

# OHIO Woodlands Water Wildlife

Winter 2014

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## Winter Wildlife Signs

Marne Titchenell, Extension Program Specialist - Wildlife

The holidays are over and winter is pressing on. While staying inside cozied up to a fire with a warm blanket is a great way to spend winter weekends, perhaps you've clocked too many hours cooped up inside and are feeling a bit antsy. Maybe it's time to get back out to the woods! Winter can be a great time for a walk in the woods, especially after a snowfall. It may seem quiet compared to the chorus of birds and chips of squirrels during the spring and summer, but there are still many species of wildlife active and moving about, leaving signs behind of their activities. Below are some signs to keep an eye out for when on a winter woodland walk:

**Home sweet homes** – Think about all the songbird nests so carefully constructed during the spring months that are now empty and abandoned. Some of those nests will not stay empty for long, as another critter sets up shop...but not before it makes a few important structural additions. Have you ever seen a bird nest in winter covered with bits of leaves, bark, grass, thistle down, or milkweed fibers? If so, this is the handy work of a mouse, usually a deer mouse or a white-footed mouse. In order to insulate its winter home, a mouse will weave in a roof over the nest, creating a warm and protective winter shelter. The mouse will also create a new exit in the floor of the nest. Sometimes, mice take advantage of bird houses, like bluebird nest boxes to build their winter nests inside. As long as the mouse nest is cleaned out by March, bluebirds aren't bothered by the temporary occupant.



Photo courtesy of [www.extension.org](http://www.extension.org).

**Wild Turkey Scratching** - Winter can be a tough season for wild turkey, with much of the day spent foraging for food. Year round, turkeys scratch and nuts) hidden within the debris. Often times, the

season for wild turkey, with much of the day the forest floor in search of hard mast (acorns scratchings appear as a miniature



Photo: Elmer Verhasselt; Bugwood.org

rolling landscape of dips and small piles of debris. After a snowfall, a turkey must scratch through the snow to reach the leaf litter below, appearing as small irregular patches of exposed dark leaf litter in an otherwise snow covered forest floor. Their large tracks, measure 3.5-5" in length and 4-5' wide may also be seen around the scratchings.

*Mystery Trails and Tracks* - A couple years ago, after a heavy snowfall, I found myself following a peculiar trail through an open woods in a Metro Park. I couldn't identify a clear set of tracks but for a few impressions on either side of a wavy line, both of which were in a 6-8" wide furrow trailing through the woods. As I was in an area of the park with little to no human activity, I became convinced the trail was from some kind of animal. This was confirmed when after a short while, the trail abruptly ended at an underground burrow roughly 8" wide. It appeared to be an animal with shorter legs and a body width that match the furrow width. In deeper snow, the body of the animal created the furrow; the short legs the few impressions I was seeing. Other impressions, or tracks, that had registered appeared to have been smoothed over by the animal's belly. But it was the wavy line through the center of the trail that puzzled me.

Have you guessed it? The wavy line was left behind by the animal's tail - a rather long, thin, and naked tail... So I was looking at a trail left behind by an animal with a body width around 6-8", squatty legs, lives underground, and has a long, naked tail - the Virginia opossum!

*Scats* - The diet and moisture intake of an animal influences the size, shape, and texture of its scat (feces), which explains the seasonal variability of white-tailed deer scat. During the spring and summer, deer are eating a lot of moist, succulent vegetation and their scat is often looser and in the shape of patties. As summer moves into fall, deer are incorporating drier vegetation into their diets,

producing clumped-together pellets. During the winter, hard and individual fibrous pellets are most commonly produced from a diet consisting of twigs, buds, and bark.

*Canid Markings* – Any dog owner walking their



Photos Tamatha Patterson  
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor

dogs along snow covered streets or trails know what yellow snow is. Domestic dogs aside, yellow snow is rarely randomly placed. Wild canids, as well as wild felids, use both urine and scat to mark their territories and communicate with others of the same species. Look on or around logs, rocks, saplings, or stumps that stick up above the snow level for urine. Often times, urine can be seen along trails or at the intersection of trails marking a territorial boundary. While the noses of canids far surpass our human noses, even we can pick up variations in the scent of different species' urine. This is especially true during winter, when the scent of canid urine gets strong with the onset of the mating season. Fox urine often has a strong, skunk-like odor to it, while coyote urine has a more of a musty smell. Urine tinged with blood indicates a female has come into estrus. Some of you may



be turning up your noses at this point, but examining both urine and scat of wild animals can open a world of insight into the lives of mammals.

Winter can appear to be a very quiet time in the wildlife world, but by paying attention to your surroundings and the signs left behind, you will quickly come to realize that simply isn't true. For more information on wildlife signs, tracking, and sign ID, check out Mark Elbroch's books, [Mammal Tracks and Sign: A Guide to North American Species](#) and [Bird Tracks and Sign](#).

