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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

### 'Piper' the Osprey Is Released to the Wild After a Successful Recovery

#### *Wildlife Rescue Teams Save Injured Osprey After Being Alerted by LIRR Engineer*

**EDITORS: Video of Piper's release is available at this link along with interviews with LIRR Engineer Ryan Dunaske and wildlife rescuer Joe Rocco:** <https://youtu.be/3D7z0C4Ojm0>

MTA Long Island Rail Road today joined Evelyn Alexander Wildlife Center to release an osprey whose feathers were repaired following an accidental flight into an LIRR train last month. The brown and white bird of prey seemed pleased to take flight from wetlands in Greenport, near the spot where it had fallen after it was clipped by a train on the afternoon of Thursday, April 16.

This wasn't the first time the train engineer had seen ospreys hovering above the tracks along the North Fork route between Ronkonkoma and Greenport. This day was a windy one, and a gust of wind blew an osprey right into the oncoming train, which clipped the bird in flight. Dunaske called Evelyn Alexander Wildlife Center in Hampton Bays.

"I grew up in Massapequa and remember seeing the comeback of the osprey as DDT nearly wiped them out years before," **said LIRR Engineer Ryan Dunaske.** "So, my instinct told me to call wildlife rescue right away and try to save this one."

A rescuer from the wildlife center was able to find the bird, hopping around near the tracks, and safely remove it

Dunaske's call got routed to wildlife rescuer Joe Rocco who walked along the tracks in the area west of Pipes Neck Road. He saw the struggling bird was in good condition except for having 10 damaged flight feathers. Wearing his usual rescue gloves, Rocco picked it up by the hips and brought it to Evelyn Alexander center. The osprey was not sexed to determine if it was male or female, but Rocco named it Piper and checked back in Greenport to see if there were any eggs in a nearby nest. He did not find any.

"It's amazing to see such a good outcome from a potentially fatal situation, and it was Ryan's quick thinking that got the osprey the help it needed," Rocco said. "I'm honored to be a part of this extraordinary rescue and to continue to do what I love. Now, Piper can fly around gracefully and join his fellow osprey friends."

"I applaud Engineer Dunaske's quick thinking," **said LIRR President Phil Eng.** "His actions exemplifies the true spirit of LIRR employees - it shows how much we care, always looking out to do the right thing. Whether it's helping our customers, our colleagues or in this case an injured animal, Engineer Dunaske went the extra mile to secure care for an injured animal."

Because of the damage to the flight feathers, the osprey had to undergo a procedure called imping which replaces damaged feathers with those from a donor osprey. Rocco brought Piper to the Raptor Trust, a bird rehabilitation and education center in Millington, N.J., which specializes in imping. On May 8, three days after the procedure was successfully performed, Rocco picked up the bird and brought it back to Hampton Bays.

Before the May 14 release, the osprey had spent the past couple of weeks in a flight cage which is the first stage for any rescued osprey to be evaluated in the hospital. Soon after, Piper was placed in a small pen and when the bird was almost recovered, it went into a flight cage.

According to Rocco, ospreys do not usually do well in captivity, but Piper had no problem eating and letting her rescuers know she was getting antsy to take flight. Surrounded by a few of the osprey's surrogate caretakers on a sunny Thursday in Greenport, Piper soared high above the railroad tracks.