



Beginning Jan. 27, high winds blew for 36 hours. Topsoil was scoured from tilled fields west of the nature preserve. At the top of this photo, the suspended earth caused a haze so thick that it coated trees and the snow-covered ground with a gray film.

Gone with the Wind

In February when the Polar Vortex threatened to bear us off like Dorothy, a gritty brown cloud billowed off the exposed soil of a field west of The Quarry Farm. By the time the mighty wind had moved on, the grass in a neighbor's back yard was buried in deposited soil, a brown blanket lay over everything in the animal sanctuary, and humans in the path were sweeping up piles of dirt that had filtered through cracks. In striking contrast, no Dust Bowl effect occurred over a stubble field to the north, and one with a cover crop to the south.

Questions came to mind in the aftermath of the storm: For instance, what potential contaminants fell out of that dust cloud on to the natural areas of The Quarry Farm? How many more tons of precious soil were stripped from the bare field and others like it? How many millions of microscopic organisms essential to plant life (and consequently ours) were destroyed?

Happily, lots of relevant, research-based publications speak to those issues via USDA, OSU Extension, and credentialed writers on the Web. One fascinating read, among many, is a bulletin from the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Cover Cropping for Pollinators and Beneficial Insects" visits a Northern Montana farm where careful management of plants used in cover-cropping has supported the wild bee population and increased productivity. It goes on to discuss how and where cover crops work best, how they enrich soil and prevent erosion, which plants support pollinators and other beneficial insects, the use of "cover crop cocktails" (seed mixes) for various conditions and temperatures, crop rotations, and relative values of each plant species to bees and other beneficials. In fairness, the bulletin also covers limitations and constraints of cover-cropping. Although intended for a larger audience, the content suggests intriguing possibilities for us home gardeners.

An eye-opening article from the Web is "The zoo beneath our feet: We're only beginning to understand soil's hidden world" by Adrian Higgins. Higgins points out that, due to microscopic imaging and DNA analysis, we are just beginning to understand "the hidden universe beneath our feet." He discusses the basic groups of organisms that interact by unfathomable numbers to build and nourish soil in every corner of the Earth: earthworms, insects, arthropods, nematodes, protozoa, bacteria, and fungi. Even though most of the diversity in soil is still a mystery, what is known has given rise to a type of farming called *regenerative agriculture*. Practitioners limit their impact on soil life with such measures as disturbing the soil as little as possible, avoiding pesticides and planting cover crops. This article offers even more for us home gardeners to think about and implement however we can to nurture and preserve our own small patches of the Good Earth.

—**The Gardener at The Quarry Farm**



Because of February's severe cold, we hung old quilts over the doorway of one of the pigs' buildings. Nemo decided they would be more useful in her bed and pulled them down, leaving colorful flags to flutter.

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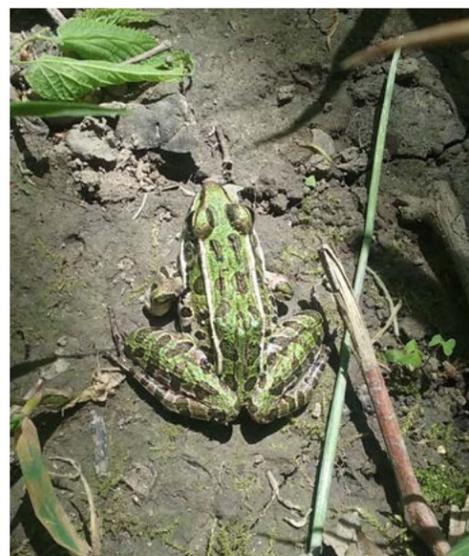
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Questions? Call 419-384-7195, email thequarryfarm@gmail.com or visit us online at www.thequarryfarm.org.

Donations to The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a 501(c)3 public charity, are tax deductible.



A leopard frog warms in the sunshine on the sandy clay banks of Cranberry Run.

Spring 2019 Programs & Events

Golden Snitch Walks

Friday, March 22, 6 to 7 p.m.
and Saturday, April 6, 7 to 8 p.m.

