



The Hemlock

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“Eagles come in all shapes and sizes, but you will recognize them chiefly by their attitudes.” ~E. F. Schumacher

A Most Interesting Bird

~Bob Myers (LHU Director of Environmental Studies)

In 1784, two years after the United States adopted the eagle as our national symbol, Benjamin Franklin described it as “a Bird of bad moral character.” In 1850, in the preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne described the sculpted eagle that guards the entrance to the Salem Custom-House as a menacing bird: “With the customary infirmity of temper that characterizes this unhappy fowl, she appears, by the fierceness of her beak and eye and the general truculency of her attitude, to threaten mischief to the inoffensive community; and especially to warn all citizens, careful of their safety, against intruding on the premises which she overshadows with her wings.”



Of course these negative impressions are minority opinions. The eagle has long been a symbol of strength and power in many cultures. There are at least 75 references to eagles in the Judeo-Christian Bible, including the well-known passage “They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles” (Isaiah 40.32). In 1911 the Boy Scouts made Eagle Scout their highest award. In 1932 the bankrupt Philadelphia Yellow Jackets drew upon imagery associated with Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal when they reorganized as the Philadelphia Eagles. And it’s not

accidental that Rachel Carson focused on the damage that was being done to our national symbol in her expose of the chemical industry, *Silent Spring* (1962).

Accordingly, it's difficult to imagine a better subject than the American bald eagle for analysis from the perspective of Environmental Studies, which looks at the relationship between humans and nature. While people have always interpreted animals symbolically and projected our characteristics onto the natural world, few species have been as thoroughly and as variously inscribed by humans as the eagle.

The writers in this issue of the *Hemlock* approach eagles from a wide variety of perspectives: scientific, historical, cultural, psychological, recreational, and personal. I'm confident that you will enjoy their attempts to engage with this most interesting and symbolic bird. I'd like to thank all of the contributors as well as Dean Stephen Neun for proposing this special issue. If you would like to receive the *Hemlock* electronically or if you would like to contribute to future issues, please email me at rmyers3@lockhaven.edu.

Soaring Higher

~Robert Pignatello (LHU President)

Life can certainly take you on unexpected and surprising journeys. Such has been the case for me when I reflect back on events in my life that led me to Lock Haven as the leader of this great institution.

I have a lifelong connection to the bald eagle, our University mascot. As a symbol of our country, it reminds me of my parents who immigrated here a long time ago—choosing to become American citizens. Leaving all they knew and what little they had, relying on hope and a promise that here they would find the freedom to achieve the American dream.

So my father, as a ten year old boy, took to the sea with an uncle on a two week voyage that ended at Ellis Island during our nation's Great Depression. Life was hard; but here, opportunity was within reach.



My father was fiercely patriotic and a proud American. He believed in our nation and the right to vote and influence the life we have. That, for him, was sacred. So we raised the flag on important American holidays, he followed events in the newspaper, on the radio and television, and was always informed—and had an opinion. I remember staying up as a family and watching as we landed on the moon. Such memories serve as indelible reminders of the value of our own freedom as Americans and our national pride.

Despite his own lack of formal education, he knew it would only be through a college degree that his children could achieve what was not available to him. With the wages of a factory worker he saved and made sure I graduated college. Were it not for our local state institution, its low tuition and nearby location, that goal would not have been attainable.

Public higher education is a public good. I believe in making our mission and programs more accessible to students and providing them a high value, high quality education that will allow them to pursue their passions and realize their dreams. Already, The Haven is a positive force in students' lives, serving as an engine for upward mobility. We rate number four in the state system for our ability to move students from the lower 60% of family income to the top 40%. This fact benefits not only our students, but also the Commonwealth and our region. Close to 25,000 LHU alumni live in Pennsylvania, driving the state's economy and serving as leaders in their professions.

My father's great interest in civic affairs inspired me to seek a career in public service—so I ran and held elected office. In many ways it was to honor my parents' sacrifice and to give back and actively take advantage of the rights and privilege we have to shape our democracy.

So today, when I see the bald eagle, I think of our country's values— freedom, liberty, hope, opportunity, and how the dream transformed our family.

Eagles also represent for me the vast natural beauty of our region and our nation. As a protected bird, it reminds me how fragile our environment is today—how our natural resources are threatened. It begs the question, what can we do as an institution to raise awareness and be part of the solution? What can we do to create a more sustainable world and protect our natural resources? How can we help our students make a contribution? Together we can answer these important questions.

Interestingly, throughout my life, I have surrounded myself with bald eagle images. An eagle portrait and wood sculpture have resided in my office for most of my long career

in higher education. Today they have a proud home in the President's office and serve as reminders of our mission and our responsibility to our students and to our namesake.

Consequently, for me it is very powerful that we are the Bald Eagles. There is such a deep personal connection. Consider the traits an eagle symbolizes—so much applies to us. Eagles are renowned for their superior vision and focus. They are keen and resourceful—soaring higher than almost any other bird. So, too, should we help our Bald Eagles at the Haven see clearly and think strategically to reach new heights.

Our students arrive at The Haven with noble goals—a desire to lead and to serve. We are here to help them achieve their vision—to contribute meaningfully to their communities by preparing them to be leaders in fields like healthcare, education, science, and more. I think back to my own college years, to the fact that access to public higher education provided me with opportunity. The dream transformed our family. Our obligation as educators is to be enablers of that dream. Serving as leader at The Haven my role is mobilize all of us to stay focused on that obligation, on improving our students' experience and ultimately their success.

