

Calling all pollinators

For many years, the garden at Red Fox Cabin has been dedicated to butterflies. Other than some vegetables, most of the plantings have been chosen for the food, shelter, and habitat they provide to our beautiful flying flowers, who pay for their room and board by serving as prey, predator, and pollinator.

This past year, and several years before that, have been alarming for the decline in species and numbers showing up in the garden, not just of butterflies but pollinators of all sorts—walking, crawling or flying pollen-collecting creatures. The apparent causes, such as habitat loss and fragmentation, improper and excessive use of pesticides, competition from invasive species, and climate change, are troubling enough, but most worrisome about dwindling pollinators is that our lives greatly depend on them.

Publications by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and other credible sources can help us understand pollinators and the pollination process as a vital stage in the life cycle of flowering plants and a necessity for healthy, productive agricultural ecosystems, even a humble garden. Consider these nuggets from “Native Pollinators” (NRCS): Almost 90 per cent of all plant species need pollinators to produce seeds and fruit. About 200,000 different species of animals worldwide act as pollinators: about 1,000 are vertebrates like birds and bats, and the rest are invertebrates like flies, beetles, butterflies, moths and bees. About 75 per cent of crop plants around the world are pollinated by these animals.

The threats mentioned earlier have caused significant declines in many pollinator populations: at least 185 species are considered threatened or extinct by the World Conservation Union, and at least two bat and 13 bird species on endangered lists in the U.S. are pollinators. The disappearance of nectar (fuel) sources along migratory routes is a major reason for decline of migrating pollinators.

With at-risk pollinators in mind, we have rededicated our garden to support native pollinators in general. The Quarry Farm Gardener will continue to develop the garden as a whole. More excitingly, however, the Putnam County Master Gardeners have adopted an approximately 35 ft. by 12 ft. plot near Red Fox Cabin and have



Putnam County Master Gardeners have adopted a plot near Red Fox Cabin. In this fall photo, several take a break from preparing it for spring planting.

prepared it for spring planting to diverse native species that will give food, shelter, and breeding habitat to pollinators. This winter, we will get together and decide what to plant, following USDA guidelines. We intend to plant a minimum of 11 species, including at least three flowering species each for spring, summer, and fall; at least one legume; at least one bunchgrass; and host plants for desired pollinators. We will avoid soil disturbance and pesticides.

The Master Gardeners and The Quarry Farm Gardener hope that, over time, our little patch will be an educational resource and just one stop on a nectar corridor, along which many gardeners provide stepping stones to pollinators on their long migratory journeys.

-The Quarry Farm Gardener



Putnam County Master Gardeners deepen the raingarden retention area.

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Questions or wish to register for a program? Call 419-384-7195, email thequarryfarm@gmail.com. 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.



Bronze turkeys greet visitors in the farm animal sanctuary above the preserve.

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: Winter snowmelt collects in the floodplain.

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

www.thequarryfarm.org



Members of Leipsic Girl Scout Troop 20704 pose on the porch of Red Fox Cabin.

Under one big sky

Just as the outdoor temperature has rollercoasted this fall and winter, the beat keeps drumming here at The Quarry Farm. We welcomed a new Girl Scout Troop just before the weather turned cold: Leipsic Troop 20704 earned their Gardening badge on a chilly day in November.

We celebrated the holiday season in two counties and communities. The sycamore and oak tree costumes were donned to be part of the newly-formed Transition Bluffton organization's entry in the annual Bluffton Blaze of Lights Parade. On the same weekend, the two trees and a butterfly represented the Quarry Farm in Ottawa's Welcome Santa Parade, for the third consecutive year.

For the second year in a row, Mr. and Mrs. Santa brought treats for the farm animal sanctuary residents. Dave and Jane Hilty (and their wagon full of Hilty Farm Market pumpkins) were surrounded by goats, pigs, donkeys, turkeys and chickens just before sunset on November 3. Guess what everyone had for breakfast the following morning? The second wagon lasted beyond Christmas. They were mushy from frost, but the animals loved their squash soup.

