



American Bald Eagles at Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge 12/09/2020

A Magazine from Small Town & Rural America

Voices and Views from the Valleys of the Nemaha to Sweeten your Coffee Break.

Cases “tested positive” for Covid-19 in our “Country Neighborhood.”

Source: Google Search; ‘Name’ County, Nebraska Covid

| Date | Nemaha | Otoe | Johnson | Richardson |
|-------------|--------|------|---------|------------|
| December 6 | 360 | 813 | 341 | 396 |
| December 12 | 413 | 874 | 383 | 431 |
| December 19 | 433 | 923 | 463 | 441 |
| December 26 | 457 | 972 | 493 | 481 |
| December 31 | 477 | 977 | 536 | 516 |

2020 Deaths 10 2 5 15

Death can result from transmission from one to another.

Decrease transmission by wearing a mask in public.

Next month this table will reflect deaths instead of “cases.”

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Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

January Writers & Contributors

Devon Adams - 6 & 7

Stephen Hassler - 12

Merri Johnson - 10

Dorothy Rieke - 4

Senator Julie Slama - 2

Janet Sobczyk - 12

Thank You!

Positive Covid Cases Bordering Nebraska

(Same Source As Table On Page 1)

| Date | Kansas | | Missouri | | Iowa |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Brown | Nemaha | Atchison | Holt | Fremont |
| Dec 6 | 822 | 1154 | 226 | 287 | 395 |
| Dec 12 | 901 | 1219 | 245 | 299 | 419 |
| Dec 19 | 955 | 1285 | 255 | 316 | 438 |
| Dec 26 | 977 | 1309 | 258 | 322 | 454 |
| Dec 31 | 1023 | 1345 | 259 | 324 | 466 |
| Deaths | 18 | 49 | 5 | 9 | 5 |

A Message From Nebraska Senator, Julie Slama

The beginning of a new year also brings the beginning of a new legislative session. I am honored to serve you, Southeast Nebraska!

As most people know, our Nebraska Legislature is unique in that we are the only state that has a Unicameral, which makes for a different legislative schedule than our neighboring states. Senators introduce bills during the first ten days of session, which are then assigned to one of the standing committees for a public hearing.

Hearings begin pretty quickly after the start of the session. During this time, the Legislature will convene at 9:00 AM and adjourn before noon with committee hearings starting at 1:30 PM. Each bill introduced receives a public hearing with public testimony. Those wishing to make themselves heard on issues can submit their public testimony online or can appear in person to the hearing to testify. Public hearings are a great way to let your voice be heard, as it is your chance to have your opinion on bills and issues be entered into the public record for consideration by every Nebraska state senator.

Full-day debate begins after many full afternoons of public hearings. During this time, the Legislature normally convenes at 9 AM, and adjourns around 5 PM, though sometimes work is completed a little earlier or later. We also have late night debates that can dismiss as early as 6:00 PM or as late as 11:59 PM. There are three levels of debate before a bill gets presented to the governor to sign. They are General File, Select File, and Final Reading. We spend the rest of the session working to get as many bills passed as possible to help our state.

Each Legislature works in a two-year cycle with one long session and one short session. This year, which is the start of a new Legislature, is a long session, which means that we will work for 90 legislative days. Bills that do not pass or fail in this session will be carried over to the short session in 2022. The 2021 Session will begin on January 6th, and I am ready to get started!

As in previous years, NET will be streaming the session, along with committee hearings, live on their T.V. channel and on their website. This is the most in-depth way for constituents to watch coverage of the Capitol as it happens live. You can also follow along on the Nebraska Legislature's website. The daily agenda is generally posted the night before and will highlight which bill is currently being discussed on the floor.

In other good news, on the federal level, we are cautiously optimistic about the passage of legislation that includes language for Peru's levee repair. The House has approved an amended version of their "Water Resources Development Act of 2020" and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved its "America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2020" by a vote of 21-0. Committees from both houses have been working together to create a bill that harmonizes both bills, and is expected to be ready this week for the House to consider. All in all, this legislation will be a great benefit to Peru, and give this great community the resources to repair our levees.

As always, I welcome your input on issues important to you. Follow along on my Facebook and Twitter pages, both entitled "Senator Julie Slama" for more updates, or contact me directly at Senator Julie Slama, District 1 State Capitol, PO Box 94604, Lincoln, NE 68509-4604; telephone 402-471-2733; email: jslama@leg.ne.gov.



Bald Eagle with juvenile (upper right corner), 12/01/2020.
Probably an offspring from last year.



As of December 18, there were still some snow geese at the refuge following a peak earlier in the month. They come and go. Notice the Bald Eagles lower center, and on the muskrat house.



