

2020 End of Year Naturalist Report Caesar Creek State Park with Volunteer Support

Summary

Total Wildlife Grant Hours Documented Nov. 22 - Jan. 3rd - 55 Hours

Total Watercraft Grant Hours Documented Nov. 22 - Jan. 3rd - 22 Hours

Total Program Attendance - 107,403? people reached (this includes numbers for the TV show/Media)

Total Program Attendance without including the TV show/Media - 2,503 park visitors reached

Total Volunteer Hours - 5,763 (Incl.; NC, MBT and Geocachers efforts)

Total Program Hours - 140?

Monthly Highlights

January

The start of a new year at Caesar Creek State Park is traditionally a time to look back at last year's accomplishments to appreciate what worked well and to add those things to our standard operation procedures. The turn of a new year is also a time to look to the future and plan ways to improve our offering for park guests. It is also a good time to get some advance training completed. Furthermore, the year's programs started off with an exceptional First Day Hike.

- First Day Hike - 278 Total Attended!
- ODNR Director, State Rep and other dignitaries attended a hike on the Buckeye Trail through Caesar Creek. (Volunteer Terry Staley and the Trail Team had our trails in top shape during this event).
- NCACC Meeting with Director's office, ODNR Assistant Chief, District Manager and Park Manager
- Volunteer Meteor Shower Planning Meeting
- Recorded Nature's Corner TV show "How to Set Up a Bird Feeding Station"
- Volunteer Raptor Team Training
- Volunteer Nature Center Host Training
- Refurbished & inventoried all NC archery equipment
- Tree Academy with Div. of Forestry
- Meeting for Warren County non-profit groups

February

February work on 2 high priority 2020 goals; the new NC pond and park kiosks, started in earnest. A new group dedicated to monitoring and education of water quality within the park held their first meeting. Training with representatives from

Fort Ancient and Caesar Creek on iNaturalist was held. Erin conducted three CPR/1st Aid classes. A bridge, Red Cedar on the Peninsula Trail, was replaced as part of a BSA Eagle Project. Plus, near the end of the month, we held a recorder breaking Winter Blues Hike event & the 2020 OCVN Class Meet & Greet.

- A Boy Scout finished his Eagle Project: Rebuild of Bridge Red Cedar
- Trail Workday: Start to refurbish the new Nature Center pond area
- OCVN Course Planning with NCACC
- Erin taught CPR/1st Aid to Caesar Creek Staff
- iNaturalist App Training
- Raptor Training
- Tree Academy with Div. of Forestry
- Erin taught CPR/1st Aid to ODNR staff at Buck Creek
- Water Quality Team Meeting
- Recorded Nature's Corner TV show "Animal's Strategies for Cold Weather Survival"
- Erin taught CPR/1st Aid to ODNR staff at East Fork
- Trail Workday: Prepare for Winter Hike
- Winter Blues Hike & Bluebird Box Workshop – Record breaking attendance!
- Refresh Information for 7 Kiosks
- OCVN 2020 Meet and Greet
- Formulated the Animal Care Notebook

March

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic much of March's Nature Center activities were postponed or cancelled. Activities that did occur were done by small groups, working outside, already using "social distancing" methods due to equipment safety. These include clearing invasive plants from and refurbishing the trail at the new NC Pond site. As well as moving all the materials for the new Mountain Bike Trail (MBT) bridge ~2 miles from the Harveysburg Loop Trail Head to the work site. We also started to update the State Logos on all the Way-Point Maps in the park and installing the last of the Bridge Tree Tags. Lastly, before the NC was closed, the first day of OCVN classes was held and we conducted our monthly Water Quality Team Meeting.

- Trail Learn & Do: Invasive Plants
- First Day of OCVN Classes
- Water Quality Team Meeting
- Trail Workday: Continue work on the new Nature Center pond area
- Preparation for Maple Syrup Breakfast
- Maple Syrup Breakfast: **Postponed**
- Updated State Logo stickers on Fifty Springs Loop Trail & Wellman area trails
- Installed 5 Tree Tags for Fifty Springs Loop Trail bridges

April

Into the second month of the COVID-19 pandemic slow-down activities that did occur were done by small groups, working outside, using “social distancing” methods. These included cleaning up beds around the Nature Center and finishing the update to State logo stickers for all the Way-Point Maps in the park.

