



UNIVERSITY OF MOUNT UNION HUSTON-BRUMBAUGH **NATURE CENTER**

Discover the Wonder of Nature's Ever-Changing Story



SPRING
2026

- 1 | Education Outreach**
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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.

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Nature Center Boardwalk Replacement

Out with the old and in with the new. Site and project manager Mike Greiner began dismantling a portion of the Nature Center's boardwalk in late October. The boardwalk section running from the south end of the Visitors Center to the Huston Farm Loop (gravel path) is currently closed. After clearing invasive brush and some dead trees, the post foundation was installed in November followed by the wooden stringers that will support new decking.

Weather will dictate how quickly replacement moves towards completion, so please be patient with us. Please obey signage and stay out of construction areas until sections are complete. At this time, visitors may use the boardwalk between the Visitors Center and barnyard or the Huston Farm Loop to access the pond and southwest sections of the trail system. Trail closures may happen at any time, so check our social media pages for updates.



Volunteer and donation opportunities are available to support this project. Volunteers are needed to assist with dismantling the old boardwalk for recycling and disposal. Work can be completed indoors this winter. Volunteers interested in working outdoors are welcome to assist the staff with invasive shrub removal along the perimeter of the new and existing sections of boardwalk to expedite the removal and replacement process. Full replacement of the boardwalk is anticipated to be completed in summer 2026. You can learn more about the project online at <https://www.mountunion.edu/academics/centers/nature-center/boardwalk-replacement-project>.

Education Outreach

Amy Miller, Environmental Science Education Outreach Coordinator, is working hard to create new opportunities for middle and high school students and teachers. In the coming months, the Nature Center's website will feature a dedicated activities page for these grade levels. Teachers will be able to explore and sign up for field trips, labs, and on-site activities at the Nature Center. Additional programming options will also be available for classrooms and outdoor spaces at their schools.

The Nature Center now offers guided student worksheets called Brumbaugh Bytes. These articles and worksheets introduce students to research conducted at the Nature Center and the University of Mount Union's campus. Many University students are engaged in exciting projects that address real-world environmental challenges and deepen our understanding of nature. Each Brumbaugh Bytes resource includes a Teacher Guide with content standards, tiered vocabulary, and an answer key. Links to these materials are available on the Nature Center's website at www.mountunion.edu/nature-center.

Questions or more information about these resources and opportunities may be directed to Amy Miller at (330) 823-7487 or naturecenter@mountunion.edu.

BRUMBAUGH Bytes

Teacher Guide
Are Raccoons Smarter Than We Think?

Vocabulary – Blooms Taxonomy

Abstract:
p. Warren's research explores the cognitive abilities and incautions in response to increasing habitat loss. Warren's research shows that raccoons have been adapting to urban environments by changing their foraging regions. To investigate their intelligence, age groups were separated and given different tasks involving soil digging and food use. The results revealed that older raccoons were more intelligent than younger raccoons. These findings suggest raccoons are more intelligent than previously thought. Raccoons are omnivores. Understanding their cognitive traits can help researchers better understand their behavior and interactions with humans and wildlife.

Teacher Guide Terms:
student likely already knows
Food: Something animals eat to get energy
Tool: An object used to help complete a task.
Behavior: The way an animal acts or responds to its environment
Problem: A challenge or situation that needs to be solved.

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student likely already knows
Food: Something animals eat to get energy
Tool: An object used to help complete a task.
Behavior: The way an animal acts or responds to its environment
Problem: A challenge or situation that needs to be solved.

Environment: The surrounding or conditions in which an organism or system exists or operates.

Observation: The act of watching something carefully to gather information.

Investigation: A careful study or examination to learn facts or truths, especially by collecting and analyzing data.

High School Science Standards:
HS-ESS2-1: Earth's Systems
HS-ESS2-2: Earth's Systems
HS-ESS2-3: Earth and Human Activity
HS-ESS2-4: Earth and Human Activity
HS-ESS2-5: Earth and Human Activity
HS-ESS2-6: Earth and Human Activity

