



ONAPA NEWS

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Clifton Gorge SNP. By Tim Snyder.

"We are dedicated to promoting, protecting, and improving Ohio natural areas and preserves for educational, charitable, and scientific purposes."

Why Nature Preserves?

By Tim Snyder

The primary role of state parks is to provide outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities for park visitors within a mostly natural setting. While the natural setting is important, it is secondary to providing for the recreational needs of the park visitor, and it need not be pristine.

The primary role of state nature preserves is to protect and manage the best natural areas of national and/or state-wide significance remaining in Ohio for educational and scientific purposes.

While providing passive recreational activities such as hiking, bird watching, and nature photography are important, they are secondary to the primary mission of nature preservation for the scientific and educational benefit of this as well as future generations.

To those of us involved with nature preserves, the difference between them and parks, as outlined above by ONAPA vice president Robert McCance, is obvious. For the general public, however, the distinction is less clear, as I quickly learned as manager of Clifton Gorge State Nature Preserve which shares a border and trail system with John Bryan State Park. Visitors who had been happily walking their dog through the park were surprised and often upset to be told by a ranger that they had crossed a line into a



Geneva State Park. By Tim Snyder.

place where Fido was no longer welcome. Once the difference was explained, the next question was, "Why?" followed by a statement: "What good are nature preserves if you can't use them?"

There are many reasons for establishing nature preserves. Scientific study, education and the opportunity to immerse oneself in surroundings where Nature, not humanity, is the primary operator come immediately to mind. The most important reason, however, is simply this: Nature preserves are our natural savings account, places where valuable assets can be protected. After all, we've only been given one world (science fiction fantasies notwithstanding), and what we do with it determines how well—or if—we survive. Nature preserves serve as reservoirs of genetic diversity, especially of the rarer forms most at danger of disappearing.

"So what?" our disgruntled visitor asks. "Who cares if some obscure plant or animal goes extinct? It doesn't affect me."

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Why Nature Preserves?	1
Why Nature Preserves? (cont.)	2
ONAPA partners with OIPC	2
The Phlox Pretender	3
ONAPA 2015 Banquet	3
ONAPA's Traveling Display	4
ONAPA Field Trips	4
Successful ONAPA Volunteer Opportunities	6
Amazon Smiles benefits ONAPA	7
Kroger Rewards supports ONAPA	7

Why Nature Preserves?

(Continued from page 1)

“Ah, but it does,” the ranger replies. “Every species lost weakens the web of life that sustains us all.”

On a more commercial level, each loss reduces the potential for future good. Take, for instance, *Thermus aquaticus*, a bacterium that provides a resistant enzyme used in DNA amplification. The bacterium was discovered in hot springs in Yellowstone National Park which, in spite of its name, also functions as a nature preserve. Similar hot springs in California and Iceland have been “made useful” for energy production, destroying their natural functions and disrupting the communities dependent on them. Had the same thing happened at Yellowstone, *Thermus aquaticus* might easily have become extinct, and a very important (not to mention lucrative) industry would have died still-born.

Or take the American bison, once reduced to a few hundred animals protected, again, at Yellowstone. Had the species been allowed to vanish, today’s growing bison meat market would be impossible. When Yellowstone was set aside in the 1870’s, no one realized the value of the obscure and the once common but rapidly-dwindling organisms it protected. Who knows what value future generations will find in plants and animal we protect for them today.



Sheldon Marsh State Nature Preserve. By Tim Snyder.

Such an argument is crassly commercial, but unfortunately is the easiest for self-centered Americans (which includes just about all of us if we’re honest) to understand. A more noble reason is that we are protecting options for future generations and willingly sharing our planet with life in all—or at least much—of its fascinating variety. Nature preserves prove we can think beyond our own immediate benefit, that we are bigger than our greed. And that is reason enough.

ONAPA Partners with OIPC on Small Grants Program

Last year, the ONAPA Board of Directors voted unanimously to set aside \$3,000 to establish a small grants program to fund research projects by graduate students that would benefit nature preserve management. Unfortunately, there was not enough time or volunteer staff to put the program together before the end of 2014.

Then, early this year, we learned at the Ohio Invasive Plants Council’s (OIPC) Annual Meeting that OIPC has had an on-going small grants program in place since 2013 to fund college students who conduct relevant research on invasive plants in Ohio. They have a great program in place with outreach to major Ohio colleges and universities, as well as an excellent grant proposal review panel composed of biology professors and land managers. However, OIPC has limited funds and could only allocate \$1,000 each year for their grants program. ONAPA had the funding, but no program structure; OIPC had the program structure, but only enough funding for 1 or 2 projects annually.

Invasive plants are a major threat to our nature preserves and are therefore a major focus for ONAPA.

