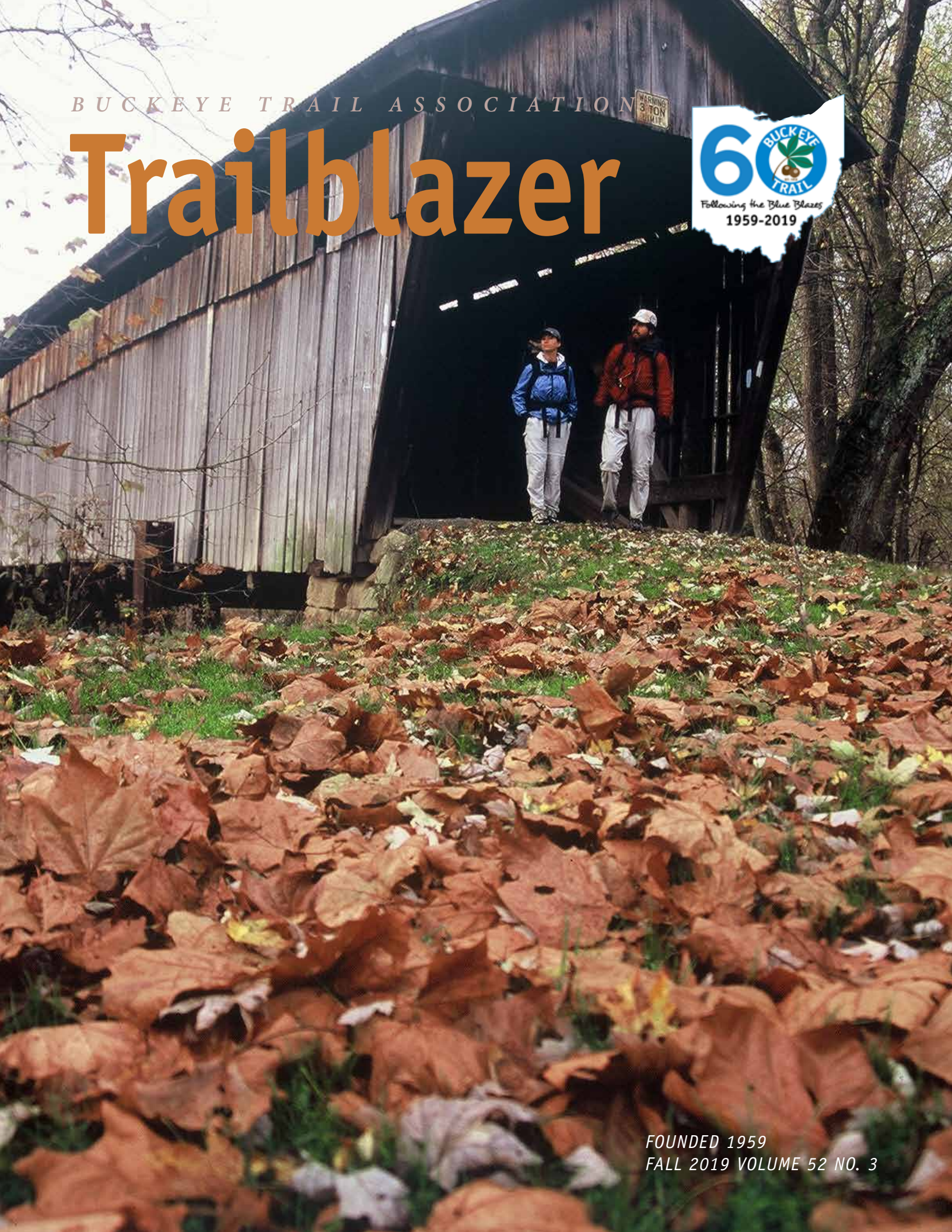


BUCKEYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

# Trailblazer



FOUNDED 1959  
FALL 2019 VOLUME 52 NO. 3



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Cartoon by Karen Power and Jerri Getts



<https://atlasguides.com/buckeye-trail/>



## Trailblazer

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*Disclaimer: The articles and all information in this publication have been prepared with utmost care. However, neither the Buckeye Trail Association nor the Editor can guarantee accuracy or completeness of information. Opinions expressed in the articles, columns and paid advertising are not necessarily those of the BTA.*



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Cover photo: Brent & Amy 2003 Thru-Hike of the Buckeye Trail  
Photo credit: Brent & Amy Anslinger

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# Thank you to 2019 TrailFest Partners and Sponsors!

Without you all, our 2019 Buckeye TrailFest would not have been possible. We're grateful for your partnership and help. Looking forward to seeing you at the Buckeye TrailFest 2020 in the Cuyahoga Valley April 30 to May 3.

We encourage our readers to check out these other amazing organizations who deserve all of our attention as they too work to better our communities, parks and trails.

For any questions, please contact [trailfest@buckeyetrail.org](mailto:trailfest@buckeyetrail.org) for more information

## TrailFest Partners



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WE KEEP YOU OUTDOORS



# President's Message

*Steve Walker*

Here's to hoping that you're all enjoying the hiking season. To put it mildly, this was a challenging year when it came to maintaining trail so that the hiking season could be enjoyed. There was an unusually high amount of rain and the temperatures were, on average, higher as well. Conditions like this are what trailside vegetation thrives on. On top of that, there were some storms with high winds that wreaked havoc on parts of the Buckeye Trail. Add high water saturation of the forest soil to high winds and what naturally follows are several downed trees.

