

Glade Run Lake has hosted share of unusual birds

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

That included a pair of nesting ospreys that showed up every spring two days ahead of the Pa. 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. Fowler, who is a member of Glade Run Lake Conservancy, which was formed to restore the lake, said the ospreys still show up and stay a few days, but not longer because the lake is dry.

The lake was drained in 2011 because of a faulty dam.

Fowler is thrilled Gov. Tom Corbett and the Pa. Fish and Boat Commission recently announced each has dedicated \$2 million to rebuild the dam, restoring the 52-acre lake by 2017's fishing season.

Fowler hopes the lake is restored so the ospreys 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.



Dave Fowler, who lives alongside the Glade Run Lake property, talks about the exotic birds he has seen over the years at the lake in Middlesex Township.
JUSTIN GUIDO/BUTLER EAGLE

Fowler said the tall birds of the heron family, such as the great blue heron and the egret, also summered at the lake in the past.

"It's funny that these long-legged birds land in trees," Fowler said.

He said three to five herons set up housekeeping at the lake every summer before its draining.

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



A bald eagle recently grabbed attention when it landed at the drained Glade Run Lake.
Submitted Photo

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

"It's a great place," Kubiak said. "It's very important."

Green herons, black crown night herons, great blue herons 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 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. "I just cannot see that we wouldn't leave this to our kids."

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