



## Local Students Battle Invasives and Improve Wetland Habitat on the Wayne

*Hocking students remove non-native invasive plants along two wetlands at Wayne National Forest. They protected native plant and wildlife habitat while improving trail experience for other visitors.*



Hocking College Ecology students remove invasive shrubs along Rutherford Wetland.

In response to the growing epidemic of non-native invasive plants, the Wayne National Forest has set out to educate the community about the impacts of these plants and involve local people in the effort to remove them. Student volunteers from Hocking College's introductory ecology classes and Wildlife Club joined the Forest Service to combat non-native invasives along two wetland trails on the Athens Ranger District.

In March, students from five ecology classes learned about non-native invasive species (NNIS) from Forest Botanist, Cheryl Coon. After taking an hour to learn about invasives, the students and their instructors cut and pulled multiflora rose and Japanese honeysuckle along Rutherford Wetland. The trail is to be turned into an accessible birding and hunting trail in memory of local naturalist and birder, Ora Anderson. Combined efforts of the students resulted in 73 hours of NNIS control. The wetland trail, once overgrown with NNIS that blocked the wetland view, was opened up. Beneath the non-native vines and shrubs students discovered young dogwoods, buckeyes and other native species that were released from suppression to grow and provide habitat and food for the wood ducks and other waterfowl that frequent the area. Already locals are taking advantage of the improved access to canoe on the wetland.

The Hocking College Wildlife Club returned for the third year in a row this April to remove garlic mustard from the hiking trail along Paine's Crossing. Paine's Crossing is a Special Area that contains rare white swamp oak and sedge meadow communities. The members talked about the characteristics of garlic mustard with Cheryl, and then set out to hand pull the mustard. In two hours, the group returned to the trail head after removing garlic mustard along the entire trail. The amount of garlic mustard collected was one-third what they had collected two years before – a sure sign that the students are slowly winning the battle against this invasive. Seed production over the past years has been significantly reduced thanks to the Club's efforts.

*For more information contact Cheryl Coon at 740-753-0558*