- Weed beds around the Nature Center
- Finish installing State logo stickers for the Campgrounds Way Point Maps
- Green Up Day: **Cancelled**
- Maple Syrup Breakfast: **Cancelled**
- CCNCA Board Tele-meetings

May

Third month of the COVID-19 pandemic slow-down; most activities have stopped at the Nature Center and transformed into mostly computer work. So far only a tele-conference Association Board meeting and a more general volunteer tele-conference occurred this month. One of the initiatives started at the board meeting was for board members to send email notes to general members of the Caesar Creek Nature Center volunteer group. This initiative will help keep the volunteers engaged until the park can re-open.

- Virtual Passport to Fishing Program with Mary Haven
- Tool sharpening and maintenance
- CCNCA Board Tele-meeting
- Cast Iron Cooking: **Cancelled**
- Memorial Day Campout: **Cancelled**
- TGIF, Volunteer Tele-meeting

June

Fourth month of the COVID-19 pandemic slow-down; the park is starting to re-open per state guidelines. Early in the month, a water quality team kayak outing was held to collect lake water samples for quality analysis; currently the lake water is fairly “clean”. A new initiative to sponsor and help create an illustrated storybook about the Eagles of Caesar Creek was kicked-off. Plus, the Nature Center Trail Team and the MBT Trail team joined forces to build a new bridge on the Harveysburg Loop MBT. Furthermore, the Nature Center Grounds were cleaned-up and groomed to prepare for re-opening, an effort to create a new association web presence is on-going, and a project to provide better trash cans continues. Lastly, work to update the state-wide trail attributes database for 6 parks (Grand Lake St. Mary, Lake Lorame, Huston Woods, Sycamore, Paint Creek & Caesar Creek) is on-going.

- TGIF, Volunteer Tele-Meeting
- Water Quality Team Lake Sampling Kayak Outing
- Erin recorded a Pod-cast with WHIO - “Parks and Watercraft Info for the public, focus on Water Safety”
- Trails Database Entry for upcoming Trails App
- Trail Team Survey Hike

- CCNCA Board, Tele-meeting; Park Trash Can Project
- Recorded Nature's Corner TV show "Boat Launching on the Lake"
- Kick-off Meeting for Caesar Creek Storybook Project
- Picked up PWC & archery supplies from Columbus
- New steps installed on Sugar Maple Loop of the Perimeter Trail
- Finished MBT Water Crossing H6.5
- Caesar Creek Storybook Project Meeting
- Nature Center Grounds Clean-up
- CCNCA Board, Tele-Meeting; Update to Association's Website
- Youth Fishing Derby: **Cancelled**

July

The new initiative through the Friends group is to sponsor and help create an illustrated storybook about the Eagles of Caesar Creek as well as our effort to procure lighter trash cans for the Park Beach area continued in July. Also, the Nature Center Playscape was refurbished as part of a list of maintenance improvements for the Nature Center. A boy scout completed his Eagle Project by replacing Bridge Hickory on the Fifty Springs Loop Trail. As part of the ongoing effort to update the state-wide trail attributes database, a shakedown hike on the Buckeye Trail that runs through Caesar Creek State Park was held, and MS Teams video conferences were conducted to review the Sycamore Trails and Hueston Woods State Park survey plans. Also, the new initiative to update the internet offering by the Caesar Creek Nature Center Association (CCNCA) continued. Lastly, a trip to Sycamore State Park to conduct trail surveys was completed.

- Nature Center Playscape Refurbished
- BSA Completed Bridge Hickory
- Buckeye Trail Shake-down Survey Hike
- Watercraft Safety Podcast with Radio station
- MSTeams VC on Sycamore Trails Survey
- Sycamore State Park Trail Mapping
- CCNCA Board Meeting; Eagles of Caesar Creek Storybook
- MSTeams VC on Hueston Woods Trails Survey

August

The park attendance numbers are still up, especially on the hiking trails and public beach. Officer Dice, Erin and Ron recorded the next Nature's Corner show. The topic was Beach Safety, Sunsets and Sandcastles. We explained the park rules at the beach and also encouraged people to have fun and be safe. A new bridge on the Ward Road Loop Mountain Bike Trail was installed early in the month. Also, maintenance/improvement work was done on the Nature Center Playscape and the Raptor Enclosure. Improvements include work on a new monarch caterpillar/butterfly features for the Playscape and gutters/rainwater collection for the Raptor Enclosure.

