

THE ACRES  
**QUARTERLY**

Fall 2025 | Vol. 64 - No. 3



**ACRES**  
LANDTRUST

*Wildlife Monitoring with Drones*

*Expanding Asherwood*

*The Making of a Conservationist*

*A Legacy of Conservation – Sam Schwartz*

*Fall Food Sources*

*All About Lichen*

## From the Executive Director

Dear Members,

Like all organizations, ACRES keeps an eye on certain indicators. Here are some of the “dashboard” items we monitor:

**Financial:** Budget vs. actual, cash on hand, endowment value, revenue vs. expenditures.

**Community Engagement:** Number of members, donation trends, volunteer hours, social media engagement and event attendance.

**Land:** Number of acres preserved, number of acres acquired this year, number of acres actively managed this year.

These are important indicators, but all are secondary measurements. Because nature is so dynamic, we cannot track the precise data we crave, so we rely on generalized information from species lists, surveys and models.

Below, I've listed the dashboard items I'd love to share with you if we were able to track them—things that would give you an even greater snapshot of your impact.

- The trillions of lives thriving on ACRES land today. (*The number of insects alone within the forested areas ACRES owns is estimated at 1,919,350,000,000!*)
- The millions of trees purifying air and growing older on ACRES land today, estimated at 2,495,155 trees.
- Number of people positively impacted by ACRES land today, some in life-changing ways.
- Number of gallons of water purified by ACRES wetlands today, *estimated at 1,844,260,000 gallons/day.*
- Number of rare, threatened and endangered species given a fighting chance on ACRES land today.
- Species establishing new populations on ACRES land for the first time today.
- Trends in species diversity, abundance and location.

Together, we have preserved 8,345 acres of land teeming with life. Visit a preserve and add yourself to the life thriving on ACRES land today. While the value will be obvious, it will be hard to measure. Some things are too valuable to assign a measurement to.

Thanks,



Jason Kissel

[jkissel@acreslandtrust.org](mailto:jkissel@acreslandtrust.org)

260-637-2273 ext. 102

Cover: Leaves begin their colorful transition along Cedar Creek at the LaSalle Family Natural Area.



ACRES Land Trust owns and protects natural and working lands, inspiring people to value, appreciate and support these places for the benefit of all—today and forever. Today we protect and steward more than 8,300 acres in northeast Indiana and portions of southern Michigan and northwest Ohio. In addition to helping care for and restore our local land, your support also offers trail systems where you and others can explore thriving natural places from dawn to dusk, at no charge. Thank you!

1802 Chapman Road, PO Box 665 | Huntertown, IN 46748-0665  
260-637-ACRE (2273) | email: [acres@acreslandtrust.org](mailto:acres@acreslandtrust.org)

[acreslandtrust.org](http://acreslandtrust.org)



