

Public Is Invited

Marietta Natural History Society

Spring 2002 Newsletter

Life Styles of the Scaled and Beautiful

Thursday, April 11, 7:00 PM
Thomas Hall, Room 124
Marietta College

Presenter: **Jim Davidson**

Jim Davidson, retired pathologist, is a naturalist who works with Columbus Metroparks. He will talk about local butterflies, their needs as adults and larval stages, mimicry, and other tricks they have up their wings.

Dysart

Thursday, June 13, 5:30 PM
meet at Hermann Fine Arts parking lot,
Marietta College

A trip to see this exquisite forest, never timbered and preserved as seen by early settlers. The 455-acre farm was deeded to Ohio University in 1962 and has been subject of much research. We will carpool about 75 minutes each way.

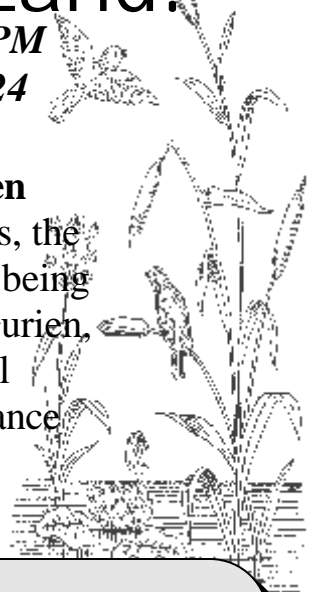


Wet Land is Good Land!

Thursday, May 9, 7:00 PM
Thomas Hall, Room 124
Marietta College

Presenter: **Molly Gurien**

Once branded as wastelands, the values of wetlands are now being better appreciated. Molly Gurien, of Ohio University, will talk to us about the importance of wetlands to humans and wildlife.



Special Programs

May 4 – Goose Run Watershed Day
“All in the ‘Shed” activities

June 20 – Ohio Archeology Week Flint-Napping session

See page 3 for details



Scarab Scenes. Spring marks the emergence of June beetles, members of the Scarab Family. Scarabs represent about 10% the world's 350,000 beetle species and play important roles as plant pollinators, scavengers, and crop pests (such as the Japanese beetle). The University of Nebraska State Museum's *Scarab Central* web site provides an illustrated guide to 23 scarab families with detailed information on their characteristics, distribution, ecology, and more. Scrounge around at www-museum.unl.edu/research/entomology/index.htm.

Beetle Craft. Many beetles have beautiful coloration patterns on their bodies, and now even the squeamish can hold and admire these critters without trepidation. From the Handcrafted Beetle Sculpture site you can purchase metallic reproductions (3 to 7 inches in length!) of a variety of beetles and other insects. If the size of these pieces isn't scary enough, the prices may be; but the spectacular quality of these metallic sculptures warrants a visit to <http://www.beetlesculpture.com/index.htm>.

JAPANESE HONEYSUCKLE by Marilyn Ortt Another Invasive Exotic Species

A number of years ago, I had spent a warm June afternoon energetically attacking Japanese honeysuckle which itself was 'attacking' young trees and other plants on a piece of property dedicated to wildlife habitat. Tired but feeling I had 'struck a blow' against this invasive exotic vine, I attended a 4-H meeting in the evening. As we were waiting for members to arrive, the mother of our hostess told me about her gardening projects. She was especially proud of a plant that she had nursed and fussed over – a very anemic-looking vine climbing a trellis next to her porch. You guessed it – Japanese honeysuckle!

Any doubts I had about beauty being in the eye of the beholder vanished. I had grown used to the surprise, if not outright disbelief, in the eyes of students on nature walks when I showed them the disfigured trunks of saplings and the dead vegetation shaded out by this honeysuckle. "But I love to suck the nectar out of the flowers" they often say.

Like many invasive exotic species, Japanese honeysuckle was brought to this country from eastern Asia and it was brought for at least two reasons. It was first introduced in the U.S. in 1806 for horticultural purposes. However, it was not reported as an escape as late as 1889 in Gray's Manual of Botany.

