

Little Pine State Park—Where Eagles Soar

By David Kagan

Little Pine State Park, in western Lycoming County along Little Pine Creek four miles northeast of Waterville up Pennsylvania Route 4001, is a summertime wonderland. Covering 2158 acres in Tiadaghton State Forest, the park offers a variety of activities to its visitors—picnicking, hiking, swimming, boating, fishing and camping.

Trails along the shore of its 94-acre, dam-created lake, through the Carsontown flood plain and up into the steep, forested mountains and plateau above the valley allow people of all ages and abilities to enjoy hiking experiences. The easiest is the 0.88-mile-long Carsontown Trail, recommended for families with small children. Hikers will see a wide variety of wildflowers and, perhaps, some of Pennsylvania's beautiful white-tailed deer.

For a longer but still relatively easy hike, visitors can walk the flat, five-mile, out-and-back Lake Shore Trail. Most challenging and scenic is the 2.7-mile-long Panther Run Trail, with its steep climb, its vistas overlooking the valley, lake and dam, and its rock outcroppings; it also passes by an old flagstone quarry.

Park Naturalist John Kaercher often conducts programs at the park. He thrills visitors with his "Eagle Watch" presentations, giving very informative talks about the magnificent white-headed and white-tailed American Bald Eagle. During past programs he has directed his listeners to look across Little Pine Creek just north of the lake area to see the huge tree nest with baby eaglets!

Looking through the previously setup scopes or their own or provided binoculars, entranced viewers have seen fledglings exercising their wings and one or both of the adults on nearby limbs carefully watching over and guarding the young.

At one point in one of Kaercher's mid-June presentations, one adult eagle took off and soared, with its amazing 6-foot wingspan, over Little Pine Creek, to the delight of the viewers. Kaercher humorously commented, "It's hard to tell whether the adult eagle took off to fish or just to get away for a little while from its constantly screaming youngsters!"

In addition to this Little Pine active nest (which was discovered in 2004), Kaercher said that there are four other active sites along Big Pine Creek, for a total of five in the watershed. The Big Pine nesting sites are all located on the west side of the creek—one across from the middle of the village of Cedar Run, a second just below Black Walnut Bottom camping area south of Slate Run, the third (and oldest site) at the first hollow above the village of Blackwell, and the last (and most recently discovered) across from the fishing area at Darling Run at the north end of the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon.

Whether it be eagle watching, hiking to view an ancient hemlock tree, digging one's toes into a sandy beach, attending one of Naturalist Kaercher's informative environmental programs, cooking hot dogs and hamburgers on an outdoor grill, sleeping under the clearly visible Milky Way stars or engaging in any of the many other available activities, visitors spending a day, a

weekend or even a whole week at Little Pine State Park this summer will, with little doubt, leave
reluctantly, planning to return again in the future.