



RI OSPREY REPORT

Volume 2 • December 2011



The Rhode Island Osprey Monitoring Project



Osprey at Allin's Cove. Photo by David Windsor

Welcome to Audubon Society of Rhode Island's annual osprey report! Initiated by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) in 1978, the Rhode Island Osprey Monitoring Project monitors the breeding success of Ospreys across the state. With the cooperation of RIDEM and the efforts of many volunteers, Audubon assumed management of the project in 2010. We hope you will enjoy reading about the project!

2011 Project Highlights

Ospreys are **continuing to thrive** in Rhode Island, with 159 successfully fledged young recorded in 2011. This is a slight decrease from 2010's total of 171, but is well within the general pattern of increase seen over the last 30 years. In our region, studies have estimated that the breeding rate needed to balance adult mortality is 0.8-1.0 fledged young per active nest. Rhode Island had 1.47 fledged young per active nest in 2011, indicating that population growth is likely to continue. The complete monitoring results can be seen on page 4.

This year we introduced an **online data reporting** system for Osprey monitors using SurveyMonkey. Many volunteers loved this system, and it definitely cut down on paperwork and duplication. However, it was not a perfectly smooth system and we are looking into more

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Did you Know?

- OSPREYS THAT BREED IN RHODE ISLAND SPEND OCTOBER-MARCH IN NORTHERN SOUTH AMERICA.
- RI FLEDGLINGS MIGRATE SOUTH IN THE FALL, AND REMAIN FOR AT LEAST 3 WINTERS BEFORE RETURNING NORTH TO BREED
- OSPREYS ENCOURAGE FLEDGLINGS TO LEAVE THE NEST BY WITHHOLDING FOOD
- SOMETIMES OSPREY FLEDGLINGS MOVE TO A NEARBY NEST TO BE FED BY DIFFERENT "PARENTS"

A Monitor's Perspective By Jack Kelly

Being an Audubon Osprey observer for the past two seasons has given me a new-found appreciation and love for the natural world. Together with my co-monitor Mark Andersen, I have witnessed remarkable examples of nature's awe-inspiring displays of beauty and wonder that constantly surround us. While chronicling the lifecycles of these

amazing birds of prey, from the courting ritual to the fledglings' first flights and eventual migration, we have been repeatedly astonished by the actions of this species. It has been a pure joy to learn first hand the habits and lifestyles that make these birds unique, and to be present as they maintain their recovery from the threat of extinction.

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RI Osprey Report



An osprey atop a telephone pole along the Pawtuxet River. Photo by Rita Holahan

“MY ORIGINAL SUBJECT, ATOP THE POLE, SLOWLY PREPARED TO TAKE FLIGHT”



The ospreys along the Pawtuxet River. Photo by Rita Holahan

Osprey on the Pawtuxet by Rita Holahan

A strange bird call startled me a few summers ago while paddling down the lower Pawtuxet River. I didn't think much of it until I drifted down river and the call became louder. I realized I was getting close to the bird, but I couldn't see it. The next thing I knew, this giant bird swooped down along the river, seemingly headed straight for me, and then passed over my kayak and on up the river. Its wing span was enormous and to my surprise a small animal lay clutched in its talons. I clearly got too close to its lunch, and s/he was not about to share. I had no time to grab my camera; the bird was too fast for me that day. But I remained curious about this magnificent bird, and described it to others who suggested that it might be an Osprey.

The next week I was back. This time, with camera in hand and a much more careful approach to its guarded location, I spotted the Osprey roosting on a telephone pole on the Cranston side of the river. As I drifted closer to take my photos, I heard the strange call again but from the opposite side of the river. I turned and saw another large Osprey

taking flight. After an aerial survey of a nearby field, it swooped up to the cell-tower nest to join its mate. I was captured by the mystique of the Osprey. With the help of another Pawtuxet River Authority volunteer, we made a habit of checking on the pair regularly. In 2010, I informed Audubon that the Pawtuxet River was home to this magnificent bird. At least since the summer of 2007, Ospreys have occupied this nest and raised one or two offspring each year. It's exciting to await their annual return and be witness to the Rhode Island phase of their migratory cycle.

