

ISSUE 9 FALL 2026

RIBBIT!

COLUMBUS NATURE, SCIENCE & COMMUNITY

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**HIP HIP
HOORAY!**

**RIBBIT!
MAGAZINE
TURNS TWO!**

IN THIS ISSUE:

**WILD ABOUT
TURKEYS**

**THE AMAZING EYES
OF OHIO ANIMALS**

**THE STORY OF TERRA
THE BOX TURTLE**

**FOLLOW
THE WATER**

...AND MORE!



HONORING THE FIRST PEOPLE OF THIS LAND.

As we explore the natural world around us in what is now called Columbus and central Ohio, we acknowledge that this land has long been home to the Mound Culture People, Adena, Shawnee, Myaamia, Kaskaskia, Delaware, Ottawa, Wyandot, Seneca, Cayuga and other Indigenous Nations. These communities have cared for the land, rivers, and wetlands for thousands of years, shaping the natural world through their traditions, knowledge, and deep connection to the land.

The land was taken from its original stewards through forceful and harmful treaties. By acknowledging the land's history, we open the space to ask ourselves how we can be kind and caring humans, and how we can take better care of the nature around us now and in the future. This includes supporting Indigenous Land Back movements and Indigenous Sovereignty of our lands. Please check out Native American Indian Center of Central Ohio (NAICCO.com) to learn more or donate to their local movement.

HI EVERYONE,

Have you noticed who's hanging out on our cover? That's a gray treefrog, taking a little break on top of a mushroom.

Well, mushrooms make pretty great frog furniture! They give frogs a place to rest while they look for tiny insects to eat. And our little treefrog has plenty of company in this issue.

And guess what? Ribbit! is turning 2! How cool is that?

We love Columbus nature and sharing all the amazing plants, animals and wild places we find with you. Thank you for celebrating with us and being part of the Ribbit! community.

Enjoy this issue!

— Your Ribbit! Team



P.S. Download a coloring page featuring our new mascot at ribbitmagazine.com/coloring.

WWW.RIBBITMAGAZINE.COM

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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Ribbit! helps Columbus children and families discover local nature, explore science and connect with their community. Through stories, activities, photography, illustrations and videos, Ribbit! encourages curiosity, learning and care for the natural world. The magazine is made possible by grants, community partnerships and donations from readers like you. Thank you for making Ribbit! possible.





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THE AMAZING EYES OF OHIO ANIMALS **PAGE 8**

See the world through the eyes of frogs, owls, insects and other Ohio animals.



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Joey finds out which foods belong on your plate and which should go in the compost.

TREES, NATURE AND BIG IDEAS **PAGE 26**

Max Rosenthal shares why Columbus needs more trees and how kids can help nature.

BEFORE YOU GO... **PAGE 28**

Find a Green Columbus giveaway near you and learn about Ribbit!'s birthday tree delivery.



GHOST HUNT

Five little Halloween ghosts are hiding throughout the magazine. Can you find them all?

(Answers are on page 29.)

COLUMBUS NATURE NEWS



FALL 2026

Columbus Nature News shares local events, wildlife highlights and ways to explore nature around the city.



PICK IT UP FOR CLEAN WATER!

Dog poop left on the ground can wash into storm drains when it rains. Those drains carry the waste, along with harmful bacteria, into local streams and rivers. The City of Columbus' PUP campaign reminds dog owners to scoop it, bag it and put it in the trash. Even poop in your own yard should be picked up! Learn more and take the PUP Pledge through the City of Columbus.



FANTASTIC FALL FUNGI

Many kinds of mushrooms grow in our woods during the fall. They help break down dead logs, leaves and other plant parts. This puts nutrients back into the soil.



WATCH THE VIDEO

Join us for a fall fungi hike at Blacklick Woods Metro Park! Scan the QR code or watch the video in our media library at ribbitmagazine.com/library!

BE A FRIEND TO BIRDS

Celebrate World Migratory Bird Day on Oct. 10! This year's theme, "Every Bird Counts," shows how observations from everyday people can help scientists learn about and protect migratory birds. Look for local birding events and guided hikes. They are a great way to learn which migratory birds are passing through central Ohio!

You can help birds!

- Watch for birds in your neighborhood and record what you see.
- Look for local birding events and guided hikes.
- Turn off unnecessary lights at night during migration season.
- Add decals or other markings to windows to help prevent collisions.
- Plant native plants and leave some fallen leaves for insects that birds eat.



READY FOR COLDER DAYS?

Mammals such as coyotes, red foxes and raccoons do not need to shop for winter coats. As fall gets colder, they grow thicker winter fur. A soft layer holds warmth close to their bodies, while the outer fur helps protect them from wind and water.

Do you have your warm gear ready?



WestFest
SCIENCE & SUSTAINABILITY

go.osu.edu/westfest

Join us at WestFest on Saturday, Oct. 24, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Ohio State's West Campus! Meet scientists, try hands-on activities and discover how science and sustainability shape our world.



WILD ABOUT TURKEYS

By Rachael Rice
Naturalist
Blacklick Woods Metro Park

What symbols make you think of fall? I picture warm-colored leaves, flannel jackets, cool weather and turkeys! This classic fall symbol is also a wild bird you can find in Ohio. Unlike the turkey you might see on a Thanksgiving table, wild turkeys live outside in your local parks and neighborhoods. Keep reading to learn more about these special birds.



Anatomy of a Wild Turkey

These large birds look like modern-day dinosaurs with their colorful, featherless heads. Wild turkeys are easily recognizable by the unique pieces of skin that hang from their beaks: the **snood** and the **wattle**. The snood hangs over the beak and the wattle hangs beneath the chin. Both skin flaps can be used to show emotion and communicate with other wild turkeys! Another interesting feature is the bundle of feathers, or **beard**, that grows from the chest. A beard may grow longer as a turkey ages, but wear and breakage mean beard length cannot determine its age precisely. Some female wild turkeys may also have beards that are very small and hard to see. Male wild turkeys also have a spike growing from the back of each leg. This is called a **spur**, and they use it to fight or kick in competitions with other males. Lastly, one of the features that all birds share is their feathers. Wild turkeys can have up to 6,000 feathers!



