

Hunting on the Atlantic Flyway

The Susquehanna River and nearby Chesapeake Bay are important components of the Atlantic Flyway, one of four major North American migratory routes for waterfowl. Each year more than a million waterfowl migrate along or spend the winter in the flyway. This includes 28 species of ducks, geese and swans.

The Susquehanna's abundant supply of waterfowl made it a popular hunting area for Native Americans and early European settlers who relied on the flyway as a source of food. In the 1800s and early 1900s, waterfowl populations plummeted due to the use of punt guns, duck traps, and other mass-kill weapons by unregulated commercial hunters, referred to as "market gunners."

Waterfowl hunting scene painted by Gerald Putt, Boiling Springs, PA



Today waterfowl hunting is a popular form of outdoor recreation. Present-day waterfowl hunters recognize that wildlife habitat protection and laws that prevent overhunting are necessary to preserve the Susquehanna River's natural heritage. Organizations like the Susquehanna River Waterfowlers Association and the Susquehanna River Wetlands Trust have taken an active role in improving waterfowl habitat by creating nesting sites, restoring wetlands, and conducting education programs that build public awareness. These efforts are helping to restore waterfowl populations throughout the Atlantic Flyway.

Waterfowlers after the hunt, circa 1920.
Courtesy York Heritage Trust



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Susquehanna River Water Trail

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