HS-ESS3-1: Earth and Human Activity

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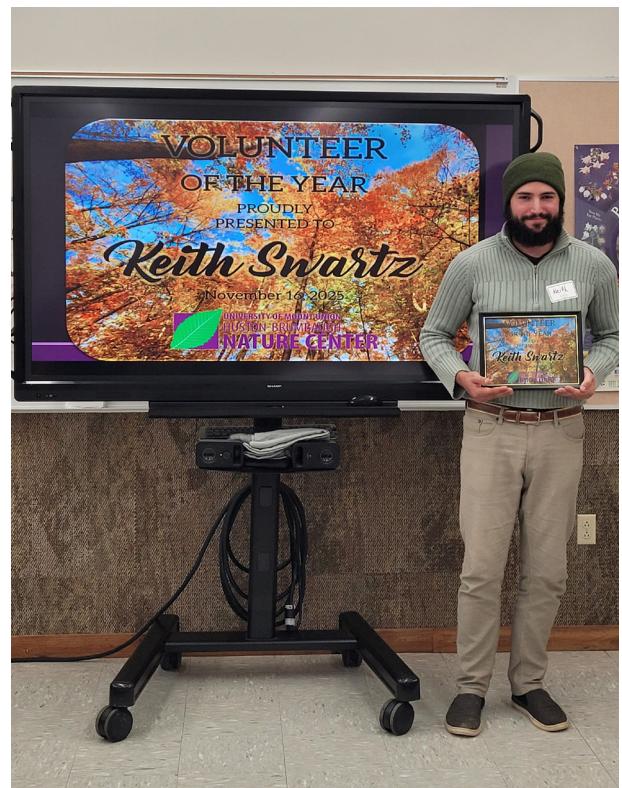
HS-ESS3-395: Earth and Human Activity</

Keith Swartz, Volunteer of the Year

by Cali Granger

Our annual Founders Day/Volunteer Luncheon held November 16th, 2025, was a wonderful day filled with laughter, friendship, and memories. This luncheon grants the Nature Center the opportunity to honor our dedicated volunteers and provide updates on the major projects and goals the Nature Center has accomplished over the course of the year. While "dedicated" can be used to describe all the volunteers at the Nature Center, it really hits home for this year's Volunteer of the Year, Keith Swartz.

Keith has become our resident invasive plant exterminator! From rain and snow, blistering 90-degree heat to sub-zero temperatures, nothing can stop Keith when he is armed with his gloves and pole pruner, ready to take down another vicious mass of multiflora rose. No complaints! He quietly shows up, cuts and clears sections of multiflora rose, and quietly leaves. Many times, the way we find out Keith was here is by finding the large piles of multiflora rose he makes, neatly stacked near the trail to be removed from site. Some may say Keith is a glutton for punishment, but I say he is dedicated. Thank you, Keith, for all the hard work you have done these past years! You are providing a great service to the Nature Center by slowly restoring its understory to a more natural state, and we are happy to honor you as this year's Volunteer of the Year.



From the Heart awards recognize exemplary acts of kindness that come from the caring heart. This year we recognized Mary Lindsay and Bonnie Twaddle, volunteers who are always there when we need them and Simon, our miniature donkey and Nature Center ambassador.

This fall, Simon passed away peacefully at the age of 27. Simon was a fixture at the Nature Center and in many instances, he was the destination for many of our visitors. Young or old, everyone who visited the barn over his long residence fell in love with him instantly. To honor Simon, it only seemed fitting to give him a From the Heart award as he touched the hearts of everyone who visited the Nature Center over his long and happy life. You may read tributes for Simon from some of our visitors and see photos of Simon through the years on the Nature Center's Facebook page in a post dated November 3, 2025.

Exemplary acts of kindness are the embodiment of Mary Lindsay, whether she knows it or not, at least from my perspective. Every growing season I know I can count on Mary reaching out to me to schedule time to volunteer in the gardens of the Nature Center. She is not afraid to get her hands and knees dirty and will pull weeds and plant flowers with equal vigor.

Mary won't rest until the job is done and done well. Mary has really taken ownership of the gardens at the Nature Center. The fact that she keeps coming back and giving her time speaks volumes of that. She cares for them and is proud of them as if they were her own gardens at home. That kind of loyalty and care does not go unnoticed, so it was an easy choice to honor Mary with the From the Heart award because all the work she does is truly from the heart.

The last award recipient is the founder and creator of the award itself, Bonnie Twaddle. Without her, we would not have all the outstanding, kind, hardworking volunteers we have today. Prior to working at the Nature Center as the Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator, Bonnie was a dedicated volunteer. She managed the desk on weekends, was a trail guide, and a full supporter of the values and beliefs of what the Nature Center stands for. Having seen the need for supporting volunteers, Bonnie was able to create the position she worked in for 22 years before retiring. Bonnie's huge heart, kind, open, and caring personality paired with her love of the Nature Center allowed her to build a loyal volunteer group. Now that Bonnie is retired, she has returned to being a volunteer, and we could not be happier to still have her and her infectious laugh around. Coming full circle shows the heart and care that Bonnie has for the Nature Center, making her a perfect recipient of the From the Heart award. It will be our honor to try and live up to the work and connections Bonnie made with all the volunteers of the Nature Center, now and for years to come. To all the From the Heart award recipients, thank you, from our hearts to yours.

Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center's Schedule of Events

General Information

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

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

Acoustic Music Jam

Sunday, February 1 | 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!

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 13 | 9-10 a.m.

Join Nature Center staff as participants in the Great Backyard Bird Count in the comfort of the Bird Observatory. Warm drinks provided. Bring your favorite mug or borrow one of ours.

Great Backyard Bird Count

Sunday, February 15 | 11 a.m.-Noon

Join Nature Center staff as participants in the Great Backyard Bird Count in the comfort of the Bird Observatory. Warm drinks provided. Bring your favorite mug or borrow one of ours.

Winter Bird Banding

Sunday, February 15 | Noon-2 p.m.

See science in action as we learn more about the winter birds at the Nature Center. Banding is conducted with federal permits and prioritizes the well-being of the birds. Banding takes place indoors, but the event will be canceled for inclement weather (extreme cold, precipitation, wind).

Great Backyard Bird Count

Monday, February 16 | 9-10 a.m.

Join Nature Center staff as participants in the Great Backyard Bird Count in the comfort of the Bird Observatory. Warm drinks provided. Bring your favorite mug or borrow one of ours.

Photo Contest Submission Deadline

Monday, February 16 | Noon

All submissions for the Nature Center's 2026 photo contest

must be submitted by noon today. The Visitors Center will be open from 8:30 a.m. to noon to receive photos.

Photography Contest Open House

Sunday, February 22 | 1-5 p.m.

The open house is the first day the gallery opens, and People's Choice voting begins. The photo contest exhibit will remain on display through March 15. See page 5 for entry and event details. Photo submission deadline is noon on February 16.

Sugaring Day

Sunday, March 1 | 1-4 p.m.

Celebrate maple sugaring season with the Nature Center. See how we turn maple sap into maple syrup. Sample maple syrup and maple-flavored treats. Alternate indoor activities will be available if the weather prevents us from boiling sap.

Acoustic Music Jam

Sunday, March 1 | 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!

*Bird Photography: A Beginner's Guide

Sunday, March 15 | 1-2:30 p.m.

Discover the art of capturing stunning bird photographs with this beginner-friendly program. Learn simple yet effective techniques to elevate your photography skills, including understanding bird behavior, choosing the right equipment, and mastering lighting and composition. Bring your camera to practice these tips in the Bird Observatory. *Registration is required.

*Bluebird House Construction

Sunday, March 22 | 1-2:30 p.m.

Make a bluebird-style nestbox for your backyard. Many species of birds like Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and House Wrens rely on nestboxes for raising young. We'll also cover how to be a good nestbox landlord. All materials provided. Please bring a claw hammer. *Registration limited and required.

*Birds and Blooms Hike

Thursday, April 9 | 5:30-7 p.m.

An exploration of the forest in search of birds and spring wildflowers. Dress for the weather and seasonal trail conditions. Binoculars and cameras are helpful for viewing birds and flowers. *Registration is required.

***App'n to Know**

Saturday, April 11 | 1-3 p.m.

An introduction to apps that can enhance your knowledge of birds, plants, and other organisms. We'll cover the basics of Merlin, eBird, and iNaturalist. Each are independent but can be used in concert with each other. Participants should have each of the apps installed on their mobile devices if they would like to use the app during this workshop. *Registration is required.

Acoustic Music Jam

Sunday, April 12 | 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!

***Birds and Blooms Hike**

Thursday, April 16 | 5:30-7 p.m.

An exploration of the forest in search of birds and spring wildflowers. Dress for the weather and seasonal trail conditions. Binoculars and cameras are helpful for viewing birds and flowers. *Registration is required.

***Spring Bird Walk**

Monday, April 20 | 8:30-10:30 a.m.

Join us on the Nickel Plate Trail in Louisville, OH for a morning bird walk. Great for beginners and experienced birders. Level, paved walking surface. Bring your binoculars. Meet at the trailhead on Pinevale Ave., Louisville, OH. Canceled for inclement weather. Group size limited due to parking constraints. Co-sponsored by Stark Parks. *Registration is required.

***Birds and Blooms Hike**

Thursday, April 23 | 5:30-7:00 p.m.

An exploration of the forest in search of birds and spring wildflowers. Dress for the weather and seasonal trail conditions. Binoculars and cameras are helpful for viewing birds and flowers. *Registration is required.

