



Volume 20 Issue 5

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

September/October 2015

SEPTEMBER 11TH NATIONAL MEMORIAL TRAIL

The September 11th National Memorial Trail Alliance recently announced its official trail alignment across Pennsylvania, which it celebrated with an inaugural bicycle ride from western Pennsylvania to New York City beginning on September 10th.

The September 11th National Memorial Trail is a 1,300-mile commemorative trail linking the National September 11th Memorial in New York City, the Pentagon Memorial and the Flight 93 Memorial in Shanksville, PA. The Trail is envisioned as a multi-use corridor for hiking and cycling and features an accompanying back-road motor route for driving, motorcycling and public and tour transportation.

David Brickley, President of the September 11th National Memorial Trail Alliance said, "This will be an historic ride to inaugurate the September 11th National Memorial Trail, a unique tribute to those who so tragically perished on September 11th, 2001. The Trail serves as a symbol of the resiliency and character of the communities in which the victims and their families lived and worked. It also has been designed to link historic points of interest along the route where these fundamental traits of American character have shone throughout our history."

We are honored yet humbled to say that the Lower Trail is part of this National Trail. So those individuals who ride this trail route honoring those whose lives were forever changed on 9/11 will ride along the Lower Trail. As we said, we are very honored to be part of this Trail Alliance.

For more information on the September 11th National Memorial Trail you may visit the website: www.911trail.org

HAWK MOUNTAIN AND THE UPPER SCHUYLKILL RIVER TRAIL

By Bob Richers

My son Aaron came home from duck hunting last fall complaining about Bald Eagles buzzing his duck decoys. Little does he realize how fortunate we are to witness the restoration of this magnificent bird of prey.

The PA Game News had printed several articles about Hawk Mountain in the late 1970's. One was about a massive Broad Wing Hawk migration. My bucket list included a visit. In mid-September of 1981, along with my daughters Christy and Anita,

we visited the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary north of Reading, PA in search of Broad Wing Hawks. My wife Sue stayed at home with Aaron, who was 2 at the time, for a relaxing day without all of us under foot. Within 5 minutes of entering the north observation lookout we saw a mature Bald Eagle glide in low and circle twice before moving on.

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary was established in the 1930's with private funding. Prior to that time, hawks were slaughtered on these mountains. There are pictures of hunters standing knee deep in dead birds of prey. Not until the early 1970's were most hawks finally protected in Pennsylvania.

At the sanctuary there are teams counting migrating raptors thru autumn (August 15-December 15) and the spring (April-May 15). During the whole autumn period, the year of our visit, there were only 19 Bald Eagles and 53 Golden Eagles observed, so we were lucky to be in the right place at the right time. By comparison, during the autumn count in 2013, 380 Bald Eagles and 161 Golden Eagles were recorded.

The successful recovery of the Eagles is the result of 2 changes: first, the banning of the pesticide DDT, which studies discovered was causing the thinning of egg shells of predatory raptors at the top of the food chain. Second was the requirement that waterfowl hunters could only use steel shot and lead was no longer permitted. The Bald Eagle would salvage the wounded waterfowl, resulting in lead poisoning. While not exceptionally fast fliers, they will prey on whatever they can catch, including small domestic pets and even young lambs.

At Hawk Mountain, Bald Eagles and Broad Wing Hawks are more numerous in mid-September and Golden Eagles in early November. The best days are when a northwest wind follows a cold front. When walking the trail to the north and south lookouts, you are also walking on a section of the Appalachian Trail.

Now when Sue and I get away on our own, we like to take our time and enjoy visiting the area's rail trails. It seems that our bikes get moody if we leave them at home! Trails close to Hawk Mountain are: the Schuylkill River Trail – Bartram Section, Muhlenburg Rail Trail, Schuylkill Valley Heritage Trail, Union Canal Trail and the Lehigh and New England Trail. If you are also really into birding, south of Reading just north of the turnpike, the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area is a must see.