With this past summer's historic dam removal in Pawtuxet Village, connecting the river to Narragansett Bay, we anticipate spawning runs in the spring of 2012. With shad and herring coming into the river for the first time in hundreds of years, we are hopeful that a more diverse food supply will make this part of the Pawtuxet River even more attractive to future generations of Osprey.

I look forward to many more years of visiting the Osprey of the Pawtuxet River.

2011 Monitoring Results

In 2011, 64 volunteers monitored 187 known nest sites. Of the 108 active nests, 91 produced at least one fledgling. A total of 159 young Ospreys successfully fledged. The RI breeding population produced an average of 1.75 fledglings per successful nest and 1.47 fledglings per active nest.

There were 62 inactive nest sites and 16 "housekeeping" nests. A "housekeeping nest" is a nest with ospreys present but no observable incubation. Often these nests are built by sub-adult Ospreys.

The town with the greatest number of active nests (18) was South Kingstown. Barrington had 14 active nests within its borders and the greatest number of fledglings (30). South Kingstown had 23 fledglings recorded within its borders.

Osprey Nesting Results Over Time

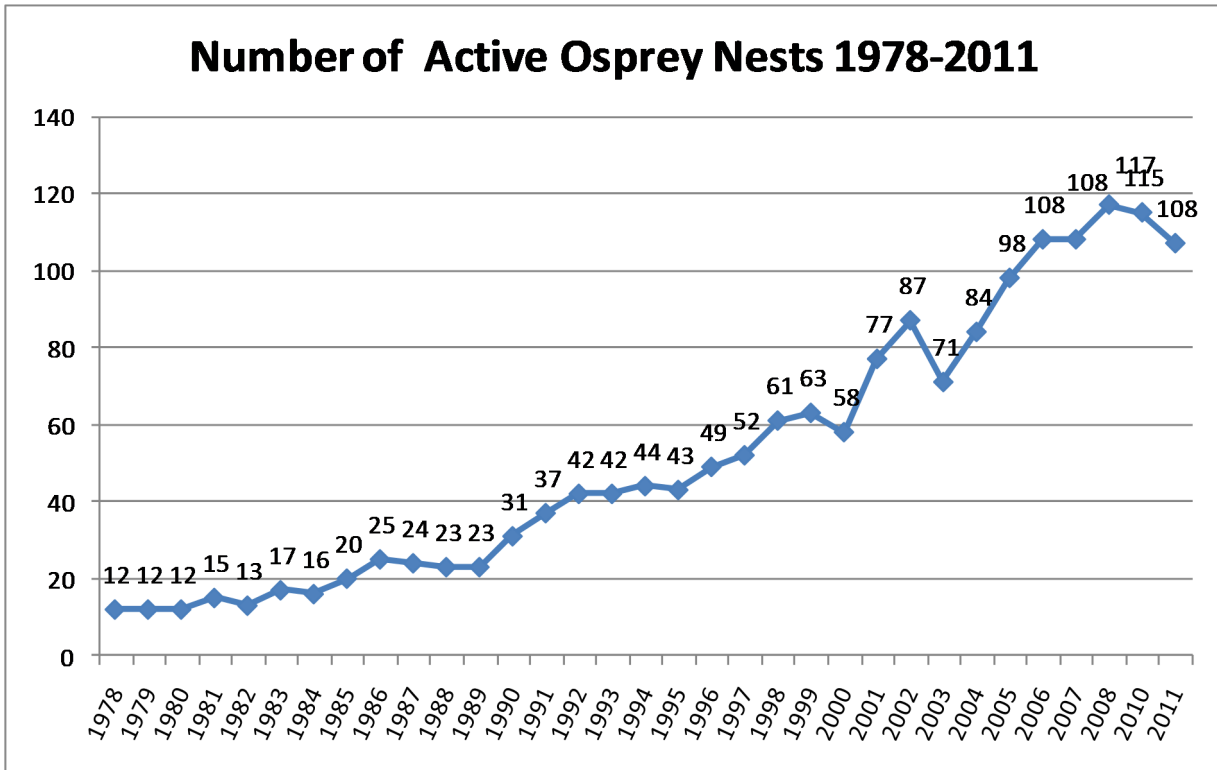


Figure 1. The total number of active osprey nests since the RI Osprey Monitoring Project began.