Male vs. Female

Birds come in many different shapes, sizes and colors. In some bird species, including wild turkeys, you can distinguish males from females based on how they look. Males, also called toms or gobblers, are big, weighing up to 16 pounds. Toms have brightly colored faces that range from red to blue, spurs and long beards. They are also known for their signature display of fanning their tails and strutting to impress female turkeys. Females, also known as hens, are much smaller, weigh about 9 pounds and are duller in color. They lack many of the features that make male turkeys stand out. Female wild turkeys usually do not have long beards, colorful tail feathers or big, red wattles. It isn't just their appearance that is different. Toms and hens can also have differently shaped scat! Toms often have J-shaped scat, while hens often have spiral-shaped scat. Larger turkeys generally leave larger droppings!



FUN FACT #2:

No need to read letters at the eye doctor. These birds can see in color and have a field of view of about 270 degrees. Their excellent eyesight allows them to spot danger from far away!



FUN FACT #1:

Quick on their feet, turkeys can run up to 25 mph!



Continue reading →



Baby Turkeys

During the summer, you might be lucky enough to spot a mama turkey and her babies. Young wild turkeys are referred to as poults, and they resemble little tennis balls with their yellow, fluffy down feathers. Poults grow fast and need a lot of protein to gain strength. When they hatch, young turkeys eat lots of bugs such as cicadas, caterpillars, crickets, slugs, worms, spiders and just about anything they can find. Once they are a month old, they start to eat greens and other plants to have a well-balanced diet. Poults stay with their mom for several months, staying under her protection, learning from her and foraging for food with her help before they are able to go off on their own.



FUN FACT #3

Wild turkeys are confident flyers, capable of reaching speeds of up to 60 mph!



BEST SEAT IN THE WOODS!

Turkey Habits

During the day, wild turkeys can be spotted foraging in forests or prairies in search of food. As the sun starts to set, turkeys travel back to their favorite trees to roost. Turkeys like to fly up into trees and sit on branches to sleep. This helps protect them from predators and keeps them warm all night long. However, when a hen is ready to build her nest, she builds it on the ground. For a month, she sits on her eggs waiting for them to hatch. For the first few weeks of the young poults' lives, she will need to find a safe place for them to sleep until they are able to fly up to roost with her at night.

"Gobble, gobble, gobble!" a male turkey says as he tries to communicate with the other birds in his flock. Wild turkeys can make a variety of calls, including gobbles, purrs, yelps and kee-kees. Even hens make yelps or purrs to talk with other turkeys. Toms might call from their roosting spots early in the morning to claim their territory and warn other male turkeys nearby. From their roosts, the calls carry farther and can sometimes be heard from up to a mile away!





Conservation

In the early 1900s, wild turkey populations were in danger and the birds almost went extinct! Their numbers had fallen sharply across North America. The main causes of their population decline were overhunting and habitat loss. The Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937 helped bring in money through taxes on hunting equipment. The extra money helped states such as Ohio create and enforce hunting regulations that limited how many wild turkeys hunters could take home, making sure there were still enough birds for the following year. Across the United States, more land was purchased and restored to forest and prairie habitat, creating more space for wild turkeys to live. In 1973, the National Wild Turkey Federation was created to help protect these birds even more. Today, there are more than 6 million wild turkeys in North America. Thanks to people who worked hard to protect these birds, you might run into a wild turkey in your local park!

Vulture Visitor

A turkey vulture has
sneaked into the article.
Can you find it?

Feather Detective

Look closely at the
five feathers. Which
one belongs to a
wild turkey?

(Check your answers on page 29.) 



What's for Dinner, Little Turkey?

A baby turkey is hungry!
Which three foods do not
belong on its plate?



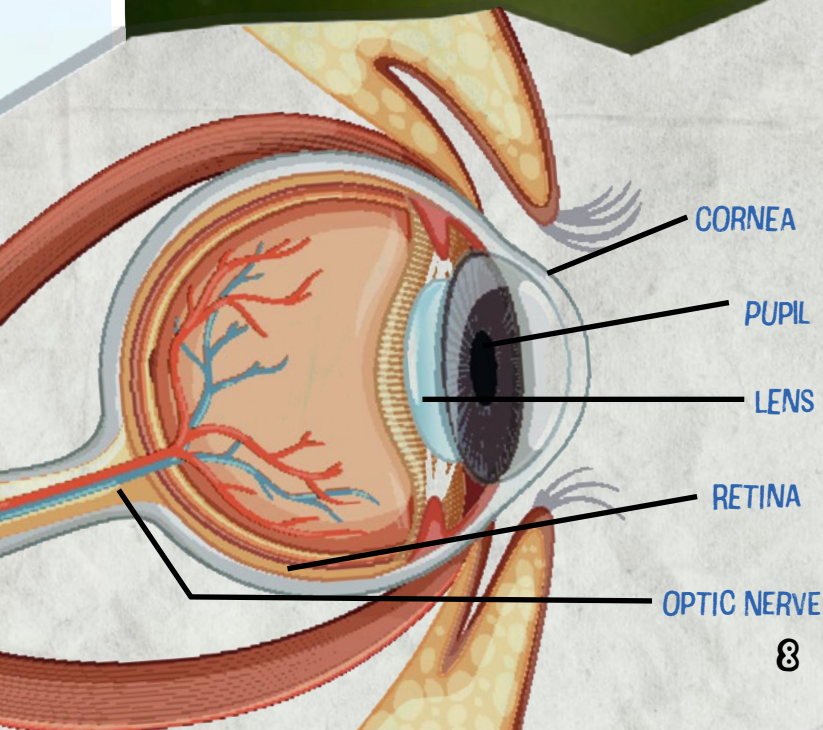
THE AMAZING EYES OF OHIO ANIMALS

By ReVision LASIK
& Cataract Surgery
ReVisionEyes.com

Do you wonder how animals see the world around them? Eyes help living things find food, stay safe and travel from place to place. Just like people, most animals use their eyes every day. But not all eyes work the same way. Some animals can see in the dark. Some can see many things at once. Others can spot movement very quickly.

