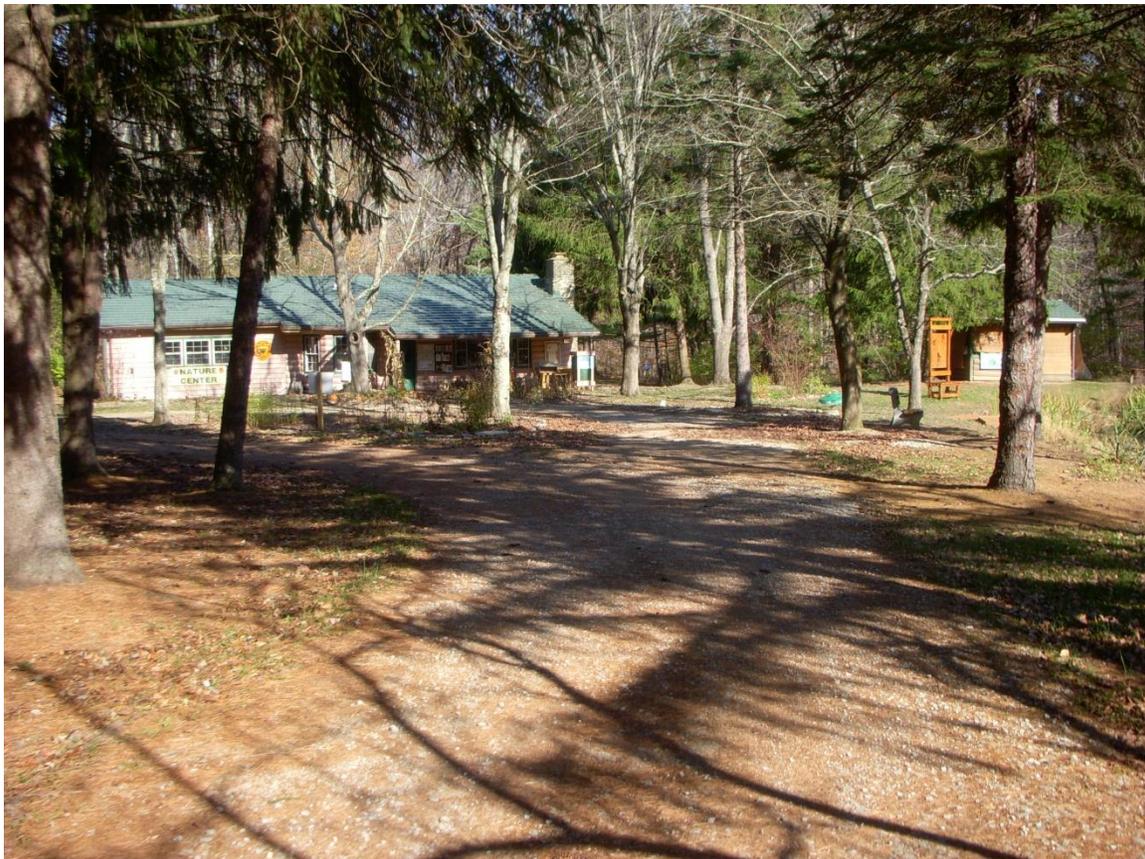




Nature Center Association of Caesar Creek
4006 Pioneer Village Road
Waynesville, OH 45068

After a year's hiatus, we have decided to once again publish a quarterly newsletter. It will feature an article written by one of our OCVNs, along with information about or from our naturalists combined with an update from the President of the Nature Center Association. We hope you enjoy it!



Observations: Spring 2017

By Jim Hickman

The winter of 2016/2017 has been “crazy” mild. A number of birds didn’t even bother to migrate south. Looks like we might be in for changes in our birding in the future. For example Puddle Ducks are already here; they did leave but are already back. Coots left for about three weeks and have already returned. Sandhill Cranes have been seen all over Ohio all winter. “Crazy” is just what this winter has been. Now on to spring in our area of Southwest Ohio. We have beautiful lakes and birding areas. Check out Spring Valley Wildlife Area, Caesar Creek Nature Center and below the dam, and Cowan Lake these are the hot spots in our area.

The unofficial start of spring in this area of Southwest Ohio is March 1st. Migration of waterfowl usually starts around this date. This year the mild winter could change this pattern. The birds that migrate to Southern United States will move north based on weather. The migrants in Central and South America don’t know what our weather is, so they will be here at their normal times. You may see the early migrants that are moving north with the early food source due to mild winters, but the next wave of migration may not follow right behind the first wave. Don’t worry they will be here at their normal date. This leads us to believe that in mid-April through May the southern migration will be here.

