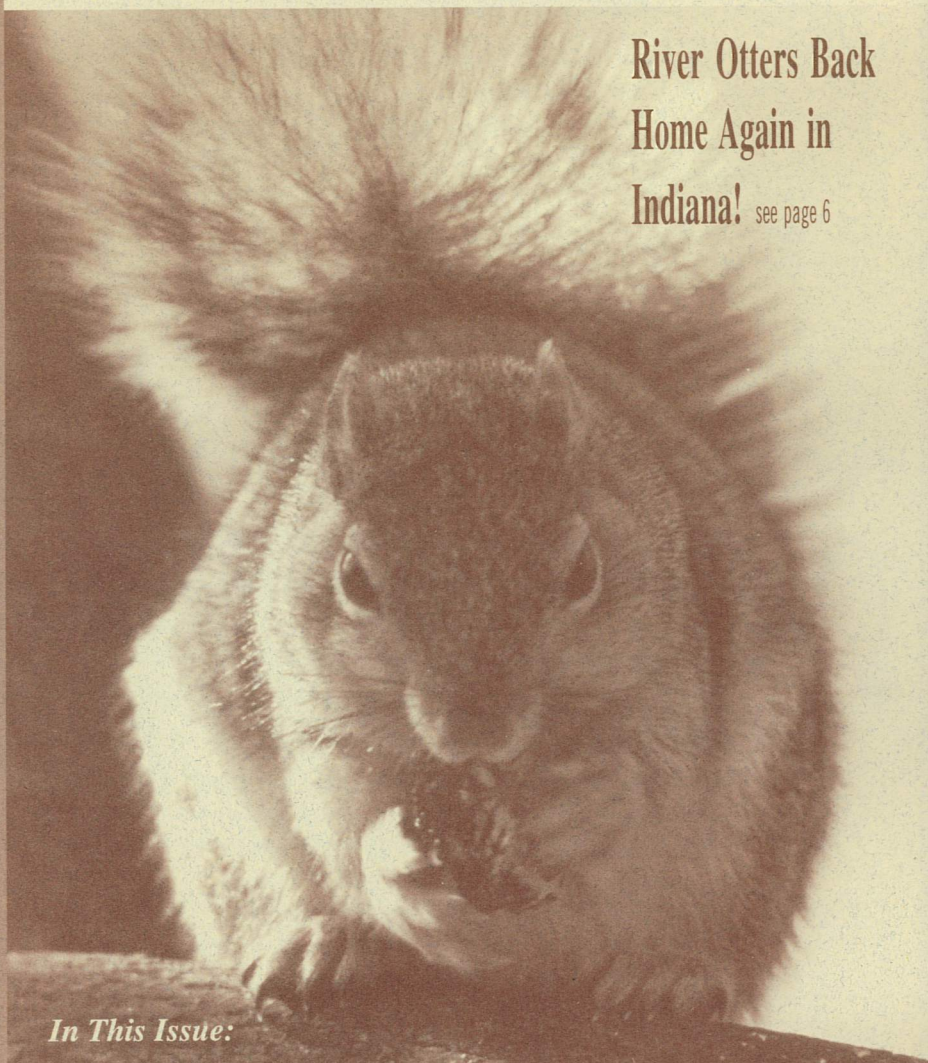


QUARTERLY

Autumn—1996
Volume 35—Number 4

River Otters Back
Home Again in
Indiana! *see page 6*



In This Issue:

- Fall Dinner
- Nominations
- Otters in Indiana
- November Walk
- New Members
- Field Trips & Events
- 1996 Butterfly Count
- Work Day Highlights

ACRES Annual Dinner Meeting

November 8, 1996

Concordia Seminary Dining Hall
6600 North Clinton Street,
Fort Wayne, Indiana

6:30 p.m.
\$12.00 a plate

Phone reservations to:
Mary and Howard Schneider (219-484-3986)
or Ethyle Bloch (219-747-4450)

Reservations must be made and honored
Deadline: November 4, 1996
Decorations by Else Matott

Guest Speaker: Lee Casebere

No Purple Mountains Majesty: Perspectives of an Indiana Naturalist. Lee Casebere is the Assistant Director of the Division of Nature Preserves. With nature photographs from all over the state of Indiana, Casebere will show the quiet, subdued beauty of Indiana landscapes. A well-known nature photographer, Casebere's photographs were recently published in the Orchids of Indiana, published by Indiana Academy of Science.

