

In the Glen

NEWS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE
GLEN HELEN ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2026



Cover Story: The Invasive Amur Honeysuckle

Photo by Dorothy Smith



From the Director

The article on Amur Honeysuckle in this issue of *In the Glen* has me thinking back to an episode of Saturday Night Live from the mid 90s, and a fake commercial for insurance against attack robots that eat prescription medicine for fuel. A group of friends are sitting around their living room coffee table talking about the ongoing threat of robots, and one of them says "I don't even know why the scientists make them."

This comes close to describing my feelings about honeysuckle. It wasn't always here. But then people brought it over, cultivated it and watched as it invaded and dominated landscapes. Eventually, people sprang into action, but only after honeysuckle had spread nearly everywhere.

Invasive species are a problem of our own doing. It would be nice if honeysuckle was the only example of a non-native plant that was purposely introduced into a place where it had no competition, and was able to exploit its advantages to the detriment of native plants and animals.

Alas, honeysuckle is but one of many invasive plants that was introduced on purpose. Kudzu is another prominent example.

Somewhere in this cautionary tale, there is a lesson for humanity: In simple terms, we should avoid doing those things that cause future problems.

While the story of honeysuckle is rarely uplifting, I'm going to try (hard) to make it an ultimately hopeful tale. Once these species have spread into the landscape, they require enormous energy and resources to try to manage them. But, humanity is capable of doing great things when we focus on solving the challenge before us. So it is with honeysuckle. By applying enormous energy and resources, we actually are able to control many invasive species.

The story on page 3 takes us through this history, from its introduction in the United States, to its long window of exponential growth, to our eventual awareness of the problem, to our current work to set ecological systems right.

Nick Boutis
Executive Director, Glen Helen Association

In the Glen is published for Glen Helen Association members and friends.

Contributors

Editor: Nick Boutis; Contributors: Nick Boutis, Margaret Dunn, Rebecca Jaramillo, Robyn Wright, Design: Jennifer Perry

Glen Helen Nature Preserve

Trails are open daily, sunrise to sunset. All wildlife, vegetation, and natural features are protected. For general information: 937-769-1902

Administrative Offices

405 Corry Street, Yellow Springs, OH 45387
937-769-1902

Vernet Ecological Center

405 Corry Street, Yellow Springs, OH 45387
Daily 10am-4pm (except holidays)

Trailside Museum and Nature Shop

505 Corry Street, Yellow Springs, OH 45387
Thurs-Sun, 10am-4pm

Outdoor Education Center

Overnight environmental education center for school groups and summer Eco-Camps.
1075 State Route 343, Yellow Springs, OH 45387
937-767-7648

Raptor Center

Raptor education and rehabilitation. Visitors are welcome to visit and see the resident birds.
Spring hours: 9am-6pm
1075 State Route 343, Yellow Springs, OH 45387
937-767-6656

Mission

The mission of the Glen Helen Association is to steward and strengthen Glen Helen nature preserve for present and future generations, safeguard the ecological, historical, and geological resources within its bounds, and utilize the preserve to offer life-shaping environmental learning to our students and visitors.

Current Glen Helen Association Board of Trustees

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Staff: Leah Duffy, Kyle Lewis

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Coordinator: Bill Mischler
Attendants: Jen Ater, John Baldasare, Emma Bennett, Emily Cook, Andy Graff, Patrick Harney, Chris Muratore, Melani Muratore

