



CONSERVATOR

NEWSLETTER OF CARDINAL LAND CONSERVANCY / April 2024

Issue XIX

Population Surveys at East Fork Wetlands

By Jack Stenger, Land Manager

In late January Cardinal acquired our newest nature preserve – East Fork Wetlands. The 67-acre property is located west of East Fork State Park. This area is ecologically unique because it was historically developed as a goldfish hatchery, but the former ponds have naturalized and developed into 10 acres of high-quality wetlands. In the coming year, Cardinal will work to restore habitat at the preserve by removing invasive species, increasing the diversity of wetland plants, and if necessary, managing water levels to favor amphibian breeding. We plan to create a nature trail at the preserve and open it to the public in 2025.

When we acquire a new property, one of our priorities is to determine what species are present so that we can consciously manage the habitat. Cardinal is fortunate to have partnered with the Cincinnati Herpetological Society, who is performing a baseline reptile and amphibian survey. So far the



Volunteer survey participants from the Cincinnati Herpetological Society gather at the water's edge to observe a green frog during a March visit to the property.

A two lined newt identified at East Fork Wetlands. These little guys can be difficult to spot. Photo credit: The Cincinnati Herpetological Society.



group has documented six species of salamanders and four species of frog.

Of particular interest are the high numbers of “mole salamanders.” These are our largest species of salamanders that spend most of the year underground, only emerging during the first warm, rainy nights of spring to congregate in their breeding pools. The ponds at East Fork Wetlands provide excellent habitat for Spotted Salamanders and Jefferson’s Salamanders, along with our only fully aquatic adult salamander – the Red-spotted Newt.

The Cincinnati Herpetological Society survey, led by Bill Stanley, will continue throughout 2024. As the weather warms amphibian activity will decline, but it will be prime time for searching for reptiles. If you have interest in participating in these surveys or other volunteer opportunities at this location, please contact our office or email Jack Stenger at jack@cardinalandconservancy.org.

Eagle Cam Update

Bonnie and Clyde continue to diligently care for their eaglets. At this stage, the babies should be almost doubling in size each week. This means they need a lot of food! Viewers should remember that eagles are carnivores and these babies need meat to survive. Be prepared to see Bonnie and Clyde bring fresh meat to the nest and keeps fragments in the nest to snack on for a few days. It's always interesting to see the variety of prey they feed on and we like to try to guess the types of fish they pull out of the rivers.

We need your help naming the eaglets! Cardinal members will be able to choose from a randomly selected list of names submitted by Cam Keepers and vote for the one they like best. An email will be sent to current members with instructions for voting on April 15th and voting will close on April 18th. If you are unsure of your membership status, please call the office at (513) 752-2828 and ask for Lauren.

Showdown on Bahr Pond: Managing Geese



By Nick Hartley, Facilities Manager

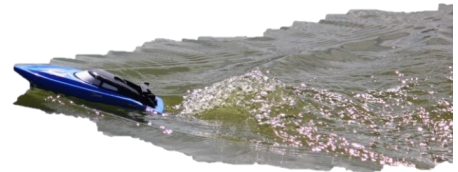
Last spring, a plague descended upon the Bahr Farm. Now you may be thinking, we experienced swarms of locusts or frogs falling from the sky. No, our blight came in the form of the dreaded Canada goose. It started off innocently enough with a pair of geese deciding our restored pond was a perfect place to raise a family in Cincinnati. Little did we know just how quickly this family would become

destructive. The offences kept adding up as the goslings grew. Water quality issues? Check. Reduced forage for our cattle? Check. Carrot crop being destroyed? Check. The staff vowed to find a solution to keep our pond goose free this year.

I can honestly say that this spring we have turned the tide against our goose adversaries. Our secret weapon? It turns out geese are unbelievably afraid of radio-controlled boats. After purchasing a trio of these toys we've never lost a battle. Now when we see birds on the pond, we simply deploy the fleet, and they fly off peacefully. So, for all of you with water features get a few boats and take back your recreation. It's a fun and humane way to keep the geese landing elsewhere.

Other Methods We Have Tried

Bahr Farm staff have tried a handful of other methods to humanely dissuade geese from getting comfortable on the farm. It has been hard to find an effective approach that does not also disturb the birds we want to feel at home. When there were only two, we hoped chasing them away would be enough, but it just pushed them into the water where they waited until we tired ourselves out. We also tried a decoy coyote stationed near the water's edge, which had no effect, and we even employed Sasha the farm dog, but she's just too sweet.



A New Publicly Accessible Preserve in 2024

By Owen Hunter-Linville, Stewardship Manager

The Cardinal team has been working hard to open more of our nature preserves, and we expect to have another open to visitors in late 2024. Westmark Woods Nature Preserve is located on Compton Rd in Finneytown and will feature 25 beautiful acres of forest with a 1-mile trail system!

Westmark Woods has nice topographical variation and features a stretch of the West Fork of the Mill Creek. While the stewardship team has been steadily chipping away at the



Pictured above: The proposed trail system at Westmark Woods (not yet establish or accessible).

long list of tasks to complete before opening, there is a lot of work to do to get Westmark ready to open. From clearing honeysuckle and other invasive plants, to building trails, to light construction, there's something for anyone that wants to help restore habitat and bring this amazing nature preserve to the public.