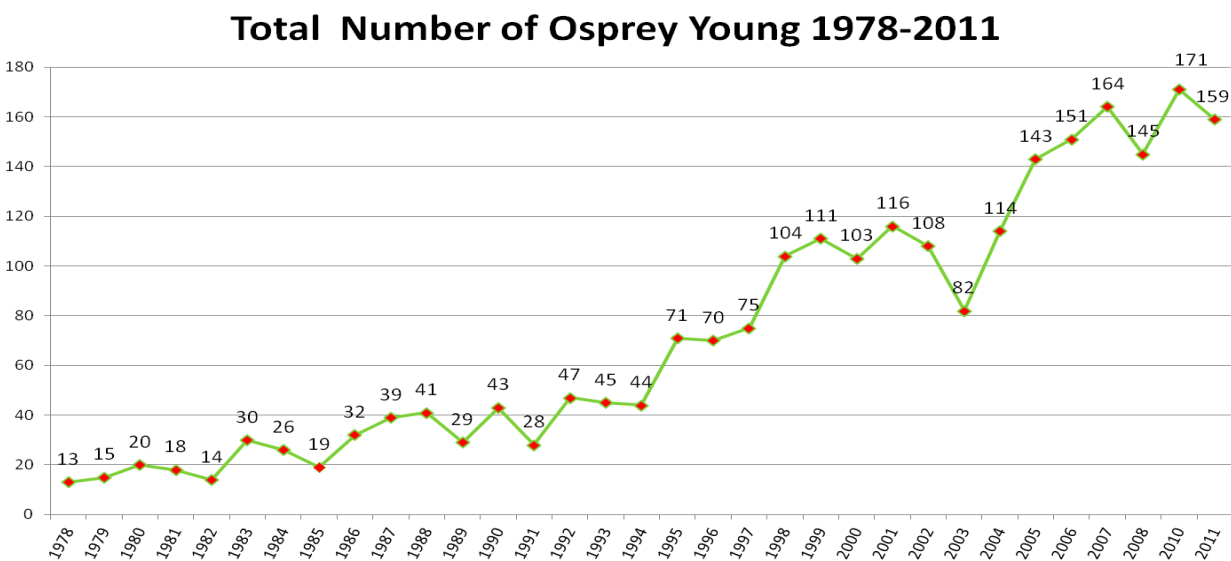


Figure 2. The total number of osprey young documented each year since the RIOM Project began.

RI Osprey Report

Nest Sites Observed: 187

Inactive Nests (no Ospreys present): 63

Housekeeping Nests (Ospreys present; no eggs/incubation): 16

Active Nests (eggs/incubation. Includes Successful nests): 108

Successful Nests (nests with fledged young): 91

Total Fledged Young: 159

Average Number of Fledged Young per Active Nest: 1.47

Average Number of Fledged Young per Successful Nest: 1.75

2011 Nesting Activity by City

City	Nest Name	Final Status	Fledged
Barrington			
	100 Acre Cove (Cove Ave)	Successful	2
	100 Acre Cove (Isl)	Successful	2
	100 Acre Tongue S	Active	0
	Adam's Pt.	NotActive	0
	Allins Cove N	NotActive	0
	Allins Cove S	Successful	3
	Barneyville Rd	Successful	1
	Barrington H.S.	Successful	2
	Brickyard Pond	Successful	2
	Cranesbill	NotActive	0
	George St./Nockum Hill	Successful	2
	Johannis Farm Midway	NotActive	0
	Johannis Farm N	Successful	4
	Johannis Farm S	Successful	1
	Little Mussachuck Creek 1	Successful	3
	Little Mussachuck Creek 2	NotActive	0
	Nagtegaal Nest	NotActive	0
	Osamequin	NotActive	0
	Palmer River (Silviera)	Successful	2
	Rumstick Pt.	Successful	3
	Smith's Cove	Successful	3
	Sowams Tree Nest	NotActive	0
		Total	30

