

# THE ACRES QUARTERLY

Spring 2016 | Vol. 55 - No. 1



**ACRES**  
LANDTRUST

*Bill Claxton's Renewing Legacy*  
*Protecting Biodiversity*  
*Anticipating Spring Wildflowers*  
*Acorn Society*  
*Our Region's Natural Groove*  
*ADIOS, But Not Goodbye*



## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Scale is a wonderful and inspiring thing.

The “bigness” of ACRES’ scope is often under appreciated. Please look at our tri-state service area depicted below—that’s a big chunk of the Earth we get to influence! It looks different from surrounding areas because ACRES exists. An easy way to test this is to pull up ACRES’ service area on Google Earth, zoom way out, find some green spots, then zoom back in on one. Doing this, you will often discover land that ACRES has preserved.

What we do together makes a difference. It’s evident as you walk through a nature preserve, and it’s evident when you fly over at 30,000 feet. I find it inspiring that ACRES gets to influence how green our service area looks from a plane or satellite. How green do you want it to be?

The “smallness” of ACRES’ work is also inspiring. Any one of our 5,865 acres holds more life and more stories than we can document in decades of research. For the thousands of life forms that conduct their entire life cycle within the confines of that one acre, we have literally saved their world.

While I don’t claim that supporting ACRES will save our planet Earth, I certainly can show that supporting ACRES makes a tangible, positive impact on this place we call home. I love land. I love that together we can preserve portions of it. We can change how a chunk of the Earth will look and function forever. That’s inspiring on any scale.

Sincerely,

 Jason

Jason Kissel  
jkissel@acreslandtrust.org

Cover Photo by Thomas Sprunger: Initially growing wrapped within a single leaf, the delicate bloodroot flower emerges and blooms in mid-April in ACRES country, before its leaf unfolds. The roots of the plant produce a red sap, used as a natural dye by Native Americans. Explore wildflowers in the preserves—see page 8–9 for more.



ACRES Land Trust preserves, protects and manages 97 properties totaling 5,865 acres.

ACRES offers more than 70 miles of trails through natural areas.



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## WELCOME 57newmembers!

Caleb Asbury  
Rita Baird  
Kris Barone  
Jim and Elaine Berning  
Gary Berube, MD  
Dina Bicicchi  
from Arlene Overheu  
David Bobay  
Dominique Bradford  
Douglas Brockway  
Jewell Burdette  
Jim and Karen Bushey  
Jack and Joyce Covell  
Robert Deitering  
Nikki Donathan  
from David Lahman  
Michael Easterday  
Alice Felton  
Eric and Judy Fisher  
Rodney Gruesbeck  
Susan Hardenbrook  
and Steve Blomberg  
Beth Hauenstein  
Diane Hunter  
Kathy Humi-Dove  
from Ted and Tedra Hemingway  
Larry and Karen Jenkins

Tom and Margaret Kownover  
James Kramer  
Steven Krause  
Jodi Leamon and Dustin Flaughter  
Wes and Emily LaRue  
Dave Lennox  
Jennifer and Shaun Loveless  
Cathy Martin  
from Jann Prince  
Alison Matheny  
from David Lahman  
Jeff and Rebecca McCann  
David and Anne Michel  
Sandra Mott  
Chris Nixon  
from Deborah Willig  
Sean Nolan  
Theresa Ransbottom  
Ben and Chelsea Rittenhouse  
Randy Romero  
from Nancy Vendrely  
Billie Rykard  
from Brian Johnson  
Bill Rust  
Andrew Smith  
Kevin Smith  
Thomas Sprunger

Brett and Kristi Stopher  
from Steven and Nancy Stopher  
Denise Strunk and Dave Libbing  
Michael Tinkel  
Douglas and Jane Vendrely  
Bill Weber  
Christine West and Dean Dwyer  
Rebecca Wolfe  
Jack Woodruff  
Nancy Wright

### life members

Miranda Davies  
Dave and Bev Fiantt

### ACRES MEMBERS PROTECT LAND! THANK YOU!

*Annual membership starts at \$25. Become an ACRES member today and belong to our growing legacy.*

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

## memorials

John Dustin  
from Marion Koenig

Harriet Highland  
from Marilyn Smith

Frank Kirschner  
from Libbie and Joe Dedman, Bill Henning,  
Malinda Henning, Glenna Knight

Ruth Kern  
from Noel and Patricia Holmgren, William Kern  
and Shirley Needham

Pat McNaghy  
from Dale and Marjorie Pence

JoAnn Martin  
from Ferne Baldwin, David Lahman, Wilson  
and Mary Lutz, Dan and Angie O’Neill,  
Devonne Rogers and Brian Wagner

