

Where are You, Woolly Bear?

Have you noticed, as we have on The Quarry Farm, an absence of Woolly Bear caterpillars this fall? Typically, the fuzzy black and brown creatures are a common sight in late summer/early fall, crawling on the warm pavement of our country road. Not so this year. Here's a brief look at the life of our fuzzy, bristly friend, to know it better and attempt to understand why its scarcity matters.

Woolly Bears are the caterpillar form of several related moth species, including the orange-yellow Isabella Tiger Moth (*Pyrrharctis Isabella*), which ranges across the U.S. and Southern Canada. The moth typically produces two broods a year. It lives about two weeks, nectaring on a wide variety of flowers. It mates, lays eggs, and dies. The caterpillars we see in the fall are the second brood. They've grown fat on leaves such as violets, nettle, sunflower, maple, and elm, and green grasses, and they may have shed five or six times while growing. When the fall brood is ready to pupate, it finds protective winter cover under leaf litter or logs or rocks. During the winter it pupates in a cocoon made from its bristly hairs and emerges as an adult in the spring. The cycle repeats to produce a summer brood.

The second-generation caterpillars that we see in the fall (in a normal year) have eaten their fill, are preparing to hibernate, and are out and about because they're looking for cover. They are not going to poison us if we pick



The "Woolly Bear" is the caterpillar that becomes the orange-yellow Isabella Tiger Moth (*Pyrrharctis Isabella*)

them up (although they can feel prickly). And sadly, they can't predict our winter weather—by coloration or by size of the brown band around their middle. Those features are influenced by stage of development, belonging to a particular tiger moth species, and diet. There is no special little weather sensor embedded under the fuzz. So why are we seeing so few Woolly Bears? First and foremost, no doubt, is the serious decline of many moth species worldwide—for all the reasons that we know too well and are struggling to deal with: climate change, habitat loss, light pollution in populated areas, pesticide and herbicide use. Also, we could look around us recently at a bleached, drought-ridden landscape and see little food for Woolly Bears preparing to hibernate. Their absence matters because, as pollinators and a major food source for birds and other animals, moths are an important link in the food chain that sustains us.

—The Gardener at The Quarry Farm

UNDER ONE BIG SKY continued from Page 1

"Aside from the Black-and-white Warbler, most of them looked nothing like they do in spring," said Deb. She and David did see one species that has proved elusive this summer. "Really exciting to see so many hummingbirds in the prairie today after missing them all year. They were loving the flowers."

The September 17 night hike was a 3-for-1 experience. Although the event was billed as the "Harvest Moon Hike," participants got to experience 1) the full moon closest to the September equinox; 2) a Supermoon, meaning the moon appeared slightly bigger and brighter than an average moon, and 3) the beginning of a partial lunar eclipse. The eclipse reached its maximum phase at 10:44 p.m., well after the hike ended. As we walked up the slope and out of the nature preserve, we did have a great



Waiting for the Supermoon Harvest Moon to rise on September 17

view of Venus and various constellations to the west as the moon continued to rise in the east.

Fall 2024 Programs & Events

Dress for the weather, including good walking shoes, and meet in Seitz Family Pavilion, 1/8 mile north of 14321 Road 7L, Pandora. There is no fee to participate unless noted otherwise. **Tax-deductible donations are welcome.**

Fall Bird Migration Hike

Wednesday, October 9, 9 a.m.

Birds are everywhere, all the time, doing fascinating things. Right now they are moving from their northerly summer homes to southerly winter retreats. Dress for the weather and bring your binoculars as we document the many species of birds that migrate through the fall color in Northwest Ohio. All recorded species will be submitted to the international Great Backyard Bird Count.

The Quarry Farm 5K

Saturday, October 12, 10 a.m.

(check-in opens 8:45 a.m.)

Walkers and runners will start at the Seitz Family Pavilion. Check-in is from 8:45 to 9:30 a.m. Please present ID to receive participation packet. The 5K run/walk will start at 10 a.m. (line-up at 9:55 a.m.) The race will be held rain or shine (unless there is lightning) so please dress appropriately and wear layers if necessary. Registration is \$25.00. Complete the registration form on this newsletter and mail with entry fee to The Quarry Farm, 14321 Road 7L, Pandora, OH 45877. **Entry forms are also available at www.thequarryfarm.org under Upcoming Events.**

National Hiking Day Hike

Sunday, November 17, 1 to 2 p.m.