RI Osprey Report

City	Nest Name	Final Status	Fledged
Block Island			
	Block Island Power	Successful	1
		Total	1
Bristol			
	Mill Cove	Successful	1
	Mill Gut	Successful	3
	Mill Gut Tree Nest	Successful	1
		Total	5
Charlestown			
	Burdickville East	Successful	2
	Burdickville West	Housekeeping	0
	Burdickville Wester	NotActive	0
	Burdickville Westest	NotActive	0
	Quonochontaug Pond	Successful	1
	Rt. 2 & Rt. 112	NotActive	0
	South County Sand & Gravel	NotActive	0
	United Nuclear	Unknown	
	West Pond	Successful	1
		Total	4
Cranston			
	Niantic Ave Cell Tower	Housekeeping	0
		Total	0
East Greenwich			
	American Legion Post	Successful	1
	Arlington RV park	Successful	1
	Uncle Bob's Self Storage	Housekeeping	0
		Total	2
East Providence			
	Bucklin Hill	Successful	2
	Catamore Blvd.	Successful	1
	Marnoch Drive	Successful	2
	Mink Road	Successful	1
	Mobil Tank Farm 1	Successful	3
	Mobil Tank Farm 3	Active	0

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City	Nest Name	Final Status	Fledged
East Providence			
	Omega Pond	Active	0
	Pierce Field	NotActive	0
		Total	9
Hopkinton			
	Dow Memorial Field	Successful	2
	Hopkinton ACO/DPW	Active	0
	Narragansett Way E	NotActive	0
	Narragansett Way N	Active	0
	Narragansett Way S	Housekeeping	0
	Potter Hill Ashaway	NotActive	0
	Potter Hill East	Successful	1
	Potter Hill West	Housekeeping	0
	Potter Hill Wester	Successful	2
	Rt. 216 Quarry	NotActive	0
	Rt. 91 Train Tracks	NotActive	0
	Tomaquag	Successful	1
	Wood River Golf Course	Successful	2
		Total	8
Jamestown			
	Beavertail	NotActive	0
	Fox Hill Farm	Successful	2
	Jamestown South Pond	NotActive	0
	Jamestown Water Tower South	Active	0
	Lawn Ave. School	NotActive	0
	Marsh Meadows	Successful	3
	Neale Farm	NotActive	0
	North Bayview Dr.	NotActive	0
	O'Farrell Farm	NotActive	0
	Palmieri Property	Successful	2
	Petrie Property	NotActive	0
		Total	7

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City	Nest Name	Final Status	Fledged
Lincoln			
	Valley Falls Pond	NotActive	0
		Total	0
Little Compton			
	Goose Wing Beach	NotActive	0
	Haeffenreffer 1	NotActive	0
	Round Pond	NotActive	0
		Total	0
Narragansett			
	Canonchet Farm	Successful	2
	Christofaro Park	Successful	3
	Foddering Farm Rd.	NotActive	0
	Galilee Bird Sanctuary	Successful	3
	Galilee Escape Rd.	Housekeeping	0
	Galilee Water Tower	NotActive	0
	Indian Rock Rd.	Successful	2
	Kenyon Farm Rd	NotActive	0
	Lake Canonchet	NotActive	0
	Long Cove	Housekeeping	0
	Narrow River Mouth	Active	0
	Pt. Judith Pond Sunnybrook Farm	NotActive	0
	Salt Pond Plaza	Successful	2
	Wastewater Treatment Facility	Successful	1
		Total	13
Newport			
	Carr Point Left Field	Active	0
	Carr Point Right Field	Housekeeping	0
	Freebody Park	Successful	2
	Gooseberry Beach	NotActive	0
		Total	2
North Kingstown			
	Bailey Rd.	Successful	1
	Mainsail Drive	Successful	1

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City	Nest Name	Final Status	Fledged
North Kingstown			
	McGinn Park	Successful	1
	North Kingstown Dog Pound	Successful	1
	North Kingstown High School #1	Successful	1
	North Kingstown High School #2	Successful	1
	Northrup Road	Successful	1
	Pendar Rd.	Housekeeping	0
	Quonset - Allen's Harbor	Successful	2
	Rabbit Island	NotActive	0
	Ryan Park	Successful	2
	Snuff Mill Rd. & Rt. 1A	Successful	1
		Total	12
Portsmouth			
	Bay Point Inn/DPW Cell Tower	Successful	2
	Bristol Harbor Rock	Housekeeping	0
	Hog Island	NotActive	0
	Melville	Active	0
	Summit Road	NotActive	0
	Town Pond 1	NotActive	0
	Town Pond 2	NotActive	0
	Town Pond 3	NotActive	0
		Total	2
Providence			
	Port of Providence	Successful	2
		Total	2
Prudence Island			
	Coggeshall Cove	Successful	1
	Nags Creek N	Housekeeping	0
	Nags Creek S	Active	0
	Potter Cove	Successful	2
	Sheep Pen Cove	Active	0
		Total	3

