

Felled Ash Trees Provide Rich Habitat

By: John Gladden, Communications Coordinator

If you have -- or had -- an ash tree in your yard, you likely have witnessed firsthand the devastation caused by an invasive insect known as the emerald ash borer. Its larvae have a voracious appetite for the ash's inner bark -- which, unfortunately, is the tree's lifeline. Without its circulatory system to carry nutrients, the tree's days are numbered.

Ash trees once were a dominant species in Ohio. Removing such a large number of dead and dying trees for safety reasons poses challenges to homeowners and municipalities alike.

Medina County Park District is no exception. Natural Resource Manager Jim Spetz has been overseeing the cutting of hundreds of ash trees along miles of trails throughout the park system. Trees in off-trail areas that are a safe distance from visitors are left for nature to take its course.

In many cases, the park district contracts with professional tree services because they have the equipment and expertise to drop trees with minimal damage to the surrounding area, Spetz said. While most visitors understand the need to eliminate potential hazards, one question the park district frequently receives is why the cut trees are left alongside trails and why the trunks of some trees are left standing. There are a variety of reasons, Spetz said.



Felled ash trees provide a smorgasbord for birds -- especially woodpeckers, including the pileated, downy, hairy, and red-bellied.

From a practical standpoint, hauling cut trees out of the parks would be a major expense. The heavy equipment also would cause significant injury to the forest environment. A portion of the wood is utilized as firewood around the park district.

From nature's perspective, a large tree represents decades of bioaccumulation -- water and nutrients taken into the tree and converted to wood and bark. Instead of removing all that organic matter from the ecosystem, the more natural process is for it to remain near where the tree grew, returning nutrients to the soil for future generations of forest plants, and providing decades of wildlife habitat, said Spetz.

Invertebrates like beetles and other insects thrive in the decaying wood, as do fungi that may feed these animals. Other creatures, such as salamanders, eat the invertebrates, and small mammals eat the salamanders. The trees provide a smorgasbord for birds -- especially woodpeckers, including the pileated, downy, hairy, and red-bellied. Nuthatches, chickadees, and even bats benefit, too. "All that biodiversity enhances the forest ecosystem," Spetz said.

While no one likes to see trees come down, and it can be jarring at first to find them along a favorite trail, the food and shelter they provide actually bring wildlife closer to the trail for park visitors to see.

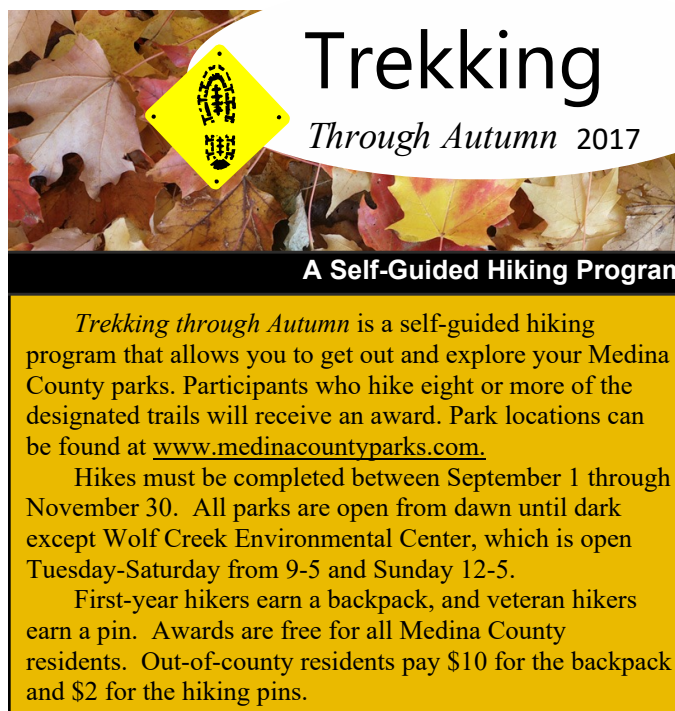
In essence, by topping dead trees and allowing the wood to remain on the forest floor, the park district is mimicking the process of nature -- accelerating it just a bit for public safety -- and, over time, providing increased habitat for wildlife, along with a richer experience for visitors.



Lake to Lake Harvest Bike Tour

Saturday, September 16
Buckeye Woods Park
7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Join us for this second annual bicycle tour of scenic Medina County originating and ending at Buckeye Woods Park. There will be four route options to choose from: two casual family friendly rides each under 15 miles on mostly flat county park paths including Chippewa Inlet Trail and Chippewa Rail Trail with a route leading to Chippewa Lake and two longer rolling hill road routes, 35 miles and 50 miles, each featuring stops in three parks and lakes -- Spencer Lake, Chippewa Lake, and Hubbard Valley. The routes will be posted prior to the event. Rain or shine, we ride! Proceeds will go to fund cycling awareness and path improvement in Medina County. To register in advance, download and print a copy of the registration form at <http://bikemedinacounty.weebly.com/upcoming-events.html>. Registration on the day of the event starts at 7:30 a.m. for the longer routes and at 9 a.m. for the family/casual rides. Cash or check only.



Trekking

Through Autumn 2017

A Self-Guided Hiking Program

Trekking through Autumn is a self-guided hiking program that allows you to get out and explore your Medina County parks. Participants who hike eight or more of the designated trails will receive an award. Park locations can be found at www.medinacountyparks.com.

Hikes must be completed between September 1 through November 30. All parks are open from dawn until dark except Wolf Creek Environmental Center, which is open Tuesday-Saturday from 9-5 and Sunday 12-5.

First-year hikers earn a backpack, and veteran hikers earn a pin. Awards are free for all Medina County residents. Out-of-county residents pay \$10 for the backpack and \$2 for the hiking pins.

Donation Corner

Tree of Life

In Memory of Donna Mace
Morna Shearer

In Memory of Steven Dillon

Carol Brennan
Lisa Toth
Michael and Mary O'Neill
HOC Transport Co.
Margie and Glen Sandin
Kathy Geers

In Memory of Mr. and Mrs. C. B. McGuire
Morna Shearer

Wolf Creek Environmental Center

Wildlife and trees poster
Cynthia Cahoon



Monarch Tagging

Wolf Creek Environmental Center

Come out between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Saturdays, September 2, 9, or 16 to catch and tag monarch butterflies and contribute to the research on declining populations. All ages are welcome. No registration required. Free.



**Register for fall programs online
at www.medinacountyparks.com.**