

Western Wildlife Corridor Announces Its Largest Property Acquisition in History

by *Tim Sisson*

It is with great pleasure and profound gratitude that I tell you about the donation by the Sisters of Charity of their properties on Bender Mountain to Western Wildlife Corridor - a donation that will more than double the size of the Bender Mountain Nature preserve.

When I moved to Delhi almost 40 years ago, several people who knew I enjoyed hiking told me I had to check out the ridge between Bender Road and Hillside Avenue. They were right; the ridge was covered with magnificent mature forest, was full of an amazing variety of wild flowers, and had spectacular views of the Ohio River Valley.

Soon after I joined Western Wildlife Corridor in 2001, we conducted a study to determine the properties in our corridor that we should focus on for protection. The ones on this ridge stood out as some of the most exceptional in the entire corridor. We contacted the owners and were able to create a partnership between two of them and Great Parks of Hamilton County. This resulted in the purchase of their properties, with an area of 42 acres, by Great Parks. Great Parks then selected Western Wildlife Corridor to be stewards of the properties. Great Parks subsequently transferred the properties to Delhi

Township (in 2008) with Western Wildlife Corridor continuing as stewards.

As soon as the land was protected by Great Parks, volunteers for Western Wildlife Corridor began removing alien invasive plants from the properties and the wildflowers surged back. The forest that we knew all along was a hidden gem began to really shine and sparkle.



Hikers at Bender Mountain Nature Preserve

Trails were developed on the properties and Western Wildlife Corridor held many events there, including our Flower-a-Thon. During these events, some hikers were heard to exclaim “this is just like climbing a mountain” as they climbed to the top of the ridge. Well, I heard their exclamations, and soon I began to use the name “Bender Mountain” for the preserve. Others realized that this name fit very well, so that now it has become the name we all use – Bender Mountain Nature Preserve.

We didn’t lose sight of our goal to preserve the entire ridge. In 2014, we were able to complete a deal with the owner of the properties at the end of the ridge so that we could buy them. The 13 acres that we protected here increased the size of the preserve to 55 acres.

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Bender Mountain became one of our brightest crown jewels, a destination for those who love the magnificent forests of our region. It was, to quote Denis Conover, Biology Professor at the University of Cincinnati, "The best place to see spring wildflowers in Hamilton County."

Now, fast forwarding to this year, the Sisters of Charity have very generously agreed to donate the rest of the ridge, 75 acres, to Western Wildlife Corridor. Our dream that began so many years ago will now become a reality. All of Bender Mountain, 130 acres, will be protected as a nature preserve — preserved forever as a refuge for plants and animals and as a resource for people to visit for education, hiking, birdwatching, and overall enjoyment. Western Wildlife Corridor will manage the preserve; we will build and maintain trails and will continue to remove invasive alien plant species.

Thank you very, very much, Sisters of Charity, for your wonderful gift that will now protect as a nature preserve what is truly one of the most important natural areas in our region.



Drooping Trillium – Bender Mountain Nature Preserve

Tim Sisson



Yellow Troutlily - Bender Mountain Nature Preserve

Tim Sisson



Zig Zag Spiderwort - Bender Mountain Nature Preserve

Tim Sisson



Pink Rue Anemone - Bender Mountain Nature Preserve

Tim Sisson

Upcoming Events

Fall Foliage Fest Hike and Art Show

Saturday, October 21

Kirby Nature Center and Preserve

Nature Hike at Kirby Nature Preserve

Saturday, October 21, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Leader Tim Sisson

Join Tim on Saturday October 22 for a day of hiking at the Kirby Nature Preserve. Enjoy the trails, and learn to identify the trees and wildflowers of Western Wildlife Corridor and learn how we are managing our forest. Meet at Kirby Nature Preserve, 2 East Main Street in Addyston, Ohio. Cost: Free, no registration is required.

