

Newsletter of the Appalachia Ohio Alliance

The Magic of Autumn

September and October mornings are irresistible. It is hard to stay in bed past 6 a.m. even though darkness still holds sway. Walking to fetch the morning paper my eyes turn skyward to admire Orion, the mighty hunter.

To many, Orion is the most beautiful constellation in the heavens. Betelgeuse (pronounced "beetle juice") a star in Orion's left shoulder, is a super giant - 400 times the sun's diameter and 300 light years from earth. Rigel, the bright star in the right foot, is 33 times the diameter of the sun and 20,000 times as luminous. The light reaching our eyes from Regel left there 500 years ago or about the time Columbus landed in the New World. I am humbled by Orion's beauty and mystery.

I retrieve the paper from the box and walk back up the driveway. Now there is a hint of light in the eastern sky. A rooster crows just up the road and far away a farm dog barks. It is still dark and night must play out its finale, but day stands ready in the wings.

As the sky brightens, the stars lose their luster and one by one they disappear from view. This dim light of early morning is the perfect time to hear the call of the great-horned owl. Recently I

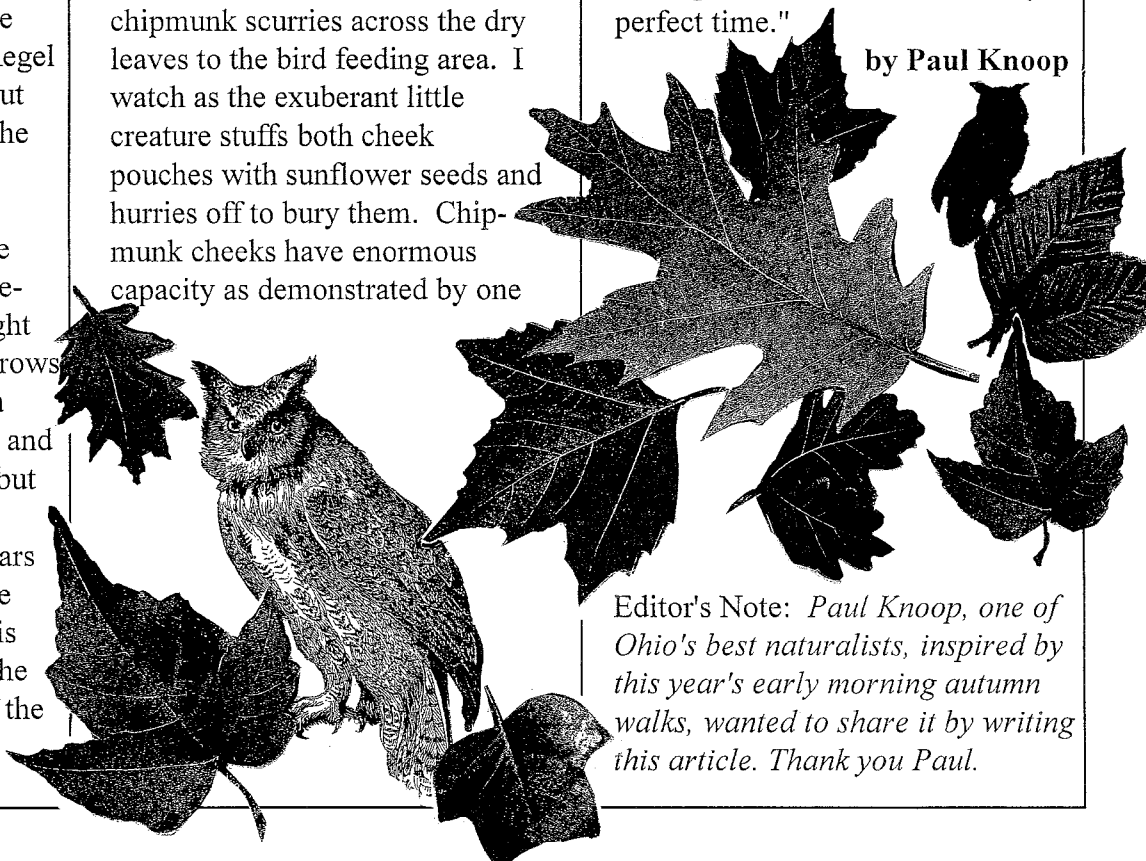
heard two of these birds call back and forth across the valley, their "hoots" bearing a resemblance to a far off fog horn. The presence of these great birds reminds me that we humans haven't completely conquered the land. There are still pockets of wild country where large predatory birds and mammals can reside.

Now the sun is breaking the horizon and another autumn day has arrived. Who can resist the bright blue sky, colorful leaves and pungent odors? A spunky Carolina wren welcomes the morning by singing its well known "teakettle" song. A chipmunk scurries across the dry leaves to the bird feeding area. I watch as the exuberant little creature stuffs both cheek pouches with sunflower seeds and hurries off to bury them. Chipmunk cheeks have enormous capacity as demonstrated by one

found dead along the road. This unfortunate little fellow had 112 tulip seeds stuffed in his cheeks.