Grinnell Mill Bed and Breakfast

Manager: Susie Butler

www.glenhelen.org

— Amur Honeysuckle —

The Invasive Shrub Changing America's Landscapes

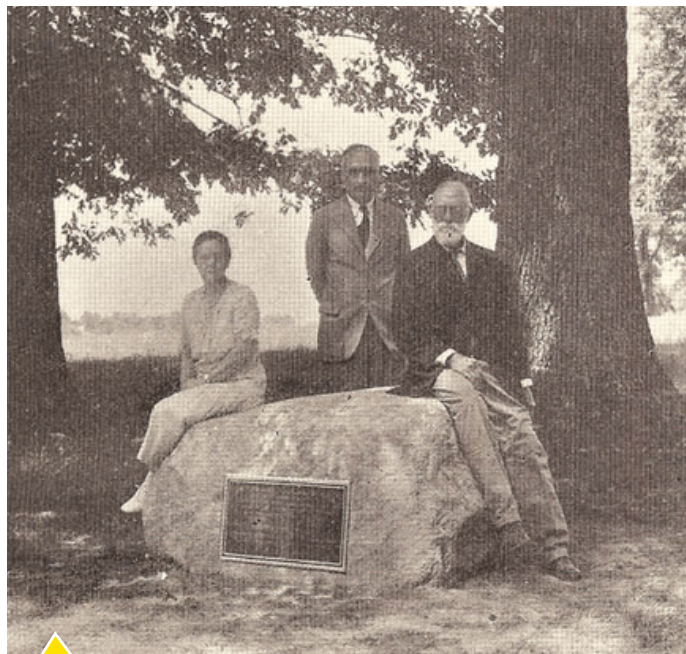
In 1929, Glen Helen benefactor Hugh Taylor Birch posed with Antioch College President and First Lady Arthur and Lucy Morgan atop "Helen's Stone" near the Birch Creek Cascades. The image commemorates the creation of the preserve in Helen's memory, but it also serves as a data point for how the land has changed over the past 95 years. Looking at the photo, apart from a couple of great oak trees behind the trio, it doesn't even appear that they are in the woods. You don't see many trees in the background because the land had only recently reverted from agriculture. You also don't see any honeysuckle because there wasn't any in Glen Helen in 1929!

In many ways, Glen Helen is an ecologically healthier preserve than it was at the time of its founding. The size of the protected area is larger. Agriculture is no longer practiced in the Glen. Drainage tiles systems have been dismantled. Forests have grown in and matured.

But, alas, progress is not uniform. There are plenty of ways in which Glen Helen is less healthy, and less resilient than it once was. The profusion of invasive plant species, especially honeysuckle, is perhaps the most obvious example.

With that in mind, I wanted to share some of what we've learned about honeysuckle—where it's from originally, how it got here, why it's so darn invasive, why it took people so long to realize how bad it is, what we're doing about it, and why, ultimately, amid all this bad news there is reason for hope.

We begin our tale in east Asia...Where it's from and how it got here. The Amur River forms part of the border between China and Russia in northeastern Asia. The floodplains along the river are the native habitats for this honeysuckle. There, it was held in balance by the other native plants and animals of the region. Chinese horticulturalists apparently cultivated it in their gardens long before it was known outside of Asia. In 1855, plant explorer Richard Maack collected



Hugh Taylor Birch with Arthur and Lucy Morgan, in front of a backdrop devoid of honeysuckle.

wild specimens of the plant, which now provide us with both the common name of the species (Amur honeysuckle) and its Latin name (*Lonicera maackii*). Note: There are other species of honeysuckle, some native, and some non-native and invasive. Here when I refer to honeysuckle, I am referring to the non-native and invasive Amur honeysuckle.

In the late 1800s, the wild species of Asia held interest to plant explorers such as Maack. European and North American plant hunters were looking for living plant material that they might be able to successfully bring back to their home countries. Honeysuckle held allure because they saw it as exotic, with foliage that some considered to be attractive, plus abundant white flowers that gave rise to abundant red berries.

Amur honeysuckle was first documented outside of its native range in 1883, when it was successfully grown by the St. Peterburg (Russia) Botanical Garden. It reached North America in the 1890s, with a first record at the New York Botanical Garden in 1898.

Why is it so darn invasive? An invasive species is a non-native organism that causes harm to the environment, economy, or human well-being. Honeysuckle meets every part of this definition because it spreads rapidly, outcompetes native species, and alters soil health.

There are several reasons why it's so good at being bad. Honeysuckle leaves come out earlier in the spring and stay on longer in the fall than our native shrubs and trees. This gives it a head start in capturing sunlight and nutrients and allows it to shade out smaller native plants before they get a chance to grow.

Birds and mammals are attracted to the shrub's abundant red berries, and widely distribute the seeds via their droppings. Honeysuckle has an ability to form dense stands that block light from reaching the forest floor, reducing the ability of native wildflowers, grasses, and tree seedlings to thrive. These dense thickets effectively transform diverse plant communities into near-monocultures of honeysuckle.

Honeysuckle grows in a wide range of conditions, from forest edges to deep woods, open fields to roadsides, and in both wet and dry soils. It tolerates shade but also thrives in sunny spots. It especially likes edge habitats and former agricultural areas. This ecological versatility allows it to invade many different habitats and resist simple control efforts.

