



Ohio adds three more jewels to state nature preserves' crown

What do Black Hand sandstone recess caves, a mixed emergent tributary swamp, and a coldwater stream in Geauga County have in common? They are the latest natural areas to become dedicated Ohio state nature preserves.



Black Hand sandstone recesses complete with natural arch

Driving along Big Pine Road in Hocking County, many stop to see the spectacular hollows and streams draining the ridges from the north into Pine Creek as it winds its way west along the roadside. These hollows, named Conkle's, Crane, Sheick and Little Rocky, are all part of Ohio's state nature preserve system.

However, the 14-acre area in Hocking County, which lies a few hundred feet

south of Big Pine Road, is not another miniature Grand Canyon, like its sister preserves. Rather, this preserve boasts perhaps the nicest set of recess caves to be found in such a small area.

Known for nearly two centuries as Saltpetre Caves, this area has been a well-known geological wonder, not only to the European settlers who came to the area, but also to the Native Americans who used the Hocking Hills as a hunting ground.

The cave complex is named for potassium nitrate or saltpetre—the white,

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The Secrets of Spring

Spring is an excellent time to dig up some real dirt on the plant world, and Eagle Creek State Nature Preserve in Portage County is just the place for some earthy activity. More than 70 species of wildflowers can be caught doing their thing on a warm and sunny day.

Between the time that the earth warms and the leaves close the forest canopy, the secret lives of early spring bloomers are there for all to see. In the wet environs around the vernal pools and seasonal streams, the rich black earth almost visibly greens before your eyes as soft shoots push their way to the sunlight. Beneath the dried dead leaves of the forest floor, the soft color of an emerging carpet of spring beauties intensifies.

Some spring plants have some interesting habits; a walk among them is the best way to discover these little known secrets. A great example is trout-lily, an early blooming member of the lily family. There are two separate species that grow at Eagle Creek. The yellow species (*Erythronium americanum*) is

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crusty efflorescence that appears on the ceilings of several of the recesses. One cave, featuring a natural arch at the 100-foot opening, is approximately 124 feet deep with an 8-foot high ceiling that permits easy access for about the first 75 feet. A second cave is 143 feet deep and 125 feet wide at the opening—again with an 8-foot high ceiling toward the entrance.

Beaver and other wildlife abound among the hemlock, birch and tulip trees, which grow on the slope below the caves.

Saltpetre Caves State Nature Preserve was purchased with \$137,000 in Ohio Income Tax Checkoff funding.

Currently, the preserve is not accessible to the public. Once the division improves preserve accessibility, it will require a permit for visitation. Permits will be available through the division.

Gift protects habitat for beaver and wetland plants

Northern Hocking County is home to another new preserve. Unlike most



Blue-winged teal in flight at Kessler Swamp

Hocking Hills preserves, which showcase magnificent geology, this area protects a wetland swamp. A special site, not because of the list of endangered plants that call the area home, but because of its mere existence.

The swamp is actually the impounded water of Durbin's Run, a tributary of Rush Creek. The waters are held by both a low earthen dam and the industrious work of the large beaver population that live there.

Kessler Swamp State Nature Preserve is also a favorite stopover for a variety of waterfowl during fall and spring migrations. Great blue and green herons use the waters as a feeding station. Even bald eagles have been spotted perched in one of the dead trees that stand boldly amidst the water.

The vegetation is typical of a naturally-developing tributary swamp. Large stands of buttonbush grow in shallow waters and several herbaceous plants inhabit the swamp edges and mudflats.

In the fall, bur-marigolds, also known as beggar-ticks because their barbed fruit stick to clothing, provide a spectacular display of yellow flowers.

The 20-acre preserve, a generous gift from Dr. Francis and Mrs. Joyce Kessler, is located in Marion Township. The preserve is open, but the only public facilities are a small parking area, bulletin board and observation deck at the south

end of the swamp. A larger deck with a bird blind is planned for later this year.

For more information on Kessler Swamp State Nature Preserve, contact the South Central Preserve District office at (740) 420-3445.