WHAT IS VISION?

Vision is the ability to see. Light bounces off objects and enters the eye. The eye collects the light and sends information to the brain. The brain helps us understand what we are seeing. This process is similar for humans and other animals. An animal's eyes are shaped to help them survive in their habitats. Different animals have different eye shapes and kinds of vision. These amazing adaptations help living things survive in different environments.



Our eyes have several parts that work together to help us see the world around us. The **cornea** is the clear outer covering of the eye, and the **pupil** is the dark opening in the center. The **lens** helps focus what we see. At the back of the eye, the **retina** senses light. The **optic nerve** then carries important messages from the eye to the brain.

Vision in Ohio's Native Animals

Ohio is filled with animals that have remarkable eyes. From the wide-view vision of deer to the thousands of lenses in a bee's compound eyes, each species has special features that help it live and thrive. By studying these creatures, scientists learn more about biology, light and vision. Engineers use these discoveries to create new technologies. The next time you see a deer in a field, a dragonfly near a pond or a firefly glowing on a summer evening, remember that each one experiences the world through a unique set of eyes. Their vision helps them survive, and their eyes help us learn more about the amazing science of life.

BULLFROGS: EYES ABOVE WATER

The American bullfrog can be found in ponds, lakes and wetlands throughout Ohio. A frog's eyes sit high on top of its head. This special position allows it to stay mostly underwater while still looking above the surface. This eye placement helps frogs watch for insects to eat and predators to avoid. Frogs can detect movement very well. If something moves nearby, a frog may quickly react.



DRAGONFLIES: INCREDIBLE FLYING VISION

Dragonflies live near Ohio ponds, lakes and streams. They have some of the largest compound eyes among insects. Their huge eyes cover much of their heads. A dragonfly can see in nearly every direction at the same time. This helps it hunt flying insects and avoid predators. Dragonflies are fast and skilled fliers. Their excellent vision allows them to track moving targets in the air. Researchers often study dragonflies because their vision and flight systems are very efficient.

PRAYING MANTISES: INSECT DEPTH PERCEPTION

Most insects have eyes on the sides of their heads. Mantises are different because their eyes face forward. This gives them better depth perception. They can judge distance more accurately when catching prey. A mantis waits quietly and then strikes with its front legs when an insect comes close. Scientists are interested in mantis vision because it shares some features with the way humans judge depth.

So far, praying mantises are the only insects proven to use **3D VISION**. It helps them judge how far away their prey is.



Continue reading



Eye Spy

Find the word EYE
five times!



E Y E X E Y E B C D
A B C F G H J K L M
E Y E N E Y E Q R S
T U V W X E Y E Z O



RED FOX: A HUNTER'S EYES

The red fox lives in many parts of Ohio. Foxes hunt small animals such as mice and rabbits. Their eyes face more toward the front of their heads. This helps them judge distance. Being able to tell how far away something is helps foxes catch prey. Foxes also have excellent night vision. Their eyes collect more light than human eyes. This helps them hunt when it is dark.



WHITE-TAILED DEER: WIDE-ANGLE VISION

The white-tailed deer is one of the most common animals in Ohio. Deer have eyes on the sides of their heads. This gives them a very wide field of view. A field of view is how much of the world an animal can see without moving its head. Because deer can see almost all around them, they can quickly spot predators. This helps them stay safe. Deer are also active at dawn and dusk when the light is dim. Their eyes have many light-sensitive cells that help them see better in low light. This allows them to move through forests and fields even when it is not very bright.



GREAT HORNED OWL: MASTER OF THE NIGHT

The great horned owl is one of Ohio's most famous birds. Owls have very large eyes. Their eyes gather lots of light, making them excellent night hunters. The eyes are so large that they cannot move in their sockets. Instead, owls turn their heads to look around. They can rotate their heads much farther than humans can. Because both eyes face forward, owls have strong depth perception. Depth perception helps them judge distance accurately when swooping down to catch prey.





BEES: THOUSANDS OF TINY LENSES

Bees are important insects found throughout Ohio. They help pollinate flowers, fruits and vegetables. A bee's eyes are very different from human eyes. Instead of having one lens in each eye, bees have compound eyes. Compound eyes are made of thousands of tiny parts called ommatidia. Each ommatidium collects a small piece of visual information. Together, all the pieces create a picture of the world. Compound eyes help bees notice movement quickly. This is useful when flying from flower to flower. Bees can also see some colors differently than humans. They can see ultraviolet light, which is invisible to us. Many flowers have ultraviolet patterns that guide bees to nectar.

Match the Eyes



Whose eyes are these?
Match each close-up
to its owner!

