

# FIELD NOTES

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF THE BFEC • 1995-2020

## 25 YEARS OF MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

by Noelle Jordan, Manager of the BFEC

THE OTHER DAY, I WAS TALKING WITH MIA, our post-baccalaureate fellow. And I shared a story about a job that I had back in the day. My first day on that job, I met the executive director (I won't name names) and asked him if he thought that nature centers and the like were making a difference. "Is our work changing things in the U.S.?"

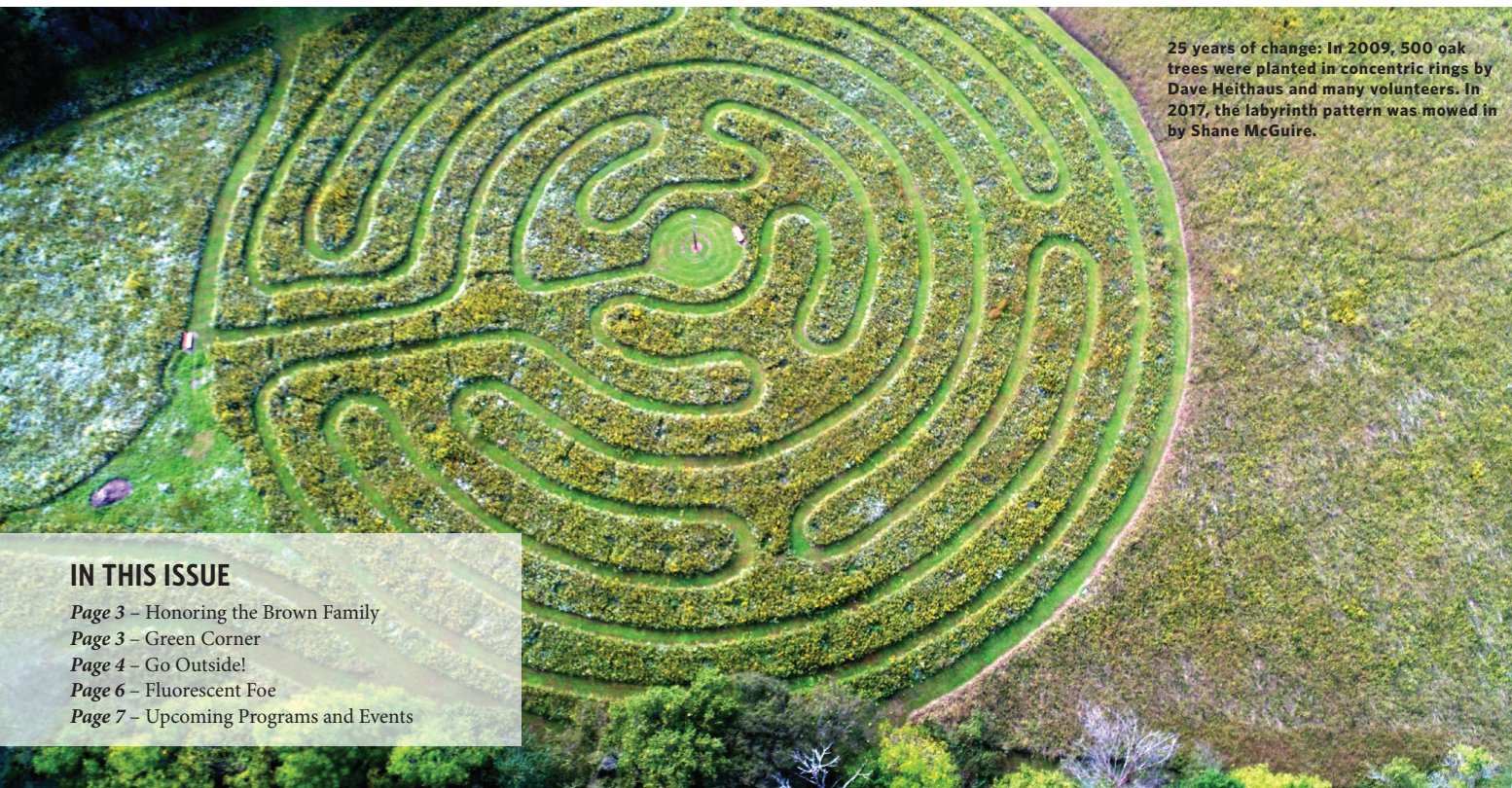
His response: "No."

