



Volume 18 Issue 4

Rails to Trails of Central PA Inc.

July/August/September 2013

## Young Eagle in its nest:



*Photo by Jeff Wingate*

Just an update on our resident eagle family. In the past newsletter we reported that a pair of eagles built a nest off the trail near Waterstreet. Jeff Wingate followed the progress of the

building of the nest, the parents sitting and caring for the eggs and at last, pictures of the young. The photo above is one of the young eagles standing on the nest. Jeff felt they were very close to "flight school stage". We are only hoping that the eagles found this a nice neighborhood and will return again next year.

## GATHERING AND RAFFLE



Over 140 people came out to enjoy this year's annual Spring Gathering on May 5th. The weather was absolutely beautiful.

Todd Emeigh and Michelle Wantz served as the Grill Masters, cooking all the hamburgers, kielbasa and hotdogs to perfection.



After enjoying the meats and all the delicious salads, casseroles and deserts that were brought by all who attended, we had the drawing for the raffle prizes.

### This year's Raffle winners were:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Prize:** Norm Saylor from Tyrone
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize:** Terry Smith from Altoona
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize:** Catherine Sayerga from Edinboro
- 4<sup>th</sup> Prize:** Patty Swanson from Hollidaysburg

Again this year, Tom Fisher from Williamsburg was our top ticket sales person, selling over 315 tickets. He sold the first place ticket this year as well.

Thank you to everyone who sold their raffle tickets. A special

thank you to Spokes-n-skis of Lakemont, Hoss's Steak and Sea House, and Moosewood Laser Creations of Belleville for donating this year's prizes. Also, thanks to Holland Brothers Meats of Duncansville and Hoss's for donating all the meats for the picnic. Please remember these businesses when you are in need of services that they provide; the companies greatly support Rails to Trails. Remember to mark your calendar for next year's gathering, which is usually the first Sunday in May.

## HOLLIDAYSBURG STUDENTS RETURN:

Over the past 12 years, the Lower Trail has benefited from Hollidaysburg Area High School's Community Service Days program. This year we had over 40 students volunteer on the trail May 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. Trail volunteers Adam Grow and Ed Donahoe outlined a number of jobs; everything from picking up sticks on and beside the trail, to resetting posts, fixing fence, putting preservative on the tables and benches, adding topsoil and seeding areas etc... These students help get the trail ready for prime user season. We greatly thank these students, teachers and our volunteers for the work done.

## THE 16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL LOWER TRAIL IN MEMORY OF JOHN HEALY

The rain held off on Wednesday, June 12<sup>th</sup> for over 60 runners to participate in the 5k race remembering John Healy and benefiting Rails to Trails. As always, Phil Sukenik did a great job organizing and running the entire event. This year's winners for the men were: 1<sup>st</sup> place, 16-year-old Dima Kunstbeck with a time of 17 minutes and 59 seconds and in 2<sup>nd</sup> place, 37-year-old Sam Schilling with a time of 19 minutes and 57 seconds. For the women: in 1<sup>st</sup> place, 30-year-old Jayme Orr with a time of 20 minutes and 5 seconds; 2<sup>nd</sup> place, 30-year-old Laura Porta with a time of 20 minutes and 7 seconds. It should be noted that several of the runners this year also were participants in this year's Boston Marathon.

We would like to thank the racers, volunteers and the sponsors for making this year's race very successful. Sponsors for this year's race were: Highmark, Martins General Stores, Keller Engineers, Labor Specialties Inc. (LSI), Ameriserv Financial, Hoss's Family Steak and Sea House and Roaring Spring Premium Spring Water.

## TREE OF THE MONTH: PITCH PINE

By Dave Despot



Pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*) is a medium sized tree (grows to 60 feet in height) that can be found scattered throughout all but the northern tier of Pennsylvania. This species often grows on poor soils, in areas where soil depth is limited, and on sites that are too wet or too dry for other species.

The native range of pitch pine begins in Maine and extends southward to western Virginia and eastern Tennessee.

