



American Bald Eagles at Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge 12/09/2020

A Magazine from Small Town & Rural America

Voices and Views from the Valleys of the Nemaha to Sweeten your Coffee Break.

Cases “tested positive” for Covid-19 in our “Country Neighborhood.”

Source: Google Search; ‘Name’ County, Nebraska Covid

<u>Date</u>	<u>Nemaha</u>	<u>Otoe</u>	<u>Johnson</u>	<u>Richardson</u>
December 6	360	813	341	396
December 12	413	874	383	431
December 19	433	923	463	441
December 26	457	972	493	481
December 31	477	977	536	516



2020 Deaths 10 2 5 15

Death can result from transmission from one to another.

Decrease transmission by wearing a mask in public.

Next month this table will reflect deaths instead of “cases.”

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Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

January Writers & Contributors

Devon Adams - 6 & 7

Stephen Hassler - 12

Merri Johnson - 10

Dorothy Rieke - 4

Senator Julie Slama - 2

Janet Sobczyk - 12

Thank You!

Positive Covid Cases Bordering Nebraska

(Same Source As Table On Page 1)

Date	Kansas		Missouri		Iowa
	Brown	Nemaha	Atchison	Holt	
Dec 6	822	1154	226	287	395
Dec 12	901	1219	245	299	419
Dec 19	955	1285	255	316	438
Dec 26	977	1309	258	322	454
Dec 31	1023	1345	259	324	466
Deaths	18	49	5	9	5

A Message From Nebraska Senator, Julie Slama

The beginning of a new year also brings the beginning of a new legislative session. I am honored to serve you, Southeast Nebraska!

As most people know, our Nebraska Legislature is unique in that we are the only state that has a Unicameral, which makes for a different legislative schedule than our neighboring states. Senators introduce bills during the first ten days of session, which are then assigned to one of the standing committees for a public hearing.

Hearings begin pretty quickly after the start of the session. During this time, the Legislature will convene at 9:00 AM and adjourn before noon with committee hearings starting at 1:30 PM. Each bill introduced receives a public hearing with public testimony. Those wishing to make themselves heard on issues can submit their public testimony online or can appear in person to the hearing to testify. Public hearings are a great way to let your voice be heard, as it is your chance to have your opinion on bills and issues be entered into the public record for consideration by every Nebraska state senator.

Full-day debate begins after many full afternoons of public hearings. During this time, the Legislature normally convenes at 9 AM, and adjourns around 5 PM, though sometimes work is completed a little earlier or later. We also have late night debates that can dismiss as early as 6:00 PM or as late as 11:59 PM. There are three levels of debate before a bill gets presented to the governor to sign. They are General File, Select File, and Final Reading. We spend the rest of the session working to get as many bills passed as possible to help our state.

Each Legislature works in a two-year cycle with one long session and one short session. This year, which is the start of a new Legislature, is a long session, which means that we will work for 90 legislative days. Bills that do not pass or fail in this session will be carried over to the short session in 2022. The 2021 Session will begin on January 6th, and I am ready to get started!

As in previous years, NET will be streaming the session, along with committee hearings, live on their T.V. channel and on their website. This is the most in-depth way for constituents to watch coverage of the Capitol as it happens live. You can also follow along on the Nebraska Legislature's website. The daily agenda is generally posted the night before and will highlight which bill is currently being discussed on the floor.

In other good news, on the federal level, we are cautiously optimistic about the passage of legislation that includes language for Peru's levee repair. The House has approved an amended version of their "Water Resources Development Act of 2020" and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved its "America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2020" by a vote of 21-0. Committees from both houses have been working together to create a bill that harmonizes both bills, and is expected to be ready this week for the House to consider. All in all, this legislation will be a great benefit to Peru, and give this great community the resources to repair our levees.

As always, I welcome your input on issues important to you. Follow along on my Facebook and Twitter pages, both entitled "Senator Julie Slama" for more updates, or contact me directly at Senator Julie Slama, District 1 State Capitol, PO Box 94604, Lincoln, NE 68509-4604; telephone 402-471-2733; email: jslama@leg.ne.gov.



Bald Eagle with juvenile (upper right corner), 12/01/2020.
Probably an offspring from last year.



As of December 18, there were still some snow geese at the refuge following a peak earlier in the month. They come and go. Notice the Bald Eagles lower center, and on the muskrat house.



Trumpeter Swans
12/09/2020

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COVID VIRUS-19 TALK

Dorothy Rieke, Julian

Covid -19 has has had a great impact on all of our lives. Indeed, it has restricted our actions, increased stress, and restricted our movements. Fortunately, it has brought us good feelings about our lives during past days.

