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Soon – we hope – as the sun will stay longer in the sky, our frozen landscape will begin to thaw, giving birth to a new season – Spring. That is when many of our winter sleepers will join us once again to enjoy the Catskill-Delaware field and streams. Find out who they are.

Enjoy ‘Glamping’ in the Catskills16

By Crystal Tweed

Are you ready for some luxurious camping that combines the comfort of home with the beauty of nature? Then you will want to go to Domes at Catskills in Swan Lake to find out how modern hospitality meets rustic charm. Enjoy.

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By Vincent Kurzrock

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Annual Shad run is an angler’s dream38

By Matthew Albeck

The American Shad has a great story to tell as they migrate nearly 330-miles up the Delaware River every year to spawn. Join Democrat reporter Matthew Albeck as he recounts this adventure and tell you why it is so important to have a good shad run every year.

On the Cover:

David Soete is a veteran photographer who has captured our National Bird – the American Bald Eagle – from almost every angle. Enjoy his photos beginning on page 24.

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CATSKILL-DELAWARE W I L D L I F E



Awake now, black bears are dormant in winter but are known to also leave their dens if disturbed by loud noises or danger. In spring they feast on leaves and other emerging vegetation.

Moving into the month of March – and waking up to sweet Springtime

By Kathy Daley

As members of the human race, we are now happily poised to enjoy sunshine that lasts eleven-and-a-half hours each day. And as for our non-human friends – animals, birds, bees and bats – the season of Spring affords them

not only daylight but also the requisite needs of warmth and food.

As Spring begins, we begin to glimpse our four-legged friends once again: from the smallest, such as the chipmunks, to our big black bears, all of whom spent some time snoozing this winter.

BUDDYING UP WITH A BIG BLACK BEAR

In New York and Pennsylvania, black bears have wintered in hollow trees or in bear-size holes similar to that of a woodchuck. The second largest mammal in New York (the moose is the largest), the black bear has also denned in rock crevices or in nests beneath the roots of large, fallen trees.

That's because in November or December, bears are triggered to go underground by the shortage of food. They started to line their dens with bark, grasses and leaves and then just slept. They gave up eating, drinking, urinating or pooping during the "denning" period.

Still, bears do have the ability to act quickly if need be, which makes them not true snoring hibernators.

Then in March and April, the bears begin to leave their dens. First, they spend a few weeks building up strength by eating grasses and other plants. They eventually move on to a menu of ants, bees and carcasses of deer and woodland mammals.

Smaller critters have also snoozed in winter and now awakened. Take the chipmunk – most of its life is underground in burrows often 30 feet long and three feet deep, with nesting chambers and storage rooms for nuts and seeds.

Beginning in late October, chipmunks sleep for long periods throughout the winter. Their heart rate declines to a miniscule four beats per minute versus its normal, whopping 350 beats per minute.

Chipmunks will occasionally awaken to snack on stored nuts

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



Woodchucks hibernate in late fall and continue until February or March, when they start looking for female burrows nearby.



See ads, pages 10-11



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During winter hibernation, a chipmunk's heart rate declines to 4 beats per minute versus about 350 beats per minute normally. Here, a hungry chipmunk is glad to start eating.



