



ONAPA NEWS

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Natural areas waiting for a winter walk

By Dick Moseley

It's a season where most people don't venture into the out-of-doors unless their work requires them to be out-and-about in Mother Nature's world of freezing cold.

Perhaps a few take advantage of the snow to ski or look for winter birds that are seen only here at this time of the year. But have you ever thought that winter is a great time to look at plants from the different perspective of this season? Winter botanizing can be a fun pastime: some plants stand out in the winter when they have no competition for attention that occurs in the spring and summer when wildflowers abound.

If you take the opportunity on a sunny winter day to venture into the woods and fields of Ohio's nature preserves, you would be amazed by what you see.

As you travel, look at the trees that grow along rivers and streams. Sycamore trees stand out with the bold white tree branches that are hidden by the numerous leaves during the rest of the year. It is amazing how many of these trees line the banks of Ohio's waterways. Or you may encounter the numerous evergreens that grow along the highways in southwestern Ohio. These are Eastern Red Cedar trees which flourish because they are limestone-lovers, growing here because of the bedrock which is in this part of the state. Red Cedar is not a true cedar, but a member of the juniper genus and

is known for its aromatic and reddish heartwood. In fact, the French colonists called it "Baton Rouge" which means "red stick," an appropriate name for this evergreen.

In the Hocking Hills preserves and the Clear Fork Gorge of the Mohican, one will see different evergreens that inhabit these special places. Native Eastern White Pine is the dominate evergreen of Clear Fork Gorge Nature Preserve and are impressive for their size. Also found in the cool, moist gorges of both this preserve and the preserves of Hocking, are the Eastern Hemlock trees which managed to survive in these areas during the recession of the Wisconsin Glacier about 10,000 years ago. The cones of this tree and its seeds are very small yet they can produce trees that can grow to the height of 60 to 70 feet. These preserves are spectacular in the winter when the ice formations are sculpted from seeps on cliffs



Photo by John Watts

Winterberry

of Blackhand Sandstone.

Another glacial relic evergreen is the Northern White-cedar or "Arborvitae" which is found at Cedar Bog and Clifton Gorge Nature Preserves. This tree looks similar to the Red Cedar but lacks the sharp needle-like leaves of that species. Its leaves are more scalelike on flattened branches that appear to be fan shaped. This species is considered to be one of the longest living trees in the Eastern United States with some known to be over 500 years old or older.

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Nature preserves are a perfect winter getaway

There is more to notice in the winter than evergreens. Other plants are, for the most part, now dormant with only their brown winter skeletons showing at this time of year. Take time to study these winter skeletons and have fun trying to identify the plants. Habitat is an important clue to help you identify these skeletons; a good place to begin is in an open field where you can find goldenrods, Queen Ann's Lace, asters, Cow-parsnip, Angelica, Chicory and many others whose skeletons appear above the snow.

Often along woodland edges and fields in succession, you can find conspicuous shrubs or small trees in our winter landscape. The most notable are the sumacs with their bright red-velvety fruits that appear as clusters on the ends of branches. These berries provide emergency food for a variety of animals when the snow is too deep in the winter. Ohio has six species of sumacs: four

have red berries and two have white to yellowish berries. The latter two are the only poisonous members of this family in Ohio—Poison Ivy and Poison Sumac. The four with the red berries are not poisonous and include the most common Staghorn and Smooth sumac, as well as the lesser seen Winged sumac and Fragrant sumac. Of the two most common, the Staghorn is the easiest to identify in the winter since it has a heavy coating of velvety hairs on the branches like a deer's antlers, thus its name. The Smooth sumac lacks velvety hairs and is typically smaller than the Staghorn.

When you can master identifying these open field plants, it's time to walk the woods looking for woodland species. You may even find the common dandelion still blooming since it is known to bloom every month of the year. Many spring wildflowers have already sprouted by October and over-winter as leaves or leafy rosettes, surviving under the snow during the cold winter months which gives them a head start for spring. Sweet Cicely, Wild Ginger, Black Snakeroot, Honewort, as well as Puttyroot and Crane fly orchids can be seen and identified by their leaves, if the snow is not too deep. Even if the snow is deep, it is still a great time to hike and enjoy

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Photo by Guy Denny



Photo by Mike Mainhart

Even without the dense foliage of other seasons, the winter forest gives observant visitors hard-to-spot surprises such as the screech owl in the sycamore tree, at right.



Photos by Guy Denny

Left to right: Berries of Dwarf sumac, Smooth sumac and Staghorn sumac.

the beauty of a Beech-Maple Forest on a cold, sunny winter day. Hueston Woods and Fowler Woods Nature Preserves are good winter venues for enjoying a hike in such a forest.

