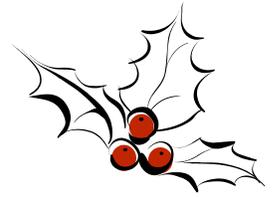




## **Bull's Run Winter Newsletter December, 2014**



**Bull's Run Nature Sanctuary and Arboretum** is a non-profit volunteer organization located in NE Butler County and serving the surrounding community. We are dedicated to preserving the natural area of Bull's Run, and strive to develop the park as an environmental facility and educational resource for people of all ages.

### **A SUMMARY OF YOUR ARBORETUM THROUGH 2014**

Last January, naturalist Barb Reuss and volunteer John Whittington, conducted our third winter tree identification workshop, with extra information supplied by Tom Hissong from Aullwood Audubon Center. Winter Nature TOTS had loads of fun discovering there's plenty to see and do outside during nature's down time.

In early spring, Barb finally announced her retirement plans to the board. She would be leaving at the end of May for northern climes and a new chapter. The job opening was listed on the website and face book page, as well as networked through several other organizations. We had several applicants, conducted interviews and hired Erin Skimming to fill the position. Erin had a brief week of training with Barb, then picked up more while working part time for Greene County Parks through the summer and fall, while still learning the ropes at Bull's Run. She is now focused on developing programs for Bull's Run Nature Sanctuary and Arboretum.

Spring Nature TOTS got to explore the seasonal changes and the creek. They also planted a tree in the prairie to honor Barb on their last week together. Each Tot painted a rock to place around the base of the young Bur Oak.

We had a presence at the National Night Out held at Sunset Park in early August. Board members, our new naturalist, Erin, and several other volunteers manned the booth, featuring nature-themed temporary tattoos, puppets, and other activities.

The prairie endured its 6<sup>th</sup> summer, thanks to the wet spring, so it was very colorful for the Prairie Walk in August. John Whittington again shared his enthusiasm for the prairie and its wide variety of plants with those who attended. Efforts to cultivate this showcase is now under the guidance of our Land Stewardship board member, Randy Wilson, with the help of many volunteers collecting seeds.

The memorial trees that were planted over 30 years ago are maturing, some have passed their peak. A few have been removed, for a variety of reasons. The four new trees that were planted late last fall are doing well. They were joined by a few new plantings in the spring (at a work day), now encased in blue tubes to protect them from hungry wildlife.

We are slowly making progress toward the creation of a memorial reflection area between the parking lot and the gate. Our major project this year was a continuation of the bridge improvements of last summer. We received grant monies late last fall from the S.L. Gimbel Advised Fund at the Community Foundation to continue improving the trail leading up from the bridges that were replaced last summer.

The Annual Meeting held at Verity Lodge on MUM campus was the perfect opportunity to introduce friends of the Arboretum to the new naturalist, Erin Skimming. We got to know Erin a little better and heard some of her plans for the future at Bull's Run. Refreshments were provided by Board Members and Friends, and created a relaxed atmosphere for fellow nature supporters to catch up on common interests.

Those who attended the Fall Family Fest in October enjoyed a beautiful autumn afternoon with crafts, live wild animals native to Ohio (courtesy of Boonshoft Museum of Discovery), a walk along the trails and refreshments.

Our annual Christmas Bird Count took place on Saturday, December 20.

## **Re-building Native Biodiversity**

*Miranda Wilson*

This has been another busy year for Bull's Run, including saying farewell to our beloved long-term Naturalist Barb and welcoming our new wonderful Naturalist Erin. The work of land stewardship carries on with the removal of invasive plants and re-introducing or expanding natives. We do not talk as much about the latter, but it is crucial to ensure there is quality habitat for creatures large and small in the park.

Earlier this year you may have noticed the blue tubes that appear to have sprouted throughout the park. These tubes are protecting about 80 native trees and shrubs that were planted this spring. From understory plants like Spice Bush and Paw Paw trees that provide food to wildlife, to Hickories and Tulip trees that will help fill in the holes in the canopy left by approximately 300 dead ash in the park, these plants are going to increase the health of the park for years to come. We are also constantly collecting seeds from the prairie and throughout the area to spread in recently cleared honeysuckle areas as we encourage shrubs and trees to grow. These efforts have also given our prairie diversity that is equal or greater than larger park systems in the area with far greater resources. These efforts increase the number of species and genetic diversity within Bull's Run, which creates more food and shelter for a variety of animals.



Our efforts to expand biodiversity don't stop at the park boundaries. Invasive seeds are spread within the park by wildlife, but they are also carried in from around the area. We have to rely on the community and our neighbors to also be great land stewards. Several of the park's neighbors have been extremely helpful in this regard. A few years ago the Conleys removed all the honeysuckle on their property and planted some beautiful White Pine in that space. This fall the Saylor's made a generous donation of five Eastern Red Cedars to be planted in the park in an area recently cleared of honeysuckle. These plants provide excellent habitat for birds and small mammals, with the bonus of being gorgeous as well.

