

FALL 2020

## Preserving the Sawmill Wetlands Educational Area

Almost a year has passed since The Friends of the Sawmill Wetlands came under the umbrella of FLOW. The Friends have supported the wetlands for many years, working with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife to preserve these 17 acres of vernal pool and mature oak-hickory woodlands, a remnant of an original 40-50-acre site. The wetlands are located in northwest Franklin County, bordered by Federated Boulevard, Bent Tree Boulevard and Sawmill Place, surrounded by retail and housing developments.

For decades, the wetlands was loved and visited by naturalists from all over the city, recognized as a jewel in a jungle of concrete. It was used as a classroom by schools nearby, and birders knew it and visited it often, being a valuable stopover site for migrating birds. After many years of threats from development, in July 2018 the wetlands was legally saved, the gates which had been intermittently locked through the years were opened, and the work of restoration began. Before visitors could return, in December 2018, massive numbers of dead ash trees due to the Emerald Ash Borer had to be removed.

In November 2019, the first meeting with representatives of The Friends of the Sawmill Wetlands and Laura Fay of FLOW took place. With her help and guidance, a small but mighty group of volunteers, coordinated by Carolyn Turner, have worked throughout 2020, following COVID social distancing guidelines and limiting volunteer

numbers. The prairie, which was planted in Fall 2014, continued to be maintained. Volunteers have tackled invasive species from Garlic Mustard to Dames Rocket, to Yellow Sweet Clover and currently, Thistles, Burn Weed, Ragweed and Mares Tail and through yearend, the invasive of all invasives, the Bush Honeysuckle.

Over 600 tree and shrub seedlings were planted inside and outside of the wetlands, and 200 pollinator plant plugs were installed in a display pollinator garden on top of "The Hill", a four-acre plot which borders the wetlands. A wildflower meadow was seeded in Fall 2019; it is one of three gardens in the parking lot area, all planted to increase nectar for the insect population and seeds for the birds. Efforts are continuing to increase educational signage. The COVID pandemic, which caused many community events to be cancelled, and the hot, dry summer have presented many challenges.

One of the most important long term goals is to increase wildlife diversity in the wetlands. The volunteers have learned of historical records kept of the bird population at the wetlands and hope to unearth them. Current records and observations by a volunteer who monitors the many nest boxes at the wetlands indicate that the bird population has been

seriously impacted by the removal of the large numbers of ash trees. A planned "BioBlitz" this spring was cancelled due to the COVID pandemic. The volunteers have intentionally

(cont. on page 3)



Volunteers Laurie Lowe and Larry Turner removing invasive species



Vernal pool seen from the boardwalk in early spring

## FLOW 2020 Recap

**This year 2020 volunteers:**

- **Planted 2962 seedlings and 1220 larger trees**
- **Cleared 572 bags of trash plus larger items**
- **Monitored 14 streams**
- **Removed invasive vegetation at 16 events**
- **Offered 16 educational events**



**Kempton Run Restoration** is an ongoing project involving neighbors and many partners. There have been extensive invasive removal efforts as well as a few

planting events over the past year. This is also one of our monitored streams.

**Perry Park** has been an ongoing project in Worthington to remove invasive species and replant with native species. This year, there have been numerous removal events and 2 replanting events.



**Hudson Prairie** along I-71 and the Crew Stadium has been undergoing maintenance and purging of invasive species.

FLOW has been working with the **Fawcett Center** since 2012 but the OSU chapter of Society of Ecological Restoration (SER) has been the pivotal partner needed to make a lasting impact. They have held regular removal and planting events over the past several years as well as monitoring efforts in order to track progress in plant composition and species diversity.



## THANK YOU!

**Thanks to all of FLOW's watershed partners. Please consider visiting these businesses that help to support water quality where we live.**

- ▶ **Cardno Nursery** for their generous donation of 300 pollinator plugs for Sawmill Wetland, Olentangy Environmental Control Center and Hudson Prairies.
- ▶ **Green Columbus** for Earth Day tree seedlings and pollinator plants. Also for over 300 containerized trees for residential property planting this fall.
- ▶ **REI, Inc.** for supporting us with a large financial gift to support us through COVID even though they are experiencing financial issues themselves.
- ▶ **The Columbus Foundation's** amazing funders and staff for creating another Big Give to help support all the non-profits in Central Ohio. FLOW also appreciates all the people that dug deep to help us make it through the COVID pandemic.
- ▶ **The Columbus Foundation Green Fund** for providing us a generous grant to support our Greenspace Implementation project!! Stay tuned, we will be replanting 20 acres of riparian land with our partners.
- ▶ **Franklin County Environment Court Clerk** and court volunteers for helping again this year.
- ▶ **Russell Tree Service** for donating their services pro-bono to help the homeowners association at the Village of Willowbrook in removing cut honeysuckle debris for the Turkey Run North Restoration.
- ▶ **Wolf's Ridge Brewery** for creating another batch of charitable Indian Pale Lager (IPL) and donating 5% of the proceeds to FLOW (And thanks to those for ordering it and having it delivered!)
- ▶ **Columbus Audubon** for a grant to support our replanting efforts along Potters Creek in Perry Park this fall.
- ▶ **AARP Community Challenge** grant to support our fall tree planting events at Windsor STEM Elementary School and Rosewind Commons Recreation Center.
- ▶ **Columbus Recreation and Parks Department** for auguring the large holes that we need at Rosewind Commons for 25 balled and burlapped trees!
- ▶ **Columbus City Schools Landscaping Staff** for unloading and auguring the large holes that we need at Windsor STEM Elementary School.
- ▶ Special thanks to our large- hearted volunteers who have continued to help us in COVID safe ways! We could not have accomplished what we did during this crazy year without you. Small groups accomplished a lot in picking up litter, planting trees, planting prairie plants, weeding and communicating with our partners!