Ohio's nature preserves are open year-round, offering a variety of experiences and an opportunity to get out of the house after being confined dur-

ing those long winter days. It's the best time to add another skill to your nature expertise by learning and identifying these plants at a different time of the year.

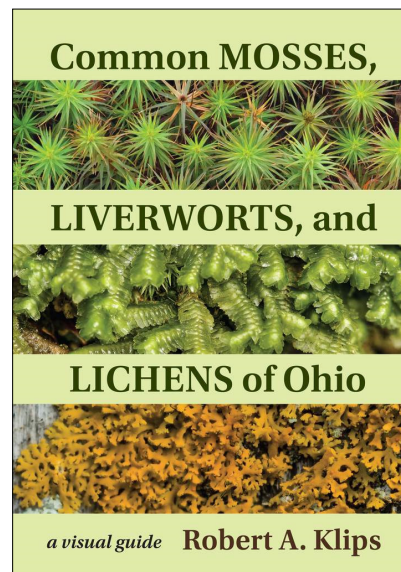
Be a four-season adventurer and visit a State Nature Preserve this winter.

New guide a must-have for the naturalist's library

By Guy Denny

Common Mosses, Liverworts, and Lichens of Ohio – a visual guide is a newly published book written by long-time ONAPA member Robert Klips. He is an associate professor emeritus in the Department of Evolution, Ecology and Organismal Biology at The Ohio State University. A field botanist with a special interest in the flora of Ohio, this guide shows he is especially well-versed in mosses and lichens.

This is an easy-to-read and understand guide book beautifully illustrated with Klips' exceptional photographs. It is a must have field guide for nature lovers wanting to learn about and master identifying the common mosses, liverworts, and lichen species of Ohio. It is available through Ohio University Press as well as many book outlets.



Year winds down but the stewards keep on working



By Maddie Brown
Lead Stewardship Assistant

ONAPA had a record-breaking year with 64 completed projects (with five more projects scheduled until the end of December). We were lucky enough to have stewardship assistants working year-round. My third year with ONAPA has been the most productive and I'm honored to be a part of a great cause. As a team, we visited over 57 sites statewide, with some places being multiple day projects.

Lydia Radcliffe and I began the 2022 year working alongside ONAPA vice president, Jennifer Windus, mostly focusing on invasive woody removal. Because of the weather, there isn't much work to accomplish outside of cutting down shrubs and trees. January through March, we completed 13 unique projects that included woody removal at places such as Prairie Road Fen, Cedar Bog, and Lakeside Daisy State Nature Preserve. We also helped preserve managers search for Hemlock woolly adelgids since the insects are spotted easily in the winter. These surveys are critical to tracing the spread of the adelgids and helps us evaluate if treatment methods are working. Jennifer and our stewardship team, small but mighty, accomplished much this past spring.

Heading into spring, our team works around two days a week. We always see an influx of volunteers because the weather is much more tolerable. We completed 23 projects in the April-June span. Luckily, we were able to hire three new stewardship assistants, in addition to Lydia and myself. In the ten years ONAPA has been a non-profit, this was the first year having five stewardship assistants! April is always an exciting month because we are lucky to participate in a few prescribed burns. With Jennifer being a burn boss, stewards have a large range of experience with habitat management. Our main partner when burning is Knox County Park District. They have multiple pieces of land that are on a regular burn cycle, so we help out when we are able! In May, we



Photos by Jennifer Windus

Above, Maddie examines hemlock for HWA; left, teamwork clears out stands of buckthorn at Irwin Prairie.

focused on pulling invasive species such as garlic mustard, Dame's rocket, and sweet clover. When June rolls around, we begin working three days a week and the work changes from pulling invasives to working in sensitive rare plant habitats. Our stewardship program is lucky enough to work alongside the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves and Fish and Wildlife Service when surveying for a handful of Ohio's rare plants. We mainly focus on surveying sites for the federally threatened Eastern prairie fringed orchid. June is always an exciting month because we are able to step back from invasive removal and enjoy the beauty that Ohio's natural areas have to offer.

Nearing the fall season, we still juggled rare plant surveys while slowly getting back into invasive plant removal. We lost three of our stewards in August when they returned to college. Luckily, Lydia and I were able to receive our Ohio Commercial Pesticide Applicator Licenses this year and this has helped us, and our partners, immensely! This fall, we worked on 24 projects with a strong group of volunteers that showed up weekly. If not for our volunteers, we wouldn't be able to accomplish 75% of what we normally do. Although a smaller group helping this year, they are amazingly dedicated. We mainly worked in northeast Ohio this fall and found ourselves working with the Cleveland Museum of Natural History staff often. Although it was a long drive for us, we always had work to accomplish.

