



VALLEY TRUST NEWS

Number 81 Fall 2025

Our mission is to conserve natural habitats, waterways and agricultural lands in southwestern Ohio, for the benefit of present and future generations, through partnerships with people and communities.

The Importance of Partnerships By Donna McCollum, photos by Ron Stevens



Steve Nimitz, Ed Teets and others look on as Mark Boardman and Tom Farmer cut the ribbon to officially open the east side of the Ruder boardwalk.

Our recent celebration, the grand opening of the east Ruder Boardwalk, highlighted how important partnerships have been in establishing this new community amenity. Mark Boardman noted that the first envisioning of a boardwalk at Ruder took place almost ten years ago and the road from then to now has been paved with partnerships. Thousands of volunteers have donated a few hours apiece to “hack honeysuckle” so there was even a place to build a boardwalk within the riparian forest. Hundreds more each year are removing invasive species and planting native species to restore this forest to a more natural system. Thousands of dollars have been donated by dozens of organizations for supplies. The City of Oxford has provided services like the bike rack and handicapped parking spaces. And let’s not

forget the thousands of hours put in by Mark Boardman, Tom Farmer and Steve Nimitz, who built the east boardwalk, working most mornings for two years. Lots of kudos are due to lots of entities for this tremendous effort.



Event speakers all spoke of partnership, as well. David Prythrych (Oxford City council) reminding us that each partner contributing just one piece, their own special part, highlighted the importance of individuals working together to accomplish something for the greater good. David Gorchov (MU Botany Professor) reminded us that Ruder Preserve is connected to a much larger protected space, the Miami University Natural Areas, which expands its impact. Kathy McMahon-Klosterman (left; retired from MU Disability Studies) noted



that her students worked on this project in its infancy and applauded the inclusivity incorporated into the boardwalk’s design. She ended with a poem, “What is Nature”, to applaud the boardwalk’s ability to facilitate people’s connections with nature. Jennifer Heston-Mullins (Scripps Gerontology Center) expounded on this, telling of her young granddaughter, who wanted to hike that day, highlighting the partnership of ages - grandmother, daughter and granddaughter (right photo) - who used the Ruder boardwalk as a way to comfortably hike into a forest - just what we had envisioned!



This celebration of partnership, on a widely known, well-liked project, suggested we should celebrate other partnerships that have made 3VCT the organization it is today. In this newsletter, then, we highlight many partnerships important to what we accomplish as a land trust. And, although there is no article highlighting these folks, I’d like to applaud our staff; as I talk to students about what land trusts do, I note how effective our executive director, Randy Evans, has been in forging partnerships. When I made note of that to him, he of course said the acclaim was really due to his excellent staff! So read on, supporters, to discover a little about how this small organization is able to make a huge conservation contribution.



**By Tom Vogel
Board Chair**

Partners in Our Conservation Success

Organizations can never harness enough resources to accomplish everything they desire. Your Three Valley Conservation Trust is no different. We rely on partnerships to achieve objectives which we could never accomplish alone. Partnerships offer significant advantages for both individuals and organizations by pooling resources, diversifying skills, and sharing burdens. The specific benefits depend on the type of partnership, but generally, they enable greater success and resilience than merely acting alone.

One very important partnership for 3VCT is with our members and supporters. One benefit of this partnership is to share the financial support of your Conservation Trust. The combination of past and present support from our members, along with others in our conservation family, have enabled your Trust to establish and continue to manage over 225 easements that protect over 25,000 acres of prime farmland, woodlands, wetlands, and prairies. You, our members, are the heart and soul of Three Valley Conservation Trust. You are what makes the Trust tick!

A second benefit of our members are the unique skills and knowledge you share with our staff and board. You offer decades of research and experience that our staff and board could never replicate. Your roles are incredibly valuable to 3VCT and you are truly partners in our shared conservation success. Again, without you, our members, none of what you see on our maps or in our signs would ever be possible.

Our partnerships are not limited to members and supporters. Many other partnerships will be highlighted elsewhere in this newsletter. They include corporations, government departments, and local businesses. These organizational partners provide both expertise and credibility to your Trust. Our relationships with these entities have resulted in 3VCT being a major force in conservation in SW Ohio and beyond.

My fellow conservationists, I only have one more comment to make. Our founders, over 30 years ago, would never have believed the force for conservation good your Trust has become ... and our many partnerships have facilitated such excellence. Thank you for supporting Three Valley Conservation Trust!



Goodbye to Caitlin and Hello to Preston!