Protecting Ohio's native brook trout

A small 31-acre tract of land in Geauga County is home to both rare flora and fauna. Spring Brook Sanctuary, owned and managed by the Geauga County Park District, became a new state nature preserve in late 2002.

This new preserve protects Spring Brook, a tributary of historic Bass Lake, which is home to Ohio's last population of native brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*).

Brook trout, also known as brookies, are characterized by a dark green back covered with worm-shaped marks. One of its distinguishing characteristics is the white leading edge along its lower yellowish to reddish fins. They range in size from 5 to 18 inches, but many of Spring Brook's inhabitants average about 6 inches in length.

Brook trout were native to northeastern Ohio and inhabited many of the cold water tributaries of Lake Erie. Changes to those streams due to settlement and development ruined the trout's preferred habitat. Today, Ohio's last wild population of brook trout find their perfect habitat in the cold, clear flowing waters of Spring Brook.

A rock outcropping acts as a stream filter and further enhances the aesthetics of the area.

The preserve lies in a mature beech-maple forest which includes several potentially threatened butternut trees. Visitation to Spring Brook Sanctuary State Nature Preserve requires a permit from the Geauga County Park District. For more information, contact the park district at (440) 285-2222 ext. 5420.

Jeff Johnson
South Central District Preserve Manager
& Heidi Hetzel-Evans, Public Information



Kessler Swamp State Nature Preserve

The Secrets of Spring

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found throughout the rich woodlands while the white form (*Erythronium albidum*) is seen in the sandy soils along the creek banks. The mottled green leaves have the appearance of a fresh trout.

Trout-lily is a wildflower of many names. Sometimes the plant is called fawn-lily, because the spotting of the leaves mimic the camouflage of a young deer. Another name for the same plant is dog-toothed violet because its root bulb looks faintly like the fangs of a dog.

Some folks call trout-lily the adder-tongue. To see why, come back in a week or two after the flower has gone to seed. The calyx swells on the stalk and looks remarkably like a snake poised to strike, complete with a wicked, forked tongue.

In the woods, two members of the poppy family are found in the shadows of the beech and maple trees—squirrel-corn and Dutchman's breeches. Closely related to wild bleeding-heart, these two plants have soft green, highly dissected leaves.

Squirrel-corn (*Dicentra canadensis*) has pale flowers, similar to those of bleeding-heart. If you pull the soil back, the tiny yellow tubers attached to the roots are visible beneath the leaves. The roots resemble kernels of corn a chipmunk or squirrel may have buried for later use.

Another member of the poppy family, Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), unabashedly displays a stem full of bright white and yellow pantaloons for all to see. The unusual flowers of both species are pollinated by bumblebees, which can reach deep into the flowers for nectar.

An early bloomer right down in the mud is the skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*). Some of the larger clumps of skunk cabbage may be a half-century old or more as their deep roots work into the mud like augers.

By early May, a raft of large green leaves may completely hide the strange leathery flowers, which have been



squirrel-corn

blooming since late February or early March, depending on the severity of the winter. Skunk cabbage has strange flowers without petals and sepals. The chemical activity taking place inside the plant while the flower matures actually creates enough heat to melt snow away. It also produces a fetid odor,

attracting insects that carry out the job of pollination.

Along with jack-in-the-pulpit and green dragon, skunk cabbage is a member of the Arum family. All have flowers with only two parts, a spathe or cap to cover the working part of the flower. Lift the spathe on the jack-in-the-pulpit and there you will see Jack hiding from the harsh light of day.

The wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) is another flower easily overlooked. Get close and look at the bottom, where the stalks bearing the two large velvety leaves join. At ground level you'll see a small, dark red-brown flower with three calyx lobes. The flower often lies curiously flat to the ground, probably pollinated by walking insects. The roots of this plant were used in earlier times as a substitute for real ginger.

Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*) is one of those plants whose flowers hide under the protective shelter of larger leaves. Growing in pairs, the small yellow to green florets dangle beneath an arched stem. Members of the lily family, a cross sectioned stem resembles a six-sided star, thus the name of the plant. Do not mistake this retiring plant for that show-off, the false Solomon's seal (*Smilacina racemosa*), which displays a great terminal cluster of white flowers and is a much larger plant, sometimes referred to as Solomon's plume.

