

UNIVERSITY OF MOUNT UNION  
HUSTON-BRUMBAUGH  
**NATURE CENTER**

Discover the Wonder of Nature's Ever-Changing Story



FALL/WINTER  
**2024**

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# John T. Huston – Dr. John D. Brumbaugh Nature Center

## Mission Statement

The John T. Huston - Dr. John D. Brumbaugh Nature Center provides and supports opportunities for enjoying and learning about our natural and cultural heritage.

## Staff

### Cali Granger

Horticulture and Facility Coordinator

### Michael Greiner

Site Manager

### Jason Smith

Director

### Bonnie Twaddle

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### Lin Wu

Ecologist

### Adam Zorn

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## Visit

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## From the Director

### Jason A. Smith, Ph.D.

It's an exciting time here at the Nature Center as we approach the midpoint of the Fall 2024 semester! So much optimism and new growth on the horizon (both literal and metaphorical). We are both thrilled and a bit overwhelmed by the significant increase in enrollment this fall. It couldn't come at a better time though as we aim to kick off our initiative to build a "nature center culture" at the University of Mount Union.

The largest incoming class of freshmen in school history is also the first EVER at Mount Union to take part in a First Year Seminar (FYS) class called "Take a Hike". FYS is a topic-based course that helps students develop a sense of belonging to our diverse campus community, learn to navigate a new learning environment, build connections to peers, faculty, and staff, and gain confidence in essential core skills such as critical thinking, written and spoken communication, problem-solving, and reflective learning. Take a Hike is dedicated to bringing students to the Nature Center at the beginning of their academic journey and showing them how engaging in outdoor activities can improve their experience as a student while learning about local natural and cultural history, gaining valuable skills in self-care and stress-relief, and networking for success while having fun!

As we approach the peak of the fall season, make sure to visit our trails to observe the subtle, but certain changes taking place. Goldenrods and asters are in bloom. Tree leaves are turning crimson, orange, and gold. Mornings are feeling a bit crisp, and it's always a great time to take a hike!



## Author Carolyn Finney

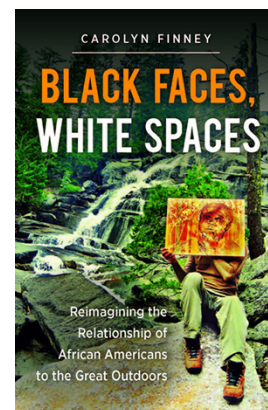
Carolyn Finney, PhD is a storyteller, author, and a cultural geographer who is deeply interested in issues related to identity, difference, creativity, and resilience. The aim of her work is to develop greater cultural competency within environmental organizations and institutions, challenge media outlets on their representation of difference, and increase awareness of how privilege shapes who gets to speak to environmental issues and determine policy and action.

Carolyn is grounded in both artistic and intellectual ways of knowing – she pursued an acting career for eleven years, but five years of backpacking trips through Africa and Asia



and living in Nepal changed the course of her life. Motivated by these experiences, Carolyn returned to school after a 15-year absence to complete a B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. She has been a Fulbright Scholar, a Canon National Parks Science Scholar and received a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in Environmental Studies.

Carolyn will be visiting the University of Mount Union and the Nature Center this fall. She will be speaking about some of the topics in her book "Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors". Check our schedule of events for three opportunities to meet Carolyn on October 24 and 25.



## Summer Wildlife Surveys

Between public programs, requested programs, groundskeeping, trail maintenance, and all the other summer activities required to keep the Nature Center operating, the Nature Center staff make time to collect data and conduct surveys on select wildlife populations at the Nature Center. It's an important component of our outreach and conservation efforts each year. This past summer, staff conducted bat roost surveys, breeding bird survey, nest box monitoring, Purple Martin gourd monitoring, and a moth survey.

