

For Immediate Release

**HIDDEN GEM:**

Narrows Reserve and Nature Center part of Greene County Parks 3,000 acres of green space

Xenia, Ohio---Bounded on its eastern side by more than one mile of the Little Miami River, the 162-acre Narrows Reserve and Nature Center off Indian Ripple Road in Beavercreek offers multiple hiking trails, bird observation room, interactive nature center, blue bird trail, canoe and kayak access, a raptor 'bird house,' as well as primitive camping.

Owned by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the reserve has been managed by Greene County Parks since the 1980s for local residents to enjoy.

"The Narrows is actually shaped like a barbell," says Greene County Parks Naturalist Mel Grovesnor. "The property is named because of the narrow river valley that lays within the park and links two wide sections at either end of the acreage."

Originally several small farmsteads, the Narrows Reserve Nature Center is one of several original homes on the property that has been remodeled as a comprehensive nature center and offers public programs, nature displays, native wildlife exhibits, as well as a bird observation room.

"We have folks come during their lunch hour and just sit to relax and watch the changing view," Grosvenor says. "We feed the birds all year and have seen all sorts of birds, including the large pileated woodpecker that feeds right outside the window. One of the most entertaining is a red squirrel that chases away the larger gray squirrels."

Wild turkeys have also been seen in the nature reserve.

With more than one-and-one-half miles of riverfront on the Little Miami River, the Narrows Reserve offers multiple viewing areas of the state and national scenic river.

This past winter, an injured kestrel stayed in the Narrows Reserve Nature Center before moving to its outside enclosure with other permanently injured raptors in the "bird house."

"All of our birds have been injured and can no longer survive in the wild," adds Greene County Parks Naturalist Ashlee Schmitt. "We are using the kestrel as part of our educational programs."

Currently the outdoor raptor enclosure includes a turkey vulture, kestrel, red-tailed hawk; the naturalists hope to add a screech owl in the near future.

An on-site apiary is managed by the Greene County Beekeepers Association and hosts multiple beekeeping educational programs, she adds.

"The beekeeping classes have been very popular," she adds.

The adjacent Little Miami River is home to multiple rare fish and mussels' species while the nature reserve has been home to several birds---Cerulean warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat---that have been classified as species of concern, Grosvenor says.

With multiple trails at the Narrows Reserve, hikers can choose among the Old Road Trail that is handicapped accessible; the Vista Trail that offers an upland view of the reserve; Cold Springs Trail that was actually used by a previous resident as a water source; Sugar Bush Trail that offers numerous sugar maples used for making maple syrup; Big Woods Trail that is home to some of the largest trees in the reserve; and the Meadow Trail that borders an open area.

For the adventuresome, primitive camping is available with a permit along the Meadow Trail; campers do not need a permit to camp overnight along the Little Miami River adjacent to the main parking lot.

Both naturalists have a deep connection to the nature reserve.

"I grew up in Beavercreek and used to come to the Narrows Reserve for the fishing and photography classes," Schmitt says. "After I graduated from Hocking College, I was lucky enough to be hired as an interim naturalist before coming onboard as a full-time naturalist five years ago."

Gosvenor has seen former participants in the children's programs come back and apply for seasonal naturalist positions.

"This is a very special place," Grosvenor says. "We have woods, we have meadows, we have the Little Miami River---the Narrows Reserve is home to an abundance of unique wildlife, birds, aquatic species and plants."

Although the Narrows Reserve Nature Center is open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., seven days a week nine months per year, visitors are advised to call before stopping by as the naturalists may be working with an on-site program.

For more information about the Narrows Reserve Nature Center or any Greene County Park, call 937.562.7440.

Cutlines:

An injured kestrel that cannot be released into the wild is now living at the Narrows Reserve Nature Center; staff is using the raptor for educational programs.

Schmitt and Grosvenor are full-time naturalists with Greene County Parks with offices at the Narrows Reserve Nature Center.

Inside the Narrows Reserve Nature Center, Schmitt and Grosvenor are shown with the resident kestrel in front of one of the many interactive nature displays at the facility.

A native black snake held by Grosvenor has lived at the Narrows Reserve Nature Center for several years and is a visitor favorite. One local parent actually stopped by to see the snake after he heard so much about it from his child.