

Raccoon Creek News

Spring 2021

Goodbye Winter, Hello Spring

Moonville Rail Trail Pilot Project Update

By Ashley Smith - Raccoon Creek AmeriCorps Member

RCP is excited to provide an update for the Moonville Rail Trail Pilot Project. This project is funded by the Ohio Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Reclamation Economic Development Pilot Program which is used for restoration of abandoned mine lands combined with economic and community development. ODNR Division of Mineral Resource Management is currently on the first phase of the Moonville Rail Trail Pilot Project. The Moonville Rail Trail will be improved with the addition of seven bridges and an enhanced bridle trail that will complement the work being done by the Moonville Rail Trail Association (a local nonprofit group). The second phase of this project will address health and safety features associated with surrounding abandoned mine lands, increasing outdoor recreation while insuring visitors' safety.

Overall, the project is moving forward and on schedule. However, the recent winter weather and rain events have slowed things down. The majority of the rail trail has been cleared and work on the bridle trail is progressing, with about one third having filter fabric and stone applied. Crane mats will be added to the project in a couple of areas where saturated ground conditions exist. Currently three of the seven bridges are completed and the bridle trail is in progress. After completion this project will open 8.5 miles of trail that was previously obstructed by hazardous stream crossings. Below are drone pictures showcasing the current progress. Thank you to ODNR for providing drone photographs!



ATHENS

GALLIA

HOCKING

JACKSON

MEIGS

VINTON

AmeriCorps Positions Apply Now!

By Kelly Love - Raccoon Creek AmeriCorps Member

Are you interested in serving in the field of watershed restoration? If you are interested, apply to become an AmeriCorps for Raccoon Creek Partnership! Recruitment for 2021-2022 Appalachian Ohio Restore Corps (AORC) AmeriCorps is currently underway. Becoming an AmeriCorps member is a great way to jump-start your career in watershed management. This unique opportunity will help you gain experience with chemical, physical, and biological monitoring, grant writing, data entry, outreach, education, and so much more. Here is what our current AmeriCorps members have to say:

“AmeriCorps has given me so many amazing opportunities and skills that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. The work environment is very positive and your supervisors want to see you succeed. It is great for gaining experience in watershed management and restoration.” - Kelly Love

“In serving as an AmeriCorps at RCP it has helped me tremendously with deciding the next step in my career. Site superiors work with AmeriCorps to gain experiences that benefit their AmeriCorps members. I have also gained many relationships with fellow Corps members and professionals in the natural resources field.” - Ashley Smith

Applications are being accepted now for the upcoming AmeriCorps service term, which begins August 16th, 2021. Visit www.raccooncreek.org or www.ruralaction.org for information on how to apply and to look at all the positions offered.



Pandemic Paddling

By Molly Gurien - RCP Board Member; ACA, USCA Canoe Instructor Trainer

Spring is nearly upon us, and after a long, cold winter of isolating indoors, nature and the outdoors are once again beckoning. While the promise of vaccines gives us renewed hope of returning to some semblance of normality, scientists are still recommending caution as we resume our activities. Just as last year, the safest way to do this is to go outside. When we're outdoors, fresh air circulates more, and we are less likely to breathe in enough respiratory droplets that cause COVID-19 infection. Being out in nature is a natural stress releaser and boosts our overall mood and well-being. Outdoor recreation brings a welcome disconnect from all the screen time we have been subjected to this year. As the pandemic began last year, people flocked to the outdoors in record numbers, seeing a surge in hiking, biking, camping, and paddlesports!

Paddling is an accessible sport for all ages and easily allows for social distancing. A typical tandem canoe is 16-17 feet in length, allowing for at least 6 feet or more between paddlers. Solo canoes and kayaks easily allow paddlers to maintain the 6-foot social distancing. Here in Southeast Ohio, we are blessed with so many opportunities for outdoor recreation without having to travel far from home. We are surrounded by public lands and ample opportunities to paddle, whether it be in our canoes, kayaks or paddleboards. Within the Raccoon Creek Watershed, we can paddle and fish the exceptionally scenic 112-mile Raccoon Creek. A map with put-ins and mileage is available from RCP. If you are looking for an easier, family friendly paddle, consider Lake Hope. If you do not have your own paddle craft, these may be rented, depending on Covid restrictions at Lake Hope State Park, or through our partners at Raccoon Creek Outfitters. Raccoon Creek Outfitters also provide shuttle services on sections of the Creek. As with all activities, please follow safety protocols. Even with outdoor activities, it is still safest to mask up, social distance, wear your life jacket and let someone know your paddling plan. Limit your paddling group to smaller family/friend groups and keep your distance at put-ins, lunch breaks and at the take-out. If you are handling other people's gear or boats, be sure to hand wash or use hand sanitizer. We must remain vigilant until we are certain our health measures have been successful. But most of all, let's rediscover the benefits of outdoor recreation and re-connect with the bountiful nature in our watershed!



