



ONAPA NEWS

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Ohio natural areas and preserves.

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VOLUME 5 ISSUE 3

SUMMER - 2018

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Poke Salad Annie

Readers of a certain age might remember the 1969 hit song written and performed by Tony Joe White, "Poke Salad Annie". It was a folk song about a notorious, tough as nails young woman living in the Deep South. Even alligators feared Poke Salad Annie! Poke is a traditional southern Appalachian food known as poke salad, poke salet or poke sallet. Salet and sallet are Deep South slang for salad. This is a cooked greens-like southern dish made from wild pokeweed. Ironically, all parts of the plant when



Pokeweed, *Phytolacca americana*

ingested are poisonous with toxicity increasing as the plant matures. The practice of gathering poke greens in spring began with Native American Indians and then passed on to early settlers. The only part of this plant that is edible are the newly emerging young leaves and shoots which must be collected generally when about 5 - 6 inches high before any traces of pink color appear on them. The young leaves and shoots, which are cooked and eaten as vegetable greens, are rich in vitamin C and iron. However, extreme caution must be exercised to avoid stems showing any sign of pink or red color on them. Color on the stems appears as the stems mature and toxicity increases. At this stage the stems and leaves become poisonous to eat. Both roots and seeds are poisonous at all stages of growth. Those who prepare poke sallet must wash and trim the tender young shoots to make sure the portion closest to the highly poisonous white fleshy taproot is removed. The stems are then boiled for 10 minutes and then the water is discarded and the stems are boiled again in a new pot of water and that water is then discarded a second time. After boiling a second time, the

water is changed again and the shoots are returned to the pot. A little salt, butter, or bacon drippings are added and the dish is simmered for one-half hour or until tender. At that point, the greens are removed and served like spinach or asparagus. Keep in mind that improperly prepared pokeweed is poisonous. You would be safer and better off simply to prepare spinach or asparagus without the poke greens. The word "poke" is Appalachian slang for a sack or bag. Pokeweed greens were typically collected in a poke, hence the common name.

Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) is a herbaceous perennial species native to the eastern United States from New England to Minnesota, south to Florida and Texas. The scientific name, *Phytolacca* comes from the Greek *pyton*, "a plant", and middle Latin *lacca*, "crimson-like", meaning "a crimson-like plant", probably a reference to its distinctive reddish stems and crimson juice of the berries. This robust plant occurs on a variety of sunny sites and can grow 4-8 feet tall. Woodland Indians used it both for food and medicine. Early explorers learned of its reputed virtues from the Indians and took the seeds back to Europe where it was grown as an ornamental garden plant. It since escaped cultivation and has become naturalized especially in southern Europe. Pokeweed was also introduced to Africa and Asia where it still is cultivated.

Blooming first appears in early summer. The flowers have 5 greenish-white petal-like sepals without true petals. The flowers are replaced by green berries, turning blackish purple when ripe. The cluster of ripe blackish

(Continued on page 3)

Alternatives to the Callery Pear Cultivars

Callery pear is visible in the spring as white flowering trees and one of the most invasive trees in natural areas now. Although the verdict is still out on the quantifiable effects that pears have upon the environment, these wild trees are noticeably spreading and we must give the public some reliable alternatives to pears. Callery pear is most obvious in the spring when its white blooms are prolific in urban areas, as well as along roadsides and in old fields. Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) was classified as invasive in 2013 by the Ohio Invasive Plants Council's Assessment Team. Results of the assessment are available through the OIPC website, www.oipc.info. We should be proactive to lessen the economic impact to the nurseries as well as the environmental impact on our native ecosystems. Presently ornamental pears represent 40% of all ornamental tree production for most Ohio nurseries. This is a huge income stream for the nurseries and a very critical financial crop to the success of most nurseries. In addition, Callery pear is now included on the Ohio Department of Agriculture's invasive plant list and can no longer be sold, propagated, or distributed after 2023 (reflecting a 5-year phase out period).