Art Show at Kirby Nature Center

Saturday, October 21, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Exhibitors include Sally Sisson Anderson, Jessee Smith, Mary Ann Perkins, David Garza, and Lori Vogel. Bring your friends to enjoy some early holiday shopping and see some great art reflecting our natural environment. Kirby Nature Center is located at 2 E. Main Street, Addyston, Ohio. Cost: Free, no registration is required.

Fossil Hunt with Jack Berninger

Saturday, November 11, 2:00 p.m. — 3:00 p.m.

Kirby Nature Center and Preserve

Get ready for some family fun with WWC, where your family will go on an adventure discovering all the interesting fossils in our dry creek bed at our Kirby Nature Center. This outdoor program will start with a short explanation by Jack Berninger, and each child will be given a special fossil at the start of the program! Admission is free. Location: Kirby Nature Center is located at 2 E. Main Street, Addyston, Ohio. Cost: Free, no registration is required.

Holiday Celebration!

Western Wildlife Corridor Member's Holiday Party Tuesday, December 5, 6:00 p.m. — 8:00 p.m.

Kirby Nature Center

2023 has been an exciting year of accomplishments for Western Wildlife Corridor and what better way to celebrate those achievements than by having a party! Just like last year, instead of a sit-down dinner, we will have a more relaxed setting – so that you may sit or move around the room to enjoy one another's company! This event is for members only. Registration is required as capacity is limited. If you wish to bring something to share, we plan on having drinks, snacks, appetizers, and desserts. Register here <https://secure.givelively.org/event/western-wildlife-corridor-inc/western-wildlife-corridor-holiday-members-party> and for more information, send an e-mail to events@westernwildlifecorridor.org.

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, September 16, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Habitat restoration at Kirby Nature Preserve. Leaders: Tim 513.922.2104 and Matt 513.604.6728
- Saturday, October 7, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Trail Restoration at Bender Mountain Nature Preserve. Leader: John 513.304.2310
- Saturday, October 14, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00m Habitat restoration at Shady Lane Preserve. Leaders: Ed 513.919.5186 and John 513.304.2310
- Saturday, November 4, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Habitat restoration at Whitetail Woods. Leaders: Gary 513.304.4303 and Tim 513.922.2104
- Saturday, November 11, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Trail Restoration at Bender Mountain Nature Preserve. Leader: John 513.304.2310
- Saturday, November 18, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Habitat restoration at Buckeye Trace Nature Preserve. Leaders: Gary 513.304.4303 and Tim 513.922.2104

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. E-mail Tim Sisson at hikertim419@gmail.com to be added to the distribution list.

Welcome Our New Executive Director, Matt Trokan



Matt grew up in Delhi along a tributary of Wulff Run Creek and spent many hours in his youth hiking and exploring the hillsides and waterways around Bender Mountain. Matt received his Bachelor of Arts from Xavier University and a Masters of Environmental Study from The Evergreen State College. His graduate research studied the relationships between climate, plants, and people. Matt has over 20 years of leadership experience with the Cincinnati Parks, U.S. Forest Service, Ohio Sierra Club, Keep Cincinnati Beautiful, and other local non-profits and is thrilled to be at Western Wildlife Corridor because it is vital to protect, restore, and preserve natural habitat.

Create A Lasting Legacy



Kirby Nature Preserve

When you include Western Wildlife Corridor in your financial plans, you are helping to protect, restore, and preserve natural habitat for generations to come. Making a planned gift can be as simple as adding a bequest to your estate plan, naming Western Wildlife Corridor beneficiary of a life insurance policy, giving from your IRA, donating real estate, or other methods.

Thoughtfully crafted gift plans offer many benefits like the peace of mind that comes with knowing you are having a lasting impact. As one of our amazing donors, John Obermeyer, said, "Knowing now that the property we have cherished and enjoyed for 50 years will forever be preserved with no development, no concrete, no blacktop, just natural, gives us a feeling of real joy and satisfaction." You can read their story or other donors and learn more about ways to make a lasting gift on our website.