Marcella Ellenwood  
from Joe and Janet Corah, Clayton Ellenwood,  
Fred and Mary Anna Feitler, Jim Frances,  
Harold and Cheryl Hahr, Doug and Sue Jones,  
Nancy Krauskopf, Janet Lee, Kevin Leech and  
Deb Hoehn, Nancy Malis, Angie O’Neill, Ron  
Patton, Keith and Louise Pomeroy, Sam and  
Jan Schwartz, Nancy Scott, James and Judith  
Tallman, Margaret Tallman, Pat Trainer

Eugene Winicker  
from Laura Dauscher

## tributes

DeAnna and Phil Garmire  
from Michelle Briggs Wedaman in honor  
of their wedding  
Pauline Lane  
from Susan Yoshimura

Dan and Angie O’Neill  
from Alice Kopfer

# PROTECTING LAND

*"Trees will be properly harvested at maturity and will regenerate, ensuring a continual forest remains."*



Bill Claxton and his great grandson Ian share a ride through Claxton Woods.

## Claxton Woods: Bill Claxton's Renewing Legacy

By Jeri Kornegay

**Breathe deeply here. The trees are putting out ample sweet oxygen, thanks, in part, to Bill Claxton's family.**

About a mile north of Spencerville are 93 acres of nurtured wooded paradise: row upon row of trees, thoughtfully planted. Pecan. Catalpa. Basswood. English walnut. Five or six species of oak. Sugar and silver maple, white and red pine. Cedar, of course. Persimmon, too. More than 43,000 thousand trees grow in Claxton Woods.

Bill Claxton began purchasing parcels of the land a few years before his 1991 retirement because he "wanted to have a plantation of trees." Because he, his wife Shirley, and their children want to ensure the land remains forested through the lives of his grandchildren and beyond, they donated Claxton Woods to ACRES.

Bill Claxton's dream is for ACRES to harvest the lumber when it's ready, in perhaps 40 years. So ACRES has placed the trees into its Protected Lands, promising the Claxtons and their six children, 17 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren that ACRES will preserve the property from development and transfer. "ACRES' name will be on the deed forever," said Jason Kissel.

With a degree in forestry, Kissel also has a personal interest in shepherding ACRES' promise to the Claxtons: "Today, Claxton Woods is home to relatively same-aged trees. Over time, with the careful, selective harvesting Bill intends, this woods will



The Claxton Family gathered this fall in Claxton Woods to honor Bill's legacy and generous gift (L to R): Jim Claxton, Chris Claxton, Jamie Claxton, Shirley Claxton, Bill Claxton, Martha (Claxton) Coffing, Laura (Claxton) Troyer, James Claxton, Joy Claxton

diversify. Trees will be properly harvested at maturity and will regenerate, ensuring a continual forest remains. This means that Bill's gift will create income from this harvesting, and will be reinvested by ACRES into protecting lands and preserving natural areas."

In the beginning, Bill's dream was a field where he planted and trimmed trees, ensuring straight-up growth. An area of dead ash trees, victims of the Emerald Ash Borer, remains where the trees fell, rotting into soil to nurture the survivors. Forestry and conservation experts mentored Bill's decisions.

Claxton Woods is home to wild walkers: deer, coon, wild turkey, a white cat. And Bill keeps his contract with the birds: "I'll feed you all winter, so long as you agree to eat the bugs in summer."

In 2013, Bill Claxton received DeKalb County's Environmental Award from the Soil and Water Conservation District.

"Respect for Bill Claxton's legacy feels right," said grandson James Claxton. "Grandpa's religious. He believes we are to be good stewards of Earth. It's our job to pick up trash. Plant trees. Respect land. It gives him peace knowing he's done his part."

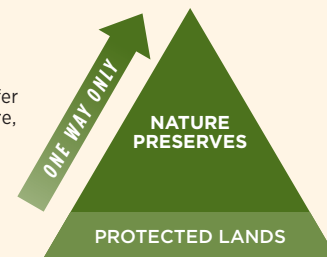
"It's all because of him," Jim Claxton said of his father. "He's taken time to come up and prune, winter after winter. Now it's completed. Time to let it go."

Well, not exactly. "Claxton Woods is not going away," said Kissel. "It will be here for more Claxtons to stand among their great-great grandfather's tree legacy and breathe deeply with satisfaction."