Every little bit helps. We have so many great volunteers that come out and help us maintain the park - from keeping bird feeders well stocked over the winter, to fixing sheds and bridges, along with making space for native plants to grow. All of these efforts encourage more types of wildlife to return to the park while giving the community another way to engage with nature. We want everyone when they leave the park to take the love of nature with them, but we also need to extend that to our own homes and yards as well. Removing existing invasive plants like honeysuckle, Euonymus vine and Autumn Olive from your yard helps slow the spread of these plants. When you add new plants to your yard, consider choosing hardy native shrubs like Viburnums, Ninebark, Elderberry and Spice Bush. Planting native trees, instead of cultivated varieties, provide better food and habitat for birds and other wildlife. For more info on the benefits of native plants and suggestions, see <http://ohioline.osu.edu/w-fact/0013.html>

Bull's Run is a gem in the community. The growing variety of native plants allows more wildlife to thrive here, giving visitors a chance to see wildlife that have not been present for decades. All of this is possible through the help of the community, and together we are making Bull's Run stronger and an even better resource for the community.

## To feed or not to feed the birds? Oh the winter question!

*Melissa Proffitt M.A.*

With winter barreling down upon us (oh wait, it is already here!), many of us may be putting out our bird feeders in hopes of attracting those beautiful winged wonders that pass through our region. Many individuals and organizations like the Audubon Society and The Humane Society of The United States advocate for backyard bird feeding as a way to help individual birds in your neighborhood receive supplemental nutrients during times when natural food items are scarce such as temperature extremes, and late winter when natural sources have been depleted. In an age when natural habitat is lost at alarming rates, bird feeders can help to fill a gap in needed food sources as well. It is also a great way to enjoy wildlife from the comfort of your own home!

What some people do not realize is that a lot of responsibility comes from choosing to feed any wildlife, even birds. As a general rule of thumb, feeding wildlife should be discouraged because it can lead to unintentional harm of the animals either from nutritional deficiencies that develop or because of habituation to humans. Many professional wildlife rehabilitators and biologists caution that feeding birds comes with consequences too. For one, bird feeders can spread bacterial infections between birds that would normally not be coming in close contact with one another. However, feeders attract groups which then transmit disease through feces and saliva contamination. Seed in feeders or on the ground around feeders can become damp and breed fungi that cause lung and crop infections in birds. And while most migrating birds leave an area based on a variety of natural cues, some individuals may not migrate because of the continuing availability of resources, thus subjecting them to temperature-related risks like flash freezing. Resource availability is also a cue for breeding patterns and could disrupt when young are born in relation to food supply abundance.

So while whether people should or should not feed wild birds is somewhat controversial, agreements are reached about HOW you should maintain your bird feeder if you choose to have one. Here are some safety tips to follow to ensure that your bird feeder is helping and not harming the birds around you:

- Thorough, frequent cleaning (at least once a week) with a 10% bleach solution. Allow feeder to completely dry before re-filling.
- Feed only high quality seed to avoid nutritional deficiencies. Seed recommended by HSUS includes:
  - **Black-oil sunflower seed** (high in fat so it provides good energy; seeds are small and thin-shelled enough for small birds to crack open)
  - **White Proso Millet** (high in protein content)
  - **Peanuts** (offer in tube-shaped metal mesh feeders designed for peanuts; use a feeder with smaller openings for peanut hearts),
  - **Suet cakes** (commercially made suet cakes fit the standard-size suet feeder)
  - **Nyjer seed** (use a tube feeder with tiny holes to keep the seeds from spilling out).
- Many of us place bird feeders out our windows so we can watch the birds. It is important to hang window clings or other objects to prevent window collisions of birds into the glass.
- If you have been filling a feeder regularly but wish to stop, gradually wean down the birds. Consistency is important, especially in winter, as birds may become dependent on your food source. Best time to reduce/stop maintaining a feeder is in spring when natural food sources are abundant.



By following these steps, you can provide a safer resource for wild birds on your property and still enjoy the beauty and delight the animals inspire. Another way to feed wildlife naturally is by maintaining native plants in your yard and garden. These plants support native ecosystems and provide a healthy, natural diet for all of your wild neighbors, feathered ones included! (For more information visit

[http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/feeding\\_birds.html](http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/feeding_birds.html),

<http://www.natureskills.com/birds/feeding-wild-birds/>, <http://www.livescience.com/2269-study-feed-birds.html>)

## **Annual Bird Christmas Bird Count**

*Nancy Clark*



The 2014 Christmas Bird Count was held at Bull's Run Nature Sanctuary and Arboretum on Saturday, December 20. Four Bird watchers hiked the arboretum trails recording the winter visitors to the woods. The hike usually lasted just over an hour, ending at the shelter where we observed a large variety of birds visiting the feeders. We were fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of a red-tailed hawk and marveled at a pileated woodpecker enjoying the suet feeder. You will find the results of the walk on the website, [www.bullsrn.org](http://www.bullsrn.org) and our facebook page. We would enjoy comments on what you are seeing at your bird feeder this winter.