Oh, yes, we have greater appreciation for the past events of our lives some months ago. We visited freely with our friends and neighbors. We traveled to nearby cities enjoying roaming about the malls. We shared food with others on various occasions. We attended church and other places without feelings of fear of contracting disease. We planned and took vacations to Branson reveling in the talent displayed in various shows.

Truthfully, we took a great deal for granted. We did not appreciate our freedom of movement without fear of disease. We went on our ways not realizing what restrictions meant to our daily lives. Today, Covid -19 is disrupting our sense of normalcy. Yes, it is disrupting our lives in a bad way.

At this time, the struggle against this virus begins in the mind. Anxiety takes away our joy and peace by kicking our imaginations into overdrive. We create scenarios where misfortunes take place which may never materialize.

Today, for some, the wearing of masks seems to take on visions of those stars in western movies who sometimes wore masks when robbing banks or committing some nefarious crimes. Maybe that is why some are reluctant to put on a mask. Masks continue to be associated with criminal activities for some.

It is true that it is difficult to identify your acquaintances while wearing masks. Some do a better job of this identification process than others.

Others probably do not like masks as they have a tendency to fog up glasses or cause noses to run.

Restrictions concerning family gatherings have altered attitudes and contributed to older people's feelings of abandonment.

Family meetings now take on different dimensions. No longer do families feel comfortable eating together in favorite restaurants. Instead, sandwiches, pies, and salads are transported to a safe place where family members meet and eat in cars.

Continued on page 10 >>>>>>>>>>>



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American Bald Eagle, 12/01/2020



Bald Eagle with its prey, 12/18/2020



This close-up of snow geese includes the "blue form."
12/18/2020

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P o e t r y b y D e v o n A d a m s, P e r u

INSIDE THE LINES

Remember coloring books?
Oh yeah, the pictures with
all the lines. Of course they
wouldn't be pictures if the
lines weren't there, right?
When we are very small,
some of us are told to stay
inside those lines when we
have crayons in our hands.
Others of us get to decide
what we do with the crayons.
We can scribble colors on
top of colors, in random strokes
that form a mottled soup over
the outlined picture. Or we
can use one shade per page.
Or we can draw on the wall!
(Whoops, maybe not that).
Perhaps the most limiting rule
is to tell a free-wheeling little
mind that skies have to be
blue, grass is always green.
Boys wear blue, girls wear
pink, trees have brown trunks,
cars have black tires, etc.
That rule does not exist except
in the mind of an uptight person.
The sky won't fall if a child uses
his imagination to paint a wild
essay of colors on an ordinary
scene. Try it yourself, you fans
of OCD. Make a lovely dream
site with purple grass, a pink
sky, blue tree trunks, polkadot
leaves, and a striped house
with a black chimney. Hold your
breath, if you like, but in the
end you will have FUN!

OUTSIDE THE BOX

There are lines and
colors and rules, or
not rules, about them.
There are also boxes.
We all live inside boxes
that are inside other
boxes. Our country is a
big American box, but
inside it are lots of small
boxes that hold people
from various locals, with
their special accents,
foods, and customs.
Pick a place, and it's
residents probably all
have similar behaviors
and habits and ideas
of what makes a person
fit there, like a piece in
a puzzle. If your edges
aren't cut just so, you may
seem out of place and
that's O.K., if you're
willing to take some
sandpaper and smooth
out your rough spots
until you're just like
everybody else. But if
you are a free soul who
listens to his heart instead
of old Mrs. Crock's "10
Rules for Resident's of
Rightville," you may be
a candidate for another
box, or another country,
or another planet. Have
fun on your journey, and
send me some postcards!

P o e t r y

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THE SINGING WIND

Every season there
is a song to be heard
in the sighing of the air.
Summer comes with a
whole band of instruments,
when storms beat out the
deep rumble of thunder
drums, and staccato hail,
not to mention the rattle
of wet leaves just before
a branch or a trunk splits
like a gun shot. In the
softness of a warm night,
trees sway in a graceful
waltz that eases our sleep
like a lullaby. Autumn is
crackly, as green turns to
red, yellow and orange
leaves that are ripped
off their mother branches
into the spiral of a death fall.
The white specter of Winter
approaches, blowing a
cold knife that cuts away
the last of the warmth,
chilling our bones. When
snow falls, a howling ghost
comes, wearing white
that takes the shape of
swirls, curls and currents
between buildings and
around trees and bushes.
Spring loosens the tight
tree muscles and thaws
mud into sucking goo.
It plays a piccolo behind
the easy rain of a new
day, and bird songs finish
the recital with the close
harmonies of life.