The drastic logging that occurred in the latter part of the 19th century in the upper part of the Ohio River watershed led to so much increased runoff that severe flooding occurred downstream. Too late, it was realized forested slopes may have absorbed a great deal of precipitation but the denuded slopes shed the water as fast as it fell. What vegetative cover could be planted that would be effective quickly? A number of species were no doubt tried but Japanese honeysuckle easily became established (unlike in a Devola subdivision) and it did cover ground quickly. The rest is

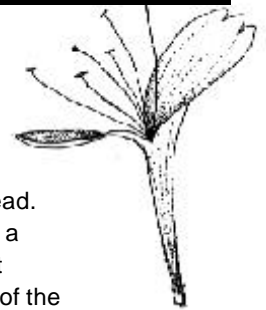
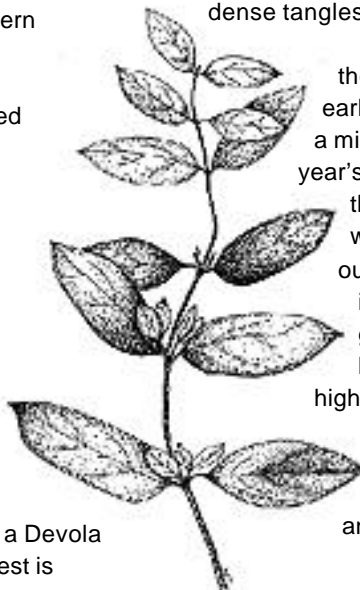
history. By 1919 it was distributed from the Gulf of Mexico to New York and Massachusetts. The canopy gaps created when chestnut blight became so prevalent in the early part of the 20th century no doubt increased its rate of spread.

And it is still traveling: in 1986, a note in a botanical journal by an esteemed botanist announced, "Japanese honeysuckle, one of the most pernicious weeds of North America, is now entering and spreading into Michigan and adjacent states".

Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) may grow as a ground cover putting out multiple runners but as soon as it has the opportunity to climb stems and trunks of small trees to get more light, up it goes. It does not have tendrils like grapes, adhesive disks like Virginia creeper or even aerial rootlets like poison ivy. Instead, the vine twines around its vertical host and even around itself, forming dense tangles.

As with many species from other parts of the world, Japanese honeysuckle leafs out early in the spring before native species. During a mild winter such as we have just had, last year's oval leaves, located opposite each other on the stem, are still present and photosynthesis was able to occur, another good strategy to out compete. This also explains how it survives in woodland shade – it hangs on during the growing season even though it is at ground level, garnering more resources during the higher light-level present during leaf-off of deciduous trees. Growth will begin at the tip of last year's vine. Upward and onward! The stem can grow to a diameter of an inch and is quite strong.

See Honeysuckle, page 5



April 2002

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4 ☉	5	6 Bloodroot Flowering
Check Tree Limbs For Tent Caterpillar Egg Masses						
7 Daylight Savings	8	9	10	11 MNHS Meeting	12 ●	13 Paint Swap Day
14	15	16	17	18 Redbud Trees In Bloom	19	20 ☾ Waste Collection Day
Time To Put Out Humming Bird Feeders						
21 John Muir's Birthday (1838)	22 Lyrid Meteor Shower	23	24	25	26 ○	27
Box Turtles Emerging From Hibernation						
28	29	30	May 11 – Migratory Bird Day Bird Watching on Middle Island, Ohio River Island National Wildlife Refuge 7:30 AM to Noon.			
Poison Ivy Leaves Emerging						

May 2002

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 ☾ Luna Moths Emerging	2	3	4 ☾
5 Eta Aquarids Meteor Shower Peak	6	7	Killdeer Using Broken Wing Act Near Nest			
12 ● Mother's Day	13	14	15	16	17	18
Take A Walk In Marietta's City Arboretum Flowering Trees In Bloom?						
19 ☾	20	21	22	23 Carolus Linnaeus born 1707	24	25
First Song Of Field Crickets?						
26 ○	27	28	29	30	31	
Male Catfish Making Nests Around Logs Green Frog Tadpoles Hatching						

