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From the editor:

Hidden wonders

So here we are, just off three-plus inches of rain after weeks of drought. The world right now smells fresh, with a hint of monsoon. The air is still a bit heavy, as if it wants to rain more but can't be bothered for a few days.

For the fall issue of Upper Delaware, we're giving you a glimpse at some hidden wonders, a few of the small secret places here, a little bit of the unknown.

Trees, you might say, are hardly unknown. They are everywhere. But how much do you really know about them? In "Trees please," Sandy Long introduces us to a movement to give trees the recognition they deserve, and remind everyone about the importance of the arboreal world.

Trains still rattle through the towns along the river, and they of course were a key part of our history. Writer and photographer Jeff Sidle brings you a new park in Port Jervis, dedicated to trains and their lore. You can see actual cars on the 10-acre park at the Erie Rail Yard, and learn about the people who drove those trains. Their descendents still live here.

Sharon Peduto has given us a story about Labyrinth Garden PA, one of those small surprises tucked away in Pike County. Labyrinths are not mazes; they are full of mystery, but it is what you learn by walking the paths that is the secret.

We all know about summer's produce. But don't forget the fruits of fall! Kristin Webber tells us about pumpkins, beets, apples and more—and where to find them.

Jeff Sidle is back with his second story, on leucistic animals here. Check out his phenomenal photographs, and learn about animals of a different color. Why the striking variation in piebald animals? What happens to them in the animal world?

And finally, Leah Casner gives us tiny Equinunk, tucked away in a corner of Wayne County, PA. Small towns have a lot to offer, and they're worth visiting, as well as their more populated siblings.

Enjoy this issue, and have a wonderful fall.

Annemarie Schuetz
Section editor

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By Jeffrey Sidle

Cover photo by Jeffrey Sidle

This leucistic whitetail doe was recently seen in the Damascus Township, PA area. Check out those "raccoon" eyes.



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'Trees Please' takes root in the Upper Delaware River region

By SANDY LONG AND DARIA DOROSH

Are you a fan of forests and trees? The Upper Delaware River region is blessed with an abundance of both, and a growing group of tree lovers is launching an exciting initiative known as "Trees Please."

The seeds of the project were sown in an enthusiastic conversation about trees between artistic collaborators Daria Dorosh and Sandy Long, just before the pandemic disrupted life. The project lay fallow until earlier this year, when Dorosh and Long reconnected and found the roots of their mutual interest in trees to be alive and thriving.

Dorosh, a passionate admirer of the work of botanist, medical biochemist and tree advocate Dr. Diana Beresford-Kroeger, became determined to find a way to share the author's ground-breaking work more widely here.

In a New York Times story from February 2022 about Beresford-Kroeger, Cara Buckley writes that "her main focus for decades now has been to telegraph to the world, in prose that is scientifically exacting yet startlingly affecting, the wondrous capabilities of trees."

At 77, Beresford-Kroeger steadfastly upholds her goal of combating the climate crisis by fighting for forests and cultivating the native trees she has planted at her home in Ontario—a collection of "hardy specimens that can best withstand a warming planet."

When Dorosh learned that the author's literary agent, Stuart Bernstein, lives locally, she reached out to him to discuss the possibilities for sharing her work with a regional audience through the **River Reporter**. Publisher Laurie Stuart eagerly embraced the idea and the quartet has been bringing things into focus for further conversation with a wider audience.

"My interest in this project is to bring information to our community about the current botanical research and historic cultural knowledge on trees as individuals and communities," said Dorosh. "I envision it as a project that is led by artists and creative thinkers who bring their skills together to offer people more ways to enjoy the nature around them and make informed decisions about it."

The core collaborators aim to convene a broader group of others interested in helping to shape what the elements of the project will look like, specify additional steps to take, and identify who is willing to get involved.

"We share an overarching goal to raise awareness of the almost endless attributes of trees, to celebrate them through the arts, to provide education related to their well-being, to share our appreciation for their many gifts, to connect with others who also value trees and to foster conversations about our relationships with trees," said Long.

