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Altoona Proud

A Monthly Insight into all that is Altoona

July is Wild About Wildlife Month

Wild About Wildlife Month celebrates the beauty and importance of wildlife and its critical role in our world. In the last five decades, the population of 21,000 mammals, birds, reptiles, fishes and amphibians has declined by 68%. While those numbers are alarming, it should also push us to action because all food and most medicines come from the plants and animals on our planet.

In the past, hunting and poaching were the major cause of endangerment or extinction. Today, species are threatened by deforestation, habitat loss, migration barriers, pollution of our waters and the disappearance of native plants in many areas of the world. In 2023, 21 species of birds, fish and plants moved from being endangered to being extinct in the United States alone. The beautiful Vaquita porpoise pictured below, living in the Gulf of California, is currently the most endangered species, with less than 10 of them still alive.

However, there IS good news! Worldwide efforts have brought back several endangered species in the past 40 years, including whales in the Atlantic and the beloved panda bear. It's a big task, but every person can help. You don't have to be a wildlife enthusiast or horticulture expert to change the trend of endangerment or extinction. Sponsor an animal through the World Wildlife Federation. Volunteer to help with park, trail, lake, beach or forest cleanup. Keep litter from lands and waters. Help a local group who is addressing the problem. Visit www.nationaltoday.com/wild-about-wildlife-month to learn more.



History of Wildlife Protection:

1961 - World Wildlife Fund established to preserve wilderness and limit human impact on wildlife.

1973 - Laws are passed in U.S. to protect endangered species (less than 250 of the species left)

1992 – The United Nations makes the first international agreement to protect wildlife and resources

2019 – Over one million species are added to the endangered list.

Fireworks and Firework Safety

July 4th brings picnics, barbecues and, of course, fireworks. While it is a fun day for all, the day also needs to be safe. The National Safety Council suggests the following to ensure a safe Fourth of July:



- Never allow young children to handle fireworks; only allow older children to use them with adult supervision.
- Never use fireworks if impaired by drug or alcohol usage, or point them or throw them at others.
- Never light fireworks indoors; only use them away from people, houses and flammable material.
- Never hold lighted fireworks in your hands or try to relight or handle malfunctioning fireworks.
- Light only one device at a time, use protective eyewear and maintain a safe distance from the fireworks.
- Keep a bucket of water nearby to fully extinguish fireworks, and soak both spent and unused fireworks in water for a few hours before discarding.
- Be respectful of neighborhood pets, for which fireworks can be very frightening and upsetting. Obey the consumer fireworks ordinances of the City, which can be found on the City of Altoona website, www.altoonapa.gov

NOTE: Sparklers account for more than 25% of firework injuries and half of all firework injuries for children under 5. Choose alternatives such as glow sticks, confetti poppers or colored streamers.

Fourth of July Events in Altoona, PA

Main Line Mania – Sunday, June 30th, 5 PM – 10 PM, Railroaders Memorial Museum; fireworks, food vendors, cash bar, Slingers Throw House and entertainment by Donny Burns & The 3rd Degree, with fireworks following. For more info, go to <https://www.railroadcity.org/events.html>

Fort Roberdeau Star Spangled Fourth –Thursday, July 4th, 10 AM - 4 PM; free parking and admission, open house and activities for all ages. Living history reenactors will be on site from 10 AM to 3:30 PM. For more info, visit www.fortroberdeau.org/events/

Altoona Curve Baseball– Thursday, July 4th, home game hosting the Harrisburg Senators at 7:00 PM, with fireworks following the game. For more info and for tickets, visit www.milb.com/altoona

Summer Thunder at DelGrosso's Park – Thursday, July 4th, with a musical pre-show at 9 PM, followed by fireworks at 10 PM. For information on July 4th hours for Laguna Splash Water Park, food stands and DelGrosso's Park Rides and food stands, visit www.mydelgrossopark.com/events

Angie Gioiosa Memorial July 4th Race – Thursday, July 4th, starting at The Mishler Theatre; 15K Run begins at 7:30 AM, 5K Run begins at 8:00 AM and 2 Mile Walk begins at 8:05 AM, with a Lollipop Fun Race for kids. Online registration closes Monday, July 1st and Race Day registration is from 6:30 AM – 7:30 AM at Heritage Plaza at 11th Avenue & 14th Street in downtown Altoona. For more info, visit www.blairregionalmca.org/race-series/july-4th-angie-gioiosa-memorial-race/

