



UNIVERSITY OF MOUNT UNION
HUSTON-BRUMBAUGH
NATURE CENTER

Discover the Wonder of Nature's Ever-Changing Story



SUMMER
2026

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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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Visit

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From the Director Jason A. Smith, Ph.D.

As I sit in the bird observatory on a cool, rainy spring morning, I'm treated to a steady chorus of life—warblers flitting through the canopy, woodpeckers tapping in the distance, nuthatches calling, and yes, even the bright flash and song of Baltimore orioles. Moments like this invite reflection, and I find myself thinking about just how busy—and how fortunate—we have been.

It has been an incredibly productive and rewarding season at the Nature Center. Our staff continues to serve the University of Mount Union community in countless ways each day. From hosting and facilitating class visits (and, at times, helping drive the vans), to providing a welcoming space for departmental gatherings, to engaging prospective students and their families, the Nature Center plays an active and meaningful role in campus life. These daily interactions reinforce our value as a living laboratory and a place of connection.

At the same time, the impact of our work extends far beyond campus. The dedication of our staff and volunteers in serving the broader community is truly remarkable. Whether it's watching a child's eyes light up during a nature program or seeing families reconnect while walking the trails on a sunny afternoon, these moments capture the heart of our mission. They are powerful reminders of why places like the Nature Center matter—not just as green spaces, but as places where curiosity, learning, and appreciation for the natural world can grow.

Looking ahead to the summer season, we are excited to offer a wide range of engaging—and in many cases, new—programs designed to connect people of all ages with our natural and cultural heritage. From educational workshops and guided walks to family-friendly events and hands-on learning experiences, there will be many opportunities to get involved.

I encourage you to take part in these programs and to consider becoming more deeply involved. If you have interest and availability, we warmly invite you to join our team as a volunteer. Our success depends on the passion and commitment of individuals who see the Nature Center as part of their home and community.

Thank you for your continued support. I hope to see you on the trails this summer.

-Jason

Summer Research

This summer the Brumbaugh Endowment is funding six students and their mentors for Brumbaugh Scholars research. The projects were selected from a diverse range of proposals, and we are proud to assist students with funding and support for their scholarly research this summer.

Emily Owens (Computer Science and Data Science & Analytics major) is working with Dr. Julie Butler to develop a guided tour application for interactive tours and experiential activities at the Nature Center. Emily's project goals are 1.) to promote an awareness of, education about, and respect for the role of natural and cultural heritage in shaping land use and the environment, 2.) to provide an accessible, engaging, and informative flora/fauna identification system specific to the Nature Center's unique and biodiverse environment, and 3.) to advance the Nature Center's mission to promote the interest, awareness, and education of the Mount Union community, local schools and institutions, and surrounding communities.



High School Environmental Science Outreach Programs

High school students entering grades 10–12 who are curious about science, nature, and real-world research are invited to participate in the Summer Environmental Science Outreach Program at Huston Brumbaugh Nature Center. This hands-on STEM program offers students the opportunity to work alongside University of Mount Union educators and scientists while exploring environmental topics through field investigations, lab activities, and outdoor research.

Participants will build practical scientific skills—such as data collection, observation, analysis, and communication—while learning how environmental science is used in conservation, ecology, and research careers. The program is ideal for students who enjoy being outdoors, asking questions, and learning by doing.

There may still be time to register—scan the QR code in this newsletter to learn more and secure a spot.



Modern Bird Science: Field ID, Apps, and Real-World Research: Tuesday, June 9, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Students learn to identify birds by sight and sound using binoculars, field guides, and popular apps like Merlin. The session includes a guided bird walk, contributions to the eBird citizen science database, and a unique opportunity to learn about bird banding from a master bird bander.

Ecological Succession at Huston Brumbaugh Nature Center: Thursday, June 11, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

This program explores how ecosystems change over time following disturbance. Students investigate different habitats across the nature center, collecting and analyzing ecological data to understand plant diversity, forest structure, and long term environmental change.

Pond Ecology: Macroinvertebrates: Tuesday, June 16, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Students dive into freshwater science by sampling pond life and studying macroinvertebrates as indicators of water quality. Using microscopes, water chemistry tests, and food web analysis, participants learn how aquatic ecologists assess ecosystem health.

