

RACCOON CREEK NEWS

FALL 2023

In a world full of chaos, be a raccoon!

Dark Skies for a Bright Future

Kaylin Callander—Naturalist, Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Autumn is the beginning of the decent into darkness. Daylight becomes more and more precious as cooler temperatures usher in the new season. And as the night comes earlier and sticks around longer, we turn on lights to aid in our comfort and safety. Light and civilization are intimately connected. One look at a photo of the night side of Earth from space will easily show you the location of larger cities. Even interstates are illuminated by the bright dots of small towns. It is a map of light and of community.

Civilization and progress are synonymous in the English language, but are they in the natural world? Studies have shown that artificial light disrupts natural ecosystems all over the world. Birds using the moonlight and stars to navigate during migration could wander off course towards dangerous nighttime cityscapes, many colliding with illuminated buildings. Prey species use darkness as cover from predators. Wetlands that are home to many amphibians are negatively impacted by artificial light during breeding seasons. Insects are often fatally drawn towards light, adding to a mess of reasons for their declining populations. Disrupting natural behaviors such as circadian rhythms, reproduction, and migration are just the beginning. Even humans can't escape the negative health effects of artificial light at nighttime.

So, embrace the darkness! Start with small steps like turning off outdoor lighting during peak migration and breeding seasons in spring and fall. Using responsible lighting practices is another economical way to save wildlife:

So, embrace the darkness! Start with small steps like turning off outdoor lighting during peak migration and breeding seasons in spring and fall. Using responsible lighting practices is another economical way to save wildlife:

- Use light only when/where it is needed (timers and motion controls can help)
- Direct light so it falls only where it is needed (shields or fixtures pointed down instead of up)
- The light should be no brighter than necessary (surrounding surfaces can reflect light)
- Use warmer-color lights where possible (try to avoid blue-violet light)

If you want to share in your appreciation of the dark, nighttime programs happen at your local parks all the time. Join us for fun and “enlightenment” as Lake Hope State Park hosts a series of dark-driven and autumnal astronomy activities this fall.

For more information on these programs and more, please check our events calendar at ohiodnr.gov, find us on Facebook or call the Nature Center: 740-596-3030

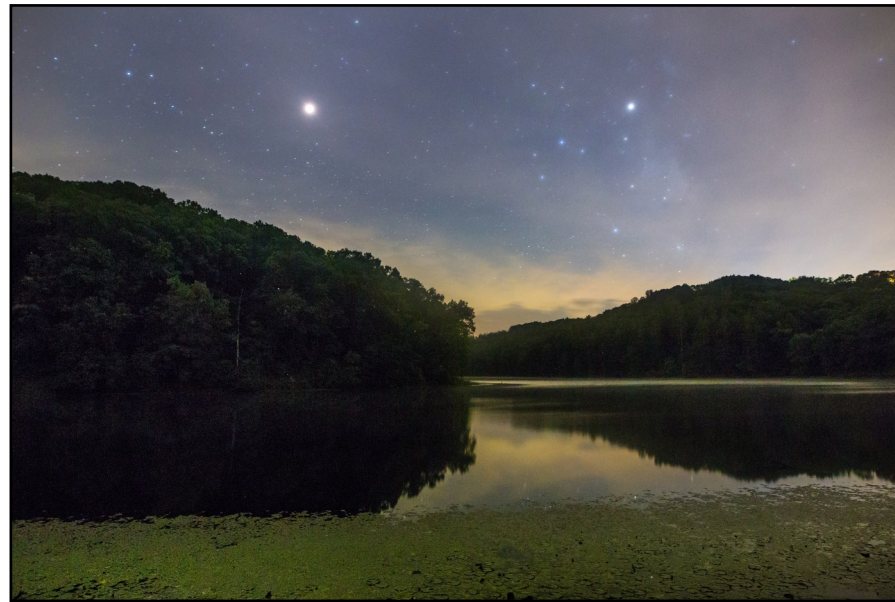


Photo taken by Ohio Department of Natural Resources

ATHENS

GALLIA

HOCKING

JACKSON

MEIGS

VINTON

Farewell to Outgoing AmeriCorps Members, Kelsey and Ashley!

I am thrilled to extend a heartfelt welcome to the new Raccoon Creek AmeriCorps members, Sarah and Laura. Additionally, I want to express my profound gratitude to everyone I have had the privilege to meet and collaborate with during my two-year term with the Raccoon Creek Partnership (RCP). Each interaction, whether out in the field, teaching at various schools and camps, or tabling at community events, has contributed to making my time with RCP both special and unforgettable.