"We're also discussing possibilities for



Photo ©Sandy Long

Our relationships with trees range in complexity, from pure and simple appreciation for their artful beauty, to the awe-inspiring wonder of what they contribute to our world. In the mix are the challenging issues of trees as resources, nuisances, damagers of property and more, all contributing to the dynamics of how we co-exist with these magnificent beings. Trees don't need us, but we need them. We should never forget that as we make decisions about their fate and always keep in mind how it affects our own.



Photo @ Daria Dorosh

Fossils recently discovered in Cairo, NY show that the earth's oldest forests date back 385 million years. These early woody forests removed CO₂ from the atmosphere and created the oxygenated planet that makes organic life possible. While human ancestors have been around some six million years, modern humans evolved only 200,000 years ago. Current research shows that forests survive by collaboration and not competition, in which large old trees play an important role. As stewards of the planet we call home, we can learn a lot about survival from trees. Diana's books are a wonderful starting point on that journey. To learn more, visit www.science.org/content/article/scientists-have-discovered-world-s-oldest-forest-and-its-radical-impact-life.

organizing events such as tree plantings, walks, talks, readings, arts experiences ranging from painting to poetry to music, as well as community conversations and roundtable discussions to bring in voices from differing perspectives."

Stuart's enthusiasm for growing the project through the pages and online presence of the **River Reporter** can be traced to her love of trees. "I have always had an affinity with the forest, spending long hours in a backyard woods as a child, and working through my early twenties as a YMCA camp counselor," she said.

"Our connection to the natural world, understanding its rhythm and its collaborative relationships, is imperative to our future. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to foster a greater understanding through the pages of the **River Reporter**, and moving our collective experience toward creativity and knowledge combined with the action of planting and caring for trees."

Beresford-Kroeger is no stranger to the Upper Delaware River region. Bernstein's professional and personal relationships with her resulted in a visit here that he remembers well.

"It was in the fall of 2013, after I had been Diana Beresford-Kroeger's literary agent for several years, that I received an email from Adriana Magaña, who, with her husband Andrew Faust, operate The Center for BioRegional Living in Ellenville, New York," writes Bernstein.

"They are two of the world's leading permaculture designers and teachers. I didn't know this at the time, but Adriana revealed that she and many of her colleagues throughout the region were aware of Diana's work and were interested in having her visit. Adriana and I got to planning a visit by Diana for the following spring. She gave a number of talks, appeared on three radio programs on the ever-welcoming WJFF, including interviews by Dick Reising and Rosie Starr, and concluded her trip with a speaking engagement in Brooklyn.

"Over the course of her stay at my place I managed to learn more about the flora and fauna on my own property than I otherwise would have in a lifetime. Diana's influence can be seen in the number of native trees planted (red oak, wafer ash, mockernut hickory, catalpa, tulip, linden, and black willow, to name a few) and also in the aesthetics of my garden, such as it is (always a work in progress). I look forward to a day when she can return!"

Dorosh and Long plan to share artwork and images such as those included with this story and to encourage sharing of creative work by fellow tree-lovers.

To be kept informed or to engage with the evolution of Trees Please, contact publisher er@riverreporter.com.



Courtesy Treespeak Films/Merit Motion Pictures
Diana Beresford-Kroeger

The right to a home

"A forest is a home. All the forests of the global garden are homes to microbiota, insects, birds, mammals and plants. These homes are important to each and every form of life. No one species is better or worse than the other. They are equal to one another in a chain of connectivity. Each bee, each wolf has the right to dream or die, has the right to live a life, its own particular life, of wonder. And it has a right to that home until the end of time."

To find a list of trees recommended for planting in the area where you live, visit calloftheforest.ca/plant-a-tree/.

Excerpt from "The Global Forest: 40 Ways Trees Can Save Us." Support independent bookstores at <https://bookshop.org/books/the-global-forest-forty-ways-trees-can-save-us/9780143120162>.



