



Bald Eagles build nest adjacent to Lower Trail

by Dr. Stan Kotala

Blair County's first bald eagle nest in more than half a century was constructed last winter on Tussey Mountain near Water Street by a bald eagle pair that has been frequenting the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River along the Lower Trail.



The recovery of the bald eagle is one of the great wildlife conservation stories in the history of both Pennsylvania and the nation.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission currently classifies

the bald eagle as a threatened species in Pennsylvania. They were removed from the federal endangered species list by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2007, because delisting goals had been achieved. In Pennsylvania, the number of bald eagle nests has increased from a half dozen two decades ago to more than 200 in 2012.

The Lower Trail's bald eagle pair can be seen most frequently in the vicinity of Water Street, hunting for fish in the Frankstown Branch.



We are honored that the eagles have decided to take up residence along the trail. Their presence also speaks volumes about the health of the Juniata River. Many years ago people thought the river was dying, and when the idea of a rail trail along the river was proposed, it was said that the trail would run all the wildlife out of the area. This just proves both of those ideas incorrect.

Photos of the eagle and the eagles nest were taken by trail member Jeff Wingate.

GATHERING AND RAFFLE



Sunday May 5th everyone is invited to the Spring Gathering at the Mt. Etna trail head. We will once again be grilling hamburgers, hotdogs and kielbasa at **1 PM**. We will have the drawing for the raffle at about 2 pm. All we ask is that you bring your favorite salad or side dish to share with others and a drink for yourself. We supply the paper products, silverware and condiments.

This is always a wonderful afternoon event. It is a time for you to meet other trail users as well as trail volunteers and board members. Plan to come out and have nice relaxing afternoon on the trail. If you haven't yet sent your tickets in you may bring them to the gathering. If you cannot come to the gathering, please mail the tickets to Rails to Trails, PO Box 592, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648 with enough time for them to be received at the Post Office by May 3rd. If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact Vickie Brua at vicbrua@atlanticbb.net or Jennifer Barefoot at 814-695-8521, e-mail at rjsunbrook@verizon.net. Thank you!

A very special Thank You is extended to the business's that make this raffle and gathering a success. Please remember these business's when you are purchasing things throughout the year; **Spokes & Skies** of Lakemont; **Holland Brothers Meats**, of Duncansville, **Hoss's Steak & Sea House** of Duncansville and **Moosewood Laser Creations** of Belleville.

THE 16TH ANNUAL LOWER TRAIL 5k RACE & FUN WALK, June 12th at 6 PM IN MEMORY OF JOHN HEALY



It is so hard to believe that it has been 16 years since we started the 5k race on the Lower Trail. This has been a fund raiser for the organization that helps with the operations and maintenance of the trail. It has been run in memory of one of the trail's all-time great volunteers, John Healy. John was on the trail usually 5 out of 7 days of the week, mowing, weed whacking, cutting up trees, picking up parts, you name it, he did it. Sadly we lost John to the dreaded disease of cancer. It seemed only fitting that we keep John's memory alive by holding a fund raiser that helps with the continued maintenance of the trail. Please consider

coming out on Wednesday June 13th and run a 5K or, if you are not a runner, come do the fun walk on the trail. It is a great way to stay in shape and help out the trail.

It is held on Wednesday evening, beginning at 6 PM. If you register by Friday, June 7th the cost is only \$12.00. After June 7th, registration is \$15.00. You may register the day of the race at the Williamsburg Trailhead starting at 4:30 PM. The registration form is also available on the Rails to Trails website: www.rttcpa.org

Sponsors for this year's race are: Highmark, Martins Oil Company, Keller Engineers, Labor Specialties Inc. (LSI), Ameriserv Financial, Hoss's Steak and Sea House and Roaring Spring Premium Spring Water.

Photo's from Wildflower Walk



30 people attended the Wildflower Walk held on the Lower Trail on Saturday, April 13. They were treated to the sight of thousands of trilliums and Dutchmen's breeches in bloom, as well as hundreds of bloodroots blossoming along the trail.



Photos of the wildflowers provided by Dr. Bruce Sheehe.

