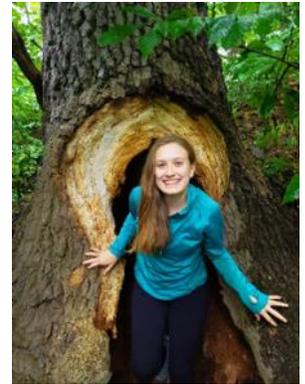


MY COVID-19 EXPERIENCE IN THE WOODS

Hi! I'm Audrey and I, like everyone else, will never forget Spring 2020.

As a junior in college, I had to move back home with my family and complete the semester online. My internship went online along with all my jobs. I spent quite a bit of time working in my room.

Once the weather got nicer, I found myself spending my free time outside. What a great place to explore! Pennsylvania has beautiful state parks and forests with many trails to explore. Any chance I got to go out on the trails, I would drag my friends and family out.



I kicked off the hiking season with a hike to Poe Paddy Tunnel. My family hikes this every year and is a go-to hike for us. This trail, an easy, 5-mile (about) hike allows adventurers to hike through an old railroad tunnel.

I live about 10 minutes from Hairy John State Forest Picnic Area where you can catch part of the Mid State Trail. I spent several weekends hiking up and down the trail. Here's a picture from one weekend. My mom took this picture of my siblings and I on our way up Winkleblech Mountain. Our dog Chester loved getting to hang out

with us outside! This part of the Mid State Trail can provide a challenge for some hikers on the way up, but with plenty of breaks and careful footing, one can make it to the top.



On my 21st birthday, the bars were still closed so I went hiking! My boyfriend and I hiked north on the Mid State Trail towards R.B. Winter State Park. (Don't mind the quarantine stash – It's long gone now!)



Another weekend, my 12-year-old sister and I hiked south on the Mid State Trail from Hairy John. We accidentally did 12 miles that day. She was not happy with me! But can you blame me? The trail

keeps going forever with hidden gems everywhere. I love exploring and this trail invites me to go further each time and see all the less-traveled areas.





When restrictions in Pennsylvania eased up, my friends and I organized a trip to Ricketts Glen State Park to hike the falls trail. This hike features 18 magnificent waterfalls. When hiking this trail, make sure to wear proper footwear because it's easy to slip on the wet rocks! We had so much fun admiring the beautiful Pennsylvania scenery.

Did you know that before WW2, Ricketts Glen almost became a national park?

For the last hike, before school started again, I found a lesser-known trail near Centre Hall, Pennsylvania. The Jimmy Cleveland trail, named for an airmail pilot who crashed in 1931. This trail ends at the crash site and some pieces of Cleveland's plane are still there. This short hike has a mysterious feeling to it. I love how isolated this trail is. I got to enjoy nature without running into anyone else on the trail.



When I wasn't hiking or doing schoolwork, I spent time outside on the lake fishing. My boyfriend and I mainly go to Walker Lake. We take out our small fishing boat and this year we tried kayak fishing. Here's a fish I caught one evening on the lake.



When I reflect on this spring and summer, I realize that the shutdown allowed me to explore my backyard and spend extra time with my friends and family. It gave me time to focus on what mattered the most in my life.



Pennsylvania has so many beautiful state parks and forests with lots of remarkable trails, if you haven't had time to explore our great state, you should put it on your bucket list!