

OSPREY NESTS PROGRAM: CHEROKEE LEDGER NEWS JUNE 2014

Osprey nesting platforms placed around Lake Allatoona By Emily Selby The Cherokee Ledger-News | 0 comments

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Next time you're at Lake Allatoona, look to the skies and you may see some new residents learning to take flight.

Georgia Power and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) forged a partnership to build and install several osprey nesting platforms that were placed around the lake.

Ospreys are large raptors that eat fish and spend the spring and summer in the United States before migrating to central and South America for the winter.

They typically nest in the tops of large, dead trees near the water's edge, but when this habitat is not available, they may seek out man-made structures.

Many will nest on cell phone towers or high voltage power lines.

Linda Hartsfield, from the USACE, said they had seen some ospreys nesting at the Lake Allatoona Dam.

"We saw the need because we didn't feel like we had enough snags for them to nest," Hartsfield said. "And with all the development around (here), it really takes a toll on wildlife."

Hartsfield said that the Corps and Georgia Power partnered together nearly 12 years ago and built four or five nesting towers. This past year, around November or December, the two partnered again to construct nine towers around the lake.

The nesting towers are made of repurposed materials.

Old U.S. Army cots found in the scrap pile of a powerhouse of the USACE were powder coated so they could withstand weather conditions, and Georgia Power provided old power poles to raise the platforms.

According to Hartsfield, ospreys typically take a year to establish a nest, but she said that there already is evidence they have started to use the recently constructed towers.

“We have seen evidence already ... there are sticks and twigs out there. It really surprised us,” she said.

The goal of the project is to provide a safe place for ospreys to nest in the hopes that they will return each year to nest and raise their young.

The companies also hope that the ospreys will thrive and provide lake visitors with the chance to watch and learn more about the birds of prey. They also hope it will encourage visitors to care more for the lake and keep it clean for the wildlife.

Both Georgia Power and USACE are partners with the Great Lake Allatoona Clean Up (GLAC) committee, an affiliate of the Lake Allatoona Associations.

The GLAC is a four-day annual project that focuses on keeping trash out of the lake and off the shoreline.

Approximately 4,000 volunteers will pick up trash to help keep the water clean for both visitors and local wildlife.

Hartsfield says of the event, “It’s a good environmental project; it’s about clean water. It helps them (ospreys), because the clean water is their environment. It will help establish a home and keep them here.”

The GLAC project is scheduled for Sept. 27, and volunteers can register and get more information at www.greatlatoonacleanup.org.

This will be the 29th year for the event.