At first look, you might mistake pitch pine for eastern white pine, but a closer look indicates that the needles are arranged in fascicles (clusters) of 3 (or sometimes 2) not 5 as are the needles of the eastern white pine. The needles are 2 to 5 inches long, yellowish green in color, and are often twisted. Another unique characteristic of pitch pine trees is the epicormic branching evident on the trunk. Epicormic branches are shoots that arise spontaneously from adventitious or dormant buds on stems or branches of woody plants. Pitch pine is one of the only pines able to produce epicormic branches and because of this ability, trees of this species have an advantage when recovering from fire or injury.

Cones mature in the autumn of their second year, but may persist on the tree for up to ten years. Twigs tend to be golden brown, with rough surfaces created by the leaf scars where needles were once attached. Mature bark is dark in color and broken into plate-like scales with reddish brown edges

Anyone who works with wood, especially for outdoor projects has probably noticed the SYP stamp on pressure treated wood as well as on some specialty products such as roof trusses. There are actually 4 species of pine that are classified as Southern Yellow Pine; loblolly, longleaf, shortleaf, and slash pine. The story goes that wood cut from pitch pine has the density and strength to be classified as SYP; however, it was not included because it grows so far into the north, the use of pitch pine as SYP might open up too much land for competition with the timber trees grown in the south. Wood from pitch pine is used for railroad ties, mine props, and other uses where rot resistance and strength are important.

## WILDFLOWER WATCH: BUTTERFLY WEED

By Bob Richers

There isn't a lot of information printed on the Butterfly Weed, (*Asclepias Tuberosa*), but someone must put some thought into coming up with such an eloquent name. Native Americans chewed on the plant's tough root as a treatment for Pleurisy and other pulmonary problems, thus the other name of Pleurisy Root.



Butterfly weed is a member of the Milkweed family. It is the only milkweed with alternate leaves. They are two to five inches and lance shaped. This wildflower produces a non-milky colorless juice. The stems are hairy and grow from one to two and a half feet tall. The flowers are 3/8" arranged in 2' groups and quite

orange in color. They bloom from June through September and, of course, attract an assortment of butterflies. The fruit is spindle shaped with narrow erect pads.

Butterfly Weed can be found growing in full sunlight dry fields, along roadsides and banks. This attractive plant makes a wonderful addition to any butterfly garden and will attract butterflies, hummingbirds, bees and other small insects. They are best grown from seed and prove difficult to transplant.

## LOSS OF TWO DEDICATED RAILTRAIL BOARD MEMBERS:

Within a month's time Rails to Trails lost two men who contributed greatly to the organization.

On April 21<sup>st</sup> Joseph Bondi Jr. passed away at the age of 82. Joe had been a long-time member and board member of Rails to Trails since the mid 1990's. Joe and his wife Wanda volunteered much of their time to the Lower Trail. Wanda passed away in 2009. Joe was a retired PennDOT engineer and used his skills volunteering his expertise as the engineer overseeing the extension of the Lower Trail from Williamsburg to Flowing Spring. He and Wanda resided in Hollidaysburg where they raised 3 children: Andrea Bondi of Fairfax VA, Joseph III of Moses Lake Wash. and Jonathan of Fairfax VA. They also enjoyed their time with their 5 grandchildren. Joe will be greatly missed as he was still a very active member of the Board until a month before he passed away.

On May 15<sup>th</sup> A. Raymond Goodman passed away. He had been very active in the building and structuring of this organization in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Ray was a past board member and had served as President of the organization.

Ray was married to Peggy Goodman, That name may be very familiar to you because Peggy basically made Fort Roberdow what it is today and just this past February retired as its executive director. Ray and Peggy raised three children, Erin Collot of Florida, Jennifer Slusser of Altoona and a son Erik of Altoona. They also greatly enjoyed spending time with their 5 grandchildren. Ray had worked and then retired from Hayes Large Architects after more than 40 years. With his design experience and love of historic preservation, he contributed greatly to the Lower Trail.