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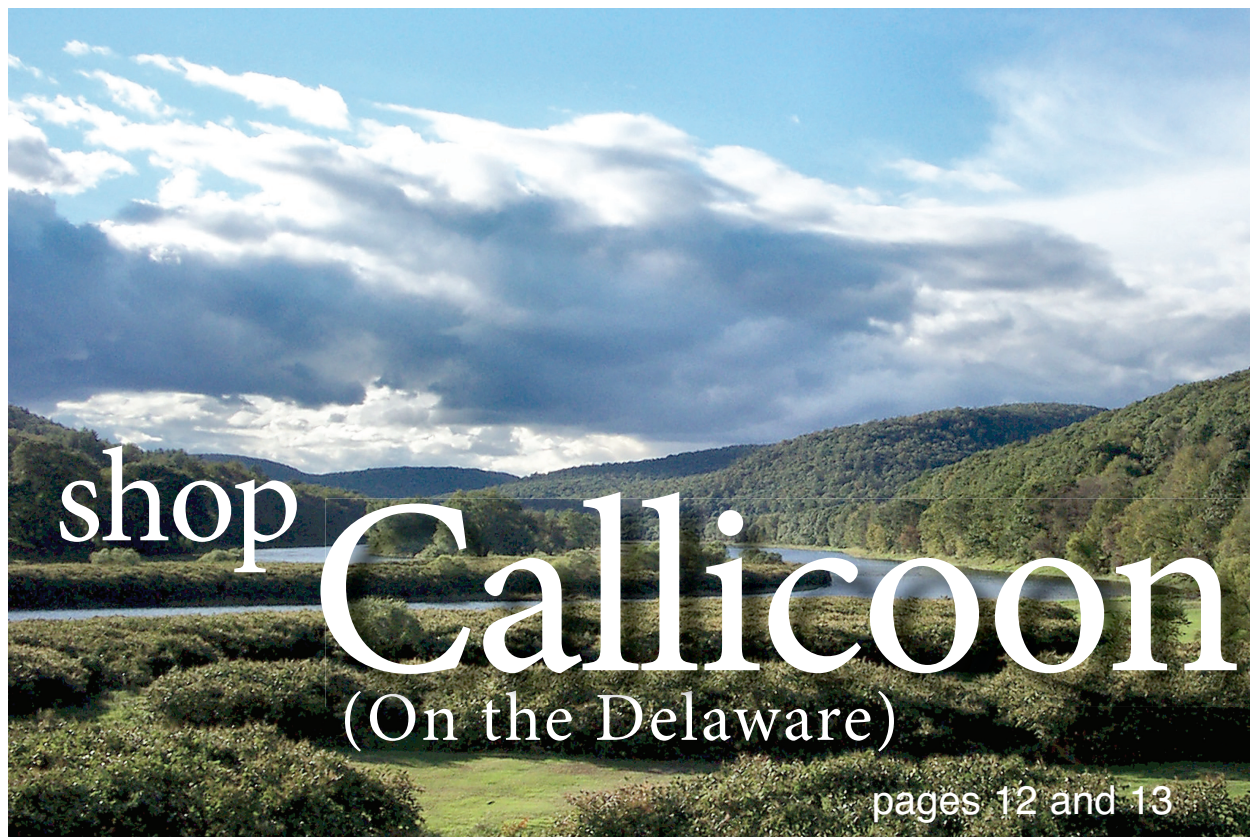
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and seeds and might go outside for brief periods on warm winter days. Then, starting in February, chipmunks begin dashing across remnants of winter snow. They emerge seriously in March for breeding season, mating twice each year, in early spring and again in summer.

SNOOZING WOODCHUCKS, BATS AND SKUNKS

One of our truest hibernators is the woodchuck, also named a groundhog, and often the bane of our existence. (The animals do eat a variety of plants – which can screw up our gardens – but they also take down grubs, insects and snails that we don't want).

A woodchuck's thick layer of fat from constant eating is deliberate: to survive the winter for a sturdy five months in an earthen chamber plugged with soil. Their heart rate slows from 160 beats per minute to 4 beats per minute.

Hibernation comes to an end as the first warm days of Spring arrive. Woodchucks emerge during the first few weeks of March, hungrily looking for grasses, twigs, plants, and weeds to eat.

Then there's our striped skunk. During the coldest months of winter, he or she goes underground in dens where they enter a state of torpor, slowing down their metabolic rates. That allows them, once again, to depend on stored body fat as a source of energy during a part of the year when food is scarce.

Skunks block off the burrow entrance with leaves and grass to keep out the cold. Often, they will burrow using social thermoregulation, a fancy term for their cuddling up with each other for warmth. In February and early March, they begin mating, giving birth in May.

Another mammal that feeds its babies with milk is the little brown bat. Warm-blooded and hairy, bats are smart enough to hibernate in September or October and wake up from March to May. During hibernation, the bats' heartbeat drops as low as eight beats per minute compared to 1,300 beats per minute when in flight.

Their stored fat reserves keep the bats alive until they're winging it once again.

The little brown bat, however, continues on the endangered list due to the White-Nosed Syndrome disease attacking bats. The National Park Service is one of the agencies looking for ways to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



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Little brown bats hibernate in caves, buildings and loose bark in trees. They emerge from hibernation and disperse on the landscape for the summer and early fall.



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When colder temperatures set in, a skunk will prepare its den by blocking off the entrance to its burrow with leaves and grass. They cohabit warming up with others until the male skunks leave their dens in search of the females.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

manage the bat populations. The bats work as pest managers, pollinators and seed dispersers.

"We need bats if we want healthy and diverse ecosystems filled with a variety of organisms," noted the Park Service. "Many bats feast on insects, some pollinate plants, and some bats spread seeds. Larger animals may depend on bats for prey. Aside from all these great services, bats are the only mammal that's capable of true flight, and they're simply fascinating."

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Above: Each dome features an indoor fireplace to keep guests warm on a chilly Catskill evening.

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At left: You will find a fully-stocked galley kitchen in each dome. Dine in while enjoying outdoor views.



