

RAVINIA

An Advocate for Community Resources Published by Friends of the Ravines (FOR) Spring/Summer 2008

Shimmering Lights in the City

I have a confession to make. I've always been a city girl. I love summer evenings: soft shimmering lights, the low hum of the city inhabitants' lives pulsing under every distinct sound. Colors even seem more vibrant, everything more alive.

A summer in Paris, long ago, turned me into a spectator of all living things. I had a favorite intersection in the university district, where a cup of coffee would buy me hours of viewing as the denizens of the city walked by. I had a favorite seat, a certain table obtained after much trial and error, that gave me a perch to be envied. No detail was too small to observe and learn from.

So imagine my surprise last summer when that feeling returned at a different intersection here in our city. Lights flickered softly over waves of color. Chatter and laughter filled the air. Leisure and energy combined to form that feeling of peace, where everything is possible, and yet nothing was so urgent that it needed to be reached for right away.

It took a moment for me to reconcile myself to time and place, as that intersection isn't one you'd recognize on a map. It's the intersection of the Adena Brook and the Olentangy River, and my perch was the bench in front of the Whetstone Prairie.

On my way home from the local coffee shop, it seemed just the right temperature for an evening walk by the river on the Olentangy Bike Path. Somehow my feet found themselves detouring towards the Adena Brook. I'd been fortunate to be able to work a bit on the prairie over the last few years with a wonderful group of people called the Wild Ones. They planned and planted five acres of beautiful native plants and allowed more than a few of us to learn more about the natural history of the area. As I sat on the bench, dusk was falling on that beautiful July evening. Waves of bright pink beebalm were mixed with purple coneflower and the yellows of brown-eyed susans. At sunset, the colors blended, and the sky and land became one. All of a sudden, the light show began. Hundreds of fireflies rose off the prairie, and it was if the stars had wings.

Several more people stopped to gaze as the lights emerged. We could hear the laughter of children racing along the path, the

chatter of the red squirrels that live in the old buckeye tree, and the hum of crickets. It was one of those moments when time seems to stop.

Extraordinary to think, this place had not been here forever. Five years ago, it was just a field of nothing special.

Like most beautiful things, the Whetstone Prairie is more than just an enchanting place. The five acres of native plants, with their perennial root systems, have created a giant sponge that helps clean storm water destined for the river. Tall grasses that wave in the breeze have root systems that can be eight feet deep. As the water flows down the hill, it tumbles over and through the plants. Some of the water gets caught and drawn up by the plants themselves. Extra soil is trapped and added to the topsoil, and the plants quickly take up the fertilizer that comes from city lawns and gardens. Vernal pools fill up with water in the early spring and support the thousands of tadpoles that one sees swimming there. Dragonflies and damselflies hunt mosquito larvae and bring us those blissful summer evenings free of bites and buzzing. Tadpoles turn into American toads in April or May, and their songs fill the air for several weeks. A quick step to miss the tiniest of just-hatched creatures means that a trip to the vernal pools ends with muddy feet.



Photograph of nodding onion courtesy of Beth Richardson.

FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

In addition to its usual wonderful array of articles about all aspects of ravines, this issue of *Ravinia* recognizes a special partner, the City of Columbus in general and the Department of Recreation and Parks specifically. It's a nice reminder that although we sometimes differ with the city about various issues, we both are committed to preserving our ravines and the undeveloped land that remains.

Cities in general do not have budgets adequate to do everything we hope from them, and that is especially true of recreation and parks budgets throughout the state and country. It's a real tribute to those in Friends of the Ravines and other groups who work with the city, and it's a real tribute to Alan McKnight and his staff, the City Council, and Mayor Coleman, that they divert funds from often more-popular initiatives to long-term preservation that doesn't always have such visible results.

We hope, in that spirit, that those of you who own land close to ravines will take advantage of the new policy that enables you to donate a conservation easement in return both for an annual contribution and for reduced taxes on the land. It may not be ideal for everyone, but you would be doing all of us an immense favor by establishing your own personal conservation area.

Jack Cooley, Chair, Board of Trustees

Shimmering Lights in the City, continued from page 1

Summer in prairie means a burst of green followed by purple nodding onions and ground petunias. Pink beebalm, coneflowers, and cupplants emerge around the Fourth of July and stay until school starts in the fall. The lazy days of August find a caterpillar eating its weight in Sullivant's milkweed, and its monarch cousin emerging to dry off its new wings. Neon dragonflies flitter about the path, and bees make their home on every other flower head. Ten-foot-tall cupplants, with their cuplike leaves, become impromptu birdbaths and launching towers for the goldfinch that play among the blossoms. The vernal pools, dried up months ago, are filled with brilliant red cardinal flowers and blue lobelia.

