



Natural Ohio

Bob Taft, Governor • Sam Speck, Director • Stu Lewis, Chief

Vol. 24, No. 1

Winter 2001-2002

SMALL INVESTMENTS ADD UP TO A GRAND PRESERVE

A staircase here, a trail there—routine and often costly additions to a state nature preserve aren't what visitors would call exciting or particularly dramatic projects, but...

"It takes a network of trails, boardwalks, staircases, bridges and overlooks to bring the splendor of an Ohio natural area, such as Conkle's Hollow, to the thousands of Ohioans and tourists who visit a preserve or state scenic river area," said Stu Lewis, chief of the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves.

Over the years, improvements can mean the difference between a breathtaking vista of fall color or one never seen by visitors. And many of these improvements are only possible because of the Ohio Natural Areas Income Tax Checkoff Program.

"The Checkoff Program gives Ohioans an opportunity to contribute all or a portion of their state income tax refund

to the division's nature preserves, scenic rivers and endangered species programs," said Chief Lewis.

Checkoff funding supports land acquisition for critical habitat protection and restoration, facility development, interpretive materials for visitors and special projects.

At Conkle's Hollow alone, more than \$17,000 in checkoff funds have supported preserve improvements since 1988.

Located in Hocking County, Conkle's Hollow is one of Ohio's most scenic and most visited nature preserves. You'll find the unequaled beauty of sheer cliffs of Black Hand sandstone

continues on page 6

Fruit of the Season

Bitterly cold January winds ruffled the chickadee's feathers as it hungrily eyed the clusters of grayish-white berries nearby. A twisting, clinging poison ivy vine winding its way up the trunk of an aging river birch would be a source of sustenance for the little bird during this wintry moment. After consuming its fill, the feisty chickadee flew off in search of better shelter.

Winter is the season when many of us spend more time indoors. The thought of hiking in the cold and sometimes inclement weather causes many to throw another log on the fire and curl up with a good book or movie.

Actually, the winter season is a great time to explore Ohio's natural areas. During this season, the trails are less crowded and with the leaves off the trees, the landscape is more discernable. Much to the delight of bird watchers, birds that winter in Ohio are easily spotted as they flit from branch to branch in search of food.

In the winter months, colors on the landscape are more muted and subtle. Grays, tans and browns dominate where just a few months earlier, the color green was king. Tucked away in this wintry collage, lies the subject of this article—berries found in winter.

continues on page 2

In This Issue

Old Woman Creek	2
Invasive Plant Alert	3
Preserve Spotlight	4
Cardinal	6
Reader Survey	7

Visitor Center at Old Woman Creek Closed for Renovation

The visitor and research center at Old Woman Creek State Nature Preserve, located in Erie County on the Lake Erie shore, closed for remodeling and expansion in early November. The preserve's trails and observation decks will remain open during most of the construction period, scheduled to run through June 2002.

"A recent facility assessment showed us that we urgently needed to deal with increasing customer service demands," said Gene Wright, administrator of Old Woman Creek. "We'll now have a place to greet and interact with visitors, house temporary exhibits of local interest and meet rising operational needs."

The facility is also classified as a National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Access to the main parking lot will be limited during the construction period and two handicapped parking spaces have been relocated. Restrooms are closed, but other public facilities are located in Huron, within a few miles of the preserve. For safety reasons there may be a need to occasionally

close the preserve to visitors; total closures will be minimal.

This eight-month project will add 1,993 square feet to the preserve's existing visitor and research center and provide pervious surface parking areas, as well as expand exhibit areas and workspace. The project also includes a 900 square foot addition to the dormitory and new storage buildings.

The remodeling project will utilize a variety of "green materials," including low-voltage, high efficiency lighting, recycled materials and environmentally-friendly construction technology. The project is jointly funded by the state's NatureWorks program and the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

"This kind of project gives the division and our federal partner, NOAA, a chance to showcase our combined



efforts to achieve sustainable estuarine and coastal communities," said Stu Lewis, chief of the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves.

