

# Raccoon Creek News

Spring 2024

*Don't worry, bee happy—it's springtime!*

## Spring Wildflowers Found in the Raccoon Creek Watershed

*Sarah Frazier and Laura Tobar— RCP AmeriCorps Members*

A sure sign of spring is when a group of plants called “spring ephemerals” pop up! These flowers bloom early in the season and have a short above-ground lifespan. They take advantage of the brief window of time between snow melt and tree leaf-out to capture sunlight. Next time you take a stroll through the woods in spring, keep an eye out for these fleeting beauties!



Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*): Bloodroot is characterized by its distinctive white flowers with bright yellow centers and lobed leaves. It gets its name from its thick, reddish-orange rhizome. It blooms in early spring and can be found in deciduous forests, along stream banks and shady woodland edges.



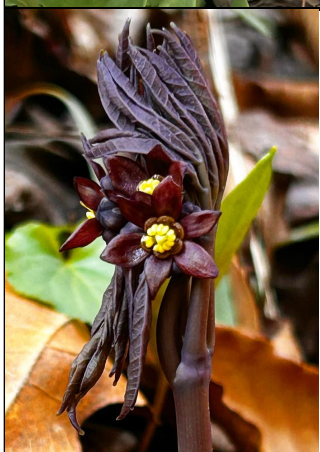
Toadshade trillium (*Trillium sessile*): It is distinguished by its single, maroon flower with three petals and three green sepals, which emerges above a whorl of three broad, mottled leaves. They typically grow alongside streams in moist deciduous forest.



Virginia bluebell (*Mertensia virginica*): It is characterized by its clusters of pendulous, trumpet-shaped flowers that transition from pink buds to vibrant blue blooms in early spring. Virginia bluebells thrive in moist woodlands, along streams, floodplains and meadows.



Yellow trout lily (*Erythronium americanum*): It features distinctive mottled leaves resembling a trout fish's coloring. In early spring, it produces solitary, nodding yellow flowers on slender stems. Found in deciduous forests, it prefers moist, well-drained soil and shade.



Giant blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*): This ephemeral has small maroon flowers. It also is identified by its dark purple shoots that can grow up to 2.5" and blue-green compound leaves. It typically grows in shady woodlands and moist, rich soils, often alongside streams.



Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*): This plant gets its name from its uniquely shaped white flowers that resemble pants hanging upside down on a clothesline. It is a member of the bleeding heart family. Can be found on rich woodland slopes and ravines.

ATHENS

GALLIA

HOCKING

JACKSON

MEIGS

VINTON

## The Wonders Of Vernal Pools

*By Kaylin Callander—Lake Hope Naturalist*

Rain, rain, go away, come again some other day! Actually, rain isn't all bad. For one thing, it helps to fill places called vernal pools in winter and spring and keep their inhabitants happy!

Vernal pools are a unique type of wetland habitat. They are typically small, shallow, ephemeral bodies of water, and unlike a pond or a lake, they have no permanent inlet or outlet. They are filled each spring by rain and snow melt, then dry up completely for at least one month during the year. This dry period typically occurs from early summer through fall. With no permanent body of water present, fish find vernal pools uninhabitable. This is great news for amphibians because fish tend to predate on their offspring, whether in egg or larval form. Spring peepers, spotted salamanders, and wood frogs are some of the amphibians that use vernal pools as a place to mate and lay eggs. Even right now, the low trill of toads can be heard in wet places throughout the forest. Though these charismatic creatures tend to steal the vernal pool spotlight, there are many other organisms that love this type of wetland too: fairy shrimp, copepods, ostracods, and many species of beetles to name a few. If you need more reasons to love vernal pools, consider this: they help regulate the flow of water through the environment aiding in minimizing flood damage. This slow flow can also help to retain moisture in the environment to protect against wildfire and filter out pollutants in the water with uptake of heavy metals into plants.



Photo Credits:  
Amy Mackey

Love vernal pools as much as I do? Want to know more about the creatures living in them and what they can tell us about the environment? Join us for adventure during our free programs in or near the wetlands!

### Thursday, April 25 and May 9- Wetland Wade

- 10:00am-11:00am
- Join the naturalist for a slippery walk amongst a wetland habitat while discovering the importance of this eco-system and looking for the flora and fauna that call it home. Meet at the Hope Furnace
- Please dress for the weather and bring footwear appropriate for wet, soggy, and muddy conditions. Rain boots and a hiking stick are helpful!

