ONAPA NEWS

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

American hazelnut a prairie remnant

Photos and story by Guy Denny

I have fond childhood memories of family excursions into the woods and fields around where I grew up to collect wild hazelnuts. We also gathered wild strawberries in summer and bittersweet in fall. We lived in a rural area with few homes on the far outskirts of south Toledo where there were open woodlots and large open fields harboring numerous prairie savanna species including oaks, hickories, eastern cottonwoods and exceptional large, widely-spaced, open-grown bur oaks. Other woody prairie species included wild plum, bittersweet, wild grapes and especially dense thickets of American hazelnut.

American hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) is native to the eastern half of North America, including both the central and eastern halves of the United States and Canada where it grows at the borders of and within open woods, in thickets, along fencerows and roadsides, at the edges of tallgrass prairies, and within prairie savannas. It occurs throughout Ohio wherever suitable habitat is found, growing in both dry and wet soils. I didn't realize it at the time, but my parents had their house constructed within a remnant prairie savanna complex on the outskirts of western Lucas County.

Hazelnut

American Hazelnut is a dense, multi-stemmed medium to large-sized shrub that frequently forms dense thickets that can grow 5 to 10 feet tall. This is a member of the birch family (Betulaceae) and like all members in this family, it is monoecious (separate male and female flowers occurring on the same plant). The male flowers are catkins that develop in the fall and remain all winter, maturing in early spring. By spring the showy, 2-3 inch long, yellowish brown catkins release large amounts of pollen. The female flowers are small, reddish, inconspicuous bud-like catkins. In spring, their red styles protrude from the tip of the catkin to capture wind-dispersed pollen. Once fertilized, they produce the husk-enclosed nuts that ripen in August-September.

One has to be fast to collect the ripe nuts since they are voraciously fed upon by squirrels, chipmunks, mice, deer, blue jays, turkey and other wildlife.

What intrigues me most about hazelnuts are the curious-looking seed husks with their ragged edged leaf-like bracts — or involucre — which mostly enwrap the nuts. Nuts occur in clusters of from 2 to 5 in each husk. The genus name *Corylus* comes from the Greek *korys* meaning "a helmet" which is a reference to the leaf-like wrapping or "helmets" over the nuts. The specific epithet *americana* obviously means "American." It is somewhat of a

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Front and back cover photos of Echo Dell Bridge, Beaver Creek SNP, by Ian Adams

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Hazelnut

challenge freeing the roundish, light brown nuts and then breaking their very hard shells to access the nutritious sweet nutmeat. Nevertheless, it was always worth the effort.

Although hazelnuts are often referred to as filberts but true filbert nuts — the ones we purchase at the grocery store — come from the European hazel (*C. avellana*). They look about the same and taste almost as good, but are nearly twice the size of our American hazelnut. Most of our commercial supply of filberts now comes from European hazelnuts and their cultivars grown in this country. The European Hazelnut, or filbert, was historically grown and harvested by early Greeks and Romans. In Europe, in addition to its use as food and in making candies, hazelnut nut oil is also used as a base for fragrant oils and perfumes. Drawing charcoal, made from hazel wood, is a favorite of artists. The slender shoots are used for making baskets and crates. "Water witches" believe hazelnut branches are ideal divining rods for locating underground sources of water. Hazelnut shrubs are also often used in Europe for planting hedgerows.

The American Hazelnut was prized by Native Americans as a source of food and medicine. The nuts were eaten raw, baked or boiled. Flour made from the nuts was used in making small cakes. The Iroquois and other tribes crushed and boiled the fresh nutmeats to mix with cornmeal and beans or berries and then make into bread. They made a drink as well from the crushed

Hazelnut in bloom

and boiled nutmeats. The nuts were also boiled in water to extract their oil which was then added as a base for soups.

Native Americans used hazelnuts medicinally for many treatments including to treat diarrhea and as an antiemetic (an agent to stop vomiting). The Ojibwa made a poultice of the astringent boiled bark and then applied it to help heal open wounds. A tea made from the bark was also used to treat hives and fever while a compound decoction of the roots was given to babies who were teething. Hazelnut tea was also used for expelling worms.

