

Holyoke

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birth but rather just an enduring expression of a behavioral trait innate to neontal fawns," Ravana wrote.

After posting the photo Tuesday — it proved very popular, as many trail camera photos are — an interesting thing happened.

Readers started sounding off on the Internet.

OK, you're right: That's not odd at all. The BDN has a vibrant community of online commenters, and they've proved they're willing to share their thoughts on almost anything they see on our site.

But these comments? They were different.

My wife checked out the story at home Tuesday night and began chuckling. The comments on our Bangor Daily News Facebook page weren't from hunters, as you might have expected. And they weren't from veteran wildlife watchers who wanted to share their own stories.

Instead, some saw the picture of the nursing fawn as a good way to take some tongue-in-cheek stabs at those who say mothers — human mothers, I should clarify — should cover up when they're breastfeeding.



How old is too old to nurse? This fawn is pretty large, but is still trying to get milk from its mother in Troy.

COURTESY OF LEONARD CROWE

I'm not going to add my 2 cents to the debate on that matter but will say that the good-natured back-and-forth that resulted made me laugh.

Do you have any great trail camera photos you'd like to share with our readers? You can send 'em to me at jholyoke@bangordailynews.com, along with a few words describing what's going on — or, in some cases, addressing any question you might have — and

the most interesting might make it into a future blog.

Fly-tying expo on tap

If you find yourself kicking around Sunday and are looking for a way to learn some new skills and meet some cool people, you might want to check out the Fly Tying Expo, which is being staged by the Penobscot Fly Fishers.

The expo will be held at the Penobscot County Conservation Association club-

house on Route 9 — North Main Street — and will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

More than 20 top-notch tiers will be on hand to show attendees new tricks of the trade, teach different patterns, and talk about fly-fishing and fly-tying.

Admission is free.

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Eagles

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and we were very hopeful that they wouldn't end up on the ground," Call said. "Fortunately, they went through the learn-how-to-fly process by going from tree to tree, not tree to ground."

The female eagle, which had ingested a toxin in May of 2014, became ill and was taken to Avian Haven in Freedom. The same day it's mate, also ill, flew into a power line and was electrocuted. After those incidents, biologists determined the duo were in the process of raising two eaglets, which were subsequently rescued from their nest, brought to the same wildlife rehabilitator and reunited with their mother.

The female adult was released in Brewer in June of 2014 and promptly found her new mate — a younger male. The pair took up housekeeping in her former nest and spent the summer of 2015

raising two eaglets of their own.

"We were just thrilled to have that success so soon after her recovery, and to have two eaglets survive and fledge and leave the nest is really wonderful," Call said. "With raptors, that doesn't always happen."

Call said young eagles can be clumsy and often topple out of their nests. If that happens in an area where pets, people or vehicles are present, the eaglet is less likely to survive. She and fellow biologist Brad Allen have some history at the Bangor nest. In 2013, another of Bangor Mom's offspring had to be rescued after it fell from the nest while trying to learn to fly.

Sharon Fiedler, a wildlife photographer who has been keeping tabs on Bangor Mom for years, said she became able to identify the eagle after receiving advice from biologist Charlie Todd of the DIF&W.

"Charlie got me into photographing eagles' legs," Fiedler said, explaining that

the Bangor female has a numbered leg band that allows biologists to identify her.

The eagle's offspring from last year also have leg bands, which has allowed biologists to receive updates when those birds are spotted.

Allen said those birds were released near the Kennebec River in September 2014, and one of them was found just weeks later in Montreal.

"On the ground in Montreal, it needed help, and a caregiver there helped it a little bit and then let it go," Allen said. "It was just down on its luck. It was young and foolish and didn't have the benefit of growing up with mom and dad. He probably made some mistakes and got weak."

Call said that after working with scientists at the University of Maine, the DIF&W has also been able to solve the mystery surrounding the illness of Bangor Mom and her previous mate.

"We found that [the male

had ingested] pentobarbital," Call said. "That's the chemical that's used to euthanize animals."

Call said determining the source of that chemical, however, has proved impossible.

The eagles may have eaten a carcass of a euthanized house pet or could have happened upon a farm animal that had been euthanized by its owner. Call explained that house pets destroyed by veterinarians or animal welfare clinics are disposed of in landfills, while farm animals often are buried at farms.