June 20– Ohio Archaeology Week Special – 6:30 - 8:30 PM At Hermann Fine Arts Center. Free Demo of local flint and chert and flint-napping - Try your hand for \$5 fee for materials, tools and instruction. Wes Clarke will be there to

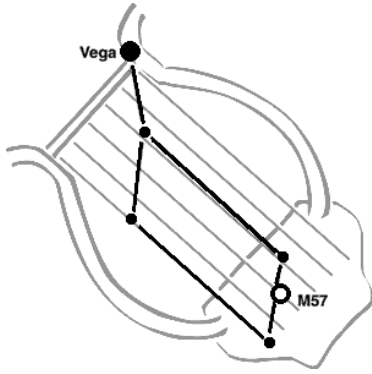
June 2002

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Etymology of the Months April -- derived from Latin verb 'to open' May -- 'Maia', the goddess of Spring and growth						1 Baby Crows Fledge
2 ☾	3	4	5	6	7	8
Baltimore Orioles Feeding Young						
9	10 ●	11	12	13 MNHS Meeting	14	15
Young Beavers Emerging From Lodges						
16 Father's Day	17 ☾	18	19	20	21 Solstice Summer Begins!	22
Milkweed Alive With Fritillaries And Swallowtails						
23	24 ○	25	26	27	28	29
Queen Anne's Lace (White) And Chicory (Blue) In Bloom						
30	 Recycled Paper 50% Total Recovered Fiber 20% Post-Consumer					

May 4 – Goose Run Watershed Day 9:30 AM - 1:00 PM

Activities begin at Washington State Community College parking lot to learn what a watershed is. Other stops include Glendale athletic field, Marietta College, and the Becky Thatcher parking lot. Learn about critters that depend on Goose Run for a home, containing chemical spills in waterways, stabilizing streambanks, and what has plugged Goose Run for over 3 years. If your watershed passport has been stamped at above stops, join us at Marietta Harbor for food, door prizes and t-shirts.





Lyrids Arrive in April

The Lyrid meteor show is the single major meteor shower appearing in our spring sky. Peaking this

April 22 (honoring Earth Day, no doubt), the meteors will be visible through most of the night.

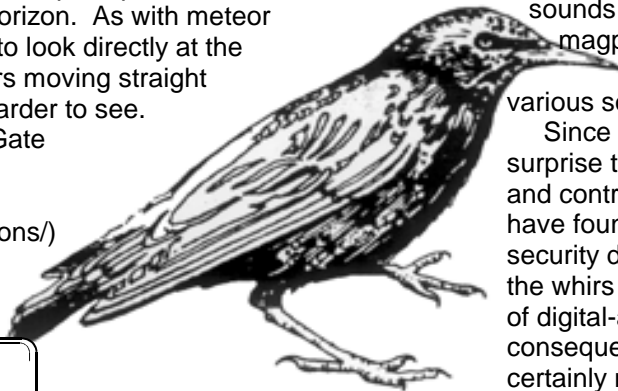
The radiant will rise around 9 PM and be high in the sky around around 4 AM. The meteors will appear to come out of the constellation Lyra, in which resides the brightest star in that area of the sky, Vega.

The first observations of this meteor shower in recent history were in 1803, although it wasn't until 1835 that April 22 was proposed as the date of a recurring celestial event. Subsequent research traced the history of this meteor shower back to the 7th century AD. Investigations in the latter part of the 19th century showed that the Lyrids were linked to the periodic Comet Thatcher, just as the Perseids are linked to Comet Swift-Tuttle and the Leonids to Comet Tempel-Tuttle.

The Lyrids typically present at a rate of 8 to 15 meteors per hour, and this is what we might expect this year. Showers of 50 to 100 meteors per hour have been recorded in peak years (the 1803 shower reportedly involved 700 meteors per hour).

To observe the Lyrids late in the evening, pull your reclining lawn chair out of winter storage, align it so that your feet face east, and look straight up. During the morning hours, as the radiant gets higher, you can align the chair to the other compass points and look 50 to 60 degrees above the horizon. As with meteor shower, it's best not to look directly at the radiant, since meteors moving straight toward you will be harder to see.

