

Land Preservation Makes a Lasting Impact!

by Matt Trokan

Since 1992, we have been working passionately to conserve forested hillsides along the Ohio River Valley. Thanks to the unwavering support of our members, we now protect over 400 acres of woods that is home to hundreds of plant and animal species, many of which are rare and threatened. This spring, the majestic Bald Eagles have been frequenting the Buckeye Trace and Kirby Nature Preserves!!! These eagles serve as a powerful reminder of the incredible achievements we can accomplish through our commitment to conservation and restoration.

Once on the brink of extinction, Bald Eagles have made a remarkable comeback, thanks to the successful ban on the harmful chemical DDT and concerted efforts to protect their natural habitats. These magnificent birds thrive in forested areas near water, where they can find abundant fish. Witnessing their return to the Corridor is not only a testament to the resilience of nature but also an inspiration for all of us to continue our vital work in preserving the beauty and diversity in our local forests.

In 2025, we strive to expand our wildlife corridor by an additional 17 acres of hardwood forest, creating a home for remarkable species like the Bald Eagle. This year, we added 4 acres of forest to Delshire Nature Preserve, a breathtaking space filled with vibrant bluebells, delicate trout lilies, and wild hyacinths, alongside ancient Burr Oak trees that have stood for well over two centuries. By protecting these woodlands, we also ensure year-round access and parking for visitors.

We also plan to grow the newly established Sisson Nature Preserve by 4.3 acres. Located just across the road from Saylor Park School, the area is frequented by wild turkeys and red-winged blackbirds. Expanding



Mark Rechtsteiner

Bald Eagle

the preserve will provide additional parking, enhance trail access, and allow us to post welcoming signage.

We also hope to protect 8.3 acres of forest in the Riverside community. We currently have over a dozen wooded properties along Hillside Avenue in Riverside, with a vision to unite these areas into a new Riverside Nature Preserve. This location offers breathtaking river views and a semi-mature hardwood forest that is home to diverse wildlife, including whitetail deer, wild turkeys, and red-tailed hawks. Last year, our members helped us secure 2.4 more acres of woods in Riverside with parking access! This year, we are determined to continue our efforts by protecting another 8.3 acres and hopefully realizing our vision. Who knows, maybe Bald Eagles will eventually come to call these areas home, too.

Playscape Update

By Mary Perkins



The Kirby Nature Preserve PlayScape's purpose is to provide a fun, educational, and immersive nature experience for young children. Our hope is to create a deep love and caring for nature and hopefully inspire a few future conservationists. Beyond that, we hope to nurture a lifetime love of hiking and observing nature as a delightful, very peaceful, and healing experience. The Nature Playscape at Kirby Nature Preserve, designed for young children, is not even done ... and yet these children are already enjoying, playing, creating, and having fun.



Staff Updates: Connecting Community and Conservation:

By Abigail Figart

My Time with Western Wildlife Corridor

Looking back on my time as the Marketing and Events Intern at Western Wildlife Corridor, I can honestly say it's been one of the most fulfilling and eye-opening experiences I've had. When I started, I knew I'd be helping promote events and sharing information with the public, but I had no idea just how much I would grow, learn, and connect with both people and nature along the way.



Abby Figart

Throughout my internship, I had the chance to be part of some amazing events that brought our community closer to the natural world. From early morning bird walks and inspiring art shows to cozy holiday gatherings and educational talks like Our Local Wildflowers, each event felt meaningful in its own way. I got to help organize and promote our Planting for Pollinators event, assist with membership meetings, work hands-on at habitat restoration events, and even be part of a bird banding session, which was such a unique experience.

One of the parts I really enjoyed during this internship was getting to promote our upcoming events. Things like the Flower-A-Thon, firefly hikes, and future habitat restoration days were so fun to create graphics for and share on social media. It felt great to be part of building excitement and encouraging people to get involved in protecting and appreciating local wildlife.

More than anything, this experience has taught me so much about community outreach, event planning, environmental education, and the importance of restoring our natural habitat. I've learned how to craft messages that resonate, how to connect with different audiences, and how to organize events that are both educational and enjoyable. I also gained a deeper appreciation for the

work that goes into preserving our natural spaces. Not just the physical work, but the communication and engagement that makes people care.

I'm so grateful for everything I've learned during my time with Western Wildlife Corridor. It's been a chance to grow personally and professionally, and I'm excited to take all this experience with me into future opportunities. Whether it's continuing in the world of environmental outreach or simply staying involved in local conservation efforts, I know this internship has shaped the path I want to follow.

Our Team is Growing!