TREE OF THE MONTH: EASTERN REDBUD

By Dave Despot



Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) with its bright, purple-pink blossoms is the classic harbinger of spring in central Pennsylvania. Redbud is among the minority of species that prefer high pH (alkaline) soils. It is no wonder that this species makes its home in the fencerows of fertile limestone valleys, on hillsides surrounding abandoned quarries, and even in the fragmented rock walls of road cuts. Redbud is highly prized as a slow growing, shade-tolerant ornamental, primarily because of its showy flowers that appear before the leaves emerge. The flowers appear along the bare branches on short stalks; sometimes they emerge from the bark on the trunk as well.

Redbud is a small tree (20 to 30 feet tall) with large, heart-shaped leaves. Leaves are entire and have a thick appearance, with dark green color above and a light green underside. Fall color is yellow. The buds are not red, as the name implies, but typically have a dark brown color. Bark is smooth and gray on young stems, developing a reddish color and long narrow scaly ridges with age. Seeds are contained in smooth, brownish pods that mature in mid-summer. Common habitat is the understory of bottomland forests; however, redbud is versatile enough to colonize disturbed areas along roadsides with great zeal.

Many people know this tree as "Judas tree". Legend has it that Judas Iscariot used a Middle Eastern relative of the redbud to hang himself following the betrayal of Jesus. The legend goes on to say that in response, the redbud tree developed weak branch attachments so that no limb would be well enough attached to hang another human.

Weak branch attachments are an issue with this species. Careful pruning to develop a strong central leader and select for strong branch attachment can help. Redbuds will be blooming soon. Make sure you take the time to enjoy the beauty this time of year.

WILDFLOWER WATCH: JAPANESE HONEYSUCKLE

By Bob Richers



Memories are often aided by our other senses. I remember in my youth, many years ago, sitting on our family's rear porch in late May anxiously awaiting the school year to finally end. The honeysuckle vine on the trellis at the edge of the porch was in bloom with honey bees in full attendance. The plant's almost vanilla fragrance that filled the air, helped imprint the memory of those warm sunny days.

It's funny but the Honey Bees and the Japanese Honeysuckle are both imported species. The bees, for the most part, have been a welcome addition. On the other hand, Japanese Honeysuckle, a native Asian vine that was introduced in the mid-1800s as an ornamental plant for erosion control and wildlife foliage, is now considered an invasive species.

In North America, Japanese Honeysuckle have few natural controls which help it to out-compete native plants. In the northern climates, the plant dies back over the cold months but in the south, it remains evergreen. Shrubs and small trees can be killed by girdling when the vines, which can extend 30' above the ground, twist tightly around stems and trunks. Dense growths of honeysuckle can gradually kill plants by blocking out sunlight. Vigorous root competition also helps this species to spread and overwhelm other plants. Mechanical and chemical controls are expensive and quite labor intensive.

This perennial plant has oblong to oval one inch to three inch leaves that grow in pairs along the soft hair covered stems. The flowers, which are in abundance from April thru July, are tubular with five fused petals. They may emerge white to pink but yellow with age. The small black fruit, which contain the

seeds, appear in the fall and can be spread thru bird droppings. The ever-expanding root system also helps to spread Honeysuckle.

On the positive side of the Honeysuckle argument, the fragrance of the flowers is extremely pleasant. This vine, when on a tall trellis, makes an excellent nesting site for Robins and other birds. It can become a major food source for rabbits and deer. Humming birds can be found frequenting the blossoming honeysuckle.

The paved Western Maryland Rail Trail just east of Hancock Maryland has dense growths of both Honeysuckle and Multi-flora Rose. It makes for a "sweet ride" in May or June.

VOLUNTEER NEEDED:

Are you organized, pretty good at coordinating, like to work at your computer and pretty good with emails and looking for a way to volunteer for the rail trail group? If you have answered yes, we may be looking for you. We are in need of a Memorial Chairperson. The position would entail letter/email writing, coordinating with trail workers, and organizing all aspects of the memorials. If you think you could help out with this and would like more information, please contact Ethan Imhoff at ethanimhoff@gmail.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Sunday May 5th: Spring Gathering 1 PM at the Mt. Etna Trailhead. Once again we will be grilling hamburgers, hotdogs and kielbasa, you just bring your favorite salad/covered dish or desert and a drink. Then following the lunch, we will draw the winners of this year's raffle.

