

The Joy Nature Brings

by Shayla Jennings

Amidst the spike in COVID-19 cases, there is no better time than now to experience the natural joys that nature can bring. There are so many beautiful places to visit, just a few miles from your driveway. Luckily, the Western Wildlife Corridor is easily accessible and is here to guide you in the right direction. Sister Joyce Richter, a lifelong nature lover, is on the board of trustees for the WWC. On November 17, 2020, Joyce gave a presentation on "The Natural Wonders of the Bender Mountain Nature Preserve." Attending her presentation inspired me to share what I learned. Conveniently, this preserve is located just minutes from where she lives. The preserve offers a wide range of fun, ranging from easy trails to more rigorous ones that will provide a workout for every skill level. Not only does this preserve give an opportunity

for outdoor physical activity, but it also gives you a chance to repair your mental health, which is greatly needed with the stress that COVID-19 brings. Moreover, Bender Mountain exhibits a variety of educational opportunities as well. From vascular plants to mushrooms, from native species to invasive species, anyone can find an interest that intrigues their mind.



Bender Mountain

Bender Mountain consists of 130 wooded acres (12.7 acres owned by Western Wildlife Corridor, 42.4 owned by Delhi Township and 74.5 owned by the Sisters of Charity). Throughout the preserve, there are many vascular plants, which includes trees and wildflowers.

However, among these wonderful plants, there are also many invasive species like honeysuckle. After the removal of a lot of the invasive honeysuckle, the preserve saw a resurgence of 431 native plants! The preserve also has an abundance of wildlife throughout the trails. Some animals you may come across are deer,



Snow and Ice — Beekley



Anna Moth — Bender



Chickadee — Kirby

The Joy Nature Brings — continued on page 2

The Joy Nature Brings — *continued from page 1*

turtles, butterflies, insects, and finally snakes. Of the snakes, black rat snakes are commonly seen. While they may seem intimidating, these snakes play an essential role by keeping destructive pests, like mice and rats, to a minimum. Additionally, mushrooms are found all over the preserve. Who doesn't like a fungus? While some of these mushrooms are edible, it is important not to take anything from the preserve. You can take pics, but don't pick!

Lastly, the Western Wildlife Corridor serves to protect, restore, and preserve natural habitats by providing education to foster connections with nature. Appropriately, WWC has provided a QR code that is present in multiple areas of Bender Mountain that provides a map. There is also another QR code used for donations, which would be greatly appreciated. Furthermore, a notable source to learn more about the plant and animal kingdoms that are present around Bender Mountain is the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. ODNR gives access to free field guides that will teach you

about plants and animals, which is great for kids! To conclude, "Just get out and enjoy nature; it does something for the soul," a quote from Joyce Richter.

This article was written by Shayla Jennings, a junior at Hanover College. Shayla has a passion for the environment and plans a career in Environmental Law. If you would like more information about the Western Wildlife Corridor please visit our website at www.Westernwildlifecorridor.org and consider becoming member or making a donation.



Woodpecker — Kirby

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, but please contact a project leader to make sure it hasn't been cancelled. For more information, please go to <http://westernwildlifecorridor.org/habitat-restoration/> and read the document *Habitat Restoration Frequently Asked Questions*.

Saturday, March 13, 9:30 am to 12:00pm

Habitat restoration at Kirby Nature Preserve. Leaders: John 513.304.2310 and Matt 513.604.6728

Saturday, March 27, 9:30 am to 12:00pm

Habitat restoration at Bender Mountain. Leaders: Jeff 513.451.1737 and Ed 513.919.5186

Saturday, April 10, 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

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

Birds at Risk with Ron Canterbury

Tuesday, January 19; 7:00pm – 8:00pm
Zoom Event

This talk will include information on current issues with birds, what we can do to help, and will highlight Ron's research on birds and invasive plants species.

Ron Canterbury is the Ornithologist and Academic Director in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Cincinnati (UC).

Cost: Free, but you will need to register as it is an online event.

Registration: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/birds-at-risk-with-ron-canterbury-tickets-135396836583>

Cicadas with Dr. Gene Kritsky

Tuesday, February 23, 7:00pm – 8:30pm
Zoom Event

The periodical cicada Brood X was first recorded in 1715 and has been returning once every 17 years since. It will next appear in May to June 2021 right here in Cincinnati. This presentation will explore what to expect with the return of Brood X, how Brood X's emergences have contributed to our understanding of cicada biology, and how you can help map out the emergence.

Dr. Gene Kritsky is Professor of Biology and Dean of the School of Behavioral and Natural Sciences at Mount St. Joseph University.

Registration details will be coming out soon; keep an eye on our social media or website.

Online Animal Encounter with Great Parks of Hamilton County

Saturday, March 14, 1:00pm – 2:00pm
Zoom Event

Do you love animals just as much as we do at WWC? Join us online for a free close encounter with animals of the Great Parks of Hamilton County. We will get to see and hear about the ambassador animals that could live right in your back yard!

Registration details will be coming out soon; keep an eye on our social media or website.

Thanks to Our Awesome Volunteers Over the Years!