<https://www.westernwildlifecorridor.org/profiles-in-giving/>

The Endangered Monarch Butterfly

Sally Sisson Anderson — Artist in Residence, Western Wildlife Corridor

Two years ago, I raised several monarch caterpillars to maturity, saw them go into their chrysalises, and then watched the butterflies fly away. I know of other people from the Western Wildlife Corridor who did the same thing. This summer I saw no monarchs fly through my yard in Harrison. I had no eggs laid onto my milkweed plants. Since then, I have seen only one Monarch, and it did not stop to lay eggs on my plants.

Books tell us that the Monarch Butterfly is a beautiful orange and black butterfly known for its long annual migrations, and that the Monarchs are concentrated in North and South America. There some also found in Australia, Hawaii, India, and other locations. The Viceroy mimics the Monarch, which is unpalatable to its predators—birds. Therefore, the birds do not eat either butterfly. The Monarch is unpalatable because its caterpillars will eat only milkweed. There are many species of milkweed. The ones in our area include the common milkweed, the honey vine, and the orange butterfly weed. Milkweed plants produce milky juices that contain toxic compounds called cardenolides which are stored in the voracious caterpillar's body and make the larva and the butterfly distasteful to predators. The caterpillar has several molts and attains a length of about two inches.

The fully grown caterpillar leaves the milkweed plant to pupate elsewhere as a pale green chrysalis with golden spots. After 10–14 days, the chrysalis becomes transparent and the butterfly soon emerges, feeding on a variety of nectar sources. Monarchs live 4–5 weeks, except for those which overwinter in Mexico, which live 7–9 months.

Once thousands of migrating Monarchs gathered in autumn and migrated southward sometimes traveling hundreds of miles or more to over-winter in Mexico or California. Upon reaching their destination, they gathered in sheltered sites, like on trees where they clustered on trunks to

hibernate. In spring, the Monarchs began their journey north, feeding on nectar along the way, and laying eggs. Very few of the overwintering population make it back this far north in the spring. Some of the returning butterflies were members of the first generation; others are the next generation to develop from the over-wintering insects. And so it goes, as the Monarchs progress northward up over the country, and over the weeks of summer. Eggs are laid on milkweed plants along the way.



But, if there are no milkweed plants because of the mowed green grass of subdivisions on their flight coming north through the United States, the Monarch will die out.

Do Monarchs eat the same thing everywhere they live in North America? Yes and no. Larvae eat milkweed as food, but adults will need nectar from different flowering plants. There are many species of milkweed and Monarch larvae will eat most of them. For instance, they

will eat butterfly weed and honey vine, both other species of milkweed. There are many different milkweeds they will eat in different parts of the country.

Things you can do: You can plant a strip of land in your back yard with milkweed and other pollinator flowers like Queen Ann's Lace, Coneflowers, New England Asters, Orange Butterfly Weed, the sunflower family, Monarda or bee balm, Mountain Mint, Dog Bane, Zinnias, Butterfly Bush, Joe-Pye Weed, and Verbena, to name a few. Milkweed plants may possibly be obtained at Gorman Heritage Farm.

When we were vacationing in Virginia and North Carolina, we saw fields of milkweed and other wildflowers in the parks. Even the roadsides were left wild, with milkweeds growing. This would be a perfect world for the Monarchs! We have all seen patches of orange milkweed on the side of highways. It would be better if they were not mowed down by the DOT's of the states. We need to get highway departments and parks to allow groves of milkweed to remain, especially when eggs or larvae are present.



Membership Donations – Thank You!

