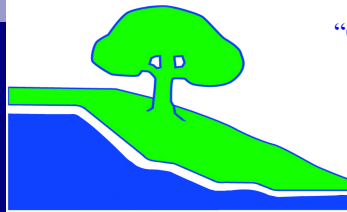


Friends of Lower Muskingum River



"Conserving and protecting natural areas in the Lower Muskingum Watershed for all to enjoy"

www.muskingumriver.org
vista@muskingumriver.org



FLMR is making a major commitment to our pollinators. See page 3 for more details



Inside this issue:

River Sweep 2016 2

Meet FLMR's New AmeriCorps VISTA 2

Leaving a Legacy: The Luke Chute Pollinator Project 3

Why I Support FLMR? 5

From the President 5

The Marcum Conservation Easement: Home to "TV's" By Dawn Hewitt

Adult turkey vultures have a face only their offspring could love. Nestling turkey vultures, on the other hand, are as cute as could be: downy white fluffballs for their first few weeks after hatching. Their head, like their parents', is featherless, but dark gray, not red.

A monitoring crew found two such "TV" nestlings June 8 in a small cave on the Marcum property, where FLMR holds a conservation easement. Turkey vultures nest in caves, or in recesses beneath boulders, on sheltered cliff ledges, in hollow trees or logs, or in abandoned structures such as hunting blinds, old pigsties, or silos. The most

important criterion for a turkey vulture nest site is its isolation from human disturbance. Vultures seem to prefer locations with forest canopy for shelter and perching.

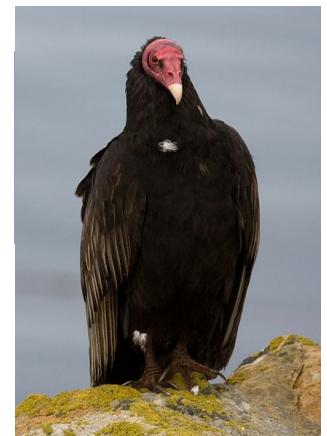
TVs don't build nests, but might scratch a depression in the soil or leaf litter or whatever is on the floor of the site they've picked for their nursery. Mom TV lays her eggs—usually two—directly on the surface of the nest site. Vultures marked for identification revealed that parental bonds last for several years, and the parents are also loyal to their nest site, often for many years.

Both parents incubate the eggs, and incubation can last from 28 to 40 days. When incubation is disturbed, the parent might fly away, or it might stand its ground,

hissing and sometimes regurgitating. Regurgitating putrid meat is a turkey vulture's most aggressive defense. TVs have been known to feign death in the face of danger, much like an opossum, but they never attack. Their talons are weak—too weak even to carry food to their nestlings. Their hooked bills are adapted for tearing decaying flesh and meat, and not for inflicting harm on living beings. Unlike hawks, eagles, and falcons, TVs aren't killing machines, and so they don't attack when threatened. They might barf something putrid, however, which is, admittedly, an effective defense.

There are seven species of vulture in the Western Hemisphere, and three are found in North America: turkey vulture, black vulture, and California condor. Although black vultures are

smaller, they are much more aggressive than TVs. Once considered a southeastern species, the range of black vultures has been expanding northward, and it is possible to spot black vultures in southeastern Ohio. TVs remain more common here, however.





River Sweep 2016 took place on Saturday, June 18th, 2016. The Ohio River Valley Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) has been putting on this cleanup of the Ohio River and its tributaries since 1989. Each year, thousands of volunteers pick up trash along nearly 3000 miles of river and stream banks.



Hello to all the Friends of the Lower Muskingum River. My name is Matt Halfhill, and I will be serving as the OSMRE AmeriCorps VISTA with FLMR over the next year. I am a lifelong resident of the area. I grew

River Sweep 2016 by Matt Halfhill

For several years FLMR has coordinated local cleanups in conjunction with River Sweep. This year we were fortunate to have a total of 25 volunteers on two crews in two different locations. One crew was organized by the Lowell Women of the Moose, Chapter 2261. They cleaned up the area around the Lowell Lock and Dam. The other crew, which included Girl Scout members from Troop 155, cleaned the area below Devol's Dam. Together, the two crews picked up nearly 50 bags of trash that other-

wise could have made its way to the Ohio, the Mississippi, and eventually into the ocean. All of the trash from the Devol's cleanup was taken to the Marietta Recycle Center where volunteers sorted through it and were able to recycle 14 of the 26 bags collected. FLMR would like to thank all the volunteers that gave up part of a Saturday to make our rivers a little cleaner. We would also like to thank Smitty's Pizza for generously donating lunch for the Devol's Dam crew.