*Members: Join us for a rare opportunity to walk with Bill in Claxton Woods on Sunday, May 15th. Claxton Woods is closed to the public—don't miss your chance to explore and learn about this tree farm from Bill himself. See page 13 for details.*

### ACRES PROTECTS TWO TYPES OF PROPERTIES:

1. Nature Preserves are created to permanently preserve and protect significant natural areas by guaranteeing never to develop or transfer them. Nature Preserves often contain unique natural features or rare, threatened or endangered plants and animals.
2. Protected Lands receive the same protection as Nature Preserves: ACRES' name will always be on the deed. Properties classified as "protected lands" allow for alternate use as directed by the donor's intent. Typical protected land uses include agriculture and managed forests.



## MANAGING LAND



## PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY:

### Managing Invasive Species By Angela Mapes Turner

While some people can walk through the woods, take in the lush, green views, and be at peace, Casey Jones, ACRES' director of land management, isn't one of them. His trained eye goes straight to the clusters of non-native invasive species beginning to dominate certain areas.

Jones says, "Biodiversity that should be there, and has potential to be there, is lost when a non-native species takes a foothold."

Now in his third year on the job, Jones has been tasked with (among other things) monitoring and improving the health of the preserves. For ACRES, that means figuring a way to manage invasive species within 5,865 acres of property. If this sounds overwhelming, that's because it is.

Early in his tenure, Jones made land management a goal. "Our success with acquisition has made it hard to keep up with maintaining the properties," he said.

While work was done, efforts had been spread thin across the preserves. With a background in restoration ecology and native habitat restoration, Jones saw that spreading the efforts evenly wasn't making a big enough dent.

So ACRES shifted focus to a new strategy: knocking out infestations—or setting them back—by identifying a few problem areas and going after them aggressively.

Jones and ACRES Land Management committee prioritized Bicentennial Woods in Allen County, Seven Pillars Nature Preserve in Miami County, and the Walter H. and E. Marie Myers Nature Preserve on Flowers Creek, a newer Miami County acquisition (currently closed to the public).

Of particular concern to Jones was Bicentennial Woods' infestation of bush honeysuckle, a shrubby plant producing red berries. Jones worried that if nothing was done right away, the honeysuckle might soon prove too invasive to be able to recover the property's biodiversity.

Bicentennial also was a logical choice because the interns reporting to ACRES' main office could work nearby, instead of traveling across the region.

Seven Pillars and Flowers Creek had infestations of Tree of Heaven, a medium-sized and particularly tenacious flowering tree. The infestation at Seven Pillars was spotty, but at Flowers Creek, it covered about 10 acres. Jones said the good news was, since the outbreak was fairly localized,

*"Biodiversity that should be there, and has potential to be there, is lost when a non-native species takes a foothold."*

"We felt if we controlled it now, we could manage it across the whole site."

For help in managing invasive species on those properties, ACRES looked to cost-sharing programs, partnering with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service in a three-year program. Jones said, "As the first year of work wraps up, ACRES has a good idea of what to tackle in 2016."

ACRES also entered into a Natural Resources Conservation Service program to manage four connected properties along the Cedar Creek corridor. The goal there is to get ahead of some of the most common invasive offenders: autumn olive, bush honeysuckle, and multiflora rose.

Jones hopes to continue strategic partnerships to tackle land management and deal with problems as they arise. One thing he knows: The work will never end.

Jones and other land management professionals were caught off-guard by northeast Indiana's latest invasive non-native species, Japanese stiltgrass. The plant spreads by seeds carried on shoes or boots, and quickly displaces native plants on a forest floor.

"We weren't expecting Japanese stiltgrass at all," Jones said. The species had been documented south of Marion County (it's more common in central and southern Indiana), but last year was first identified in Allen County in Little Cedar Creek Wildlife Sanctuary in Hometown. ACRES has temporarily closed this preserve while Jones works to eradicate the stiltgrass and prevent its spread.

Jones explained that if Japanese stiltgrass were to get into the floodplains, it could spread very quickly. He hopes the outbreak, currently concentrated in one area, can be stopped by continuing the efforts already begun. "This could be an awesome success story," Jones said.

ACRES' efforts in invasive species management currently are handled by staff, interns, contractors and volunteers. Jones hopes to bring more volunteers into the fight in 2016 (see page 12 for training details if you'd like to help).

He believes ACRES' mission to protect natural areas is served by protecting the biodiversity in a habitat. "If we lose diversity, we aren't doing a good job."



## EXPLORING THE PRESERVES



### Anticipating Spring Wildflowers

By John J. Smith

Skunk cabbage (1) is the first native plant to flower, most years in March. Then come harbinger-of-spring, hepatica, false rue anemone and many more. But 2016 may have surprises.

