

Chautauqua Watershed Notes  
From the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy  
For August 30, 2009



Wildlife on the Outlet  
By Mark Baldwin

Recently our daughter and I paddled our kayak through the Outlet and into Chautauqua Lake. The paddle up was exhilarating. As we got into an easy rhythm, wood ducks and mallards flushed and flew out ahead of us, and cormorants flew close overhead so you could hear the wind in their wings. It was a quiet evening on the lake – not a lot of boat traffic. On our way back to where we put in we had to keep stopping to turn the boat around to gaze at the western sky; the sun setting through layers of clouds on the horizon and reflecting off the water was spectacular.

As soon as we entered the Outlet, as evening descended, wildlife began to appear. We paddled in close to observe several patches of cardinal-flower, their brilliant blossoms glowing like the floral counterpart to a male scarlet tanager. Then we observed a dark “bump” gliding across the water directly ahead of us, a V-shaped wake behind – then suddenly a tail flip and a splash – as the big beaver dove and did not resurface the whole time we paddled past.

In the meantime two green herons flew swiftly past us and landed in the topmost branches of a tree along the shore. The animals and the softening colors of evening on the water already had us spellbound. Then we saw it. An osprey flew low over our heads, coming to a landing on the bare branch of a snag arching out over the water ahead and to our left. As we approached the enormous bird it took off and landed again on the opposite

shore a little ways downstream. Just then a second osprey flew in low over the trees and disappeared. Now we were really transfixed!

The amazing thing is that experiences like this are not all that unusual along the Outlet. It is such a magnet for wildlife and it is so close to – actually part of – the urban center not only of the Chautauqua Watershed but the entire region. On any given day you can get an “Animal Planet” experience here, but so much better because you are seeing it firsthand. All you need is a quiet way to get out there and to stay quiet enough to allow the wildlife to feel comfortable.

The Chautauqua Lake Outlet Greenway Preserve is an ongoing project of the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy to create a corridor for wildlife conservation and viewing along the Outlet. It is a remarkable grassroots effort that deserves the support of everyone interested in protecting the natural assets of the Chautauqua Watershed – and that should be everyone who lives here!

The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is a local, private not-for-profit organization supported primarily by membership donations and grants from private foundations. Its mission is to preserve and enhance the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, streams and watersheds of the Chautauqua region. It is the only locally based not-for-profit organization actively conserving important habitats, scenic sites and watershed lands in the county. It takes a preventive approach to address lake algae and plant problems. For a list of upcoming events go to [chautauquawatershed.org](http://chautauquawatershed.org). or call 716-664-2166.