### **Reserve your spot at our Fourth Annual Winter Tree Identification Class!**

Hint: It's all about the buds on the branches. Come join us for the popular, fourth annual Winter Tree Identification course at Bull's Run Nature Sanctuary and Arboretum, 3909 Rosedale Rd., Middletown, Ohio, on Saturday, January 17, 2015, 1:30 - 4:30 pm. John Whittington and Nancy Clark will lead this fun afternoon for beginners and those a little more experienced.

In three hours you will learn how to recognize more than 20 common trees at Bull's Run and in southwest Ohio; your backyard. We will spend about an hour inside (Church of the Ascension, 2709 McGe Ave., Middletown -- near Bull's Run) and then move outside for field experience and the real thing! Dress in layers for the weather.

This year we will again be joined by Guest Naturalist and winter botany expert, Tom Hissong, from the Aullwood Audubon Center. Tom, a naturalist and educator for more than 30 years, will give his power point presentation and join Bull's Run current Naturalist, Erin Skimming, a former Naturalist, Nancy Clark and backyard naturalist John Whittington as we learn how to tell one tree from another in the woods and in your neighborhood...in the winter. Bonus: Some of these identification skills will work for you year around.

Your walk in the woods will never be the same. Course materials provided.

Workshop fee: \$20.00 including course materials and light refreshments. You receive a 50% discount if you have a 2015 BRNSA membership, either the \$15.00 individual or a \$25.00 family payable with the insert provided. See our website to discover other activities. Payment is also possible by PayPal though the website or cash or check at the workshop. Registration in advance preferred to assure adequate amount of course materials. To register and for more details call Nancy (513-422-5063) or John Whittington (513-320-0242/513-423-1300) or use the registration form on the back of the enclosed membership form.





# Winter Nature Tots



**5 week program in Jan-Feb 2015**

**For Preschoolers (ages 6mth-6 yrs) & Caregivers**

*Child-centered hands-on exploration!*

**On Wednesdays Jan 14, 21, 28 and Feb 4, 11 from 12:30 - 1:30 pm**  
*Something new each week!*

**At Bulls Run Nature Sanctuary and Arboretum**  
3909 Rosedale Road in Middletown

*Space is Limited - Reserve Now!!*

Call Erin at 513-515-3746

or email Erin: [naturalist@bullsrn.org](mailto:naturalist@bullsrn.org)

**\*with 2015 Bull's Run Family membership**



## Winter Nature TOTS starts in January!



BULL'S RUN  
NATURE SANCTUARY  
AND ARBORETUM



Hey ho, the winter winds blow! The snow piles up and the nature tots pile in! Winter Nature TOTS will begin January 14<sup>nd</sup> and run through February 11<sup>th</sup>. That is 5 consecutive Wednesdays of nature exploration for little ones and their adults! This child centered, hands-on program gives the adult caregivers a weekly breath of fresh air, too! The fun begins at 12:30 pm and you will spend an hour or so investigating the wonders of winter and end with a snack and some warm cocoa. What a way to start your winter afternoons. If you have family or friends with children under 6 years old, think about joining us for an hour of nature exploration and learning at Bull's Run. The program is free with your 2015 family membership of \$25 or you can pay \$5 per session. The membership entitles you to free Spring and Autumn Nature TOTS, too! For more information and reserve your spot, contact Erin at [naturalist@bullsrn.org](mailto:naturalist@bullsrn.org).

## **Bull's Run Nature Sanctuary and Arboretum Contributions since June Newsletter**

### **Memberships**

Loren E. Ackerman  
Baker-Stevens-Parrimore Funeral Home  
Ron and Barb Conley  
Maddie Dunfee  
Margaret Fiora  
Frank E. Fisher  
Nancy Haney  
Jane Hobbs  
Ellen and Bill Kukuk  
Michael and Priscilla Lane  
Les and Phyllis Mills  
Dorothy Morehead  
Elizabeth Pague  
Pamela Pearson  
Bruce Peters Jr. and Glenda  
Jack Schaefer  
Glen and Joan Shivers  
Shovel and Hoe Garden Club  
Judith Thorn  
Charles R. Turner  
Mary Lou Williams  
Bob and Gibbie Wise

