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Tuesday, September 11, 2012

# Plant Diversity and Our Rivers

Brother Don Geiger has written about the role our rivers play in plant diversity... read below! This is great insight as we launch the ice books this Friday.

## Rivers Contribute to Increased Floodplain Plant Diversity

The environmental preservation group, Oxbow Incorporated, has used purchase and easements to protect considerable area of native habitat. The land is now known as the Oxbow. This natural area is located at the site where the Whitewater River empties into the Great Miami River. The 5,400 square-mile Great Miami River Watershed drains land in Ohio and a small area of Indiana and empties into the Ohio River at the Oxbow. Over the years, Dr. Denis Conover of the University of Cincinnati and I have spent considerable time searching out and identifying plants in the floodplains of the Oxbow. We have found an amazing variety of native plants, some of them rare state-listed species, on these floodplains. Our observations demonstrate that seeds from populations of plants in the watershed provide an important source for the great diversity of plant populations in downstream habitats.

The Ice Book Project helps demonstrate the importance of rivers in enriching plant populations in a watershed. The floating books are a visual prompt to increase our awareness of how rivers enable plants to distribute seeds over much larger areas that wind and animals can spread them. Mobility of seeds has become much more important by the shifting environments caused by global climate change. Land based transport is realistically limited to less than a mile per year. The river route has the potential of much longer transport that can enable a species to arrive at a more suitable habitat as the climate shifts.