For more information on Hawk Mountain or these trails you may visit: www.hawkmountain.org, <http://www.traillink.com/trail/schuylkill-river-trail--bartram-trail-section.aspx>, (this website will link you right to the other trails mentioned above.) and <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=613318&mode=2> this site will take you to the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area or just google Middle Creek.

SPEAKING OF THE BALD EAGLE:



Lower Trail users continue to experience the great sightings of Bald Eagles along the trail. Trail members and very dedicated volunteers, Rick and Sally Hess saw these two eagles sitting up

by Indian Rock, (the rock formation along the river between Grannas Station and Williamsburg Park). This picture may not show it well, but you can plainly see one eagle sitting on top of the rock. The second eagle is just below and off to the right. If you have a computer please look up the newsletter on-line, www.rttcpa.org. In the colored photo, you can see the second eagle much better. It is so great that these eagles seem to have made the Juniata River along the trail their home.

WHAT IS THE LOWER TRAIL GOOD FOR?

When you think of attractions to go to, how many have such a number of diverse options as a rail trail

In this month's newsletter, I want to focus on **Enjoying the Fall Foliage**. Autumn is one of the most beautiful seasons in Pennsylvania. The air becomes cooler and crisper and the leaves take on an artist's palette. Fall festivals are occurring in just about every community and pumpkins are appearing on everyone's porches in preparation for Halloween. Everyone should take the time to just take a walk or bike ride and just soak in the beauty the trail and all of the fall foliage it has to offer. Just taking the time to do this is some of the best "therapy" individuals/families can enjoy. So what are you waiting for? Go enjoy!

WILD FLOWER WATCH: BIRDSFOOT TREFOIL

BY Bob Richers



Trefoil is another example of a non-native Eurasia wild flower that is widely established world-wide. It grows anywhere and thrives in waist areas. Birdsfoot Trefoil is used for erosion control and grown for pasture, hay and silage. It blooms profusely from June thru September

and a pound of seed pods produce 375,000 seeds. This leads to

its success, but also results in it being labeled invasive in regions of North America and Australia.

Birdsfoot is a herbaceous perennial legume. It has a deep tap root with numerous surface side roots. The plant can reach a height of 2 to 3 feet tall, but also thrives when mowed or grazed close to the ground. It is similar in appearance to some clovers. It has 5 leaflets with the central 3 leaves holding dominance above others, thus the use of the name "trefoil." The ¼ inch yellow flowers, which look like tiny dragonflies, bloom in clusters at the end of the stems. The flowers develop brown seed pods which look like a "bird's foot" extending from the stem. It produces slight amounts of hydrogen cyanide, normally not injurious to humans but if condensed, can be used as a sedative.



Birdsfoot Trefoil is a choice food source for Canada goose, deer and elk. It provides a green ground cover most of the year which is attractive to pheasant and ducks. This plant is also used as a green crop, hay and pasture for livestock. As a non-bloating legume, it produces 20% more growth after July 1st. than most other dryland grass legume mixtures.

While driving along interstate 99 throughout the summer, the yellow flowers of Trefoil are abundant along the side of the road. Even though I never noticed the plant in my neighborhood, when an older home down the street was torn down and back filled, Trefoil somehow appeared on the property. This little flower is here to stay, so we might as well enjoy it.

CONSTRUCTION ON THE TRAIL

Heads up to trail users. We are planning to re-surface approximately 2½ miles of the Lower Trail. Grannas Brothers will be re-surfacing the trail between Mt. Etna and Waterstreet at the end of October or beginning of November. Vegetation has been encroaching on the sides and center of the trail in this section and we've received a number of requests to address this problem. Earlier this year, we received a \$6,000.00 Act 13 Marcellus Shale Legacy Fund grant from the Huntingdon County Planning Commission with the help of the Morris Township Supervisors towards the overall project cost of \$35,000.00.

We were also fortunate to have received a grant from the Lower Trust to cover most of the remaining \$29,000.00 we need to move forward with this project. We will keep you updated as to the start dates of this project, please check the website for updates at www.rttcpa.org.