THE NORTHERN CARDINAL

Sally Sisson Anderson - Artist in Residence, Western Wildlife Corridor

One of our most popular birds is the cardinal; it is the official state bird of seven states: Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, and Indiana. A pair of cardinals has been nesting in the honeysuckle arbor over our patio this past summer. They raised three chicks. Over the years many cardinals have been raised in our area. Both the male and female sing. Spring and Summer ring with their birdsongs. In Fall, the calls taper off some, though you may still hear them on and off.

The cardinal is numerous across the eastern United States, from Main to Minnesota to Ohio to Texas and all the states in between; then they extend south through Mexico, to Guatemala and Belize. The common name refers to the cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church, who wear distinctive red robes and caps. Only the summer tanager rivals the bright red of the male cardinal, but lacks the red crest that the cardinal raises at will. The stout coral bill and the black mask completes his outfit. The female has subdued plumage of olive, rose, and brown with soft pink underparts.

We rarely see the cardinal without his mate at his side. They remain together throughout the year. In early winter the bond may be relaxed a bit. I often see one or the other at the birdbath, drinking and bathing.

The diet of the cardinal consists mainly of weed seeds, grains and fruits. It is a ground feeder, and finds food while hopping along the ground. It will consume all kinds of insects like centipedes, spiders, flies, butterflies, and moths. It feeds its young almost entirely on insects. Other common foods of adult cardinals include oats, sunflower seeds, and blossoms of the elm trees. They will drink the sap of maple trees from holes made by sapsuckers. Putting sunflower seeds and safflower seeds in your feeder will attract the cardinals to your feeding station. Using only sunflower seeds will get rid of nuisance birds like starlings. The natural habitat of cardinals is woodlands, gardens, shrubbery, and wetlands. In the Western Wildlife Corridor the cardinals are found throughout, but especially at the Kirby Nature Center.

In early Spring, the cardinals show renewed

interest in singing and feeding together. They will often perch in the tops of tall trees singing over and over. The countryside rings with their music. During courtship the male will often collect food and bring it to the female. Sometimes he also brings nesting material to her. The female does most of the nest building. She weaves a deep cup of bark strips, rootlets, and grass, then lines it with fine grass and hair. The nest typically takes three to nine days to build. The finished product is about four inches across, and two to three inches deep. She usually builds it in a well-concealed spot in dense shrubbery or in a low tree nine feet off the ground. The male feeds

her while she incubates the eggs. The eggs are grayish or greenish white with blotches of pale gray to brown. Two to five eggs are laid in a clutch. Incubation takes 11 to 13 days. Male and female share the feeding of the chicks, feeding them grasshoppers, grubs,

beetles, caterpillars, and other insects. The young fledge in 7 to 13 days after hatching. I have seen a young female following her mother several days after fledging. When out of the nest, the fledglings wear plumage browner and duller than their mother's garb, but soon their underparts turn redder, and the crests of the young males become more crimson. By Fall, the youngsters have molted and they look just their parents.

The common name "Cardinal" refers to the cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church, who wear distinctive red robes and caps



The Northern Cardinal – continued on page 7



Membership Donations – Thank You!

Black Walnut Tree of Honor

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

Tim Sisson

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

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Nuthatch

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Special Thanks

Western Wildlife Corridor would like to give special thanks to Stephanie Sepate for the Memorial of John McCabe, and to Jennifer Brown for the Memorial of Bruce Jones.



Western Wildlife Corridor 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: \$ _____

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

Visa/Mastercard Number: _____

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Volunteer! May we contact you with volunteer opportunities? YES

Donate online 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

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For more information check out our website at www.westernwildlifecorridor.org or email staff@westernwildlifecorridor.org



Tim Sisson

Playscape Update



Joel Miller built this display case for the Kirby Nature Center. Mary Perkins donated the materials for this project.

Saying Goodbye

As I prepare for the next chapter in my life, I want to take a moment to thank you for the fond memories and opportunity to work with you all. I am proud to have worked with an organization whose members and volunteers put a great deal of effort into caring for nature. You all have taught me so much, and I am grateful for everything I will be taking with me from this organization. I hope all of you stay safe and healthy.

Don't be a stranger.

Warm Regards,

Ariannah Lambert

The Northern Cardinal — *continued from page 4*

The cardinal is a territorial song bird. The male sings a loud whistle from a top of a tree to defend his territory. He will chase other males. The cardinal learns its songs, and as a result the songs may vary regionally. Both sexes sing clear, whistled song patterns that they sing over and over. Some common phrases are “purdy, purdy, purdy” or “whoit, whoit, whoit, cheer, cheer, cheer”.

The cardinal was once prized as a pet, but its sale as a caged bird was banned in the U.S. by the migratory bird treaty act of 1918. The expansion of people and their back yards over the last two centuries has been good for cardinals. To encourage cardinals in your yard, leave undergrowth in corners and around the edges, and you may have more cardinals nesting nearby.

Cardinals have a lot of enemies: hawks, shrikes and owls, like the barred owl, long eared owls, and screech owls. Predators of their eggs include snakes, blue jays, crows, gray squirrels, chipmunks and cats.

The oldest documented wild cardinal lived to 15 years and nine months. Twenty eight years was achieved by a captive bird. Survival rates for adult cardinals have been estimated at 65%, but there is a high mortality rate for juveniles. Your pair of cardinals may live several years. Help them out by feeding them sunflower seeds.



Male Northern Cardinal — Kirby

Tom Malone



PO Box 389077
Cincinnati, Ohio 45238-9077

513 921 WILD (9453)

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