Photo ©Sandy Long

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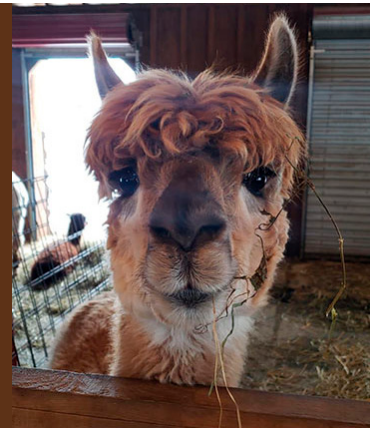
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A LABYRINTH IN PIKE COUNTY



Drone image taken by Napoleon Molfetas, contributed by Labyrinth Garden PA

The labyrinth from above.

By SHARON PEDUTO

GREENTOWN, PA — Carol Cannon-Nesco's journey began 25 years ago this fall. She went on a pleasure ride in the car, and doesn't know why she pulled over and began walking. The spot was near Columcille Megalith Park, "Land of Myth and Mystery," so maybe it was no surprise: something was calling to her.

Without a map, Cannon-Nesco walked until she saw "a circle of stones." It was her first sighting of a labyrinth.

She walked in, not knowing its significance, but it resonated with her. Time and again she'd return, taking her son and friends. "It seemed as though it was trying to tell me something," but what?

The vision of the labyrinth would stay in her psyche.

One winter, she spent 5 1/2 hours digging out snow to resemble a labyrinth. Children were enchanted, she said, playing in the dug-out circles, which, in a labyrinth, are called circuits. Cannon-Nesco was enchanted, watching them.

Eight years later, her husband said to her, that she'd "better do something with that field, so I don't have to mow it anymore." That was her awakening. She knew exactly

what to do in that field, she said. It was the beginning of the artist's largest piece of artwork. It would take five years before it was opened to the public.

Living art

Cannon-Nesco would soon learn that living art is never truly done. Maintenance is an ongoing process. Each year brings different things that need to be fixed. Even now, she spends a minimum of two hours a day working on her project.

One wet season, the labyrinth washed out eight times. Stone would be moved by the rain onto the mulched paths. She'd fix it every time. Her husband finally corrected the problem by digging something similar to French drains around the labyrinth.

She began by painting the outline of the labyrinth on the field; then string was used to mark the dimensions before digging or stone placement began. You need a lot of stone to create the circuits in a labyrinth. Cannon-Nesco built 11 circuits, using the template of the Chartres Labyrinth, which was built in the 13th century. When asked where she got all the stones she mischievously replied "I took them from our stone wall."

Her husband eventually became savvy. "Stop taking stones from my wall," he

said. It didn't stop Cannon-Nesco. A friend said she could take stones from her wall. She needed double the amount of stones to grow her garden within the circles. She went to a quarry, filling buckets of stone to complete her circles.

As you walk, the secret garden presents itself on both sides. All flowers were and are planted by seed. Recently a California couple walked it while measuring the distance. It is a mile to the center.

A place of sharing and celebration

Cannon-Nesco has welcomed charities that want to hold fundraisers at the labyrinth. This year, partner organization Angels and Dragonflies Children's Charity has been collecting donations of toiletries to make 200 "Bags of Love." When they're holding an event at the labyrinth, you might hear an Asian string instrument and a piano playing.

No appointments are necessary during event days. The cost is \$3 per person for admission. There's no charge for children aged 12 and under.

Every year, World Labyrinth Day is celebrated on the first Saturday of May to "Walk as One at 1" local time. Put that on

When you go

Labyrinth Garden PA is located at 314 Sawmill Rd. in Greentown.

It is open from spring until the first snow. Currently, the hours are from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. by appointment only.

To make an appointment, call 570/350-2517. For updated information, visit labyrinthgardenpa.com.

your calendar for next year.

This is a nondenominational, pet-friendly labyrinth. You can come alone or as a group. You're welcome to meditate, pray or simply enjoy.

In her spare time Cannon-Nesco is a freelance artist, painting and working as a commissioned architectural illustrator. You can see her on YouTube at "The Labyrinth Garden," produced by the Artists' Market Community.

Labyrinths are not a maze. There's only one way in and one way out. Just as in life, you will encounter twists and turns. You may feel lost moving toward the center, only to be brought back toward the beginning. Ultimately, you will end up exactly where you're supposed to be.

