

CONSERVATION TRAILS

"Follow the Trail of Natural Resource Conservation"

Wayne SWCD

330-263-5376

Mockingbird Leaves the Meadow to the Meadowlarks by John Lorson

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There's a certain hilltop where I stumbled upon a particularly vocal Northern mockingbird years ago, and I've made a point to swing by the spot in the springtime of each ensuing year to stop, look and listen just to make sure he was still at it.

Sadly, once I'd made it to the songster's traditional spot I found that the apple tree which had hosted the bird's favorite perch had been removed and the steep roadside bank where it had stood had been rounded to an easy-to-mow hillside. My mockingbird was gone.

In a lesson from nature that we see time and time again, however, there was something else in its place that was just as worthy of a thought-filled pause. Perched on brand new fencepost a stone's throw from the grassy knoll was an Eastern meadowlark singing away in all its sunflower-breasted glory. The presence of that particular species struck me as interestingly appropriate.

Back in the days before our portion of Ohio was settled, it was largely covered with thick and ancient forests—pretty much the last place you'd find a meadowlark. As forests were cleared to make way for crop fields and pastures, however, settlers inadvertently created a new and entirely appropriate space for the Meadowlark. The species' population increased right along with the number of acres put to agricultural use.

Dates to Remember:

- 05/29 Memorial Day
- 06/13 Board Mtg 8:30 am
- 06/19 Juneteenth Holiday
- 07/04 Independence Day
- 07/11 Board Mtg 8:30 am
- 08/08 Board Mtg 8:30 am
- 09/04 Labor Day
- 09/05 Board Mtg 8:30 am
- 09/09-14 Wayne Co. Fair

Firefly or Lightning Bug?

Whatever you call them, they need our help! Due to habitat loss and degradation, light pollution, climate change, and pesticide use, many species are threatened. Visit these links: [firefly.org/ Firefly- Watch](#) and at [xerces.org](#) to HELP and learn more!



Image by rawpixel.com
Bruce Hallman/USFWS



An [Eastern meadowlark](#) sings from his perch at the edge of a grass pasture. Close kin to the red-winged blackbird, the meadowlark similarly sings from a high point to proclaim and defend its territory. Nests are hidden in the tall grass below. Photo Credit: J. Lorson

A ground nesting bird, the [Meadowlark](#) makes its living off insects and seeds found in abundance within the thick-growing cover of its native grasslands and prairie. And while the "meadow" portion of its name is entirely appropriate given the bird's preferred habitat, the "lark" portion of the moniker is a misnomer. The meadowlark is not a true lark but is, instead, more closely related to the red-winged blackbird and oriole. The only true lark in North America is the horned lark, an equally beautiful creature.

While the meadowlark benefitted greatly by man's land use practices of the 19th and early 20th Centuries, the species now faces threats created by those very same machinations of man. Loss of habitat as land is developed away from agriculture is the greatest of those threats.

As for my missing [mockingbird](#), I found him a quarter mile down the road singing from the top of a power pole not far from his new favorite apple tree. Nature's resiliency is incredible and inspiring, but not limitless.

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Save the Date!

Something to crow about! Plan on joining the Wayne SWCD Supervisors and Staff for breakfast on Thursday November 2nd for our FIRST ANNUAL BREAKFAST MEETING AND SUPERVISOR ELECTION! Yes, our yearly big event is moving to the morning from 7:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., at the Connection Conference Center, Wooster. The event is FREE, but an RSVP is required.



Get the Newsletter E-mailed!
You'll get to click on lots of great hyperlinks! Like [WAYNESWCD.ORG](#)

How Well Do You Know Your Septic System? by Ricky Papay

It is important that homeowners regularly maintain their septic systems, as repairs and replacements can be incredibly costly. Homeowners may question exactly how they're supposed to maintain a septic system, and what other information they should know regarding their septic system. It is important that a homeowner know the location of their septic system and their specific type of septic system. The most common septic system in Wayne County is the septic tank and leach field. Piped wastewater solids settle in the septic tank, with the overflow water being piped to a drain (leach) field, where the wastewater percolates through and is subsequently treated by the soil.

The best maintenance practice for your septic system is simply having routine inspections performed. The pumping of household septic systems usually occurs every 3-5 years, dependent on a multitude of factors. These factors include the size of the household, the total wastewater generated, the volume of the solids, what is being flushed, and the size of the tank. Through regular maintenance, homeowners can save thousands of dollars through avoiding costly repairs, protecting their property value, and more importantly, protecting their health.