Glamping is a term that originated in the UK around 2005. It's a luxurious form of camping that combines the comforts of home with the beauty of nature. Modern glamping has been dated back to 16th century British travelers who used large tents made of canvas with luxurious furnishings during their journeys. Over the past few years glamping locations have been on the rise in New York City and Upstate, NY. Did you know that we have glamping locations right here in Sullivan County?

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Domes at Catskills is located in the small hamlet of Swan Lake. Owner Jerry M. Feeney chose the Catskills as a location because of how it welcomed Jewish travelers to this area many years ago, says Rigo Ramirez, operations coordinator and manager.

Ramirez also shared, "that was also the inspiration for the dome names. Each one pays tribute to an old hotel like the Flagler, Cromwell, Mountain View, and the Pinewood." And how fitting! Forget all you think you know about camping. This takes outdoor camping to an all-new level! There are 5 domes, but they are hoping to have a total of 9 by the peak season in May. But the holidays are always busy, too. Browse the website to see which option piques your interest.

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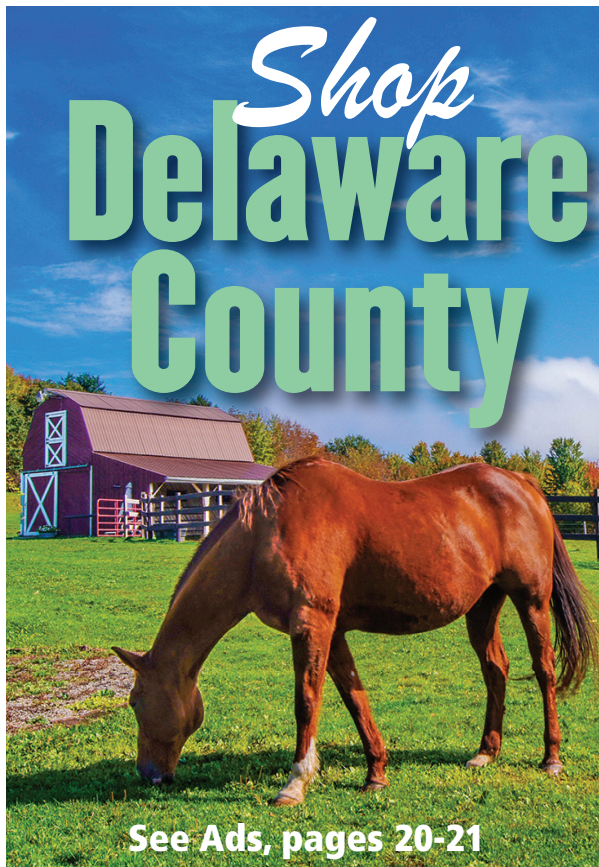
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DAVID SOETE PHOTOS

The trip not only strives to teach about eagle conservancy, but the ecosystem as well.

Eyeing eagle conservancy

BY VINCENT KURZROCK

The ongoing effort to protect the Bald Eagles in the Upper Delaware Valley got underway in earnest in 1998.

This is also the year when the Eagle Institute was founded, which offered guided tours as a part of their programming. Years later, the Delaware Highlands Conservancy combined with the Institute.

The Conservancy strives to continue that grand tradition today with the Eagle Watch bus tours. Eagle watching bus trips are usually every weekend in January and February and you can expect them to announce the start of the season in November. You can check the website for more information at www.delawarehighlands.org/events/ for other wildlife and eco tours.

These tours give participants a chance to view eagles in the wild and helps them understand why their conservation is so important.

The importance is not just eagle conservancy, but the entire ecosystem as well.

Each winter, hundreds of bald eagles migrate to the Upper Delaware River region from Canada and upstate New York.

As northern waters freeze, they travel up to 900 miles south in search of open water, abundant fish, and safe, undisturbed habitat to survive the winter.

The region's large trees provide ideal perches for hunting, while protected lands offer safe nighttime roosting for wintering eagles.

Unlike during breeding season, these eagles do not build nests here, relying instead on undisturbed areas for rest.

Visitors can join the Delaware Highlands Conservancy's guided bus tours, departing from the Zane Grey Museum in Lackawaxen, PA, for a scenic and educational eagle-watching experience.

Participants will learn to identify eagles by their size, shape, and changing feather colors—

from brown and white as juveniles to the iconic black bodies with white heads and tails by age five.

The tours also emphasize “Eagle Etiquette,” teaching participants how to observe these magnificent birds without disturbing them or depleting their vital energy reserves.

“I learned so much about eagles and their habitat in the Delaware River. I greatly appreciate the effort made to speak about the importance of the Endangered Species Act and the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act of 1968,” said Katie Simpson, a tour attendee. “It was an especially important message to share at this time when efforts to protect the environment are under attack.”