Callery Pear, *Pyrus calleryana*
Photo courtesy Theresa Culley

Below are some species/cultivars that may be considered as alternatives for Callery pear:

Nyssa sylvatica 'Green Gable', Green Gable

This is a selection made by Alex Neubauer of Hidden Hollow Nursery. It has the classic teardrop canopy of a pear and has incredible deep red fall color. The summer glossy green foliage, the fact that this is a native tree, and is an excellent nectar source for bees makes this one a favorite to offer to the public. A couple of other cultivars of *Nyssa* that could be considered are 'Wildfire' (bright red new growth) and 'Tupelo Tower', an Ohio selection by Bill Hendricks of Klyn Nurseries.

Amelanchier laevis 'Cumulus', 'Lustre', or 'SnowCloud', Serviceberry

Another native species with abundant white flowers in early spring followed by a blue fruit (excellent food source for wildlife) and brilliant fall colors of oranges and reds. This small tree is common in the industry and does have some planting issues, so site considerations will be more critical for *Amelanchier* than for some other trees.

Syringa reticulata 'Ivory Silk' and 'Ivory Tower', Japanese Tree Lilac

Not necessarily new to the industry and also a non-native species, this fine small tree has great summer foliage and large white flowers in July, when most other trees have little interest. Durability and urban tolerance should make this a consideration in the landscape.

Acer saccharum 'Barrett Cole', Apollo Dwarf Sugar Maple

A native sugar maple with a unique narrowness, dense branching and compact form make this dwarf and columnar sugar maple ideal as an alternate for pears. Dark green foliage withstands summer heat followed by fall colors of yellows and burnt oranges. Though the blooms are insignificant, the overall form and

shape make it an excellent choice for those landscapes with limited space.

These are just a few ideas - there are many more that could be recommended as alternates for the invasive Callery pear. To maintain a healthy industry and environment, we need to promote alternates just as passionately as we promote the idea of the invasiveness of pears within the industry.

The Ohio Invasive Plants Council (OIPC) has a new brochure, *Alternatives for Invasive Plants in Ohio: A Guide for Landscaping and Habitat Restoration*. The brochure addresses Callery pear and recommends serviceberries, black tupelo, and willow oak as alternatives. To request copies of this brochure, contact OIPC through their website at www.oipc.info.

~ David Listerman, Listerman & Associates, Inc.,
OIPC Board
~ Jennifer Windus, OIPC President
& ONAPA Vice-president

Thank You for Your Support! Newest Members & Donors

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Poke Salad Annie (cont'd)

-purple berries are typically held on 2 to 8 inch long, drooping red-stemmed racemes.

Another common name for pokeweed is "pigeonberry" suggesting that passenger pigeons may have relished feeding on pokeweed berries. Even today, these berries are relished by a number of bird species, especially robins, bluebirds, mourning doves, mockingbirds, gray catbirds, brown thrashers, and cedar waxwings. It has been

reported that birds have become intoxicated from eating fermented pokeweed berries. Even though the 12 tiny seeds contained within each berry are toxic, the fleshy pulp is not. The seeds pass right through a bird's digestive system without any ill effect on the bird. Actually, the tiny seeds must pass through the digestive systems of birds or small mammals before the seeds will germinate. Even at that, seeds may lie dormant in the ground for years and years until some disturbance exposes them to sunshine enough to release them. In woodlands, pokeweed is one of the first plants to make an appearance around a tree trunk after a tree has died or been blown over. It always makes me wonder if those seeds might have been placed there long ago by a passenger pigeon.

Pokeweed is one of several species Algonquin Indians referred to as puccoon which in their language means a plant used for paint or dye. The purple-black berries produce a purple-red juice which makes an excellent long-lasting dye or ink. Colonists used this juice in place of ink, which was difficult to come by in the American Wilderness, hence two other common names applied to this



Pokeweed Fruit

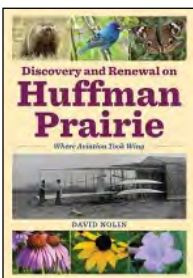
plants are "inkberry" and "pokeberry". During the Civil War, soldiers often wrote letters home using pokeberry ink. Even now, all these many years later, such letters preserved in museum collections are still legible. Pokeberry juice, less its poisonous tiny seeds, was also reportedly once used for coloring cake frosting, candy and wine.