If your septic system is beginning to fail, there are a few warning signs you will likely notice. One of these indicators is a slower drain rate, along with the backing up of wastewater in your drains. Another indicator is the appearance of bright green, spongy grass in your drain field. Strong odors being emitted from your drain field are another good indicator that your septic system may be running into issues. Finally, pooling water or muddy soil around your septic system or in your basement usually indicates issues with the septic system. Contact the [Wayne County Health Department](http://www.waynecountyohio.gov/health) for more information or any questions you may have, or visit <https://www.epa.gov/septic>.



Photo
Source: EPA

The Annual Cover Crop Program is back! By Cody Beale



Soybeans coming up with cereal rye. Photo Credit: Dave Robinson

Cover crops are essential to not only prevent erosion, but to help improve soil health, productivity, and farm profitability. The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District is funding landowners to seed cover crops. Interested landowners and operators can apply at the Wayne Soil and Water Conservation District. You can get [the application](#) and [all information needed](#) with the application at our office or on our website. All cover crops must be planted per NRCS `deadlines. MWCD approved funding will consist of \$12/acre with a 200-acre cap for participants. Certain areas in Wayne County may be eligible for funding *over the 200-acre cap*. Anyone who is interested in the program can be put on a direct e-mail list or can [check our website for up-to-date material](#) as we get it. If interested, please contact Cody at 330-263-5376 or cbeale@wayneoh.org.

Wild Bees in the Woods by Kathy Burley

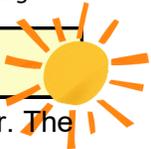
You probably think of wild pollinating bees only visiting meadows, gardens and flowerbeds. [There are over 4,000 different wild bee species in the United States](#). In the NE United States one third of our wild bee species prefer and rely on forest habitat. Most are solitary, don't live in hives or even make honey. Some are specialized to collect pollen and nectar from spring ephemerals such as trilliums, and others rest in rotting logs and leaf litter to collect pollen in the blooming canopy.

Dr. Kass Urban Mead, Pollinator Conservation Specialist says, "these wild, native pollinators have long evolutionary relationships with our beloved wildflowers and also provide important pollination services for our favorite fruits, nuts and vegetables. This can also be important for agriculture – for example, when apple orchard pollinators are busily collecting forest canopy pollen before those trees in the orchards even bloom." To learn more, visit <https://xerces.org/> And watch videos : [xerces society kass mead wild bees in the woods - Search \(bing.com\)](https://www.bing.com/search?q=xerces+society+kass+mead+wild+bees+in+the+woods)



Images by rawpixel.com

Nutrient Management Planning Round 2 by Cody Beale



Wayne SWCD will offer the VNMP (Voluntary Nutrient Management Plan) Program once again this year. The program is funded through the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District. Participants will be eligible to receive \$10/acre upon approval of the VNMP by Wayne SWCD. There is no cap on acreage at this time, however, these terms may be subject to change. The first step in the process is to notify or meet with Wayne SWCD and sign up for the program. VNMP's may be developed by an Ag Retailer, Certified Crop Advisor, or the producer. Once enrolled/approved in the program, you must submit your finished VNMP to [Wayne SWCD](#) for final review. For more information, please contact Cody at 330-263-5376 or cbeale@wayneoh.org.

No-till Leads to Healthier Soil, Cleaner Water by John Knapp, NRCS



In the minds of many, a freshly tilled field is picturesque- cleaned and ordered for the next planting. But we've learned from studying soil that heavy tillage isn't good. When soil is heavily tilled, the stalks and leaves remaining from the previous crop are chopped, disturbing the top several inches of soil. This "fluffing" action allows for better seed placement according to some, but soil scientists say not tilling leads to healthier soil.



Corn and soybeans in alternate rows grown in no-till system. Image by Rawpixel.com/ USDA

USDA's NRCS and other groups recommend producers to not till and leave the residue in place. By not tilling, soil organic matter is enhanced, increasing water infiltration and reducing erosion. No-till is a conservation practice that leaves the crop residue undisturbed from harvest. Any tillage causes a flush of organic matter decomposition, resulting in loss of soil carbon. Tillage also breaks up soil aggregates, which are important for water infiltration, providing oxygen to plant roots, and reducing erosion.

Healthy soils cycle water and nutrients more efficiently. And they function better, enabling them to buffer against extreme drought and flooding. Plus, they reduce soil loss into waterways, which can cause problems for water quality. Good management of field residue helps control erosion. No-till can be used for many crops in almost any soil and can save producers labor costs and fuel. [It's a sound investment for the environment and the farm.](#) For more information contact the Wayne NRCS office at 330-262-2836, or visit nrcs.usda.gov.