We are excited to welcome our newest staff member, **Ash Conway**. As the Volunteer & Events Coordinator, Ash will be helping to organize fun and informative hikes, lectures, and volunteer opportunities with a focus on expanding our programming to meet the growing community demand.



Ash Conway

Kayla Ferdelman

Ash was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, and while always interested in the natural world, Ash's passion for nature exploration and education began after working as a camp counselor at a local nature preserve. Ash received a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies from the University of Cincinnati and a Master of Arts in Biology from Miami University in Oxford. Their graduate work focused on identifying barriers and solutions to outdoor access among marginalized communities. Ash is excited to bring their passion for community, accessibility, and conservation to the Western Wildlife Corridor!

2025 Flower-a-thon

Photos by Abby Figart



Summer Volunteer Events

Volunteer Hours Report

By Matt Taylor

The Western Wildlife Corridor has many dedicated volunteers who put in countless hours removing invasive plants, building trails, raising funds, organizing events, etc. For the last 5 years, we have kept track of volunteer time, and now we can examine all of that data. Thanks to everyone who contributed and reported volunteer hours!

Here are the hours for last 5 years:

Hours by:	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Individuals	4,933	4,219	4,266	4,867	4,391
AmeriCorps	0	0	0	0	2,000
Other Groups	35	123	186	320	509
TOTAL	4,968	4,342	4,452	5,187	6,900

Volunteers have been putting in about 5,000 hours/year. That's a lot of hours! And dedication. In 2024, volunteer hours jumped to nearly 7,000 because an AmeriCorps NCCC team contributed over 2,000 hours of service.

In 2025, we plan to continue to get more volunteer support from a variety of groups, including university students from UC, Miami, and Mount St. Joe, high school students from Elder, Summit Country Day, Oak Hills, and Taylor, companies such as P&G, Good Sam Hospital, INEOS, and Duke Energy, and other help from the boy scouts. If your school, business, or organization is looking for a service outing, please consider us for your next event!

We are fortunate to have many volunteers who have put in 100 hours of volunteer work for at least 1 of the past 5 years! Huge thank you to **Joyce Richter, Tom Malone, John Klein, Sally Anderson, Mary Perkins, Kathy McDonald, Walt McBeath, Roselyn Schloss, Debbie Lutkenhoff, Ted Ridder, Jeff Doering, Mark Rudemiller, Roger Auer, Davie Rudemiller, Jessee Smith, Mark Streicher, and Sarah Kent.** A handful of incredible individuals have put in at least 100 hours of volunteering for each of the past 5 years, a special thank you to **Molly Hunter, Jeff Ginter, Gary Rapien, and Matt Taylor!** That's commitment! But that's not all. Unbelievable but true, one volunteer, **Tim Sisson**, has put in nearly 1,000 hours a year for each of the last 5 years! Our volunteers are super-duper!

The volunteer hours are split 50-50 between "outdoor" work (habitat restoration, trail work, etc.) and "indoor" work (meetings, events, newsletter, fund raising, etc.). So whatever kind of contribution you want to make, you can do it at the Western Wildlife Corridor!

Volunteer Events

What's our habitat restoration all about? It's one of the most important things we do! If you've never done one of these before, we encourage you to join us for an event this summer, as it is a lot of fun.

Join our amazing group of volunteers at an upcoming habitat restoration event to make a difference at one of our neighborhood nature preserves!



Habitat Restoration:

Sisson Nature Preserve

May 10, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Kirby Nature Preserve

May 17, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Sisson Nature Preserve

May 31, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Sisson Nature Preserve

June 7, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Sisson Nature Preserve

June 14, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Kirby Nature Preserve

June 21, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Rapid Run Nature Preserve

July 19, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Shady Lane Nature Preserve

August 2, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Please RSVP and learn more online: <http://westernwildlifecorridor.org/calendar/>



Habitat Restoration

Fascinating Flying Squirrels

By John Klein

There seems to be no end to the variety of plants and animals found in the Corridor. In fact, the more you learn about each species, the more interesting they become. One of my longtime fascinations has been with flying squirrels.

For years now, I have been watching, feeding, and learning about our most common local squirrel. Yes, I too was surprised to learn that the flying squirrel is our most common squirrel. However, due to their nocturnal habits, most of us never get to see them. They are the most nocturnal of all the tree squirrels and the most arboreal of our native squirrels. They are rather slow and clumsy on the ground, but in the trees (where they spend almost all of their time) they are amazingly fast and agile! Being cavity nesters, they live in hollow trees and old woodpecker holes (and sometimes your attic), but readily utilize nest boxes with 1 1/2" entrance holes (like those used by bluebirds). It has been fun building various boxes and monitoring their use.

