

# Welcome 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 bellow 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 bulls lock antlers and then push and shove each other until the weaker bull eventually gives up and trots away.

## When Viewing Elk and Wildlife

- Watch quietly, move slowly and blend in with your surroundings - wear neutral colored clothing.
- Do not approach elk. Use binoculars or spotting scope to view at a safe distance.
- Only stop at roadway pulloffs; 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.



## 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' ragged 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. Mature bulls drop their 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.



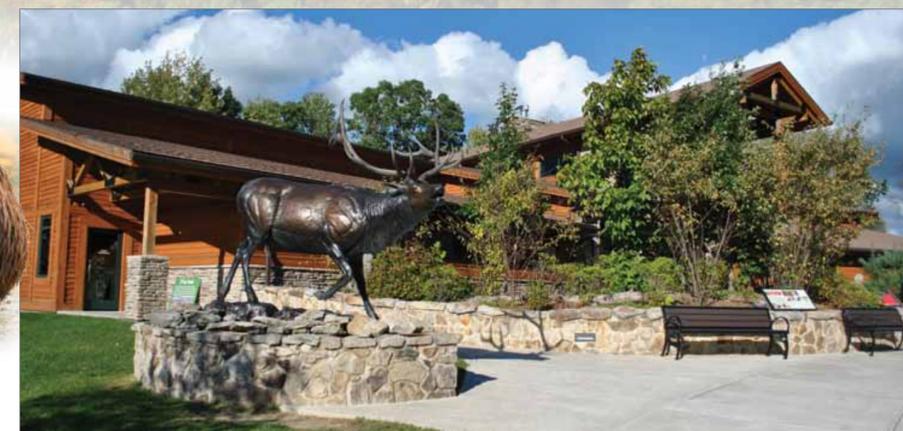
## Spring and Summer Renewal

During spring and summer, the bull elk's velvet antlers re-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 tower four to five feet above the animal's head and support five or six tines that branch off of the main stem of the antler. Rarely found, elk sporting seven tines 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 [pawilds.com](http://pawilds.com) or at locations in communities marked on the map with symbol.



## 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 panoramic

views, interactive exhibits, a 4-D immersive story 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](http://www.elkcountryvisitorcenter.com).



## Wildlife Center at Sinnemahoning State Park

In the heart of the Pennsylvania Wilds region, the Sinnemahoning State Park Wildlife Center contains state-of-the-art interpretive exhibits about the park's native wildlife, area history and state conservation leaders, as well as visitor information. It has a full schedule of conservation and recreation programs throughout the year including the popular "Women in the Wilds" program held each June. The George B. Stevenson Dam and Reservoir provides excellent boating and fishing in the park and its creekside Forty Maples day-use area is a beautiful spot for picnicking. The park also has a special wildlife viewing area and trail at the north end of the park—a beautiful setting where you might spot white-tailed deer or elk in the open fields along the Sinnemahoning Creek. For more information go to [www.dcnr.state.pa.gov](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.gov).

## Did You Know?

- 1 Elk are best seen an hour or two after dawn or right before dusk.
- 2 Mature male elk, called bulls, stand 50-60 inches at the shoulder and weigh 600-1000 pounds.
- 3 Females, or cows, weigh 500-600 pounds and stand 4-5 feet tall at the shoulder. They have no antlers.
- 4 Elk can run 30 miles per hour for short distances, and can trot for miles. They can jump and swim like pros.
- 5 Antlers aren't just a showy hood ornament—they are used by males for sparring and to impress the ladies.
- 6 Listen for a bull's low bellow that reaches a long high note. This is called bugling and is done during the mating season to attract the cows.

