



ONAPA NEWS

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History of Natural Areas Council shows value of expert citizen input to DNAP

By Dick Moseley

When the Ohio Natural Areas Act was passed in 1970, it not only authorized the Department of Natural Resources to establish and manage a state system of nature preserves but it also created the Ohio Natural Areas Council (ONAC) which was a citizen advisory body appointed by the governor (Ohio Revised Code 1517.03 and 1517.04).

The duties of this Council were to review and make recommendations on the acquisition and dedication of State Nature Preserves. The Council was to advise the Department on the criteria, inventory, planning, and the regulations pertaining to these preserves. It also made recommendations on the extent and type of use and visitation to be permitted at each preserve. Members of the Council served without compensation.

The original Council consisted of eight members, with the Director of ODNR serving as a non-voting ex-officio member. The other seven members were appointed by the governor to serve four-year staggered terms. The Natural Areas Act requires the Governor to appoint one representative from natural history museums, one from metropolitan park districts, one from Ohio colleges and universities, and one from outdoor education programs. The other three members were appointed as at-large positions and all members must be individuals interested or active in natural area preservation. The Act also required that no more than four members could be from the same political party.

The first Natural Areas Council was appointed by Governor James A. Rhodes during the interim period between passage of the Act in May and its effective date on August 31, 1970. The four representatives were Dr. David H. Stansbery, a

specialist in freshwater mollusks and Curator of Natural History at the Ohio State Museum; Bertalan Szabo, Chief Naturalist of Akron Metropolitan Park District; Richard H. Durrell, professor of geology from the University of Cincinnati; and Paul E. Knoop, Jr., Director of Aullwood Audubon Center. The three at-large members were Jeanne Hawkins, a naturalist and botanist from Toledo; William B. Price, retired Chief Naturalist of Ohio State Parks from Murray City; and Dr. David A. Rigney, a professor at The Ohio State University, and the Conservation Chair of the Central Ohio Group of the Sierra Club.

The Council started its work almost immediately and held its first meeting on September 15, 1970, just two weeks following the effective date of the Act. ODNR Director Fred Morr called the meeting and served as acting Chair until the Board elected its leadership team. This inter-disciplinary group was charged with establishing a priority list of areas to be acquired as nature preserves. This was necessary since the General Assembly had appropriated \$400,000 a year earlier to be used for acquiring preserves. Unless the Department acted within a year, these funds would be lost to the program. The Council's dedication to this fledgling program was reflected by the number of meetings held, nine meetings in the first ten months of the program.

Dr. David Stansbery was elected as Chair, Richard Durrell as vice-chair and Jeanne Hawkins as secretary at the second meeting which was held six days later. At this meeting, the Council established their recommended priorities for acquisition and the Department began acquiring

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Expertise of advisory council proved to be a valuable asset

areas using these recommendations. The Department was able to acquire 14 properties totaling 632 acres with this initial appropriation of \$400,000. As the new coordinator of the Natural Areas and Scenic Rivers programs, I can tell you that this would not have been accomplished had it not been for the dedication and knowledge of this special citizens group. Their advice was indeed priceless and definitely gave us insight from a different perspective that we would not have had without their counsel.

The Council established a classification system for State Nature Preserves which was based upon the quality of the unique features present and the capacity of an area to be used without being degraded. Initially three classifications were recommended—Scientific, Interpretive, and Scenic, with Scientific having the most restrictive use and Scenic the least restrictive. In 1975, a fourth was added, Ecological Research, which provided opportunities for manipulative research on areas that may need such activities.