## Education and Outreach Working to Meet the Needs of Families During At-Home Learning

At FLOW, we highly value creating opportunities to teach people about the Olentangy Watershed as we engage them in its care and protection. We aim to create activities that are educational in order to help the community participate in enhancing the health of our watershed.

The Education and Outreach Committee has been working hard to support families who are learning at home for a variety of reasons. If families click on the “Education and Outreach” tab on our website, they will be able to access a variety of activities and lessons. We have links to learn about macroinvertebrates and how humans affect the watershed. There are also several lesson plans integrated with children’s literature to support learning about how to care for and what to do to support our watershed. Finally, we have many trees to meet that are native to our area.

We plan to continually add to our educational resources for families learning at home. We are also hoping to expand our resources by creating virtual field trips for families to take when they are unable to visit the watershed in person, or as a precursor to an actual visit. A grant was applied for late in the summer in hopes of supporting this endeavor with the help of Franklin County Soil and Water. Please keep your fingers crossed for us!



## Preserving the Sawmill Wetlands Educational Area

*(continued from page 1)*

planted nut and seed-bearing trees and shrubs. A large swath of “The Hill” will be seeded with pollinator plants late this year.

With the pandemic, the Wetlands has served as a quiet, green refuge for many nearby neighbors. A recent visitor with her two young children said, “I am just so glad it is here.”

The Wetlands has always had people protecting and fighting for it. Volunteers always show up to tackle projects – often when they seem insurmountable. Carolyn gives “a special thank you to a core group of Friends of the Sawmill Wetlands, Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists, , Worthington Hills Garden Club members, FLOW members, and when they had no strength left after days of tree planting, The Mad Scientist Associates who graciously lent some of their employees to us! And thanks to FLOW and Laura Fay for keeping us on track and for supporting us when we most needed it.”



*Petra Schmalbrock and Joe Carter working on one of the three parking area wildflower gardens*



## COVID and FLOW

The year 2020 has been challenging for all of us and FLOW hasn’t been immune to the effects of COVID. Spring, summer and fall are typically busy times of the year for FLOW and this past April all activities were halted due to COVID-19. FLOW has had to regroup during this pandemic and figure out ways to be creative yet compliant with health directives.

FLOW is working hard behind the scenes to continue with the mission of supporting the health of the Lower Olentangy as well as of our volunteers and our members. We began small group activities in May with groups of 10 or less. These small groups continued our work with invasive species removal, river clean ups, and water monitoring. Most of these events have been with

groups or organizations rather than open to the public.

While our events have been smaller and fewer to accommodate for health precautions during this pandemic, we will continue to host events as we are able to do so. We are working on planning small events this fall for tree plantings and river clean ups. These events will be open to the public with social distancing in place, mandatory face masks, and other necessary precautions for the health and safety of all.

Please keep an eye out for upcoming events on Facebook and on our web site. FLOW is disappointed that fundraising and social events have been cancelled along with the public lecture series. Those will be rescheduled in the future when the COVID pandemic has allowed us to continue these practices. Please feel free to reach out to FLOW for any activities that are happening if you don’t see them on Facebook or on our website.

**Published By:**  
**Chair – Kelly Thiel**  
**Vice Chair – Danielle Johnson**  
**Treasurer – George Williams**  
**Secretary – Laura Fay**  
Jim Palus  
Bob Campbell  
Deirdre Donaldson  
Amy Hill  
Gregg Peace

**Newsletter Layout:**  
Ellie Nowels, Education & Outreach

**Contact FLOW**  
3528 N. High St., Suite F, Columbus, OH 43214  
614-267-3386 (phone)  
info@olentangywatershed.org  
www.olentangywatershed.org  
**Facebook group:** Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW)

Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed  
3528 N. High St., Suite F  
Columbus, OH 43214

Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping the Olentangy River clean and safe for all to enjoy through public education, volunteer activities, and coordination with local decision makers. FLOW is registered with the IRS as a tax-exempt, nonprofit charitable organization under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible.

**FLOW relies heavily on volunteer participation to create positive change in our watershed.**

Please contact us for information on how you can volunteer. We have a wide variety of opportunities to fit your schedule and match your skills and interests. To be added to the FLOW email list, please send a request to info@olentangywatershed.org with a subject line of "Email list".



## Free ways to Donate to FLOW



### Kroger Plus Card

By registering your Kroger Plus card, you can help FLOW receive a donation of 5% of qualified purchases under the Kroger Community Rewards Program at no cost to you. Use your registered Kroger Plus card when shopping for each purchase to count. Go to [www.kroger.com](http://www.kroger.com), select **Savings & Rewards**, and then **Kroger Community Rewards**. FLOW's new code is AU317.

### AmazonSmile:

With AmazonSmile, you can donate to FLOW at no cost to yourself. Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. Go to <https://smile.amazon.com/> and search for Friends Of The Lower Olentangy.

Thereafter, start your Amazon sessions at <http://smile.amazon.com>.



## FLOW Autumn 2020 Volunteer: Lindalee Brownstein



Lindalee has been a FLOW volunteer since 2011. She has served on the board, has volunteered for several projects and has been the newsletter editor for the past 5 years.

Lindalee is also the Arbor Chairman for Old Beechwold, which has a ravine, creek, and woodlands; and she is a master gardener with a special interest in native plants and woodlands.

Lindalee has a lifelong interest in nature, something learned from her father. As a child, her best toy was the creek behind her house.

Lindalee also volunteers for Gethsemane Lutheran Church helping the elderly and families in need.

We so appreciate all the work Lindalee has done with FLOW and the watershed.