### **Memorials**

*In loving memory of Dick Hopper*  
Lavernne Hopper

*In loving memory of Gavin Lewis*  
Ed Seamon

*These memberships were received between 6/1/2014 and 12/10/2014. If our records do not reflect your records, please notify us and we will be sure to include you in our next newsletter where we list new contributions to Bull's Run Nature Sanctuary and Arboretum. Thank you for your support.*

Storage Sheds now match, thanks to Debbie and Forest Grant

### **Honorariums**

*In honor of members*  
*Mrs. Helen Stevens Gleason*  
*Mrs. Debbie Hazelbaker*  
*Mrs. Lynn Zollett*  
Middletown Garden Club

### **Bridges**

Loren E. Ackerman  
Mary Lou Williams  
Ron and Joyce Williams

### **Education**

Bruce Peters

### **Additional Contributions**

Baker-Stevens-Parrimore Funeral Home  
Ron and Barb Conley  
Maddie Dunfee  
Michael and Priscilla Lane  
Glen and Joan Shivers  
Charles Turner  
Bob and Gibbie Wise

### **Other Special Donations**

Gene and Pat Saylor  
Ernie Sturgill  
Bob Wise



# **Thanks to all who help keep Bull's Run an important asset of the community!**

- ❖ Thanks to all of the Master Gardeners who volunteered at Bull's Run this year to eradicate honeysuckle, work on the Native Plant Garden and help on Work Days.
- ❖ Thanks to John Whittington for his help with prairie education and leading our sixth annual prairie seminar and tour in August!
- ❖ Thanks to Pat and Gene Saylor for donating cedar trees to fill in an area cleared of honeysuckle and adding biodiversity to the Arboretum.
- ❖ Thanks to Forest and Debbie Grant for clearing some of the wind damage to dead ash trees off the trails.
- ❖ Thanks to all the guides working with Nature Tots helping to build a bridge to the future where each child learns to love and understand the outside world.
- ❖ Thanks to the City of Middletown for mowing, supplying mulch for the trails and hauling off honeysuckle branches after work days.
- ❖ Thanks to Sunshine Preschool at Breiel Church for access to their laminating equipment for the bulletin board displays at the entrance gate.
- ❖ Thanks to Katherine Lawson, Debbie Grant and Marge Kochunas for creating the bulletin board displays monthly.
- ❖ Thanks to the numerous volunteers who brought craft supplies and food to our fall events!
- ❖ Thanks to Danbarry for popcorn for the Fall Family Fest!
- ❖ Thanks to the Miami University Middletown Botany Department and Dr. Carolyn Keiffer for providing Verity Lodge for the annual meeting.
- ❖ Thanks to the Butler County Master Gardeners for their partnership. Education and volunteerism is flowing both ways!
- ❖ Thanks to Chris Parker for the donation of educational materials accumulated over years as an outdoor education enthusiast!
- ❖ Thanks to Bob Wise for refurbishing the bird feeders and also to Forest and Debbie Grant for installing them.
- ❖ Thanks to all the workday and WOW volunteers!
- ❖ Thanks to those who attended the annual meeting to welcome Erin to the Bull's Run Nature Sanctuary and Arboretum family!
- ❖ Thanks to those who shop at Kroger and have enrolled in their community rewards program, listing Bull's Run Nature Sanctuary and Arboretum – agency # 83005.
- ❖ Thanks to everyone who “likes” us on Facebook.
- ❖ Thanks to the Episcopal Church of Ascension for their all-around support.
- ❖ Thanks to Aaron Grant for maintaining our website.
- ❖ To all the volunteers who helped greet at Light Up Middletown.
- ❖ Thanks to all Board members for their enduring support!
- ❖ To everyone who made Bull's Run part of their 2014 giving and those who plan to contribute in 2015, we truly appreciate your support!

**2015 Membership Form is included in this mailing.  
Together we are making a difference!**

December

Sat. 19 Annual Christmas Bird Count 9-10 am

January

Sat. 17 Winter Tree Identification Class 1:30 - 4:30 pm begins at Episcopal Church of Ascension then at Bull's Run

Wed. 14, 21, 28 Winter Nature Tots 12:30 – 1:30 pm

February

Wed. 4, 11 Winter Nature Tots 12:30 – 1:30 pm



For more information please visit our website [www.bullsrn.org](http://www.bullsrn.org)  
Contact Erin Skimming, Naturalist, at [naturalist@bullsrn.org](mailto:naturalist@bullsrn.org) or 513-515-3746, to speak to your organization or for a program at Bull's Run

## Bull's Run Photo Gallery



←Pileated woodpecker

Cardinal, goldfinches and house finches ↓

Seen at 12/20/14 Christmas Bird Count



New erosion control riprap