Other Native American uses, besides food and

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Girdham Road Sand Dunes preserve dedicated

By Randy and Chris Haar

Lucas County's Girdham Road Sand Dunes were dedicated as Ohio's 151st state nature preserve June 2, 2025. The 19-acre site is located within the 5,000-acre Oak Openings Preserve of Metroparks Toledo, which will retain ownership and control of the preserve. The site features sand dunes that date back to when Lake Erie was much larger (called Lake Warren) and the

shores stretched to the preserve area. Some of the preserve's notable plants include Wild Lupine, Blunt-leaved Milkweed, Prickly-pear Cactus, Sand Cherry, and Dwarf Dandelion. Speaking at the dedication ceremony at the Buehner Center were Jeff Johnson, Ohio DNR Natural Areas and Preserves Chief, Dave Zenk, Metroparks Toledo Chief Executive Officer, and Zuri Carter, Chief Natural Resources Officer, who stated, "It's the awe that you feel standing at the dunes and realizing the passage of time that has happened, and how much of a blip we are in that passage of time."

The Oak Openings Preserve is part of the larger 1,300 square mile Oak Openings Region. Dave Zenk reminded us that The Nature Conservancy once called the Oak Openings Regions one of the 200 last great places on Earth. Other State Nature Preserves within Metroparks Toledo system include the Audubon Islands State Nature Preserve in the Maumee River and the Blue Creek Limestone Glade. A portion of the Lou Campbell State Nature Preserve is also owned by Metroparks Toledo.

2025 ONAPA field trips almost 'in the books'

By Guy Denny

ONAPA kicked off its first membership field trip of the season on May 10 with a tour of **Lakeside Daisy State Nature Preserve** lead by nationally recognized Lakeside Daisy expert and ONAPA Vice President, Jennifer Windus. Jennifer brought participants up-to-date on the Lakeside Daisy National Recovery Plan, explored the alvar ecosystem with its rare plants, and explained the glacial geology of the Marblehead Peninsula. In the afternoon, participants explored the new addition to the nature preserve, the last remaining remnant of the original alvar on the Marblehead Peninsula that has not been mined. Preserve Manager Warren Dunegan assisted with the tour.

Robert Klips, Associate Professor Emeritus of The Ohio State University provided an outstanding session about the **Mosses and Lichens of Caesar Creek Gorge** on June 12. Dr. Klips provide a wealth of information about mosses and lichens during a classroom setting in the U. S. Corps of Engineer's visitor center, followed with a field tour identifying the various mosses and lichens of the Caesar Creek Gorge area. Everyone had a great firsthand experience, learning a lot about a challenging subject that Professor Klips made easy to understand.

Photo by Guy Denny

On July 10, we took a **Walk with Some Good Fronds**, led by extremely talented Naturalist Steve McKee who focused his field trip on the ferns of the woodlands of Malabar Farm State Park in Richland County. Participants had a very enjoyable time learning about the life cycle of ferns as they went on a great tour of the surrounding woodlands to see how to identify the wide diversity of ferns native to this region of Ohio. The weather was great and everyone had a terrific time with Steve answering all their questions about ferns and how to recognize one species from another in the field.

Photo by Jan Kennedy

As this newsletter went to print, there was still one field trip remaining: **Seed Collecting at Denny's Tallgrass Prairie**. The **Saturday, October 4** event starts at 10 a.m. This day is open to anyone who would like to collect prairie seeds for planting their own prairie gardens. Paper lunch bags, markers and garden clippers are recommended. Meet in Knox County at 6021 Mt. Gilead Road, Fredericktown. **No registration required.**

Watch for our Winter edition of the *ONAPA NEWS* for summaries of our remaining field trips.

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Hazelnuts

medicine, included using the green hazelnut burs as an ingredient with other plants including the inner bark of bur oak and butternut for making a black dye. Straight, young shoots were fashioned into arrows. The Iroquois mixed the nutmeat oil with bear grease and rubbed it on their bodies to repel mosquitoes. They also used the oil as a hair dressing either by itself or mixed with bear grease. The Ojibwa used the young twigs of hazelnut for making baskets and brooms. The also used stems with enlarged bases for drumming sticks.

I don't often encounter wild hazel that much anymore. They aren't especially rare — just not as common as they once were. Hazelnuts, wild plums, and bittersweet are no longer found in the area where I grew up. They are all gone now, replaced by a dense residential development with well-kept Kentucky bluegrass lawns along with other non-native landscape plantings. People living there now have no idea that such interesting native plants ever grew there. But I remember and think back with a smile every time I see filberts at the grocery store. If you have never had the opportunity to become acquainted with the American hazelnut, visit Bigelow Prairie Cemetery State Nature Preserve west of Plain City in Madison County. American Hazelnut can be seen growing along the wooden fence at the front of the cemetery.

Here's something to gobble about

By Tim Snyder
(Photos by Tom Fishburn)

If you haven't seen wild turkeys wandering your neck of the woods, you will eventually. The return of Meleagris gallopavo is another example of the successful "rewilding" of Ohio. Originally found in every county, they eventually succumbed to extensive hunting and the conversion of forest to cropland. By 1904 they were considered extirpated from the state.

