



photo-courtesy of Linda Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives, Connecticut College



FINDING RACHEL—

The Rachel Carson Legacy in Pennsylvania

by *Linda Stager*

You may find Rachel when you stand on the Ninth Street Bridge in downtown Pittsburgh, Allegheny County. Or, you may find Rachel while you gaze at a raptor soaring high in the sky.

And, I may find Rachel when I am sitting quietly on one of Pennsylvania's waterways, enjoying the fresh air, birdsong, and clean water.

In every case, we owe those moments to biologist and visionary Rachel Carson, Pennsylvania native and author who, with her research and writings, literally changed our world.

Carson is broadly known as the intrepid and tenacious woman who changed our natural world for the better. Her early career as a biologist for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service set the stage for writing about her understanding and appreciation of an environment that would sustain human culture into the future.

Carson was born in a small town about 15 miles north of Pittsburgh in 1907. Carson grew up exploring her surroundings and followed her interests to college, where she majored in zoology. She also loved to write.

After college, she pursued a job with the United States Bureau of Fisheries, where she wrote script for a series of educational radio shows. When the radio series ended, Carson continued to write essays, including a series of pamphlets titled, "Conservation in Action."

In the men's world of the 1950's, Carson set the standard for all scientists, both male and female. *The Sea Around Us*, a blockbuster bestseller, helped readers celebrate ecology and a love of nature.

In 1958, Carson's journey changed based on a letter she received from a landowner who discovered many dead birds on her property. Coincidentally, only days earlier, there had been a massive spraying of the insecticide DDT.

Carson became inspired to correct what she thought was an injustice. She felt that the environmental destruction she saw demanded that someone step up and tell the story. After 4 years of research, *Silent Spring* was published in 1962. That book would change how people looked at the environment. It became a "call to arms" for change before it was too late.

Silent Spring sparked a firestorm of protest. Carson was bullied and vilified. She held the course. She spoke to organizations and testified at congressional hearings.



photo-Linda Steger

Two eaglets in a Pennsylvania bald eagle nest. This photo was taken with a long telephoto lens using ethical photography techniques.

In 1963, the United States government published the President's Science Advisory Committee: Pesticides Report. Each of Carson's points highlighted in *Silent Spring* was confirmed. In 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created, described by one journalist as the "extended shadow of Silent Spring".

It has been 61 years since *Silent Spring* was published.

Carson is heralded for being one of the first messengers for conservation. More importantly, Pennsylvania's waterways are cleaner now than ever before. According to Chris Urban, Chief of Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's Natural Diversity Section, Rachel Carson was one of our early conservation heroines who helped bring awareness to the importance of clean air, water, ecology, and species conservation to the general public. Her conservation message still resonates with us today.

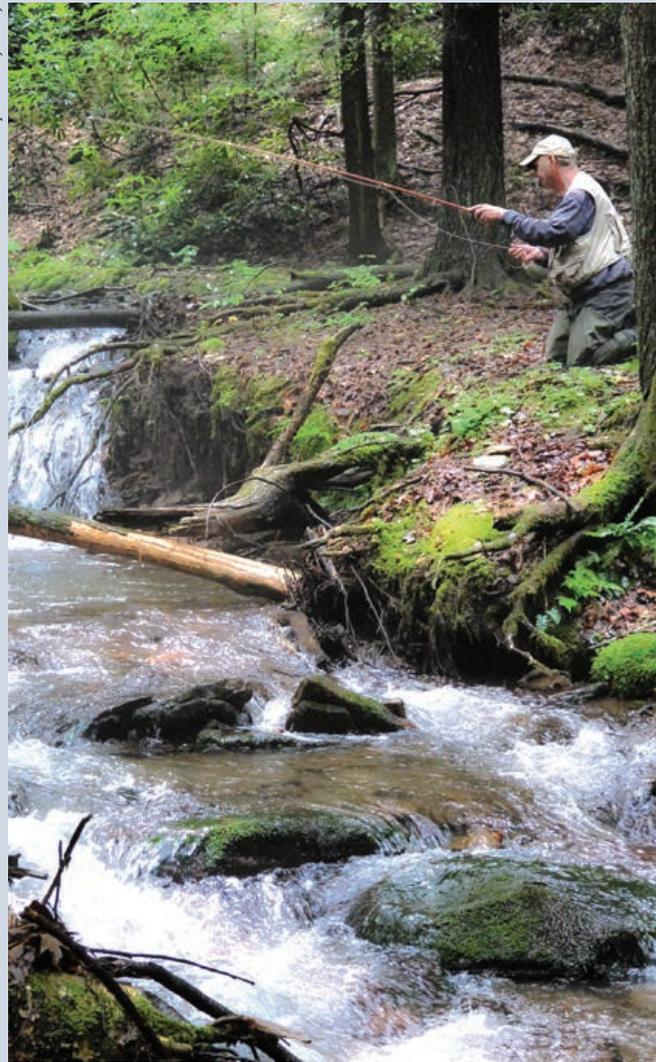
Furthermore, at least three raptors that have been endangered species, now enjoy renewed vitality in Pennsylvania as a direct result of Carson's publications about the dangers of pesticides. Whenever we see a peregrine falcon, an osprey, or an eagle in our skies, we should thank Carson for her efforts.

And, the Ninth Street Bridge in downtown Pittsburgh is only one of several structures in Pennsylvania named after Carson. Her name graces this bridge as well as the Rachel Carson State Office Building in Harrisburg, the 45.7-mile Rachel Carson Trail north and east of Pittsburgh, numerous conservation areas, as well as numerous structures across the nation.

Rachel Carson was someone who paved a new way of thinking about conservation and changed our future forever.

You'll find her in every inch of what we enjoy most in nature here in Pennsylvania. ☐

photo-Terry Malloy



Pennsylvania's waterways are cleaner now than ever before.

photo-courtesy of Stephanie Sheridan



Rachel Carson's conservation message still resonates with us today—the importance of clean air, water, ecology, and species conservation.