

# OHIO Woodlands Water Wildlife

Fall 2014

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## 2014 Farm Science Review and the Gwynne Conservation Area

*Kathy Smith, Extension Program Director – Forestry*

This year's Farm Science Review takes place September 16, 17 18 at Ohio State University's Molly Caren Agricultural Center outside of London, OH. Once again the Gwynne Conservation Area is offering a wide variety of talks and several demonstrations during the three day event.

If you have been to the Gwynne before you will notice some definite changes around the area this year. The elms that were planted in the bottom area where the honeysuckle was removed are doing well and will continue to have their growth monitored by the Ohio State forestry students each year. In addition to those trees, the pine plantation that has been present on the grounds was removed after last year's Review. They were Scotch pine and suffering greatly from a constant infestation of Diplodia tip blight. The plantation was removed but a mix (douglas fir, concolor fir and Norway spruce) of new conifer trees were planted this past spring. The spring weather was rough on

them and success was limited for this first planting. However, the intent is to continue to replant the area with a variety of conifers over the next few years.

In the wetland area more renovations have been implemented in the last year. Much of the woody vegetation has been eliminated in order to plant more desirable woody vegetation in the area. Some of the new elm cultivars have been planted on the perimeter and as we make room, species that provide better cover and are a good source of food for wildlife will be added into the area. Along with the vegetation renovation a viewing platform has been added that will allow visitors to get an overlook view of the area as the project progresses.

Come visit us at the Gwynne and check out the changes! We look forward to seeing you there. Tickets for Farm Science Review can be bought in advance at your county Extension office or at the gate the day of the event.

For more information on the Farm Science Review go to <http://fsr.osu.edu>.



# 2014 Gwynne Conservation Area Schedule of Events

Everyday! →

4-H Shooting Sports: Tues, Wed, & Thurs 10 am - 3:30 pm

Preparing for the Envirothon (OSU Preservice AgriScience Teachers): Tues, Wed, & Thurs 9:30 – 10:45 pm