Over the years, Council members changed as terms ended and new members came on board and new ideas helped keep the Natural Areas Program a vital growing entity thanks to their advice and dedication. Members included Dr. Charles King, Director of the Ohio Biological Survey; Dr. Art Herrick of Kent State University, author of the Natural Areas Project of OBS; Ralph Ramey, Director of Glen Helen Preserve at Antioch College; Dr. Harold Mahan, Director of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History; Dr. Jane Forsyth, Glacial Geologist, Bowling Green State University; DeVere Burt, Director of the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History; Dr. Barbara Andreas, Plant Biology Specialist, Kent State University, Norville L. Hall, former Chief Naturalist and retired Chief of Ohio State Parks; Ruth W. Melvin, Outdoor Environmental Educator, Ohio Academy of Science; Ann Malmquist, NE Ohio Native Plant Society; Robert R. Findlay, Supervisor of Conservation, Ohio Department of Education; and others who held positions on the Council during its 34 years of existence.

The last meeting of the Ohio Natural Areas Council was held on December 15, 2004. On January 28, 2005, Director Sam Speck sent a letter to Bob Glotzhober, Secretary of the Council informing him that the Council was sunset by the Ohio Legislature's Sunset Review Committee effective December 30, 2004. Obviously, this abolishment was recommended by the Department at the urging of the temporary acting Chief of Natural Areas and Preserves who felt that this advisory body was a burden and outlived its usefulness. Unfortunately, this attitude has prevailed for many years and new leadership of the Division has not benefited from the advice and wisdom of such a group of experienced leaders in their fields.

Members of the last Council were Bob Glotzhober, Senior Curator of Natural History, Ohio History Connection; Charity Krueger, Director of Aullwood Audubon Center; Tom Stanley, Resources Manager, Cleveland Metro Parks; Joseph Croy, Assistant Director, Toledo Metro Parks; David Todt, Professor at Shawnee State University; Bill Tomko, at-large member from Chagrin Falls and Jerry Eldred, at-large member and Executive Director of the Miami County Park District.

During the economic downturn due to 9-11, the

Department suffered significant budget cuts which resulted in downsizing and in some cases, elimination of programs and divisions to meet their reduced budget. The merging of the Division of Natural Areas & Preserves with the Division of Parks and Recreation was not in the best interest of the Natural Areas Program. This action motivated Guy Denny and me to attempt to get the Natural Areas Council re-established since we were concerned that the care of these unique and fragile preserves would be managed by a Division whose sole goal is to provide recreation opportunities for Ohioans rather than a Division whose primary goal and mission were the preservation of high-quality natural areas. So, if this was to happen, we felt it was imperative to again have this important Natural Areas advisory group to assist the new union of the two divisions in the management of the preserves.

To accomplish this, at the beginning of the Kasich Administration, we worked with the assistance of State Representative David Hall to incorporate language within FY12-13 Budget Bill (H.B. 153) to re-establish the Council as originally written in 1970 with one exception—the members would not receive reimbursement for their expenses incurred in the performance of their duties. H.B. 153 was passed on September 29, 2011 which included the re-establishment of the Council. As requested, Guy and I made a list of 19 potential candidates and their credentials for Council membership which was delivered to the Chief of Parks & Recreation who, in turn was to provide it to ODNR Director David Mustine for recommendation for appointment by the governor. Governor John Kasich was to appoint members within 30 days after the effective date of the bill. However, the governor ignored the provisions of the law and never appointed anyone to this Council, so it remained a council on paper only. With the Council being without members, the Council and its Revised Code Sections 1517.03 and 1517.04 were again repealed by H. B. 471 on December 19, 2016.

David Rigney, the second chair of the Council in 1972, and I both provided testimony at the Sunset Review Committee Meeting on May 9, 2016 opposing the sunset of the Ohio Natural Areas Council. He noted in his testimony that *"The members of ONAC were volunteers and concerned citizens with considerable expertise in complementary areas. The members pooled their knowledge and tried for balance in their discussions and recommendations. It was clearly a cost-effective group of consultants. We worked hard to set up what was then the best State system of natural areas and preserves in the U. S. Experts in other states contacted the devoted leaders and staff of the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves for advice on how they could set up similar systems in their own states. The Council should be rejuvenated, not killed."*

It is truly unfortunate that ODNR leadership and the legislature did not value the advice and expertise of this citizen body of professionals who worked so hard to create the wonderful nature preserve system we have and to maintain the preserves at their highest quality. Perhaps some future leader will be wise enough to realize the value of such counsel and seek to restore this citizen council again to the benefit of the preserves.