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The fruits of fall

By KRISTIN WEBBER

REGION — We all know about the summer growing season, when we get fresh produce from farm stands, farm markets and other farm-to-consumer places. We all know this happens during the height of summer—June, July and August.

We even look forward to the first bounties of the season in early spring—somewhere around mid-to-late May—offering such things as lettuces, spinach, radishes and strawberries.

But what about the things that we can find after that long, glorious warm weather growing season?

Did you know that you can still get fresh produce in the fall?

Some things even like to grow after we've had a frost. In fact, some of the veggies that you see do much better after they've had some cold weather.

Some veggies don't like the heat. What!?

I bet you're thinking, "But I thought all veggies grew better with the heat." That might be true of most fruits and vegetables—tomatoes and peppers thrive in the heat. But there are so many more vegetables than just tomatoes and peppers.

Don't get me wrong, I love tomatoes and peppers. But if we're talking about eating

seasonally and being more farm-to-table minded, we need to talk about the fruits and vegetables that like the cooler weather.

So, when things start to cool down in the late summer, begin looking for produce that likes the cooler weather. That's beets; pumpkins; root vegetables, such as potatoes, parsnips, turnips, rutabagas and carrots; onions; garlic; radishes; broccoli; Brussels sprouts; apples and pears, just to name a few. If you are lucky, you might even find fall offering strawberries, cranberries and currants!

Now that you know some of what you will be able to find after the main growing season, where do you find these yummy delectables?

Well, for starters, check your local farm markets! Here in Sullivan County, NY, we have quite a few markets: Callicoon, Roscoe, Barryville, Livingston Manor, Narrowsburg, Monticello, Jeffersonville, Kauneonga Lake, Liberty, Mamakating and Rock Hill (you can even find me there on occasion offering up timely tips for your produce and kitchen).

And don't forget to look across the river to the farm markets in Pennsylvania. The Main Street Farmers' Market at the Coopersage opens on Saturday, November 5. The Milford Farmers' Market is open at the Columns Museum until Sunday, **- Page 10**



Photo by Marek Studzinski on Unsplash

Fall is apple season.



Photo by Jez Timms on Unsplash

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FRUITS - Page 9

October 9. The Wayne County Farmers' Market is open through October.

But you should also look beyond the farmers' markets. There are plenty of farms that feed our communities. And a lot of those farms will have farmstands right where the food is grown. Think about Diehl Homestead Farm in Callicoon, NY; Good Find Farm in Damascus, PA; Root 'N Roost Farm in White Sulphur Springs, NY; Wild Russet Farm in Jeffersonville, NY; Majestic Farm in Mountain Dale, NY (they have pick-your-own apples!); and Cunningham Family Farm in Swan Lake, NY (pick-your-own pumpkins!). If you are up for a little drive, you will want to visit Kelder's Farms in Kerhonkson, NY.

Of course, there are so many farmstands that I couldn't mention them all. But I guarantee that if you drive around our neck of the woods long enough, you are bound to find your favorite roadside stand.

And I should mention that if you are a home gardener, there's always room for some cold-weather crops. Unless you are like most of us, and have had enough of growing and preserving (and sneaking some extra veggies onto your neighbor's doorstep). Maybe now you are ready to put the garden to bed.

If that's the case, be sure to support the other growers in our region, and find a farmstand or farm market to visit!



Photo by Griffin Wooldridge on Unsplash

Pumpkins are waiting for you. Think pie or pumpkin stew.

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RR photos by Jeffrey Sidle

Locomotive No. 7299 was built by the Plymouth Locomotive Works of Plymouth, OH, a specialty manufacturer of small industrial locomotives. The diminutive 18-ton locomotive was built for the U.S. Army, and rolled off the assembly line on October 13, 1941.

A park for railroad and history buffs

By JEFFREY SIDLE

PORT JERVIS, NY — The Port Jervis Transportation History Center (PJTHC) opened to the public for the first time on Memorial Day weekend.

It's a big deal for Port Jervis; it could bring plenty of tourists into town, as well as offer a place for locals to congregate.