	Woodland	Wildlife	Aquatics	Cabin
	<b>Tuesday</b>			
10:30	The Hungry Caterpillar, <i>Amy Stone, OSU Extension</i>	Tick ID and Bite Prevention Techniques <i>Cindy Meyer, OSU Extension</i>	Attractants and Introduced Cover for Pond Fisheries <i>Eugene Braig, OSU Extension</i>	
11:00	Hobby Maple Syrup Production <i>Gary Graham, OSU Extension</i>	Earthworm Invasion: Impacts on Your Woodlot, <i>Danae Wolfe, OSU Ext.</i>		Environmental Impacts of Shale Gas Extraction, <i>Joe Bonnell, OSU Ext.</i>
11:30		Grassland and Wildflower ID <i>Rob Chapman, Purdue Extension</i>	5 Keys to Successful Pond Management <i>Bill Lynch, OSU Extension-Retired</i>	Know Your Well Water, <i>Anne Baird, OSU Ext. Rebecca Fugitt, ODH</i>
12:00	Invasive Species ID and Control <i>Stephen Rist, ODNR-Forestry</i>	On the Edge & Down in the Weeds: Managing Farmland Wildlife Habitat to Keep Common Species Common <i>Bob Gates, Randy Knapik, Coree Brooks, Olivia Smith, OSU-SENR</i>	Asian Carps in Ohio: Status Update <i>Eugene Braig, OSU Extension</i>	What to Do with Your Woods <i>Kathy Smith, OSU Extension</i>
12:30				Energy Savings for Households & Congregations: Energy Stewards <i>Greg Hitzhusen, OSU Extension</i>
1:00	Twenty Questions of Plant Diagnostics, <i>Amy Stone, OSU Ext.</i>	Turkey and Deer Management <i>Lee Crocker, National Wild Turkey</i>		Rain Barrel - How-To <i>Sara Ernst, Franklin Co. SWCD</i>
1:30	Intro to Tree ID <i>Kathy Smith, OSU Extension</i>	Attracting Barn Owls to Your Property <i>Ken Duren, ODNR-Wildlife</i>		Home Composting <i>Sara Ernst, Franklin Co. SWCD</i>
2:00	Evaluating the Health of Your Soil <i>Matt Deaton, Matt Lane, Steve Baker, ODNR/NRCS</i>	The Exclusion Solution: Fencing Deer Out, <i>Lenny Farlee, Purdue Extension</i>		
2:30				
3:00				
	<b>Wednesday</b>			
10:30	Steps for Successful Conservation Tree Planting <i>Lenny Farlee, Purdue Extension</i>	Managing Nuisance Geese in Ohio <i>Gary Comer, ODNR-Wildlife</i>	Aquatic Vegetation Management and Control <i>Perry Orndorff, Fairfield Co. SWCD-Retired</i>	Container Gardening <i>Judy Arnett, COWGS</i>
11:00		Swan Management in Ohio <i>Gary Comer, ODNR-Wildlife</i>		
11:30		Controlling Wildlife Damage Around the Home and Yard <i>Brian MacGowan, Purdue Extension</i>	Asian Carps in Ohio: Status Update <i>Eugene Braig, OSU Extension</i>	Electrofish Demo (1 hour) <i>Ethan Simmons, ODNR-Wildlife</i>
12:00	20 Questions of Plant Diagnostics <i>Amy Stone, OSU Extension</i>			Environmental Impacts of Shale Gas Extraction, <i>Joe Bonnell, OSU Ext.</i>
12:30	Invasive Species ID and Control <i>Stephen Rist, ODNR-Forestry</i>	The Exclusion Solution: Fencing Deer Out <i>Lenny Farlee, Purdue Extension</i>	Management and Basics of Pond Aeration <i>Perry Orndorff, SWCD-Retired</i>	Things To Know Before Selling Your Timber <i>Dave Apsley, OSU Extension, Bob Mulligan, ODNR</i>
1:00		Gardening for Pollinators <i>Denise Ellsworth, OSU Extension Federation</i>		Rain Barrel - How-To <i>Sara Ernst, Franklin Co. SWCD</i>
1:30				
2:00	Evaluating the Health of Your Soil <i>Matt Deaton, Matt Lane, Steve Baker, ODNR/NRCS</i>	Attracting Barn Owls to Your Property <i>Ken Duren, ODNR-Wildlife</i>		Home Composting <i>Sara Ernst, Franklin Co. SWCD</i>
2:30				
3:00				
	<b>Thursday</b>			
10:30	The Hungry Caterpillar <i>Amy Stone, OSU Extension</i>	Swan Management in Ohio <i>Gary Comer, ODNR-Wildlife</i>	Pond Safety Kits <i>Gary Graham, OSU Extension</i>	Container Gardening <i>Judy Arnett, COWGS</i>
11:00	Earthworm Invasion: Impacts on Your Woodlot, <i>Danae Wolfe, OSU Ext.</i>	Managing Nuisance Geese in Ohio <i>Gary Comer, ODNR-Wildlife</i>	Aquatic Vegetation Management <i>Perry Orndorff, SWCD-Retired</i>	
11:30		Mammals of Ohio: Pelts, Skulls, and Sign ID <i>Marne Titchenell, OSU Extension</i>	Attractants and Introduced Cover for Pond Fisheries <i>Eugene Braig, OSU Extension</i>	Who's Who in Ohio's Raptors <i>Bill Lynch, OSU Extension-Retired</i>
12:00	Ohio's Wall of Shame: Inv. Species Update <i>Amy Stone, OSU Extension</i>			Rain Barrel - How-To <i>Julia Cummings, Madison Co. SWCD</i>
12:30	Intro to Tree ID <i>Kathy Smith, OSU Extension</i>	Tick ID and Bite Prevention Techniques <i>Cindy Meyer, OSU Extension</i>	5 Keys to Successful Pond Management <i>Bill Lynch, OSU Extension-Retired</i>	Home Composting <i>Julia Cummings, Madison Co. SWCD</i>
1:00	Evaluating the Health of Your Soil <i>Matt Deaton, Matt Lane, Steve Baker, ODNR/NRCS</i>			
1:30				
2:00				



## The Weasels: Ohio's Small but Mighty Carnivores

Marne Titchenell, Extension Program Specialist - Wildlife

Back in June, I was teaching at the Ohio Forestry and Wildlife Conservation Camp to several groups of high schoolers about mammal skull identification. It is from that experience that the idea for this newsletter's Critter Corner article came to me. One of the skulls the campers had to ID gave them a bit of trouble. Prior to this guess-the-skull activity, they were told about several features of a skull that can serve as clues to the species' identify and/or species' lifestyle. For example, the presence of large, inflated auditory bullae indicates good hearing; large, forward facing orbits indicates good eye site and binocular vision, typically a predator; and elongated canines and sharp molars indicates an animal with a carnivorous appetite. Take a look at Figure 1 to see the skull the campers were required to ID. I'm sure you have a pretty good guess as to what species it is, given the title of this article!

