



days at
Dunrovin

March 2019



Ranch
Talk



Geese on the Ospreys' Nest

It's not that unusual!

Geese taking over ospreys' nests in the Missoula, MT area is so common that the University of Montana's Project Osprey has taken to protecting the empty nests with mesh covers that are removed once ospreys have returned from their winter feeding grounds along the Gulf of Mexico.



Often the fierce ospreys are able to dislodge the geese from the nest, but not always. About 15 years ago a pair of Canada Geese took over the Dunrovin osprey nest and raised a clutch of goslings. The baby birds tumbled out of the nest, falling like yellow snowballs, landed on the road, and followed their parents to the Bitterroot River. Several years ago, an osprey observer in Minnesota who used a spotting scope to track activities at a nest, reported watching a Canada gosling hatch to an osprey mother. The osprey tried to feed it. But, of course, that didn't work as goslings feed themselves plants and insects and will not accept fish from an osprey. The gosling died within four days.

The last three years have seen Canada geese attempt to usurp the Dunrovin nest. In 2017, they nearly succeeded in spite of our spectacular and totally unsuccessful efforts to dissuade them. What spectacular efforts you might ask? Well let me explain!

Meet Mrs. CGD—Canada Goose Decoy!



Not wanting to spend the money to have a bucket truck come out just so we could take down a wire mesh cover like the University of Montana does on the ospreys' nests they manage, we decided to place a goose decoy on the nest to signal that the nest was already taken. Our plan was to have the décor rigged to two fishing poles so we could “reel the goose down” at the right moment. It worked very well—until it didn’t!

The decoy looked real. The geese stayed away. And the first really big wind whipped her right over! The fishing reel scheme preformed flawlessly in “reeling her down” which left an empty nest that Mrs. REAL Canada Goose took over within day. She laid an egg on the very day that Harriet arrived. Luckily Harriet is one very aggressive and big osprey. When she returned to her nest after being away to go fishing, she roared in on the wing and dispatched the goose—but not before the goose had laid the egg.

Harriet tried unsuccessfully to roll the goose egg out of the nest. This all had a happy ending, but we’re not telling You will have to join us for our live broadcast on Tuesday, March 12, 2019 for the rest of the story and to learn of our plans for this year. YES, we’re going to experiment yet again with Mrs. Decoy!

Broadcast: Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Location: _____