

# OPINION

Record-Courier

TUESDAY

MARCH 20, 2012

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# Portage County enriched by reminders of glacial past

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT

We take for granted the physical world surrounding us here in Portage County. Our parks and natural areas are a testament to our natural heritage, one of high hills modified and softened by thousands of years of glacial activity. The bogs, fens, marshes, and swamps speak of high quality wetlands.

Rare and endangered species abound in these communities. From the Paleozoic sandstones of Nelson Ledges to the tiny dragon's mouth orchids along the upper Cuyahoga, we are truly blessed with a bounty of natural features that many of us are unaware of.

We sit astride a continental divide with waters flowing to the both Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico. The Headwaters Trail in northern Portage County crosses this divide between Hiram and Mantua.

Rare northern species including carnivorous pitcher plants and sundews bask in the meadow at Triangle Lake Bog. The Kent Bog stand of tamaracks, deciduous conifers of Ice Age origin, is reported to be the largest community this far south in the U.S. A half-mile-long boardwalk takes the visitor through a forest like that in northern Ontario with blueberries, cranberries, gray birch, and cottongrass.

At Triangle Lake Bog one can actually walk to the edge of a quaking floating mass of sphagnum mosses and ferns at the lake's margin and imagine themselves in the wilds of Maine. Gott Fen and Herrick Fen also are throwbacks to the Pleistocene age, a time when mastodons and big tooth cats roamed what is now Streetsboro.

The Cuyahoga River rises in the uplands of Geauga and Portage counties and then cuts its way down through the sandstones and conglomerates of Kent and Cuyahoga Falls. The river rushes through Kent with rapids from Standing Rock clear to Fred Fuller Park, through the heart of the city. Trails extend from Brady's Leap through Heritage Park along the river. The removal of the dam in Kent has revitalized the riv-

## GREEN

## PORTAGE

Emiliss Ricks



er and provided greater opportunities for enjoying nature along the Cuyahoga.

If wildflowers are the ticket, then Eagle Creek in Nelson Township or the Hiram College Field Station are the places to visit. On a weekend in early May over 70 species of native spring wildflowers can be seen along the trails at Eagle Creek including bluebells, red and white trillium, trout lilies, and over a dozen species of violets.

Many of these natural areas and parks are short-handed these days, a result of government cutbacks and dwindling resources. In order to better protect these areas, volunteer help is desperately needed. Removal of invasive species, maintenance of trails and facilities, and reporting problems are things that volunteers can do. For more information about opportunities to volunteer the Portage Park District, contact Director Chris Craycroft at 330-297-7728.

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On a sadder note, long-time volunteer Gordon Vars died earlier this year. Gordon was single-handedly the driving force behind the Friends of Kent Bog, providing great leadership and public information for visitors at the bog throughout the four seasons. If we had more Gordons, his county's natural areas would be in great shape. He will be greatly missed — a friend of both nature and people.

Retired after 35 years as a preserve manager for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Emiliss Ricks is now out haunting a forest, field, or wetland near you. Green Portage is a monthly feature of the Record-Courier in cooperation with the Portage Park District.