“Who Cooks For You; Who Cooks For You, Alllll....!”

By Patrick Quackenbush – ODNR, Naturalist Supervisor, Hocking Hill State Park

Anyone who has ever heard that crazy call of the Barred Owl late at night walking through the woods or along an old country road here in Appalachia Ohio should have little wonder why our early settlers heard fairies, elves, gnomes, and spirits in the dark forest. Some early beliefs felt that hearing an owl call at night could even mean tragedy for your family the coming day. Some early Native American legends tell how the owl could lead a passed spirit into the land of the dead if you could follow their silent nocturnal path through the woods. However, this unique group of birds and their special adaptations are one of those tales where truth in some cases can be more wondrous than fiction.



Barred Owl

Ohio has eight species of owls that call Ohio home for at least part of the year if not all year long. We have four species that prefer to travel down from Canada in the winter, including the Snowy, Short-eared, Long-eared, and the tiny Saw-Whet owls. Our year-round residents include the Great Horned, Barred, Screech and Barn owls that call our area home and raise their families right alongside our children. Myths aside, these birds have some amazing adaptations for living, hunting, and raising their young in a nocturnal world.



Great Horned Owl

When most people look at an owl quite obviously the first thing they tend to notice are the animal's giant eyes. Those eyes are a marvel at collecting and gathering light in the darkness. Owls can literally see at midnight as well as we can during a cloudy day. Their pupils dilate almost the entire surface of the eye and allow copious amounts of light in to brighten their night time world. However, in exchange for this great ability to see in the dark they also forfeit most of their color vision and their ability to move the eyeball within the socket. The eye is simply too large to allow for muscles to move the eyeball itself. So, owls have adapted longer more elastic ligaments and muscles in their necks to allow them to turn their heads and look directly behind them so they can watch for danger and look for prey.

Next on their hit list of special adaptations would have to be their amazing ears. Located on the side of the head (*similar to the location of ours*) the large opening and angle of the ear canals allow them to pinpoint even the slightest mouse squeak up to ½ mile away. The ear opening on a great horned owl is larger in diameter than a nickel! The large tufts that stick up on some species such as the great horned or screech owls are not the ears. In fact, they are there for camouflage or to make them look bigger and tougher than might really be the case. The truth is that the ears do much of the hunting and the eyes come into play to avoid obstacles in flight and to zero in on prey for the last few feet.

Combine the above adaptations along with special feathers for silent flight and powerfully sharp talons you get a predator that is often considered one of our top hunters in the night woods. Owls are grouped in with other raptors such hawks, eagles and vultures but have evolved over very different lines through the years even though they fill the same niche in rodent control. One of the subtle clues to this difference is in the digits on the talons. Raptors in Ohio all have four digits. But hawks and eagles have three digits in front and one in the back, while owls have two forward and two pointing back. This allows owls to spread their talons wider and cover more surface area to capture prey. Again, a small difference, but important when looking at the evolution of the species. They are so good at what they do; one pair of large owls feeding up to four young in a nest can take upwards of 30 mice every night to keep everyone fed!

I have been fortunate enough to work with, study & observe, band, care for as well as call and talk with these amazing birds throughout my 40 years as a naturalist. So the next time you hear that awesome call outside your window or on your hike, go quiet to the porch or take a seat on a log and enjoy the show. Notice as they sit and listen quietly, then swoop and hunt keeping your woods & fields, as well as your barns & outbuildings free of rodents and other potentially bothersome creatures. You too will be amazed by what you see and hear in the nocturnal realm.



Screech Owl

Lake Hope Lodge- Like a Phoenix from the Ashes

By Kaylin Callander - Lake Hope State Park Naturalist

Many visitors to Lake Hope State Park can easily recall fond memories of the “old lodge”. Built in 1949, as the Division of Parks and Recreation was birthed into existence, the original dining lodge was the first of its kind in the entire state. By its completion in 1951, park guests and locals alike could stop in to have a full course meal in the lower level prepared and served by friendly staff.