WELCOME

# 59newmembers!

Jessica Bardon  
from Ray McIntosh

Katie Bell

Talitha Benner  
from Michael Benner

Sonya & Gene Best

Jan Blair & William Junk

Dennis Bobilya

Jill C. Boschini

Renate Brenneke

Courtney & James Burkhart

Dorla & Paul Clements

Abigail Clough & John  
Boulton

Sam Cook

Earth Adventures Unlimited

Kristen Evrard

Ref Fransen & Vonda Litwiller

Marilyn Gerke & Matt Gerke

Kimberly Glick

Mark & Karin Gose

Adrienne Grimm

Brandon Handshoe

Denise & Robert Hayes

Scott & Patty Heller

Tisha & Todd Holsten

Mark & Laura Hursey

Indiana Millwright Services

Tom & Diane Keefer

Christopher & Madeline

Kindlesparger

Scott & Pam Kipfer  
from Jenna Justice & Taylor  
Kinley

Susan Knowles

Jon Kolhoff

Jim Lake

Thomas Linevitch & Sarah  
Bertekap

Derek Long

Gary Martin

Bruce McAfee

David & Elizabeth Meyers

Ryan Miller

Mississinewa Audubon Club

Ann Muldoon

from Chris Pranger

Kenneth Ng

Sean O'Leary & Danielle  
Doepke

Valerie O'Brien

Judy Peelle

Dante Ramos

John & Kate Ranshaw

Connie & Charles Ridgway

Christina Schnitz  
from Joanna Stebing

Anthony Searfoss & Sheerah  
Dawn Harvey

Whitney Stipp

Sundance Tennant

Robert & Rachael Veenstra

Paula & Charles Voltz

Debra Waldick

Jessica & Cole Watkins

Alan Wilson

JoAnn Woodward

Isaac & Claire Wyss

Rachel & Duane Yoder

Kevin & Loretta Zizelman

## In Honor of

Janet Kauffman  
from Nick Borland & Lyn Munno,  
Ethan & Jay

Ken Klotz  
from Marilyn Klotz & Carl Johnson

Dana Davis  
from Heather Davis

## In Memory of

Brian Becker from Joe & Suzanne Milledge  
Evelyn & Eric Beyer from Sandra Killila  
Tom Bland from Alan & Joann Butt, Maria & Troy  
Estes, Ella Harmeyer, Janet & Mike Borst, Mick  
& Mary Mehlon, Keith Gehring, Sue Siefert,  
Jamie Strauss

Chad Crimmins from Phyllis Brockmyer,  
Margo Dubach, Joan Garman  
Cecy Dunning from Melissa Dunning &  
Jim Hewitt

Bob Farling from Tyler Farling & Heather Foster  
Kate Ferguson from Erin Hiatt, Angie & Dan  
O'Neill

Betty Hill from the Claxton Family, Kaydean &  
Kerry Geist, Dick Rapp, Jr. & Ruth Rapp

John Johnson from Dan & Laura Robinson,  
Paula & Charles Voltz

John Peterson from C Austin Construction, LLC,  
Joan Garman, Geralynn Vonderhaar &  
Carol Ort

Dahlia Siders from Phillip & Peggy Siders  
Nick Wilhelm from Louise A. Larsen

Amy Fry-Miller from Anonymous, Darcy & Jeff  
Armstrong, Helen Frost Thompson & Chad  
Thompson, Paul & Kathy Fry-Miller, Heidi Gish,  
The Steven & Lila Hammer Fund, Bill & Evelyn  
Kilgore, Kimberly Koczan & Brian Flory, Jessica  
Kreider, Bonnie Dee Merritt, David & Teresa  
Migliorini, Kendall & Becky Pitts, Beacon  
Heights Preschool, Michelle Roudebush, Jan  
& Steve Sarratore, Tim & Katrina Shoemaker,  
Rose Wenrich, Rachel & Duane Yoder



## *Wildlife Monitoring with Drones*

Aircraft have long been used to monitor wildlife populations within the expansive natural areas of the western United States. Here at home, drones are used in a very similar way.

This past winter, ACRES and the Indiana DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife teamed up to estimate deer abundance within two of ACRES priority areas: Marsh Lake (Steuben County) and Cedar Creek (Allen County).

Much like in the West, these flights are scheduled during winter or early spring, when visibility is not obstructed by foliage and ungulates tend to be more concentrated. Over just a few hours, Carsten White, DNR Research Deer Biologist, could fly several hundred acres with the drone and capture a few thousand pictures. These flights occurred at night because the drone was outfitted with high-resolution thermal imagery.

“These flights allow us to survey a property in a single night with roughly five or six hours of employee time,” said White. “This is a minimal amount compared to the roughly two full work days’ worth of time spent setting out the necessary number of cameras.”

After the data was collected, the real work began: sorting through thousands of still photos to determine if deer and turkeys were present. “Determining if what you are looking at is a deer or a turkey versus a tree stump or a rock certainly takes some practice,” said ACRES Stewardship Director Evan Hill.

White explained the broader purpose: “Our overall goal for this project is to eventually have a consistent method to estimate deer density statewide at a very fine scale on a 1–3 year cycle. Utilizing relationships with land trusts like ACRES allows us to contribute more to our dataset and also assist land trust staff in managing these properties.”

Having an accurate population estimate is extremely helpful when making stewardship decisions, including when to initiate controlled hunting. Areas with high deer densities can be negatively impacted by overbrowsing and soil compaction, resulting in lower biodiversity and loss of conservative plants vulnerable to these impacts. As stewards of high-quality natural areas, we manage our land as a functioning system; sometimes, that includes managing wildlife populations.

# ACQUISITION



## *Expanding Asherwood*

Because expanding an existing nature preserve brings significant ecological benefits, preserve expansion remains a top priority for ACRES Land Trust.

By increasing the amount of contiguous, undisturbed habitat, we provide more space for wildlife while helping support larger, healthier populations of native plants and animals. Larger, well-connected preserves are more resilient to environmental disturbances, ensuring the protection of natural resources for future generations.

