



Friends of Scioto Brush Creek

Helping maintain and improve the water quality of Scioto Brush Creek through education, awareness and the involvement of local residents.

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FoSBC Receive Bruce Dawson Award

By Martin McAllister; President, Friends of Scioto Brush Creek

This spring, the Friends of Scioto Brush Creek, Inc was proud to be the recipient of the Bruce Dawson Memorial Award, presented by the Outdoor Writers of Ohio at their annual conference in Marietta. The Outdoor Writers of Ohio, Inc is an old and respected organization founded in 1939 by journalists and other outdoor communicators "dedicated to the ideals of truth and conservation." Presently the OWO boasts over 80 members from all branches of the journalism profession including authors, columnists, photographers and broadcasters. Many well known Ohio naturalists and writers have carried the membership card of the OWO including Karl Maslowski and George Laycock as well as two current FoSBC members Tom Cross and Guy Denny.



2009 OWO President Chip Hart, FoSBC president Martin McAllister, 2008 OWO President Celeste Baumgartner

The Bruce Dawson Memorial Award was created by the OWO nearly three years ago as a memorial to a past OWO president, Bruce Dawson. Applications are accepted from non-profit organizations who meet certain criteria including teaching children about the outdoors. FoSBC's decade-long record of working with children in the Scioto Brush Creek watershed was very much in keeping with the OWO's objective and we were honored to receive the award in May at the OWO Spring Conference and Awards Banquet. The banquet was held at the historic Lafayette Hotel in downtown Marietta. In addition to a handsome plaque, FoSBC was also awarded a check in the amount of \$300. This money, as well as all donations and membership dues, will be used to continue the educational programming so vital to maintaining a quality watershed. The Friends of Scioto Brush Creek express our sincere thanks to the Outdoor Writers of Ohio for selecting FoSBC as the 2008 recipient of the Bruce Dawson Memorial Award.

Artist Donates Painting to be Auctioned at Annual Meeting

Paul Smith, a local artist and Friend of Scioto Brush Creek has donated a Wood Duck painting to the Friends of Scioto Brush Creek to be auctioned at the annual meeting in January.

For the past 25 years, Paul has made a hobby of painting and often donates his skill to support the outdoors and wildlife. In the past, he has donated paintings to the Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, The Peregrine Foundation, the Wildlife Diversity Fund and other local organizations.

A 1960 graduate of Northwest High School, Paul is retired from the United States Enrichment Corporation (USEC) after having served as an Industrial Maintenance Mechanic for 32 years. Now Paul finds time to produce wildlife paintings. "Painting for me is a very inspirational time," says Paul, as he looks at the whole of nature and the interconnection of life.



Paul Smith displays his Wood Duck painting in front of the Otway Covered Bridge. Visit www.friendsofsciotobrushcreek.org for a full view of the painting.



2009 Rarden Whitetail Deer Festival

Visit Rarden, Ohio on September 11, 12, and 13 and attend the Whitetail Deer Festival. The festival features a number of wildlife activities and displays sure to pique the interest of any outdoor enthusiast. Be sure to visit the Friends of Scioto Brush Creek freshwater fish display while you're there!

Friends of Scioto Brush Creek
3654 McDermott-Pond Creek Road
McDermott, Ohio 45652
www.friendsofsciotobrushcreek.org
(740) 259-9231



Muskies in Scioto Brush Creek

By Tom Cross Executive Director of Adams County Travel & Visitors Bureau and author of "Fishing Ohio"

What always fascinated me about Scioto Brush Creek was its native muskellunge population. Native "muskies" in Ohio are a rare breed. Nearly all Ohio lakes that offer muskie fishing are hatchery supported with the majority of muskies hatched and reared at the Kincaid State Fish Hatchery in Pike County. There is some evidence that Berlin Lake in northeast Ohio has some natural muskie reproduction and locals insist Lake White may have a muskie or two in it from natural reproduction in Pee-Pee Creek, but it is extremely rare for successful muskie reproduction to occur in any Ohio Lake.

