

Bald eagle, other unusual birds flock to Glade Run

Cranberry Eagle

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Dave Fowler of Middlesex Township talks Monday about unusual birds that nest at the drained Glade Run Lake. Fowler has lived for a decade alongside the Glade Run Lake property off Overbrook Road, watching the birds. JUSTIN GUIDO/CRANBERRY EAGLE

MIDDLESEX TWP — While a bald eagle recently caused a stir when it landed in a tree at the drained Glade Run Lake, a neighbor of the property said the lake's acreage has hosted a number of unusual birds over the years.

That included a pair of nesting osprey that showed up every spring two days ahead of the state Fish and Boat Commission's stocking truck.

“They would grab one fish after another. They would eat them just like popcorn,” said Dave Fowler, who has lived for a decade alongside the Glade Run Lake property off Overbrook Road.

He said the osprey still show up and stay for a few days, but not longer since the lake is dry.

The lake was drained in 2011 due to a faulty dam.

Fowler is thrilled that Gov. Tom Corbett and the state Fish and Boat Commission announced a few weeks ago that each have dedicated \$2 million to rebuild the dam, which will restore the 52-acre lake by 2017's fishing season.

Fowler hopes the lake is restored so the osprey will not lose interest or reach the end of their life span before their one-time buffet returns.

“They've been coming every year for seven or eight years,” Fowler said.

One year an osprey put on a show on the first day of fishing season, Fowler said. The large bird swooped down and plucked a large fish from the lake in front of hundreds of fishing enthusiasts.

Fowler said the osprey used its large talons to expertly reposition the fish for aerodynamics as it sped toward its nest on the east side of the lake shore.

“I have a video of him flying away with the fish,” Fowler said. “It was a big fish.”



Dave Fowler recently spotted this lone bald eagle at the drained Glade Run Lake.

He said the tall birds of the heron family, like the great blue heron and the egret, also summered at the lake in the past. He said three to five heron set up housekeeping at the lake every summer before it was drained.

Regarding the recent visiting eagle that had nature lovers buzzing, Fowler said he traditionally saw one or two every month, and has seen three so far this year.

“They were regular visitors when the lake was full,” Fowler said. “They'd stop by, and you'd see them there for a day or two and they'd move on.”

Another avian visitor that fascinated Fowler when the lake was full was the large northern harrier.

“They would fly through,” he said. “They were obviously just staying here for a week and they would move on.”

The birdwatcher has also seen a plethora of hawks and falcons at the lake during its heyday.

Chris Kubiak, the developmental associate with the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania in Fox Chapel, said Glade Run Lake was an important stop over for shore birds, waterfowl and many other species migrating north and south.

“It's a great place,” he said. “It's very important.”

Green heron, black crown night heron, great blue heron and stilted sandpipers are some of the exotic birds Kubiak has seen stop at the lake as they make their way north or south during migration.

He said Western Pennsylvania now is at the height of bird migration, as warm-weather loving birds return to the mid-Atlantic, New England and Canada. He said with the constant development in the Cranberry Township area, the lake provided a rest and refueling station.

“As we go to sleep every night, there are millions of birds headed north,” Kubiak said. “Spots like Glade Run Lake are important as a stopover habitat.”



Regarding the eagles recently spotted at the lake, Kubiak suspects they were migrating to the area. He said bald eagles are known to steal fish from the talons of osprey, which, along with their occasional consumption of carrion, were the reasons Ben Franklin opposed naming the bald eagle as the nation's symbol.

“He called it 'a bird of poor morals,’” Kubiak said of Franklin, who favored the turkey for the lofty position.

Kubiak said the Audubon Society is in the early stages of a partnership with the conservancy that will work to improve the habitat for all birds once the lake is restored. He said the group may build islands or mud flats to attract birds that require those features.

Fowler said he looks forward to the partnership with the Audubon Society, but mainly, he wants the lake to be restored as soon as possible.

“This lake is such a great part of the community,” Fowler said.