There is every reason to call September and October elegant as the chemistry of autumn brings brilliant color to local woodlands. I recall that Native Americans called October the "Moon of the Falling Leaves." This is the month that colors fade and leaves fall from the trees signaling the end of autumn. One old Native American, nearing the end of his life, expressed the following prayer: "Oh, God of my father, when I reach the Happy Hunting, let it be ever the Leaf Falling Moon, for that is the only perfect time."

by Paul Knoop



Editor's Note: *Paul Knoop, one of Ohio's best naturalists, inspired by this year's early morning autumn walks, wanted to share it by writing this article. Thank you Paul.*

Landowner Conservation Motivation Study

(This article was taken from the *Land Trust Alliance publication SAVINGland*)

Recent studies by Colorado State University and the University of Wyoming researchers show that "conservation ethic" and "spiritual attachment to one's land" are dominant reasons for agricultural landowners to pursue conservation easements and protect land in their community. Results also show that landowners' trust of land trusts increases through personal contact. However, the greater a landowners' economic dependence upon the land, the less likely the landowner trusts land trusts, according to the study.

As part of a comprehensive, multi-phase research study of landowner and land trust motivations, a large group of agricultural landowners in Colorado and Wyoming were surveyed about their sense of place for their property, their attitudes toward land trusts, and perceived need for land conservation. Social Scientists generally use *sense of place* to describe a multi-dimensional concept involving emotional attachment, satisfaction and identity. Analysis of 20 sense of place measures indicates that "spiritual place attachment," "conservation ethic" and "economic dependence upon one's land" are three distinct dimensions.

Of all the sense of place measures, "conservation ethic" presented the highest ranking on a 5-point scale (4.36), indicating that most landowners in this sample feel a strong commitment to stewardship and land conservation. The research also shows that agricultural

landowners, in general, have a strong attachment to their land.

However, those with high economic dependence upon the land that they manage are less likely to engage in a conservation easement, are less likely to trust land trusts and are less likely to be connected with the "conservation ethic" category. This is not to suggest that those with economic dependence upon the land have less of a conservation ethic in general; rather, their motivations to protect the land may be more self-driven. Therefore, these individuals might be less likely to engage in conservation easements that they believe infringe upon operational control or production activities. However, they may be willing to support other conservation programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program. This reinforces the notion that a spectrum of land protection policies may be effective when approaching landowners with strong economic dependence upon the land.

Other aspects of the study confirm many anecdotal land trust beliefs. Results indicate that the time land trusts spend contacting agricultural landowners is time well spent as they were more likely to agree with the statement, "I trust land trusts." The positive correlation between the "conservation ethic" and trust of land trusts is also robust.

Part of Queer Creek Riparian Corridor Saved

The Ash Cave Queer Creek Valley Preserve protects an area west of the Ash Cave State Park but also significant portions of the

stream corridor upstream from the park (as mentioned in the last newsletter). AOA recently completed purchase of 19.20 acres west of the Ash Cave State Park picnic area as well as two other properties upstream, totalling 156 acres south of the park along the Queer Creek corridor.

Thanks to the generosity of Marilyn House, the former property owner, AOA was able to purchase the property using matching funds from the Clean Ohio Open Space grant program. Mrs. House graciously contributed the in-kind match that enabled AOA to successfully compete for an Open Space grant. This 19 acre parcel will be managed as a natural area and is intended to be accessible to users of the Buckeye Trail and Ash Cave State Park. The preserve property adjoins the state park and state forest on the east and Amerine Road (Township Rd. 265) on the west. State Route 56 is on the north boundary while private lands are located to the south. Visitors will be able to hike and explore the preserve but no motorized vehicles will be permitted. The property will remain in its natural state.

AOA has also been working upstream with local residents to preserve additional riparian areas of Queer Creek. Two additional tracts have recently been protected in Bison Hollow through Clean Ohio Open Space grants. Thanks to the generosity of Dick and Barbara Harwood who donated the in-kind matching funds for a 76 acre preserve. And thanks to Dale Riddle who also donated in-kind matching funds, another 80 acres nearby was saved. Both properties

are richly forested and will greatly enhance the scenic and conservation value of the area.

Musings of a Nature Hike

AOA guests and hikers joined us on July 24 to tour Alan Cohen's and Evie Adelman's conservation easement-protected property. They have created a wonderful sanctuary, restored meadow, planted prairie and arboretum on their 80 acre property. The prairie features a wide variety of planted native prairie species including Big Blue Stem, Indian Grass, Black-eyed Susan, Lavender Bergamot, Butterfly Weed, Common Milk Weed, Tall Tick seed and Prairie Dock. The participants were also treated to a show of a wide variety and abundance of butterflies which entertained the group while they were hiking.

