

Indiana LAND PROTECTION ALLIANCE

Red-tail Nature Preserve

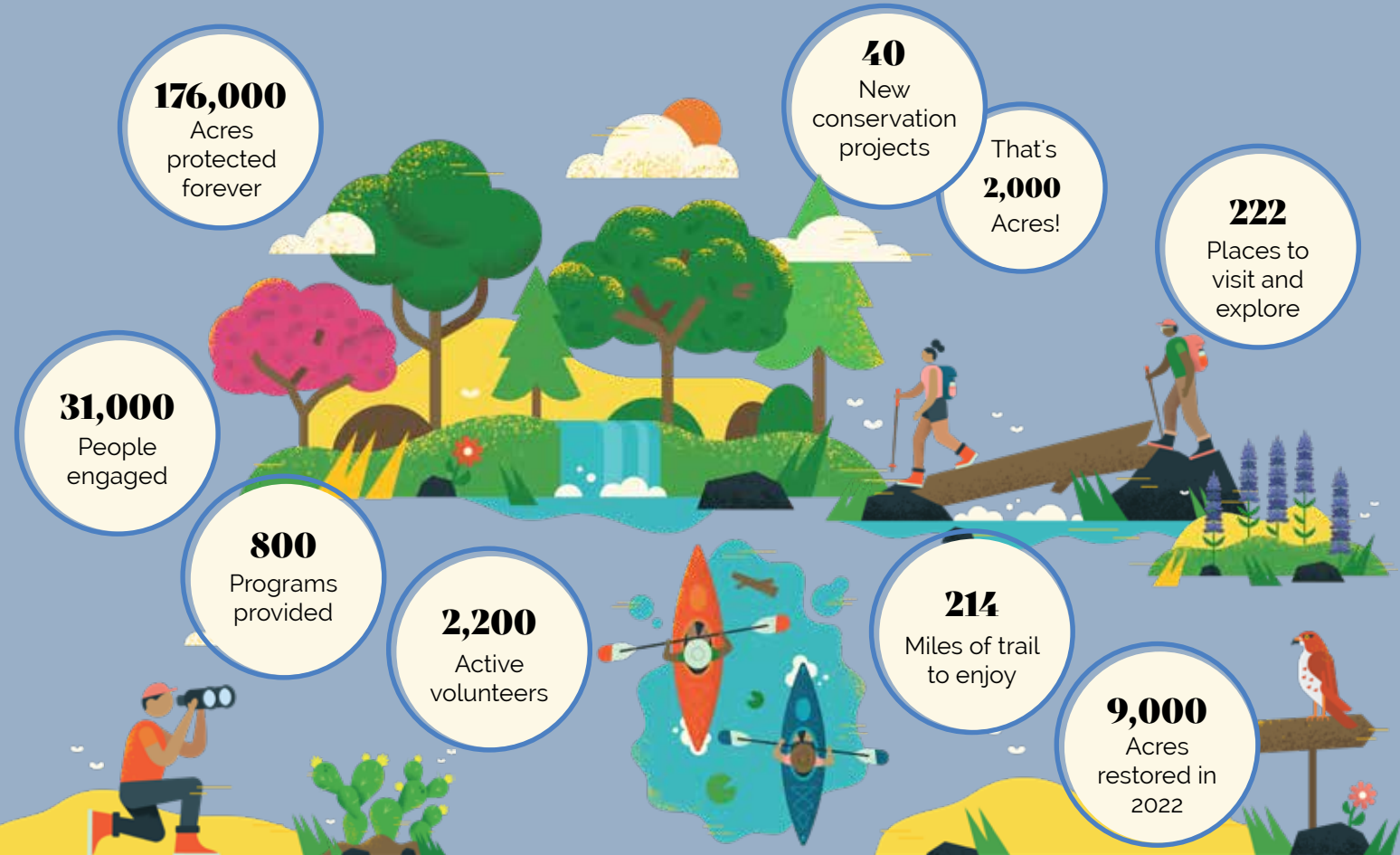
State of the Lands 2023





About ILPA

We are a vibrant network of land trusts, conservation partners, and community members. We are guided by our shared vision of a resilient future for Indiana lands. Together, we celebrate successes, overcome challenges, and work to conserve and restore land in Indiana.



In this Issue

Celebrating Milestones	4-5
Welcoming ILPA's Newest Members	6
Preserving Legacies	7
Building Climate Resilience	8 - 9
Restoring Habitats	10-14
Engaging & Strengthening Communities	15 - 18
Get Involved	19



I am proud to introduce our first-ever State of the Lands publication, a statewide collaboration highlighting land trusts' successes in 2022. In the past twelve months, our alliance has achieved unprecedented growth. It's a privilege moving this work forward with you as ILPA's executive director.

Last year, we welcomed two new land trust members, LC Nature Park and George Rogers Clark Land Trust. This year, we welcome a third new land trust member, the Archaeological Research Institute located in Lawrenceburg, Indiana. These new members are a testament to the relationships we've cultivated and the impact we've demonstrated as an alliance.

When I first joined ILPA, we were six months into a three-year strategic plan. Our initiatives these past two years have revolved around four core goals outlined in this plan: 1) building capacity to increase the pace of land protection in Indiana; 2) elevating the collective impact of Indiana land trusts; 3) strengthening communities of practice; and 4) creating synergy with new and traditional partners.

