

The Traveling Nature Photographer Blog

www.davidgeorgephotography.com

Animals out of Place:

Before I start on the animals out of place I need to tell you that I am going to finish up the Florida, Birds and Sunrises and Sunsets in the next few weeks. The projects will in reality probably never finish as I seem to keep growing the list.

I have been working mostly in the field for a few years and have started noticing a trend in some of the animals. It is not unusual to see migratory birds lose their way and end up somewhere they normally do not go. This last few months I have seen two raptors that were not where you would expect them. The reason I am bringing this up is that I have seen it in more than one state.

The two raptors I am going to discuss are the American Bald Eagle and the Osprey. First the Ospreys.

Normally I see them around large bodies of water like bays and larger lakes or in some rare occasion large ponds. I have now had two experiences with them in forests hunting in streams. This may not seem like much but the streams were almost totally dry due to near draught conditions. One was in the Smoky Mountains. I was sitting at the edge of a stream hoping for a rain that was supposed to come. It was early in the day as the water still had a light fog in some areas. The stream while wide when running full was down to very little water moving. It had several small pools that did have some fish in them. I was sitting there reading as it was a very quite morning in the wild. I had been there for well over an hour. I was totally taken by surprise when I heard the osprey scream. If you have heard them you know the sound. I was at a loss as I was in the mountains with a very low stream. I spotted him almost over my head. As I watched it hover over the pools my mind was searching for the answer to a simple question. Why here and now. More on that in a minute. It dove into the water and expertly removed a small fish. It then disappeared just as fast as it had appeared. I sat there in my camp chair thinking about why that bird was hunting in a nearly depleted waterway. The large lake/reservoir that was about 30 miles away was very low. There are many birds who eat the fish. Osprey are not heavy fighters like the Great Blue Heron or the Bald Eagle. With the draught working on the waterways and the large bodies of water it make sense to expect the younger and elderly birds to have to relocate due to the shrinking hunting and nesting territories.

Second, the bald eagles. Now both of the different raptors where in Tennessee and Indiana just for your information. The balds are doing very well in both states now after nearly being extinct in them back in the ddt days. I think the same forces are working on the balds as the ospreys but there is something else that may be at play here. The population of bald eagles is exploding in eastern Tennessee according the various newspaper articles from that area. You take the dwindling territories and the growing population and there are gong to be eagles that are just going to have leave the area. The only places left for them are the fields, the woods and forests. The eagle pictured here was on the ground which is not that unusual for a bald eagle. I have images on them walking on frozen ponds and sitting on tree stumps near the lakes. This particular bird was up in the smokys in the forest. There is a stream that is not too far away but it too was running at a fraction of the water it normally carries. A couple of other things. I got close. That is also not something that is

normal for these birds. It was sitting on a short stump intently watching something on the ground. It allowed me to move around some to get the shot. It followed me with it's head. I have a couple of other shots that I was allowed to take showing the intense look it had at something. The more I think about it I think it had dropped a small fish or had found some carrion to eat. With the balds it seems they are being seen in the fields in both areas. I have even photographed a golden eagle walking on the ground in Indiana.

There are others but these two especially interest me as they are a couple of my favorite animals not just birds to photograph. There is no question the environment is changing most likely from both natural causes and we are not helping that in my opinion. Yes this is the same bird photographed the same day at the same place.

The one on the left is the first shot in the shade with almost no sun and the second was the last shot with sun and has been corrected while the one on the left has not.