Bat roost surveys have been conducted twice each summer since 2018. A late May survey and mid-July survey of bats leaving the Huston barn at sunset gives some clue about the reproductive productivity of the bat colony each year. In late May, we expect to count adult bats only. In mid-July, we expect to count adult bats plus any offspring that were born in the barn earlier that year. The best year for productivity was in 2018 when the count increased from 23 bats in May to 49 bats in July.

The worst year was 2023 when our count decreased from 24 bats in May to 12 bats in July. This summer's count was better than last year, but our count indicated the colony remained stagnate this summer with 22 bats in May and 23 bats in July.



This year's annual Breeding Bird Blitz was held on June 22. Since 2019, the Breeding Bird Blitz has been used as a one-day snapshot of breeding birds residing at the Nature Center. The guided walk visits most of the habitat types present on the property to look and listen for bird species present. Presence doesn't always indicate that a species is rearing young where detected, but in mid-June all the birds are finished with spring migration and are at least trying to find mates and raise young. This year's tally was 47 species of birds during the 2-hour walk. That's just a little above the average of 45 species detected over the past six years. With seven more acres of field and wetland habitat this year at the North Woods, a pair of Killdeer and five Purple Martins were recorded for the first time.

The Nature Center has 27 bluebird-style nest boxes spread across the property. Each summer, they are monitored for nesting activity and managed to limit the impact of invasive bird species like House Sparrows and European Starlings. From April through August, 20 of 27 boxes were used by Eastern Bluebirds, House Wrens, and Tree Swallows to lay eggs and successfully fledge young. These three species fledged a total of 131 young – Eastern Bluebirds 66, House Wrens 56, and Tree Swallows 9. Of the 66 bluebird young, 53 were banded as part of a bluebird dispersal study conducted by federally-licensed bird bander Al Eibel. If you see one of these banded birds at the Nature Center or in your backyard, you can report your sighting using a form on our website.

One more observation from this year's next box monitoring is how often some birds use a few of our boxes. When monitored and managed properly, a nest box can be used up to three times during the breeding season by the aforementioned species. This summer, six different nest boxes hosted three successful broods. These 18 successful nesting attempts were comprised of Eastern Bluebirds and House Wrens. If you watch your nest boxes carefully and clean them out as soon as the young fledge, the most desirable locations will host another tenant quickly.

A rack with 24 artificial gourds was erected at the North Woods at the end of March 2024 with the hope of attracting Purple Martins to the new field and wetland habitat on the north side of Daniel Street. Martins were casual visitors to the air space high over the Nature Center in summer each year, so we felt there was at least a small chance of attracting a few to establish a new colony. As luck would have it, we were home to three pairs of martins this summer. It took a while for the birds to get settled in and select gourds to lay eggs, but eventually they got themselves organized. Nest checks started on June 4 and continued until July 11 when the chicks were banded.

Initially the martins were laying eggs erratically. At one point there were six different gourds with eggs even though we only had 3 pairs of martins. As many as 6 eggs were deposited in one of the gourds while others had 4, 3, 2, 2, and 1 egg each (18 eggs total). Eventually incubation began in three of the gourds and a total of 7 eggs hatched live young. During the course of the next two weeks, five young remained alive and were in excellent condition for banding by permitted bird bander Al Eibel. All five birds eventually fledged about two weeks later.

Finally, for the second summer in a row, we conducted an evening moth survey during Moth Night Out. This event coincided with National Moth Week, which celebrates the beauty, life cycles, and habitats of moths around the world. National Moth Week is held annually during the last full week of July. With a variety of light traps set up around the visitors center as well as several flowering plants attracting the nocturnal pollinators, we observed 50 species of moths. Like the Breeding Bird Blitz, this is just a snapshot of moths residing at the Nature Center for one evening. But with similar effort year after year, we will eventually build a robust list of species that call the Nature Center home. To date, we have recorded almost four times as many moth species (156) as butterfly species (40) at the Nature Center illustrating their amazing diversity.

# Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center's Schedule of Events

## General Information

Events marked with an asterisk (\*) require registration. All other events are informal, open to adults and families, and are available without registration. All events begin at the Visitors Center and are held rain or shine unless otherwise indicated.