Meet the FLMR officers, board members, and staff

FLMR Officers

President - Katy Lustofin
Vice President - Vacant
Secretary - Doug Albaugh
Treasurer - Vacant

Board Members

Elin Jones
John Lee
Ty Williams
Brad Bond
Sam Powell
Kenner Sims

Staff

Matt Halfhill-
AmeriCorps VISTA



Meet FLMR's New AmeriCorps VISTA

up on a small farm in Whipple, Ohio, and I reside there now with my wife Lisa, two boxers, and many animals. I earned two associate degrees from Hocking College in Wildlife Management and Fish Management and Aquaculture. I also have a bachelor of science in Wildlife and Conservation Biology from Ohio University. My past experience includes an AmeriCorps

position with Rural Action's Monday Creek Restoration Project, several years in a local metal fabrication shop, and several summers conducting fish surveys with Midwest Biodiversity Institute. I enjoy fishing, hunting, playing volleyball, canoeing and kayaking, working in my garden, hiking, and just being out in nature. I am excited to serve with FLMR and I



look forward to working with the members, volunteers, and partners to strengthen the organization and continue the good work FLMR does in our region.

Leaving a Legacy: The Luke Chute Conservation Area Pollinator Project by Matt Halfhill

Monarch butterflies, honey bees, and other pollinators have seen massive declines in their populations in recent years. Several factors have contributed to their decline including pesticides, parasites and disease, and loss of habitat and the plants they rely on for their survival. In May of 2015, the federal government decided it was time to act. President Obama announced the National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and other Pollinators, as a result of recommendations from the Pollinator Health Task Force. A goal was set for all the states to restore or create pollinator habitat on 7 million acres over the next five years, restore the population of monarch butterflies to 225 million in their overwintering grounds in Mexico by 2020, and reduce the loss of honey bee colonies during overwintering to 15% or less within the next 10 years. Ohio responded

with the creation of the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative (OPHI). OPHI has brought together a diverse and growing group of public and private partners so Ohio and its citizens can do their part in meeting the goals of the project.

This past February, FLMR's Kenner Sims heard a presentation about OPHI by Marci Lininger while attending the Ohio Chapter of the Fish and Wildlife Society Conference. After the presentation, he was able to talk to Marci, and inform her that FLMR had some property that might be perfect for a pollinator project. The

property he had in mind was our Luke Chute Conservation Area. Kenner presented the idea to the FLMR Board, and they agreed that the creation of a pollinator habitat would be a great addition to FLMR property. Marci introduced Kenner and the Board to Lori Stevenson from the Partners for Fish and Wildlife, a program of the US Fish and Wildlife Service that focuses on improving fish and wildlife habitat on private lands. Lori would be responsible for drawing up an agreement with FLMR so that the Partners program could help fund project.

Right- Aerial view of the future pollinator habitat taken with our drone after the initial mowing and spraying.



Leaving a Legacy: The Luke Chute Conservation Area Pollinator Project (Continued)



Hummingbird Clearwing Moth- Photo courtesy of John Flannery, Richmond County, NC

They were also introduced to Mike Retterer from Pheasants Forever, who was tasked with drawing up the plan for how the habitat would be created. Over the past five months, there have been multiple emails, phone calls, and a couple of site visits at Luke Chute with Marci, Lori, and Mike. On July 19th, FLMR signed an agreement with Partners for Fish and Wildlife which will lead to the creation of the Luke Chute Pollinator Habitat.

The Luke Chute Pollinator Habitat will consist of approximately 6.6 acres on the Luke Chute Conservation Area, as well as 2 acres on FLMR Board Secretary Doug Albaugh's property which FLMR holds a conservation easement on. This is currently the largest project on private land in the state. The area on Luke Chute is one contiguous field, but has been divided into two regions which will be planted differently. A short grass pollinator mix will be planted on 4.5 acres of the Luke

Chute field as well as on Doug's 2 acre field. The remaining 2.1 acres of the Luke Chute field will be planted with a tall grass mix. The trails through the fields will be planted with a legume mix. All of the fields have been cleared of non-beneficial and invasive woody species by FLMR volunteers. They have been brush hogged and sprayed with an herbicide. The mowing and spraying is done to get rid of non-native and invasive plant species so that when we plant the area with na-

tive beneficial species they will have the best chance of getting established. The fields will get mowed and sprayed once more, and we will be planting in late fall or winter. The Partners will be providing the seed mix, as well as providing some funds for renting a tractor and seed drill to plant them. OPHI will be providing milkweed plugs for planting. Once the pollinator habitat is established, the area will need to be mowed every two to three years to discourage trees.

