



## Lichen and Bryophyte Groups Visit Wayne National Forest

*Site on the Ironton District considered premier habitat for moss and lichens.*



Ohio Moss and Lichen Association members, Don Flenniken and Mark Zloba identifying lichens on a chestnut oak at the Symmes Creek hotspot of moss and lichen diversity.

Last spring Ohio hosted a four-day national gathering of lichen and moss experts from all over the eastern US. There were actually two groups, one for lichens and one for the mosses that held a combined workshop based at the Shawnee State Park. The groups visited a number of natural areas in southern Ohio and both groups spent time at a site in the Wayne National Forest.

The Wayne NF site is located in Gallia County and is a steep, rocky slope overlooking Symmes Creek. It had been visited earlier by Ray Showman, an Ohio lichenologist, and Barbara Andreas a bryologist from Kent State University. Both agreed that the site contains an unusually rich assemblage of these lower plants. Dr. Andreas wrote that: "I don't believe you can top the species list from Symmes Creek, I am ever so impressed. It's such a small area to be so rich."

The two groups visited the site on different days of the workshop and each spent several hours combing the area and collecting specimens of lichens, mosses and liverworts. These were taken back to the base at the Shawnee State Park Lodge where microscopes were set up for identification. Specimens from this site were retained by the participants of the workshop and are now located in herbaria as diverse as the New York

Botanical Garden, Philadelphia Museum of Natural History, University of Nebraska, Kent State University and The Ohio State University.

One of the goals of the combined workshop was to develop lists of lichens and bryophytes for each area visited. The lichen list for the Symmes Creek Site contained more species than any of the other sites visited. There were 132 species recorded, of which 16 are new county records and one is a new state record. Two state endangered lichens were also found at this site.

The list of bryophytes from the site is equally impressive, with 68 mosses, 18 liverworts and one hornwort. No Ohio area of equal size has ever reported this type of bryophyte diversity.

The Symmes Creek Site in the Wayne National Forest is not especially good for growing trees, but it is exceptional for growing lichens and bryophytes. It contains a variety of tree bark, soil and rock habitats for these lowly plants. A small cove containing a waterfall has as many bryophyte species that one would expect in an area 10 times its size. In addition, the proximity to Symmes Creek may boost the relative humidity of the site, a definite plus for these organisms with no roots to pull water out of the soil. Showman and Dr. Andreas have contacted Gloria Chrismer, District Ranger and Chad Kirschbaum, botanist for the Ironton Ranger District, and are exploring the possibility of designating this site a Special Area for the preservation of lichens and bryophytes.

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