Rocks, Soils, and Landforms: Post Ice Age Natural History: Thursday, June 18, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

This session examines how glaciers shaped the land and soils of the Nature Center. Students collect sediment and soil samples, identify soil horizons and rock types, and reconstruct the area's geological and environmental history through hands on fieldwork.

Plants Get Sick Too!: Tuesday, June 23, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Participants explore plant diseases caused by fungi, bacteria, viruses, and environmental stress. Students learn to recognize symptoms in the field and examine how plant health connects to ecosystem stability and even human health.

Insects & Pollinators: Entomology, Ecology, and Conservation Biology: Thursday, June 25, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

This program introduces students to insect diversity and the critical role of pollinators. Through field sampling, specimen preparation, and pollinator observations, students learn real research techniques used by entomologists while exploring conservation challenges.

Summer Research (cont)

Adam Schlarb (Biology major) is working with Dr. Mike Zimmermann to investigate aquatic macroinvertebrates inhabiting the wetland pools at the Nature Center. They will conduct weekly sampling in the wetland pools at the North Woods to understand the distribution and diversity of species inhabiting the wetland habitats. Photographs of common species within the wetland complex may be used to develop a photo catalogue and potential interpretive signage at the site.

Alfonso Cruz III (Criminal Justice major) is working with Dr. Mike Zimmermann to explore deer movement and feeding patterns at the Nature Center. Alfonso's goal is to better understand the distribution patterns and habitat use of the deer residing at the Nature Center as well as investigate their diet and preferred food sources. Alfonso's work might shed some light on how the Nature Center's resident deer may impact native and non-native plants and potential management implications for improving forest health.

Emma Welch (Theatre & English major), Ilani Jones-Wallace (Theatre & Biology major), and Lisa Bosely (Theatre & Music major) are working with Kevin P. Kern, Professor of Theatre, and the Eckler Endowed Chair of American Literature and Drama. Together, they will focus on the connection between nature and humanity while developing an original performance titled *The Forest Listens: A Theatrical Walk*. The project will be conducted as a production through the University of Mount Union theater department in the Fall 2026 semester and hosted on the trails at the Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center.

Everyone is invited to learn about their projects and results on September 13 at the Summer Research Showcase.

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.

***Nature Photography Hike**

Saturday, June 6 | 8 - 10 a.m.

Grab your camera and join us for a Photography Hike at the Nature Center! We'll explore Brumbaugh Woods Trail and Big Valley Trail in search of birds, fungi, insects, animals, and other natural wonders. Designed for photographers of all experience levels, this hike encourages participants to share techniques, ideas, and inspiration while learning from fellow nature enthusiasts in a supportive group setting. *Registration is required.

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! No registration required.

***Breeding Birds Hike**

Saturday, June 13 | 8 - 10 a.m.

Over the last 10 years, 81 species of birds have been recorded at the Nature Center during the breeding season. Join us for a leisurely walk around the Nature Center to see how many of these we can see and hear and maybe add new species to the list. Bring binoculars. Canceled in event of rain or high winds. *Registration is required.

***Birdwatching Basics: Learning What to Look For (Part 1)**

Sunday, June 14 | 2 - 4 p.m.

This beginner friendly birding program introduces two key identification skills: Size & Shape and Color Pattern, focusing on bold, easy to see features rather than fine details. After a brief indoor session, participants will practice these skills on a short, guided hike, applying what they've learned to real birds in the field. *Registration required.

***Sunset Party**

Thursday, June 18 | 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

The Nature Center will provide some lawn games, light refreshments, and the ambiance of a summer evening at the North Woods. Be entertained by the sights and sounds of nature as we enjoy sunset (8:58 p.m.) and nocturnal wildlife emerging at dusk. Participants should bring a chair and are welcome to bring their own snacks, non-alcoholic beverages, and/or lawn games. *Registration is required.

***Birdwatching Basics: Learning What to Look For (Part 2)**

Sunday, June 28 | 2 - 4 p.m.