One of the couples, Alan and Mary Melnick (who are potential easement donors) had this to say about the afternoon hike: "On a very warm July day several members and friends of AOA met at Alan Cohen's to hike around his property on Starr Route Road. More than 30 years ago he bought this well used farm. Over the years he has put in many trees, various gardens and most recently, three swaths of prairie.

After we had gathered, Alan led us around the various areas pointing out the plantings and vistas he has created. The hike took us above the Japanese garden with its pond and various plants. Up on top were the prairies, which this year were graced with many butterflies. Clyde Gosnell and Paul Knoop were on the walk to help when someone would call out 'what is

this plant or flower?' At the end of the hike we were all invited into the house for cool drinks and snacks. Then we all gathered in the living room. Alan talked about the inspiration and appreciation of nature, ending with the Navajo belief 'To Walk in Beauty.' "

Legislative Alert: Proposed Federal Prohibition on Private Transfer Fees

Working with the Realtors Association, the Federal Housing and Finance Agency (FHFA, the parent agency of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and the Federal Home Loan Banks) has issued a proposed guidance document for public comment that would effectively eliminate the use of all Private Transfer Fees (PTFs), removing a critical funding mechanism for environmental conservation, affordable housing and community infrastructure. Land trusts use transfer fees to fund conservation easement stewardship, restoration projects and project acquisition. As the full cost of stewardship and legal defense is fully realized, along with the inability of granting landowners to fully fund these things, more land trusts are exploring transfer fees while several have been capitalizing on transfer fees for years. By eliminating this option, land trusts lose a potential long term source of stewardship funding. Realtors in several states have been pursuing legislation to prohibit transfer fees at the state level but some conservation attorneys and groups have successfully defeated or modified such attempts, protecting conservation interests. In contrast to traditional commun-

ity-benefits fees, developers and investors have started using this mechanism to generate long-term income streams by beginning to market "capital recovery fees" to developers based on the PTF model. PTFs could then be scrutinized and sold, creating a pool of money to benefit developers and investors instead of benefiting the community. This use of scrutinized PTFs as additional income for developers, without benefit to the community, has upset home buyers and realtors.

Let the FHFA know you support the use of private transfer fees when they benefit land and water conservation, the home owner, the HOA or provide community benefit. While the deadline for comments was set for October 15, a coalition of concerned charitable organizations, government agencies and others is trying to get the comment period extended to January 2011. Submit comments via email: regcomments@fhfa.gov
Reference: "Guidance on Private Transfer Fee Covenants, (No. 2010-N-11)"

This notification is from Erin M. Heskett, Midwest Dir, LTA.

Special Note

Special thanks to our donors and workplace contributors who participate in the annual workplace giving program through Earthshare in the Combined Charitable Giving campaigns throughout Ohio. Look for our display, as we will be visiting many of the campaign kickoff locations this fall in central and SE Ohio. Your contributions help us protect Ohio's vanishing natural places and farmland in SE Ohio.

**Appalachia Ohio Alliance
2010 Calender of Events**

**-Camp Oty'Okwa, October 24,
1:30 PM, Hocking County**

Camp Oty'Okwa is a 600-acre facility, owned and operated by the Big Brothers Big Sisters of central Ohio. Here one will find some of Hocking County's most primitive beauty with forested hills and valleys, high cliffs, recessed caves, clear-flowing streams and abundant wildlife. *Directions:* Camp entrance is just off SR 664 on Purcell Road, south of Old Man's Cave State Park. Follow the signs.

**-Coalition of Ohio Land Trusts
fall statewide meeting, Oct 28,
10:00AM-4:00 PM, Dawes
Arboretum, Newark, OH**

Located at 7770 Jacksontown Rd SE. For details email Erin Heskett at: eheskett@lta.org

**-AOA Recognition Dinner, Sun.,
Nov. 14, 2:00 P.M., Brass Ring
Golf Club, Logan, OH**

Join us for a wonderful buffet meal and interesting video program by Ora E. Anderson and presented by Jean Andrews. This film, "Ora E. Anderson: the Soul of the Woods," relates his evolution as a conservationist. Tickets for this partial fundraiser are \$25.00 each.

RSVP by Nov 5. To make reservations and for more details contact: Paul Knoop at 740 385-6638.

-11th Annual Farmland Preservation Summit, Nov 18, 8:00AM-4:00PM, OSU 4-H CENTER, Columbus For details contact Jodi Fife at 614-728-6210 or email at: farmlandpres@agri.ohio.gov

Leave a Legacy of Beauty

If you are a landowner interested in leaving a legacy of natural beauty for future generations, plan now for 2010 taxes through a conservation easement. Please contact Steve Goodwin, program consultant at 740-967-2737 or any representative of Appalachia Ohio Alliance.

Appalachia Ohio Alliance

P.O. Box 1151
Logan Ohio 43138-1255
www.appalachiaohioalliance.org

***Preserving Family Lands
Today for Tomorrow***

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Logan, Ohio 43138-1255**