As I stood there, open-mouthed, gaping at him, he offered some lame explanation, but my mind was spinning. I was so busy wondering how he — the leader of a nature center — could come into work every day when he didn't think his work was making a difference, that I neither heard nor comprehended his lame response.

Then Mia looked at me and asked, "So, what motivates you to do your job?"

I took a deep breath and started ranting about change. Change — positive change — happens! It has been happening. I've seen it happen! In my 30 years as an adult in the workforce, I've traveled across the country and back again, east to west, south to north. And during those 30 years, I've seen change — a change in awareness, a change in attitudes, and for many, a change in actions.

Here's one example. In 2002, I interviewed for a job in a small town in Texas. During my visit there, I didn't see any organic options at their local grocery store, no local food options in their restaurants, no yoga studios in town, no nature center. Five years



25 years of change: In 2009, 500 oak trees were planted in concentric rings by Dave Heithaus and many volunteers. In 2017, the labyrinth pattern was mowed in by Shane McGuire.

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## 2 FIELD NOTES



**Making Change Happen: Groundbreaking ceremony for the Resource Center in April 2000. Kenyon President Phillip Jordan is second from left, and Ray Heithaus is fifth from the left.**



**Making big changes in 1998. The ceremony that designated our stretch of the Kokosing River as a state scenic river. Pictured left to right: Ohio Secretary of State Bob Taft, Doug McLarnan of College Township, Bob Gable of ODNR, Ray Heithaus of Kenyon College/BFEC, and then-Kenyon President Robert Oden, Jr.**



**Creating the first prairie unit in 1997. From left: Stu Schott, Mike Dailey and Guy Denny.**



**Volunteer Ruth Woehr and Patricia "Pat" Heithaus moving a rock as they create the butterfly garden in spring 1995.**

later, I was invited back for another look at the organization, as it was about to open a new nature center. And in 2007, the local grocer had some decent organic options. A few restaurants were proud to serve locally grown veggies, and there were three yoga studios. If a small town in a very red southern state can make those kinds of changes in five years, then surely there is hope.

Now I find myself in Knox County, Ohio. You know the place: a rural, agricultural county made of small towns. And similar to the small town in Texas, Knox County has an army of concerned citizens who have been making change happen here. People who live here on purpose — who love the rural character of the landscape and who work to preserve that landscape and make this place resilient, economically and environmentally.

Positive change happens because people work to make it happen. And that motivates me on a deep level. It means that I'm not alone, that there are others who care and who work alongside me, each doing their own job at their own organizations. And together, we make change happen.

This year, the BFEC celebrates 25 years of positive change. For 25 years, all the people who have contributed to the BFEC have worked tirelessly to make amazing things happen. In 2016, when I stepped into the role of manager here, I knew I was standing at the end of a long line of dedicated faculty, staff, community members, and students who have worked to transform a family farm — complete with cornfields and cows — into an environmental center with thriving natural areas.

In 1980, Philip H. Jordan Jr., then president of Kenyon, shared his vision of creating a land lab at Kenyon with new biology faculty Ray and Pat Heithaus. Shortly after that, land became available and was purchased. And after that, Ray and Pat shared their newly minted proposal for an environmental center with the Kenyon Board of Trustees. Together, all of these people decided to make change happen, and in 1995, the Kenyon Center for Environmental Study was born.

After that, a whole bunch of people made a whole lot of changes quickly. Trails were blazed, a butterfly garden was created, thousands of trees were planted turning farmland into forest, seeds were sown to create prairies. A large gift was offered (see the article, "Honoring the Brown Family"), and a new building was raised. Bluebirds nested in newly built boxes, bridges were constructed, then ponds, then a labyrinth, and then a pollinator plot.