Old Woman Creek is a popular north central coastal destination, drawing more than 40,000 visitors annually. Its 571 acres have a variety of habitats, including an open water estuary, marshland, 15-acre wooded island and a barrier beach, separating the estuary from Lake Erie. These habitats are home to many rare and endangered plant and animal species.

Before visiting Old Woman Creek, call the preserve at (419) 433-4601 for construction updates. ✓

Fruit of the Season *continued from front page*

Let's return to that little chickadee feeding on those poison ivy berries. Taking many forms, poison ivy (*Toxicodendron*) is found growing in nearly every habitat and location in Ohio.

Poison ivy creeps, clings and climbs. The old folk rhyme says it best—"leaves of three, let them be; berries of white, run in fright." While we humans suffer greatly from the clear, sticky oil known scientifically as urushiol and found in all parts of the plant, wildlife has no such worries.

The potentially toxic poison ivy berry plays an important role in winter because it provides nutrition for many animals. Deer and birds feast on the white or gray berries, immune to the effects of the oil. Once excreted, the small, hardened seed is now pre-digested and fertilized, which makes spreading it likely.

Found in the woods, clusters of berries perch at the tips of spicebush (*Lindera*



benzoin) branches. This shrub, which grows to 12 feet in height, is found in stream bottoms and rich moist woodlands. Its name is derived from the spicy fragrance emitted when a twig is snapped or a leaf is crushed. The fruit is red and 3/8 of an inch long. Its seed is large and the fleshy portion of the berry has a spicy, peppery taste.

Spicebush berries mature in September or October; if left alone they will persist throughout the winter. Many bird species will feed on the berries in winter, including bobwhites and flickers.

Be sure to look for the berry's bright red color nestled among the branches

of the attractive shrub. Spicebush berries are safe for human consumption. They can be dried, ground and used as a substitute for allspice in any recipe.

As you hike in winter, it's important to look down along the edges of the trail, as well as straight ahead. Many treasures await the sharp-eyed hiker. They may include the remnants of once colorful fungi silently clinging to decaying logs, brown skeletal remains of the parasitic beechdrops near the base of an American beech tree or the bright red berries of the prostrate evergreen creeping vine known as partridge berry (*Mitchella repens*).

A member of the Bedstraw or Madder family (*Rubiaceae*), the partridge berry is persistent and will stay on the vine until spring. Both the hungry bird or hiker alike may enjoy the berries with their slightly wintergreen taste. I enjoy their refreshing flavor on a cold winter's day.

Invasive Plant Alert #10

Japanese Honeysuckle *Lonicera japonica*

Description: Japanese honeysuckle is a vine that has entire and opposite leaves, oval to oblong, from 1-1/2 to 3 inches long. In Ohio, the leaves are semi-evergreen, persisting late into winter or early spring. The stems are usually hairy and hollow inside, reaching a length of 30 feet or more. A profusion of two-lipped, very fragrant, white to yellow flowers are produced in pairs in the leaf axils along the stems.



Flowering occurs primarily from April to June, but Japanese honeysuckle has been known to extend its flowering season into late September.

Japanese honeysuckle blooms and fruit all along the stems; other honeysuckle

vines bloom and fruits only at the ends of the stems. The fruit is a many-seeded, black, pulpy berry maturing from September to November.

Habitat: Japanese honeysuckle thrives in disturbed habitats, such as roadsides, trails, fencerows, abandoned fields and forest edges. Disturbances, such as logging, road building, floods and windstorms, create an opportunity for this vine to invade native plant communities, especially the understory of woodlands. This invasive vine is found in many of our woodland nature preserves throughout the state.

Distribution: Japanese honeysuckle is native to eastern Asia and was introduced into New York in 1806 as an ornamental plant and ground cover. Now distributed over most of the southern and eastern United States, it is often planted as a source of food for wildlife. This species is found throughout Ohio, but seems to be more prevalent in the southern part of the state.

