

Find your lucky bird in the Juniata River Valley

Bigger and better events planned for 2024

LEWISTOWN – Make this fall unforgettable by celebrating a centuries old tradition in the Juniata River Valley. Goose Day is fast approaching, and the Juniata River Valley Visitors Bureau is ready to welcome visitors from all over the state to take part in this beloved and growing holiday.

The legend of Goose Day, proclaimed a holiday in Mifflin and Juniata Counties decades ago, says if you eat goose on Sept. 29th, you will ensure wealth and prosperity for the coming year.

Goose Day List release

The official list of events and goose dinners is released Sept. 1st on the Juniata River Valley Visitors Bureau's website at www.JRVVisitors.com. The visitors bureau is encouraging everyone to call ahead to any restaurant to reserve their goose meal for September 29 before traveling.

"We publish the activity list almost a month before the celebrations begin so people can do a bit of research and plan their trip in advance," advises Landis. "And if you want to be certain to get your lucky goose, call ahead for a reservation."

Begin your adventure

With the significant growth and enthusiasm surrounding Goose Day, coupled with the activities and events which are spread over two counties, the visitors bureau wants to ensure all visitors have the best experience. This year, the bureau is encouraging guests to stop first at the Historic Courthouse in downtown Lewistown on September 27 and 28 for guidance. The staff will have a prepared list of events and activities happening elsewhere that weekend to hand out to visitors.

New this year

Join Two Brothers Bicycle Company for the inaugural Goose Day Gravel Ride, a 10-mile mountain bike ride through Coopers Gap in Rothrock State Forest. Covering 1,000 feet of elevation, the ride will be a simple out and back on Coopers Gap Road with a stop to enjoy the view of Big Valley at the halfway point. The ride is rain or shine on Sept. 28th. Bring your own mountain bike!

Goose Day Rubber Duck River Race will take over Kish Creek at Lewistown Rec Park for a good cause on Sept. 28th. The ducks will "race" to the finish line where the top three finishers will earn their sponsors some cash prizes. But it's more than just a rubber duck race – it's a chance to help with the completion of the Dream Center Mifflin County, a Christ-centered facility helping those with addiction, hunger, trauma, and financial issues.

The Feathered Frolic, a free mobile passport scavenger hunt, is designed for all ages, combining fun, exploration, and a dash of friendly competition. This interactive adventure takes participants on a journey through the local community, discovering hidden treasures, while learning about our Goose Day traditions. Passholders will collect points for each check-in on the app, and for every four check-ins, users can redeem the points for an entry to win the Goose Day grand prize. Visit www.jrvvisitors.com to sign up.

Returning this year

Lucky Friday is returning to downtown Lewistown in a big way with more than 140 vendors, live music, axe throwing, car cruise in, food trucks, kid's activities, and goosey activities from 5-9 p.m. on Sept. 27th.

Following Lucky Friday is the return of the Goose Day Drone Light Show. This year, the show will feature 100 more drones for a total of 300 illuminated and synchronized drones while the JRVVB's YouTube channel will supply background music including two original Goose Day songs.

"After captivating our audience last year, Firefly Drone Shows of Michigan, is returning to put on another stunning drone light show," said Jenny Landis, executive director of the JRVVB. "Don't miss this display of aerial artistry!"

The drone show will lift off from the field near the corner of Green Avenue and Kishacoquillas Street in Lewistown at 9:30 p.m. on Sept. 27th. The field will be blocked off from the public starting Friday afternoon. This portion of Green Avenue will be closed only during the show. Viewing areas include but are not limited to Rec Park, Mifflin County Middle School, and downtown Lewistown parking lots.

Want your own Goose Day merchandise? The Goose Day online store, getgoosed.store, features license plates, temporary tattoos, Swifty bracelets, stickers, and more. All items are shipped free to all points in the United States.

For 46 years, the Goose Day 5K and the Goose Day Road Rally continue to be fan favorites with many individuals signing up to take part in one or both events. Runners can register for the race at jvstriders.com and teams can find registration information about the rally on the Facebook event page.

For more events, review the official list starting Sept. 1st at www.jrvvisitors.com.

Where to get your lucky bird

Get your lucky meal at many restaurants in Mifflin and Juniata counties. From traditional roast goose dinners to goose tacos, goose poutine to goose pizza, visitors won't have trouble finding a delicious meal.

To find out who's serving goose or to reserve before traveling, refer to the official list.

Wild Geese: Flock Together

The Wild Geese: Public Art Project includes 45 five-foot-tall fiberglass goose sculptures painted by professional local artists. As this project, coordinated by Community Partnerships, continues to grow, the online Goose Tracker is updated as quickly as possible. Find it at <https://jrvvisitors.com/wild-geese-tracker/>. Additional Wild Geese landings are planned for Sept. 20th, weather permitting.

For more Goose Day information, call (717) 248-6713, info@jrvvisitors.com, visit www.jrvvisitors.com or stop by 1 W. Market St., Lewistown. Ongoing details about Goose Day can be found on the "Goose Day in the Juniata River Valley" Facebook page.

What exactly is Goose Day?

It all started when a Pennsylvania Dutchman named Andrew Pontius was looking to hire a tenant farmer to help with his farm in Snyder County. On his way to Lancaster to hire a German immigrant, he stopped in Harrisburg for the night where he met a young Englishman named Archibald Hunter. Hunter told Pontius that he'd jumped ship while the British fleet was docked in Philadelphia and that he was working his way west.

Impressed with the youth, Pontius dropped his original plan and offered Hunter the job. He accepted and the two drew up a contract which included a clause specifying that their accounts were to be settled each year on the traditional day to do so, September 29th.

On that day, Hunter appeared at Pontius' door with accounts under one arm and a plump goose under the other. The tenant explained to his wondering landlord that in England, eating goose on St. Michaelmas Day, patron saint of soldiers and protectors, would bring good luck. A goose was expected payment since they were at their prime at this time of year.

Generations of people in the Juniata River Valley have observed this long-standing holiday by dining on goose and in recent years, a wide variety of events and activities have increased over the two-county region to make this a fun fall destination.