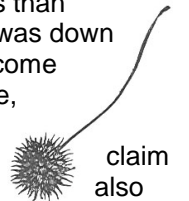
(Thanks to the StarGate Constellation Guide (<http://stardate.org/resources/constellations/>) for use of the Lyra image)



Sweetgums — *dropping the ball?*

Sweetgum trees thrive along the streets of Marietta, and their presence adds great beauty to our city's urban forest. Might their photosynthesis and growth also help reduce global warming? Apparently not according to a recent study, and these findings bode poorly for proposals to use forest biomass as a sponge for atmospheric carbon dioxide.

In a large scale study of the ability of forests to act as sinks for anthropogenic carbon dioxide, researchers at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee pumped carbon dioxide into the canopies of stands of young sweetgum trees for four years. In the first year, the trees accumulated 35% more biomass than controls. Two years later, the differential was down to 7%. The results indicate that trees become less effective carbon sinks as they mature, probably due to limiting nutrients in the soils. Residents of Marietta might also claim that massive quantities of carbon are being lost from sweetgum trees in the fruitballs that fall on sidewalks throughout much of the year.



Winter Birdfeeder Counts?
 Don't forget to send your winter birdfeeder counts to
 Ava Bradley at 104 Alderman St., Marietta

Birds Soundings

Modern society affronts us with many sounds—from automobile alarms and truck backup beeps to computer jingles—which seem inescapable. What little unsullied nature remains offers some respite, but apparently less so now.

A variety of birds are known for mimicking sounds in nature (such as other bird calls), including magpies and starlings. Observed mainly in males of these species, vocalization in new and various sounds may be a display of fitness to females.

Since it's a 'guy thing', it should not come as a surprise that these birds have begun to mimic gadgets and contraptions of the human world. Bird watchers have found bird mimicry to include beeps of cell phones, security devices, alarm clocks, motorcycle engines, even the whirs and clicks of bird watchers' cameras. Will entry of digital-age sounds into bird songs be of any consequence to the species? Experts think probably not; certainly much less than the encroaching world that brought the sounds in the first place.

MNHS
Board of Directors
 Diane Mitchell
 Marilyn Ortt
 Elsa Thompson

Newsletter Editor
 Steven R. Spilatro

Marietta Recycling Center Wins Award
 Congratulations to the Marietta Area Recycling Center (on Gilman Ave.) for winning the Recycle Ohio! Volunteer Recycling Award, to be bestowed by the ODNR on April 4. A well deserved honor! Marietta and the MNHS thank all the volunteers at the Recycling Center for their dedication and hard work.

Spring activities at *the Wilds*

April 27 — Fifth Annual Eco Thon

Running and walking trail of 5K and 10K through forests, grasslands, and by wetlands and lakes. Register online www.thewilds.org or call 740-638-2060.

May 3 & 4 — Spring Migratory Bird Days

6 pm Friday to 2 pm Saturday; birding programs, day and night hikes, kid crafts, and fun with birds
\$2 parking fee only — please call ahead.

June 30 — Benchmark Appalachian Adventure

50 mile adventure race with mountain biking, running, kayaking, orienteering, etc. Register online at www.hfpracing.com.

If you have questions about these activities, contact Al Parker, Conservation Educator at the Wilds at aparker@thewilds.org or call 740-638-2116.

Dinner with the speakers WW New Location & New Time WW

We will meet
at 5:30 at the
Oak Star Restaurant

Check first with Diane (373-8031), Marilyn (373-3372) or Elsa (373-5285).
to be sure speaker will be there. Members should make their own reservations.



Marietta City Bird Walks

... Will be starting again soon!

Walks are held on Tuesdays, 6:30 to 7:30 AM

Leader: Lynn Barnhart

April 23 at Buckeye Park

meet at picnic parking area

April 30 at Jackson Park

meet in parking lot near pool

May 7 at Oak Grove Cemetery

meet near entrance to
American Legion

Wear comfortable shoes and dress for the weather. Binoculars would be useful but not

Natural History Question?