1. Common eastern bumble bee

2. American bullfrog

3. Red fox

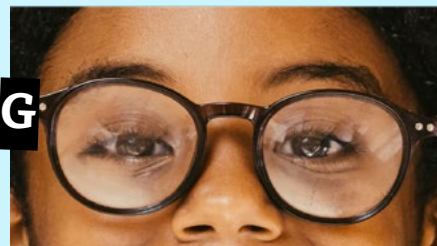
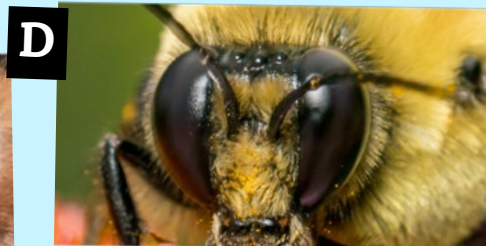
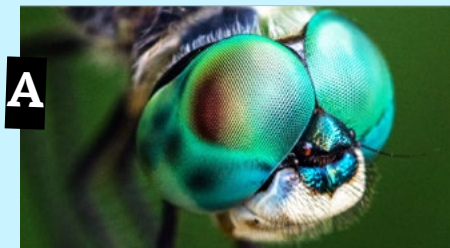
4. Human child

5. White-tailed deer

6. Great horned owl

7. Blue dasher dragonfly

8. Carolina praying mantis



(Page 29 has the answers.)





THE STORY OF TERRA THE BOX TURTLE



By Lindsey Schmidt
Science Writer

MEET TERRA, AN EASTERN BOX TURTLE,
AND DISCOVER HOW SHE BECAME
Highbanks Metro Park's MOST OUTGOING
ANIMAL AMBASSADOR. FOLLOW HER STORY
AND LEARN ALL ABOUT BOX TURTLES!

Dawn breaks in central Ohio. Bright rays of sunlight filter through the trees at Highbanks Metro Park. The light and the warm summer air wake Terra, an eastern box turtle that calls the metro park home.

Terra gets her name from the scientific name for eastern box turtles, ***Terrapene carolina carolina***. Eastern box turtles are a type of box turtle that lives in the eastern United States, from Maine to Florida. These reptiles can live in many different types of terrestrial ecosystems, including grasslands, meadows, woodlands and forests.

Eastern box turtles are **diurnal** animals, meaning they sleep at night and are active during the day. They are cold-blooded reptiles, so they rely on external sources to regulate their body temperature. Like solar panels, they soak up energy from the sun and will seek out sunlight for warmth. If they are feeling too hot, they might find cool, shady places and take short naps throughout the day to allow themselves to cool off.



TERRAPENE
CAROLINA
CAROLINA





Scutes and ridges
create a one-of-a-kind
shell pattern.



Look into their eyes!
Can you tell who is male and
who is female?



Safe and snuggly!
A **hinge in the plastron** allows
an eastern box turtle to close
its shell tightly.

Terra slowly crawls out of her nighttime hiding place next to an old, fallen log and under some dry, brown leaves. She adopts a confident stride, head held high, as she begins another day of travel.

Eastern box turtles are brown with yellow, orange and red **patterns**. These colors provide camouflage, which means they help the turtles blend in with the forest floor. Their **eye color** can provide a clue about whether a turtle is female or male. Females generally have yellow-brown eyes, while males generally have orange-red eyes.

The pattern on each box **turtle's shell** is different, like fingerprints. Turtle shells are made up of scale-like plates called scutes. **Scutes develop ridges** as a turtle grows. Like the rings of a tree, these ridges can be used to estimate a turtle's age.

Over mossy logs, through shallow streams and between stalks of wildflowers, Terra

carves her path. She comes across a path covered in small gray stones. The crunching stones warn her that a group of humans is approaching. To Terra, they are tall, two-legged creatures with brightly colored shells. She doesn't recognize any of their voices, so she backs away from the edge of the trail, hides in the leaves and closes her shell as she waits for them to pass.

Turtles can remember faces and voices and might even approach people they recognize. If they don't recognize the people around them and feel afraid, or if a predator is nearby, they hide in their shells. Box turtles are one of the only types of turtles that can completely close their shells, making them look like boxes. The lower part of a box turtle's shell, called the **plastron**, has a **hinge** down the center, just behind its front legs. Turtles can fold the front part of the plastron up toward the upper part of the shell, or the carapace, until the shell is completely closed.



DANGER



Turtles may **cross roads** while trying to find their way home.

I CAN DO IT & I WILL DO IT



Yum! **Mayapple** is on the menu! Box turtles help new plants grow!



Note: Most of the mayapple plant, including unripe fruit, is toxic to people. Never eat a wild plant unless a knowledgeable adult says it is safe.



After the humans have passed, Terra crawls her way across the small stones and arrives at the forest on the other side. Hungry from her journey and the excitement of seeing humans, she seeks out something to eat. She finds a mayapple plant and munches on the ripe, sweet and tangy fruit.

Mayapples are wildflowers with large, flat leaves and white petals. If fertilized, the blossoms develop into yellow-green fruits about the size of golf balls. Box turtles love the citrusy taste of these **fruits**, and they are the primary dispersers of the plant's seeds. They eat the seeds within the fruit and leave them behind in their droppings.

It's time for Terra to continue her journey. Her path is once again blocked by a flat expanse of land. This one is larger and more exposed than the gray stone path. Every

once in a while, a huge metallic creature zooms past. Terra is afraid of them, but she has no choice but to cross. She knows her home is somewhere on the other side and will do whatever it takes to get there.

Box turtles are homebodies. They usually live in an area no bigger than about seven football fields. If box turtles are removed from their **home ranges**, they will spend their entire lives trying to get back. They have a natural ability to find their way home and will brave any terrain to get there, even if that terrain is **dangerous**.

When all seems quiet, Terra takes her chance. She fixes her gaze on the trees on the other side and doesn't stop until she reaches them. Shortly after she makes it across, a metallic beast flies by. Phew! That was a close call.



Which **predators** can you name?

An eastern box turtle's **omnivore** menu: wiggly worms, small amphibians and tasty mushrooms!

Box turtles have always faced danger from **predators**. Adult box turtles have very few predators because of their hardy shells, but coyotes and large birds might sometimes attempt to break the shells open. Box turtle eggs and young box turtles that can't fully close their shells yet face predation from other animals like raccoons, chipmunks, skunks, foxes and snakes.