Problem: Japanese honeysuckle is an aggressive vine that can severely damage native plant populations by limiting needed sunlight, constricting nutrient flow in stems and overweighting treetops, which increases the

likelihood of wind damage. Japanese honeysuckle is a prolific seed producer with the seeds often being dispersed by birds. The root system is very persistent and capable of extensive root suckering. Plants tend to regenerate quickly after cutting.



Management: Burning, in combination with systemic herbicide application, may be an effective control method. Herbicide can be applied to the leaves when native plants are dormant, such as in late fall or early spring. Be aware there are native climbing honeysuckles in Ohio, such as limber honeysuckle (*Lonicera dioica*).

Alternative Native Plants: Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), raccoon-grape (*Ampelopsis cordata*), trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) and virgin's bower (*Clematis virginiana*). ✓

Jennifer Windus, Research and Monitoring Section

Once picked, notice the two “eyes” on the berry. This is the result of twin flowers working together to form one berry. This condition, known as dimorphism, which means “to occur in two forms,” signifies that the two flowers are structurally different from each other. Neither flower can fertilize itself and both flowers must be cross-pollinated by insects. Look for this richly-colored green vine on your next winter hike.

Other berries you might encounter include those of greenbrier, viburnum, bittersweet vine, sassafras, teaberry and rose hips. Regardless of the species, winter berries provide a source of nourishment and a punctuation of color on the winter landscape.

Ohio's state nature preserves provide a wonderful opportunity to experience winter at its finest. Why not visit a preserve or two this winter? After all, that book can wait until evening... ✓

Mark Howes

Central Ohio Regional Manager



Jennifer Windus, DNAP Chief Stu Lewis and David Parshall of the Ohio Lepidopterists.

Butterfly Recovery Efforts Recognized

Jennifer Windus, DNAP research and monitoring administrator, was recognized by The Ohio Lepidopterists for her work in returning the Karner blue butterfly to Ohio.

The Karner blue butterfly is a state- and federal-endangered butterfly, extirpated from the Oak Openings of northwest Ohio in the late 1980s and reintroduced in 1998. A member of the Ohio Karner blue butterfly recovery team since 1993, Windus helped coordinate early efforts to plan and implement surveys and reintroduction of this rare butterfly.

Recovery efforts in Ohio have been a collaborative effort between ODNR divisions of Wildlife, Natural Areas and Preserves, and Forestry, as well as The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, The Ohio Lepidopterists, the Toledo Zoo, Toledo MetroParks and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. ✓

Preserve Spotlight

Boord State Nature Preserve A Hidden Gem in Washington County

Along the Ohio River in southeastern Ohio rests beautiful Washington County, and deep within Washington County lies a rarely-visited natural area—a preserve—Boord State Nature Preserve.

At 89 acres, the smaller size of Boord is not an indicator of magnitude of loveliness. Imagine a miniature Hocking Hills preserve and you've got Boord, but remember to take away the people, because on most days you'll have the preserve to yourself.

In 1986, the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves used Land and Water Conservation Funds to purchase this impressive hemlock gorge along Falls Run from Larry and Lloyd Boord. The brothers, deeply committed to land preservation, generously donated funds at the time to assist with development and management of the area. The preserve was dedicated in honor of their parents, Cora B. and Elza R. Boord.

Visitors to Boord are treated to a diversity of plant communities. Four major vegetation zones can be found along the trail: the stream corridor along Falls Run, a mature hardwood forest, a younger forest and a white pine plantation. Together, they create a variety of experiences for preserve visitors.

A 3/4 mile trail leads to an observation deck overlooking a waterfall where the stream begins to cut through a deep gorge lined with hemlocks. As the trail continues, the Permian-age sandstone walls of the gorge eventually rise to heights of 60 to 80 feet above Falls Run.

Leaving the stream and heading up hill, the trail traverses a diverse woodland area containing the scarce rock skullcap, and, when in season, a fine selection of spring wildflowers.

In the spring, two state-listed wildflowers can be found blooming in the preserve—the tiny narrow-leaved toothwort and the brightly-colored golden-knees. The latter species is a showy member of the Aster family.