The early twentieth century also coincided with the low point of woodland in Ohio. In 1788, forest covered 95% of the future state. By 1940, that had been reduced to 12%. More than trees had been lost. Soil had washed from denuded slopes to clog streams and rivers. Springs had dried up and animals that depended on dense growths of old-growth forest had vanished.

But for every action there is a reaction. As unprofitable farm lands were abandoned, especially in the rugged southeastern quadrant of the state, the abused woodland began to return. The results of a century of excessive use opened a lot of eyes, and efforts to protect and encourage the re-emerging forests began. By 1952, large enough tracts had developed to encourage the Division of Wildlife to attempt a reintroduction of wild turkey, one of the signature animals of the lost wilderness. Some 1400 turkeys reared on game farms were released in several locations. By the early 1960's, all of them had vanished.

Mulling over the reason for this disappointment, wildlife biologists surmised that their wild turkeys had not been wild enough. Game farm stock carried too many traits common to domestic turkeys. They simply did not have the ability to fend for themselves in the wild over the long run. What Ohio needed was real wild turkeys.

Fortunately, the wild version managed to survive in other states. Wild turkeys trapped in West Virginia, Missouri, Arkansas, Alabama, Kentucky, Texas and Florida were shipped to Ohio and released on wooded tracts containing at least 9000 acres. By 1960, this population had grown large enough to allow trapping and relocation projects within Ohio. The number of birds involved was surprisingly small. Only 142 "foreign" turkeys were brought into the state. By 1971, their increase allowed for the transfer of 255 birds, most of them coming from Raccoon, Tar Hollow and Hocking State Forests which were successful sites of early turkey establishment. By 1966, the population had grown large enough to permit a limited turkey hunting season—the first in 64 years.

By 1994, Ohio's turkey population, concentrated in the heavily-wooded hill country, was well-established. In that year, a few birds were transferred to a few sites in the more open western parts of the state. The animals quickly adapted to wooded and brushy stream corridors, prompting further stockings in the agricultural counties of northwestern Ohio. Now, wild turkey ranges across every county in the state. They have joined deer, beaver and Canada Goose in the elite fraternity of once-extirpated animals most likely to be seen in the wild in Ohio. Someday you may even see them in your backyard.

Stewardship crew works through a busy summer

By Jennifer Windus

The past four summer months have been busy for our crew of stewardship assistants and volunteers, working at 27 different sites! This was truly an amazing feat given some very hot and humid weather in June and July. There was a variety of habitat management accomplished, including woody species removal, Japanese stiltgrass control, butterweed and garlic mustard control, purple loosestrife and cattail control, and giant ragweed control. We also assisted with rare plant surveys for Lakeside daisy and Eastern prairie fringed orchids. We had a few new volunteers join us and are very pleased with our stewardship assistants, Annalora and Camryn.

We continue to work with several partners including the Killbuck Watershed Land Trust, Cedar Bog Association, The Nature Conservancy, Crawford County. Park District, Knox County. Park District, Greene County. Parks & Trails, Audubon Society, Beaver Creek Wetlands, and the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves. There is always plenty to do at each natural area, so feel free to join us, even for a few hours.

MAY-JUNE
Brinkhaven Barrens
Cedar Bog
Clifton Gorge
Fowler Woods
Johnson Woods
Lakeside daisy seed collection
Lakeside daisy surveys on Kelleys Island
Milford Center Prairie
Prairie fringed orchid surveys (8 sites)

JULY-AUGUST
Beck Fen
Brinkhaven Barrens
Cedar Bog
Daughmer Savanna
Honey Run Highlands Park
Jackson Bog
Kitty Todd Preserve
Milford Center Prairie
Myersville Fen
Travertine Fen
Warner-Perkins Preserve
Wolf Run Park
Zimmerman Prairie

Top: Crew at Daughmer Prairie Center, Stewardship Assistants Annalora Nguyen and Camryn Ford
Bottom, Myersville Fen group (*Photos by Jennifer Windus*)

Orange-faced sparrows add touch of color to autumn

Story and photos by John Watts

Sparrows are considered by many to be difficult to identify. These small brownish colored birds that dart in and out of vegetative cover rarely show themselves for good views unless perched to sing or at a winter feeder. To some degree, that is an accurate portrayal of many of the 25 species of sparrows that have been recorded in Ohio. With patience, most of our annually occurring sparrows are fairly attainable to find and observe. Two of the most sought-after sparrows requires a little more work. LeConte's and Nelson's Sparrows are often the last two sparrows for most Ohio birders' state lists. While records outside of the fall migration exist, late September through the first week of November is best time to find them. They are nicknamed "the orange-faced sparrows" as both show varying degrees of a buffy orange face pattern. This pattern aids their camouflage in the fall vegetation of weedy fields, wet pastures, and grassy wetland borders that they inhabit during fall migration. Beyond a small "seet-type sparrow call" they are silent as they pass through in much smaller numbers than other sparrows. Observations are typically of single or few individuals. In 1936, however, an invasion flight of LeConte's Sparrows into northwest Ohio produce an incredible 53 birds in one meadow and it was believed that several hundred were present. This type of movement for this species has never been repeated (Peterjohn, 2001).