I have known both men since the beginning of Rails to Trails of Central Pennsylvania and can say this organization would not be what it is today without their contributions. Our thoughts and prayers go out to each of their families. These men will be greatly missed.

## REGIONAL TRAIL GUIDE BOOKS:

By Bob Richers

Quite some time ago, I took a spare copy of the New 2011 Guide Book for Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey and also my copy of the History of the Ghost Town Trail to a board meeting. Since the last time I did a book report was in 1966 on





## GRANNAS STATION WELCOME CENTER IMPROVEMETS

*By Karl King*



Attorney Dean Lower, whose financial contributions made the purchase of the Lower Trail possible, continues to support the trail even after his passing.

Thanks to a \$26,000 contribution from the T. Dean Lower and Jane Young Lower Trust, through the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation, Rails to Trails of Central Pennsylvania was able to make substantial improvements to our Grannas Station headquarters building in Ganister.

The building, built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, originally served as a railroad freight station. Acquired by Rails to Trails in 2000, it was only useable during a few months of the year because of a lack of heat and water service. The Lower Foundation grant made it possible to install a heat pump and restore water service to the building,

allowing year-round use of the station for RTTCPA activities while increasing the organization's visibility to trail users.

In addition to the added utility services, the grant made it possible to improve the weather tightness of the building and enhance its attractiveness for visitors with the installation of drywall and crown molding, window trim, baseboard, and track lighting in the public area where interpretive information and visitor guides will be made available.

The heating and air conditioning system was installed by Bovard Heating and Cooling while the interior renovations were done by Sigrist Construction, Inc. The well was re-established by Ritchey Well Drilling, who donated \$300 in in-kind services toward the project. Interior painting will be undertaken by our volunteers.

Due to the improvements resulting from the Lower Trust grant, the Rails to Trails board approved the expenditure of an additional \$17,000 to construct an ADA-compliant access ramp for the building, ensuring it's availability to all members of the public. Construction of the ramp should begin this month.

RTTCPA president Ethan Imhoff said the Lower Trust grant has opened the way to use the building in the way it was originally intended. "Thanks to the generosity of the Lower Trust, Rails to Trails of Central Pennsylvania will be able, for the first time in over a decade, to make full use of Grannas Station as a trail headquarters and visitors center."

## THE "BIKER FRIENDLY" CONCEPT GAINS MOMENTUM:

*By Valerie Burnett*

### State Events:

For the first time ever, funding for bicycle and pedestrian travel made it into Pennsylvania transportation bill SB1, which passed the Senate with bipartisan support (45-5) and passed in the House transportation committee (15-10). Sadly, it has since stalled in the House. Members of a newly formed bi-partisan Bike Caucus promise to work to improve funding for bicyclist and walker needs throughout the state. Members of the Bike Caucus include: Senator Lisa Boscola, Lehigh County; Senator Mike Folmer, Lebanon County; Representative Tom Killion, Delaware County; Representative Mark Longiotti, Mercer County.

### Local Events:

These recent happenings indicate that the dialogue about active transportation for exercise, creating community connectivity, reduced vehicle traffic, and improving environmental conditions are seeping into the consciousness and conversations of residents:

#### Juniata Valley Bike to School Day:

20 volunteers and 40 students cycled to and from Juniata Valley High School on Wednesday, May 8, 2013 to celebrate the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Bike to School Day. Everyone started from the fire hall nearest to them in Alexandria or Petersburg. Fire company personnel and state police escorted the bicycle enthusiasts before and after school.



Participants in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Bike to School Day converge in front of Juniata Valley High School after riding from the fire hall in Petersburg or Alexandria on Wednesday, May 8, 2013 (photo provided by Rachelle Hopsicker from J.C. Blair Memorial Hospital).

Spokespeople from Juniata Valley Sustainability Club, the Bike JC Club of Juniata College, Rothrock Outfitters, J.C. Blair Memorial Hospital, and Juniata Valley School District highlighted specific ideas that fit into the larger goal of making Huntingdon County more biker friendly.