I've shared just a few of the little-known secrets of Ohio's spring wildflowers. You never know what you might find on a pleasant walk in spring—but time is fleeting, so get out there before the flowers are gone and the mosquitoes are buzzing.

Emiliss Ricks, Jr.
Northeast District Preserve Manager

Best plant finds of 2002

It was another good year for Ohio's native plant list—three new species were discovered.

These additions bring Ohio's native plant list to about 1,800 species. Besides discovering new species, state botanists also rediscovered two plants and many new locations for endangered and threatened species.

Dave Minney of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), discovered hair grass (*Muhlenbergia glabrifloris*) at TNC's Glade Wetland Preserve in Pike County. This diminutive grass is new to the flora, and quite similar to the common and widespread wirestem muhly (*Muhlenbergia frondosa*).

In 2001, just a stone's throw away from the hair grass, Minney located woolly panic grass (*Panicum scoparium*). The division waited to report it until it was determined to be native. Woolly panic grass shares a very similar distribution to hair grass.

While on a birding trip with the Toledo Naturalists' Association at Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge in Lucas County, DNAP Botanist Jim McCormac collected an odd-looking sedge. It turned out to be Olney's three-square bulrush (*Schoenoplectus americanus*). This species, typically a coastal species, is quite rare around the Great Lakes.

Adams County resident Barb Lund made a stellar rediscovery when she found long-flowered alumroot (*Heuchera longiflora*). It is a showy wildflower, which was considered extirpated. Lund found two sites in Adams County; this species had only been collected once before in 1954.

In an impressive display of botanical detective work, Jason Larson of Muskingum College, relocated white wood-sorrel (*Oxalis montana*) at a historical location in Belmont County, where it was last seen in 1915. Larson discovered a site with thousands of the plants. This species, which hadn't been seen in Ohio for 22 years, was considered extirpated.

While wading in waist-deep water in Summit County's Singer Lake,

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COME TO COLLIER

Northwest Ohio's Howard Collier State Nature Preserve offers visitors numerous wonders throughout the year. But it can be especially beautiful when the woodland floor is covered in a spectacular display of spring blooms.

Located in Seneca County, this 301-acre natural area also gives guests a chance to enjoy an Ohio scenic river area rich in history and biological diversity. It was named for Toledo's financial wizard, Howard L. Collier (1932-1990), who was also a former state Budget Director.

Collier's communities of yesterday and today

Many Native Americans lived in the Collier area from prehistoric times until the last of the Wyandots left or were displaced by settlers. Long before the Wyandots lived here, the Wisconsin Age glaciers shaped the land. Some of the ridges stretching through Collier are the clay, sand, cobble and boulder deposits of the Defiance end moraine.

Wooded Upland

The late-Wisconsinan Till Plains of northwest Ohio hold some of the state's most fertile agricultural land. Collier's upland community represents an excellent example of what was once the region's natural beech-maple forests. These dense stands included red and white oak, sugar maple, shagbark and shellbark hickory, white ash, American beech and black cherry. The upper lands and slopes of Collier are still home to these hardwoods. Beneath their canopy lies a forest floor thick with spring wildflowers, such as sharp-lobed hepatica, Dutchman's breeches, squirrel-corn, twinleaf, white and yellow trout-lily, and three species of trillium, including Ohio's state wildflower— large-flowered trillium.

Floodplain along Sandusky State Scenic River

Collier's ridges fall to a mature floodplain community along the Sandusky River, a state scenic river. Sycamore, cottonwood, green ash and basswood trees dominate the flora. Red oak also can be found here, a tree species rarely found in a floodplain.

In spring, the area shelters wildflowers, such as spring beauty, and harbors dynamic vernal pools. These temporary pools attract salamanders, frogs and other amphibians. The frosts of autumn bring forth the glorious reds, golds and maroons of fall color.

Together, the upland and lowland communities of Collier comprise a healthy riparian corridor which buffers the Sandusky River. Bald eagles and many migratory birds, including several warblers, use the abundant resources found here. The Sandusky itself also provides critical habitat to more than 70 species of fish, mollusks and other organisms.

