

## Conservation and You

The primary goal of Conservation Corner is to provide a means of educating people of all ages about the environment and issues of protecting the land. The area is currently being used and will continue to be an area for many types of programming including identification of native plants, learning about habitats and exploring for signs of wildlife.



**Contact us for more information about our educational or volunteering opportunities.**

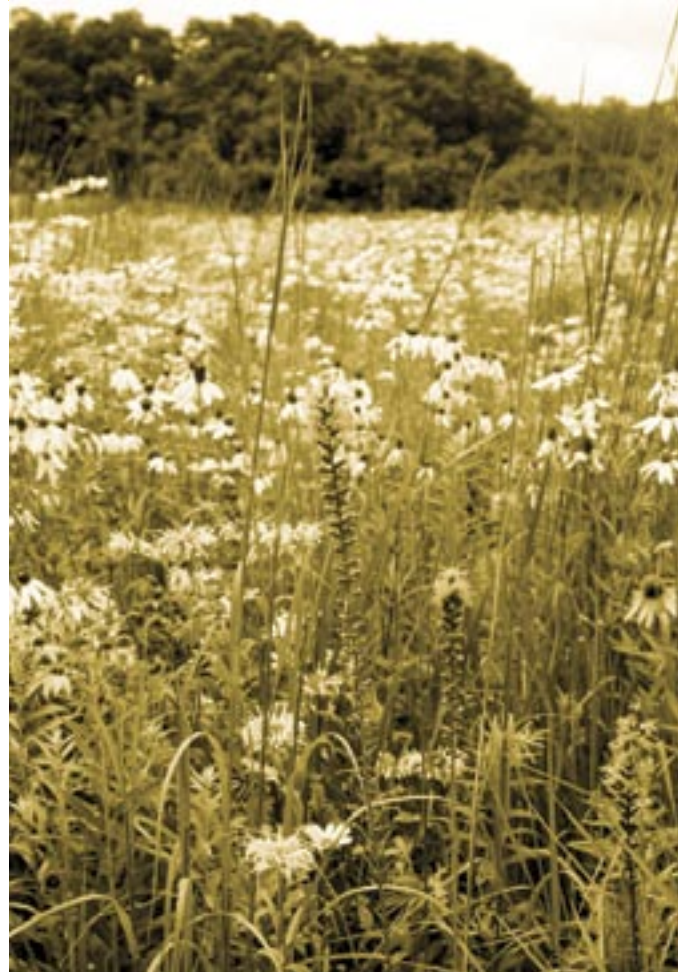
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**CONSERVATION  
CORNER**  
*Heal the Land*

# CONSERVATION CORNER

*Heal the Land*

## A Living Library for Environmental Education

Land conservation is one of the primary motivations for Conservation Corner and involves making use of land responsibly, in ways that promote the diversity of life. By creating several different habitats and maintaining them, stable environments are produced that might otherwise be inaccessible to the plant and animal communities that need them. Species that are only able to live marginally in other areas thrive in the habitats preserved in Conservation Corner.

Conservation Corner is also meant to demonstrate land stewardship and restoration ecology. The land stewardship ethic advocates taking care of the land so that it not only supports natural communities now, but ensures that the land and resident creatures will be healthy and vibrant for future generations to enjoy. Restoration ecology is a proactive approach to creating habitats or repairing damaged habitats so that they exist as they did prior to human disturbance. Land Stewards often try to mimic habitats back to pre-colonial time periods. It often involves re-establishing natural occurring associations.

The final impetus behind Conservation Corner is education for students of all ages as well as the general public. In learning about the complex balance of the environment in a hands-on way,

visitors may gain a true appreciation for the connection between humans and other inhabitants. Visitors may then better understand the need to conserve and preserve the diversity of the natural world. Conservation Corner will serve as a living, interactive laboratory for research in many scientific disciplines. There are three major habitats of Conservation Corner:

## Tall Grass Prairie

Tall grass prairies were abundant throughout Ohio at one point; however, restoring this piece of land required hard work. The process involved the breaking up of pebbly clay soil with heavy machinery as well as the seeding, planting, digging, and transplanting of prairie plants.

The prairie seeds were planted in the spring of 1997 and today the habitat is composed of deep-rooted perennials and native grasses such as Indian Grass, Big Bluestem, Grey-headed Coneflower, and Bergamot. The area is burned every three years, in what is termed a prescribed burn, to help stabilize the grassland.

*Barn Swallow at the Bird Blind*





Mary Klunk, Five Rivers MetroParks Land Stewardship Manager, supervising the prescribed burn

The prescribed burning kills back the weedy, woody, non-native species, giving the prairie plants a competitive advantage. The burning also rejuvenates the grasses, and aids the germination of prairie seeds. Animals that you might find in an Ohio prairie include the American toad, rabbits, bumblebees, deer, dragonflies, butterflies, grasshoppers, snakes, and many varieties of birds. You may see the Redtail Hawks or Kestrels hovering over the grasslands looking for voles in the prairie.