Flying squirrels are our oldest living line of modern squirrels. Their fossil records go back 30 million years! There are two species of flying squirrels in the U.S.- the northern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus*), with a total length of about 12 inches, and the southern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys volans*), which is about 9 inches long. We have the smaller southern species here.

Flying squirrels get their name from the way they soar between trees by stretching their legs to expand a furry flap of skin between their front and rear ankles called a patagium. They don't actually fly, but glide by forming a square kite with their body. It is amazing to see how well they can float on air! Because they are gliding, they always have to start from a higher position than where they land. They can quickly climb up a tree, glide down to the trunk of another tree and repeat that process over and over again until they reach their destination. The average glide is around 30 ft., but glides of up to 270 ft. have been observed! This ability to glide is unique among rodents. They have extra sensitive whiskers on their cheeks, chin, and ankles that allow them to find their way in total darkness, and they use scent glands in their cheeks to mark their routes. They also have very soft foot pads for landing silently on the trunk of a tree. As soon as they land, they race to the other side of the



Leah (last name unknown)

Flying Squirrel

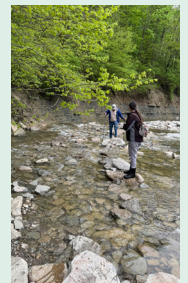
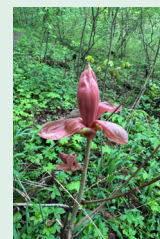
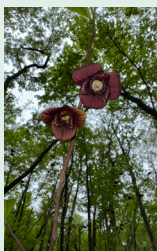
tree in case an owl or other predator has followed them. Their main predators are owls, domestic cats, raccoons, bobcats, weasels, and snakes.

Like us, they are omnivores and consume a wide variety of foods. During the spring and summer, their diet consists of insects, fruits, seeds, inner bark, leaf buds, fungi, and occasionally even bird eggs and young. During the fall and winter months, their diet changes mostly to nuts and other seeds. They are especially fond of oak and hickory forests.

The mother is very protective of her babies and will move her young several times during a season to alternate nests when disturbed. A mother was once seen moving her babies during a forest fire, getting singed in the process! The young can glide at 8 weeks of age and usually become independent in 4 months. Flying squirrels are just one of the many fascinating animals that call the Corridor home!

2025 Flower-a-thon

Photos by Abby Figart



Summer Education Events

Forest Bathing with Pam Lowe Cho

Bender Mountain, June 12 | 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Have you heard of Forest Bathing? Forest bathing or Shinrin-Yoku is an evidence-based practice from Japan that quiets the mind by immersing oneself in nature by gently re-awakening the five senses; sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. Forest Bathing is one of the most exciting and growing relaxation practices being used by wellness practitioners around the world to reduce stress and anxiety, boost the immune system, enhance creativity, and promote mindfulness.

During this 90-minute session, you'll learn nature therapy techniques that you can seamlessly integrate into your daily life, both at work and home. The slow, guided walk will be led by Pam Lowe Cho, ANFT-Certified Forest Therapy Guide and Executive Coach. Pam received a certification as a forest therapy guide through the ANFT (Association of Nature & Forest Therapy), and traveled to Japan in 2022 to study the practice there.



unknown

Bender

Blue Ghost Firefly Hike with Matthew Speights

Bender Mountain, June 27 | 8:15-11:00 p.m.

The blue ghost firefly (*Phausis reticulata*), often associated with the Great Smoky Mountains, can be found at Bender Mountain too. The old-growth and mature forests and thick, healthy leaf litter along the forest floor create the ideal home for this mysterious little creature. Their spooky name comes from their long-lasting flash, which can remain illuminated for up to one minute at a time and appear to cast a spotlight on the ground below.

Join Matthew Speights for a nighttime hike on Bender Mountain to see Blue Ghost and other firefly species like the Little Gray Firefly and Chinese Lantern Firefly. Hikers will need a red headlamp/flashlight to preserve their night vision, as well as sturdy shoes/boots and a hiking stick to hike steep trails in the dark (fireflies will not come out until approximately 10:00 p.m.). Due to space restraints, this event is for members only.



Matthew Speights

Firefly

Bird Banding with Adam McCosham

Kirby Nature Center, July 12 | 8:30-11:00 a.m.

Whether you are just learning to ID birds or want to learn more about nesting or migration, observing a bird banding session is incredibly informative. Join us for this interactive outdoor program for a chance to watch bander Adam McCosham in action, while getting a chance to see various bird species up close and personal. You will learn how to identify birds as well as see how bird banders age, weigh and sex the birds as well as how they affix the band.