Accordingly, the presidents of both the ONAPA and OIPC boards discussed the possibility of joining forces to better address the problem of understanding and controlling invasive plants in Ohio. Both agreed it would be an excellent move. At the February 27, 2015 ONAPA Board Meeting, a motion was passed unanimously to approve using the \$3,000 in the small grants program for this partnership with OIPC to support research on invasive plants in 2015. Dr. Raymond Heithaus, Chair of the ONAPA Scientific Advisory Committee, is coordinating this new joint small grants program with Dr. Jean Burns from Case Western Reserve University, coordinator of OIPC’s small grants program. Proposals must be submitted to OIPC by November 1st. In addition to ONAPA, the Cincinnati Wildflower Preservation Society is contributing \$1,000 to OIPC this year for the program, giving a total of \$5,000 available to college students and others with important research projects on invasive plants. Interested parties can obtain more information on the OIPC website at www.oipc.info.

Jennifer Windus, ONAPA Board Member and OIPC President

The Phlox Pretender

Guy Denny

Over the years I have been surprised how many times I have heard people say how much they enjoy the spring wildflowers, especially the beautiful array of various colored phlox that grows up to 3 feet tall along



Garden Phlox—Guy Denny

our roadsides in May into early June.

Although we have seven species of phlox native to Ohio, none of them grow knee high along our roadsides in the spring. In fact, only the Garden Phlox (*Phlox paniculata*) grows to that height and it doesn't bloom until July through August. Our most common and widely distributed spring blooming phlox in Ohio is Wild Sweet William or Blue Phlox (*Phlox divaricate*) and it is a common, primarily woodland wildflower, that only grows to about 18 inches in height.

So what is this phlox impersonator that has become so abundant along our roadsides in springtime? Well, the first thing to do is take a close look at the petals; a phlox will always have 5 petals. Our impersonator has only 4 petals which is a quick give away that it does not belong to the Phlox Family (*Polemoniaceae*). Instead, it belongs to the Mustard Family "*Brassicaceae*", members of which have only 4 petals

which form a cross.

The Mustard Family was previously known as the "*Cruciferae*" in reference to the flower's similarity to a crucifix. Our phlox look-alike is actually Dame's Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*), an escaped garden plant originally introduced from Europe. Although quite colorful with its showy white, pink, to purple flowers, it has become very aggressive and invasive along roadsides, fencerows, floodplains and open woods throughout Ohio and the eastern United States. This prolific self-seeder has become quite a pest, like its close and also very invasive "cousin," Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolate*).



Dame's Rocket— Guy Denny.

The genus name *Hesperis*, comes from the Greek, *hesperos* which means "evening". The specific name "*matronalis*" means "matronly" from an old world name for this plant, "Mother-of-the-Evening". Although the flowers have little fragrance in daytime, the flowers become quite fragrant in the evening with a sweet violet-like odor that most likely attracts moths as pollinators. Dame's Rocket is now unveiled.

ONAPA's Annual Meeting and Banquet Saturday and Sunday, September 19th & 20th, 2015 Dawes Arboretum, Newark, Ohio

Featuring Sat. morning indoor presentations at Dawes Arboretum and field trips on Sat. afternoon (1-4 p.m.) and Sun. morning (9 a.m. –noon) to: Blackhand Gorge State Nature Preserve, Flint Ridge Park, Dawes Arboretum, and Sand Hollow Winery (Saturday only).

The Banquet will be held in the Firelight Room at Dawes Arboretum starting at 5:30 pm on Sat., September 19, with snacks and a wine tasting by the Sand Hollow Winery in Heath, Ohio. The buffet dinner will be provided by Creative Catering of Hebron, Ohio, starting at 6:30 p.m. The silent auction will begin at 5:30 p.m.

Our featured speaker this year will be Ian Adams, a well-known Ohio photographer, speaking about **Natu-**

ral Ohio: A Photographic Celebration, which will focus on his new book and photographing natural landscapes.

Registration will begin soon on the ONAPA website at www.onapa.org or can be done over the phone for those without access to the internet. More details will be available on the ONAPA website in the coming month.

If you have any ideas or contributions for the Silent Auction, please contact us at info@onapa.org. We are looking forward to a great Annual Meeting and Banquet this year! Be sure to register early as the facility holds just 100 people, so we will have to limit attendees to 100. Registration will close on September 11th, or ear-

ONAPA's Traveling Displays



ONAPA's traveling displays and new banners have been busy around the state in 2015 promoting the great field trips and volunteer work events while building membership and awareness of ONAPA and its important mission.

