

Monarchs Need Our Help

by John Klein

I have had the pleasure of working with monarch butterflies for more than 40 years, both through my job at the Parks and on my own. Unfortunately, the population has decreased dramatically over the past 30 years and is now considered at risk.

Monarchs are not only one of the most beautiful butterflies, but they also migrate further than any other insect. They are often referred to as the “International Traveler”, migrating from southern Canada to Mexico. What makes their migration even more amazing is that they go to the same small sites each year, even though none have ever made the trip before! That is because it is the fourth or fifth generation monarchs that live long enough each fall to make the long journey and survive till spring.



Monarch Butterfly on Swamp Milkweed

A citizen science project that includes tagging monarchs has been going on well before the discovery of their overwintering sites in 1975 by Dr. Fred Urquhart with the University of Toronto, Canada. Before then, almost nobody knew where monarchs went in the fall. Local villagers in the mountains of Mexico did, however. They have long believed that the first arriving monarchs are the spirits of their ancestors returning around the “Day of the Dead” festival in Mexico on November 1st and 2nd each year.

All of our monarchs east of the Rocky Mountains head to a remote mountainside in Mexico each year to spend the winter.

Those west of the Rockies head to the coast of southern California. The eastern population is much larger, funneling through the central, midwestern, and eastern coast States to get there.



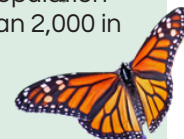
Monarch Caterpillar on Swamp Milkweed

Today, a group called “Monarch Watch” with the University of Kansas administers the tagging program with thousands of volunteers participating. I have been tagging them myself with other volunteers since 1983. I had the opportunity to visit an overwintering site in Mexico in 1991.

The trip was organized by the Cincinnati Museum Center when the population was still high. It was a trip of a lifetime and an experience that I will never forget! There were tens of millions of monarchs clustered in a small section of forest on the side of a mountain. This destination is not a tropical paradise, but a cool place with temperatures just above freezing, where they can rest. There are so many that tree branches sometimes break under their weight!

Unfortunately, their numbers have been on a serious decline for several decades. Counts are made at the overwintering sites each year based on the amount of space the clusters of monarchs take up (number of Hectares). It was estimated that the eastern population was around 19 million individuals last year, compared to more than 380 million in 1996! The western population was down from a high of 1.2 million to less than 2,000 in recent years!

Continued on page 2.



Monarchs Need Our Help Continued

by John Klein

The decline of the monarch butterfly has become so severe that scientists are now forecasting how soon it will go extinct. For example, the eastern population has declined approximately 80% with an extinction probability of 56% to 74% by the year 2080. The western population has declined more than 95% since the 1980's with an extinction probability of more than 99% by 2080! It is so sad to think that future generations of children may not have the opportunity to experience the miracles of the monarch life cycle and migration.



Monarch caterpillar on butterfly milkweed

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed and is currently considering adding the monarch butterfly to the Endangered Species List. If designated, it will likely be on the Threatened list as a precursor to possibly being added to the Endangered list at a later date. These designations come with some additional protections, which may help curb or even reverse the decline.

A recovery plan (according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) must include: the need to increase the availability of milkweed and nectar plants, to protect and enhance overwintering habitat, to reduce the negative impacts of pesticides, and to maintain public support for monarch conservation by incentivizing volunteer efforts.

What can we do in our own backyards to provide habitat for monarchs? We can plant and protect milkweed plants (the larvae's only food source) and provide more nectar-producing native flowers as food for the adults. It is also important to reduce the use of any pesticides in your lawn or gardens. I plan to present my "Those Amazing Monarchs" program at the Kirby Nature Center on September 13th, where you can learn more details about monarchs and how you can help.

