

## Osprey Restoration in Iowa 2024 Nesting Report - Iowa DNR

The Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) restoration program in Iowa began in 1997 and involved translocating young birds from Minnesota and Wisconsin to strategic locations across Iowa. The last year that birds were released was 2016 and currently, the objective is to monitor nesting activity. There are three main areas in the state where Osprey have become well established: the Iowa City to Waterloo corridor, Des Moines and vicinity, and Spirit Lake and vicinity (though this area is least stable). There are also two active nesting pairs on the western border of Iowa south of Sioux City (Figure 1).

Monitoring of nest sites is accomplished primarily by volunteers. Volunteers are assigned to a particular nest or nests and new nests are reported opportunistically. Volunteers visit the nest multiple times during the breeding season and try to gather information on nest activity at the start of the nesting season and whether the pair is successful in fledging young towards the end of the nesting season. Some opportunistic reports of nesting activity are also accepted if no formal data are available.

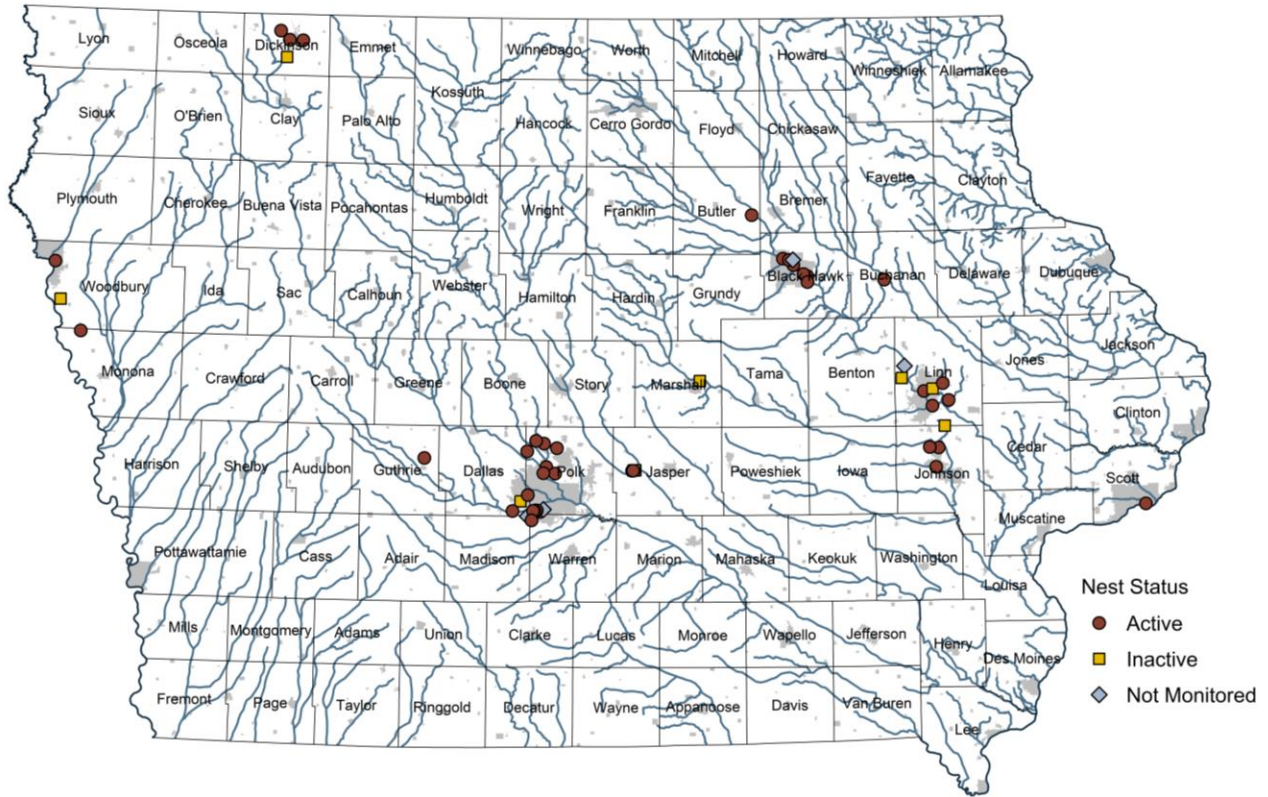
The Iowa Osprey population continues to slowly increase, with a record 50 Osprey nests monitored during the 2024 nesting season (Table 1). Of these 50 nests, 39 were active and 11 were inactive. Seven new nests were reported this year. Of the 39 active nests, 25 were reported as successful (at least one young survived to fledging), 5 were reported as failed, and 9 had no outcome reported.