It is extraordinary that these blooms last the summer, as there is no watering source or hose within a quarter of a mile. Native plants, accustomed to our quirky Ohio weather, shine through our weeks of cold rain and blistering heat without complaint, when hothouse flowers wilted away long ago.

On another day, I had a chance to walk the bike path where it meanders along the Olentangy River. I was amazed to see pink monarda, purple coneflower, and brown-eyed susan where there hadn't been anything but garlic mustard before.

NEWS FROM THE RAVINE

GLEN ECHO RAVINE residents, this is the latest news on the upcoming Beulah Trunk Rehabilitation. Assistant Director of Department of Public Utilities Rick Tilton reports that the Division of Sewerage and Drainage continues to work through easement and budget concerns related to the project.

IUKA RAVINE is a likely location for rain gardens, which would both beautify the ravine and relieve storm sewers of run-off during heavy rains. The center boulevard already serves as a natural basin; minor modifications will complete the proposed rain garden project.

LINWORTH RAVINE residents, *Ravinia* staff apologizes! In two issues we have incorrectly identified your ravine as Linden Ravine. We thank our readers who politely questioned the erroneous information.

OVERBROOK RAVINE has been the site of amazing wild life activity. Neighbors report sightings of coyote, red fox, and deer. Also, Adena Brook Community's nesting box program is improving the bird, flying squirrel, and bat population.

RUSH RUN activities include a dedication of Park Boulevard Park, spring clean-ups, garlic mustard removal, and finalizing plans for a rain garden.

Big bluestem and Indian grass are showing up intermittently along the sides of the river, their roots preventing erosion. They stabilize the riverbank and clean the river of things that shouldn't be there. Because they are perennial, we can hope that they'll be there for years to come.

On my way to my favorite bench, I passed by the bridge that crosses over Adena Brook. An orange butterfly weed, complete with butterflies, had jumped the fence and was happily flourishing in the sun along the brook. I too jumped the fence and picked up the old plastic grocery bag and Styrofoam cup that lay next to it. I figured that if it could help clean the river, I could too. After all, a great perch is hard to find. I want this one to be here for a long, long time.

To visit the Whetstone Prairie: From I-71, exit on North Broadway, go west to High St., turn north on High St., proceed approximately 1.5 miles north to the Whetstone Park entrance at 3901 N. High St. Enter here and follow the park entry road to the lower parking lot. Turn left at the open picnic houses and park as close to the turnaround as possible. The prairie is located over the footbridge to the left. Hope to see you there.



Invasive Plants Can Take Over the Neighborhood

Kill a plant. What a wonderfully ironic idea the caller offered: We can work to save the planet by eradicating growing things.

Well, certain growing things. Specifically, imported plants that are invasivespreading fast and threatening indigenous species.

Purple loosestrife. Garlic mustard. Multiflora rose. Honeysuckle. Tree of heaven. Privet. To name only a few.

The once desirable plants have turned into costly environmental nightmares in the United States. A Cornell University report estimated that states spend \$45 million a year trying to control only one exotic: purple loosestrife.

Such invasive plants were introduced by accident.

People planted others not knowing that we'd lose all control. They grow so fast that they crowd out the indigenous plants that feed our animals.

Garlic mustard can crowd out native wildflowers in just seven years. Even deer refuse to eat it.

A few of the invasive plants-such as loosestrife and garlic mustardjumped the garden gate and took root everywhere.

The Ten Most Invasive Plants in Ohio

Japanese Honeysuckle (Lonicera japonica) Japanese Knotweed (Polygonum cuspidatum) Autumn-olive (Elaeagnus umbellate) **Buckthorn** (Rhamus frangula, R. cathartica) **Purple Loosestrife** (Lythrum salicaria) **Common Reed Grass** (Phragmites australis) **Reed Canary Grass** (Phalaris arundinacea) Garlic Mustard (Alliaria petiolata) Multiflora Rose (Rosa multiflora) Bush Honeysuckles (Lonicera maackii, L. tatarica, L. morrowii)

For more information on the invasive plants of Ohio, visit www.ohiodnr.com.

By Cindy Decker

Others-bush honeysuckle, tree of heaven, and multiflora rose-were planted extensively years ago in the hope of quick coverage for erosion and reforestation. They covered their target area and kept going.

