

Pennsylvania Wildlife

SPRING 2019

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Fishing Off the Grid

Hawk Mt. Leader in Raptor Conservation

The Plight of the Bog Turtle

and more!





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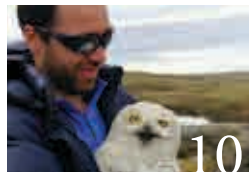


Cover photo: Baltimore Oriole, Mark Nale.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE



Robin nestlings waiting for food.

Spring is upon us, and for me, that means the start of one of my favorite hobbies: bird-watching. I have been a fan of birds since I was

a young child. I used to go to the beach with my grandparents who lived in Pittsburgh. My grandfather made the trip from Pennsylvania to South Carolina fun for me by pointing out types of birds, and we always had a running count of how many red-winged blackbirds we would see along the way. Perhaps that is what started my love for birds.

For the last eleven years, Spring has brought American Robins to my back porch to nest—typically two clutches from March to August, and sometimes three! I look forward to watching them build their nests, lay their eggs, and care for their babies. I have watched numerous baby birds fledge. It's always a tense moment for me, when a fat, fluffy nestling sits on the edge of its nest, looking pensively into the great unknown, as its parent calls to it from a nearby tree.

At the very instant the nestling makes the decision to leave the nest, I've caught myself

catching my breath as I watch it go, landing safely on the ground, never to return to its former home. The show continues as

I watch the fledglings learn to hunt with their parents, eventually becoming independent and in short time, ready to return to my porch as the next generation of robins looking to nest. Though American Robins are very ordinary birds, for a very brief period of time, I felt like I had a unique kinship to their instinctual behavior, and I admit, I got attached.

Spring also brings to my backyard a euphony of sounds, courtesy of Black-capped Chickadees, Downy Woodpeckers, Mourning Doves, Blue Jays, Chipping Sparrows, and Gray Catbirds.

These are the most prominent songs I hear in the early mornings each day just as the sun is rising, and before life gets too busy. This harmonious awakening is a great way to start my day, and a reminder to me that birds are all around us, we just need to take the time and listen. Happy Spring!

WELCOME SUSAN HAWTHORNE

Susan Hawthorne brings extensive leadership and management experience to her new position, having served as director for three non-profit organizations in Centre and Clearfield Counties. Her specialties include program development and evaluation, strategic planning, communications, fundraising and donor cultivation. Hawthorne holds a B.S. in Organizational Leadership and a M.S. in Strategic Leadership from Mountain State University, West Virginia. She received a M.P.S. in Community and Economic Development from Penn State University.



SPRINGTIME *in* BALD EAGLE STATE PARK

A Birder's Paradise

by BOB SNYDER

Bald Eagle State Park is a 'birding hot spot' in Centre County that attracts birders and everyday folk who appreciate what nature has to offer. The park covers 5,900 acres of early successional forest with edge and old-field habitats, surrounding the 1,730-acre lake at Foster Joseph Sayers Dam.

The varied geology within the park has created diverse habitats for a variety of birds who are residents of the park as well as those more uncommon birds who stop over on their migratory path. Today, as I write this, in mid-February, the lake at Bald Eagle State Park is partially covered with ice, the deciduous trees are bare and birdlife seems to have all but disappeared. However, within three weeks, by the last week of February and through March, migrating waterfowl will begin to appear on the open stretches of water. During inclement weather hundreds, even thousands of birds representing species of ducks, geese, swans and other water birds may 'fall out' and use the lake as a safe haven during their flight north during late February and March.

It is as this time that visitors and bird watchers will see the large flocks of white Tundra Swans that stopover during their northward migration. Each winter the lake is drawn down by the US Army Corp of Engineers

Bob Snyder has been a 'birder' and photographer since his college days. He volunteers as a compiler of bird counts for Potter and Tioga Counties for the Pennsylvania Birds Journal and for the Bald Eagle State Park Christmas Count. Bob and his wife reside in Howard, PA.

to create a reservoir that contains water from snowmelt and spring rains. Dropping the water level exposes large expanses of mudflats and shallow water that the swans prefer for roosting. Flocks of northbound Tundra Swans and Canada Geese, and sometimes Snow Geese and Greater White-fronted Geese will use the park as a stopover point. Flocks up to several hundred birds have been seen on the lake in these areas. Increasingly, due to the Ontario Trumpeter Swan breeding program, there is opportunity to observe these rare swans in the park as well.