In 2024, 23.1% of monitored active nests had an unknown outcome (i.e. we do not know if the nest successfully fledged young or failed). This rate is lower than last year (36.4% unknown outcome nests in 2023). We thank our volunteers for helping to improve reporting and we will continue to work with monitors to reduce the percentage of unknown outcome nests in future years. More complete reporting improves the certainty of our trend data for this species.

Based on available data, 64.1% of monitored active nests were successful (25 nests; Figure 3) and a minimum total of 47 young were fledged (Figure 4). This is a notable increase from last year where 48.5% of monitored active nests were successful (16 nests; Figure 3) and a minimum total of 26 young were fledged (Figure 4). An average of 1.57 young were produced per known-outcome active nest (Figure 5), the third highest fledge rate since 2016. The Spirit Lake area continues to see fluctuations in the number of active nests. In 2018, there were a record 5 active nests, which decreased to only 1 active nest in 2023 but this year saw an increase to 3 active nests recorded in the area. Additional years of nesting data and additional nest searching will help us better understand the stability of this segment of the population.

In future years, the DNR will continue to monitor Osprey nest sites with the partnership of volunteers. An ongoing challenge is that Osprey like nesting on cell phone towers. Osprey don't generally cause damage to the towers but conflicts can arise when work must be done on a tower during the nesting season, especially since over 75% of the 2024 active Iowa nest sites were on cell towers. We will continue to work with partners on managing this potential conflict.

Finally, a huge thank you to all the volunteers who are vital to tracking the recovery of this species! You are invaluable. Please contact the Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program Coordinator if you are interested in helping with monitoring in the future; [vwmp@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:vwmp@dnr.iowa.gov).



Produced by Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program, December 2024

**Figure 1. Statewide map showing 2024 nest locations (39 active, 11 inactive, 4 not monitored).**

**Table 1. 2024 Nest Site Activity in Iowa**

Nest ID	County	2024 Activity	Outcome	Young Fledged
33	Polk	Active	Failed	0
158	Black Hawk	Active	Failed	0
162	Woodbury	Active	Failed	0
167	Dallas	Active	Failed	0
170	Jasper	Active	Failed	0
2	Monona	Active	Successful	2
3	Dickinson	Active	Successful	2
8	Polk	Active	Successful	2
11	Black Hawk	Active	Successful	2
17	Buchanan	Active	Successful	1
25	Johnson	Active	Successful	2
28	Linn	Active	Successful	1
32	Polk	Active	Successful	3
105	Polk	Active	Successful	1
113	Dallas	Active	Successful	3
114	Linn	Active	Successful	1
122	Polk	Active	Successful	1
124	Jasper	Active	Successful	1
136	Black Hawk	Active	Successful	3
138	Polk	Active	Successful	2
141	Dickinson	Active	Successful	3

