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## **OSPREY FLEDGED FROM REFUGE’S STRONG UNIT IN MONROE COUNTY REACHES CUBA ON HIS FALL MIGRATION**

Grosse Ile, Michigan – On July 6<sup>th</sup> an osprey named Monroe Spark, born on an osprey platform in the Strong Unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge near Estral Beach, became one of three osprey chicks from southeast Michigan to be tagged with a satellite transmitter to better understand their migration patterns and ecology. Our very own Monroe Spark has now reached Cuba on his migration from his breeding grounds at the Refuge’s Strong Unit to its over-wintering grounds in Central or South America.

Osprey is one of the largest birds of prey in North America, with a nearly six foot wingspan. These unique North American raptors live on a diet of fish and are well known for their ability to dive for them. As a result, osprey is often called a “fish hawk.” Osprey is a common sight soaring over shorelines, patrolling waterways, and standing on their large stick nests with their white heads gleaming. It is considered a “species of special concern” in Michigan. Osprey numbers have rebounded since the banning of certain pesticides like DDT, starting in the late-1960s, and wildlife biologists consider them a good indicator of aquatic ecosystem health.

A team of biologists, veterinarians, utility company workers, and volunteers helped make this project possible, including volunteers and staff from Osprey Watch of SouthEast Michigan (OWSEM), Detroit Zoological Society, DTE Energy, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. OWSEM championed the project and secured the funding from DTE Energy and American Tower Corporation for the satellite transmitters, veterinarians from the Detroit Zoo provided health checks for the chicks, U.S. Department of Agriculture secured the tracking unit to the bird, DTE Energy installed the utility pole and built the nesting platform on the Strong Unit of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, and Michigan Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided technical assistance.

The satellite transmitters were installed on male osprey because they will return to the area where they fledged. Females typically disperse after their initial migration.

Fledgling osprey typically leaves in the fall and remain in their wintering habitat for two years, returning north when they reach breeding age.

The transmitters are about the size of a nine-volt battery with a 7-inch antenna that is secured to an osprey's body with a harness. Osprey wear these satellite backpacks easily and the units are designed to drop off in 2–3 years. Osprey have been found to be ideal candidates for tracking with solar-powered transmitters because they stay out in the open - not under canopies - and winter in sunny climates that will continue to charge the battery.

Monroe Spark was the second of three chicks from southeast Michigan to be tagged this past summer (July 6) with a satellite transmitter. He was six weeks old when fitted with the satellite transmitter. Nine days after he received his "backpack", Monroe Spark left his nest under his own power and began investigating his local watershed, including venturing south to Sterling State Park and north to Lake Erie Metropark.

After a few weeks of investigating areas of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, Monroe Spark started heading south on August 24<sup>th</sup>. Now, nearly two months later, he is in Cuba. See link below to OWSEM's website to track progress of Monroe Spark's migration. This is a fascinating story of fledging our very own Monroe Spark from Monroe County and his migration journey to wintering grounds in Central or South America.

[http://www.owsem.org/html/monroe\\_spark.html](http://www.owsem.org/html/monroe_spark.html)

The Detroit River has the distinction of being the only international wildlife refuge in North America and the only river system to hold both American and Canadian Heritage River designations.

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge incorporates 5,800 acres along 48 miles of the Detroit River and western Lake Erie. The Refuge focuses on conserving, protecting, and restoring habitat for 29 species of waterfowl, 23 species of raptors, 31 species of shorebirds, over 100 species of fish, and over 300 species of birds. It is the first international refuge in North America and one of the few urban ones. Unique habitats being managed for conservation include islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals, and waterfront lands. The Western Lake Erie Watersheds Priority Natural Area is the institutional mechanism for Canadian federal, provincial, and local partners to cooperatively work with U.S. partners on the International Wildlife Refuge.

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