



## **Ospreys in Danger**

Pamela McDowell

illustrated by Kasia Charko

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### **About the Book**

When an osprey nest atop an electrical pole catches fire, the whole town of Waterton loses power. Cricket, the park warden's daughter, is there at the scene, where she finds three baby ospreys abandoned in the smoldering grass. Caring for the chicks proves to be challenging for Cricket. The birds are noisy, hungry and very picky eaters. But when she discovers that the power company is building a new anti-nesting device on the electrical pole, Cricket has an even bigger problem. How will she reunite the baby birds with their parents if there is no place for them to build a nest?

### **About the Author**

**Pamela McDowell** was born in Calgary, Alberta, and has lived almost all of her life there. She graduated from the University of Victoria in British Columbia and began her first career in education. Pamela taught junior high and high school in Alberta and British Columbia, and she enjoys getting back into the classroom to share her books with students. She has written articles for local and national magazines, stories for *The Calgary Herald*, and more than two dozen nonfiction books for children.

Pamela's fiction focuses on the diverse animals and habitats of Alberta. As a teenager, she chose volunteering at the Calgary Zoo over hanging out at the mall. On weekends at the zoo, she made friends with Peaches the porcupine and spent part of each day cuddling Rosie, the boa constrictor. *Ospreys in Danger* is her first book with Orca.

### **About the Writing**

While doing research for a newspaper article about windsurfing on Waterton Lake, Pamela stumbled upon the Waterton National Park Warden log. In 1977, an osprey nest really did cause the entire town of Waterton to lose power. That set Pamela's

imagination off with the question “What would happen if...?” What would happen if there were chicks in the nest when it was struck by lightning? What would happen if they could be rescued? How would a couple of kids care for them?

Ospreys are exciting birds. Pamela has watched them fish, diving into the man-made lakes in Calgary, the Okanogan, and of course in Waterton. A lot of research had to be done before writing the book, and Pamela learned many interesting facts about ospreys. She also spoke with Colin Weir, the founder of the Alberta Birds of Prey Centre in Coaldale, Alberta, which cares for birds that have been shot, flown into power lines or been injured in other ways. There was too much information for one book, but all of this research helped Pamela understand ospreys' needs and the dangers they face.

### Teaching Ideas—Curriculum Connections

#### *Prereading Ideas*

It can be very exciting to see a wild animal in its natural habitat. What makes a wild animal “wild”? In the book, the main character, Cricket, wants to rescue some wild baby birds that have fallen from their nest. Can you think of reasons why a person *shouldn't* touch wild baby animals? Are there reasons why Cricket *should* rescue the birds?

#### *Classroom Discussion Questions*

1. Cricket and Shilo discover that caring for the baby osprey is hard work. What are some of the challenges they face? How do they work together as a team? Do you think Cricket could have cared for the birds herself? Have you ever started a project that was too big? Who did you ask for help?
2. An osprey is very similar to an eagle. They live in the same kind of habitat, eat some of the same foods, and look very similar. Can you think of other kinds of animals that are similar to each other? In what ways are they different from each other?
3. The osprey nest caused the power to go out in Waterton. If the power went out in your neighborhood, how would you have to do things differently? How would you cook your food? How would you keep perishable things cold? What would you use for light? How would you stay warm? How would you do your homework?

#### *Suggested Activities*

1. Using information from the book, draw a map of Waterton. Be sure to include Cricket's house, the school, movie theater, RCMP headquarters, pond, lake and boat dock.
2. Write a letter to FortisAlberta to convince Mr. Sprague to build a new nesting pole for the osprey.
3. Build a model of a nesting pole. Can you create a unique design? Try using recycled materials, like a plastic cup, an egg carton and straws.
4. Find Waterton Lakes National Park on a map. Use a ruler to measure how far away

it is from where you live. Use the scale on the map to calculate the distance in miles or kilometers.

5. Divide a piece of paper in half lengthwise. Label one side "osprey" and the other side "bald eagle." Research to find information for each about food, habitat, appearance, etc., and create a chart.
6. Ospreys do not spend the winter in Waterton. Ospreys from western North America fly south to Mexico and Central America for the winter. Ospreys from eastern North America fly further, about 4,500 miles to Venezuela. Some fly as far as Paraguay and Brazil. Using a map of North and South America, color the countries where ospreys spend the winter.
7. Using the internet, research ways electric companies like FortisAlberta try to prevent birds from being injured by power lines.
8. Draw a food web for the osprey. If the osprey are healthy and return each year to raise a family, what do we know about the environment?

#### **Websites of Interest**

Wildlife Journal Junior: Project Osprey summary and seven-minute video

[www.nhptv.org/wild/osprey1.asp](http://www.nhptv.org/wild/osprey1.asp)

[www.friendsoftheosprey.org](http://www.friendsoftheosprey.org)

[www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birds/osprey](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birds/osprey)

[www.easyscienceforkids.com/all-about-ospreys](http://www.easyscienceforkids.com/all-about-ospreys)