Nest ID	County	2024 Activity	Outcome	Young Fledged
142	Polk	Active	Successful	2
143	Black Hawk	Active	Successful	3
152	Linn	Active	Successful	3
154	Polk	Active	Successful	1
157	Dickinson	Active	Successful	2
159	Butler	Active	Successful	2
166	Polk	Active	Successful	2
168	Warren	Active	Successful	1
169	Black Hawk	Active	Successful	1
10	Black Hawk	Active	Unknown	NA
111	Polk	Active	Unknown	NA
120	Johnson	Active	Unknown	NA
132	Linn	Active	Unknown	NA
155	Polk	Active	Unknown	NA
156	Guthrie	Active	Unknown	NA
161	Scott	Active	Unknown	NA
164	Polk	Active	Unknown	NA
165	Johnson	Active	Unknown	NA
15	Linn	Inactive	NestGone/NotFound	NA
151	Linn	Inactive	NestGone/NotFound	NA
14	Linn	Inactive	No Activity	NA
18	Dallas	Inactive	No Activity	NA
35	Woodbury	Inactive	No Activity	NA
45	Jasper	Inactive	No Activity	NA
125	Jasper	Inactive	No Activity	NA
126	Jasper	Inactive	No Activity	NA
129	Dickinson	Inactive	No Activity	NA
144	Jasper	Inactive	No Activity	NA
150	Marshall	Inactive	No Activity	NA
13	Linn	Not Monitored	N/A	NA
112	Madison	Not Monitored	N/A	NA
117	Polk	Not Monitored	N/A	NA
160	Black Hawk	Not Monitored	N/A	NA

**Table 2. Summary of 2024 Nesting Results**

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of Nests Reported On	43	44	48	42	50
Number of Inactive Nests	14	15	16	9	11
Number of Active Territories	29	29	32	33	39
Number of Nests Failed	9	6	7	4	5
Number of Nests Successful	18	15	19	16	25
Nests Gone/Removed	0	1	5	1	2
Monitored Nests with Unknown Outcome	2	8	5	12	9
Minimum Total of Young Produced	36	26	35	26	47
Average Young per Nest	1.33	1.24	1.35	1.30	1.57