If we work together we can help them fly higher—to soar like bald eagles.



Bald Eagles in Pennsylvania

~Dr. Shonah A. Hunter (Professor, Department of Biological Science)

In spring of 1990 when I first taught Ornithology here at LHU, it was unheard of to see a bald eagle in this area. Throughout the 1970s, only 3 bald eagle nests were documented in Crawford County, Pennsylvania (NW PA) and there was general concern that this majestic bird would disappear from Pennsylvania forever. Since that time, the bald eagle population in Pennsylvania has made an amazing recovery due to changing environmental regulations, habitat conservation, and population restoration.

During the first half of the 20th century, bald eagle populations had been declining nationwide due to habitat changes, degrading water quality, and increased shootings.



Photo by Edie Cox and Sonia Graybill

However, the most significant impact on raptor populations after WW II was the widely used pesticide DDT. Bioaccumulation of the pesticide residues in the food chain resulted in significant eggshell thinning in raptors because it interfered with calcium metabolism necessary for hard shells. When the females tried to brood the eggs during incubation, the eggs were crushed and the embryos died.

Pennsylvania-native Rachel Carson published her book *Silent Spring* in 1962 clearly documenting the decline in bird populations was due to DDT residues and other pesticides in the environment. Her work led to the ban of DDT in 1972, and an increased awareness of human impacts on the environment.

Increased environmental consciousness in the 1970s led to the reaffirmation of the Migratory Bird Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Act and established the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act to help conserve bird and wildlife populations in the U.S. In 1983-1988, the Pennsylvania Game Commission initiated the bald eagle Recovery Program to reestablish the state's eagle population. Eighty-eight bald eagle nestlings were transported from Saskatchewan, Canada and placed into a hacking program. Hacking is the process whereby nestlings are placed into special boxes and cared for in a way to prevent them from imprinting on humans. They are fed for several weeks through a trap door using hand puppets resembling the parents, and are gradually given more freedom as they develop towards fledging, flight, and independence. Hacking programs have been very successful for most raptor species, because adults tend to return to the area from which they are fledged, thus establishing a potential local breeding population.

The Bald Eagle Recovery Program has been an unquestionable success. At the end of the 1st Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas (1983-1989), 12 bald eagle nests were confirmed in the state. During the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas (2004-2009), 226 bald eagle nests were confirmed; an increase of 1783%. Due to the success of state recovery programs, the bald eagle was removed from the federal Endangered Species

list in 2007 and in Pennsylvania its status was changed from Endangered to Protected in 2014.

During the last decade, bald eagles have consistently nested in the Pine Creek Valley (Lycoming County) and Bald Eagle State Park (Centre County). Wayne Laubscher, a longtime Clinton County birder, LHU alumnus, and member of the local West Branch Bird Club, reports increased nesting activity here in Clinton County in the past 5 years with “nests at Mill Hall, River Road east of LH, Kettle Creek SP, on the mountain across the river from South Avis, and on the river along Rt. 120”. Here in Lock Haven, it is not uncommon for levee-walkers to see a bald eagle patrolling the Susquehanna River for food. During our Ornithology class field trip to Bald Eagle State Park in Spring 2017, we spotted not 1, but 2 bald eagles in trees right along Rt. 150. Needless to say, that required a quick U-turn and intense binocular viewing by the whole class and remains a highlight of our birding activity.

bald eagle nests have spread throughout the state and have been documented in 58 of the 67 counties. The Pennsylvania Game Commission has done an excellent job of educating the public about this species and has produced a documentary on the 30 years of conservation and restoration of the population. There has been a live stream of a bald eagle nest in Hanover, PA since 2015, which has had over 1.4 million viewings during that time. People enthusiastically watch the nesting progress of the eagle parents as they feed and care for their eaglets, and launch them into independence. Although there has been much success in recovery efforts for the bald eagle population, the fight is not over. DDT residues remain in the soil and are still affecting bird populations and other organisms, including humans. People still indiscriminately shoot bald eagles and other raptors with little fear of being caught. Lead shot from waterfowl and game carcasses, and lead fishing lures in fish are ingested by the birds and cause systemic nervous, muscular-skeletal, and digestive system damage. Affected birds may be captured and transported to a wildlife rehabilitation facility, but the prognosis is usually not good and most often it is fatal. The current federal government is trying to roll back the very environmental protections that directly contributed to the success of the bald eagle and other species’ population recovery. We have to be educated, vigilant, and proactive to continue to protect our environment and native species. We do not want to return to the days of rarely seeing our majestic bald eagle and beloved LHU mascot soaring over the skies of Lock Haven and nesting in our beautiful Pennsylvania Wilds.

Find out where bald eagles are being seen in your area using Pennsylvania ebird: <https://ebird.org/pa/home> and go out and watch them. You’ll be hooked!

For more information, check out some of the sources I consulted to write this article:

American Eagle Foundation. n.d. Eagle Hacking. <<https://www.eagles.org>>.

Environmental Protection Agency. <<https://www.epa.gov>>.

Pennsylvania Game Commission. 2013. Bald Eagles <<https://www.pgc.pa.gov>>.

