

# Raccoon Creek News

Spring 2014

Snapping Turtles, Owls, and Feral Swine... Oh My!

## A Message from the Chairperson

Dear Raccoon Creek Partnership Members,

Spring is showing its face in the Raccoon Creek Watershed. The ice has melted off of the creek, we're keeping our eyes out for the first wildflowers and peepers are singing to us as we collect water quality samples. We've braved the winter weather to keep our sampling on track and have lots to look forward to this spring. I hope you enjoy reading about the watershed and we look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!

**Natalie Kruse, Raccoon Creek Partnership Chair**



### Raccoon Creek Partnership - Current Board of Directors

Natalie Kruse (Chair), Molly Gurien (Vice-chair), Amber Brookins (Treasurer), Bob Eichenberg (Secretary)  
Rocky McNickle, Heike Perko, Rob Wiley

## Feral Swine Damage and Disease Threats in Ohio

*Craig Hicks, USDA-Wildlife Services, Wildlife Disease Biologist*

Introduced to the continental United States in 1539, feral swine are rapidly becoming established throughout the country. Having many common names such as feral hog or pig, Eurasian or Russian wild boar, razorback, and piney woods rooter, all are considered to fall under the same ancestral genus and species of *Sus scrofa* and have become established in several areas of Ohio.

Depending on ancestral lineage and crossing among breeds, feral swine can vary greatly in appearance. Typical fur coloration for true Eurasian boar can be grey to dark brown to black, while domestic breeds can display a wider variety of colors with many defining patterns of striping or spots. Combine several generations of cross breeding between domestic and Eurasian lineages, and the physical appearance of these animals can be drastically different within the same family unit. In Ohio, adults typically range in size from 125-200 lbs, but larger specimens do occur.

Male feral swine are typically solitary, while females tend to live in family units called "Sounders." Sounders are composed of adult breeding females, juveniles, and piglets. Feral swine typically reach sexual maturity 8 months of age, can breed year round, and produce up to two litters per year with 4-12 piglets in a litter.



Feral swine visiting a bait station in Gallia County.  
Photograph: Craig Hicks, US Department of Agriculture.

Feral swine cause significant damage directly to valuable agricultural and natural resources each year. In the United States, feral swine damage to agriculture and the environment cause economic and other losses, and when combined with control costs, are estimated to be \$1.5 billion annually. Wallowing can severely damage downstream water quality through silt deposition and bacterial contamination and rooting often leads to increased soil erosion and colonization of invasive species such as garlic mustard and bush honeysuckle. Feral swine are omnivorous feeders and will consume almost anything in their path. Although their diet consists primarily of vegetation, feral swine can also consume invertebrates, smaller vertebrates, eggs of ground nesting birds, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals, and even the young of larger mammals such as white-tailed deer and livestock. (continued on page 2)

ATHENS

GALLIA

HOCKING

JACKSON

MEIGS

VINTON

# Feral Swine Damage and Disease Threats in Ohio

*Continued from Page 1*

Feral swine compete with native wildlife species such as white-tailed deer, squirrels, raccoons, and wild turkey for valuable resources such as acorns, nuts, and other mast crops.

In addition to physical damage, feral swine are highly mobile disease reservoirs and can carry at least 30 significant viral and bacterial diseases, as well as a minimum of 37 parasites that can affect people, pets, livestock and wildlife. Feral swine are a foreign introduction to Ohio's ecosystem. In a state so rich in agricultural and natural resources, the presence of feral swine cannot be ignored or accepted.

To report feral swine sightings, or to receive assistance with feral swine damage, contact Craig Hicks at 614-993-3444, or call toll free 1-866-4USDA-WS.

## Watershed Projects

*Sarah Landers, Raccoon Creek Water Quality Specialist (Ohio Valley RC&D & Ohio University)*

There are now 14 completed remediation projects and 3 new projects actively under construction or planned for 2014-2015 completion. Check our newly updated watershed map (to the right).

**Middleton Run II** (Jackson County) Office of Surface Mining grant was awarded in late September 2013. Individual ridgetop surface mines and acidic strip pits are being reclaimed one at a time. Construction began on this project in mid-September. In November construction stopped for winter and will resume in the spring of 2014.

