



UNIVERSITY OF MOUNT UNION
HUSTON-BRUMBAUGH
NATURE CENTER

Discover the Wonder of Nature's Ever-Changing Story

FALL/WINTER
2023

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John T. Huston – Dr. John D. Brumbaugh Nature Center

Mission Statement

The John T. Huston - Dr. John D. Brumbaugh Nature Center provides and supports opportunities for enjoying and learning about our natural and cultural heritage.

Staff

Cali Granger

Horticulture and Facility Coordinator

Michael Greiner

Site Manager

Jason Smith

Director

Bonnie Twaddle

Community Outreach Coordinator

Lin Wu

Ecologist

Adam Zorn

Program Manager

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Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center
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Summer Banding Summary

Adam Zorn

Bird banding research returned to the Nature Center this past summer! Many thanks to dedicated volunteer and master bird banding permittee Al Eibel for lending his time and expertise to facilitating this summer's banding activities. Bird banding data contributes to the foundational knowledge about the bird species residing at the Nature Center and their use of the habitats in and adjacent to the utility line corridor. All bird banding activities are conducted with the proper permits and authorization of the U.S. Geological Survey, Bird Banding Laboratory.

Eight banding sessions were conducted between June 9 and August 16 at the utility line corridor. Each banding session was conducted from sunrise to 11:30 a.m. A total of 121 birds comprising 23 different species were netted during the summer-long effort. All species, excluding Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, were banded and released accounting for 88 newly banded birds. There were 25 recaptures during the season which were representative of birds banded prior to calendar year 2023, birds banded in nest boxes elsewhere at the Nature Center, and birds previously banded and released this year at the utility line corridor.

Highlights from this summer include an after hatch year Northern Cardinal originally banded in August 2019 and recaptured on June 29, 2023 which makes that bird at least six years old. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Blue-headed Vireo (pictured above) were new species encountered during banding activities. The former is a regular breeding species each summer while the latter is a very uncommon species during the summer months in NE Ohio due to a breeding range typically further north. Four hatch year House Wrens originally banded in a nest box in the Nature Center's east meadow this summer traveled over 300 yards west through the old growth forest before being encountered in a net almost in sequential order! The top five species netted and released this summer were Gray Catbird, Wood Thrush, House Wren, Acadian Flycatcher, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

Bird Banding: A Student Perspective

Ava Fornara

Since my summer project last year as a Brumbaugh Scholar at the Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center, I have wanted to engage in hands-on research involving birds. The incorporation of bird banding into the Nature Center's events this summer was a major factor in why I applied to be the Visitor Services Associate for the summer of 2023. I was not expecting to do very much bird banding, since most of my job involved front desk work and assisting with programs and upkeep of the Nature Center. About once a week, however, I would assist in bird banding along the ROW (right of way) with Al Eibel and Adam Zorn. I had traversed the ROW many times before during my research of 2022, and I had discovered many different species of birds in and around it. Bird banding was a very different experience than the point counts I had previously conducted, but it was also extremely fascinating and enlightening.

I would start the day of banding by waking up before sunrise and setting up the mist nets. Afterward, a point count would be conducted throughout the banding session. Every 40 minutes, we would check the mist nets to see which birds had been caught in them. The birds would be held in paper bags, so that they would be calmed down while still being able to breathe. The actual process of banding the birds was quite insightful and interesting. Al would use special pliers to attach the bands to the birds' legs, while I would look at the birds' physical characteristics to determine their age and sex. Since I was an assistant with no prior experience in bird banding, I was not allowed to band the birds or remove them from the nets, but I was still able to hold the birds and release them from my hands after being banded.



Handling birds had its fair share of challenges- wrens would wiggle through the smallest gaps, woodpeckers would attempt to peck through the bag, cardinals would bite my hand and refuse to let go. It was entirely worth it, however, since I had never held a wild bird before, and getting to see them up close was an incredible experience. Before my time of bird banding, I did not know it was possible to tell the age of a bird by looking at its feathers, and it was very rewarding to get better at aging the birds as I attended more banding sessions. I would definitely recommend witnessing at least one banding session, and working with Al has inspired me to work towards earning my own banding permit someday.

