

Ripples

A Publication for Members and Friends
Killbuck Watershed Land Trust

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KWLT annual gathering on Oct. 21 will showcase Brinkhaven Barrens

Dear Supporters of KWLT,

It's hard to believe that summer is over already. With the days getting noticeably shorter, only a few weeks remain until the end of another season of explosive growth in the natural world. It seems like as autumn quickens and the landscape transforms, our lives and schedules get busier, too.

As president of the Killbuck Watershed Land Trust Board of Trustees, I would like to invite board members, landowners, and anyone interested in the ongoing work at Brinkhaven Barrens to come have a look at the preserve in southwest Holmes County this autumn. The annual KWLT gathering will be a bit different this year, and will showcase this property purchased and protected by KWLT and containing a unique natural area, an oak barrens.

If you are up to a short hike along a quiet township road and the Holmes County Trail,

please join us on Saturday, Oct. 21, for a glimpse of autumn colors and a look at this unique natural area.

Now that the Holmes County Trail is completed, countless walkers and bicyclists, as well as buggies and horses, will pass by the Brinkhaven Oak Barrens regularly. KWLT purchased the 114-acre property in 2004 using grants from the Clean Ohio Program as well as private contributions.

The 81-acre parcel containing the south barrens is predominately oak woodland with a prairie barren opening of a little more than four acres. That parcel, whose southern edge borders Richland Township Road 13, has a parking area for trail access. The adjacent 33-acre parcel is along the Holmes County Trail. It has a mixed oak woodland with a much higher quality barren of roughly four acres.

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Kaufman farm responds to tender care

Fixer-uppers are all the rage. Find a neglected property that has potential. Purchase it, perhaps at a bargain price. Let your imagination run wild. Then commit the time, hard labor and money to coax your diamond out of the rough.

Nearly three decades after purchasing his fixer-upper in Auburn Township south of Sugarcreek, Adrian Kaufman is still hard at work. For him, ownership of the property, just shy of 100 acres, isn't about creating a cozy spot where he could live out his retirement. It's certainly not about selling the greatly upgraded site and cashing in.

For the Sugarcreek tax consultant who has spent 40 years in that vocation, the Tuscarawas County property is a place to nourish his farm-roots and to be a good neighbor as he

maintains and improves the land.

In the 1970s Adrian visited the farm and met its owners, three elderly siblings who had been reared there. The century-old farmhouse had no indoor plumbing and was heated by a potbelly stove in the middle of the living room. Perhaps fortunately, the occupants didn't worry about succumbing to carbon monoxide poisoning because there were so many holes and cracks

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Promoting, protecting and preserving our natural heritage

Kaufman's farm has evolved into a natural gem

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in the uninsulated walls that air blew freely through.

"It was a very primitive property even in comparison with my childhood," recalls Adrian, now 74, who grew up with seven siblings on an Amish farm at the south edge of Sugarcreek. He befriended the owners, fell in love with the property, and in 1989 purchased it while giving a life estate so the surviving sibling could live on the farm as long as the elderly man was able.

"My initial goal in buying the farm was to make life simpler for him," said Adrian, who went right to work, utilizing a spring to provide inside running water for the first time and making many other improvements. Eventually the decrepit frame home became more comfortable for its lone occupant. More popular than Adrian's home upgrades was the garage he had built near the barn. "Art had an old car, and I mean OLD, that he used to go to town," remembers Adrian. "He really liked that garage."

At the same time Adrian was busy trying to reclaim what nature had retaken over the years. The fields were grown over with multiflora and poison ivy while weeds of all varieties thrived right up to the walls of the house. He battled them with a Weed Eater and, at first, with chemicals.

Adrian planted 1,500 white pine trees on a steep hill to prevent both erosion and weed growth. After clearing the thickets of multiflora on an opposite hill he built a cattle shed and brought in a small herd of beef cattle to graze.

Several years after Adrian purchased the property, Art became unable to live in the isolated home alone. He went to a nursing home and died two weeks later.

Over the years Adrian has continued to upgrade the property whose access is a narrow gravel lane more than half a mile long. A year ago he had a 200-foot well drilled atop a hill. With power from four solar panels, a pump keeps the cattle trough filled with water. Excess well water is piped into to a large pond Adrian had built behind the house, stocked with fish and rimmed on the house side with repurposed foundation stones.

