

## A Fanciful Walk on the Plain

It's a chilly, breezy spring afternoon, and I'm crossing the Cranberry Run bridge. Lugging a flat of purple violets dug up from the garden around Red Fox Cabin. I'm headed for the floodplain to the north between our Quarry-turned-wetland-pond and Riley Creek. As I follow the trail around the northwest corner of the Quarry, bullfrogs erupt noisily from the bank and plop-plop-plop into the water. Out in the shallow depths of the Quarry several beds of flags are pushing up spiky leaves. Their clear blue flowers will come later. On both sides of the path Spring Beauties are blooming, small and delicate.



Blue flags are pushing up in the quarry wetland.

Farther north on the trail, the Spring Beauties are sparser and the soil looks washed. Floodwaters flow down Cranberry Run from the south to cover this area at least once a year, draining slowly into Riley Creek. It's here on the floodplain that I've come to plant some violets and see what might be starting to grow this spring. That's of special interest because for years dense, spreading thickets of bush honeysuckle and multiflora rose, as well as wild grapevine tangles have effectively shaded out most vegetation. Until now. As a result of David Seitz's hard work this past year, the invasive scrub that had smothered the plain is now the stuff of several enormous brush piles, some given names for fun like the Giant Turtle Pile and North Turtle Pile. These mounds are providing wildlife cover, while sunlight filtering through the branches of hackberries, bitternut hickories, and sycamores will bring dormant seeds to life—for better or worse perhaps, considering what may have settled out of floodwaters and lain in wait for sunshine. The coming months will tell. Today I'm seeing tufts of grass and sedges and wispy sprigs of bed straw that may soon cover the ground like green froth—and twine around ankles.

As I head back down the trail, violets all planted, I imagine a time when they'll form a purple carpet lifting above tall grasses. I imagine Dutchman's Breeches, Jack-in-the-Pulpits, Trilliums, Jerusalem Artichokes, Heliopsis, and other native plants migrating to the floodplain. I envision myself transplanting more native plants and flowers to the woods. I picture the native trees that Anne is going to plant soon grown tall and sheltering. Several times, I spot an enemy near the path and stoop to yank a leafy honeysuckle seedling.

—The Quarry Farm Gardener



Woodducks and Eastern Comma butterflies are two of Spring's earliest and most elusive fliers in the nature preserve. Another welcome sight, and proof that warmer days are upon us, are reptiles sunning themselves on rocks, logs and water surfaces. Did you know that snapping turtles are curious freshwater reptiles that live extremely long lives? Snapping turtles often live more than 100 years with a maximum theoretical life span of 170 years.



"Was really surprised later in the afternoon when the log floating on the west side of the quarry moved," said David Seitz during his March 30 bush honeysuckle removing session, "Was a Jurassic snapping turtle! Really big one!"

## Spring 2021 Programs & Events

**Dress for the weather, including good walking shoes, and meet in Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora. Masks are required for the safety of everyone present and social distancing will be observed. There is no fee to participate. Tax-deductible donations are welcome.**

### Haiku Hike

Saturday, April 17, 1 to 2 p.m.

April is National Poetry Month, April 22 is Earth Day and April 17 is International Haiku Poetry Day. In celebration of all three, we'll hike the trails, look for wildlife and spring wildflowers and—you guessed it—try our hands at writing haiku about nature in Spring. The Haiku poem is a Japanese art form that consists of short and simple, 3 line stanzas consisting of 5-7-5 syllables. We can be bards and enjoy the emerging season in the process.

### Spring Migration Bird Hike

Saturday, May 15, 8 to 10:30 a.m.