There is good news in all of this, though. The Buckeye Trail Association has a solid volunteer base of sawyers,

maintainers and other people that care about the trail and are glad to come out and help open it back up. On June 28<sup>th</sup>, a severe thunderstorm settled over the eastern side of Leesville Lake for about an hour. A microburst resulted and downed hundreds of trees in the area. Many of these trees ended up across the Buckeye Trail there. This part of the Buckeye Trail is particularly important to me as Karen and I are joint maintainers with Dennis and Kim Love-Ottobre on the 3 mile segment.

We quickly received hiker reports that the trail was largely impassable and lots of bushwhacking was required to get through. A quick survey of the trail suggested that there was also a safety issue since the soil was still very wet and the possibility existed that more trees could still fall. Quite a few of the downed trees required the skills of a certified sawyer to deal with. As a result, we decided to request a Trail Alert. The Trail Alert was granted to bypass this segment temporarily.

At this point, we looked at our options. As the Buckeye Trail Crew had been solidly scheduled with 14 work parties this season, we reached out to the current crop of certified sawyers that help keep the Buckeye Trail clear: Byron Guy, Pat Hayes, Scott Pendleton, Bill Jindra and Andy Hagat. Most of these folks do not live near Leesville Lake, but all were willing to come and help. Some of these sawyers were recruited with the help of Trail Management Team Chair Richard Lutz. The State Sawyer Program is in its very early stages and promises to be a major help to Section Supervisors and Trail Adopters who have tree problems that are beyond their skillsets.

Other good news involves some of those Section Supervisors who are looking to improve their part of the Buckeye Trail. In particular, I'd like to mention James "Sunny" Sunyak, our Akron Section Supervisor.



# 129 Project



*Illustration by Michael Ryan*

Sunny has been working with a long time partner, the Cuyahoga Valley Trails Council (which is also a partner of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park) to re-establish the actual tread of the Buckeye Trail inside that park. The last time that the BTA worked with CVTC was in 1992. There was lots of trail creep over many years of heavy use. In the last couple of years, “Sunny” and Randall Roberts reached out to the Cuyahoga Valley Trails Council. Our first joint project with them was to re-establish and harden the Buckeye Trail tread near the Spicy Lamb Farm in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. “Sunny” and Randall have also cultivated a strong relationship with the Cuyahoga Valley National Park staff who helped with this project.

While “Trail” is a part of our name, “Buckeye Trail,” not everything we do is trail building or maintenance. In March of this year, your BTA Board took action to acquire properties in Shawnee, Ohio, in order to expand our headquarters. The next step in that process is the refurbishment of the building next to our current headquarters. The rehabilitation of that structure is called the 129 Project and is well under way with a grand opening scheduled to coincide with the Annual BTA Staff Holiday Party on Friday, December 20,

2019. Several volunteers have helped and we’ve received many donations, but there’s still much to do. We’re looking for your help to bring the 129 Project to fruition. Needs include volunteer work, financial donations, building materials and fixtures. If any of you wish to help with these needs, please contact me at [president@buckeyetrail.org](mailto:president@buckeyetrail.org).

Our five year strategic plan, named BTA 2025, is likely to be published before the end of 2019. The final stages of developing BTA 2025 are being ably led by your newest BTA Board Member, Rory Robinson. Your input has helped shape this important blueprint that will guide the Buckeye Trail Association through the next five years.

As is usual for me at this point, I’m encouraging you to consider committee work. We currently have many active committees that are helping with the work of the BTA. These include the Development, Membership, Personnel and Awards Committees. You can also let me know if you’re interested in serving on any of these committees by contacting me at [president@buckeyetrail.org](mailto:president@buckeyetrail.org).

Our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year is shaping up to be our best year, yet! I hope that you’ll want to be an active part of that celebration and help us to even greater success in our next 60 years. Have a great Fall!





# On the Trail

I'm looking at my hiking boots over in the corner under the coat rack. They're 'old' and broken, pieces of the sole are coming off, the 'new' paracord laces bypass a couple of the broken loops. Because I have never washed them, they are the color of Ohio's dirt. They've been used and abused, under water, beaten by dull pulaski's while trail building, raked by multi-floral rose thorns, beaten on pavement, grass, roots, rocks and mud. And yet, when I look over at them I get the feeling that they are looking back at me with the excited anticipation of a puppy... "are we doing it?! Are we going?! Did you say 'hike'?" Not today. Today I'm doing important work so that everyone can hike.

Do you know where your boots are? Or, for that matter, your trail runners, tennis shoes or flip flops you've taken out on the BT? Likely yours are like mine. We've been a lot of places together; Max Patch on the AT with family and friends, searching for bugling elk in Rocky Mountain National Park, overlooking the dramatic Columbia River Gorge, and of course many places along the Buckeye Trail following my wife and daughter's boots.

My boots look at me skeptically when I tell them I'm working on the BT as I sit here writing (I don't actually talk to my boots... out loud). I have an interesting profession. My job basically entails getting as many people as possible out to do what I want to do: go hike the Buckeye Trail. On any given day I could be volunteering by chainsawing some trees off the trail, writing

a grant proposal to fund a major trail development, hiring and supervising AmeriCorps Members, meeting with ODNR leadership about trail issues or opportunities, walking the halls of the Statehouse to advocate for large public land acquisition, working with volunteers to evolve our database and software, pushing the buttons on a social media promotion, paying bills, helping organize 5-10 events around the state or spending time on important BTA Board Committee meetings. A combination of those things require a wardrobe change part way through the day (Why?).