Do you have a question about our local natural history? Submit it to the Newsletter Editor (spilatr@marietta.edu; 376-4748) and we will print it

Honeysuckle, con't.

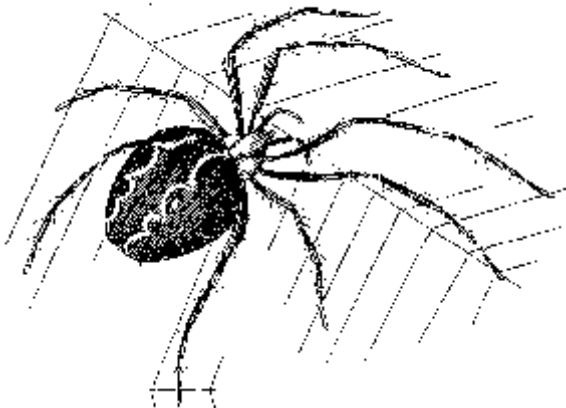
The trunks of saplings will be deformed after several years of association with this vine – many of the interesting walking sticks and canes have been made from these trunks.

In late May but mostly in June the extremely fragrant white-to-yellow flowers open, each on a short stem arising from the junction of the leaf and stem. The fruit is small, berry-like and shiny black and, unfortunately, enjoyed by birds who, having digested the pulp, drop the seeds with their own supply of fertilizer.

Japanese honeysuckle is one of the few species that can withstand pollution from heavy metals and sulfur dioxide so our society would seem to be managing for it over our less tolerant native species.

There are native honeysuckles for horticultural use that are not nearly as aggressive but more colorful. Trumpet or coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) and (*Lonicera dioica*) are both worthy of planting. Just check the scientific name – Japanese honeysuckle still shows up in the horticultural trade. Avoid it and the bush honeysuckle species at all costs!

As for my battle with Japanese honeysuckle? It's still a standoff.



Carnie – the Carnival Turtle

by Steven Spilatro

During the Washington County Fair two years ago, my son Daniel brought home a baby turtle. Some of you may recall that fair, along with the usual assortment of live animal prizes at the carnival games were immature iguanas and red-eared slider turtles. Much to our surprise Daniel's booty, a turtle named Carnie, is still alive and well and taking up ever more space on the kitchen counter (we're up to a 20 gallon tank now) — at least in our house, turtle habitat is expanding. Along the way we've learned a lot about keeping turtles as pets, and how beautiful and interesting they are.

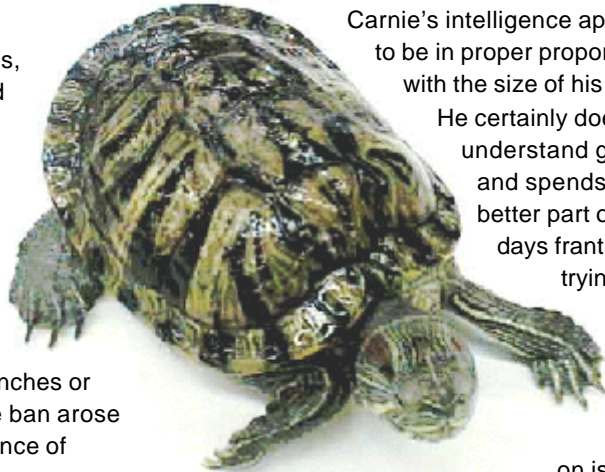
But first, let's clarify the issue of legality. U.S. law prohibits interstate and intrastate commercial distribution of turtles with a carapace four inches or less in diameter. The ban arose from the a high incidence of salmonellosis in humans transmitted from pet turtles. Immature turtles pose the highest risk of carrying the bacterial pathogen. The young turtles may pick up the pathogen *in ovo* or from the environment. Under the poor conditions under which the creatures are often kept, they may become vectors of disease transmission and succumb themselves. Within years of imposing the prohibition, turtle-associated salmonellosis became rare. Thus, it was illegal for these turtles to be given away at the fair; so keep it quiet – Carnie is a turtle on the lam. Fortunately, the CDC has traced no cases of salmonellosis to our house.

