

**TELLING THE STORIES  
OF COLUMBUS NATURE  
& THE ENVIRONMENT**

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



Naturewise Columbus



## REFLECTING ON OUR FIRST YEAR

**2024 was an exciting year for us!** We launched Ribbit! Magazine, a free community publication that shares the stories of Columbus' nature and environment. Our highest goal was clear: to create a nature magazine that would inspire children in Columbus to discover the beauty and wonder of the natural world around them. But more than that, we wanted it to be truly free and accessible to all. To make this vision a reality, we founded Naturewise Columbus, a nonprofit dedicated to publishing Ribbit! as a free resource for our community.

This adventure began in March 2024, and we are immensely grateful to everyone who joined our mission. Thanks to your support, we published our first issue in September, which was warmly received by children (and grown-ups!) across the city. In December, our winter issue followed, reaching an even larger audience with inspiring stories and articles.

From the beginning, we've been thrilled by the support of environmental professionals, community partners, donors, and all those who have joined us in bringing Ribbit! to life. We look forward to continuing this journey in 2025, inspiring more children to explore and care for the natural world. Together we're bringing the joy of nature and the importance of caring for our environment to children and families across the city.

Thank you for being part of this adventure!

With gratitude,  
**Bettina Cooper**  
Board President and Founder



## OUR MISSION

is to connect children in Columbus with the environment through **Ribbit!**, our free community magazine that inspires curiosity, learning, and a sense of stewardship for the natural world.

## WE ENVISION COLUMBUS

as a vibrant community where children feel at home in nature, fostering an innovative and sustainable environment for all.

## OUR VALUES ARE:

### COLLABORATION

We work with diverse stakeholders in the community to connect children to nature, achieve shared goals, and create lasting impact together.

### EMPOWERMENT

We help children foster a sense of agency to make a positive impact on the environment and the community.

### FUN

We strive to make learning about nature enjoyable and exciting for children.

### ACCESSIBILITY

Ensuring environmental education is available to all children in Columbus, making learning and participation easy and inclusive.

Every issue of **Ribbit** contains **32 pages** filled with engaging articles, colorful visuals, and fun puzzles. It contains:



**COLUMBUS NATURE &  
ENVIRONMENT**



**STEM LEARNING**



**COMMUNITY INSIGHTS &  
RESOURCES**



# FALL ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

The Fall 2024 issue of Ribbit! marked the launch of our magazine, celebrating the wonders of our amazing nature and community in its very first edition.

Kids learned how rocks and minerals power our technology in *The Minerals in Your Cell Phone* and discovered Ohio's tropical treasure in *Ohio's Secret Fruit*, featuring the pawpaw and its quirky pollinators. *Hello Fall!* explored how wildlife prepares for winter, from cozy shelters to late-blooming flowers, while *Fantastic Fall Fungi* celebrated mushrooms with funny names and fascinating features.

*Our Urban Forest* highlighted the vital role of Columbus's trees, and *After Dark in Fall* showcased amazing nocturnal creatures. In *Blueways and Beyond*, kids explored water conservation and recreation, while *Harvest in the City* spotlighted community gardens, including the Highland Youth Garden.

*Where Do the Birds Go?* shared why some birds migrate and how they navigate, featuring local spots like Hoover Reservoir and Blacklick Woods Metro Park, while *A Buzz for Conservation* celebrated a mural honoring the Rusty-Patched Bumblebee and pollinator protection efforts. *Diving Back in Time* uncovered Ohio's ancient seas through fossils like brachiopods and cephalopods, revealing a prehistoric underwater world. Finally, *The Three Sisters* shared the story of corn, beans, and squash growing together, complete with a tasty recipe.

Our first issue welcomed the fall season and set the stage for exploring the natural beauty of Columbus, one season at a time!





# WINTER ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

The Winter 2025 issue of Ribbit! highlighted local nature during its coldest season, inviting readers to explore how the rhythms of winter connect city life to the natural world.

*Biomimicry in Airplane Design* explored how animals like birds and dragonflies inspired aviation and space exploration, while *Where for Winter?* uncovered how creatures like wood frogs, squirrels, and snakes endure the cold.

*Chillin' with the Birds* introduced the joys of winter birding, sharing tips for spotting local species and observing their seasonal behaviors, while *Metro Parks Winter Fun* featured insights from naturalists about the best activities to enjoy during the frosty months, like sledding, hiking, and wildlife tracking. *Endangered Species Close to Home* highlighted at-risk species like the Eastern Hellbender and Gray Fox, paired with *Restoring Ohio's Forests*, which showcased community efforts to replant trees and support ecosystems.