Already on Christmas day 2015 I found skunk cabbage spathes starting to emerge a few inches, and one hepatica flower and one false rue anemone flower in bloom! The National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) forecasts January, February and March, 2016, to be warmer and drier than average. If their forecasts turn out to be accurate, blooming times will be earlier than usual.

ACRES properties I hike most frequently are Spurgeon, Culp, and Bender Nature Preserves—all within 30 miles of my home in Goshen. While exact blooming times will vary somewhat, each preserve has wonderful wildflower displays, with many species in common, and several that are unique. I highly recommend hikes in all these ACRES treasures in April and May (perhaps earlier this year, if NOAA is right).

### Edna W. Spurgeon Woodland Reserve

Wildflowers in this old-growth forest are wonderful week after week.

**Late March:** To find skunk cabbage, keep left on the loop trail to the short boardwalk over the vernal pond.

**Second or Third Week of April:** Throughout the woods, harbinger-of-spring's tiny white flowers and showier displays of hepatica (3), bloodroot (cover), spring beauty, and Dutchman's breeches.

**Late April and early May:** Squirrel corn, yellow trout lily, blue cohosh, three trillium species (*T. sessile*, *T. grandiflorum* (center spread) and *T. flexipes*), five violet species (*V. sororia*, *V. striata*, *V. pubescens*, *V. striata* and *V. canadense*), large-flowered bellwort, bishop's cap, Jack-in-the-pulpit (5), downy Solomon's seal, and wood poppy.

**Mid-May (when trees begin leafing):** Blue phlox, wild geranium, great waterleaf, anise-root, false Solomon's seal and putty-root (2).

### Richard G. and Mary H. Culp Nature Preserve

Culp is in the middle of Amish farms near Shipshewana. Walking clockwise on the loop trail, you climb a steep south-facing slope. In this sunny spot I find the earliest flowers of round-lobed hepatica, harbinger-of-spring and cut-leaved toothwort, usually early April.

**Late April to Early May:** Nearly twenty species will be blooming at once, such as wild ginger, blue cohosh, rue anemone, false rue anemone, false mermaid, large-flowered trillium, and the same five species of violet as at Spurgeon.

This is one of the few woods where I find the watch-listed dwarf ginseng. Each plant has a whorl of 3–5 compound leaves, with a short stalk that terminates in a ball of tiny white flowers. And I first discovered putty-root flowers at Culp, May 21, 2006. The solitary, grayish-green leaves with white veins appear in fall and stay green all winter. As the leaves die back in late May, a few of the plants may shoot up an inflorescence of 8–15 small flowers.

### Lloyd W. Bender Memorial Forest

Because it contains both floodplain and hills, this fine forest west of Albion has a wide diversity of wildflowers.

**Late March:** Skunk cabbage usually flowers in the wet floodplain, followed in April by marsh marigold, wood betony, golden ragwort, round-leaved ragwort, cut-leaved toothwort, and purple spring-cress.

**May (also in the floodplain):** You may find white spring-cress, Virginia waterleaf, American gromwell, honewort, Jack-in-the-pulpit, and Jack's unusual cousin, green dragon (7).

**May (in Bender's higher mesic woods):** You'll find most of the wildflower species as in Spurgeon and Culp, with the addition of the watch-listed goldenseal (4) and the unusual American columbo (6) which bloomed in 2015, but does not bloom every year.

I will be walking all three of these ACRES preserves every 2–3 weeks this spring, beginning as soon as harbinger-of spring appears and continuing until putty-root blooms in late May. By then the trees will be in full leaf; the ephemeral wildflower shows will be over. But my ACRES hikes won't end—I'll just switch to hiking preserves with sunny wetlands where flowers will bloom into October! ~ John J. Smith

You can join John on the trail through the Edna W. Spurgeon Woodland Reserve on May 7. See page 13 for details.

Center Spread photo by Thomas Sprunger. By lighting the wildflower from the side, Sprunger captured "soft light dancing over the undulating petals of two large flowered trillium at Kokiwanee."



## NON-NATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES — Field Volunteer Training Sunday, April 24, 2 pm or Tuesday, April 26, 2 pm

ALLEN COUNTY | Tom and Jane Dustin Nature Preserve  
1802 Chapman Road, Hometown, IN 46748

Learn how to support ACRES' non-native invasive species management as volunteers. Casey Jones will teach species identification and demonstrate effective methods for their removal or eradication in the field.