Much of our success in expanding preserves is thanks to the relationships ACRES builds and maintains with our neighbors. For example, when a parcel of land on State Road 124 in Wabash County, Indiana, across the road from Asherwood, was listed for sale, our team reached out to the landowners to discuss the possibility of including their property under ACRES protection. Understanding and supporting our mission, our neighbors chose to remove their real estate listing and offered the land to ACRES at a discounted price.

This new parcel features topography similar to the existing Asherwood preserve, with deep, forested ravines and ridges lined with mature beech and maple trees. This addition also protects more than half a mile of the Asher Branch, a stream running through Asherwood, bringing the total protected stream length to over 1.5 miles between the two properties. During a recent site visit, ACRES Stewardship Director Evan Hill even discovered a native orchid, *Spiranthes ovalis* (also known as Lesser Ladies' Tresses), highlighting the ecological value of this newly protected land.

Thanks to an anonymous donor, the Kent Family Foundation and other donations made at the end of 2024, this land acquisition project is already fully funded!



*Spiranthes ovalis*

# INTERNSHIPS

## INTERNSHIP REFLECTIONS *The Making of a Conservationist*

by Evan Hill

Every summer for the last 20 or so years, ACRES has made a callout for summer stewardship interns. These interns are usually early in their college experience and still trying to decide exactly what they want to do when they enter the workforce. At least that was true for me.

As a former ACRES intern, I can attest to the impact that two short months can have on a college student. Their time here will either solidify their plans to pursue field work as a career, or they may decide they will need to avoid it at all costs. Lugging around a backpack sprayer while bitten by mosquitoes and poked by prickly plants certainly affects people differently. It's not all bad, though!

Interns gain a wide range of experiences and are offered the opportunity to interact with professionals in their area of special interest. Most of their time is spent on invasive species management, but we also sprinkle in many other experiences; planting trees and prairie forbs, equipment operation, trail maintenance and wildlife surveys/monitoring, to name a few. Interns will become knowledgeable about our local flora and fauna and will walk away with tangible skills and knowledge that can be applied and built upon as they finish their academic career and enter the workforce.

But don't just take my word for it. Here's what this year's interns have to say about their summer spent working at ACRES.





“Getting my hands dirty during spraying and planting has made me much more appreciative of quality parks, especially those with quality native plant populations. After working for ACRES, I am sure that I would like to pursue a career in a field similar to this so that I can find meaning and appreciation in my work.”  
– **Stew Blinco**



“I’ve had some great experiences. I’ve learned a lot about using and maintaining various hand and power tools. I use my tree, plant and wildlife identification skills every day, which keeps them sharp. Finally, this internship has been a workout for both my brain and my body. Every day, we work our bodies hard and spend time solving problems. The most important thing I have learned, however, is the human side to conservation. The work we do would not be possible without our strong and supportive community of volunteers and donors. It’s so encouraging to be out in the field and have people come up and tell us how much they appreciate our work. This internship has solidified my desire to continue my path towards a forestry or natural resources career.” – **Jacob Meyers**



“I’ve gained a deeper appreciation for the scope and importance of land conservation. From tackling invasive plant management to participating in general preserve stewardship, I’ve come to understand how hands-on fieldwork directly supports the long-term health and resilience of natural ecosystems. One of the most impactful lessons has been seeing how much thoughtful planning and consistent care go into maintaining a nature preserve. This experience has strengthened my interest in conservation and ecological restoration as a career path. Being in the field every day and learning from professionals who are passionate about their work has inspired me to pursue a future where I can contribute to preserving and protecting natural environments. I’m grateful to be part of this important mission, and I’m excited to carry these lessons forward.” – **Wyatt Pearson**



“I have had a variety of learning experiences. Working under my supervisors, I have had the opportunity to learn about native plants and invasive species in different ecosystems throughout ACRES properties. This has allowed me to understand the importance of a diverse ecosystem and the harm that abundant invasive species can do to the land. These experiences have given me the chance to further my career experience and guide me in a direction towards career development.” – **Cali Godlewski**

*Thanks to funding from the Olive B. Cole Foundation, Robert Dietrick Company and our members, ACRES continues to have the incredible opportunity to invest in the future leaders of conservation in the Midwest.*

## NEXTDOOR TO NATURE: *Neighbor's Impact*

Neighbor John maintains the trails  
at Pehkokia Woods.