Another early spring migrant, the American Woodcock will return from its southern wintering habitat by mid-March. These large sandpipers prefer the forest edges, shrubby growth and wet meadows. At twilight the woodcock will give its nasal sounding 'peent' call and suddenly will burst into a sky dance, its wings producing whistling, chittering sounds as the birds hover high overhead in the fading daylight. Suddenly the 'dancing' birds will plummet back to earth, out of sight and then repeat the display into the fading evening light.

Two well-known raptors nest within the park and utilize the lake to catch fish for themselves and their nestlings. Bald Eagles have nested continually within the park since 2004, though locations of nests have changed several times. The eagles will usually finish building their nests in late fall, mate in January, lay eggs in February then hatch chicks by mid-late March. It is common to not only see adult Bald Eagles around the park, but also to see immature eagles in plumage indicating ages of one through four.

Another raptor, the Osprey can be seen in the park by mid-April. During 2018, a pair

of Osprey nested successfully on a cell tower north of the lake, producing two young. Fish are caught by both Ospreys and Bald Eagles, though at times you may see an eagle attempting to steal fish from the smaller Osprey. Green Herons return to the park in the spring and can be seen perching on tree branches that hang over the lake or waiting in the shadows along edges of ponds and streams for fish to swim into reach.

Breeding birds of the forest and valley begin arriving by mid-April and by the end of May, have set up breeding territories and found a mate. The park's aquatic environment created by the lake, small feeder streams and Bald Eagle Creek, combined with the surrounding forest and early successional habitats attract many breeding birds, and provide food and shelter for migrating birds passing through our area on their journey north. According to the Pennsylvania Game Commission, there are 27 warbler species that breed in the state. While they may all nest within the forest, they prefer differing habitats.

Bald Eagle State Park is a birder's paradise. With at least 251 species of birds either breeding, full-time resident or passing through in the spring, the novice or experienced birder will be treated to a unique show that will not disappoint.

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Birds of Central Pennsylvania: Bogiano and Grove (©2010, Stone Mountain Publishing).

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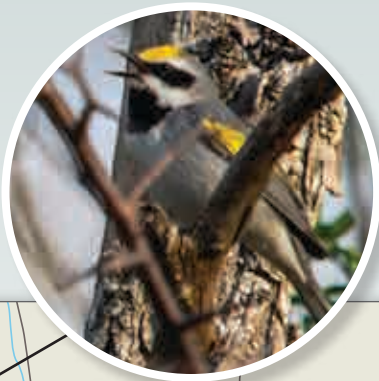
Tundra Swans.

Photo© Bob Snyder

SPRING MIGRATION IN BALD EAGLE STATE PARK

Bald Eagle State Park lies below and partially on the west slope of the Bald Eagle Ridge, which is designated as an Important Bird Area in Pennsylvania. Administered by the National Audubon Society, this designation recognizes an area as globally important for the conservation of bird populations. The program relies on local community engagement for site conservation that will benefit birds and biodiversity.