Hope to see you there!
John Klein

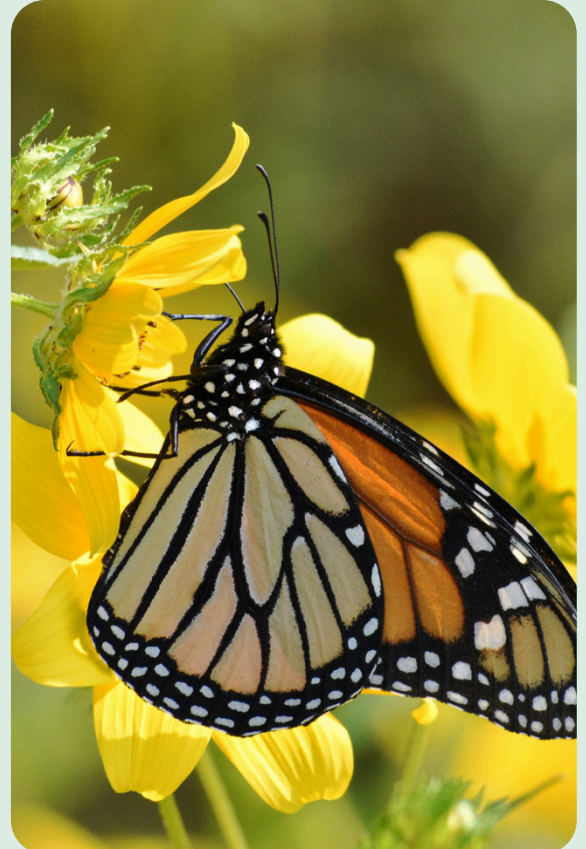
Those Amazing Monarchs

Kirby Nature Center, September 13th at 2 p.m.

Monarch butterflies are soooo amazing! Monarchs are not only one of the most beautiful butterflies, but they also migrate further than any other insect. They are often referred to as the "International Traveler", migrating from southern Canada to Mexico. What makes their migration even more amazing is that they go to the same small sites each year, even though none have ever made the trip before!

Join John Klein on Saturday, September 13th, at Kirby Nature Center to learn more about the monarch butterfly and how you can help monitor and provide habitat for them.

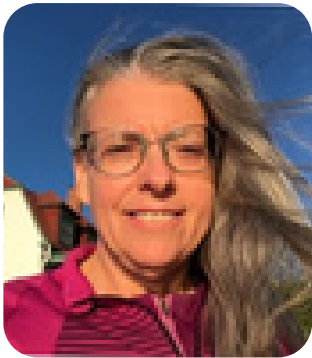
John is a west-side native of Cincinnati, spending most of his life in Sayler Park and now residing in North Bend. John retired as Land Manager of the Hamilton County Park District in 2010 and is proud of the many restoration projects that he helped create there. He currently provides nature programs and hikes to local groups and loves sharing his knowledge of nature with others. John is also involved as the former president of the Ohio Chapter of The Society of Ecological Restoration, is a board member and Land Manager at Oxbow, Inc., and is a member of the Fernbank Garden Club in Sayler Park with his wife Paige.



Monarch Butterfly

Welcome New Board Officers and Staff Members

Leesa Scudder is returning to the executive committee as our new Secretary. We are fortunate to have Leesa's leadership. She is a lifelong learner and graphic designer based in Cincinnati, Ohio. She often volunteers for organizations that improve the lives of others or help preserve our natural resources, including The Colorado Trail Crew, Red River Gorge Trail Crew, and Great Parks of Hamilton County.



Leesa Scudder, Secretary



Caity Valley, Treasurer

Caity Valley is joining the executive committee as Treasurer. Caity works for Hamilton County as a Senior Program Manager of Community Development and is dedicated to fostering collaboration between government, non-profits, and residents to create a more equitable and sustainable future. She is driven toward public service and has a Masters of Public Administration from Eastern Kentucky University.

Our leadership team is a fantastic mix of passionate and dedicated individuals. We're incredibly grateful for our talented team, as they enable us to handle most of our administrative tasks and much of our habitat restoration work through the efforts of amazing volunteers. This means that even more of your generous donations can go directly to protecting, preserving, and restoring our native forests. If you're interested in joining our leadership team, we'd love to hear from you! Send an email to matt@westernwildlifecorridor.org to learn more.

GET INVOLVED! Board Members Needed



Abby Figart



2024 Holiday Party!

Holiday Party!

Kirby Nature Center, December 9th at 6 p.m.

Join us for the annual holiday party potluck at the Kirby Nature Center on December 9th, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. We are going to celebrate the end of the year with some scrumptious bites, festive drinks, and amazing company!