From the 1960s through 1984 (yes, 1984), The Soil Conservation Service sponsored a program to develop hardier cultivars of the species. Drink that in for a moment: Already, honeysuckle was growing in North America without natural competition that would hold it in check. But then, researchers expended resources and energy to create a "franken-plant" that would grow even more robustly and produce even more fruit. Remarkably, the Soil Conservation Service was still recommending plantings of these super-honeysuckles into the 1990s.

A low-down, good for nuthin' plant. Amur honeysuckle has been in the United States for over 125 years, but it was only quite recently that it went from being available and even encouraged, to unavailable for purchase and actively being controlled.

As early as the 1920s, there were reports that honeysuckle was spreading beyond where it was planted.

But, the ecological impact of its exponential growth took decades to become obvious. It's obvious now. In 1961, the only populations growing wild in Ohio were in Hamilton County (the Cincinnati area). By the mid 1990s, it could be found in 34 Ohio counties. Today, Amur honeysuckle is naturalized and invasive across much of the eastern and midwestern United States and Canada. Travel through any small city in southwest Ohio, and it's easy to come away with the feeling that we are at the epicenter of the honeysuckle invasion.

Relatedly, it wasn't until around the 1980s that researchers started investigating the ecology of honeysuckle. With every new bit of research, its values seemed ever less redeeming.

For example, a major reason that the Soil Conservation Service promoted it was its value to wildlife. Yet, it turned out that honeysuckle fruit are lower in nutritional value than many native berries, so it's not as helpful a food source as they thought it would be. Also, while birds may nest in dense stands of honeysuckle, the structure of the plants actually makes the nesting birds more susceptible to predators.

But wait, there's more: research also suggests that part of honeysuckle's invasive qualities include releasing chemicals into the ground that make it harder for native plants to grow there. Areas dominated by this shrub have fewer native species and significantly lower understory plant cover compared with areas where it is absent. By outcompeting native shrubs, wildflowers, and tree seedlings, honeysuckle reduces biodiversity. Studies comparing honeysuckle to native shrubs show that the invasive shrub supports fewer arthropods than native plants. This means less food for birds and other insect-eating wildlife.

*“Once the honeysuckle is gone,
native plants do begin
to grow back.”*

As if we didn't need any other reasons to dislike honeysuckle, some research even suggests that honeysuckle thickets may influence the abundance of ticks and tick-borne disease risk. In a Midwest study, areas with heavy honeysuckle invasion hosted more ticks carrying disease pathogens. When the honeysuckle was removed, both deer activity and infected tick numbers declined.

Rent The Glen

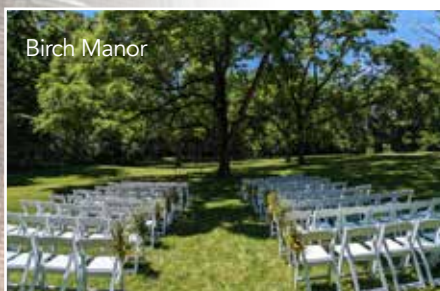
Did you know that Glen Helen has many unique rental facilities for hosting a variety of functions such as weddings, graduation parties, reunions, celebrations of life and business retreats?



Vernet Ecological Center



Camp Greene



Birch Manor



Outdoor Education Center Lodge



Vernet Ecological Center

With its spacious auditorium and beautiful natural stone patio, Vernet Ecological Center is the perfect space for weddings, receptions, celebrations of life, dances, group activities, workshops, and business meetings.



Camp Greene

This cozy 200-person capacity wooden lodge with two stone fireplaces and gorgeous outdoor spaces makes Camp Greene the ideal private location for gatherings of all kinds: weddings, receptions, family reunions, celebrations of life, business events, retreats and more!



Birch Manor

Birch Manor's historic brick 1931 mansion and surrounding tree lined lawns are a welcoming setting for weddings, receptions, and retreats.



Outdoor Education Center Lodge

Great windows to the forest make this oversized cafeteria style dining room the ideal spot for day retreats, birthday and anniversary celebrations, workshops, and family reunions.



Cedar Center Dormitory

NOW AVAILABLE FOR WEEKEND OVERNIGHTS! With room for up to 40 guests, Cedar Center Dorm is the perfect option for large groups looking to reconnect with nature.



Please visit glenhelen.org/rentals for photos and information. For rates, questions, or to schedule a tour, contact rentals@glenhelenassociation.org or 937-769-1902 x1101.



