TO THE ELK SCENIC DRIVE

The 127-mile Elk Scenic Drive is a picturesque driving tour in the heart of the Pennsylvania Wilds region. Drive stops not only include some of the best places to observe our awe-inspiring wild elk herd, but also help travelers experience the diversity and abundance of the region’s wildlife and recreational assets that are hallmarks of this scenic and rugged landscape. The drive’s Quehanna Spur also offers visitors access to wildlife viewing sites, several hiking trails and other places of interest within the remote Quehanna Wild Area.

Elk History
Elk once roamed across Pennsylvania, but their range was drastically reduced to a small area in Elk County by the mid 1800s. In 1867, the last native Pennsylvania elk was killed near Ridgway. As part of a major conservation effort to restore this great animal to the state, the Pennsylvania Game Commission released 177 Rocky Mountain elk into Pennsylvania between 1913 and 1926. Today, at 1,000 animals, the herd is the largest in the northeastern United States.

To help support the growth of the elk herd and to keep the animals away from agricultural areas, the Game Commission and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, with financial and volunteer assistance from many conservation organizations including the Keystone Elk Country Alliance and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, have established and maintained elk habitat areas and food plots.

The Fall Mating Season
“The Fall Rut”—in other words, elk mating season—lasts from September through October and is a particularly fascinating time to observe elk. During this time, bull elk bugle—or emit a low hollow that ascends to a long high note, followed by guttural grunts—to gather harems of 15 to 20 cows for breeding. They protect these mates and their territory by sparring with other males. Fighting bull elk lock antlers and begin to grow a new set within a few days. Be aware that there is no winter maintenance on most public state forest roads.

Winter Watch
Winter, after the hunters have retired, is another great time to view elk. In these cold months, both male and female elk grow dark brownish-gray coats of long, coarse guard hairs overlaying woolly underfur. Whitish fur covers their rumps and 4- to 5-inch tails. The dark-haired animals are easy to spot against the snow and often congregate in small groups in lower elevations.

In late February through March, the harsh winter stresses are obvious in the animals’ rugged coats and lean bodies. They paw through snow to reach what little grass is available, or turn to twigs, buds, and the bark of trees for nourishment. Mating bulls drop their antlers and begin to grow a new set within a few days.

Spring and Summer Renewal
During spring and summer, the bull elk velvet antlers grow rapidly as plentiful food—grasses and herbaceous flowering plants—becomes available. A bull elk’s antlers can grow about a half-inch per day, and eventually will lower four to five feet above the animal’s head and support five or six times that branch off of the main stem of the antler. Randy found, elk sporting seven times on each stem, or fourteen points, are known as Imperial Bulls.

In spring and summer, the coats of adult males and females are short, thin, and reddish brown. The cows and calves, which are dappled with spots, separate from the males and form smaller groups at this time. The mothers communicate with their young by barking and grunting and the calves make sharp squealing sounds in return.

Visitor Centers
There are two major visitor centers where you can get better oriented to the Elk Scenic Drive, find detailed information about the greater Pennsylvania Wilds region, and participate in a variety of conservation education programs and events. They are the Elk Country Visitor Center and the Wildlife Center at Sinnemahoning State Park. More visitor information can also be found at pennwilds.com or at locations in communities marked on the map with .

When Viewing Elk and Wildlife
- Watch quietly, move slowly and blend in with your surroundings—wear neutral colored clothing and shoes. (No jeans please.)
- Do not approach elk, like binoculars or spotting scopes to view, at a safe distance.
- Only stop at roadway pull-offs, don’t be a hazard on the road or block driveways.
- Respect wildlife homes—leave nests and their occupants as you found them.
- Do not feed or pet wildlife as it is dangerous to you and the animals.
- Respect private property. View wildlife on public lands.

SINNEMAHONING STATE PARK

- Picnicking
- Swimming
- Boating
- Fishing
- Hiking
- Birding
- Wildlife
- Nature Trails
- Guided Tours
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- Guided Tours

Access to the Park:
- Camping
- Restrooms
- Beach
- Access Cabins
- Access to Fishing

Elk Country Visitor Center
Located in Benezette, the Elk Country Visitor Center (ECVC) opened in 2010 to provide a facility for conservation education related to Pennsylvania’s elk herd as well as a prime location for viewing this amazing animal in its natural habitat. The non-profit Keystone Elk Country Alliance manages the facility for DCNR who owns the building and grounds. This world-class, eco-friendly visitor center offers panoramas, views, interactive exhibits, a 4-D immersive theater, a “Made in the USA” Gift Shop, and a hands-on Discovery Room for younger visitors. Outside, you can explore well-tended wildlife trails, elk observation areas, and viewing blinds. The site is also known for its horse-drawn wagon rides, wildlife programs and special events like the annual Elk Expo. For more information go to www.elkcountryvisitorcenter.com.

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This area is best known for its stand of white birches. In late July, blueberries and huckleberries abound here, a favorite of bears. A rustic CCC-era cabin in this small wooded park.

Watch for black swallowtail butterflies in wildflowers at the edge of Parker Lake or in the occasional sapling or bald eagle overhead. Walk Beaver Dam Trail to experience varied habitat types and look for sturdy beaver huts.

Take a quick hike, enjoy a picnic lunch or stay overnight in a stockaded rustic CCC-era cabin in this small wooded park.

Blustery winds in the fields in the 1800s. As you walk along S. B. Elliott State Park, you will have a good chance of spotting elk or fox in the towering pines that may be hunting rodents.

See more than 300 years old tower pine that sprouted in farm fields. The rugged trail follows a private road up the mountain. From the viewpoint you can see the steep slopes far down in the 167-acre Kettle Creek Reservoir, a stocked trout lake.

Walk two short trails to the viewing area. This ridgetop vista provides excellent views westward. It is a good place to look for red-tailed hawks and American kestrels. Enjoy your adventure on the Elk Scenic Drive. Look for these handy signs to guide you. See reverse side for individual site services offered.

This is one of the premier elk viewing areas along the drive, with a handicap accessible viewing blind that provides incredible views and wildlife photo opportunities.

A longer 5-mile hike option from the roadside and parking area.

 jailed many trees here. It created a broad range of habitats in which wildlife abounds, including an amazing variety of wood warblers.