Much to our dismay, our very experienced and much-loved Conservation Manager, Caitlin Brown, has accepted a new professional opportunity and will be leaving us. She will be much missed. Her collaborative approach in our daily work and commitment to our mission have strengthened our programs, partnerships, and day-to-day operations. We are deeply grateful for her contributions and wish her every success in this next chapter.

Caitlin, we're sorry to see you go, but wish you all the best as you go forward!

As a result, 3VCT has hired a new staff member, GIS and Conservation Technician, Preston Lawson. Preston will begin his full-time role on November 3, which will provide a brief period of overlap with Caitlin. She'll help familiarize him with our GIS database and ongoing projects to ensure a smooth transition. We look forward to welcoming this new staff member. Below is Preston in his own words:

Hi, I'm Preston. I'm a recent Miami graduate with a degree in Biology and Environmental Science, along with having gone through the GIS Certificate program. I have a strong interest in geospatial sciences, land stewardship, and natural resource management. As a Ross local, I'm excited for the opportunity to serve my community and contribute to the many conservation efforts supported by Three Valley. I look forward to growing as a conservation professional with such an amazing team and working with the farming communities I've grown up around.

Best, Preston



Executive Director's Report

This fall, I've been reminded again of how powerful partnerships can be. We recently celebrated the grand opening of our Ruder Nature Preserve accessible boardwalk with a large crowd of community supporters, volunteers, and donors. It was wonderful to see so many in attendance to celebrate with us. At Three Valley Conservation Trust, nothing we do happens alone. Every acre of the nearly 25,000 acres we protect represents the combined efforts of caring landowners, volunteers, donors, and community partners who all believe in keeping our corner of the world green and thriving. Together, we're not just conserving land; we're strengthening the connections between people and the places they love.

Our partnerships with private landowners are at the very heart of this work. These are folks who choose to protect their farms, forests, and fields forever so that future generations can enjoy the same open spaces and natural beauty we do today. We are proud to walk alongside them through every step of the conservation process, helping them meet their goals while keeping the land healthy and productive. Each conserved property tells a story of care, stewardship, and hope for what's ahead.

Looking forward, I'm filled with gratitude and optimism. The conservation community that surrounds 3VCT is growing stronger every year, and it's inspiring to see what we can accomplish when we come together. Whether you volunteer, donate, or simply share your love of nature, you are part of this story. Thank you for helping us protect and restore the green spaces that make our region such a special place to call home.

Semper Gratus! - Randy



By Randy Evans
Executive Director

The Power of Community Foundations in Local Conservation

By April Hamlin, Development Manager

One of the most impactful partnerships a nonprofit has is with local community foundations. Community foundations are charitable organizations that manage a collection of funds established by individuals, families, and organizations. They make grants to support local nonprofits and causes, ensuring that donor gifts are invested wisely and used to strengthen the community for generations to come. At 3VCT, community foundations are vital partners who provide direct grant support and a trusted place where donors can contribute to funds supporting the needs of their communities.

At 3VCT, we are fortunate to work with several area foundations. The Oxford Community Foundation has been a steadfast supporter, awarding some of our largest grants through the Kenneth M. Buerk Open Space Preservation Fund. These funds directly support our core mission work to conserve natural habitats, waterways and agricultural lands in our region. The Northern Cincinnati Foundation played an essential early role in launching the Seed Library Program, which now includes 11 seed libraries across Butler County, all offering free native seeds to the public. The Middletown Community Foundation has championed our educational outreach, helping expand our popular Seed Library Program into Middletown, Trenton, and Monroe. And the Hamilton Community Foundation serves as the home of the Three Valley Conservation Trust Endowment Fund, established by 3VCT to provide lasting support for our programs and operations.

These partnerships illustrate the power of community foundations to multiply impact. By offering both immediate funding and long-term giving opportunities, they make it possible for donors and nonprofits to work together to preserve open spaces, restore habitats, and nurture the next generation of conservation stewards. Together, we are building a legacy of conservation rooted in community and growing stronger every year.

Help Support Three Valley Conservation Trust

Membership—show your commitment to land conservation in SW Ohio by becoming a member, renewing your membership, or providing a gift membership. As a Three Valley member, you join people committed to conserving open land, preserving agricultural legacy, clean air and water, and habitats.



Donations—provide additional support for monitoring and protecting our 215 easements and acquiring new ones.

To become a member or to donate, go to <https://www.3vct.org/donate> or call the 3VCT office at 513-524-2150, ext. 5.