We have received numerous questions as to why there has not been much resurfacing on the Huntingdon County end of the trail. The main reason is funding. We continue to tell people that our trail is PRIVATELY OWNED and MAINTAINED, (the membership owns the trail and volunteers maintain it). We depend on donations and grants to operate and maintain the trail. Grants have been harder to secure and many of the grants must now have the municipality that the trail runs through apply for grant funding. We have been very fortunate that Morris Township has been willing to help us out in Huntingdon County. If you live in Huntingdon County, please thank your elected

officials who have supported Rails to Trails of Central Pennsylvania Inc. and ask others to add their support. It would go a long way in helping us to secure funds to help maintain the trail. Also, please urge more people to join our organization as each membership helps.

THANK YOU

It is hard to believe that the summer has flown by and our summer Grannas Station Program Series has come to an end. We would like to extend a very special thank you to Board Member Peggie Goodman for putting the program series together and working to arrange exceptional speakers to present each program. We would also like to thank these speakers for taking their time to share their knowledge with us. We look forward to presenting the series again next year with even more programs, if possible. Also, our Grannas Station headquarters building continues to improve with spouting added this summer. We hope to add a deck to the rear of the building next year. We hope you had a chance to stop in and see the station. Thanks also to member/volunteer Helen Yoder for her work in painting and cleaning the station. She does an exceptional job.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS Posted on our bulletin boards:

Undated: "First time on the Lower Trail. A wonderful ride!! The Lenze Family Dave, Lisa, Kristen, & Michelle."

6/3/2015: "Love the new paving. Don, Esther, Ed, and Ann Mifflintown."

6/5/2015: "Saw a black snake crossing the trail! Weston Looper."

6/6/2015: "Grilled lunch on the trail - beautiful day!! Reginald Witner, Lyndell Zimmerman, Josiah Simes, Stewart Ebersole, Valory Ebersole."

6/11/2015: "Came all the way from Houston, loved it."

6/12/2015: "What a great day to be on the trail. Happy trails to you! Dennis and Sue from Hollidaysburg."

Undated: "Our favorite trail to bike on! All the way from Brooklyn, NY! --Sharpes "

6/25/2015: "Always a pleasure biking on the trail. Free fun & exercise! Gary and Debbie."

6/29/2015: "Great Day. Saw a snow bunny. Marsh, Kaitlyn, Andrew & Dick."

6/30/2015: "BEAR SIGHTING! Between Water St. and Rt. 22 bridge."

7/4/2015: "We are camping. Hailey and grammy."

7/6/2015: "Great ride! Kane, PA."

7/11/2015: "Saw Indigo Bunting/Sapphire bird. Tandem ride - Bicycle built for 2. Also called bicycle built for divorce. Ha Ha."

7/25/2015. "Black snake today!"

8/3/2015. "What a beautiful trail! Thank you to all the volunteers that maintain it! Natalie, Alex & Cecilia."

8/13/2015. "I (love) PA! Thru-hiking the Great Eastern Trail (GET) via the Mid-State Trail (MST) for now. Left Niagara Falls, NY (6/8/15) Gulf of Mexico, FL (12/22/15) trailjournals.com/greateastertrail2015.

8/15/2015. "To who takes care of this trail T.Y. Hope to meet you all someday. Brian, Kim."

8/15/2015. "Riding on a hot day with friends."

8/15/2015. "Best bike ride ever!!! Ealor B."

8/20/2015. "All the way from Manchester, England. Jordan."

8/23/2015. "Great day with the family. The Garretts - York, PA."

8/26/2015. "Great ride - Alexandria to Flowing Springs and back! This is my official 1st Day of Retirement! Hope to spend many more days riding my bike. Thank you for this fantastic trail."

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



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday October 13th
Tuesday November 10th

Monthly Board Meeting 7 PM at the Grannas Station
Monthly Board Meeting 7 PM at the Grannas Station

More details on all events see the insert of the *Trekker* or visit our Web site at www.RTTCPA.org
All are invited to the monthly meetings.

KEEP YOUR ADDRESS CURRENT

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Rails-to-Trails of Central Pennsylvania, Inc.
Post Office Box 592
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648-0592
814--832-2400

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