However a relative handful of Ohio streams actually support a reproducing population of muskellunge; those being- Grand River (Lake County), Mahoning River (Trumbull & Mahoning County), Little Muskingum River (Washington County), Sunfish Creek (Pike County), and Scioto Brush Creek. One additional drainage, which has been noted to have a small population, is lower Darby Creek (Pickaway County). I have heard it said that in the past a number of eastern Ohio streams once contained muskies. One stream that's keep popping up on the radar screen is Leading Creek in Meigs County. I suspect past mining activity in eastern Ohio could have contributed the muskie's demise in any number of streams in that region of the state.

Biologist point to three distinct sub-species of muskellunge inhabiting waters throughout the U.S and Canada: those being the Great Lakes muskellunge, the Wisconsin, and the Ohio muskellunge.

The Ohio muskellunge is native to all Ohio River drainage streams as well as some upper Mississippi Streams. Kentucky is said to have more native muskie streams than any other state. Ohio muskies can be found in rivers and streams in Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and in some lakes as far east as New York.

Streams in the lower Scioto River drainage appear to be among the few strongholds for native muskies in Ohio. From reports and talking to fishermen and biologist, Sunfish and Scioto Brush Creek seem to have a fairly large, healthy, and self sustaining population of muskies. In numbers too, I might add, that actually provide a viable sport fishery for the species.

The stream record for Scioto Brush, from what I've been able to gather, is a whopping 47 inch- 27 pound female muskie that was caught near Otway in April of 2002. Muskies in Scioto Brush inhabit nearly every deep pool from Otway to Rushtown. Found hidden among the deep long jams and lily pads edges, most muskies will average 30 to 38 inches long, weighing up to 10-12 pounds. However 40 inch plus muskies from Scioto Brush Creek is not uncommon. It's also well known that most muskie anglers on Scioto Brush release their catch and don't tell their secrets.



Tom Cross releases a 37 inch Muskie during a fishing trip.

Muskies spawn in early spring when water temps reach into the 50's. Mid-March thru mid-April is spawning time for Scioto Brush Creek muskies. Muskellunge in Ohio and Kentucky streams typically spawn on decaying, matted leaf material found atop debris piles along the edges of streams. I've watch them myself on streams in Kentucky. Female muskies, accompanied by a smaller spawning male, will broadcast eggs over several shallow leafy debris piles in a stream. Once accomplished the fertilized eggs are on their own as mom and dad head back to deep water. Muskies hatch and survival rates are very low when compared to other species of fish.

Rural streams like Sunfish and Scioto Brush have largely escaped the developmental factors that would prove negative to the species survival in those streams. Ohio's own highly successful muskie stocking program owes its start to the native stream population as a result of eggs and sperm taken from the few muskies that were captured in Sunfish Creek during the spring of 1954. The fertilized eggs hatched and the resulting muskie fry was later released in the newly impounded Rocky Fork Lake in Highland County. Years later those few captured stream muskies launched a fishery that rivals' any muskie fishery found in the U.S.



Tom's book "Fishing Ohio: An Angler's Guide to Over 200 Fishing Spots in the Buckeye State" highlights fishing information for every public lake and stream in Ohio. Each entry describes the water and its game fish population, angling tips, and local regulations as well as advice on boat ramps, parking lots, marinas, lodging, and local attractions for every fishing venue. The book is available at all bookstores including Borders and Barnes & Nobel, as well as online bookstores. Signed copies are available at the Adams County Travel & Visitors Bureau office in West Union.



Household Hazardous Waste Cleanup Set for September 26

By Jody Newton-McAllister; Secretary, Friends of Scioto Brush Creek

Every household generates hazardous waste, such as chemicals, cleaners, pesticides, solvents, etc. Individual amounts may not seem large, but collectively, these amounts are significant. Recycling and disposing of these wastes are a problem for many and that is why the Lawrence-Scioto County SWMD is affording you the opportunity to dispose of your hazardous waste through their Household Hazardous Waste Event. Dow Chemical Company and Veolia Environmental Services have joined with the District to provide you this opportunity. The Lawrence-Scioto County Solid Waste Management District will conduct its 3rd Annual "Special Collection Event" on Saturday, September 26th, 2009 from 9am-1pm. The collection will take place at the Dow Chemical Plant in Hanging Rock, OH located at 925 County Road 1-A.