- Trail Workday; Installed MBT Bridge W10
- Meet with Eagle Scout candidate Colt to review project; Kiosk
- Meteor Shower Campout: **Cancelled**
- MSTeams VC Caesar Creek Volunteer Meeting

- Project Workday; Playscape & Raptor Enclosure Improvements
- Record Nature's Corner TV show "Life is a Beach at Ohio State Parks"
- Caesar Creek Eagle Storybook Draft Review Meeting
- MSTeams VC Caesar Creek Volunteer Meeting

September

Work continues on projects to improve the Nature Center and park program offerings. The Hobie Cat's trailer was moved to the NC and every watercraft was inspected; 36 individual repairs/replacements were done to bring the watercraft back to specifications. Erin supported the creation of an ODNR Webinar pertaining to the Turtles of Ohio; the program was available "live" and also as a saved YouTube offering. Erin also recorded "Nature's Corner" with Officer Dice on the topic of Vultures. Stairs leading to the Horseshoe Falls and the Swinging Bridge on the Horseshoe Falls Trail were refurbished and 5 fallen trees were removed from Wellman Area hiking trails. NCACC Team continues work on Seymour the Sycamore illustrated book. Later in the month Erin and Ron conducted Hobie Cat program training for volunteers, and Erin & Rick held a "Learn and Do" on how to prepare and cook freshly caught fish. The new CCNCA Website was launched. Bob Thobaban held a Bird Banding session for OCVNs near the end of the month.

- Labor Day Weekend Camp-Out: **Cancelled**
- Video conference with OSU Extension for future OCVN

Courses

- Helped Create & Posted "Ohio Turtles" Webinar
- Project Workday; Repair Hobie Cats
- Repair stairs on Horseshoe Falls Trail
- Cleared 5 fallen trees from the Wellman Area hiking trails
- Recorded Nature's Corner TV show "Vultures"
- Erin supported Strategic Planning session in Columbus
- Hobie Cat Program Training for Volunteers
- Erin met with Big Trees Ohio Organization to register "Seymour"
- Passport to Fishing Training
- Birding Program - Fall migration and bird banding
- Fish Species Survey on the Little Miami River
- New CCNCA Website was launched
- Chainsaw sharpening techniques webinar for volunteers

October

Fall has come to Caesar Creek State Park and work continues on projects to improve the Nature Center, the park and to refresh/improve volunteer's program knowledge. The month started with Director Mertz camping in the campground and visit to the park. The month ended with our Halloween Campout. The Trail Team concentrated on the Campground trails the first

half of the month including refurbishing a bridge/stairs structure on The Point Trail and replacing a bridge on Deer Run Trail. Also, a Boy Scout started work on a new canoe rack at the Campground Beach for his Eagle project. The Caesar Creek Collaborative also was awarded an Ohio EPA grant to complete a 9-element nutrient reduction plan for 5 sub-watersheds of Caesar Creek Lake. Later in the month, the Trail Team cleaned up the Perimeter Trail near the Furnas Shores Trail Head including refurbishing 2 bridges. And on a rainy day, Erin and volunteers cleaned and organized inside the Nature Center while practicing good Social Distancing Guidelines. A draft proposal to make a part of the 50 Springs Trail wheelchair accessible was submitted.

- Trail Workday; Tool Inventory and Repairs
- Trail Workday; Campground Trails Survey and Groomed 2 Trails
- Director Mertz camped in the campgrounds and visited the park
- Announcement of the Ohio EPA Grant Award to the Caesar Creek Collaborative
- Groomed 2 Trails & Refurbish a Bridge/Stairs at the Park Campgrounds
- Meeting for the Caesar Creek Collaborative
- NC Sheds Reorganization & Prefabricated Bridge Materials
- NCACC Board Meeting
- 50 Springs trail proposal
- BSA Eagle Project @ the Campground Beach
- Replaced bridge on the Campground's Deer Run Trail
- Project Workday; Prepared Raptor Enclosure for Winter
- Perimeter Hike: **Cancelled**
- Clean up Perimeter Trail @ Furnas Shores TH
- Halloween Campout at the Park Campgrounds
- Erin met with Sugarcreek Township parks to discuss the Swinging Bridge Project
- Video meeting for Caesar Creek Collaboration TV recording prep
- Prefabricated replacement for Bridge Catalpa & clear tree from Bridge Butternut.