This beginner friendly birding program introduces two important identification skills: Behavior and Habitat, helping participants learn how what birds do and where they live can quickly narrow down an ID. After a short indoor session, these skills will be practiced on a brief guided hike, applying observations to birds encountered in their natural settings. *Registration required.

CLOSED – July 4th Holiday

Friday, July 3 and Saturday, July 4

The Visitors Center is closed for the holiday. Trails remain open from sunrise to sunset.

Acoustic Music Jam

Sunday, July 5 | 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! No registration required.

***Night Hike**

Wednesday, July 8 | 8:30 - 10 p.m.

A guided walk to explore the Nature Center at night. Fireflies, bats, and other nocturnal creatures are likely as the sun goes down. Bring a flashlight. This is a moderately difficult hike due to distance and changes in elevation across the trail system. *Registration is required and limited.

***Bat Roost Monitoring**

Wednesday, July 22 | 8:30 - 10 p.m.

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. Bring a flashlight. Cancelled for rain/wind. *Registration is required and limited.

***Tick Talk: What's Trending?**

Sunday, July 26 | 2 - 4 p.m.

'Don't be suspicious' of this tick talk! Come and learn about the different species of ticks found in Ohio as we talk about their biology, lifecycle, disease transmission, and tick bite prevention methods. Discover which ticks are 'giving main character energy', which ticks have the 'most followers', and which ticks to 'bombastic side-eye'. The more you know, the less you'll go "Ew, brother, ew! What's that, brother?!"
*Registration required.

***Nature Photography Hike**

Saturday, August 1 | 8 - 10 a.m.

Grab your camera and join us for a Photography Hike at the Nature Center! We'll explore the North Woods in search of birds, fungi, insects, animals, and other natural wonders. Designed for photographers of all experience levels, this hike encourages participants to share techniques, ideas, and inspiration while learning from fellow nature enthusiasts in a supportive group setting. *Registration required.

Acoustic Music Jam

Sunday, August 2 | 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! No registration required.

Pond Study

Sunday, August 2 | 2 - 3 p.m.

Let's explore who's living in the pond! There is a wide variety of organisms our visitors rarely see living just under the surface of the water. We will provide nets and collection containers. Wear footwear you don't mind getting wet or muddy. Follow the boardwalk to meet us at the pond. No registration required.

***Plant Healthcare 101**

Saturday, August 15 | 1 - 3 p.m.

Plants get sick too, but don't let this get you down. This program will provide an overview of the basic diagnostic processes needed to identify the common causes of plant diseases, pests and disorders that cause plant healthcare issues in the home landscape. You will learn to identify signs and symptoms, learn about fungi, viruses, nematodes, insect pests, and general strategies for keeping plants healthy. *Registration is required.

***Insect Pollinators in the Garden**

Sunday, August 16 | 1 - 2:30 p.m.

From bees to butterflies, pollinators play an important ecological part in our gardens. Whether you are growing produce for your family or enjoying the beauty of a flower garden, pollinators are key to their success. On this exploration, we will look at the Nature Center's vegetable and flower gardens to see the pollinators in action! We will also talk about providing season-long habitat structure, providing pollinators with more than just a food source, and ways to increase pollinators into your gardens. *Registration is required.

***Nature Photography Hike**

Saturday, September 5 | 8 - 10 a.m.

Grab your camera and join us for a Photography Hike at the Nature Center! We'll explore the Huston Farm and trails around the pond in search of birds, fungi, insects, animals, and other natural wonders. Designed for photographers of all experience levels, this hike encourages participants to share techniques, ideas, and inspiration while learning from fellow nature enthusiasts in a supportive group setting. *Registration required.

Acoustic Music Jam

Sunday, September 6 | 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! No registration required.

***Mushroom Cultivation Basics**

Saturday, September 12 | 2 - 4 p.m.

Are you curious about growing your own mushrooms? Come to this free workshop for beginners, and learn the basics of how to grow your own edible/culinary mushrooms at home! Participants will learn about fungal culture, making spawn, inoculating logs, and more. There will even be an opportunity to inoculate and take home your own "mushroom log" for your backyard. *Registration is required by August 28.

Summer Research Showcase

Sunday, September 13 | 1 - 3 p.m.