The dinner will be a sit-down meal.
If unable to dine with us, please plan to join us
at 8:00 p.m., in classroom 201, for the program.
General Public is welcome for the program - no charge!

ACRES Welcomes New Members!

Gary and Barbara Baus
Lyle and Susan Boxell
Angel Cruz
Jo Cultice
Steve Desmonds
Rosendo Diaz and Pamela Martin Diaz
John and Jean Elliott
Leonard J. Helfrich
Megan Hughes
Lawrence and Phyllis Jordan
Lurabelle Jordan
Nancy Kilduski
Ted and Judy Kruspig
Carol Lawton
Wallace and Shirley Martin
Victor C. Moeller, M.D.

Dave and Lynda Nelson
Jeannine Norwalt
Jim and Nancy Nyffeler
Tom and Paula Oldag
Ann Raber
Carl O. Reed
Donald and Susan Richey
Matt Schmidt
Maryln Sellers
Ellsworth and Sharon Smith
Dan Stark
Jean Stevenson
JoElla Waldschmidt

BSA Pack 3002
Ostego Ball Lake Association

In Memory

Benjamin Hyde

BSA Pack 3002
Todd and Linda Davis
Lakeside Middle School
Lyle and Susan Boxell
Betty Jane Keim

George Fruechtenicht

Patricia McNagny

Barry D. Griffith

Paula, Jay, Beth and Grace Lindly

Bill Swan

Bob and Janet Weber
Tom and Jane Dustin
Carolyn McNagny

Ralph Sheets

Marilyn Russell

Nominations Sought

ACRES election of board members will come up this fall. If you would like to nominate someone for the board, please do so by October 22, by contacting the ACRES Office at (219-422-1004). Sam Schwartz, Ben Roush and Jane Dustin are serving on the nominating committee this year.

If you are a current member in good standing, you will receive a return-by-mail ballot by November 20. You must vote by mail by December 10, or you may vote in person on December 11, 1996, between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. at the ACRES Office, 2000 N. Wells St., Fort Wayne, Indiana 46808.

Field Trips & Special Events



Sunday, November 3rd.

Wing Haven Nature Preserve Open House
(1 p.m. to 5 p.m.)

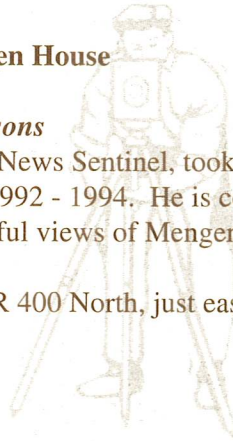
Special Event: Mengerson through the Seasons

Argil Shock, longtime photographer for The News Sentinel, took over 200 slides of the Mengerson Nature Preserve in 1992 - 1994. He is compiling them into a wonderful program on the beautiful views of Mengerson.

When: 2:00 p.m.

Where: Wing Haven, Steuben County, on CR 400 North, just east of SR 127.

Contact: ACRES office at (219) 422-1004.



Friday, November 8th.

ACRES Annual Dinner and Meeting.
See details on page 2.



Sunday, November 10th.

Miami Indians and their tools.

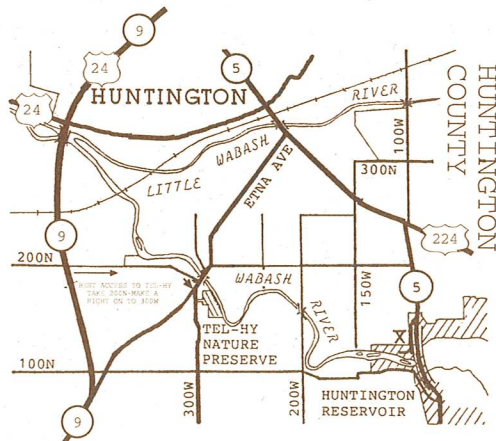
Dr. Larry Wiedman, Director of Environmental Studies at Saint Francis College.