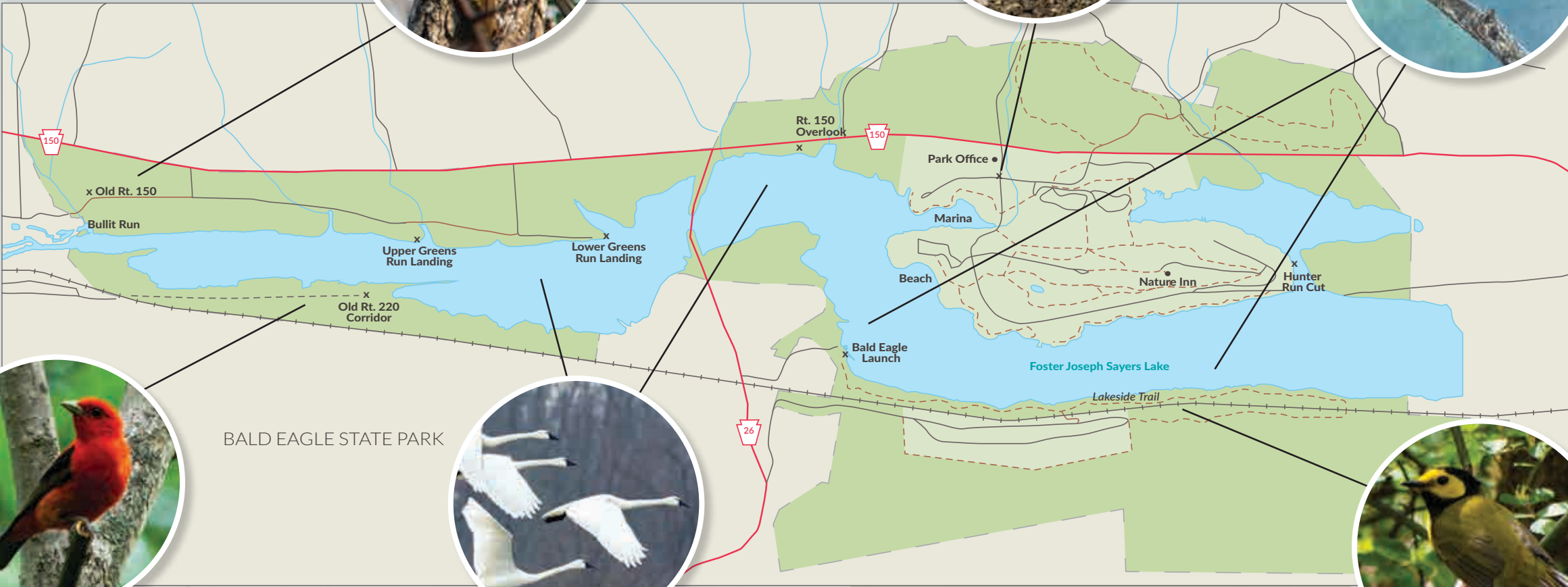
Golden-winged Warbler
Mid-April



American Woodcock
Mid-March – April



Osprey with fish
Mid-April



Photos© Bob Snyder



Scarlet Tanager
Mid-April



Tundra Swan
Late Feb – March



Hooded Warbler
Mid-April

eBIRD APP

The eBird app, created by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is a database of bird sightings that provides real-time data about bird distribution and abundance. It is open to anyone who is curious about birds and where to find them. Observations are recorded in real time over cell phones by birders in the field using the eBird app. To see what local birders have been observing in Bald Eagle State Park, go to eBird.org.

OFF THE GRID

Fishing little-known, non-stocked trout streams

by MARK NALE

A strong hit rewarded my long cast into the deeper water near the old bridge. I set the hook, and seconds later, a hefty brown trout erupted from the calm water. It leaped once—twice—and then two more times, spraying crystal beads of water into the cool morning air. I held my breath at each jump—enjoying the colorful trout’s acrobatics—but at the same time hoping that my hook would not be shaken free.

I truly needed that hit. After fruitlessly fishing 200 yards of marginal water, I was beginning to question my stream choice for that morning’s outing. However, one good cast can change everything.

The hook held, and after the exciting battle, I was measuring a 14-inch brown trout. Chocolate and cherry spots accented the trout’s golden flanks. Along with its large eyes and perfect fins, the fish’s bright colors marked it as a naturally-reproduced trout, rather than one raised in a hatchery.

More nice water greeted me around the bend. My next 6 casts yielded three more trout—two browns and a red-bottomed native brookie. I no longer questioned my stream selection. I just continued to work my way up the small stream, smiling at my good fortune.

As the first hour of fishing was drawing to a close, I recorded my twelfth trout in the pocket notebook that I always carry with me—not bad for a section of stream that I had never fished before. Just then, a movement

on the opposite shore—about 15 yards upstream—caught my eye. I paused to watch.

It was a short wait, because moments later, a mink swam by with a crayfish in its mouth. The mink reached just downstream from me when it dove under an undercut bank. It was most likely a mother taking food back to her young in the den.

I was enjoying both trout and nature, one of my favorite late spring and early summer pastimes—fishing “off the grid”—as I call it. By that, I mean fishing in non-stocked trout streams that are also not included on the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission’s Class A Wild Trout Stream or Wilderness Trout Stream lists. Until recently, these small streams were not on any list, except my own. They are just out there—often full of trout—and rarely fished.

Now, thanks to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission’s Unassessed Waters Initiative, you now have access to “my” list. Pennsylvania anglers have more places to fish for wild trout and many streams have better protection.