Nature Center Welcomes Dr. Jason Smith



We're excited to announce the appointment of Dr. Jason Smith as the director of the Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center and professor of biology. Jason will be teaching courses in the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences in addition to his leadership of the Nature Center.

Jason has been a faculty member at the University of Florida since 2006 where he taught, conducted research, and carried out extension programs related to tree diseases and forest health. Jason's specialization is in the biology, diagnosis, and management of fungal diseases with an emphasis on new and emerging tree health issues. His extension programs focused on technology transfer of novel diagnostic methods for tree diseases, educating the public about new and emerging diseases, and providing training on diseases and decay in urban trees for the professional arboricultural industry.

With nearly 300-acres of mostly forested land managed by the Nature Center, Jason's research interests and specializations will be an important component to the education of the students in Mount Union's biology and environmental science programs.

Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center's Schedule of Events

General Information

All events begin at the Visitors Center and are held rain or shine unless otherwise indicated. Events marked with an asterisk (*) require registration. All other events are informal, open to adults and families, and are available without registration.

To register or inquire about events, call (330) 823-7487 or email naturecenter@mountunion.edu.

Relax and De-stress Event

Sunday, October 1 | 1-5 p.m.

EVERYONE needs to manage their stress these days. Take advantage of some relaxing activities such as chair yoga, strolling through the peaceful woods, walking the labyrinth, relaxing by the pond, listening to live music, making s'mores, and more. Come alone or bring the family – there is something for everyone!

The Big Sit!

Saturday, October 7 | 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

It's a "tailgate party for birders" with the objective to tally as many bird species as can be seen or heard inside a 17-ft count circle. Last year we tallied 36 species from our lawn chairs at the North Woods! Join us for a couple of minutes or a couple of hours during this annual, international, noncompetitive birding event.

*Wildflower Seed Collection

Saturday, October 21 | 1-2:30 p.m.

Assist the staff with collection of seeds from a variety of flowering plants. Participants will learn how to collect and process seeds for future planting and can take some seeds home. Wear sturdy shoes and long pants. ***Registration is required.**

*Diversity of Dahlias

Sunday, October 22 | 2-4 p.m.

Join Stan Vuletich a.k.a. 'Stan the Dahlia Man,' a certified Senior Dahlia Judge by the American Dahlia Society and volunteer at the Nature Center, in this hands-on and in-depth dive into the wonderful world of dahlias! Learn the common forms of dahlias, how to dig up tubers, store tubers over the winter, and collect seeds. Cut some of your favorite dahlia flowers and take free tubers and seeds! Event will be moved indoors for inclement weather. ***Registration is required and limited to 16 people.**

*Stark Stewardship Symposium

Friday, November 3 | 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Enjoy a full-day conference focusing on resources available to small- and large-scale property owners. Learn how to make conservation work for you from natural resource professionals. The event is co-hosted by Stark Soil & Water Conservation District and Stark Parks. Breakfast and lunch provided with registration. ***Register for the conference by visiting starkswcd.org or calling Stark Soil & Water at (330) 451-7645.**

*Introduction to Volunteer Opportunities

Sunday, November 19 | 2-4 p.m.

Have you been interested in Volunteering at the Nature Center but do not know where to begin? Then join us this afternoon to learn about the mission of the Nature Center, the history, the staff, what we do to achieve our mission and the vital roles that Volunteers provide to help us accomplish this endeavor. There are opportunities available for individuals and families of all ages. No commitments will be requested during this informational program. ***Register by November 17.**

Holiday Celebration Open House

Sunday, December 3 | 1-5 p.m.

The Visitors Center and Huston Cabin are dressed up for the holidays. Drop in from 1-5 p.m. to make some ornaments, enjoy acoustic music, and walk to the cabin. Great photo opportunities indoors and outdoors. Free and fun for the whole family.

124th Christmas Bird Count

December 14 – January 5 | All Day

Participate in the Audubon 124th Christmas Bird Count as a volunteer in the Canton (Dec. 14), Wilmot (Dec. 15), or Quail Hollow (Dec. 16) count circles. Join a team of volunteers to count birds in the field, or you may be able to participate at home. Visit the Audubon Society online at <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>.

Holiday Break

December 22 – January 1

The Visitors Center will be closed as part of the University of Mount Union's holiday break. Staff will be present daily for limited hours to respond to email, voice messages, and care for the animals. The Visitors Center will reopen on Tuesday, January 2.