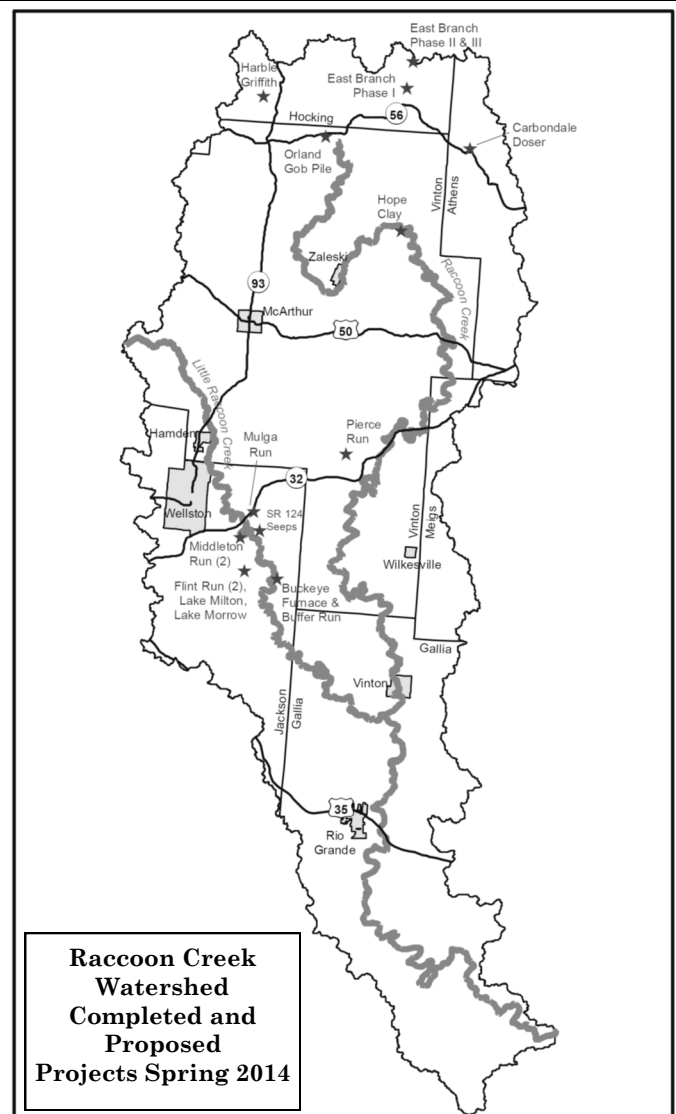
**Lake Morrow** (Jackson County) Office of Surface Mining grant awarded. Construction was put on hold for winter and will be completed in summer of 2014. This project is located in the Flint Run/Broken ARO Wildlife Areas in Jackson County, which is part of the Little Raccoon Creek subwatershed. The lake was drained and a dam consisting of coal spoil was modified and a culvert is being installed to keep water from collecting behind the dam.

**Flint Run East Wetland Berms** (Jackson County) Project construction will be in 2014-2015, preconstruction monitoring is presently being conducted. The project consists of using limestone to install and enhance existing berms in a wetland downstream of Flint Run and Lake Milton treatment projects to slow water and precipitate metals before discharging into Flint Run.

There's a new and VERY EASY way for you to support the work being done in the Raccoon Creek Watershed! Just shop on Amazon and 0.5% of your eligible purchase price goes to RCP.

AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service. Support your charitable organization by starting your shopping at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com).

Just go to: <https://smile.amazon.com> and enter Raccoon Creek Partnership as your charitable organization. Then remember to go to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) next time you shop on Amazon! It doesn't cost you anything, and it helps to support the Raccoon Creek Partnership!



Raccoon Creek  
Watershed  
Completed and  
Proposed  
Projects Spring 2014

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## Spring has FINALLY Sprung... So Get Out and Have Some Fun in Raccoon Creek!