Under the program, agency biologists and their college and university partners have been surveying streams since 2010. They find wild trout in approximately 45 percent of the streams.

The Commission has been approving approximately 99 newly-identified wild trout waters at almost every quarterly meeting. Nearly 2,000 streams containing naturally-reproduced trout have been added to the growing list. Some are scenic mountain trickles, while others are small valley streams that people drive across every day.

Although I do this every spring, I still marvel that such good fishing exists—and hardly



Native Brook Trout

anyone takes advantage of it. It seems that many Pennsylvania anglers have the mindset that, if the white stocking trucks do not stop there, then the streams are not worth fishing.

You can see which new streams are approved each quarter by checking the minutes after each Commission meeting or use the agency’s interactive fishing maps—available on their website www.fishandboat.com.

Try some exploring of your own this spring. You will learn, as I have, that Pennsylvania is blessed with a wealth of small streams holding beautiful wild trout.

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary

Local to global raptor conservation

PARTNERS *in*
CONSERVATION

by SEAN GRACE

President, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary

Hawk Mountain is both an outstanding destination and a forerunner in the American Conservation Movement with a rich history. It was 1934 when founder Rosalie Edge first visited a ridge locals called “Hawk Mountain” where hawk shooters gathered on fall weekends. She leased the land and installed naturalist Maurice Broun to serve as its warden and ornithologist. With her singular action, she turned this shooting ground to sanctuary and established the world’s first refuge for birds of prey that were considered vermin by many.

Fast-forward 85 years, and I’m proud to say I’ve just finished my first year as president of this organization. I feel confident that Rosalie Edge would be proud of the Sanctuary, in particular the growth of its programs in scientific research, education, and international training. I applaud the staff, board and Sanctuary supporters for helping make an impressive conservation impact year after year.

It was Mrs. Edge who instructed Maurice Broun in 1934 to record a scientific tally of the number and type of raptor species that passed overhead. From that rocky outcrop, he completed the first of what is now the longest and most continuous record of raptor populations globally and effectively launched

the practice of raptor migration science. Hawk Mountain fast became a “crossroads of naturalists.” Partnerships formed on the lookout and Broun began to publish scientific findings. As the professional staff grew, so too did its research, and young people began to spend periods of time at the Sanctuary as interns.

Today, Hawk Mountain conducts local research on nesting American kestrels, and regionally on farmland raptors, broad-winged hawks, and northern goshawks that nest in Pennsylvania. Our scientists partner on an international Raptor Population Index Project to assess conservation status of raptors across North America. Scientists lead long-term studies of New World vultures, and help to

coordinate and support work on endangered species like the hooded vulture in Africa, and the island-endemic striated caracara in the Falklands. Our biologists are learning more about climate change from the study of arctic raptors like the snowy owl and rough-legged hawk. And of course, the annual count at North Lookout continues, adding to the long-term dataset and encouraging visitors and members to scan the skies for hawks.

The fledging intern program from the 1950s has also evolved into a highly competitive international and professional

Hawk Mountain North lookout.

Photo © Bill Moses

traineeship. Hawk Mountain now boasts more than 470 trainee graduates from 74 countries on six continents, and graduates go on to become partners after they return to their home countries. Some extend their connection as Hawk Mountain Graduate Students who conduct independent research that furthers our own science goals. No other organization brings this type of far-reaching focus aimed exclusively on raptors.

What I love is knowing that Hawk Mountain is effectively changing the face of raptor conservation: 47 percent of our trainees come from other countries and represent diverse backgrounds, 65 percent

are women, and our research collaborators stretch across the world. Not only are we filling the ranks with outstanding and diverse candidates, but we're also advancing the number of women in science across the globe and that matters.

It's exciting work and as someone who is passionate about hawks, it inspires me every day. When raptor populations are steady, it often indicates a healthy environment. Hawk Mountain will continue to serve as a think-tank for international research, mentoring, and information sharing, and I look forward to growing our partnerships, especially in Central and South America where habitats are under threat and species diversity is high. If you, too, love the outdoors and the hawks that soar overhead, I invite you to visit and learn more.

Sean Grace is president of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary where he leads the organization's global raptor conservation mission. The former director of Audubon Sharon, Grace also served as leader for Audubon's healthy forest program across Connecticut.