Trumpeter Swans
12/09/2020

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American Bald Eagle, 12/01/2020



Bald Eagle with its prey, 12/18/2020



This close-up of snow geese includes the "blue form."
12/18/2020

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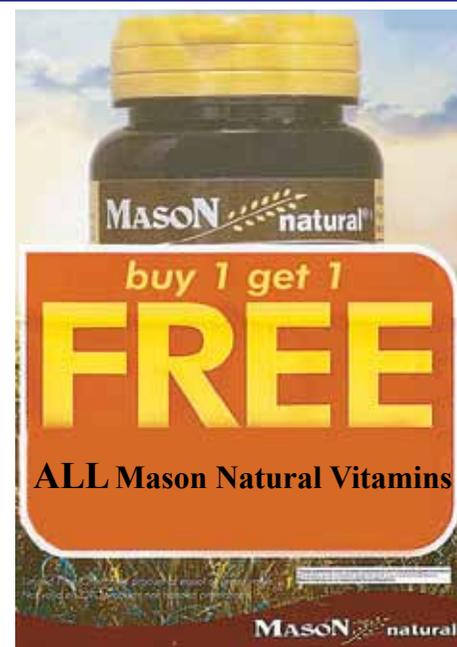
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INSIDE THE LINES

Remember coloring books?

Oh yeah, the pictures with all the lines. Of course they wouldn't be pictures if the lines weren't there, right?

When we are very small, some of us are told to stay inside those lines when we have crayons in our hands. Others of us get to decide what we do with the crayons.

We can scribble colors on top of colors, in random strokes that form a mottled soup over the outlined picture. Or we can use one shade per page.

Or we can draw on the wall! (Whoops, maybe not that).

Perhaps the most limiting rule is to tell a free-wheeling little mind that skies have to be blue, grass is always green.

Boys wear blue, girls wear pink, trees have brown trunks, cars have black tires, etc.

That rule does not exist except in the mind of an uptight person.

The sky won't fall if a child uses his imagination to paint a wild essay of colors on an ordinary scene. Try it yourself, you fans of OCD. Make a lovely dream site with purple grass, a pink sky, blue tree trunks, polkadot leaves, and a striped house with a black chimney. Hold your breath, if you like, but in the end you will have FUN!

OUTSIDE THE BOX

There are lines and colors and rules, or not rules, about them.

There are also boxes.

We all live inside boxes that are inside other boxes. Our country is a big American box, but inside it are lots of small boxes that hold people from various locals, with their special accents, foods, and customs.

Pick a place, and it's residents probably all have similar behaviors and habits and ideas of what makes a person fit there, like a piece in a puzzle. If your edges aren't cut just so, you may seem out of place and that's O.K., if you're willing to take some sandpaper and smooth out your rough spots until you're just like everybody else. But if you are a free soul who listens to his heart instead of old Mrs. Crock's "10 Rules for Resident's of Rightville," you may be a candidate for another box, or another country, or another planet. Have fun on your journey, and send me some postcards!

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THE SINGING WIND

Every season there is a song to be heard in the sighing of the air. Summer comes with a whole band of instruments, when storms beat out the deep rumble of thunder drums, and staccato hail, not to mention the rattle of wet leaves just before a branch or a trunk splits like a gun shot. In the softness of a warm night, trees sway in a graceful waltz that eases our sleep like a lullaby. Autumn is crackly, as green turns to red, yellow and orange leaves that are ripped off their mother branches into the spiral of a death fall. The white specter of Winter approaches, blowing a cold knife that cuts away the last of the warmth, chilling our bones. When snow falls, a howling ghost comes, wearing white that takes the shape of swirls, curls and currents between buildings and around trees and bushes. Spring loosens the tight tree muscles and thaws mud into sucking goo. It plays a piccolo behind the easy rain of a new day, and bird songs finish the recital with the close harmonies of life.

ERASING HISTORY

There are those who pay no attention to facts. Facts are no more than rocks to be kicked out of the way if they paint the “wrong” picture of our history as a country. Wrong is defined as opposite the preferred view. No matter that proof exists for the facts, opinion trumps truth, and bully’s want to win by any means, preferably by lying. If that doesn’t work, violence will do, as long as the leaders of the movement can pay others to do the fighting, a custom common to cowards. Freedom is precious. We have the right to be free, but we have to work and to fight to stay that way.

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COLD HEAT

They say the sun is so hot that it would cook you if you got close, but today, it seems so far away that it could never make you warm. High in the blue of a winter noon just after the shortest day has come and gone, it is a cold white orb that mocks your thoughts and throws blue snow shadows at your feet. It will be leaving soon, dropping like a rock in a lake, as it falls into the sea west of California. Then you’ll have to pray to the smiley face of the silver dollar moon for the heat you’ll never feel.