To register or inquire about events, call (330) 823-7487 or email [naturecenter@mountunion.edu](mailto:naturecenter@mountunion.edu).

### The Big Sit!

Sunday, October 6 | 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

It's a "tailgate party for birders" with the objective to tally as many bird species as can be seen or heard inside a 17-ft count circle. Last year we tallied 36 species from our lawn chairs at the North Woods! Join us for a couple of minutes or a couple of hours.

### Relax and De-stress Event

Sunday, October 6 | 1-5:00 p.m.

EVERYONE needs to manage their stress these days. Stop by at your convenience and enjoy some relaxing activities such as strolling through the peaceful woods, walking the labyrinth, relaxing by the pond, listening to live music, light refreshments, and more. Come alone or bring the family – there is something for everyone!

### \*Diversity of Dahlias

Sunday, October 13 | 2-4:00 p.m.

Are you mesmerized by the beauty and novelty of dahlias? Ever wanted to learn how to grow and maintain these vibrant flowers to add color and variety to your garden or to enter a dahlia show/contest? Join Stan Vuletich a.k.a. Stan the Dahlia Man, a certified Senior Dahlia Judge by the American Dahlia Society, in this hands-on and in-depth dive into the wonderful world of dahlias! You will learn the common forms of dahlias, how to dig up tubers and store tubers for winter, collect seeds, and take some dahlias home. Please come prepared for the weather.

**\*Registration is required.**

### \*Natural Dye Workshop

Saturday, October 19 | 1-4:30 p.m.

Presented by the Canton Fiber Arts Guild. Natural dye workshop using 3 dyes: madder, sandalwood, and mystery dye (it IS October!) using wool roving. All materials and instructions provided. Minimum class size 6-maximum 20. \*Materials fee is \$25 to cover wool, dyes. **\*Registration is required.**

### \*Feathers & Foliage Hike

Sunday, October 20 | 10 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Bring your binoculars for a walk around the Nature Center in search of birds and brilliant fall foliage. The walk is moderately strenuous due to duration and terrain. Canceled for inclement weather. **\*Registration is required.**

### \*Wildflower Seed Collection

Sunday, October 20 | 1-2:30 p.m.

Assist the staff with collection of seeds from a variety of flowering plants. Participants will learn how to collect and process seeds for future planting and can take some seeds home. Wear sturdy shoes and long pants. Canceled for inclement weather. **\*Registration is required.**

### Black Faces, White Spaces with author Carolyn Finney

Thursday, October 24 | 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

The Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center and University of Mount Union host storyteller, author, and cultural geographer Carolyn Finney, PhD for a presentation and book signing. Carolyn's presentation will highlight the work of her first book "Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors." A more detailed introduction to Carolyn and her work can be found on page 1. This event is free and takes place at the Giese Center for the Performing Arts, University of Mount Union.

### \*Dinner and Campfire with author Carolyn Finney

Thursday, October 24 | 6:00-7:30 p.m.

Join author and storyteller Carolyn Finney and the Mount Union community for a meal, campfire, and casual discussion in the Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center's pavilion. Indoor option available for inclement weather. Carolyn will be available to sign copies of her book. **\*Registration is required.**

### \*Brunch and Discussion with author Carolyn Finney

Friday, October 25 | 10:30 a.m.-Noon

Join author and storyteller Carolyn Finney and the Mount Union community for brunch and discussion related to Carolyn's visit in the Huston-Brumbaugh Nature Center's pavilion. Indoor option available for inclement weather. Carolyn will be available to sign copies of her book. **\*Registration is required.**

**REMINDER:** Visitors Center hours adjust to winter hours from November through March. The Visitors Center is open 9am-4pm Tuesday-Friday and 1pm-5pm on Sunday; closed on Monday and Sunday through March 30, 2025.

### **\*Introduction to Volunteer Opportunities**

Sunday, November 17 | 2-4:00 p.m.