As usual, there will be tons of delicious food, and we encourage you to bring a dish, dessert, or drink to share. This event is all about YOU, our members, and we will have a special gift for everyone who attends.

Thanks to our members, it has been another incredible year, and we can't wait to celebrate with everyone! Please RSVP online to help us plan the event and to get event reminders.

Volunteer Spotlight and Volunteer Events

Another Volunteer Loving the Outdoors: Mark Streicher

By Matt Taylor

Another key volunteer of the Western Wildlife Corridor, Mark Streicher, loves spending time outdoors and especially loves helping to restore our preserves by helping native plants flourish. Mark joined us just a few years ago, right after retiring, and immediately got to work restoring habitat. And what a resource for the Western Wildlife Corridor! He puts in over 100 hours every year.

Mark volunteers on our weekday and Saturday group projects, and sometimes works solo when he wants a more relaxing, quiet woods experience. He believes we have a great group of people to volunteer with, likes the physical outdoor projects, and, of course, enjoys the sights and sounds of nature. Mark is happy to help the Western Wildlife Corridor grow, meet other great people, and do such important forest restoration.

Mark has worked in virtually all our nature preserves and is particularly fond of whacking honeysuckle. He even bought his own mini-chainsaw so he could be more productive. Mark is yet another Cincinnati native, born and raised in the Colerain area, and a graduate of La Salle High School and Miami University. He worked for 40 years at Fifth Third Bank as a computer systems analyst. Who stays in the same job that long anymore? He spends lots of time with his many siblings, relatives, grandkids, and kids, most of whom live locally.

Invasive plants continue to be removed from our nature preserves, allowing the return of native plants and wildflowers. The work of volunteers like Mark Streicher is critical to this effort. And Mark loves doing it!



Mark Streicher



Volunteer Events

Join Mark and other amazing volunteers at a habitat restoration event this fall to make a difference at one of our neighborhood nature preserves! If you've never attended a volunteer event with us before, we encourage you to join us for a fun event this fall to help cut invasive species, install signs, repair trails, and collect litter. We will provide the tools, and no special skills are required. Please RSVP on the website to let us know you're coming and to get weather alerts.

Join us on Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

- 9/20 Kirby Nature Preserve
- 9/27 Buckeye Trace Nature Preserve
- 10/4 Delshire Nature Preserve
- 10/25 Bender Mountain Nature Preserve
- 11/8 Kirby Nature Preserve
- 11/22 Bender Mountain
- 12/6 Bender Nature Preserve



James Johnson

Mount St. Joseph University Student Volunteers



Mid-Week Hikes



Did you know that we offer fun mid-week habitat restoration hikes? The locations and activities change from week to week, but we always have a lot of fun. If you are interested in getting involved, e-mail staff@westernwildlifecorridor.org to be added to the distribution list.

Fall Events

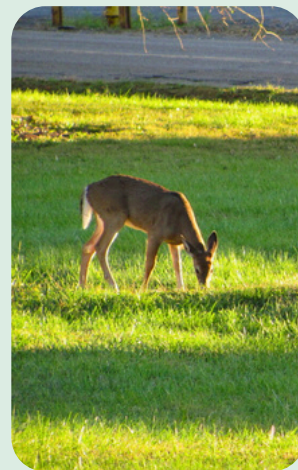
All of our events are free, family-friendly, open to the public, and led by experts in our local environment. Visit the website to learn more or register!

Urban Deer Management with Millie Schafer

Kirby Nature Center, September 19th, 7-8 p.m.

Are there too many deer? Overabundant deer populations can lead to habitat destruction, the spread of diseases, and increased car collisions. The Urban Deer Management presentation will briefly cover various urban deer management strategies and whether such practices are needed in Cincinnati. We will look at local data on deer populations, bow hunting, and sterilization methods, as well as discuss concerns around safety, public health, and compassion for animals.

Millie Schafer, PhD, grew up on a farm in Madison, IN, and had a natural affinity for the animals and outdoor life. Early on, her parents trusted her with animal care, which led to her pursuing numerous educational endeavors and developing an extensive background in chemistry, biochemistry, molecular biology, and numerous life sciences training/research endeavors. She also took specialized training at the International Science and Conservation Center in Billings, Montana, and is certified to remotely dart deer with EPA-approved PZP birth control.



