



Marion County Board of County Commissioners Marion County Fire Rescue

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MARION FIREFIGHTERS RESCUE FEDERALLY PROTECTED OSPREY

Immediate Release

MARION COUNTY, Fla. (Mar. 17, 2010) – While walking out to get his morning newspaper on Tuesday, March 16, off-duty Marion County Fire Rescue Lieutenant Charles Etheredge noticed two ospreys acting strangely in the tree top. Still concerned about the birds an hour later, he checked on them and discovered that one of the birds was hanging upside down, caught in a tree limb, and struggling to stay alive.

After seeking local assistance, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission recommended that Etheredge contact the local fire department and an animal sanctuary to assist with rescuing the federally protected bird. Lending a helping hand, Marion County Fire Rescue Salt Springs Station 15 and the Ocala Wildlife Sanctuary (OWLS) assisted a local tree service in freeing the bird yesterday evening. Only a few hundred ospreys inhabit Marion County; this species is a federally protected migratory bird.

Marion firefighters provided the lighting needed to release the bird from the approximately 80 foot tree. Once it was safely on the ground, Fire Rescue Captain James Blizzard and Lt. Etheredge removed the bird's wedged leg from a tree branch and wrapped the osprey in a blanket until animal sanctuary officials arrived on-scene. Fire Rescue was non-committed during this incident, meaning if a 911 call was received at any time, emergency personnel would have immediately responded.

OWLS officials sent the osprey to a local animal hospital for x-rays this morning due to wing abrasions and potential tendon damage. Once stable, it will be transported to the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland for rehabilitation. OWLS officials expect the bird to undergo an approximate six-week recovery process before they are able to release it back into the wild. Due to the fact that ospreys mate for life, an OWLS representative will return the bird to the location where the rescue took place and the osprey nests.

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