ERASING HISTORY

There are those
who pay no attention
to facts. Facts are no
more than rocks to
be kicked out of the
way if they paint
the “wrong” picture
of our history as a
country. Wrong is
defined as opposite
the preferred view.
No matter that proof
exists for the facts,
opinion trumps truth,
and bully’s want to
win by any means,
preferably by lying.
If that doesn’t work,
violence will do, as
long as the leaders
of the movement
can pay others to
do the fighting, a
custom common to
cowards. Freedom
is precious. We have
the right to be free,
but we have to work
and to fight to stay
that way.

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COLD HEAT

They say the sun
is so hot that it
would cook you
if you got close,
but today, it seems
so far away that
it could never
make you warm.
High in the blue of
a winter noon just
after the shortest
day has come and
gone, it is a cold
white orb that mocks
your thoughts and
throws blue snow
shadows at your
feet. It will be leaving
soon, dropping like
a rock in a lake, as
it falls into the sea
west of California.
Then you’ll have
to pray to the smiley
face of the silver
dollar moon for the
heat you’ll never feel.

STARS AND SIGNS

They say the sky
of the night is a
map to follow even
from an endless sea
of open ocean.
But you’d have to
know how to read
the signs of the
stars. What if you’re
in a night plane,
flying over Kansas,
at 30,000 feet or so.
Can you find your way?
If you can read the
stars on the ground
then you’ll be sailing
in an upside-down
sky that stretches
from sea to sea.



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(S) '17 JD X390, 117 hrs, 54" deck, pwr deck lift, pwr steering.....	\$4,480
(S) '13 JD 997, commercial zero turn, diesel, 72" deck, 2530 hrs.....	\$7,800
(S) '14 JD Z930R, 1094.5 hrs, 54" MOD deck, sus seat.....	\$6,200

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Juvenile Bald Eagle, Soaring, 12/09/2020

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I was hoping to capture the classic and romantic bill-to-bill greeting, but they were watching me.

12/09/2020



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The following suggestions may help in meeting the challenges of Covid 19:

Plan all events in advance taking in consideration that masks should be worn and guests should stay six feet apart.

Discover parts of routines that can be slightly changed. Instead of personal visits, talk on the phone. Send notes and letters to friends. A good letter is like a visit.

Don't forget your needs. Practice self-care. Get enough sleep, exercise, take medicine as needed, and connect with local resources if needed.

Maintain a healthy balance of nutritious foods including vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and proteins.

Reduce stress by watching a movie or reading a book.

Lower your expectations. Don't do as much; do what is required.

Think of others. Help them as needed. Helping others and thinking of their needs are beneficial to your own health and well-being.

Truthfully, we are all in this together. If each of us does his or her part, this virus will pass, and all this will be a memory we will want to avoid.

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

Dear Readers,

Obviously, this column was written for last year. In re-reading it, I realized how appropriate its doomsday theme still is. Keep that in mind as you read it.

January 2020

Are you ready for all the clever usages of “2020” that will surely be coming at us from all directions all year long? The last time I recall a year getting so much publicity was 2000 – the year of Y2K. Of course, 2012 was going to bring the end of the world based on the fact that the ancient Mayan calendar ran out that year. I think people panicked less about that than about Y2K, however. Apparently predictions of technology failures strike more fear into our hearts than threats of the actual end of the world. Then again, climate change alarmists are throwing around a lot of doomsday warnings now. But I digress a bit.

Back to Y2K. Computers were going to crash, causing all sorts of mayhem. Gas-powered generator sales skyrocketed due to fears of electricity grid failures. According to the website science.howstuffworks.com, the federal government spent over \$100 Billion on computer fixes. Maybe they were necessary. But just maybe that money could have been better spent. **January 2021 Update: I wonder how that compares to Covid-19 spending?**

And, do you remember how we were all advised to stock up on necessities in case of disruptions in the grocery supply chain? We had a supply of food in our freezer, so we weren't all that concerned. It was January, after all. If we lost electricity, we could just put our food in boxes and keep it cold outdoors. **January 2021 Update: I don't recall a shortage of toilet paper then.**

Twenty years on, the only disaster preparedness I recall doing concerned twine. Twine, you ask? That's right. My mother and step-father had needed twine for some reason and had purchased a two-pack. Apparently that was the only option. Since they didn't need quite that much twine, they gave us one of their rolls. Obviously, none of us needed that much twine, so we jokingly referred to it as our Y2K twine. Each roll was ten inches high and nine inches across. I know this because we still have our roll. In the event that there had been a run on twine, we would have been sitting pretty. **January 2021 Update: Again, toilet paper, anyone?**

The twine appears to have been a French import. At least that's my assumption, based on the fact that the instructions on the wrapper are printed in French and English. Or maybe the manufacturer was American and had a big trade deal with France. The interesting thing is that there

<<<<<<<<<<< *Diary continued from page 10*
are instructions in the first place. If you are buying twine – for whatever reason – I would think you already know how to “use” it. Oh well. That, in itself, is a sign of the times.

