



# The Mountain Eagle

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## Swap Out the Lead Talk to be Offered at EagleFest

By Jonathan Ment

Friends of the Feathered and Furry Wildlife Center's Barbara "Missy" Runyan will be promoting her "Swap out the lead" initiative at the upcoming EagleFest, a celebration of the bald eagle's return to the Hudson Valley after time on the brink of extinction.

Bald eagles are our national bird and an increasingly common site in the Catskills - and down the Hudson Valley as they make their winter migration. The event features over 25 exhibitors, live bird-of-prey exhibits, and viewing scopes on Feb. 9 from 9 - 4 p.m.

Runyan will speak about her "Swap out the lead" initiative focused on encouraging a switch to copper bullets where the use of lead is likely to find its way into wildlife.

"We test a lot of the birds of prey," says Runyan, adding, "When the rivers freeze early

(making fish harder to reach), you get a lot of eagles coming in with lead toxicity because they're monopolizing the food that they can get. That means they're congregating in areas where there are a lot of hit-by-car deer."

"Some . . . police departments, all the way down to Westchester, they will swap out a clip and put in their copper clip when they dispatch a deer," says Runyan.

But the initiative is also directed at hunters.

"When you hunt and field dress, the lead trail is throughout the body," says Runyan, adding "They take the meat after it's butchered and . . . leave the entrails behind."

Bald eagles, other birds of prey and more wildlife, which feed on those leavings, are contaminated.

"One grain of lead, the size of a grain of rice, can kill an eagle," says Runyan, who uses copper bullets herself if she's called to a field

about an injured creature that she determines can't be saved."

"I'm a realist . . . There's a way to coexist and do things responsibly," says Runyan, adding, "Unfortunately, hunting with lead whether birdshot or the bullet, keeps killing long after its fired."

"I'm not a hunter," says Runyan, but she's quick to add, "I'm not a vegan either. I feel that sometimes hunting, if it's done properly, can be more humane than factory farming these days."

Copper bullets cost about .33 cents more than lead ones, she says, so if a responsible hunter takes that one lethal shot, the small investment can make a life or death difference for wildlife after the hunter has gone.

"I'm asked to do a lot more presentations than I can do, but this is for lead so I'm driving two and a half hours each way to do it," said

Runyan, adding, "I'll also have a booth there."

EagleFest is held at Croton Point Park in Croton-on-Hudson by Teatown, a nonprofit 1,000-acre nature preserve and environmental conservation center. With 15 miles of hiking trails, a two-acre island refuge for over 230 species of native wildflowers, year-round programming, wildlife exhibits, and natural science day camps in the summer and school breaks.

Though held largely under heated tents, in the event of heavy snow it will be held Feb. 10. More information is available at [www.teatown.org](http://www.teatown.org)

The Friends of the Feathered and Furry Wildlife Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization run entirely one donations and by volunteers - including Runyan.

The center's "Freeze Your Butt Off for Wildlife Bake sale will be

held Saturday Feb. 16, in tents set up beside the Go Greene Food Mart in Tannersville. The tents are heated through the generosity of Mountain Propane Inc. It's one of two annual fundraising

events for the wildlife center.

More information about the work they do and ways to support it can be found at [www.fff-wildlifecenter.com](http://www.fff-wildlifecenter.com)



Barbara "Missy" Runyan with a banded Bald Eagle. Photo provided.