

Brown Family Environmental Center



Become a Member of the Brown Family Environmental Center

While the BFEC receives support from Kenyon College, we also rely on donations from individuals, families, and businesses. Their generosity allows us to offer a wide range of programs to the greater community.

Membership dollars, special donations, and memorial gifts have enabled us to:

- Host school field trips.
- Hire a part-time gardener and employ students to maintain the wildlife garden.
- Purchase butterfly nets, wading boots, and other materials for community programs.

You can help us carry out our work by becoming a member of the BFEC. Membership levels start at \$20, and all donations are tax-deductible. For a membership form, contact the center, or stop by.

Brown Family Environmental Center
P.O. Box 508
Gambier, Ohio 43022
740-427-5050
ON THE WEB: bfec.kenyon.edu

The BFEC Resource Center is located at 9781 Laymon Road in Gambier, Ohio, about four miles from Mount Vernon.



Conserving natural diversity, engaging people with nature

The Brown Family Environmental Center (BFEC) is a 480-acre preserve located in the Kokosing River valley of central Ohio. Our mission: to conserve natural diversity and engage people of all ages with nature. As part of Kenyon College, the BFEC also provides opportunities for education and research.

popular among cyclists, runners, and walkers, goes through the preserve as it follows the old railroad line from Mount Vernon to Danville.

THE BFEC OFFERS...

- Eight miles of hiking trails through varying habitats
- An extensive garden area
- An abundance of wildlife
- Programs for children and adults
- A resource center for classes and events .

The BFEC borders the Kokosing, a State Scenic River. One-third of our land is devoted to agriculture, reflecting the region's rich farming heritage. The fourteen-mile, paved Kokosing Gap Trail,



Exploring the Center

WILDLIFE GARDEN



In this one-acre area, stone-lined paths meander among flower beds featuring native plants that attract birds, butterflies, and bees. A small waterfall and pool also attract wildlife and add to the tranquility.

PICNIC AND CAMPFIRE AREAS



Visitors can picnic at tables in the shade of hundred-year-old maple trees or under a newly constructed shelter. Nearby, stone benches ring a fire pit, which visitors may reserve for campfires.

PONDS AND NATURAL PLAY AREA



Four ponds provide sites for students to conduct research on aquatic ecosystems and spots for kids to discover tadpoles. A kids' natural play area provides boulders to climb and plants that awaken the senses.

BLUEBIRD NESTING BOXES



We maintain and monitor a network of nesting boxes along the trails in order to promote the continued resurgence of the eastern bluebird. The BFEC provides habitat for several species of birds, insects, and plants that are threatened elsewhere in Ohio.

Programs and Activities

AN ACADEMIC RESOURCE



The BFEC serves as a year-round resource for Kenyon classes and for students and faculty members pursuing research projects. Students in fields ranging from art to zoology use the center to see and study the natural world.

RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT



Ongoing projects include reforestation, the removal of invasive species, and the establishment of natural buffers along small waterways and the Kokosing River.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR THE COMMUNITY



Each year, about 900 elementary schoolchildren take field trips to the BFEC. With the help of Kenyon student and community volunteers, the center provides children with effective, hands-on science learning and a chance to connect with nature.

NATURE WALKS AND SPECIAL EVENTS



We offer nature walks, workshops, and special events that are open to the public and often designed for families. Programs range from bird-watching and star-gazing to trail races, wildlife-friendly gardening, and an annual harvest festival.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



Volunteers tend gardens, lead field trips, maintain trails, clear invasive species, and assist in the BFEC office. To learn about opportunities, call the center at 740-427-5050.



GRANDFATHER TREES

Follow these trails to discover the graceful canopies of our eldest trees.

Walk the **FERN TRAIL** or **PINE OVERLOOK TRAIL** for an outstanding overlook of the Kokosing River valley. Red-tailed hawks perching in the branches of the Black Gum tree that dominates the hilltop often share the view.



Follow the eastern half of the **RIVER TRAIL** to discover one of the largest trees on the preserve, an immense Sycamore. These trees are staples along rivers and with their noble white branches are sometimes referred to as "ghost trees." Continue east on the trail to find a great spot to stick your toes in the water.

On the GIVENS' GROVE TRAIL,

duck under the branches of a massive White Oak tree that likely predates the Civil War. It's a good example of a "wolf tree," or a tree with wide, spreading branches that grew without crowding neighbors.



The **BISHOP'S BACKBONE TRAIL** touts a canopy cathedral provided by our most mature forest, with towering oak, maple, and beech trees. Beech trees have smooth gray bark, sometimes likened to elephant skin. This trail also follows Wolf Run; look for salamanders under large rocks and logs on the stream's edge.



BFEC FACILITY AND TRAIL MAP

MAP SYMBOLS

- Public Parking Area
- Information Kiosk
- Preserve Grounds
- Waterway
- Hiking Trail
- Shortcut or trail spur

BROWN FAMILY ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER TRAIL GUIDE

- MILLER OBSERVATORY TRAIL.** Length: 0.8 miles. Level: easy. A hillside trail overlooking the river valley leads 0.3 miles to a 0.5-mile wooded loop bisected by a seasonally running stream.
- CORRIDOR/WETLAND TRAIL.** Length: 0.75 miles. Level: moderate. A broad, fenced path leads from the Observatory to Wolf Run Creek and then turns north along the wetland border. May be muddy during wet weather.
- GIVENS' GROVE TRAIL.** Length: 0.3 miles. Level: easy. Follow a raised boardwalk over seasonal wetlands to one of the largest oak trees on the preserve.
- NEW GAMBIER LOOP TRAIL.** Length: 0.75 miles. Level: easy. This broad loop trail features both forest and grassland. May be muddy during wet weather.
- BISHOP'S BACKBONE TRAIL.** Length: 1.25 miles. Level: moderate. This trail meanders through one of our largest woodlots and along the banks of Wolf Run Creek.
- RIVER TRAIL.** Length: 1.0 mile. Level: easy. The trail follows the banks of the Kokosing State Scenic River. The southern section features a 0.4-mile loop through the riparian corridor with access to the Kokosing Gap Trail.
- PRAIRIE TRAIL.** Length: 0.5 miles. Level: easy. The trail circles our seven-acre restored prairie and borders the wildlife garden.
- PINE OVERLOOK TRAIL.** Length: 0.6 miles. Level: difficult. Climbing steeply up to the pine plantation, this trail offers impressive views of the Kokosing River valley. It continues around the pine plantation before descending back to the prairie.
- FERN TRAIL.** Length: 0.7 miles. Level: moderate. This trail winds up the steep valley wall above the river before turning up the hill and proceeding through forest to the southern border of the pine plantation.



DETAIL OF BFEC SOUTH