If we all do just one thing...

How do you celebrate Earth Day? Maybe you volunteer at one of our local parks, help to collect trash along the roadside, or just make a point of walking a trail and enjoying the great outdoors.

For the past few years, Black Swamp Conservancy has celebrated Earth Day by bringing people together to talk about the environmental issues that are touching our community.

Last year, we held a gathering to celebrate our local waters - the Maumee River, Lake Erie, and the entire Western Basin. With the water crisis shining a negative light on our region, we wanted to highlight what a natural treasure our waterways really are and the opportunities that exist to improve them.

The film is centered on a global scale, and many of the threatened species you won’t find in the woods and prairies across northwest Ohio. However, the important underlying message - if we all do just one thing, we can make a difference - is one that can be carried over to our own backyard.

Species loss, whether manta ray off the coast of Australia or Blue spotted salamander here in northwest Ohio, impacts us all.

For this Earth Day, we’d like to discuss another important conservation issue - the loss of genetic and species diversity.

On Thursday, April 21st Black Swamp Conservancy is hosting the local premiere of the movie “Racing Extinction” at the Maumee Indoor Theatre. This 2015 documentary exposes mankind’s role in a potential loss of at least half of the world’s species.

With your help, Black Swamp Conservancy has already made great progress in combating species loss in our community by protecting more than 15,700 acres of land.

I look forward to seeing you on April 21st as we celebrate Earth Day and continue the conversation.

Rob Krain
Executive Director
Black Swamp Conservancy is proud to have derived its name from the Great Black Swamp that once covered much of northwest Ohio. A formidable wetland complex, the historic swamp stretched over 1,500 square miles of the Western Lake Erie Basin.

With the arrival of European settlers, “big changes” did come, and the swamp was laboriously cleared and drained in the first half of the 19th century. The result of these efforts is a landscape dominated by some of the most fertile farmland found anywhere in the world.

As is often the case when we try to dominate nature, not all of the results are positive. The draining of the swamp meant sweeping loss of some of the most biologically productive places on earth — wetlands which are also incredibly efficient at cleaning water.

Studies suggest that an acre of wetland can store as much as 300 pounds of phosphorus and uptake another 350 pounds per year. Considering that so many wetlands in northwest Ohio have been destroyed (upwards of 99%), it is no surprise that we are facing difficult water quality issues.

Wetlands are often referred to as “natures kidneys” because of their ability to filter pollutants from our waterways. The Conservancy’s projects are helping to rebuild Mother Nature’s natural defenses.

Outlined on this map is the Paulding County portion of the Marie de Larme Creek watershed. Highlighted in green, and strategically positioned at the confluence of the watershed and the Maumee River, is Forrest Woods Nature Preserve.
Enhancement and restoration of wetlands is central to improving the health of our watershed. Our region has lost too many of its natural defenses, and we need to return some to the landscape.

The Conservancy has been doing its part by working to acquire and restore strategically selected lands. These sites are ones that will result in the greatest benefit to water quality, wildlife habitat, and public recreation.

Our Forrest Woods Nature Preserve is a perfect example of a strategically sited wetland for affecting water quality. It is situated at the confluence of the Marie de Larme Creek and the Maumee River.

This means that all of the water draining from the watershed must pass through the preserve. At times of heavy rain and high stream flow, the creek spills over into the expansive lowland wetland. That spill water is held back and naturally treated before reaching the river and ultimately Lake Erie.

The map on the opposite page shows the Marie de Larme watershed and Forrest Woods Nature Preserve. Worth noting is that Forrest Woods is only a very small portion of the watershed, but one that is contributing significant value in ecosystem services.

Black Swamp Conservancy is currently working on a large-scale stream and wetland restoration at Forrest Woods, which will further enhance the preserve’s contributions to clean water (see notice at right with regard to our upcoming public meeting).

More of this work is needed if we are going to continue to bring about positive change to water quality and wildlife species. For that reason, the Conservancy is undertaking several such projects across both the Maumee and Sandusky watersheds.

Healing our lake will take time, and wetlands are only part of the long-term solution. But they are a viable solution that we can begin implementing today.

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Forrest Woods Public Meeting Announcement

Learn more about the restoration project going on at Forrest Woods Nature Preserve. Join us for a community information meeting.

Monday, July 11
Begins at 5:30 p.m.
Black Swamp Nature Center
753 Fairground Drive
Paulding, Ohio

After a brief presentation, Conservancy representatives will be on hand to answer questions and obtain feedback.

For more information, contact Chris at 419-833-1025.

Wetlands like the ones pictured here at the Forrest Woods Nature Preserve perform important ecosystem services— including filtering nutrients from water.
A Family Inspired by Conservation

You could say that conservation runs through Pat Beam’s entire family. Her brother, John, writes a blog for the Washington Native Plant Society. Her niece does forestry work in Utah. And, Pat herself has been active in the National Wildflower Research Center since it was first formed by Lady Bird Johnson in 1982.

So when the time came to make a decision regarding the family’s 135-acre Fulton County farm, a farm that has been in the family since 1877, conservation was the natural choice.

Earlier this year, Pat and her family - who had formed an LLC and purchased the farm from the estate of Pat’s late mother - signed an agricultural easement with Black Swamp Conservancy forever protecting their State designated Century Farm.

“The whole family views protection of the land as important,” stated Pat after signing the conservation agreement. “We wanted to keep our family farm whole and a benefit to the farming community - by working with the Conservancy, we’ve done just that.”

A Sure Sign of Spring

There are many signs of spring. Skunk cabbage peeking through the ground... The raspy call of chorus frogs... The influx of seed catalogs in your mailbox...