Land conservation thrives on collaboration and trust, especially in rural communities where relationships run deep and neighbors look out for one another. At ACRES, we know that protecting special places is only possible when volunteers, donors, landowners and neighbors come together with a shared purpose.

Neighbors, in particular, are invaluable partners in our mission. Their nearness and local knowledge make them the first to notice changes, challenges, or opportunities on and around protected lands. For example, Lisa Vetter and Paul Siefert—artists and founders of The Art Farm near Spencerville, Indiana, embody what it means to be good neighbors. Proximity to McNabb-Walter Nature Preserve was a driving factor in purchasing their rural oasis. Living close to the preserve, Lisa and Paul frequently visit for inspiration and relaxation. Over the years, they've developed a keen understanding of the preserve, regularly sharing observations and alerting us to concerns. Their enthusiasm for ACRES and the preserve inspires others in the community, strengthening support for conservation.

Some neighbors go even further by actively caring for the land. The Laatsch family, who protected their property in 2010 (now Pehkokia Woods outside Huntington, Indiana), is a shining example. John Laatsch still lives next to the preserve, caring for it by maintaining trails, removing invasive species, collecting native seeds for habitat restoration and keeping the preserve free of trash and debris. For John, this stewardship is deeply meaningful. As he shared in a recent interview, "I am thankful that I get to be a small part of protecting a natural area."



Neighbor Lisa enjoying  
McNabb-Walter Nature  
Preserve

Building trust with neighboring landowners is essential, especially when new land is protected. One of our first steps after acquiring a property is reaching out to adjacent landowners with a friendly introduction. We want them to know who we are, invite their involvement and listen to their concerns. This open communication reassures neighbors and lays the groundwork for future collaboration. A prime example of this is the June 2025 expansion of Asherwood, featured on page 5.

Ultimately, land protection is about more than boundaries on a map—it's about nurturing relationships, earning trust and working side by side with the community to ensure that these cherished places endure for generations to come.



## A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION: *Sam Schwartz*

On May 7, 1960, just two months after the birth of a grassroots conservation movement in Northeast Indiana, Sam Schwartz took a quiet but powerful step. He became a member of ACRES Land Trust, then known as Allen County Reserves, marking the beginning of the organization's longest-standing membership.

Sam's commitment to protecting land came at a pivotal time. The newly formed group was reaching out to neighbors with hot pink postcards, aimed at drawing attention to the urgent need for land preservation. Among those who heard the call was Sam, whose support has remained steadfast across six decades.

"Back then, I had no idea how big ACRES would become. I just knew protecting land mattered and wanted to be part of it."

His membership represents the heart of ACRES mission: engaging ordinary people in protecting natural places for future generations. When Sam joined, there were no nature preserves, trailheads, or staff—just a vision shared among passionate people determined to save local landscapes.

"Sam saw something worth protecting before most even knew it was at risk," says Jason Kissel, ACRES Executive Director. "His commitment helped build the foundation we stand on today."

ACRES has grown to protect more than 8,300 acres across the region. Sam's support has been part of that journey, underscoring the impact of consistent stewardship.

In honoring Sam, ACRES celebrates the power of community-driven conservation. His story reminds us that protecting land is not just the work of scientists or policy-makers; it's a legacy built by everyday people who choose to act.

As ACRES approaches new milestones, Sam stands as a living link to its beginnings, a reminder of how individual commitment can change environmental history. His dedication is present in the soil of the preserves he helps protect. His legacy will be a thriving landscape of forests, wetlands and wild spaces—forever protected, thanks to a pink postcard and a choice made in 1960.

Photo spread on pages 10 –11: ACRES member and artist Rebecca Justice-Schaab captures an enchanting autumn day with oil paints. As leaves fall, meandering creeks and steep ravines are revealed.



R. Justicescheid

# FALL HIKES & events

RSVP for events by visiting [acreslandtrust.org/events](https://www.acreslandtrust.org/events) or calling 260-637-2273.

## FOREST BATHING (Member Event)

Experience the practice of forest bathing with certified guide Christy Knecht, who will lead you through mindful exercises designed to deepen your connection with nature. Leave feeling refreshed, grounded and more attuned to the rhythms of the forest around you.



**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2-4:30 pm**

WABASH COUNTY | Hathaway Preserve at Ross Run

Space is limited. **RSVP by September 12.**

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2-4:30 pm**

DEKALB COUNTY | Heinzerling Family Five Points Nature Preserve

Space is limited. **RSVP by October 24.**

## TRAILS, TALES & TASTINGS

Step into the past as ACRES archiving volunteers bring the preserve's past to life with tales of how nature and human history have shaped these special places over the decades. Cap off your journey through time at a nearby winery, where the stories—and conversations—can continue to flow.