Planned Giving/Estate Planning - Contact 3VCT at giving@3vct.org

Miami Conservancy District Partnership

By Mark Rentschler, Board Member

The Miami Conservancy District (MCD) and Three Valley Conservation Trust share a long-standing partnership to protect land, water, and community health across Southwest Ohio. Together, the organizations have advanced several conservation projects, including securing federal funding to protect farmland and stream corridors along Twin Creek in Montgomery County and Four Mile Creek near Oxford's wellfield. Most recently, MCD has supported the Hoffman Wetland and Stream Restoration Project on Indian Creek in Butler County through streamflow monitoring and data collection (photos). These collaborative efforts safeguard clean water, enhance wildlife habitat, and preserve the Buried Valley Aquifer for future generations.



Thank You for Local Support

By LaTricia Hillman, Board Member

As a non-profit, 3VCT relies on the support of locals like Joel and Melissa Engelhard, owners of Oxford LaRosa's, who have partnered with us the past decade. This generosity enables us to host community events like our annual members' meeting. The meeting fosters a deeper connection between people and nature by combining learning, inspiration, and fresh ideas for meaningful action. Thanks to Joel and Melissa, we are able to reach not only our loyal members but also those just beginning their conservation journey.

Partnerships like this help us build a more connected and resilient community rooted in stewardship and sustainability. We are deeply grateful to Joel for his continued support and for helping us grow our impact in the community.



Conserving Together: Park Partnerships that Make a Difference

By Randy Evans

Recently, Steve Gordon and I had the chance to revisit Salamander Run, a MetroParks of Butler County nature preserve that 3VCT helped acquire and restore through the Paddys Run Conservation Project. We joined MetroParks staff Joe Dumyahn and Katie Ely-Wood, along with Tana Weingartner, Senior Editor and Reporter at WVXU-FM (Cincinnati's NPR station), to hike the property and talk about how Salamander Run is improving our region's drinking water quality. That visit was a great reminder of a simple truth: conservation works best when we work together.

At 3VCT, collaboration is at the heart of what we do. Our partnerships with MetroParks of Butler County, Great Parks of Hamilton County, Five Rivers MetroParks of Montgomery County, and Preble County Parks have helped us protect and care for some of southwest Ohio's most treasured landscapes. Together, we're preserving the places that make our region so beautiful and ensuring everyone can continue to enjoy them. These projects do far more than conserve open space. They improve water quality, restore wildlife habitat, and create new opportunities for people to get outside. Whether we're protecting land along a creek, connecting forest corridors, or helping expand a public park, each success story shows what's possible when park districts and land trusts team up for the common good.

What's especially inspiring is how these conserved lands have become outdoor classrooms. Many of the properties we've protected with our park partners are now being used by students, teachers, and researchers to study ecology, water, and habitat restoration firsthand. When young people can experience conservation in action, it deepens their connection to the land and to their communities.

Our work with park districts does more than protect places, it builds relationships. By combining our expertise, resources, and shared passion for nature, we're creating a legacy of healthy landscapes and vibrant communities. Together, we're ensuring nature will always have a home in southwest Ohio.

Tana Weingartner's report on Salamander Run can be found here:
<https://www.wvxu.org/environment/2025-09-09/fernald-nuclear-site-paddys-run-conservation>



A Partnership Example - the Henshaw Wetland

By Erik Hermann, Stewardship Technician

For a few newsletter cycles now, we have talked about the Henshaw Wetland, one of 3VCT's efforts to protect valuable habitat in the Paddy's Run watershed. Stanley and Charlotte Henshaw, along with their children, partnered with 3VCT to convert an 11.4-acre parcel from row crops to wetlands to enhance habitat for native amphibians and pollinators. This creation of several wetlands and vernal pools, surrounded by grasslands, which will improve water quality in Paddy's Run and the aquifer below it, is a perfect example of the many partnerships 3VCT has forged. Over the course of a few years, the landowners and 3VCT have worked with Jeff Davis (herpetologist), the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Energy, Butler Soil and Water Conservation District, Environmental Solutions AQ (environmental engineering firm), the USDA National Resource Conservation Service, Fernald Trustees, and the James & Joan Gardner Foundation (funding).

The process of making such a project happen is complex, as might be expected with many partners. After establishing an easement on the property, the work of habitat creation began. In spring of 2023 more than a thousand woody shrubs, deciduous trees, and herbaceous plants were planted by the Davey Resource Group and 3VCT staff. In 2024 and 2025, 3VCT staff and volunteers spent several days removing invasive species.



An aerial view of the Henshaw Wetland shows the newly mown paths, wooded riparian area along Paddy's Run Creek, and small vernal pools among the grassland plantings.



Tom Buckley mows high grasses to make a path.