One of the best places to see waterfowl is Cowan Lake. This may be due to the small lake and intimate environment. Caesar Creek Lake, on the other hand, is so large that they have many areas to hide. Both Cowan Lake and Caesar Creek Lake have gulls especially in winter and early spring. When the ice is gone from Spring Valley Wildlife Area it has many puddle ducks.

When you are out looking for birds in the Cowan Lake, Caesar Creek Lake and Spring Valley Wildlife Area watch the sky for Bald Eagles. We are very fortunate to have three active nesting sites in these areas.



Erin Shaw's Biography

Erin Shaw is going into her tenth year with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). She is a Park Naturalist for Parks and Watercraft. She holds American Canoe Association (ACA) instructor certificates in canoeing, kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding (SUP) and adaptive paddling. She is currently in the process of joining the ACA Instruction and Education Council. As a Naturalist, Shaw provides programs statewide, but primarily oversees the state parks near her hometown which include Caesar Creek, Cowan Lake and Little Miami State Parks, located in southwest Ohio. Her main goal is to educate the public about safety and the joys of outdoor recreation; such as canoeing, kayaking, SUP, sailing, archery, hiking, resource management and water quality monitoring, to name a few. Shaw is also nearing her tenth year of hosting a TV show focused on wildlife and recreation in the state parks.



Shaw grew up on the Little Miami River in the rural community of Oregonia, Ohio. Her love for paddling started at an early age. As a child, she was brought up canoeing to and from friends and family who lived along the river. In high school, her career on the water began at the local canoe livery where she taught the public paddling skills. She moved to Tennessee during college, where she worked as a Guide for an Adventure Based Counseling Camp, leading whitewater canoe trips, rock climbing expeditions, mountain biking, horseback riding, power boating, skiing and teambuilding activities on a high and low rope course. After graduating with a Master's in Education, Shaw taught school in Inner-city Cincinnati, Asheville North

Carolina and the islands of Micronesia, where she paddled traditional outrigger canoes on the South Pacific Ocean. Currently, Shaw is excited about SUP surfing. Just a few months ago, she attended the ACA SUP surf trip to Puerto Rico. Wherever she is in the world, Shaw finds a way to utilize her love of water activities.

In 2007, Shaw returned to her hometown in Ohio and became employed with ODNR. As a Park Naturalist, she was able to meld the two most important aspects of her life - a love of the outdoors and her passion for teaching – into a rewarding career. She was recognized as Park Naturalist of the year in 2013. Sharing her passion for paddling is Shaw’s favorite part of the job. She continues to master new skills and increase her knowledge, always striving to move forward with the many different aspects of education.

A Spring Note from the President of the Nature Center Association of Caesar Creek

The Nature Center Association of Caesar Creek is a group of highly motivated individuals with a great wealth of knowledge and experiences. Our members have a passion for sharing the unique experiences that interacting with wildlife and our native Ohio ecosystems can offer anyone willing to come outdoors and join us. Working in conjunction with our two naturalists, Erin Shaw and Sarah Blair, the Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists (OCVNs) and other volunteers at the Caesar Creek Nature Center strive to make the seemingly impossible occur. Just last year the swinging bridge was constructed in the middle of winter at Caesar Creek and now new flight cages are being built just to the left of the nature center all with volunteer workers!

The Nature Center relies upon donations, and the cash raised during our special events such as cast iron cooking, the meteor shower campout and holiday’s traditions to fund our many projects. We also offer a membership to the Nature Center Association for the small amount of \$25.00 and this allows members a two dollar discount off our special events registration fees and off the purchase of the bird nesting boxes that are for sale at the nature center. Please consider becoming a member of the Nature Center to assist us with our goals.



These unusually warm days that we have experienced during February are enticing everyone who is suffering from cabin fever to go outdoors. At the same time-our naturalists, OCVNs and volunteers are in the process of preparing all of our equipment and facilities to get ready for when the weather finally enters the true spring and summer phases. Once the season starts there will more hikes, nature tours on the water, archery and boating courses along with the wonderful changes that will occur with all the birds, animals, reptiles, amphibians, plants and trees.

I encourage everyone to check our webpage: www.caesarcreekstatepark.com and also our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/CaesarCreekStatePark for the most up to date information on activities that are available for everyone to participate in along with our dedicated staff. Start getting your gear in order now, spring is around the corner!

Rick Hoffman OCVN
President Nature Center Association of Caesar Creek 2017