In life, no matter what the problem, always beware the quick fix. It tends to cost more time and money in the long run.

These rogue garden plants are claiming large areas of natural lands.

Just because you don't see little honeysuckles popping up in your yard doesn't mean the seeds from your Amur honeysuckle aren't spreading. Birds eat them and leave them where they may. If you need proof, look along the fencerow.

To prevent these garden thugs, be careful what you plant. Even reputable nurseries sell plants the state considers worrisome in their spread.

Buy native plants when possible. Not only are they used to the vagaries of our climate, they also support animal and insect life.

If you want to buy native plants, become familiar with the Latin names of the plants you want. Indigenous and exotic plants may bear the same common name. For example, while "witch hazel" is a native shrub, not every plant called that is native; many varieties derive from Asian parents.

Ohio has identified its 10 worst invaders, although the species are by no means the only troublemakers. I've added a few from my personal hit list.

You may not even have to leave your vard to help the world. Kill one for the planet.

Friends of the Ravines received permission to reprint this article, which appeared in The Columbus Dispatch on 4/20/03.



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Elementary Botany at OWU in 1899

By Martha Harter Buckalew



OWU Campus in 1888

Since its beginnings in 1842, Ohio Wesleyan University has promoted the Sciences as well as the Classics in its curriculum. Its first president was a physician who, despite financial constraints, created a natural science museum and acquired collections of specimens. Many of its first professors, including its second president, were teachers of natural science. This progressive atmosphere attracted a number of outstanding academicians to faculty positions.

One of these notables was Dr. Edward Thompson Nelson, who taught Natural Science at Ohio Wesleyan University from 1871 until his death in 1897. He was a beloved professor whose service to humanity reached far beyond the classroom, as described in an obituary in the *Catalogue of Ohio Wesleyan University*.

As a college officer, Professor Nelson was conscientious, discriminating, and wise. As an instructor he was commanding in his acquisitions, artful in presentation, and enthusiastic in spirit. As a colleague he was always considerate, congenial, and fraternal. In his relation to students, he was most winning, as his sympathies with young people were without limit. He loved his lecture room as did all his pupils. Those he served became not simply his admirers but his associates and personal friends. He was equally faithful to all; recognizing the successful, stimulating the discouraged, and admonishing the careless and wayward.... He illustrated the value of scholarly attainments and culture when consecrated to the promotion of good citizenship, and sanity, and other economic and civic reforms. His love for his neighbor identified him with every enterprise seeking his neighbor's prosperity.

In 1895, Dr. Nelson published his *Herbarium and Plant Descriptions*, a portfolio designed for specimen collection for students taking his courses. His opening instructions advised:

Whatever is worth doing at all is certainly worth doing well. Neatness is the secret of success in all botanical work. Every step in the several processes of collecting, preserving, and mounting flowers and plants should be most carefully considered, since lack of attention at a single point will often destroy the entire value of a season's work.



Nelson's accomplishments were numerous. He received his B.A (1866) and M.A. (1869) from Ohio Wesleyan and another M.A. and Ph. D. (1869) from Yale University. In 1869, he led several parties of scientific explorers in expeditions, including one to the Bay of Fundy. From 1869 until he came to Ohio Wesleyan, Nelson was chairman of the Department of Science at Hanover College in Indiana. In addition to his teaching responsibilities at OWU, he served as President of the Ohio State Board of Health, studied Histology at University College in London, England, and held memberships in the Ohio Academy of Science and the Connecticut Academy of Science and Arts. In 1895, he was awarded an M.D. from Ohio Medical University.

Herbarium and Plant Descriptions is an example of his devotion to self-improvement and education. It introduced the student to basic steps of elementary botany through a methodical examination of each plant specimen. A folio of four pages that could be removed from the book was devoted to each plant. Following a detailed description of every part of a plant, three blank pages housed the pressed, dried, and mounted specimen so it could be preserved for future study.

Two years after Nelson's death, Anna Zimmerman, a student at Ohio Wesleyan, equipped with a pruning knife, trowel, pocket-size notebook, low-powered magnifying glass, portfolio, and cigar box, set out to collect flora specimens in southern Delaware County. The instructions in Nelson's book advised her to collect flowers when the air was bright and clear, to pay close attention to roots, and to observe their habits of growth. She was also instructed to collect stems, flowers, fruits, leaves, and roots of smaller herbs and to take special care to write down the *location* and *habitat* of each specimen—with the admonition not to trust these two important points to the memory.



