



UNIVERSITY OF MOUNT UNION HUSTON-BRUMBAUGH NATURE CENTER



2020 Spring Newsletter

Discover the Wonder of Nature's Ever-Changing Story

Nature Almanac

February

- 1 Look for snow fleas (springtails) around the base of trees
- 9 Full Snow Moon
- 24 Red-winged blackbirds return

March

- 1 Clean out and repair bird nesting boxes
- 9 Full Worm Moon
- 19 Spring Equinox

April

- 7 Full Pink Moon
- 13 Native bees emerge to begin their annual cycle
- 22 Earth Day

May

- 1 The first ducklings and goslings are born
- 11 Wild geraniums begin to bloom
- 16 Full Flower Moon



The 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:

Jamie Greiner, Sustainability and
Campus Outreach Manager
Michael Greiner, Site Manager
Karen Santee, Facilities Manager
R. Chris Stanton, Director
Bonnie Twaddle, Community Outreach
Coordinator
Lin Wu, Ecologist
Adam Zorn, Program Manager

Visit:

Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center
16146 Daniel St. NE
Minerva, Ohio 44657

Contact:

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Brumbaugh Nature Center
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Instagram: @JMNatureCenter



18th Annual Photography Contest and Exhibit

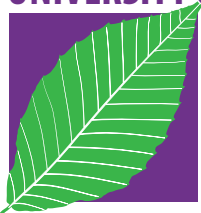
Amateur nature photographers are invited to enter their photos in the Nature Center's 18th Annual Nature Photography Contest and Exhibit on February 28. Participation is free, but submissions are limited to nature photos captured in eastern Ohio (east of Interstate 71 and Ohio Route 23). Photos must be size 8x10 inches and securely mounted and matted on 11x14 inch mount board (not under glass or in a frame). Photos must be the original work of the photographer.

Nature photos will be accepted for the following categories: Wildlife – Vertebrates, Wildlife - Invertebrates, Wild Plants, Landscapes, Seasons, Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center, Mount Union Campus, Black and White, Youth (photos by children 12 years old and under), and Open. The "Open" category has no geographic range restriction, but the entry must be a nature photo and is available only to participants who are submitting at least one other photo in another category. Ribbons will be awarded for each category. Formal judging will be completed by a panel of judges comprised of professional photographers and naturalists. Judges will also determine one winner of "Best in Show". The public will vote for "People's Choice" awards for each category. People's Choice judging is determined by ballots cast by the public from February 28 through March 15.

Photo submissions will be accepted by Nature Center staff in the Visitors Center during normal operating hours beginning in February. Photographers are limited to five entries in total and three entries per category, except the Open category which is limited to one entry per photographer. Photographers must have at least one other entry in another category to participate in the Open category. Same rules apply to youth participants. Deadline to submit a photo is Monday, February 24 at noon. Full details and contest entry forms are available on the Nature Center's website and in the Visitors Center lobby.

An open house/artist's reception will take place on Friday, February 28, from 6-8 p.m. Photographers, friends and the public are invited to attend. People's Choice balloting begins during the open house and runs through March 15. The exhibit runs through March 20. Questions regarding the contest and exhibit may be directed to Adam Zorn, program manager, at (330) 829-8988.

UNIVERSITY OF MOUNT UNION



HUSTON-BRUMBAUGH
**NATURE
CENTER**

The Taming of the Shrews: Yeah, right.

Al Eibel

Often during warm days of spring, summer, and autumn, I sit in the shade on the back steps of our house. Invariably, I will hear incessant squeaking in the thick groundcover, and soon a shrew will flash across the flagstone from one flower bed to another. If I am patient enough, sometimes it might return via the same path. I am guessing the small insectivore is either a Masked Shrew or a Northern Short-tailed Shrew, because they are the most common shrews in Ohio—possibly the most common mammals. But it is always moving much too quickly to effectively take a tail measurement and separate the two species. Research has shown that shrews are very vocal animals that might use squeaks and chitters to communicate and aid their movements by echolocation, but not with bat-like sophistication.