The Zane Grey Museum, operated by the National Park Service and located in the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, serves as the central hub for the eagle-watching program.

Knowledgeable staff and volunteers provide insights that enrich each tour experience.

The presence of bald eagles in the Upper Delaware River region reflects the area’s healthy

habitat – protected through the efforts of the Delaware Highlands Conservancy.

With over 19,000 acres of preserved farms, forests, clean waters, and wildlife habitats, the region supports both resident and wintering eagles.

The bald eagle’s remarkable recovery – from just one nest each in Pennsylvania and New York in the 1970s to hundreds today – demonstrates the success of ongoing conservation efforts.

The majestic birds rely on large, undisturbed forests near water for nesting and roosting, and thanks to continued preservation, they thrive in the Upper Delaware River region.

Whether on the tour or eagle-watching on your own, it is important to make sure you are following proper eagle etiquette which means respecting the eagles and other eagle watchers around you.

You can find out more details on eagle etiquette on our website: <https://delawarehighlands.org/eagles/eagle-watching/eagle-etiquette/>.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



The heated bus will make many stops at observation points. Spectators also report seeing different wildlife like dark-eyed juncos.



Keep your eyes peeled for eagles sitting in the trees, especially near water.

“It’s important to dress warmly to keep yourself comfortable as the temperatures in the region during January and February are typically very cold and windy,” advises Rachel Morrow and Bethany Zarnowski of the Delaware Highlands Conservancy. “Good winter footwear is essential. Bringing binoculars will help you safely get a closer look at the birds rather than viewing with the naked eye or trying to move closer and potentially causing the birds to fly away, using the energy they are trying to conserve.”

They also advise that cameras are recommended in case you get a chance to capture any moments that you would like, whether it’s of the eagles or a great picture of you and those who accompanied you on the tour.

“You don’t need to have a lot of gear to have a great eagle watching experience!”, said Morrow.

The Conservancy partners with landowners in Pennsylvania and New York to protect their land through conservation easements – voluntary,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

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The bus trip starts at the Zane Grey Museum. This serves as the central hub for the program.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

legal agreements that permanently safeguard a property's natural value.

These agreements are flexible, balancing land preservation with future needs, and are recorded in the property deed. The Conservancy works with current and future landowners to uphold these protections forever.

The Conservancy's headquarters, the 144-acre Van Scott Nature Reserve in Beach Lake, PA, offers a welcoming space for all ages to explore nature. With three miles of walking trails through forests, meadows, and wetlands the Reserve also hosts year-round educational programs.

The number of eagles seen on each tour varies, as wildlife can be unpredictable, but some

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31



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tours have spotted up to 30 eagles! Participants may also see a variety of other birds, including raptors like hawks and smaller species such as chickadees, red-bellied woodpeckers, and dark-eyed juncos.

“The tours sell out annually, and typically have a waitlist,” explained Zarnowski. “Reserving your spot early ensures you will be able to attend a tour on your preferred date. Tours are typically announced in November of the prior year.”

If you’re unable to attend an eagle-watching tour, there are still ways to support eagle conservation.

Advocate for the protection of land, water, and wildlife, or contribute to organizations like the Delaware Highlands Conservancy through donations, which can be made on their website.

Additionally, you can get involved by volunteering as an Eagle Watch member. You can also visit www.DelawareHighlands.org for more information on how to help protect these majestic birds and their habitat.



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STEVEN DAVIS PHOTO

An immature eagle (distinguished by its mottled coloring) dives for dinner.

