Spring is in the air at the James H. Barrow Biological Field Station! As winter storms move behind us and spring rains move in, the Field Station is a beautiful place to hike more than five miles of trails to enjoy the forest wildflowers and welcome back American woodcocks and warblers. We also welcome you to enjoy our new patio and stop into our visitor’s center Mondays-Fridays from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. to view our educational displays. Trail maps and general information can be found in the visitor’s center and trailhead pavilion next to the visitor parking lot.

Many changes are occurring at the JHBBFS to continue to improve experiences for our students and visitors. I am pleased to announce that longtime Field Station steward, Jim Tolan has joined our staff full-time as Manager of Operations for both the JHBBFS and Northwoods Field Station. Jane O’Brien has also moved into a new role, serving as our Education and Community Outreach Coordinator.

We have quite a few exciting events in store for the remainder of this spring and summer! Please visit our website or Facebook page to see events offered each month! Registration is also open for summer youth nature and art camps. To get regular updates on events and our newsletter, feel free to contact me to join the Friends of the Field Station email listserv.

Special thanks to all of you who participated in surveys and focus group meetings as we develop the JHBBFS strategic plan. We are always looking for ways to improve our programming and your experience at the Field Station. Please do not hesitate to share your concerns, questions, suggestions, or memories with me and our staff and faculty.

**JHBBFS Presents Research At The Ohio Natural History Conference**

Eight students attended the Ohio Biological Survey’s annual conference in Columbus, Ohio in February. Dr. Jenn Clark, director of the JHBBFS, gave one of eight talks at the conference and reported on the short-term impacts of the Eagle Creek restoration project on fish communities. Students presented posters on their independent research projects the Field Station. Presentations covered acoustic bat surveys, fungi surveys, impacts of forest age on salamander populations, fish and macroinvertebrate surveys at the Eagle Creek Restoration Site, and Beech Leaf Disease which has unfortunately been identified in our forest.

Pictured from left to right: Zack Fox, Andrew Runyon, Madison Proctor, Henry Schwendler, Nicole Ryman, Keegan Rankin, Kristen Maslach, Dr. Jenn Clark, and alumna Kailey Cooper
Salamanders are on the Move!

There are 15 species of salamanders that call northeastern Ohio home. As they wake-up from hibernation and emerge from underground burrows, species like the Jefferson and spotted salamanders make their way to vernal pools to breed. Springtime and after dark is the only time you are likely to see these species as they spend most of their time in underground burrows and exhibit nocturnal breeding behaviors. Along with Dr. Jenn Clark, several students have worked hard this spring to construct and set traps to catalog salamander species present at the JHBBFS. This March, their first survey turned up 38 red-spotted newts, 84 green frog tadpoles, 42 Jefferson salamanders, 3 spotted salamanders, 9 adult wood frogs, 1 adult green frog, and 1 adult spring peeper. These three spotted salamanders are early arrivers as they are more common in the month of April.

Education and Community Outreach

Thanks to the more than 200 people that have attended our events so far this spring! Our programming has included guided-hikes, workshops on pawpaw trees, American woodcocks, and bluebird house construction, documentary viewings, talks on the Apollo mission and organic farming, meet and greet the animals of the field station, movie nights for children, and a FrogWatch USA volunteer training. If you missed our bluebird house building workshop and are interested in having one for your yard, we have some still available for sale. Contact us to see how you can help conserve this important species!

At the JHBBFS, we also provide a variety of field trips for school groups, scout troops, homeschoolers, and many other organizations. There are also many ways that you can volunteer! As we gear up for summer, JHBBFS staff, faculty, and students are looking forward to hosting several nature and art camps. Registration is now open! Contact Jane O’Brien with questions at obrienjs@hiram.edu. Other spring and summer programs will continue to be advertised on our website and Facebook page.

