

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2019

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HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

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HOUSE BILL DRH10009-LG-14

Short Title: Adopt the Osprey as State Raptor.

(Public)

Sponsors: Representative McElraft.

Referred to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

29 Whereas, the female usually lays two to five eggs, for which the incubation period is
30 34 to 40 days, and after the chicks hatch, they remain in the nest for 48 to 59 days to fledge,
31 becoming independent of their parents four to eight weeks later but prior to the start of fall
32 migration; and

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



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 carolinensis*) is adopted as the official raptor of the State of
15 North Carolina."

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