Students of all ages were thrown into these natural areas to learn, and over 25 years, they have grown, alongside the saplings and fledglings. Those students are now adults who have a connection to the natural world, to the trees and the prairie flowers, to the insects and frogs in the ponds. They are now adults who care about what happens to this place and in this place, adults who will take what we have done these last 25 years and make it even better in the next 25 years.

And change continues.

We are, each of us, a part of the cycle — if we choose to be. If we choose to get our hands dirty, spend some time outside, and act as stewards of this place. And while we do our work here in Gambier, Texans will do work in Texas and others will work in every other corner of the country, and change will happen.

I invite you to be part of the change. Find what motivates you, and then do good work. If you are inspired to be a part of our work at the BFEC, call me. If not, I trust you will find work to do in your own backyard or in your community.

I can assure you that we at the BFEC will continue to do what we do: conserve our natural resources and beautiful rural landscape, and connect students of all ages with that landscape. For another 25 years, we will continue to make positive change happen and make this place a little better.



# HONORING THE BROWN FAMILY

IN 1999, THE MINIGOWIN FOUNDATION APPROACHED KENYON with a memorial gift in the name of Robert Bowen Brown. The endowment transformed the Kenyon Center for Environmental Study (KCES) into the Brown Family Environmental Center.

Robert Bowen Brown graduated from Kenyon in 1911 and returned in 1941 to serve as Kenyon's alumni secretary. He went on to fill multiple roles at Kenyon, including dean, director of public relations, founding editor of the Alumni Bulletin and vice president for development. Other members of the family memorialized by the gift are Robert Bowen Brown's wife, Frances Hearne Brown, their daughters Antoinette Brown Suter and Frances Brown Newell, and their sons Harry Whiting Brown II '37 and Robert Bowen Brown Jr. '40.

Other members of the Brown family are still avid supporters of the Brown Family Environmental Center. In 2018, they collectively made another generous endowment that supports our newest staff position – a post-baccalaureate fellow. This position is filled each year by a Kenyon graduating senior who works with us for 12 months before spreading their wings in the wide world.

We are deeply humbled by the Brown family's previous and continued generosity, and we strive to honor them with our efforts in conservation and education.

## GREEN CORNER

### *Anniversaries: Celebrating the Past and Looking to the Future*

By Lisa Schott '80, Director of Philander Chase Conservancy

ANNIVERSARIES ARE SPECIAL OCCASIONS for taking time to reflect on all that has transpired over the years and to look forward to the future to anticipate the new opportunities it may hold. Three anniversaries that have an interesting intersection in my life have been on my mind of late. Philander Chase Conservancy was founded 20 years ago in May, and my 40th Kenyon reunion is the same month. I know: if you double the years since the conservancy was founded, you get the number of years since I graduated. I wish it were the other way around! The third anniversary that matters to me is the upcoming 25th anniversary of the founding of the Brown Family Environmental Center.

I deeply value the education I received at Kenyon and the career and life opportunities the College provided for me. My liberal arts education gave me a learning framework that has served me through several interesting careers during my 35 years of Kenyon work, spanning experiences with alumni, the conservancy, developing a farm program and building a nature preserve cemetery.

What I value most from my four years as a student, however, is the love affair that I have with the natural beauty of Knox County. I grew up in Cleveland and was always drawn to the metroparks as a girl. Coming to Kenyon, however, was my first experience of living in a rural area where I was surrounded by trees and farmland and a beautiful, healthy river. I was hooked. I returned to Cleveland for graduate studies but knew I had to return to living in the country, and I was fortunate to be able to return to Gambier in 1985.

During my student years at Kenyon, there was no conservancy, no Brown Family Environmental Center, no Kenyon Farm, no Kokosing Nature Preserve, no Knox County Park District trails to walk (which, by the way, is also celebrating 25 years this year) and no Kokosing Gap Trail. I loved this area before we had such generous access to the resources of the beautiful green spaces that surround us. And because of that, I feel a special debt of gratitude to the many people who made all of these resources possible in the 40 years since my graduation.