ITEMS ACCEPTED INCLUDE:

- Scrap Tires (Passenger/Light Truck)
Note: Limit of 6 per person
- Computers (CPU, monitor, keyboard)
Note: Limit of 6 per person
- Electronics (cell phones, scanners, printers, fax machines)
- Lead-Acid Batteries
- Motor Oil
- Brake Fluid
- Used Antifreeze
- Paint, Thinners, Solvents
- Cleaners w/ acid or lye
- Pesticides
- Herbicides
- Pool Chemicals

ITEMS NOT ACCEPTED:

- Explosives
- Ammunition
- Trash
- Medical Waste
- Yard Waste
- Heating Oil Tanks
- Fuel Tanks
- Appliances

How should you prepare?

- Bring the items you wish to dispose of in a sturdy box
- DO NOT mix products together
- Be prepared to leave your containers

For more information, contact Dan Palmer, District Director at (740) 532-1231 or visit their website at http://www.lsswmd.org/HHW-Event_brochure.pdf



Brush Creek Township Park Continues to Make Progress

By Thelma Shirey, Brush Creek Township Park Committee

The Brush Creek Township Community Park is making progress! If you haven't been west of Otway on State Route 348 for a while, you need to make the trip to see how the park has grown. This spring, a 40 X 60 concrete basketball court was installed with Scioto Area Foundation grant funds and in August, a slide, swing set and two park grills were set in place. The playground equipment was purchased with a \$16,000 ODNR Nature Works grant. The park committee raised the remaining 25% grant match funds. No township funds are being used for to finance park expenses. In July, the park committee sponsored a raffle. On October 10 at 10:00 AM, the park committee will sponsor an auction in the old Otway School building.

The ODNR Nature Works grant also calls for construction of a 24 X 32 shelter house. At this point the engineering plans are complete, submitted to ODNR and returned. With the receipt of the grant money the shelter house will be built – hopefully, before winter. All work is being done by volunteers; most are

park committee members and/or Friends of Scioto Brush Creek members. With installation of more playground equipment and construction of the shelter house getting closer, all help is welcome.

If you would like to help with this community minded endeavor, please consider making a direct donation by sending a check payable to Brush Creek Twp Trustees- Park Fund, P.O. Box 28 Otway, OH 45657 or Friends of Scioto Brush Creek-Park Fund, 3654 McDermott-Pond Creek Road, McDermott, OH 45652. All donations are tax deductible. Donations of time or materials are also appreciated. To get involved in a rewarding community activity come to the park meetings, held the second Wednesday each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Brush Creek Twp Hall in Otway. Meetings will be held at the park if weather permits.

For more information call Thelma Shirey at (740) 372-2984, Anita "Sis" Powell at (740) 372-0701 or Carl Koenig at (740) 372-5054.



Wayne Kelley (Left) receives the July raffle prize from Sam Shirey.