Events we have been or will be attending include:

- The Ohio Botanical Symposium
- The Ohio Natural History Conference
- The Ohio Wildlife Diversity Conference
- The biggest week in American Birding at Maumee Bay
- The Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist Conference in Hocking County
- The 1st annual Pollination Festival at Gorman Nature Center
- The 9th annual Western Wildlife Corridor Wildflower Festival at Mount St. Joseph College
- The Little Miami River Kleeners annual Clean Sweep of the Little Miami River in Green County
- Bob - a - Links at Byers Woods
- The Midwest Native Plant Conference
- The Mad River Watershed Conversation Area at the Clark County Fair

2015 ONAPA Field Trips (For more information, visit onapa.org)

Contact Christine Hadley at christinehadley@earthlink.net or 513-850-9585 with any field trip questions. See onapa.org for up-to-date information.

Saturday July 25: *Guy's Prairie*, Knox County, Ohio, Leader: Guy Denny

Saturday August 15, 1 pm: *NASA Plum Brook Station Prairie*, Erie County, Ohio, Leader: John Blakeman

Saturday, August 22, 10 am: *Little Darby Creek State Scenic River: Prairie & Insects*, Franklin County, Ohio, Leader: Jim Davidson

September 19-20, *ONAPA Annual Meeting*, Dawes Arboretum

Saturday September 26, 10 am: *Prairie Seed Collecting*, Knox County, Ohio, Leader: Guy Denny

This is your chance to collect native prairie seeds for your own prairie garden and learn about the origin and ecology of Ohio prairies. Please, no

commercial collectors. This event is for prairie wildflower hobbyists only.

What to Bring: Dress for the weather, rain or shine. Bring a sack lunch and water to drink. Camera and binoculars are desirable, but not essential. Paper sacks will be provided for collecting your prairie seeds.

Directions: Take I-71 to Exit 151 Ohio 95 Mt Gilead/Fredericktown. Head East to 6021 Mt. Gilead Rd.

Sunday, September 27, 2 pm: *Travertine Fen State Nature Preserve*, Greene County, Ohio, Leaders: Dan Boone & Marjie Becus

This is a joint field trip with the Cincinnati Wild Flower Preservation Society.

Saturday, October 3, Noon: *Beaver Creek State Park*, Columbiana County, Ohio, Leader: Allison Cusick

Saturday, November 7: *Christmas Rocks State Nature Preserve*, Fairfield County, Ohio, Leader: Jeff Johnson

Successful ONAPA Volunteer Opportunities

Jennifer Windus

ONAPA is working hard this year to offer a work trip every month at a state nature preserve or other natural area, and training for our volunteers. Tim Snyder and I (co-chairs of the ONAPA Resource Protection Committee) met with all 8 Division of Natural Areas & Preserves managers individually to discuss their habitat management needs. In March we began coordinating volunteers at the nature preserves where the DNAP manager organizes the work to be accomplished. So far we have had 5 successful work trips:

March 28th – Milford Center Prairie, tree & shrub removal & herbicide application to cut stems



Volunteers clear woody invaders at Milford Center Prairie. Photo by Tim Snyder.

April 18th – Lake Katharine SNP, garlic mustard removal

May 9th – Milford Center Prairie, removal of several invasive plants including common teasel, garlic mustard, & poison hemlock

June 13th – Daughmer Savanna SNP, common teasel removal

June 20th – Chaparral & Adams Lake Prairies SNP, sweet-clover removal

We have 6 more work trips planned in 2015. Please refer to www.onapa.org for more details on these volunteer events. The work trips are very important in enabling ONAPA to assist preserve managers with critical habitat management efforts, supplementing the work they are doing, but may not have enough staff or resources to complete on a regular basis. We work in preserves most in need of habitat management, manually removing invasive plants or invading woody species and applying herbicide where appropriate. This type of ecological management in nature preserves is significant as it maintains the species and plant communities for which the nature preserves were acquired and dedicated. Without regular ecological management, the rare species and plant communities such as prairies, bogs, and fens may be lost to natural succession or in-



Volunteers at Lake Katharine State Nature Preserve. Photo by Jennifer Windus.

vasive plant monocultures. Each work trip so far this year has had 10 to 20 volunteers participate and has accomplished a significant amount of habitat management. Of course, we always have a good time as well, making new friends and sharing experiences.

On May 16th, ONAPA held a volunteer training session at Gorman Nature Center in Mansfield. The training included indoor presentations and a field trip to view various wildflowers and invasive plants. The indoor topics included an overview of DNAP and ONAPA, review of necessary volunteer forms, the need for preserve monitors, and invasive plant identification and control. We had 12 volunteers attend and



Battling Teasel and White Sweet Clover—Chaparral Prairie State Nature Preserve. Photo by Tim Snyder.

it was very worthwhile to everyone, despite the rainy weather. We plan to conduct another training at the ONAPA Annual Meeting at Dawes Arboretum on September 19th. We encourage more volunteers to join us on these work trips, and welcome ideas for topics for future training.