The banks of the Wabash River provided important village locations and lookout sites for the Miami Indians and other tribes. Dr. Wiedman will talk about the rock materials and other natural resources the Indians found when they first arrived in the Northern Indiana area and how it shaped their culture.

When: 2:00 p.m., meet at the Tel-Hy parking area.

Where: Tel-Hy Nature Preserve, Huntington County.

Bring: Family and friends!
Walking shoes and warm clothes.



Field Trips & Special Events



Sunday, December 1st.

Wing Haven Nature Preserve Open House.
(1 p.m. to 5 p.m.)

Special Event: Christmas Sing-A-Long with the Eberhardts

Join Art and Marion Eberhardt in singing Christmas carols around the wood stove at Wing Haven. We'll burn the yule log.

When: 2:00 p.m.

Where: Wing Haven, Steuben County, on CR 400 North, just east of SR 127.

Contact: ACRES office at (219) 422-1004.



Sunday, January 5th.

Wing Haven Nature Preserve Open House
(1 p.m. to 5 p.m.)

Special Event:

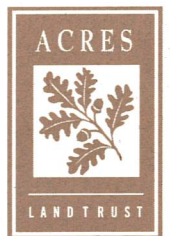
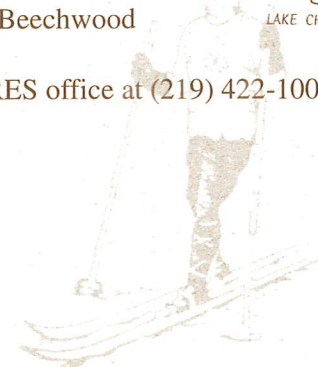
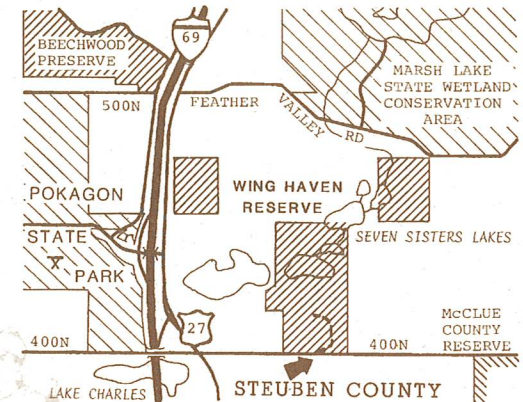
Cross Country Skiing at Beechwood Nature Preserve.

Have fun working off your holiday dinners skiing (or walking if there's no snow) the 1.5 mile trail through Beechwood Preserve.

When: 2:00 p.m.

Where: Meet at Wing Haven to caravan over to Beechwood or meet at the Beechwood parking area.

Contact: ACRES office at (219) 422-1004.



RIVER OTTERS: BACK HOME AGAIN IN INDIANA!

by Carolyn McNagny

Sleek and swift, playful and graceful...these are adjectives that could describe the River Otter. Gone from

Indiana for over 50 years, the River Otter was once common in the streams and rivers of the Hoosier state. The widespread loss of wetland habitat, dredging of waterways, and unregulated trapping for their luxuriant fur caused the otter populations to decline sharply in the mid 1800's. No River Otters have been seen in the state since 1942.

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources began a River Otter reintroduction program in 1995. Scott Johnson, of the IDNR Division of Fish and Wildlife, says that the goal of this program is to reestablish River Otters populations in six major colonies by the year 2003. To accomplish this goal, an estimated 325 otters are expected to be released at various sites around the state during the 1995-1999 period.

According to Scott Johnson, development of a statewide reintroduction program was preceded by a comprehensive feasibility study in 1994 and a pilot release of 25 otters at the 7,800-acre Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge in 1995. Fifteen animals were outfitted with radio transmitters so biologists could track them. Post-release survival, movement patterns, and interactions among those otters were encouraging.