All of these things help to build, maintain, protect and promote Ohio's Buckeye Trail – so that everyone is able to take a hike, our mission. And I'm not the only one! A small army of BTA Volunteers and partners are telling their boots that they have something important to do before we go for a hike: help everyone go for a hike.

If you are reading this that means you are doing your part too. You're supporting the BTA and our goal to get more boots on the trail. It's not fun or glamorous to do database entry, write grants or deal with liability insurance for volunteers, but it gets more trails connected, maintained and ready for another generation of adventures around Ohio. The BTA is a small organization when measured by staffing, but it is a significant organization when measured by impact thanks to our volunteers and supporters like you.



*Photo credit to Andrew Bashaw*

Fall is here and, as always, there is so much to do out on the BT. We're officially opening 16 new miles of the BT/North Country National Scenic Trail at the Nature Conservancy's 20,000 acre Edge of Appalachia Preserve in Southeast Adams County. There are multiple Buckeye Trail Crew Work Parties to attend and volunteers are busily fixing up a new home for the BTA in the Village of Shawnee. Jim Gilkey and friends are celebrating the completion of his second lap around the BT and many on their first during the Circuit Hikes in Milford. Roads, Rivers and Trails outfitters is sponsoring a Buckeye Trail Backpacker Bash from Loveland to Milford, the Run for Blue Blazes Trail Marathon is coming soon to the Wayne National Forest and the Crooked River Chapter is busy planning for Buckeye TrailFest in the Cuyahoga Valley April 30 – May 3, 2020. This Fall is a great time for a last hoorah to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the BT and BTA!

So. What plans do you and your boots have to celebrate the BT? Don't tell our President, Steve Walker, but I think I'm going to take off a little early this Friday, take someone's advice to 'go take a hike'... and build some new BT with a local college class and enjoy where my boots will take me.

Where on the BT will your boots take you this Fall?

Thank you for supporting the BTA and thank you for hiking!

Andrew Bashaw  
Executive Director

## Follow us on...



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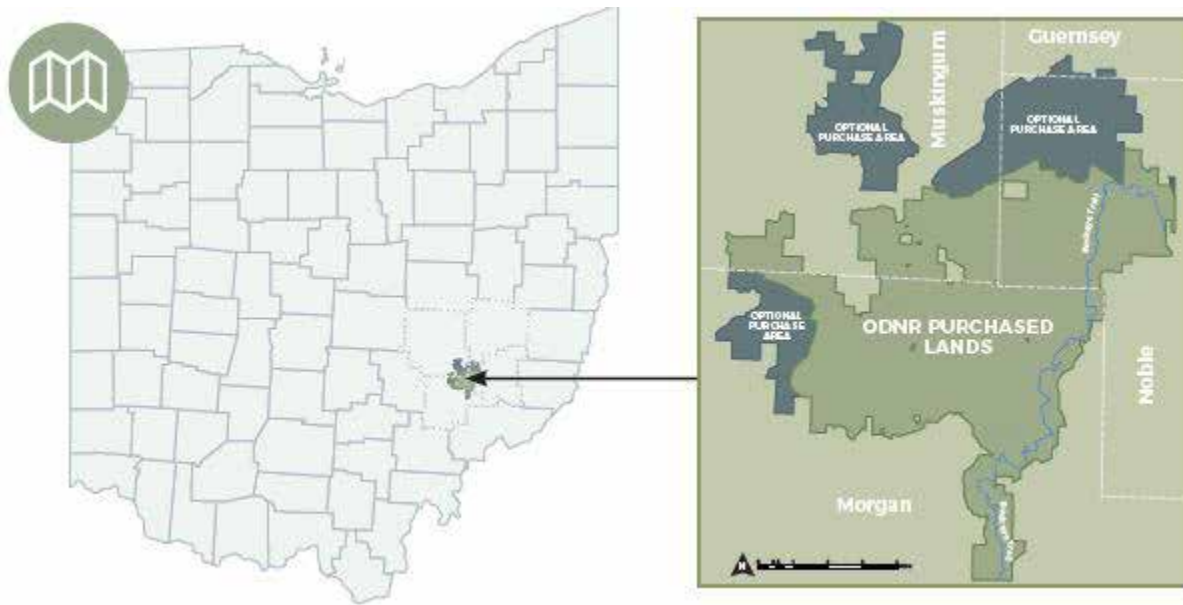


[@hikethebt](https://@hikethebt)



# 24 Miles of The Buckeye Trail through AEP ReCreation Lands Protected by Historic ODNR Land Acquisition.

*article by Andrew Bashaw, graphics from ODNR*



There is way too much to say about the BTA's decades of effort on AEP ReCreation Lands here in one short article, but the headline sums up the news. Before we miss our Trailblazer deadline, here is an excerpt from ODNR:

On October 2nd Governor Mike DeWine announced the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and American Electric Power (AEP) have reached an agreement that will secure more than 31,000 acres of public land in perpetuity for conservation and outdoor recreation. The land is in Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, and Guernsey counties in eastern Ohio and will be acquired in parcels over the next two years.

"This is an historic addition to Ohio's public lands," said Governor Mike DeWine. "With this acquisition, we ensure that all of our citizens and future generations will continue to enjoy this scenic area and its resources."