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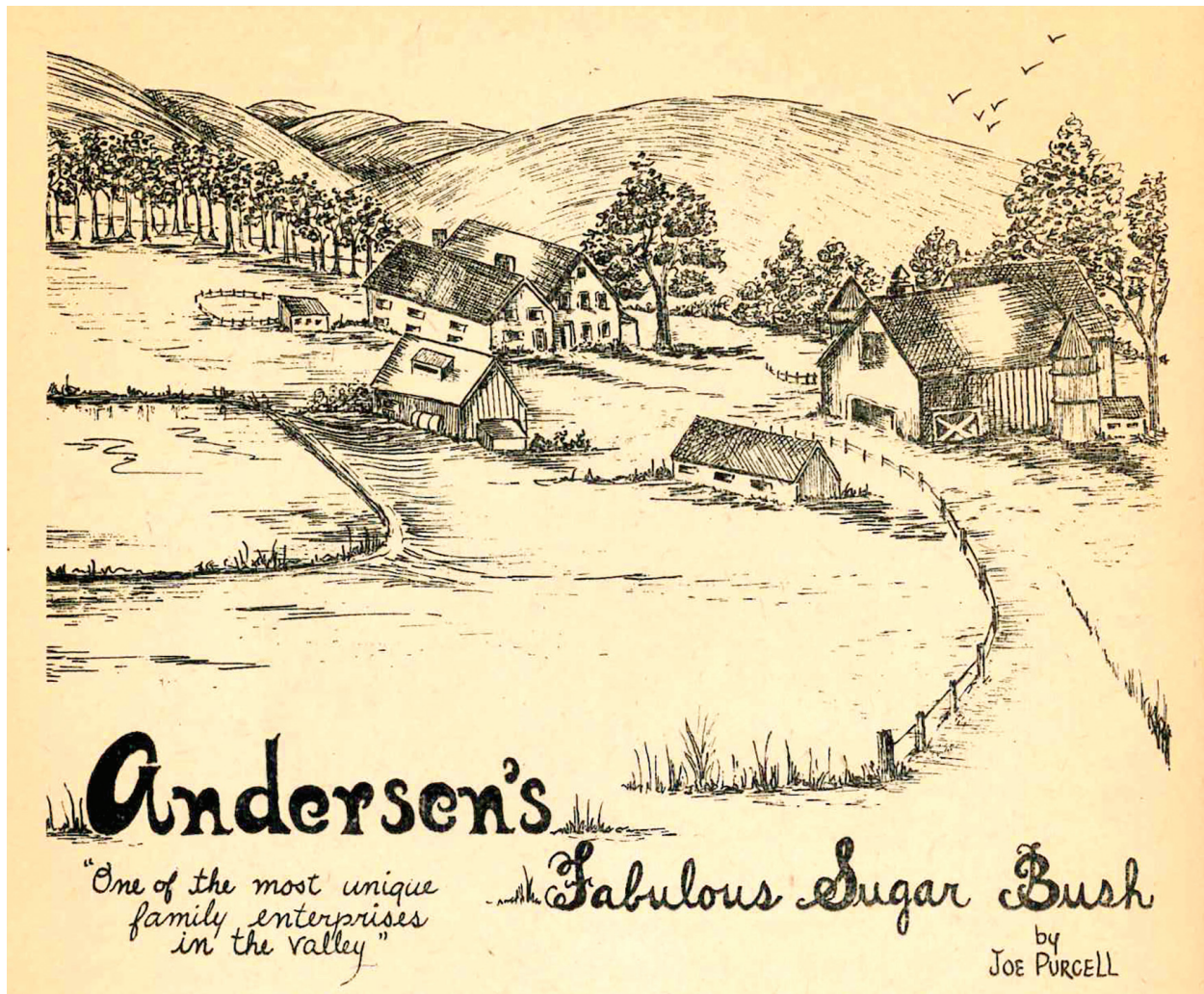
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This article first appeared in the 1966 Upper Delaware Drummer, whose Editors were Dorothy M. and Joe Purcell. Heralded as "Useful Information for the Traveler and Visitor," the Upper Delaware Drummer was published by Snug Harbor Country Store in Narrowsburg, N.Y. for several decades in the 1950s and 60s. The staff artists included Mrs. Anthony Hawker of Narrowsburg; Zelda Milk of Long Eddy; Manville Wakefield, Sullivan County Historian; James W. Burbank, curator of Fort Delaware and Wayne Trimm, staff artist for the New York State Conservationist.

It seems only fitting and proper that a man whose father operated one of the most famous eating places in the Scandinavian countries should establish one of New York State's largest maple sugar industries – and that Andersen's Sugar Bush should be located near where America's first such enterprise started.

August Andersen and his wife, together with their son, August and daughter-in-law, Irene, have developed a sugar bush of some 5,000 trees which supplies the raw materials for their syrup and candy operation high up in the hills above

Long Eddy. Their sugar bush, although not the largest syrup producing bush in New York State, is unique in that they make their own candy and colorful ceramics in which much of their produce is packed.

August Sr. and Mrs. Andersen were both born in Copenhagen. Mr. Andersen's father was known all over Europe for his "strawberry cellar," which in today's language would mean that he had a restaurant which featured gourmet food

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

despite the season. His operation, according to Mr. Andersen, first gained fame for the strawberries served with thick cream when they were unavailable locally. The Andersen "strawberry cellar" supplied the royal families as well as the Czarina of Russia.