Black Walnut Tree of Honor
 Western Wildlife Corridor thanks the following individuals for their support of

\$1,000 or more:

- Linda Graviss
- Carl & Carol Huether
- Mary & Christopher Perkins
- Dan & Amanda Pessler
- Don & June Reynolds
- Sisters of Charity

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

- Mary Jo & Fritz Bazeley
- Liz Maxwell
- Barb Neumann
- David & Ally Nurre
- Hubbell Smith
- Chris Sweigard



Tim Sisson

Black Swallowtail — Bender Mountain Nature Preserve

Beech Tree Steward Recognition

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

- Bill & Janet Berger
- Robert & Mary Lee Busam
- Kiwanis Club of Riverview - Delhi Hills
- Kathy Mank

Paw Paw Steward Recognition

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

- Sydney Barnes
- Holly Burgstrom
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- Teri Gilligan
- Linda Maurer
- Connie & John McCaslin
- Mr. & Mrs. David Meyer
- Bob & Leslie Rice
- Marie Salem
- Ed Tedtmann
- Western Hills Garden Club
- John Wiener



Tom Malone

Zebra Swallowtail — Bender Mountain Nature Preserve



Tim Sisson

Great Spangled Fritillary — Bender Mountain Nature Preserve

Special Thanks

Western Wildlife Corridor would like to give special thanks to Connie & John McCaslin, Kathleen Furlong & Jim Walker, Bill & Janet Berger and Robert Thomas in Memory of Bob Ruchhoft, John Wiener in Memory of Tom & Terry Wesseler, Barb Neumann in Memory of Rosemary Wernke and Elizabeth Neumann, Nancy Fenton in Memory of Patricia M. Moore, Liz Maxwell in honor of Joyce Richter, and Dee Sizler, SC, in honor of Sisters of Charity special anniversaries.



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!

SUPPORTING DONATION

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

STEWARD RECOGNITION

- \$100—\$199 Paw Paw
- \$200—\$499 Beech

TREE OF HONOR

- \$500—\$999 Red Oak
- \$1,000 and up Black Walnut

Enclosed is my tax deductible donation: New Member Renewal

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Volunteer! May we contact you with volunteer opportunities? YES

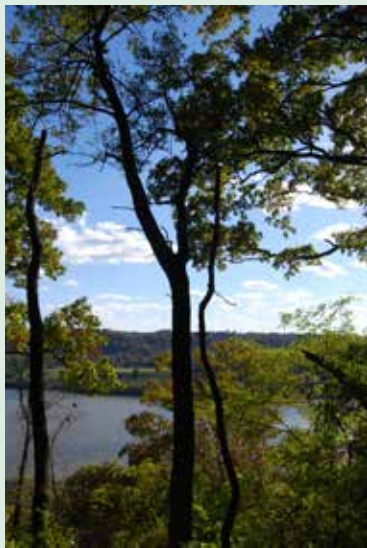
Donate online at www.westernwildlifecorridor.org

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 Was The Featured Land Trust in the August Issue of *Midwest Field Notes*

The Land Trust Alliance, of which Western Wildlife Corridor is an accredited member, featured our organization in their August issue of *Midwest Field Notes*. For your reference, the article is reproduced here:



Bender Mountain Nature Preserve

to care for all creation. Western Wildlife Corridor has been a wonderful neighbor and we are confident that they will love and protect the land as we have."

Expanding an Ohio River Green Corridor in Cincinnati

The accredited Western Wildlife Corridor was established to create a corridor of greenspace in and near the Ohio River Valley. Jeff Ginter, board president, noted, "As we work to achieve that goal, an important step is to connect properties together, creating large blocks of greenspace." Recently, they received 73 acres of land from the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati that expands its existing Bender Mountain Nature Preserve.

"The Sisters of Charity are delighted that Western Wildlife Corridor has accepted this gift and agreed to ensure that this special property will remain undeveloped and available for people and wildlife to enjoy into the future," said Sister Joanne Burrows. "Their generosity ensures that a valuable wildlife throughway from Mill Creek to the Indiana border remains unimpeded. The gift flows from the Sisters of Charity's mission



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Address Correction Requested

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- Playscape:** Mary Perkins

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- Preserve Monitors:** Matt Taylor and Tim Sisson at Kirby; Molly Hunter at Delshire; Joyce Richter, Jeff Ginter, Roger Auer and Rich Helmchen at Bender; Tim Sisson at Buckeye Trace; and Gary Rapien at Whitetail Woods
- Webmaster:** Jeff Doering
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