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2017. <<https://www.fws.gov>>.

Wilson, A.M., D. W. Brauning and R. S. Mulvihill, Editors. 2012. *Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Pennsylvania*. The Pennsylvania State University Press. <http://www.pabirdatlas.psu.edu>.

The Bald Eagle Mascot in LHU History

~Joby Topper (LHU Library Director)

Johnny Wynne (1906-1969), the sports editor of the Lock Haven *Express*, asked his readers an interesting question in the issue of October 2, 1935:

“Neither the noble football warriors of the Purple and White, or in other words, Lock Haven High School, nor the Teachers College’s Maroon and Steel soldiers has adopted any sort of permanent mascot. Why???”

Wynne, whose pen name was “Old Scribbles,” had some reason to be disappointed. By 1935, mascots were part of the fabric of American sports culture, especially at the college level. Yale, for example, adopted a bulldog named Handsome Dan as the school mascot in 1889. Handsome Dan was Yale’s good luck charm. In fact, the French word *mascotte* means “lucky charm.” Its root is the medieval Latin word *masca*, meaning “witch.” Witches are known for casting charms and spells—hence the connection.

It was time for a true mascot, a real lucky charm, not just a nickname based on the school’s original colors—“Maroon and Steel/Gray”—or the school’s vocational purpose—“the Lock Haven Teachers.” We needed something catchy. Wynne noted the importance of name recognition: “Every sports fan has heard of the Bucknell Bison, the Nittany Lion of Penn State, the Yale Bulldog, the Penn Quakers, the Princeton Tigers, the Pitt Panthers, and the Temple Owls.” Perhaps to apply peer pressure, he mentioned two of our sister schools that had mascots: the



Bloomsburg Huskies and the Kutztown Keys. (“Keys” came from Kutztown’s original name, “the Keystone Normal School.” Kutztown’s current mascot is the Golden Bear.)

To his credit, Wynne did not simply complain. He made a list of suggestions: the Indians (because Great Island was “an Indian town”); the Pointers (from “the Point,” the piece of land where Bald Eagle Creek and the West Branch meet); the Lumberjacks or Sawyers (“because it was the lumber industry which gave Lock Haven its original boom”); the Colts (for Major William Colt, who helped create Clinton County); the Boatmen or Mules (for the men who steered the boats, and the mules that hauled the boats, through the old canal); and finally the *Bald Eagles*, “due to the proximity of Bald Eagle Creek, Valley, and Mountains.”

The students at Lock Haven High School immediately responded to Wynne’s question, though he may not have been thrilled with their choice. They selected the Bobcat, which was not on his list of suggestions.

The students here at LHU (i.e., the Lock Haven State Teachers College) decided to wait. Meanwhile, at least three more of our sister schools adopted mascots—the Mansfield Mountaineers, the Shippensburg Ships (now the Raiders), and the California Vulcans. A mascot movement was afoot. Finally, in 1937, during the week of October 24-27, our students conducted the mascot election.

The final vote came down to two birds: the raven and the bald eagle. While the raven had the advantage of rhyme—the “Haven Raven”—this was not enough to win the election. Besides its status as our National Bird, the bald eagle’s main advantage, as Scribbles had noted in 1935, was the proximity of Bald Eagle Creek, Bald Eagle Valley, and Bald Eagle Mountain.

The creek, the valley, and the mountain were named in the 18th century when bald eagles were common in the West Branch Valley. With that said, these landmarks were not *directly* named for the birds. They were named for Chief Woapalanne, the leader of the Munsee tribe of the Lenni-Lenape Nation, who lived in the Bald Eagle Valley during the mid-1700s. Woapalanne’s name translates to “Bald Eagle.”

Bald eagles were rarely seen in this area by the time we adopted the bald eagle as our mascot in 1937. Deforestation and water pollution—and the resulting decline of the bald eagle’s supply of fish—took their toll during the peak lumbering years and the early days of industrialization, 1870-1900. Many bald eagles were killed by trophy hunters and by farmers protecting their chickens. The federal Bald Eagle Protection Act of 1940, passed just a few years after our mascot election, was too late to save the bald

eagles of the West Branch. The use of DDT as an insecticide during the 1940s and 50s drove the already small population of bald eagles in central Pennsylvania to near extinction.

Fortunately, the story of the bald eagle in the West Branch Valley did not end there. Thanks to reintroduction efforts of the past 35 years, we now have an estimated 300 nests in Pennsylvania. At least one of these nests is along the river at Lock Haven, and at least three others are within a 15-minute drive of campus (Salona, Lamar, and Bald Eagle State Park).

The history of the *costumed* bald eagle mascot begins in 1983—the same year, fittingly, that the Pennsylvania Game Commission began to reintroduce the bald eagle. Although costumed mascots had been around for decades, they became hugely popular during the 1970s thanks to master

showmen like The San Diego Chicken (“hatched” in 1974) and the Phillie Phanatic (born in 1977). Closer to home, the appearance of “Ernie the Eagle” at Clarion University in 1979 may have provided the final bit of motivation for us to jump on the costumed mascot bandwagon. On January 24, 1983, the Undergraduate Alumni Association (UAA) held a bake sale in Thomas Fieldhouse to raise money for a bald eagle costume.