Hiking can be simple—no heavy pack or rugged mountain required. Put on good walking shoes, weather-appropriate clothes and join us on the nature preserve trails to enjoy the mental and physical health benefits of hiking.

Cookie Day Night Hike

Wednesday, December 4, 7 p.m.

Over the years, many types of cookies have emerged throughout the world. This includes drop cookies, rolled or cutout cookies, sandwich cookies, filled cookies, cookie bars, pressed cookies, molded cookies, no-bake cookies, fried cookies, and refrigerator or ice box cookies. Celebrate National Cookie Day by packing your favorite cookie to enjoy on a night hike through the nature preserve. We will have hot chocolate for cookie-dipping.



Board of Directors:

Laura Coburn, President
Randy Basinger
Martha Erchenbrecher
Mike Erchenbrecher
Paula Harper
Phyllis Macke
Tim Macke
Paul Nusbaum

Rita Seitz
Deb Weston

Advisory Board:

Bonnie Brooks
Erin Fitch
Alaina Brinkman Siefker
Kevin Siefker

Do you have questions, want to schedule an outing or workshop for your group or keep up with what's happening here? Email thequarryfarm@gmail.com, follow us on Facebook, Instagram and visit www.thequarryfarm.org or call 567-376-0705.

Donations to The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a 501(c)(3) public charity, are tax-deductible.

Mission Statement

It is our goal and mission to provide the opportunity for people of all ages to increase their understanding of the natural environment of Northwest Ohio and to interact with their fellow inhabitants in a sustainable manner.



Pongo, Dot, and Socks appreciate donations like carrots fresh from the garden.

The Quarry Farm Newsletter is a quarterly publication for supporters of The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm, a nonprofit organization in Pandora, Ohio.

On the cover: *Ruby-throated Hummingbirds feed on Wingstem wildflowers in the tallgrass prairie this fall. (Photo by Deb Weston)*

All photographs printed in this newsletter were taken on The Quarry Farm Nature Preserve & Conservation Farm.

www.thequarryfarm.org



Printed on recycled, recyclable paper

Under One Big Sky

There were so many people interested in creating one-of-a-kind leaf-molded birdbaths, bowls and stepping stones from concrete and stone that we held two workshops in July. The originally-scheduled July 13 workshop included workspaces outside the pavilion, so we added another date to keep everyone under the roof and out of the sun.

The August 10 Kidfest at Ottawa Memorial Park offered us the opportunity to try something new. As late summer can almost always be counted on for bright sun and heat, we filled our booth with wildlife puppets instead of educational ambassadors like Tyree the Cornsnake. Three hours would have been a long time for Tyree to be outdoors in Ohio sun, but handpuppets allowed us to talk with children and their parents about Ohio wildlife, including Virginia Opossum, Big Brown Bat, and American Toad.



Silkie made a big impact on the painting process during ONU ACE Day.

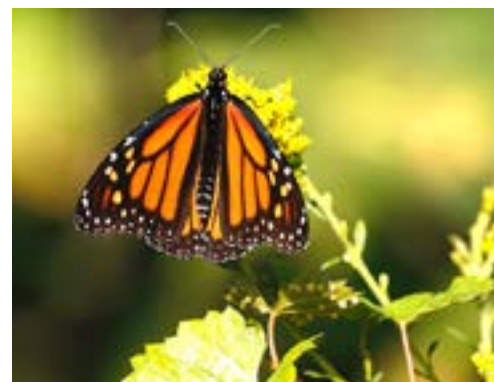
- 5 Wild Turkey
- 2 Wood Duck
- 3 Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- 2 Eastern Wood-Pewee
- 1 Least Flycatcher
- 2 Eastern Phoebe
- 3 Warbling Vireo
- 1 Black-and-white Warbler
- 4 Tennessee Warbler
- 1 Nashville Warbler
- 6 Common Yellowthroat
- 2 American Redstart
- 2 Cape May Warbler
- 1 Magnolia Warbler
- 1 Blackburnian Warbler



Rita Seitz introduced local wildlife at Ottawa Kidfest with the aid of puppets.

Ohio Northern University ACE (Ada Community Engagement) Day students lent their hands to painting the farm animal sanctuary outbuildings on August 24. The students' work will protect and winterize the shelters. Although four-legged assistance was not always helpful that morning, the donkeys, goats and pigs benefited from two hours of socialization with the visitors.