Although for many months he did not seem very active or to grow much, we later learned from Dr. David McShaffrey, in the Marietta College Biology Department, that turtles

respond to light exposure. After we set up a light above the tank, Carnie began a growth spurt that continues today. From a turtle toddler about the size of a half dollar, his carapace has grown to a length of 6 inches. Although the experts suggest a UV light source, which helps in shell formation and vitamin D formation, our light is incandescent and Carnie seems none the worse. The tank sits near a window, and this provides additional natural lighting.

We've discovered that Carnie's intelligence appears to be in proper proportion with the size of his head.

He certainly does not understand glass, and spends the better part of most days frantically trying to get through it. Hopefully, frustration is not an emotion



known to turtles; resignation certainly isn't. Actually, the exertions provide much exercise.

Which probably contributes to his insatiable appetite. Small turtles can be fed small amounts of food every other day, but mature turtles need only be fed once or twice a week. Sliders are omnivorous, and although Carnie's staple is synthetic reptile treats, he loves most every other offering (except the little colored turtle pellet food, which he now spurns; I'm thinking about using them as Christmas cookie decorations). Crickets are a favorite (crunchy on the outside and gooey on the inside), either from the local pet shop or periodic cricket safaris in the basement. Fresh worms and insects of all sorts make fine turtle fare; vegetable matter also —fresh spinach,

bananas, an occasional grape, and certainly the aquatic plants which we add for habitat enrichment —is well appreciated. Even cat food, unbeknownst to Shadow, another member of the Spilatro Zoo, is eagerly devoured. Guppies provide companionship in the tank, but only until Carnie catches them. We also periodically try to feed Daniel to Carnie, but he never gets much beyond a firm grasp on a finger.

As I've said, Carnie's tank size has grown in proportion with his carapace. With the arrival of the light, he quickly graduated from the bowl to a 5 gallon tank, then 10 gallon, now 20, which may be a bit small. A 30 gallon tank may eventually be required (don't tell Jane, my wife), which may necessitate placing the counter telephone actually in the tank; but who said turtles can't enter the digital age. His tank has a large inclined plexiglass shelf carpeted with plastic mesh for traction; Carnie discovered soon after moving in the thrills of flopping off the high end into the water.

We try to compensate for a smaller tank by maintaining good water quality. A pump with a biofilter helps, but more so do regular water changes. We get blooms of algae periodically, which look a bit unsightly but are probably beneficial. We always include a chlorine remover when adding tap water. Some herpetologists suggest feeding the turtle in a separate tank to avoid accumulation of waste, but we haven't seen much of a problem.

Clearly, sliders are hardy when given reasonable care. We admire the beautiful patterning of greens, browns, white and red (near the ears — thus the name) of our red-eared slider. He's friendly, in a reptilian sort of way, doesn't beg at the table, or make much noise. Granted, he doesn't do tricks, but heck, neither do the guinea pig, rabbit or cat.

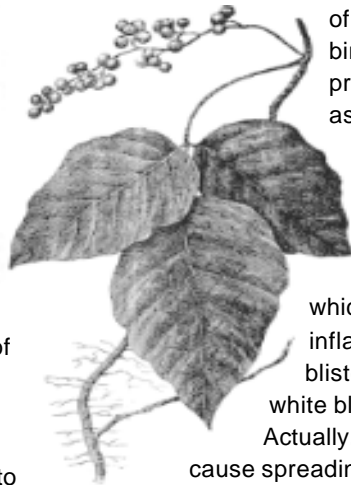
Poison Ivy Springs Forth

by Steven R. Spilatro

Warming weather stirs growth of many woodland plants — trillium, spring beauty, and... poison ivy. Supposedly the first European to describe the plant was John Smith in 1609, who coined its name.