A Question of Life

A misshapen question mark was lying in the middle of the road. Jogging past, I saw that it was a snake—a large snake as thick as my wrist and as long as my arm. Probably a Black Rat Snake, one of the few dark snakes in Ohio that grow to such size.

I was barely past it before my conscience spoke up: “You assumed the creature was dead, but what if it’s not?” True, it made no movement when I passed, but



Black rat snake. Photo by Guy Denny.

then, snakes are cautious animals. Black Rat Snakes are one of mankind’s unheralded allies in the fight against the ravenous, crop-destroying rodent hordes. As predators on rats (thus the name), mice and other small but potentially destructive things, these gentle, inoffensive snakes merit our tender consideration. And, too, the fact that it shared with me the awesome gift of life entitled it to some measure of consideration. Even snakes deserve a chance.

Consoling myself with the thought of helping it on my return trip, I jogged on, pondering the limited mentality of drivers who see snakes in the road as mere targets for their multi-ton machines. Even more unfathomable is the mind that will bubble sentimental grief over the carcass of a hole-digging, crop-damaging groundhog while rejoicing in the death of a much rarer, rat-devouring snake. But then, snakes don’t have fur and big brown eyes. They are victims of the worse form of inter-species discrimination.

Rounding the curve and heading back, I heard a

rapidly approaching roar behind me and jumped aside as a battered green car sped past, weaving across the entire width of the road. “Get a life!” I shouted, knowing full-well that the driver couldn’t hear me and wouldn’t care if he did, judging from the stupid gaze he threw my way. And then I thought of the snake. Wasn’t this just the kind of brainless jerk that

would hit a snake just for the “thrill” of it? Had he not, after all, nearly hit me?

The snake lay as I first saw him. The reckless driver had either ignored it or been too drunk to notice. Now a sudden quandary presented itself. Driven by conscience, I was still repelled by conditioning. We are trained early on to fear and revile snakes. Even the best of good intentions must struggle to overcome that.

I nudged the limp body with my toe. It did not move. My first impression had been correct after all. It was dead. Resting a light foot on its head just in case, I reached down and grabbed it. The body was still warm. Its dry skin slid

across taut muscles, but underneath I could feel the crushed remnants of its remarkably engineered skeleton. There was obviously more than one jerk out on the road.

That moment brought a sudden realization. My hesitancy had not been prompted by a fear of snakes, but by a revulsion to death. Define it how you will, life is still the greatest of all miracles. When that wondrous dance of muscle and bone ceases, when the complicated interactions of chemical processes end, when life becomes death, the world becomes a smaller place. How bad it is for life to yield to death in the normal course of things; how much worse for life to be squandered recklessly to satisfy a self-centered human’s lust for “excitement.”

With a swing of my arm, I sent the dead snake into the bushes by the side of the road where it would hopefully decay in peace. Even snakes deserve a little dignity.

Tim Snyder

Deadline for Fall 2015 issue—September 1

SUPPORT ONAPA THROUGH THE AMAZON SMILE PROGRAM



Through the new **AmazonSmile** program, Amazon will donate a portion of your Amazon purchases to a participating charity of choice.

Please consider choosing the **Ohio Natural Areas & Preserves Association** (ONAPA) as a beneficiary of your purchases by shopping through **AmazonSmile** at <https://smile.amazon.com/>

With your help, we can protect Ohio's natural legacy.
Thank You!

Kroger Rewards Program Benefits ONAPA



ONAPA has signed up as a recipient of the Kroger Company's rewards program that benefits nonprofit organizations without costing the individual any of their own money.

Here is how you can help:

1. Go to the Kroger.com website. Find the "Set up an Account" in the upper right side of the first page. You will be asked to enter your email address, create a password, and select your preferred store. If you wish, you can decline to receive emails from Kroger.
2. You can then link your Kroger Plus shoppers card to your account and select which organization receives donations from Kroger. ONAPA's number is **92516**, which is the quickest way to link to us. **You must do this every year.**
3. ONAPA will receive donations from the Kroger Company based upon how many people are linked to us and how much they spend at Kroger. It will not cost you anything and it will help ONAPA achieve its mission. **When you shop, check the bottom of your receipt to make sure ONAPA is listed as a recipient.**

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To submit inquiries, comments or questions, or information on your nature-related event for inclusion in the ONAPA calendar, e-mail us at
info@onapa.org

Deadline for submissions to the Summer—2015 Issue of ONAPA News is May 1st



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