

Upcoming Events

1. [Butterfly Hike](#) – Take a 1.5-mile hike through woods and open meadows to see butterflies and other critters. September 1, 10:00 AM-11:30 AM @ [Highbanks](#). We meet at Highbanks Nature Center and then set out for the hike. (Contact snyder@metroparks.net or saksena.6@osu.edu for any queries)
2. [Insect Chorus Walk](#) – Take a 1.5-mile hike to listen to loud sounds of singing insects. September 1, 8:00 PM-9:00 PM @ [Blacklick Woods](#)
3. [Bat Night Hike](#) – Learn about challenges bats face when they begin their migration to their winter homes and hike in the night to look for bats. August 31, 7:30 PM-8:30 PM @ [Glacier Ridge](#)
4. [September Skies](#) – See the Milky Way and our planetary neighbors. September 1, 7:45 PM-9:00 PM @ [Clear Creek](#) Creekside Meadows
5. [BioBlitz](#) – Join experienced naturalists in surveying (and learning) as much flora and fauna that can be found within a 24-hr window @ [Deer Haven](#). Starts September 7 at 12:00 PM. Ends September 8 at 12:00 PM
6. [Wild Food Exploration](#) – Take a 1-mile walk to uncover and experience the wild flavors of late summer. September 9, 2:00 PM-4:00 PM @ [Blacklick Woods](#)
7. [Hike to The Giants](#) – Take a 4-mile rugged and strenuous off-trail hike to giant Sycamore trees by the Olentangy river. September 9, 2:00 PM-5:00 PM @ [Highbanks](#)
8. [Introduction to Native Bee Keeping](#) – Learn about native pollinators and what you can do to help them. September 9, 2:00 PM-3:00 PM @ [Glacier Ridge](#)
9. [Wild and Scenic Film Fest](#) – Ohio River Foundation is bringing the Wild & Scenic Film Festival On Tour to Greater Columbus. Join ORF for an evening that will educate and inspire! Participants will enjoy short films, refreshment and community engagement aimed at addressing the health of our environment and our community. September 15, 3:30 PM-7:00 PM @ [Gateway Film Center](#). (*This is a ticketed event*)
10. [Weekly Bird Hike](#) – Hike with experienced birders to find birds and learn about them. September 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM @ [Scioto Audubon](#) Grange Insurance Audubon Center

More opportunities could be found at

[Parkscope](#)

<http://www.metroparks.net/>

<http://paddle.ohiodnr.gov/>

<https://www.preservationparks.com/>

Butterflies

It's summer/Fall and butterflies are here! In addition to offering a pretty sight to our senses, butterflies play a vital role in our ecosystem. They are an important pollinator and hence responsible for the many of the foods we eat! The larvae of the butterflies are greatly relished by birds and their chicks and hence a great food source for other animals. If it were not for these larvae, the population of some of our songbirds would decline alarmingly. Butterflies serve as an important indicator of the ecological health!

Butterflies belong to the Order *Lepidoptera* (which means “scale wing”) in Class *Insecta*. They undergo a complete metamorphosis (holometabolous), *i.e.* eggs hatch into larvae (called *caterpillar*), the larva turns into a pupa (called *chrysalis*), and finally a full-grown adult ecloses from the chrysalis.

The most recognized butterfly in North America would arguably be the Monarch! It is also the longest-lived Ohio butterfly. Not only are they so magnificent to look at, their [migration](#) is one of the most fascinating one! North American Monarchs overwinter as adults in Mexico. With the arrival of Spring, they begin their 3000-mile journey up North, and continue in several generations. Monarchs lay their eggs on Milkweed plants and their caterpillars voraciously graze upon their leaves. Milkweeds produce a cardiac glucoside toxin, but the Monarchs have evolved to be tolerant to the toxin. If a predator such as a bird or another insect were to prey upon the butterfly or its caterpillar, it would painfully regret it! That's why Monarchs advertise their toxin with flashy bright orange and black colors.

As the Fall comes to an end, the Monarchs retreat back south to the same forests in the Sierra Madre mountains in Mexico. What's absolutely remarkable is the fact that the generation that's returning has never been to the place where their parents or grandparents came from. Yet, somehow they exactly know their destination and what route to follow!

Fun Fact: The Viceroy butterfly, belonging to an entirely different family, mimics the Monarch with the same bright orange and black colors. Until recently, it was believed that the Viceroy does not carry any toxin and mimics the Monarch for protection against predators. However, we now know that Viceroy do carry a poisonous substance of their own, and use the style of mimicry found in nature where two or more inedible species converge on a similar aposematic pattern.

To brighten your day, here are a few pictures of the majestic Monarch and the Viceroy (try to spot the differences between the two. All pictures were taken here in Columbus at Highbanks Metro Park!)