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City	Nest Name	Final Status	Fledged
Richmond			
	Buttonwoods Rd.	Successful	1
	RPE Waste Services Cell Tower	Successful	2
	Rt. 95 /Old Switch Rd.	Active	0
		Total	3
Scituate			
	Clayville	NotActive	0
		Total	0
South Kingstown			
	Billington Cove	NotActive	0
	Factory Pond	Successful	2
	Great Swamp IMP #1 (Water)	Successful	2
	Great Swamp IMP #2 (Water)	Successful	1
	Great Swamp IMP #3 (Water)	Successful	1
	Great Swamp IMP #4 (Water)	Housekeeping	0
	Great Swamp IMP #5 (South)	NotActive	0
	Great Swamp IMP #6 (South)	Successful	2
	Great Swamp IMP #7	NotActive	0
	Great Swamp IMP #8	NotActive	0
	Great Swamp IMP#9	NotActive	0
	Great Swamp Platform 1	NotActive	0
	Great Swamp Platform 2	NotActive	0
	Great Swamp Range	NotActive	0
	Great Swamp Substation	Active	0
	Jerusalem Lab	Successful	2
	Narrow River Duck Blind	NotActive	0
	Narrow River Gooseberry Isl.	NotActive	0
	Old Mountain Field	Successful	2
	Pond St.	Successful	2
	Potter's Pond	Successful	2
	Pt. Judith Pond Smelt Brook	Successful	2
	Ram Pt. Marina	Active	0

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City	Nest Name	Final Status	Fledged
South Kingstown			
	Shannock Rd	Successful	1
	Succotash Water Tower	NotActive	0
	Trustom Pond Isl.	Successful	2
	Trustom Pond Pt.	Successful	2
	Turner Cove 2	Housekeeping	0
		Total	23
Swansea			
	Merriman's Pond 2	Successful	2
		Total	2
Tiverton			
	Fogland Marsh	NotActive	0
	Ruecker Refuge	NotActive	0
	Tiverton Land Fill	NotActive	0
		Total	0
Warren			
	Belcher Cove Middle	Successful	1
	Belcher Cove N	Successful	1
	Brown St.	NotActive	0
	Cell Tower Near FedEx	Successful	1
	Fatima High School	Successful	1
	First Student Nest	Successful	2
	Kickemuit Middle School	Successful	2
	Market St. Land Nest	Successful	3
	Palmer River Tree Nest	Housekeeping	0
	Swansea Golf Club N	Successful	3
	Swansea Golf Club S	Housekeeping	0
	Wujick Farm Nest	Successful	1
		Total	15
Warwick			
	Barry's Nightclub	NotActive	0
	CCRI	Successful	1
	Mickey Stevens	Successful	1

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City	Nest Name	Final Status	Fledged
Warwick			
	Pawtuxet River-Electronics Drive	Successful	1
	Rocky Hill School	Successful	2
		Total	5
West Greenwich			
	Big River Mgt. Area	Active	0
	Hazard Rd.	NotActive	0
	Super 8 Motel	NotActive	0
		Total	0
Westerly			
	Avondale	Successful	3
	Misquamicut West	NotActive	0
	Napatree Pt. Central	NotActive	0
	Napatree Pt. E	NotActive	0
	Napatree Pt. W	Successful	2
	Pee Wee Football	Successful	1
	Rt. 78 & Rt. 91	Housekeeping	0
	Tom Harvey Rd.	Successful	1
	Westerly Police	Active	0
	White Rock Rd.	Successful	2
	Winnapaug	Successful	2
	Winnapaug Breach Dr.	NotActive	0
		Total	11
		Grand Total	159

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The Rhode Island Osprey Monitoring Project

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efficient methods of online reporting.

Volunteers Eric Walsh and Jason and Melanie Benda developed a new **GIS map and database** for the project with all of our current and historical osprey data. They braved a substantial amount of data cleanup to complete this formidable task! Our next GIS project is to perform spatial analysis of the data to answer questions about osprey habitats and breeding success. A goal for 2012 is to publish an interactive version of the map online, which will replace the Google Map. We are definitely stretching the capabilities of Google Maps with the amount of data we have stored there!