Stewardship perseveres in spite of Old Man Winter

Story and photos by Jennifer Windus

Given the erratic winter weather we have had in January and February, it has been challenging to keep our stewardship projects going. We scheduled one project a week during January-March, with the idea that we could reschedule a second day each week as needed. But even that has been hard with fluctuating temperatures, rain, snow, and poor access to some preserves due to deep snow. Regardless, we have made some progress and are thankful for hardy volunteers who are happy to get outside. Both Maddie and Lydia, our stewardship assistants, are still with us and help a lot, coordinating with volunteers and DNAP staff. They are still posting on Instagram, too, so watch for their entertaining news!

In January, we worked at Lakeside Daisy Preserve (January 5), Brinkhaven Oak Barrens (January 11), Mallard Club Wildlife Area (January 20), and Gallagher Fen (January 25). These projects were all woody species removal, so we cleared habitat for rare and native plants.

In February, we went to Prairie Road Fen (February 10, in place of Herrick Fen which had too much snow) and Bonnett Pond Bog (rescheduled to February 16). Four projects were cancelled; we hope to reschedule them in March, if the weather cooperates. We have five projects scheduled in March and are crossing our fingers that we can accomplish them.

In April, we will schedule a few stewardship projects, likely to focus on garlic mustard, lesser celandine, and butterweed. We will also be conducting some prescribed burns which we do in cooperation with partners such as Knox County Park District, Crawford County Park District, Johnny Appleseed Metropolitan Park District, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and Killbuck Watershed Land Trust.

Watch our website for upcoming stewardship projects for April-November. We hope to start a second stewardship team for central and southwest Ohio with one project a week in this region in cooperation with two new crew leaders, John Watts (ONAPA board member, retired from Columbus & Franklin

County Metro Parks) and Mary Klunk (retired from Five Rivers MetroParks in the Dayton area). Expanding our stewardship program is an exciting new chapter for ONAPA and we are looking forward to your support.



Above, spreading seed at windy Lakeside Daisy preserve. Left, removing cut branches on frozen Bonnett Pond Bog. Below, burning cut brush at Brinkhaven also keeps workers warm.



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Songs of sparrow and thrush will brighten spring

Story and photos by John Watts

Many spring migrant species of birds pass through our yards and small wooded areas near our homes each year. We are overjoyed when we see a short-termed “fallout” of a few species of the colorful warblers darting through the trees, even if they only spend an hour feeding and then disappear just as quickly. A few species of birds seem to leisurely move north on their journey to their breeding grounds, providing the opportunity for us to enjoy them.

Two species which can be found in almost any lightly wooded yard or small woodlot in the spring are the White-throated Sparrow and Swainson’s Thrush. Both species are fairly cryptic: staying close to the ground, feeding in the shadows and moving along the edge of downed logs and brush piles. However, it is not unusual for both species to sit on a perch in full view relying on their brown ground colors to camouflage them.

When found this is a great opportunity to study them.

White-throated Sparrows are present in small numbers during the winter and will often visit bird-feeders during snowy or cold weather.

However, as spring arrives the plumage of the male begins to intensify in anticipation of the pending breeding season. Most of the relevant markings are on the head as the black and white crown stripes sharpen, the yellow in front of the eyes (supraloral area) brighten, and as the name implies, the white throat becomes a clean, brilliant white. The genus name, *Zonotrichia* is from Greek “zone” meaning “banded hair” and *trichos*, in reference to the striped crowns of sparrows of this genus. The species name *albicollis*, is Latin meaning “white necked”.

During late April, prior to embarking on the next phase of their northward trip, larger groups will gather. These groups become very vocal and fill the air of spring evenings with their sweet song paraphrased “*Old Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody or Pure Sweet Canada, Canada, Canada.*” Robert Lemmon referred to the song of the White-throated Sparrow as “one of the loveliest of all bird songs.” Within a few days the song decreases to a few individuals and by the second week of May they will have completely departed to the north.