In our pursuit of achieving these goals, we have taken our education and advocacy initiatives to the next level. We have created opportunities for land trust members to meet and build relationships with elected officials. We have advanced new projects, such as our first-ever statewide nature preserve guide, our first infographic, and a new website, to build awareness for land trusts and their work.

We launched committees to increase land trust staff and volunteer participation with ILPA. These new voices inspired new training sessions and programs. For example, in December we hosted a presentation on media relations and a discussion on the legislative process. Last month, we hosted our first-ever workshop focused on events. We actively leverage knowledge and experience from within our community to craft programs and professional development opportunities that enrich individual organizations and enhance our network as a whole.

Further, we have invested in partnerships with new-to-us organizations such as the Indiana Academy of Sciences, the Global Center for Species Survival, and Indiana Audubon. These relationships contribute much-needed research, expertise, and vast networks who share our conservation vision.

Most importantly, we have remained versatile to maximize new opportunities. Thanks to the support from our partners at the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, ten member land trusts successfully submitted sixteen Next Level Conservation Trust projects. These projects are a reflection of the hard work, commitment, and meaningful collaboration happening statewide.

As we close out our current strategic plan, we will evaluate priorities and set new goals with member land trusts and partners. As you read these success stories from throughout the State, we invite you to share your thoughts on how we continue to grow our impact and our resilience as an alliance. I am eager to launch this next chapter with you.

Andrea Huntington


Executive Director
Indiana Land Protection Alliance

McVey Memorial Forest
Photo by Jeffrey Johnson

Celebrating Milestones



The Nature Conservancy

 Twenty-five years ago, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) acted on a once-in-a-generation opportunity to purchase 7,200 acres in northwest Indiana's Newton County. The establishment of Kankakee Sands stitched together existing State-protected lands to connect over 20,000 acres of habitat. To celebrate its 25th year at Kankakee Sands in September 2022, TNC hosted an anniversary weekend in Morocco. Nature Conservancy trustees, staff and conservation partners came together to celebrate all that had been accomplished. An immense undertaking, TNC and partners have restored more than 8,000 acres of agricultural land to prairie by planting more than 600 species of native plants. The prairie now teems with life, including butterflies, birds, and even bison.

Although bison were not part of the original vision for Kankakee Sands, their re-introduction in 2016 represented a natural progression in the landscape's restoration. As restoration efforts grew Kankakee Sands to an appropriate scale and habitat composition, TNC and its partners recognized that bison belonged there. Bison are a keystone species, and their grazing is a natural habitat management tool. Now, they are also a highlight for many visitors to the preserve.

More than 300 people from Newton County and across the state came to enjoy a full day of activities during the weekend including sunrise yoga on the prairie, guided hikes, bison corral tours, a free lunch and crafts. Much of the event's success can be credited to the volunteers who helped with every aspect of the festivities.

Another highlight of the celebration was the unveiling of plans to enhance the visitor experience at Kankakee Sands. Having realized its monumental restoration vision, TNC can now look to the future of Kankakee Sands and shape it into a regional destination, one that provides visitors an immersive experience that inspires an appreciation for conservation. With the support of the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, TNC is working with partners and community members to create this new vision for visitors of all ages and abilities.

As The Nature Conservancy celebrates and reflects on the 25 years of restoration and stewardship at Kankakee Sands, it acknowledges that its time stewarding this land is a mere moment in the long and ongoing use and care of this landscape. Kankakee Sands is part of the ancestral lands of the Bodéwadmik, Myaamia, Peoria, Kiikaapoi, and many other Nations. The biodiversity of the land that The Nature Conservancy now stewards is the legacy of countless generations of care and stewardship by these Nations, whose descendants continue to care for the land in the Grand Kankakee Marsh and beyond.



Mud Creek Conservancy



In 2022, Mud Creek Conservancy (MCC) celebrated a season of growth, thanks to the continued support of MCC members and conservation-minded community members. MCC supporters helped the organization surpass a \$50,000 matching challenge from the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority. With 60 days granted to meet their goal, it was reached in just over one month. Once completed, Sargent Road Nature Park will be MCC's first public preserve.

Just 2 years ago, the 26-acre Sargent Road Nature Park property was for sale, under imminent threat of development. **The dream of a nature park was just that – a dream.** Now, the property has been purchased and preserved, and MCC is nearing its goal to make this urban nature park open for all to enjoy.

MCC has been busy pursuing several preservation opportunities in the Mud Creek Valley. Thanks to the grassroots support received to complete the organization's first land acquisition at Sargent Road Nature Park, MCC was able to leverage that effort and apply for additional acquisition funding through Indiana DNR's Next Level Conservation Trust. This project has been approved and will preserve an additional 12-acres of riparian habitat and create a new public nature preserve in northeast Indianapolis.



Did you know?

The Mud Creek watershed is a significant source of drinking water for the Indianapolis metro area. Protection of the remaining natural areas that sit atop this aquifer and restoration of degraded sites is important for the health of the broader community. The land in its natural state serves as a filter, essential for clean water recharge.



George Rogers Clark Land Trust



The George Rogers Clark Land Trust (GRCLT) holds perpetual agricultural conservation easements in southern Indiana. GRCLT works with landowners, local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices, and/or the Indiana DNR Division of Forestry to develop land management conservation plans. GRCLT monitors and oversees these conservation easements in perpetuity.