Indiana is obtaining wild-caught river otters from a private supplier in coastal Louisiana, who specializes in the safe capture and transport of otters

for reintroduction programs. The otters quickly adjust to the colder temperatures, although it must be a shock to be sunning on a southern bayou one day and among the ice flows of the Tippecanoe River the next. The natural range for the otters extends well into northern Canada and Alaska and they are well adapted to the cold. They minimize heat loss through body fat deposits and the exceptional insulative and waterproof qualities of their thick, dense fur. Louisiana otters are also being reintroduced into Ohio, Iowa, and Pennsylvania.

River Otters are sociable members of the weasel family. Their sleek shape allows them to hunt fish and the most abundant or slowest-swimming fishes get it! Crayfish, frogs, an occasional turtle and other aquatic animals complete the otter's diet. Otters use natural shelters for dens, like logjams or in a bank beneath overhanging roots. They especially like abandoned beaver lodges to set up home.

Female otters reach sexual maturity at 2 years and mating activity peaks from March through April. The young are born the following spring after a 9-month period of delayed development and a 60-day gestation period. There are usually 2-3 pups and the young stay with the female until just prior to the birth of a new litter. An encouraging sign for the otter release program is that several females released in 1995 gave birth in the spring of 1996.

The otters are seldom seen in the wild, but otter signs are identifiable in all seasons. When traveling on ice or snow, the otters will run, then slide on their bellies a short distance, then run again - leaving a distinctive dot-dash-dot track pattern. Areas of flattened, matted



vegetation on a bank are called landings and are used for rolling and grooming. Otter tracks have 5 toe prints and are about 3 inches wide. The webbing between the toes rarely shows, but the rubber-like tail may leave a drag mark.

Adult otters have few natural enemies, with the greatest threat coming from man. With the otters released last year in the Muscatatuck, road-kills have been the major source of mortality. River otters are wide-ranging and highly mobile. Travel routes generally follow waterways, but they will use overland shortcuts and occasionally move cross-country for long distances. The average life span in the wild is 10-15 years.

Otters are an integral component of healthy aquatic systems. It seems odd to have to justify the importance of an animal that was here long before man. River otters seldom conflict with agricultural or recreational interests. Otters are not burrowing animals and, unlike muskrats, will not damage dikes or levees. Fishermen may become concerned that otters will affect the fish populations, but otters are opportunistic predators and game fish are rarely an important food item.

The otter program is receiving strong public support for people in Indiana. Scott Johnson describes a release along the Tippecanoe River...

Brisk and freezing temperatures did not dampen the spirits of the nearly 400 wildlife enthusiasts who lined the banks of the Tippecanoe River to get a glimpse of otters who were to be released that day. They had traveled far, arrived early, and were waiting patiently with their cameras and video recorders.

In just a few minutes, the first of 25 river otters were going to be released. The crowd cheered as the otters scampered along the thin ice and dived into the swift-flowing water. Other otters, more curious about their new surroundings, wandered along the grassy bank or rolled on their backs in the new-fallen snow. Everyone, including school children, local residents, and

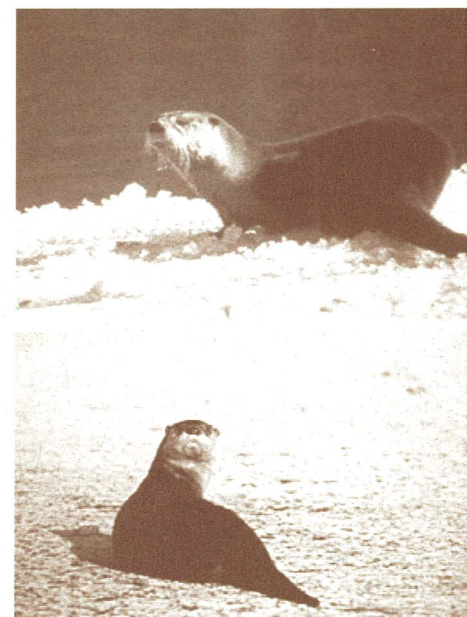
news and television photographers, savored this opportunity to watch a free-ranging river otter at home again in Indiana.