STARS AND SIGNS

They say the sky of the night is a map to follow even from an endless sea of open ocean. But you’d have to know how to read the signs of the stars. What if you’re in a night plane, flying over Kansas, at 30,000 feet or so. Can you find your way? If you can read the stars on the ground then you’ll be sailing in an upside-down sky that stretches from sea to sea.



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Juvenile Bald Eagle, Soaring, 12/09/2020

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I was hoping to capture the classic and romantic bill-to-bill greeting, but they were watching me.
12/09/2020



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<<<<<<<<<<<<< *Diary continued from page 10*

are instructions in the first place. If you are buying twine – for whatever reason – I would think you already know how to “use” it. Oh well. That, in itself, is a sign of the times.

Which brings me to my next point. What are the odds, do you think, that 2020 will be the start of a return to common sense in this world? With perfect 2020 vision, and all of the hindsight we now possess on so many topics, just maybe we’ll realize that doomsday predictions have yet to come true. Not to say we shouldn’t keep working at improving how we treat our world and each other. But let’s not get so fixated on doom and gloom that we fail to recognize all the good in the world. It’s out there. Just look; you’ll see it.

January 2021 Update: I believe my question at the beginning of the preceding paragraph has been answered. In my opinion, we have NOT returned to common sense in this world. But there is still hope. The vaccine most of us will be receiving in the next few months just might allow us to get past the current doomsday mentality that has controlled public policy since March. Let us all resolve to get the vaccine and get on with our lives.



Visit the Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge

If the water at the refuge is not frozen over, then December, January, and February are the best times to see the Snow Geese or other waterfowl at Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge (east of Rulo near Mound City, Missouri). I visit when “counts” are over 100,000 or when there are a lot of eagles. The Refuge website updates eagle, geese, and swan “counts” weekly, but the birds can come and go more often than that. The 10-mile loop around the marshes can have a lot to offer photographers and birders, but timing a visit can be frustrating or rewarding.

Google; “Loess Bluffs Waterfowl Counts.”



**The photos on this page were taken on 12/09/2020 at
Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge**

Above, they always keep at least one eye on me.

Below, a juvenile takes four to five years for
its white head and tail color to develop.



If You Believe, You Can

Janet Sobczyk, © 2020, Omaha

She believed she could tie her shoes
didn't know she was "handicapped"
fine-motor-skills challenged
didn't know that many children
with Down syndrome
wear slip-ons or shoes with Velcro
their whole lives
she was determined
would twirl and twist laces
worn thin, we'd replace 'em
she kept trying
we kept encouraging
she'd master the first loop
then get stuck
master the second loop
get stuck again
year after year
she practiced, focused
and one day...
she did it!
not once but over and over
double-knotted
triple-knotted
she'd bring the shoes to us
show her success
want them unknotted
to begin again
time after time
'til muscle memory stuck
proud and happy
she knew she could do it!

Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

The view through my window on Fifth Street is that of a more 'larger world' today than that which I could perceive when I was younger.

Quite some time before the pandemic I was walking through a mall with someone who asked if I had done drugs in the 60's. I replied that I was too busy studying, both in high school and college. As I got older and reminisced or learned of other people's experiences during that decade, I came to realize that "things went on" which I just didn't hear about or pay attention to. After all, the "60's" was a defining decade. There were dramatic changes in society; music, movies, women's rights and civil rights (both still unfinished), attitudes toward war, marriage, divorce, and probably more that I'm just not thinking of right now. I was there! But I was focused on my education. The country was racing Russia to the moon, and I wanted to work for NASA!

Late last year I watched (streamed), a movie about Helen Reddy. Certainly, I knew of her 70's musical hit, "I Am Woman," but I hadn't known of the turmoil in her life during the early 80's. I was preoccupied during that time also, recently divorced with financial troubles.

In times of turmoil in one's life, perhaps being self-centered makes sense. When it comes to a person's passion, it seems one can only effectively direct such passion in one direction. As one matures, one develops a broader perspective, and becomes more observant and aware, hopefully. The view through my window on Fifth Street is that of a more 'larger world' today than that which I could perceive when I was younger.

But there were "events" that got my attention; the JFK assassination, the moon landing, the Challenger disaster, the Oklahoma City bombing, the 9/11 attack. I can picture in my mind where I was and what I was feeling when I first heard or viewed each of those events.

And even now, in my "later years," I wonder what I might be missing today. What year-old event might I read about and wonder, "Why didn't I hear about that?" On an insignificant level, if I hear about a movie that was popular in theaters a year or two ago, I might think to myself, "That sounds good. I wonder why I didn't see that?" At least being kind of a "news junkie" helps me feel confident that I'm keeping up with some things these days.