In both cases, state agencies require certain procedures to follow. Figuring out the source of one animal that was not disposed of properly — or which was subsequently dug up by another forager — isn't possible.

"It's just amazing that the eaglets weren't exposed to [the chemical]," Call said. "It must have been such a huge dose that [the adults] just didn't make it back to the nest to deliver the food."

plant specimens, he spent months bushwhacking through Baxter State Park with volunteer teams, identifying and photographing plants.

"Parkwide, there were very few non-native species we ran across," Mittelhauser told the audience on Saturday morning. "It's fairly pristine."

"Plants of Baxter State Park," a guidebook compiled from the study, is scheduled to be released sometime next year.

Mittelhauser was just one of several scientists who presented research projects that weekend, and the stories from their field studies stirred a lot of laughter and engagement from the audience.

"Soil scientists don't get to talk to people about their projects very often," said Tony Jenkins, a Maine soil scientist who presented on his study of the distribution of mercury and other metals in high elevation areas of Baxter State Park.

After hours of panels and presentations, Saturday ended with a hot meal catered by River Drivers Restaurant and an animated performance by famous Theodore Roosevelt impersonator Joe Wiegand, who adapted his show to highlight Roosevelt's connections to Maine and Katahdin.

After leading everyone in singing "America the Beautiful," he commended the alpine stewards for their work in preserving the country's wild places for future generations to enjoy.

He was a fitting guest for the occasion. It was Roosevelt — the 26th president of the U.S. and a dedicated naturalist — who once said, "There are no words that can tell the hidden spirit of the wilderness, that can reveal its mystery, its melancholy and its charm."



A Baxter State Park pin was given to everyone who attended the ninth Northeast Alpine Stewardship Gathering near Baxter State Park at the New England Outdoor Center Twin Pine Cabins in Millinocket recently.

ty, are focused on doing one thing, in one place.

"So that peak is going to be a crowded place, and we ask ourselves as managers, is this wilderness that we're managing for? Is this acceptable as an experience? And it's difficult," Bissell said.

Alpine stewards from other parks and wilderness areas are facing similar dilemmas.

"Our numbers are going up — they're going up dramatically," said Julia Goren of the Adirondack Mountain Club.

"You wouldn't think being claustrophobic on a mountain is possible, but it does sometimes feel that way," said Jenifer Dickinson, a wilderness educator in Monadnock State Park in New Hampshire.

During Columbus Day weekend alone, an estimated 8,000 hikers visited Mount Monadnock, Dickinson said.

This increased visitation is causing a few challenges for stewards who are attempting to preserve the "spirit of wildness" in these places.

Problems discussed at the gathering included the im-

proper disposal of human waste; a lack of visitor preparedness; and the trampling of fragile and rare alpine plants.

"Partying and drinking in the mountains is an issue that seems to be getting worse," said Holly Sheehan of the Maine Appalachian Trail Club. "There was actually a keg party at Gulf Hagas this summer."

These problems aren't new. Parks, clubs and organizations are already working on finding solutions through social media, educational signs and other tools.

At the gathering, stewards shared which methods had proven effective, and which hadn't.

Another big component of the gathering was the sharing of new alpine research.

"It's difficult to conserve what you don't know you have," said Aaron Megquier, executive director of Friends of Baxter State Park, while introducing Maine botanist Glen Mittelhauser.

Mittelhauser is working on a five-year project to create the first ever complete inventory of vascular plants in Baxter State Park. After unearthing and sorting through 1,200 historic

Getting to know noises of birds

Dickcissels fart. At least, that's the sound they make when flying over. I learned this in a conversation at Maine Audubon last week. I'll bet you're wondering how a conversation about farting dickcissels developed.

A dickcissel is a grassland bird of middle America. It's a sparrow-like bird in the cardinal family that looks like a meadowlark. In other words, it's a weird mix of characteristics. I saw my first dickcissel in Tennessee 20 years ago. I have seen a few in Louisiana and maybe one in Texas. That's all.

Dickcissels collect into huge autumn flocks and migrate to South America for the winter. But some get kind of lost and wander — even into Maine. Two dickcissels have been frequenting a bird feeder in Wells for most of this month. Doug Hitchcox heard one fly over while leading his weekly walk at Maine Audubon's headquarters in Falmouth. Doug is Audubon's chief naturalist.

