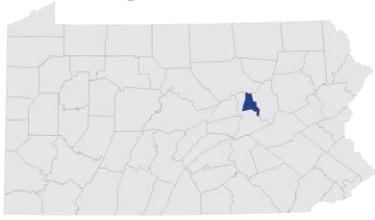


My Story



Escape to the Outdoors

Montour Preserve

By Jon Beam, Montour Area Rec. Commission

"Now, hardly a day goes by that someone doesn't see at least one of the resident eagles that have been nesting here for almost a decade."

An early morning mist begins to dissipate as the rising sun warms the air above Lake Chillisquaque. A bald eagle glides over the water, angling down toward the surface. Reaching forward with its taloned feet, the eagle grabs a fish from the water and begins a circling climb back to a safe perch for a morning feed. Forty-five years ago, when Montour Preserve first opened to the public, the opportunity to see a bald eagle here was slim to none. Over the years, that increased from rare to occasional. Now, hardly a day goes by that someone doesn't see at least one of the resident eagles that have been nesting here for almost a decade. That is a change I've been able to witness firsthand.

Over the course of my twenty-five years at the Montour Preserve I have seen many changes. The annual changes in nature are always a



Keystone Fund Investment: \$50,000

Total Public/Private Investment: \$480,000

pleasure to watch as they unfold: woodland wildflowers blooming in early spring; migrating birds returning to summer habitat; dragonflies and damselflies appearing above ponds and the lake; summer wildflowers filling fields with bouquets of color; autumn's colorful

panoply of leaves; and winter's blanket of snow and quiet. There have been physical changes, too. The preserve's Visitor Center, which originally was home to exhibits and displays as well as a seating area for programs and workshops, just couldn't serve the expanding needs as visitation grew. So an Environmental Education Center was added to provide more seating and allow for additional interpretive displays in the Visitor Center.

One thing that hasn't changed through the years is the visitation to the preserve. People come

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from near and far to enjoy the educational and recreational opportunities here. Montour Preserve, located in rural Montour County, is a hidden gem according to many



visitors who spend time at the preserve. This great family destination offers 966 acres to enjoy nature, picnic, fish, boat, hike, photograph, or just relax in an outdoor setting. Educational programs for the public and visiting schools, scouts, and special interest groups are standard fare at the preserve. One of the most popular programs is the annual maple sugaring operation, which gives visitors a look into the history and tradition of making maple syrup. It was one of the first educational programs offered by Montour Preserve and has introduced several generations to the sights, sounds, and smells of a maple sugaring operation.

Even older than the preserve's maple sugaring--by several hundred million years--are the fossils. An old shale bank known as the Fossil Pit is open for people to collect fossils of creatures that lived in the shallow sea that once covered Pennsylvania millions of years ago. It is a favorite stop for young and old alike and has sparked an interest in our distant past in many a child.

Change continues at Montour Preserve. When a recent sale of the landholdings to a new owner threatened to make drastic changes in access to the preserve, public outcry and support brought Montour Area Recreation Commission into the picture. After months of negotiation, they now manage the operation of the preserve for the current owners. Public support has been overwhelming in providing funding for maintenance and operations for the past two years. And now a DCNR grant will expand those funds for an additional two years. We can't predict what changes are in store after that, but for now Montour Preserve serves appreciative visitors who enjoy the beauty and opportunities the preserve offers.

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