The fleshy very poisonous roots of pokeweed which somewhat resemble the

roots of horseradish, were officially listed in the U.S. Pharmacopeia from 1820 to 1916 and are still occasionally dug in fall by ginseng diggers and sold to herb dealers. These roots contain an assortment of chemical compounds such as saponins, including the alkaloid pytolaccine, tannin and phytolaccic acid. Poisons contained within the roots cause nausea, vomiting and purging. Death is said to be caused by paralysis of the respiratory organs. Native American Indians reportedly used the powdered root as a poultice to treat cancer. The poisonous root was also made into a salve to sooth burns and sores as well as to treat hemorrhoids. American Indians also reportedly used tea brewed from the boiled berries to alleviate rheumatism, arthritis and dysentery. The dried leaves were used in treating various skin disorders. Early settlers reportedly used the juice to treat skin sores. While pokeweed has been subject to modern laboratory research, medical evidence that it has any beneficial effect on human health is lacking. Nevertheless, pokeweed is a familiar and fascinating member of the Ohio flora whose berries are relished by many species of birds. Watch for "Poke Salad Annie's" pokeweed the next time you are in the field. -Guy Denny, ONAPA President

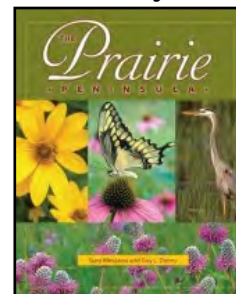
Two Newly Published Books You Should Have In Your Library

Discovery and Renewal on Huffman Prairie Where Aviation took Wing written by ONAPA member and outstanding naturalist David Nolin was just published by Kent State University Press. Huffman Prairie is not only home to Orville and Wilber Wright where they piloted their first flying machine for several short flights, it is also one of the finest original prairie remnants in Ohio. David Nolin's book is a must. This captivating volume is informative, enjoyable reading and lavishly illustrated with a wealth of photographs and drawings. Nolin does a masterful job of documenting the sequence of events, from both a natural and human perspective, that makes Huffman Prairie such a special site.



The Prairie Peninsula co-authored by Gary Meszaros and Guy Denny, and recently published by Kent State University Press. This book with its strikingly beautiful photographs by Gary Meszaros examines the many prairie types, floristic composition, and animals that are part of the tallgrass prairie of North America. The Prairie Peninsula stretches from

eastern Kansas, eastward to northwestern Indiana with outliers in Ohio. It lies between the short and mixed grass prairies of the west, and the eastern deciduous forest region and includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, southeastern Wisconsin, and Ohio. This too is a must for anyone who is fascinated by and wants to learn more about the tallgrass prairies of North America.



Stewardship in Action, Join Us in 2018!

For stewardship project details and to register to participate, visit www.onapa.org
Rain dates will also be posted on the website.

We also ask that you keep track of your volunteer time, including driving time to the site, and submit it online at <https://www.onapa.org/volunteer-hours.html>



ONAPA volunteers at Rhododendron Cove State Nature Preserve

Tuesday, June 5, 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. - Clifton Gorge SNP (understory woody species removal)

Saturday, June 23, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. - Daughmer Savanna SNP (teasel & other invasives removal)

Saturday, July 7, 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. - Jackson Bog SNP (woody species & purple loosestrife removal)

Tuesday, July 24, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. - Springville Marsh SNP (cattail & woody species removal in fen meadows)

Tuesday, August 21, 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. - Myersville Fen SNP (woody species removal in fen meadows)

Saturday, September 8, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. - Springfield/Gallagher Fen SNP (woody species removal in east fen)

Wednesday, September 19, 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. - Kent Bog SNP (woody species removal)

Wednesday, October 10, 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. - Gott Fen SNP (woody species removal)

Saturday, October 20, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. - Brinkhaven Oak Barrens (woody species removal)

Thursday, November 8, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. - Medway Prairie Fringed Orchid Site (woody species removal)

Wednesday, November 14, 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. - Karlo Fen SNP (woody species removal)



MEMBER FIELD TRIP TO EASTERN KANSAS:

Monday, June 11th - Friday, June 15th

Field trips to the National Tallgrass Prairie Preserve and Konza Prairie Biological Station

Details and registration at www.ONAPA.org/onapa-field-trips.html If you plan to join us on this trip don't delay in registering!

Join us for an ONAPA Summer Field Trip

ONAPA field trips will last from 2 to 3 hours or longer depending on interest. Bring a snack or a bag lunch to tide you over.