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## Ohio's Newest Invasive: Thousand Cankers Disease

Kathy Smith, Extension Program Director – Forestry

Do you remember the Ohio tourism phrase “Ohio, The Heart of It All”? Today one could think that means the heart of all the insect and disease invasive species! Historically, Ohio has seen its fair share of the alien invaders and they have all left their mark on our forest resources in some shape or form.

- Chestnut blight – discovered in 1904 and majority of trees gone by the early 1940's
- Dutch Elm Disease – introduced to Ohio in

was found in Ohio in 2003 we have added 3 more significant invaders to our ecosystem with the latest being thousand cankers disease (TCD). The challenges natural resource land managers face with these issues are tremendous.

What is TCD? The fungus, *Geosmithia morbida* causes walnut mortality and is carried by the walnut twig beetle (WTB) *Pityophthorus juglandis* as it bores into the tissue of the tree. This fungus causes thousands of small cankers to form under the bark of walnut branches and stems. These cankers eventually coalesce in the cambium layer of the tree causing the supply of nutrients and water to these branches and stems to be cut off. The tree shows signs of crown dieback and eventually the tree declines and dies.

Which trees are susceptible to TCD? Black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) and butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) are both very susceptible to TCD. Northern California walnut (*J. hindsii*), Southern California walnut (*J. californica*), Persian/English walnut (*J. regia*) are all intermediate in their susceptibility, with Arizona walnut (*J. major*) being resistant and pecan (*Carya illinoensis*) and shagbark hickory (*C. ovata*) being immune.



Figure 1: Crown dieback, yellowing of leaves.  
Photos: Joe Boggs, OSU Extension



Figure 2: Cankers and WTB galleries.

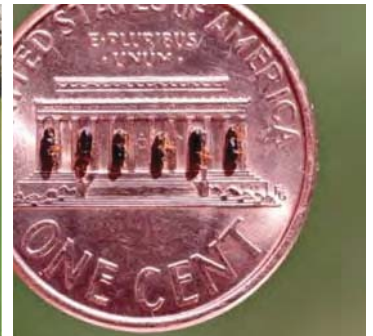


Figure 3: Walnut twig beetles (WTB).

1928 still dealing with it today

- Gypsy Moth – introduced to the US in 1889, first trapped in Ohio in 1971
- Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) – found near Toledo, 2003
- Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) – found in SW Ohio 2011
- Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) – found in SE Ohio 2012
- Thousand Cankers Disease (TCD) – found in SW Ohio 2013

What stands out about this list is that since EAB

The visual symptoms (figures 1, 2, 3) of TCD include yellowing of foliage and thinning in the upper crown of the infested tree. Yellowing foliage on black walnut in late summer is nothing new to anyone who is familiar with walnut. However, the thinning of the upper crown with eventually some dieback in that crown are symptoms that should make any owner of a walnut tree question just what is going on with the tree. On the other hand, the walnut twig beetle is so small (see figure 3) that most people looking for this insect won't have a lot

of success.

In the early 2000's Colorado thought their black walnuts were dying from extreme drought conditions. However, over time the walnut twig beetle and the *Geosmithia* fungus were found to be critical parts of these trees decline and eventual deaths. While TCD has been identified out west for many years, it was not found east of the Mississippi until August of 2010 when it was found in Knoxville, TN. Since that find, TCD has been confirmed in several states east of the Mississippi. In August of 2012 the walnut twig beetle was found at one location in Butler County, Ohio but no fungus was found. However, in August of 2013 at another location in Butler County both walnut twig beetles and the *Geosmithia* fungus were confirmed. It is important to note that to date, while there are monitoring traps scattered around the state, only these two locations have resulted in walnut twig beetle finds.

As with many of these non-native insect and disease issues on our trees, human movement of wood products (firewood, logs etc.) seems to be a major player in the spread of this disease so limit movement of these potential carriers. So far there are no recommended chemical treatments for either the twig beetle or the fungus.

Treatments that would target either of these entities end up being present in the nutmeat of the walnut (a potential food product) and therefore are not a viable means of dealing with TCD.

Keep an eye on your walnut trees to ensure they are healthy and thriving. When something appears to be unusual with your trees ask questions! There are resources available at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Department of Agriculture and your local county OSU Extension office to help you with any questions you may have. You can also utilize your smartphone to identify and report suspicious trees. The Great Lakes Early Detection Network (GLEDN) smartphone app is available as a free download ([go.osu.edu/GLEDN](http://go.osu.edu/GLEDN)) and has images on TCD that you can use when looking at suspicious trees. If you believe the find needs someone to take a closer look snap a picture with

your phone and upload it using the app so that someone can take a closer look and verify whether it is or isn't TCD.

For more information on TCD Ohio State Extension has a fact sheet (*Thousand Cankers Disease, HYG- 3313-13*) on it and it can be found at our Woodland Stewards website under publications/forestry/invasive species. There is also a great regional website available at [thousandcankers.com](http://thousandcankers.com).