As these anniversaries approach, I want to thank everyone who has cared about our natural environment and who has worked to conserve land and educate others about why our natural world matters. Together, we have made great strides, but much remains to be done. May we celebrate all that has been accomplished and continue to work together to introduce others to the joys of this beautiful rural area we are fortunate to call home.

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One of the most recent additions to the Brown Family Environmental Center is Walker Pond, secured through the efforts of the Philander Chase Conservancy.



# CONSIDER THIS: GO OUTSIDE!

by Noelle Jordan, Manager of the BFEC

STRANGE TIMES, EH? I'm writing this the day after Kenyon announced that students would finish the semester via online learning as a preventative measure to (hopefully) slow the spread of Coronavirus. The campus is quiet.

In Mount Vernon, the mood is somber, and inside people's homes, things are most likely tense. Restaurants, gyms and movie theaters are closed. Kids are not in school.

Fast forward three weeks. While you are reading this, we've all most likely settled into a new but weird normal. Perhaps by now, there are communities encouraging people to stay inside, but I certainly hope that's not the case. And if it's not, I'm hoping that spending more time outside is part of your new routine. If not, what are you waiting for?

Spring is happening, and it's spectacular! Frogs have filled the ponds, birds are migrating and singing their hearts out, and the spring flowers have sprung. Temperatures are warming up, and I'm seeing a little more blue sky and sunshine.

It feels good to be outside, and here's why. "People living closer to nature [have] reduced diastolic blood pressure, heart rate and stress. In fact ... exposure to greenspace significantly reduces people's levels of salivary cortisol — a physiological marker of stress." This quote is from a 2018 report from the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England. The report published the results of 140 studies involving more than 290 million people in 20 countries including the U.S., the U.K., Spain, France, Germany, Australia and Japan.

Here's more: "The team analyzed how the health of people with little access to green spaces compared to that of people with the highest amounts of exposure. 'Green space' was defined as open, undeveloped land with natural vegetation as well as urban greenspaces, which included urban parks and street greenery.

We found that spending time in, or living close to, natural green spaces is associated with diverse and significant health benefits. It reduces the risk of type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease, premature death and preterm

birth and increases sleep duration. People living closer to nature also had reduced diastolic blood pressure, heart rate and stress. In fact, one of the really interesting things we found is that exposure to green space significantly reduces people's levels of salivary cortisol — a physiological marker of stress."

For more information about these health benefits, check out the article "The health benefits of the great outdoors: A systematic review and meta-analysis of greenspace exposure and health outcomes," published on July 6, 2018 in the journal *Environmental Research*.

In Knox County, there are lots of places to get outside and reconnect to nature. The BFEC, for example, has nine miles of trails, a wildflower garden, a cool labyrinth and lovely views of the Kokosing River and Wolf Run Creek. Knox County Parks has eight parks, including a dog park, a park with horse trails and geocache sites. In total, Knox Parks has 955 acres with lots of trails to hike. The Ramser Arboretum has some great trails that are gorgeous in the spring when the dogwood trees are blooming. All of these parks are open every single day from dawn to dusk, and it's free to enjoy them.

So, if you're feeling stressed, or simply bored to tears, or if your kids are driving you crazy, go outside! When you're out there, look up at the sky and take a deep breath. Exhale. How do you feel?

## WHERE TO GO

Parks and trails filled with springtime beauty abound throughout Knox County. To find the park nearest you, check out the following websites:

**Brown Family Environmental Center**  
bfec.kenyon.edu

**Knox County Parks**  
knoxcountyparks.org

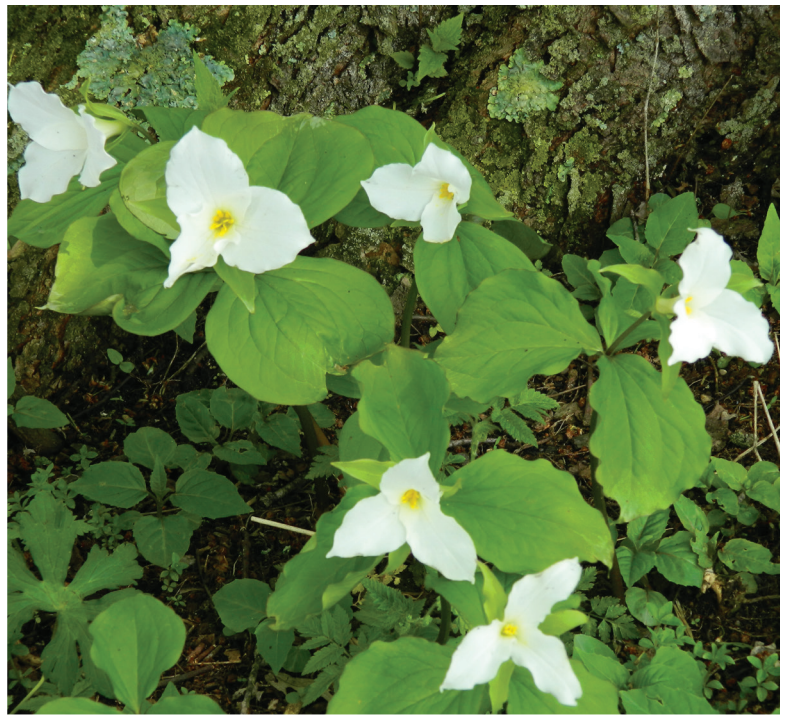
**Ramser Arboretum**  
ramserarbor.org



## SPRING COLOR

Look for these beautiful spring wildflowers while you're out and about.

Clockwise, from upper left: sessile trillium, great white trillium, virginia bluebells, dutchman's breeches.





# FLUORESCENT FOE

By Mia Fox '19, BFEC Post-Baccalaureate Fellow

THEY'RE COMING, AND THERE IS LITTLE WE CAN DO ABOUT IT. But they need to be stopped.

Take one look at the spotted lanternfly, and you may be wondering why we would want to eradicate these bright beauties. But looks are deceiving. The fluorescent allure of the spotted lanternfly masks its nasty capabilities.

Originally from China, the bug descended on Pennsylvania in 2014. Since its arrival, the bug has spread to New Jersey, Delaware and Virginia. In the past two months, eggs of the invasive species were found on the border between Ohio and Pennsylvania.

As the spotted lanternfly feeds on the tender shoots and stems of various plants, it excretes a fluid called honeydew. This thick, sugary substance lands on other parts of the plant and can form mold and rot. In Pennsylvania, this pest has been most detrimental to some of our favorite food crops – grapes,

hops, maples, walnut trees – but also to our lovely dogwood trees and pines. A recent study released by Penn State University found that the spotted lanternfly is costing the Pennsylvania economy about \$50 million and eliminating nearly 500 jobs each year. Of particular importance for Ohio are instances of the spotted lanternfly feeding on soybean and corn crops.

Its destructive powers are alarming and magnified by the bug's ability to hitchhike. Females lay eggs on any surface, including things like cars and trains, and those egg masses are not clearly visible once they've been deposited. Then the car or train travels from Pennsylvania to, say, Gambier, in just a few hours. And voila! The spotted lanternfly becomes established in another part of the country. Combine this ability to spread with the fact that its favorite host plant, the tree of heaven, is prolific in nearly all 50 states and particularly thrives in highly trafficked areas, and we have a recipe for disaster.

On the flipside, this species reproduces only once each year. So, we at least have that working in our favor. For now, all that can be done to stem the spread of lanternflies is to remain watchful for their presence and any damage they may inflict. When you're hiking on your property or at the BFEC, look for what appears to be sap oozing or weeping at the base of trees. If you get close enough, you will also detect a fetid or fermented odor.

An app developed by the School of Environment and Natural Resources at Ohio State allows users to report invasive species if they suspect that they have come across them. Called the Great Lakes Early Detection Network, it features details about invasive species that people should be on the lookout for. If you see a lanternfly or evidence at the base of trees, please contact the Ohio Department of Agriculture at 614-728-6201 or use the Great Lakes Early Detection Network app.