This spring, a Henshaw Wetland sign was designed and installed. Also this year, 3VCT staff has established trails through the wetland with our new brush mower (left), which allows better access to the property's pools and areas of interest and easier invasive removal. The trails are coming along great and 3VCT has plans to seed them with a slow growing grass and forb mix next year. While mowing we have seen many interesting species including an Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle (right) & a Cope's Gray Treefrog. The herbaceous pollinator plantings have been a huge success; the entire field was teeming this summer with native prairie plants like



*This soft-shell turtle (*Apalone spinifer spinifera*) was found along Paddy's Run*

Wild Senna, Swamp Milkweed, Butterflyweed, Blue Vervain, Sunflowers, Coneflowers, and Cardinal Flower.

The Henshaw family has demonstrated a deep commitment to conservation, maintaining a legacy of improving woodland ecosystems and implementing sustainable agricultural practices on their cropland. Their creation of a new wetland designed for public education and enjoyment reflects their dedication to both environmental stewardship and community enrichment. By managing and stewarding this project, 3VCT has protected and created critical habitat for many different organisms, even some we might not know are there. This complex project exemplifies the very real power of partnerships!

Strength in Collaboration

By Caitlin Brown, Conservation Manager



Three Valley Conservation Trust is proud to be an active member of the Coalition of Ohio Land Trusts (COLT), a statewide alliance that brings together land trusts to share knowledge, strengthen practices, and advance conservation across Ohio.

COLT meets monthly to discuss emerging issues, review policies, and exchange ideas that help each organization grow stronger. The coalition also offers educational programs and training opportunities that support professional development and ensure land trusts continue to meet the highest standards of stewardship and accountability.

By working together through COLT, land trusts like 3VCT can learn from one another, stay informed on state and federal policy changes, and collectively amplify the impact of land conservation efforts throughout Ohio.

Conserving Farmland Through ODA and NRCS Programs

By Caitlin Brown, Conservation Manager

Three Valley Conservation Trust's success in preserving productive farmland would not be possible without our long-standing partnerships with the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Together, these programs provide vital support for landowners who wish to permanently protect their farms while keeping them in agricultural production.

NRCS is in charge of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and the farmland component of that is the Agricultural Land Easement (ALE). The ODA is in charge of the Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (LAEPP). Whew, that's a lot of acronyms! But the important thing is that both ACEP-ALE and LAEPP programs offer financial incentives to landowners for putting their farmland into easements that prohibit development and both require a local partner who works with the landowner to create an easement. We are that local partner, in Butler and Preble Counties for ODA and anywhere in our service area for NRCS.

All easements require many steps to ensure their legality, such as title searches on the deed, surveying the property, preparing all appropriate paperwork for closing, and filing the easement with the county. In addition, ODA and NRCS applications require extensive evaluations 3VCT can provide, such as the proximity of other protected properties, support of township governments, and the landowner's stewardship practices. Once this information is gathered, 3VCT's Land Protection and Stewardship Committee determines if this is a property we want to protect and the Board of Trustees must vote to accept the easement, remembering that each of our easements adds a perpetual responsibility of annual monitoring and reporting. So, it's a lot of work to set up and maintain an easement! (Thank you for the behind-the-scenes work on every easement, staff!) Although 3VCT does not charge landowners when the easement closes, we do ask for a contribution to our stewardship endowment to help ensure the easement can be monitored in perpetuity.

However, through these collaborations, 3VCT currently co-holds 107 agricultural easements with ODA and NRCS. These easements protect more than 13,000 acres of farmland across our service area. Each project represents a shared commitment among landowners, 3VCT, ODA, and NRCS to safeguard the agricultural heritage of southwest Ohio through cooperation, trust, and stewardship.

We continue to see strong interest in farmland and natural area preservation across our service area. So far this year, 3VCT has completed one new conservation easement with Clare Iniewicz, permanently protecting 13 acres in Reily Township. In addition, 10 easements are pending, totaling roughly 1,000 acres, with hopes to close several before the end of the year. Looking ahead, 3VCT plans to submit more than 20 NRCS applications for the upcoming funding round. Interest in protecting land remains high, with new landowners often reaching out to learn more about how conservation easements can protect their property in perpetuity.

Interested in learning more about protecting your land? Visit our website or reach out to us to start the conversation.



Growing Healthier Forests Together

By Randy Evans



Collaboration between the Ohio Tree Farm Committee (OTFC) and the Southwest Ohio Woodland Association (SOWA) plays a vital role in sustaining the health and longevity of private forest lands across the region by translating national standards of the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) into practical, locally-tailored action. Since the OTFC's organization in 1946, its broader goal has been to promote sustainable management for the four cornerstones: Wood, Water, Wildlife, and Recreation. The OTFC establishes a statewide framework, bringing together state agencies, consultants, and industry experts to influence policy and administer the ATFS certification process.