Are you interested in volunteering at the Nature Center but do not know where to begin? Join us this afternoon to learn about the mission, history, and staff of the Nature Center, what we do to achieve our mission, and the vital roles that Volunteers provide to help us accomplish this endeavor. There are opportunities available for individuals and families of all ages. No commitments will be requested during this informational program. **\*Registration is required by Friday, November 15.**

### **Bird Feeding AMA**

Sunday, November 24 | 1 -3:00 p.m.

AMA means “ask me anything”. Do you have a question about feeding birds in your backyard? Have you wondered how the Nature Center attracts a variety of bird species to the bird feeders? Need help with bird ID? Stop in the bird observatory this afternoon and ask our staff your bird feeding questions!

### **Holiday Celebration Open House**

Sunday, December 8 | 1-5:00 p.m.

The Visitors Center and Huston Cabin are dressed up for the holidays. Drop in from 1-5pm to make some ornaments, enjoy acoustic music, and walk to the cabin. Great photo opportunities indoors and outdoors. Free and fun for the whole family.

### **125th Christmas Bird Count**

December 14 – January 5 | All Day

Participate in the Audubon 125th Christmas Bird Count as a volunteer in the Canton, Wilmot, or Quail Hollow count circles. Join a team of volunteers to count birds in the field, or you may be able to participate at home. Visit the Audubon Society online at <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>.

### **Holiday Break**

December 21 – January 1

The Visitors Center will be closed as part of the University of Mount Union's holiday break. Staff will be present daily for limited hours to respond to email, voice messages, and care for the animals. Please continue to enjoy the trail system daily from sunrise to sunset. The Visitors Center will reopen on Tuesday, January 2.

### **\*Trail Camera Treasures**

Sunday, January 12 | 2-3:00 p.m.

Nature Center trail cameras run nearly all year long on over 250-acres of land managed by the Nature Center. Thousands of photos of local wildlife are recorded, and we are looking forward to sharing some of our recent images and sequences captured on camera. **\*Register by January 10.**

### **\*Birding by Ear**

Sunday, January 26 | 1-2:00 p.m.

Birding with binoculars is a useful skill. Birding by ear takes your enjoyment and discovery of birds to a new level. This introductory program is for beginners who would like to learn more about learning how to identify birds by ear. We'll cover some of the most common species and the songs/calls you are most likely to hear in the coming weeks as winter transitions to spring. **\*Register by January 24.**

### **Great Backyard Bird Count**

February 14-17

Join Nature Center staff as participants in the Great Backyard Bird Count in the comfort of the Bird Observatory. Save the dates!

### **Photo Contest and Exhibit Open House**

Sunday, February 23 | 1-5:00 p.m.

Save the date! See page 6 for preliminary contest details.

## **Recurring Programs**

### **Acoustic Jam | 2-4 p.m.**

October 6, November 3, December 8, January 5, February 2

Join us at the Nature Center for a music jam. Bring an instrument or just come to listen. Beginners are welcome. Make new friends, have fun, and learn a new tune or two!

### **Project FeederWatch**

Sundays from November through April

Count birds with the Nature Center staff and volunteers in the bird observatory. No registration required. You can participate at home too! Details at [www.feederwatch.org](http://www.feederwatch.org)

# Max and the Magnificent Peach

By Al Eibel, Nature Center volunteer

Max, my ten-year-old grandson, can't resist gardening nor the tools of gardening: shovels, rakes, pitchforks, hedge trimmers, trowels. Throughout the year, rain or shine, cold or hot, he turns over dirt, rakes leaves into piles, and spreads compost and mulch. When he visited recently, I showed him the free-to-a good home, newly salvaged wheelbarrow tipped up in the back of our garage. The rough-cut wheelbarrow had seen better days, but it looked sturdy and functional which is all I wanted. I already owned a Rubbermaid Big Wheel Cart – not a real wheelbarrow – and I endured years of stuttering baby steps to avoid the cart snapping at my Achilles while I pulled it behind me. Now, I owned a true wheelbarrow.