*Ice Age Safari* transported readers to Ice Age Ohio, introducing mammoths and giant ground sloths, while *Thinking Green All Year* offered eco-friendly tips for conserving energy and reducing waste during the winter months. *Zooming in with Digital Microscopes* inspired kids to discover the microscopic wonders of nature, complementing the season's focus on learning. The *Cozy Wild Rice Recipe* combined seasonal ingredients like squash and cranberries for a nutritious winter dish.

Our second issue brought nature, winter insights, and a sense of wonder to kids across the city to enjoy, and to embrace the magic of the cold season!





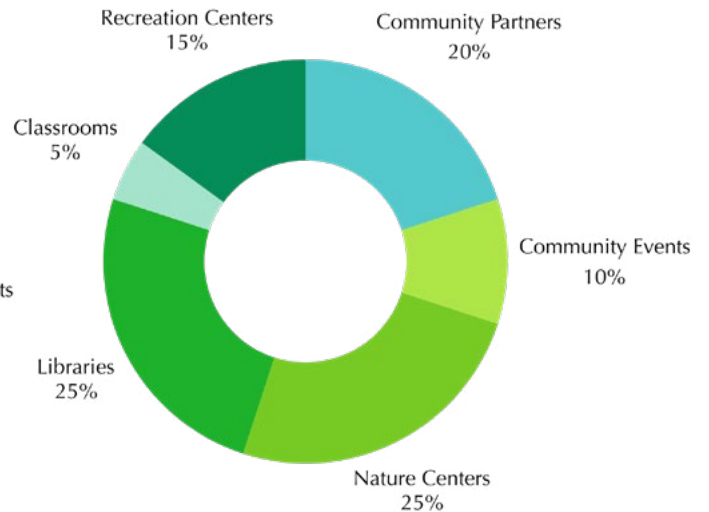
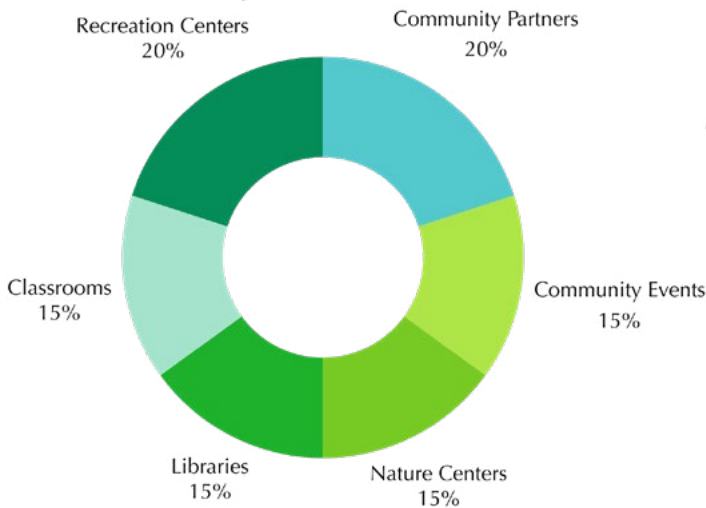
Ribbit! has been used by educators in a variety of settings, serving as a valuable resource for enriching classrooms and after-school programs, not just with nature and environmental education, but also by supporting STEM learning, literacy, social studies, and encouraging creativity.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