See the work of outstanding University of Mount Union students in this showcase event. The 2026 cohort of summer researchers undertook a variety of projects with University mentors. Each student will make a presentation about their research. Your attendance is appreciated in support of the students, their mentors, and their academic research! No registration required.

Events Continue on the next page

Events Continued from pages 3-4

Stark County Bird Quest

September 25 & 26

This family-friendly 24-hour challenge has two goals: get people into the outdoors using birds as a catalyst and to accumulate data about bird populations in Stark County. This event is free including resources, guided walks, and the celebration at the event's conclusion on Saturday, September 26. For more information and registration, go to cantonaudubon.org/stark-county-bird-quest.

Acoustic Music Jam

Sunday, October 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! No registration required.

The Forest Listens: A Theatrical Walk

SAVE THE DATE: October 9, 10, and 11

The Forest Listens: A Theatrical Walk invites you to experience the Huston Brumbaugh Nature Center in a completely new way. This immersive performance guides audiences along the Nature Center paths at dusk where theater and the natural world intertwine, opening yourself to a fresh way of connecting with theater and the environment around you. Join us for an unforgettable evening where nature becomes the stage!

Boardwalk Progress Report

The Nature Center's property and project manager, Mike Greiner, has made incredible progress on the boardwalk project since our last report in February. Mike and a small crew of contractors have completed nearly half of the replacement since the weather broke in March. To date, the entire stretch of boardwalk from the Visitors Center to the pond has been removed and replaced. This stretch of boardwalk was reopened for foot traffic on April 10th.

If you haven't seen the new boardwalk in person yet, we'd love you to make a trip to use it. The new structure is one foot wider, and the walking surface is a high-traction grid that provides secure footing in wet conditions. The new structure follows much of the same path as the previous version, but some alterations have been made to accommodate increased width and a shallower grade. We believe that it will facilitate easier movement of visitors in wheelchairs and strollers.

Tax-deductible donations can be made through the University of Mount Union's Office of Advancement. Learn more about the project online at <https://www.mountunion.edu/academics/centers/nature-center/boardwalk-replacement-project>.

Huston House Added to Nature Center

The historic Huston House was purchased by the University of Mount Union to become part of the facilities at the Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center. The 2-story farmhouse sits adjacent to the Nature



Center's Huston Barn and was once the home of John T. and Catherine Huston. One of the Huston's daughters, Mary, lived in the home until her passing in 1953.

The home and approximately 2-acres of land were subdivided from the original 109-acre Huston farm and sold to a new owner in the mid-1950's. John T. Huston's grandson, Dr. John D. Brumbaugh, retained the remainder of the former Huston farm. At this time, the Huston farm had largely reverted to forest. The barn and land served as a quiet retreat for Dr. Brumbaugh. He would later permit the biology department of Mount Union College to visit the property for observational studies of plants and wildlife beginning in the 1970's. In 1986, Dr. Brumbaugh would donate the land to Mount Union College to be used as a field station and nature preserve for the college and community to learn about nature.

Meanwhile, the Huston family's former home, seated a few dozen yards from the barn and property now known as the John T. Huston - Dr. John D. Brumbaugh Nature Center, remained as a separate, neighboring property. In the 1990's and early 2000's, the home was operated as a 2-bedroom bed and breakfast known as the Huston House. The Huston House retains much of its original character throughout due to the care and maintenance of its previous owners.

The Nature Center and University of Mount Union administration are exploring several opportunities to blend the Huston House into the Nature Center's operations and the University's academic and research programs. The home's previous use as a bed and breakfast presents opportunities to host resident Nature Center staff and researchers, small group gatherings, and programs focused on historical and cultural topics. The outbuildings have potential to serve as additional laboratory and classroom space for Mount Union classes and Nature Center events. Eventually, the vision is to develop the facilities and associated opportunities of the home and barnyard into a center for sustainability.

Development of a center for sustainability will take many months of careful planning followed by a calculated plan of execution. Much of what is accomplished will be determined by the availability of staff and financial resources. There will be opportunities for the community to support this project with monetary and in-kind donations as well as volunteerism. If you would like more information about how you can be involved, please contact the Nature Center at naturecenter@mountunion.edu.