The area has long been a popular destination for hunting, fishing, camping, and hiking. The property has 24 continuous miles of the Buckeye Trail traversing the area and includes 350 lakes and ponds and six campgrounds. It adjoins the newly created Jesse Owens State Park.

Thank you to all the BTA Volunteers who hiked the halls of the Statehouse over the last several years successfully advocating for this historic project and thank you to Herb Hulls and the Buckeye Trail Crew Volunteers who have worked tirelessly on this important stretch of Ohio's Buckeye Trail!





# BTA Funds Report

Your contribution to any BTA fund is tax deductible. All contributions of \$20 or more are acknowledged.  
We hope to include your name in the list of contributors in the Trailblazer.

## MAY 2019 TO AUGUST 2019

### TRAIL PRESERVATION FUND

Karen Power

Petra Schmalbrock

Ryan Bowles

Sandra Barlett

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## A New Backpacking Destination on the BT is Open for Hiking at the Nature Conservancy's Edge of Appalachia Preserve

*written by Andrew Bashaw; photo credit to David Ike*

A new mile of the BT at Caldwell Lake, a new 2.5 mile loop at Tecumseh Lake in the Wayne National Forest near the Village of Shawnee, and a permanently protected 24 miles of the BT at AEP ReCreation Lands. All of these were multi-year projects of the BTA that have come to successful completion just in the last month! To add to our celebration of our 60th Birthday this year on September 28th, a large gift was presented to Ohio's hiking and nature loving community. We celebrated the grand opening of a new 16 mile segment of the BT across Ohio's largest privately owned nature preserve, the Nature Conservancy's 20,000 acre Edge of Appalachia Preserve.

The new segment runs along TNC's Sunshine Ridge Corridor that is connecting the 'Edge' to Shawnee State Forest, creating Ohio's largest publicly accessible tract of forest and connecting to an existing 60 mile network of trails in Shawnee State Forest including an additional 14 more miles of the BT.

What a gift from our Buckeye Trail Crew; creating countless future adventures for hikers in one of Ohio's most rugged and beautiful landscapes that only BTA volunteers have been able to enjoy for the last few years! But, like all of our projects we did not do it alone. Many Nature Conservancy staff were active partners in trail layout, authoring a successful Clean Ohio Trails Fund grant application for trail construction to match the Buckeye Trail Crew's efforts, as well as problem solving, campsite development, interpretive panel creation and promotion. The North Country National Scenic Trail National Park Service staff members, Chris Loudenslager and Luke Jordan, were present to celebrate with us and announce the certification of these newest miles of the NCNST. ODN's Assistant Director Steve Gray also joined us to congratulate the partners, give us a sneak preview of the AEP ReCreation land acquisition, and paint the final blaze for this multi-year project.

Wouldn't Emma "Grandma" Gatewood, a founding member of the BTA, and Emma "Lucy" Braun, a founding member of The Nature Conservancy, both born in the late 1880's, be proud of how the products of their leadership, two great causes both born in 1959, have brought together so many of their admirers who value the preservation and enjoyment of Ohio's natural wonders here in one special place.



*View from BT/NCNST over Ohio Brush Creek Valley*



# “Hocking Hills Day Hikes” hits the shelves

Eight of 25 featured hikes are along the Buckeye Trail

ATHENS, Ohio — The Hocking Hills now has its first-ever hiking guide book. “Hocking Hills Day Hikes” is available in both e-book and print book form. Out of the 25 featured hikes in the book, eight are all or in part along the Buckeye Trail.

The book includes 25 featured hikes with photos, trailhead directions, hike descriptions and trail maps. It includes classic hikes like the Grandma Gatewood Trail/Buckeye Trail from Old Man’s Cave to Ash Cave. Also included are hikes in the greater Hocking Hills region, and lesser-known BT sections, like the Buckeye Trail through Hocking State Forest to Balanced Rock, and a portion of the BT in Boch Hollow State Nature Preserve.

“How is it possible that this book did not already exist?! Mary Reed has created an indispensable companion to so many solo and family adventures to the Hocking Hills with great photos, easy to read maps, and hike descriptions that fits in your pack or your back pocket,” said Andrew Bashaw, director of the Buckeye Trail Association.

“Beyond the well-known destinations included like the Grandma Gatewood/Buckeye Trail at Old Man’s Cave, Reed highlights lesser known, but just as spectacular, sights throughout the region with a great leave no trace message to ensure we all continue to hike, enjoy and steward this special part of Ohio.”

The pocket-size print book is available for purchase online from [www.getoutpublishing.com](http://www.getoutpublishing.com) and at various retailers, including the gift shop at Hocking Hills State Park and REI in Columbus.

In addition to highlighted trails, the guide includes lists of hikes by length and by feature (waterfalls, caves and so on) plus information about other nearby permit-only preserves, state parks and regional backpacking trails.



Go to [www.getoutpublishing.com](http://www.getoutpublishing.com) for more information about the book, including a “look inside.”

List prices are \$14.99 for the print book and \$9.99 for the e-book.

The book is written by Athens, Ohio-based author and BTA member Mary Reed. Reed’s earlier works include “Hiking Ohio” and “Hiking West Virginia.”