MARCH APRIL MAY 2026 Glen Helen Program Calendar

MARCH

1

Glen Kids

11:00-11:45am

Join environmental and stem educator Amber Good and guest teachers for an engaging environmental science discovery! Tools and materials provided. Family friendly! Walk-ins welcome. Program: \$5, Parking \$10, Members free. Trailside Museum, 505 Corry St.

15

29
SUN

5

Project FeederWatch

2:45-3:15pm

Project FeederWatch is a community science project done by the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology. We will gather at the Glen Helen Trailside Museum on Thursday afternoons to log the birds visiting the feeders there. Our data will be sent to Cornell and will contribute to their data on feeder birds. This is a great way to learn to ID birds! Ages 8+. Trailside Museum, 505 Corry St. Free. Parking \$10, Members free.

12

19
26
THU

5

Golden Morning Walkers Club

9:00-10:00am

Gather in the Glen for a slow-paced ½ mile wooded, moderate trail walk. Geared toward older adults, but all ages and abilities are welcome. Meet outside the Vernet Center at the north end of the Steps Parking Lot: 405 Corry St. Registration suggested, walk-ins welcome. Weather permitting. Registered participants will be notified of cancellations. Program: free. Parking: free for participants.

THU

15
SUN

Nature Journaling

1:30-3:30pm

Join Anne Griffith for some guided, creative time in the Glen. New and veteran journalers are welcome. Bring drawing supplies! Ages 12+ Registration required at glenhelen.org. Program: \$5, Parking: \$10, members free. Trailside Museum: 505 Corry St.

22
SUN

The Baby Bird Journey

11:00am-2:00pm

Drop-in and learn how nesting birds go from fluffy babies to fledglings ready to fly. How do birds build nests? What do different types of bird eggs look like? What do baby birds eat? See if you can identify our ambassador birds by their baby pictures! Cascade's Parking Lot: 1075 State Route 343 and along a short half-mile walk to the Raptor Center. Parking \$10, members free.

28
SAT

Late Winter Birding

8:00-10:00am

We'll search the north Glen for winter residents and early spring migrants on this two-mile walk. Program: \$10, members free. Parking: \$10, members free. Meet at the Cascades Parking Lot: 1075 State Route 343.

28
SAT

Eco-Game Nite

4:00-6:00pm

Join Eco-Game Nite Host & OCVN, Jake Haney for an evening of board games and fun! All ages and abilities welcome. Registration requested, drop-ins welcome. Program: Free. Parking: Free for participants. Trailside Museum: 505 Corry St.

12
SUN

Venue Rentals Open House Extravaganza

2:00-4:00pm

Are you looking for a space for your upcoming wedding, reception, or other special event? Please join us for open houses at our venues! Snacks, light refreshments, and drawings for discounted rates will be available. No RSVP required.

Birch Manor: 720 Jacoby Rd.
Camp Greene: 3452 Grinnell Rd.
Vernet Ecological Center: 405 Corry St.

18
SAT

Earth Day Weekend Birding

8:00-10:00am

During this early spring migration walk, we'll search for sandpipers in the Little Miami, Yellow-throated Warblers in the Sycamore trees, and Wood Ducks overhead. Program: \$10, members free. Parking: Free. Grinnell Mill, 3536 Bryan Park Rd.

19
SUN

Nature Journaling

1:30-3:30pm

See March 15 listing for description.

25
SAT

Eco-Game Nite

4:00-6:00pm

See March 28 listing for description.

26
SUN

Earth Day Celebration

1:00-4:00pm

The celebration will be outdoors on the large lawn space in front of the John Bryan Community Center, 100 Dayton St., Yellow Springs. Free.

MAY

1
FRI

Full Flower Moon and Wildflower Hike

8:30-10:00pm

Join us for a guided hike along the Inman Trail with volunteers Pan Reich and Michele Stroh, covering a moderate 1-mile stretch. Program, \$5, Parking \$10, members free. Registration required. Meet at the Cascades Parking Lot: 1075 State Route 343.

APRIL

2
9
16

Golden Walkers Club

9:00-10:00am

See March 5 for full description of this slow-paced ½ mile moderate

Co-sponsored by the Yellow Springs Senior Center and the Glen Helen Association. For registration, through Yellow Springs Senior Center, visit MyActiveCenter.com. Questions to Maggie Dean at info@ysseniors.org, 937-767-5751.