Nowadays, humans are the greatest threat to eastern box turtles. People remove them from their home ranges to keep them as pets or sell them, not knowing or not caring about how dangerous that is for the turtles. As people build more roads, homes and buildings, and as more cars travel those roads, turtles face more threats.

Terra is exhausted after the encounter. She finds a shallow pool of water with some worms poking out of the soft, wet dirt. After eating a worm and sipping the water, Terra finds a pile of leaves. She sinks into it and falls asleep, giving herself both time to digest and a break from the midday summer heat.

Box turtles are **omnivores** and will eat pretty much anything they can find, from mayapples and mushrooms to worms and small amphibians. They continue to digest when they sleep, but the process is much slower than when they are awake. The energy from heat and sunlight speeds up their metabolism, allowing their bodies to break down food more quickly.

The sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays are also essential for a turtle's health. UVA rays have long wavelengths that go deep into the skin. These rays stimulate box turtles' appetites. UVB rays have short wavelengths that only reach the surface of the skin. These rays assist with the production of vitamin D, which helps turtles absorb calcium to build strong bones and shells.

Terra rises and travels farther into the wetland. She sees more humans headed her way. At this point in her journey, Terra has traveled about 150 feet, and she is exhausted. Though her first instinct is to hide, she is hungry for the apple they've brought with them. She allows them to pick her up, and when one offers her the fruit, Terra eats it right out of the human's hand.



WATCH THE VIDEO

Join us at Highbanks Nature Center as naturalist Christena introduces us to Terra and shares fascinating facts about eastern box turtles! Scan the QR code or watch the video at ribbitmagazine.com/library!



+ Listen to the audio story!

Terra was found in the wetlands at Highbanks in 2004. She had long nails and a long beak. In the wild, chewing on fibrous foods and crawling across rough surfaces naturally wears these features down. She was comfortable eating from a person's hand, which showed that she was used to being around people. Together, these traits revealed that Terra was most likely taken from the wild at a young age, kept as a pet for some time and then returned to the park.

The humans move Terra to a small, enclosed forest with clear barriers that mimics her natural habitat. She's sad to realize she'll never return to the home territory of her youth, but her new habitat has the light, food and entertainment she needs. As night falls and the light fades, Terra settles underneath a hollow log in the corner of her new territory. She is adaptable and brave, and she will get used to calling the Highbanks Nature Center her home.

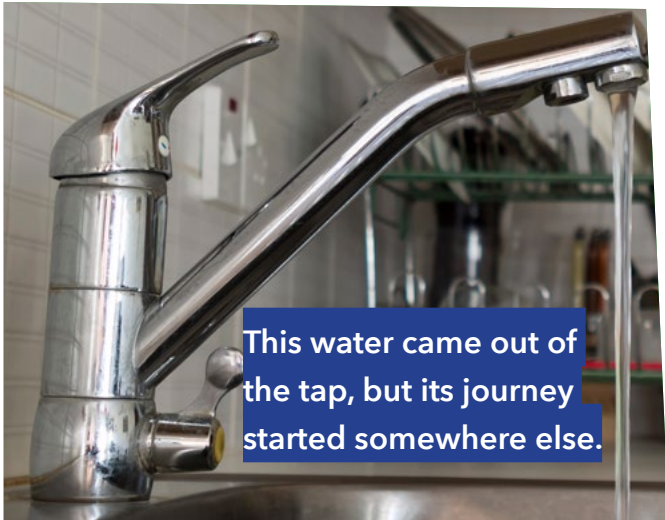
Terra adapted quickly to being the park's new animal ambassador. She has a big personality and will even pose for photos. She loves hanging out with the kids who come to see her, but she seems less fond of her reptilian roommate, a fellow box turtle called Three, and rules the tank that they share. Her scutes indicate she is 40 to 60 years old. She has only gotten more outgoing in her two decades at the park and now helps teach visitors about eastern box turtles and their importance to central Ohio's ecosystem.

In Ohio, eastern box turtles are considered a species of concern, meaning they might become threatened or endangered if people don't protect them. If people leave box turtles where they belong and don't take them home as pets, they have a much better chance of living a long life. Terra's new role as an animal ambassador at Highbanks saved her from likely dying while trying to return home. Had she been found within her original home range, she would have been left alone. You should visit Highbanks Nature Center to meet Terra and learn why it is important to let wild animals stay wild.



THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Lindsey met Terra during a visit to the Highbanks Metro Park Nature Center. There, she learned Terra's story and fell in love with her new turtle friend. Lindsey was so inspired that she wanted to learn everything she could about eastern box turtles and write this wonderful story about Terra. 



This water came out of the tap, but its journey started somewhere else.

CHRISTY AND JACK FROM COLUMBUS GREENSPOT CHECK OUT THE DUBLIN ROAD WATER PLANT TO SEE HOW RIVER WATER IS TREATED AND TURNED INTO CLEAN WATER FOR THE COMMUNITY.



Christy and Jack head to the Dublin Road Water Plant to follow the water's journey.



Who better to explain the water's journey than Plant Manager Beth?

Note: Water treatment is a complex process. This story introduces some of the main steps used at the Dublin Road Water Plant.



Water from the Scioto River enters the Dublin Road Water Plant, where the treatment process begins.



No fish beyond this point!

Screens catch large debris before water treatment chemicals are added.

Aluminum sulfate causes tiny pieces of dirt to stick together, almost like syrup makes things sticky.

Paddles help the tiny pieces form soft clumps called floc. The floc becomes heavy and sinks to the bottom.

After much of the dirt is removed, the plant adds lime and caustic soda.

These chemicals allow the plant to remove calcium and magnesium, the minerals that make water hard.

Lime and caustic soda raise the water's pH. The pH shows how acidic or basic the water is.

At a higher pH, calcium and magnesium form particles that can be removed.

Paddles gather these particles into another kind of floc. The floc settles, and the water moves into another set of basins.