Max's scrutinizing eye shared my vision and saw only the beautiful practicality that it suggested. He came into the house, but soon returned to the garage and asked if he could try it out. Of course, I granted his request, and he wheeled it around the yard loading leaves and sticks into it. I sat with my back to him while he worked, and soon he asked, "What's that fruit?" I knew the most common fruit on the ground were walnuts – courtesy of red squirrels always bellyaching their impatience, anger, and irritation while they dropped them. Without looking, I told Max, "That's probably a walnut."

Lucy, my wife, excitedly corrected me saying, "That looks like a peach!" Now, a peach was not even on my brain's checklist, and I thought Lucy had made a silly mistake. "What? No way!" I thought as I walked to the silver maple and cried, "That IS a peach!" Nestled tightly between the maple's roots was a small, but vigorous looking tree. I held up a branch revealing a single, beautiful peach; posed for a photo, then plucked it. Max quickly and proudly took ownership of the peach and



the peach tree. His sharp eyes had spotted something I would never have seen.

For many, many years a jury-rigged compost bin of wooden pallets and rusted porch railing sat near the base of that silver maple with an impressive circumference greater than ten feet. When I replaced the old compost bin with an Exaco Thermo Star 1000 Jumbo Composter, I simply raked material from the old bin to the base of the maple to bury what I thought at the time were ugly surface roots. That detritus must have included at least one viable peach pit.

During the Covid pandemic, I moved the Exaco composter to a new site so that I could expand a rock garden that helped me endure the lockdown. I dug out the surface roots of the maple from the mound of old compost and was thrilled that the roots had grown immensely and now resembled a huge theropod foot. After exposing the roots, a couple years passed and a mysterious tree grew, even flowered, but I cut it back. I couldn't dig it out because it was so deeply wedged between the toes of the maple. Who knew it was a peach tree? Who knew it would produce a peach? Regardless, despite my best efforts, it regrew every year and eventually produced a peach that was juicy and oh, so sweet.

## Volunteer Recognition

We extend a sincere thank you to our April, May, June, and July Volunteers! Our outstanding Volunteer staff assists us in maintaining high-quality programming and a beautiful facility. Thank you for ALL that you do!

Kim Anderson	Al Eibel	Samantha Quinonez
Joseph Balogh G.M.	Claire Fried Hamako	Axel Castellanos Rivera
Diane Blessing	Furuhata-Turner	Cindy Sakotas
Rick Blessing	Ann Hende	Scout Troop #50
Nate Border	Paul Hobe	Adam Seefeldt
Ruthie Border	Charlie Hoopes	Grace Seefeldt
Thaddeus Border	Sophia Hoopes	Geri Senczyszak
Patty Bruey	Judy Horn	Holly Smith
Casey Brunner	Audrey Hurley	Darla Sutton
Jacob Buttar	Savanna Klotz	Rich Sutton (father)
Mark Clough	William Kobak	Rich Sutton (son)
Kerry Cochran	Mary Lindsay	Keith Swartz
Sarah Conley	Barbara Lyons	Dan Trachman
Mike Cope	Chris Marks	David Turner
Paula Cope	Bernie Miner	Stan Vuletich
Shirley DeMaio	Lukea Pitinii	
Elayne Dunlap	Joe Planisky	
	Karen Planisky	

### Special Thanks

We want to extend a thank you to Stark Parks and Canton Symphony Orchestra for asking us to host a Summer Serenade this past June. The staff of both organizations were great to work with and did a great job of assisting us with the preparation and facilitation of our best-attended event of the summer!



## North Woods Habitat Vegetation Management

If you've been at the Nature Center at some point since June, you've likely noticed the change in the landscape on the north side of Daniel Street. What was once a barren, earth-colored landscape with shallow pools of water is now a lush green landscape from end to end. You may have noticed the area being mowed, stakes and fencing appearing around trees and shrubs, and vegetation being pulled or sprayed in select areas. These activities are all intended to improve the development of the habitats still in their infancy. Read on to learn more about each management activity.

