

Savannah Creation at Kirby Nature Center

by Jack Stenger

When standing in the lawn outside the Kirby Nature Center, the surrounding hills make it feel like you're on the stage of a giant amphitheater. On the higher slopes there is a beautiful mature forest. On the terrace just above the Nature Center, Western Wildlife Corridor (WWC) established a prairie planting. On the intervening slopes and terraces is an area of dense, young trees with relatively low plant diversity. This area is the focus of a new WWC habitat restoration project that aims to transform the hillside into a savannah that connects the prairie and forested areas. The goal is to increase the habitat diversity on WWC property and emphasize an overlooked natural habitat: open woodland.

This area was historically cattle pasture and is composed of trees that could handle heavy grazing or rapidly colonize after the disturbance ceased, like black locust. White ash was a dominant species before emerald ash borer killed most of the trees; many canopy gaps exist where they once stood. The species typical of our mature forests – oaks, hickories, maples, beech – are relatively scarce in this area, suggesting that if it were to be left untouched, it would not regenerate into a mature forest.

Compared to other WWC property, the biodiversity is relatively low here. A century of sun and cattle grazing eradicated many shade-loving wildflowers that occur nearby. And wildflowers suited to more open habitats can't get enough sun to survive due to the dense canopy. The result is that much of this area is dominated by golden ragwort and white snakeroot.

This young forest also harbors low bird diversity. It is not old enough or structurally complex enough to provide the microhabitats required for most forest birds. Yet at the same time, it's not open enough for the species that favor shrubland or dense ground cover. Put in more specific terms, it's too short for a Scarlet Tanager, too tall for a White-eyed Vireo, and too claustrophobic for a bluebird. As it functions now, it is primarily home to low densities of common backyard birds like Northern Cardinal and Carolina Wren.

With this in mind, WWC will be transforming this underutilized natural area into a habitat that can accommodate an increased plant and animal biodiversity. The general plan for the young forest area is as follows: selectively remove some of the "weedier" species of trees to create an open-canopied forest. The oaks, elms, sycamores, and walnuts will remain, as will the larger trees. Once that is done more sunlight will penetrate the canopy layer, so that a shrub and herbaceous layer will have the opportunity to thrive. This will be encouraged by the planting of native shrubs and seeds and a blending with the existing prairie planting. The result will be an area with large canopy trees, dense thickets of native shrubs, and a lush herbaceous layer that contains both species associated with prairies and forest. This heterogeneous structure will increase the diversity of plants and by extension birds and other wildlife.

Visitors to Kirby Nature Preserve will notice the difference right away. The forest around the Nature Center will feel a less claustrophobic as there will be extended sight lines with the removal of trees. Expect to see more birds, especially those like Indigo Buntings, Orchard Orioles, White-eyed Vireos, Eastern Bluebirds, American Woodcock, Summer Tanagers, migrant warblers, and hopefully some more uncommon breeding species like Prairie Warblers and Blue-winged Warblers. And in the winter, the bird feeders should be a lot more active.



Location of Future Savannah

We Are Applying for Accreditation

Stakeholder Notification/Public Notice

The Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places forever. Western Wildlife Corridor (WWC) is pleased to announce that it is applying for accreditation in 2020. A public comment period is now open.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies and programs. WWC is dedicated to conducting business and conservation activities with ethical conduct, sound finances, responsible governance and enabling lasting stewardship. We seek accreditation so that our members and supporters will know they are standing behind a strong and honest organization.

The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how the Western Wildlife Corridor complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards see <http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices>.

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org, or email info@landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be faxed or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: (fax) 518-587-3183; (mail) 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Comments on Western Wildlife Corridor's application will be most useful by March 23, 2020.



Habitat Restoration plus:

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, as it doesn't require any special skills. No registration is necessary, just show up! If you have never done one of these, go to <http://westernwildlifecorridor.org/habitat-restoration/> and read the document *Habitat Restoration Frequently Asked Questions*.

Saturday, March 14, 9:30 am to 12:00pm

Habitat restoration at Kirby Nature Preserve. Leaders: Leaders: John 513.304.2310 and Ed 513.919.5186

Saturday, March 28, 9:30 am to 12:00pm

Habitat restoration and trail maintenance at Bender Mountain Nature Preserve. Leaders: Jeff 513.451.1737 and Bob 513.476.3274

Saturday, April 11, 9:30 am to 12:00pm

Habitat restoration at Whitetail Woods. Leaders: Tim 513.922.2104 and Gary R. 513.304-4303

For the locations and directions on where we will meet for the habitat restoration projects, please check the WWC calendar: <http://westernwildlifecorridor.org/calendar/>.