*Trail Camera Treasures

Sunday, January 21

Nature Center trail cameras run nearly all year long on over 250-acres of land managed by the Nature Center. Thousands of photos of local wildlife are recorded, and we are looking forward to sharing some of our recent images and sequences captured on camera. ***Register by January 20.**

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 16-19

Join Nature Center staff as participants in the Great Backyard Bird Count in the comfort of the Bird Observatory. Save the dates!

Photo Contest and Exhibit Open House

Sunday, February 25 | 1-5 p.m.

Save the date! Photo submissions for the Nature Center's 22nd Annual Nature Photography Contest and Exhibit will be accepted beginning in February 2024. Participation is free, but submissions are limited to nature photos captured in eastern Ohio, including Lake Erie and the Ohio River basin. Photographers must be amateurs. Contest details and entry forms will be available by February 1. See page 5 for preliminary contest details.

Recurring Programs

Acoustic Jam

Oct. 1, Nov. 5, Dec. 3, Jan. 7, Feb. 4 | 2-4 p.m.

Join us at the Nature Center for a music jam. Bring an instrument or just come to listen. Beginners are welcome. Make new friends, have fun, and learn a new tune or two!

Get Wild & Wooly

Oct. 8, Nov. 12, Dec. 10, Jan. 14, Feb. 11 | 2-4 p.m.

Bring your spinning wheel, knitting, crochet, needle felts, looms, etc. for a wooly sharing of the fiber arts. Open to all interested in participating or curious to watch and learn.

Project Feeder Watch

Sundays from November through April

Count birds with the Nature Center staff and volunteers in the bird observatory. No registration required. You can participate at home too! Details at www.feederwatch.org

Volunteer Recognition

We extend a sincere thank you to our April, May, June, and July Volunteers! Our outstanding Volunteer staff assists us in maintaining high-quality programming and a beautiful facility. Thank you for ALL that you do!

Kaylee Adkins	Claire Fried	Bernie Miner
Kim Anderson	Sandy Gahan & Annie	Lukea Pitinii
Joseph Balogh	Georgene Gross	Karen Planisky
Judy Birmingham	Liza Harris	Joe Planisky
Rick Blessing	Ann Hendel	Joan Runion
Katriel Border	Paul Hobe	Adam Seefeldt
Nate Border	Gina Hoffman	Grace Seefeldt
Ruthie Border	Judy Horn	Joseph Seefeldt
Thaddeus Border	Anse Kee	Susan Smith
Hannah Botzman	Arlo Kee	Kenzlie Stafford
Patty Bruey	Julie Koziarz	Darla Sutton
Monica Budac	Liz Koziarz	Rich Sutton (father)
Micah Burns	Emily Krizner	Rich Sutton (son)
Jacob Buttar	Alex Kuttie & Troop 150	Caitlin Thouvenin
Kerry Cochran	Mary Lindsay	Kylie Thouvenin
Sarah Conley	Joseph "PJ" Lombard	Larry Thouvenin III
Mike Cope	Deena Long	Vivian Tisevich
Paula Cope	Chris Marks	Kristine Turko
Cub Scout Pack #2050	Amy McElhinney	Stan Vuletich
Shirley DeMaiolo	Kate McMahon	Sage Warner
Elayne Dunlap	Sarah McMahon	
Al Eible	Tammy Mierzna	
Marisa Fellin		
Clo Figaro		

Special Thanks

We want to extend a thank you to Stark Soil & Water District for facilitating the "Explore Vernal Pools" at our Nature Center for the public. Another thanks to DeHoff's Flowers and Greenhouse for providing a seed packet for every Alliance 3rd grader who participated in our Hands-On Children's Gardening Program. We truly appreciate all your years of support for this program!

22nd Annual Photography Contest



Save the Date!

Photo submissions for the Nature Center's 22nd Annual Nature Photography Contest and Exhibit will be accepted beginning in February 2024. There is still plenty of time to capture the perfect shot of your favorite subject, season, or landscape. Participation is free, but submissions are limited to nature photos captured in eastern Ohio, including Lake Erie and the Ohio River basin. Photographers must be amateurs.