There is a fenced dog park and a flat area for walking, adjacent to the box car that is home to some of the museum's collection of smaller artifacts and memorabilia.

The 10-acre park is located at the former Erie Rail Yard, which is now owned by the City of Port Jervis.

The railyard includes one of the last remaining railroad turntables—those were mainly used to change the direction of engines, but were also used for rail cars. The yard has been in continuous use since 1848, and provides a fantastic historic setting for a rail-themed transportation history center. It's large enough to hold an entourage of train cars and engines in various stages of restoration.

Adjacent to this property is an active rail line, the northernmost terminal of the New Jersey Transit Authority's passenger train service. The tracks continue to the north as the freight line of the New York, Susquehanna and Western Railroad up the Delaware River Valley to Binghamton.

While visiting the site on Sunday, August, 7, I had the pleasure of speaking with Rudy Garbely and his wife, Carolyn Hoffman, both of whom are deeply involved in several of the partnering organizations for this collaborative undertaking.

Garbely is the chairman of the board of the PJTHC; the group is composed of members representing six additional organizations involved in the project. The Dining Car Society owns all the passenger cars; the Tri-State Railroad Preservation Society operates the museum in the box car; the Outdoor Club of Port Jervis focuses on maintaining the grounds; the Friends of Port Jervis Arts and History operates as a fundraising arm; and the Conrail Historical Society has a couple of sheds on the property available to the PJTHC.

One of the sheds houses a couple of speeder cars. The speeders, needing some electric repairs, are small, powered cars that were used to examine the tracks for any indications of required maintenance.

Garbely has been interested in trains most of his life. He began with model railroading and was a history major in college, doing his thesis on a railroad in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. During a summer break from college classes, he got a job at a local railroad, and ended up staying for six years. He moved through the ranks, first as a "go-for" and then, with his mechanical background, was soon doing the hands-on maintenance work.

Garbely also had some computer background, which he put to use in marketing for the railroad. Eventually, he moved away from his job at the railroad to focus on his business, the Garbely Publishing Company, one of the leading publishers of railroad history titles in North America. Garbely is also the author of nine books on the history of railroads.

Hoffman is president of Operation Toy Train, which operates in conjunction with the Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Foundation. Each year, the group collects toys on its train cars, and then gives the 30,000-plus donations to Toys for Tots. Operation Toy Train owns the majority of the train cars at the yard.

With over two decades of administrative and planning experience, she has coordinated successful events for the Port Jervis Transportation History Center, the Dining Car Society, and The Conrail Historical Society. She is the volunteer coordinator for several of the groups involved in the PJTHC.

The couple was quick to point out that Garbely and Hoffman are but two of many people who have worked very hard at making this dream become a reality. "There are a ton of people that are involved in various managerial/administrative capacities from all of the organizations without whom PJTHC would not be possible," Garbely said. "For example, Mike — Page 13



New Jersey Transit rail lines and trains at the yard in Port Jervis, adjacent to the Port Jervis Transportation History Center.



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RAILROAD -Page 11

Ward, president of the Outdoor Club, is the PJTHC's executive director and manages most of the day-to-day activity on the site, and he also personally handles nearly all of our grounds maintenance. Another one is Frank Eichenlaub, Operation Toy Train's vice president and a director at the PJTHC, who was the one that not only had the initial idea for PJTHC in late 2019, but has also supervised or personally performed all of the trackwork on site that gave us a place to put all of the trains," and organized their shipment, he said. "There are probably a dozen more people that I could list here that are absolutely integral to PJTHC's operations and very existence."

When asked who the target audience will be, Hoffman said, "Most kids are into anything that is big and moves." Retired rail workers are bringing their grandchildren, so the kids can experience what railroading is about.

She said she is excited when local visitors react to the project. They say, "This is great! There is something going on and it doesn't just look like trains rusting to the rails!"

Garbely interjected, "This is a big railroad town. Anyone who has lived here for a generation or two, somebody in their family has worked for the railroad."



RR photo by Jeffrey Sidle
This view of the historic 115-foot railroad turntable, on the site of the Port Jervis Transportation History Center, was taken from Point Peter at Elks-Brox Park, on the hillside overlooking the city of Port Jervis.