Hawk Mountain Scientist Dr. Jean-Francois Therrien studies snowy owls in the Canadian Arctic.

NEW WILDLIFE CENTER, *One Step Closer!*

by JERRY REGAN
Chair, Wildlife Center Committee

Soon you will be able to sit on one of our trailside benches and observe a rising Mayfly hatch, or hear the mating call of a spring gobbler, or simply relax and unwind to the babbling sounds of Bald Eagle Creek. The new Wildlife Center, situated on the Tom Ridge and Julian Wetlands in Centre County, is one step closer to becoming a reality. Bids have been solicited for the project and a project manager hired. This means the Wildlife Center committee along with our project manager and trusted advisors will dedicate the next several months to submitting various permits, completing detailed construction designs, master signage and interpretive displays for our accessible boardwalk loop trail. The bottom line is that we are moving forward and very soon our Commonwealth will add another jewel to its conservation crown; this one offering full accessibility, so all Pennsylvanians regardless of physical challenges may take advantage of the restorative benefits that nature offers.

We also are working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) which will complete the Bald Eagle Creek restoration this summer (assuming we don't have the record

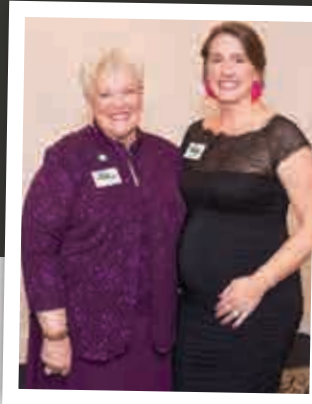
rain falls we had last year). The USFWS, under the leadership of Mark Roberts, is donating this portion of the project which is valued at more than \$50,000. Restoration will include construction of a stabilizing mudsill structure and installation of two rock vanes that will protect the stream bank from erosion and provide an improved habitat for fish.

It takes many partners to undertake these types of projects and we are most grateful to the USFWS, Department of Community and Economic Development, Centre County Commissioners, SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority, Senator Jake Corman, our Wildlife Center committee and the other supporters who have joined with us to make our community a better place to live.

The wetlands that comprise the new Wildlife Center is a little-known gem. It serves as an important stopover site for birds and waterfowl that migrate through the area, attracting 190 species of migrant or breeding residents. In addition, our area is known for one of the largest Golden Eagle migrations this side of the Mississippi River. We invite you to come out, hike our trail and experience the beauty of our wetlands this spring.

WILDLIFE GALA

The 2nd Annual Pennsylvania Wildlife Gala was a tremendous success. Close to 200 guests enjoyed the festive evening, contributing to the Foundation's cause of promoting wildlife conservation and education in Pennsylvania. Wildlife Biologist and bear expert, Mark Terment, engaged the audience with his comprehensive knowledge of the PA black bear. Gala Committee Co-chairs, Janet Nyce and Ashley Diehl, surprised Joe Mattioli, Gala floral designer and Foundation supporter, with a bench to be placed on the new Wildlife Center property in his name. A live auction featured fine art by renowned wildlife artists, a fly fishing excursion at the exclusive HomeWaters Club and dinner at Bentzel's Mill in York PA.



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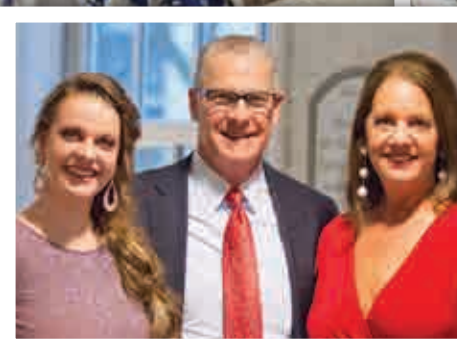


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BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

Board Member's Connection Realizes FOUNDATION'S DREAM

Michael Schaul

Thanks to Michael Schaul, the Wildlife for Everyone Foundation is developing an ecological gem that will soon offer residents of the Centre region and beyond an outdoor classroom and nature observatory that will cater to all nature enthusiasts, regardless of physical limitation. Schaul's association with the 15-year old foundation began when his former company, WHM Solutions Inc., was actively searching for a non-profit organization to take ownership of its newly-created wetlands in Centre County. WHM had been contracted by PennDot to mitigate wetlands destroyed by the construction of Interstate 99 during the 1990s. The mandate to the non-profit was to maintain the ecosystem and utilize it as an educational resource. In 2010, WHM gifted the property to the Wildlife for Everyone Foundation, along with a \$50,000 maintenance fund.