Once the weather starts to change, our work seems to come to a screeching halt. But not this year! We've been comfortably working two days a week and plan to slow down for the holidays. Nine projects were scheduled at year's end. Lydia and I are still working alongside Jennifer and have no plans to slow down. I'm speaking for us both of us when saying that this year has been such a humbling experience. I've been with ONAPA for three years and can honestly say I learn something new every day. Here's to 2023!

Smaller team still effective in producing results

Story and photos by Jennifer Windus

As expected, our stewardship team got smaller in the fall for most projects, with three stewardship assistants returning to college and a few less volunteers. We still planned two projects each week, but some were mainly planned for the stewardship assistants with partners.

In September, we had five projects: Myersville Fen (September 6), Kiser Lake Wetlands (September 8), Wolf Run Park (September 15), McCoy Fen (September 20), and Cedar Bog (September 29). These projects were removing woody species and several involved other partners than DNAP, such as Knox County Park District, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and the Cedar Bog Association. We were also involved in two Ohio Invasive Plants Council events, a workshop on September 1 and the Annual Meeting on September 30.

In October, we were busier with eight projects and two ONAPA events, the seed-collecting day at Guy Denny's prairie on October 1 and our Annual Meeting on October 29. We continued to work on woody species removal at Erie Sand Barrens (October 4), a private prairie in Coshocton County that we burned in the spring (October 6), Newberry Preserve with Great Parks (October 11), cleaning out the prairie at the Heritage Garden (October 13),

Brinkhaven Oak Barrens (October 15), a Lakeside daisy transplant to the preserve (October 19), Crane Hollow (October 20), and a Conneaut Creek Scenic Rivers site. It was a hectic month with partners including Great Parks, the Governor's Residence, Killbuck Watershed Land Trust, and Scenic Rivers.

In November, we had eight projects: Myersville Fen again (November 1), Tucker Preserve at Blacklick Woods Metro Park in Columbus (November 3), Medway prairie fringed orchid site (November 8), Lakeside Daisy Preserve (November 10), Karlo Fen (November 15), Kelleys Island State Park (November 16), TNC's Herrick Fen (November 17), and Irwin Prairie (November 29). We worked on woody species control primarily to improve habitat quality. Woody species control involves cutting and treating woody stems with herbicide to reduce re-sprouting and fall is the best time for this work. Our groups ranged in size from six to sixteen people, but much was accomplished and we had a good time doing it!

After four projects scheduled for December and a short break for the holidays, our winter schedule resumes in January-March.

Watch our website for the new schedule and please join us! It is a great way to get outside and help manage Ohio's natural areas.



Fall stewardship projects included Brinkhaven Oak Barrens (left) and Myersville Fen (right).

Save these field trip dates in 2023

After a very long hiatus in response to the COVID pandemic, ONAPA will once again be offering several natural history field trips to our members and friends during 2023. Arrangements are still being finalized but we want to let you know about some of the dates we have firmed up thus far.

More details about these and additional planned field trips will be forthcoming in the spring and summer issues of the ONAPA Newsletter as well as detailed online.

June 10: Plans are in the works for retired Geauga County Park naturalist Dan Best to lead a tour of Spring Brook Sanctuary, a state nature preserve owned and managed by the Geauga Park District. Ohio's only known native brook trout population is found in Spring Brook.

July 22: We will once again be offering guided tours of Denny's Tallgrass Prairie in Knox County.

October 7: Once again, as we have for the last several years, we will open Denny's Tallgrass Prairie for anyone wanting to collect prairie seeds for their personal prairie plantings.

Visitors to rural Ohio fly in from Arctic tundra

Story and photos
by John Watts



The migration of winter birds into our area often highlights hawks, owls, and finches; however, driving snow covered rural roads through Ohio's farmland can be rewarded with flocks of Lapland Longspurs. This species is most often in association with Horned Larks, Snow Buntings, and American Pipits. The Lapland Longspur is a circumpolar species and is considered one of, if not the most common breeding species of the Arctic tundra north of the tree line.

The Lapland Longspur's scientific name is *Calcarius lapponicus*. *Calcarius* is from Latin *calcar* meaning "a cock's spur" referring to the long claw on the hind toe or hal-

lux. All four of North America's longspurs (Smith's, Thick-billed, and Chestnut-collared) possess this claw. The specific name *lapponicus*, is modern Latin meaning "of Lapland" referencing Scandinavia, where the type specimen was collected. In England, this species is known as the Lapland Bunting (Meiter 2020).