Which brings me to my next point. What are the odds, do you think, that 2020 will be the start of a return to common sense in this world? With perfect 2020 vision, and all of the hindsight we now possess on so many topics, just maybe we’ll realize that doomsday predictions have yet to come true. Not to say we shouldn’t keep working at improving how we treat our world and each other. But let’s not get so fixated on doom and gloom that we fail to recognize all the good in the world. It’s out there. Just look; you’ll see it.

January 2021 Update: I believe my question at the beginning of the preceding paragraph has been answered. In my opinion, we have NOT returned to common sense in this world. But there is still hope. The vaccine most of us will be receiving in the next few months just might allow us to get past the current doomsday mentality that has controlled public policy since March. Let us all resolve to get the vaccine and get on with our lives.



Visit the Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge
If the water at the refuge is not frozen over, then December, January, and February are the best times to see the Snow Geese or other waterfowl at Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge (east of Rulo near Mound City, Missouri). I visit when “counts” are over 100,000 or when there are a lot of eagles. The Refuge website updates eagle, geese, and swan “counts” weekly, but the birds can come and go more often than that. The 10-mile loop around the marshes can have a lot to offer photographers and birders, but timing a visit can be frustrating or rewarding.
Google; “Loess Bluffs Waterfowl Counts.”



**The photos on this page were taken on 12/09/2020 at
Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge**

Above, they always keep at least one eye on me.
Below, a juvenile takes four to five years for
its white head and tail color to develop.



If You Believe, You Can

Janet Sobczyk, © 2020, Omaha

She believed she could tie her shoes
didn't know she was "handicapped"
fine-motor-skills challenged
didn't know that many children
with Down syndrome
wear slip-ons or shoes with Velcro
their whole lives
she was determined
would twirl and twist laces
worn thin, we'd replace 'em
she kept trying
we kept encouraging
she'd master the first loop
then get stuck
master the second loop
get stuck again
year after year
she practiced, focused
and one day...
she did it!
not once but over and over
double-knotted
triple-knotted
she'd bring the shoes to us
show her success
want them unknotted
to begin again
time after time
'til muscle memory stuck
proud and happy
she knew she could do it!

Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

The view through my window on Fifth Street is that of a more 'larger world' today than that which I could perceive when I was younger.

Quite some time before the pandemic I was walking through a mall with someone who asked if I had done drugs in the 60's. I replied that I was too busy studying, both in high school and college. As I got older and reminisced or learned of other people's experiences during that decade, I came to realize that "things went on" which I just didn't hear about or pay attention to. After all, the "60's" was a defining decade. There were dramatic changes in society; music, movies, women's rights and civil rights (both still unfinished), attitudes toward war, marriage, divorce, and probably more that I'm just not thinking of right now. I was there! But I was focused on my education. The country was racing Russia to the moon, and I wanted to work for NASA!

Late last year I watched (streamed), a movie about Helen Reddy. Certainly, I knew of her 70's musical hit, "I Am Woman," but I hadn't known of the turmoil in her life during the early 80's. I was preoccupied during that time also, recently divorced with financial troubles.

In times of turmoil in one's life, perhaps being self-centered makes sense. When it comes to a person's passion, it seems one can only effectively direct such passion in one direction. As one matures, one develops a broader perspective, and becomes more observant and aware, hopefully. The view through my window on Fifth Street is that of a more 'larger world' today than that which I could perceive when I was younger.

But there were "events" that got my attention; the JFK assassination, the moon landing, the Challenger disaster, the Oklahoma City bombing, the 9/11 attack. I can picture in my mind where I was and what I was feeling when I first heard or viewed each of those events.

And even now, in my "later years," I wonder what I might be missing today. What year-old event might I read about and wonder, "Why didn't I hear about that?" On an insignificant level, if I hear about a movie that was popular in theaters a year or two ago, I might think to myself, "That sounds good. I wonder why I didn't see that?" At least being kind of a "news junkie" helps me feel confident that I'm keeping up with some things these days.