In an almost magical moment, the trail abruptly enters a white pine wood forest and winds through a non-native white pine plantation. The contrast is amazing—from a highly-diverse mature hardwood forest to a nearly pure stand of white pines. In a few footsteps you leave the crunchy-leaved deciduous forest floor and begin walking upon a softly-cushioned carpet of pine needles, nearly all sounds absorbed by the surrounding pines.

After walking through the quiet pines, the trail emerges into an old field where shrubby St. Johns-wort brightens a summer day with yellow flowers, before bringing the visitor back to the parking area.

To find Boord Preserve, travel 4-1/2 miles east of Bartlett on State Route 550, then south 3/4 of a mile on County Road 6 to Township Road 69. Turn right and the parking area is 1/2 mile on the left. ✓

*Phil Zito,
Southeastern District
Preserve Manager*

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Volunteering... *hard work and special times*

Volunteers play an important role in Ohio's state nature preserves. One especially supportive group of volunteers, the Columbus Audubon Society, has given 7-10 days annually to the division for almost two decades.

During a beautiful, warm and sunny weekend in mid-October, 18 members of this faithful group traveled to Old Woman Creek to spend two days building a wooden boardwalk across one of the preserve's wetter trail areas.

It is amazing to see so many people eagerly survey an enormous pile of lumber—not as a tortuous obstacle, but rather an inspirational challenge. Suddenly, after brief instructions, water bottles, tools and work gloves appeared as people launched into the task at hand.

Some volunteers preferred the seemingly endless job of carrying lumber back to the remote reaches of the worksite. Others stayed busy measuring and cutting the bulk lumber, while still others grabbed shovels, hoes or spud bars and began preparing the trail route for the base lumber.

It is a wonder to suddenly see a form begin to take shape. Crew members weary from hauling supplies begin picking up their favorite hammers—soon the melody of pounding nails echoed across the valley.

When the sun finally settled down toward its nighttime rest, the final nail was ceremoniously pounded into its final resting place. Always a special moment, volunteers joined in a unanimous cry of victory.

For nearly 20 years, it has been my pleasure to work with this special group of volunteers—they've worked hard, but more importantly, have helped to create special memories. ✓

*Bill Loebick
Real Estate Administrator*



The Cardinal

There is nothing quite like the flash of a brilliantly-colored red male cardinal to brighten a gray winter's day. These cheery, easily-identified birds have become an important part of Ohio's wildlife picture. It was not always so.

When the first Euro-American settlers moved into the Ohio country, the northern cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) was found only in the central and southern parts of the state. This was a result of their preference for nesting in thickets, shrubby woodland edges and the brushy margins of ponds.

Because most of primeval Ohio was covered with dense old-growth forest, such habitat was rare. The scattered prairie openings and old corn fields surrounding abandoned Indian villages provided the best opportunities for cardinals to nest. Since these were few and located mainly in central and southern Ohio, cardinals were rare and localized.

European settlement in Ohio changed that forever. As the forest fell before the axe, brushy fencerows and abandoned fields became more common, and so did cardinals. By 1830, they had finally spread to the northern parts of the state. By the early twentieth century, cardinals were found in every Ohio county.

Today's local populations of cardinals are directly related to habitat. The most recent statewide breeding survey, completed in 1991, found them to be abundant in southwest Ohio's Illinoian Till Plain where the mix of field and scrub land is optimal. Their population is less dense within the Glaciated Plateau of northeast Ohio and the Till Plain regions of western Ohio where farming is more intense. In the southeastern area of the state, the Unglaciated Plateau region has fewer still, reflecting its increasing forest cover. The very intensively farmed Lake Erie Plain region has the fewest cardinals of all.

The breeding success of cardinals is helped by their adaptability and apparent tolerance of humans. To a cardinal, a cemetery, golf course or back yard looks enough like a shrub thicket to be acceptable and they nest quite successfully in such places.

