



Driving tour hits 22 stops along the Susquehanna

Page F-5

OUTDOORS

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'Cache in'

New geocaching trail joins Susquehanna Greenway

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Susquehanna Greenway



The 500 miles of the Susquehanna Greenway, one of the largest greenways of its kind in the state, link people to places along the Susquehanna River and its West Branch — spots such as parks, trails, access points, conserved areas and river communities — according to its partnership.

The West Branch Water Trail recently was listed as one of the Best Adventure Destinations of 2012, by National Geographic.

A new trail is coming to the greenway — the West Branch Susquehanna River GeoTrail. It offers a way to travel in diverse manners by land and water, with the popular activity of geocaching at its center.

Geocaching is increasing in popularity every day and the partnership wanted to find a way to add it to the trail, said Erin Pierce, program coordinator of the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership.

"We think this popular activity will be a great way to explore and learn about the West Branch in a fun and healthy way and is also an opportunity to attract new visitors and their tourism dollars to the area and river towns," she said.

The GeoTrail is "a unique journey through history across the varied landscapes of the West Branch for those looking for a new kind of adventure," Pierce said.

The river will be used as a guide, a feature that is a bit different from most other geocaching experiences.

"The GeoTrail will build on this designation and allow paddlers and non-paddlers alike the opportunity to interact with and learn about the West Branch. The river is a great destination for paddling, but through the GeoTrail people will also discover the Susquehanna River is also a great place for walking, hiking, camping, photography, wildlife watching and more," Pierce said.

Geocaching basically is treasure hunting using a GPS unit to find specific coordinates. At the coordinates, a geocache usually is hidden. It may be a container containing small trinkets, toys, papers and a logbook so visitors can add their names and the date they found the cache. Some sites only contain a logbook.

"Inside, you'll find the 'treasure,' which typically consists of a logbook and possibly a small item you can take as long as you replace it with an item of similar value," Pierce said. "Caches must be labeled so there isn't any confusion as to what it is once it is found."

20 caches

On the GeoTrail more than 20 sites will be part of the trail. All of them are in Susquehanna Greenway, which stretches through Clearfield, Centre, Clinton, Lycoming, Union and Northumberland counties.

The GeoTrail can be traversed by bike, canoe, kayak or on foot, or a combination.

Along the trail's 228 river miles, the caches will commemorate impor-
(See GEOCACHING, Page F-3)

The West Branch Susquehanna River GeoTrail introduces families to the outdoor activity of geocaching, while also providing an outlet for hikers, bikers and boaters. The GeoTrail allows travelers to explore more than 20 sites — all of them in the Susquehanna Greenway, a 500-mile long greenway that stretches across Clearfield, Centre, Clinton, Lycoming, Union and Northumberland counties. Organizers anticipate that the GeoTrail will be finished and ready for public use by the end of the fall. When it is, the Susquehanna Greenway website — www.susquehannagreenway.org — will list cache coordinates, offer a downloadable passport logbook and show information and images that help tell the story of each cache location.

PHOTOS PROVIDED and COURTESY OF CHUCK HAUPT (bottom and top)



Reflections in Nature: 'Possums love persimmon trees



BILL BOWER

When my wife Mary Alice and I visit our son's family in Arlington, Va., we often take walks around their neighborhood. On an unusually warm and sunny morning walk last winter, we noticed large brown seeds scattered on the sidewalk beneath a tree.

I was unable to identify the tree even after looking at the seeds and bark of the tree. We noticed a lady across the street, working in her flower garden. I asked her if she knew the name of the tree, and she replied that it was a native persimmon tree.

According to the following song and story, most opossum hunts ended at the foot of a persimmon tree.

*Raccoon's got a bushy tail,
Possum's tail goes bare,*

(See REFLECTIONS, Page F-4)

TAKE a WILD GUESS



Though this week's Take a Wild Guess entry is shown nestled in grass, it would prefer to be deep in a pond or river. Think you know what it is? Submit your Wild Guess by noon Friday for a chance to enter our monthly drawing. See Page F-4 for a list of rules and for the answer to last week's entry.

JESSICA WELSHANS/Sun-Gazette

Outdoor Briefs

(From Page F-2)

wool. Folk's Butterfly Farm will teach kids and adults all about butterflies, and the Susquehanna Beekeepers Association will display a working beehive.

Perimeter tours of the nuclear plant also will leave from the center throughout the day.

The festival will be held at the Susquehanna Riverlands and the Susquehanna Energy Information Center. For more information, call 1-866-832-3312 or email pplpreserves@pplweb.com. For directions, visit www.pplpreserves.com, click on "Susquehanna Riverlands," then select "Contact Us and Directions."