Group sizes are limited. Register early to ensure your participation @ Glenhelen.org.

Programs are free or discounted for members. Contact programs@glenhelen.org for member discount code.



6
FRI

Full Worm Moon Hike
8:00-9:30pm

Join Brendan and Simone Baumann for a night hike under the full moon. Moderate 1 mile hike. Program, \$5, Parking \$10, members free. Registration required. Trailside Museum, 505 Corry St. Meet at Cascades Parking Lot: 1075 State Route 343

ALL
SATS

Turtle Feeding
1:30-2:00pm

What does a box turtle eat? Drop in to find out as we feed our resident turtles, tree frogs and other native animals ambassadors. No registration required. All ages welcome. Program: Free. Parking: \$10, members free. Trailside Museum: 505 Corry St.

10
MAR

March Eco-book Club: The Comfort of Crows
6:00-7:30pm

Join us for an informal, fireside discussion of the book *The Comfort of Crows* by Margaret Renkl at the beautiful historic Grinnell Mill. Led by volunteer, Anne Griffith, this book "follows the creatures and plants in her backyard over the course of a year. Registrations requested, free.



12
THU

Willow Suet Bird Feeders
6:00-8:00pm

Make your own Willow suet bird feeder with local artist and basket weaver Beth Bridgeman. Participants will be guided through the weaving process of a basic weaving technique called twining and simple randing to make a sturdy, refillable outdoor suet feeder. All tools and willow will be provided. Vernet Center, 405 Corry St. Members \$30, Non-members \$40. Parking: Free for program participants.

23
30

THUR

trail walk.



1
FRI

Golden Walkers Club
9:00-10:00am

See March 5 for full description of this slow-paced ½ mile moderate trail walk.

2
SAT

Raptor Center Photo Program
10am-11:30am

See April 12 for full description.

3
17
SUN

Glen Kids
11:00-11:45am

See March 1 for full description.

9
SAT

Make it Count for the Birds
Starting at 5:30am

Our annual birdwatching marathon, with free hikes scheduled throughout the day. Join us as we raise funds in support of Glen Helen land restoration activities, and discover how many bird species can be found in the Glen in one 24-hour period! See Announcements page for locations and meeting times.

13
WED

Speaker Series
7:00-8:30pm

A Tree I Wish I Had Met by Don Cipollini
Open to the public. Program: Free, Parking: \$10, members free.

17
SUN

Nature Journaling
1:30-3:30pm

See March 15 listing for description.

23
SAT

Eco-Game Nite
4:00-6:00pm

See March 28 listing for description.

30
SAT

Full Blue Moon Hike
8:00-9:30pm

Join volunteer Tom Sabin for a night hike under the bonus full moon this month. A Blue Moon is the second full moon in the same month, that well, happens once in a Blue Moon. Moderate 1-mile hike on the Inman Trail. Program: \$5, members free. Parking: Free. Registration required. Meet at Cascades Parking Lot: 1075 SR 343.

3
FRI

Full Pink Moon and Pine Forest Hike
8:30-10:30pm

Join volunteer Tom Sabin on this guided hike through the Pine Forest and the nearby School Forest, covering 3 miles of moderately strenuous terrain, and the natural beauty of the forest. Program, \$5, Parking \$10, members free. Registration required. Meet at Cascades Parking Lot: 1075 State Route 343.

4
18
25
SAT

Spring Beauty Wildflower Walk
2:00-4:00pm

Trillium, Hepatica and Mayapple, oh my! Join our volunteer naturalist, Patrick Dwyer, as we explore the trails in search of emerging plants and spring flowers. Registration required. Program: \$5, members free. Parking: \$10, members free. Trailside Museum: 505 Corry St.

12
SUN

Raptor Center Photo Program
10:00-11:30am

Get ready to capture incredible photos of our resident raptors around the Raptor Center and surrounding woods. The program will proceed in light wind or rain, heavy rain will necessitate a reschedule to April 19. Tickets: \$45, Members: \$35 Registration Required. Max 12. Glenhelen.org to register. Meet at the Raptor Center, 1075 State Route 343.

12
26
SUN

Glen Kids

11:00-11:45am
See March 1 for full description.