*Presented by Casey Jones, director of land management*

## MAPLE SYRUP MAKING AND PANCAKES Saturday, March 12, 9 – noon

WABASH COUNTY | Asherwood Environmental Center  
7496 W SR 124, Wabash, IN 46992

Join us for warm pancakes, sausage and fresh-made maple syrup plus a guided tour of this preserve's sugar bush.

*Presented by Bill Harmsen, Asherwood caretaker, and Jason Kissel, executive director*

*No reservations required. \$5/person, children under 5 free.*



Photo by John Raub

## INDIANA BICENTENNIAL 200-TREE PLANTING

Celebrate Indiana's Bicentennial and enrich ACRES preserves by helping plant 200 trees! Can you imagine your results 200 years from now?

**Saturday, April 16, 11 am**

KOSCIUSKO COUNTY | Wildwood  
409 E. SR 14, Silver Lake, IN 46982  
Lunch provided

*Co-sponsored by the Manchester University Environmental Club*

**Saturday, April 23, 11 am**

ALLEN COUNTY | Blue Cast Springs  
21412 Bluecast Road, Woodburn, IN 46797  
Lunch provided

## BABY LEAVES

**Thursday, April 21, 6 pm**

HUNTINGTON COUNTY | Pehkokia Woods  
1570 Flaxmill Road, Huntington, IN 46750

They grow up so fast! In just a matter of days, they go from pink, hairy, and only an inch long, to green, fully mature leaves. Explore the world of baby leaves and how their emergence coincides with all the wildflowers on the ground. Is there anything better than the sweet smell of a new baby leaf?

*Presented by Jason Kissel, executive director*



## 27TH ANNUAL ADOPT-A-TREE FESTIVAL

**Saturday, April 23, 10 am – 3 pm**

STEBEN COUNTY | Wing Haven  
180 W 400 N, Angola, IN 46703

Continue your Earth Day celebration! Enjoy a variety of events for children and adults: make a bluebird house or suet feeder, view pond water under a microscope, and adopt an Ohio Buckeye, Swamp White Oak, Red Pine or Redbud. Entertainment will be fiddle and dulcimer music and caricature drawings.

*Presented by ACRES friends: Art Eberhardt, Laurie Eberhardt and Peter Martin, Jim Shearer, David Syler, John Eddy, David and Bonnie Snyder, Paul Nailor and Lee Sauer*

## MEMBERS ONLY! WALK IN CLAXTON WOODS

**Sunday, May 15, 3 pm**

DEKALB COUNTY | Claxton Woods  
Spencerville, IN, RSVP for address

Be among the few to experience Claxton Woods, a new, closed-to-the-public ACRES property. The Claxton family will share their love of this land and the work that went into creating this 93-acre tree farm.

*Presented by Bill Claxton, Claxton Woods land donor. Space is limited, please RSVP to Heather Barth at 260-637-2273, ext. 5 or [hbarth@acreslandtrust.org](mailto:hbarth@acreslandtrust.org)*

## INDIANA DIVISION OF NATURE PRESERVES FIELD DAY Saturday, May 21, 10 – noon

ALLEN COUNTY | Fogwell Forest  
9630 Whipoorwill Drive, Fort Wayne, IN 46809

Ben Hess, IDNR regional ecologist, and Casey Jones, ACRES' director of land management, will guide this hike. Fogwell Forest contains an old second-growth forest growing on land with slight differences in elevation, producing large changes in forest composition. The understory contains dogwood, spicebush, pawpaw, and maple-leaved viburnum. Trilliums, Dutchman's breeches, trout lily, bloodroot and violets are common on the forest floor in spring.

*Presented by Ben Hess and Casey Jones*

*Limit 10 people. RSVP by May 20 to [bhess@dnr.in.gov](mailto:bhess@dnr.in.gov)*



## SHARE THE TRAILS

**Saturdays, March 19, April 16 and May 14, 1 pm**

ALLEN COUNTY | Blue Cast Springs  
21412 Bluecast Road, Woodburn, IN 46797

Blue Cast Springs has many stories to tell and beautiful vistas overlooking the Maumee along a 1 mile flat trail. Share your love of this trail, its wildflowers or birds on a casual walk in the woods.