Contact: Mary Reed, [getoutpublishing@gmail.com](mailto:getoutpublishing@gmail.com)

740-707-3829

# 2019 Schedule of Hikes & Events

Always check [www.buckeyetrail.org/events.html](http://www.buckeyetrail.org/events.html) for more information and last-minute updates

## OCTOBER

Oct. 5, 2019

**2019 Buckeye Trail Run: Run for Blue Blazes**

**Location:** The race starts and ends in downtown Shawnee OH.

**Information:** Visit the ([buckeyetrail.org/run4blue.php](http://www.buckeyetrail.org/run4blue.php)) web page for all the details. Registration is OPEN!

October 7, 2019

**Discover the BTA**

Monday - 6:30 PM.

**Location:** Salem Library, 821 East State Street, Salem, OH 44460

**Contact:** The Library - 330) 332-0042

October 12-16, 2019

**Work Week at Camp Tuscazoar in the Massillon Section**

The Trail Crew will leave at 8:30 AM and work until 3:30 PM.

**Camping:** Camp Tuscazoar at 066 Boy Scout Rd NE, Dover, OH 44622.

**Meals:** Food will be provided by the BTA Barn Kitchen. Contact Mary Hamilton [hamilton3310@roadrunner.com](mailto:hamilton3310@roadrunner.com) to make food donations

**Contact:** Steve Walker [president@buckeyetrail.org](mailto:president@buckeyetrail.org) for work party questions and to RSVP

October 19-20, 2019

**BT Circuit Hike**

**Description:** Ten of the circuit hikers who are doing the BT's circuit hikes lead by Jim Gilkey, will complete the circuit this weekend on October 20th. Join Us for the Celebration!

Riverside Park in Milford, Ohio is the location for the celebration on October 20th. Visit the Circuit Hike Celebration page at <http://www.buckeyetrail.org/circuit-end.php> for celebration details.

**Saturday:** Meet along the road at 1302 Binning Road, about 1.2 miles west of Point 26, coordinates N39.12624 - W084.22861. Leave at 9:30AM to car pool.

**Sunday:** Meet at Riverside Park parking lot on Water Street in Milford, about .3 mile east of Point 29. Coordinates N39.17670 - W084.29575. Leave at 9:30AM to car pool.

**Camping:** East Fork State Campground, 2837 Old State Route 32, Batavia OH 45103.

**Contact:** Jim Gilkey at 614-879-9912 ahead of time or at 740-277-8749 on the hike weekend. Those wishing to attend the celebration, contact Cheryl Kreindler at [ckreindl1443@gmail.com](mailto:ckreindl1443@gmail.com)

October 26-27, 2019

**Work Weekend at Pretty Run in the Old Man's Cave Section**

We will leave the camp at 8:30 AM and work until 3:30 PM.

**Camping:** at Pretty Run, 39.34987 N, -82.62431 W. Tent camping only.

**Meals:** This is not a Chuck wagon event, so volunteers must bring their own food and water

**Contact:** For questions about the work party and to RSVP contact Byron Guy at [oldmanscave@buckeyetrail.org](mailto:oldmanscave@buckeyetrail.org)

## NOVEMBER

Nov 2, 2019

**Buckeye Trail Board Meeting 10:00AM**

**Location:** Tecumseh Theatre in Shawnee, OH

**Contact:** Steve Walker, President, at [president@buckeyetrail.org](mailto:president@buckeyetrail.org)

November 7, 2019

**Discover the BTA**

Thursday - 6:30 PM

**Location:** Dover Public Library, 525 North Walnut, Dover, OH 44622

**Contact:** Jim Gill at 330-343-6123

November 9-10, 2019

**BT Circuit Hike**

**Contact:** Jim Gilkey at 614-879-9912 ahead of time or at 740-277-8749 on the hike weekend.

## 2020 EVENTS

April 15-19, 2020

**Work Week in the Wayne National Forest**  
New Straitsville Section, Chuck Wagon event

April 25-29, 2020

**Work Week in Cuyahoga Valley National Park**  
Akron Section, Chuck Wagon event

May 16-20, 2020

**Work Weekened at Bill Miller Trail Head**  
Old Man's Cave Section, Chuck Wagon event

## SAVE THE DATE! BUCKEYE TRAILFEST 2020

April 30-May 3

Buckeye TrailFest 2020 will be at Camp Manatoc within the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. We hope to see you there!

Also stay tuned for next year's:

EGGS Hike, Run for Blue Blazes, MorelFest, Little Loop Challenge, Ralph and Regula Memorial Golf Outing

*photo credit to Mary Reed*







*Photos credit: Preston Barlett*



# NEW TRAIL AT CALDWELL LAKE-ROAD FORK SECTION

*written by Tom Rohr*

The enjoyment of hiking is mostly in the journey rather than in reaching the destination. The more we can enhance that enjoyment, the more hikers will appreciate and use the Buckeye Trail.

The Road Fork Section of the BT begins (clockwise) only a few hundred yards from a busy and noisy intersection of I77 and ends in the middle of the wilderness loop. The first half follows back roads. It's a nice hike, but the trail does not go off-road until after almost 30 miles.

Back in June of 2016, I had stepped off the trail just after point 2 to get a better view of Caldwell Lake from the top of the dam impounding the water supply for the Village of Caldwell. Although the road walk does offer a few limited views of the lake, it seemed a shame

that hikers were not able to appreciate more of the lake and the woods surrounding it.

After some inquiry at the Village Hall, I did find that the management of the lake is part of the responsibility of the Water Department. I made, what is called a "cold call" by salesmen, a stop at the water plant and was fortunate enough to meet the Superintendent, Jason Weber. I say fortunate because the plant operates 24-7 and the staff does move between shifts.