My educational journey at Ohio University, where I majored in marine, freshwater, and environmental biology, led me to AmeriCorps as a natural next step. I was drawn to the Raccoon Creek Partnership because of a shared desire to make a tangible difference in our watershed and to raise awareness about the critical issue of acid mine drainage in Southeast Ohio. One of the highlights of my term was witnessing the downstream 40 miles of Raccoon Creek being officially designated as Exceptional Warm-water Habitat by the EPA. I'm so proud to have been part of RCP during this milestone.

As I look to the future, I am excited to share that I will be attending the University of South Florida this fall as a graduate student focusing on coral biology. It's a new venture, and while it's a change of pace from Ohio, I'm looking forward to the journey ahead.

Though I will dearly miss my time with RCP and AmeriCorps, I'm carrying with me a plethora of cherished memories and friendships.

—Kelsey Daniels



Serving with Raccoon Creek Partnership has been a dream come true for me. Through the two years I've been with the non-profit I've been able to do and learn so much. I've gained a lot of hands-on work experience in the field of environmental restoration and education, as well as learned a lot about fish, macroinvertebrates, freshwater ecosystems and more. Not only has the position been extremely valuable for my career in conservation, but it's been an absolute blast and a joy to show up every day and to feel like I'm doing work that really makes a difference. I've met so many wonderful people that I hope to keep in touch with even as I move on to work elsewhere, and I've made so many great memories. Some of my favorite experiences with Raccoon Creek include the everyday camaraderie of field work, watching kids have fun and learn at our summer camps, and even that one time we got the boat stuck for several hours and weren't sure we'd ever get it out.

It's a little sad to be moving on, but I feel like this position has done so much to help prepare me for a successful career and I'm very hopeful about the future. Not only has Raccoon Creek helped my resume, but it has also allowed me to go back to school and finish my degree in Wildlife Conservation

Biology. As the term comes to an end, I am enrolling in my final class and preparing to graduate. I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for all the wonderful folks I've met through AmeriCorps and Raccoon Creek Partnership. I wish you all the best and I hope the next service members love this position as much as I did!

—Ashley Grace



Hello to New AmeriCorps members, Sarah and Laura!



Sarah Frazier is a first year AmeriCorps member serving with Raccoon Creek Partnership. She graduated with an Associates from Hocking College and then continued her educational journey into West Virginia University where she obtained her Bachelor's degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Management. After graduation she travelled and worked in many places such as a Nature Preserve in Oahu and at a Ski resort in Winter Park Colorado. After moving back to southeast Ohio in the beginning of May she is ready to dive back into conservation work, give back to her community and learn more about her Appalachian heritage. Sarah's love for nature extends to her hobbies and she spends any free time she has in the great outdoors. She is an avid bird watcher, hiker, and loves learning about edible and medicinal plant species. She is excited to be a part of this wonderful organization and to begin expanding her skill set and knowledge about watersheds. Sarah's dedication to this field is fueled by a genuine interest in preserving our natural ecosystems and ensuring clean, healthy waterways for future generations to enjoy.



Laura Tobar, a proud Athenian and newly minted AmeriCorps member, is excited to make a lasting impact in her local community and the environment. She's a graduate of Athens High School and Ohio University, where she earned a degree in Political Science with a focus on environmental, African, and gender studies. Laura's career path has been diverse; ranging from working in breweries to her most recent roles in child care and camp counseling. Laura is thrilled to be serving with the Raccoon Creek Partnership, where she is already expanding her knowledge about macroinvertebrates, water testing, fish sampling, and engaging in educational outreach efforts. She will continue to explore uncharted parts of her community and its watersheds, deepening her connection to the region. Outside of her AmeriCorps service, you can find her taking leisurely walks with her dog, Rider. Laura is an avid music enthusiast and a big fan of Billy Strings. She also loves trying new beers and identifying her local flora and fauna. She cherishes the outdoors and is enamored with all things squishy, strange, crawly, and beautiful.

Raccoon Creek.....First State Scenic River in Southeast Ohio? Hopefully!