The latest easement acquired by GRCLT was the Shaffer Haggard farm located in Harrison County. Thanks to federal and county programs, this was the first farm in Indiana to utilize the NRCS ALE program.

LC Nature Park



LC Nature Park celebrated its Grand Opening in May 2021. The Park is comprised of over 300 acres protecting native grassland, wetland, woodlands, and a 107-acre farm which will be restored to grassland. It features a post-glacial sand dune with a deciduous forest and a diverse understory of spring wildflowers including trillium that inspire the Annual Trillium Fest and Camp Trillium.

By conserving and restoring these ecotypes, the organization provides habitats for a variety of organisms from the smallest soil microorganisms to the largest of the charismatic megafauna including elk and bison, all of which serve for the backdrop for the Park's educational programming.



Ouabache Land Conservancy



Ouabache Land Conservancy celebrated the grand opening of John O. Whitaker Woods Nature Preserve in Clay County. A 0.6-mile hiking trail loops through the rolling terrain, and Kilns Creek winds through the heart of the property.

Having purchased the property in 1975, Dr. John O. Whitaker, Jr. worked diligently to restore and protect this 40-acre woodland, donating the property to OLC in late 2021. 2,252 trees of 34 different species were studied and measured in 1977-78, 1993-94, and 2009-10. The most abundant species, in order, are Tulip Tree, Red Hickory, Red Oak, Shagbark Hickory, White Oak, Red Maple, and American Sycamore.

From an early age, Dr. Whitaker has been interested in natural history. Since moving to Terre Haute in the early 1960s, his career has included publishing several books including *Mammals of Indiana: A Field Guide* and the *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mammals*. He is currently a Professor of Biology, Emeritus at Indiana State University.

Oxbow, Inc.



The Oxbow Nature Conservancy is a 1630-acre refuge in the floodplain of the Great Miami River at its confluence with the Ohio River. The area is a major migratory stop for a variety of species of birds -- over 290 species! Oxbow, Inc. maintains wetlands, lakes, rivers, prairies

and woodlands on the property, as well as 720 acres that is in agriculture including 490 acres of leased land.

While most of the land contains recovered and managed habitat, the inclusion of farming has been very beneficial. Each year, a portion of the crops are left behind to feed migrating and over-wintering animals, and income from leases support operation costs. Farmed land provides another type of edge for the edge ecosystem that is the hallmark and strength of the preserve. By keeping some land in production, Oxbow has developed partnerships with local farmers who provide valuable expertise, technical assistance, and equipment.



Photo by Jon Seymour

In part, this work is a legacy of the founders of the land trust, some of whom were from families that have farmed in the "bottoms" for nearly two centuries.

Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D Land Trust



In 1998, Wood-Land-Lakes, RC&D Land Trust (WLL) accepted its first conservation easement, the Eigsti Farm, once owned by Ori Eigsti, the developer of the seedless watermelon. Twenty-four years later in 2022, WLL passed the 11,000-acre mark of protected farms and woodlands, including additional farms with historic significance. Along with the growth of acres protected, WLL hired a part-time Executive Director.

In addition, support from the Uncle Corncob education fund, established by one of WLL's farm families to educate farmers on the importance of conservation easements, made possible the creation of an educational film series. The series highlights stories from three farm families. In the films, the families share their reasons for donating a conservation easement and discuss why they believe farming, open space, and farmland is important to their communities.



Archaeological Research Institute



The Archaeological Research Institute (ARI), located in Lawrenceburg, uncovers the past to preserve the future. We focus on the identification, preservation, and responsible scientific exploration of archaeological sites in Southern Indiana, Southwestern Ohio, and Northern Kentucky areas.

Under the guidance of ARI's team of archaeologists, visitors, interns, volunteers, and students of all ages are invited to experience unique hands-on opportunities to explore Southwest Indiana's rich history.





Sycamore Land Trust

Central Indiana Land Trust



Central Indiana Land Trust, Inc. (CILTI) keeps climate at the forefront when protecting and restoring land. With a goal of planting a million trees over the coming years, the organization works to buffer and expand existing protected areas.

The work is local, but with global impact. Planting new forests—while protecting existing ones—makes a difference for the changing climate. A newly planted oak, for example, will scrub carbon from the air and lock it in for the tree's lifespan—roughly 400 years. A protected forest filled with such trees will capture and contain massive amounts of carbon forever. It also provides habitat for countless species, reduces flooding, and uplifts the human spirit.

In 2022 CILTI's members ensured that Callon Hollow, a forest in Johnson County, will remain in its natural state forever. These 109 acres provide habitat for countless species, including "special concern" species like worm-eating warblers, hooded warblers, and broad-winged hawks.



In another win for both native species and climate, CILTI now holds a conservation easement on 179 acres known as Bear Wallow. Straddling Morgan and Brown Counties, this property is surrounded on three sides by the 25,000-acre Morgan-Monroe State Forest—extending high-quality forest interior habitat for many migrating birds. Federally listed Indiana and Northern long-eared bats also find safe haven here.