*Amy Mackey, Raccoon Creek Watershed Coordinator*

After a LONG, COLD, SNOWY winter...we are all pretty excited to see the sun and the grass and the earliest of the spring wildflowers, and to hear the birds and the first of the spring frogs calling. Sure, we might get a few more snowflakes and some chilly days, but, spring is officially here! The winter months have given us plenty of time to catch up on 2013 reporting and data entry and now it's time to plan for 2014. In this addition of the RCP Newsletter be sure to check out the upcoming events list, there are A LOT of them! Grafting apple trees, catching newts in the pond, star gazing, birding at Lake Hope, floating down the beautiful Raccoon....there's something for everyone!

Also, don't forget to get your 2014 fishing license, the 2013 ones expired February 28<sup>th</sup>. Fishing opportunities in Raccoon Creek get better and better every year. Check out the pictures to the right of the spotted bass and flathead catfish caught while sampling a section of Little Raccoon Creek that was previously dead (due to acid mine drainage). Fish like these, as well as largemouth bass, channel catfish, sauger, bluegill, and many non-game fish are becoming more and more abundant in the Raccoon Creek Watershed as a result of the water quality improvements downstream of reclamation and treatment projects.

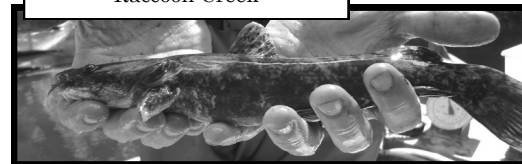
Happy Spring and we hope to see you soon!

One great (free!) way to support Raccoon Creek is to register your Kroger card at [www.krogercommunityrewards.com](http://www.krogercommunityrewards.com) and select "Raccoon Creek Partnership". You must renew every April!

Swipe your Kroger Rewards Card every time you shop and help RCP grow!



Spotted Bass & Flathead Catfish caught in Little Raccoon Creek



Looking for a job that makes a difference in the watershed?? Become a Raccoon Creek AmeriCorps member! Members assist with chemical and biological monitoring, outreach and education, grant writing, member recruitment, etc.

Position details will be posted on our website, [www.raccooncreek.org](http://www.raccooncreek.org) and Raccoon Creek Partnership Facebook page when available. AmeriCorps application site opens April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014; deadline, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Check the website, then email me at [mackey@ohio.edu](mailto:mackey@ohio.edu) for more information.

## Snapping Turtles

*Heike Perko, Raccoon Creek Partnership Board Member & Education Coordinator*

As springtime nears get ready to encounter this ancient inhabitant of our Raccoon Creek Watershed. The Common Snapping Turtle can be seen traveling long distances to lay her 25-80 eggs in just the right spot, preferably sandy soils or maybe your garden. The eggs will hatch anywhere from 9-18 weeks after laying, depending on temperatures. Many brave souls who have pulled their car over in order to rescue these reptiles can tell a tale or two about their long reaching necks and intimidating looking beaks. Snapping turtles get their names from the snapping action of their beaks, this is how they catch their prey, reaching from macroinvertebrates to amphibians, other reptiles and even small mammals and birds. Snapping turtles are omnivores, meaning they eat both other animals and plants, and they scavenge on already dead animals, helping the planet stay clean. They can be found in ponds, creeks, and wetlands. Some studies have shown that snapping turtles are extremely hardy and can be seen active during the winter months under the ice. Snapping turtles are an important part of our local aquatic ecosystems, and once you realize that they are masters of disguise and survival it is hard not to see the magic of the natural world in this species.



Snapping Turtle  
Photo: Ohio Department of Natural Resources

## Outreach & Education Update

*Rand Romas, Raccoon Creek AmeriCorps Member, 2013-14*

RCP's Annual Dinner was held on October 20<sup>th</sup>; we raised almost \$1,500 and had over 50 people in attendance! Thank you to all who came out and showed your support!

Our annual Owl Prowl was held February 6<sup>th</sup> at the Lake Hope State Park Dining Lodge. We had almost 60 people in attendance and Pat Quackenbush, Hocking Hills State Park Naturalist, brought two beautiful owls and led the group on a night hike. Thank you to all who attended and special thanks to Snowville Creamery and the Lake Hope Lodge for their generous donations.