Complementing OTFC's statewide framework, SOWA fosters local connection—bringing tree farmers together to share experiences, troubleshoot common issues, and access hands-on education and peer support. SOWA helps members navigate complex topics—such as managing invasive species like the Emerald Ash Borer or bush honeysuckle, or securing financial incentives like EQIP—by hosting field days, organizing landowner meetings, and connecting participants with officials from support organizations such as county Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Also, by including representatives from regional groups on the OTFC committee, SOWA informs state policy makers, ensuring their standards and programs are relevant and accessible to the small, private family forest owners who steward over 73% of Ohio's woodlands.

In 2022, 3VCT helped revive SOWA to reconnect and empower local woodland owners. Since then, 3VCT has coordinated quarterly meetings and workshops that bring together landowners, educators, and natural resource professionals to share best practices in woodland management. These gatherings provide hands-on learning about topics like invasive species control, timber stand improvement, and habitat restoration, while also creating a sense of community among those who care deeply for our region's forests.

Ultimately, this partnership creates a pipeline of support for private landowners, which is the most effective form of woodland conservation. It creates a clear path for landowners from a SOWA field day, to receiving technical advice from a Service Forester, to earning ATFS certification. Local associations foster shared responsibility and community among "tree people," while the OTFC provides the professional validation and connection to state and federal resources. This model ensures that conservation efforts are not just theoretical but are actively and sustainably applied across Ohio's diverse forest landscape for generations to come.

SOWA quarterly meetings are scheduled on the third Sundays in January, April, July, and October.

Announcements are posted on the Three Valley Conservation Trust website and via email to SOWA members. If you wish to be added to the email list please contact Randy Evans at Directoror@3vct.org

Partner Profile: Our Soil and Water Conservation Districts

By Steve Gordon, Conservation Contractor

Successful partners rely on teamwork, collaboration, and outreach. Land trusts bring people and organizations together to work toward common goals. Over the years, 3VCT has enjoyed productive partnerships with its Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). Our mission often overlaps SWCD's goal of leadership and services that enable Ohioans to conserve, protect, and enhance soil, water, and land resources.

How do these partnerships work? SWCDs bring valuable expertise to our land conservation stakeholders, while 3VCT provides its own special knowledge to the SWCDs and their audiences. SWCD staffs have extensive experience in providing community workshops, technical advice, field demonstrations and tours. Often, 3VCT provides staff and consultation at these events. In August, 3VCT staff manned a booth at Butler County SWCD's Field Day workshop at the historic Cox Farm in Jacksonburg. Along with several exhibitors, including SWCD staffs from Clermont, Hamilton and Warren Counties, the workshop featured soil scientists, ag commentators and private vendors discussing a range of topics that included soil health, best practice herbicide and pesticide management, and state and federal farm policies. Last year the Preble County staff hosted a well-attended woodland management workshop at the Swartzel Farm near Gratis.

SWCD offices also assist 3VCT's mission through consultations involving watershed quality, habitat restoration, and woodland stewardship. The Buck Run and Cotton Run watershed streamside (cont. next page)

(cont. from pg. 7) stabilization projects have brought several partners together, including SWCDs, while a revitalized Southwest Ohio Woodland Association (SOWA) has also benefitted from SWCD participation.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) funded through the federal Farm Bill and administered by NRCS and SWCDs help fund and encourage landowners to adopt best management practices while supporting wildlife habitats and water quality. These programs have proven to be a “win-win” for landowners and the broader agricultural community. 3VCT deeply appreciates the commitment to best land conservation practices by our SWCD offices.

Save The Dates!

Lots to look forward to this winter, so reserve the dates and check the website for details as we get nearer!

Last Fall Hike for Acres

Our last hike of the season will be at the 188-acre Indian Creek Nature Preserve, Ann Geddes’s property, under easement since 2005. Some of the acreage is still in agricultural production, but part is now 20-year-old grassland and wetland habitat. Along with the riparian forests along Indian Creek, these habitats offer important resources for native flora and fauna. Ann and/or Donna McCollum will lead a hike around the restored native habitats. After the hike there will be a social gathering to visit with friends from our community and enjoy snacks provided by Ann and 3VCT.

Date: Thursday, November 20, 2025

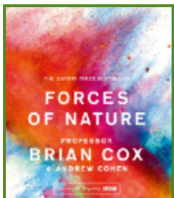
Time: 4:00-6:00 pm

Location: 2575 Indian Creek Road, Oxford, OH

Cost: Free - donations always accepted

Last Book Club for 2025

The 3VCT book club is open to all and completely free, so please consider joining us for our next great discussion. Even if you don’t have time to read the book, there are usually enough of us who have to make it interesting! In November we will be asking for ideas of what to read next year, so come give your input!