***Bird Photography: A Beginner's Guide**

Saturday, April 25 | 1-2:30 p.m.

Take your bird photography to the next level in this hands-on session. Learn how to optimize your camera settings for stunning shots, tell compelling stories through your photos, and apply simple editing techniques to make your images shine. After the workshop, join us on a guided hike to discover real-world birding photo opportunities and put your new skills into practice. *Registration is required.

City Nature Challenge Bioblitz

Sunday, April 26 | all day

A bioblitz is an intense period of biological surveying to record all the living species within a designated area. Help us bioblitz the Nature Center and contribute sightings to the 2026 City Nature Challenge. Observations are collected using the iNaturalist app on your smartphone or tablet. Explore on your own.

***Spring Bird Walk**

Monday, April 27 | 8:30-10:30 a.m.

Join us on the Nickel Plate Trail in Louisville, OH for a morning bird walk. Great for beginners and experienced birders. Level, paved walking surface. Bring your binoculars. Meet at the trailhead on Pinevale Ave., Louisville, OH. Canceled for inclement weather. Group size limited due to parking constraints. Co-sponsored by Stark Parks. *Registration is required.

***Birds and Blooms Hike**

Thursday, April 30 | 5:30-7 p.m.

An exploration of the forest in search of birds and spring wildflowers. Dress for the weather and seasonal trail conditions. Binoculars and cameras are helpful for viewing birds and flowers. *Registration is required.

***Spring Insect Walk**

Saturday, May 2 | 1-2 pm

Spring has sprung and the insects are jumping back to life! On this guided walk around the Nature Center, come and release your spring fever as we explore, discuss, catch and identify those early emerging spring insects. *Registration is required.

Acoustic Music Jam

Sunday, May 3 | 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!

***Spring Bird Walk**

Monday, May 4 | 8:30-10:30 a.m.

Join us on the Nickel Plate Trail in Louisville, OH for a morning bird walk. Great for beginners and experienced birders. Level, paved walking surface. Bring your binoculars. Meet at the trailhead on Pinevale Ave., Louisville, OH. Canceled for inclement weather. Group size limited due to parking constraints. Co-sponsored by Stark Parks. *Registration is required.

Events Continue on page 5

Events Continued from pages 3-4

*Happy Hour Hike

Tuesday, May 5 | 5:30-7 p.m.

Trade your work shoes for trail shoes and join us for a hike. We'll enjoy the sights and sounds of late spring throughout the Nature Center. Bring your own food if you would like to eat at the Nature Center before the hike begins. Hike leaves from the Visitors Center promptly at 5:30pm. Dress for the weather and seasonal trail conditions. *Registration is required.

*Spring Bird Walk

Monday, May 11 | 8:30-10:30 a.m.

Join us on the Nickel Plate Trail in Louisville, OH for a morning bird walk. Great for beginners and experienced birders. Level, paved walking surface. Bring your binoculars. Meet at the trailhead on Pinevale Ave., Louisville, OH. Canceled for inclement weather. Group size limited due to parking constraints. Co-sponsored by Stark Parks. *Registration is required.

*Happy Hour Hike

Tuesday, May 12 | 5:30-7 p.m.

Trade your work shoes for trail shoes and join us for a hike. We'll enjoy the sights and sounds of late spring throughout the Nature Center. Bring your own food if you would like to eat at the Nature Center before the hike begins. Hike leaves from the Visitors Center promptly at 5:30pm. Dress for the weather and seasonal trail conditions. *Registration is required.



Amateur nature photographers are invited to enter their photos in the Nature Center's 24th Annual Nature Photography Contest and Exhibit on Sunday, February 22, 2026. 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 and securely mounted and matted behind an 11x14 photo mat (not under glass or in a frame). Photos must be the original work of the photographer. Photographers must be amateurs who take photos for pleasure and not for financial gain. Photos will be accepted for the following categories: Wildlife – Vertebrates, Wildlife - Invertebrates, Wild Plants, Landscapes, Seasons, Mount Union Campus & Nature Center, Black & White,

*Happy Hour Hike

Tuesday, May 19 | 5:30-7 p.m.

Trade your work shoes for trail shoes and join us for a hike. We'll enjoy the sights and sounds of late spring throughout the Nature Center. Bring your own food if you would like to eat at the Nature Center before the hike begins. Hike leaves from the Visitors Center promptly at 5:30pm. Dress for the weather and seasonal trail conditions. *Registration is required.