In preparation for the October 9, Fall Bird Migration Hike (and because birding is one of their favorite things to do), Deb Weston and David Smith walked the trails on September 11 to see what birds are passing through on their way south and which ones are returning for their winterstay on The Quarry Farm. They recorded 38 species, including:



Alongside Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, a Monarch butterfly nectars on Goldenrod in the prairie. (Photo by Deb Weston)

—continued on the back page

Resident Spotlight: Emerson

Author Sterling North published the book *Rascal* in 1963. It's an autobiographical story about industrial and economic changes, wilderness being lost to industry, and a young boy raising a baby raccoon. The antics of the animal help alleviate the boy's fear for his brother who is a soldier at war. I remember reading it and desperately wanting a raccoon. Like a lot of people who read it and watched the Disney movie based on the book, the later parts of the book where the growing animal became destructive in captivity just didn't sink in. When an orphaned raccoon did come into my life, my dad was there to intervene. The wild animal did not become a pet. There was also a creek nearby with crayfish. We taught him to catch and eat them. He built strength by climbing trees. He grew a warm coat. As the days passed, we saw him less frequently. One day in December, I saw him along the creek, as I did most days. He hesitated on the path, then turned slowly away, huffing. It was like a switch turned and he was one of the wild things again.

There are more rural residents now, and fewer opportunities to slowly release a rehabilitated animal into the wild. Unless you are trained and licensed to do so, it's against the law to contain a wild animal. Not only is it illegal, it's unhealthy for humans and wildlife. Raccoons are especially tricky. They imprint on people very, very easily. There are licensed wildlife rehabilitators who work only with raccoons because these animals take so much time, resources, and territory to "rewild." And there are certain parts of Ohio where it isn't legal at all to rehabilitate a raccoon.

The Quarry Farm does not rehabilitate wildlife. When people call here, saying that they have a) a baby bird/rabbit/raccoon/squirrel or b) an injured wild animal, we a) tell them to put it back and/or b) provide contact info for someone else. We do possess educational permits from the State of Ohio for a few non-releasable wild animals that serve as ambassadors for their kind. We have the training to care for them—six years of it before we were allowed to house a Virginia Opossum. That is how Emerson the Raccoon came to live here.

Last spring, we were asked if we were in a position to care for an 8-year-old male raccoon named Elvis. He had quite a backstory. Long-story-short, the raccoon came here in a cage. His mother was shot and killed before she could teach him how to be wild and free. He grew up in a house, and indoors is what he has always known. While a long-ago head injury and neutering tempered the more destructive nature of his kind, he still had a full set of teeth and was absolutely terrified. His diet had to be altered as well, from a reliance on people-food to fruits, veggies, protein bites and absolutely no more potato chips. It took several weeks of coaxing and a name change before Elvis became Emerson, king of the tallest bookcase, keeper of squeaky toys (unless Quinn the Fox steals them), and puller of earlobes. Thankfully, he was litterbox-trained when he arrived and never misses.

Emerson dips his sensitive hands* in his water bowl, "seeing" the grapes and carrots that we drop in. It's thought that water contact increases a raccoon's tactile ability. His wild counterparts do the same in streams and ponds. The only other thing that he has in common with wild raccoons is his appearance. Emerson has always lived his life completely contained and will continue to do so. At least he will help us teach people more about how to co-exist with these intelligent, curious animals.

*For more information: https://northernwoodlands.org/outside_story/article/raccoons-hands



Thank you...

- ...to Walter, Tim and Megan Cusick for pumpkins and dried corn
- ...to Dave and Jane Hilty for sweet corn for the animals
- ...to ONU ACE Day participants for painting outbuildings
- ...to David Seitz for honeysuckle and vine removal and hydrological engineering
- ...to Rita Seitz for Kidfest puppeteering
- ...to Deb Weston for leading visiting birders on the trails

Monetary Donations:

- Bruce Coburn in memory of Bert Coburn
- Sue Frey
- Peg and Bob Morman
- Becky, Carrol and Cara Pauley



Black-capped Chickadee (Photo by Deb Weston)

Lights Off for Birds

Turn off non-essential lights from 11 p.m. until 6 a.m. through November 30, the end of critical fall migration in the contiguous U.S.

- Turn off or dim lobby and atrium lights.
- Turn off or dim interior home lighting, or draw blinds to prevent light escaping.
- Turn off decorative landscape lighting.
- Turn off lights before leaving the home or office.
- Be sure outside lights are aimed down and well shielded.
- Install motion sensors on outside lights to minimize use.
- Prevent daylight collisions with bird friendly products for windows