Shrews are among the most common mammals in our area of eastern Ohio, and to first-time observers, are probably identified as mice. Because shrews are furtive and elusive, we often catch only a phantom glimpse of the animals as they scurry across patches of open ground, and, at a glance, they really do resemble mice. However, closer observation reveals an animal much different. Shrews have pointy noses, short dark brown or gray or grayish-brown fur, small pinhead-sized eyes, and small ears. The best chance for me to see shrews up close and personal is a dead one that I discover. Once seen in that static state, there is little doubt that a person would confuse a mouse with a shrew.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources lists five species of shrews in Ohio. The most common being the Masked Shrew (also known as the Common Shrew) and the Northern Short-tailed Shrew. Other species include the North American Least Shrew, the Smokey Shrew, and the American Pygmy Shrew which is only two inches long and the smallest mammal in North America. Other species range in size from four to five inches long, excluding the tail. They all mass out at less than an ounce.

Because shrews do not hibernate and are active all year, it pays for them to have varied diets that include worms, slugs, snails, spiders, salamanders, carrion, and small birds. Shrews inhabit many different types of habitats ranging from marshes and swamps, wooded areas, birch and hemlock forests, grassy areas, and brushland; and that just about covers the entire state. Generally, shrews have one or two litters of pups per year, but the Pygmy Shrew has but one, and the Northern Short-tailed Shrew has up to three. Litter sizes range from two to ten pups. The prolific reproductive rate helps maintain populations because the life span averages a relatively short seventeen months. And that is only if a shrew does not fall prey to raccoons, snakes, foxes, dogs, cats, bobcats, skunks, weasels, hawks, or owls. I guess it pays to be furtive and elusive, but I bet there are shrews somewhere close to you.



Mount Union to Host Ohio District 13 Science Day

Jamie Greiner

The University of Mount Union is proud to once again be hosting Ohio District 13 Science Day on Saturday, March 14. One of 17 District Science Days in Ohio, the fair is open to 5th-12th graders from Carroll, Stark, and Tuscarawas counties. For so many students, the weeks and months of experimentation and research will finally pay off when they arrive at Bracy Hall ready to compete in our District Science Day!

The Ohio District 13 Science Day is a Broadcom Masters and Buckeye Science and Engineering Fair (BSEF) affiliate. Broadcom Masters is a competition that allows us to name our top 10% of 6th-8th grade students to be nominees for a national competition in Washington DC, where awards totaling over \$60,000 are available. The BSEF affords 9th-12th grade students

an opportunity to compete for advancement to the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), one of the largest and most prestigious science fairs in the world. Through District Science Days in Ohio, more than 1,000 students in 7th-12th grade will advance to the Ohio State Science Day and compete for more than 100 different scholarships and awards valued at more than \$2,500,000.

We cannot make Ohio District 13 Science Day a success without your help. We are looking for Science Day judges and volunteers. If you would like to be a judge or volunteer, please contact Jamie Greiner at (330) 829-8161 or greineja@mountunion.edu. You can also visit our District 13 Science Day webpage at: mountunion.edu/ohio-district-13-science-day.

Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center's Schedule of Events

Sunday, February 9

***Full Moon Night Hike 6-8 p.m.**

Take a walk under the light of the full Snow Moon! We'll walk to the east end of the trail system to view the moonrise, listen for owls, and walk by the light of the moon. Dress warm and bring a flashlight. This is a moderately strenuous walk suitable for older children and adults. ***Registration is required.**

Friday, February 14

Great Backyard Bird Count 9-11 a.m.

Join Nature Center staff and members of the Canton Audubon Society as participants in the Great Backyard Bird Count in the comfort of the Bird Observatory. Snacks and warm drinks provided.