Along with the garage and cattle shed, Adrian has added a machinery shed for



ADRIAN KAUFMAN (left) shows KWLTL Board President Randy Carmel the pond he built, stocked with fish and bordered with gravel to deter muskrats.

his mowing equipment and a root cellar (pictured on Page 1). He has a grove of nut trees and dabbled for a few years with fruit trees, but found them problematic. "People want perfect fruits and vegetables, but they don't want them sprayed. That's just not possible," he says.

The house has been extensively rehabbed, retaining its original slate roof and stone and brick foundation with new siding and trim covering the old frame. While there are no big projects on the horizon, Adrian wants to do some work on the bank barn, which sits near out-buildings erected decades ago including a smokehouse and chicken house.

A bachelor, Adrian thought years ago that he might retire to the farm, a hobby that used to occupy his time two days a week. Now, though, with the farm long protected by a conservation easement

held by KWLTL, he thinks it would provide a good ownership opportunity for a young couple someday when he's gone.

"The land is too chopped up (to support sustainable farming), but I keep dreaming of ways maybe somebody could take up a small cottage industry out here," he says. The current tenant works a construction job.

Of economic development, Adrian says he's not opposed to it, but "I like it done in an orderly fashion. I get irritated when I see factories built in cornfields."

He looks out over the verdant land and recalls, "I was out here brush-hogging on a beautiful fall day and I thought to myself, what could I do that's any more enjoyable than what I'm doing right at this minute?"

His conclusion: absolutely nothing.

Melody L. Snure, Ripples editor

Your KWLTL membership fosters land conservation

Your membership in the Killbuck Watershed Land Trust helps to maintain the rural atmosphere that has made our area a desirable and unique place to live. Your dues will be used for conservation education, public outreach, land acquisition and management, and legal action to monitor and maintain conservation easements

Annual membership levels are: Friend, \$50; Steward, \$100; Conservator, \$250; and Protector, \$500. To join KWLTL or to renew your membership for 2017, send a check payable to Killbuck Watershed Land Trust to Killbuck Watershed Land Trust, 133 S. Market St., Wooster, OH 44691.

Killbuck Watershed Land Trust is a tax-exempt organization pursuant to Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Donations are tax deductible.

White snakeroot: lovely, but deadly

Soon the autumnal equinox occurs, that time when daylight and darkness are almost equal and the noon sun hangs straight above the equator. Summer ends and the season of fall begins.

Why “fall”? Was it shortened from “fall of the leaf” as the season was called in 1500s England?

Even when autumn officially begins the signs of change have been evident for several weeks. The angle of light is different, giving the trees a golden hue even though few leaves have actually changed color. Here and there a few maples are beginning to show some reds and yellow, and the linden is slowly turning from green to yellow. And of course, the black gum has some leaves of crimson. The gum can’t wait for autumn to display its colors.

Likewise in the insect world there is a winding down; that preparation for the end of summer. Last evening, with the temperature at 70 degrees, I biked along a wood where in August’s heat dozens of katydids called out their names. Now instead of a multitude rasping I heard only two. And their songs were a half-hearted “katy-de” instead of the robust “katy-didn’t” of a month ago. Surprisingly, I saw several late fireflies blinking their lights over a hayfield. Even their light seemed weak and unsure.

The tall fall flowers, however, are thriving. Night before last our daughter brought us a bouquet of assorted wild-flowers. She had tall and flat-topped goldenrods, a deep purple tall ironweed, a late and lovely lavender Joe-pye weed, and wild sunflowers.

To add white to the yellows and purple of the bouquet, she brought white snake-root with its sprays of cottony-white

flowers.

White snakeroot is an interesting plant, and a deadly one. It is a plant that brought much grief to pioneer families. Nine-year-old Abraham Lincoln’s mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, died from snakeroot poisoning. Since the two- to three-foot tall snakeroot grows along woods’ edges and in clearings it was



grazed in late summer and autumn by the settlers’ cows. The poison in snakeroot, tremetol, is fat-soluble so it is concentrated in milk and was passed on to the families that drank the milk. The poisoned milk caused a disease called “milksick.” In animals the disease was called “trembles.”