Tom Malone

Deer at Kirby

Forest Bathing with Pam Lowe Cho

Bender Mountain, September 23rd, 9-10:30 a.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 and gently re-awakening the five senses: sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. Forest Bathing is one of the fastest-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. Our first-ever Forest Bathing program in June was so successful that we scheduled another program for September.

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.



James Johnson

Bender Mountain in the Morning

Earth Connectors- Our Backyard Birds

Kirby Nature Center, October 11th 10-11:30 a.m.

Join us for a bird talk: Earth Connectors - Our Backyard Birds. Suellyn Shupe will share her experience visiting the high-altitude Cloud Forest region of Guatemala in January 2025. The trip was arranged by ARC of Appalachia to the Community Cloud Forest Conservation site and was prompted by the discovery that 35 species of birds migrate between our regions. We will learn about the rich connections between the two regions, as well as the implications of climate change demonstrated by the drop in numbers of many of these species.

Suellyn Shupe has been an outdoors/nature person from childhood and has worked or volunteered in many nature learning and earth-supporting organizations, such as Girl Scouts, Bulls Run Arboretum (Middletown), Grailville, Imago & Enright Ecovillage, Highlands Sanctuary/Arc of Appalachia, and Western Wildlife Corridor.



Jeremy Hynes

Ruby-throated hummingbird

Fall Events

All of our events are free, family-friendly, open to the public, and led by experts in our local environment. Visit the website to learn more or register!



Tom Malone

Fall colors on a sugar maple

Fall Hike with Western Wildlife Corridor

Bender Mountain, October 25th 2-4 p.m.

Join Western Wildlife Corridor staff on our fun annual fall foliage hike at Bender Mountain to learn more about the trees, plants, and our upcoming forest restoration efforts. We will be hiking approximately 2.5 miles over moderate to difficult trails with stunning views of the Ohio River Valley. Please bring hiking shoes, water, and snacks. Trekking poles are recommended.

Executive Director Matt Trokan 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. Volunteer, Events, and Land Manager, James Johnson, grew up in Northern Kentucky and has worked in many different environmental roles, including with NKU's Center for Environmental Restoration. He has also helped write two management plans for nature preserves owned by Scio Township and the Michigan Audubon.



Fossil Program with Jack Berninger

Kirby Nature Center, November 8th 1-3:00 p.m.

Did you know that Cincinnati is famous for its Ordovician fossils from 450 million years ago? Get ready for a fun family adventure to discover all the incredible fossils in the creek at Kirby.

The outdoor program will start with a short overview of the different fossils in our area, and each child will be given a special fossil at the start of the program! Then we will explore the creek searching for fossils and other interesting geological features. Jack Berninger is an educator, naturalist, and lifetime outdoor enthusiast.



Matt Trokan

Fossil hunting with kids



Matt Trokan

Bird banding a tufted titmouse

Bird Banding with Adam McCosham

Kirby Nature Center, November 15th 8-11 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.

Thank You to Our Supporters

Membership Gifts

Black Walnut

Anonymous, Carl & Carl Huether, Mark Miller & Sharon Grenberg, Jeff & Michelle Ginter, Liz Maxwell, Chris & Mary Perkins, and Don & June Reynolds

Red Oak

Anonymous, Robert & Mary Lee Busam, Stuart Golder & Margaret Rhein, and Paul & Jill Staubitz

Beech

Chip Brigham, Chris & Becky Sweigard, Mark & Eileen Rechtsteiner, Marie Salem, and John Wiener

Paw Paw

Anonymous, Louise & Gary Bruemmer, Joe Huber, Margaret Atterbury & Bruce Bernard, Stella Bavely, Mary Bender, Tom Murphy, Kathy Nienaber, and Maureen & William O'Conner

Gifts in Honor of

Joyce Richter S.C.

Community Partnerships

Grants and Sponsorships

Anonymous, First Unitarian Church, General Electric, OxBow, SAP, Unnewehr Family Foundation, Northwest Title, and Wild Birds Unlimited

Special thanks to everyone who supports the Corridor through Community Shares and Kroger Community Rewards!



