



# Ripples

A Publication for Members and Friends  
Killbuck Watershed Land Trust

Volume 7, Issue 4

Spring 2018

## Inside this issue

Larksong farm	1, 4
President's column	1, 2
Our summer intern	2
Support KWLT!	2
Yellow flowers	3

## Board of Trustees

Randy Carmel, President  
Robb Stutzman, Vice President  
Linda Bush, Secretary  
Ron Holtman, Treasurer

Maryanna Biggio  
Neal Caldwell  
Bob Hunter  
David Kline  
Matt Mariola  
Betsy Sparr  
H. Dewey Thompson

Killbuck Watershed Land Trust  
133 S. Market St.  
Wooster, OH 44691  
carmel.randall@gmail.com

Robb Stutzman, Vice President  
2171-B Eagle Pass  
Wooster, OH 44691  
Phone: 330-264-6115  
Fax: 330-262-5729  
www.killbucklandtrust.org

Melody L. Snure, Ripples Editor  
jgrad72@yahoo.com

Killbuck Watershed Land Trust  
is a tax exempt organization  
pursuant to Section 501(c)3 of  
the IRS Code.

## President's Message

# Spring brings an explosion of growth

It always seems like this time of year is a mad rush of keeping up with the explosion of plant and animal growth around the farm, including transplanting seedlings, weeding and readying the garden. I am having trouble just keeping the yard mowed between rain events, and as I write this I have enough "hay" to rake and use as mulch or compost.

Of course, spending time outdoors has taken

up a much greater share of time, with the wildflowers blooming and migrating songbirds to view, and flower beds to tend to, consuming the long periods of daylight present. Getting the barn cleaned out and preventing the barn swallows from making a mess of implements left lying below their nests is an annual task.

The swallows are worth the trouble as they

**Continued on Page 2**

## Meet the Klines and Larksong farm

One hundred years ago this spring, Jerry Schlabach bought a farm between Fredericksburg and Mount Hope at a Holmes County Sheriff's auction. Today that farm is home to the third, fourth and fifth generations of the family. Schlabach's grandson David Kline Jr., and Elsie, David's wife of 50 years, recently moved into the grandfather house next to a newly built home occupied by farm co-owners Kevin Miller, his wife Ann (the Klines' middle daughter), and their four children.

While readers may not have met David Kline, many know him through his columns about the family's organic farm, Larksong, that have appeared in *Ripples* for the past seven years.

David's father moved to the farm in 1929 and his son and namesake has lived there all his life except two years during the Vietnam War when he was drafted and did alternative service in a Cleveland hospital.

If Jerry Schlabach could see



**KEVIN MILLER** uses an eight-horse team to work a cornfield on the Holmes County farm he and his wife Ann own jointly with her parents, David and Elsie Kline. In the background are the farm's grandfather house (left) and main home.

the farm today he might feel a familiarity with his purchase of a century ago. Thanks to the Klines' Amish lifestyle the verdant, rolling land continues to be worked with teams of horses, the homes are heated with wood cut from the property, and much of the family's food is produced

on site.

Since 2000 the 120-acre Kline farm has been certified organic, with a Jersey herd of 53 milk cows and 15 to 20 replacement heifers anchoring the diverse operation. All of the grain – 16 acres of corn and 12 of oats – is

**Continued on Page 4**

*Promoting, protecting and preserving our natural heritage*

# KWLT is getting a helping hand this summer

Continued from Page 1

keep the yard clear of the explosion of insects at this time. Spring is a splendid time of year for those who like to stay busy outdoors.

At Killbuck Watershed Land Trust, we are welcoming a summer intern to help with many bits of unfinished business. Jacob Pries has already helped KWLT lay out a new brochure,



**RANDY CARMEL** (left) goes over some paperwork outside the KWLT office in Wooster with summer intern Jacob Pries, who lives with his family in Wadsworth.

and is researching environmental/conservation grants available to nonprofit organizations. He will be helping with organizing our files and monitoring easements, including several new easements that need baseline reports completed.

When he is ready to get out of the office and visit our two preserves, Baker Wetlands and Brinkhaven Oak Barrens, putting up new signage along the boundaries will be among his tasks.

It promises to be a busy season and having a seasonal employee should allow us to get many tasks completed that have been on the back burner. Welcome to Killbuck Watershed Land Trust, Jacob.

*Randy Carmel, President  
KWLT Board of Trustees*

## Jacob Pries says he's ready to 'make an impact' here

If the tenacity Jacob Pries demonstrated in finding an internship represents his work ethic, Killbuck Watershed Land Trust stands to accomplish a lot this summer.

Jacob graduated in 2017 from The College of Wooster and recently completed his first year of law school at the University of Toledo. He wanted to find a summer experience that would mesh with his love of the outdoors yet keep him close enough to his Wadsworth family's home that he could commute daily.