During the nineteenth century the dreaded disease would periodically appear and the frontier doctors had no cure or idea what caused it. Twenty-five percent of its victims died within ten days of the onset of the first symptoms of milksick which were severe abdominal cramps and vomiting, followed by muscle fatigue. In a few days, they entered a coma that often led to death.

Although the mysterious disease baffled the physicians, farmers noticed that milksick most often occurred in late

summer and early autumn in dry years. They suspected their animals were eating plants they wouldn’t touch in normal rainfall years.

In 1841 John Rowe, an Ohio farmer, brewed a batch of snakeroot leaves and fed the extract to a pig which died 12 hours later. Rowe then offered snakeroot to a steer and a calf that refused to eat the plants until all their other feed was withheld for several days. Finally the animals ate the snakeroot, developed trembles, and died. Rowe announced his discovery in a local paper, but because he hadn’t kept detailed notes of his research, the medical profession, unfortunately for the disease’s sufferers, dismissed Rowe’s conclusions. As late as 1906 a death from milksick occurred in Erie County, Ohio.

It was not until 1909 that botanist and eccentric Bowling Green State College professor Edwin L. Moseley became interested in milksick and ran careful animal tests. He proved beyond doubt that white snakeroot was the culprit, the plant farmers had suspected for many years. By then the disease had almost died out as more land was cleared and snakeroot retreated from the clearings. The increase in dairy herd size helped too, for the milk of the occasional adventurous cow that ate snakeroot was diluted with untainted milk, making it safe to drink.

In 1929 researchers finally isolated and identified snakeroot’s poison. They named it tremetol, likely for the tremors it caused. Tremetol is a complex, fat-soluble alcohol.

The white snakeroot in our bouquet doesn’t look deadly, but I’m not going to feed it to the pigs.

David Kline, KWL T Trustee

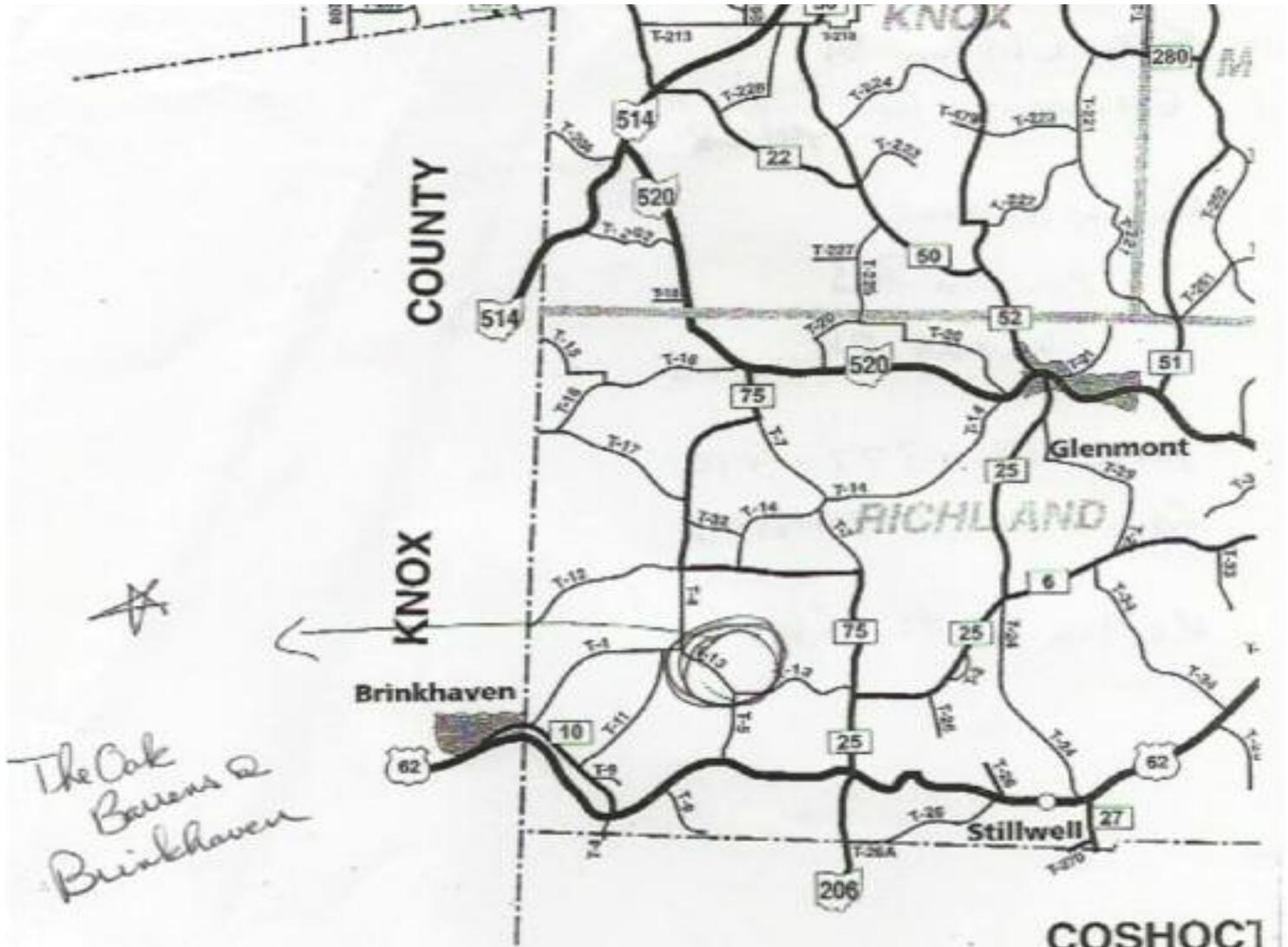
Mariola will be presenter during Science Cafe series in Wooster