Bat Roost Monitoring

Friday, May 29 | 8:30-9:45 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. Bring a lawn chair and assist the staff in counting bats that leave the roost in the Huston Barn. Canceled for wind or rain. Optional short night hike afterwards.

Acoustic Music Jam

Sunday, June 7 | 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!

24th Annual Photo Contest

Youth (photos by children 12yrs 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 22 through March 8.

Photo submissions will be accepted by Nature Center staff in the Visitors Center during normal operating hours beginning February 1st. Photographers are limited to 5 entries in total and 3 entries per category, except the Open category which is limited to one entry per photographer. Same rules apply to youth participants. Deadline to submit a photo is Noon on Monday, February 16. 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 Sunday, February 22, 2026, from 1-5 p.m. Photographers, friends and the public are invited to attend. The exhibit runs through March 15. Questions regarding the contest and exhibit may be directed to Adam Zorn at (330) 823-7487.

Mount Union Nature Center Awarded \$10,000 Grant from Athletic Brewing for Trail Projects

The Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center was recently awarded a \$10,000 grant from Athletic Brewing Company as part of its "Two For The Trails" initiative. This funding will support necessary materials for the Nature Center's ADA-accessible ramp and observation deck as part of its nearly 1,800-foot boardwalk.

Estimations for the boardwalk renovation project total nearly \$200,000, and the Nature Center is continuing to seek additional funding to ensure the best result for its thousands of annual visitors.

"Every little bit helps in a project of this scope," said Michael Greiner, site manager of the Nature Center. "The boardwalk is nearly 25 years old, so it's significantly worn after exposure to weather over time. It is also one of the most heavily used parts of our trail system, so this grant helps with more updated materials for a more sustainable build."

Renovations on the boardwalk began in November, and Greiner estimates its completion in Summer 2026.

Mount Union was one of 241 organizations selected to receive a Two For The Trails grant from Athletic Brewing Company in 2025. Named after Athletic Co-Founder and CEO Bill Shufelt's family tradition of taking two brews to toast post-trail adventures, this program gives back up to \$2 million annually to protect and restore outdoor spaces across the globe.

"In 2025, Two For The Trails received more than 500 applications requesting over \$10 million in funding — proof of the growing need to invest in the environments and communities where we live, work and adventure," said Cara Wilson, impact manager with Athletic Brewing Company. "With up to \$2 million in funding, we're proud to support 241 projects across the U.S. and Canada that will expand outdoor access and improve natural spaces. These efforts will balance recreation with environmental care, helping ensure we leave our planet better than we found it. We're honored to partner with so many nonprofits doing this important work."

The Nature Center is free and open to the public, and more information can be found at mountunion.edu/nature-center. To learn more about the boardwalk project or donate, email advancement@mountunion.edu.

Athletic Brewing Company is America's largest dedicated non-alcoholic brewer. Athletic is revolutionizing how modern adults drink by crafting game-changing NA brews that can be consumed anytime and anywhere. Launched commercially in 2018, Athletic is the number one non-alcoholic beer brand in America and a top 20 U.S. brewing company. Its award-winning brews are available nationwide at over 75,000 retail locations. Athletic operates custom breweries in Connecticut and California and donates up to \$2 million annually to protecting and restoring outdoor spaces across the globe via its Two For The Trails program. Athletic is proudly a Certified B Corporation™. Learn more and shop at www.athleticbrewing.com.

Volunteer Recognition

This past year, 135 volunteers donated 1,181 hours of time in various capacities! We thank you ALL for your hard work and dedication to the Nature Center. Our outstanding volunteer crew assists us in maintaining high-quality programming and a beautiful facility. Thank you for ALL that you do! We extend a sincere thank you to our August, September, October, and November volunteers!

Kaylee Adkins	Janet Fox	Joe Planiskey
Connie Boller	Rachel Goebel	Karen Planiskey
Ruth Border	Sarah Heffernan	Samantha Quinonez
Jacob Buttar	Paul Hobe	Mark Sherer
Mark Clough	Matt Honaker	Ashleigh Starkey
Hannah Conley	Arlo Kee	Keith Swartz
Paula Cope	Anse Kee	Trevor Szekely
Mike Cope	Emily Krizner	Kaylynn Thomas
Ryan DePerro	Jack Larko	Alexa Titus
Grace DiSalvatore	Mary Lindsay	Bonnie Twaddle
Al Eibel	Mike McDonald	Johanas VanEeden
Jack Faflik	Jim Miller	Jillian Wagner
Claire Fired	Lukea Pitini	Ella Witting



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