The Luke Chute Pollinator Habitat will create a haven for our honey bees and native pollinators, in addition to the many creatures that benefit from their presence. It will also be another great reason to visit the Luke Chute Conservation Area.



Why I Support FLMR? by Elin Jones

Why?

A long time ago, it became necessary to make financial and time choices: Our children?

Birds, wolves, kangaroos, whales...? The Environmental Defense Fund, Greenpeace, Natural Resource Defense Fund, The Nature Conservancy, Ohio Nature Conservancy, the list goes on and on.

So, I had to ask myself, what is essential to everything? **WATER.**

And how is water pro-

tected and conserved?

Land management.

And how is land management achieved? **Conservation.**

And how are we to do that? Acquire land along our waterways by ownership or easements, as a land trust, to be monitored and maintained. And we needed to educate the public.

Who is to do that? The Ohio Nature Conservancy? But they aren't active down here.

So, who else but Marilyn Ortt established FLMR about 15 years ago. This effort appealed to my sense of local responsibility and was a means to make a difference in ways that sending money to huge organizations did not. I still support TNC,

EDF, and NRDC, but I can't imagine my puny contributions doing anything except for the mailings, and maybe not even that. A name on their membership list.

Marilyn Ortt always seemed to be charging in the right direction. The best I could do was to encourage her and now enable others to **CHARGE.**

Dear FLMR members,

In this newsletter, you will notice that we have a new VISTA, Matt Halfhill. Like Kenner Sims and other VISTAS we have been fortunate to have, Matt is doing a fantastic job of helping FLMR continue our important work. Unfortunately, preserving natural areas in the Muskingum Watershed is more than just a VISTA can accomplish. While we have been fortunate in the past to have a watershed coordinator, funded in part by government grants and local businesses, that funding has largely disappeared. The work hasn't disappeared and the board of directors is beginning a fundraising campaign to hire an executive director starting in May 2017.

From the President

Our goal is to raise \$37,500, to provide salary and benefits to a part-time executive director. Why do we need an executive director? Simply put, to help FLMR meet our mission and grow. The executive director would be responsible for coordinating volunteer efforts, including monitoring our properties and conservation easements; continuing the programs we currently have, like the annual electroshock fishing demonstration at the levee, educational outreach at Camp Hervida and local schools, and other educational programs

Continued on page 7

FLMR would not be able to function without your continued support and for that we are forever grateful!

If you are a supporting member of FLMR and your name is not on this list, please call 740-374-4170

Want to become an FLMR member?

Send in the form found on the back of this newsletter along with your annual dues.

FLMR needs you! Seeking board members, a new treasurer, and a new vice president. If you are interested or just want to learn more about the organization, please contact our president, Katy Lustofin, at ksl002@marietta.edu for the date and location of next board meeting. We would love to have you.

The Marcum Conservation Easement: Home to “TV’s” (Continued)



*Turkey vulture chicks huddle under a rock overhang
on the Marcum Conservation Easement*

Continued on page 6

In flight, black vultures appear to have dipped the tips of their black wings into white paint. The lower half of a turkey vulture’s long wings, viewed from below, is white, not just the tip. TVs also have much longer tails than BVs. Sometimes the two species soar together, and it’s worth comparing them when given such a show. If you get a good look, you’ll see that the black vulture’s head is black. Young turkey vultures have a dark gray head, so use the wing color pattern rather than head color to distinguish them. Also, TVs tend to hold their wings in a shallow V (called a dihedral) as they soar,

while BVs hold their wings flat. TVs often teeter as they soar; BVs don’t.

But back to baby turkey vultures. Upon hatching, baby TVs are helpless, like songbirds, and not precocial like chickens and sandpipers—up and running around within a few hours of hatching. Both TV parents brood the hatchlings continually for about five days, feeding them well-digest regurgitation. Yum! The parent opens its mouth and the babies dig in.

Turkey vultures eat primarily carrion—the flesh of a dead animal—and often, it is far from

fresh. Research has shown that TVs prefer freshly killed meat to old stuff, but even rotting meat doesn’t sicken them, or their young. The digestive system of vultures is adapted to accommodate their bacteria-infested diet, and many disease-carrying organisms such as botulism and salmonella are destroyed in the TV’s digestive tract. The pH of TV vomit is between 1 and 2—highly acidic. Consequently, vulture poop is nontoxic relative to the excrement of most animals.