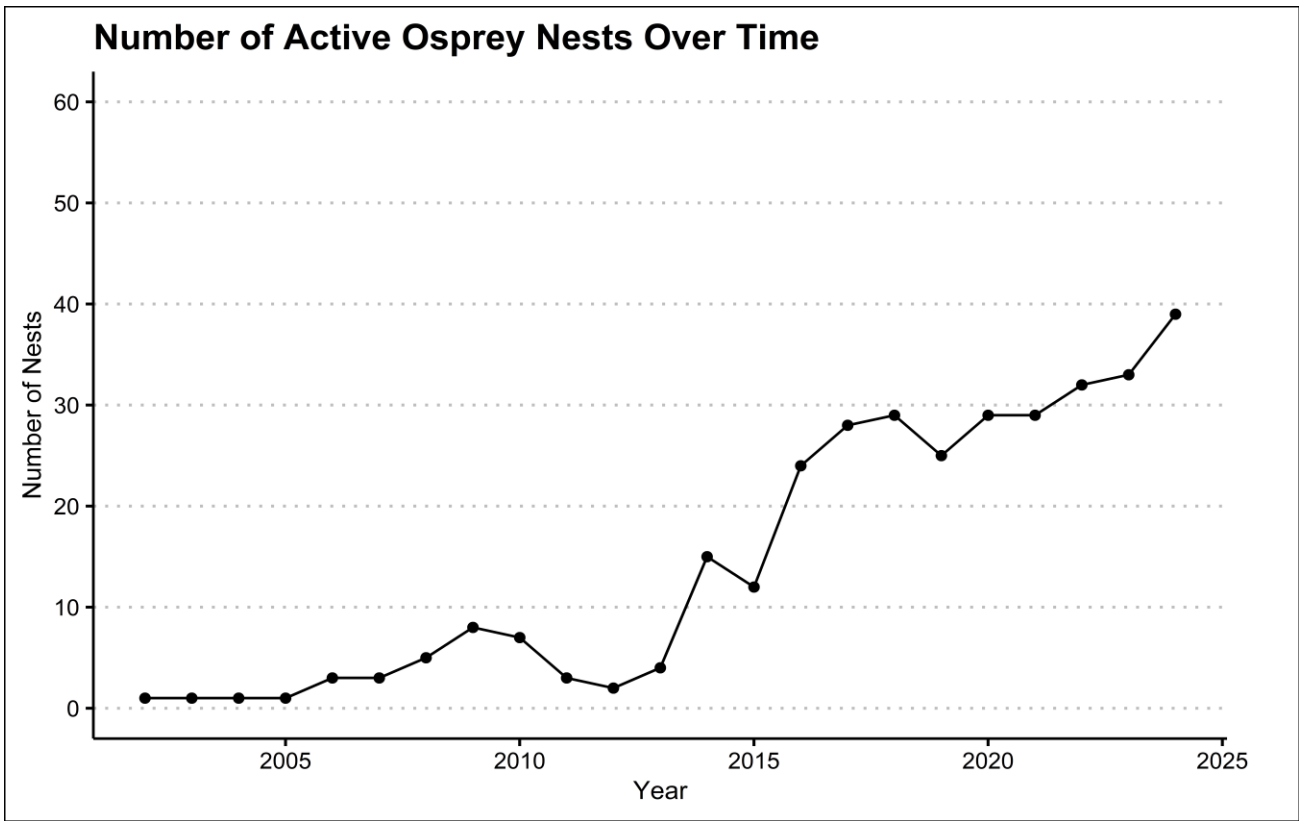


Figure 2. The total number of active nests from 2002-2024.