— Glen Helen —
Announcements

Accessible Trail Update



Our land stewardship team is hard at work constructing Glen Helen's first ever accessible trail, which will stretch from our new Cascades Parking Lot at 1075 State Route 343 toward the Birch Creek Cascades and the Yellow Spring. Our latest milestone: construction of the restroom at the parking lot is complete, and it is now open to the public daily.

Order a Glen Helen License Plate today!

The Glen Helen license plate is a way to show the world that you love the Glen. Plus, as a bonus, you get to drive with a beautiful Charley Harper sapsucker affixed to your bumper. Any Ohio car owner can acquire the tag, either from your local Bureau of Motor Vehicles office, or by visiting oplates.com. No need to wait until your regular renewal date on your birthday - you can order your plates at any time. For each driver who purchases or renews these specialty plates, the Glen Helen Association receives \$15.

Sponsor a Raptor

We are not financially supported by state or federal funds, so your contributions allow us to continue our work. Sponsorship levels start at just \$50 per year. Your sponsorship of \$1,000 or more will last for the lifetime of the bird. For full details, including a complete list of our resident raptors visit glenhelen.org/bird-sponsorship/

Grinnell Mill

Grinnell Mill Bed and Breakfast offers beautiful accommodations in an expertly restored, historic grist mill located in Glen Helen on the banks of the Little Miami River. A fresh continental style breakfast and Wi-Fi access are included during your stay. The mill is also available to rent for private events such as retreats, meetings, conferences, parties, etc. For more information or availability visit: glenhelen.org/grinnell-mill/

Join Our Family of Volunteers

We depend on volunteers to carry out the programs, events, and initiatives that help preserve Glen Helen. From fundraisers, to mailings, to trail maintenance, volunteers at the Glen not only participate in our important efforts, they have fun while they do it! Whether you are a short-term volunteer with a service requirement, or seek a longer-term position, we may have an opportunity for you. To learn more, and to join our family of volunteers, visit glenhelen.org/volunteer

Eco-Birthdays

Celebrate your child's birthday with a nature-themed party!

- Animal encounter and outdoor activity
- Two hours of private party space for up to 20
 - Party room set up with tables, chairs
 - Choose from 4 program themes
- Ideal for ages 4-12...Open to everyone

For inquiries and bookings, please contact rentals@glenhelenassociation.org or 937-769-1902 x1101

Make it Count for the Birds Saturday, May 9

5:30am: Dawn Chorus along the Little Miami

Greet the dawn and hear the forest awaken with song.
MEETING SPOT: Grinnell Mill, 3536 Bryan Park Rd.

8:30am: Woodland Bird Walk

We expect fifty species or more on this two-hour hike.
MEETING SPOT: Trailside Museum.

8:30am: Pine Forest Walk

Migratory songbirds, with occasional sightings of unusual finds like the colorful pine warbler.
MEETING SPOT: Horace Mann Meadow, Bryan Park Rd., just south of John Bryan St Park entrance.

12pm: Tally Rally

Birders share what they've found (and what they've missed).
Nosh on complimentary snacks and coffee.
LOCATION: Trailside Museum.

12:30pm: The Homestead Walk

The sparsely visited area of the South Glen is home to a recently restored wetland.
MEETING SPOT: The end of West Jacoby Rd. (Access via Rt. 68)

12:30pm: South Glen Wetlands

The slope wetlands and cattail marsh of the South Glen present a wholly different habitat than that of the North Glen.
MEETING SPOT: Greene County Boat Launch at the end of East Jacoby Rd. (Access from Clifton Rd.)

3:30pm: Prairie and River Walk

We'll walk through the South Glen along the Little Miami.
Expect orioles, finches, swallows, and warblers.
MEETING SPOT: The Little Miami Bridge on Grinnell Rd.

— The Invasive Shrub Changing America's Landscapes —



In the early years of honeysuckle management, we used to clear all of the cut branches from the area.



Senior Land Steward Steve Strauss on the lookout for honeysuckle.



Volunteers haul cut branches to a wood chipper

Reasons for hope. Glen Helen started actively managing honeysuckle around 2000. We've learned a lot along the way, as we've gained experience, and as the best practices for invasive species management have evolved. Over time we learned more about which tools were most effective for swift, safe, and successful work.

We tried giant pry bars because we liked the idea of popping the honeysuckle out of the ground without using any herbicide. A good idea, perhaps, but we found it painstakingly slow. Plus, the soil disturbance created by wrenching the shrubs from the ground created a vector for other invasive species.