May/June Outdoor Indiana "Tippecanoe and Otters, too" by Scott Johnson.

Thanks to Scott Johnson for the photographs and information. Congratulations to everyone at the IDNR Division of Fish & Wildlife for the River Otter reintroduction program.

River Otter reintroduction in Indiana is financed almost entirely through contributions to the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Fund on the Indiana state income tax form. Look for the eagle on your tax form and donate to the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Fund!

Nongame biologists are planning 1997 river otter releases on the Patoka River and the Elkhart River. ACRES Members will be invited to the releases on the Elkhart River and please check your Winter Quarterly for the date, time and location.





November Walk

by Bob Frantz

Photo by Carolyn McNagny

Not many people walk in the woods any time of the year and, for those who do, certainly November would not be a favorite time. Some enjoy the freshness of spring, some the fullness of summer, some the color of October, a few the frigid beauty of deep winter, but hardly any would bother with November.

We took a walk in the woods on this early November evening and found much to make it a worthwhile experience. The trails were covered with a thick carpet of brown, yellow and occasional red leaves. What a beautiful sight to find this carpet available everywhere—not only on the trails, but all over the entire woodland floor.

The trees have lost most of their leaves, but here and there a hickory still has part of its leaves and many of the oaks still have leaves of varying shades. If you happen to be walking in the evening when the air is clear and crisp and the sun is nearly to the horizon, you will note more color than you had thought possible with the red rays of the setting sun painting everything with a final touch of beauty.

At a time when crops have matured and leaves are brown, it is always a little amazing to see the rich green growth when one kicks aside some of the leaf carpet. The cress is almost a spring green and will remain that way throughout the winter. If you chance to spy it under the snow, you may also find wild strawberry and other plants. Any one knows that even though spring is a long way off by the calendar, it is really beginning right here and now. If you happen to come to a dogwood, you will also notice the buds which have already developed and will become lovely flowers in the spring.

On a deeply wooded hillside we found Christmas ferns which looked particularly healthy, their dark green color contrasting with the dry leaves with which they are partially covered. Anytime this winter, if you know where to look under the snow, you may find these hardy plants and not until spring do they begin to wither to make ready for the new fronds to uncurl and so to start their life cycle once again.

The end of our walk is past the pond which is now at an all time low because

of the extremely dry summer and autumn, but the water is clear and fresh. Since the level is low and more than usual mud bank is exposed, it is easy to observe the tracks of deer and raccoons which have been there ahead of us—perhaps for a drink, or more likely for the raccoons, a tasty frog which has not yet gone into the mud for the winter.

November doesn't have all of the surprises of other seasons, but neither does it have the mosquitoes or deer flies. It does not have blooming flowers, green trees or gaudy leaves, but it does have peace, serenity and the promise of the beauty of winter and yet another spring. It is November.

*If you Stand Very Still..
Thoughts and Experiences from the
Woods*

November 1980

Written by Bob Frantz

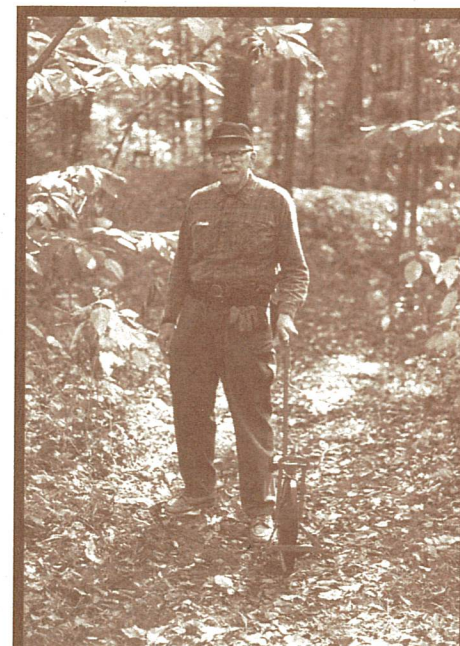
For many years, Bob and Alice Frantz have cared for "Wildwood"—a beautiful natural area of wetlands and woods near Silver Lake.