Historically, this species rarely nested in northern Ohio.



White-throated Sparrow



Since 1932 there has been only one confirmed breeding record in Ohio during 1997 in Ashtabula County (Rodewald et al 2016).

As spring migration moves into its later phases, one species that arrives is the Swainson’s Thrush. Named for William Swainson, a notable English naturalist, this species was formerly known as the Olive-backed Thrush.

Swainson’s Thrushes begin to arrive in early May and linger into mid and sometimes into late May. Swainson’s Thrushes, even though they are late migrants, travel to the upper peninsula of Michigan to breed. During their spring stay they inhabit a variety of woods and wood edges including urban parks and yards.

Like the White-throated Sparrow, it is not unusual to hear them singing later in the day during spring evenings, often being one of the last birds of the day to sing even as it becomes dark. Their genus name, *Catharus*, is from Greek *katharos*, meaning pure or clear referring to the clear musical notes of their song. The specific name, *ustulatus*, is Latin for “burnt” referring to the bird’s brownish color (Meiter 2020). The song is described as an “ascending spiral of varied whistles” and was noted by Aretas Saunders as “sweet and melodious but not as clear as the Hermit Thrush.”

The Swainson’s Thrush is slightly smaller than other thrushes. Its back is entirely olive-brown and bares no reddish coloring. The Swainson’s best field mark is the distinct buffy tinge to the cheeks, sides of the head, and around the eyes. Swainson’s Thrushes show spots that are concentrated on the upper breast and throat. These markings are generally dull in color and evenly distributed.

During this spring’s migration keep an eye out along wood edges and woodland shadows for these two migrants. Better yet, keep an ear open for the sweet spring songs of these two migrants during one of the most exciting times of the year in our eastern deciduous forest.



Swainson’s Thrush

Flowers of the Mountain Laurel capture attention

By *Tim Snyder*

It's always gratifying when a local kid makes good. We need feel no less pride if the "kid" happens to be a flower. Come May and June, certain favored hillsides in the unglaciated Allegheny plateau of southeastern Ohio become a floral quilt as the Mountain Laurel explodes into bloom. Such a spectacular display could not help but to attract notice early in the exploration of our country. Samples sent back to Europe were eagerly adopted into the finest gardens. Today it is enjoyed around the world.

Mountain Laurel, or Calico Bush (named for the bright markings on the petals which look like calico prints) prefers acidic soils, which is why it likes bog margins or rocky hillsides. It can be found in much of the Appalachian highlands, along the coastal plain to Louisiana and westward to Indiana. It usually grows as a shrub to nine feet tall, but in sheltered mountain valleys it can become more tree-like, reaching as much as 36 feet in height.

It was these larger specimens that Peter Kalm, a Swedish naturalist who visited America in the 1700's, found being used for axe handles, pulleys and weaver's shuttles. The scientific name, *Kalmia latifolia*, honors him. The name "Mountain Laurel" was given by early English settlers because of the similarity between its leaves and those of the European Laurel. They also noticed that the leaves made horses, oxen and cows sick, and could be fatal if eaten by calves and sheep. On the other hand, deer would eat the leaves in winter when little other browse was available, apparently without any ill effect.

Interesting though the leaves may be, it is the flowers that have captured the world's attention. E. Lucy Braun, one of Ohio's premier ecologists in the early twentieth century, called it, "One of America's most beautiful

shrubs...." The showy white to pink flowers clustered at the ends of the branches have an interesting saucer-like shape and an even more interesting method for getting pollinated. In fresh flowers, the filaments carrying the pollen-bearing stamens lie under tension in cavities inside the flower. When a bee lands and probes with its tongue, the stamens spring up and smack it on the head, depositing pollen which is then carried to the next flower and left behind.

