



Figures 6 and 7 shows a once in a lifetime view of one of the largest raptors to be found in Illinois, in direct comparison with the largest mammal to be found in the state. Perhaps due to adrenaline released from the shock and pain of the attack, the white-tail gave a burst of speed in a different direction, kicking up snow (see Figure 8), then continuing its criss-cross escape method, likely saving its life since the eagle could not adjust quickly enough to this tactic (Figure 9). This action scene passed directly in front of me. The Golden Eagle was only 8 feet above ground when it entered the prairie.

The deer appeared to have escaped over the next ridge in the prairie. It was now about 11:35 am and I drove over to the Nachusa Grasslands visitor center parking where after 15 minutes I relocated the Golden hunting about 0.5 mile east. I was able to show the eagle to a few other birders present and as we watched, two Rough-legged Hawks (*Buteo lagopus*) began to dive-bomb the eagle. Despite Rough-leggeds having large wings, they seemed like specks in the sky compared with the Golden. The eagle meandered south, so I drove that way, soon coming across a flock of 32 Wild Turkeys, the majority of which were running for cover into the nearby woodland as the eagle arrived. Perhaps my presence saved these turkeys since they were adjacent to my car.

The Golden Eagle was last seen at 1:11 p.m., circling and gaining altitude as it headed east toward Carthage, north of Flag Road (Ogle County).

Golden Eagle attack methods have been described by observers. Generally, the eagle dive-bombs from a high altitude, reaching speeds mammals cannot outrace. Upon reaching its prey, the eagle will drop its two large hind-claws into the lower back or hind-quarters of the mam-

mal, hoping to fly away with its prey or cause it to crash to the ground. These claws cause severe lacerations, pain and bloodshed. The eagle will continue tearing at the prey with its claws as well as its beak, while beating the sides of the prey with its massive wings (Bent 1961).

One quote perhaps speaks for the former belief of the majority of ornithologists and birders, "Golden Eagles attacking (white-tailed) deer are quite rare. I have never run into anyone who has witnessed the event. We even considered it a myth for years." (Richard Stevens, director of the Colorado Birding Society, pers. comm.) This is an understandable position, since Golden Eagles average weight is 10-12 pounds while female white-tailed deer average 155 pounds, about 13 times the weight of the eagle.

At nest sites, Golden Eagle food preferences were documented as 79 to 84 percent mammals, mostly rabbit-sized or smaller (Sorensen 2008 et al. and Olendorff 1976) with a higher mammal percentage during the fall-winter season (Bent 1961). Larger prey items documented as Golden Eagle kills include goats and their kids, mountain sheep lambs, roe deer calves, pronghorn antelope and black-tailed deer (Bent 1961).

At Maryland's Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge on 20 January 2008, a 1.5-year-old Golden Eagle dove into a group of sika deer (which are smaller than white-tails), causing them to scatter over the corn stubble field. It chased one, which escaped by going into a grove of trees (Greg Inskip, pers. comm.).

One satellite-collared Golden Eagle spent 10 days feeding on a deer carcass in western Wisconsin's Pepin County. Formerly it was considered to be leftover from the hunting season, but the long stay at this carcass and