Changing Seasons in the Corridor
Tim Sisson

Late last year the Western Wildlife Corridor went through some truly dramatic seasonal changes. In the fall, the leaves had some of the most spectacular colors I have ever seen. They were a little later than usual, peaking at the start of November, but the leaves were truly brilliant. On one memorable hike at Buckeye Trace, the sugar maples literally glowed with red and gold. The next day I was treated to the same show on Sister’s Hill. The effect against the blue sky was stunning!

But then winter really hit us. Our Wednesday morning hiking group was enveloped in a strong snow shower on Bender Mountain in late November. The snow was so thick it seemed the top of the mountain was an island surrounded by a snow sea. We couldn’t see Kentucky across the river or even the forest on the other side of Rapid Run Creek.

That was just a small hint of things to come. Later, in December, we had lots more snow, almost breaking the record for the total amount of snowfall for that month. I had set up our new scouting camera at Buckeye Trace before the big snowfall of December 6. When I came back to retrieve it, there were many, many animal tracks in the snow. I couldn’t wait to see what critters had ventured in front of the camera. As you can see from the pictures I wasn’t disappointed. Lots of turkeys had been feeding there and the young buck almost seemed to be posing for me. By the way, our camera takes movies too. Please visit our website to see more of the animals in the corridor in action.

With the snow came a deep freeze. On a trip to Bender Mountain a short time later, I decided to visit Rapid Run Creek to see if there were any interesting ice formations. Again I certainly wasn’t disappointed! The deep freeze had caused an elaborate ice sculpture on the cliff above the creek. In the creek itself the moving water caused some truly exotic ice formations. They reminded me of impressionist paintings.

I hope you too had a chance to get out in November and December to see the beauty of our corridor. The delightful scenes I found reminded me once again of how important it is that we protect it.
Last year we changed the focus of WWC’s annual spring wildflower event to make it an educational day, as well as being a lot of fun. This was a big hit, with many people joining the groups led by experienced wildflower enthusiasts! This year’s event on Saturday, April 26, continues with last year’s features and adds something new to make it even more enjoyable. We’ll still have some traditional teams for those who wish to register their favorite group.

Start times are 8 am with Panera’s bagels and coffee at the shelter at Embshoff Woods, and 1 pm at the gravel lot on Bender Road. When we head out into the preserves, you will have a chance to see uncommon flowers like shooting star, drooping trillium, blue-eyed Mary, the state-endangered fern-leaf phacelia and, with a little luck, the green dragon and federally-endangered running buffalo clover.

At the end of the day you will be treated to a lasagna dinner and presentation about wildflowers by Brian Jorg, Manager of Horticulture at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden. We will also have displays featuring native wildflowers and other plants to allow you to review what you learned through the day. There are sure to be tall tales about wildflowers to be enjoyed as well.

Per person fee is $15, which includes breakfast and dinner. Teams and individuals are encouraged to collect donations in advance just like we’ve always done, but it’s not required. This is still our biggest fundraising event, after all! Donations enable us to preserve and protect precious hillside habitat along the Ohio River.

The Flower-a-thon is an excellent chance to have fun while increasing your knowledge and appreciation for wildflowers no matter what your starting point is. Everyone is welcome. Please join us!
Habitat Restoration plus:

Saturday, March 22, 10 am to noon
Trail construction at Bender Mountain
Leader: John Klein 513.941.4877 or john.kleinp2@yahoo.com. Help us as we work to complete the trails in preparation for our big hike and dedication on April 19.

Saturday, March 29, 10 am to noon
Habitat Restoration at Buckeye Trace
Leader: Tim Sisson at 513.922.2104 or tsisson@fuse.net. We will be clearing honeysuckle from this preserve in Sayler Park.

Saturday, April 12, 9 am to noon
Habitat Restoration at Sister’s Hill
Leader: Greg Lang at 513.404.5250 or gfl2376@gmail.com. This time we’ll be clearing honeysuckle from our new property in Delhi.