Such an inviting plant could not long escape the plantsman's meddling. In the late 1800's, several plants with unusual flower or foliage forms were discovered. By the mid-1900's, domestic versions with red buds and deep pink flowers had been developed. Today, you can buy dwarf plants, willow-leaved plants, and plants with flowers that are banded, striped or edged. On the horizon are versions that creep, that never open their buds, and that have double flowers (this last, the only double specimen known, was discovered in New Zealand where it apparently had been sent as a seedling).

If you have the right planting conditions, Mountain Laurel would be a wonderful addition to your garden, not only for its

colorful flowers and glossy, evergreen leaves, but for its origins. Here is a true Ohio native, one of which we can all be proud.

There are several state nature preserves where you can see Mountain Laurel in its original habitat. A prime site is Lake Katharine State Nature Preserve near Jackson which even offers a Calico Bush Trail. Shallenberger (Fairfield County), Blackhand Gorge (Licking County), Conkles Hollow and Beck (both in Hocking County) State Nature Preserves offer more chances to see this native beauty in bloom.



Photos by Guy Denny

Calico pattern is evident in Mountain Laurel flower, giving rise to a common name, "calico bush."



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Don't forget to re-enroll every year!

Spring beauty lives up to its name

Story and photos by Guy Denny

I can't imagine a more appropriate name for this dainty, early spring woodland wildflower than "Spring Beauty." Shortly after the snow has finally melted, spring beauties begin making their appearance. They are one of the very first native wildflowers to appear in rich woodlands throughout Ohio - truly a harbinger of spring.

They don't just spring up here and there, but rather typically appear in great abundance blanketing the newly awakening forest floor. There are two species of spring beauties native to Ohio. The most common species is the Spring Beauty or Virginia Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*) found throughout Ohio as well as throughout the eastern half of North America from Canada south to Texas with the exception of only Florida. Much rarer in Ohio is the Northern or Carolina Spring Beauty (*Claytonia*



Carolina spring beauty

caroliniana) which is a more northern species occurring from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Ontario south to the higher elevations of the mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina. In Ohio it is a very rare species essentially limited to the Allegheny Mountain influ-

enced Snowbelt Region of extreme Northeastern Ohio.

The most noticeable difference between these two species are the leaves. Each species has a single opposite pair of leaves attached about halfway up the stem. However, Virginia Spring Beauty has very long narrow grass-like succulent leaves while Carolina Spring Beauty has distinctly broad, oval leaves that are 1/2 to 3/4 inch wide with pronounced petioles. Otherwise, the flowers of both species are essentially identical in appearance.

In 1737, famed Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus named the genus *Claytonia* to honor John Clayton (1695-1778). Clayton was born and educated in England but made his way to America and Gloucester County, Virginia, around 1720 where he



Claytonia named for botanist John Clayton

became a distinguished and celebrated botanist. Clayton also served as clerk of Gloucester County for more than fifty years while at the same time devoting much of his time in the study of botany becoming well published and well known in both American and European botanical circles. Clayton was considered by some at that time as the greatest botanist in America.

To fully appreciate their beauty, one has to take a close-up look at the delicate spring beauty flowers. The flowers occur on a succulent flower stalk that terminates in a loose raceme of typically three to five or more stalked flowers. When fully opened, each flower is about one-half inch across, consisting typically of five white or pinkish petals at the base of which are two green sepals. The anthers are pink.

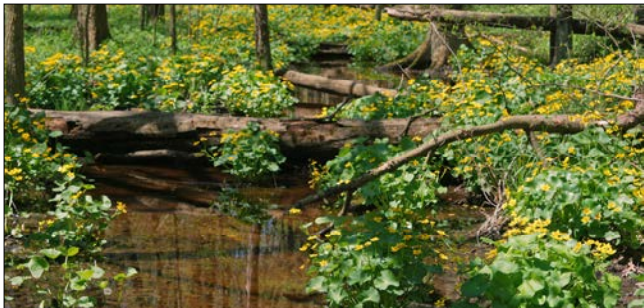
Each petal has numerous conspicuous fine pink stripes or veins varying in color from pale pink to bright pink that guide pollinators to the nectar source situated at the base of each petal. Such nectar is a very sought-after resource so early in the growing season.