During our first few years, we honestly let our emotions influence our approach. Because we didn't want to look at dead honeysuckle, we would drag everything we cut into massive piles and then chip it. This was a lot of extra work, and it made our overall progress interminable. I remember thinking that we were working at the rate of about an acre a year, and at that rate we'd clear the Glen of honeysuckle in a thousand years.

Now, we focus on cutting the honeysuckle and treating the stump with just enough herbicide to ensure that the plant cannot resprout. We use loppers on small shrubs, and chainsaws or a brush cutter on larger ones. In areas where honeysuckle has formed a monoculture, we are experimenting with forestry mulching. Last year, using diligence and our improved techniques, we were able to remove honeysuckle from

300 acres! A big reason for our current successes is the tireless work of our Senior Land Steward, Steve Strauss. He is highly experienced, tireless in his approach, and deeply focused on restoring the native ecology of the preserve. At the pace we are going now, we can envision a future for Glen Helen where honeysuckle is no longer a significant part of our landscape.

Plus, once the honeysuckle is gone, native plants do come back. In areas of the Glen where we've removed the honeysuckle, you're much more likely to encounter native shrubs like spicebush, bladdernut, or blackhaw viburnum. These native shrubs fit naturally into local ecosystems. They support entire food webs by serving as hosts for native insects, which then serve as food to native wildlife. When we replace Amur honeysuckle with native alternatives, we don't just remove a problem, we restore ecosystem function.

There may well be future battles against invasive plants that have been purposely introduced, but fortunately, modern conservation places a strong emphasis on native plants, risk assessment, and long-term monitoring, to minimize the likelihood of history repeating itself.



Nick Boutis, Executive Director, Glen Helen
nboutis@glenhelen.org

— Welcome —

New OEC Employees

The Outdoor Education Center (OEC) has welcomed two new employees, Sara Blankemeyer and John “Mickee” Mick, to its campus as well as promoting Joretta Johnston to Kitchen Manager.



Joretta joined the OEC in the spring of 2025 and brought a warmth and love of feeding children to the team. Joretta has deep ties to the OEC as her Grandmother, Eloise Hamilton, was the cook during the 70’s. Joretta also makes a mean mac & cheese!



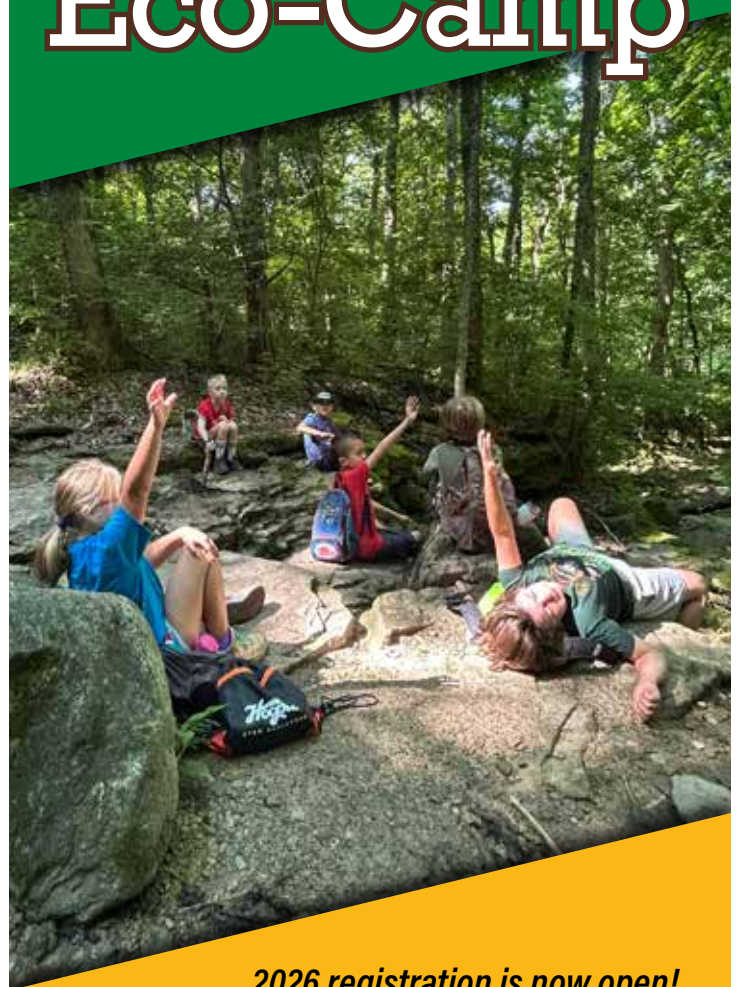
Sara is our Kitchen Assistant and comes to us with a strong background in vegan cooking and a passion for reducing food waste. She loves the color yellow and has been a bright spot on our team.