Mid-week hikes

Finally, did you know that Western Wildlife Corridor volunteers do a mid-week hike almost every week? This is where we might do some light habitat restoration or trail building. Email Tim Sisson at hikertim419@gmail.com to be added to the distribution list.

Upcoming Events: January – April 2020

by Various WWC Volunteers

We have a lot of fun events coming up. From hikes, speakers, animal encounters, and composting sessions, we hope you will be able to join us as we kick off the year 2020 strong. A brief description of the upcoming programs and events are found below. We are trying out a new registration form for events, so things may look a little different when you go to RSVP. For more information, registration, or to stay up to date check the WWC website calendar: <http://westernwildlifecorridor.org/calendar/> or find Western Wildlife Corridor on Facebook and follow us!



Free Speaker Event with Greg Torres

Tuesday, January 21; 7:00pm – 8:30pm

Kirby Nature Center

Join WWC at the Kirby Nature Center for a free talk by Greg Torres about Tree Reforestation and the Importance of Greenspace in Urban Areas. Greg, is a horticulturist at Civic Garden Center

of Greater Cincinnati.

To register for the event, go to: <https://forms.gle/epALNgk7Dkmjqs366>

Location: Kirby Nature Center, 2 Main Street, Addyston Ohio 45001

Have Questions? Contact Ariannah Lambert via email at ariannahlambert@outlook.com for more information.

Where: Drive west to the end of Delhi Avenue in Delhi Township, Ohio. There is also regular bus service via Queen City Metro, route 32.

Have Questions? Contact Tim at 513.607.2599, or John at 513.304.2310 for more information.



Annual Membership Meeting and Guest Speaker Brian Jorg

Tuesday, February 25; 6:30pm – 8:30pm

Kirby Nature Center

Join WWC at our free Annual Winter

Membership Meeting at Kirby Nature Center for updates on our organization and an exciting talk with our guest speaker Brian Jorg. Brian is the manager of the Native Plant Program for Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden. A lot of his work is at the Boywer Farm "EcOhio Wetlands" located in Lebanon, Ohio. Brian will be talking to us about how to landscape with wildlife in mind as a part of his Wildlife and Nature Series.

To register for the event, go to: <https://forms.gle/1e9LfSb2DhngWEKy5>

Location: 2 Main Street, Addyston Ohio 45001

Have Questions? Contact Jeff Ginter at (513) 237-3936 or Ariannah Lambert via email at ariannahlambert@outlook.com for more information.



Annual Winter Hike at Sisters' Hill Trail, Bender Mountain Preserve

Sunday, January 26, 2:00pm – 3:30 pm

Bender Mountain Preserve

Don't let the cold weather keep you inside! Join us for our free annual winter hike for some fresh air and exercise. Bender Mountain has over three miles of hiking trails, some with a fantastic view of the Ohio River. This is a lovely restored nature preserve supporting hundreds of plant and animal species. Sightings of the meanderings of wildlife in winter will probably be found, especially if there is snow on the ground! Dress for the weather and wear sturdy hiking boots.

How to get there: Meet at the barrier at the end of Delhi Pike near the Mount St. Joseph University.

Distance: The moderate hike is just under 2 miles long if you decide to go the whole way down and back. The strenuous hike could be over 3 miles. The first part of the hike will be on the portion of Delhi Pike that was closed years ago due to hill slippage, but still makes a nice hiking path (commonly called Sisters' Hill Trail). Those who prefer a moderate hike can turn around at the end of this part and return to the meeting place. Those interested in a strenuous hike can continue on a trail we've constructed up from Hillside Avenue to the top of Bender Mountain to reach old-growth forest and a nice view of the Ohio River.

Fundraising Event: Sharing the love for WWC at 13 Below Brewery

Friday, February 28th, 5:00pm to 10:00pm

13 Below Brewery

Celebrate the end of February by joining WWC for drinks and food at the 13 Below Brewery in Saylor Park. 13 Below Brewery has kindly offered to donate 10% of all beer sales from 5pm to 10pm for that evening! The brewery has a restaurant called the Incline Smoke Stack, if you would like to grab some food from their menu while we share the love for WWC. We hope to see you, your family and friends there! For more information about 13BelowBrewery go to their website at <https://www.13belowbrewery.com/welcome>

Location: 7391 Forbes Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45233.

(Upcoming Events – continued next page)

Upcoming Events: January – April 2020

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Animal Encounter with Great Parks

Saturday, March 21,
1:00pm – 2:00 pm
Kirby Nature Center
Do you love animals just as much as we do at WWC? Come join us at Kirby Nature Center for

a free close encounter with animals of the Great Parks of Hamilton County. We will get to see and hear about 3 ambassador animals that could live right in your back yard!