I'm sure the pandemic will be added to those events that I consider milestone events in my life, although there is no one day or one moment as yet that flashes in my mind. I suspect that when I receive the vaccine, the people around me, the weather outside, which mask I'm wearing; these memories will last and become part of who I am. So when that day comes I expect I'll gladly say yes, I've "done drugs." Maybe there's a time and a place for everything, and a more worldly view yet to come; to be viewed through my window on Fifth Street.



PSC Men's Basketball

DEC 5, PSC v MIDAMERICA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY, W 66-59
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Tanksley Earns Last Heart MBB Player of the Week for 2020

In its final player of the week announcements, the Heart of America Athletic Conference (Heart) named Henry Tanksley (Lincoln) as its men's basketball player of the week. The Bobcat player led his team to an 84-63 win over Graceland in Lamoni, Iowa, to improve the team's overall record to 6-5 and to 4-4 in conference play. The 6-4 guard scored 29 points on 12 of 23 shooting from the floor which included hitting two of four from long range. In addition, Tanksley added a team-high seven rebounds, dished out three assists, blocked one shot, and grabbed one steal.





PSC Women's Basketball

DEC 5, PSC v MIDAMERICA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY, L 63-80
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Peru State College News

2019-20 Peru State Swenson Winners Noted

Another victim, at least to this point of the COVID-19 pandemic, was the annual recognition of the Peru State Swenson Award winners. Normally, the honorees would have been recognized at halftime of a Bobcat football game. Several dates were planned, but the coronavirus kept interfering and eventually the Peru State football season was suspended for the fall of 2020.

So without further ado, the Peru State athletic department would at least like to publicly recognize its 2019-20 honorees with the hopes of potentially honoring them at an upcoming basketball contest.



Claire



Luis

The individuals selected as the 2019-20 recipients were Claire (Cudney) Renyer (Marysville, Kan./Sabetha, Kan.) and Luis Constantino (Varzea Grande, Brazil).

Claire was a four-year member of the Bobcat volleyball team and a three-year member of the women's basketball team. She has completed her student teaching in the Sabetha elementary at the second grade level. Recently, she was hired by the school district to teach second grade during the spring semester. Over the summer, she married Eric Renyer and they are living in Sabetha. During her student teaching, Renyer helped coach the Bluejay volleyball team to a state championship title.

Constantino is living in Beatrice. He is completing paperwork in order to start a master's degree program.

About the Swenson Award

Each year since 1925, outstanding student-athletes have been presented with the Bert Swenson award in recognition of their participation in athletics, outstanding character, personality, service, and loyalty to Peru State. Since 1999, a female and male selection has been made by the members of the athletic department staff. The award was created in memory of Bert and Stella Swenson's 13-month old son, Bert, Jr., who passed away. Bert Swenson, Sr., was a football great who graduated from Peru State College in 1909. The Shickley, Nebraska, native served as the football team captain and class president during his senior year at PSC. In 2009, Mr. Swenson was honored posthumously with his induction into the PSC athletic hall of fame.

Another Matthies to Play Bobcat Volleyball

There will be a familiar name joining the Peru State volleyball team in the fall of 2021. Bobcat head volleyball coach Laurie Felderman recently announced the signing of Ella Matthies from Roncalli Catholic High School in Omaha.

Matthies, a 5-8 outside hitter/opposite, will be the second in her family to play for the 'Cats as her older sister Mallory was a member of the team for four years. Mallory completed her eligibility in the fall of 2019 and graduated that following spring.

The daughter of Brett and Marsha Matthies plans to major in early childhood development while at Peru State.

Roncalli finished the 2020 season with a 15-11 mark. Matthies played in 68 sets and produced 192 kills while hitting at a .359 clip. She added 14 total blocks, 213 digs, and 22 assists.

Matthies was named to the River Cities All Conference First Team and gained honorable mention recognition in the Omaha World-Herald C-1 teams for the past two years, as well as, for the All-Omaha Area teams. While at Roncalli, Matthies was inducted into the National Honor Society.

John Baeten to Bowl for PSC

Peru State bowling coordinator Brenda Lutz recently announced the signing of John Baeten (Topeka, Kan.) for the 2021-22 season. Baeten is transferring from Newman University in Wichita, KS. He graduated from Seaman High School in Topeka, and holds the single-season record average of 239. During his last season at Newman, Baeten averaged a 184.81 over 33 games.

This is Peru State's first year with competitive bowling. Baeten will be part of the Bobcat's second year and is excited to continue his collegiate bowling as a part of Peru State's team.

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WITH A NEBRASKA CAREER SCHOLARSHIP ADDS \$12,000 (\$3,000/yr)

DEANS
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GPA of 3.20 out of 4.0

WITH A NEBRASKA CAREER SCHOLARSHIP ADDS \$10,000 (\$2,500/yr)

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- ♦ Majoring in Business, Education, Criminal Justice or Computer Management Information Systems.
- ♦ Score of 18 or above on the ACT.
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