

Golden Eagle attacks white-tailed deer at Nachusa Grasslands

Story and Photos by Eric Walters

I was birding Nachusa Grasslands (Lee/Ogle Counties) on 13 February 2010 hoping to see a recently reported Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), among a large variety and number of other raptors. At 11 a.m., I noticed a large bird just north of Stone Barn Road and about 0.7 mile east of Lowden Road (Ogle County). The bird was large enough to be an eagle, but its wingbeat was different from that of a Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). The beats were quicker and the flaps were stronger. A nearby Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) began dive-bombing this eagle. After obtaining scope views, I was able to note the telltale white areas in the mid-wing and upper tail, confirming it was a Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*).

The eagle continued to drift south, offering me a photo opportunity if I were to drive ahead of its projected flight path and wait for it. I raced in my car down Carthage Road (Lee County) and stopped at the Carpenter Prairie portion of Nachusa. Less than a minute after stopping, I relocated



the eagle in the sky. Little did I know I was about to witness one of the most thrilling experiences of my life.

Using my car roof as a makeshift tripod, I took a few photos of the Golden after which I noticed it was setting its wings and diving in my general direction as if it were going on a hunt (Figure 1).

It was then I noticed a white-tailed deer sprinting across the open cornfield opposite the prairie. Was