KWL T trustee Matt Mariola, assistant professor of environmental studies, sociology and anthropology at The College of Wooster, will be a presenter in this year’s free Science Cafe series.

Mariola will discuss “What Do We Mean By Sustainable Agriculture? Reflections from southern Chile” at 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 2. The presentation, followed by public discussion, will be

held at Spoon Market & Deli, 144 W. Liberty St., Wooster.

Mariola lives on a farm south of Wooster with his wife Deborah Galaz, a native of Chile, and their two children. They lived in southern Chile during the 2015-16 academic year while he conducted research among peasant farmers and others involved in local small-farm communities.



Take Route 62 to reach Oak Barrens parking lot

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To reach the KWLTL Oak Barrens parking lot on Twp. Rd. 13, use State Route 62 and pass Stillwell coming from the east or Brinkhaven coming from the west. Twp. Rd. 5 ends at Route 62 on the north side of the road; look for a sign posted by KWLTL on Oct. 21 to help in locating this hard-to-see road. It drops quickly down a hill and is easy to miss.

The map above can be helpful if you plan to travel to the Barrens without the help of GPS or a smart phone. Follow Twp. Rd. 5 until it dead ends at Twp. Rd. 13, then turn left and go through the tunnel and up the hill about a quarter mile to the parking lot on the right.

To reach the site by bicycle, access it from the recently completed Holmes County Rail Trail. Park at the Brinkhaven

access just south of town at the parking lot for the Bridge of Dreams, the longest covered bridge in Ohio. Ride north along the Rail Trail toward Glenmont. Pass through the tunnel under Route 62. After another mile or so the trail crosses a small bridge over Twp. Rd. 13. The first of two barren openings will be about 100 yards beyond on the west (left) side of the trail. It is difficult to access from the trail. The second, or north barrens, is another 300 yards or so on the left. This is where scheduled maintenance will be completed on Oct. 21 by Ohio Natural Area and Preserves Association volunteers who will work until 3 p.m.

Turn around and ride back the way you came to the Twp. Rd. 13 bridge. About 50 yards on the left is an easy way to get onto Twp. Rd. 5; go left and ride through

the tunnel on Twp. Rd. 13 as you ascend the hill to the KWLTL parking lot about 200 yards up the hill on the right.

The bad news: Cell phone coverage is spotty in the area. The good news: a Porta-Jon will be provided at the parking area on Twp. Rd. 13 where we will begin gathering at 3 p.m. to take a walk that will last about an hour and cover less than a mile out and back.

Plan to attend the annual KWLTL gathering at Brinkhaven Oak Barrens at 3 p.m. on October 21 for an informal event highlighting this unique property with a pleasant walk down the Holmes County Trail. The hike will begin at 3:30 p.m.

For further information, please contact me at 330-763-4030.

*Randy Carmel, President
KWLTL Board of Trustees*