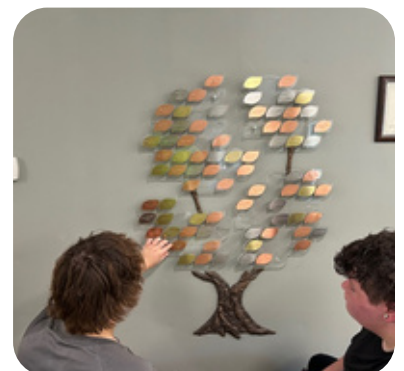
Land Preservation Update!

We did it!!! Thanks to all of our incredible supporters, we surpassed our 2025 Land Preservation goal of \$150,000!!! Together, we protected over 8 acres of forest, growing our newest nature preserve, the Sisson Preserve, and our oldest nature preserve, Delshire. Plus, plans to establish a new nature preserve are in the works.

Thank you to the unwavering support of passionate individuals in our community who made this possible, including recent gifts from: Anonymous, Marc & Barbara Alexander, Mary Jo & Robert Berry, Jim & Kaye Bono, Sr. Mary Bookser, Jim & Erika Boyle, Lawrence Brassie, Joe Bunke, James Donovan, Pat Frock, Ed Gemperle, Lisa Gesenhues, Sherry & Brett Goodson, Linda Graviss, Judy & Bob Helmes, Don & Betty Horak, Roland & Clare Johnson, Liz Maxwell, Gary & Norma Rapien, S. Joyce Richter SC, Mark & Julianne Rudemiller, Roselyn & Stuart Schloss, Karen & Mark Streicher, and William & Denise Zumvorde.

Tree of Honor Grows!

The Tree of Honor at the Kirby Nature Center keeps growing thanks to our amazing community of supporters! The tree is now completely leafed out, and we are ordering more branches to keep it growing. We are so grateful for everyone's support!



Volunteers add leaves to the Tree of Honor

Kirby Nature Playscape Grand Opening!



Six years ago, the Kirby Nature Playscape was founded with the vision of providing a fun and free outdoor space where children can interact with and learn about nature. Dozens of volunteers have dedicated hundreds of hours to this vision, and now we are excited to announce the official Grand Opening! Over the past year, tremendous progress has been made to complete the nature playscape and create a space where everyone is welcome to explore the outdoors.

The site, which features a prairie/woodland savannah, has been restored with native pollinator plants that attract a spectacular array of birds, insects, mammals, and other wildlife. We have installed accessible trails, a gathering terrace, and six activity stations for children ages 2-10. The playscape offers a sense of adventure, with trails winding through tall grasses and flowers, allowing children to engage with fun activity stations along the way.

Visitors of all ages are already enjoying the nature playscape, trails, benches, and the opportunity to observe all of the wildlife in the area. As one mom of two young boys said, "Thank you for creating a place on this side of town where we can come and let the kids play outside. We have needed something like this for a while". We hope everyone can stop by soon to enjoy the playscape. A special thank you to all of the individuals, organizations, and foundations who have supported the project over the past six years and made the vision a reality!



Bird Banding Workshop at Gathering Terrace

Nature Playscape Grand Opening Celebration

Kirby Nature Center, October 11th 2-4 p.m.

Everyone is welcome to celebrate the opening of the Kirby Nature Playscape on Saturday, October 11th, from 2-4:00 pm at the Kirby Nature Center. Over the past year, we completed the construction of the outdoor gathering terrace, forest kitchen, sensory garden, balance beam & climbing logs, fossil dig, shelter building station, vernal pools, and prairie loop trail.

We are so grateful to all of the volunteers and contributors who made the playscape possible, and we look forward to celebrating your efforts with light refreshments, fun games & activities, and speakers. Please register online to help us plan for the event.