I will give credit to the 100+ campers I taught that day - after listening to my brief spiel on features to look for, most if not all the campers were able to tell me the following about the skull. The skull belonged to an animal with good eyesight and binocular vision, good hearing, and a carnivorous lifestyle (as indicated by the long canines and very sharp premolars and molars). It boiled down to a rather small, but well equip predator. And that is where the campers became stuck. It's not surprising, because when many of us think of mammalian predators, we think of larger animals - coyote, bobcat, fox, or bear. We often forget about a family of mammals in the Order Carnivora, the Mustelidae, which several small yet mighty predators belong to, 3 of which can be found in Ohio.

I am referring to the weasels. Small, silent, and

secretive, the weasels are without doubt fierce predators that often escape our attention. Ohio is home to 3 species of weasels, the long-tailed weasel, the short-tailed weasel, or ermine (this was the mystery skull the campers had to ID), and the least weasel. The least weasel is perhaps best known as the smallest carnivore in the world. This small carnivore, which measures 6.5-8" long and weighs in at a mere 1-2 oz., can take

Figure 1



down prey larger than its size. This ability is present in all 3 species of weasels. For example, a male long-tailed weasel can hunt and successfully kill an adult eastern cottontail rabbit! Despite the occasional rabbit, rodents are the main prey item for weasels, making them important predators within the habitats in which they live. Female long-tailed

weasels especially prefer to hunt rodents as their smaller body size allows them to squeeze into rodent burrows. Weasels will also supplement their diets with a wide range of foods, from birds to reptiles to fruits and berries. When attacking prey, weasels use their keen senses to stalk their prey until they get within striking distance. At that point, they tackle their prey with impressive speed, wrapping their bodies around the unfortunate victim while delivering repeated bites to the back of the neck until the spinal cord is severed, killing the animal. Do you see now why I say small but mighty?

Ohio's 3 species of weasels share similar body builds – long slender bodies, with short legs, a triangular shaped face, small, rounded ears, and bright black eyes. The long-tailed weasel is the largest, with males measuring 13-16" and the smaller females measuring 11-13" excluding the tail. The tail of the long-tailed weasel is also the longest of all 3 species, measuring roughly 50% of the body length. Both the long-tailed and short-tailed weasels have black tips on their tails. The short-tailed



forests. The short-tailed weasel can also be found in more wet habitats such as riparian woodlands, marshes, or wet meadows. All 3 species of weasel are terrestrial, though the short-tailed weasel swims and climbs trees well. Weasels typically live in an underground burrow, sometimes burrows that belonged to their most recent meal! Weasels will also den under tree roots, hollow logs, rock piles, or buildings. Due to their secretive nature weasels are rarely seen, despite the variety of habitats in which they live and the fact that they are active both day and night. In Ohio, the short-tailed weasel is a species of special concern, and the least weasel is rare throughout most of its range.

The aggressive nature of weasels towards prey (as well as towards threats and territory intruders) may explain why they not much for socializing among others of their own kind. Weasels are solitary creatures, except during the mating season. Weasels mate in the spring and summer, and produce one litter per year. Female long-tailed and short-tailed weasels practice delayed implantation, meaning the fertilized egg remains in a suspended state until triggered to implant and resume growth. Triggers are typically the length of daylight the following spring. This means that female short-tailed and long-tailed weasels, for an animal of their size, have incredibly long pregnancies lasting 8-10 months!

Once the young are born, it's only a matter of roughly 2 months before the young are out and about hunting on their own. I will conclude this article by saying that weasels don't always have the best of reputations, especially when it comes to their feisty nature and efficient hunting abilities. Folklore lists them as evil, unlucky, sneaky, and omens of death. While the hens in the hen house and mice in the barn may certainly agree with such rhetoric, I prefer to think of weasels as what they simply are – a small but mighty carnivore.

