



From the

Wetland Trumpeter

Newsletter

Vernal Poolooza 2022 A Successful Science Conference

by Jenna Odegard

Ohio Wetlands Association's (OWA's) second bi-annual Vernal Poolooza conference was a success! It took place this spring (March 24-26) at Salt Fork State Park Lodge in Cambridge, Ohio. There were approximately 125 people who joined across the three days, including speakers, volunteers, attendees, and sponsors. Participants were affiliated with a variety of groups including state or regional agencies, private businesses, county governments, colleges/universities, or simply vernal pool enthusiasts! Attendees took part in daily presentations focused on vernal pools and enjoyed extra networking time during shared catered meals, field activities and evening social hours. There were sponsors, book sellers, and a small group of poster presenters available during the breaks.



Vernal Poolooza 2022 Crew

The formal portion of the conference on Thursday and Friday consisted of two concurrent sessions covering topics such as ecology of vernal pools (e.g., plants, amphibians, macroinvertebrates), funding mechanisms, educational resources and tours, and areas of research across the midwest. In addition, the conference hosted two amazing evening keynote speakers: David FitzSimmons, an award-winning photographer and writer, well known for his Curious Critters series, and Thomas Biebighauser, author, restoration expert and owner of Wetland Restoration and Training, LLC, who has restored over 2,700 wetlands and written, "A Guide to Creating Vernal Ponds."



Left: Keynote speaker, Thomas Biebighauser, giving a presentation during dinner regarding vernal pool development and restoration

Throughout the conference, field trips were offered as an effective way to apply and investigate some of the concepts covered during the conference. These were well-

attended, despite some of the rainy and chilly conditions Thursday, Friday night and Saturday morning. Field trip options involved checking funnel traps and searching for vernal pool dwellers, constructing a vernal pool on Salt Fork State Park property (visit it here: [40.135528°](#), [-81.492750°](#)), or staying indoors at the pop-up laboratory to gain hands-on identification experience.

OWA has received abundant, positive feedback that this was a worthwhile, productive, and valuable event. In fact, everyone who took the post-conference survey agreed that participating in the event was a good use of their time and that they learned something new that they will apply in their work, future decisions, and/or lifestyle! Feedback received specifically mentioned appreciation for the variety of knowledgeable presenters from diverse backgrounds providing interesting and inspiring presentations. In addition to the presentations and hands-on field trips, (the latter which are considered the most fun way to learn by our participants!), attendees deemed networking and connecting with people with similar passions of vernal pools the highlight of the event.



*Northern dusky salamander (*Desmognathus fuscus*) found on Saturday's morning field trip*



Identification laboratory session focused on vernal macroinvertebrates, zooplankton, and amphibians



Vernal Pool construction field trip at Salt Fork Lodge, showing conditions before (left) and after (right)

We look forward to our next Vernal Poolooza conference in 2024 at a location that is yet to be determined. If you have a good idea for a venue or would like to be on the planning committee, feel free to reach out to us at OVA. Otherwise, please keep an eye on the Ohio Vernal Pools Network Facebook page and upcoming OVA newsletters for future updates!



Corbin Binkley at vernal pool construction site



Dusky Salamander in hand



Vernal pool observers on field trip



Ray Stewart presenting the iNaturalist module



Vernal Poolooza