In conversation, Doug mentioned he heard the flyover. I confessed I didn't know what a dickcissel flight note sounded like, because I had very little experience with this species. He explained it was a very distinctive: "fppt" — a flying fart. In the history of bird call descriptions, this one takes first prize. I will remember the sound a dickcissel makes for the rest of my life.

Wayward dickcissels often end up associating with flocks of house sparrows, so I keep an eye on flocks of house sparrows during winter — even though they are the commonest of common birds, prone to hanging around McDonald's parking lots. Someday, I'd like to see a dickcissel in Maine, and now I know what to listen for.

I am an idiot savant, the Rain Man of bird sounds. I have very little book learning about avian fauna in general, but if a bird makes a noise in Maine, I usually know what it is. So it surprised some people in the conversation that there were bird sounds from away that I didn't know. In truth, I'm always learning. For 30 years, Maine Audubon has been part of that learning experience. Nowadays, I get to share that learning. Two opportunities are coming right up.

On Sunday, the Penobscot Valley Chapter of Maine Audubon is leading a boat trip out of Roque Bluffs to explore the coves around all the islands in the area. While the goal is to get a count of the winter waterfowl returning from the arctic breeding grounds, we're really just out for fun. It's good practice. If participants can't tell the dif-

ference between a distant horned grebe and a red-necked grebe or the difference between a common loon and a red-throated loon or the difference between the three scoter species, they sure will by the end of the trip.



BOB DUCHESNE

GOOD BIRDING

On Friday, Nov. 20, I'll be presenting a program at Fields Pond Audubon Center in Holden, disclosing all my favorite winter birding locations. By the end of the program, I will have no secrets left. Fledgling birders often are surprised to find out how good cold weather birding can be. The coast is livelier in winter than summer. Lots of Canadian breeders infiltrate our woods and fields this time of year. I'll explain it all. The 7 p.m. event is free.

Most other chapter events are free, too. It's hard for non-members to keep up with it all. Members receive newsletters and email updates. The email alerts are especially useful, because some great opportunities develop after the latest newsletter goes to print. The place to start is maineaudubon.org. Becoming a member automatically gets you enrolled with a local chapter, if there is one. There are five chapters covering most of Maine's long coast, from the York County Chapter in southern Maine to the Fundy Chapter in Washington County. A sixth chapter, Western Maine Audubon, serves that side of the state, and the Penobscot Valley Chapter serves much of this side.

Most of what Maine Audubon offers to the public is geared toward fledgling birders. Many skills regarding bird finding and identification are easier to learn than most people think. Whether it is spring warbler walks or autumn boat trips, it's handy to have an experienced birder along to point out the key field marks. And, speaking for myself, it's a lot of fun to help new birders develop their skills. Frankly, experienced birders don't need me.

Plus, I'm always learning from my association with other birders at Maine Audubon. Take dickcissel farts, for instance.

Bob Duchesne serves as vice president of Maine Audubon's Penobscot Valley Chapter. He developed the Maine Birding Trail, with information at mainebirdingtrail.com. He can be reached at duchesne@midmaine.com.

Things to Do Outdoors

BREWER — Central Maine Chapter of the Ruffed Grouse Society's fifth annual Conservation and Sportsmen's Banquet, Saturday, Nov. 21, at Penobscot County Conservation Association, 570 North Main St. 862-5069.

BREWER — Penobscot Fly Fishers' annual Fly Tying Expo, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 15, at Penobscot County Conservation Association clubhouse, 570 North Main St. Free. Bronzebackfly@gmail.com

CHARLESTON and PARKMAN — All-you-can-eat hunters breakfast buffets to benefit Highview Athletics, 4:30-10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 14, at the old Charleston Elementary School in Charleston and at McKusick Gymnasium at the old Parkman Elementary School in Parkman. \$7 for adults, \$5 for ages 3-10, free for children under 3. Door prizes and silent auction.

GRAND LAKE STREAM — Wilderness first aid, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Nov. 14-15, at Downeast Lakes Land Trust, 4 Water St. To pre-register, call Downeast Lakes Land Trust at 796-2100 or email cbrown@downeastlakes.org.

ROCKLAND — Talk by Ward Feurt, manager of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, 6:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 16, at Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center in Rockland. Free. 594-0600, ext. 5.

For a complete listing of calendar items or to submit your event, visit www.bangordailynews.com.