Where to go

86 Pike St., Port Jervis, NY
Learn more at pjthc.org.

Hours

The Port Jervis Transportation History Center is now open on weekends from 12 noon to 4 p.m.
Admission is free, but donations are highly encouraged.

Next event: Halloween at the 'Eerie' yard

It takes place on Saturday, October 29, beginning at 5 p.m. Check pjthc.org for details.

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With a changing demographic, participating in community dialogue is more important than ever.

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We've heard from our youth this past summer. Their #1 request? More spaces to hang!

And on October 26 at 1:30 pm, we'll be holding an event at the Tusten Town Hall for seniors.

Visit bit.ly/tkktkktk or scan the code to learn more!

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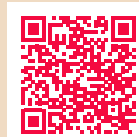


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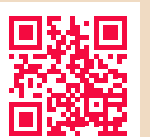
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After all, small is beautiful

Tiny Equinunk has a lot to offer

By LEAH CASNER

EQUINUNK, PA — While the census-designated area of Equinunk stretches miles to the south and east, the tiny, exquisite Equinunk Historic District sits at the intersection of Equinunk Creek with the Delaware River, eight miles below the birth of the Main Stem of the river at the confluence of the East and West branches.

This northeastern corner of Pennsylvania, known as the Upper Delaware region, is part of the glaciated low plateau section of the Allegheny Plateau, according to the National Park Service. A 2,400 square mile escarpment forms the Pocono mountains.

After glaciers receded in northeastern PA, the first people probably arrived 12,000 years ago, living partly in caves along the river, according to the Equinunk Historical Society. When Europeans began arriving in the 17th century, the Munsee branch of the Lenape people used the area as hunting and fishing grounds rather than as a permanent settlement.

As more colonists arrived, the Munsees moved away, until eventually the remaining Lenape were pushed out by the colonists, who had allied with the traditional Lenape rivals, the Iroquois.

'Clothes on rocks'

The meaning of “Equinunk” is uncertain, adds the historical society. Sources say that in the native language, “nunk” means place, but the remaining syllables could refer to “clothes on rocks” or to trout—the Delaware River is renowned for its fishing and its clear waters.

“Clothes on rocks” could describe laundry being dried in the sun; other sources suggest the colonists offered clothes to the Indigenous people. It was said that the Munsee would not accept garments from the hands of those who offered, but would take them if they were left on the rocks. That gave the Europeans both a saintly hue and the privilege of naming the location, and one might say that both seem rather historic.

Preserving the past

Located at the intersection of Pine Mill Road and U.S. Route 191, the Equinunk Historical Society and Calder Museum run public programs, porch sales, musical events and tours. The society preserves pieces of the past and shares them willingly with visitors.

As the museum describes it, “Equinunk’s first growth spurt dates from Alexander Calder’s house and sawmill, as well as D. C. Scudder’s 1847 tannery and the axe factory of Dillon & Cole.

“These two pioneer industries thrived. As more people were drawn to the area, commerce increased rapidly.”

Lordville’s railroad station, dated 1848, is located nearby, as is the 1869 Lordville-Equinunk bridge, built by the Roebling Bridge Company. At that point, “it became easier for city people to vacation in



RR photo by Leah Casner

Taking a walk near the Equinunk United Methodist Church.

rural Equinunk.” Four hotels were built by the 1880s, as well as seven boarding houses that served the area after 1900.

“By 1897,” the historical society notes, “Equinunk had grown to a population of 445, with two churches, six stores, three saloons, two acid factories, an excelsior mill, a creamery, a furniture store, a millinery, a blacksmith, a carriage shop, a harness shop, two physicians and an undertaker.”

Today that clatter of industry has disappeared, and now the town sits nestled quietly between bosomy hills lining the Delaware River.

Unlike many former industrial areas, though, instead of fading completely into the landscape, several remaining homes in the town are themselves pieces of history, either preserved or refurbished.

In the historic district

The Equinunk General Store, at the intersection of 191 and Lordville Road, has been a general store since 1876. Restored by the current proprietor, it provides locally sourced meats, cheese, butter, ice cream, pastries, handmade goods, antiques and always fresh hot coffee. There are sandwiches, and Saturday BBQs all summer, as well as fishing supplies and advice, if the staff is available.