Mickee has come on as our Kitchen and Facilities Assistant. His strong work ethic and love for the work the OEC does has made him an invaluable addition. Mickee brings a lovely sense of humor and excellent taste in music to our team. 🍀

CONNECT WITH NATURE. FIND JOY. EXPERIENCE COMMUNITY.

Eco-Camp



2026 registration is now open!

Eco-Camp is open to any child ages 5-17. Themed day-only sessions, progressive, overnight, and specialty overnight sessions are available.

Eco-Camp sessions run weekly
June 15 through August 7.

— Then and Now —

Naturalist Teacher Internship

The Glen Helen Outdoor Education has been offering Outdoor School since 1956. These programs have created lifetime memories for the participants. None of this would have been possible without those facilitating these experiences: the Glen Helen Naturalist Teacher Interns.

Naturalist Teachers have been the centerpoint of our programming, present since the creation of the Outdoor Education Center itself. Truly, anyone can become a Naturalist Teacher. Folks come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences—the desire to share the natural world with children connects them all.

At the start of their term, Naturalists go through rigorous training to be able to lead students in science classes, using the Preserve as the classroom for Outdoor School. Not only are they sharing content, they are also teaching students vital social emotional skills, allowing them to take safe risks, learn how to work together as a team and as part of a community. Naturalists lead classes, facilitate recreational afternoon activities, eat meals with their students, get silly with skits and songs performances, but mostly, Naturalists create lasting memories that students will remember for years to come.

Former Naturalist Donna's favorite memory in 1978 was a student sharing that *"this was the best week of my life!"* She also has *"cherished memories of attending Glen Helen as a fifth grader in May of 1966. I will never forget going on the night walk with Naturalist Jenny."*

Others remember *"finding life-long colleagues and friends"* (Brian, Naturalist 1982-1984), or that *"those years are crammed with beautiful, novel experiences - hundreds, if not thousands of Glen memories build the foundation for who I am today"* (Ian, Naturalist 2012-2014), and that *"this experience is something you will remember forever and you'll meet some awesome people while you're doing it"* (Harmony, Naturalist 2007).

Many of the Glen Helen Association staff were Naturalists here early in their careers. Nick Boutis served as a

Naturalist intern in the spring of 1990, an Eco-Camp counselor in summer of 1990, and as a Program Coordinator intern the fall of 1990. The skills he learned as a Naturalist prepared Nick for a career in conservation and leadership, eventually leading back to Glen Helen as the Executive Director, a post he still holds today.

Post pandemic, the OEC has been not only rebuilding both the Outdoor School and Eco-Camp programs, but revamping the Naturalist Training Program to better prepare this new generation of young professionals. Our terms have shorter semesters and training consists not only of content and skills necessary for their role, but also career development and life skills to set the Naturalists up for success in the future.

This year's 2025/26 Naturalist cohort is the first to return to a nine-month experience, leading Outdoor School August through May. They've received a myriad of training, from learning about bird language and lichens, to community building, Project WET and Project WILD certifications, and attending career fairs and professional conferences—as well as one-on-one mentorship! Through this updated Naturalist training program, they have *"learned so much [...] they have opened the door for me to new interests I didn't know I had or didn't know how to begin pursuing"* (Jon, 2024).

The 2026-2027 school year will mark the 70th year of learning, growing, and creating community and connection at the Outdoor Education Center. We look forward to celebrating a beautiful milestone together with past naturalists, students, and staff.

If you have any memories, stories, or experiences related to your Naturalist Teacher Internship, please reach out to Kelsey Mazur. We always love hearing from you!



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Glen Building

The Vernet Ecological Center, known by many as the "Glen Building," was built in 1973, made possible by a gift from Sergius Vernet's foundation. In this photo, construction crews are in the early days of the project, clearing the land so that they can set the foundation.

Today, our auditorium is located where you see the two vehicles in the image. Hey look—there were still train tracks along what is now the Little Miami bike path! 