All trips require registration but we will be using Eventbrite to manage reservations for field trips that have a limited participation. On these trips, we ask that you please cancel your reservation if your plans change so that another ONAPA member can take your place.

Monday, June 11th through Friday June 15th: *Field trips to the National Tallgrass Prairie Preserve and Konza Prairie Biological Station*, eastern Kansas. Participants must register for additional information.

Saturday, July 21st, 10 a.m.: *Fungi of the Hocking Hills Region with a focus on edible species and how to prepare them*. Leader Mark Bailey, Ohio Mushroom Society. **Limited to the first 15 to sign up.** Meet at the overflow parking area at Cedar Falls State Park, Hocking County. If we have an absolute dry spell, we may have to reschedule.

Saturday, July 28th, 10 a.m.: *Tour of Guy Denny's Prairie*. **No participation limit.** Meet at Guy Denny's Prairie located at 6021 Mt. Gilead Road, Fredericktown, Ohio at 10:00 AM.

SAVE THE DATE for ONAPA'S Annual Meeting! This year our Annual Meeting will be held on **August 18th, 10 a.m. - 5.p.m.**, at Owens Community College, in the Veterans Hall in Perrysburg. This is conveniently located just off I-75 and will be easy access to a number of excellent field trip locations in NW Ohio in the afternoon. There will be 3 morning speakers, a business meeting and lunch, before the field trips. More information is coming soon on our website and registration will likely begin in early July. Mark the date and be sure to come!

Saturday, September 22nd, 10 a.m.: *Annual Prairie Seed Collecting Event at Denny's Tallgrass Prairie*. Meet at Guy Denny's residence, 6021 Mt. Gilead Road, Fredericktown, Ohio at 10:00 AM. **No participation limit.** This annual event is for those who want to collect Ohio native genotype prairie seeds to start or expand their prairie wildflower patches. Collect all the seeds you want, but please, no commercial collecting.

Richard E. Moseley Jr., Awarded the Glenn Thompson Scenic River Award

On February 28, 1968, Ohio became a pioneer in river preservation with the passage of the Scenic Rivers Act, the nation's first scenic rivers law and seven months prior to the passage of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act by Congress. In recognition of the 50th Anniversary of the Ohio Scenic Rivers Act, the Ohio Chapter of the Nature Conservancy and the Little Miami Conservancy, along with numerous other conservation organizations, including ONAPA, sponsored a special state legislative reception this past February 28th in the Statehouse Rotunda.



Eric Partee and Richard E. Moseley, Jr.

At the conclusion of this very special event, Richard E. Moseley, Jr. retired ODNr administrator and currently ONAPA's Secretary was awarded the very prestigious Glenn Thompson award for Dick's pioneering efforts in developing the Ohio's Scenic Rivers Program as the first administrator of the program. The late Glenn Thompson, publisher of the *Dayton Journal Herald*, was a major force behind the passage of the state's as well as federal scenic river laws. Presenting the award to Dick Moseley were former First Lady Hope Taft and Eric Partee, Executive Director of the Little Miami Conservancy.

Wild Black Cherry, *Prunus serotina*

Wild black cherry, *Prunus serotina*, is the largest and most widely distributed of the eight species of native cherries in Ohio. Mature trees may reach more than 80 feet in height. A wild black cherry in Licking County is nearly 100' tall. Another in Scioto County measures almost 53" around. The genus *Prunus* in the Rose Family contains more than 200 species on every continent except Antarctica. Many of these species are of considerable economic importance, such as peaches, almonds, plums and apricots, in addition to cherries.

Prunus serotina is the only member of the genus which is valuable as a timber tree. The mahogany-like wood fetches high prices on the international market and is prized for cabinetry and furniture. Though wild black cherry today is a minor woodland species, in pioneer times it was far more significant. On the Appalachian Plateau of northwestern Pennsylvania, for instance, it made up nearly 15% of the canopy in some mixed hardwood-conifer forests (E. L. Braun, *Deciduous Forests of Eastern North America*, 1950). Wild black cherry is common throughout Ohio in sun and semi shade in a variety of edge habitats, as well as open fields.

Wild black cherry ranges across North America from southern Canada to the Great Plains, south to Texas and northern Florida, as well as in the mountains of Mexico. These trees are the variety *serotina*, described in 1783 by the German botanist Jakob Ehrhart (1742-1795), a student of the famed Carl Linnaeus. At least four other varieties of wild black cherry occur in the southern and southwestern US and in Central and South America.