*Presented by Rob Stone, volunteer*



## Wildflower Hikes

**Saturday, April 30, 2 pm**

WABASH COUNTY | Kokiwanee  
5825 E. 50 S, Lagro, IN 46941

*Presented by Tippecanoe Audubon Society and Dr. Dave Hicks, chair of biology, Manchester University*

**Saturday, May 7, 3 – 5 pm**

NOBLE COUNTY | Edna W. Spurgeon Woodland  
9478 N. 600 W, Ligonier, IN 46767

*Presented by John J. Smith, emeritus professor of education, Goshen College*



More events online: [www.acreslandtrust.org/events](http://www.acreslandtrust.org/events)

### A MIGHTY OAK EMERGES:

## A Planned Gift by David and Tracy Fox Establishes the “Acorn Society”

By Connie Haas-Zuber

Photo by David Fox

When David and Tracy Fox, the first members of the Acorn Society, talk about being forward-thinking people, they really mean forward. They're thinking a good century out.

So it's no surprise they became life members of ACRES in 2014, and no surprise they decided they wanted to do more.

“We have seen so much growth in ACRES in the last seven years that we have lived here,” David said, “that we have used ACRES as a role model for doing things right. We've seen programs expand and donations come in. What we are really interested in, because I work for the state historic sites here in Indiana, is long-term sustainability.”

David is manager of the Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Site at Rome City, and Tracy is local market manager for the American Red Cross blood services unit in Fort Wayne. They moved to the area when David left a job at the Indiana State Museum to take his current job. He met ACRES Executive Director Jason Kissel in Indianapolis and reconnected up here.

“We have been kind of keeping tabs on ACRES ever since,” he said. He sees a natural pairing in ACRES' mission and Gene Stratton-Porter's legacy as one of Indiana's first environmentalists. As restoration work continues on her Cabin at Wildflower Woods on Sylvan Lake, and rare plants that she saved flourish and animals return, so rare plants flourish in ACRES preserves, and animals thrive, too, David said. He and Tracy want both the hundred-year-old Wildflower Woods cabin and ACRES nature preserves to still be thriving in another hundred years.



David and Tracy Fox

### So together they decided to bequeath a planned gift to ACRES.

What they didn't plan on was that the timing of their gift would make them the first members of ACRES' new **Acorn Society**. “It was quite a surprise,” David said, with a laugh. “I remember Jason told me he had a brand new form for me to fill out and I knew I'd be the first person to test out the form.”

### The Foxes feel fine about leading the way for the Acorn Society.

“It's such a painless way to give,” David said, “and when we are no longer here, we know we will be leaving a legacy people will be able to enjoy.”

“We understand that non-profit organizations like ACRES need grants and donations today to operate,” Tracy said, “but you certainly need that money tomorrow, too. We felt that not only as life members, but it was really important to show commitment in the future as well to continue to protect Indiana's heritage.”

“Having the **Acorn Society** allows us to formally recognize the very generous intention these individuals have for ACRES.”

Establishing the Acorn Society is an important milestone for ACRES, said Heather Barth, director of fund development. “Having the Acorn Society allows us to formally recognize the very generous intention these individuals have for ACRES. It allows us to further deepen their relationship with our mission. Since the organization's beginning, people have made planned gifts to ACRES, but doing it formally in this way allows us to promote this opportunity to other people who might not have been aware that this is another way to leave a legacy for other generations to come.”



### INTRODUCING THE ACORN SOCIETY

We are pleased to announce the **Acorn Society**, a special group of people who make plans for ACRES in their will, estate, or bequest, or who otherwise make a planned or deferred gift. These gifts leave a legacy that ensures future generations are able to enjoy this area's most unique natural places. If you have already made plans for ACRES, please let us know so that we can include you as a member of the Acorn Society!

For more information about planned gifts and the Acorn Society, call Heather Barth at ACRES, (260) 637-2273 ext. 5, or email her at [hbarth@acreslandtrust.org](mailto:hbarth@acreslandtrust.org).



## Digging Our Region's Natural Groove: THE CEDAR CREEK CORRIDOR'S TUNNEL VALLEY

By Lettie Haver

You've probably read about the Cedar Creek Corridor, but have you stood 80 feet over the creek and wondered how this dramatic topography happened right here?

Recently, Tony Fleming, geologist and long-time ACRES friend, shared geologic theory and evidence as we walked along the corridor's 80-foot elevated Lanham's Promontory overlooking Cedar Creek in the Tom and Jane Dustin Nature Preserve.



In Cedar Creek, Fleming sees "classic tunnel valley morphology: unusually steep walls, flat bottom and a really straight course. Not a typical stream, no tributaries coming in, just Cedar Creek."