FALL ISSUE  
**1400**  
COPIES PRINTED

WINTER ISSUE  
**5000**  
COPIES PRINTED

## DISTRIBUTION



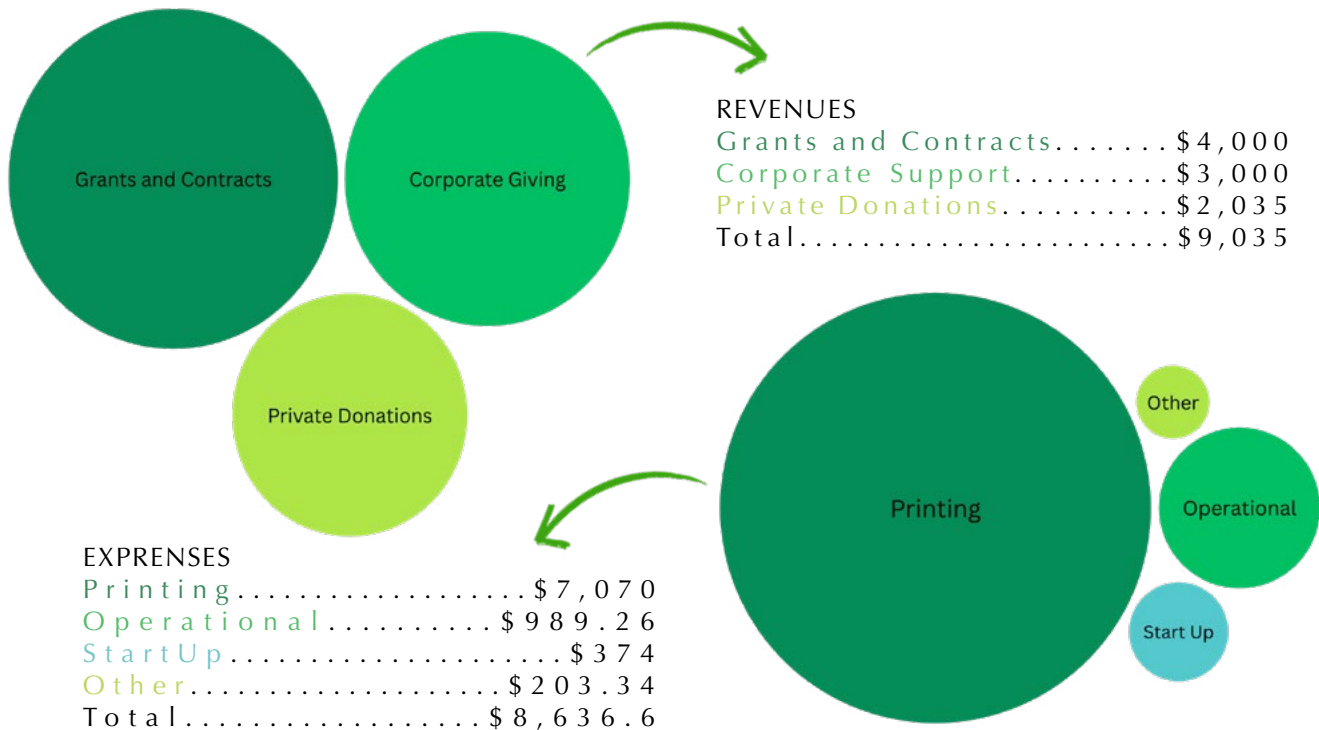
Besides interesting articles, children have especially enjoyed the images of local wildlife and solving our seasonal puzzles that add extra engagement with the magazine for readers of all ages!





# FINANCIALS

Our primary focus at Naturewise Columbus is maximizing print volume to reach and serve our community. With an all-volunteer team, we operate with minimal overhead, ensuring that the majority of our resources go toward providing free and accessible environmental education for children.



Thank you to the **Friends of Metro Parks** and their Parks Connect Grant, which has supported the printing of Ribbit Magazine, helping bring Metro Parks' enriching learning experiences and resources to families across Columbus.

Thank you to **The Guardtower** game store, our wonderful community partner, for your generous support. Your contribution has played a key role in our outreach efforts and has helped us significantly expand our impact.

Thank you to the **AEP Foundation** for your generous support of our Ribbit! Magazine table and activity at the 2024 West Campus Science & Sustainability Festival at The Ohio State University.

We also want to thank our major partner **Columbus GreenSpot**, which empowers residents to make sustainable choices and provides valuable resources and workshops to help communities reduce waste, conserve energy, and create greener living environments.

Thank you to **MINE Living LLC.** and **Fast Enterprises LLC.** for your kind donations and to **everyone** who has generously contributed to Ribbit through an individual donation enabling us to distribute more magazines and bring nature education to children and families across Columbus.

# TOGETHER FOR NATURE

After starting Naturewise Columbus and launching Ribbit! Magazine, we are growing this project into an institution that becomes a community pillar for learning about Columbus nature and protecting our local environment. With your support, we're empowering children to learn about our local nature, become more environmentally conscious and help build a greener community. There are many ways you can get involved:



**Joining Our Board** – Contributing strategic guidance and helping shape the future direction of Naturewise Columbus and Ribbit! Magazine.