Saturday, February 15

Great Backyard Bird Count 10 a.m.-noon

Sunday, February 16

Great Backyard Bird Count 1-3 p.m.

Monday, February 17

Great Backyard Bird Count 9-11 a.m.

Sunday, February 23

***Waste Not, Want Not 2-4 p.m.**

No one wants to waste money. Estimates indicate \$1,000-3,000 in food, per household, is thrown out every year. Judi Strauss will teach us how to bring that number down. Shopping, storage and preservation information will be provided. We will also cook some tasty food designed to get more from your food budget. ***Registration is required and will begin on Monday, January 27 at 9 a.m. Class is limited to 16 adults. Food Fee is \$8 per person.**

Friday, February 28

Nature Photo Contest and Exhibit 6-8 p.m.

See page 2 for entry and event details. Photo submission deadline is noon on Monday, February 24.

Sunday, March 8

***Bound to Dye: Yarn Dyeing Workshop 10 a.m.-4 p.m.**

Create uniquely designed yarns with natural dyes. Using yarn from protein fibers — protein fibers include sheep wool, alpaca, silk— learn bound resist techniques to create patterned or variegated yarns. Bring your own yarn in 10 yard skeins (maximum five skeins). One 10 yard skein, along with wooden wrapping pegs and resist tape, is included in your workshop cost. Additional wool skeins will be available for purchase if you don't want to bring any. Bring your own sack lunch and drinks. ***Registration is required and will begin on Monday, February 3 at 9 a.m. Class is limited to 12 adults. \$35 per person.**

Saturday, March 14

District 13 Science Day

We cannot make Ohio District 13 Science Day a success without your help. We are looking for Science Day judges and volunteers. If you would like to be a judge or volunteer, please contact Jamie Greiner at (330) 829-8161 or greineja@mountunion.edu. You can also visit our District 13 Science Day webpage at: mountunion.edu/ohio-district-13-science-day

Sunday, March 22

***Deer and Your Landscape 2-4 p.m.**

In conjunction with Alliance City Council, we are hosting presentations and discussion to help shed some light on protecting your landscape from foraging deer. Topics will include protection of your existing plants, landscaping options to minimize future destruction and discussion about the urban deer population in Alliance. There will be opportunities for questions and open discussion with the group to share your experiences. ***Registration is required.**

Sunday, March 29

***Amphibian Exploration 7-9 p.m.**

Spring rain rouses dormant amphibians from their long winter hibernation. Explore the vernal pool and pond for some of the amphibians that reside at the Nature Center. Good for children and adults. ***Registration is required.**

Friday, April 10

***Wildflower Walk 10 a.m.-noon**

Explore the Nature Center's old-growth forest and its abundant spring wildflowers. This is a slow, but moderate walk suitable for older children and adults. Dress for spring trail conditions. ***Registration is required.**

Sunday, April 19

Earth Month Celebration 2-4 p.m.

Join the UMU Green Raiders to celebrate Earth Month at the Nature Center. This year marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. The Earth Day theme in 2020 is climate action! Drop in for any or all of the afternoon's activities! Full details available as the date approaches. Great for all ages.

Sunday, April 26

Bioblitz: City Nature Challenge 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

A bioblitz is an intense period of biological surveying in an attempt to record all the living species within a designated area. Help us bioblitz the Nature Center and contribute sightings to the 2020 City Nature Challenge. Scheduled and self-guided activities with instruction will be available during the day. Full details available as the date approaches.