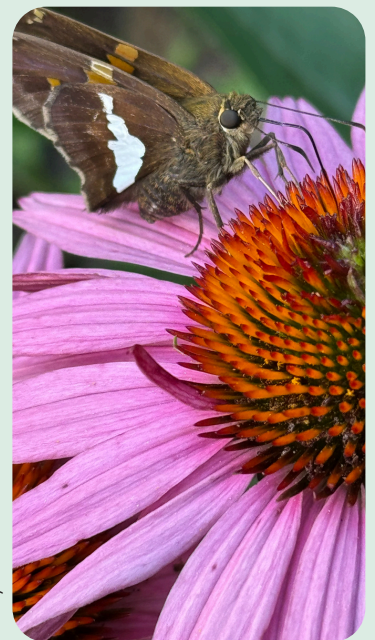
Matt Trokan

Forest Kitchen



Mary Perkins

Fossil Digging Area & Dry Creek Bed



Mary Perkins

Pollinators at the Playscape

Protect Your Wild Place! Renew or Join Today!

In 1992, a small group of visionary individuals founded the Western Wildlife Corridor. They recognized the forested hillsides of the Ohio River Valley as a unique resource that should be protected for the benefit of our community. Now, 33 years later, we manage over 440 acres of forests and each year, get closer to our vision of creating a protected wildlife corridor stretching from downtown Cincinnati to the Indiana border.

What started as a small group of dedicated volunteers has grown to over 300 members who help protect and grow the corridor. By joining the Western Wildlife Corridor, your membership gift helps preserve our beautifully wooded hillsides, restore vital natural habitats, and create a home for rare and threatened wildlife. Your support also enhances trail access, coordinates dedicated volunteers, and educates the next generation of nature stewards.



Abby Figart

Spring Wildflower Hike at Bender Mountain

Your membership gift helps to protect our forests and makes everything we do possible, from trail maintenance to education programs. There are membership levels for every household and individual, from \$25 to \$1,000.

All members receive our newsletter, The Steward, with exciting updates, fun events and activity details, informative articles, and great seasonal photos. Paw Paw and Beech members will be recognized in the newsletter, while Red Oak and Black Walnut members will be recognized in the newsletter plus have a Donor Leaf added to the Tree of Honor in their name at the Kirby Nature Center.

Membership Levels

Membership gifts make everything we do possible!

All members receive our newsletter The Steward, access to special events, opportunities to volunteer, and more!

Become a member today at westernwildlifecorridor.org

Mountain Climber \$25-\$100

Your gift, no matter how large or small, will have a big impact because we use volunteers to help stretch every dollar. Last year, close to 7,000 volunteer hours were dedicated to maintaining and restoring our preserves. A gift under \$100 will help us purchase equipment and tools for volunteer events.

Paw-Paw \$100

Your gift will help restore our forest and provide a natural habitat for wildlife by supporting the purchase of trees, seeds, and other restoration supplies. With your support, we plan to restore over 25 acres of forests.

Beech Tree \$200

Your gift will help inspire the next generation of environmental stewards by providing a speaker, materials, or supplies for an educational event. Each year, we hold dozens of free, family-friendly events led by local experts and scientists on topics from Blue Ghost Fireflies to local Wildflowers.

Red Oak \$500

Your generous gift will help provide trail and welcome signage, maintenance, and landscaping at our preserves, which now feature 10 miles of scenic trails that inspire over 40,000 visitors to connect with nature each year.

Black Walnut \$1,000

Your membership gift will protect the over 440 acres of forest and the thousands of plants and animals that call Western Wildlife Corridor home by helping to conserve and connect the Corridor.



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Newsletter Contributors

Newsletter Contributors: Matt Taylor, John Klein, Mary Perkins, James Johnson, Leesa Scudder, Caity Valley, and Matt Trokan

Design, Editing, and Production: Leesa Scudder, Jessee Smith, James Johnson, and Matt Trokan

Photographers: Joyce Richter, Tom Malone, Mary Perkins, Abby Figart, Matt Trokan, and James Johnson

Leaders

Artist in Residence: Sally Sisson Anderson

Habitat Restoration Project Leaders: Tim Sisson, Matt Taylor, Molly Hunter, Jeff Ginter, Gary Rapien, Ed Lottman, John Klein, and Mark Streicher

Human Resources: Jeff Ginter

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Muddy Creek: Roger Auer

Buckeye Trace: Mark Streicher, Patrick Murphy, and Tim Sisson

Rapid Run: Tim Sisson and Roger Auer

Delshire: We need a new volunteer here!

Sisson: Tim Sisson and Roger Auer

Kirby: Matt Taylor, Tom Malone, Bob Breitenstein, and Mark Rudemiller

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