Funding for bicycle safety instruction by licensed cycling instructor Maria Wherley of State College, bicycle helmets, and renting bicycles for students was provided through a grant awarded by the Safe Routes to School Program in cooperation with the Center for Nutrition and Activity Promotion, the Pennsylvania Department of Health and PennDOT.

#### Comprehensive Transportation Funding Panel Discussion:

4 panelists and over 60 people in the audience at a discussion held at the Huntingdon Country Club on Thursday, June 13, 2013, applauded the efforts of the Senate passing SB1, which offers \$2 million in funding for bikeways and walkways. The panelists focused on multimodal transportation needs in Pennsylvania along with the money needed to provide safe infrastructure for all methods of transportation. It was noted and emphasized by the AARP and Mission: Readiness representatives that there exists a critical need for improved bicycle and pedestrian-friendly routes throughout Pennsylvania.

The panel included PA Department of Transportation Deputy Secretary Jim Ritzman; Associated PA Constructors and Keystone Transportation Funding Coalition (KTFC) Robert Latham; Associate State Director of Federal Advocacy at AARP Desiree Hung; Mission: Readiness PA State Director Steve Doster. Approximately 60 people including Senator Eichelberger, Keith Black from Representative Mike Fleck's office, Mike Glazier from Congressman Glenn Thompson's office, County Commissioners Dean Fluke, Gary O'Korn and Jeff Thomas, and former State Representative Sam Hayes attended.

The luncheon was sponsored by Huntingdon County Business and Industry (HCBI) and the Huntingdon Chamber of Commerce.

#### Biking in Huntingdon:

On April 6, 2013 about 30 people gathered for a "Biking in Huntingdon" potluck to encourage conversation to improve on our current opportunities for bicycling and walking. Greg Anderson of Standing Stone Coffee Company shared ideas including an initiative to make Huntingdon Borough more bicycle friendly with the addition of wrought-iron bike racks created by local blacksmith artists placed throughout the community. There was also discussion about creating a safe path for students from Juniata College to bicycle into downtown Huntingdon. Participants commiserated about the limited access to safe bikeways throughout the county. Pam Grugan, from the Juniata Valley Sustainability Club, suggested the opportunity to increase visibility for this issue by participating in the Juniata Valley Bike to School Day.

The exchange occurred in conjunction with the arrival of 6 cyclists riding from State College to Washington, D.C. to raise awareness of climate change. The riders belong to the Pennsylvania chapter of Interfaith Power and Light: A Religious Response to Global Warming. Participating organizations included: Stone Church, St. James Lutheran, Juniata College faculty, Bike JC Club of Juniata College, The Daily News, and Standing Stone Coffee Company.

Future Events: We welcome more participants as we continue to discuss the importance and value of safe walkways and bikeways for the health and well-being of our families, friends, neighbors, and the broader community.

If you would like to participate in the Annual Juniata Valley Bike to School Day as well as other events that increase visibility for those who use and need alternative transportation methods, please contact Valerie Burnett by email: [RTTVolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:RTTVolunteers@gmail.com) or phone: 814-669-4278.



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*(Or Current Resident)*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Sunday August 25th**  
**Sunday September 8<sup>th</sup>**

**Tuesday September 10<sup>th</sup>**  
**Tuesday October 8<sup>th</sup>**

**Tom Snyder Memorial Bike Ride** Beginning at the Grannas Station at 2 PM  
**In Step for Kids, 5k Run Walk** Sponsored by Big Brothers Big Sisters.  
Registration begins at 12:30, race begins at 2 PM at the **Alfarata Trailhead**.  
**Rails to Trails Board Meeting 7 PM at the Grannas Station.**  
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More details on all events on page 3 of the *Trekker* and on our Web site at [www.RTTCPA.org](http://www.RTTCPA.org)  
All are invited to the monthly meetings.

## KEEP YOUR ADDRESS CURRENT

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