Sunday, May 3

***Spring Haiku Writing 2-4 p.m.**

Spring is an exciting time at the Nature Center due to the many rapid changes happening outside. We will try to capture

some of these exciting moments by writing and sharing our original haiku poems. Dress for spending some time outside to observe and write. This program is open to all ages—no experience necessary. ***Register by May 1.**

Saturday, May 9

***Vernal Pools 1-3 p.m.**

Vernal pools are important but temporary habitats for many organisms, like frogs, salamanders, and invertebrates. We will explore which species are living in the vernal pools of the Nature Center and how the environment supports their lifecycles. This program will take place indoors and outdoors (weather permitting). ***Registration is required.**

Saturday, May 23

***Spring Bird Walk 9-11 a.m.**

A guided exploration of the Nature Center's trails in search of warblers, flycatchers, orioles, and more! Bring your binoculars and dress for spring trail conditions. This is a slow, but moderate walk suitable for older children and adults. Meet in the Visitors Center. ***Registration is required.**

Sunday, May 24

***Its Not Just a Garden: Pollinator Habitat 2-4 p.m.**

You would be surprised by how much your outdoor space provides for pollinators already! We will discuss what you currently provide for pollinators (without even realizing it!), and simple steps you can take to make your outdoor space more pollinator-friendly. FREE seeds, plants, pollinator home and safe water dish will be available for those that want to add any or all of these. ***Registration is required and opens on Tuesday, April 28 at 9 a.m. Attendance is limited to 20 adults.**

Friday, May 29

Ohio Bat Roost Monitoring 8:15-9:30 p.m.

Bats are a critical part of our ecosystem and an important component of the agricultural economy. As the main predator of night-flying insects in Ohio, bats keep insect populations in check and reduce impacts on humans. Unfortunately, bat numbers have drastically declined over the last few years. Bring a lawn chair and assist the staff in counting bats that leave the roost in the Huston Barn. These data contribute to the Ohio Bat Roost Monitoring Project facilitated by the ODNR Division of Wildlife. Internet search "Ohio Bat Roost Monitoring Project" for more information. Canceled for rain.

Saturday, May 30

***Get Hooked on Fishing 2-4 p.m.**

Learn the basics of fishing from University of Mount Union biologist and lifelong fisher Dr. Christopher Marks. This workshop is geared towards families who would like to take their children fishing and want to learn how to get started. Topics will include Ohio fishing laws, native fish species, fishing locations, bait and tackle, knot tying, and casting. Fishing poles are available for practice or bring your own. Anyone interested in using their new skills are invited to join Marks for fishing at Silver Park in Alliance immediately following the workshop.

***Registration is required by May 29. Limited to 20.**

Sunday, June 28

***Its Not Just A Garden: Pollinator Habitat 2-4 p.m.**

You would be surprised by how much your outdoor space provides for pollinators already! We will discuss what you currently provide for pollinators (without even realizing it!), and simple steps you can take to make your outdoor space more pollinator-friendly. FREE seeds, plants, pollinator home and safe water dish will be available for those that want to add any or all of these. ***Registration is required and opens on Tuesday, June 2 at 9 a.m. Attendance is limited to 20 adults.**

Recurring Programs

Acoustic Jam

2-4 p.m. on April 5, May 3, June 7

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!

Winter Bird Banding

10 a.m.-noon on February 9, 23, and March 8, 22

See live songbirds and science in action during a bird banding demonstration. Banding takes place inside the Visitors Center. Bird banding is canceled in the event of rain, snow, or temperatures below 20 degrees Fahrenheit.

Bird Banding with Al Eibel

8 a.m.-noon on April 18, 26, and May 9, 23

See live, wild songbirds in the hand and learn why bird banding is an important tool for bird and wildlife conservation. Drop in any time between 8 a.m. and noon. Meet Al outside on the east side of the Visitors Center. Banding sessions are canceled in the event of rain.

Spring Bird Walk

9-11 a.m. on April 13, 20, 27, and May 4, 11, 18

Join Naturalist Adam Zorn on the Nickel Plate Trail in Louisville for a morning bird walk. Great for beginners and experienced birders. Level, paved walking surface. Bring your binoculars. Meet at the trail head on Pinevale Ave, Louisville. Canceled for inclement weather. RSVP requested.

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.