With money raised from the bake sale and from other sources, we finally put a proud Lock Haven student in a bald eagle costume. “The Bird” (called “Talon” since 2013) was hatched at halftime of the SUNY-Buffalo football game at Jack Stadium on November 10, 1984.

One of our earliest mascots was Brian Wisler (’90), our Bald Eagle from 1987 to 1990. I don’t yet know the identities of our very first mascots, 1984-87. Maybe this article will attract attention and draw out those anonymous alumni. I would love to meet with them, and with Brian Wisler, and talk about mascot history.

In closing, I tip my cap to Johnny Wynne, “Old Scribbles,” whose aforementioned 1935 editorial was the catalyst for our mascot election of 1937. Wynne, a native of Renovo, died of a heart attack in Lock Haven on June 14, 1969, at age 62. He was a writer for the

Express for nearly forty years. Wynne is buried at St. Agnes Cemetery on Glen Road, about half a mile from campus. May he rest in peace.

For 81 years, the bald eagle has been our university mascot. For 34 of those years, our costumed bald eagle has been leading cheers and entertaining sports fans in Thomas Fieldhouse and around our athletic fields. As our local bald eagle population continues to grow, I look forward to seeing more of our mascots—our flying lucky charms—as they soar over this beautiful campus.

Top-Level Predators

~Mike Myers (LHU Recreation Management Major)

Many people have their favorite outdoor destination in Pennsylvania whether it be the camp they've gone to with their family since they were a kid, or the deer stand where they took their first shot. Maybe it is the stream where they went to fish with their friends after school, sitting back in a cathartic state as the sound of rushing water and jumping fish drowns out the load of homework resting in the back of their minds. Many of us who have that sacred place want to protect it because it has a special value that brings you back time and time again. What we must remember is that we are not the only ones who have these sacred places. For some inhabitants of the PA wilderness it's not called a tree stand, it's a nest or a perch, and it's not a stream for sport fishing but a stream filled with your family's primary source of food. For the American bald eagle the Pennsylvania wilderness is not just a spot for leisure and recreation but a home where they use their phenomenal skills to hunt, fish, and raise their young.

When people think of birds of prey or symbols of hunting prowess often times owls, hawks, and falcons are among the first to come to mind, and rightfully so. Not many people rank bald eagles very high on that list due to their love of the predeceased, or carrion. As Benjamin Franklin put it eagles are, "birds of bad moral character" who "do not get their living honestly" and are "too lazy to fish." While it is true that eagles do enjoy the taste of a ripe piece of dead meat, it would be wrong to say that it makes them any less of a hunter or predatory bird. In fact, bald eagles are some of the most cunning, and resourceful hunters in the wild and would put even the best human hunters to shame. Eagles have a unique set of abilities that make them perfectly suited for taking out prey. With an enormous seven-foot wingspan (which is about the exact height of Michael Jordan) eagles are able to soar high in the air looking for potential meals. Bald eagles have on average 7,000 feathers on their body, and many of the primary feathers are adjustable so they can maneuver quite easily throughout the air. While their average speed in the air is around 30 mph, when an eagle locks onto its target it can dive at speeds up to 100 mph and take out its prey with deadly precision.

Along with great stealth, eagles use the razor-sharp scythes they have attached to their legs to grip onto their prey. An adult bald eagle has a set of four talons that resemble claw machines in arcades, although these claws always get the prize. With three powerful front talons and a fourth called the Hallux, Eagles can easily grip branches, perches, and prey. Eagles need these powerful legs and sharp talons to hold onto the



Photo by Edie Cox and Sonia Graybill

high perches where they settle in to spot their prey. Since eagles are like the Boeing 747s of the bird world it takes a lot of space to take off, and land safely. Many adolescents will fly in like a bat out of hell and completely miss their perch and end up several feet beyond in a completely different tree, or upside down barely clutching on to the wrong branch. When the bald eagle does successfully get to its desired perch, it will most likely spend a great deal of time there peering out over the

landscape looking for potential meals. Like many birds of prey eagles have incredible eye sight, having around four times better vision than humans. This incredible eyesight helps them to also spot potential threats to their young eaglets high atop their massive homes.

With a primary diet consisting of fish, eagles are most commonly spotted along river banks and lake fronts, nesting high up in a tree sitting and waiting for the perfect moment to dive down and snatch a delicious fish from the water. If sitting and waiting for the right opportunity becomes too much of a bother, eagles will use their domineering presence and skill to steal a meal from a fellow bird of prey. Author Jon Gerrard tells the story of an encounter between a bald eagle and an Osprey, "We were not prepared for what happened. After three unsuccessful attacks, the eagle turned to brute force. This time coming up fast from behind and below, the eagle flipped onto its back, thrust its talons upward, and ripped the fish right out of the osprey's grasp. What a sight!" (37) The bald eagles are incredible survivors who will use whatever means necessary to feed their young.

Bald eagles are some of the best animal engineers in the world when it comes to the mansions that are their nests, returning year after year to build further expansions. On average a bald eagle nest is around five feet wide, and three feet deep allowing for the whole family to enjoy some space. Building these lofty penthouses in the sky is a cooperative job between the male and female eagle, each one adding more branches and twigs to accommodate the incoming fledglings. Just as most people enjoy the benefits of being a homeowner, eagles will return every year to the same nest, building and making repairs. Some eagles take such pride in their nests that they will build onto it for decades, the largest recorded bald eagle nest was around nine feet wide and 20 feet deep, weighing as much as a car at two tons. These nests provide eagles with protection for their young who take time to develop into the strong birds that they are.