Jacob's interest in land conservation led him to one of his favorite Wooster professors, KWLT board member Matt Mariola. While KWLT wasn't offering a summer internship, nor had it ever offered one in the past, Jacob was undeterred. His pitch led to a conversation between Mariola and KWLT Board President

Randy Carmel, then between Carmel and members of the KWLT board of trustees.

Jacob successfully applied for an outside grant to fund his internship and the board approved his summer in the KWLT office. He and Carmel will visit landowners who have conservation easements held by KWLT, and Jacob will organize mountains of paper records in anticipation of converting the office to electronic files.

Carmel also has arranged for Jacob to spend time as an observer in the Wayne County Planning Department to better equip him with knowledge about land use regulations and challenges.

An avid fisherman and waterfowl hunter, Jacob is passionate about preservation of public lands which, he said, "have never been under attack more than right now." He feels blessed to have the opportunity this summer to "get out into the world" and make a difference. "I'd like to help make an impact in this community," he said.

*Melody L. Snure, Ripples editor*

### Support land conservation: join KWLT today

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 2018 membership dues will be used for:

- Conservation education
- Public outreach
- Land acquisition and management
- Legal action to monitor and maintain conservation easements

Annual membership levels are:

- Friend, \$50
- Steward, \$100
- Conservator, \$250
- Protector, \$500

To become a new member or to renew your membership for 2018, write a check payable to Killbuck Watershed Land Trust and send it 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.

# Time again for those yellow flowers

In the Book of Genesis God told Adam that, as a penalty for eating of the forbidden fruit, the ground will bring forth “thorns also and thistles.” The livestock farmers here in the Central Highlands of Ohio think several more species should be added to that cursed list of thorn-in-the-side weeds. These problem weeds that are pricking me right now are relatively new to this region, appearing only in the last three decades, but they are obviously here to stay.

I will list only two – bulbous buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*) and Kentucky-31 fescue. The local farmers call the buttercups, with a sigh of resignation in their voice, “those yellow flowers.” These species are from two diverse families but are equally successful in invading and thriving in permanent and good pastures.

While many problem weeds can be controlled, or at least held at bay in permanent pastures with carefully managed intensive grazing and timely mowing, buttercup cannot. It manages to evade all control attempts and comes back stronger and meaner than ever. Even the farmers who have used 2-4-D weed killer on the buttercups eventually admit defeat. The buttercups appear to be dead for that year; nevertheless, the following spring they are back with ferocity. Pulling it is like pulling a wart; you have to get every bit of its many-tendriled root system or it'll spring back.

Buttercups are particularly prolific where horses graze. The single-stomached horse seems to stratify the seeds. Where it drops its manure the grasses are slightly suppressed, the buttercup seeds sprout, and the fertility is there to boost their growth.

The tragedy of it all is that some of these problem forbs are here because of the follies of agribusiness. For the first half of the twentieth century the egg

market was the small-scale farmer's primary profit-maker, and these farms produced all the grain needed for laying flocks of three to five hundred hens. A local feed mill, Gold Star of Wooster, manufactured a protein supplement called Egg Elements. Farmers fed whole-grain shelled corn and oats along with the protein supplement and oyster shells. Hens and farmers flourished.

Then in the early 1960s some farmers expanded their laying flocks beyond the scale that their farms could supply with grains, so they started buying all-mash, a complete feed mixture of ground

Kentucky-31 fescue seems almost benevolent. When we started farming in the late 1960s we reseeded a 2.5-acre piece that had been pig pasture for too long and was populated by mostly burdock, elderberry, and bull thistle. The local soil and water conservation district gave us advice on managing the two open waterways flowing through the paddock.

I had disked and seeded the field to bluegrass and white and red clover. The technician suggested I seed the waterways with K-31 fescue. Murray insisted that it would hold the soil in place and

then, removing his pipe for emphasis, he looked me in the eye, adding, “And David, it will not spread.”

The newly seeded pasture was divided into three paddocks grazed by six to eight brood sows. This was not enough to effectively graze it, and the fescue thrived. Then I discovered (by accident, not design) a way to suppress K-31 that allows more desir-

able grasses and legumes to gain a foothold in the heavy sod.

All winter and into May we allowed a group of yearling heifers access to the pig pasture, and they cropped the fescue as fast as it emerged. Bluegrass began to appear, I top-seeded ryegrasses and clovers and it evolved into a beautiful pasture. The fescue never recovered. It merely moved to the roadsides and ditches where the county and township radial-arm rotary mowers remove all brushy growth and K-31 finds an unobstructed home.

Meanwhile, here in late spring I'm seeing a few patches of yellow flowers in the nice pasture ... sigh.

*David Kline, KWLTL Trustee*



**THIS IS THE CABIN** at Larksong where David Kline goes to write. The only yellow flowers in sight there on a recent day were beautiful tulips.

grains, protein, and minerals. Since the flocks were indoors, and soon after in cages, the egg yolks tended to be the color of low-end margarine, which was of serious concern to the savvy homemakers and chefs of that day. They remembered real eggs.

