

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA**  
**SESSION 2025**

**H**

**1**

**HOUSE BILL 597**

Short Title:    Adopt Osprey as State Raptor. (Public)

Sponsors:     Representatives Cairns, Tyson, Carson Smith, and Miller (Primary Sponsors).

*For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.*

Referred to:    Wildlife Resources, if favorable, State and Local Government, if favorable, Rules,  
Calendar, and Operations of the House

April 1, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT TO ADOPT THE OSPREY AS THE OFFICIAL RAPTOR OF THE STATE OF  
NORTH CAROLINA.

Whereas, ospreys are raptors that are plentiful in North Carolina, inhabiting estuaries, lakes, rivers, and marshes throughout the Coastal Plain, but can often be seen nesting as well near lakes and rivers in other parts of the State; and

Whereas, ospreys are majestic birds that stand 21 to 26 inches tall, weigh up to four pounds, and have wingspans that measure up to about six feet; and

Whereas, ospreys have plumage that is generally dark on the back and wings, while the under plumage is mostly white; and

Whereas, ospreys have distinctive white coloring on the top of their heads and a dark stripe that runs through each eye to the nape; and

Whereas, ospreys can be recognized during flight by the crooked or M-shape of their wings; and

Whereas, ospreys are diurnal birds of prey that hunt during daylight hours when they use their keen eyesight to focus on locating fish just below the surface of the water; and

Whereas, ospreys are unique among North American raptors, feeding almost exclusively on live fish with a diet that includes about 80 different species of saltwater and freshwater fish; and

Whereas, ospreys are the only raptors that plunge into water feet first and can dive 30 miles per hour or greater to grasp fish with their specially equipped talons; and

Whereas, ospreys have earned the reputation as "Fishermen of the Seas"; and

Whereas, ospreys are one of the most easily observed birds of prey, because they use brush, driftwood, sticks, twigs, and other debris to build large, bulky nests in dead trees along waterways or in man-made structures over open water, such as channel markers; and

Whereas, ospreys typically reach sexual maturity in their third year and are monogamous, with pairs returning to the same nest year after year, usually in early March for breeding season; and

Whereas, the female usually lays two to five eggs, for which the incubation period is 34 to 40 days, and, after the chicks hatch, they remain in the nest for 48 to 59 days to fledge, becoming independent of their parents four to eight weeks later but prior to the start of fall migration; and

Whereas, although female ospreys are somewhat larger than males, each partner has an average life expectancy that exceeds 10 years; and



\* H 5 9 7 - V - 1 \*

1           Whereas, because of their sensitivity to contaminants in the environment and the ease  
2 with which they can be observed and monitored, ospreys can serve as an excellent indicator of  
3 the health of the environment; and

4           Whereas, the U.S. osprey population has been increasing steadily since 1960 when it  
5 was at an all-time low, which was attributed to the peak of the use of harmful pesticides, which  
6 were leeching into U.S. waterways; and

7           Whereas, the resiliency of the osprey reflects the spirit of the "Tar Heel nature" of the  
8 people of the State of North Carolina; and

9           Whereas, North Carolina does not have an official State raptor; Now, therefore,  
10 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

11           **SECTION 1.** Chapter 145 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new  
12 section to read:

13           **"§ 145-52. State raptor.**

14           The osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) is adopted as the official raptor of the State of North  
15 Carolina."

16           **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law.