### Mowing

It seems counterintuitive to run a mower over a newly seeded meadow, but it really works! Native seed mixes are largely comprised of perennial wildflowers and warm-season grasses. A good, diverse seed mix will contain species that grow and bloom over most of the growing season. Just as mature plants of different species will bloom at different times, so too will their seeds germinate at different times. Quick germinating species as well as agricultural weeds can dominate a newly seeded area if left with no intervention. Mowing once every four to six weeks maintains a vegetation height that prevents a handful of species from crowding out the slower germinating species. With all of the plants growing with the mower keeping them on equal footing, proper germination of all species in the seed mix is far more likely to occur than without intervention.

Mowing is a great way to limit unwanted species from flowering and setting seeds too. Many species of agricultural weeds are aggressive growers and vigorous seeders. Many of them are annual plants too, so mowing can limit their ability to flower and distribute more seed into the soil. Common examples on our site include foxtail grasses, butterweed, sow thistle, velvet leaf, marehail, and ragweed. With period mowing, we can limit seed production from these plants while the native plants gather their energy during the growing season. In successive growing seasons, the native plants will be able to compete, even outcompete, these unwanted annuals and limit their presence over time.

### Stakes and fencing

Wind and mammal browsing are significant threats to the trees and shrubs now inhabiting the new wetland and field habitats. Their effect was almost instantaneous. In less than 24 hours on site, many of our new trees and shrubs showed signs of deer browsing. A few small plants were aggressively browsed and defoliated. Therefore, we began installing fencing around



individual plants starting with those first whittled to stems by the deer. Due to the wind that blows across the site, each fence needs two wooden stakes to ensure they stay in place.

New trees with bundled root systems are prone to shifting after being planted. Installing them in windy areas makes them even more prone to tilting leeward. To ensure our trees remain upright, stakes and guy lines were installed to prevent them from shifting under the pressure of the wind. As the root systems of the trees unravel and sprawl through the soil anchoring the tree in place, the guy lines will be loosened and removed.

### Pulling and spraying weeds

Though it's hard to treat a 7-acre site like a garden, sometimes it is the best approach when dealing with certain noxious plants. A handful of problematic, perennial weeds persist regardless of how often they are mowed, so more aggressive tactics must be employed. Species such as creeping thistle and curly dock are two common species with a penchant for taking over. Their vigorous growth and extensive root systems make them very difficult to manage by simply removing leaves and stalks. Pulling works on young plants in damp soils in the spring months, but full eradication of mature plants often requires the assistance of an herbicide that can reach the root. We've employed both tactics this growing season to keep their invasion at a minimum. It's important to employ a zero-tolerance policy with certain noxious weeds like this while the site fills in with young native perennials who cannot compete with such aggressive species. Over time, a site full of native perennials will be able to exclude most of these plants from becoming well established with minimal intervention.

## 23rd Annual Photography Contest

**SAVE THE DATE.** Photo submissions for the Nature Center's 23rd Annual Nature Photography Contest and Exhibit will be accepted beginning in February 2025. There is still plenty of time to capture the perfect shot of your favorite subject, season, or landscape. Participation is free, but submissions are limited to nature photos captured in eastern Ohio, including Lake Erie and the Ohio River basin. Photographers must be amateurs. Photo submissions must be printed at 8"x10" size and matted (no frame or glass). An artists' reception and exhibit opening are scheduled for Sunday, February 23, 2025 from 1-5:00 p.m. Contest details and entry forms will be available by February 1.



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## Discover the Wonder of Nature's Ever-Changing Story

### Visitors Center and Bird Observatory Hours

**April through October**  
Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Saturday and Sunday, 1-5 p.m.  
Closed Mondays

**November through March**  
Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Sunday 1-5 p.m.  
Closed Mondays and Saturdays

*Our trails are open from dawn to dusk every day.*

**The Nature Center is located six miles south of  
the University of Mount Union on Daniel Street, just off Route 183**



### Contact us at:

Phone: (330) 823-7487

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