

Strathmere Fishing & Environmental Club

The Osprey Nesting Platform Program

Background:

Shortly after Karen Mitchell took over Whale Creek Marina she asked me to look into repairing an old platform that was right across the Creek. The year was probably 2002. I repaired and reinstalled the platform but it was in the wrong place, the birds were affected by car lights. Karen then proposed that she would pay for the material if I would design, build and install a new platform at a better location. So that's how the program started.

The first platform was installed across from the Marina in 2003, about 100 yards west along Whale Creek. Olly Twist Jr., my son Paul and myself put installed the platform. It has been occupied every year since, I assume by the same pair of birds. The second platform as installed the following year just north on the same side of Whale Creek as the Marina. It also has had birds nesting every year.

I don't recall just how the Fishing Club got involved. I think Herb Hollinger helped install the second platform and we got to thinking about more units in other areas around Strathmere. Platforms number three and four were installed in 2005, number three on the island across from Frank's and number four on Flat Creek where it joins Whale Creek. Richie Hollinger, Herb and I installed #3 & #4. Platform #3 was our first failure; the birds just wouldn't use it. After three failed years we moved it about 150 yards south on the island, birds arrived within the hour.

Over the years we have had three platforms damaged and replaced by weather or errant boats. There have been some design changes, notably in 2012 we switched to using a 6X6 post instead of a 4X4. Occasionally a platform will go empty for a year most likely because of the passing of one of the birds. Most platforms are occupied the day they are erected but we have had a few that went for a year or two without occupants. We eventually moved one other platform from the vicinity of ICW Marker #317 about 300 yards southeast. It also was occupied immediately after we moved it.

At the start of 2019 we have a total of 26 platforms, 25 of them were occupied at the end of the 2018 season. One year a platform on Whale Creek had five chicks and they all made it through the season. Mostly it is one or two chicks per platform, occasionally there will be three. It is difficult to estimate but it is safe to say we have added hundreds of birds to the population. In 2016 & 2017 we had Peregrine Falcons nest on one of the platforms.

Platforms are constructed in June of each year, installation is near the end of July, sometimes the first week in August. New platforms are usually occupied the day they are installed. Plans are not firm but in 2019 we will probably install two or three new platforms.