In the Beanblossom Creek Conservation Area, a corridor of more than 2,000 acres of protected habitat north of Bloomington, Sycamore Land Trust made great strides to restore wetland habitat in 2022. In the organization's largest restoration project ever undertaken, new wetlands were created at Fix-Stoelting Preserve in Monroe County, and preparations are underway to restore 80 more acres to wetlands at the neighboring Sam Shine Foundation Preserve. Over 7,000 wetland and pollinator-friendly wildflower plants planted in these restorations were grown in Sycamore's new Native Plant Nursery using seeds that were sustainably harvested from existing nature preserves.

In addition to wetland habitat, Sycamore planted 26,000 native trees to restore bottomland forest habitat at the Fix-Stoelting and Sam Shine Foundation preserves, as well as Skylar's World Forest at Dan Efroymsen Preserve.

To monitor the impact of these wetland restoration projects, Sycamore set up motion-triggered wildlife cameras to document and monitor the animals that depend on this important habitat. In 2022, their Wildlife Camera Project captured incredible footage of more than 40 species, including otters, flying squirrels, bobcats, minks, sandhill cranes, coyotes, and a family of beavers. Wetland restoration was already planned for this area, but after assessing the impact of this new beaver dam to help reshape the ecosystem into thriving wetland habitat, plans were modified to allow the beavers to continue their important work. Watch the footage at sycamorelandtrust.org/wildlife.



In Parke County, near Turkey Run State Park, 200 acres of mixed forest and farmland west of Sugar Mill Creek are protected forever through another CILTI conservation easement.

These conservation gains expanded CILTI's protected acreage to 6500 across Central Indiana last year. On the restoration front, the stewardship team planted more than 20,000 trees, buffering the old growth forest of Meltzer Woods.

A carbon calculator on the organization's website enables people to offset the carbon emissions of their travel miles, whether by air or auto. Calculating the number of trees needed to offset carbon based on mileage, the tool shows how much of a contribution to make toward the tree planting program.

Land conservation is more than just protecting and preserving the land. It's about creating resilience in the face of an uncertain and dynamic climate.



Photos by Chris Fox

Red-Tail Land Conservancy



One of Red-tail Land Conservancy's first projects was the protection and restoration of Red-tail Nature Preserve, a crop field adjacent to Prairie Creek Reservoir in Delaware County. 20 years later, the land is now a thriving tallgrass prairie with myriad native flowers like bee balm, milkweed, and prairie dock.

Early restoration included breaking up and removing farm tiles, soil preparation, and seeding. It is currently managed with planned burns, mowing, and manual invasive plant removal. Seeds from this preserve are harvested and dispersed across the organization's protected lands.

A strong sign of restoration success is the return of a once-rare apex predator, the osprey. At the beginning of the project, a tall platform was erected at the center of the prairie. It was designed to be a nesting site for osprey. In 2022, after two decades of restoration, the first breeding pair of this bird-of-prey built a massive nest and raised young. In the spring, osprey could be seen perched protectively on the platform, surveying the prairie. That summer, fledging osprey practiced fishing, plunging awkwardly through the air toward the reservoir.

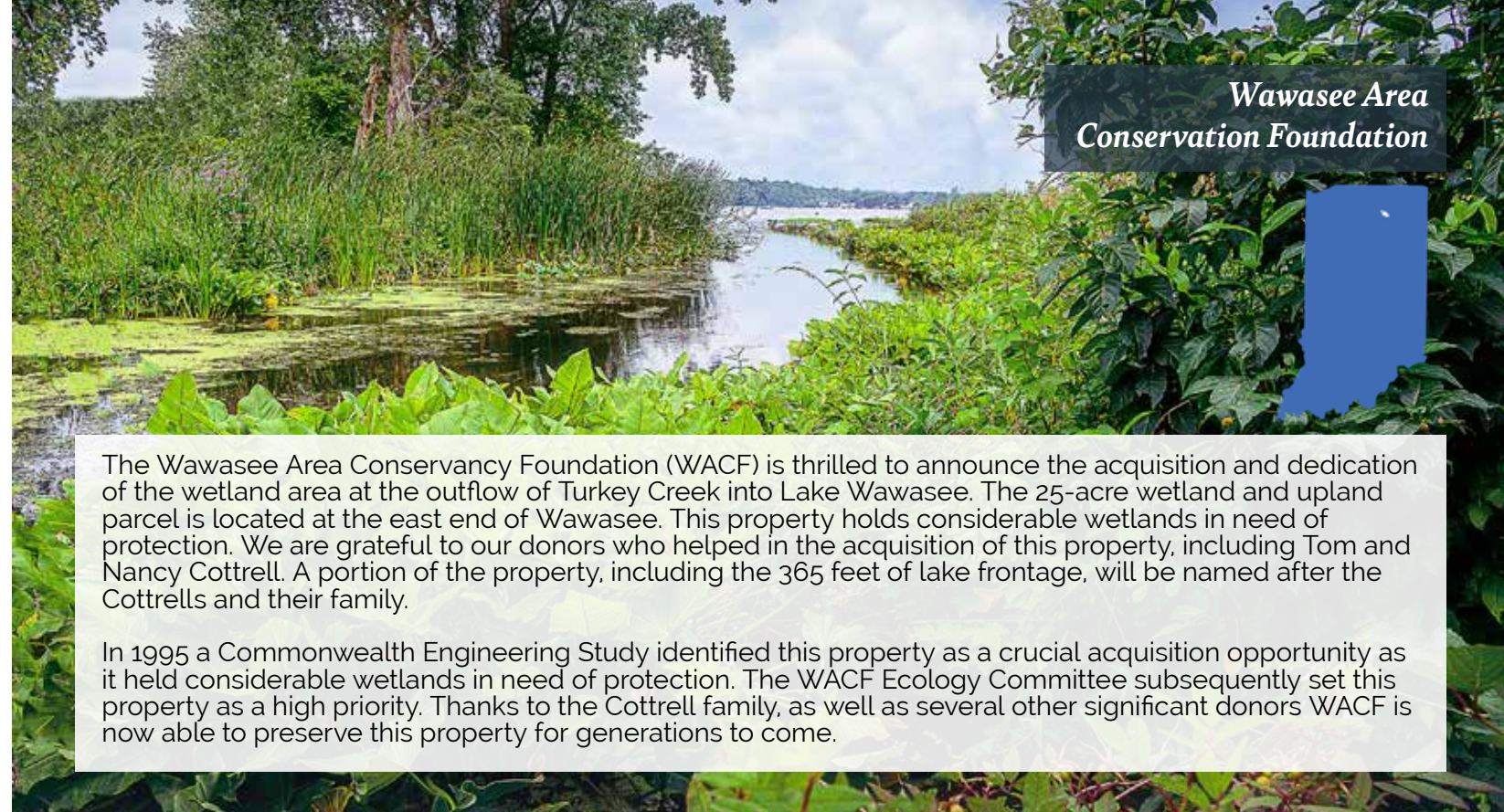
Red-tail Nature Preserve is a testament that wildlife will return with perseverance and patience in restoring a habitat. Details on visiting this preserve and information on other ongoing restoration projects can be found at Red-tail's website www.fortheland.org.