Meet in Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora

If you're a fan of Harry Potter, you'll be familiar with the game of Quidditch and the round, winged Golden Snitch that players must catch to win. Join us for an evening hike where we will listen for the whistling wings of nature's own Golden Snitch—the American Woodcock. We may also spot emerging wildflowers, flocks of wild turkeys and migrating turkey vultures. **Preregister the day before each walk by calling 419-384-7195 or by emailing thequarryfarm@gmail.com.**

Vernal Pool Watch

Saturday, April 13, 5 to 6 p.m.
and Saturday, April 20, 9 to 10 a.m.

Meet in Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora

Vernal pools are the spring wetlands that are the nurseries for amazing wildlife. Join us as we collect water samples from the quarry wetland to look for salamander nymphs, fairy shrimp and beetle larvae. We'll also turn over leaves to see if we can find adult salamanders. **Preregister the Friday before each watch by calling 419-384-7195 or by emailing thequarryfarm@gmail.com.**

Wildflowers & Feathered Wings

Sunday, May 19, 2 to 4 p.m.

Meet in Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora

Walk the trails with us and look low for spring wildflowers, and look up for birds who fly overhead. We may look somewhere in between ground and sky for nesting woodducks. **Preregister by Friday, May 17 at 12 p.m. by calling 419-384-7195 or by emailing thequarryfarm@gmail.com.**

Spring Family Day

Saturday, June 15, 1 to 4 p.m.

Bring yourself, friends and family for an afternoon of fun in the gardens, woods and wetlands. Make a walking staff and take it with you along the trails to count butterflies and Blanchard's cricket frogs and visit residents of the farm animal sanctuary. Admission is free and no registration is required. Tax-deductible donations are welcome.

For more information about these programs, to schedule a visit, or to view a complete list of our available presentation topics, visit www.thequarryfarm.org. Follow us on Facebook for scheduled Star Walks as these are scheduled based on the weather forecast.



**THE
Quarry
FARM**
**NATURE PRESERVE &
CONSERVATION FARM**





Mission Statement

It is our goal and mission to provide the opportunity for people of all ages to increase their understanding of the natural environment of Northwest Ohio and to interact with their fellow inhabitants in a sustainable manner.



A hummingbird moth collects nectar from bee balm in the Red Fox Cabin gardens.

The Quarry Farm Newsletter is a quarterly publication for supporters of The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a nonprofit organization in Pandora, Ohio.

On the cover: Salamander nymph observation in the Seitz Family Pavilion

All photographs printed in this newsletter were taken on The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm.

www.thequarryfarm.org

Printed on recycled, recyclable paper



Sue came prepared for the snowy Hat Day Hike. She wore the masked goldfish (below right) for hot chocolate and cookies and the purple gremlin hat (above) on the trails, pausing to appreciate the scenery above the quarry.

Under one big sky

Winter 2018-2109 came in like a lamb, then the lamb got really cold. The Annual Hat Day Hike was our first scheduled program for Winter. January 13 dawned with deep snow and cold. Sue Kreidler Frey took the opportunity to make a statement with not one but two incredible winter hats.

Each February, the National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology coordinate the Great Backyard Bird Count. We joined in on February 16 to document birds that shelter in the preserve, as well as those that stop by on their annual migration. We didn't see or hear many this year, what with 24 degree cold and 26 mph wind gusts outside the trees. Red-bellied woodpeckers hammered in the north along Riley Creek. Horned larks chimed in the field. White-breasted nuthatches scolded. We saw or heard a downy woodpecker, two goldfinches, robins, a male cardinal, bluejays and two Canada geese. Nonetheless, The Quarry Farm is identified as a birding hotspot, with 72 species



She needed a little help with a short flight of stairs, but Sophie worked the crowd and the snack line in Burlington, Ohio.

recorded at this location via 11 checklists filed at <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2709897>. Check it out, then come see what you can spot yourself on May 19 (see Programs & Events on the back of this newsletter.)