**Becoming a Volunteer** – Supporting various aspects of our operations, from outreach events, content creation, distribution, and community engagement.



**Serving as an Advisor** – Sharing expertise in areas like education, marketing, fundraising, or environmental science to guide our efforts.



**Partnering with Us** – Collaborating with local organizations, schools, and community groups to expand our reach and impact in environmental education.



**Individual Donation** – Supporting our mission through financial contributions or in-kind support. Your generous contribution will help the growth of Ribbit! Magazine and help us expand our reach.

**Corporate Support** – Both, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, can play a vital role in supporting our mission. By contributing through your philanthropic, corporate social responsibility, marketing, or community relations budget, you demonstrate a commitment to fostering a valuable community resource like Ribbit! magazine.



# ACKNOWLEDGING OUR SUPPORTERS

Ribbit! Magazine is a true community effort. We are thrilled to dedicate this section of our first annual report to express our heartfelt gratitude to the incredible individuals and organizations who helped bring Ribbit! Magazine to life, supported its growth, and ensured it reaches the hands of children throughout Columbus. Each contribution has been unique, and every piece of advice, collaboration, and effort has been invaluable in shaping this project.

First and foremost, we would like to thank **exceptional team of naturalists at the Blacklick Woods Nature Center**. The engaging activities at the center inspired us to create Ribbit! and share such enriching learning experiences with children across the city, especially those who might not have access to them. A special thank-you goes to **Maria Bergman** from the Battelle Darby Creek Nature Center for being such an inspiring naturalist and offering your insights and support from the very beginning. We are incredibly grateful to **Dale Gnidovec** and **Loren Babcock** from the Orton Geological Museum for contributing fascinating content that enhanced Ribbit!'s educational value with your expertise. Thank you to **Dianne Kadonaga** from Sunny Glen Garden for your unique sense of nature, conservation, and community. Our thanks extend to the wonderful team at **Local Matters** for providing us with healthy, seasonal recipes. Natural and healthy eating is a key part of our mission to connect kids with the environment, and your contributions make that possible. Thank you to **Marisa Hudlin** and **Maxie Troeltzsch** for helping us shape Ribbit!'s unique visual identity. We're grateful to **Sandy Libertini** and the Grange Insurance Audubon Center for being such a valuable community partner and to **Ryan Foshee** and the Clintonville Green Team for your ideas and support in helping Ribbit! grow. Thank you to **Christy Walters** and Columbus GreenSpot for becoming a fundamental community partner. Your commitment to sustainability inspires us. A heartfelt thanks to **Sarah Flecker** for your work as a naturalist and for partnering with us to share Ribbit! during the Franklin Park Conservatory's Community Days. Special thanks to **Edwina Teye**, **Cody Berkebile**, and the **STEM Impact Collaborative** at The Ohio State University for joining our advisory council. Your expertise will help guide Ribbit! on its journey to becoming a cornerstone for children and families in Columbus to learn about nature and the environment. We also extend our gratitude to **The PAST Foundation** for becoming a community partner and bringing STEM insights into environmental education.

Thank you to **The Watkins Printing Company** for being our trusted printing partner, helping us produce Ribbit! right here in Columbus. A special thanks to **Paul Bryson** for providing essential legal consulting work for nonprofits, which was crucial as we launched Naturewise Columbus. Finally, we are deeply grateful to the **Columbus Metropolitan Library** for not only distributing Ribbit! across its branches but also for the invaluable nonprofit resources it offers. These community resources, support and guidance available to new nonprofits have been instrumental in helping us turn our vision into reality. To **everyone** who contributed to Ribbit! Magazine, thank you for helping us connect children to the wonders of Columbus's nature and the environment. Together, we've created something truly special.



The PAST  
Foundation



We are deeply grateful to our board members, whose leadership, vision, and dedication have guided Ribbit! Magazine from an idea into a thriving community initiative. Your commitment to connecting kids with nature and the environment has been invaluable. Thank you to: **Tara Sikora** (Board Treasurer) **Geena Soliz** (Board Secretary), and **Bettina Cooper** (Board President).

Visit [www.ribbitmagazine.com](http://www.ribbitmagazine.com) to read Ribbit!, order a classroom set, or make a contribution.

At [www.naturewisecolumbus.org](http://www.naturewisecolumbus.org) you can learn more about the nonprofit behind the magazine and contact us for ways to join our team, become a community partner, and support the magazine with corporate giving.



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