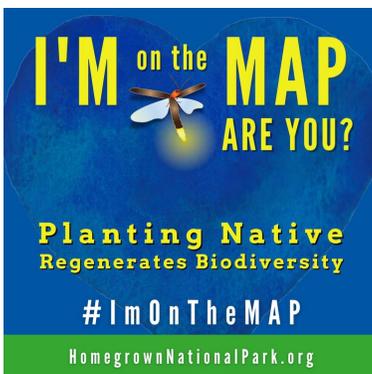
Homegrown National Park by Kathy Burley



"In the past, we have asked one thing of our gardens: that they be pretty. Now they have to support life, sequester carbon, feed pollinators and manage water." ~ DOUG TALLAMY

There's a new idea on the horizon—small efforts by many people can make a difference! Please visit <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/> Start a new Habitat—a HOME GROWN NATIONAL PARK. Get on the Map and spread the word.

[Homegrown National Park](#)® is a term coined by Doug and is the key to our call-to-action: "Our National Parks, no matter how grand in scale are too small and separated from one another to preserve species to the levels needed. Thus, the concept for Homegrown National Park, a bottom-up call-to-action to restore habitat where we live and work, and to a lesser extent where we farm and graze, extending national parks to our yards and communities."



Our pollinators need us as they face loss of habitat, pesticides, environmental pollution, etc. Resist the idea of a totally manicured lawn and garden. Allow a portion of it to return to its wild state, where pollinators find food, seek shelter, and breed. Use native plants since they are such an important source of food for our native bees, butterflies, insects, caterpillars, birds, and all wildlife. These plants have evolved over thousands of years to survive in our climate. Some non-native plants may even be inedible or fail to meet pollination needs. Remove invasive plants and try to have something blooming all season. For more reading check out this article: <https://gardenforwildlife.com/blogs/>

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Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

2375 Benden Dr., Suite B, Wooster, OH (330-234-5372)

John Knapp, District Conservationist

Ray Rummell, Conservation Specialist

Scott Kenreich, Resource Conservationist

Wayne SWCD Staff

Cody Beale, Ag Resources Coordinator

Kathy Burley, Secretary

Stacey Hiller, Administrative Assistant

Rob Kastner, Water Management Engineer

John Lorson, District Program Administrator

Ricky Papay, Water Resources Specialist

Kelly Riley, Education Specialist

Wayne SWCD Makes A Difference!



Wayne County ponds are swimming with 5,700 new fish this spring thanks to our Annual Fish Sale and 3,500 new trees have found a home in the rich soils of our county thanks to our Annual Tree Sale. Best of all, 500 youngsters got a chance to "put conservation on the ground" with their own hands by planting individual trees supplied to schools through the generous donations of Wayne SWCD supporters!

Big Tree Contest Reminder

Big Tree nominations are due July 14th for the largest Eastern White Pine tree in Wayne County. The forms and more information can be found at this link on our website at

<https://www.wayneswcd.org/home/landowner-assistance/trees-forestry/big-tree-contest>

Winning nominator will receive a \$25 gift card and the winning tree owner will receive a special plaque.

The search is on—get your entries in!



Kelly's Cool Links - It is worth it to get the E-Newsletter! Just click on all of the links!

- ◆ Click to drop a raindrop anywhere in the contiguous United States and watch where it ends up visit <https://river-runner.samlearner.com/>
- ◆ We've Lost One in Four Birds Since 1970... Birds are telling us we must act now to ensure our planet can sustain wildlife and people. Learn about 7 SIMPLE ACTIONS TO HELP BIRDS and more at www.3billionbirds.org/
- ◆ The ugly truth about PLASTIC and pollution of it! www.beyondplastics.org/ & www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/
- ◆ On Monday, April 8, 2024, people within a 124-mile-wide band in the state of Ohio will experience a total solar eclipse! Start planning now and learn more about this at <https://ema.ohio.gov/media-publications/ohio-total-solar-eclipse>
- ◆ Bird lovers! Ever wondered how many birds have migrated across your county? You will love this site! <https://dashboard.birdcast.info/region/US-OH-169> You can change the location to anywhere in the USA!
- ◆ Did you know? [Oak Trees are long-lived and support more life forms than any other tree in America?](#)



Wayne Soil & Water Conservation District

428 W. Liberty Street

Wooster, OH 44691

330-263-5376

<http://www.wayneswcd.org>

e-mail: info@wayneswcd.org

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