"Right about here, Dustin Preserve sits on the summit of the Wabash moraine." [A moraine is an accumulation of soil and rocks, distributed by glaciers.] Fleming says, "we can infer the ice margin, or edge of this glacier, stood here for a long time because there's about 80–100 feet of sediment built up in these ridges. Sediment accumulates at the edge of ice; the longer ice stands, the more sediment accumulates."

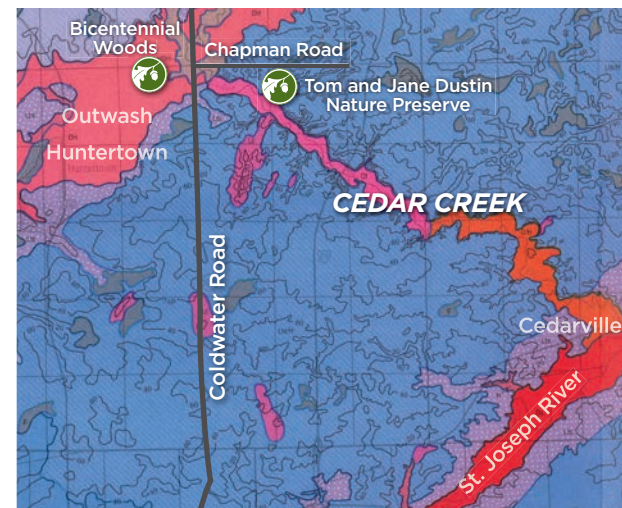
We can see this on the land: the margin appears to have been along Chapman Road, just off Coldwater. Fleming says, "you can see it. You're surrounded by bottomland, and all of a sudden there's this big wall of sediment." This is the front of the end moraine, just before Cloud Hill Drive. "It's pretty obvious on the land. That's where the glacier stopped."

Sediments, or outwash, excavated from Cedar Creek's tunnel valley, formed the hills and ridges of Bicentennial Woods. Map courtesy Tony Fleming.

"It's a very distinct ridge, composed of clay-rich glacial till," explains Fleming. "Underneath this ridge is a slightly older series of sediments from an earlier advance [of glacial ice] that's mostly sand and gravel. Eighty feet down, about at creek level, this group of sand and gravel bodies is all saturated, full of groundwater."

How did this ridge form? Cedar Creek Canyon was created beneath a glacier frozen to the ground along its edges, trapping its own meltwater. Fleming says "this glacier was only frozen to the bed in a thin zone, right at its margin." Meltwater, created by heat from the insulation of this immense ice sheet, built up behind this frozen ice margin. Eventually, this trapped meltwater built enough pressure to dig into the relatively soft sediment underneath—and then to burst out, right at the margin, excavating a very straight gorge, creating this tunnel valley. This pressure was so strong it not only dug out a tunnel valley, it also forced Cedar Creek to initially flow northwest—opposite the direction the creek flows today (which is into the St. Joseph River, which did not exist at the time).

"A lot of sediment was excavated from this moraine: the tunnel valley is 80 feet deep, a quarter to a half mile wide, and several miles long." So the question is: where did the sediment all go? "That's the alluvial fan at Bicentennial Woods," says Fleming. "The hills you hike over and through at Bicentennial Woods are the outwash of sediments deposited at the mouth of the corridor's tunnel valley," as seen above on a map of the area.



**Glacial ice. A frozen margin. Pressure. Water running uphill. Outwash.**

Our groove? Our region's mark on the map? "A gash," Fleming says, "created under pressure." An 80-foot-deep wound, walled by beautiful, rich, diverse vegetation quite distinct from vegetation growing on top of surrounding ridges and hills.

"There's something else going on here too, ecologically, that's why this is significant. Obviously, you have radically different positions in the landscape, ranging from a dynamic floodplain down there, to a fairly dry ridge above, where the clay-ey till acts like concrete during the heat of the growing season. But on the walls of the tunnel valley, the sides of the ravine, it's pretty rich vegetation."

"It's the soil," explains Fleming. "The soil on the walls of the canyon has a shallow soil profile. Plants have ready, easy access to calcium because rain waters haven't washed the mineral out of the soil."

"So the morphology [the form] of this tunnel valley is also contributing to a richer vegetation community." But that's another story.

## Wild Walkers Explore ACRES Preserves

You are invited to join Wild Walkers, a self-directed adult hiking group, for their spring exploration of ACRES preserves:

**STEBEN COUNTY** | Wing Haven Friday, March 11, 9–10:30 am

**KOSCIUSKO COUNTY** | Bock Nature Preserve Friday, March 25, 9–10:30 am

**ALLEN COUNTY** | Vandolah Nature Preserve, Friday, April 8, 9–10:30 am

**WABASH COUNTY** | Asherwood, Friday, April 22, 8:30–10 am

**ALLEN COUNTY** | Spring Lake Woods and Bog, Friday, May 13, 8:30–10:30 am

Questions? Contact Amy Hicks (260) 427-6005 or [amy.hicks@cityoffortwayne.org](mailto:amy.hicks@cityoffortwayne.org).

