



Cincinnati Nature Center Community Science News 2022 Season Part 2



Firefly Monitoring

This program started in the spring of 2021 and is led by our knowledgeable volunteer Linda Romine and staffer Sheila Cox-Riley. There are approximately 24 different types of fireflies or "lightning bugs" in Ohio. Not all light up and not all fly. Each type has its own distinctive flash pattern and color of flash. As well as time of evening they are most active. Once one knows that, the beautiful constellation of flashes one sees in the woods and fields becomes somehow more focused and specific. You might notice a green flash, or a blueish flash. Maybe a long white flash that streaks across the night sky.

The second season of Firefly Watch started similar to last year. Ohio's earliest flashing firefly, the spring treetop flasher had a nice showing in early May in the forest and tree margin bordering the Cabin Field. Soon the Cabin Field was filled with the greenish flash-trains and flickers of spring four flashers and the orange wavering flashes of marsh flickers.

This year we added two new sites: tree margin bordering Crosley Dam, and the succession field and tree margin along the Edge Trail. To our surprise, we did not see many fireflies in these habitats even though many were seen in and around the Cabin Field. We ended up not completing counts at these sites because something completely unexpected happened.

A remarkable discovery!

Notes from Linda Romine: On June 1, firefly hike leaders gathered for our yearly training session not knowing we were about to make a remarkable discovery. The group walked a different route from years past that led us to the Herb Wall. We spied tiny fireflies hovering low to the ground flashing quick, pinkish flashes. What were they? Mr. Mac? No one was quite sure, except that they were different! Two evenings later, Sheila and I went back to the Herb Wall. Soon a hiker walked past and said she had just seen a firefly. We rushed to the spot. I knew instantly they were NOT Mr. Macs—too low, too quick, too pink, not paired. But I recognized the flash pattern because I had seen it last year in Highland County—*Photinus scintillans* otherwise known as the low pink winker.

But I couldn't be sure since there are several small fireflies that have quick flashes. The best way to confirm the ID is finding a female. You see, low pink winkers are a remarkable firefly indeed. The female is brachypterous, she cannot fly because her wings are too short. She lives in a burrow, and climbs

up onto low vegetation, leaves, or sticks. The males fly very low so they can see her response to their quick flashes.

Unlike many fireflies, they start flashing early in the evening, sometimes well before sunset. By the time most people start thinking fireflies should be flashing, these little guys are wrapping up. The Firefly Watch group studied this new-found population for the next few weeks. It took awhile to finally find a female thanks to Gary Lubin's sharp eyes. Identity confirmed! The group also wanted to study how far the population extended into the forest surrounding the Herb Wall. Because the female cannot fly, this remarkable species of firefly is very vulnerable to disturbance. We want to make sure this firefly is protected!



Project FeederWatch

This monitoring program is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. The project is conducted by the Cornell University Ornithology Lab. Participants periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November until early April. The data collected provides scientists information on broad scale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.

At the Nature Center, Kristine Seitz, one of our dedicated volunteers, and her daughter Emily lead this program. Project FeederWatch begins mid-November and concludes in early April. Volunteers meet Thursday and Friday from 9:30-11:30 am to count all the birds at the two feeder locations outside of Rowe Visitor Center.

The data collected is organized into different categories such as: number of days a species is present, average daily count for each species, and highest daily count among others.

The species with the highest average daily count in descending order were: Northern cardinal, American goldfinch, and cedar waxwings. The species with the highest daily count was the American goldfinch at 35 in one day!

Come and join us next to the fire and watch our feathered friends!

A big heartfelt thank you from everyone at CNC to our dedicated volunteers! Because of your efforts we are able to track and improve our conservation efforts as well as our land stewardship goals.



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