Bald eagles are truly some of the most amazing predatory birds in the world. With their large array of hunting talents these birds soar through the sky with beauty that is jaw-dropping when seen in person. Seeing eagles fly through the groves of White Pines and Hemlocks and dip down into the cold water of Pine Creek instills me with a sense of respect for the Pennsylvania landscape. The story for the bald eagle wasn't always a happy one, with large dips in population due to hunting, and stunted birth rates due to DDT use. Now that population numbers are back to where they used to be it is important to remember that we share this land with these incredible birds and need to maintain a positive relationship with the environment around us. If you are ever so lucky as to see one of these great birds swoop down and use those talons to scoop up a fish from the water, you've had an experience that you will remember forever, and a deeper connection with the beautiful Pennsylvania wild.

For more information see Jon M. Gerrard and Gary R. Bortolotti's *The Bald Eagle: Haunts and Habits of a Wilderness Monarch* (Smithsonian Books, 1988).

Bald Eagles and Hummingbirds: Opening to Awe

~Lynn Bruner (LHU Psychology Professor)

As a child, I was lucky to have parents who were avid nature walkers and bird watchers. I grew up in the Philadelphia suburbs knowing the names of backyard birds, interestedly watching their feeding, courting, nesting, and migratory habits. However, something new came into my life at about six, when I started reading the National Wildlife Federation's magazine for children, *Ranger Rick*. Reading one issue, I studied a chart showing the cycle of the pesticide DDT: it was sprayed to kill mosquitoes, the chemical got into the waterways, the DDT contaminated fish, and bald eagles ate the fish. Then the eagles, poisoned by DDT, laid eggs with thin or rubbery shells, and the parents' normal nurturing behaviors toward the eggs led to them breaking. Eagles lay

only one to three eggs a year, so whole clutches, whole generations of bald eagles were being lost. The image of a mother eagle looking down at her broken eggs, seemingly confused, broke my six-year-old heart. I ran in tears to my mother, crying “I’m never



Photo by Edie Cox and Sonia Graybill

going to see a bald eagle! They’re all going to die!” How could such an amazing bird be lost to us? I wanted so badly to see eagles in the wild, and I feared so deeply that I never would.

When I moved to Lock Haven in 2002, I enjoyed exploring opportunities for walking and birding here, especially as I was moving back to Pennsylvania after five years of urban living in Chicago. During that first winter, my parents came to visit, and we went walking on the Pine Creek Rail Trail. Standing shivering on an old railroad bridge, we focused our field glasses on what looked like a mink,

scurrying furtively along the bank with a fish in its mouth. The mink kept looking up worriedly over its shoulder, and my dad wondered aloud if it had somehow noticed us far above it on the bridge. Then, in brilliance of black and white and gold, a bald eagle sped through our lines of sight, zeroing in on the mink. “Eagle, eagle, eagle!” I cried, not even realizing that I was shouting, joy lighting my chest. The mink, folding itself into a scuttling hunch, managed to disappear with the fish into a hole in the bank, leaving the eagle to land, sulky and disappointed, on an overhanging branch. It glared at the hole, tipped its head to glare at us, shrugged its feathers back into place, and took off, skimming the bridge arches. Tipping our field glasses up, we watched it as long as we could, really past the point of being able to see it any longer, before allowing our craning necks to relax. And then, silence. What could be said after such a gift of wildness and grace? We exchanged enormous smiles, stuffed gloved hands in our pockets and stood, content with wordlessness, transcendent, shaking with the January cold. Winter light tipped every ripple on Pine Creek, and the sky was full of possibility.

We are lucky in the Lock Haven area: bald eagles live and mate and breed here, and so many nestlings have successfully fledged that we can see eagles regularly, all year round. Even so, every bald eagle I see carries some of the thrill of that first. Bald eagles are enormous; their soaring flight is the epitome of majesty and grace; their very existence in the midst of our daily lives seems so improbable. They awe us. Lately, I’ve been reading about humans’ desire for, and need for, awe in their lives. In recent

research in positive psychology, experiences of awe have been associated with reduced self-absorption, reduced rumination on one's problems and worries, and increased compassion and empathy for others. Experiences of awe remind us that "it's not all about me." There is a greater world, a deeper understanding, a vaster universe beyond our small selves. In a 2012 article in the *Journal of Marketing Research*, two University of Pennsylvania professors at the Wharton School of Business examined articles from the *New York Times* that readers most often shared on social media or in e-mails. They found that people forwarded articles for reasons involving self-presentation (look how smart I am!) or a need to convey information, but the majority involved a wish to share something awe-inspiring. I found this amazing thing, people wanted to say, and I wanted you to have the chance to be amazed too. Here. Look at this.

John Muir knew full well that experiences in nature can bring us to states of transcendent awe: in *My First Summer in the Sierras*, he wrote "We are now in the mountains and they are in us, kindling enthusiasm, making every nerve quiver, filling every pore and cell of us. Our flesh-and-bone tabernacle seems transparent as glass to the beauty about us, as if truly an inseparable part of it, thrilling with the air and trees, streams and rocks, in the waves of the sun—a part of all nature, neither old nor young, sick nor well, but immortal." Many of us may assume that this kind of transcendence is beyond us, available only to great wilderness adventurers and mystics like Muir, who spend days, months, or years deeply engaged in the outdoors. Yet, ordinary people have opportunities everywhere in the natural world to stop, look deeply, and allow ourselves to be overtaken by awe.