Beautiful but dangerous:  
the spotted lanternfly

## DONORS AND VOLUNTEERS

### Winter 2019-20

Humble thanks to our generous donors who have invested in our conservation and education efforts. Kenyon provides about 30% of our annual operating expenses, so our donors are vital to the work that we do.

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# UPCOMING EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

As part of Kenyon's response to COVID-19, all programs and events originally scheduled through May 15 have been cancelled.

We are currently offering the following programs in hopes that we will be able to reconvene public gatherings in mid-May. If things change, we will let you know.

There will be additional offerings added to our calendar for summer. For the most up-to-date information, please check our website, [bfec.kenyon.edu](http://bfec.kenyon.edu).

## Bird Walk

MAY 16, 8 A.M.

Join us for an easy stroll through a portion of BFEC property and along the Kokosing Gap Trail to search for and identify birds. Focus will be visual ID, behaviors and niche preferences. All experience levels are welcome. Bring your own field guide and binoculars, or use ours if you're a beginner. Jake Peer of Helser Woodland Management will lead this adventure. *Meet at the BFEC Resource Center.*

## Tree ID

JUNE 20, 10 A.M.

Join us for a walk along BFEC trails to identify trees in all their glory. Trails will include some moderately difficult hills. All experience levels are welcome. Field guides will be provided. Jake Peer of Helser Woodland Management will lead this adventure. *Meet at the BFEC Resource Center.*

## Forest Bathing: Forest Therapy Walk

JUNE 27, 2 – 3 P.M.

In Japan, the practice of forest bathing is decades old. Shinrin-yoku, or “taking in the forest atmosphere,” is the simple but profound practice of walking through a forest and opening your senses. Experience for yourself what research has told us for years – that spending time under a forest canopy can boost your immune system, lower blood pressure, accelerate healing and so much more. Jill Emmelhainz, a certified forest therapy guide, will show us how to use our senses to connect with nature. Rain or shine. *Meet at the picnic pavilion.*

## Best of the BFEC: Celebrating 25 Years

SEPTEMBER 12, NOON – 4 P.M.

This special event will include flying falcons by Ohio Falconry, tree climbing, live music, children's activities, a silent auction and more. Join us to celebrate 25 years of conservation and education=.

Dick Mulligan  
Richard and Susan  
Murray

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Colleen Damerell  
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and Cari Ficken  
Annie Lambla

### VOLUNTEERS

Winter is a quiet time at the BFEC. Our volunteer numbers are small, but the volunteers themselves are mighty. Thank you for all you do to make the BFEC great!

Jon Minard, *community*  
Denny Wiegman, *community*



# Brown Family Environmental Center

at Kenyon College

bfec.kenyon.edu | 740-427-5050

BROWN FAMILY ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER | 9781 LAYMON ROAD | GAMBIER, OH 43022-9623

## OUR MISSION

The Brown Family Environmental Center exists to support the academic goals of Kenyon College, to provide opportunities for education and research, to engage Central Ohioans of all ages with nature, and to conserve the natural diversity of the Kokosing River valley.

## OUR STAFF

Mia Fox '19, *Post Baccalaureate Fellow*

Jill Kerkhoff, *Facilities Coordinator and Office Administrator*

Shane McGuire, *Land Manager Naturalist*

Noelle Jordan, *Manager*

# INVEST IN ANOTHER 25 YEARS

TO MAKE A GIFT, PLEASE FILL OUT THE INFORMATION BELOW, DETACH THE SHEET AND SEE MAILING INSTRUCTIONS.

There are many reasons to give, including the satisfaction of knowing you're a part of critical environmental education and conservation programs. Receive preferred access to workshops, a hard copy of our newsletters, and a discount on bird seed. **Use the form below to send your contribution today.**

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Your donation is tax deductible as allowed by law. The Brown Family Environmental Center at Kenyon College is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization.

**Mail to:** BFEC, P.O. Box 508, Gambier, Ohio 43022