Cardinals prefer to build their nests 4 to 8 feet above the ground in dense trees or shrubs. Our habit of planting conifers around house foundations has been a real boon to them. Start looking for nest building activity in April and expect the first eggs later that month. The first broods of young cardinals fledge between May and

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SMALL INVESTMENTS ADD UP TO A **GRAND PRESERVE**

continued from front page

rising nearly 200 feet above the valley floor. The cool gorge, only 100 feet wide in places, is considered one of the deepest in Ohio.

Conkle's Hollow also features numerous waterfalls cascading over sandstone cliffs. The cliff tops with their magnificent overlooks and the quiet gorge below offer visitors an opportunity to explore a variety of habitats, each with its own plant and animal communities.

Nature preserves are special places set aside to protect habitat and communities of natural significance. According to Mark Howes, regional preserve manager, trails and boardwalks protect the preserve from the visitor and the visitor from the preserve.

Prior to the construction of a 220-foot staircase, which made access to the East Rim easier, hikers had only a makeshift staircase of railroad ties and concrete slabs to assist in their travel. Today, because of Checkoff Program funds, the trail has a wooden staircase, including decks and benches to help visitors up and down the steep hillside.

Another benefit of the project was the preservation of the area, which had become heavily disturbed over the years when hikers formed their own trails down the hill. Now only taking up a 5-foot corridor, the staircase is protecting an additional 10-20 feet along each side of its entire length.

"Unique plants, such as the tway blade orchid, showy orchis and wood betony, were unable to grow in the disturbed areas," said Howes. "Now these lovely wildflowers are growing up against the stairs."

Another project supported by the Checkoff Program was the 12-foot by 20-foot observation deck built near the upper falls area along the Rim Trail. The 90-foot high deck serves two purposes—safety and scenic viewing. In an area once plagued by serious accidents, visitors can now safely peer over the deck and enjoy the splendor of water in flight as seasonal waterfalls fall toward the gorge.

In 1990, the gorge's easily traversed trail was made even easier by a 125-foot boardwalk. Hiking this section of the 1/2-mile trail, one of Hocking Hill's easiest and most popular, was often a trudge through muck and mud until

1990 when the Checkoff Program funded a new boardwalk. Howes estimates that 150,000 visitors use that boardwalk each year.

Leaving the parking lot, a bridge over Pine Creek brings visitors into the preserve. Before continuing down the trail, visitors may stop at the informational display area, also made possible through tax checkoff donations. Here, they can spend a few minutes learning about the area's natural history and see a three-dimensional model of the preserve, as well as obtain information on other preserves in the Hocking Hills region.

"Conkle's Hollow State Nature Preserve has become one of the most popular natural areas to hike and enjoy. This is due in no small part to the generous contributions made by so many citizens of Ohio," said Howes.

Winter, spring, summer or fall—because of the Ohio Natural Areas Income Tax Checkoff Program, anytime is a great time to visit Conkle's Hollow State Nature Preserve. From Logan, the preserve is located 12 miles south on S.R. 664, 1 mile north on S.R. 374 and 1/4 mile east on Big Pine Road. For more information, please call (740) 420-3445. ✓

Natural Ohio Reader Survey

Over the past two years, the division has made a lot of changes, both editorially and graphically, to our newsletter, *Natural Ohio*. Here's your chance to tell us what you think about the newsletter, its content and what's important to you.

To make it easy to respond, there are three ways you can forward the survey to us:

- Access the survey on our web site at: www.ohiodnr.com/dnap/survey.
- Mail the survey to:
ODNR, Division of Natural Areas & Preserves • Attn: Editor, Natural Ohio
1889 Fountain Square Court, F-1 • Columbus, OH 43224
- Or, fax the survey to (614) 267-3096

Thank you in advance for sharing your thoughts!

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

Check which category best describes you:

- Teacher/educator
- State, county or locally-elected official
- Environmental organization member (past or present)
- Federal, state or local employee
- Nature enthusiast
- Other (_____)

How old are you?