Another achievement of 2011 was to create a **website** where all forms and materials on the Rhode Island Osprey Monitoring project could be stored, and where updates could be posted. The web address is:

<http://riosprey.blogspot.com/>.

Our list of **osprey nesting sites** continues to evolve as we receive new infor-

mation. We added several new nests this year, and eliminated defunct locations. We took **GPS coordinates** of many nest sites to improve the accuracy of the map. In 2012, we plan to complete this process and create detailed directions to every nest site on the map.

Since Audubon administers the osprey monitoring program, we often get calls from people wanting to **repair a nest platform, put up a new one, or remove a problem nest**. While we do not manage these activities, it is useful to have good information to provide. Volunteer Eric Walsh wrote a publication that addresses these issues. In addition, Eric wrote an **osprey monitor training manual** which will be very useful for volunteers. We are also planning a **training session for monitors** in March to kick off the osprey season.

We look forward to seeing all the monitors in the spring!

Many thanks to Osprey researcher Alan Poole, PhD. of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, who provided comments and information for this section.



A juvenile osprey with a fish.
Photo by Jack Kelly

New Rhode Island Osprey Monitoring Website!

All monitoring forms, information, instructions, maps and updates can be found at: riosprey.blogspot.com

Check it out!

GET INVOLVED : Support the Rhode Island Osprey Monitoring Project!

Audubon needs your help to continue this important program.

- Volunteer to monitor an Osprey Nest! Commit to a regular schedule from April through July. Monitors are especially needed in southern RI. Contact July Lewis to find a nest that needs a monitor: jlewis@asri.org or 401-949-5454 x3044.
- Donate supplies: Spotting scopes, binoculars, and GPS units are all very much needed to improve monitoring. Powerful computers that can efficiently run GIS software may also be needed; contact July Lewis for details.
- Become a member: Your tax deductible membership dollars help support not only the osprey program, but education, conservation and advocacy programs across the state. A membership form is on the back page of this publication, or you can go to www.asri.org to join or donate online.



100 Acre Tongue nest platform.
Photo by David Marshall

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A Monitor's Perspective

(Continued from page 1)

A secondary bonus to watching these birds is the friendship developed amongst the human neighbors of our feathered friends. These relationships have added to the richness of our lives, and allowed all those concerned to share in the beauty of the natural world.

I have been an avid spectator to fascinating and entrancing sights. One particularly rainy afternoon late last April, the female Osprey was incubating her eggs. The male Osprey was holding his left wing over her head as if to shield her from the rain. This display lasted for about ten minutes. During this time, the male shifted wings and continued to cover his mate until the heavy showers passed out of the area.

In mid-July I was present when one of the fledglings took its initial flight into the air above a nearby sports complex. Although a little tentative at first, the juvenile made a complete circuit over the field and landed on a cross bar for the stadium lighting. It was an awe-inspiring moment to witness. There are too many moments like this to list – but each one is memorable.

Jack Kelly is a nature columnist for Newport This Week and www.newport-now.com.

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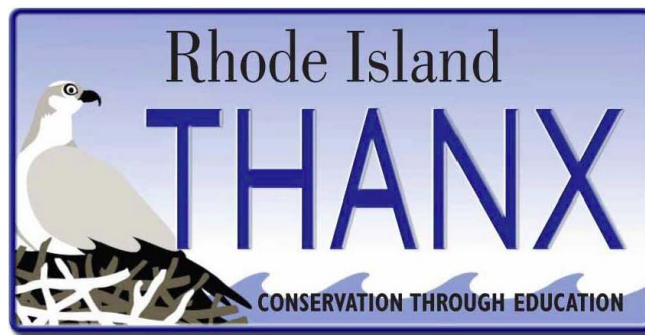


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Note: A \$10 fee will be added upon renewal of your registration to support environmental education.

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Audubon is a donor-supported organization. Everything we do is made possible by the generosity of donors like you. If you value programs such as osprey monitoring, the conservation of wildlife habitat, good environmental policy, and school programs that teach kids about the amazing natural world around them, then please join us and become a member today.

Become a member today!

1.) Join By Mail: Fill out the form below and mail it to Audubon Society of Rhode Island, 12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield, RI 02917.

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