Photo by Mike Mosier

Did you know?

Osprey nests start small, but a pair will return to the same nest for generations, building as they go. Eventually, they can end up with nests 10-13 feet deep and 3-6 feet in diameter.



The Wawasee Area Conservancy Foundation (WACF) is thrilled to announce the acquisition and dedication of the wetland area at the outflow of Turkey Creek into Lake Wawasee. The 25-acre wetland and upland parcel is located at the east end of Wawasee. This property holds considerable wetlands in need of protection. We are grateful to our donors who helped in the acquisition of this property, including Tom and Nancy Cottrell. A portion of the property, including the 365 feet of lake frontage, will be named after the Cottrells and their family.

In 1995 a Commonwealth Engineering Study identified this property as a crucial acquisition opportunity as it held considerable wetlands in need of protection. The WACF Ecology Committee subsequently set this property as a high priority. Thanks to the Cottrell family, as well as several other significant donors WACF is now able to preserve this property for generations to come.

Oak Heritage Conservancy



Restoring sixty feet of Cooper Run Creek at Hilltop Farm Nature Preserve has long been a priority for Oak Heritage Conservancy. The generosity of an anonymous donor finally made it possible. This multiphase project first required the demolition and removal of several concrete and corrugated metal culverts that had failed. The culvert pipes had been in place for years, serving previous farming needs.



Portions of the pulverized concrete were used as base material to create an at-grade ford style crossing to accommodate mowing equipment and utility vehicles.

Following completion of the channel repair and restoration, field stones were hand placed in the creek to create a stepping-stone crossing for hikers. The newly graded slopes were seeded with annual rye grass and mulched with wheat straw to prevent soil erosion into the creek.

Finally, native willow cuttings (stakes) were harvested from Oak Heritage's Hall-Carmer Wetland property in Jennings County. Approximately 40, 1/2" diameter cuttings were planted along the newly restored stream bank. These cuttings should sprout roots in the early spring providing additional stream bank protection and riparian habitat in the future.



Photo by Chris Flook





ACRES Land Trust



In 2022, ACRES' stewardship crew and summer interns managed non-native invasive species on 600 acres and volunteers helped manage an additional 100 acres. This work focused on the removal of species like bush honeysuckle and autumn olive that out-compete and displace native plants by creating dense shade that hinders the growth of plants that need lots of sun.

ACRES also worked to install over 100 acres of native habitat. The majority of this work took place on two properties that previously had land in agricultural production: Heinzerling Family Five Points Nature Preserve and James M. & Patricia D. Barrett Oak Hill Nature Preserve in DeKalb County.

ACRES borrowed a seed drill from DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation District to frost seed a native tallgrass prairie seed mix in late January. The seed drill maximizes seed-to-soil contact for better germination success in the spring. It works by sorting seeds into boxes by size. Agitators keep the seeds from clumping and keep them flowing through 15 tubes where they come out between the cutting wheels and rear wheels that press the soil back together. As the ground freezes and thaws, snow packs the seeds against the soil.

In late spring, firebreak seed mix (drought tolerant grasses that remain relatively short) was broadcast over the perimeter trails and along portions planted to trees. Trees were planted in the early summer. Both Heinzerling and Barrett Oak Hill preserves are located in the Cedar Creek Corridor, where ACRES protects over 1,000 acres and our conservation partners protect an additional 500 acres. As these new plantings mature, they will support the biodiversity of the Corridor and provide habitat for native wildlife, including rare, threatened and endangered species.



Left: Stewardship Assistant Jenna Bair snapped this photo of a state-endangered Blanding's turtle laying eggs in the Cedar Creek Corridor.

Right: Frost seeding a native tallgrass prairie seed mix in late January.