Most of our native cherries bloom before their leaves have fully expanded. In contrast, the wild black cherry flowers well after leaf emergence. The specific name "*serotina*" means "late", referring to the lateness of the flowering. The blooms are born in multi-flowered, elongate clusters called racemes. There are 12 to 60 or more flowers in each raceme of *Prunus serotina*.

The common chokecherry, *Prunus virginiana*, often is confused with wild black cherry since it also bears flowers in racemes. In addition, chokecherry occupies the same geographic range as *P. serotina* and grows in similar habitats. The racemes of chokecherry, however, contain fewer than 12 flowers. The shapes of the leaves of the two species also are different. The leaf blades of *P. serotina* are lanceolate, that is, widest in the middle and gradually tapered to each end. The blades of *P. virginiana* are obovate, distinctly widest above the middle, not symmetrically tapered.



Wild Black Cherry, *Prunus serotina*

Chokecherry usually is a shrub, not a tree. On rare occasions, however, it may reach 20'. Chokecherry tends to bloom slightly earlier than wild black cherry though there is some overlap in time.

The pin or fire cherry, *Prunus pensylvanica*, might be confused with *P. serotina*, but is a smaller tree, seldom reaching 40' in height. The pin cherry has flowers in flattened clusters of 5 to 7 blooms which appear before the leaves have fully emerged. The trees are handsome in spring with showy, white flowers against a stark background of bare twigs. Although pin cherry is common in Canada and the northern US, it's scarce in Ohio. This species is restricted to our northeastern counties with a few records from northwestern Ohio. Pin cherry usually grows in mixed hardwood-conifer forests and is a pioneer species after landslides, clear-cutting and other disturbances. The adjective "fire" is quite apt; the species flourishes after forest fires.

The fruits of all our cherries provide excellent food for wildlife. Birds famously feast on cherries and spread the seeds far and wide. That's how the native species, as well as the non-native ones, are dispersed. The cherry fruit botanically is a "drupe", that is, a single seed--the "stone"--surrounded by a hardened seed coat and embedded in a fleshy exterior. Drupes are common among the flowering plants and are found even in such unrelated species as avocados and olives.

On the negative side, however, wild black cherry is a leading cause of livestock poisoning in late summer and fall. The foliage contains amygdalin, a compound which is converted into hydrogen cyanide when eaten by animals. The cyanide is most potent in wilted leaves. When those leaves fall into a pasture, the livestock may eat them and be poisoned as a result. Any experienced reader of mystery novels knows that cyanide also can be extracted from the cherry stones with a bit of grinding and distilling. So leave those leaves and stones alone!

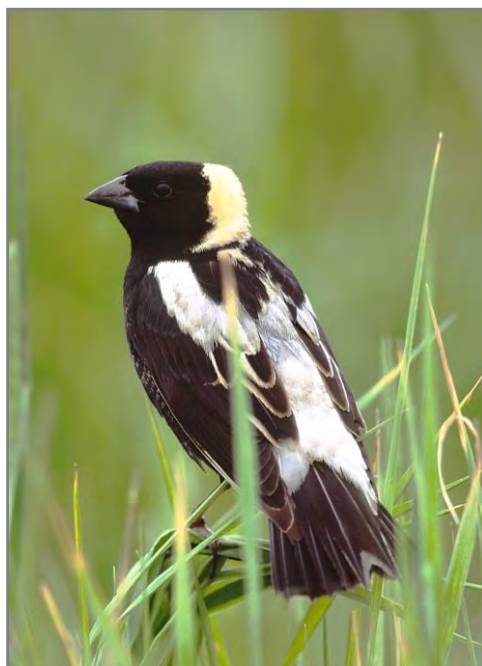
~ Allison Cusick,
Retired, ODNR Chief Botanist

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The Skunk Blackbird

I still vividly remember the excitement of watching my first bobolink. What a grand sight and thrill that was! This handsome male bird, just slightly smaller than a starling, was on territory in a pasture on the Chandler Estate Farm in Willoughby, Ohio. Like most grassland birds, bobolinks nest on the ground with nests concealed among the grasses. A male bobolink in full nuptial plumage is a sight to behold. During the brief period in spring devoted to staking out territories and wooing mates, male bobolinks are at their finest. Their courtship song is like no other. It is a loud and joyous metallic-like bubbly sound typically made while making characteristically slow hovering flights across meadows.