Although the consequences of an encounter are known to all, the appearance of poison ivy is less distinct. The adages 'leaves of three, let it be' and 'berries white, take flight' are helpful caveats though generally insufficient for reliable identification. Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) is rather varied in appearance, and certain other plants (such as Virginia creeper, fragrant sumac and wild sarsaparilla) are often victims of mistaken identity. The leaves are reddish with smooth edges when they emerge in spring, but turn ever greener and more lobed through summer. In autumn, the leaves take on hues of yellow and red. The leaf is actually a compound leaf, consisting of three leaflets joined to the stem with a single petiole. The leaves vary greatly in size, from less than an inch to several in length. The center leaflet has a longer leaf stalk, whereas the two side leaflets are almost stalkless. White to greenish flowers appear in June in loose clusters or panicles from the leaf axis. The flowers develop into white berries during the summer months.

The woody stems arise from a trailing rhizome, and the plant can be quite varied in overall form. Sometimes poison ivy spreads only a few inches high with leaves that seem to tessellate the ground, or it may appear as a small shubby plant two to three feet tall. The plant also can also snake up shade tree, producing large hairy stems with large leaves that engulf the trunk.



Some might speculate that poison ivy purposefully nestles itself along woodland paths just to jeopardize hikers, but a fondness for disturbed areas, and moderate soil moisture and sun exposure better explain its general distribution.

The poison ivy rash is caused by exposure to sap present in the leaves and all other plant parts except the fruit pulp, flowers and pollen. The sap is released when the plant is bruised. Exposure can occur by direct contact with the plant or contaminated objects such as shoes, tools, and clothing.

The active substance is a chemical called urushiol (pronounced yoo-roo'-she-ol). Within about 15 minutes of exposure, urushiol binds tenaciously to skin proteins. The rash forms as the body's immune system acts against the bound urushiol. This triggers a reaction called an allergic contact dermatitis, which is characterized by inflammation, swelling, and blisters filled with fluid and white blood cells.

Actually, scratching does not cause spreading of the rash. Once bound, urushiol does not disperse. The appearance that scratching causes spreading is the result of slower development of the rash in other areas. One's best defense is to wash the exposed area to a soapy lather as soon as possible; once bound, urushiol also will not come off. Ointments can diminish the symptoms, but the course of the rash is typically 12 to 15 days, and any treatment should be continued at least two weeks.

Getting rid of poison ivy plants invading a yard can be challenging. Using chemicals is probably not a good idea for environmental reasons and inadvertent effects on surrounding garden plants. Manually



pulling out the plants will work if one is thorough -- any part of the root or stem left behind can regenerate the plant (images of Arnold Schwarzenegger as the terminator come to mind). If the plants must be pulled, wear plenty of hand protection (the sap will soak through cloth gloves) and heavy clothing. Contaminated clothing should be thoroughly washed.

No good answer for disposal can be offered. Although, the urushiol disappears from leaves as they naturally die in the fall, stems of dormant plants are still potent. So pulling out the plants in winter is of only limited advantage, and disposing of the plants is still a problem. Even when the plant is dead, urushiol can remain active for months, and composting can take a long time. Burning is probably the worst option, since the urushiol will volatilize into the smoke and potentially cause serious reactions in the eyes, throat and lungs.

The other notable poisonous plants, poison oak and poison sumac, share the same genus and allergen as poison ivy. However, poison oak is most common along the coasts, and while poison sumac occurs in Ohio, it typically only grows in bogs or fens.

Poison ivy is not without merit. A variety of bird and animal species consume the berries with impunity. Bees collect nectar to make honey (though not a variety generally stocked in natural food stores), and most common hooved mammals forage on the leaves.

Invite a Friend to Join the Marietta Natural History Society

Wood Thrush — Individual \$15
River Otter — Family \$25
Monarch — Friend \$50
Why not give a gift membership?

Mail check to address given below



Benefits of Membership

- ┌ Monthly programs
- ┌ Field trips
- ┌ Quarterly newsletter
- ┌ Educational experiences
for kids and adults
- ┌ Conservation Projects

The MNHS Mission

- i To foster awareness of and sensitivity to our environment and its biodiversity
- i To provide a place where people with these interests can gather for information and activity
- i To create a presence in our community representing these ideas



Marietta Natural History Society
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