Some thirty years ago, August and his wife came up to their farm high above the Basket Brook with the idea of taking in boarders and establishing a resort. In the process, they added two farms to their holdings to make a total of 1,000 acres, much of which was covered with sugar maples. From the start, they, like so many of their neighbors, made a quantity of sugar from their bush. However, about eight years ago, after taking into consideration the assets that they had – some 10,000 trees that could be tapped, a daughter-in-law, Irene, who is a home economics teacher who'd be a tremendous help in sugar producing, and a son who was not afraid of hard work – they went into the sugar and syrup business for keeps.

According to the Andersens, the maple sugar

industry has undergone a complete change.

No longer is it operated as in the days of old when wooden buckets and horse or ox-drawn sleighs brought the sap to the collection point for boiling. Gone are the days of the cast iron kettles in which the sap was boiled down for syrup. Today's sap product, which is delivered to the sap house by plastic tubing and drawn from the trees with nylon fittings, is a cleaner, more sanitary product. The appearance and taste of maple syrup has been improved considerably since oil burners have replaced wood-fired evaporators. The colorful sugar operation of yester-year, which featured roaring wood fires, resulted in an accumulation of ashes, bark, soot and smoke which was not appreciated with pancakes.

It was at Stockport, Pennsylvania, located on the Delaware River, just a short distance "as the crow flies" from the Andersen sugar bush, that the first maple sugar industry in the United States is reported to have been born. Around 1790, Samuel Preston and John Hilborn sent a quantity of maple sugar down the Delaware to Philadelphia to Henry Drinker. He in turn for-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36



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August Andersen Sr. and his wife operated a gourmet restaurant in Copenhagen before coming to America.

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warded a box of it to George Washington and received a reply in a letter in which Washington wrote: "And being persuaded that considerable benefit may be derived to our country from a due prosecution of this promising object of industry (the manufacturers of maple sugar), I wish every success to its cultivation which the persons concerned in it can themselves desire."

Mr. Drinker, who was a large landowner in this county (Wayne), at once had a little book printed

setting forth the pleasures and profits of the sugar industry, and shortly thereafter set about organizing a society which was to be called "The Union Society, for promoting the manufacture of sugar from the maple trees and furthering the interests of agriculture in Pennsylvania." (The above taken from the History of Wayne, Pike and Monroe Counties).

The Andersens pray for warm sunny days (above 40 F) and frosty nights which make the sap run heavy. The heavy run may last as long as 20 days and each tap should yield some 10 gal-




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lons of sap per season. Ten gallons of sap boiled down will yield one quart of syrup.

With the coming of the first warm spring nights and first stages of bud development, the harvest season is over. If the work of collecting some 50,000 gallons of sap seems like a chore, the Andersens have only started. For now comes the packing of syrup, making of the candy and its distributions to shops far and wide and finally, the appearance at the Wayne County and Rhinebeck Fairs.

It is at the fairs that the Andersens try to meet many new people and acquaint them with their delicious maple products. In merchandising their maple cream, they found that customers thought that this was some sort of a face cream and didn't go for it. The Andersens now call their delicious cream, "Maple Butter" and point out that their butter actually does not contain butter but is pure maple syrup made to remain in a spreading, butter-like consistency. Once they induce people to try it on pancakes, French toast, biscuits, and the like, they're sure they'll have a demand for their product.

The Andersen's sugar bush is located three miles from Long Eddy and is easily reached by

turning off Route 97 at the viaduct and proceeding east on County Road 134.

Visitors are always welcome at the Andersens where candy is frequently being turned out in the candy kitchen, where Mrs. Andersen is busy turning out attractive ceramic jugs for the packing of syrup and where everyone is busy, busy, but never too busy to be friendly.

Now in its third and fourth generations, Andersen's Maple Farm is still going strong today. Please see Andersen's Maple Farm's ad on page 19.

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STORY BY MATTHEW ALBECK

Marking the joyful rebirth of Spring, the annual shad run is an epic 330-mile journey for adult shad who swim from the Bay of Fundy in the Atlantic Ocean to the Upper Delaware River to spawn.

On this run they must safely swim past many predatory fish, including striped bass, smallmouth bass, bluefish, and channel catfish. Larger predators like birds, bears, and marine mammals also eat shad. Anglers usually catch and release shad, although some keep the fish for their roe. Once they reach their spawning

area, the shad begin releasing eggs (up to 300,000 each) at night in shallow areas where water is moving. Most shad die after spawning, but some may survive to spawn for many years. Once they hatch, the little shad fry live in river nurseries until the next fall, when they return to the Atlantic Ocean on their way to the Bay of Fundy.

The Delaware River is unique along the Atlantic Ocean because it is free flowing along its entire length. Shad and other migratory fish can swim through the entire main stem river and up into the East and West Branch of its headwaters. In the 19th century, exploitation, pollution, and dams in the upper Delaware obstructed this free

flowing watershed and led to a significant decline in the shad population.