- Under 18
- 19-34
- 35-50
- Over 50

Where do you live?

- City (50,000 people or more)
- Town (less than 50,000 people)
- Rural

Please categorize your education:

- High school
- Some college
- Technical school graduate
- College graduate
- graduate degree

How many state nature preserves have you visited in the last two years?

- More than five
- Three to five
- Two
- One
- None

TELL US ABOUT THE NATURAL OHIO NEWSLETTER

How long have you been receiving *Natural Ohio*?

- Less than one year
- Two to five years
- More than five years

How much time do you spend reading the newsletter?

- less than five minutes
- 5 to 10 minutes
- 10 to 15 minutes
- 15 to 30 minutes
- more than 30 minutes

Generally, are the articles in *Natural Ohio*...

- Too technical or scientific in nature
- Not technical or scientific enough
- A good balance of general and technical/scientific information

The following is a list of general topics featured in past newsletters; please check all the subjects you enjoy reading about...

- State nature preserve spotlight
- State scenic river spotlight
- Plants
- Invasive plants
- Trees
- Birds
- Mammals
- Amphibians and reptiles
- Fish and other aquatic wildlife
- Stream quality monitoring activities
- Geologic and natural history
- Preserve or scenic river area improvements
- Calendar of events
- Staff spotlights
- Volunteer opportunities and highlights
- Outdoor recreation opportunities
- Annual rare plant finds
- Botany
- Nature—General and Fun Facts

Do you have any additional comments about the *Natural Ohio* newsletter?



*The Cardinal
continued from page 6*

June, giving parent birds time to raise another family or two before the season advances too far. Such exuberant parenthood is another reason their population grew so rapidly once habitat conditions improved.

Cardinals are permanent residents of Ohio, helped through winter by our increasingly common practice of bird feeding. The cardinal's diet consists of fruits, seeds and insects. At the feeding station, they prefer unshelled black-oil sunflower seeds, but will also eat safflower, cracked corn, white proso millet, bread, nutmeats and peanut butter mixes.

Interestingly, cardinals are more numerous during winter when they gather into flocks which may include as many as 60 birds. By the time spring arrives, winter mortality has reduced their ranks, but not their vivacity.

Cardinals mate for life. The sight and sound of a lusty male cardinal singing his heart out to a nearby ladylove raises our spirits, on many a dreary day, no doubt a factor in the cardinal being the official bird of Ohio.

In the words of W. L. Dawson who wrote about Ohio's birds at the turn of the century, *"Not merely for the splendor of his plumage, but for the gentle boldness of his comradeship and the daily heartening of his stirring song, the cardinal is beloved of all who know him."* ✓

Tim Snyder

West Central District Preserve Manager

Help Protect Ohio's Special Places

Please use Line 24 on your income tax form to donate to the preservation of Ohio's nature preserves and scenic rivers.

It's easy to support the preservation of Ohio's natural heritage through the Natural Areas Checkoff Program. Taxpayers may donate any portion of their Ohio state income tax refund to support natural areas acquisitions, education programs, scientific research and protection of threatened and endangered species.

Please use Line 24 on your income tax form to donate to the preservation of Ohio's nature preserves and scenic rivers. Your generous donation helps protect high-quality scenic rivers, significant native plant communities, such as bogs, prairies, oak savan-

nas and old growth woodlands, and numerous rare plant and animal species.

Today, only scattered remnants of Ohio's unspoiled natural landscape remain as tributes to the state's proud natural heritage. Join the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves... together we can make a difference! ✓



PRESERVING NATURE TODAY FOR THE NEEDS OF TOMORROW

The Division of Natural Areas and Preserves' Mission Statement
Administer a system of nature preserves and scenic rivers by identifying and protecting Ohio's significant natural features.

Vision Statement
Leading Ohio in the stewardship of its natural heritage.

This newsletter is a free public service made possible through your contributions to the Ohio Natural Areas Income Tax Checkoff Program. If you are receiving duplicate newsletters, please contact (614) 265-6453.

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