Rick Blessing Awarded Volunteer of the Year

Bonnie Twaddle

The annual luncheon for our founders and volunteers is one way we honor and thank them for their contributions that support the Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center mission to “provide and support opportunities for enjoying and learning about our natural and cultural heritage.”

Lunch was catered by Amy’s Catering and entertainment was provided by David FitzSimmons, an award-winning freelance photographer and writer. David’s program gave us a picturesque view of how he is able to capture the detailed, up-close photos for his *Curious Critters* publications and other featured works. His program was eye-catching, engaging, and humorous! Rick Blessing was awarded Volunteer of the Year 2019. Rick began volunteering at the Nature Center in May of 2013 as a trail guide

for school groups. The following year, Rick and his wife, Diane, presented a honeybee workshop for the general public. Both have been actively maintaining honeybees for many years and always make themselves available to help others who have questions about or want to begin beekeeping.

Rick, aka “Beeman”, has helped with the honeybee keeping at the Nature Center by donating a package of honeybees in the beginning stages and educating us from his wealth of knowledge and experience in this field. Rick continues to be a Trail Guide for school groups, and he is excited each and every time! Thanks for “blessing” the Nature Center with your many talents!

“From the Heart” awards (medallions) recognize exemplary acts of kindness that come from the caring heart. This year’s award recipients are Adrienne Bock and Paul Hobe.

Shirley DeMaiolo, aka “Nature Center Mom”, and Al Eibel received recognition for providing volunteer service of 309 hours and 217 hours, respectively, this past year.

The celebration was concluded with a blessing shared by Monsignor James Kolp.

Just this past year, 171 volunteers provided 1,783 hours of service! We are so thankful for all the help you provided that supported our mission for another great year!



Volunteer Recognition

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

Noah Allen	Thaddeus Border	Elayne Dunlap	Sophia Hoopes	Hayley Maher	Rachel Poe	Laura Steinken
Megan Amos	Jess Brashear	Al Eibel	Megan Hoover	Taylor Marcum	Patty Rickard	Lynn Sullivan
Kim Anderson	Patty Bruey	Sandy Gahan	Judy Horn	Brianna Marin	Kristen Ritzman	Ann Sutton
Daniel Baker	Phyllis Case	Cali Granger	Katie Horn	Jared Marsh	Lois Rupp	Rich Sutton (father)
Joseph Balogh	Kathy Chambers	Christian Hanson	Amy Hosking	Emilio Martinez	Dania Saleh	Rich Sutton (son)
Alec Barker	Mark Clough	Deb Hatherill	Allison Hrovat	Keith Miller	Jacob Sanford	Ben Trenka
Brianne Bixby	Caylie Coupland	Jane Helwig	Alexis Jayne	Larry Miller	Dwight Santee	Alejandra Twiss
Rick Blessing	Quinnlan Crowe	Ann Hendel	Emily Keller	Blanche Moore	Christal Schumacher	Mattie Van Orman
Lance Boland	Derek Currey	Jennifer Henderson	Laura Klingler	Johnny Naples	Liz Serafini	Carol Wearstler
Adrianna Border	Emma Dames	Paul Hobe	Kera Leskovec	Zac Novak	Zach Serafini	
Katriel Border	Ruth DeFranco	Kiersten Hofman	Suzu Lish	Kristen Osborn	Jenna Simon	
Lani Border	Shirley DeMaiolo	Matthew Honaker	Lester Lozier	Carol Pancake	Jarek Slernit	
Ruth Border	Andrea Dietz	Charlie Hoopes	Dana Lucas	Shannon Pavsek	Susan Smith	

SPECIAL THANKS! Additional gratitude is extended to Aultman Alliance Community Hospital, who donated handwashing booklets for every Alliance-area 4th-grade student in conjunction with the Children’s Hands-On Gardening Program.

Where are the Owls?