Strange creatures of Scioto Brush Creek—The Softshell Turtle

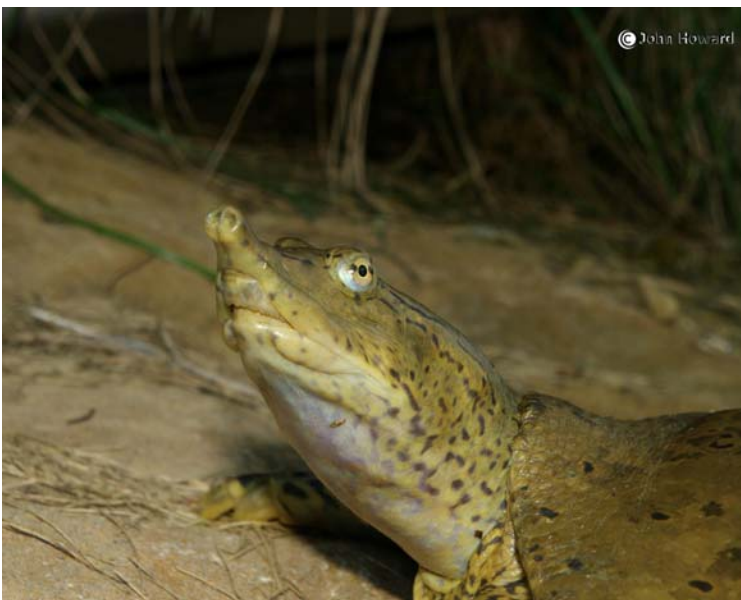
By John Howard, Freelance Naturalist, Adams County

The Scioto Brush creek watershed is home to two most unusual animals, the softshell turtles. Most people familiar with them call them “Leatherbacks” because of their flexible rubbery shell. These animals are far different than their hard-shelled counterparts in almost every way. Not only are their soft shells literally as flat as a pancake, but their noses are elongated into a long thin snout that Pinocchio would be proud to see.

There are actually two species of softshells found in the Scioto Brush Creek watershed, the Eastern Spiny Softshell (*Apalone spinifera*) and the Midland Smooth Softshell (*Apalone mutica*). The Smooth Softshells are primarily a southeastern Ohio species, while Spiny Softshells were originally found throughout the state. Of the two, the spiny is a little larger, sometimes reaching 15- or 16 inches in length. The spiny is also distinctly marked on its skin with a pattern of spots and stripes, while the smooth softshell is generally a uniform tan color. Some individuals may be difficult to separate though, so the sure way is to look into the snout, where the spiny actually has small ridges that the smooth softshell lacks.

Many people live their entire lives without ever seeing these elusive turtles. They rarely leave the water and are extremely wary and quick to retreat at the slightest movement or disturbance. Fishermen catch them occasionally, and they fight gallantly. Many a trophy catfish has been hooked and battled to the bank only to find that that the award-winning fish was really a large softshell turtle.

We have all heard the story “The Tortoise and the Hare”, the story about the slow turtle and the fast hare. The softshell doesn't fit this description at all, as it is extremely fast and agile -- an animal built for speed. With its flat profile, webbed feet, and strong legs, it is lightning fast in the water, zipping through the water like a runaway frisbee.



Spiny softshell turtles can be identified by a pattern of spots and stripes, as well as the small ridges on their snouts.



A group of softshell turtles climbs onto a sand bar in the stream.

The softshell turtles are even more aquatic than most other turtles, rarely leaving the water's safety for any reason. The carapace of the softshell is tan with a pattern of small spots and circles, looking for all the world like a pebbly sandbar. Their flat profile allows them to float in shallow water and bask just under the surface. When frightened they can drop to the bottom and, by pummeling their feet, they can dig straight down in the creek bottom, throw sand over their back, and completely disappear in just a few seconds.

I once was fishing on a sand bar in Scioto Brush Creek on a sunny day, and noticed a large softshell settled on the bottom of the stream, a few feet from where I was sitting. As I watched, it stretched its long neck ever so slowly toward the surface, finally breaking the water with just the tip of its pointed snout. It remained this way for just a moment while it replenished its air supply, then slowly retreated again, becoming nearly invisible on the sandy bottom.

A softshell's neck is unbelievably long, and they bite viciously when taken from the water. Fortunately, they don't have the large jaws or the power of a snapping turtle, but nonetheless they can inflict a painful bite, a lesson I learned the hard way as a young boy.

Female softshell turtles lay their eggs in shallow nests on sandbars close to the water. An abundance of mammalian predators such as raccoons and the destruction of sand and gravel bars by gravel mining have reduced the rate of successful reproduction in recent years, completely eliminating them from many watersheds in Ohio. Fortunately both species are still common in Scioto Brush Creek. The continued presence of this handsome animal in Southern Ohio is one in which we can take pride.