In 1828, the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company constructed a 16-ft dam across the river at Lackawaxen, Pennsylvania, which remained for 80 years until it was dismantled. In 1889, The New York Times reported that this bridge decimated the upper river spawning run. During the 1940s and 1950s, pollution around Philadelphia caused significant declines in dissolved oxygen which blocked fish migrations from late spring

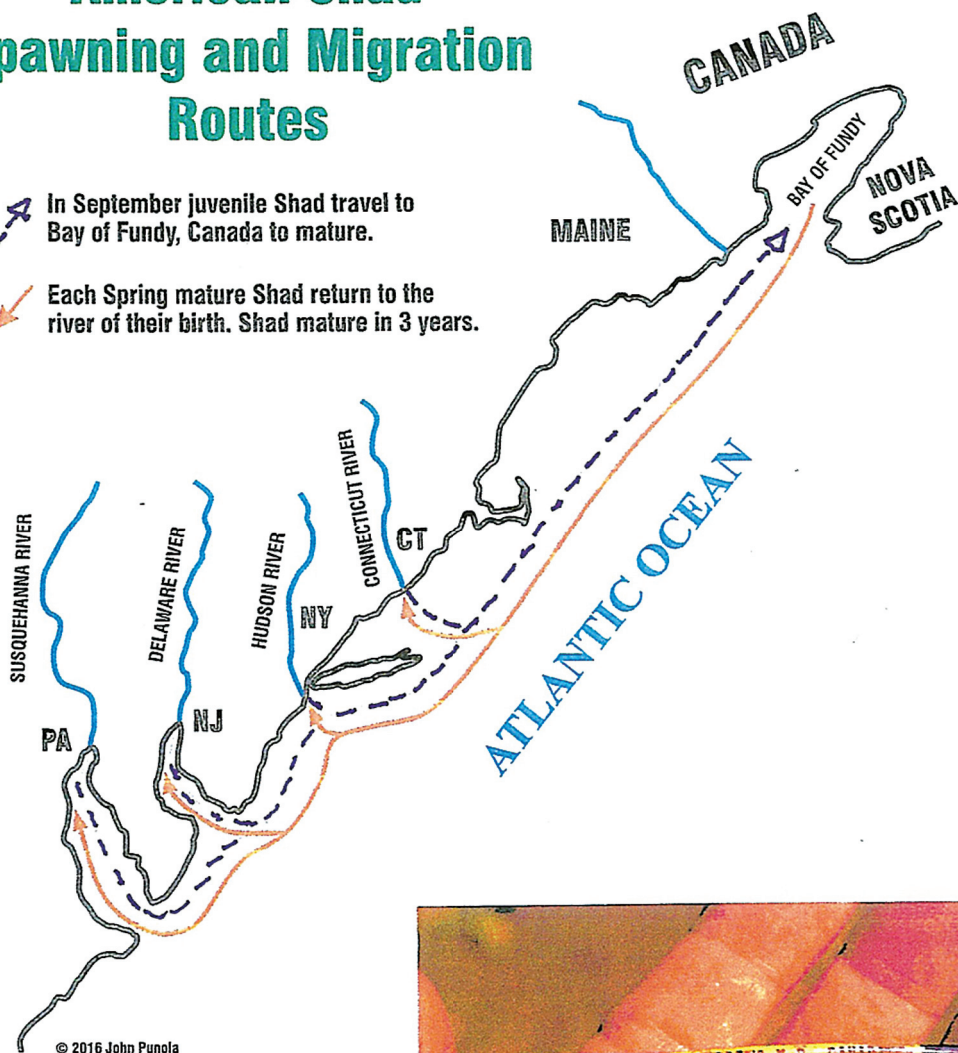
to early fall. Pollution of the Delaware watershed continued to persist until the passing of the Federal Clean Water Act in 1972, which significantly improved water quality.

Jesse Filingo has been a fly fishing guide on the Upper Delaware River for the past ten years and leads trips on the upper branches as well as 30 miles of the main stem. He usually guides from a drift boat and teaches everyone from beginner fly fishers to advanced anglers who are keen to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40

American Shad Spawning and Migration Routes

- In September juvenile Shad travel to Bay of Fundy, Canada to mature.
- Each Spring mature Shad return to the river of their birth. Shad mature in 3 years.



This map, designed by the late John Punola, who was known as Mr. Shad Man, shows the migratory route the shad take every year. At right, is a band used to track shad on the route.



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pages 40-41

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Filingo teaches all aspects of fly fishing and also provides his clients with environmental education. He believes it's important to know about the ecosystems, watersheds, insects, birds, and flora of the area that you are fishing, and he imparts this wisdom to his clients.