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## Ohio Maple Days Coming Jan. 23, 24, & 25.

Gary Graham, Natural Resource Specialist – Maple; Holmes County Extension Educator

There are many changes coming to the maple industry not only in Ohio but internationally, and nationally. Some of those changes include grading laws, the Food Safety Modernization Act, and mandatory registration to produce syrup. There are also issues for the selling of syrup and making confections within Ohio and as well as the selling of products across state lines. This year we are bringing in national and state specialists to help bring some clarity to the many changes that WILL be impacting all producers of pure Ohio maple syrup. These changes have been in the works for many years and are now ready to be enacted and every maple producer needs to be up to date to be in compliance with the new regulations. Maple schools are held across Ohio in three different locations:

### **Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, Morrow County:**

Lutheran Memorial Camp, 2790 State Route 61, Fulton, Ohio 43321

### **Friday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, Holmes County:**

Mennonite Christian Assembly Church, County Rd. 501, 10664 Fryburg Road, South of Fredericksburg, Ohio, 44627

### **Saturday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, Geauga County:**

Joe J.S. Miller's Window Shop 15020 Shedd Road, Burton, Ohio 44021.

Pre-registration is required to assure enough materials are made for the meetings. Cost is \$30 and the deadline to register is January 13<sup>th</sup>. Contact Cheryl at 330.263.3881 to register.



## Winter Blues - Do Bluebirds Migrate?

Do eastern bluebirds migrate? I often get this question from landowners and bird enthusiasts, and the answer isn't a simple 'yes' or 'no', it's actually 'yes' *and* 'no'. I've also been asked whether or not keeping bluebird nest boxes open during the



Photo – Johnny N. Dell, Bugwood.org

winter will encourage bluebirds to forgo migration, the answer to which *is* a simple 'no'. Leaving bluebird nest boxes open during the winter will not encourage bluebirds to stick around and skip migration. When it comes to migration, some bluebirds will migrate, and some won't. It's the available food supply, and not open nest boxes that influences whether bluebirds choose to stick out the cold winter months, or migrate miles to warmer climates (a tough choice either way if you ask me). If food is plentiful in the area before migration, especially berry producing trees and shrubs, bluebirds may stick around. Bluebirds don't typically feed on seed at bird feeders, so don't worry that feeders will encourage bluebirds to stick around either. During the fall and winter, the majority of a bluebird's diet consists of fruit. Homeowners can plant sumac, blueberries, black cherry, black gum, currants, wild holly, dogwood, hackberries,

pokeweed, Virginia creeper, and juniper berries to provide fall and winter food for bluebirds. If berry producing trees and shrubs are in short supply on your land, consider 'recycling' your Christmas tree by placing it out in yard with garlands of cranberries and raisins. Winter is a tough season and food can become scarce, leaving bluebirds at risk of starvation. So why do some bluebirds choose to stick around and brave the winter months? The payoff is big if they survive the winter - they get their first pick of nest boxes and natural cavities before the migrant bluebirds return. There are some definite advantages to skipping migration! In addition to planting fall and winter berry producing trees and shrubs, landowners can also provide a heated water bath, and suet with berries in it to help overwintering bluebirds.

## 2014 Ohio River Valley Woodland & Wildlife Workshop

*Kathy Smith, Extension Program Director - Forestry*

Are you looking for a landowner oriented workshop where you can get information all in one day on multiple topics? Then mark March 22, 2014 on



your calendar! On that date Kentucky will host the 2014 edition of the Ohio River Valley Woodland & Wildlife Workshop at General Butler State Resort Park in Carrollton, KY. This event rotates around the three states that sponsor it Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio and the planning committee works hard to make sure the topics are relevant and timely for our woodland owners.

Come spend the day with landowners from all three states as they add to their knowledge base on woodland and wildlife topics. Look for registration information in early 2014 at our website [woodlandstewards.osu.edu](http://woodlandstewards.osu.edu). We hope to see you there!!!



# Calendar of Events

<b>February 11th</b>	What Can You Do With Your Woods?	Crawford County
<b>February 25th</b>	Selling Timber? ConsiderThis...	Crawford County
<b>March 11th</b>	What Can You Do With Your Woods?	Medina County
<b>March 22nd</b>	Ohio River Valley Woodland & Wildlife Workshop	General Butler
<b>March 25th</b>	Selling Timber? Consider This...	Medina County
<b>March 28th</b>	Winter Tree ID	Geauga County
<b>April 25th</b>	Arbor Day	OSU Mansfield Campus
<b>May 3rd</b>	Tree School	OSU Mansfield Campus
<b>May 9th</b>	Wildlife in Your Woods	OSU Mansfield Campus



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2021 Coffey Road  
Columbus, OH 43210

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### Contact Us!

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