



CINDY ROSS (2)

Hawking Art

Known as a site to view migrating raptors, Hawk Mountain also has a wealth of local artists who will open their studios during an annual arts tour

Text and photos by Cindy Ross

Dan Christ adds detail to a painting, and Todd Gladfelter refines his chain-saw sculpture. These two plus many more artists will be demonstrating their talents or have their studios open for visitors during the art tour.

NORMALLY, THE SOUNDS A VISITOR HEARS at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary on the Kittatinny Ridge are the sweet songs of twittering birds or the flap of a migrating hawk on the wind. But on Saturday, June 6, the ring of a blacksmith's hammer on the hard steel of an anvil will interrupt the sounds of nature and announce the Hawk Mountain Arts Tour and Sale.

Inspired by the world-famous Hawk Mountain and the stunning Kempton Valley, a wide variety of artists have made this region their home. The one-day, 20-mile arts tour through Albany Township in Berks County is a rare opportunity to see their work in the place they create it. More than dozen artists will open their studios that day and welcome visitors into their creative lives.

Mary Linkevich, manager for the sanctuary, hatched the idea for an arts tour a few years ago when she was working on the sanctuary's annual benefit dinner and silent auction and she realized that many area artists had donated works. Uniting an auto tour through the beautiful countryside with stops to experience art along the way somehow seemed a natural marriage.

"We have such an incredible wealth of artistic talent

right here in Hawk Mountain's shadow," says Linkevich. "A few of our artists are even world famous."

CANDLESTICKS, TOTEM POLES AND QUILTS

Our tour begins at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, where we secure a map, driving directions, and a list of participating artists. The sanctuary, which sponsors the auto arts tour, is celebrating its 75th anniversary this summer.

At our first stop on the tour, we can watch creations take shape before our eyes. Todd Gladfelter swings his arm up and brings his hammer down on some hot red metal. The New Ringgold-based blacksmith makes such items as candlesticks and chandeliers in his portable blacksmith forge. But, if the mood strikes him, he also might start carving an owl or an egret out of a hefty chunk of tree trunk with his chainsaw-carving bar.

Alongside Gladfelter, two other artists are demonstrating their crafts. Kempton artist and photographer Chuck Eckenroth specializes in hand-carved totem poles. His work ranges from walking sticks and 13-foot-tall poles to hand-carved signs and figures. Frank Fretz, a natural history illustrator from Lenhartsville, is giving demonstrations

of his work on woodcuts (using plank grain of wood) and wood engravings.

Next, we head into the valley to Kindred Spirits Horse Farm where Jan Pavelco of Hamburg is exhibiting her photographic art. An outdoor photographer, she strives to capture the true spirit of people, places and things through her camera lens.

Dan Christ's wildlife painting studio is on the side of scenic Little Round Top. Upon walking into his studio, we are swept away by the dozens of taxidermy wild animals covering the walls. Christ captures their lifelike essence in the oil paintings he creates of wild animals in the natural world.

Hawk Mountain B&B hosts fabric artist Annie Trexler and painter Dave Hughes, both of whom have deep connections to Hawk Mountain and the valley. Trexler's needlework talent is evident in the quilts, table runners and place mats she displays. Hughes's exquisite paintings are of birds, including hawks and eagles, that he encounters during long walks in the woods. The warm brown and burnt sienna tones in his paintings come from a unique medium—coffee.

On Kempton Road, Jon Bond's paintings reflect his surroundings of the Kempton Valley and the nearby peaks. Visitors at this stop are treated to a tour of Bond's studio, which is a converted tobacco barn with massive timbers and picture windows that show off the breathtaking scenery. Bond's work can also be seen at the nearby Kempton Hotel. On the ceiling of the 1874 bar room, the artist has filled 200 square feet with a mural that traces our nation's history from Betsy Ross to Babe Ruth and from the frontier west to outer space.

POTTERY, SPOONS AND BASKETS

In the tiny village of Trexler, potter Jeff Dietrich and folkart carver Kai Kaysen display their work at Dietrich's historical log home and shop, which is located before the Wannamaker-Kempton Southern Railroad's train tracks. Dietrich decorates his stoneware and redware pottery with early Pennsylvania German motifs such as tulips and distleflinks. Woodcarver Kaysen specializes in "bird trees" made by steaming sassafras saplings and bending down the branches to form drooping arches. Individual hand-carved, hand-painted birds are then mounted on the branches.

At the Spoon Shop on Route 737 in Kempton, we hear the story of how spoon artist Jonathon Simons began his business 30 years ago when he forgot to take a spoon to work in his lunch bag. Since he was working with a woodworker, he grabbed a piece of wood and quickly whittled a crude eating utensil so he could finish his lunch. That spoon has led to a successful business creating hundreds of designs of cherry wood spoons, forks, tongs, spatulas, scoops, spreaders and cutting boards that are shipped to locations around the country and in Europe. His spoons have been

featured on the Oprah Show and are endorsed by cooking celebrity Rachael Ray.

Located a half mile from Simons's studio, Celtic Folkworks, a gift shop at Pamela's Forget-Me-Not B&B, is worth a stop on the tour. Located in the carriage house of the 1879 brick Victorian home, Randy and Pamela Gyoroy's shop features handmade leather, jewelry, tapestries and framed art.

The Country Seat on Old Philly Pike is our last stop on the tour. Owners Angie Wagner and her parents, Bill and Donna Longenecker, are experts at crafting baskets, and their well-stocked shop contains just about every conceivable supply you would need to weave a basket. You can even learn the craft yourself since they offer classes in basket making or caning or rushing a chair.

It is hard to believe that so many artists can be found within a 20-mile circuit in the Kempton Valley. The Hawk Mountain Arts Tour and Sale is a pleasant way to spend a day and discover the creativity this area has to offer. And entering the homes and studios of these artists simply reinforces the notion that there are many ways to make art. ♣

—Cindy Ross of New Ringgold is a regular contributor. Her husband, Todd Gladfelter, is a featured artist on the tour.

Many gather at the North Lookout at Hawk Mountain in the spring and fall to watch for migrating raptors.



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When You Go

The fourth annual Hawk Mountain Auto Arts Tour will be held Saturday, June 6, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., rain or shine. The event is free and has been greatly expanded this year. To mark the 75th anniversary of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, this year's tour features steel sculptor Mary Taylor at the Hawk Mountain Visitor Center. For tour maps, detailed artist information and suggested routes and tips for the 20-mile loop, contact the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary at www.hawkmountain.org or 610-756-6961. Public restroom facilities are available at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and the Kempton Hotel. ■