Rain date: Saturday, May 22

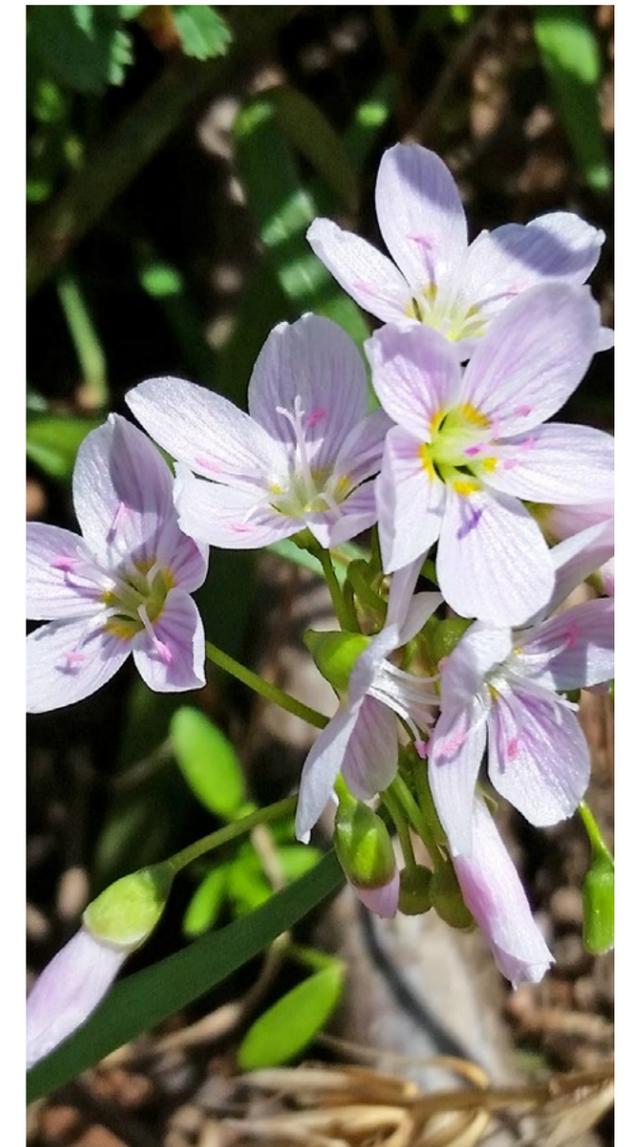
Migration will be in full swing during that time and our leaders, birding enthusiast Dave Smith and Deb Weston, Birder and Quarry Farm Board Member, hope we'll see some nice warblers.

Dress for the weather in earth-toned colors and sturdy hiking shoes that can get muddy. We'll be walking with stops to look and listen for migrating and resident birds. Participants will learn which are passing through on their way to breeding grounds in Canada and which will stay to nest here. If the birds are actively singing, we'll listen for the differences between species.

Materials will be available for take-home, including warbler bird song mnemonics, basic shapes of birds and a list of residents versus migrants. What we see will be documented on Cornell Lab of Ornithology's ebird and shared with any participants who want to share their email. Bring binoculars and cameras are welcome.

(Note: We won't use bird songs on devices to draw the birds in, especially during breeding season when they have enough to contend with. Sensitive species may leave the area if they hear a rival.)

**Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for photos and updates.**



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**Questions? Email [thequarryfarm@gmail.com](mailto:thequarryfarm@gmail.com), visit us online at [www.thequarryfarm.org](http://www.thequarryfarm.org) or call 419-384-7195. Donations to The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a 501(c)(3) public charity, are tax deductible.**



## 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.



Eastern Bluebirds are setting up house in the grassland this Spring. (Photo by Deb Weston)

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: Spring Beauties, one of the first native wildflower species to appear in Spring, bloom in the nature preserve.**

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

[www.thequarryfarm.org](http://www.thequarryfarm.org)

Printed on recycled, recyclable paper

## Under One Big Sky

So what's a little snow? We did have some in February, but the snow didn't stop our incredible volunteers from tackling invasive bush honeysuckle on the nature preserve and setting off on the trails to observe and enjoy natural Ohio.

The Hat Day Hike was walked on January 16 with mild winter weather. We didn't even need hats. The February 13 Great Backyard Bird Count was a different story. Ohio's coldest periods were in late January and most of February. Rather than watch for birds in the nature preserve, the bird count hike was cancelled and we all drank hot chocolate and bundled under our favorite blankets to document birds who visited feeders. As in past years, all species recorded here were submitted to the international count as part of the largest snapshot of global bird populations.

Girl Scout Troop 20024 from Ottawa joined in the March 13 New Moon Hike. We almost stepped on an American Woodcock near the Settler's Well. It flew up and hurtled through the air to the grassland where two other American Woodcock buzzed in search of mates. As the sky darkened, we watched constellations emerge, then walked to the oxbow wetland to look for nocturnal aquatic insects and fairy shrimp.