Wetlands need to be fed by water so site location is critical to the success of recreated wetlands. Schaul's company purchased two farms that existed on the present-day site, amounting to 135 acres. The property that is now the Tom Ridge Wetlands had been farmland for the past 200 years and before that it was likely a natural wetlands site. In considering the site selection, Schaul states, "We recognized that runoff from the mountains to the north of the site and ground saturation from the adjacent Bald Eagle Creek

made for an optimal site and allowed us to construct wetlands without mechanics, that is, without incorporating manmade structures." "It's very challenging to get it right and we were able to do it successfully in partnership with several state agencies," states Schaul.

Throughout the remediation process, special care was taken by the WHM team to follow the *Science of Mother Nature*. In Schaul's words, this guiding principle means "returning the land to its original state." He acknowledges the Native Americans that lived on the site and the potential to offer anthropological education in addition to the science that surrounds a wetlands environment. "The Wildlife Center presents huge opportunities for learning," comments Schaul. "That has always been important to me."

Schaul enjoyed a 20-year career serving four Pennsylvania governors as Deputy Secretary of Commerce. He was appointed Executive Director of the Governor's Commission for Economic Development where he provided oversight to offices in ten countries. After his stint in the public sector, Schaul managed a venture fund for a Pittsburgh law firm for 19 years until he stumbled upon his passion... "doing good things for the environment." Schaul and engineer, Joh Blazosky, formed WHM Group, a multidiscipline company committed to delivering environmental resource solutions.

Schaul has served on the board of directors of several non-profit organizations, many government-related. He served as chair of the Council of Trustees of Shippensburg University for 10 years and has served as secretary of the Wildlife for Everyone Foundation board since 2010.

the plight of the BOG TURTLE SMALL TURTLE, BIG CHALLENGE

by MICHAEL TOROCCO

This little bog turtle was born on a warm, late August afternoon, after spending a month incubating in its egg. She faced many hazards during her incubation—mostly predators looking for an easy meal, but also harsh environmental conditions like drought or flooding which can affect her delicate nest environment. But how does one of North America's smallest turtle species survive in

a habitat that exists somewhere between the world of familiar, dry, upland forests or fields (the home of box turtles), and ponds or streams that are favored by the familiar painted turtle? The home of the bog turtle is a unique one—spring-fed wetlands with water that flows through small channels, or "rivulets", which are usually only an inch deep. As a result of the upwelling of springs,



Hatchling Bog Turtle.

Photo © Michael Torocco



Photo © Michael Torocco

Bog Turtle nest.

deep mud abounds throughout the wetland, and plants survive by adaptations to constant saturation, or by rising above the water on small hummocks that grow taller over the years. The bog turtle found a niche in this environment, one that box turtles found too wet but aquatic turtles found too dry—and it is here where they thrive.

The mother of our little bog turtle, documented by our research team to be at least 40 years old, nested in a raised hummock within her home wetland, which is one of the few places dry enough for a nest. The nest is created by digging with her hind feet into the soft, damp humus which forms at the top of the hummock. Each female selects a suitable place that has adequate sun to incubate her clutch, which typically ranges from 2–5 eggs. Once the eggs are laid in a small, carefully formed cavity in the hummock, she carefully covers the eggs with a layer of humus and grass blades, expertly concealing the eggs beneath. With any luck, predators like raccoons and rodents will not find the nest.



Photo © Michael Torocco

Bog Turtle habitat.

After the mother bog turtle lays her eggs, she will not return to care for the eggs or young. The eggs are laid typically in early June, and will incubate with the aid of the heat from the summer sun. Hatching occurs about two month later, when the young turtles slit their way out from the egg with the aid of a special egg tooth. Although incredibly delicate at birth, and with defenses limited to hiding in the vegetation or mud, they possess the

“Although their first years can be perilous, the probability of survival improves with maturity, and bog turtles have been documented at over 40 years of age.”

instincts to survive. Although their first years can be perilous, the probability of survival improves with maturity, and bog turtles have been documented at over 40 years of age.