Here at the Conservancy Homestead, spring has arrived when we begin to see the regal Great Blue Heron soaring past the office windows into the heart of Bell Woods. A muddy trek through the woods to the rookery within reveals dozens of nests being eagerly prepared for new arrivals. Breeding generally occurs from the end of March through mid-April with the hatching period peaking in May.

You will have an opportunity to see the heron (and rookery) for yourself on Saturday, April 30th as we host a nature walk here at the Conservancy Homestead. We hope you will come out and witness this natural spectacle for yourself.
In anticipation of the returning snowbirds, I recently spent a day at Forrest Woods Nature Preserve to clean out Wood Duck and Blue Bird boxes ahead of spring nesting.

When I arrived at the preserve I discovered that the past couple weeks of warm weather had already kick-started activity. Most notable was the deafening sound of chorus and wood frog calls.

As I walked through the wetlands located at the northeast portion of the preserve, I found them to be “hopping” with wood frogs everywhere I looked. And it was hard to miss the appearance of early wildflowers, including harbinger of spring and Virginia waterleaf.

A number of migratory waterfowl flew over the preserve while I worked, and there was at least one pair of ducks down in the wetlands with me. I wasn’t able to get a clear look, but I am pretty certain the Wood Ducks are back!

For all of the signs of spring returning to Forrest Woods, there was also evidence that there is plenty of work to be done. Invasive species threaten the natural condition of the preserve - teasel is popping up in the prairies; honeysuckle, cedars, and autumn olive are encroaching as well; and I discovered grape vine starting to establish along the banks of the Marie de Larme Creek.

Non-native invasions are now an unfortunate and all-too common part of property management. It is an issue we need to pay special attention to in order to conserve the biological communities that represent Ohio’s natural heritage found at Forrest Woods. I will be working at the preserve throughout the spring, summer, and fall to control these species, and the Conservancy is hosting several volunteer days, I hope you’ll join us.

Our first volunteer day of the season will take place out at the Forrest Woods Nature Preserve and is set for Saturday, April 16th, at 9:00 a.m.

It’s a great pleasure of mine to be able to spend several days a year working to maintain such a unique natural area. If you would like more information about our volunteer days, please contact Emily at enunn@blackswamp.org or give her a call at 419-833-1025, and we will be happy to get you out on one of our preserves.

See you in the field!
Join Us for a Tromp Through the Historic Great Black Swamp

We are taking a walk through the Great Black Swamp, and you’re invited!

On Saturday, April 30th we are partnering with our friends at Ohio Wetlands Association to give tours of three of the finest remnants of the swamp. Join us for one walk, or the whole day!

Beginning at 10:00 a.m. we’ll hike Bell Woods - located at the Black Swamp Conservancy Homestead at 4825 Sugar Ridge Road, Pemberville (overflow parking available at Eastwood High School directly across the road).

Next, we will visit Goll Woods State Nature Preserve in Archbold at 1:00 p.m.

Last stop is at 3:30 p.m. at the Forrest Woods Nature Preserve near Antwerp.
Walks will take place rain or shine on rustic unimproved paths that are generally quite wet. Please be prepared with muck/rain boots, bug spray, raingear, etc.

More information is available online at BlackSwamp.org.

Calling All Photographers

Are you interested in nature photography but get bored shooting the same locations? Then join the Conservancy at one of our upcoming Nature Photography Field Trips. You bring the camera, we provide the stunning scenery.

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

Tuesday, April 12
Black Swamp Conservancy Homestead (Pemberville)
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.  Homestead Spring Clean Up

Saturday, April 16
Forrest Woods Nature Preserve (Paulding County)
9:00 a.m.  Invasive Plant Removal

Thursday, April 21
Maumee Indoor Theatre
7:00 p.m.  Earth Day Program - Man Tables

Tuesday, May 3
Black Swamp Conservancy Homestead
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.  Homestead Spring Clean Up

Saturday, May 14
Forrest Woods Nature Preserve
9:00 a.m.  Invasive Plant Removal

Interested in helping at one of our volunteer days? Give Emily a call at 419-833-1025 or send her an email at enunn@blackswamp.org.

Upcoming spring photography field trip dates:

Wednesday, April 13
6:00 p.m.  Black Swamp Conservancy Homestead
4825 Sugar Ridge Road, Pemberville

Sunday, May 29
6:30 p.m.  Meadowbrook Marsh
8577 E. Bayshore Road, Marblehead

The Conservancy’s Nature Photography Field Trips are free and open to all current Black Swamp Conservancy members. Please RSVP to Sarah at 419-833-1025 or at sbrokamp@blackswamp.org.

Not a Conservancy member? Join us today!
Black Swamp Conservancy’s Blue Grass & Green Acres fundraiser always promises to be a good time, and this year was no exception. Our 5th annual event was a success, raising more than $26,000 thanks to our supporters, and due in large part to our generous sponsors (listed below).

Special thanks go to our event volunteers including; Debbie Farley, Sally Goligoski, Virginia Keller, Terry & Jeanne Lesniewicz, Jennifer Marshall, Jim & Carole Nooney, Diana Nowels, Gingi Rothman, Aly Rumer, Jeffrey Schorsch, Jessica Sherman, Laurie VonSeggern, and Tim & Sue Wiersma.
At Black Swamp Conservancy...

We take direct action to permanently preserve northwest Ohio’s natural habitats and family farms for the benefit of future generations. By protecting our valuable land and water resources we are supporting healthy communities with strong, sustainable economies.

Our work ensures the diverse habitats of our region will be protected for generations and that our children and their children will forever be able to enjoy this special place.

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Blue spotted salamander photo on cover courtesy of George Sydlowski.