November 13 - Forces of Nature by Brian Cox, led by Julie Primack.

This Sunday Times bestseller takes you around the world, “from the mid-Atlantic ridge in Iceland and the volcanoes of Indonesia to the precipitous cliffs in Nepal and the manatees off the coast of Florida, in search of the fundamental laws that govern it. Cox’s romantic, lyrical approach to astrophysics... feels less like homework and more like having a story told to you. A really good story, too.”

An Evening of Wines and Small Bites

Sommelier Rob Wocks, Vintage Wine Distributors

Date: Saturday, December 6, 2025

Location: Patterson’s Café
103 Spring St., Oxford, Ohio

Cost: \$100 per ticket

Spaces are limited, so
**reserve your spot by
November 26** at 3vct.org
or 513-524-2150 ext. 5



3VCT Annual Meeting

As in the last few years, the annual meeting will be held at The Knolls of Oxford. At this meeting, we will have a synopsis of the state of Three Valley, an interesting speaker (TBA) and a lovely meal.

Date: Sunday, February 22, 2025

Time: 5:00-7:00 pm

Location: The Knolls of Oxford, 6727 Contreras Road, Oxford

Cost: TBD - check the website later

What Have Members Been Doing Lately?

Article and photos by Julie Bath Primack, Teri Wickham

Annual Picnic 2025

A good time was had by all at the annual member picnic at Leonard Howell Park. The weather was beautiful for a potluck lunch on July 9 (after many long weeks of rain!). Bluegrass music was provided by Noah Miller and Warren and Judy Waldron. Marlene Hoffman spoke about local birds, especially the importance of natural areas like Ruder Preserve and the Miami University Natural Areas to support their diet and habitat needs. Mark Boardman followed up with information about the boardwalk on the east side of Four Mile Creek, at that time, nearly complete. Mark introduced Tom Farmer and Steve Nimitz, co-volunteers on this massive project, and talked about the journey of the boardwalk from an aspiration to the wonderful community amenity it is now.

Thanks to all who made this a fun event!



Warren and Judy (not pictured) Waldron and Noah Miller entertained us with bluegrass music. Photo by Julie Primack

People enjoyed lunch, with sandwiches provided by 3VCT and potluck dishes by all guests (above right), as well as walking on and hearing about the boardwalk (below right). Photos by Julie Primack, Teri Wickham



Fall Hikes

Although we had to cancel our first fall hike due to weather, the second one was a lot of fun. A 3VCT Board Member, Dr. Sarah Dumyahn, asked her students in Sustainability in Practice (IES 474) to show us their work at the MU Farm on Somerville Road. From 2016 to 2024, the 14-acre farm north of Yager Stadium was run by Charles Griffin as an interdisciplinary project and CSA (community-supported agriculture). Many of us enjoyed the bountiful CSA produce from the farm. In 2024, Miami's budget deficit forced the closure of the CSA, so Dr. Dumyahn and others joined forces to keep the farm available to Miami students. Among other projects, the students have chosen to grow native plants to provide seed and habitat. At the hike, students led a tour of the property, we processed and traded some native plant seeds, and everyone enjoyed drinks and snacks with friends and community.



Above, students led a hike of the property. All photos by Julie Primack.



Above, Joe Dumyahn (Butler County Metroparks) talked to hikers about how to collect, store and plant seeds, while students Brianna Hickok, Katherine Hamilton, Ty Cordonnier and Jill Fanning listen.

Right, hikers gathered to watch seed processing on screens made and provided by Joe Dumyahn.



Ruder Boardwalk Celebration

At the celebration of the Ruder boardwalk, we had people contribute to a community poem. From thoughts left there, Teri Wickham (assisted by AI) composed the poem below. Well done, Teri, and thanks to all who attended!