Site Name / Phone / GPS Coordinates	ACTIVITIES														
	Picnicking	Swimming	Boating	Fishing	Hiking	Bike Trails	Water Fountain	Parking	Hunting	Canoe Access	Camping	Restrooms	Beach	Handicap Access	Cabins
1. S.B. Elliott State Park / (814) 765-0630 / N 41.11276, W 78.52594															
2. Parker Dam State Park / (814) 765-0630 / N 41.19640, W 78.51028															
3. Marion Brooks Natural Area / (814) 765-0821 / N 41.26508, W 78.27832															
4. Beaver Run Dam Wildlife Viewing Area / (814) 765-0821 / N 41.26097, W 78.25800															
5. Hoover Farm Wildlife Viewing Area / (814) 765-0821 / N 41.22652, W 78.18781															
6. Wykoff Run Natural Area / (814) 486-3353 / N 41.22990, W 78.19208															
7. Winslow Hill Viewing Area / (877) 877-7674 / N 41.34105, W 78.36896															
8. Dent's Run Viewing Area / (877) 877-7674 / N 41.34600, W 78.34654															
9. Pine Tree Trail Natural Area / (814) 486-3353 / N 41.37952, W 78.28029															
10. Thunder Mountain Equestrian Trail / (814) 486-3353 / N 41.39993, W 78.29282															
11. Hicks Run Wildlife Viewing Area / (814) 486-3353 / N 41.36101, W 78.24864															
12. Bucktail Path Trailhead/Johnson Run Natural Area / (814) 486-3353 / N 41.32350, W 78.09671															
13. Lower Jerry Run Natural Area / (814) 486-3353 / N 41.24992, W 78.08186															
14. Sinnemahoning State Park Viewing Area / (647) 747-8401 / N 41.418512, W 78.04877															
15. Kettle Creek State Park / (570) 923-6004 / N 41.37603, W 78.92903															
16. Cranberry Swamp Natural Area / (570) 923-6011 / N 41.26509, W 78.73363															
17. East Branch Swamp Natural Area / (570) 923-6011 / N 41.23942, W 78.77248															
18. Fish Dam Run Scenic View / (570) 923-6011 / N 41.23554, W 78.78193															
19. Two Rock Run Scenic View / (570) 923-6011 / N 41.19012, W 78.85364															
20. Fields Ridge Road Overlook / (570) 923-6011 / N 41.20951, W 78.95911															
21. State Game Lands 100 / (570) 398-4744 x 0 / N 41.11777, W 77.97303															
22. German Settlement Reclamation Project / (570) 398-4744 x 0 / N 41.06913, W 77.98795															
23. Karthaus Canoe Launch / (570) 923-6011 / N 41.11427, W 78.11146															
Elk Country Visitor Center / (814) 787-516 / N 41.32592, W 78.367599															
Sinnemahoning State Park / (814) 647-8401 / N 41.47341, W 78.05653															

# Explore THE ELK SCENIC DRIVE



**MAP KEY**

- STATE FOREST
- STATE GAME LAND
- ELK SCENIC DRIVE
- QUEHANNA SPUR
- STATE PARK
- VISITOR CENTER SITE
- VISITOR INFORMATION\*

**1 S.B. Elliott State Park**  
Take a quick hike, enjoy a picnic lunch or stay overnight in a rustic CCC-era cabin in this small wooded park.

