

Biological Station (Chautauqua NWR, Mason County), I noted four Bald Eagles in a conservation till cornfield on the south side of the road. One bird flew east as I stopped my pickup truck and reached for my field glasses. A subadult and a bird in full adult plumage were sitting about 5 meters apart on slightly elevated ground. The third eagle, another subadult, was on the ground about 30 meters east of the others. There was no snow cover on the ground, littered with corn stalks.

Using Cohen (1993) criteria, the subadults appeared to be third-year birds. Both had mottled bellies but not the dirty white head and tail and dull yellow beak of the classic fourth-year subadult. As I watched, the subadult on the ground scratched vigorously in the debris until it had gathered a small pile of leaves, all the while observed by the other adult. The subadult with the leaf load then flew low and parallel with the ground directly in front of and past the other birds rising to 15 to 20 meters above ground. At 30 to 40 meters elevation, both subadult birds rolled but did not appear to touch talons, though the bird initiating the behavior apparently unlocked one of its talons, as part of its leaf load was lost. Then, clutching the remaining load, it turned sharply north flying across the road followed closely by the second subadult. The two disappeared at the wooded area along Quiver Creek which flows toward Lake Chautauqua, 1 kilometer north of my observation point. Two minutes later the adult flew in a direction opposite the courting birds.

Having discovered an eagle nest several kilometers north on the refuge during the autumn of 1994, it was tempting to think these subadults might choose to nest in the area. Throughout February, adults were on the nest occasionally rearranging sticks, but only once did I observe a subadult at the nest site. On 18 March 1995, Barbara Frase observed an adult and an immature rearranging sticks at the nest. Shortly thereafter, high winds destroyed the nest, which was located in a cottonwood tree killed previously by flooding. It is most likely that the subadults I saw courting in February were practicing before moving north to contemporary eagle nesting habitat.

Literature Cited

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Glaucous-winged Gull at Lake Springfield, Sangamon County

On 31 December 1994, as I was about to enter the cinder area just north of Lake Springfield, Sangamon County, I saw a large, buffy gull flying toward the flats. The gull had no black in the wing tips or tail. I drove into the cinder flats where the gull was standing with Herring (*Larus argentus*) and Ring-billed (*L. delawarensis*) Gulls. The gull in question was head and shoulders above the Ring-billed Gulls and larger than the Herring Gulls. The bird was in good light to the west at about 9:30 a.m. I put my Kowa scope on the bird at about 40X.

The gull had a large, thick, all-black bill. The plumage was buffy gray all over. It flew once, a short distance, showing little or no translucence in the wing tips, although the underwing appeared lighter. The wings were in fact the same color - grayish buff - all the way to the tip. This is the same impression I had when the gull flew into the flats. Gulls sometimes give this impression when they are in worn plumage (especially toward spring), but this gull did not appear to be in worn plumage.

I also knew that Glaucous Gulls (*L. hyperboreus*) had translucent wing tips and a two-tone bill and Thayer's Gulls (*L. thayeri*) had smaller bills and somewhat more dark areas in the wing tips and tails. The field marks on this gull eliminated Glaucous and Thayer's Gulls as possibilities. I was fairly certain that I was viewing an immature (first year) Glaucous-winged Gull (*L. glaucescens*). I was familiar with this gull in coastal California, where the species fed on discarded minnows at a bait shop behind my apartment in Oceanside.

The gull was with hundreds of gulls and geese. While I was zeroing in on the fine points, I noticed a white bird with the geese. I scanned to the white bird - a Snow Goose - then quickly back to the gull. I couldn't find it! Thinking it had sat down, I scanned back and forth. Apparently, however, it had flown just as I moved to the Snow Goose. I checked the rest of Lake Springfield

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