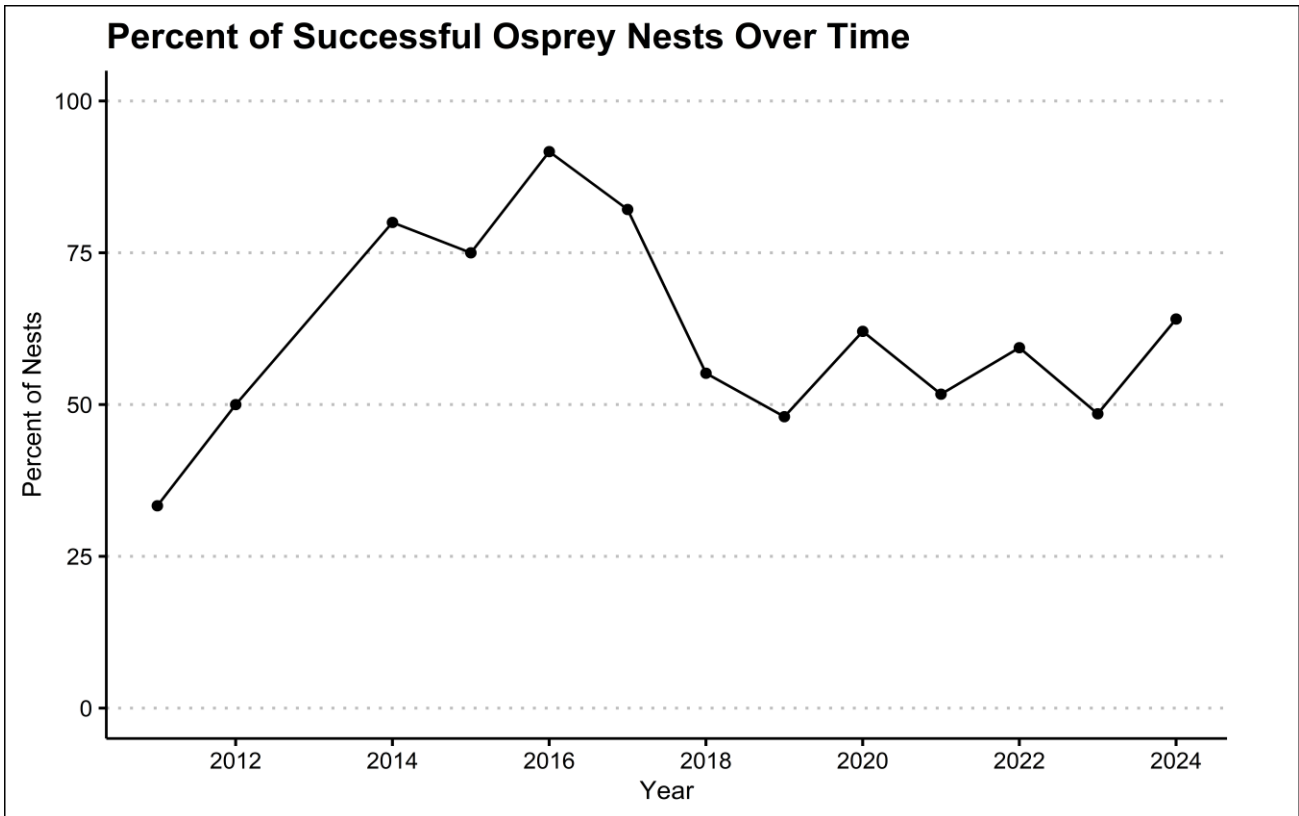


Figure 3. The percent of active and successful nests (out of total active territories) from 2011-2024 (data from 2013 are incomplete, thus not shown here).

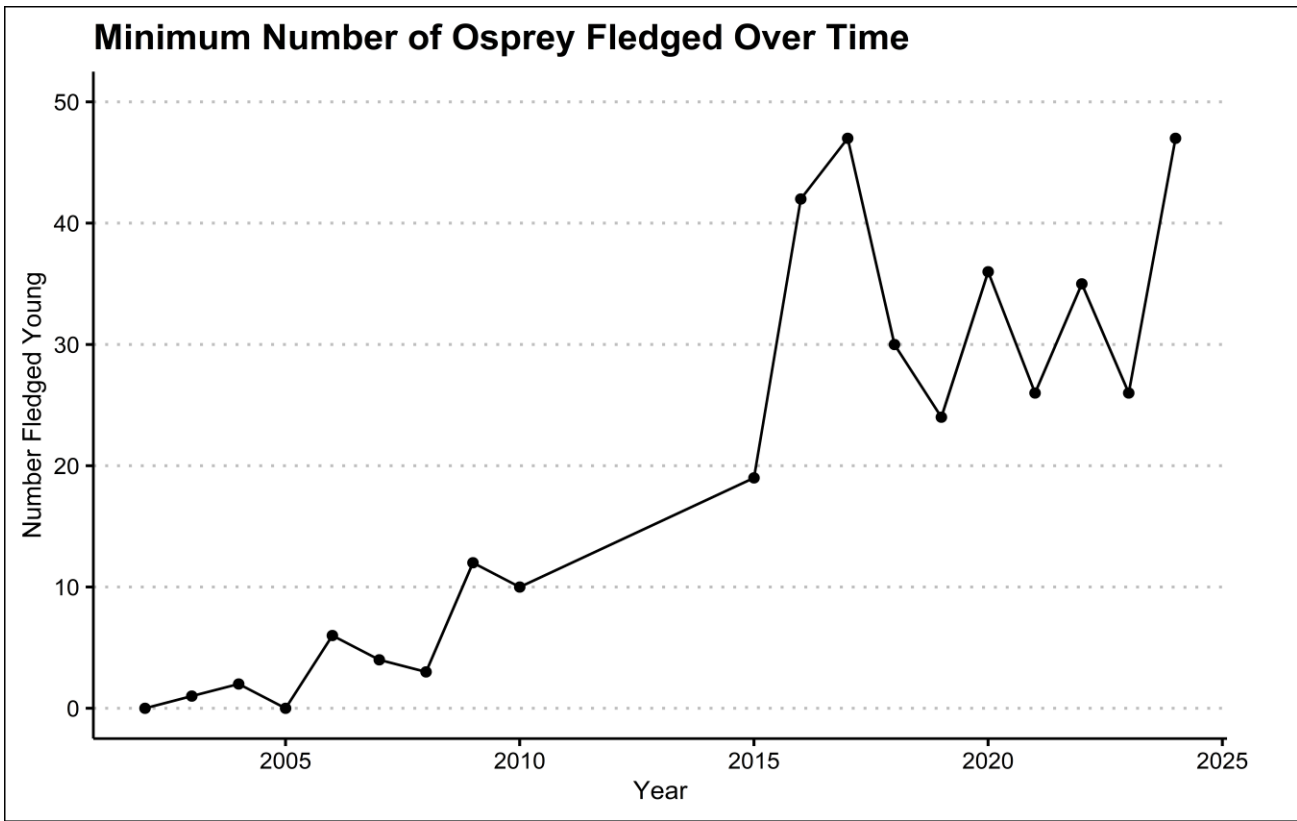


Figure 4. The minimum number of young fledged per year from 2002-2024 (data from 2011-2014 were incomplete, thus not shown here).