Herpetological Associates, Inc., through a generous donation from the Wildlife for Everyone Foundation and the support of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Pennsylvania Game Commission, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is continuing to study this critically endangered species in its native habitat in Pennsylvania on Pennsylvania Game Commission land. Our research has included studies on the

hatching success of bog turtle nests, and methods to improve the odds of survival for developing eggs. One of the techniques we have employed is the use of wire mesh cages, or Predator Excluders, placed around nests to protect the eggs from mammalian predators. But nests can be difficult for the researcher to find, and so another component of our research is to follow individual adult turtles to their nest sites using radiotelemetry. We have successfully followed the movements of bog turtles using this technology over the past 10 years, which has increased our knowledge of the spatial requirements and habitat preferences. Some of the bog turtles in our study were first encountered by our research team 25 years ago, and with a little luck and some dedicated effort by those that care, we hope to see them 25 years in the future!

Michael Torocco is Pennsylvania Regional Manager/ Herpetologist for Herpetological Associates, Inc., Wyomissing, PA.

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS & INTERNS



The Wildlife for Everyone Foundation is honored to assist six university students with financial support and internships to advance their career goals. The Wildlife Scholarship Fund will benefit five students interested in advancing their career interest in a wildlife or conservation field.



Michaela Wallingford (Spring Mills, PA) is a sophomore studying Wildlife and Fisheries Science at Penn State-University Park campus. She hopes to pursue a Master of Science degree in Wildlife Management. Michaela is looking forward to becoming a dedicated conservationist and following in the footsteps of her parents as a wildlife biologist for either the Pennsylvania Game Commission or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She is the vice president of The Wildlife Society—Penn State Student Chapter. With her scholarship money, she hopes to cover the cost of textbooks for the year.



Victoria Roper (Bloomsburg, PA) is pursuing her master's degree in Biology at the Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania. She received a B.S. in Biology from the University of New Orleans and plans to pursue her PhD following graduation. Currently, she instructs undergraduate biology students in field research collection techniques and laboratory skills. Her long-term goal is to work with The Nature Conservancy and continue her life-long commitment to avian research, conservation, and mentoring young scientists. She plans to utilize this scholarship money to help cover the costs of tuition fees.



Jessica Brown (Dauphin, PA) is a senior majoring in Wildlife and Fisheries Science at Penn State-University Park campus. Upon graduation, Jessica will continue her education as a master's student in Entomology at Penn State. Her goal is to become a professor of wildlife biology with a focus on wildlife parasitology. This summer, Jessica will conduct her first field season as part of her graduate research investigating tick choice and host behaviors as a driver of tick burdens. Jessica is treasurer of The Wildlife Society-Penn State Student Chapter. She plans to use her scholarship money to cover the initial expenses of her field study.

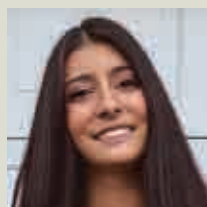


Kristin Bomboy (Shickshinny, PA) is pursuing a master's degree in Biology at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She holds a B.S. in Environmental Science: Fisheries and Wildlife Biology from the California University of Pennsylvania. Kristin is a member of The Wildlife Society and former treasurer of the California University of Pennsylvania Student Chapter. She hopes to get a job that allows her to do public outreach for the betterment of wildlife and its habitat. She plans on using her scholarship money to help pay for her remaining education expenses this semester.



Makayla Whaling (Luthersburg, PA) is a senior majoring in Wildlife Technology at Penn State-DuBois campus. She plans to continue in the field of Wildlife and Fisheries Science with the goal of becoming a wildlife biologist. She looks forward to gaining experience from her field-related internships this summer. Makayla is a member of many wildlife—related clubs including The Wildlife Society—Penn State DuBois Chapter and the student chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. She plans to use her scholarship money to help offset the cost of tuition.

A student intern has been offered a marketing/communications internship with the Wildlife for Everyone Foundation for the spring semester.



Angela Pagiazitis (Old Bridge, NJ) is a sophomore majoring in Public Relations at Penn State-University Park campus. She is pursuing a minor in Digital Media Trends and Analytics. Angela is an active member of Kappa Alpha Theta fraternity in which she holds a leadership position. She is also a member of the Public Relations Student Society of America. Her career goal is to work in the public relations industry.