Most of our offsite presentations happen in the Ohio counties of Putnam, Hancock and Allen. We do find ourselves journeying a little father afield on occasion. Because of the focus on respect for animals one would encounter in and around a farm (both wild and domestic creatures), the "Living Side By Side" presentation is a popular traveler. On February 26, Sophie the Potbellied Pig and an aquarium of aquatic macroinvertebrates (a water scorpion, gilled snails, and dobsonfly larvae) journeyed to Fulton County to meet a 4-H group.



We didn't see or hear many birds on February 16, but Mandy spotted a *Secropia* Moth cocoon on the land bridge between the quarry wetland and Cranberry Run.

Resident Spotlight:

Quinn

Did you know that foxes are the only canine capable of retracting their claws, like cats do? This is just one of the things that Quinn, educational ambassador for red foxes, teaches at The Quarry Farm. Quinn was seized by the State of Utah from a roadside zoo in Utah. No one knows exactly how old she is, but we do know that she came from an exotic animal breeder or a fur farm. She and the three other foxes and two raccoons that she shared a very small space with were transported to Save-a-Fox Rescue in Minnesota. We asked many questions about her to see if she would be a good fit for our program "staff." Due to the passing of Sebastian the Skunk, we decided to apply to adopt Quinn so that she could help us teach about red foxes in Ohio. After approval and with our permits in order, we traveled to Minnesota, and Quinn journeyed home with us.



You may have met Quinn and Tyree the Corn Snake at a Putnam County District Library location last summer. If you did, here is more of what you learned:

- Foxes do not hunt in packs, nor do they kill for pleasure. If they do find their way into a domestic rabbit or bird enclosure, they will kill, but their intention is to bury their prey for leaner times. In fall and winter, foxes feed primarily on small mammals, including voles, mice, squirrels, and young rabbits. In spring and summer, they switch to berries and invertebrates such as grasshoppers, caterpillars, crayfish, and beetles.
- Foxes are nocturnal, but it's not unusual to see them out in daylight. Pairs of red foxes separate during the winter, but in late winter and early spring, they come together for breeding. Now that spring is upon us, you may see them out and about looking for each other, and hear them calling at night. Some may look a little rough, their fur coming out in big tufts as they shed. A fox you saw in winter may look skinny several weeks later, but that is only because they've shed a third of their body in winter undercoat.

Education is why Quinn is here. She is not a pet and she was never a wild animal, but is probably a mixture of various breeds of fox bred for their fur. *Foxes do not make good pets.* They mark their territories, dig, chew, and make all sorts of vocalizations which are fascinating, but also a little alarming. For instance, when Quinn is excited, she screams just like the victim in a horror movie! The true horror is that over 15 million shy, intelligent foxes are kept in very small cages worldwide and killed at around seven months of age for fur coats and trinkets.

Give a Gift to Support TQF, Get a Unique Work of Art

Looking for the perfect Mother's Day gift? Purchase a gorgeous Quarry Farm mug created by artist Brandon Knott of It's Knott Pottery, Continental. The mugs are **\$20 each** and are glazed in a variety of colors. Each includes a sculpted "cookie" on the front. If you've ever attended an event here, you'll know we have the best cookies.

Complete the order form to the right and send, with cash or check, to: The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, 14321 Road 7L, Pandora, OH 45877.



Thank you...

...to Daryl Bridenbaugh for straw
...to Joan Utendorf for sunflower seeds
...to Hard Rock Llama Co. for Mosaic guidance

Monetary Donations:

Tim and Martha Seitz, *in memory of Ted Hildenbrand*
Sandy and Doug Downing
Bill and Carol Schumacher
Hancock-Wood Electric Cooperative
Paulding Putnam Electric Cooperative
Mary K. Mack



Lucy is looking for a new coworker this spring. Want to be The Quarry Farm's spring/summer intern? Send us an email at thequarryfarm@gmail.com or call 419-384-7195.

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How many mugs? _____

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Please include \$5.00 for shipping per mug. Free local delivery is available.