

GREEN ISLANDS

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Summit Metro Parks Bi-Monthly Magazine

ON THE INSIDE

page 4 DISCOVER

Marvelous Moths: Appreciating Nature's Overlooked
Pollinators

page 7 EXPLORE

Programs and Events

page 16 ENJOY

Celebrating the 60th Annual FHS

Our parks are like green islands in an urban landscape.

IN THIS ISSUE

Fall Yard Clean Up: Less Is More

Marvelous Moths: Appreciating Nature's Overlooked
Pollinators

Programs & Events

Celebrating the 60th Annual FHS

A Look Back: FHS Shield Assistance

Fall Hiking Spree Form '23

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The park district's governing body is appointed by the Summit County Probate Judge. Commissioners serve overlapping three-year terms and are assisted by the executive director, who oversees the work of full-time and part-time employees, seasonal workers and volunteers.

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EDITORS

Claire Merrick Marketing & Public Relations Manager

Victoria Putnam Community Engagement Manager

Lindsay Smith Brand Manager

Stephanie Walton Chief of Marketing &
Communications

DESIGN & ART DIRECTION

Jennie Levy Graphic Designer

Karl Simonson Graphic Designer

Summit Metro Parks

975 Treaty Line Rd., Akron, OH 44313-5837

Administrative Offices: 330-867-5511

F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm: 330-865-8065

Liberty Park Nature Center: 330-487-0493

Summit Lake Nature Center: 330-864-8431

Seasonal Information: 330-865-8060

Volunteer Information: 330-865-8047

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PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY:

Jerry Cannon • Christy Counterman • Rob Curtis • Keara
Giannotti • Jeff Hill • Tim Hite • Claire Merrick • JJ
Prekop Jr. • Robert Roach • Karl Simonson

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real-estate tax. This magazine is an example of your
public dollars at work.

page 2

HELP WILDLIFE, EARN REWARDS

When you participate in the Grow a Wild Back Yard program, you not only help wildlife, but also earn rewards!

Complete the required actions for the level that's right for you, then turn in your form to earn a reward for each level completed. Rewards can be picked up at the following times and locations, or 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays at SMP's Administrative Offices (975 Treaty Line Rd., Akron).

Friday, September 1, 1 - 3 p.m.

F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm Visitors Center

Wednesday, September 6, 4 - 6 p.m.

Summit Lake Nature Center

Saturday, September 9, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Liberty Park Nature Center

Friday, September 15, 1 - 3 p.m.

F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm Visitors Center

Growing a Wild Back Yard is a truly rewarding experience, bringing a sense of fulfillment and connection with nature while creating a thriving and biodiverse environment, just outside your doorstep.

page 3

DISCOVER YOUR BACK YARD Section

FALL YARD CLEANUP: LESS IS MORE

By Becca Zak, Interpretive Naturalist

When it comes to fall cleanup, less is more in your Wild Back Yard! Before you grab your rake, leaf blower and yard waste bags, consider "cleaning up" with wildlife in mind:

Leave your leaves: Leaves fall from trees to return much-needed nutrients to the soil, NOT to inflict hours of raking and bagging! Amphibians, reptiles, insects and small mammals use leaf "litter" as winter habitat, while plants benefit from the insulation leaves provide from winter's snow and frigid temperatures.

Respect the dead: Leave logs and branches to decay and build understory habitat. When safe, leave standing dead trees as roosting spots for songbirds and small mammals. Let native wildflower seed heads stand throughout the winter as a food source for backyard birds and an overwinter nursery for solitary bees!

Build up brush: Use fallen twigs and branches to create a brush pile to benefit wildlife. If placed near feeders, winter birds and small mammals will use it to take shelter from weather and predators when they snack.

pages 4 through 6

MARVELOUS MOTHS:

Appreciating Nature's Overlooked Pollinators

By Joe Malmisur, Interpretive Naturalist

When most people hear the word "moth," they immediately think of holes in sweaters, the smell of moth balls or meal moths flying out of their baking flour. They are often shocked to discover that many moths are incredibly beautiful, some with intricate patterns that allow them to camouflage and evade predators. But, most importantly, moths are a cornerstone of the food web. How is that possible, you ask? Just like butterflies, moths begin life as caterpillars. Our native songbirds almost exclusively feed these protein-packed morsels to their young.

While butterflies get all the love, there is much to appreciate about moths. These winged wonders outnumber butterflies about 20:1, with over 3,000

species in Ohio. Moths and butterflies are both members of the Lepidoptera order of insects, but there are several easy ways to tell them apart. Moths have featherlike antennae, whereas butterflies have clubs or hooks on the ends of their antennae. And, while both have strong olfactory senses in their antennae, moths with larger antennae tend to have a much more powerful sense of smell than butterflies. Most moths fly at night, while butterflies fly during the day. However, there are six species of day-flying moths in Ohio. Moths overwinter in a cocoon on the ground or buried in leaves, while butterflies metamorphose into a chrysalis attached to a plant or other structure. Moths are generally hairy with plump abdomens, while butterflies are smooth and slender. Finally, when landing on a flower or branch, moths' wings lay flat, while butterflies keep their wings folded upright.