Peterjohn (2001) says of the LeConte's Sparrow, "one of the most handsome of all the sparrows". LeConte's Sparrow, named after Dr. John Lawrence LeConte who was a fellow naturalist and friend of Audubon, is a very elusive grassland and wet meadow sparrow that is often not seen until flushed. Even when flushed, often near the observer's feet, it flutters a short distance just above the vegetation and then quickly drops back down into its thick cover. LeConte's Sparrows body plumage is a combination of soft, warm buffy browns and oranges, with a bright white clean belly. The face is a pale buffy orange with a gray face patch (actually ear coverts) just below the eye. The crown of the head shows a narrow white median stripe bordered by darker stripes, which make it noticeable in almost any view of the head. The nape (the upper part of the back) is pale silvery-gray with small rich brownish streaks that appear a dull purple at close range in good light. The body flanks and breast are a light buff color with fine black streaks. Overall, the pale color of a LeConte's is a very good descriptor as compared to the Nelson's Sparrow.

LeConte's Sparrows breed in a large area across the Canadian Prairie Provinces from east-central British Columbia and the southwestern Northwest Territories eastward through Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. The southern edge of this breeding range extends into North Dakota, northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the upper peninsula of Michigan. A disjunct breeding population occurs in northeastern Montana (Wright, 2019).

In contrast, the Nelson's Sparrow presents colors that are overall darker and more saturated than LeConte's, especially interior continent individuals (the ones most likely encountered in Ohio). While their facial patterns are similar, Nelson's will show a much darker orange facial and head pattern and darker head with a gray crown strip flanked by lateral black stripes. The nape of Nelson's is a darker gray and lacks the fine streaking of the paler LeConte's. While the belly is overall white, it tends not to be as bright and clean, it shows distinct streaking on only the flanks, and the breast is a much richer color of orange. While most of our individuals will show the darker patterns, Nelson's Sparrows are considered to have three distinct geographical breeding ranges each with pronounced plumage variations.

LeConte's Sparrow

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Nelson's Sparrow

Nelson's Sparrow was first collected along the Calumet River by Edward Nelson, a Chicago ornithologist in September 1874 who referred to them as "sharp-tailed finches." He sent one specimen to Joel Asaph Allen in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Upon examination of the bird, Allen felt it was different than the Sharp-tailed Sparrows of the eastern salt marshes and concluded it to be a race of the eastern species. Uncertainty regarding its accepted classification continued for decades as it was reclassified multiple times. Finally, in 1995 it was concluded that it was a separate species from the Saltmarsh Sparrows of the coastal northeast. Through the studies of Jon Greenlaw, it was concluded that the two species of sparrows were separated by glaciation and that each had evolved in isolation from each other. As what would become Nelson's ranged expanded eastward and the coastal species expanded northward they once again encountered each other along coastal Maine. Greenlaw's evidence suggested differences in song, morphology, and habitat and the absence of extensive interbreeding where their ranges overlapped. In 2009, the name Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was simplified to Nelson's Sparrow (Wright, 2019).

In Ohio, Nelson's Sparrow is considered rare but has been increasingly located along Lake Erie in recent years. In general, it arrives a week or two ahead of LeConte's but their presence in Ohio overlaps during the month of October where it is possible to see both in the same day if you are fortunate. As with LeConte's, observations are often of 1-2 individuals. A pronounced invasion of this species occurred in the Cincinnati Region in 1953; however, few details accompany this report. In 1964, on September 30 and October 1, 75 individuals were counted at the Winous Point Shooting Club with the belief that up to 200 birds may have been present. This type of invasion has never been reported in Ohio since that time (Peterjohn, 2001).