Blue Heron Ministries

Historically, the 1,100-acre State-owned property known as Cedar Swamp Wetland Conservation Area (WCA) was the hunting grounds of the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi People. A dispersal summer camp of one of the clans existed nearby at what is now Fremont, IN (formerly known as Willow Prairie). The landscape of the immediate area included prairie, wetlands of various types, oak savanna, and oak woodland, and mixed deciduous forest.

According to historic anecdotal reports by early settlers:

“The land was much of it oak openings, the trees were some distance apart and the fire ran through them every year and kept down the young trees so that one could see a long ways...”

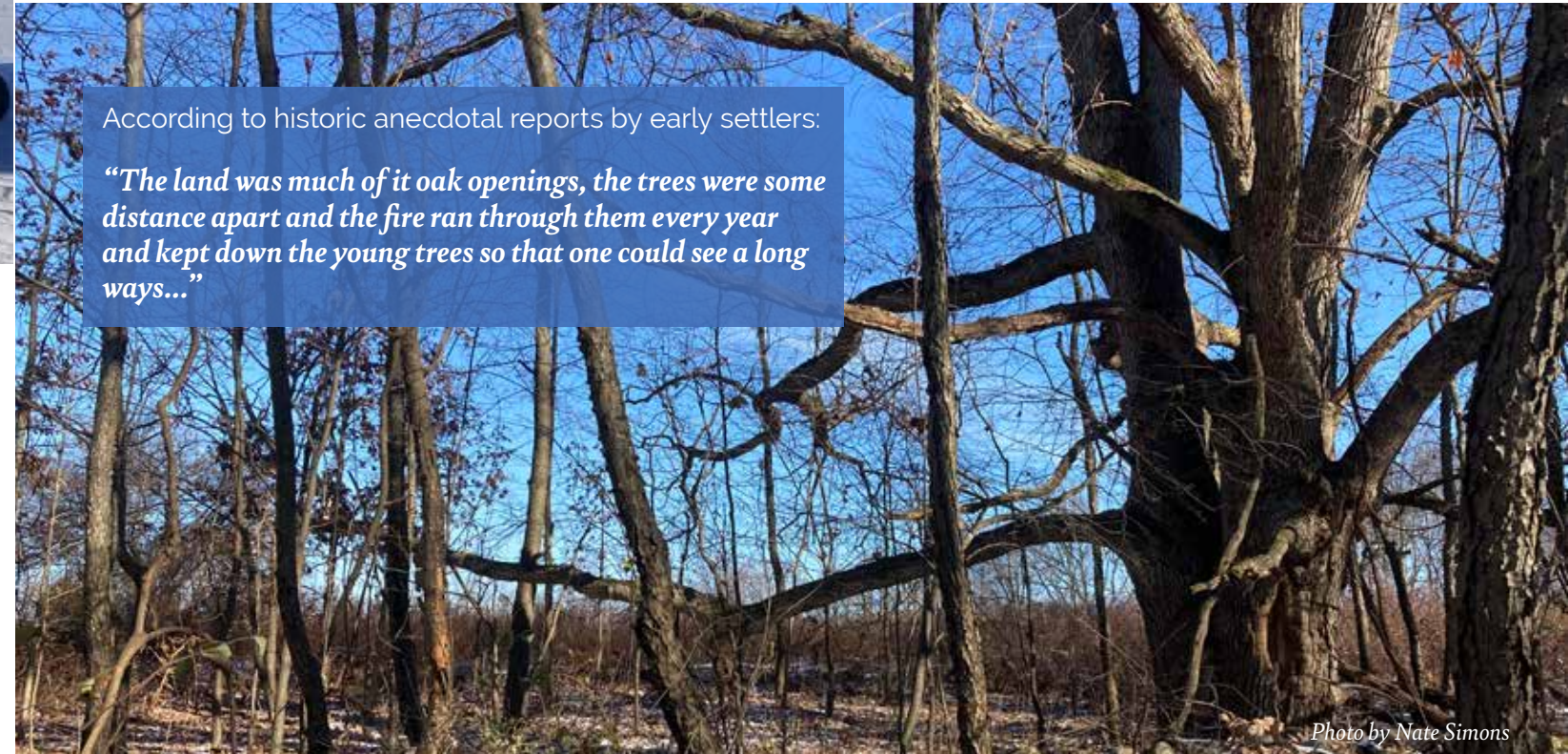


Photo by Nate Simons

When Indiana acquired the land in 1992, the 640-acre wetland complex had been drained and the surrounding uplands were in agricultural production. Under the care of Pigeon River Fish & Wildlife Area, the property opened for public hunting. Water was returned to the marsh and the uplands were divided into small management units. Of the 443 acres of upland, about 386 acres were planted in alternating strips of prairie and annual food plots. Over time, invasive non-native brush and trees compromised the integrity of the prairie fields.

In 2022, property manager Savanna Vaughn saw the opportunity to change the paradigm at Cedar Swamp WCA from “farming for wildlife” to “restoration of native landscapes for wildlife.” A partnership was forged and funds were raised to renovate the existing prairie plantings and to convert agricultural fields to prairie, thereby creating one 357-acre prairie. Partners will highlight the area's historic prairie-oak continuum ecosystem by protecting the small remnant patches of native prairie and oak savanna, removing invasive brush and unwanted trees from fencerows and existing prairie plantings, and planting old fields with diverse, location-specific prairie seed mixes.