### Shrublands

Natural habitats slowly progress through various stages of development based on a given region's climate, soil, and other environmental characteristics. The series of ecological changes is called succession.

The area in succession between the stages of grassland and forest is often referred to as brushland, thicket, or shrublands. The habitat is composed of a unique mixture of plants and animals due to its transitional stage that offers a variety of food and protection. Plants that thrive in this habitat include blackberry, raspberry, elderberry, wild rose, and grapevine. A number of animals including red fox, weasels, skunks, and common yellowthroats rely on this habitat for food and shelter.

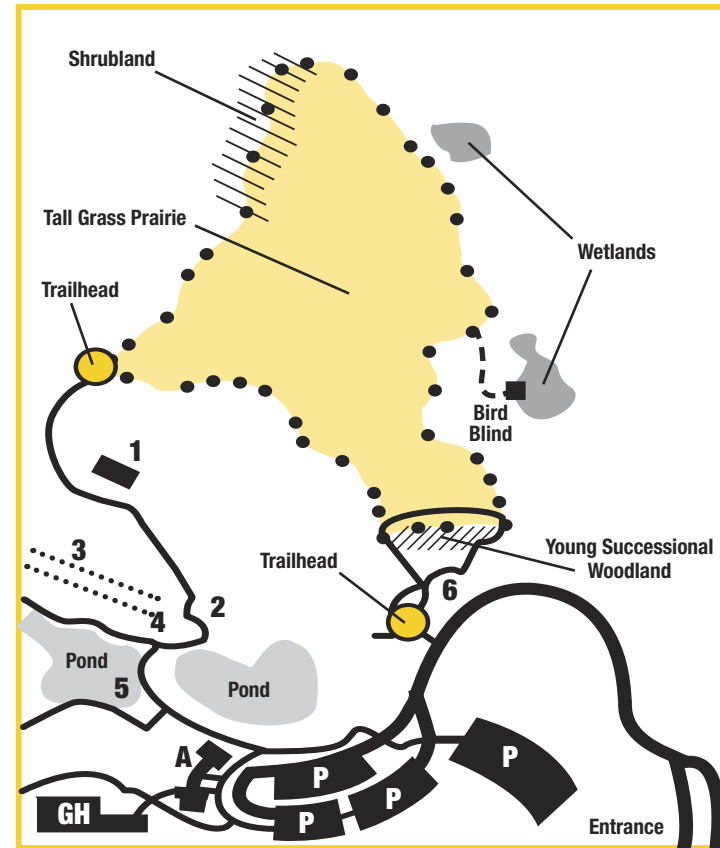
The shrublands are maintained with controlled burning and mowing to prevent it from becoming forested land. This type of maintenance will slow the growth of young saplings in order to allow for bushes, vines, and herbaceous plants to grow. Unmowed roadsides, fence rows, and windbreaks along fields are examples of potential shrublands.

### Wetlands

A wetland is an area that retains water for several months of the year. In Ohio, there are many kinds of wetlands: bogs, fens, marshes, swamps, vernal pools, wet prairies, and wet woods. Ohio wetlands have tree characteristics in common: water at or near the surface during some part of the growing season, soils that lack oxygen, and plants that are adapted to life in these saturated conditions. The wetlands at Cox Arboretum & Gardens were created in the fall of 1996 by an earthen levee and are maintained and monitored to this day. Wetlands are habitats with a variety of hidden values such as their ability to reduce erosion, provide natural flood control, and to aid in water purification.



Enjoy seeing all wildlife in the wetlands



- Conservation Corner Boundary
- Red Trail
- 1** Butterfly House
- 2** Clematis Arbor
- 3** Crab Apple Alleé
- 4** Stonewall Perennial Garden
- 5** Water Garden Terrace
- 6** Woodland Wildflower Garden
- P** Parking
- GH** Greenhouse
- A** Zorniger Education Center including Huffman Gallery, Fifth Third Conference Center, MeadWestvaco Theatre, National City Outdoor Classroom

Wetlands are also important habitats for many plants and animals that cannot survive in the prairies or shrublands. The habitat is essential for nesting waterfowl, amphibians such as green frogs and spring peepers, and reptiles such as the painted turtle. Plants such as marsh marigolds, pink lady's slipper, skunk cabbage, and hop sedge also thrive on wetland habitats.

Wetlands were once thought to be of no value and unfortunately over 95% of Ohio's wetlands were drained and converted into farmland or developed into residential or industrial areas. Today, since wetlands are highly valued, it is required by law that

if a developer destroys a wetland, the company or individual must recreate a similar habitat elsewhere.

### Following the Red Trail

Conservation Corner can be easily accessed as you enter the nature trails or at the west side of the Woodland Wildflower Garden. The Red Trail, in the map indicated above, will lead you through the seven-acre site to experience a young successional woodland, the tall grass prairie, a shrubland, and past two distinctive wetland areas. Birds and other wildlife can be viewed from a blind just off the red trail in Conservation Corner.