**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2-4 pm**

STEBEN COUNTY | Edna W Spurgeon Woodland Reserve

After hike stop at Harry Stuff Brewing Company .

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1-3 pm**

ALLEN COUNTY | Blue Cast Springs

After hike stop at Kekionga Craft Company.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1-3 pm**

HUNTINGTON COUNTY | Tel-Hy

After hike stop at Two-EE's Winery.

## SEED COLLECTION WORKDAYS

Help us harvest native seeds alongside fellow volunteers. The seeds will be used for upcoming restoration projects on ACRES preserves. The workday will begin with a short introduction to plant identification and harvesting techniques; no prior experience necessary. All equipment provided. Long pants and closed-toed shoes recommended.



**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 5-6:30 pm**

DEKALB COUNTY | Heinzerling Family Five Points Nature Preserve

Hosted by ACRES Stewardship Manager Jenna Bair. Space is limited.

**RSVP by September 15.**

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2-3:30 pm**

HUNTINGTON COUNTY | Pehkokia Woods

Hosted by ACRES Stewardship Manager Gavin King. Space is limited.

**RSVP by September 25.**

## POPP OPEN HOUSE (Member Event)

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1-4 pm**

ALLEN COUNTY | Emanuel M. Popp Nature Preserve

12129 Tonkel Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46845

Warm up at the campfire or take a hike through the forested trails at this preserve open only once a year to ACRES members. Light snacks and refreshments provided. Hosted by Popp caretaker Tom Gardner and volunteers Larry Biggerstaff, Louise and Keith Pomeroy, Natasha Manor and Bridgett Hernandez. Space is limited. **RSVP by October 13.**



## RIEGSECKER OPENING CELEBRATION

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 10 am - noon**

ELKHART COUNTY | Jesse & Agnes Riegsecker Natural Area

Event parking across the street from 55605 County Rd 33, Middlebury, IN 46540

Be among the first to explore the first official hike on ACRES brand-new trail system in Elkhart County! Share this landmark moment with other passionate supporters who understand the joy of protecting land forever.



## LICHEN THE VIEW

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1-3 pm**

WABASH COUNTY | Asherwood

ACRES Conservation Manager Joanna Stebing will introduce you to our lichen-covered land. Learn what makes this organism unique and how to identify local varieties. Take a group hike to put your spotting skills to the test! Space is limited. **RSVP by November 6.**

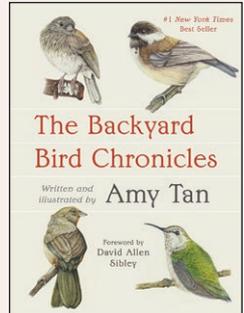


## BOOK DISCUSSION (Member Event)

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2-3:30 pm**

ALLEN COUNTY | ACRES Land Trust Office

Take time this fall to read *The Backyard Bird Chronicles* by Amy Tan. Gather in the office to discuss your thoughts and takeaways from the book. Hosted by volunteers Natasha Manor and Bridgett Hernandez. Space is limited. **RSVP by November 13.**



## COME JOIN US

### BOOTS & BREWS

**3RD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH**

Boots & Brews is an ACRES Land Trust hiking group for nature-loving young adults in their 20s and 30s. Come solo or bring a friend; hike and stay for a brew or two afterwards! See [acreslandtrust.org/series/boots-brews](https://www.acreslandtrust.org/series/boots-brews)



## PARTNERSHIP EVENTS

### GRIEF HIKES WITH STILLWATER HOSPICE

**3RD FRIDAY OF THE MONTH, 10 am**

Stillwater Hospice is partnering with ACRES for another year of Grief Hikes. Join a group hike to process grief in nature. Call **260-435-3261**, email [GriefCenter@stillwater-hospice.org](mailto:GriefCenter@stillwater-hospice.org), visit [stillwater-hospice.org/complementary-grief-programs](https://www.stillwater-hospice.org/complementary-grief-programs), or scan the **QR code** to register for a hike.



## *All About Lichen*

by Joanna Stebing

Lichens can be easily overlooked, but they are one of the more fascinating and widespread organisms that exist all around us. They grow in a wide range of habitats—damp crevices in rock walls, tree bark, city sidewalks, on decaying logs and even the landscaping stones in your front yard.