The contest requires photo submissions being printed at 8"x10" size and matted (no frame or glass). An artists' reception and exhibit opening are scheduled for Sunday, February 25, 2024 from 1-5 p.m. Contest details and entry forms will be available by February 1.

Grounds and Trail Improvements

Summer has flown by with lots of general maintenance, property care, and a few major projects. Keeping trails clear and the boardwalk in good condition has been a challenge this past summer with so many storms testing the health and strength of our trees. The Visitors Center received a new roof and skylights this summer. This was a contracted job with some quality improvements like metal valleys and uniform ridge venting.

An issue a few people may have recognized for the last two growing seasons was the windmill was not pumping water for our gardening program. As it turns out, chasing down a knowledgeable contractor and the correct parts took some time. In the end, we carried out the project ourselves which involved removing 120 feet of galvanized well pipe, replacing two sections of well pipe, and replacing the lift pump at the bottom of that pipe. Of course, we've had a wetter summer than the previous two and have not required heavy watering in the garden. It's nice to know the windmill is working.

Our largest project of the summer was to build a 40-foot bridge to cross the stream on the west end of the Big Valley trail. A big shout out to our UMU summer student worker Michael Shields for his hard work to get this completed as quickly as we did!

Eagle Scout Alex Kuttie (Troop 150) recently completed his service project by upgrading our story walk. The story walk had been a temporary installment for several years to see how our visitors enjoyed it. With positive reviews and a collection of stories for all seasons of the year, Alex undertook the task of installing new permanent posts and panels. Alex also wrote his own story to go on display in the new story walk panels with illustration help by three other scouts.

Check out his handy work and enjoy his story of Fred the fox learning how to hunt in the woods. Great work Alex!



New Barnyard Residents

Three new ungulates took up residence in the Huston barn alongside Nature Center mainstays Simon (miniature donkey) and Lilly (sheep). In early July, Pedro (donkey), Max (goat), and Cedric (goat) joined the Nature Center herd. They arrived in advance of Nature Center director Dr. Jason Smith's move from Florida to Ohio. All three of Dr. Smith's animals have settled into their new surroundings in the Huston barn and adjacent pasture. They can often be found in the morning and late afternoon hours grazing in the pasture.



Though all the animals generally keep to themselves, any of them may approach visitors passing by along the Brumbaugh Woods and Huston Farm trails. Gentle pets on the back are welcome by the animals if they approach the fence. Do not enter the pastures or interior of the barn to interact with the animals. Please also refrain from feeding any of the animals – they have plenty of forage in the pasture to keep them happy and healthy. *Pictured top to bottom: Cedric the goat, Pedro the donkey, and Max the goat.*

Wetland Construction Update

Planning of a wetland and habitat restoration of the North Woods crop fields has been on-going since our project announcement in February 2023.

Additional data were collected by students in the University of Mount Union's civil engineering program as well as an environmental science case studies course during the Spring 2023 semester. The information gathered by the students, in addition to input from the Nature Center staff, have driven the development of construction plans for the area to be restored.

A series of four small, seasonal wetlands will capture and discharge water into a larger, permanent wetland basin before water eventually enters a stream in the woodlot on the north side of Daniel Street.

The capture and slow release of water across the wetland complex will restore some of the original hydrology of the site, mitigate erosion, create new habitat features for resident wildlife, and likely attract new wildlife species not currently residing at the Nature Center. Research and monitoring the restored area will allow us to understand how the project affects current wildlife and any species that immigrate to the site.

Ground-breaking should take place this fall. It may take several days to complete the work required to regrade portions of the site. Access to the property on the north side of Daniel Street may be restricted while equipment is being operated.

We're asking for your patience and cooperation should the area be closed on a future visit.



John T. Huston-Dr. John D.
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Discover the Wonder of Nature's Ever-Changing Story

Visitors Center and Bird Observatory Hours

April through October
Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday, 1-5 p.m.
Closed Mondays

November through March
Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Sunday 1-5 p.m.
Closed Mondays and Saturdays

Our trails are open from dawn to dusk every day.

**The Nature Center is located six miles south of
the University of Mount Union on Daniel Street, just off Route 183**



Contact us at:

Phone: (330) 823-7487
Email: naturecenter@mountunion.edu
mountunion.edu/nature-center