Sound science quickly came to their rescue. Yellow color was added to the all-mash and the yolks actually began to look edible again. Soon every farm that harbored those larger flocks was sprouting nice, yellow-flowered plants. The feed companies were putting the flowers and seeds, of bulbous buttercups in their layer mashes to add color to the yolks! The local commercial egg market was mostly gone by 1965, but we have a cursed reminder of those glory days.

Compared to the creeping buttercup,

# Organic farming is a way of life at Larksong

Continued from Page 1

stored to feed the animals that also include eight Belgian draft horses, two buggy horses, several ponies and a flock of chickens. On their own 120 acres (70 tillable) and another 30 they lease, the Klins raise hay and maintain 30 acres of rotational pasture.

The farm of daughter Emily, her husband David Hershberger and their two children adjoins to the east, while son Tim, his wife Katie and their four children own a farm five miles to the west. Son Michael, his wife Martha and their four sons live and farm a dozen miles south. Michael also works for Organic Valley, a farmer-owned cooperative based in La Farge, Wis. All of the Kline family farms produce for Organic Valley.

Only daughter Kristine is out of the area, operating an organic dairy farm with her husband Nathan and their nine children near Syracuse, N.Y.

David continues to enjoy fieldwork but, with both knees replaced in recent years, he cedes much of the work to Kevin and Kevin's son Seth, now 12. On a recent spring day, Kevin was driving a team of eight Belgian geldings to prepare a cornfield with a spring-tooth harrow. With the recently developed multiple hitching method, animals and equipment are joined with nylon ropes and pulleys. Working four abreast in two rows, the huge horses can share the load more effectively and work longer between rests.

The new method also has a side benefit, David pointed out. "The nylon rope stretches and acts like a shock absorber so it's not as jarring when you hit a big rock."

While the tillable part of the farm provides the family's livelihood, material for many of David's columns is drawn from the flora and fauna of the pond, the winding stream and woodlands of the property. While not considered productive by agricultural standards, the diagonal piece of land across the road teems with life.

Family members enjoy birding, and trips to favorite migratory sites along Lake Erie are a special treat. But with the great diver-

sity of natural habitat on their own farm, the Klins needn't leave home to see dozens of species of birds. The backyard has an assortment of feeders that are filled regularly, and carefully thought-out plantings create a unique habitat for critters of all kinds.

Elsie is very passionate about gardening, saying, "If I couldn't walk I would do it on my knees, I love it so much." In addition to raising vegetables and fruit, she also loves flowers and has had great success cultivating tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*). Its reddish orange blossoms play a big role in attracting more than 20 species of butterflies to the Kline homestead.

Between the garden and the barn is an 1800s-era log cabin where David does his writing. He developed an extensive body of work while writing essays for publication in *Family Life*, an Amish magazine. "Great Possessions," a collection of essays, was published in 1990. His second book, "Scratching the Woodchuck," followed seven years later.

Wooster Book Company published "Letters from Larksong" in 2010. And last year

David's fourth book was released: "The Round of a Country Year." It features a preface by his long-time friend and mentor, acclaimed environmentalist Wendell Berry.

David is one of three founders of Killbuck Watershed Land Trust along with fellow KWLTL board members Maryanna Biggio and Ron Holtman. A conservation easement held by KWLTL gives his farm permanent protection from development.

He attributes his love of nature to his father and to the late Clarence F. Zuercher,



**MASON BEES** occupy nests under the eave of David Kline's writing cabin. The bees produce no honey or wax but are excellent pollinators. They nest in hollow bamboo canes gathered in woven baskets.

his teacher at Elm Grove School from grades 2-8 (Mr. Zuercher had taught David's father years before). David began keeping a journal during those years and became fascinated with writing. He continues that journal to this day; his new book features journal excerpts from the fall of 2014 through the summer of 2015.

For 17 years David and his family have produced *Farming Magazine*, a quarterly publication that celebrates "the joys of farming well and living well on a small and ecologically conscious scale." It features articles about rural matters as well as book reviews, home hints, poetry, recipes and a regular editorial, "Letter from Larksong."

*Farming's* recipes, a labor of love for Elsie, are among the most popular features of the magazine. As a result, Elsie will soon become a published author, with the anticipated fall release of a recipe collection.

One of the challenges for publication, she admits, has been adapting recipe instructions to meet the needs of beginning cooks. "A recipe we use might say something like, 'pour batter into pan and bake until the cake is done,'" she explains. "We know what 'done' means, but a new cook might not. It takes further explanation, like 'stick a toothpick into the middle (to test for doneness)'."

*Melody L. Snure, Ripples editor*

Note: *Farming Magazine* is sold over the counter at businesses in the Holmes County area or by subscription at PO Box 85, Mount Hope, OH 44660. David Kline's books are available online.



**UDDER CONTENTMENT** among the Jerseys in the dairy herd at Larksong