Wild Ones PA



Wild Ones is a national, non-profit organization, whose mission is to preserve, protect, and restore wildflower meadows, native plants and rain gardens. Their goals are to raise awareness of the importance of native plants, encourage people to use native plants in their gardens, plant in public parks and gardens and educate children about plants, conservation and environmental issues. Restoring and re-creating natural rain garden habitats cleanses our water and curbs flooding, both important issues for the City.

Today, 99% of our wildflower meadows are gone, because of chemical spraying and imported plants that become invasive. Native plants are necessary for pollinating native species and insects, because they do not recognize foreign plants, so have nowhere to feed or reproduce. For example, the milkweed wildflower is the only plant on which monarch butterflies will pollinate. Without them, we lose our monarch butterfly population. More than 40% of insect species have been in decline since 1970, an alarming number, since 80% of our produce needs to be pollinated by insects.

The local chapter, PA Wild Ones Ridge and Valley, was founded in 2022 by Jordan Wild. Working with Blair County Conservation District, the chapter is cleaning areas of debris and flooding, securing grant funding for the planting / restoring of native plants in public areas and parks in the City, and providing educational opportunities for children. Locally-owned company, Ecotopian Earthcare, has a local Native Plant nursery that provides the native plants to the Wild Ones Chapter, and also sells native plants to the general public. For information, visit ecotopianeathcare.com

Current projects include:

Fairview Park – aintenance of a rain garden planted in 2018. The chapter is restoring native plants and hosting visits from Holy Trinity Elementary School.

Tuckahoe Park- cleanup in a three – acre green space at Tuckahoe Park, with plans to create a walking trail connecting other City Parks.

Browning and Kentucky Avenues - using currently empty flood plain fields, to create a community food forest, that will be open to the public, with native edible plants and signage to educate visitors about the uses of the plants.

Grants from the PA Native Plant Society and federal funds for the development of community food forests are in place but it is just a start. If you would like to learn how to get more involved, or to become a member, you can visit www.paridgeandvalley.wildones.org

Railroader's Memorial Museum Summer Concert Series

The Railroader's Memorial Museum is pleased to present the Railroad City Summer Sounds Concert Series, being held in the new and improved Railyard at the Railroader's Memorial Museum. The first of the series, held on June 21st, featured the group Hair Force One. The second concert, to be held Friday, July 12th at 6:00 PM, will feature Cowboy, the ultimate Kid Rock tribute band. Gates open at 5 PM and tickets are \$10. Tickets can be purchased in-person or online at www.railroadcity.org/events. Stay tuned for more summer events from the Railroader's Memorial Museum!

French-American Heritage Month

Since July is French-American Heritage Month, we highlight:

French-American Heritage

As is the case with many nationalities who emigrated to America, the French influence began in Philadelphia, with unusually large amounts of French-speaking people arriving in the 1790's, escaping from the French revolution happening in their homeland. By 1793, there were over 3,000 French-speaking refugees.

Unlike other nationalities, many French immigrants eventually returned home. However, a number of them stayed and, after a few years, began to move west across the state. Most communities were centered around Catholic priests, on their journey west. Small numbers settled in the countryside of central Pennsylvania (our area) or on individual farms, though these were few in number and widely scattered.

Many factors contributed to the French immigrants' eventual departure from the states. Because they came not only from France, but from Geneva and the West Indies as well, political differences prevented them from forming a cohesive group, as other nationalities were able to do. Many French refugees had been prosperous in their homeland but, in America, were struggling to survive. The news of the death of King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, along with the general amnesty declared by Napoleon, ultimately and significantly caused the French immigration population to dwindle.



French-Americans did, however, contribute to our culture in many ways. French immigrants brought technical, medical and scientific expertise. The French greatly influenced the arts, bringing ballet, pantomime, musicians and vocalists. They are also credited with bringing hot air ballooning to America and the "Cirque" (circus) as we know it, with exotic animals and trapeze performances. French wine, pastries and sorbets are also part of our culture because of their influence.



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