

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Guidelines for Working near an Active Osprey Nest

A significant percentage of osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) pairs in Florida nest on power poles or other man-made structures. This document outlines guidelines for working near osprey nests when the nest is active. A nest is considered “active” if it contains eggs or flightless young. When an osprey nest is present, it is suggested that a tower climber perform and document observations of the nest and surrounding area before performing any activity. Indications of an active osprey nest include fish bones and parts on the ground, an osprey bringing fish or other food to the nest, a pair of ospreys in or around the nest, and aggressive behavior of an osprey towards other birds in the surrounding area.

In most cases, work near an active osprey nest should be avoided. When such work is not avoidable, precautions should be taken as climbers may need to defend themselves from an osprey while also performing job duties. Ospreys are known to aggressively defend their nests, and can pose a formidable threat to anyone in close proximity of their nests. Osprey may use their large talons when defending their nest by puncturing the skin of the trespasser. They will generally attack from behind so as not to be seen before making contact.

Work around an active osprey nest is not only potentially hazardous to the climber but also to the osprey eggs and young. The temperature of eggs and chicks must be maintained within a relatively narrow range. If the adult osprey is off the nest for an extended period, eggs or young may become too hot or too cold, causing them to perish. Further, the potential for osprey chicks to jump out of the nest (causing death) increases when they can see workers close by.

If work on a tower or pole containing an active osprey nest is unavoidable, the potential for violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or provisions of the Florida Administrative Code will be minimized if the following precautions are taken:

- Limit maintenance or construction activities in close proximity to active nests. Work as far away from the nest as possible to avoid being seen by osprey chicks that cannot yet fly.
- All work on a tower or pole should be conducted before 8:30 a.m.
- No work should be conducted during rainy weather.
- If work cannot be completed within 45 minutes, workers should leave the area for a minimum of 45 minutes before resuming work.
- No more than two work attempts should be performed in one day.

The intentions of this document are to prevent the take or long term disturbance of an active osprey nest. If it is unclear whether a proposed activity can be undertaken consistent with these guidelines, then the local FWC regional nongame biologist should be contacted <<http://www.myfwc.com/Contact/regnoffc.htm>> for guidance.