



## Five-Year Osprey Study Report

This year marked the completion of the fifth year of the osprey breeding survey originally initiated by the LowCountry Institute. This citizen science project involved volunteers from the the Sea Island Fly Fishers, and also from the LowCountry Master Naturalist Association, Parris Island Natural Resources, and the Fripp Island Audubon Club. Volunteers “adopted” specific osprey nests in Beaufort County and observed and reported on their nesting success. Ospreys were selected because they are a species that acts as a sentinel of environmental health – as fish eaters that are widely distributed throughout the world, ospreys can serve as indicators of fishery health, environmental contamination, and climate change. For the past two years, LCI has partnered with the College of William and Mary’s Osprey Watch program to report these data to an international online database.

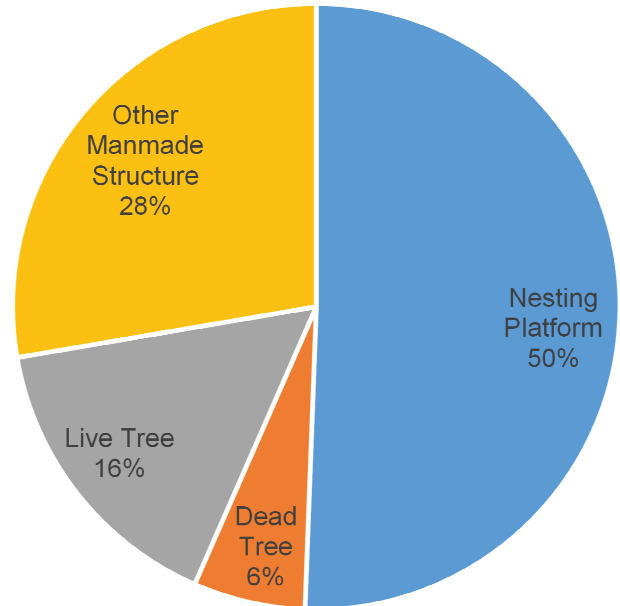
There are 420 total nesting sites located within the observation area (most of which is in Beaufort County) that have been observed at least once during the study period. Of these 420 nesting sites,

78% are located on artificial substrates – osprey nesting platforms, boat lifts, sports field lighting, cell towers, etc.

During the five year study period the number of nests has varied widely from year to year, which is a function of volunteer effort rather than a reflection of the actual number of nesting osprey pairs. More important is the nesting success from year to year. The percentage of successful nests (nests that produced chicks/ total number of active nests) has ranged from 74% in 2013 to a high of 89% in 2010.

For the past five years nesting success has held steady ranging from 1.3-1.5 young per active nest (based on analysis of a subset of data from 2009-2012). This may

### Osprey Nesting Substrate



success is probably a low-end estimate since in many cases it is impossible to count the total number of chicks in a nest due to difficulty making observations from the ground. Thus, it appears that the lowcountry population is steady and possibly increasing.

The goal of the Institute is to make this project a long term monitoring program so that it will provide yet another way for us to monitor the health of the lowcountry.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who have participated. If you have an osprey nest you watch on a regular basis and would like to contribute as an observer, visit [www.osprey-watch.org](http://www.osprey-watch.org) to log your observations.

not seem like much, but College of William and Mary research indicates that nesting success of 0.8-1.2 is necessary to sustain a population. Our observed rate of nesting

### Young per Active Nest