I'm sure the pandemic will be added to those events that I consider milestone events in my life, although there is no one day or one moment as yet that flashes in my mind. I suspect that when I receive the vaccine, the people around me, the weather outside, which mask I'm wearing; these memories will last and become part of who I am. So when that day comes I expect I'll gladly say yes, I've "done drugs." Maybe there's a time and a place for everything, and a more worldly view yet to come; to be viewed through my window on Fifth Street.



PSC Men's Basketball

DEC 5, PSC v MIDAMERICA NAZARENE UNIVERSITY, W 66-59
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Tanksley Earns Last Heart MBB Player of the Week for 2020

In its final player of the week announcements, the Heart of America Athletic Conference (Heart) named Henry Tanksley (Lincoln) as its men's basketball player of the week. The Bobcat player led his team to an 84-63 win over Graceland in Lamoni, Iowa, to improve the team's overall record to 6-5 and to 4-4 in conference play. The 6-4 guard scored 29 points on 12 of 23 shooting from the floor which included hitting two of four from long range. In addition, Tanksley added a team-high seven rebounds, dished out three assists, blocked one shot, and grabbed one steal.





PSC Women's Basketball

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Peru State College News

2019-20 Peru State Swenson Winners Noted

Another victim, at least to this point of the COVID-19 pandemic, was the annual recognition of the Peru State Swenson Award winners. Normally, the honorees would have been recognized at halftime of a Bobcat football game. Several dates were planned, but the coronavirus kept interfering and eventually the Peru State football season was suspended for the fall of 2020.

So without further ado, the Peru State athletic department would at least like to publicly recognize its 2019-20 honorees with the hopes of potentially honoring them at an upcoming basketball contest.



Claire



Luis

The individuals selected as the 2019-20 recipients were Claire (Cudney) Renyer (Marysville, Kan./Sabetha, Kan.) and Luis Constantino (Varzea Grande, Brazil).

Claire was a four-year member of the Bobcat volleyball team and a three-year member of the women's basketball team. She has completed her student teaching in the Sabetha elementary at the second grade level. Recently, she was hired by the school district to teach second grade during the spring semester. Over the summer, she married Eric Renyer and they are living in Sabetha. During her student teaching, Renyer helped coach the Bluejay volleyball team to a state championship title.

Constantino is living in Beatrice. He is completing paperwork in order to start a master's degree program.

About the Swenson Award

Each year since 1925, outstanding student-athletes have been presented with the Bert Swenson award in recognition of their participation in athletics, outstanding character, personality, service, and loyalty to Peru State. Since 1999, a female and male selection has been made by the members of the athletic department staff. The award was created in memory of Bert and Stella Swenson's 13-month old son, Bert. Jr., who passed away. Bert Swenson, Sr., was a football great who graduated from Peru State College in 1909. The Shickley, Nebraska, native served as the football team captain and class president during his senior year at PSC. In 2009, Mr. Swenson was honored posthumously with his induction into the PSC athletic hall of fame.

Another Matthies to Play Bobcat Volleyball

There will be a familiar name joining the Peru State volleyball team in the fall of 2021. Bobcat head volleyball coach Laurie Felderman recently announced the signing of Ella Matthies from Roncalli Catholic High School in Omaha.

Matthies, a 5-8 outside hitter/opposite, will be the second in her family to play for the 'Cats as her older sister Mallory was a member of the team for four years. Mallory completed her eligibility in the fall of 2019 and graduated that following spring.

The daughter of Brett and Marsha Matthies plans to major in early childhood development while at Peru State.

Roncalli finished the 2020 season with a 15-11 mark. Matthies played in 68 sets and produced 192 kills while hitting at a .359 clip. She added 14 total blocks, 213 digs, and 22 assists.

Matthies was named to the River Cities All Conference First Team and gained honorable mention recognition in the Omaha World-Herald C-1 teams for the past two years, as well as, for the All-Omaha Area teams. While at Roncalli, Matthies was inducted into the National Honor Society.

John Baeten to Bowl for PSC

Peru State bowling coordinator Brenda Lutz recently announced the signing of John Baeten (Topeka, Kan.) for the 2021-22 season. Baeten is transferring from Newman University in Wichita, KS. He graduated from Seaman High School in Topeka, and holds the single-season record average of 239. During his last season at Newman, Baeten averaged a 184.81 over 33 games.

This is Peru State's first year with competitive bowling. Baeten will be part of the Bobcat's second year and is excited to continue his collegiate bowling as a part of Peru State's team.

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