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

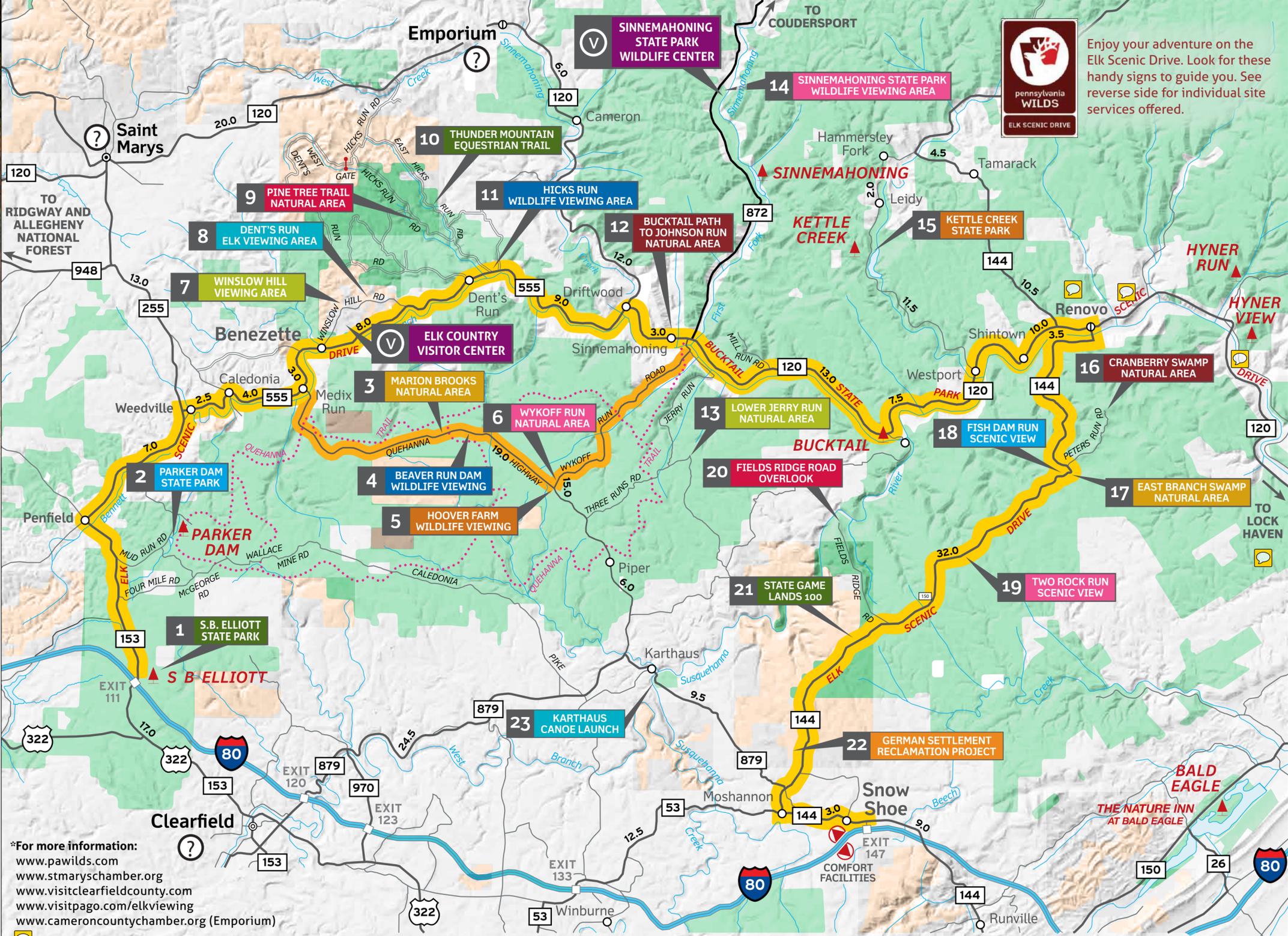
**3 Marion Brooks Natural Area**  
This area is best known for its stand of white birches. In late July, blueberries and huckleberries abound here, a favorite of bears and hungry hikers. Listen for wood peckers and eastern towhees.

**4 Beaver Run Dam Viewing Area**  
Walk the short trail to a viewing blind and look for cavity-nesting wood ducks and hooded mergansers. Smaller nest boxes house eastern bluebirds and tree swallows. You may also see great blue heron fishing by the shore.

**5 Hoover Farm Viewing Area**  
Take the short trail to a viewing blind and look for elk, white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, and grassland birds. A longer 5-mile hike option also loops around the viewing area.

**6 Wykoff Run Natural Area**  
Birds, birds, and more birds! At this Audubon Important Bird Area, hikers and cross-country skiers can spot a wide variety of species while exploring the Old Hoover Trail that bisects the natural area.

**7 Winslow Hill Viewing Area**  
Once strip-mined, this reclaimed site provides good elk viewing with more parking off Dewey Road. About 1/4 mile further on Winslow Hill Road, look for the Woodring Farm Trail, a 3/4 mile walking path to another viewing area.