From mid-May to late September, I keep a hummingbird feeder clean and full. If I'm lucky, I'll have more than one nesting pair of ruby-throated hummingbirds visiting the feeder, chipping through their parabolic courting flights, and bringing their fledglings to the feeder for some first tentative sips. If I'm really lucky, I can have closer encounters. Early this summer, I was kneeling in damp grass, putting in new plants: native perennials touted as bee, butterfly, and hummingbird friendly. A light drizzle was falling, so I'd tucked my hair into a red baseball cap. Straightening after tamping dirt around a coneflower seedling, I found myself face to face with a male ruby-throat. Suspended on a breath, I watched him hover, seeming to examine my glasses and the wide eyes behind them, before he flipped his tail to slip upward and investigate my hat brim. Everything was silent around me: nothing existed but this improbably tiny bird, so enormously close. He came back to face level, again seeming to examine me carefully, then darted to the safety of an oak tree. I breathed again. I realized the cardinal across the street was still singing. I was here, in the yard, mountains curling toward me, rain beading on my face, knees planted on the planet, one small being in her shared habitat. I was deeply present and wholly transcendent. A tiny moment, yet one

that informed that whole day; one, like the eagle encounter, that I can remember with vivid precision, in all my senses.

There are so many possibilities. Bald eagles and ruby-throated hummingbirds. Forest floors full of blooming mountain laurels and burgeoning backyard dandelions. Spring trees reddening across mountain ridges and single crisping autumn leaves. Look up. Look down. See something flying by, and follow its path until you remember what you have always known, that you are a small amazed creature on a magnificent planet. Let awe find you. Open up.

The Eagle of Legend

~Norman Houser (LHU History Major)

The sun was barely in the sky as I started to hike through Spring Creek Canyon. The small group of us had only managed to go a short distance when Mike pointed out the eagle perched in the tree on the opposite side of the creek. We were all instantly enthralled by the sighting. It had been years since I had seen one in the wild and this was the first sighting of an eagle for many of our group.

We watched the eagle until it took flight and soared across the sky. Following Spring Creek vanished into the forest. There was no doubt in my mind why they have become a part of our culture and traditions and why they were a part of the traditions of the Indian nations that lived here before the Europeans. The eagle is a symbol of strength and power, action and grace, and leadership and vision.

In many traditions, the eagle has played an important part in the lore of the culture. The eagle is one of the few creatures that most Indian nations deem sacred. The Great Spirit created the eagle to be a leader among all creatures: no other can fly as high or see as far as the eagle. This height always it to be closer to the Great Spirit and allows it to see the past, present and future. The relationship the eagle has with the Great Spirit gives it great honor and Indian cultures believe that it should not should not be killed or eaten. Those cultures who allow for the killing of eagle have in place strict rules of how, when, and who is allowed to kill the eagle.

The eagle is an important part of Indian cultures. The Abenaki, which were traditionally located in New England, had an intense relationship with the eagle in many different forms. According to their legends, a deity called "Kisosen," or "Sun-Bringer" was an eagle that creates each day by opening its wings and brings about night by closing them. The Abenaki also had "Wad-zoo-sen," a spirit eagle that controls the winds.

The Iroquois also viewed the eagle as having an important part of their mythology. They tell the story of Jowiis, an Indian boy, who brought the bird dances to the First People. After getting lost while hunting Donyondo, the bald eagle, saw the dying boy lying on the riverbank. Donyondo returned the boy to a village and left him there. When he was not discovered by the villagers, Jowiis would be taken to the Land of the Birds, where the Golden Eagle decreed that Jowiis would be taught the language and dances of the bird.



Photo by Edie Cox and Sonia Graybill

The eagle is also associated with thunder in many of the Indian cultures. The ability to create thunder with the flapping of its wings has given the eagle a connection to the supernatural. Known as thunderbirds, some cultures have the mystical creature having the ability to bring rain and can shoot lightning from its eyes. The legend of the thunderbird is one that has morphed over the years and has become engrained as a part of modern society. In modern times, the thunderbird bird has been associated with any large, unidentified bird of prey.

While eagle legends vary most agree that when an eagle appears to you, it means that you are being put on notice. It is there to teach a lesson. One legend of the Lenni Lenapi states if a warrior could pluck a feather from the tail of a live eagle it was a sign of bravery and brought good luck.

Once a young warrior went in search of an eagle feather, but he was not satisfied with a regular tail feather – he wanted the best feather from the largest eagle. He brought meat to the place where eagles were often spotted in search of the eagle feather. Eagle after eagle came to eat the meat and he left each one pass, unhappy with the “small” eagles. Suddenly the largest eagle he had ever seen landed and approached. Before the warrior could react, the eagle grabbed him and took him to its nest of a high cliff, from which there was no escape.

In the nest were a number of young eagles. The warrior was commanded by the large eagle to stay in the nest and care for the young eagles until they learned to fly as a punishment for not accepting the feathers from the eagles he had passed over. After many days, the young eagles learned to fly and would be gone for hours, leaving the

warrior alone in the nest. Finally the old eagle returned with the four eagles that had been in the nest. Two of the eagles grabbed him and returned him to the place he had been abducted from. The warrior quickly gathered up some of the feathers that were on the ground having learned his lesson that opportunities will finally cease to come if you continue to brush them aside in search of a better one.