You're guaranteed to find them almost anywhere on the planet. Lichens have been found to survive even in extreme environments such as simulated Mars-like conditions and in the vacuum and radiation of space. They're tenacious organisms that deserve attention and appreciation!

The global presence of lichens should be enough to create plenty of allure for this diminutive lifeform, but there's another kicker—lichens aren't comprised of just one organism: they're made up of two, or sometimes even three. Lichens are a two-organism partnership between fungus and an algae (or cyanobacteria, sometimes both). In those other cases, it's been discovered that certain lichens do have a third component in the form of a basidiomycete yeast. These organisms have learned to cooperate in unique ways over a long period of biological time, establishing miniature universes of cooperation that in turn provide structure and habitat for bacteria, non-lichen fungi, microscopic worms and even tardigrades (affectionately known as "water bears"). They seem unassuming until you peer through a magnifying lens and start witnessing things at a different level of scale.

The whole of a lichen in its entirety, called the "thallus," occurs in three possible growth forms: crustose, foliose and fruticose, depending on the group they belong to. Some are very leafy in appearance and easy to pick out from a distance, while others are small and hide very well, often appearing as no more than a lighter colored circle on tree bark, or tiny "pebbles" on the surface of rock. If you look up these terms online, you'll find excellent examples of the diversity within each type! They also have a wide variety of fun common names. Mealy boulders? Fool's gold dust? Flakey firedots? Curly biscuits? It's hard not to get a chuckle thumbing through the average list of names for lichens.



*Bagliettoa calciseda*

Recently, surveys were conducted at several ACRES preserves in Huntington and Wabash Counties alongside Gerould Wilhelm of the Conservation Research Institute, in the Chicago area. Our understanding of where different groups and the species within them occur relies on collections made by scientists and many other passionate people, and since lichens are a very understudied group, there were no collections made for either county. To determine whether collections have been made, we look at the Consortium of Lichen Herbaria, which houses records from around the world. In other words, we had work to do!



The ACRES preserves that were surveyed included Pehkokia Woods, Hanging Rock National Natural Landmark, Hathaway Preserve at Ross Run and Kokiwanee. At each property, we found species that had been collected only once before within the state, and several were first-ever collections altogether. Many uncommon in the Midwest rely heavily on high-quality habitat associated with the microclimates created by rock ledges, heavily dissected streamside banks and other spaces that feature topographic variation and limestone exposures.

A few species of interest at Hathaway included scarce taxa such as *Bacidina delicata*, *Coppinsidea croatica*, *Lecanora thysanophora*, *Placynthium nigrum*, *Thelidium zwackhii*, *Verrucaria glaucovirens*, *Verrucaria tecta* and really rare, growing among *Climacium americanum* moss patches, *Scytinium lichenoides*.

At Hanging Rock National Natural Landmark, we collected *Bagliettoa calciseda* and *Verrucaria fayettensis*, which are conservative to base-rich rock.

At Kokiwanee, we collected *Verrucaria dolosa* on a half-buried rock. Gerould had seen this only once before!

At Pehkokia Woods, six species from the *Cladonia* group were all found on a single old piece of long-discarded roof wood, including *Cladonia coniocraea*, *Cladonia fimbriata*, *Cladonia rei* and two species still to be determined. *Coppinsidea croatica* was found on one of the Sugar Maples and was previously uncollected for northeast Indiana.

Some species are truly unique. We noticed some funny little yellow spots growing only on pine sap and decided to take a sample. It wound up being *Zythia resiniae*, a pine sap obligate, which means it can only grow directly on the sap of members of the pine tree family. This is the second time it's been collected for the state!

Some of the species can be identified with a guide and a jeweler's loupe; others require more intensive study with a microscope and even chemical application. Lichens present engagement for everyone, whether you're a beginner or a seasoned botanist.

All in all, lichens are a fun element of our natural areas that usually get overlooked but present a lot of potential for enjoyment and discovery. Grab a hand lens, head out to your favorite local nature preserve and try to find a few for yourself.

**Join Joanna this fall for a lichen workshop! Details on page 13.**



Cladonia growing with moss



Scytinium lichenoides growing in mosses



# Fall Food Sources

By Gillian Martin, District Wildlife Biologist, Indiana  
Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish & Wildlife

Many outdoor enthusiasts know the value of good trail mix. A sweet and salty blend of nuts, seeds and dried fruit gives us energy to finish a long hike or a day spent pulling invasives. For Indiana's wildlife, the seasonal production of nuts, fruits and seeds is crucial to survival. These foods provide essential carbohydrates, fats and proteins to prepare wild animals for migration, hibernation and winter scarcity.