Hike along Collier's scenic trails

Visitors to Collier may enter the upland community from the one-mile Beech Ridge Trail and follow the trail to the floodplain. This trail is located at the top of the parking area. The journey treats hikers to the spectacular view from the artisan-crafted staircase.

The floodplain may be directly accessed from the Little Fox Run Trail, about a half-mile in length, which has sections of boardwalk along the wetter areas. This trail is located at the base of the parking area. The trail bisects an area that has a mature hardwood forest on one side and a reverting farm field on the other. Notice the difference in the type, density and abundance of tree species.



Dam removal benefits Olentangy Scenic River

Restoring the Olentangy State Scenic River to the natural free-flowing stream it once was is an important goal. This past fall, the Ohio Scenic Rivers Program took its first step toward realizing that goal by removing the Dennison Dam.

Dennison Dam was located south of the city of Delaware, off State Route 315. Removing it re-established a series of riffle, run and pool habitats, which had been hidden below the slow-moving slack water of the impoundment.



It eliminated the dangerous hazard of portaging around the former dam has been eliminated.

Increasing the number of habitat types will allow a greater diversity of fish, insects and other aquatic organisms to colonize the area. The removal eliminated the barrier that blocked fish and other aquatic organisms from freely migrating up and down the river.

The removal of Dennison Dam was supported by Ohio's Scenic

Rivers Protection fund. The work was performed by corpsmembers from the Ohio Civilian Conservation Corps.

As the water receded behind the dam, a pleasant surprise emerged. At the far reach of the impoundment a small waterfall appeared. The waterfall, hidden under the impounded waters for nearly 100 years, is a new feature of the scenic Olentangy River.

The Ohio Scenic Rivers Program hopes to coordinate the removal of other lowhead dams along the Olentangy State Scenic River, as well as other Ohio state scenic rivers. Scenic Rivers staff continue to work with dam owners, residents and local organizations to garner support and permission for future dam removals.

Other benefits of the dam's removal include higher levels of dissolved oxygen and greater access to adjacent floodplains. As a recreational bonus, the area will be more appealing to pad-

To learn more, contact the Ohio Scenic Rivers Program at (614) 265-6453.

*Tim Peterkoski
Central Ohio Assistant Scenic Rivers Manager*

Tread carefully

A variety of low impact activities await you at Howard Collier—hiking, bird watching, nature appreciation and photography. Visitors are reminded to stay on the trail.

Paved parking is available from mid-spring through late autumn. The area is closed to vehicles during the winter, but foot travel is welcome. There are no restrooms or drinking water at this site.

Directions – In Seneca County, from McCutcheonville, 3 miles east on County Road 58, one-quarter of a mile north on Township Road 131, and one-quarter of a mile east on Township Road 38. For more information, contact (419) 981-6319.

*Bob Vargo & Anne Coburn-Griffis
Northwest Scenic River District*



Volunteers plant 2,600 trees along Kokosing Scenic River

Despite bitter wind and damp conditions, a small group of volunteers from Knox County and the division planted more than 2,600 trees along the Kokosing State Scenic River in early April.

Because of volunteer efforts, a Knox County-owned wellfield, located in Howard outside of Mt. Vernon, will grow into a well-forested buffer for the Kokosing. Volunteers also planted trees along an eroded bank of the river.

About 10 volunteers planted a variety of trees including swamp white oak, black cherry, green ash, sycamore, pin oak and other hardwood trees. As the trees mature, they will help stabilize the streambank, provide habitat and shade for the Kokosing, as well as filter water before entering the river and the groundwater supply of the wellfield.

Best plant finds of 2002

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TNC Botanist Rick Gardner and Richland County Park District's Steve McKee located swaying bulrush (*Schoenoplectus subterminalis*). This endangered plant, not seen since 1988, was only known from Mud Lake State Nature Preserve in Williams County.



triangle grape fern

Elsewhere in Summit County, Gardner also discovered a third known site for the bizarre saprophytic orchid, early coral-root (*Corallorhiza trifida*). Gardner also spotted the endangered Gattinger's foxglove (*Agalinis gattingeri*) in Darke County.