November

Early in the month, work to upgrade the Hobie Cat Trailer was started. Unfortunately, with a resurgence of Pandemic cases in Ohio, many planned volunteer workdays on the Hobie Cat Trailor have been postponed. However, due to the easy of using Social Distancing techniques, trail maintenance/improvement has continued during November. Bridge Catalpa was replaced on the 50 Springs Trail, and Bridge Coffeetree was refurbished on the Perimeter Trail. Trail kiosks were surveyed and the materials on the NC and Wellman Area Trail Head kiosks were updated. New Nature Center

signs were installed at the Perimeter Trail entrance to the Bluebird Path. Erin met with the producer of the Bluejacket outdoor play to discuss creating an outdoor version of the story of Caesar. Water Quality Consortium issues/progress information was added to the new CCNCA Website. The Trail Team continued to clear trees from the Wellman Area trails & from the Perimeter Trail near the Day Lodge; 18 trees were cleared in total

- Trail Team Workday; Replace Bridge Catalpa on the 50 Spring Trail
- Project Workday; Refurbish Hobie Cat Trailor #1
- Recorded Nature's Corner TV show "Soil & Water Conservation"
- Trail Team Workday; Kiosk Survey, Trail Cleanup, Bridge Repair, New NC Sign
- Zoom CCNCA Board Meeting
- Cast Iron Cooking Demonstration: **Cancelled**
- Trail Team Workday; Refresh Kiosk Info, Groom & Repaired Trail Signs
- Erin met with Bluejacket Producer on Caesar's Story
- Erin Recorded/Posted "Witch Hazel" Program on NC FB
- Water Quality information added to the new CCNCA Website.
- Zoom Meeting for Volunteers
- Trail Team Workday; Clear fallen trees off Wellman Area/Perimeter Trails

December

The Trail Team continues to survey and clean-up trails through-out the park as well as assist Erin in validating the trail data that will be included in the new State-Wide Mobile Map App by DETOUR. Erin also has created Program Videos beyond the Nature's Corner series. This month she posted the video *Hunting Art & Hiking Safety* to the Natures Center's Facebook page that combined a short discussion on hiking safety during hunting season at Caesar Creek State Park as well as a demonstration on how to make objects of art from small animal bones. Also posted on the Nature Center's Facebook page; a Spoon Carving demonstration video as well as a Soil & Water Conservation Program video. Based on the surveys done earlier in the month, the Trail Team removed 32 fallen trees from the Perimeter Trail, 50 Springs Loop Trail and trails at the Park Campgrounds

- The Caesar Creek Trails are being recognized in many articles!
- Trail Team Workdays; Trail Surveys
- Erin Recorded/Posted Program Video "Hunting Art & Hiking Safety"
- Erin Recorded/Posted Program Video "Spoon Carving"

- Trail Team MStTeams Session; Validate Mobile Map App Data - Kick Off
- Warren County Soil & Water Conservation District Video Posted on NC FB
- Holiday Traditions; **Cancelled**
- Trail Team Workday; Clean-up trails based on the earlier surveys
- Zoom VC CCNCA Board Meeting
- Erin Completes Map App Data Final Validation
- Webinar on Bald Eagles - Record attendance
- NCACC's website updated

Trail Improvements Summary

- 52 Miles of Trails Groomed to Accessibility Standards
- 8 - Bridges Built/Refurbished
- All Hiking Kiosks' Display Materials Refreshed Quarterly
- 42 - Informal Signs Installed
- 112 - Fallen Trees Removed
- 58 - New State Park Logos installed
- 3 - Learn & Do Training Sessions
- 1 - Canoe Tree Installed
- Trail Improvement Grant Submitted