Jason, who grew up in the area and knew the landscape well, was very positive about building a trail to enhance the Caldwell Lake area and to provide a hiking trail for local citizens. Now the Water Department is administered by the local Board of Public Affairs. Jason offered to float the idea by the board and get their feedback. He found that feedback to be positive.



In August, Richard Lutz and I met with the Board and personally presented the basic idea to build a trail along the lake. They were receptive but, as you might imagine, they did request more detail.

In October, the two of us hiked both sides of the lake to get some sort of idea how to lay out trail. We had the opportunity to get up close and personal with some very dense briars and brambles and some of the healthiest multiflora roses you have ever seen.

Then in November, we flagged the south side. On a relatively warm and sunny day in December, we flagged the north side. It had been very cold for a number of days before, so the lake had mostly frozen over. While we flagged, the ice creaked, groaned and screeched as the sunshine warmed the surfaced and created fractures. A neat experience.

Richard, Andrew Bashaw, Jason Weber and I held a meeting in early January of 2019 at the Water Treatment plant in regards to the proposed off-road BT trail addition. Maps of the flagged trails (south and north sides of the lake) were given to Jason to share with city officials and others directly impacted by the proposal. It was stressed that there needed to be a documented, long-term agreement among the Village of Caldwell, landowners and the BT so there would be a full understanding between all parties.





*Photos credit: Andrew Bashaw*

During most of 2017, much time was spent communicating between the BT, the Village and private landowners. “Paperwork” was prepared, circulated, and reviewed. As things evolved, concerns by private landowners preclude building on the south side of the lake so it was decided to concentrate on the north trail.

In January of 2018, Jason Weber presented the draft proposal, prepared by the BT, regarding the Caldwell Lake north trail to the Board of Public Affairs and, at that time, he gave copies to the clerk of the Village Council to distribute to the Council.

With Richard Lutz, I met with Mayor Jon Bates and the Council to ask for approval of the resolution to build new off-road trail on the north side of Caldwell Lake. As a group, they were very receptive and approved the resolution (resolution no. 2018-02).

In anticipation of the approval, the Trail Crew had been scheduled to begin building in October of 2018. In August, I attended the Caldwell Village Council meeting to remind them of our plans to make sure everyone was comfortable.

Between October 13 and 17, 2018 the Trail Crew (ranging between 10-15 BT volunteers) finished about 3,100 feet of trail. A special and generous crew also worked on the trail in April of 2019 and, in July, a group from the scheduled Road Fork/Whipple Work Party spent an extra day to finish up. A huge “Thank You” to all the volunteers who made this trail happen and a special thanks to Susan Stover who was always there.

Blazing was completed in August, a week before the formal opening which took place on the 14th with representatives from the Village of Caldwell and the Buckeye Trail Association.

The Road Fork Section runs through Noble, Monroe and Washington Counties. The first 30 miles are a pleasant hike, but are all on-road. There were no off-road portions in the 20 miles running through Noble County.

This new trail adds about a mile of off-road hiking within just the first few miles of the trailhead. It winds through forest and opens on beautiful vistas of Caldwell Lake. It passes interesting rock outcroppings. The trail is a relatively easy hike and quiet. By incorporating existing roadway, it can be a 1.5 loop for the casual hiker. It is an asset to the Buckeye Trail and to the Village of Caldwell.

I wonder, if fate had not scheduled Jason Weber to be working that June day in 2016, would I have persevered with additional follow-up or would the new Caldwell Lake Trail be non-existent?







Many have heard the tales of a once wilder Ohio. Passed down from Native Americans and early settlers. It is well documented what existed here when the first European settlers stepped foot west of the Ohio River. From the Appalachian foothills to the shores of Lake Erie, from the Great Black Swamp to the Miami Valley, a massive, ancient forest dominated our land. Intermixed with sporadic prairie openings, large numbers of wetlands and maintained meadows, Ohio was truly a haven for wildlife. Species that, today, we only think of as living on the vast protected lands in the west, were once very much common place here in the Buckeye State. Iconic American animals such as mountain lions, bison, gray wolves, black bear, lynx, and the eastern elk all could be found in abundance.

In just over 100 years however, all of the staples of Ohio's forest ecosystem were destroyed. Not only were these animals gone, but the places they called home hung on by a thread. Settlers cut close to 99% of the original forests, drained 98% of the wetlands, and replaced the native tallgrass prairies with farm fields and cow pastures. The Europeans did not value the treasures that they found here and replaced them with a landscape like the one from which they came. This conversion from a forested land to a pastoral landscape, coupled with a coal boom and eventual industrialization, left Ohio as a place

unrecognizable to the people who lived here just a couple of generations prior.

The devastation was catastrophic for the animals. Along with the extirpation of our largest mammals, there were no more white-tailed deer in Ohio by the early 1900's. There were no wild turkeys, no beaver, no bobcats and no otters. Other Ohio animals like the passenger pigeon, blue pike, Carolina parakeet, and eastern elk disappeared from the world completely. It was a true ecological collapse, the likes of which we continue to recover from.

Fortunately, our legacy does not end here. Shifting cultural views and a heightened awareness of environmental health during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as galvanizing events, such as the Cuyahoga River Fire, led to policies that began to heal some of the damage done to wild Ohio. Native American tribes across America, hunters, hikers, environmentalists, fishermen, birdwatchers, and all outdoor enthusiasts alike, worked together to demand that things change.