While exploring a deep, dark Hocking County hemlock gorge, Denison University Pteridologist Dr. Warren Hauk and his students found one of our smallest ferns, the triangle grape fern (*Botrychium lanceolatum*). This endangered species is about as high as the average thumb, and is only known at one other Ohio site.

Mark Dilley, a Columbus biological consultant, made another spectacular find of an endangered plant. While assessing a Ross County wetland, he stumbled into a staggeringly large population—10,000 plus plants—of burhead (*Echinodorus berteroi*), only the third known site. While inspecting those, Dilley noticed a different looking sedge, which proved to be pale umbrella-sedge (*Cyperus acuminatus*), also

endangered. The wetland supported thousands of those plants as well.

A new station for burhead was also found by Mike Busam of Butler County, thus extending the range of the local Gilmore Ponds' population.

Although belated, news reached us that Beverly Stamp of Cleveland found a station for pale umbrella-sedge back in 1999. These plants were in a wetland in the very urban location of the I-70/West Broad St. junction near downtown Columbus.

In other wetland finds, Ohio EPA Botanist John Mack located the gorgeous and threatened pink-flowered large marsh St. John's wort (*Triadenum tubulosum*) in a Jackson County swamp. Jason Hopkins of Kent State University also found it in Portage County.



false hop sedge

Also in Portage County, TNC's Gardner and Megan Wilkinson and the county park district's Brad Stemen, found new colonies of the endangered small bur-reed (*Sparganium chlorocarpum*), one of our rarest wetland plants.

Adams County resident John Howard found the obscure and parasitic pretty dodder (*Cuscuta indecora*) growing in his own backyard prairie. Other Adams County finds included: false melic (*Melica nitens*) by TNC's Rich McCarty and warty panic grass (*Panicum verrucosum*) by Gardner, Scott Howard and DNAP's Butch Grieszmer and McCormac.

An expedition to remote wetlands along the St. Marys River in Mercer

County produced the second known population for cuspidate dodder (*Cuscuta cuspidata*). Strangely, it was infesting another endangered species, bottomland aster (*Aster ontarionis*). Discoverers included TNC's Gardner, Terry Seidel, John Mack, Marshal Moser, a biological consultant from Lima, Tim Schetter of the Black Swamp Conservancy and DNAP's Michael Lee and McCormac.

Cleveland Museum of Natural History Botanist Jim Bissell added to his list of great finds. Along with Stan Stine, a Twinsburg naturalist, Bissell found a huge population of the threatened marsh spear grass (*Poa paludigena*) in Summit County. Bissell found an even rarer grass, the endangered sharp-glumed manna grass (*Glyceria acutiflora*) in Stark County while botanizing with Judy Semroc of Uniontown, Larry Rosche of Kent and Ohio EPA's Theresa Gordon.

Bissell also found two other endangered species—Canada St. John's-wort (*Hypericum canadense*) in Lake County and false hop sedge (*Carex lupuliformis*) in Ashtabula County. Somewhat belatedly, we report Bissell's find of the endangered smooth rose (*Rosa blanda*) at Kelleys Island in Erie County.



cuspidate dodder

It's not often that a large tree is overlooked, but at least one population of the endangered Spanish oak (*Quercus falcata*) was, until Shawnee State Park Manager Kevin Bradbury found the trees in a small Scioto County woods. While on another trip in Shawnee State Forest, Bradbury, Park Naturalist Jenny Richards and DNAP's McCormac located a population of the endangered twisted yellow-eyed-grass (*Xyris torta*). It was previously only known from the Oak Openings of Lucas County.

Learning of a new site for one of Ohio's six federally listed plants is always good news. Cincinnati-area botanists Dan Boone and Marjie Becus discovered additional Hamilton County populations of running buffalo clover (*Trifolium stoloniferum*).

Another Cincinnati botanist, Dr. Denis Conover from the University of Cincinnati, located several new sites for the endangered two-seeded copperleaf (*Acalypha deamii*).