Male's long spur is evident

Lapland Longspurs begin arriving along the Lake Erie shore from their summer breeding grounds between September 20-30, being more regularly observed by mid-October. Flocks of 20-30 individuals are typically observed but higher concentrations of 100-200 birds may be observed near western Lake Erie. Fall birds are casual to uncommon elsewhere in Ohio, being least common in the southern and southeastern portions of the state (Peterjohn 2001).

Wintering longspurs inhabit open farmlands of rural Ohio, especially standing or lightly tilled corn stubble fields and adjacent road edges. Snowfall often congregates flocks and pushes them towards the road edges where they are more easily observed. Farmland where manure is freshly spread on snow or short pasture can also be very attractive to wintering birds. In the absence of snow, these birds tend to disperse throughout the open farmland and can be very difficult to locate. Lou Campbell and Milt Trautman encountered flocks containing

Flock of Lapland Longspurs, above; one in basic winter plumage, at right.

100-400 birds during the 1930's, when farming practices left plenty of cover and food during the winter (Peterjohn 2001). More recent clean farming practices leave very little cover or food and intensive fall plowing generally will not support regular observations of longspurs, so efforts to locate these birds should concentrate in other areas.



Winter plumage largely shows tones of brown and black above and white on the belly with streaking on the flanks and throat. Adult males retain more of the color showing black streaks on the flanks, a black mottled upper breast, a yellowish eye stripe, and a chestnut patch on the back of the head. Beyond adult males, winter plumage individuals can be difficult to age and sex.

Lapland Longspurs are most numerous in the spring when larger concentrations can form as they stage for their northward migration. The author observed a flock estimated at nearly 1,000 birds in western Madison County on April 6, 2021. Other exceptional observations are 625 from Mercer County (April 13, 1986), estimated 4,200 Maumee Bay State Park (March 21, 1997), and an amazing 10,000 birds by Lou Campbell in Lucas County on May 1, 1949 (Peterjohn 2001). Flocks of 15-40 are more common but it is easy to overlook these birds as they blend into corn stubble and recently plowed fields. Birds actually hide behind larger balls of soil in freshly plowed fields as they hunt for seeds and insect larva.

During March and April, when they are most numerous, the males begin to acquire their breeding plumage. The head and chest become a dark black and the eye stripe becomes buff colored to yellow and the chestnut patch on the back of head becomes a much richer shade. These hues, while striking when observed, still allow them to blend into their open field surroundings. This

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Autumn gave perfect weather for those attending the ONAPA 2022 Annual Meeting

The ONAPA Annual Meeting was held October 29 at the Eagleview Lodge at Blacklick Woods Metro Park east of Columbus. Almost 70 people, including walk-ins, turned out to celebrate ONAPA's 10th anniversary.

Presentations by Guy Denny and Jennifer Windus covered ONAPA's accomplishments over the past year. Guest speakers covered a variety of subjects:

Dr. Elliot Tramer, retired, University of Toledo, *Winners and Losers in the Age of Humans*;

Cody Berkebile, Senior Naturalist, Blacklick Woods Metro Park, *Preserves in Your Columbus Metro Parks*;

Judy Semroc, Nature Spark, *Hiding in Plain Sight—Amazing Patterns of Camouflage, Evasion, Trickery and Mimicry in Nature*.

After a short business meeting during lunch, participants enjoyed a perfect autumn afternoon on one of



Photo by Lydia Radcliffe



Photo by Jan Kennedy

Dick Moseley, at left, and **Cody Berkebile**, above, lead groups on afternoon field trips.

three field trips: Tucker Preserve (a dedicated preserve at Blacklick Woods), with Cody Berkebile; a boat trip to Cranberry Bog with Guy Denny and Jennifer Windus, and a walk through Shallenberger Preserve with Dick Moseley.

More photos of the event and field trips can be found at ONAPA.org.

Arctic visitors

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color combination also allows them to blend in quite well with recently burned areas. The author saw his first Lapland Longspurs at Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area in a recently burned field. The only way to find them was to use a scope and watch for the movement. Once spotted and followed in a scope, they provided great views for study. Also, by late March and early April they become more vocal, especially in flight, but will occasionally sing their complete song from a ground perch which may aid in locating them.

Two other species of longspurs have been recorded in Ohio. Smith's Longspurs are rare spring migrants in corn stubble fields, pastures and hayfields with most recent records from Madison and Mercer Counties. Ohio has two records of the Chestnut-collared Longspur (2018 and 2021) both from the same site in Lake County (Harlan 2020).

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Male Longspur bathing



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