Because moths are such an important and integral part of the ecosystem, it is crucial to provide them with native plants and trees. Your Wild Back Yard can offer the host plants moths need to lay their eggs and for their caterpillars to munch on as they develop. When looking at your landscaping, a chewed leaf is a good leaf! If you have space, trees will give you the biggest bang for your buck. Oak trees support over 500 different moth species, cherry trees support 450 species and maple trees support 285 species. Other plants like mallows, asters, sunflowers, goldenrods, boneset and phlox will provide excellent host plants for several hundred species.

Since many moths utilize trees as their host plants, the concept of providing "soft landings" around landscape trees has emerged. The idea is to provide the necessary requirements for caterpillars when they fall to the ground to pupate (or transform between immature and mature stages) and overwinter. Instead of a thick layer of mulch or stones, consider planting a ground cover, ferns or other native plants under your trees.

To learn more about moths, join a naturalist for Lunas and Leaves (see the Sep-Oct Programs & Events

Guide). Always remember: everything in nature is connected, so let's celebrate the critical role moths play in your Wild Back Yard.

page 16 and 17

CELEBRATING THE 60TH ANNUAL FALL HIKING SPREE

By Christy Counterman, Marketing Assistant and Katelyn Freil, Marketing Specialist

Inaugurated in 1964, the first Fall Hiking Spree marked the beginning of a beloved tradition, inviting residents to hike seven different trails in two months. A total of 1,530 hiking staffs were awarded in the first year to those who completed their hiking spree, collecting ranger signatures on their type-written forms along the way. Participants hiked many trails that may be familiar to visitors today, such as Mingo Trail at Sand Run Metro Park and Redwing Trail at Firestone Metro Park.

Sixty years later, hikers of all ages continue collecting shields and memories throughout the Fall Hiking Spree. As we embark on this anniversary year, we celebrate and share memories of family, friends and community. Look for signs at the beginning of this year's featured trails, and follow the QR codes to hear stories from hikers and others who have made the Fall Hiking Spree what it is today.

JEFF LANE

Completing the Fall Hiking Spree is a tradition that spans five generations in this family! Jeff Lane recalls hiking with many family members growing up, from grandparents to aunts, uncles and cousins. Though Jeff's family has moved away, he returns every fall to complete the spree with his wife and daughter.

DAVE AND KAYANN HAWKINS

Hikers since 1980, the Hawkins family was featured in the October 1984 issue of Green Islands. Pictured left to right, son David S., mom Kayann, dad David and in front Tom and Sheila, finish their hike with Phyllis and Gene Leach. Kayann and David continue to complete the Spree for All and Fall Hiking Spree each year.

ARE YOU ONE OF OUR HERITAGE HIKERS?

If you began the Fall Hiking Spree between 1964 and 1975, you qualify for a FREE commemorative hiking staff medallion. Please contact us by:

- Calling 330-867-5511
- Emailing contact@summitmetroparks.org

FALL HIKING SPREE MILESTONE TIMELINE

1965

The first shield is distributed to hikers completing their second FHS.

1971

For the first time, hikers are offered a choice to complete eight of 10 hikes.

1973

A 5.6-mile hike at Deep Lock Quarry is the longest hike ever included in the FHS.

1984

SMP hosts a picnic for 44 original hikers to commemorate the 20th spree anniversary.

1988

The 25th year is celebrated with the first-ever FHS Kick-Off.

1996

The FHS expands to include hikers from outside Summit County.

2000

SMP hosts the first Shield Assistance.

2015

Dogs become eligible to receive a shield for their collars upon completing the spree.

2020

More than 17,000 shields are awarded, breaking all previous yearly records.

page 18

A LOOK BACK: FALL HIKING SPREE SHIELD ASSISTANCE

By Christy Counterman, Marketing Assistant

If you've seen the phrase, "Is attaching the hiking spree shield more challenging than actually hiking the eight trails?" in any of our publications, you'll be glad one of our dedicated volunteers started a tradition that has lasted for more than 20 years.

The late Bill Barnes, a Summit Metro Parks volunteer from 1992 to 2022, often handed our Fall Hiking Spree shields to visitors at F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm and was sympathetic to those who were having problems attaching the shields to their staffs. In 2000, he started taking home first-year hikers' staffs and attaching the shields to them, but returning hikers still had to do the job themselves. So, Bill gathered fellow volunteers Dick Bennett, Lloyd Bresley, Doug Dawes and Bill Wilkerson to host the first "Shield Assistance" workshop. They were surprised when hikers showed up with not only the current year's shield, but handfuls of shields from years past. People had tried tape or glue, and often accidentally bent the tiny nails attempting to affix their rewards.

Thousands of shields and many years later, the crews have changed but the spirit of the event remains strong. We look forward to seeing you after you complete this year's spree!

DID YOU KNOW

Summit Metro Parks has its own gift store? Maple Leaf Gifts can be found inside the visitors center at F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm in Akron. Visit Maple Leaf Gifts to find Summit Metro Parks branded apparel and gear, along with a diverse selection of items for the nature-lover in your life. View a selection of products online at bit.ly/MapleLeafGifts where you can place an order by phone, or come visit us during business hours: Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, 12 to 5 p.m.