

Year End Reflections

Max Bukowitz, Piney Run Naturalist

It's that time of year again for both reflection and looking forward to the future. Personally being on the tail end of the baby boomers, I still enjoy hearing a tweet - from a bird, remembering how TV had knobs and 4 stations, cars needed keys to start, and how we could drive *into* the movies.

I'm also young enough to know computers are here to stay, and are an immense part of our daily lives. With that thought in mind, I am taking the plunge to embrace online dating apps! I am going out on a *limb* and setting up profiles for my office mates. They are quite elusive and tend to stay to themselves. I believe this will boost their presence and allow them to become more connected to others in this technologically modern world!



BALD EAGLE – Fun fact: I have been the national emblem of the United States since 1782. I was chosen for my majestic appearance and representation of freedom and strength.

Preferences: clean water, tall trees for nesting, wooded area for finding small rabbits, and muskrats.

Interests: fishing, hunting, and shredding my prey with my sharp talons and beak! I prefer to live in the woods, with a very large nest, but within a close range to clean water like Piney

Run Lake. I am a rather large bird (weighing between 6 – 12 lbs) with a wing span over 6 feet. I tend to have a lot of cameras on me, so I am not afraid of being seen!

Difficulties – fishing line, litter and chemical pollution (like pesticides).

GREAT HORNED OWL – Fun Fact: I cannot see very well in the dark however, I am not blind. In fact, I rely on my hearing more than any other sense when hunting at night. However, during daytime I owe my hunting ability to my remarkable eyesight. We, great horned owls, have binocular field of vision.



Preferences: wooded areas with plenty of food (especially small ground critters), decomposing trees to use as nesting sites and tree hollows for shelter.

Interests: hunting for furry woodland critters and even an occasional scaly snake, raising our young, and playing hide and seek with the hikers. I blend into the trees, so I am very hard to find!

Difficulties: disappearing forests and protecting our young from bobcats, feral cats, foxes, racoons and coyotes.

GREEN HERON – Fun Fact: I am one of the few bird species known to use “tools”. I will bait for fish using things like bread, leaves, or feathers as lures.

Preferences: swamps, marshes, lakes, ponds, impoundments, and other wet habitats with trees and shrubs to provide secluded nesting sites. They may even nest in dry woods and orchards if there is water nearby for foraging.

Interests: hunting for snacks, wading in the water and watching people watching me! It's entertaining!

Difficulties: snakes and racoons - they find me tasty!





PILEATED WOODPECKER Fun Fact: I sometimes use telephone poles and power lines for nesting. Due to the size of my nesting hole, 8” wide by 24” deep, they often make the poles snap.

Preferences: open pine forests with mature widely spaced trees. My territory is claimed by drumming on trees with my bill.

Interests: hunting for carpenter ants, beetles, fruits and nuts using my sharp like bill to pull bark off trees to find my food. Finally using my long tongue, I poke holes and drag out lunch! It keeps me busy!

Difficulties: cats, snakes, foxes, large birds, and rats, although other animals may also prey upon us.

BARRED OWL – Fun Fact: my hoots sound like "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you"?

Preferences: old deciduous and coniferous forests with proximity to swamps or marshes. I nest in empty tree cavities or in the abandoned nests of other birds. My nests are usually lined with a layer of soft feathers. We do not migrate, nor do we venture beyond our territory, unless there is a scarcity of food.



Interests: hunting, eating food in a single swallow, and expelling pellets of the indigestible matter. It is very entertaining and a good way for humans to discover my diet!

Difficulties: My biggest issue is YOU! Please do not hunt, poison or trap me for my beautiful feathers.

While all my office mates look different, make unique calls, and enjoy different foods, at the end of the day, it is unanimous – they need a clean environment. The birds need the fish in the lake to be healthy, the trees in which they perch to be sturdy, and the air that they (and we) breathe to be clean. Each one of us can make small steps and be more aware of our impact on the environment to make this a better place for both humans and wildlife alike. We invite and encourage you to come to the park. Look up – look in the water – look down. When you walk by that tree with the hollow, take a closer look - there may be eyes looking back at you!

We hope after reading all these lovely profiles you will swipe *right*... and meet us in person at Piney Run Park (if you can find us)!

Many thanks for your continued support.

May the new year bring you good health – and lots of time outdoors!

Photographs provided by nature and photographer enthusiast Jeff Wetzel. For more spectacular photos please visit his site <https://jeffwetzel.smugmug.com/Wildlife>.