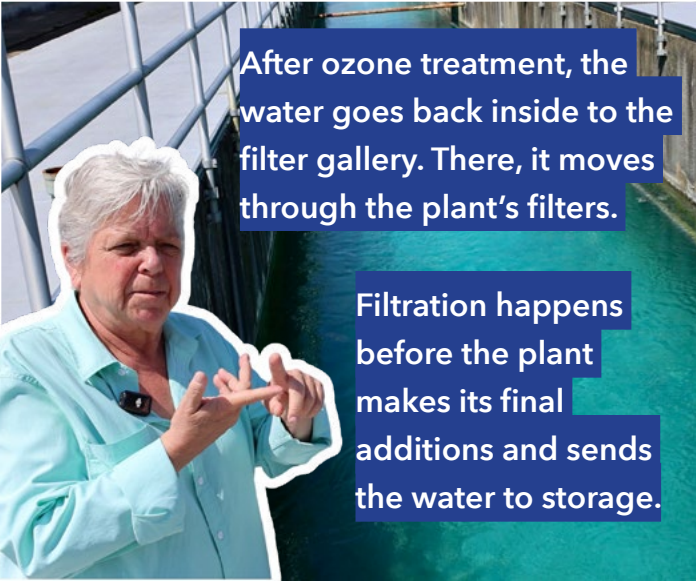




The mineral floc sinks, and the water becomes clearer and softer.



Carbonic acid lowers the pH after the water is softened. Next, the plant turns oxygen (O_2) into ozone (O_3). Ozone helps treat the water before it moves to the filters.

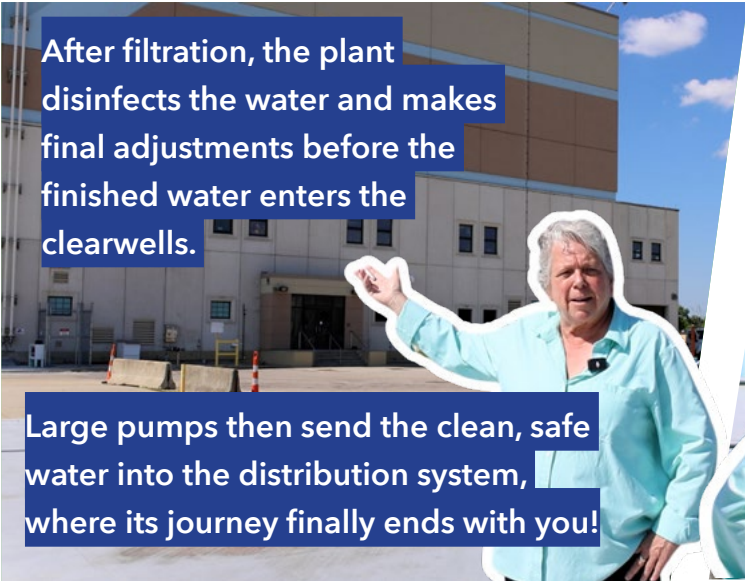


After ozone treatment, the water goes back inside to the filter gallery. There, it moves through the plant's filters.

Filtration happens before the plant makes its final additions and sends the water to storage.



The water is looking sharp!



After filtration, the plant disinfects the water and makes final adjustments before the finished water enters the clearwells.

Large pumps then send the clean, safe water into the distribution system, where its journey finally ends with you!



Wow, we learned so much about how river water becomes clean tap water. Thanks for showing us around, Beth!

EASY WATER CONSERVATION TIPS

In Columbus, we have a plentiful water supply, but every drop still takes time, energy and resources to treat and deliver. Using only what we need helps protect our rivers and streams and keeps our water supply strong for the future.



1. CAN YOU BEAT FIVE MINUTES?

Pick a favorite song that lasts about five minutes and try to finish your shower before it ends. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends keeping showers under five minutes to save water.



3. BE A LEAK DETECTIVE!

Hear a toilet running when no one just flushed it? See a faucet dripping? Tell an adult. A leaking toilet can waste about 200 gallons of water in one day.

Hey, why is the toilet still running?



2. WATER PLANTS IN THE MORNING.

Morning is a good time to water because less water is lost to evaporation than during the hottest part of the day. **Pro tip: Plant native!** Plants native to central Ohio are adapted to our local weather and rainfall. Plus, they provide food and shelter for local pollinators like bees and butterflies!



Check your knowledge

1. What stops big fish from touring the entire water plant?

- a) A fish crossing guard b) Screens c) A "No fish allowed!" sign

2. What helps tiny pieces of dirt stick together?

- a) Peanut butter b) Aluminum sulfate c) Superglue

3. What are the clumps of tiny particles called?

- a) Floc b) Fluff c) Water meatballs

(Need a hint? Visit page 29.)



Give food a second chance

with

SWACO
FROM WASTE TO RESOURCES

CAN THIS FOOD BE SAVED?

Can you save that snack, or should it go in the compost? Test your food waste knowledge and discover simple ways to reduce waste at home.

When it comes to food, the best use is to eat it. Food accounts for 15% of what goes to the Franklin County landfill, making it the largest single waste stream, with nearly 1 million pounds of food sent to the landfill each day. When food goes to a landfill, we waste not only the food but also the money and all the resources it took to grow, transport, preserve and market that food. Join Joey to test your food waste knowledge and discover simple ways to give food a second chance.

MOLDY STRAWBERRIES:

Answer: Compost them!

Mold can spread through soft foods like fruit and make you sick. Compost the moldy strawberries and ask an adult to check the others before you eat them.



STALE BREAD?

Answer: Eat it as long as it is mold-free! A loaf of bread can be revived by sprinkling the crust with water and baking it in the oven at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for about five to seven minutes. Scan the QR code on page 25 for a French toast recipe. Don't let the hard outside stop you from eating it!



These are general guidelines from SWACO, but always double-check with an adult if you have questions.