"The Indiana Banana" or Paw Paw

Few people see the Paw Paw before the raccoon and possums have them for dinner. The Paw Paw trees at Wing Haven had abundant fruit this year. Settlers called the fruit the "Indiana Banana" because, to them, it tasted like a banana.



Photo by Carolyn McNagny



Everitt Padgitt stands by a measuring wheel at Wing Haven. Sean Carroll, John and Rosemary Rouch, Jennifer Hurley, and John and Marcella Ellenwood have been working on measuring trails and writing descriptions at 6 ACRES Nature Preserves. The information will be used in the 101 Best Hikes in Indiana, a book by Alan McPherson.



"If you stand very still in the heart of the wood, you will hear many wonderful things, the snap of a twig and the wind in the trees, and the whirl of invisible wings."

—Patience Strong

1996 BUTTERFLY COUNT

by Don Gorney

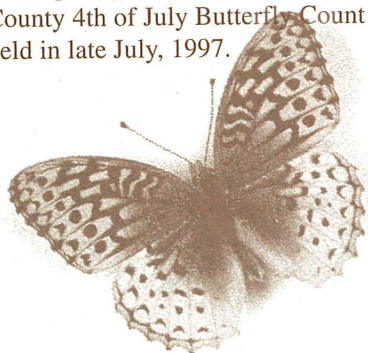
Allen County held its first 4th of July butterfly count on July 27, 1996. The count was only the second for northeast Indiana; with the first being held in Noble County just three weeks prior. Fourth of July butterfly counts have been held nationally since 1974 and are sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) and the Xerces Society. Although there is a six-week window in which to conduct the butterfly count (from mid-June to late July), organizers must pick one day in which to count butterflies within the count circle. A count circle is fifteen miles in diameter.

The Allen County count circle was drawn to incorporate as much of northern Allen County as possible because of the wealth of natural areas, including several ACRES properties. Also on this day, not so coincidentally, was an ACRES butterfly program at Vandolah Nature Preserve. Much earlier in the year I had suggested to Carolyn McNagny that ACRES should consider holding a butterfly walk.

When Carolyn asked if I would lead such a walk, I balked. "Someone with much more knowledge about butterflies should lead the program" I bemoaned. Well, as fate would have it, in the end I was scheduled to lead the butterfly program. With an ACRES butterfly program scheduled for the after noon of

July 27, and the excitement of the Noble County count still buzzing in my head, I decided to organize an Allen County count the same day.

Participants in the count spent an enjoyable day trying to identify the fast moving and elusive butterflies that were flying about. Although nets were used, it was a challenge to snare the many fluttering butterflies. However, the scene of an adult running and gyrating through a field with a net was quite humorous. (All butterflies that were netted during the count were released unharmed immediately after identification.) The final tally was 22 species; a respectable total for a group who knows birds and wildflowers better than butterflies. Species that were present at Vandolah preserve included eastern comma, monarch, eastern tiger swallowtail, eastern tailed-blue, silver-spotted skipper, and pearl crescent. Unfortunately, the most numerous butterfly for count day was the cabbage white, which is an alien species. Stay tuned for information about participating in the second annual Allen County 4th of July Butterfly Count to be held in late July, 1997.



Work Day at Beechwood Nature Preserve

Beechwood Nature Preserve was spiffied up for visitors at the October 5th Work Day! Volunteers worked on removing large rocks and one boulder from the trail, cut back shrubs and trees along the trail, and repaired the boardwalk. Thanks also to Sam Boggs, who has maintained the trail by mowing it several times a summer!