*To me, nature is joy and care,
Pushing my mom through autumn air.
At Ruder Preserve, where wild things grow,
We wander softly, hearts aglow.*

*It's family laughter, friends so dear,
The sound of love that echoes clear.
It's therapy in sunlight's beam,
A living prayer, a sacred dream.*

*A celebration of the Divine,
Where roots and souls in grace entwine.
A heron glides, a beetle crawls—
Life whispers softly through the calls.*

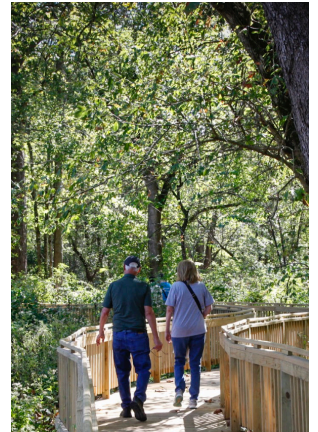
*Shadows dance on forest floors,
Each pattern opens hidden doors.
My solace, my spirit, my reason to live,
In nature's arms, I learn to give.*

*Grounded and healed by earth and sky,
My soul takes wing, it learns to fly.
Each season sings—each one brings peace,
A quiet gift, a soul's release.*

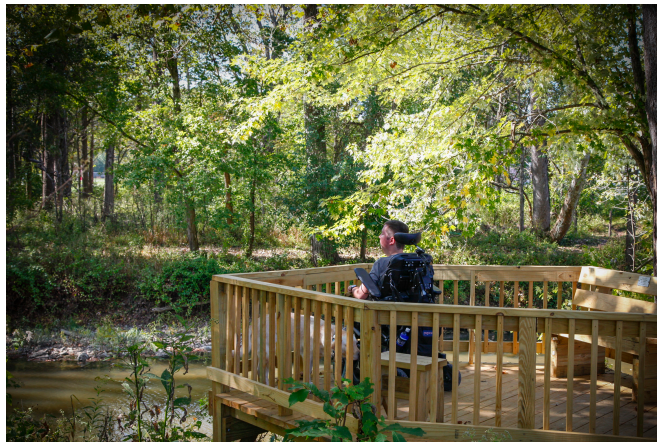
*Beauty breathing, ever alive,
From nature's heart, all dreams derive.
In every leaf, in every breeze,
Lie gifts and truths that set me free.*



The celebration attracted lots of supporters, a nice sign of appreciation of the effort put in by so many to accomplish this community resource. Photo by Ron Stevens



The boardwalk's winding path is intentional; no trees were removed to make a path and nature has few straight lines, so the walkway feels more natural. Photo by Ron Stevens



Dan Darko, who consulted with 3VCT long ago on the west side boardwalk, was caught enjoying the resting area in this beautiful photo by Ron Stevens.

Preserving Legacy Through Landowner Partnerships

By Caitlin Brown, Conservation Manager

Three Valley Conservation Trust's partnerships begin with the landowners who choose to protect their land. This year, Clare Iniewicz donated a conservation easement on her 13-acre property in Reilly Township to ensure it remains natural for future generations.

Clare was inspired by childhood memories of riding her bike down a quiet dirt road in her hometown, now a four-lane highway lined with development. She wanted to make sure that never happens in Reilly. A lifelong lover of nature, Clare says she has "never met a flower she didn't love," and her passion for the natural world made the decision to protect her land an easy one. As part of her estate planning, the easement gives her peace of mind by knowing the property will stay protected even if her daughter, who lives out of town, decides to sell it one day.

Reflecting on the experience, Clare shared, "I couldn't have picked a better partner. Three Valley made the process so easy."



3VCT Stewardship Technician Erik Herrmann, Board Member Ed Teets, Conservation Manager Caitlin Brown and attorney Jon Nerenberg joined Clare Iniewicz at her easement closing.

Natural History Spotlight: Autumn's Not so Desirable Bounty

By Jeff Davis, Photos by David Cameron (Native Plant Trust [Go Botany](#))

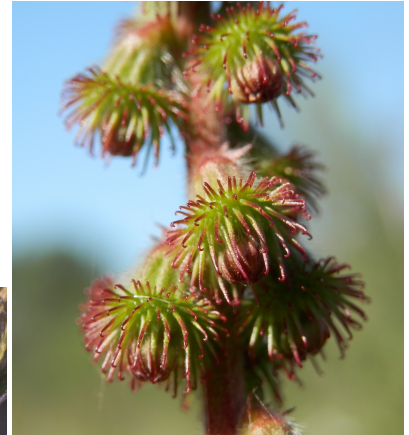
Editor's note: When you mention partnerships as a newsletter theme to a biologist, it should seem natural they would consider an ecological partnership! Enjoy.

At one of my study sites where I monitor snake populations, the vegetation is so dense by mid-July I have to break out the brush cutters so my colleagues and I can open up the trails. It's hard work in the summer heat, but without it our study would come to an early end. When I encounter one particular plant, I cut the trails a bit wider than normal so I might not have to deal with it in August and September when its fruits have developed. That plant is agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), and if you know it, you know why I do my best to avoid it. Its clingy little fruits will latch onto your clothes, follow you home, and leave you the task of picking them off, sometimes for hours.