## THE NUTS

The backbone of trail mix begins with nuts (or legumes, but I won't get technical!). Chock-full of healthy fats and protein, nuts are an important source of calories for wildlife. Each fall, acorns, walnuts and hickory nuts drop to the forest floor. These hard-shelled powerhouses are perfect for long-term storage by rodents, jays and woodpeckers. Forgetful squirrels help with seed dispersal, while deer and turkey readily consume these crunchy, calorie-rich foods. These trees also provide food and habitat for webworms and moths, which act as food for birds, reptiles and amphibians.

## THE FRUITS

Climbing vines like wild grape, poison ivy and Virginia creeper can be found along old fencerows or creeping up trees. Shrubs like spicebush, chokeberries and viburnums produce juicy berries for wildlife. The fruits contain energy-boosting sugars and protective antioxidants. Birds like robins, catbirds and waxwings eat these berries to bulk up before migration. Consider yourself lucky to find a ripe bunch before the wildlife does!

## THE SEEDS

Like the sunflower or pumpkin seed component of your favorite trail mix, seeds are small but mighty sources of protein and vitamins for wildlife. Native wildflowers like coneflowers, asters and black-eyed Susans keep their seed heads into winter, offering food for finches, chickadees and doves. Thick sunflower seeds are cracked open by cardinals and grosbeaks. Rodents gather and store these fallen seeds, sometimes becoming a vital food source for wintering raptors.

Native plants provide denser and higher-quality nutrients than non-native plants. Next time you fill your bird feeders, consider adding native species to your backyard buffet as a sustainable way to feed wildlife. The next time you visit an ACRES preserve, see if you can spot these "trail mix" items and marvel at how the ecosystem provides for all residents.



Persimmon tree

## The Forever Business

It's a bold claim to be in the business of preserving land forever. Just the next several hundred years will bring tremendous change. So how does ACRES plan for forever? We build stability and longevity into everything we do.

**We always prioritize the long term over the short term.** We invest in long-term relationships with members, landowners, employees and partners. We plan in centuries, not decades. We operate on nature's timetable, ensuring that our protected lands thrive and provide immense benefits to all life that depends on them, including our own.

**We grow our endowment as we grow properties we care for.** ACRES endowment minimum is set by answering this simple question, "If ACRES never receives another dollar, how big an endowment is needed to continue to own and protect the land we care for forever?" The answer (currently about \$5,000,000) is where we ensure the endowment stays above.

**We utilize and enforce real estate and private property laws.** We ensure encroachment doesn't occur on ACRES properties, add legal protections such as state dedication and conservation easements and enforce any violation on our properties.

**We remain flexible in how we work.** What we do (protecting places) doesn't change, but how we do must change frequently to remain effective.

**We do one thing and do it well.** With a single focus, we don't have to worry about competing priorities or mission drift.

**We build community support for our work.** This is the absolute best way to ensure ACRES longevity — remaining relevant and important to people's lives.

*Each day on our march into forever, ACRES builds stability. Since today is part of forever, we work stability into today's work. Tomorrow we'll do the same. For the past 23,900 days we've been building stability — and we've just begun.*

# New Staff Welcome!



## Susan Graber

Growing up, Susan traversed the lush family woods in Grabill and southern Indiana. Seasons spent navigating the small creek and flipping logs sparked an appreciation and curiosity for the natural world. After graduating with a master's in public administration, Susan worked in the nonprofit field and became passionate about creating authentic, lasting connections with people.

After hearing about ACRES from a friend, Susan began to explore. The idea that small efforts from numerous members could coalesce into a movement protecting land for future generations is what drove Susan to join as a member. As she hiked ACRES trails, Edna W. Spurgeon Woodland Reserve became one of her favorites due to the abundance of spring blooms.

Susan enjoys the world through travel and adventure. As a forever-learner, she values experiencing different cultures and learning about history and art. During her free time, Susan can be found creating abstract art, reading books and relaxing on the water.

Joining the Advancement team at ACRES was a perfect match for Susan's love for mission-centered work and nature. She appreciates the ACRES fundraising method, which values people and relationships more than money.

