

BACK FROM THE BRINK



Keith Opperhauser

Haliae, a bald eagle, was banded in 2013 and tracked flying in Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Canada, and New Jersey.

Human Intervention Spurs Recovery

By KAREN KNIGHT

This is the first in a three-part series on endangered species.

Efforts to restore the natural habitats of endangered and threatened non-game species are showing signs of progress, according to experts who have been studying the patterns of ospreys, bald eagles, peregrine falcons, horseshoe crabs and other species that stop along the way or make their homes along the Delaware Bay in Cape May County.

However, the progress that has been made is not enough to restore these species to what conservationists would like to see.

In addition, the life or death of these species

is an indicator of the health of the surrounding environment and could impact a growing economy across the county that saw tourists spending \$6.6 billion last year.

A Critical Stopover

Flowing from the Catskill Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean, the Delaware River is the heart of the four-state region comprising New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.

Cities, towns, farms, forests, mountains, marshes, beaches, and more are all connected by the longest undammed river east of the Mississippi River and its 2,000 tributaries.

The Delaware River watershed is defined by its diversity. It encompasses the most densely populated urban areas in the nation, yet re-

mains 50% forested, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Delaware Bay's shores are a critical stopover area for six species of migrating birds, including Red Knots, sanderlings, ruddy turnstones, and Semipalmated sandpipers.

The late May arrival of these birds coincides with the spawning of horseshoe crabs, producing one of the most dramatic natural phenomena anywhere in the world, according to the state Department of Environmental Protection Division of Fish and Wildlife.

Feeding on crab eggs, the birds refuel and continue their journey to Arctic breeding grounds. There has been a dramatic decline in horseshoe crab numbers since 1991 and a corresponding decline in shorebird numbers.

Ospreys, Bald Eagles Decimated

Ospreys and bald eagles were "decimated" post-World War II, according to Eric Stiles, president and CEO of the New Jersey Audubon Society, because of pesticides used in households and on farms, DDT (Dichlorodiphenyl-trichloroethane) in particular.

The chemical is passed along in the food chain and affected the thickness of egg shells.

"The birds would sit on their eggs and crack the shells because they were so thin," Stiles noted.

By the time the pesticide was banned in New Jersey in 1968 and in 1972 for agricultural use in the nation, Stiles said suburban sprawl also had destroyed much of the Ospreys' habitats.

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Tech Employees' Jobs Safe

By VINCE CONTI

CREST HAVEN - At a special meeting June 4, the Cape May County Technical School District Board of Education reached a last-minute, negotiated agreement that averted the potential loss of 15 custodial, maintenance and grounds-keeping jobs at the school.

For weeks, the district had been moving towards privatization of those jobs, a move, the board said in a press release after the meeting,

which would have saved the district \$650,000 over the life of a two-year initial agreement.

The Cape May County Technical Education Association, the union representing the workers, launched a protest against the move, which included asking the freeholders to intervene May 28.

The district reviewed bids from private firms and the special meeting was initially seen as the one at which the board would make an award.

The meeting drew over 75 employees and members of the public to the board conference room. They stood along the walls three deep, and filled floor space in front of the board meeting table.

The meeting was moved to space more suitable to the crowd and a changed agenda made clear that the privatization move was dead. That agenda called for the board to reject the privatization bids and approve a settlement with the union.

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Maxwell Resigns; Fox Stays

By TAYLOR HENRY

WEST WILDWOOD - Commissioner Cornelius Maxwell's name plaque stood in front of his empty chair at the June 5 West Wildwood Commission meeting.

Maxwell resigned days before for "family reasons." That left Mayor Christopher Fox and Commissioner Scott Golden.

The June meeting was the first since Fox was terminated as city administrator in Wildwood in the wake of his \$24,900 in state ethics fines. His severance pay from Wildwood was \$24,904.

The announcement of Maxwell's resignation garnered cheers from

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Taylor Henry

Trish Sinnott, far right, president of the non-political citizens group Concerned Taxpayers of West Wildwood, addresses West Wildwood commissioners June 5.



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