

Wally's perch.....

Get lost, I'm busy!

Wally lives here most mornings watching the world go by below.

When he sees a languid fish forced to swim close to the surface over the sandbar at lowtide, he swoops down from his post, seizing it for breakfast.

Of all the large birds of prey, the osprey is the best fisher. While other raptors eat all sorts of prey, even dead animals, the Osprey eats live fish almost exclusively.

For that it is specially equipped like no other raptor — its toes swivel around to allow a 2 x 2 configuration. This enables the claws to act as a beartrap. Other hawk and eagles' toes are positioned 3 x 1 only. The pads of its feet are spiked for grasping slippery, scaly fish. Its claws have a round crosssection like a sewing needle for better piercing too. Its legs are beefier and stronger to haul a fish as heavy as itself out of water, and to carry it home to its nest. Its eyes can see fish through the shimmering surface of the water from its perch.



## Look Up And Meet Wally The Seahawk.

Its nostrils shutter completely like a submarine hatch because the Osprey will plunge its talons down 3 feet below the water to grab its prey, its whole body often being entirely submersed until its catch is securely subdued. It then uses its wings underwater to hoist it all up to the surface. Thrusting its wingtips up above the surface again, it beats the air, lifting itself to freedom from the ocean, lake or river. Once in the air, a couple of shakes fling off excess water. Aided by its special toe arrangement, on the wing, it can turn the fish's head forward for greater aerodynamic efficiency.

Because it is so successful a fisher, and fish are found on every continent, the Osprey is a world citizen everywhere but where its meals are ever-frozen in Antarctic pack ice. In temperate zones where winters also freeze the waters, the Osprey migrates to warmer continents returning in Spring to its same nest to raise another year of hatchlings. It is also one of the best-travelled birds so its gene pool has neither isolated nor differentiated into many species. But its reliance at the top of the food chain on fish, which are themselves migratory and in their broad range, easily contaminated by toxins such as pesticides, makes the Osprey very vulnerable. Their bellwether presence in the environment is a good sign.



# OSPREY

PANDION HALIAETUS



KITE FALCON OSPREY HAWK OWL EAGLE SECRETARYBIRD VULTURE