To register for this fun event, go to: <https://forms.gle/ZQmCLTcM3Z4EMQji9>

Location: 2 Main Street, Addyston Ohio 45001

Have Questions? Contact Ariannah Lambert via email at ariannahlambert@outlook.com for more information.

Hike At Buckeye Trace

Sunday, March 29; 2:00pm – 3:30pm
Buckeye Trace Preserve

Please join us for a spring hike at our Buckeye Trace Preserve on Sunday, March 29. This preserve is a gem in the making (quite well along actually). It has a well-maintained trail system (with trail signs), includes a spectacular view of the Ohio River valley and has an interesting historical story. There will be lots of spring wild flowers blooming by then.

How to get there: The driveway is on the east side of Hillside Avenue a hundred feet or so north of Rockaway. This is a little over a quarter mile north of where Rapid Run Road intersects with Hillside. Look for the WWC sign which is visible from the street. The portion of the driveway going up from the street is concrete, but the rest is gravel. There is a small gravel parking lot near the trailhead suitable for about 10 cars. If you don't want to drive on gravel, you can park on Rockaway close to Hillside and walk up. There is plenty of additional parking on Rockaway and other side streets.

Parking is limited, so register to join here: <https://forms.gle/3UEE8SnXyM3AHysTA>

Location: 6446 Hillside Avenue, Cincinnati OH, 45233

Have Questions? Contact Tim Sisson at 513.607.2599 for more information

Backyard Composting Seminar with HCRSWD

Tuesday, March 31, 6:30pm – 8:00 pm
Kirby Nature Center

Composting your yard and food waste is a great way to divert waste from the landfill and to make your own

fertilizer for your yard. However, we all know starting your own compost pile can be intimidating or you may have a few questions about the whole process. Join WWC at Kirby Nature Center for a seminar by Hamilton County Recycling and Waste District, where they will teach us all about backyard composting! This seminar is free and each family will be given one free kitchen collector to help you on your way. Register now by calling (513) 946-7746 or emailing: angela.river@hamilton-co.org Angela Rivera, the Outreach Specialist at HCRSWD.

Join WWC and WildOnes for a Hike

Sunday, April 5 (*times to be determined*)

Bender Mountain Preserve

Reserve the date on your calendar and follow us on Facebook to stay tuned for more details!



Sixteenth Annual Flower-a-thon and Native Plant Sale

Saturday, April 25, 6:30pm – 8:00 pm

Kirby Nature Center and Bender Mountain Preserve

You won't want to miss the biggest event of the year! Come join us at the 16th Annual Flower-a-thon where

you will be going on a guided journey in search of vibrant wildflowers throughout the majestic Western Wildlife Corridor. As you experience the awe of the beautiful forested hillsides of the Ohio River Valley, you can rest assured to spot uncommon flowers like the fern-leaf phacelia, drooping trillium, blue-eyed Mary, and perhaps the federally endangered running buffalo clover or even the green dragon.

Price: For \$20 you can spend the whole day in nature while learning, exploring, socializing, and eating! Unable to come for the whole day? You can sign up for whichever part of the day you prefer when you register.

Plus, this year you will have an opportunity to buy native plants to meet your gardening goals. Whether you hope to plant a rain garden, pollinator friendly garden, or to find beautiful plants native to this area, you will find everything you need at our Native Plant Sale at Kirby Nature Preserve. More details will be coming soon! Stay Tuned for Registration Details!

Questions: Are you curious about the Flower-a-thon and want more information? Contact Tim Sisson at 513.922.2104. Interested in knowing more about the native plant sale or how to get involved? Contact Richard Stoll at 513.377-3213.

THE BARRED OWL

Sally Sisson Anderson - Artist in Residence

The Barred Owl is a true native of eastern North America. It is known as the Northern Barred Owl or the Hoot Owl. Adults are large and are brown or grey with bold streaks on the chest.

The rich baritone of the barred owl can be heard at the Bender Mountain preserve, and also in the Buckeye trace preserve of Western Wildlife Corridor. The usual call is a series of seven accented hoots ending in a "oo-aw" with a downward tone at the end. It sounds like "Who cooks for you, who cooks for you all", and it can be noisy. A pair of owls will sometimes call back and forth including clucks and clicks. While calls are most often made at night, they do call during the evening and day time as well.

The bird is about sixteen to twenty five inches long with a thirty eight to forty-nine inch wing span. The weight of the owl can be one to two and a half pounds. It has a light face with rings around the eyes, a yellow beak and brown eyes. It is the only owl in the United States with brown eyes. Its upper parts are mottled grey-brown, and its underparts are light colored. The belly and chest are barred vertically. Its legs are covered with feathers, making it a bird well suited for winter. The head is round with no ear tufts.