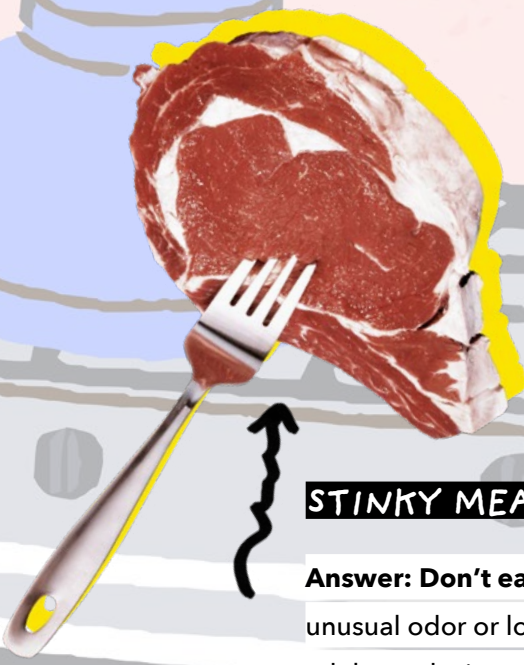
SOFT CELERY?

Answer: Eat it! Place the soft celery in a cup of water or an ice bath to perk it up.



YOGURT ONE WEEK PAST ITS DATE LABEL?

Answer: Ask an adult! The yogurt may still be safe if it is unopened and has stayed refrigerated at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below. Dates such as "best by" and "use by" usually tell you when food will taste best, not when it becomes unsafe. Never taste food to find out if it is safe.



STINKY MEAT?

Answer: Don't eat it! If meat has an unusual odor or looks or feels slimy, ask an adult to take it to a food scrap drop-off.



BRUISED APPLE?

Answer: Eat it! Ask an adult to cut away the bruised or damaged parts. Compost those pieces and eat the rest of the apple.



MOLDY CHEESE?

Answer: It depends! If it's a block of hard cheese, such as cheddar, Parmesan or Swiss, ask an adult to cut off at least 1 inch around and below the mold. You can eat the rest. If it's a soft or semisoft cheese, like mozzarella or pepper jack, then please compost it at a food waste drop-off.

Continue reading



Save Food With Your Family

What can you do to make a difference and combat food waste? You can start by taking smaller portions and asking for more if you are still hungry. This prevents extra food from going to waste. Once a week, ask your family to have a leftovers night. Pull out the leftovers in the fridge and have everyone choose something that may go bad soon. Your meals do not have to look pretty or match, as long as your family eats the food!

There are now apps that can make it easier for you and your family to fight food waste and save big bucks at the same time!

The Too Good To Go app connects you with cafes, bakeries and restaurants that offer discounted Surprise Bags. You may not know exactly what you will receive, but if it is from one of your favorite spots, it might be worth taking a chance. Don't see restaurants you like participating? Talk to them about the opportunity and see if they would be interested in joining. If you are traveling with your family to other cities in the U.S., check the app to find some good deals while keeping food out of landfills. To learn more, scan the QR code on page 25.

The Flashfood app helps you and your family find discounted groceries nearing their best-by dates. You can save up to 50% on items such as meat, dairy products and fresh produce while helping reduce food waste. Giant Eagle and Meijer are among the retailers that use Flashfood. Check the app with an adult to find a participating store near you. The QR code on page 25 has more information.

There are so many things you can do at home and at school to prevent food waste. Eat what you take and take only what you can eat. Enjoy your leftovers and compost food scraps that cannot be eaten. Remember, when you waste food, you also waste the money, water, energy and other resources used to produce it. When you do your part to keep food out of the landfill, you not only save space but also turn food scraps into compost that is great for gardens. **Visit [SaveMoreThanFood.org](https://www.savemorethanfood.org) to find a food waste drop-off location near you!** By making smart choices about food, you can save money, reduce waste and protect the planet, one meal at a time!



Join Joey as he saves food and takes scraps to a composting drop-off! Scan the QR code or visit [ribbitmagazine.com/library](https://www.ribbitmagazine.com/library).





Joey's closest drop-off location is in Whitehall. Which drop-off location is closest to you?

We are fortunate to have so many communities offering free food scrap drop-off sites for residents to help keep food out of landfills. There are 35 locations where residents can drop off food scraps, including meat, dairy products, bones and produce. Visit [SaveMoreThanFood.org](https://www.savemorethanfood.org) or scan the QR code below to find a drop-off location near you.



Does Your School Share?

A share table lets students offer unopened and uneaten food to others instead of throwing it away. SWACO's Share Table Champion Program includes education, on-site support and a toolkit. The toolkit includes a rolling cart, a cooler, ice packs and signs. You can find many of these resources on SWACO's website or scan the QR code to learn more. If your school does not have a share table, ask your teacher if you can start one!

SHARE TABLE

Share



WHOLE FRUIT



UNOPENED MILK & BEVERAGES



UNOPENED PACKAGED
HOT & COLD FOOD



UNOPENED SNACK ITEMS FROM SCHOOL
(NUTS, CHIPS, BREADS, ETC.)

Do Not Share



OPEN PACKAGES



PARTIALLY EATEN FOODS



ITEMS FROM HOME

SAVE MORE
THAN FOOD
MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SWACO

INTERVIEW



Max Rosenthal

Director of Environmental Awareness
Final Third Foundation



TREES, NATURE AND BIG IDEAS

We asked Max from the Final Third Foundation about his work with nature, why Columbus needs more trees and how kids can get involved.

1. What is the Final Third Foundation, and what does it do?

Final Third Foundation (F3) is a nonprofit organization working here in central Ohio, with a branch of our work stretching all the way to Mombasa, Kenya. F3 runs soccer, wellness and education programs that give kids safe and healthy opportunities to play, learn and grow. We use soccer as a way to strengthen youth development, literacy, wellness and community connection.