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, we offered a Winter Tree I.D. Hike led by Heike Perko. Although the rain wouldn't hold off, 12 active tree enthusiasts came out to Waterloo to learn about the defining characteristics of our Ohio trees.

April 5<sup>th</sup> we will be hosting a Spring Kids Camp, "Discovering Signs of Spring" – join us to learn about the changing seasons and discover various wildflowers and amphibians.

On April 6<sup>th</sup> we will be hosting our annual Apple Grafting Workshop! Join us and learn how to graft your own apple trees and eat quite a few apples in the process! \*(This workshop has a \$10 training fee, cost covers one complete tree.)

May 17<sup>th</sup> we will be hosting the Raccoon Creek Birding Hike led by Bob Scott Placier at the Lake Hope Furnace. Come fly with us!

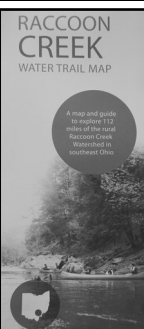
For the KIDS!!! July 21<sup>st</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> will be the Raccoon Creek Partnership Summer Camp! Water Conservation is the theme this year so be ready to get wet! \*Sign-ups will begin May 1<sup>st</sup>\*



Owl, by Maggie Perko

## Water Trail Update

*Molly Gurien, Chair, Raccoon Creek Water Trail Association*



For those of you who have not yet heard, our beautiful Water Trail maps finally arrived last fall! They exceeded our expectation in quality and have become a valuable navigation and educational resource for exploring the Raccoon Creek Watershed. If you haven't already purchased yours, you can do so by contacting us at [raccooncreekpartnership@gmail.com](mailto:raccooncreekpartnership@gmail.com).

Our new focus is on improving access sites and signage on the Water Trail and we are pursuing fundraising opportunities to accomplish this. We have also added to our fleet of canoes this year through some very generous donations and purchases. With the addition of these canoes and our new canoe trailer we are able to increase the number of participants on our canoe floats. Our spring float will be held in conjunction with the Buckeye Trail Festival this year on April 27<sup>th</sup>, and we are planning a June clean-up on the Creek as part of the Ohio River Valley Sanitation Commission's annual Ohio River Sweep.

We welcome your participation and encourage anyone with a love of paddling and interest in protecting our natural resources to become involved. We hope you can join us for this year's floats, or at one of our monthly meetings. For more information, contact Molly Gurien at [paddlemerlot@yahoo.com](mailto:paddlemerlot@yahoo.com) or visit our web page at [www.raccooncreek.org](http://www.raccooncreek.org).

Dates have been set for the 2014 edition of "A Day in the Woods" 2nd Friday workshop series. The workshops take place at the 12,000 acre Vinton Furnace State Experimental Forest, which is one of Ohio's best kept secrets. It is Ohio's newest state forest and one of the premier research and demonstration forests in the United States. ~ and it's located right in our backyard near McArthur in Vinton County!

**2014 classes include: Edible & Medicinal Plants, Trees to Lumber, Tree ID, Wildlife Habitat & more!**

Classes will run from 9:00am to 3:30pm and the registration fee for each class is \$10 which will include lunches and handout materials. For more information visit: <http://go.osu.edu/seohiowoods>

## Hemlock Wolly Adelgid Workshop Being Offered

*The Athens Conservancy*

The Athens Conservancy is hosting a workshop in May to help landowners and others become familiar with the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), which threatens the eastern and Carolina hemlocks that make their home in Southeast Ohio and elsewhere. The workshop will be held Wednesday, May 14<sup>th</sup> at the ODNR Wildlife Headquarters on East State Street in Athens, from 6:30 to 7:30 pm. Forest Health Forester for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry, Tom Macy will share his expertise on Ohio's efforts to prevent and control the HWA infestation.

The Hemlock woolly adelgid, a tiny aphidlike insect from Asia, was first discovered in the eastern U.S. in the early 1950s near Richmond, Virginia. By this century, the HWA had spread to portions of 16 States from Maine to Georgia, covering about half of the range of hemlock. The impact has been most severe, often devastating whole populations of hemlocks, in some areas of Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Connecticut. HWA has been discovered in recent years in Southeast Ohio, including Hocking, Meigs, and Washington Counties.