The barred owl's nest is often a cavity in a hollow tree made by a pileated woodpecker or a nest used by red-shouldered hawk, a Cooper's hawk, or a crow, or squirrels. The nest may be reused as barred owls do not migrate. The female lays two or three white eggs. Incubation is all done by the female while the male feeds her. The female will remain with the young much of the time at first while the male hunts and feeds the female and the chicks. The first flight of the young is about six weeks. The barred owl has been known to live up to 24 years in the wild, and about 23 years in captivity.

The principal prey of this owl are meadow voles, mice, and shrews. Other mammals preyed upon by the owl include rats, squirrels, rabbits, bats, moles, mink, weasels, and opossums. Birds taken can be woodpeckers, grouse, quail, jays, doves, and pigeons. An owl can sometimes go in the water

to take fish, turtles, frogs, and crayfish, and will eat snakes, lizards, salamanders, slugs, and other insects. The barred owl hunts by watching from a high perch at night or by flying through the woods and swooping down on the prey. These owls have incredibly large eyes that can take in as much as light as possible, allowing for better night vision. A barred owl can sometimes be seen hunting before dark or on a dark cloudy day. This happens during nesting season when the owl is hunting for the female and chicks. However this species still hunts most near dawn or dusk. Studies in the northern U.S. have found barred owls breeding in plots of old growth forest. The main competitor of the barred owl is the great-horned owl. The barred owl is a little smaller, and a little less aggressive. Competition with the great-horned owl may keep the barred owl out of more open woods.



Membership Donations – Thank You!



Black Walnut Tree of Honor
Western Wildlife Corridor thanks the following individuals for their support of \$1,000 or more:

Liz Maxwell
Walt and Susan McBeath
Mark and Julie Rudemiller
Midwest Native Plant Society
Tim Sisson

Red Oak Tree of Honor
Western Wildlife Corridor thanks the following individuals for their support of \$500 to \$999:

Jim and Kim Neil
David and Ally Nurre
Don and June Reynolds
Marie Salem
Ann Schlinkert
Jim Scott and Donna Hartman

Beech Tree Steward Recognition

Western Wildlife Corridor thanks the following individuals for their support of \$200 to \$499:

Mary Jo and Fritz Bazeley
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Stuart and Margaret Rhein Golder
Jim Scott and Donna Hartman
Mary Elizabeth Huey/ Dan Hadley
Ed and Judy Krautter
Victor Lassandro III
Margaret Possert
Gary and Norma Rapien
Roselyn and Stuart Schloss
Richard and Jennifer Stoll
Bob Streicher
Larry and Jan Tepe
Robert and Pam Thomas



Snow at Kirby

Tim Sisson

Paw Paw Steward Recognition

Western Wildlife Corridor thanks the following individuals for their support of \$100 to \$199:

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Thank you for helping Western Wildlife Corridor protect the scenic beauty and natural resources of the Ohio River Valley!



Western Wildlife Corridor 2019–2020 Membership

All donations \$100 or more will receive a special recognition in *The Steward* newsletter. \$500 or more will be prominently displayed on the Tree of Honor located in the Kirby House Great Room — A Lasting Memorial!

TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION

- \$25 Individual Hiker
- \$35 Family Pathfinders
- \$55 Organization Trailblazer
- \$75 Mountain Climber

WWC STEWARD RECOGNITION

- \$100 Paw Paw
- \$200 Beech
- \$300 Sycamore
- \$400 Sugar Maple

TREE OF HONOR

- \$500 Red Oak
- \$1,000 and up Black Walnut

Enclosed is my tax deductible donation: New Member Renewal

Add My Additional Donation for Land Acquisition: \$ _____

Total charges to be made to my account: \$ _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Check enclosed (*make payable to Western Wildlife Corridor*)

Visa/Mastercard Number: _____

Name on Card: _____

Expiration Date: ____ / ____ Zip ____ CSV ____ \$ ____

Volunteer! May we contact you with volunteer opportunities? YES

Donate online with at www.westernwildlifecorridor.org

Mail to Western Wildlife Corridor, P.O. Box 389077, Cincinnati, OH 45238-9077

Thank you for supporting the Western Wildlife Corridor's mission to preserve the scenic beauty and natural resources of the Ohio River Valley!

WWC is an IRS certified 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

WWC Gained Two New Properties in 2019

Our Corridor grew by about 12 acres this year thanks to the generous donations from Timberchase and Ernie and Jeanne Ciambarella. The Ciambarella's have been members since 2017 and we couldn't be more grateful that they decided to donate their land to us! Donating your property to Western Wildlife Corridor is one of the best ways to ensure that it will be protected forever.



Ernie and Jeanna Ciambarella



Volunteers putting the Eagle Scout Bridge back into place on Bender Mountain after a winter storm.



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Tom Malone



Tom Malone

Great Fun was had by all at our Annual Holiday Party!

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