

Warren County Park District Community Nature Programs, 2019 Recap

2019 was another wonderful year of growth for our environmental outreach programs. Here are a few highlights from the year and a peek into what to expect in 2020.



Tech-Free Tuesdays: Over 1,200 participants enjoyed our free children's programs last summer. We met for an hour each Tuesday from Memorial Day to Labor Day, alternating weeks between Landen-Deerfield and Warren County Armco Park. Children and their caregivers got to enjoy reptiles, insects (including a special week just for monarch butterflies), and visits from Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists, Warren Co. Soil and Water Conservation District, Nature Nurses Wildlife Rescue, and Warren County Wildlife Officer Jason Keller and K9 "Scout."

100-Hours-Outside Challenge: 46 children were rewarded for spending at least 100 hours unplugged and outside this past summer. Prize packages were provided by Friends of WCPD, Blooms and Berries Farm Market, and Loveland Canoe and Kayak.

Coyotes: We met with several community groups and addressed numerous questions and misconceptions this year on social media platforms, helping the public understand how to keep their pets safe while learning to coexist with one of Ohio's most misunderstood predators.

Program Reptiles: Our reptiles met with hundreds of community members last year, including Scouts, retirees, South Lebanon Elementary students, Vacation Bible School attendees, and Tech-Free Tuesday participants. Our program animals were rescued from unfortunate situations which made them unable to be re-released in the wild. Now they are registered with Ohio Division of Wildlife and serve as animal ambassadors, helping the public learn about native wildlife.



Nature Nurses Wildlife Rescue: We formed a new partnership with NNRW, a local organization comprised of volunteers who are permitted by the Ohio Division of Wildlife to assist injured and abandoned native animals. Their hotline is 513-601-9617.

Programs for Retirees: We were able to work with scores of retirees this year through Otterbein Senior Living in Lebanon, and Miami University's Institute of Learning in Retirement. Our monthly programs at Otterbein are free and open to the public, so mark your calendar for 2020 and come join us; all ages are welcome!

Pollinator Garden and Accessible Trail at Landen-Deerfield Park:

You may have noticed the new Challenge Course at the entrance to LD Park, but have you ventured to the back of the park recently? Thanks to our Parks Director, Larry Easterly, there is now a wheelchair- and stroller-friendly path. Park District Commissioner Jeff Blazey donated a rain barrel, and local artists Amy Lynn Johnson and Lynn Baird generously donated their talents to enhance our Monarch Waystation garden. Finally, WCPD maintenance staff has been hard at work converting the area next to the path into a native pollinator habitat.



Solar/Pollinator Habitat at WC Armco Park: Solar panels are now providing power to all of WC Armco Park, and Phase One of the pollinator planting was installed this past spring, attracting a myriad of pollinators with dozens of species of native plants. Thanks to OCVN Dianna Kenneally's hard work, and cooperation from Rocknoll Energy Systems, WC Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative, we were awarded a grant for \$8,731 by the Ohio EPA to install a new, interactive, self-led Discovery Trail at this location. Work will begin on this project on January 2nd!



Program Support: Our programs' success is possible because of the generous support of the Friends group, local nature professionals, WCPD Staff and Commissioners, and Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists! **THANK YOU** to everyone who helped me lead programs and extend our reach into the community this past year.



Coming in 2020: I've already started lining up programs for the upcoming year, including scheduling our monthly Otterbein Nature Series and Summer Tech-Free Tuesdays. We will continue to work on the native pollinator areas at Landen-Deerfield and WC Armco Parks, with noticeable enhancements coming to both. You will see improvements to the bluebird houses at Keever Trails, and a new splash pad and playground at Landen-Deerfield Park (these will definitely be part of our Tech-Free Tuesdays!) If you've not stopped by the Nature Playscape at WC Armco Park recently, check it out; there is always something new to discover. This summer, we will also be kicking off "Project Wild" training for local educators interested in including environmental education into their curriculum.

You can see a schedule of upcoming nature events on the Friends of WCPD website: fwcpdoh.com or follow us at [Facebook.com/WarrenCountyNature](https://www.facebook.com/WarrenCountyNature). If you have a request for an outreach program for your group in Warren County, or if you are interested in volunteering, please drop me a line; I'd love to work with you!

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