### Saturday, May 11- Prothonotary Warblers

- 9:30am-11:00am
- Join Mike Wren for a presentation on prothonotary warblers, a small migratory species that nests in wetland areas. He will take us on a walk along the Moonville Rail Trail to locate and discuss his ongoing nesting box project.
- Meet at the Hope School House.
- Bring a pair of binoculars and wear weather appropriate clothes. This is a rain or shine event.



## Spring Foraging: Foraged Green Pesto

By Molly Jo Stanley— SE Ohio Regional Director of the Ohio Environmental Council and OEC Action Fund

**Spring Green Pesto** is made of some of the great “Volunteer Vegetables”- coming into disturbed soils to heal and preserve the fertility of soil. These plants are not only edible and medicinal, they act as ground cover and mulch. The recipe is not exact; it contains roughly equal-parts **Chickweed, Onion Grass, Bitter Cress, and Purple Dead Nettle**, with the addition of **Black Walnuts**, and (the only ingredients not foraged by us here in the Appalachian Foothills) **Sea Salt and Sunflower Oil (Olive Oil would work well, too)**.



**Purple Dead Nettle (*Lamium purpureum*)** is one of the first plants to flower in Southeast Ohio, providing crucial sustenance to emerging Bees and other pollinators. This introduced Eurasian plant does well in disturbed soils, especially open lawns and fields. The leaves and flowers make a nice addition to salads and pesto, or as a cooked green. Because Purple Dead Nettle has a fuzzy/hairy consistency, this makes a better companion than stand-alone green. *Lamium purpureum* is known for antihistamine, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, astringent, immunostimulating, nutritive, and styptic (blood staunching) qualities.

**Common Chickweed (*Stellaria media*)** In addition to being a nutritive powerhouse, this dainty-looking green is a mender of wounded skins, irritated mucous membranes, inflamed digestive tracts and damaged tissues and lymphatic systems. Freshly harvested greens that thrive in cooler weather (often gathered even beneath the snow) offer our bodies tremendous amounts of essential vitamins and minerals that our seasonal diet typically lacks. Chickweed nourishes the body directly, and assists in creating elasticity and permeability in the cell walls to increase nutrient absorption and waste excretion.



**Pennsylvania or Hairy Bittercress (*Cardamine pensylvanica* or *hirsuta*)** These are wild mustards – Brassicaceae family members (Kale, Broccoli, Cabbage, etc.) – like their cultivated cousins (and possibly moreso), abundant in vitamins and minerals our bodies crave – especially in early spring. Though only slightly bitter and spicy, those bitter, spicy tastes support our digestive, endocrine, circulatory, and immune systems, aiding the body on many levels. Use the wild Cresses to provide that delightful mustard flavor to salads, dressings, marinades, and sauces.

**Onion Grass (*Allium vineale*)** Like all Alliums (Garlic and Onion), this plant is a powerful antibiotic, antimicrobial, circulatory-stimulating blood purifier. Folks have used Alliums to relieve tension headaches, heal fungal infections, lower cholesterol, and reduce blood pressure. The leaves and bulbs contain all the same properties and flavors, and can be used just the way one would use commercial garlic or chives. It's worth remembering that no poisonous look-alikes of Allium plants smell like Alliums!



**Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*)** Though processing them by hand is no simple task, it's absolutely worth the effort (and a wonder that there aren't more people processing Black Walnuts locally). Used just as the English Walnuts – with a richer, stronger, fruitier (and many people agree, better) flavor – these little marvels are packed with protein, essential fatty acids, iron, magnesium, potassium, and a whole lot more. They are being studied for their anti-cancer properties. And the juglandin, juglone, and juglandic acid (allelopathic constituents that hinder the growth of some other plant species) that give them a bad reputation also kill parasites and are effective in treating homes and animals infested with fleas.

**Combine these foraged treats in a food processor or blender and enjoy!**

**\*Please be sure to properly identify plants before eating them\***

## Spring Foraging: Blossom Jelly

*By Sarah Frazier– RCP AmeriCorps Member*

You can make jelly using a variety of spring blossoms like dandelions and redbuds, just by following this straightforward recipe!