Studies have shown that Spring Beauty is pollinated by as many as 71 different species of insects. As a generalist, being pollinated by such a large number of insects provides a distinct advantage for enhancing the chances of being cross-pollinated when cold and otherwise inclement weather conditions occur during the short spring blooming period. At this time of year weather conditions may keep insect activity at a minimum and raise the risk of a spring bloomer not being cross-pollinated at all. Spring beauty flowers open on sunny warm days but remain closed at night and during harsh weather when insect pollinators are not active.

One of the things that impresses me most about spring beauties is not only their ability to form extensive colorful blankets of woodland blooms, but

April field trips planned to Fowler Woods preserve

Join ONAPA for a deep-dive into one of the best known swamp-forest displays of spring wildflowers in Ohio. We are offering two opportunities to take a guided tour of Fowler Woods State Nature Preserve in Richland County. Set aside **Friday, April 22**, or **Saturday, April 23**, for a 10:00 am to



noon tour. (Choose one because space is limited.)

Fowler Woods' floristic wetlands show blooms under an impressive display of trees, even as it recovers from the devastating losses of Ash, due to the emerald ash borer.

A generous handicap accessible boardwalk makes for easy viewing of a sea of marsh marigolds and vast array of spring ephemerals: trilliums, bellwort, water leaf, hepatica and more.

To register, please email weedpicker.cheryl@gmail.com, selecting either April 22 or April 23 and a phone number and preferred email where you can be reached in the event of unexpected changes.

Meet at the parking lot at 7815 Olivesburg-Fitchville Road near Greenwich.

For more information about Fowler Woods, please visit the ODNR website: <https://ohiodnr.gov/go-and-do/plan-a-visit/find-a-property/fowler-woods-state-nature-preserve>

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Spring beauty a generalist

also their incredible ability to recolonize highly disturbed sites such as lawns. My yard in Knox County is adjacent to a woodland where spring beauties are quite abundant. Even though what is now my yard was an active agricultural cropland for more than 100 years, I am delighted to see it is currently being readily invaded by spring beauties and common blue violets. What amazes me most is that I can continue mowing my yard in early spring after both species have bloomed, or even while they are still blooming, and they appear no worse for the wear. They continue to bloom mixed in with lawn grass, increasing in numbers each year, adding a beautiful splash of color to the yard and a valuable source of nectar for a host of early spring pollinators.

Like most spring ephemerals, spring beauties don't last long before going to seed and then dying back for the season. Each pollinated flower produces an oval seed capsule containing several shiny black seeds. The seeds are myrmecochorous, meaning they are dispersed by ants. A close examination of the fresh seed reveals a gelatinous lipid-rich appendage known as an elaiosome to which ants are attracted. Ants take the seeds back to their nest where the nutrient-rich elaiosomes are fed to their larvae. Afterwards, the seeds are removed from the nest and discarded some distance away where they then typically germinate.

Spring beauties aren't just pretty to the eye, they also were once a source of food and medicine for Native American inhabitants of the eastern woodlands. The root system consists of a pea-size to

marble-size corm (solid enlarged portion of the underground stem) situated two to three inches below ground and from which small rootlets emerge. These tiny potato-like tubers were eaten raw or prepared like potatoes. Actually, it probably took more of an expenditure of energy digging these small tubers than was provided by their food value. Also, like most members of the Purslane Family (Portulacaceae), the fresh, succulent above-ground stems and leaves of spring beauties were also prepared and eaten as a potherb or added raw to a salad. The Iroquois are said to have made an infusion or decoction of the powdered corms given to children to treat convulsions.

In as much as harvesting spring beauties for food or medicine destroys them, it is far better to enjoy their beauty and let them live on in your eye and memory so they can spread their delightful beauty across the springtime forest floor for all to enjoy in celebration of the final arrival of spring.



Narrow leaves mark Virginia Spring Beauty



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