The Glen in 1896-1899

The text in *Herbarium and Plant Descriptions* contained detailed instructions on how to press and mount plants. Students were advised to remove plants from the storage box as soon as possible after returning from a collecting trip and arrange them as they were to appear in the herbarium before placing them within sheets of thin, untreated paper. The preferred paper for drying was carpet or builders paper because it was the cheapest and most absorbent. Two wooden boards, slightly larger than the drying paper, and bricks completed the equipment for pressing plants.

Labeled plants, within their protective sheets, were placed between sheets of drying paper and the boards. Then they were exposed to 25 pounds of pressure, which could be increased gradually to 50 or even 100 pounds. Drying papers needed to be changed twice a day, or more often if they felt damp. Usually a week in the plant press was sufficient, although the time varied with the season and succulence of the plant. Once the drying process was completed, the final step was mounting the specimen in the herbarium.

Anna's collection contains 35 pressed plant specimens, all from the Ohio Wesleyan campus and surrounding areas; habitats included fields, banks of streams, dry woodland, and marsh land. She recorded finding specimens on Monnett Campus, in "The Glen," in the fields around the university, and in the city of Delaware. Each pressed and mounted specimen has a printed template, which Anna completed in her graceful penmanship.

continued on page 6



The Glen from OWU 1899 student yearbook





C. B. AUSTIN, M. A., REGISTRAR.

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DELAWARE, OHIO, Jan. 30, 1392.

Monnett Hall was razed in 1978 and replaced by Smith Hall, a coed dorm.

Visuals from the Ohio Wesleyan Historical Collection, Beeghly Library, Delaware, Ohio

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We marvel at the familiarity of some of her listings: Common Blue Violet, Sweet Scented Water Lily, Buttercup, Wild Columbine, Wild Black Cherry, High Blackberry, Anemone, Swamp Rose, Wild Sweet William, Jacob's Ladder, Common Locust, White Clover, Ground Ivy, Larger Blue Flag, Blue-Eyed Grass, Tulip Tree, Spring Beauty, Bluets, Beard Tongue, Flowering Dogwood, Mallow, Moneywort, Mouse-Eared Chickweed, Mayapple, Hedge Mustard, Mock Orange, Oxeye Daisy, Daisy Fleabane, Wild Water Poppy, False Solomon's Seal, Wild Cranesbill, and Wood Sorrel.

It is worth noting that most of the plants she gathered as a student exercise are still around some 100 years later, although development has robbed many of their 1899 habitats. However, over the years Ohio Wesleyan University has continued its 115-year-old commitment to the teaching of science through the acquisition of museum specimens. The Jason Swallen Herbarium, located on the Ohio Wesleyan campus, houses about 15,000 pressed and dried plant specimens that date back to the late 1800s. The preservation of this collection is ensured by an endowment from the late Jason Swallen, a 1924 Ohio Wesleyan graduate who was head curator at the Department of Botany in the Smithsonian's National Herbarium. The Jason Swallen Herbarium owns sixteen copies of Nelson's Herbarium and Plant Descriptions completed by OWU students; each book holds approximately 50 specimens. Considering the high bar that Dr. Nelson set, one wonders if Anna Zimmerman, who recorded only 35 specimens, passed the course.

At the time of this writing, one Internet book dealer listed nine copies of Dr. Edward T. Nelson's *Herbarium and Plant Descriptions* in his inventory. The cost per copy ranged from \$40 to over \$1000. The nine copies include records of plants from Pennsylvania, Michigan, New York, and Vermont, as well as various locations in Ohio.

Special thanks to Carol Holliger, Archivist at Archives of Ohio United Methodism; Dr. Nancy Murray, Curator of the Jason Swallen Herbarium; and Dr. Paul Burnam, Public Services Librarian at Ohio Wesleyan University.

Adena Brook Wildlife Habitat Enhancement

by Greg Cunningham

Before white settlers arrived in Ohio, the state was mostly forested and the location of many high-quality wetlands. The area that is now Columbus became a small permanent settlement, was cleared for agriculture, and then gradually built and expanded to become the major metropolitan area that exists today. Thanks to the difficult topography of the ravine areas, many were spared the plow and bulldozer and are now wooded islands surrounded by suburban pavement.

These wooded stream corridors still provide forage, sheltering, and nesting places for forest birds and mammals that are native to Ohio. The birds and mammals often visit the neighboring yards and feeders near the ravines, providing us with close encounters and much enjoyment.