The post office is next door. A few steps away in a former barn is a restaurant catering to hearty appetites. Grandma Laurie’s is open early enough even for fishermen.

Across Route 191 and slightly north is the quiet Equinunk cemetery, founded in 1815.

And travel further

Crossing 191 to the east, Lordville Road runs between the local bar—the Equinunk Inn, itself a historic building with many former incarnations devoted to entertainment—and the Equinunk United Methodist Church, where the stained glass windows are glorious.

Continuing east, Lordville Road crosses the river to New York, where following some winding roads will take you to the trailhead for the Bouchoux Trail. It’s a steep 1 1/2-mile hike that crosses over a creek above a waterfall to Jensen’s Ledges, from which you can see miles of the curves of the river below. (The surrounding land is private, so stay on the trail.)

South down Route 191, the volunteer-created and -run Manchester Community Library is open spring, summer and fall on Mondays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. There, local summer visitors as well as local people can borrow books or purchase bags-full during the library’s monthly sales.

The historical society also owns and maintains the Joel Hill water-powered sawmill and the Cleveland Museum, located on Little Equinunk Creek eight miles south, and restored and run by volunteers.

The sawmill is open for tours several weekends during the year, and reservations are required. Pocono Television network did a short program on the sawmill.

Several miles to the south of the heart of the village, if you turn right on Hellmer’s Hill Road, you’ll find the Browning

Beaver Meadow Sanctuary. The sanctuary is a NEPA Audubon Society 78-acre preserve with a three-quarter-mile trail and a wheelchair-accessible viewing deck overlooking a large pond with beavers. Water birds flit overhead.

Summer living

The area is chock-full of sleepaway summer camps, and many houses in the surrounding townships are used as vacation homes or rentals.

There are no hotels or motels within the town, but vacation rentals on Airbnb and VRBO are abundant, including a former general store just a few steps up the hill from the center of town.

Twelve miles to the west, the Inn Starlight Lake and the restaurant, 289 Starlight Lake Rd., has lovely views and an old-fashioned vibe.

There are several fishing lodges and outfitters on the West Branch above Equinunk. Stop at the Delaware River Club Fly Fishing Resort and the West Branch Angler & Resort.

Campsites in the area are available for short rentals. Soaring Eagle is right on the Delaware River, and you can find a more pristine experience at Quilted Woods.

When you visit, bring cash! Cell service is a gamble at best. The nearest gas station is eight miles south.

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Nature in many shades

By JEFF SIDLE

REGION — The beauty of nature surrounds us here in the Upper Delaware River region of New York and Pennsylvania. The diversity of plants and animals can provide a lifetime of wonderment, enjoyment and a chance to learn about our environment.

Whether it be out on a hike in the forest, traveling down the river on a float trip, fishing in one of the many lakes, or even in your own backyard, you are guaranteed to come across something that will broaden your knowledge in the ways of the wild.

I've spent countless hours over the years enjoying the bounty provided by Mother Nature, both as a hunter/gatherer and a nature photographer. Lately, I have enjoyed photographing the whitetail bucks with their antlers—which grow quickly—in the velvet stage, as well as the many does and what seems to be a banner number of fawns all over the area.

Recently a friend of mine mentioned seeing a “piebald” fawn while out mowing lawns in the vicinity of Narrowsburg. I haven't seen this abnormal coloring in quite a few years, so I ventured out to see if I could capture some images.

On the third visit, I finally got a glimpse of this stunning animal, and did capture a few clicks on the sensor, but not really anything presentable. On my fourth visit the doe came out early, accompanied by her twin fawns, one of which is partially white. It was a special encounter and I came away with a bunch of photos for my efforts.

A deer of a different color

“Piebald” is the term, passed down through generations, describing deer that have blotches of white fur mixed in with their normal tones of reddish-brown or gray-brown fur, depending on the season. The biological term for this condition is leucism, and the condition is caused by a genetic mutation, injury or disease.