Learn how to avoid survival situations

WASHINGTONVILLE — Learn how to avoid getting into a survival situation from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Saturday at PPL's Montour Preserve.

Being able to identify hazards that can put you in an outdoor survival situation is one of the first steps in preparing for an outing. Join outdoor enthusiast Fred Gast as he explains events that could turn an outdoor trip into a hazardous situation. The program will help people of all ages learn how to avoid becoming a victim of circumstances.

Meet at the PPL Montour Preserve Environmental Education Center. For directions, visit www.pplpreserves.com and click on "Montour."

For more information, contact the preserve at 437-3131 or jdbeam@pplweb.com.

See vehicles from years gone by

EAGLES MERE — The fourth annual Bi-Planes, Trains & Antique Cars Fair will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at Eagles Mere Historic Village in Sullivan County.

An admission fee applies for those ages 13 and older.

For more information, email emgreen-events@gmail.com or call 525-3370.

Guide, author to discuss fall trout fishing

Don Daughenbaugh, noted fishing guide, author and fly tyer, will discuss "Trout Fishing In The Fall" at the Susquehanna Chapter of Trout Unlimited's regular monthly meeting at 7:30 p.m. Oct. 10 at the First Presbyterian Church of Williamsport, 102 E. Third St. The meeting is open to the public.

Attendees should use the rear entrance. For more information, call David Craig at 971-4744.

Family fun day scheduled

MILLERSBURG — The Ned Smith Center for Nature & Art will hold a Fall Family Fun Day on Oct. 13.

The annual event is designed to increase awareness of the natural world with many activities for children and families. See live animal presentations, get your face painted, visit the pumpkin patch, create a fall decoration at the Art Creation Station, try your skills with a round of pumpkin bowling or stroll across the Wiconisco Creek on the footbridge.

For more information, call 717-692-3699.

Annual harvest festival planned

PENNS CREEK — Shade Mountain Winery's annual Harvest Festival will be held Oct. 13-14 at the winery, 16140 Route 104.

On Oct. 13, T & D's Cats of the World will be on hand with a display. Grape stomping will be held in a handmade vat at 1, 2 and 3 p.m., food vendors will be set up and The Pepper Street Band will perform outside from 3:30 to 6 p.m., weather permitting.

On Oct. 14, carriage rides through the vineyards will be held from noon until 4 p.m. and guided tours of the facility by the winemakers will be offered at 1, 2 and 3 p.m.

The vintner's pig roast and special bean soup available for a fee.

For more information, call 837-3644.

Snowmobile safety course planned

HANEYVILLE — Registrations are being accepted now for a free snowmobile safety course planned for Nov. 17 at the Hyner Mountain Snowmobile Club lodge, along Route 44, about six miles north of here in Clinton County.

State law requires that children ages 10 to 15 earn a safety certificate before lawfully operating a snowmobile, except upon lands owned or leased by their parents or legal guardians.

The goal of the course, which was developed by the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, is to develop safe attitudes in all Keystone State snowmobilers. Student manuals and workbooks will illustrate the sport's basic principles and safety concepts. Course content will cover winter clothing, machine safety and snowmobile laws and regulations. Class participants qualify for a certificate by completing their workbooks and achieving a score of 80 percent or better on the final examination.

Course instructors will be Henry Hartman, of Hanover, and Harrison Langley Jr., of Palmyra.

Parents must accompany their children to registration so required forms may be completed. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. Class starts at 8 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m. The club will provide lunch.

Enrollment is limited to a maximum of 30 students. Registration priority will be given to those

between the ages of 10 to 15.

Students who register in advance will be guaranteed a seat until 8 a.m. Walk-in students, including adults, only will be accepted if the class is not completely filled or if the registered students do not arrive by 8.

To register, contact Louise Davidson at 368-2288 or

Geocaching trail gives families way to interact with Susquehanna Greenway

(From Page F-1)

tant events, people and natural resources and encourage heritage tourism and promote healthy recreation, Pierce said.

"The trail will be very long, adding the challenge that geocachers will not be able to complete it on one day. Instead, its length and variety of cache locations give participants the opportunity to take their time and explore the GeoTrail as their schedule or interests permit," she said.

Many caches will be hidden in public access areas such as community parks, river access areas, walking and bike trails and historic sections of river communities.

"Some caches will be easier to find than others, but all will provide interesting, river-related stories," Pierce said.

Some will include the river's role in the lumber and coal industries as a transportation corridor, important conservation history, historical connections between river towns and downstream markets, and modern river ecology.

"Stories will also include historical human impacts on water quality, and participants will have the opportunity to learn about modern acid mine drainage mitigation along the river's tributaries that are helping to improve water quality along the river," she said.