Not only did the lodge provide food options, but it also provided entertainment in the form of a game room. Located inside Julie’s Café one could find air hockey, a pool table, and arcade games. A wooden board game with a spinning top and pins called Skittles was also popular (the Nature Center has a board now!). Some may also remember that prior to the cabins getting satellites in 1998, the lodge was the only place to watch cable TV and those beloved games of football.

This past February 10th marked the 15-year anniversary of the devastating fire that destroyed the entire structure. Little is known about the cause of the fire, but many have their own speculations. In any case, the fire burned so hot and high that night that volunteer fire departments could not keep up despite their best efforts. Once the charred remains were cooled and cleared away, it would be 6 years before a replacement would be resurrected.

The new dining lodge (completed in November 2012) now sits in the same footprint as the old, carrying on the traditions of locally prepared meals for visitors by Edible Appalachia. During construction, Zaleski State Forest helped to mill local timber for the inside of the building, giving it a warmer feel. Beautiful views expose the glimmering lake far below, making it a perfect place to relax, get married, or take a “selfie”. The lodge also houses our gift shop, selling locally made faire, ice, and firewood. It is also the place to check in for cabin rentals and glean information about nearby points of interest and programs at the park.

Despite having only been open for less than 10 years, it is the hope that many wonderful memories will be produced here just as in the old lodge. Every year more and more people flock to Lake Hope to relive childhood memories and share new ones with future generations. Years from now who knows what fun pictures will pop up and jog our minds back to a different time.



Birding in the Watershed

By Kelly Love - Raccoon Creek AmeriCorps Member



The sun is shining and the birds are chirping. You know what that means?! It is time to go out and do some bird watching! Bird Watchers sometimes refer to the activity as “birding”. Spring is one of the best times to go birding since many more bird species have returned to the area. Raccoon Creek Watershed has so many great areas to go birding. I want to share some of my favorite places in the Raccoon Creek Watershed to go birding.

Hope Furnace is a great location for birding — and one of my favorites — because of the variety of birds flocking to the spot! Hope Furnace is part of Lake Hope State Park. There are plenty of parking spots and you can enjoy looking at the historical furnace on your way to the hiking trail. Once you walk past the furnace, there is a nice hiking trail along Sandy Run. You can see waterfowl, songbirds, woodpeckers, raptors, and even owls! The area is known for its abundance of migratory spring warblers.

Another great location to go birding in Raccoon Creek Watershed is Waterloo Wildlife Area near New Marshfield. I have seen so many different species there, including wild turkeys, scarlet tanagers, and cerulean warblers. It is a great place to explore for the day. The area has a pond where you can spot newts, and a creek nearby is where I found a baby snapping turtle. I recommend taking the family birding here and having a picnic when you are done.

For birders, I also recommend going to the Moonville Tunnel and Kings Hollow Tunnel. Both areas are surrounded by forest and the tunnels are unique and fun. Lake Hope, Lake Alma, and Tycoon Lake are other areas where birds gather. The Hocking Valley Birding Trail and ebird are great resources if you plan to look to the sky and enjoy the birds.

RCP UPCOMING EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

Spring Day Camp Kit Pick-up _____ May 12th - 14th,
 Multiple Pick-up Locations

RCP Summer Virtual Summer Camp _____ July 12th – 16th

Ohio River Sweep _____ TBA

RCP Apple Tree Sale _____ mid-June

Events are subject to change.

Stay up to date with changes on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/raccooncreekpartnership/>.

Or e-mail raccooncreekpartnership@gmail.com or mackey@ohio.edu.

Check-out RCP’s Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/raccoon_creek_partnership/



Raccoon Creek Partnership

c/o Amy Mackey

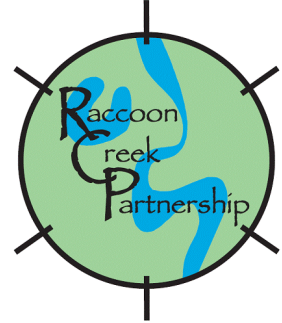
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Channel Catfish	\$50	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grass Pickerel	\$100	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spotted Bass	\$500	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paddlefish	\$1000	<input type="checkbox"/>

Membership

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

RCP Membership Application