Real feathers—dark ones—start to replace the nestlings’ white down around day 18 after hatching. By 25 days, their remaining down is dingy white. By day 40, they begin exploring areas outside of their nest, and take their first flight about two months after hatching. They typically leave their natal site by around 12 weeks. By that time, they are no longer dependent upon their parents.

Turkey vultures can be found coast to coast in the U.S. from spring through fall, but only in extreme southern Canada. In the East, they migrate only as far south as necessary when temperatures become frigid. It is common to find TVs in southern Ohio during warm winters, and even during warm spells amid cold winters. Vultures that breed here

might head farther south for the winter, and vultures that winter here might be birds that have nested in Michigan or southern Ontario. Turkey vultures throughout the far West are more reliably migratory, and spend the coldest months in Central or even South America.

Unlike most birds, TVs have a well-developed sense of smell, allowing them to find carcasses hidden beneath the forest canopy, and even under leaf litter. They are often seen over farmland as well, being opportunistic foragers. They most commonly eat mammals, from vole-sized to deer, but also wild and domestic birds, reptiles, fish, large insects, and amphibians. I have a friend in Indi-

ana who, not interested in leftover casseroles, ceremonially carries his Thanksgiving turkey out to his backyard after his family feast to feed the neighborhood vultures. TVs apparently don't mind cooked meat.

Adult TVs weigh around 4.5 pounds and have a wingspan up to 6.5 feet, nearly as wide as an eagle's. One TV banded as an adult was recaptured 16 years later, suggesting that they can have a remarkably long life.

That's a good thing. TVs are as valuable to the ecosystem as trash haulers are to civilization—they make life much more pleasant. Even though they are considered ugly by human standards, and even

creepy, TVs deserve our respect and gratitude, and we should all be very happy that they have made an FLMR conservation easement property their nursery.

Dawn Hewitt is an FLMR member and an editor for Bird Watchers Digest

From the President (Continued)

for local groups and organizations, as well as strategic building of new programs; increasing awareness of the importance of environmental conservation in this area; fundraising to ensure long-term financial stability of FLMR; and recruiting new members and building new partnerships.

How can you help? Please consider donating to our executive director fund – we have a sponsor who has agreed to match funds donated during our fundraising campaign this fall and winter. Your \$120 donation will be matched, gaining us \$240 towards our goal. This number may seem

random, but if we could get every current FLMR member to donate this amount, we would reach our goal. Obviously, if you want and can afford to donate more, we'll happily accept whatever you can give. If you cannot give a monetary donation at this time, please help spread the word; reach out to friends and neighbors. See if your workplace has a donation program. Let us know if you hear of a grant that might help us reach our goal. Better yet, if you have grant-writing skills, consider donating your time to help secure grant money for this important position.

Our goal is to raise \$37,500 by May 2017, so we can hire an executive director before our current

contract with AmeriCorps ends and we lose our VISTA. Please consider helping in any way you can. Checks can be mailed to the FLMR office (348 Muskingum Dr, Marietta, OH 45750). If you have questions or want more information about our fundraising campaign to hire an executive director, please email Katy Lustofin (ksl002@marietta.edu) or any of the board members.

Thank you for your continued support!

Katy Lustofin, President, Board of Directors, FLMR

Upcoming Events

FLMR Potlucks-
6pm on the last Thursday of the month at Luke Chute Conservation Area (through October)

Sept. 17th– Devol's Dam Cleanup
with Marietta Crew Team

Oct. 8th– Scrap Tire Collection
8 am– Noon at the County Garage on Colgate Drive

Call our office for more details
(740)374-4170



Friends of Lower Muskingum River
348 Muskingum Drive
Marietta, OH 45750

We're on the Web!
www.muskingumriver.org

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Cartridges* and *Cell
Phones* so we can recycle
them and raise money.



**Want to become a FLMR member?
Cut out this form & return to the
address below!**

Name: _____
Address: _____

Phone: _____
Email: _____

- ☐ Please send announcements by **email**
☐ Please send announcements by **mail**
☐ **I DO NOT** wish to receive any
announcements

Membership Level Annual Dues

Individual \$15
Family \$25
Non-profit Organization \$50
Corporate \$100
Lifetime \$500

Dues: _____
Donation: _____
Amount Enclosed: _____

Please make checks payable to:
Friends of Lower Muskingum River

Mail to:
Quincy Robe, FLMR Membership Chair
P. O. Box 31, Malta, OH 43758