The HWA typically kills their hemlock hosts within 4 to 10 years of infestation in the northern range, and can occur in as little as 3 to 6 years further south. The tiny reddish-brown to purplish-black insect is difficult to see (less than 1/16-inch (1.5-mm) long). As it matures, however, it produces a covering of wool-like wax filaments to protect itself and its eggs from natural enemies and prevent them from drying out. This "wool" (ovisacs) is most conspicuous when the adelgid is mature and laying eggs. Ovisacs can be readily observed from late fall to early summer on the underside of the outermost branch tips of hemlock trees.

Stephanie Downs, former ODNR invasive species forester, was quoted as saying, in a WOUB interview in 2012, "Hemlock isn't a common species throughout the state (Ohio), but where it does occur it's an important ecological and economic species because usually it's in areas of high tourism, and Hemlock is important because it affects water quality in a lot of areas that are very steep and rocky where there's not much soil to filter water."

Sources: [http://na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/pest\\_al/hemlock/hwa05.htm](http://na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/pest_al/hemlock/hwa05.htm); Fred Kight, WOUB Radio, Jan. 22, 2012, Meigs County, OH. If you have questions about the May 14<sup>th</sup> workshop, contact Char Rae, a board member of the Athens Conservancy at [rae@ohio.edu](mailto:rae@ohio.edu).

## RCP UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Visit [www.raccooncreek.org](http://www.raccooncreek.org) for details about upcoming events and activities, as well as event and meeting locations. Unless otherwise noted, many of our educational events take place at the Waterloo Aquatic Education Center (WAEC). Event dates and times subject to change!

*Monthly RCP Meetings are held the Last Wednesday of every month*

*Monthly RCWTA Meetings are held the Second Wednesday of every month and subject to change*

<b><u>March 29th</u></b>	RCP Astronomy Night, 8:00pm with our very own Bob Eichenberg
<b><u>April 5th</u></b>	RCP Spring Day Camp, 10:00am-1:00pm "Discovering Signs of Spring"
<b><u>April 6th</u></b>	Apple Grafting Workshop, 2:00pm (\$10 for one complete tree)
<b><u>April 24th-27th</u></b>	Come see us at the Buckeye Trail Festival ( <a href="http://www.buckeyetrailfest.org">www.buckeyetrailfest.org</a> )
<b><u>April 27th</u></b>	RCWTA Spring Float down Raccoon Creek @ 11:00am Contact Molly Gurien at <a href="mailto:paddlemerlot@yahoo.com">paddlemerlot@yahoo.com</a> to reserve a canoe for free
<b><u>May 17th</u></b>	RCP Birding Hike at Lake Hope Furnace, 9:00am - 12:00pm (w/ Bob Scott Placier)
<b><u>June 21st</u></b>	Ohio River Sweep litter clean-up via canoe. Location TBA
<b><u>July 21st-24th</u></b>	RCP Kids Summer Camp "Water Conservation"

**"Like" us on Facebook!**

To find RCP on Facebook, type "Raccoon Creek Partnership" in the search box and "Like" our page!



**Send To:**

Athens, OH 45701

The Ridges, Bldg 22

Voinovich School

c/o Amy Mackey

**Raccoon Creek Partnership**

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## RCP Membership Application

*A local partnership working towards conservation, stewardship, and restoration of the watershed for a healthier stream and community*

### Individual Membership

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yellow Warbler	\$15
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wood Duck	\$30
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kingfisher	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/>	Great Blue Heron	\$500

### Organizational Membership

<input type="checkbox"/>	Channel Catfish	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grass Pickerel	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/>	Spotted Bass	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/>	Muskie	\$1000

Yes, I (we) would like to help protect Raccoon Creek

Name
Address
Phone
E-mail

Your contributions are tax deductible.

**Please make checks payable to the:**

Raccoon Creek Partnership

**and send to:**

Raccoon Creek Partnership

Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs

c/o Amy Mackey

The Ridges, Building 22 Athens, Ohio 45701