In order for a fawn to display the trait, both of the parents need to carry the mutation in their DNA, and even so, because it is a recessive gene, the trait can skip over generations of offspring. Leucistic animals differ from true albino animals, which lack all pigmentation and have pink/blue eyes and pink noses.

Besides the obvious impact to the deer's natural camouflage, piebald deer can be afflicted with skeletal deformities of the backbone and legs, and they have rounded noses. Many are never seen, as they don't survive long after birth. Leucistic deer make up less than one percent of the whitetail population, so if you get a chance to see one, consider yourself very lucky.

A couple of days after seeing this beautiful creature in Narrowsburg, I was traveling in Damascus Township, PA two or three miles from Narrowsburg. I saw another piebald fawn in a neighborhood yard.

The homeowner saw me stopped in front of his house, with my large lens poking out the window, and told me about two others that he knew of a mile or so from his house. I headed down the road, and **- Page 19**



RR photos by Jeffrey Sidle

A leucistic fawn, commonly referred to as a “piebald” whitetail deer, was seen recently in the Narrowsburg, NY area.



This is a leucistic chipmunk that I was very fortunate to come across this spring, while hiking in a Pennsylvania game land that borders the Delaware River.

Inset: A representative capture of a normally pigmented chipmunk.

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NATURE - Page 17

although it was too late for good photos, I was rewarded by seeing both of them down the road, up under the apple trees.

The other, normal-looking, deer in the small groups at each sighting, did not display any out-of-the-ordinary behavior toward the leucistic members of the group. I did hear from another nature-photographer friend, who has photographed whitetails in a breeding facility, that a breeder buck had killed a piebald offspring while occupying the same pen. I couldn't find any other information about this happening in the wild.

One of the highest concentrations of piebald deer is located at the now-closed Seneca army depot in upstate New York. The depot was surrounded by a fence in 1941, essentially creating a 10,600-acre deer preserve that contained a population in which some deer carried the gene causing leucism. Hunting was allowed by the members of the military, and in 1951 the depot commander established a rule restricting the taking of the white deer. Today 200 to 300 of the estimated 800 whitetail deer on the property are leucistic. The Nature Conservancy is involved in discussions on what will become of the deer and other wildlife on this highly desirable piece of property.

In both New York and Pennsylvania, leucistic/albino deer are legal game and are open to harvest by credentialed hunters. Folklore from many local hunting camps has passed down through generations that the killing of a white deer would bring the shooter a long string of bad luck, including possibly never bagging a deer again. Native Americans considered the white deer mystical and held them in high esteem.

Leucism affects many other mammals, reptiles, birds, plants and even crustaceans, but not humans. I was very fortunate to see and photograph a leucistic chipmunk earlier in the spring while walking a trail on Pennsylvania game lands along the Delaware River. It was the first one I've seen in my 67 years.

The opposite end of the spectrum

Having spent some time on the River Flats trail in Narrowsburg, I have seen and photographed many gray squirrels that exhibited a trait known as melanism. I wondered why there were so many, which led me to a little bit of research.

Melanism is also a genetic condition, which presents as black or dark-brown coloration in affected species. Because a melanistic animal's offspring have an increased chance of being melanistic, under certain conditions entire populations of darker individuals may appear. This phenomenon is known as adaptive melanism. The dark coloring could increase the squirrels' ability to hide, increasing their survival and ability to pass on the gene to their offspring.

A few years ago I had an opportunity to photograph a melanistic woodchuck on several occasions over the span of two summers. It was located along Route 6 just east of Hawley, PA, and was living underneath a sporadically occupied cabin with its family, which were all covered in the normal brown fur.



RR photos by Jeffrey Sidle
This photograph shows a melanistic woodchuck with a normally pigmented member of its family, and was taken along Route 6, just east of Hawley, PA.



A melanistic black squirrel photographed on the River Flat Trail, Narrowsburg, NY.

The next time you're out and about in the great outdoors, do yourself a favor and slow down, relax, sit a while and let nature

come to you. You will be rewarded, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. And when you go home, perhaps you can look at your

fellow humans who are different from you, just as you see that beautiful, "different," piebald deer.



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