2. What is your role at the Final Third Foundation?

As the director of environmental awareness, I am in charge of all things related to the environment at F3. I am the lead land steward of Pathways Park, our 55-acre park, and oversee our Sprouts environmental education programs in schools.

3. What is your favorite part of your job?

My absolute favorite part of my job is that I get to regularly use both my mind (my smarts) and my body (my strength) to improve the health of my community and the earth.

4. What project are you most proud of?

Creating, developing and growing our Sprouts program is something I am very proud of. Sprouts gives kids the chance to connect with nature and explore their own passions and interests.

5. What project are you working on right now?

I have two big projects in the works right now. You can read about one in question 8. I don't want to spoil the surprise! The other is turning one of the soccer fields at Pathways Park into a space to grow food for our community.

6. Why is it important for kids to learn about nature?

The health of the earth affects our own health and the health of everyone we care about. The more we know about nature and care about nature, the more we can take care of ourselves and our community.

7. What do you hope kids remember after learning about the environment?

Exploring is learning. Go explore in nature and discover new things. Then go get a book about what you found and learn more about it.

8. What is the Pathways Park Arboretum?

Pathways Park Arboretum highlights the trees growing at Pathways Park. An "arboretum" is like a tree museum. For a landscape to become an accredited arboretum, it must also teach people about its trees.

9. Why should people in Columbus plant more trees?

Oh my goodness, where do I begin? They are beautiful. They give us oxygen. And shade. They are home to sooooo many animals, insects and fungi. They are fun to climb. They make our community healthier. And Columbus is a city that needs more trees!



"Go explore in nature and discover new things."



"Kids need nature, and nature needs kids."

10. What is your favorite tree?

The olive tree. It has many special meanings for me connected to culture, community, place and the earth. And olives are delicious.

11. What did you want to be when you were a kid?

I wanted to be a soccer player or a gym teacher. Today, I still get to play soccer, play outside and teach kids.

12. When did you know you wanted to help the environment?

I grew up playing outside all day, every day, from playing sports with friends to exploring the woods and the creek in my backyard. As I got older and got to choose what I wanted to learn about in school, I was naturally led toward environmental education and wanted to give other kids the same opportunities I had.

13. If you could be any wild animal for one day, which one would you choose?

A common swift, bar-tailed godwit or albatross. These birds can fly extremely long distances, and I would love to get a bird's-eye view of the entire earth.

14. If animals could talk, which one do you think would be the funniest?

Otters. Obviously, they are super cute. But when I see the way they lie back in the water, I feel like they are cracking jokes as they just float and chill. "Did you see the newbie in the romp? You otter meet 'em!"

15. What is your favorite thing to do outside in Columbus?

Walking along the Scioto Mile downtown is fantastic because you can watch ducks splash in the river and see beautiful native flowers blooming along the paths.

16. What are three easy ways kids can help nature?

1. Play in it. Kids need nature, and nature needs kids.
2. Sprinkle some native wildflower seeds in your yard, and tell your family I said to let them grow.
3. Eat food that is grown close to where you live.

17. What is one small thing every family can do this weekend to help nature?

Go play in nature together. Visit a Metro Park or explore one of the river trails, such as Alum Creek, Olentangy or Scioto. The more we connect with nature, the more we will care about it.

18. What nature challenge would you give our readers this fall?

Plant a tree! Late fall is the perfect time to plant trees. Ribbit! tip: Don't have a place to plant a tree? You can still help! Ask an adult to look for a community tree planting or volunteer opportunity near you.

"Sprinkle some native wildflower seeds in your yard, and tell your family I said to let them grow."



Don't have seeds or aren't sure which ones are native? We'll send you some! Ask a grown-up to visit ribbitmagazine.com/seeds. Available while supplies last.



BEFORE YOU GO...

Columbus Needs More Trees!

Trees clean our air, cool our neighborhoods, soak up rain and provide homes and food for wildlife. When you plant a tree, you help make Columbus greener and healthier for everyone!

Green Columbus is giving away **FREE NATIVE TREES**. Check the flyer for giveaway dates and locations near you.



Note:
The South Side giveaway location changed after this issue went to print. Visit the Green Columbus website for the new location.

SEPT	OCT	OCT
27	4	11
South Side	Franklinton	Linden
10am-1pm	11am-3pm	10am-2pm
580 E Woodrow Ave	667 Sullivant Ave	1142 E 17 th Ave

Sign up for your FREE tree at greencbus.org/freetrees

Can't make it to a giveaway?

To celebrate Ribbit!'s second birthday, we'll pick up a free tree from Green Columbus and bring it right to your doorstep!

Available in select ZIP codes: 43201, 43203, 43204, 43205, 43206, 43207, 43211, 43219, 43222 and 43223.



Scan the QR code or go to ribbitmagazine.com/trees to tell us you're interested.



Share Your Wild Side!

Be one of the first 20 kids to submit a nature story or drawing and receive an award-winning Wild Republic® Flipkins sensory toy!

Every child who participates will receive a special thank-you card.

Ask a grown-up to scan the QR code or visit ribbitmagazine.com/share and upload a photo of your story or artwork.



Full details and terms are available at ribbitmagazine.com/share.



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ANSWERS

PAGE 1: The ghosts are hiding on pages 2, 9, 13, 21 and 28.

PAGE 7: The turkey vulture is on page 6. Feather number 5 is a wild turkey feather. The candy corn, gummy worm and purple gummy spider do not belong on the baby turkey's plate.

PAGE 10

E	Y	E	X	E	Y	E	B	C	D
A	B	C	F	G	H	J	K	L	M
E	Y	E	N	E	Y	E	Q	R	S
T	U	V	W	X	E	Y	E	Z	O

PAGE 11: 1D, 2E, 3B, 4G, 5H, 6C, 7A, 8F.

PAGE 21: 1b, 2b, 3a.

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it within reach of
every child.

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