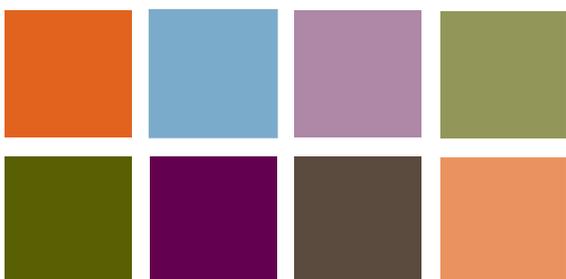


Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists

Impact Statement



A OCVN from The Wilderness Center. Photo credit: Steve Upperman.

SUMMARY

The Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist (OCVN) program is a natural resources outreach and service program. The mission of the OCVN program is to promote awareness and citizen stewardship of Ohio's natural resources through science-based education and community service. Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists provide volunteer service to hundreds of organizations so that their activities and programs can be more effectively and efficiently delivered to the general public.

SITUATION

Ohio has a rich natural heritage but state and local funds to protect this heritage have been declining in recent years. Our state and local park systems, nature centers, and natural areas and preserves rely heavily on volunteers to help deliver programs and educate visitors on the importance of conservation and stewardship of our natural resources, monitor and protect habitat, maintain trails, and monitor for and remove invasive species. As young people and families spend less and less time outdoors, awareness and appreciation for this natural heritage also declines. All around Ohio there are hundreds of individuals, many of whom are retired and seeking opportunities to serve, with a strong desire to share their passion for and knowledge of nature and the environment with others.

RESPONSE

The OCVN program is a research-based scientific education program that emphasizes hands-on natural resource education coupled with volunteer service. Participants in the OCVN program receive 40 hours of combined classroom and field instruction and upon completing the instructional program, provide service to their local parks or nature centers. Volunteers become Certified Volunteer Naturalists after completing their 40 hours of service and are required to provide 20 hours of volunteer service and complete eight hours of



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advanced education annually. Education programs and volunteer service coordination are provided through partnerships with local course hosts. There are currently 22 OCVN course host locations around Ohio, including local OSU Extension offices and state, federal and local park districts. There are four categories of volunteer service: Education, Interpretation and Outreach; Program support; Land Stewardship; and Citizen Science.

2016 OCVN Impacts

A new volunteer service database was implemented which allows certificates to be issued directly to participants

100 participants attended the 2016 OCVN State Conference at the OSU Mansfield Campus, the conference featured presentations by SENR Extension staff and students

New marketing materials were created and updates made to the OCVN education manual

Quarterly webinars hosted featuring SENR and CFAES faculty and student research attended by 79 participants

New course locations created in collaboration with OSU Extension in Logan and Perry counties

\$4700.00 in cost recovery generated

142 new volunteer naturalists were certified in 2016 adding to a total number of 549 OCVNs statewide

In 2016 alone, OCVNs contributed over 6000 volunteer hours to 79 different organizations

Examples of 2016 OCVN volunteer service:

Education/Interpretation

OCVNs helped state and local park systems offer programs including “Owl Prowl” at Caesar’s Creek State Park and “Howling Coyotes” at the Geauga County Park District.

Program Support

OCVNs volunteered as trail ambassadors with the Cleveland Metro Parks and helped with trail marking and improvement planning at Somerset Parks in Perry County.

Land Stewardship

OCVNs helped with invasive species removal at Arc of Appalachia and Johnson Wood State Nature Preserve.

Citizen Science

OCVNs helped with creek restoration and monitoring at The Wilderness Center and assisted ODNR Division of Wildlife with bat monitoring

Contact Information

Anne Baird

Program Director

371A Kottman Hall
2021 Coffey Rd
Columbus, OH 43210

614.292.8603
baird.41@osu.edu

Joe Bonnell

State Team Leader

367B Kottman Hall
2021 Coffey Rd
Columbus, OH 43210

614.292.9383
bonnell.8@osu.edu

senr.osu.edu
ocvn.osu.edu



OCVN volunteers provide hours of service across the state.