The bald eagle has retained a mystic quality through generations. The bird held sacred by Indian cultures has become twined with a new nation as a bird of strength and honor, but mostly importantly, it is the bringer of a lesson – may we all learn something from the majestic creature.

Eagles in the Area

~John Reid (LHU Physics Professor)

Where are all the damn eagles? That's what we were asking as we headed out on a few trips to rediscover them for this issue of the *Hemlock*. It became a running joke, not because we couldn't find them, but because of the irony in the fact that we see them all the time on our many outings. There are lots of them around and some not far at all from Lock Haven. Now we were looking for them and we couldn't find them--not a damn one.

I remember when I first moved to Central PA in the mid-80s. In grad school, friends and I often stole opportunities to get out of the lab and into the woods. These trips often involved fishing, camping, or just driving around on some back roads. Didn't much matter, we always had a good time. I remember one trip up to Wellsboro. Somehow, we caught wind of there being an eagle's nest up there. They weren't so common back then, and the expense of gas seemed like a worthy reallocation of precious beer and pizza funds.

It was. I'll never forget seeing that bird soar over the lake that day. It's hard to miss a mature eagle with that bright white head and tail. I really have no idea how many eagles were nesting in our woods in those days, but I do know it seemed like a rare and wonderful thing. Last time I'd seen an eagle was with my brother high up in the mountains of northern California. We did the same thing as my grad school friends and I did at Wellsboro – just watched in awe.

I still do. And now I know there are so many to be found nearby. The internet can tell you that. It will tell you all the locations of nests in PA (https://www.fws.gov/northeast/pafo/bald_eagle_map.html). Over 300 hundred of them! Imagine that. But I knew there were many to be found nearby before looking on

the internet because I looked outside. (Imagine that.) I've gotten a kick out of the fact that knowing where eagles are is part of the local culture. So many times I've said to someone something like, "I was floating on Bald Eagle Creek behind Walmart and saw a bald eagle." And they'll tell me, "Oh yeah, that's the one that has a nest over by the country club. There's two juveniles flying around, too." People know these things and love to share them and share in the thrill.

One day I was walking up to main campus on the dike. I was about at Boom Island when I saw a large bird a good bit up-river about 40 feet above the water gliding downriver. I watched it approach, trying to figure out what it was, and, as it got closer, I was able to eliminate the other larger birds (goose, hawk, vulture, heron...). It angled off the river and began a steady cruise along the dike. As it glided my way, it was hard, at first, to see that distinctive white head. When I did, I was even more excited realizing that it would be passing directly over me. When it went by, it was probably 20 feet above. Took my breath away.

For me that was a rare sight - seeing one on the river. I float Pine Creek when I can, and usually with my friend Bob. Seeing them there is a typical experience. That, to me, is an amazing thing. We see them in many places along Pine, but there are a couple places where they are more likely sighted it seems, certainly where the known nests are. The one nest we know well is the one at the little village of Cedar Run.

There lots of reasons to head up that way aside from eagles. It's a good drive to get to Cedar Run from Lock Haven. Take Rt. 44 north, then fork onto Rt. 414. Cedar Run has a little store, the Cedar Run General Store. It's one of my favorite places to get ice cream. They also have great sandwiches for lunch. Across the (only) street is the Cedar Run Inn. It's a charming bed & breakfast and a worthwhile destination for an excellent three-course dinner.

Oh yeah, the eagles. Just about every time we float past Cedar Run we see an eagle. Look over to your right and up the hillside, and it's not hard to spot the nest high up in a hemlock tree. Whether doing a float, or out for a bike ride on the rail-trail, or just going there for a weekend drive, it's fun to sit on the bench by the creek and relax (ice cream helps). If the eagle is in the nest it's easy to spot. If not, if you wait, there's a good chance you'll see it appear in the air somewhere (more ice cream helps). Many times, along with the mature eagle, we've seen juveniles squawking in the nest or flying around. One time, when we were drifting past, looking for the eagle, we were excited to see an osprey there instead. That didn't last long. The eagle came out of nowhere and we witnessed a battle in the air that lasted several minutes. The osprey moved on.

My last little story is one that happens now and then on a Pine Creek float. Sometimes Bob or I will spot an eagle flying over the stream up ahead. If we're lucky it perches on a branch overhanging the water. We pull in the paddles and let the flow quietly move us by. In the lush green of the trees the stark whites of head and tail stand out. We've gone right underneath an eagle many times, just quietly eyeing each other - it's focused glower steadily following us below. Along with the wonderment of the moment I can't shake the unnerving feeling that I'm being sized up. For sure, Pine Creek is not just a beautiful place, but also a beautiful place to commonly see eagles.