Bobolink, *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*
Photo by Gary Meszaros

At other times of the year, the male bobolink resembles a very large drab colored sparrow, the year-round coloration of the female. However, during the breeding season, he is transformed into a strikingly beautiful and distinctively marked songster. This member of the blackbird family is jet-black below and light colored above. He is unmistakable with white shoulder patches, white lower back, and a distinctive buffy yellow nape. In some circles he is known as the "skunk blackbird" because of his distinctive, skunk-like black and white markings. Other nicknames include Robert of Lincoln, ricebird, butter-bird, and white-winged blackbird.

Bobolinks are long distance Neotropical migrants. They may make a round-trip journey up to as many as 9,000 miles between their wintering grounds in southern Brazil and northern Argentina to their breeding grounds in the northern United States and southern Canada. Historically, they especially seem to do well in wet prairie grasslands such as those once occurring along the south shore of Western Lake Erie.

Bobolink numbers are plummeting in Ohio along with the loss of other grassland dependent species due to a loss of critical nesting habitat. At the time of early settlement in Ohio, it is estimated there was anywhere from 1,000 to 2,000 square miles of scattered tallgrass prairies occupying the Ohio landscape, including wet prairies. These were remnants from a post glacial warming period occurring four to six thousand years ago known as the Hypsithermal Interval when climate warming favored the eastward expansion of prairies over woodlands. This was a period in time when the tallgrass prairie ecosystem to our west was able to expand eastward into Ohio for thousands of years

until the climate became cooler and wetter allowing forest to recolonize the landscape, leaving only isolated prairie remnants behind in Ohio along with populations of grassland species including bobolinks.

European settlement and farming favored grassland birds. Bobolinks rapidly moved in from the west increasing their numbers as the forest was cleared for farming. Hayfields and pastures provided excellent nesting habitat for grassland nesting birds. Even up until WWII, small family farms which typically had a few draft horses and milking cows with ample pasture and/or hayfields to support them, provided excellent habitat for such species as bobolinks. Unfortunately, since the 1940's as family farms have been replaced by large scale row crop grain farms, there has been

a corresponding reduction in suitable nesting habitat for bobolinks as well as most other grassland dependent species. The long-term outlook for bobolinks in Ohio is not good except in areas dominated by Amish farms that still depend on draft horses, milking cows, and the open pastures needed to sustain such livestock. Today a sprawling elementary school complex occupies the field in which I saw my first bobolinks back in 1968. There is no evidence that the old pasture, let alone the bobolinks that nested in it, ever existed.

If you want to see bobolinks in Ohio, there is still an opportunity in the abandoned strip mine lands of southeastern Ohio which have been reclaimed with non-native grasses. Man-made grasslands such as The Wilds in Muskingum County, a conservation area managed as a satellite of the Columbus Zoo, is well worth visiting not only to see rare exotic wildlife being bred there on the open grasslands, but also to experience a variety of native grassland birds. Grassland birds have adopted these reclaimed strip mine lands in place of their traditional native grasslands in Ohio that have long ago been converted to croplands. There, at The Wilds, you and your children can still experience the thrill of seeing your first bobolinks. To lose the opportunity to discover and enjoy these dapper, joyful songsters with their bubbling "bob-o-link" song would truly be a regrettable loss.

~ Guy Denny, ONAPA President

12TH ANNUAL BOBOLINKS & BUTTERFLIES FESTIVAL
Saturday, June 23, 2018 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Byers Woods, 675 County Road 1754, Ashland, OH
Presented By: Greater Mohican Audubon Society,
www.gmasohio.org

Free, entertaining, educational and family-friendly. Guided walks, easy terrain, snacks available.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

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HAS EXPIRED

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SAVE THE DATE! Saturday, August 18th, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.: *ONAPA Annual Meeting* at Owens Community College, Veterans Hall in Perrysburg, Ohio. Registration will be required. Details coming soon at www.ONAPA.org.



Ohio Natural Areas & Preserves Association

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Protecting Ohio's Natural Legacy
www.onapa.org