**Upper Right:** Weasel skull  
**Center:** Short-tailed weasel photo credit Karen Francl, Radford University  
**Right:** Long-tailed weasel photo credit: Phil Myer, Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan- Ann Arbor  
**Bottom:** Short-tailed weasel photo credit: Phil Myers, Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor

weasel, as the name suggests has a shorter tail, about 35% of its body length, and white feet (the long-tailed weasel has brown feet). The least weasel's tail is even shorter, and lacks a black tip. During the winter, all 3 species trade in their chocolate brown coats and cream to white underbellies for an all-white coat.

The preferred habitat of weasels is quite variable. Weasels can be found in crop lands, grasslands, shrublands, and forests, though rarely thick, dense

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## Technology at Your Fingertips

There are plenty of ways technology plays into what we all do. One thing we have been encouraging landowners to do is download our Great Lakes Early Detection Network (GLEDN) smartphone app and help us locate where infestations of a wide variety of invasive species

can be found around the state. Many of you have done so and we appreciate the help! If you want to participate you can either go to <http://go.osu.edu/GLEDN> or scan the QR code here to begin the download process. Don't have a smartphone? You can still report invasive plants at



the <http://GLEDN.org> website or invasive species in general at the EDDMapS site <http://eddmaps.org>. For those of you looking for a smart phone app to help with tree identification check out the Virginia Tech Tree ID app here



<http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/main.htm>. The description of the app says it has fact sheets for 969 woody plants from all over

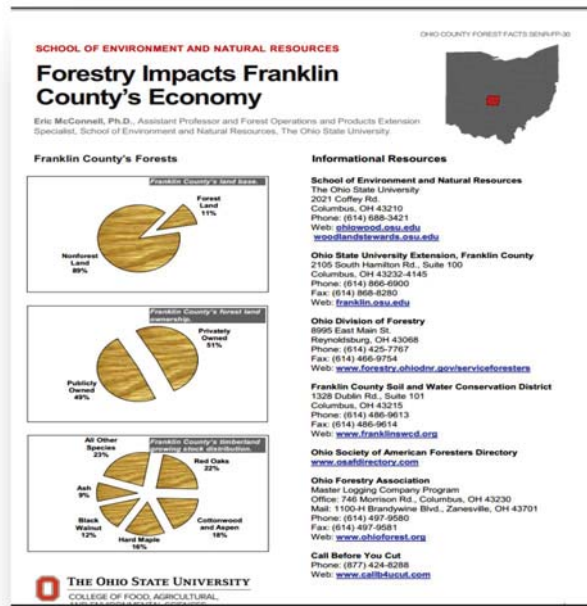
North America. It has lots of images to reference so it will occupy some memory when downloaded. The app asks a series of questions to help narrow the possibilities down when trying to id a woody plant and will give you a short list of possibilities to look at. If you don't have a smart phone you can also access the information on your computer at the Virginia Tech website listed above.

## Changes in the Program

Many of you have had a chance to interact with Eric McConnell, our Extension Forest Products Specialist in the last few years. Whether through his articles here in the newsletter or at one of the many programs he participated in across the state, Eric's information was always well received. Unfortunately for us Eric has decided to move on to a new position at North Carolina State. We wish him well in his new position!

Before he left Eric finished up a project he has been working on for quite a while. On the forest products website you will find a fact sheet for each county that details data about how forestry impacts the county economy. The listing of sheets can be found at <http://ohiowood.osu.edu/forestfacts.asp>.

Check out how much impact forestry has on your county's economy - you may be surprised.



## Mark Your Calendars!

Ohio will be hosting the 2015 Ohio River Valley Woodland and Wildlife Workshop. The workshop will be at the Kings Island Resort and Conference Center on March 28th. Make sure you save the date!



In addition we have set the date for the 2nd Annual Tree School. Tree School will be April 18th at the Ohio State University Mansfield Campus. We look forward to seeing you there!

# Calendar of Events

Sept 16-18	Farm Science Review	London, Ohio
Oct 2	Your Woodland Water & Wildlife	Medina County
Oct 7	What Can You Do With Your Woods	Harrison County
Oct 18	Capturing Nature's Wonders	Ohio State Mansfield
Oct 28	Selling Timber? Consider This.....	Harrison County



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### Check Us Out On The Web!

Look for newsletter articles, links to fact sheets and other publications by browsing our site. Registration for upcoming Woodland Stewards classes may also be done electronically.

Website:

[woodlandstewards.osu.edu](http://woodlandstewards.osu.edu)

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