GeoCoins

As part of the conservation effort in caring



PHOTO PROVIDED

A woman strolls along the Canal Towpath Trail in Watsontown.

for the West Branch of the Susquehanna, the river stewardship will encourage small trash bags in each of the caches, promoting a "Cache In, Trash Out" attitude.

Geocachers then will be able to submit their logbooks, after visiting a majority of the caches, to the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership and will receive a commemorative GeoCoin.

The coins often are minted and used in geocaching, and this one in particular will be made from sustainably harvested Pennsylvania hardwoods.

"We are very excited about the GeoCoin since it will be made right here in

Pennsylvania, in the Lumber Heritage Area, from local products and is a unique way to support small business in the watershed," Pierce said.

The GeoTrail is being developed thanks to a mini-grant from the Lumber Heritage Region.

Technical assistance was provided by project partners such as conservation districts, state foresters, local historical societies and local governments.

"The support of local businesses that are excited to see this new kind of tourism bring people to the West Branch is so important and critical in making this project a reality," Pierce said.

The trail is expected to be complete and ready by the end of fall. When it is, the Susquehanna Greenway website — www.susquehannagreenway.org — will list cache coordinates, offer a downloadable passport logbook and show information and images that help tell the story of each cache location.

"The GeoTrail will be a new way for people to explore the West Branch, a National Recreation Trail and a new National Historic Connecting Trail due to the river's connection to the historic explorations of Capt. John Smith in the 17th century," Pierce said.

Enjoy nature

"Geocaching is a great way to take part in outdoor activities because it is relatively low-cost, low-impact and a pretty low-key way to enjoy nature. We think that once people can connect with a special place like the Susquehanna, they are more inclined to care for it," Pierce said. "That can mean simply picking up some litter on their way to and from the cache, getting involved in a larger river cleanup or even joining the local watershed association or historic society to preserve these resources. We want the GeoTrail to be a fun way to inspire stewardship for the Susquehanna River."

Anyone who wants to stay informed of GeoTrail news and progress should sign up for the Susquehanna Greenway e-newsletter at www.susquehannagreenway.org.

Agency seeks to expand mentored youth hunting

The state Board of Game Commissioners on Tuesday gave preliminary approval to a regulatory change to expand antlerless deer hunting opportunities under the Mentored Youth Hunting Program for the 2013-14 license year.

"Sporting organizations and other interested groups have continued to express an interest in having the Game Commission expand the MYHP opportunities," said Ralph A. Martone, board president. "These groups support this proposed change in regulations to permit the transfer of no more than one Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) permit to a mentored youth hunter per license year."

"This change, along with the recent addition of fall turkey hunting to the MYHP, creates a wide

range of opportunities for young hunters," he added.

Martone said the action will not significantly affect the DMAP antlerless deer harvest and is consistent with the goal of providing additional mentored youth hunting opportunities. Also, it will work in the same manner as the recent change in regulations to allow adult mentors to transfer one Wildlife Management Unit-specific antlerless deer license to a mentored youth.

If the change is given final approval at a subsequent meeting, beginning in the 2013-14 license year, adult mentors would be authorized to transfer one DMAP harvest permit issued to them to an eligible mentored youth. The permit must be valid for the property on which the pair is hunting, and in the possession of the adult

mentor at all times while hunting antlerless deer.

Adult mentors may transfer the DMAP harvest permit to mentored youths only after the youth harvests an antlerless deer. A mentored youth may receive by transfer no more than one DMAP harvest permit each license year.

As is the case with antlerless deer licenses, a mentored youth is ineligible to make direct application for a DMAP harvest permit.

"Since 2006, Pennsylvania's hunters have been taking advantage of a remarkable opportunity to introduce those under the age of 12 to hunting through the Mentored Youth Hunting Program, and we have seen a steady increase in the number of MYHP permits issued," said Carl G. Roe, Game Commission executive director.

PGC board addresses illegal use of ATVs

The state Board of Game Commissioners on Tuesday gave final approval to a regulatory change to address violations of possessing, maintaining, operating, occupying or traveling on an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) or snowmobile in violation of the state's Vehicle Code.

"Unauthorized ATV operation on state game lands and private lands enrolled in the agency's Hunter Access Program continues to be one of the top 10 violations our wildlife conservation officers (WCOs) encounter each year," said Carl G. Roe, Game Commission executive director.

Current law does not give WCOs authority to enforce those Vehicle Code violations.

"This amendment will ensure safe and effective enforcement of these requirements occurring on lands under Game Commission ownership, lease, agreement or control," Roe said.

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