After decades of protests and calls for awareness, landmark legislation like the Clean Air & Clean Water Acts and the Endangered Species Act were passed with the idea of living in a healthier, cleaner and more prosperous world. We created parks and wildlife areas, cleaned our waterways, and prevented toxic



# Biodiversity on the Buckeye Trail:

# A WILDER OHIO

*Written by Ryan Brown*

contamination from chemicals like DDT. The forest returned in southeastern and eastern Ohio, boosted by a large national forest that was established there. Deer and wild turkey were reintroduced by the Division of Wildlife and today have thriving populations. In recent decades, the Division of Wildlife reintroduced river otters, who are doing very well in Ohio's much cleaner rivers. Beavers have returned to almost every county. We have even seen the strategic reintroduction of some of our smaller creatures, including American burying beetles, karner blue butterflies, and the eastern hellbender salamander.

In the past 20 years Ohio has gotten wilder yet. As their habitat has returned, two important animals that had been absent from our forests for the past 100 years have slowly started to return. One of our three extirpated wild cat species, the bobcat, has returned to Ohio and seems to be thriving in the southeast part of the state. Starting in the 1990's the state of Ohio began a monitoring program, asking citizens to report bobcats if they saw one. Beginning with just a few dozen sightings per year back then, that number has grown to 499 verified sightings or road kills in 2017\*. A study is now underway at Ohio University to learn more about Ohio's bobcat population and how they are adapting to life in the Buckeye State. Bobcats are typically about twice the size of

domestic house cats. They have variable spotted, striped, or plain tan colored coats and a short "bob" tail. One of the best ways to be sure if the cat you are looking at is a bobcat is to check the back of the ears. Bobcat ears are black with white markings on them. They also often have a dark tuft of hair that extends off the top of the ear.

Another newly returned species is Ohio's largest mammal. Able to reach sizes of 800 pounds, the American black bear is no teddy. Most male bears however, average 300 pounds, while most of the smaller females average 175 pounds. Not long ago it was hardly imaginable that you could see a bear in Ohio, however, much like the bobcat, in recent decades bears have returned to claim their former territory with 191 sightings in 2018\*. In the wintertime, bears hibernate, excavating a den where the females will have a litter of two to three cubs every two years. They are omnivores, eating a wide variety of foods including grasses, acorns, berries, carrion and insects. Typically, a bear's diet is 85% plant based. Bears are a keystone species of the eastern deciduous forest and their presence is a great sign for the improving environmental health of our state.

In recent years, people have been buzzing about another legendary animal returning to wild Ohio. A recent study by Ohio State University has shown that quality habitat to sustain an elk herd does exist in



Ohio. Areas ripe for elk reoccupation include the AEP ReCreation Lands as well as Wayne National Forest. Imagine, once again, hearing the bugle of a bull elk ringing through the hills of wild Ohio. Our neighbors in Kentucky have recently had an extremely successful elk reintroduction program, bringing in a herd of Rocky Mountain elk, which are closely related to our extinct eastern elk. Today, elk range all across eastern Kentucky and have reclaimed their place in the ecosystem. Tourists and hunters alike have flocked to the region where these great animals are roaming, giving ecological and economical benefits to the region.

While so much progress has been made restoring wild Ohio, it is important to remember that we live in a state that also has a large human population. We must constantly be working to protect our natural treasures; as new challenges to their prosperity are ever present. Today, the use of petroleum fertilizers in suburban landscapes and in industrialized agriculture are causing nutrient overload and the eutrophication of our waterways. Many of you likely have heard of the toxic algae blooms in Lake Erie that are threatening people and wildlife alike. These same industrial farms are now able to plant crops so efficiently that they are removing the right-of-ways, fence rows, hedge rows, and brush piles that provide much needed habitat for animals like pheasants, songbirds, rabbits, and quail. The wild spaces that remain in the corn belt are now also often choked out by invasive species like bush honeysuckle, which makes the habitat of low value to much of our native wildlife and hinders natural forest succession. Honeysuckle and many other invasives have bombarded our landscape in the last 50 years, largely due to the mass-planting of non-native ornamentals in suburbia. Urban and suburban sprawl are continually encroaching into rural places, which

fragments wildlife habitat. Even in Ohio's most forested corners, fossil fuel extraction still threatens to degrade environmental health. We must remain vigilant of the threats to wild Ohio, and do our part to keep our wild spaces healthy and thriving. It is for all of our benefit.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

You can do your part to keep Ohio wild!

1. Replace lawns with native pollinator and/or vegetable gardens
2. Compost. Most of the waste in landfills is thrown-out food.
3. Plant more trees. You can do this on your own property or through town initiatives.
4. Avoid plastic, reduce and re-use, recycle when you cannot do either of those first.
5. Leave no waste in wild spaces. Join initiatives to pick up litter and clean dumping sites.
6. Support conservation organizations and policies
7. Share your love for the great outdoors with someone else and pass on a legacy of environmental stewardship.
8. And much more!

Get out on the trail this fall and explore some of our wildest places and introduce someone you know to wild Ohio. It's by building those connections with the natural world that people come to love a place so much; they are willing to protect it. It is only if we value and continue to invest in our environment that a wilder Ohio will continue to thrive.

\*Statistics provided by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.