SUPPORT THE WILDLIFE SCHOLARSHIP FUND A permanent fund will generate yearly awards to students interested in wildlife conservation. Please consider supporting our scholarship fund.

A WORD FROM OUR FUTURE CONSERVATION LEADERS



MY EXPERIENCE *at the* WILDLIFE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

by EMMA OLNEY

This past July, I enjoyed the wonderful experience of attending the Wildlife Leadership Academy's Drummers Field School in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania. The Drummers Field School is one of five field schools available to select youth, ages 14–17, through the Wildlife Leadership Academy. Each school (or camp) focuses on a particular species of wildlife or fish species, its habitat,

Emma Olney is a sophomore at Central York High School in York PA.

and connection with other species. There are five field schools: Bucktails (white-tailed deer), Bass (bass), Brookies (brook trout), Drummers (ruffed grouse) and Gobblers (wild turkey).

When I arrived at Stone Valley Recreation Area in mid-July, I had little to no idea of what I was getting into. While I knew that the camp would be geared towards learning about the ruffed grouse and improving leadership skills, I did not know exactly what activities I would complete or what people I would meet. A mixture of nervousness and excitement coursed through my veins during that first afternoon, when, after some icebreaker activities, we jumped straight into informational PowerPoints.

After getting to know everyone on my team, I quickly formed a strong bond with them over our love for school and our passion for the environment. Looking up at the bunk bed above me from my sleeping bag that night, I knew, comfortingly, that Stone Valley Recreation Area would soon feel like home. Throughout the course of that week, we flew through sessions with experienced wildlife biologists and foresters at a breakneck speed, covering everything

from how the ruffed grouse's scientific name, *Bonasa umbellus*, refers to its umbrella-shaped feather ruff to the fact that a lack of young forests is one of Pennsylvania's most pressing environmental issues.

We often ventured into surrounding forests to learn more about forest management and its importance to a variety of species. I also participated in a mock debate on the ethics of pipelines in communities; dissected grouse, woodcock, and owls; and created an informational tri-fold display and PowerPoint presentation on the ruffed grouse, all while connecting to the other students, volunteers, and staff at the Drummers Field School.

Never before have I felt such a kinship with my peers: driven, academic, adventurous, and friendly teenagers, who made an excellent group of friends that I am still in touch with today. One of the revelations that has struck me is how much the knowledge I've gained at this camp now influences my opinions on important environmental matters.

For example, before attending the academy, I was very much against hunting. I had never seen anyone in my circle of family and friends do it, let alone participate in the sport myself. I hated the idea of killing



animals, and besides, I thought, ..."doesn't hunting hurt the environment?"

When I arrived at the camp, I came to realize how much hunting can actually help the environment. I learned that hunting can help regulate population sizes to keep the ecosystem in balance, something that

"The Wildlife Leadership Academy instilled in me many qualities that I cherish..."

-Emma Olney

Pennsylvania very much needs. Although I may not hunt personally, I have a newfound appreciation and respect for the sport and its positive impact on the environment.

The Wildlife Leadership Academy instilled in me many qualities that I cherish—an increased passion for the environment, a greater interest in leadership, and a new appreciation for different perspectives, to name a few. I have also grown through the outreach work I have completed in my school and community: displaying my tri-fold board on the ruffed grouse and its forest habitat in my school's library and writing for the Wildlife Leadership Academy's Next Generation Blog as a youth correspondent. As for the future? I hope to major in environmental studies in college to work towards a better environment—both for humans and for the ruffed grouse!



The Ruffed Grouse is nicknamed the drummer because of the noise the male grouse makes with his wings to attract female grouse to his territory. The male grouse rapidly beats his wings against the air, making a drumming noise. A male may drum from the same spot, using the same log or stump for several years.

THE WILDLIFE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (WLA) is a Pennsylvania-based, year-round program for high school-aged youth that begins with rigorous summer field schools that focus on wildlife/fisheries biology and conservation, as well as leadership skills development. After the camp's completion, students return to their communities and engage in outreach—environmental work and education, that put them on the path to becoming certified Conservation Ambassadors. Continued support is offered to WLA alumni to prepare them for success in their professional lives. Advanced educational training on conservation themes and a one-year leadership and professional development program serve the alumni's needs as they grow from high school to college to workplace. For more information on the Wildlife Leadership Academy, call 570-245-8518 or visit wildlifeleadershipacademy.org.

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