Why habitat restoration? Many times the biggest threat to our preserves is invasion by alien plant species. Plants such as Amur (or bush) honeysuckle, euonymus and garlic mustard can produce such a dense cover of foliage that native plants cannot survive. We’ve been told that Amur honeysuckle even secretes a toxin that kills native plants! When we restore the habitat in one of our preserves, we remove these invasive alien plants so that native plants and animals can thrive. Contact Tim at 513.922.2104 or tsisson@fuse.net for more information.
Ned Keller grew up in Delhi, in a neighborhood which was then mostly wooded. He still likes to play in the woods when he isn’t practicing law. He believes that Western Wildlife Corridor’s mission of preserving and improving habitat is key to the long-term conservation of our native plants and animals.

Ned is currently a board member of the Audubon Society of Ohio, and in the past has also served as an officer or board member of several other local or statewide conservation organizations.

Presently there is much wildlife in the Western Wildlife Corridor. This includes the often seen deer and turkey and the often heard coyote. But that is not all that inhabits our preserves. We know this by identifying road kill. This is another method of finding out what lives here in the Corridor.

Dave Might, taxidermist, is always on the lookout for road kill to use in his practice. He has collected carcasses of certain species that we would not see or expect to be in the Corridor.

For example, Dave picked up a least weasel on Bender Road near the Sister of Charity’s Motherhouse. The carcass was in good shape so it was mounted and now resides in Dave’s sister’s house in Columbus, Ohio.

He has also collected for mounting two mink, a red fox kit, and a raccoon—all in the Corridor. Other species Dave has identified but not picked up, due to the poor condition of their pelt or the degree of decomposition of the specimen, are beaver, striped skunk, and opossum. Many of these species are not seen by the casual hiker because they are secretive or nocturnal. Dave has also picked up a Cooper’s hawk, a forest raptor, which is now in his freezer along with other road kills much to the chagrin of his wife.

It’s unfortunate that these creatures end their life under a moving vehicle, but we can benefit from these hapless creatures by learning more about the wildlife in the Western Wildlife Corridor.

Join us for our annual membership meeting on Tuesday, March 4 at 7 pm at Earth Connection, 370 Neeb Road in Delhi Township. Guest speaker Anita Buck will present a program entitled “Bats of the Midwest”.

Anita has been rehabilitating injured bats since 1991. She responds to phone calls about injured bats, orphaned baby bats, and bats in the wrong place (e.g. flying in people’s houses in winter). She cares for the bats until they are healthy, and then releases them. Occasionally, the bats have sustained injuries that make it impossible to survive in the wild. She finds homes for these bats with organizations that educate people about bats. She has two bats living in her home, Denise, who is 21 years old and Dale, who is 18.

Even if you think bats are creepy or scary, you should come to this program. Bats are fascinating creatures that play an important role in our ecosystem.

A brief review of Western Wildlife Corridor’s plans for the coming year will also be given. Light refreshments provided. The public is invited. Contact Pam at 513.227.3564 or cincynaturegirl@gmail.com for more details.

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I first met Susan Frede at a hearing in Addyston on a proposed development of a hilltop property above the village. Susan was opposed (no, make that strongly opposed) because the way the development was planned would have resulted in the unnecessary destruction of a large area of forested hillside. I could see right away that she was a kindred spirit.

Susan soon became a member of WWC and eventually a member of our Board of Trustees. We could always depend on Susan to provide good input into any topic we were discussing. She became our Secretary and did an absolutely great job of capturing details of complicated discussions.

I wish Susan the best of luck as she leaves the WWC Board and moves on to new challenges.

Please indicate how you would like to help!

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Please mail to:
Western Wildlife Corridor, Inc.
PO Box 389077
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Thank you for supporting the Western Wildlife Corridor’s mission to preserve the scenic beauty and natural resources of the Ohio River Valley!
Take a look at these additional photos of the seasons! The WWC’s Flower-a-thon is April 26, 2014! See inside article for more details.