Adam is currently a Conservation and Parks Manager with the Great Parks of Hamilton County. He has a degree in Natural Resource Management. Adams has spent the last six years training to band birds and loves passing on his knowledge of natural history to others. This event usually fills up, so don't forget to save your spot.



Tom Malone

Carolina Wren

Summer Education Events

Mothing with Jessee Smith and Sarah Kent

Kirby Nature Center July 26 | 8:30-10:00 p.m.

Did you know that Ohio is home to over 3,000 different species of moths? In fact, there are many more species of moths than butterflies. Join us for a fun family event where we will explore the fascinating nighttime world of moths. You'll learn about the various types of moths in our area, their behaviors to avoid predators, and how they find food and shelter.

Jessee J. Smith grew up in Colerain and graduated from Mount St. Joseph University, where she majored in natural science with a concentration in entomology and fine art with a focus on sculpture. Jessee has worked with the WWC for over eight years and particularly enjoys honeysuckle removal and habitat restoration.

Sarah Kent is the current Executive Director at Groundworks Ohio River Valley. She is the recipient of Cincinnati's 30 Under 30 award, the National Recreation and Park Association's 30 Under 30 award, and the National Association of Interpretation Outstanding New Interpreter Award (both national and regional). Sarah is also an artist (@keepitwildcreations), avid gardener, and forager, and enjoys Cincinnati's music and food scene.



Luna Moth

Matt Taylor



Great Horned Owl

Umkmoen

Hoot & Hike with Wild Birds Unlimited

Kirby Nature Center August 8 | 8-10 p.m.

Explore the nocturnal world of owls with Wild Birds Unlimited. Meet at Kirby Nature Center at 8:00 pm to learn about the different owls of southwest Ohio, including the Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, and Eastern Screech Owl. Then we will venture out for a night hike to listen and look for owls.

Bring a red headlamp or flashlight to keep your night vision intact (we'll have some to share!), and wear sturdy shoes or boots along with a hiking stick for our steep trails. Space for this hike is limited, so make sure to register on our website and secure your spot for a hootin' good time!

Archaeological Research Institute with Samy Norris

Kirby Nature Center August 22 | 7-8:30 p.m.

Join us for an engaging talk that explores how hands-on archaeology offers a unique opportunity to connect with the past while actively contributing to the stewardship of our land and cultural heritage. Learn how you can be part of preserving history through meaningful, on-the-ground experiences that bridge science, story, and sustainability. Perfect for anyone curious about archaeology, conservation, or making a real-world impact.

Samy Norris is the Director of Programming at Archaeological Research Institute. She has worked with program partners in Paraguay and Guyana to learn about different conservation methods, incorporating the voices of native and local people, and engaging the public with science.



Eastern Box Turtle

Abby Figart

Members and Supporter Acknowledgments

Members make everything we do possible. Thank you to everyone who renewed their membership this spring!

Membership Gifts

Black Walnut (\$1,000+):

Anonymous, Mary Jo & Fritz Bazeley, Donna Hartman, Mary & Christopher Perkins,
Mary Jo Wittrock, and Delane Bender Slack

Red Oak (\$500+):

Anonymous, David & Ally Nurre, Beth Ronan Ronald Rothhaas, Robert Temple,
Randy & Jan Johnson, John & Nancy Trokan, Brinker Animal Hospital, and Jim & DJ Dolle

Beech (\$200+):

Anonymous, Chuck Geraci, Mr. & Mrs. David Meyer, John Wiener, Robert & Jean Willis,
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Beth Warmuth, Ann Wegman, Cincinnati Wildflower Preservation Society, Wild Birds Unlimited,
Robben Florist & Gardens, and Wesley Wiemann



Help Us Raise \$150,000 to Preserve Our Forests!

We're excited to share that our goal for 2025 is to raise \$150,000 to protect 17 beautiful acres of forest, and we're already making great progress! You can help us make a difference by contributing to our Land Preservation Fund. As a special thank you, if you donate \$500 or more, we'll proudly display your name on the Tree of Honor at the Kirby Nature Center.

100% of your gift will be used to preserve land.
You can give to the General Land Preservation Fund or choose to give to a specific project:

- ☐ Delshire Nature Preserve 4.1 acres
- ☐ Sisson Nature Preserve 4.35 acres
- ☐ Riverside Preserve 8.3 acres
- ☐ General Land Preservation Fund



If you'd like to contribute, you can send checks to:
Western Wildlife Corridor,
P.O. Box 389077, Cincinnati, OH 45238,
or easily make a donation online.

We truly appreciate your support!

Name: _____

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Webmaster: Jeff Doering

Welcomers Administrator: Matt Taylor

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