## 19TH ANNUAL SPRING BIRDATHON

Spring is here! It's time to send Fred Wooley and the ACRES Avocets out to observe as many bird species as possible. Birdathon takes place May 14th when Fred and his team will comb several counties, tallying birds spotted.

You can pledge your support: either a *fixed amount* or an *amount per species*. You can also include an additional pledge for finding your favorite bird or a special "challenge" bird. Please visit [www.acreslandtrust.org/birdathon](http://www.acreslandtrust.org/birdathon) to make your pledge or donation. You can also call the ACRES office, or send a note with your name, address, amount of your pledge per species and favorite bird (\$5 extra pledge). Pledges are due by May 11.

Birdathon benefits Wing Haven, ACRES' 254-acre, state-dedicated nature preserve in Steuben County. This property was once home to Helen Swenson and her husband, Ben, who ran Wing Haven Resort, "a sanctuary for birds," from 1948–1972. Helen was an artist, naturalist and avid birder.

Last year, your support provided \$2,900 for maintenance and upkeep on the trails and facilities at Wing Haven, including repair to two stone chimneys on the caretaker's house. Will you help us raise at least that much again this year to install a floating dock on Little Gentian Lake? The beavers have been busy, and the dock is sinking! You can help ACRES accommodate the rising water level, providing a nice (dry) spot from which preserve visitors can view a variety of birds.

As always, your contribution is tax deductible as allowed by law. Please contact Heather Barth at 260-637-2273 extension 5 or [hbarth@acreslandtrust.org](mailto:hbarth@acreslandtrust.org) with questions.



# SPECIAL thanks

All our Quarterly distributors  
 All our preserve monitors and stewards  
 All our administrative volunteers  
 Marti Berry, Dave Brumm, Laura Colpitts, Joe and Nancy Conrad, Ted and Tedra Hemingway, Al McSweeney, Sue Markey, Teresa Neuhaus, Kerry Sharpe, Ellsworth Smith, Susie Watson, Nellie Jean Wendell  
 collating the Quarterly  
 B & J Rental (Columbia City)  
 donating chain-sharpening services  
 Laura Colpitts  
 donating kitchen sponges  
 Angie O'Neill  
 donating coffee  
 Thomas Sprunger  
 donating high-resolution photos  
 Chad Taylor  
 donating high-resolution photos  
 Devin Willis  
 donating a cash box  
 Jeri Kornegay  
 donating coffee  
 Lowe's (Fort Wayne locations)  
 donating paint

## wish list

SD card for camera  
 Flash drives  
 5 x 8 pads of lined paper  
 Name badge labels  
 Bird seed and suet cakes  
 Forever postage stamps  
 Polaris Brutus HD side-by-side utility vehicle  
 Coffee and Peanut M&Ms to fuel land protection  
 Folding sawhorses



Natural Letters by Shane Perfect

"Adios" is the farewell Shane and I offered each other almost daily for the past decade. Following Shane's resignation in December, this casual farewell still seems appropriate as Shane's relationship with ACRES continues. His photography will still grace the pages of the *Quarterly*, and he will continue to serve as the caretaker of Wing Haven. Thank you, Shane, for your service as an employee of ACRES—and for your continued involvement. ~Jason Kissel

**DIRECTORS:** Steven Hammer, President; Carol Roberts, Vice President; Joe Conrad, Vice President; David Schnepf, Treasurer; Norm Cox, Secretary; Craig Bobay, John Clark, Pam George, Connie Haas-Zuber, James Haddock, Ashley Motia, David Nugent, Angie O'Neill, Mark O'Shaughnessy, Angie Quinn, Dawn Ritchie, David Van Gilder, Michelle Briggs Wedaman.  
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Photo by Shane Perfect



*Look around my house: It's an entire world shaped to my wishes, from the temperature to the angle of every chair. I painted the walls, chose the lighting. The kitchen's perfect mix of form and function took a decade to create. And yet here, where I control everything, I feel lost.*

*Then I go to the woods where all seems to be chaos: that hill, those acorns — who planted that tree? My only control is over my footsteps. But here in the woods where even the streams do as they wish, and I am just a visitor, I finally find myself.*

— Dan Stockman