# BTA Member Wins State Award at the 2019 International Trails Symposium

*Article by Karen Power*

Andy “Captain Blue” Niekamp was honored on May 1 in Syracuse, New York with the American Trails “State Awards: Outstanding Trail Leader” for Ohio. This prestigious, biennial national award recognizes individuals who have made “compelling and significant contributions” in the advocacy, design, construction, and/or maintenance of trails in their home state. Andy was recognized not only for promoting trails in Ohio among state legislators and residents in all regions of Ohio, but also for providing hiking opportunities for thousands of hikers in the Dayton area, for supporting Five Rivers MetroParks, township and city parks, and the Buckeye Trail Association with his time, skills, and finances. Andy accepted his award at the closing keynote luncheon where participants from all over the U.S. and abroad gathered to recognize outstanding achievements in the trails industry.

“Daytonian of the Week” in The Dayton Daily News featured Andy as “Daytonian of the Week” in celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dayton Hikers, Andy’s hiking club,

and also in recognition of his two long-distance thru hikes within the past year: the John Muir Trail and the Florida Trail. The “Daytonian of the Week” is a weekly column that features local residents in the Dayton area who have interesting and inspiring stories.

You can read more about this at <http://bit.ly/dotw-captainblue>.

Earlier this year, Andy received the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association (OPRA) Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award for 2018. Nominated by Montgomery County’s Five Rivers MetroParks, Andy was honored for his excellence in outdoor recreation leadership and trail stewardship.

Andy serves as a volunteer on the Buckeye Trail membership committee, the electronic mapping committee, and in other capacities as needed. For a description of Andy’s hike on the Florida Trail, check out this July 2019 article:

[www.outsideonline.com/2399071/florida-national-scenic-trail-thru-hike](http://www.outsideonline.com/2399071/florida-national-scenic-trail-thru-hike)

Congratulations, once again, Andy, for your continued positive impact on hikers and our trails.



*Andy with Roger Bell, previous American Trails Board chair.*



# Not Another Root





*written by Jeremy Dominguez, photos credit to George Blankenhorn*

“Not another root” became the catch phrase of the summer, during my time working with High School kids to build a portion of the Buckeye Trail in the Wayne National Forest for the Summer. I started Fall semester off at Hocking College, the same as my past two semesters, eager to learn and excited about the new classes I would be taking. I had signed up for Sustainable Trail Design taught by Andrew Bashaw, the Executive Director of the BTA. I ended up really enjoying that class, so much, as a matter of fact, that I inquired about doing an internship with the Buckeye Trail for college credit. My internship focused a lot on designing a birding trail around the entire Buckeye Trail (now highlighted via the Ebird smart-phone app).

After my internship was done, Andrew thought I would be a good fit for a summer position he had available: Trail Crew Supervisor for the Hocking-Athens-Perry Community Action Program (HAPCAP) part of the Perry County Department of Job and Family Services. Naturally, I accepted the position, which tasked me with taking High School aged kids out on the trail to have them construct new trail as well as solving issues. Over the eight week program, I had a total of eight participants who helped finish a new loop trail on the BT at Tecumseh Lake. This trail, located in the Athens Unit of the Wayne National Forest, highlights Southeast Ohio’s natural wonders and colorful history. Out of the eight participants, I only had two that stuck with me the whole eight weeks: David and Savannah. Both kids were very bright and hardworking. David was very vocal and we always knew when he hit a root while digging, due to the fact he would scream “not another root,” which he would usually have out within a matter of moments. None the less, the catch phrase was born and stuck with us all summer long.

Building trail midsummer in Ohio is not an easy feat. When you are not dealing with the heat and humidity, you have pop-up thunderstorms and rain, mosquitoes and bees (we all managed to get stung at least once) and many other obstacles. We persevered through it all and are very proud of what we accomplished throughout this Summer on the BT. We had lots of help along the way from others: Andrew and Richard Lutz from BTHQ, as well as Ryan Brown and George Blankenhorn, the AmeriCorps Members that work with the BTA. We also had a lot of help from all the folks from HAPCAP, especially Amy and Kate (the kid’s job coaches), and our wonderful

BTA volunteers that came out to help with this project. Thanks to even more work by the BTA volunteers, BTA AmeriCorps Members, and the latest semester of Hocking College Sustainable Trails class the new “Woodthrush Loop Trail” with the Buckeye Trail serving as the backbone will be open for adventures by Little Cities of Black Diamonds Day festival on October 12th!





# The Towpath Trail between Delphos and Spencerville is being improved!

*caption & photos submitted by Sam Bonifas*



The Johnny Appleseed Metropolitan Park District in Allen County of the Delphos Section has started work on its Phase 2 of the Miami - Erie Canal Trail Project. Phase 2, which has been contracted out to All Terra Inc. consists of improving the towpath trail from Zion Church Road to Delphos. Last year, JAMPD using the same contractor completed their Phase 1 work which covered the area from the northern limits of the Village of Spencerville to Zion Church Road. When this segment is completed (tentatively end of August 2019), the 10' wide packed gravel pathway will extend from the southern limit of the City of Delphos all the way through Spencerville to the southern end of Deep Cut Park.



# Do you have any photographs or nature drawings of the BT that you'd love to share?

Send them to [trailblazer@buckeyetrail.org](mailto:trailblazer@buckeyetrail.org) and they could end up on a photo gallery page in our magazine in future issues!



*Jim Gilkey and George Tyo shown completing the shelter on part of a newly completed 3.5 mile segment of the BT through the Wayne National Forest and BTA's new 100 acre Imhoff Preserve.*



**Buckeye Trail Association**

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