Work began in late summer. Pigeon River and Blue Heron Ministries crew prepared 110 acres of fallow fields. Blue Heron Ministries conducted fall prescribed fires on 202 acres of remnant and planted prairie.

When completed, this exciting project will serve as a model for natural area restoration and management in Indiana. And with the planned and reclaimed use of fire on the land, Cedar Swamp WCA will once again thrive for the benefit of wildlife and the enjoyment of people. **Cedar Swamp Prairie is Coming Alive!**



Photo by John Brittenham



Fall Creek Gorge, colloquially known as "The Potholes," is one of Warren County's premiere sites of scenic inspiration and ecological importance. Over millennia, Big Pine Creek carved its sandstone bedrock foundation into a steep winding canyon with a series of deep kettle holes. For decades, people have visited this local treasure to take in the sights and escape the summer heat.

The property was at risk of being flooded by a reservoir project on the creek. A grassroots opposition effort resulted in the dam project being abandoned. The Nature Conservancy protected the property in 1973, and Fall Creek Gorge remained open to the public.



Photo by Chad Phelps

Niches Land Trust



NICHES Land Trust protects 484 acres in the Big Pine Creek Valley and has a strategic vision to increase connectivity in the Corridor. Eventually, ownership of the Fall Creek Gorge section was transferred to NICHES from The Nature Conservancy for better long-term management. In 2022, a highly engaged community of volunteers, neighbors, and partners organized around habitat and public access improvements on the preserve.

Collaborating with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and a neighboring landowner, 40 acres of invasive shrubs were removed from the preserve and adjacent 100-acre private property. These partnerships allowed NICHES staff to focus on restoration and the first prescribed fire over 43 acres of the preserve, while strengthening relationships with neighbors and engaging the community in reshaping the public's relationship to this landmark.



Photo by Chad Phelps

Fall Creek Gorge closed in 2020 due to overuse resulting in extreme erosion and vandalism. With a goal of eventually reopening this preserve to the public, NICHES gathered an informal group called 'The Friends of Fall Creek Gorge' (FOFCG) consisting of neighbors, community leaders, partners, and volunteers. Over the next 5 months, the FOFCG and representatives from the Warren County Community Foundation met for 7 trail building workdays. In 2023, the group will help install a new parking lot with funding through the Warren County Community Foundation. This past November, 13 local hunters helped to complete a deer cull on the preserve.

NICHES is honored to help carry on the rich conservation legacy of Fall Creek Gorge and hopes to reopen this iconic Indiana preserve to the public in the summer of 2023.



Photo by Sam Cody

Engaging and Strengthening Communities

Shirley Heinze Land Trust



Over the past 5 years, Shirley Heinze Land Trust has established an innovative agricultural land program to provide support and resources for farmland owners and operators across northwestern Indiana. The organization is partnering with the Porter County Soil and Water Conservation District, Porter/Lake County Farm Services Agency, Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Northwest Indiana Food Council, and several farmers and landowners to conduct outreach and co-host events that highlight conservation practices and promote available resources.



In 2022, Shirley Heinze engaged over 250 farmers and landowners with resources for soil health and conservation practices. The organization cohosted workshops and field days, presented at local events, created relevant blog and social media posts, and shared resources throughout northwestern Indiana. A goal of this program is to connect with farmers, landowners, and partner organizations within their geography to help them explore conservation and legacy planning options and provide technical assistance to support shared land management goals. This initiative is an important opportunity for Indiana's conservation community to develop increased awareness for agricultural land protection.



Did you know?

Through the USDA Conservation Reserve Program, Indiana landowners planted over 73,000 trees last year. This is the country's largest private-land conservation program.

The program allows land trusts to enroll acreage into the CRP to fund stewardship programs and restore land. Shirley Heinze currently has about 164 acres enrolled, and has planted 60,000 trees as part of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.



Indiana Karst Conservancy



**How can we encourage our state-wide members to be active patrons?
How do we attract and retain new supporters?**

As Indiana's only land trust focusing exclusively on karst and caves, our board wondered how to answer those questions. Posting quality content on Facebook helped us attract new folks and renew the energy of others.

Could we take that virtual momentum and make it tangible?

Through a membership questionnaire and board goal session, we decided to host field days to invite our members, mostly cavers, to become familiar with the surface of our preserves while also engaging new or prospective supporters. In the 36 fruitful years of our existence, we hosted many volunteer workdays. Our outreach, however, had not focused on our preserves. It was time to change that through our new quarterly field events.

In 2022 we traveled to four of our seven preserves, encouraging active use and appreciation of the land we own and inspiring volunteerism as well as monetary support. In April a tour of our Orangeville Rise Nature Preserve featured two of Indiana's brightest hydrogeology experts. In June, we partnered with the Division of Nature Preserves to host a karst features and ecology tour at Buddha Karst Nature Preserve. In October, a board member who is also a bat biologist led a bat habitat hike at Wayne Cave Preserve. And finally in November we held a walking tour of Robinson Ladder Cave Preserve, showing off the unique features of our southernmost preserve. Each new event has attracted people of all ages, and our Facebook followers enjoy following along. We have gained new members, received new support from participants, and attracted new volunteers.