Adam Zorn

After more than 50 hours of effort over the course of five weeks, we finally banded and released a Northern saw-whet owl on the evening of November 18. "Where are the owls?" we kept asking ourselves night after night between sunset and 11 p.m. This was our fifth season of Project OwlNet. In seasons prior, our best chances to net owls had been from November 1-14, and we were losing hope that we would net an owl this season. We had started to convince ourselves that zero owls are usable data too.

Ohio has a small group of licensed bird banders that spend fall nights trying to band and release saw-whet owls in various locations around the state. One of the most productive saw-whet banding stations is located on Kelly's Island, Lake Erie. This site can band nearly a dozen owls in an evening some years, but they had netted less than a dozen owls in the month of October. Their lack of owl encounters was a trend playing out across Ohio and, as we would later find out, across the eastern U.S.

Scott Weidensaul is an ornithologist, author, and co-director of Project OwlNet. Since 1997 he has been researching saw-whet owls, so who better to reach out to for answers? I sent Scott an email titled, "Where are the owls?" He replied and described an exceptionally tight correlation between evergreen cone crops and saw-whet owl populations. In his words, "no cones, no mice, and no mice, few baby NSWOs." He went on to say that his banding sites in Pennsylvania were having their slowest season in 23 years, and a colleague in Maryland was on pace to have the fewest owls banded since 1991.

In the winter of 2018-2019, the evergreen cone crop across eastern Canada was poor. The seeds inside the cones of fir, spruce, white-cedar, pine, and hemlock trees sustain a wide variety of birds and mammals through the winter months in Canadian forests. When cone crops are poor, many species of birds like pine siskin, red-breasted nuthatch, purple finch, and even blue jay will migrate south from their normal winter range in search of food. Mammals do not have the same ability to migrate in years with low food supplies, so direct consumers of the cone crops, like mice and other rodents, experience population declines in response to the scarcity of food.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES | Share Your Love of Gardening!

Beginning our 16th year this March, the Children's Hands-On Gardening Program continues to serve Alliance-area third and fourth-grade students. The students visit the Nature Center four times during one growing season to learn about gardening and get hands-on experience. Third-grade students come in March and May then return as fourth-graders in September and November. Students visit from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and cycle through activity stations in small groups that reflect the season and theme of their visit. The themes are Germination/Plant Life Cycle, Plant Parts and Functions, and Pollination in spring.



The decline of rodent populations, especially mice, has a cascade effect on the wildlife that rely on them as a source of food. During the spring of 2019, the lack of mice contributed to a lack of baby saw-whets growing to fledgling age. The owl parents do not monitor how many mice are available and lay a clutch of eggs accordingly. They will lay the average clutch of six eggs, then proceed to feed as many as they can based on the availability of food. When food is scarce, not many babies will survive to leave the nest and migrate south for the winter.

We were very fortunate to net, band, and release one northern saw-whet owl this past fall. There is a lot of anticipation for next fall based on the evergreen cone crop in eastern Canada this year. Spruce cone crops have been described as abundant and other evergreen cone crops are good to excellent according to Ron Pittaway's Winter Finch Forecast 2019-2020. Winter finches and other birds of the northern forest are expected to stay in their traditional winter ranges due to the robust food sources. It is very likely that rodent populations will rebound and saw-whet parents will have all the mice they need to raise healthy clutches of baby owls next spring.

The fall lessons include Seeds to Salsa Harvest, followed by Soil and Nutrient Cycling. With this basic knowledge and hands-on experience of an entire growing season in Ohio, we hope these students are inspired and confident to plant in pots or gardens at their homes for years to come. Volunteers are needed to help facilitate the activity stations on a variety of dates in both the spring and fall. For more information about this volunteer opportunity, please contact Bonnie Twaddle at (330) 823-7487 or twaddlb@mountunion.edu.



The John T. Huston-Dr. John D.
Brumbaugh Nature Center
1972 Clark Ave.
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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