The triangular pods produced by trefoil have microscopic hooks that cling tightly to fabric and fur alike.

And there is tick-trefoil (aka beggars ticks; *Desmodium paniculatum*), with its triangular fruits that have the same strategy; latch on to whatever walks by to move away from the parent plant to disperse the seeds. And there are more. Devil's beggar ticks (*Bidens frondosa*) has little black fruits with a pair of spines that grab hold. They always seem to get deeply imbedded in my boot laces more so than my clothes.



Agrimony's fruits are tipped with numerous hooks that become entangled in fur or fabric. They seem unable to grasp tightly woven fabric like nylon.

Each bidens fruit (left) has two prongs with tiny spikes directed away from their point.



Virginia stickseed lays down lines of sticky fruits.

It's not just hikes through fields and meadows that leave me covered in unwanted hitchhikers. Another of my study sites is under a forest canopy where I monitor the recovery of Cave Salamanders after a 2014 oil spill. My nemesis there is Virginia stickseed (*Hackelia virginiana*), aka beggars lice. I watch for it as I'm walking and I do my best to step around it, but invariably, at some point I look down and there they are, straight rows of those little hooked capsules stuck tightly to my pant legs.

I've spent many hours picking all these hitchhikers from my clothes, boot laces, and snake bags that I keep tucked under my belt. I've learned that agrimony doesn't cling to nylon pants like it does to cotton, and on "harder" fabrics like denim, most burs are easier to get off than from "soft" fabrics like fleece or cotton sweat pants. But for the others, there seems to be no stopping them. And some, like cockle burs (*Xanthium strumarium*), and burdock (*Arctium tomentosum*) have fruits that are large enough to see and avoid.

Is there a silver lining? Can something positive be said about these buggers (or beggars)? Sure! Some have edible roots and leaves or are valuable as medicinal plants. Some varieties of bidens and tick-trefoil are cultivated as ornamental plants. Others provide sources of nectar to bees and hummingbirds. And of course, the inspiration for Velcro was the hooks on the spines of burdock fruits. What would we do without Velcro!

Perhaps more importantly, these fruits do just what they have evolved to do, which is disperse seeds away from the parent plant. Just last week as my colleague and I walked back to my truck picking trefoil and stickseed fruits from our pants by the hundreds, I pointed out that it's pretty amazing that these plants evolved such an ingenious means of spreading out. They must have co-evolved with mammals whose fur was the perfect surface to get caught on. So, even if you dread dealing with these hitchhiking fruits, like I do, the least you can do while plucking them from your clothes is to give these species credit for having such an interesting and effective partnership as a means of seed dispersal.



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Seed Library Updates - It's Time to Plant!

DID YOU KNOW? Fall is a great time to plant native seeds. Most seeds of native plants grown in greenhouses need to be “stratified” to start germination in the spring. Stratification is some type of pretreatment, i.e. before planting seeds, that helps initiate growth. It usually involves a few weeks or months of cold, such as in a refrigerator or freezer, sometimes along with other actions. However, if you plant seeds outdoors in the fall, nature does all that for you. So why not make your last visit to one of our seed libraries, grab some seeds and get them in the ground?



If you choose to wait until spring, there is plenty of information around on how to stratify seeds of particular species, such as in these directions from [Prairie Nursery](#). But be aware - our seed libraries will be not be replenished from the end of November until March of 2026, so find your seeds now whether you plant them now or need them early in the spring so you can stratify them before putting them in the ground.

P.S. While you're working in the garden, remember to Leave the Leaves!

Fall Restoration Schedule at Ruder:

We have 2 more work days scheduled this fall - **Sundays, November 2 and 16 from 9-noon**, plus a class meeting every **Thursday morning from 9:30-12**. Feel free to join us! Is there a group you know that would like to set up a work day? Contact Donna McCollum at donnamccollum@me.com or 513-544-7638.

Would you like to help?

3VCT couldn't accomplish its mission without many committed volunteers. As we plan for 2025 and beyond, we want to encourage you to help out however you feel comfortable doing so. One of the best ways to volunteer with 3VCT is to join one of our committees. Please consider helping out where you can. If you would like to help in any way, contact the 3VCT office at 513-524-2150, Ext. 5 for information. Thanks!

Outreach and Education - recruits the next generation of 3VCT supporters, educates current ones, plans and helps with fundraising events, builds community

Land Protection & Stewardship - evaluates properties proposed for easements

Property Management - decides about activities at Trust-owned properties

Development - determines strategies for developing a financially sustainable organization through key partnerships and donors

Finance - keeps track of accounts, formulates the budget and informs the board on all financial matters

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