Little River Wetlands Project



Every year, Little River Wetlands Project provides free programs such as educational hikes, stewardship programs, and a large Earth Day celebration. This year, staff and volunteers provided nearly 250 programs and welcomed over 5,800 visitors.



LRWP has strong community partnerships in the Fort Wayne community. For example, the Seed to Marsh program grew 1,500 native plants with help from many schools groups. One third of those were used in restoration projects, and two thirds were distributed to the wider community. In 2022, the Seed to Marsh program directly impacted over 7,000 people.

Most excitingly, this past year at the annual Earth Day celebration, LRWP debuted a new floating trail, making the organization's most popular preserve more accessible for visitors. Visitors with mobility challenges can now immerse themselves, almost quite literally, into LRWP-protected wetlands.

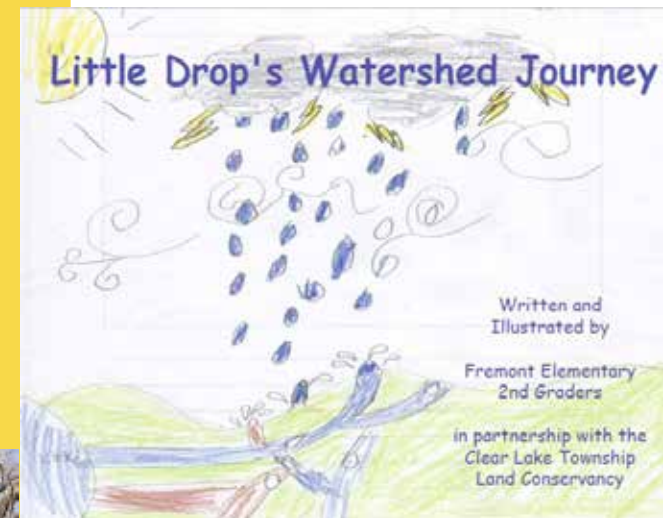


Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy



Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy collaborated with the 2nd grade class from Fremont Elementary School to author and illustrate a children's book.

Over three classroom visits, lessons focused on "What is a watershed?" and how humans positively and negatively affect watershed health. Students acted out the process of waterdrops traveling through a watershed in a life-sized watershed maze. In the final visit, the 2nd graders used their knowledge of and excitement for their local watershed to create their story.



In a collaborative writing process, the students authored and illustrated the experiences that "Little Drop" encountered as he traveled through the watershed and into Lake Michigan.

"It was enjoyable to see how individual students gravitated towards the parts of the watershed most familiar to them. It made the writing and drawing process very personal for the students."

The published book, *Little Drop's Watershed Journey*, now lives in the homes of 78 students, their 4 classrooms, the Fremont Elementary Library, and the Fremont Public Library. In addition, the Conservancy uses it in their continued educational programming.

The impact on these students was clear as they shared and celebrated the publishing of the book in a final celebratory visit. Students were excited to hear the story and see the pictures of the book they helped create. When the books were handed out to each student, they had time to look and read through the book individually or with each other. The hum of excitement was fantastic!



Photo by Allan Claybon



On a brisk October morning, people from all across the state woke up, grabbed their binoculars, and set out for a day of birding to participate in October Big Day, a global community science event. On this annual occasion, birders everywhere observe birds in their backyards, neighborhoods, or nearby natural areas to tally as many species as they can find in one 24-hour period.

ILPA was thrilled to partner with Indiana Audubon to organize expert-led birding walks at 14 nature preserves protected by member land trusts. Over 160 participants registered to join these beginner-friendly hikes. By the end of the day, they had counted 97 species of birds, including 10 species of migrating neotropical warblers.

Every group saw at least one American Robin, and all but one saw at least one American Goldfinch. For those of you seasoned bird watchers, that's probably not a surprise. Each site featured different habitat, so places like Eagle Marsh in Fort Wayne and Oxbow Nature Conservancy in Lawrenceburg had more luck with waterfowl and shorebirds. We were proud of our participants across the state for their efforts, as 18 species (nearly 20% of all birds seen!) were only found at a single site. It's safe to say that our combined, statewide effort was truly worth the early morning alarms and cool fall temperatures!



Plan your own birding walk or nature adventure by downloading a PDF copy of ILPA's nature preserve guide at www.protectindianaland.org. We look forward to seeing you at our October Big Day hikes in 2023.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- **Support your local land trust.**
- **Introduce your favorite park, nature preserve, wild place, or scenic landscape to a young person in your life.**
- **Contact your state and local representatives to share what Indiana's land means to you.**



Our work is made possible thanks to the generosity and commitment of our foundation partners, members, corporate partners, and donors. Together, we are making a difference.



HERBERT SIMON
FAMILY FOUNDATION

*Geoff & Josie Fox Family Foundation
(Since 2002)*



NINA MASON PULLIAM
CHARITABLE TRUST
CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

Land Trust Members

ACRES Land Trust
Archaeological Research Institute
Blue Heron Ministries
Central Indiana Land Trust
Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy
George Rogers Clark Land Trust
Indiana Karst Conservancy
LC Nature Park
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Mud Creek Conservancy
NICHES Land Trust
Oak Heritage Conservancy
Ouabache Land Conservancy
Oxbow, Inc.
Red-tail Land Conservancy
Shirley Heinze Land Trust
Sycamore Land Trust
The Nature Conservancy
Wawasee Area Conservancy
Foundation
Wood-Land-Lakes RC&D

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