In an effort to help these natives, the Adena Brook Community decided to embark on a wildlife enhancement project that included the installation of bird, flying squirrel, and bat boxes. The ravine has many trees, but, unfortunately, there are few "snags" (dead, standing trees) in which woodpeckers have created holes or natural processes have created cavities suitable for nesting. This, coupled with the unlawful removal of dead trees by firewood collectors, has resulted in very few suitable places for cavity-utilizing birds and mammals.

Under the direction of Susan Michael Barrett, coordinator of the Adena Brook Community, a program was developed to address this problem. Susan applied for and received grant money from The Columbus Foundation to purchase nest

boxes for the ravine. In addition, she established a sponsorship program whereby neighbors could sponsor nest boxes, with the proceeds being used to acquire more. Greg Cunningham, an Adena Brook Community member and Advisory Board member of Audubon Ohio, took over the responsibility of siting, installing, and maintaining the nest boxes. In all, over 50 nest boxes have been installed in the ravine and on neighboring properties.

The selected boxes are



A screech owl peeks out of a box in Cunningham's back yard. Photo by Casey Tucker.

Kudos to Columbus Recreation and Parks Department

By Martha Harter Buckalew

The four ravine ecosystems located north of downtown Columbus—Iuka, Glen Echo, Walhalla, and Adena—provide natural drainage systems for the Clintonville area. These areas support unique and often sensitive woodland habitats, whose stability and balance have been threatened by development and urbanization. The City of Columbus owns land in all four of the ravines. In spite of severe budget cuts in recent years, the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department has acquired land adjacent to three of the ravines to conserve and preserve these sensitive urban oases.

In 1919, Recreation and Parks began acquiring and preserving property in Iuka Ravine from Indianola Avenue to Fourth Street. It currently owns four acres within Iuka Ravine and hopes to acquire additional land. Recreation and Parks is working with the Iuka Ravine Association, which received an Urban Infrastructure Funds Grant from the city to improve Iuka Ravine. With these funds, new period lighting, picnic benches, sitting areas, and several rain gardens will be installed, which will improve the aesthetics and the environment.

Glen Echo Ravine began with 3.09 acres when the City of Columbus first acquired the property in 1912. Since 2000, Recreation and Parks has acquired roughly seven more acres for stream and ravine protection. Included in that area are recent purchases of 3.0 acres in 2006 and of 2.97 acres in 2007. These are wooded parkland areas. Thus, Recreation and Parks owns almost ten acres in and adjacent to Glen Echo

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Ravine. Glen Echo Ravine is located north of Cliffside Drive, from ¹/₄ mile east of Indianola to I–71.

In 1936, Recreation and Parks began acquiring and preserving property in the Overbrook Ravine area, from High Street to Cooke Road. Since then, it has acquired roughly 11 acres of wooded parkland to preserve and protect the Adena Brook Watershed. Much of the Overbrook Ravine area that Recreation and Parks does not own along Overbrook Drive is adjacent to the Adena Brook Stream; it is owned by the city Transportation Division and is considered right-of-way.

Walhalla Ravine is owned primarily by the adjacent private property owners and runs the length of Walhalla Road. It comprises about 16 acres of stream and ravine area between High Street and Indianola Avenue. The Transportation Division and Sewers and Drainage Division own the rightof-way associated with Walhalla Road.

Property owners adjacent to ravine areas should remember that the Recreation and Parks Department always welcomes conservation easements. Donation of a conservation easement insures that the land will be protected and may provide tax relief for a property owner.

Thanks to Tina Mohn, Property Manager for Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, for providing documentation for this article.

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YES! I WANT TO BE A SUPPORTING MEMBER OF FRIENDS OF THE RAVINES.		
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I want to volunteer to help Friends of the Ravines carry out its mission to protect ravine areas and educate the public. I can help by:		
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My special area of expertise is		
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Adena Brook, continued from page 6

intended for titmice, chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, flycatchers, screech and barred owls, flying squirrels, and bats. Monitoring and maintenance of the nest boxes in the ravine area shows that most have been used for purposes of nesting or roosting. Neighbors have also reported activity in boxes on their properties. Last year, screech owls nested in a box in the yard of Greg Cunningham on Glenmont near the ravine. The owl has been roosting in the box again this winter and will, we hope, rear another brood this spring.



The ravines of Clintonville provide a unique opportunity for wildlife viewing in the city. Through enhancement programs such as this, we can give urban wildlife a much-needed break.

Greg Cunningham installed and maintains nest boxes. Photo by Ann Tormet.

Thank You:

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Submissions and suggestions are welcome.

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