Volunteer Opportunities

Boardwalk Demolition: The components of the old boardwalk need to be sorted for recycling or disposal. Volunteers are needed to help us remove nails and screws from deck boards and to dismantle the wooden foundation of the old boardwalk. We have the tools but need some extra hands! Volunteers are welcome to reuse/repurpose salvageable material they help to dismantle. Some materials may be suitable for a variety of small projects.

Stewardship Volunteer: A great fit for anyone who loves physical work and has experience working outside on the land. If you enjoy working in the fresh air, this job is for you. This person would be comfortable working on their own and as a team with Nature Center staff and other volunteers. This role has a flexible schedule and can be completed at different times, depending on availability. Experience or an interest in invasive plant management, habitat restoration, trail building & maintenance, gardening & landscaping, and/or construction are perfect fit for this role.



Weekend Docent: A Nature Center docent serves as host of the Visitors Center at the Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center on weekend afternoons. The Visitors Center is an interpretive center that introduces visitors to the Nature Center and its natural and cultural resources, along with local plants and animals and conservation work. This would be a great role for anyone who likes to interact with the public and people of all ages and backgrounds, and who knows a lot about the Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center or is excited to deepen their knowledge and would prefer to be indoors rather than leading programs outdoors. This person would love to have a regular schedule (Saturday and/or Sunday) and longer shifts (1-5pm).

Field Trip Trail Guide: This position will lead K-5 school visitors on hikes, indoor and outdoor experiences, events, projects/activities, or programs at the Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center. They help children gain an understanding of the Nature Center and the natural world. Each grade will have curriculum written for the trail guide to use in leading the class on their field trip. This is a great role for someone who likes to interact with school-aged children. A person who is familiar with the Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center, and has specific interests like birding, botany, or history. This person would prefer to lead programs outdoors and has the energy to lead field trips for at least 90 mins. This person would love to have a flexible schedule and be called to be a field trip trail guide at different times (usually weekday mornings), depending on availability.

Interest in these volunteer opportunities may be expressed at <https://www.mountunion.edu/academics/centers/nature-center/volunteer-opportunities> or an email to naturecenter@mountunion.edu.

Volunteer Recognition

We extend a sincere thank you to our December, January, February, and March volunteers! Our outstanding volunteer staff assists us in maintaining high quality programming and a beautiful facility. Thank you for ALL that you do!

Judy Blebea	Sophia Hoopes	Gianna Phillips	Bonnie Twaddle
Ruth Border	Liz Keene	Santiago Salvador	Jessalynn Ziegler
Andrea Dulac	Kevin Kern	Miho Shibata	Hailey Zorn
Sophia Ganni	Ellisa Kern	Keith Swartz	Whitney Zorn
Paul Hobe	Tyler Kohlmann	Allyson Troyer	
Charlie Hoopes	Eva Miller	Danielle Troyer	

Special Thanks

We would like to give an extra shout out to Keith Swartz for his ongoing effort to reduce the Nature Center's population of multiflora rose. Many people have seen the piles of rose canes along several sections of our trail system – this is the work of Keith. He has also contributed many interesting observations to the Nature Center's iNaturalist biodiversity project, too. We sincerely appreciate his contributions to the improvement and knowledge of the Nature Center's natural resources.

Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist Program

If you have a strong interest in nature and enjoy helping others, you are invited to apply to become an Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist (OCVN). The Ohio State University Extension – Stark County, in coordination with Stark Parks, The Wilderness Center, Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center, and Beech Creek Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve, is facilitating an OCVN training this fall from September 10 through November 12, 2026. Meeting once a week, OCVN participants will learn how to contribute to community science efforts, restore and protect critical habitats, and communicate effectively about Ohio's environment while exploring parks and natural areas in your community.

Spaces in the course will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Course size is limited to 15 participants. You must be at least 18 years old to apply. All fees are due two weeks before the start of the first session. The price includes a binder manual, additional handouts, state fees, and related costs for conducting the program. Application period opens June 1 and closes July 24. To learn more, contact OSU Extension Stark County at 234-348-6145 or visit go.osu.edu/OCVNStark.



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