Photo taken by Bob at Pine Creek in 2013

Now all this still begs the question; why didn't we find any on our recent journeys? Several times we drove to Bald Eagle State Park and Little Pine State Park. Both have well established and well-known nests, and we've both seen the eagles there many times. If you go, stop by the park offices and they'll tell you where the nests are and the latest on sittings. A kayak is a good way to see the nests at each place. Even if you don't find the nests you're likely to see the eagles flying around. At Bald Eagle you'll also see many osprey. A good viewing location at Bald Eagle is at the end of Main Park Rd, which is the entrance to Hunter Cove. You often find people there with binoculars looking south across the lake at the nests. At Little Pine State Park they have a great little viewing area with good signage. The viewing area is just past the park office and boat launch on Little Pine Creek Rd. There's a small pull-off on your right after the parking area.

Well, I haven't answered the question yet. After several failed attempts at finding the eagles in their nests, we finally did what I just suggested above; We stopped by the park office. Turns out the eagles are not nesting these days (fall). They're still out and about, just not where we were looking. No complaints from us, though. We had a great time hiking around the trails and taking in all the beauty.

So, if you want to know where to see an eagle, get on the internet and find out where the nests are. Better yet, start asking people around you. Not only will you learn where to go, but you're likely to hear a fun story or two.

A Symbolic Bird

~Hannah Bell (LHU Recreation Management Major)

When the words “bald eagle” are said, most people think of the United States of America’s national symbol. Or they think of the beautiful birds who soar high in the sky, or maybe even an encounter they personally had with the bird before. The people thinking these thoughts are not original, in fact people have been thinking about the majestic bird for centuries across multiple cultures and countries. The question remains though, why are these birds such a fascination to humans, so much so that heavy symbolism is placed on the birds? To unravel that mystery, one must start at the beginning of time with ancient civilizations.

One of the earliest mentions of bald eagles and the power they represent was by the Aztecs. In ancient Aztec history, the chief god told the people to settle at the place where they found an eagle perched on a cactus eating a snake. We know that place today as Mexico City. The bald eagle has also been mentioned in various religions. Early christians used the sign of an eagle to instill strength, hope and salvation in followers. An eagle also appears twice in the Bible in Revelations, both times being referenced as being on God’s side. Islam also uses an eagle in parts of the Quran. To Islamic people, the eagle resembles warlike ferocity, nobility and dominion. Throughout history, various nations, religions and tribes have placed such high praise on the bald eagle, much like humans today.

Since bald eagles fly higher than any other bird, they are considered man’s connection to the divine. Eagles also convey the powers and messages of the spirit, again relating them to the divine. Native Americans held these same beliefs, and often credited eagles as symbols of power, vision and leadership. Pueblo Indians also associated eagles with energies of the sun (physical and spiritual) as well as symbols of greater sight and perception. When white settlers started moving to the America’s, they knew of the symbolism put on eagle’s, which helped the founding fathers of The United States decide what the national bird should be.

In 1782 after years of discussion, the founding fathers of the U.S. came to an agreement on the national symbol, a bald eagle. The Great Seal of America even depicts a bald eagle holding an olive branch in one talon, and thirteen arrows in the other talon. Also on the eagle is a flag with thirteen red and white stripes and in its beak is a banner that reads '*E Pluribus Unum*', which means "out of many, one." The founding fathers knew that bald eagles were described as being majestic, which means "like a king". Even though the



country decided to forgo a monarchy, the founding fathers still thought the national symbol should hold power. Also, bald eagles are free to roam and fly high in the skies, which means a lot. Americans had just fled from a king who controlled them, taxed them without representation and took away various forms of their freedom. In choosing a bald eagle, a statement was being made that the people of the new country were flying away from their previous rulers, and had finally achieved the freedom they had been craving. There is a story from the Revolutionary war that claims men were up in a mountain fighting a battle and they awoke bald eagles in their nest with noise. The eagles flew out to see what all the noise was and as they soared over the battlefield, they let out loud shrieks. The patriots took this as a sign that the eagles were "shrieking for freedom", and the rest of the patriots living in the colonies saw eagles as a symbol of their freedom. One of the last reasons the bald eagle was adopted as America's national symbol was because they are strong, and live a long time. For a new country, the bald eagle helped the U.S. establish its strength, power and make a statement that the country will exist for a long time.

From age to age, civilization to civilization, and country to country, the bald eagle has been present. This majestic bird is seen as king of the skies, and has powerful symbolism placed on its wings. Bald eagles are unique creatures that capture our attention and favor because of the strength, power and beauty that they encompass. Next time you see a bald eagle soaring high in the sky, think of what they symbolize to you.

For more information, see: Trish Phillips, "Fly Like the Eagle," www.pure-spirit.com/more-animal-symbolism/629-eagle-symbolism; and Suzanne Rose, "Facts About the bald eagle as an American Symbol," study.com/academy/lesson/facts-about-the-bald-eagle-as-an-american-symbol-lesson-for-kids.html.

Environmental Focus Group

Bob Myers (Chair), Jeff Walsh, John Reid, Lynn Bruner, Elizabeth Gruber, Joby Topper, Michael McSkimming, Heather Bechdel, Dain TePoel, Md. Khalequzzaman, Michael Myers, Barrie Overton, Todd Nesbitt, Jamie Walker, Stephen Neun, Jared Conti, Colleen Meyer, Bo Miller, and George Rusczyk. The committee is charged with promoting and supporting activities, experiences, and structures that encourage students, faculty, and staff to develop a stronger sense of place for Lock Haven University and central Pennsylvania. Such a sense of place involves a stewardship of natural resources (environmentalism), meaningful outdoor experiences, and appreciation for the heritage of the region.