Although the juniper sedge (*Carex juniperorum*) is only listed as "threatened," any out-of-range discovery is significant since this sedge has one of the most limited distributions of any eastern *Carex*. In Ohio, it was known primarily from the cedar glades of Adams County, until 2002, when Tony Reznicek of the University of Michigan found it at Buffalo Beats Prairie in Athens County.

Finally, a plant find, which demonstrates how tricky some of these species can be to recognize. Last year, George Wilder, a Cleveland botanist, found kidney-leaved violet (*Viola renifolia*) in Cuyahoga County, which was new to Ohio's flora. These small white violets can be difficult to identify accurately, and although his specimens were also identified by a recognized *Viola* authority, Wilder still had doubts. After exhaustive research, he determined that the find was actually sweet white violet (*Viola blanda*), a relatively common species. Our thanks to Mr. Wilder for his commitment to accuracy.

You may wonder—what's left to find? It's hard to believe that a state as populated, urbanized and reasonably well-explored would continue to produce new botanical discoveries, but Ohio does. The primary reason behind many of the discoveries is the dedication of amateur and professional botanists who regularly explore our state's terrain.

Thanks to all who generously contribute their time and expertise to help the division track Ohio's botanical diversity.

Jim McCormac
Botanist

Under the Niagara Escarpment

"...She gazed down... across a rolling basin black with forest, to a colossal wall of red rock, level and black-fringed on top, but wildly broken along its face into gigantic cliffs, escarpments, points, ledges, as far as the eye could see..."

Thus did the popular Ohio author Zane Grey introduce Arizona's Tonto Rim, a major element in his novel, *Under the Tonto Rim*. If it was a rim he wanted, he need not have gone so far to find one. His native state also boasts a rim, while not as dramatic as the Tonto; it still has its own interest. It is called the Niagara Escarpment and it runs in a ragged semicircle for 90 miles across the southwestern corner of Ohio from Adams County to Preble County.

The escarpment marks the boundary between the Ordovician rock strata upon which Cincinnati is built and the younger, tougher Silurian rocks above them. Both were deposited in a tropical sea, but there must have been a slight change in conditions after the Ordovician rocks were laid down because the two systems differ greatly.

The Ordovician rocks are made of a series of thin layers of highly fossiliferous and easily eroded limestones and shales. In contrast, the Silurian rocks contain few fossils and are far more massive and resistant to erosion.

This difference in vulnerability is one reason the Niagara Escarpment exists. The softer Ordovician strata weather more rapidly than the Silurian rocks and so have been worn down to a lower level. Where the two systems meet, the softer rock weathers out from beneath the harder one, leaving it unsupported. The Silurian rock then breaks away and slumps down in large blocks, creating a definite rise in the landscape behind. This is the same process which created the main portion of the Niagara Escarpment over

which Niagara Falls plunges in New York and Canada.

Ohio's piece of the escarpment was never very high—not much over 150 feet—and was in most places more of an abrupt slope than an actual cliff. It has been further obscured by a thick layer of glacial till, which was dropped over it during the last Ice Age.

Still, it has its dramatic moments. The same continental ice sheet, which dropped the till during its retreat, also released vast floods of meltwater, which roared over the Silurian edge and cut back into the escarpment. The rock-walled gorges created from those now-extinct rivers are some of southwest Ohio's most spectacular scenery: Clifton Gorge, Cedarville Gorge, Mad River Gorge, the cliffs of the Great Miami River in Taylorsville Reserve and the cliffs of Ohio Brush Creek in Adams County.

Smaller tributaries dropping off the escarpment into the deeply cut valleys of the major streams have created a series of waterfalls and miniature gorges: Charleston Falls, Ludlow Falls, Greenville Falls and Sunderland Falls.

Most of these notable places are now protected within state nature preserves, local parks and conservancy reservations.

It's easy to see how many of the scenic features, which set this corner of the state apart from the rest of western Ohio, are due to the presence of the Niagara Escarpment. It's just too bad Zane Grey did not look closer to home for his scenery.

Tim Snyder
West Central District Preserve Manager



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Administer a system of nature preserves and scenic rivers by identifying and protecting Ohio's significant natural features.

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Leading Ohio in the stewardship of its natural heritage.

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