Beech Leaf Disease and Our forests

Beech Leaf Disease (BLD) is an undiagnosed disease that affects American beech trees. After its discovery in Lake County, Ohio in 2012, BLD has steadily progressed across forests in Northeast Ohio and surrounding states. Initially upon infection, leaves show dark-green banding between veins. As the disease progresses, leaves darken solidly, wrinkle and shrink, and feel leathery. Eventually, buds may abort and branch die-back occurs often following with death of the tree.

American beeches are the dominant tree in mature forests in Northeast Ohio and beechnuts are incredibly important food for wildlife such as squirrels, chipmunks, black bear, foxes, deer and many species of birds. Hollowed trunks and cavities also provide habitat and protection for many species.

JHBBFS students Zack Fox and Henry Schwendler, conducted initial studies within a 1/10-acre plot in the old-growth beech maple forest last summer. Unfortunately, 18% of mature trees and 76% of seedlings showed severe damage just within this small area of forest. Broad-scale surveys to assess disease progression in our forest will continue this summer. If you see signs of BLD as you hike the trails, please let us know!

Additionally, the Ohio Division of Natural Resources urges Ohioans to report signs of BLD to the ODNR Forest Health Program Administrator Tom Macy (thomas.macy@dnr.state.oh.us) or use the BLD section of the NE Ohio Parks app available at parkapps.kent.edu.
Biodiversity Conservation and Environmental Stewardship

As you hike our trails this spring, you may notice that we work hard to keep the trails clear of downed trees and have many improvements planned! With the February wind storm, 18 trees came down and were cleared by the JHBBFS staff and students. Improvements to our service roads are also in the works with 20 tons of gravel delivered recently to help manage some of our softest section. You will also find new boardwalks along the trails this spring and summer! Sixty feet of boardwalk has already been prepared to install near the Smiley bird blind after drainage and debris is cleared.

As we work to conserve our property, we also partner with the Portage and Geauga Park Districts on a variety of conservation and eco-management projects. In March, Jim Tolan assisted the Geauga Park District with a controlled burn to help manage their prairie systems and the favor will be returned as they help us with future burns at the Hils vista. The JHBBFS values these diminishing habitats and we do quite a bit of prairie management to maintain this important habitat for a variety of species. We hope to attract and provide nesting grounds for birds like the bobolink, Eastern meadowlark, horned lark, and grasshopper sparrow. Land Stewardship Manager Emliss Ricks has started 1,000 plugs of prairie grasses under grow lights in the studio barn that will be planted in the Stavenger fields.

JHBBFS staff and students are also devoted to removal of invasive species. Garlic mustard is the first invasive we will tackle this spring. We are seeking volunteers during our programs this spring to help us combat this problematic species.

Animal Conservation and Husbandry

Now that spring is finally in the air, the JHBBFS is preparing for the influx of orphaned baby ducks that will be arriving late April and early May. Wood ducks are usually the first babies to show up, with Mallards not too far behind. Hooded Mergansers and Canada Geese may also arrive needing care until they are old enough to be released. One young bird that we have already been caring for is our female Trumpeter Swan. She was born on the OB Pond last summer, and has remained with us all winter, growing into a beautiful young adult, with streaks of white gracing her gray, immature plumage, depicting her journey into adulthood. In November, we acquired an adult male Trumpeter Swan from Lake Erie Science and Nature Center, which has been living with our female all season. Our hope is that they create a lifelong pair bond together, continuing the legacy of Trumpeter Swans residing at the JHBBFS.

**What to do with an injured or orphaned native bird?** Not all birds that are on their own are orphaned. First look and listen for the parents as fledglings spend a lot of time on the ground by themselves as they learn how to use their wings and forage for food on their own. The parents can often be found close by. We can help you look for signs!

Before bringing an orphaned or injured bird to the JHBBFS, please call us at (330) 527-2142 to speak with our animal care staff or students for instructions. Unfortunately, many birds are injured due to attack by outdoor cats. Keeping your cat indoors especially during the breeding and fledging season is the best way to help successful baby birds reach adulthood. Attacks on adult birds are also common!

To learn more visit: https://abcbirds.org/program/cats-indoors/cats-and-birds/