SATURDAY, MAY 11: Annual Terry Wentz Memorial Hike at Canoe Creek State Park - This 4-mile moderate hike on Moore's Hill Trail honors former Canoe Creek State Park manager, the late Terry Wentz, who served on the Juniata Valley Audubon and Rails to Trails boards of directors for more than a decade. Meet at the Canoe Creek State Park Environmental Education Center at 2 P.M. Trip leader: Stan Kotala, 946-8840, ccwiba@keyconn.net.

SATURDAY MAY 11TH: YARDSALE. The Bells Gap Trail will be holding a yard sale fundraiser. You can set up a table to sell items or just come and shop. For more information contact Hazel Bilka at hab@blwd.k12.pa.us

Wednesday June12th: 6 PM the Annual John Healy Memorial 5K race. The race benefits the Lower Trail while remembering one of the trail's very dedicated volunteers who lost the battle with cancer.

If you'd like to schedule an event call Stan Kotala, Rails to Trails Event Coordinator at 814-946-8840 or email ccwiba@keyconn.net

JUST FYI:

In the January Newsletter we wrote about the H B & T Rail Trail. If you want to check the trail out before going, one of

the trail users made a short YouTube video of the trail. You can check it out via this link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SF106NyCgA>

SURE SIGN OF SPRING: PEEPERS



Have you heard them? The Peepers have started singing, calling for a mate. You can hear them along the trail. They are small frogs that are 3/4" to 1 1/4" long but have very loud voices. The females are the larger but it is the males who are singing.

The dominant males come early to get the best territories.

BOARD VACANCY:

Rails to Trails is sad to report that there is another Board Vacancy to be filled. Joe Bondi passed away Sunday, April 21st. Joe has been a Board member since the mid 1990's. A full article about Joe will appear in the next newsletter. In accordance with our by-laws a Board vacancy shall be filled by a special election presided over by the president. A special election will be held at the August board meeting. Nominations shall be accepted from the floor preceding the election. A special election will be held at the May board meeting to fill the term of Bill Taafe, who passed away suddenly in January.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: (____)-_____

E-mail _____

_____ New Membership _____ Renewal

_____ Individual	\$15.00
_____ Family	\$20.00
_____ Supporting	\$50.00
_____ Group	\$75.00

I am interested in:

_____ Horses	_____ Hiking
_____ Heritage	_____ Bicycling
_____ Nature Study	_____ Jogging
_____ Other	

I would like to help by volunteering for:

Make checks payable to:

Rails-to-Trails of Central PA Inc.
PO Box 592, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648
(814)-832-2400
www.rttcpa.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday May 5th	Spring Gathering, 1 PM at the Mt Etna Trailhead.
Saturday May 11th	Terry Wentz Memorial Hike, 2PM - meet at the Terry Wentz Environmental Education Center at Canoe Creek State Park
Saturday May 11th	Yard Sale Fundraiser – Main Street, Bellwood to benefit the Bells Gap Rail Trail
Tuesday May 14th	Monthly Board Meeting, 7 PM Grannas Station
Saturday May 25th	Run-a-Muck 5k Race, Williamsburg Trailhead. contact Becky Mingle Bmingle701@comcast.net for more information
Wednesday June 12th	John Healy Memorial 5k, 6 PM at the Williamsburg Trailhead.

More details on all events on page 3 of the *Trekker* and on our Web site at www.RTTCPA.org
All are invited to the monthly meetings.

KEEP YOUR ADDRESS CURRENT

This newsletter is mailed 3rd Class Bulk Mail. The Post Office will not forward 3rd Class Bulk Mail. If anything about your address changes, Route Number, Street Numbers, or Zip code, the Trail Trekker will not be forwarded to you. Please keep Rails-to-Trails informed of any address changes by using a post office change of address card or dropping us a note at the following address. Remember, if your mailing address is Highlighted, your membership is about to expire. Please renew quickly and continue to support Rails-to-Trails. Thank You!

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