By Amy Mackey – Ohio University Voinovich School & Bob Gable – ODNR Scenic Rivers



<https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/about-odnr/nature-preserves/scenic-rivers/list-ohio-scenic-rivers>

This is a map of the state Scenic Rivers in the state of Ohio. Do you see anything missing from this map? Where are the scenic rivers in southeast Ohio?! Over the past several decades, watershed groups have partnered with local, state, and federal agencies to clean up and restore many streams and waterways in southeast Ohio. In Raccoon Creek alone, more than 100 miles have been restored to meet or exceed biological criteria and It's time to recognize these impressive watershed improvements and our amazing partners by getting some stream miles on the Ohio Scenic Rivers map! Raccoon Creek Partnership and Ohio University Voinovich School personnel are working closely with ODNR Scenic Rivers staff to begin the process of possibly designating the mainstem of Raccoon Creek as the very first Scenic River in southeast Ohio. This designation will showcase the partnerships that have resulted in recovery of Raccoon Creek over the past several decades; from “dead as a bag of hammers” to meeting

Warmwater and Exceptional Warmwater Habitat. Stay tuned for updates and see below for more information from ODNR Scenic Rivers Bob Gable, about the state Scenic River program.

The mission of the Ohio Scenic Rivers Program is to work cooperatively with local governments, businesses, landowners, non-profit organizations and other state and federal agencies to protect Ohio's remaining highest quality rivers and streams. Currently there are 15 designated wild, scenic and recreational rivers across the state of Ohio comprising 27 stream segments. More than 830 river miles are protected by the program and three of the designated streams, the Big and Little Darby Creeks, Little Beaver Creek and Little Miami River are also designated as National Scenic Rivers. Three different levels of designation, wild, scenic and recreational reflect the degree of natural character that each stream possesses.

To be designated wild, scenic or recreational a river or stream must possess outstanding water quality, high biological diversity, a relatively in-tact natural riparian corridor and limited human intrusions in close proximity to or crossing the waterway. The Scenic Rivers Program welcomes the proposed inclusion of any potential qualifying river or stream into the system. Proposed designations are usually initiated at the local level and the river or stream is evaluated for inclusion in the program through a cooperative effort with Ohio Scenic Rivers Program staff. If designated, a 10-member advisory council representing local interests is appointed by the Director of the Department of Natural Resources. The council's role is to advise the department on local issues pertaining to the protection of a designated river.

Fun Fall Time Crafts!

DIY PINE CONE BIRD FEEDER

As winter nears, the days get shorter and food starts to become more difficult for wildlife to find. This is an easy, inexpensive project, for all ages, to add some instant feeding stations in your own backyard.

Supplies you will need:

- Pinecones
- Cotton string or twine
- Peanut butter or sunflower seed butter
- Plates or trays
- Birdseed

Directions:

1. Wrap the string around the pinecone (tight enough so that it can resist weathering)
2. Add a fair amount of peanut butter or sunflower seed butter over the pinecone and in-between crevices
3. Pour birdseed onto a plate or tray
4. Roll the pinecone in the birdseed until it is well covered

Now you have a natural bird feeder! Find a tree to hang it on and watch the wildlife enjoy your thoughtful gift!

Before you know it, your new feeder will be a hotspot for chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, woodpeckers, and other birds. This will be a fun way to practice your ID skills by watching and recording which birds and even squirrels visit your feeder!



Photo Credit: Steve Byland



Photo Credit: The Spruce / Meg MacDonald

Upcoming Events and Opportunities

RCP Annual Public Meeting and Bonfire _____ **Sunday, November 5th, 6pm-8pm**

Raccoon Creek Outfitters, 74815 US 50 #8010, Albany, OH

Carbondale Doser Channel Cleaning _____ **Tuesday, November 7th, 10am**

1659-11923 Carbondale Road, Nelsonville OH

Email us at raccooncreekpartnership@gmail.com if you would like to join in on the fun!

****All events subject to change. ****

For info or directions visit our Facebook page:

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

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



Raccoon Creek Partnership

c/o Amy Mackey
 Voinovich School
 The Ridges, Bldg 22
 Athens, OH 45701

Place
 Postage
 Stamp
 Here

Send To:



Printed on post-consumer recycled paper

and send to:
 Raccoon Creek Partnership
 Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service
 Building 22, The Ridges
 Athens, OH, 45701

Please make checks payable to the:
 Raccoon Creek Partnership
 Your contributions are tax deductible.

Name
Address
Phone
E-mail

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

Creek Chub	\$15	
Johnny Darter	\$30	
Channel Catfish	\$50	
Grass Pickerel	\$100	
Spotted Bass	\$500	
Paddlefish	\$1000	

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

RCP Membership Application