Andy Seitz and Jennifer Curtis Seitz stayed at Red Fox Cabin over Thanksgiving and spotted a long-eared owl in the surrounding nature preserve (and overheard flying squirrels in the chimney.)

In 2016, the Bluffton Public Library organized a hike on the trails of The Quarry Farm. Next month, another hike will take place—this time, under the stars. Check out the Programs & Events listing on the opposite page.

Update on the Virginia opossum

While not a farm animal, Virginia opossums are no strangers to peopled places. That's why we have been looking for a new educational ambassador; to help people learn more about the vital role these much-maligned marsupials play in world health and balance.

In mid-December, we welcomed our latest sanctuary resident. Thanks to the Ohio Wildlife Rehabilitation Association and the Stark Parks Wildlife Conservation Center, we welcomed a new Virginia opossum to The Quarry Farm. Like Captain John Smith, we hoped this Nature's garbage collector would accompany us to classrooms. He was brought to the Stark County facility after he allowed a park visitor to approach and pick him up. The diagnosis was head trauma, probably due to a hit-by-car, and the damage was likely permanent. We launched a contest to name him and have received great candidates.

The good news is that he seems to be recovering. Unlike the Captain, he is not pleased with humans. A life in the wild—the best and most natural one—may be in his future.

Residential Spotlight Freckles

A number of roosters have lived out their lives on the farm animal sanctuary. The notable first was Bernie, the swashbuckling Red who gave up his seat at the food pan for the hens, stabbing any upstart male (or slow-moving flesh) with his dagger-like spurs. Woe to him/her who wore scarlet in his presence.

The current swain of the yard is a speckled rooster of equally dotted lineage. He came to us several years back, one of the few feathered survivors of a cruel neglect case in Allen County. Freckles and a handful of hens were seized by the Allen County Humane Society on the coldest day of 2012. The birds were found amid the only shelter available to them: the frozen bodies of many other chickens.

Upon his arrival at The Quarry Farm, Freckles took a back seat to other males, including Bernie. He is a rather petite rooster, but his glorious pale plumage, seeded with luminous shades of browns, greens and reds must be impressive enough that he now rules the roost. Although he is the first king to allow more than one rooster in his flock (there are currently four, other than himself), Freckles rules with a firm claw.



Thank you...

...to Dave and Jane Hilty for pumpkins and more pumpkins

...to Daryl Bridenbaugh for grass hay and straw

...to Kathy Dityfor apples

...to the Putnam County Master Gardeners for adopting a pollinator garden plot and working in the other gardens

Monetary Donations:

Joyce Brown

Doug and Sandy Downing

Brandon Fitch

Linda Gorey

Marilyn Hodler

Mary K. Mack



Visiting with Beatrice

Winter 2017 Programs & Events

2017 Great Backyard Bird Count

Saturday, February 18, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

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

Bird populations are always shifting and changing. Each February, the National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology team up to coordinate the Great Backyard Bird Count. Join us as we walk the trails to document the many species of birds that shelter in the preserve, as well as those that stop by on their annual migration. All recorded species will be submitted to the international count as part of the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations. Preregister by calling 419-384-7195 or by emailing thequarryfarm@gmail.com.

Bluffton Public Library Star Walk @ The Quarry Farm

Thursday, February 23, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

("Cloud Date" Feb 25, same time)

Bring a flashlight and be sure to dress for the weather, including good walking boots/shoes. (Sorry, no infant strollers allowed.) Grab a cookie and chat for a bit as everyone arrives, then take a guided walk to the preserve area to gaze at the stars. Please sign up by Friday, February 17, at the Bluffton Public Library, 145 S. Main St., Bluffton, 419-358- 5016 to let organizers know you are coming and to get details of potential "Cloud Date."

Follow "The Quarry Farm" on Facebook and Instagram for 'pop-up' activities onsite and in the region.

WISH LIST

The following items are needed for garden and visitor trail development and educational animal ambassador rehabilitation, care and handling. Please call 419-384-7195 or email thequarryfarm@gmail.com if you can supply anything on the list.

- unsalted tree nuts in the shell (acorns, almonds, hazelnuts)
- apples