Both LeConte's and Nelson's Sparrow reports have increased in recent years; however, both remain rare in most of Ohio and accidental in some regions especially unglaciated Ohio. One record of a Nelson's Sparrow was photographed at Lake Logan, Hocking County, by Jen Allen on October 20, 2016 along the edge of a patch of cattails documents one of the few, if not only, confirmed records for the region. eBird reports that LeConte's Sparrows were annually observed in central Ohio at Battelle Darby Creek Metro Parks Prairie Restoration Area from 2013-2024 and numerous records in the Holmes County region, but most reports are from the northwestern half of Ohio. Nelson's has a similar report of observations on eBird. In addition to Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park in central Ohio, areas such as Headland Dunes State Nature Preserve, Mentor Marsh State Nature Preserve, and wildlife areas such as Big Island, Killbuck, and Killdeer Plains are excellent locations to search. Both of these species are a special treat to observe. When found the reward to see either of these "orange-faced fall visitors" is well worth the patience and effort.

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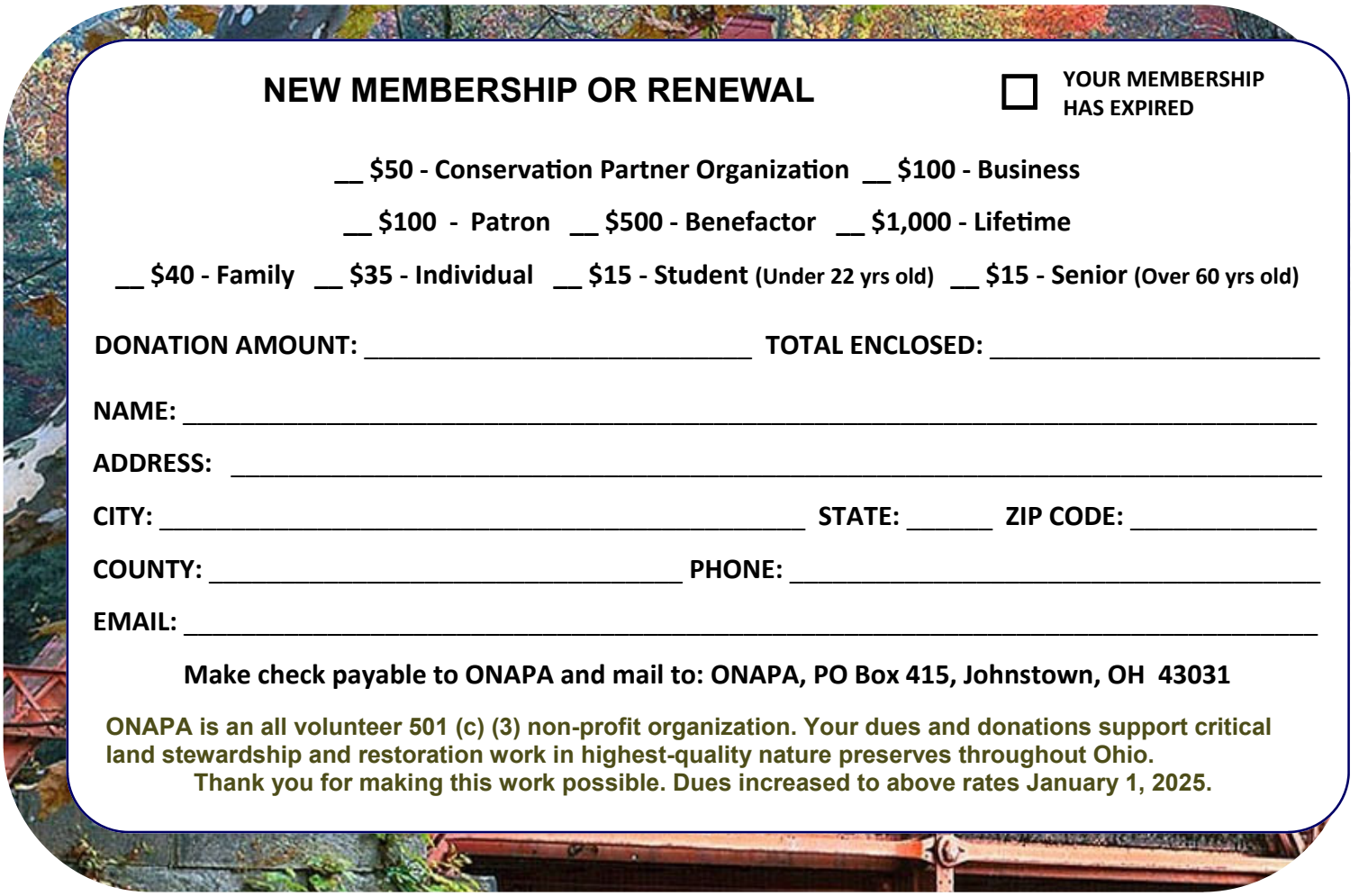

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Thank you for making this work possible. Dues increased to above rates January 1, 2025.