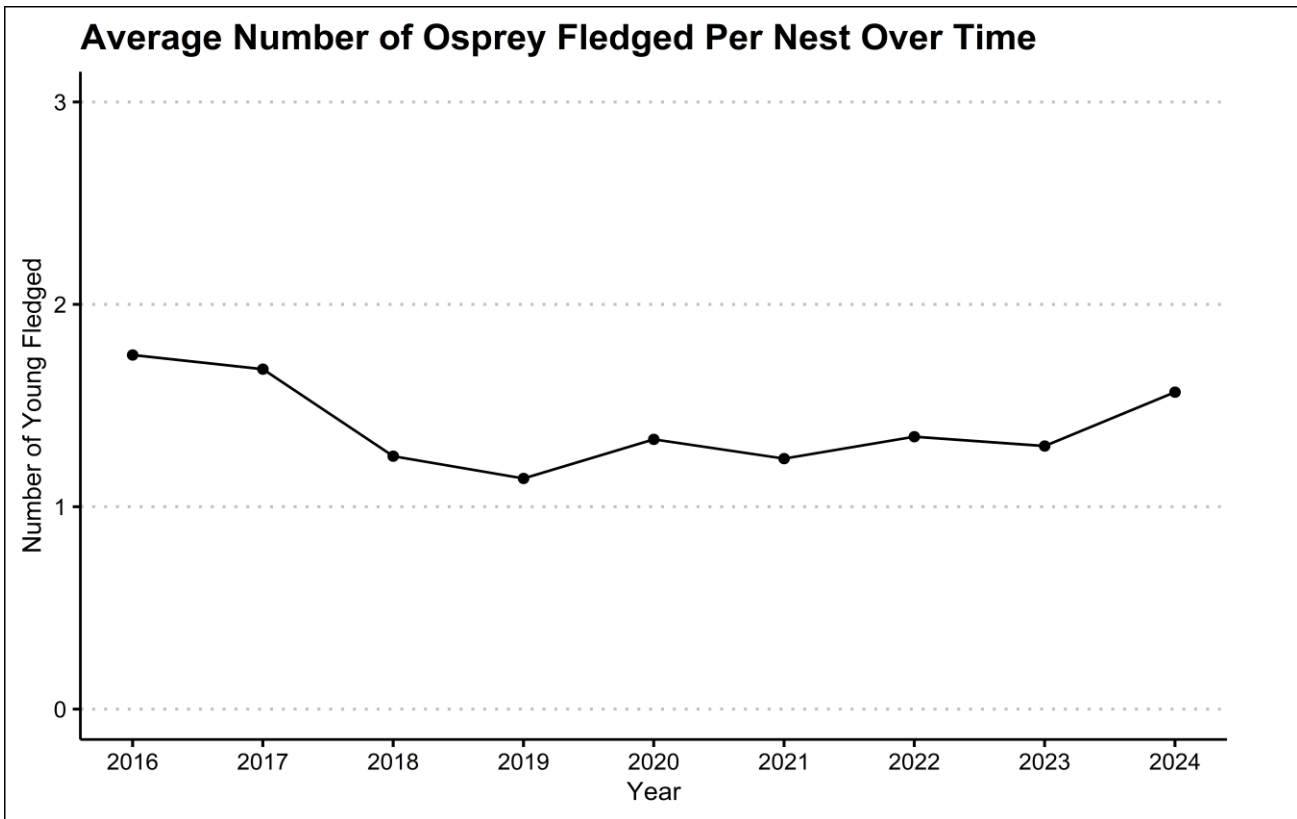


Figure 5. The average number of young fledged per known-outcome nest from 2016-2024.