In addition to making them more skilled fisherman, understanding a watershed's ecosystem bolsters a client's sense of place and also fosters a respect for the watershed and hopefully inspires a stewardship over the land they use for recreation. It is this respect for the Upper Delaware's vitality that makes Filingo elated when he sees a healthy shad run.

Filingo knows that large numbers of migratory shad are an excellent indicator of water quality and overall environmental health of the watershed and local ecosystems of the Delaware River. It's crucial for the shad to have a clean and unblocked river system for their long migration, so when the shad run is large, it tells Filingo that the water quality is good. The shad run offers a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44



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PHOTO BY JESSE FILINGO

Jesse Filango's friend Jake Precone battles a fish on the Upper Delaware.



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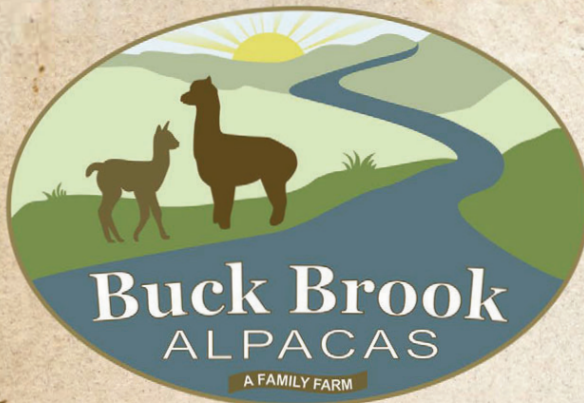
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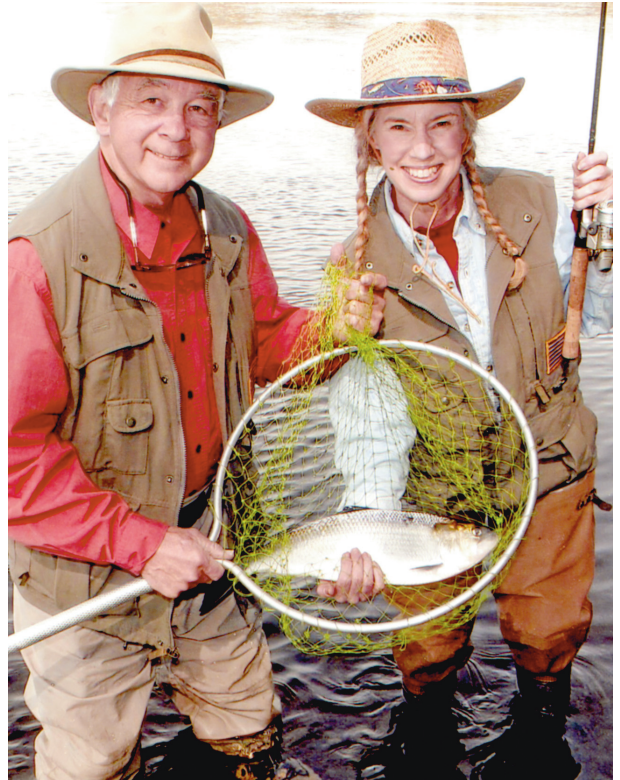
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view into The Delaware's water quality but also provides a necessary food source for eagles, ospreys, and other predators.

Filingo said there were "a ton of shad as far up as Callicoon" in 2024, but that it varies year to year depending on a number of factors.

For example, in a year of lower snowfall, the water volume will be lower and the shad may have a tough time reaching their spawning grounds. In late April, Filingo starts to see significant shad numbers in the Upper Delaware that increase in May and into early June. He said the most sought after fishing spots are 10-20 miles north and south of the New Hope-Lambertville Bridge area near Trenton, New Jersey, where the shad begin appearing in early April.

The shad are able to navigate large rapids on the lower Delaware and no artificial dams block their run. In the Upper Delaware, Filingo sees most shad in the main stem because they avoid cold water for spawning (they cannot tolerate water below 41 degrees). Filingo said that shad are not sought after by humans to eat, but their



The late John Punola and his wife Nancy fished for Shad every Spring for more than two decades. He was the expert when it came to putting shad in the net.

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roe has been historically prized as a delicacy.

Filingo said, "it's amazing that the shad are still able to make this epic journey" and "we will know that we are in trouble if the shad stop spawning in the Upper Delaware River."

Jesse Filingo owns and operates Filingo Fly Fishing and is a certified fishing guide in New York and Pennsylvania (jesse.filingo@filingofly-fishing, 615-428-5090)

Catching shad is loads of fun, especially when you give a seven-year-old the fishing pole.



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