



A female osprey dangles helplessly from an overhead ground wire on the Alcova line near Casper, Wyo. Helping hands from the Casper line crew and Wyoming Game and Fish Department successfully freed the bird. (Photograph by Jim Clark)



Amazingly, the bird was not badly injured, although her claw was swollen from the circulation being cut off.

Western employees to the rescue

It was May 1, and a female osprey was not having a good day. With one talon hopelessly entangled in fishing line, she dangled from the overhead ground wire of a tap line feeding Alcova Substation near Casper, Wyo. But her luck was about to change, thanks to the quick thinking and training of the Casper line crew and a few more helping hands.

"At first we thought she was dead," recalled Lineman **Ted Slate**, whose eagle eyes noticed the bird as he and Lineman **Jim Clark** returned equipment to the substation. "Then I saw her move."

"As we watched, the osprey struggled and managed to flip herself upright on the OGW," added Clark. "Once upright, the bird fought furiously to free herself. Then she became exhausted and ended hanging upside down again."

Slate and Clark immediately called RM Environmental Specialist **Rodney Jones** and left a message that they were going to help the bird. "I then called Reclamation's Casper Control Center," said Clark "I asked for a clearance on the line." They contacted Loveland Dispatch to advise them of the situation.

The two then drove into Casper to pick up a 105-foot Reachall Manlift, personal protective grounds, some protective equipment for handling the bird and a camera. When they arrived back at the substation, they were joined by fellow Linemen **Mike Leiz** and **Randy Rau** and Daryl

Lutz, Casper Region wildlife management coordinator for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. By the time dispatch gave them the clearance, the crew was ready to go.

"Mike and I got Daryl's safety equipment rigged up and then took him up to free the bird. Daryl grabbed the osprey and held on while I cut the fishing line snaring the bird," explained Slate. "Mike brought the manlift down while we removed the rest of the fishing line from the raptor's 4-inch, crescent-shaped, needle-pointed claw!"

Amazingly, the bird was not badly injured, although her claw was swollen from the circulation being cut off. Lutz turned the bird over to Frank and Lois Layton, nationally renowned raptor caretakers.

Four days later on May 5, the osprey was released, apparently no worse for the wear.

"We were all glad we could give a hand and would like to thank Daryl Lutz and the Laytons for their help and expertise. Also appreciated was the help from the Reclamation switchmen, Loveland Dispatcher **Dave Waag**, the Reclamation Casper Control Center operators and last but not least Western Construction Inspector extraordinaire **Ron French** for the bravery to let a lineman borrow his camera," laughed Clark. 🗡️