\*For more information:  
[www.pawilds.com](http://www.pawilds.com)  
[www.stmaryschamber.org](http://www.stmaryschamber.org)  
[www.visitclearfieldcounty.com](http://www.visitclearfieldcounty.com)  
[www.visitpago.com/elkviewing](http://www.visitpago.com/elkviewing)  
[www.cameroncountychamber.org](http://www.cameroncountychamber.org) (Emporium)

**23 Karthaus Canoe Launch**  
Just upstream from the old green suspension bridge at Karthaus, this launch gives paddlers access to the West Branch Susquehanna River Water Trail, and some of the most remote paddling in the state.

**22 German Settlement Reclamation**  
Reclaimed after strip mining, these grasslands are habitat for golden-winged warblers and many bird species. Wild apple trees, remnants of early German Settlements, attract white-tailed deer and ruffed grouse.

**21 State Game Lands 100**  
Dawn and dusk are the best times to look and listen for the forest's resident owls. Both barred and great-horned owls perch here, waiting for prey to stir.

**20 Fields Ridge Rd Overlook**  
Hot air rises along these steep slopes. It provides thermals for turkey vultures, broad-winged hawks, and other raptors to soar above the West Branch of the Susquehanna River below.

**19 Two Rock Run Scenic View**  
In 1990, fire killed 90 percent of the trees over 10,000 acres here. Observe natural regeneration at work. Walk two short trails to scenic viewing areas.

**18 Fish Dam Run Scenic View**  
This ridgetop vista provides impressive views westward. It is a good place to look for red-tailed hawks and American kestrels. Watch for chipping sparrows along the roadside and parking area.

**17 East Branch Swamp Natural Area**  
Early 20th-century loggers, followed by fires and a tornado, felled many trees here. It created a broad range of habitats in which wildlife abounds, including an amazing variety of wood warblers.

**16 Cranberry Swamp Natural Area**  
At the headwaters of Cranberry run, this open wetland is filled with rushes, sedges, and grasses surrounded by forests. It is home to swamp sparrows and common yellowthroats. When blooming, steeple bush attracts many butterflies.



Enjoy your adventure on the Elk Scenic Drive. Look for these handy signs to guide you. See reverse side for individual site services offered.

**8 Dent's Run Viewing Area**  
Enjoy panoramic views of grazing fields to the north and east. At dawn and dusk watch for elk, white-tailed deer, wild turkeys or red foxes that may be hunting rodents.

**9 Pine Tree Trail Natural Area**  
The trail leads to a 12-acre white pine stand that sprouted in farm fields in the 1800s. As you walk beneath the giant pines listen for black-throated green warblers calling overhead.

**10 Thunder Mtn. Equestrian Trail**  
The trail consists of 53 miles of roads and trails in various loops. You will have a good chance of spotting elk far from busier viewing sites. Hick's Run is also excellent for trout fishing.

**11 Hicks Run Wildlife Viewing Area**  
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.

**12 Bucktail Path/Johnson Run Natural Area**  
The rugged trail follows a private road up the mountain. From the ridge top you can see old growth hemlocks and pines growing on the steep slopes far down in Johnson Run.

**13 Lower Jerry Run Natural Area**  
Immerse yourself in the wilderness at Lower Jerry Run Natural Area, where old-growth hemlocks more than 300 years old tower 120 feet toward the sky. Watch for rattlesnakes along the trail.

**14 Sinnemahoning State Park Viewing Area**  
The site is at the north end of the park, just 1/4 mile from the Wildlife Center. A viewing blind offers opportunities to observe white-tailed deer, elk, and eagles in the fields along Sinnemahoning Creek and the Lowlands Trail.

**15 Kettle Creek State Park**  
The Alvin R. Bush Dam creates the 167-acre Kettle Creek Reservoir, a stocked trout lake that is irresistible to anglers. The park's wide variety of habitats offer multiple wildlife viewing opportunities.