Workdays for Westmark Woods will be announced periodically via email and our social media channels. If you would like to help you can join our fantastic volunteer team through our website. We welcome groups looking for corporate workdays too. We look forward to seeing you at Westmark!

Connect with Cardinal!

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Cardinal's Mission

Preserve natural habitats, waterways, agricultural lands, and open space we love in Southwest Ohio by working with individuals, families, and communities.

Putting a Twist on the 2024 Annual Meeting

By Lauren Stanula, Development Manager

Cardinal's Annual Meeting is an opportunity for all members to come together, mingle, ask questions to the board and staff, and hear about our plans for the coming year. It's also a big "Thank You" for all that our members do to support Cardinal's mission. Sharing our story with family and friends, joining us for workdays, promoting the Eagle Cam, offering your talents as volunteers, the list goes on and we appreciate every single person who shares our passion for land conservation in Southwest Ohio.

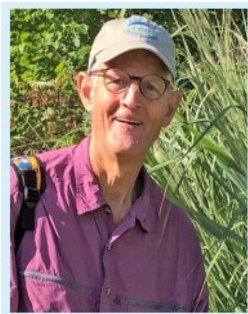
This year, the Annual Meeting is going to look a little different... The Annual Meeting is also going to be a fundraiser! With the number of projects on the horizon and our growing needs as an organization, we wanted to try a new approach this year as we anticipate an even bigger crowd of dedicated Cardinal supporters. The event will be hosted at HighGrain Brewery's new location off of Winton Rd. in the old Brentwood Bowling Alley. Andy will give his typical year in review presentation, we will welcome new members to the board and honor those who are stepping down. We will also have an exciting guest speaker as in years passed, lite bites, HighGrain brews, and a number of raffle baskets!

Invitations for the Annual Meeting will go out soon but for now, please save the date: **June 4th.**



Our 2023 Annual Meeting was held at Bahr Farm under the pole barn. Andy and our Board of Directors spoke on Cardinal's year of success, thanks to the help of our growing membership, and plans for the future to the record attendance of 57 members. Attendees relaxed by the pond after the meeting.

Letter From the President



Just like the Spring season, there is a lot popping at Cardinal Land Conservancy:

- Ready to close on the acquisition of 89 acres of the original Grailville property on O'Bannonville Road in Loveland!
- Filing for Carbon Credits on Winton Preserve and Westmark Woods
- Implementing the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) grant for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQUIP) for invasive removal and fencing at Bahr Farm
- Eagle Scouts installing 10 warbler nesting boxes and trail markers at Bortz Family Preserve
- Filing Local Agricultural Easement Protection Program (LAEPP) application for 3 farms in Highland and Adams Counties

To keep things popping at Cardinal, we need your continued support. Please consider a gift to celebrate Earth Day when you receive our appeal which will be in the mail/email shortly.

Happy Earth Day to all,

Bill Hopple



Cardinal has already had some exciting member events and work days this spring. Pictured here: our Todd's Fork land steward, Rich, explains the history of the land to our Woodcock Walk group in mid-March. Become a member today and join us for our next outing!



Cardinal
LAND CONSERVANCY

www.CardinalLandConservancy.org

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Spring Renewal: Harbingers of the New Season

By Andy Dickerson, Executive Director

For many, the onset of spring is bittersweet, as it brings with it the dreaded hay fever season. As temperatures rise and daylight hours extend, trees, grasses, and flowers burst into life, releasing copious amounts of pollen into the air. While this season may spell misery for allergy sufferers, many feel it's a small price to pay for the beauty and vitality that spring brings.

From delicate daisies to vibrant bluebells, meadows and woodland floors are carpeted with a riot of colors. The sight of these ephemeral blooms not only lifts the spirits but also serves as a vital food source for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators crucial for ecosystem health. For many, the simple pleasure of taking a leisurely stroll through fields ablaze with color is one of the quintessential joys of spring.

In the quiet corners of woodlands and meadows, another harbinger of spring makes its presence known—the woodcock. This enigmatic bird, with its cryptic plumage and distinctive probing bill, embarks on a mesmerizing courtship display during the twilight hours of early spring evenings. Known as the "sky dance," this ritual involves the male woodcock spiraling high into the air before descending in a series of erratic zig-zags, all the while emitting a distinctive nasal "peent" call. It is a spectacle that has captivated the hearts and imaginations of nature lovers for generations. This sky dance can be seen at our Bortz Nature Preserve, Todd's Fork Nature Preserve and our new preserve in Loveland.

As we bid farewell to the frosty embrace of winter and embrace the warmth and vitality of spring, let us take a moment to appreciate the signs of renewal that surround us. From the pesky pollen that triggers hay fever to the delicate wildflowers that carpet the landscape and the mysterious dance of the woodcock, each sign serves as a reminder of the beauty and resilience of the natural world. So, as you venture outdoors to enjoy the sights, sounds, and scents of spring, take a moment to marvel at the wonders of nature and the endless cycle of life that continues to unfold before our eyes.



A sweet stand of deep purple larkspur at Kope Hollow Nature Preserve in Adams County.