### Ingredients:

- ◆ 4 cups dandelion petals or redbud petals (harvested from unsprayed, pesticide-free areas)
- ◆ 4 cups water
- ◆ 1/4 cup lemon juice
- ◆ 1 package (about 1.75 oz) powdered pectin
- ◆ 4 cups granulated sugar



### Instructions:

1. Rinse blossoms, then simmer them with boiling water for 10 mins.
2. Steep for 1 hour, strain, and discard blossoms.
3. Combine blossoms infusion, lemon juice, and pectin in a saucepan.
4. Bring to a roaring boil, then add sugar.
5. Boil for 1-2 mins, skimming foam.
6. Test gel consistency, then pour into sterilized jars.
7. Process jars in a water bath for 10 mins (optional).

## News from our Partner, The Hocking River Commission

*By Dan Imhoff—American Eel Preserve Project Manager*

Recently the Hocking River Commission (HRC) planted, with a lot of volunteer help, 4,600 trees at the American Eel Preserve, along the banks of the Hocking River near Chauncey, Ohio.

The American Eel preserve is located at the upstream junction of the Hocking River and Sunday Creek. In Google maps search for “American Eel Preserve, Ohio”. The land is all floodplain, about 32 acres had been farmed for decades and the remainder woodland.

The American Eel is an unusual fish not often found in Ohio streams; some have been collected recently in the Hocking River. American Eels live in freshwater and return to the Sargasso Sea to reproduce. The fish in the Hocking swim from the Sargasso Sea up the Mississippi, up the Ohio River through about 13 locks and dams. Just to live out most of its life in the Hocking River. And it didn't have a preserve named after it.

In 2022 HRC received an H2Ohio grant to fund this project. The purpose of the grant was to reduce nutrient and sediment input to the Hocking by restoring the farmed fields to native riparian forests.

In spring of 2023 we planted 850 pounds of pollinator seed and 14,400 trees in the farmed areas. 18 different tree species have been planted. The planting in 2024 is a continuation of the effort. As with all of the HRC preserve the Eel preserve is open to the public for the enjoyment of nature.

The Hocking River Commission is an all-volunteer, 501c3 nonprofit whose primary missions are to improve and maintain a high-quality Hocking River and to promote the wise use of the river. We have 6 preserves, planted over 40,000 trees along the Hocking and have been instrumental in creating about five public river access points.

Learn more about us at <https://hockingrivercom.org/>

## Activities and Upcoming Events

### Spring Word Search

R	T	T	T	Y	A	D	O	H	A	H	N	N	U
M	C	O	R	E	D	N	A	M	A	L	A	S	N
U	I	A	I	L	I	D	O	F	F	A	D	R	B
I	L	D	T	L	L	L	L	E	K	L	L	L	H
L	L	I	Y	I	O	L	B	M	U	K	O	L	D
L	H	Y	A	C	I	N	T	H	O	O	T	G	L
I	F	C	L	L	N	A	A	R	D	R	N	L	E
R	S	I	A	A	R	L	G	R	N	I	E	O	C
T	P	O	N	W	A	L	O	T	L	B	E	L	A
B	R	L	I	E	D	O	L	K	E	A	E	N	L
A	O	S	D	N	T	R	C	U	A	L	S	L	C
B	U	I	R	E	A	U	L	O	W	T	L	R	E
L	T	L	A	R	D	B	E	B	Y	L	T	B	R
A	I	U	C	I	B	W	L	L	D	D	O	R	A

HYACINTH  
RENEWAL  
BLUEBELL  
SALAMANDER  
BLOODROOT  
TRILLIUM  
CARDINAL  
DUCKLING  
MOREL  
DAFFODIL  
TOAD  
SPROUT



### Upcoming Events and Opportunities

Spring Day Camp \_\_\_\_\_ Free and open to all ages! \_\_\_\_\_ May 18th, 11am-1pm

We will be painting pots, planting flowers, having a wildflower hike and snacks!

Dairy Lane Shelter House @ The Ridges Athens, OH ( Near the mini golf course

Summer Day Camp \_\_\_\_\_ July 8th – 12th, 9am-4pm

Raccoon Creek Outfitters- 74815 US-50 #8010, Albany, OH 45710

**Registration: Closed, volunteers needed. Please contact us if you are interested!**

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

For info or directions visit our Facebook page:

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

Or e-mail [raccooncreekpartnership@gmail.com](mailto:raccooncreekpartnership@gmail.com) or [mackey@ohio.edu](mailto:mackey@ohio.edu)





**Raccoon Creek Partnership**  
 c/o Amy Mackey  
 Voinovich School  
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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

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