## Anne Bao

Anne's journey to ACRES began with daily walks. After moving from Miami to Hometown in 2023, she discovered the trails at Bicentennial Woods and the Tom and Jane Dustin Nature Preserve, quickly making them her go-to spots for multiple weekly hikes.

"Being out in nature is incredibly relaxing and rewarding to me," Anne explains. "Each hike clears my mind and brings me peace and contentment. I always find something new—be it a plant or critter."

After nearly a decade in biotechnology, she was determined to pivot her career toward conservation, volunteering with organizations like Miami Waterkeepers and joining ACRES volunteer efforts in fall 2023. When not exploring ACRES preserves, she fills her yard with native plants, tends a vegetable garden, and shares her love of nature with her children.

What excites Anne most about her new role is diving into ACRES rich 65-year history. "I am excited to learn about all of ACRES preserves over the last 65 years, the founders who decided to start ACRES and the people who choose to protect their land instead of giving it up for development," she shares.

Now, as ACRES Archivist, Anne brings her environmental passion to preserving the stories of the organization and landscapes she's grown to love.



# SPECIAL thanks

Bridgett Hernandez, leading a nature journal workshop

Asherwood Celebration volunteers Katia Cook, Chris Fairfield, Tony Fleming, Julie Samek, John Shire, Grady Stout, Kirk Swaidner, Jerry Sweeten

Chris Fairfield, aiding in Grief Hikes

Julie Wall, hosting an art workshop

Wildflower hike learners Tony Fleming, Dave Hicks and Deborah Hustin, Tony Fleming

Spring booth volunteers, Lisa Seiler, Cathay Lassen, Steve Etheridge

Nancy and Joe Conrad, aiding with concert parking

Wild Wonder kids camp volunteers, Alison Seiler, Erin McKeever, April Steury

Invasive weed pull volunteers

Litter cleanup volunteers

Volunteer preserve stewards, caretakers and trail monitors

Office support volunteers

Jeri Kornegay & Lyn Winchell, donating toilet paper, snacks and to-go cups; helping with the New Member Open House

Jim Meyer, donating a backpack sprayer, herbicide

Linette Barry, donating a gently used iPhone for the stewardship team

Robert & Steph Weber, donating an ACRES branded fire pit

Presentations: Center for Nonviolence, Marion Public Library History Center, Mississinewa Audubon Club, Wabash Master Gardeners

Group Outings: The Arc of Wabash County

---

## wish list

Your generous donations of these supplies help keep our overhead costs down to focus on our mission. Thank you!

[acreslandtrust.org/wishlist](http://acreslandtrust.org/wishlist)

---



**DIRECTORS:** Brittany Hall, President; Scott Mattson, Vice President; Jill Noyes, Vice President; Dan Ernst, Secretary; Veronica Mertz, Treasurer; Shannon Connors; Dick Donovan; Alexis Hathaway; Jeri Kornegay; Sara Manning; Jordan Marshall; John Michaels; Melissa Rinehart; Rick Samek; Al Spice; Terry Thornsby; Chris Fairfield, Recording Secretary

**STAFF:** Jason Kissel, Executive Director; Jenna Bair, Regional Stewardship Manager; Anne Bao, Archivist; Heather Barth, Advancement Director; Carman Draves, Land Steward; Susan Graber, Advancement Specialist; Evan Hill, Stewardship Director; Jenna Justice, Administrative Director; Gavin King, Regional Stewardship Manager; Taylere McCoy, Land Steward; Reena Ramos, Outreach Manager; Joanna Stebing, Conservation Manager; Elijah Stewart, Communications Manager

**ACRES Quarterly:** Carol Roberts, Editor | Published by ACRES, Inc., at 1802 Chapman Road, PO Box 665, Hometown, Indiana, for the interest of its members, friends and others similarly dedicated to the preservation of natural areas. ACRES, Inc., is a nonprofit, charitable corporation, incorporated under the laws of Indiana. Contributions are deductible for tax purposes.

**MEMBERSHIP:** Life Member, \$1,000; Corporate Member, \$500; Annual Member, \$20. Dues payable annually.

**ACRES Land Trust**  
1802 Chapman Road  
PO Box 665  
Huntertown, IN 46748

**Whim Wood**  
by Katherine Towers  
into the coppery halls  
*of beech and intricate oak*  
to be close to the trees  
*as they whisper together*  
let fall their leaves,  
*and we die for the winter*



[acreslandtrust.org](http://acreslandtrust.org)