Beth Cance
Craig Williams
Melissa Schmeltz
Sean Hoffer
Vicky Boehm
Tina Wilcox
Ruth and Les Fisher
Greg Bickel
Janel Rogers
Everitt Padgitt
John and Marcella Ellenwood
Jim Haddock
Jeff Raff
Ethel McClelland
Carolyn McNagny

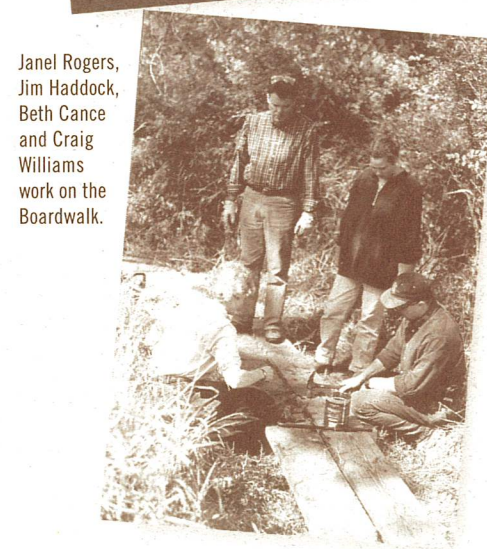
The Vandolah Nature Preserve Work Day was also a success, with volunteers removing wheelbarrow fulls of trash from the old dump and clearing downed trees from the trail. Thank you to all of the Land Management Volunteers and the ACRES Stewards!



Everitt Padgitt, Jeff Raff and Ethel McClelland take a quick break before resuming trail trimming.



Craig Williams and the students from the Tri-Beta Biology Club removed large rocks from the trail.



Janel Rogers, Jim Haddock, Beth Cance and Craig Williams work on the Boardwalk.

The Back Page...

There is a tree out the window here at Vandolah that is ablaze with orange and yellow and gold. When the sun shines through it, it practically illuminates the studio. Nothing can even begin to describe it except glorious. The leaves have fallen onto the pond and the colorful wood ducks are swimming in between the gold leaves... the sun glinting off of the water...that's reflecting the brilliant orange trees on the banks.

Sometimes when I stop from my frenetic schedule long enough to look at the outdoor display, I think ..."it's like, there's a party going on out there, I wish I could join; and when I do go out; there's colored paper strewn all over the woodland floor, and you can kick them up in the air."

It comes every year. It's so repetitive and yet we are never bored with it, like a great book we've already read. It cycles around again and again. Autumn reminds us that with all the change and upheaval we go through in our lives, that some changes are at least welcome, predictable and beautiful.



Change that we enjoy! Now, that's something to be grateful for!

Here's hoping you find time to get out on one of the ACRES sunlit trails and get some wonder done.

Susan Britton, Editor

The ACRES Quarterly welcomes letters, articles, artwork, photos, and anything else of interest to our readers. Send any and all items to Susan Britton, Editor, ACRES Quarterly, 2000 North Wells Street, Fort Wayne, IN 46808. Deadline for Winter issue is December 1, 1996

ACRES Land Trust
2000 North Wells Street
Fort Wayne, IN 46808-2474
Address Correction Requested

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Fort Wayne, IN
Permit No. 954

Directors: Ted Heemstra, President; Robert C. Weber, VP; David Gall, VP; James D. Haddock, VP; David C. VanGilder, Secretary; Mary Anna Entwistle, Treasurer; David P. Deimling, Ben Roush, Arthur Eberhardt, Sam Schwartz, Greg Craghead, Paulette Bremer, James M. Barrett III, Jane Dustin, David J. Miller, Janel A. Rogers, Dennis Schoff, Tony Acosta. Carolyn McNagny, Executive Director. National Advisory Board: Howard Michaud, Alton Lindsey, M. Graham Netting, Richard H. Pough, Durward Allen, Lynton K. Caldwell, Frank Kirschner. ACRES Quarterly is published by ACRES, Inc. at 2000 North Wells Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana for the interest of its members, friends, and others similarly dedicated to the preservation of natural lands in northeast Indiana. ACRES, Inc. is a non-profit corporation, incorporated under the laws of Indiana. Contributions are deductible for tax purposes. Susan Britton, Editor. MEMBERSHIP: Benefactor, \$500.00; Patron, \$100.00; Organization/Club, \$50.00; Share-the-Expense, \$50.00; Family, \$25.00; Individual, \$15.00; Senior Citizen, \$10.00; and Student (through High School), \$10.00. Payable Annually. Membership year is July 1 to June 30.

