

September 30, 2023

London Osprey Monitoring – 2023 Season Report

September is that magic time when the Goldenrod yellow mingles with the royal purple of New England Asters, there is colour in the sumac and a chill in the evening air. The Osprey parents have stopped feeding their fully grown young and some have started south.

Since April, Nature London members have reported on the Osprey families nesting in the London area. 2023 has been a very different but successful season for Ospreys in London. First arrivals were a week later than normal with the first Ospreys seen at Labatt Stadium and White Oak at Dingman on April 1. However, we had 3 new nests, 15 active nests (up from 12 in 2022) and fledged 22 young Ospreys (up from 17 the previous season).

Nests at Gainsborough & Hyde Park and Millar Berry Farm tower were “Active” They were occupied by a pair of Ospreys throughout the season but did not fledge any young birds. We don’t know what happened. Both nests are very high in communication towers so monitors could not see into the nests at the earlier stages and no full size young were visible in July. However, these two nests were exceptions and overall, the Ospreys were productive.

Fishing must be good in the northeast section of the city as we had three new nests with young at Highbury Stoney Creek Baptist Tower, London Gospel Tower on Fanshawe Park, and Sovereign & Belle Isle. Another new Osprey couple set up housekeeping on the tall capped chimney near the South Thames bridge on Adelaide.

Osprey Nesting -- 2023 Results

Nest Location	Young Fledged	Notes
Clarke & Fanshawe	2	Active
Hudson Boatworks, Fanshawe	2	Active
Airport -Huron & Dakota	2	Active
Sovereign & Bell Isle	1+	Active,
River Rd & Gore Rd	2	Active ,
Windermere & Adelaide, Soccer	1	Active
Windermere Stoneybrook Ball	2	Active
Windermere at Kilally	0	Goose
Windermere & Richmond	0	Nest gone
Western Stadium	2	Active
Gainsborough & Hyde Park	0	Active
Labatt Stadium	3	Active
Greenway Park	0	No Ospreys nesting this year
Dingman & White Oak, tower	1+	Active
Millar Berry Farm, tower	0	Active

Fanshawe Gospel Hall tower	2	Active, NEW
Highbury, Stoneybrook tower	1	Active, NEW
Adelaide & S Thames chimney	2	Active, NEW
TOTAL	22+	15 Active

+ indicates there may have been 1 more, but only 1 is confirmed.

Ospreys are interesting and attractive birds to watch. They are at the top of their food chain and accumulate any contaminants. Since the typical Osprey diet is 95 % local fish, the health of our Ospreys and their ability to produce young is a barometer of the health of our watershed. By this measure we have some cause for optimism.

London Osprey Nesting Over the Years

Year	Young to Fledging Age	Active Nests
2023	22+	15
2022	17+	12
2021	23	11
2020	19	10
2019	16 +	8+
2018	16	10
2017	13	8

Osprey Drama at Labatt Stadium

Once again, the Labatt Stadium Osprey family fledged three young birds, more than any of the other “Active” nests in London. This is a result of their early start (they were the first to return) and superb fishing skills by the adults. This season had some special drama. While the female was still incubating the eggs, the City of London sent in a crew to service the lights below the Osprey nest. Alarmed, the female left the nest for about half an hour. Fortunately, the Nature London members who watch over the nest noticed the disturbance and contacted the workers who withdrew soon after. We were uncertain about the consequences of the exposure but eventually three chicks emerged from the eggs and grew to full size in a matter of weeks.

The City plans to remove the Labatt Osprey nest this winter but will not provide a new platform in hopes that the birds will occupy the existing lower platform nearby. We can hope that platform proves acceptable and the neighbours and visitors to the ball field will continue to enjoy the Osprey entertainment overhead.

Silly Goose Stories

In recent years, Ospreys have encountered a new challenge from Canada Geese looking for a safe nesting place. The geese have the advantage of arriving before the Ospreys to occupy existing nests, without much thought about how far the goslings must fall before they can fly. At first, we were concerned when nests at the Airport and Kilally Park were occupied. However, in both cases the Ospreys simply created new stick nests nearby

and carried on without any apparent problem for them. The Canada Geese were gone by May.

Thanks to the Osprey Reporters

All this information is thanks to the volunteer Osprey monitors. Some provided regular checks on specific nests and others reported occasional sightings to us at info@naturelondon.ca. In turn, we combined the information from individual reports, tried to fill the gaps and sketched this picture of Osprey activity in the London area.

Ric and Sandy Symmes
Nature London Osprey Monitoring Coordinators.