The March 20 Spring Sparrow Hike was a beautiful way to start Spring. Twenty-four bird species were recorded, including a Song Sparrow. Birder/Board Member Deb



This Spring brought an American Coot to the quarry wetland, bringing the official bird count here to 131 species. (Photo by Deb Weston)

*Although winter this winter brought some much-needed moisture to this area, it was a harsh season on our hearts as we said goodbye to S'more the Nigerian Dwarf Goat, Chablis the Llama and Timmy the Bronze Turkey. S'more and his brother Marsh were the first mammalian residents of the farm animal sanctuary. There wasn't a fence that S'more couldn't overleap nor a deck too high to mount. Old age (13) didn't stop him from peeking in the north deck windows in Summer 2020. He began to slow down in fall, sleeping more and more in sunny patches and straw beds in the barns. Chablis, a normally-shy camelid, forgot to be aloof this winter. At 19, she followed whomever carried the feed bucket, often draping her long neck over that person's shoulder to gobble up bites. One day I found myself nose-to-nose with a curious llama and the next day she was gone. That night, Timmy fell asleep on his perch and didn't wake up. We miss all three but are grateful for the opportunity to share life with them, and for their swift, peaceful passing.*



Girl Scout Troop 20024 (first year Cadettes from Ottawa) checked out the night sky during the New Moon Hike.



Silkie (center) is almost always first at the breakfast table that she shares with Buddy and Lucy.

## Resident Spotlight: Silkie

A little brown donkey joined Buddy and Lucy on the hillside grassland in 2019. Winter wasn't too far in the future when she arrived, fully named and loved. Silkie was so loved that she required hugs and immediate attention when anyone ventured into her line of sight. She still does over a year later.

Unlike Buddy and Lucy, the goats, and even the pigs, Silkie had little in the way of winter coat. Her former bedroom was equipped with a heat lamp so she had no need of it. If you pass The Quarry Farm's farm animal sanctuary in winter, you may see the residents sporting thermal coats of blue, burgundy, green and fluorescent orange. But because the animals do develop thick winter coats in fall, the coats are only worn during the coldest weeks of winter. In fact, the animals often find some way to remove the coats themselves when temperatures rise. As Silkie had short fur, we bought a new coat for her right away. She liked wearing it, luckily, even inside the barns.

This past winter, everyone went into winter with tick, shaggy coats of fur. Thermal coats were worn when the temperatures plunged in January and continued to be on until Buddy pulled his off, right over his head and into a muddy patch. Silkie was a little reluctant to have something taken away that she felt was rightfully hers, but when the breeze ruffled her thick, slightly sweating fur, she came in for a hug and brayed loud and long for a peanut to make up for the affront.



## Tune in for 2021 'Quarry Fridays with the Bluffton Public Library'

For the second year, The Quarry Farm and Bluffton Public Library will present *Quarry Farm Fridays & Animal Book Bundles*. Most Fridays through the summer, you can watch a fun video featuring the Animal of the Week on Facebook Live at 10 a.m. The video will be posted later in the day on both organizations' Facebook pages and websites. Once the video goes live, there will be themed Animal Book Bundles available for pickup at the library on request (while they last.)

Scheduled 2021 Quarry Farm Fridays are June 11, June 18, June 25, July 9, July 16, July 23 and July 30. Watch our Facebook page and Bluffton Public Library for announcements about related book discussions for older readers, too.

## Thank you...

...to Brad, Bonnie and Anthony Brooks, and Paul Nussbaum for removing stumps in the grassland

...to Brad Brooks for using his equipment to bury S'more and Chablis in the south pasture, a task that would have taken us several back-breaking days to accomplish by hand

...to Paula Harper for helping with the New Moon Hike refreshments

...to David Seitz for continued trail work and invasive plant removal

...to David Smith and Deb Weston for leading the Spring Sparrow Hike

...to Casey Walker for sweet corn

...to Deb Weston for the use of her bird photos



Facilitator Anne presents a spring update to Ottawa Kiwanis. (Photo by Nancy Kline)

## Monetary Donations:

Bruce Coburn, in memory of Bert Coburn

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