

THE ACRES QUARTERLY

Spring 2018 | Vol. 57 - No. 1



ACRES
LANDTRUST

Turning \$1 million to \$3 million:

Cedar Creek Corridor BNT update

Restoring Land to Protect Ecosystems

The Next 199 Years

2nd Annual Bird Blitz

2016-17 Annual Report | 2018-19 Strategic Plan

From the Executive Director

Photo by Thomas Sprunger

Dear Members,

On page 17 you'll find a summary of ACRES' new strategic plan. I'd like to explain why it's a little different from our past plans. More than any time in our history, ACRES has more support, more assets, and more land.

Thanks to you, ACRES has grown. Grown indeed! Over the past fourteen years, ACRES has doubled in size in nearly all categories: land owned, staff, endowment, and financial support.

The new strategic plan will allow us to focus attention on determining the best ways to sustain this tremendous growth. While continuing to acquire more land and care for the land we own, we will perform an extensive self-evaluation of the organization.

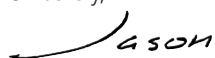
This evaluation will not focus on what we do. That's set and won't ever change: ACRES exists to protect land. What will be under scrutiny is *how* we protect land. We'll be asking big questions, such as these: Is the organizational governance structure from 1960 still the most effective? Does our service area need adjusting? Should we consider regional offices? What do members want more of? Less of? Do our acquisition criteria need to be revised? We will review all aspects of our organization.

In 2020, we'll celebrate ACRES' 60th anniversary. We'll also unveil the new strategic plan based on the evaluations being performed over the next two years. *Since ACRES belongs to you, we need your input.*

While we'll provide formal ways for you to respond (surveys, events, polls, etc.), I also welcome your phone calls and emails. Please question everything ACRES does. When you discover something that doesn't quite make sense to you, or you think there might be a better way, let me know.

Thank you for making our organization so successful that this type of evaluation is necessary. Although it took ACRES 44 years to acquire its first 3,500 acres, you and fellow members took just 14 years to acquire the most recent 3,500 acres. That's impressive—Congratulations!

Sincerely,

 Jason

Jason Kissel
jkissel@acreslandtrust.org
260-637-2273 ext. 2

Cover photo by Thomas Sprunger of Virginia Bluebells ringing in spring at Kokiwanee. You can explore the incredible wildflowers of this much-loved preserve at 2 pm, Sunday, April 22 with Dave Hicks. You're also invited to celebrate this protected place with a Kokiwanee Spring Celebration, 1–4 pm, Sunday, May 6. See page 13 for details on both events. And see you at Kokiwanee!



ACRES Land Trust preserves, protects and manages 115 properties totaling 7,047 acres.

You can explore more than 70 miles of trails through forever-protected nature preserves, dawn to dusk, thanks to your member support.



1802 Chapman Road
PO Box 665
Huntertown, IN 46748-0665
260.637.ACRE (2273)
email: acres@acreslandtrust.org

acreslandtrust.org



WELCOME

145newmembers!

Many thanks to so many of you who gave ACRES memberships as gifts during the holidays. Nearly half of the new ACRES memberships this quarter are a result of your generosity. You help ACRES grow.

Tessa Aby
Thomas and Nancy Beaver
Holly and RJ Benninghoff
John and Susie Bertsch
Mark Beucler
Becca Bishop
from Rebecca Bishop
Daniel Bonkoski
from The Clemens Family
Sarah and DeWayne Bontrager
Tim Brauch
Sean Brennan
Cody Burniston
Sharon Carey
from Bill Novak
Tom and Cindi DeSomer
from Stan and Glenda Whittern
Melinda Doak
Kirk and Karen Dunkelberger
Ferguson Family
from Don DeCook
Mitchell and Maddie Fisher
Vicky Foltz
Julie Garber
from Dan and Weebe Naragon
Diane Gearhart
Kyle and Britta Glass
from Gary Eberly
Richard Gray
Noah Haefner
LuAnne Harley
from Julie Garber
DJ Hartley
Kryston Henderson
David and Cassie Hill
Scott and Hollie Hill
John and Gay Ingold
Danielle Faurote
Robert Kempfer
David Keuhl
from Kristen Keuhl
Cheryl Krueckeberg
Christy Kuziensky
Valerie Lake and Jeff Faulstich
from Charles Lake
Eric and Amy Lantz
Mike and Alison Lewis
from Lisa Seiler
Michaela Lock
Daniel and Christine Martin
Joan and Goven Martinez
Lyn McCloskey
Cheryl McCurley
Brent McMillan
James Merriman
Sydney Miracle
from Sandy Lamp
Jim and Dianne Meyer
Patty Metzger

Mark and Ramona Michael
Benjamin and Adrian Murphy
Suanne Musser
Rob and Barbie Myer
Brian Myers
Scott and Lindsay Namestnik
Zach and Vonnie Netzley
from Pardee and Toshiko Gunter
Tom and Lori Neumann
from Tom and Mary Jo Bland
April Nicely
from Pat Brubaker
Harry Oelschlager
from Sandra Slone
Angie Pasqua
from John Johnson
Diana and Jeff Peat
Veronique Poudrier
Jane Rackley
from Glenda Walden
Rick Pernod
Dave Ray
Mark and Cindy Renshaw
Doug and Lisa Rice
Alice Ropchan
Brandon Roth
Mike Saylor
Rebecca and Dale Orr
C. Joe and Patricia Ottinger
Teresa Snyder
Elizabeth Somers
Keith Spurr
Donna Lampke and Kevin Sutton
Thomas Swihart
Dave and Barb Thiel
Glenda Walden
Laressa Webb
from Tiera Liby
Nancy Webster
Bill Widdifield
from Leann and Christopher Johnston
David Wilson
from Jeff and Becca Wilson
Jenny and Tim Wirts
from Mary Anna and Fred Feitler
Carmen Zahrt
Matt Barcalow Family and
Micah Barcalow Family
from Pam and Doug Barcalow
Jason Bell, Chris and Alyssa Fletcher,
and Hugh and Cindy Fletcher
from Erica Bell
Jim and Pat Alspaugh, David
Bobay, Greg and Faun Brown,
Ryan and Krysta Buckner, Suze and
Kelly Fair, Trish and Wally Gratz,
Sarah and Jared Kent, Ric and
Amie Kumfer, Jim and Sue Mertz,
and Paul and Kelli Sturm
from Craig Bobay

Kate Lautzenheiser, Ashley Smith
and Family, and Dale and
Kay Watson
from Janet Canino
Ben and Jenny Gordon, Don and
Jeanine Martin, and Dan and
Beth Votaw
from Joe and Nancy Conrad
Nicole LaRue and Rachel LaRue
from Wes and Emily LaRue
Andrew Chinworth, Jim Dunmire,
Nathan and Diane Fingerle,
David Hupp and Katy Gray Brown,
David and Teresa Migliorini, Paul
and Kathy Fry-Miller, Jeff and
Sharon Lehman, Steve and Betty
Messer, Tina Rieman, Ben and Carrie
Vineyard and Jack and Deb Vineyard
from Steve Hammer
Susan Burns and Linda Michael
from Connie Haas Zuber
Peter Hathaway, Richard and
Sara Hathaway, and Dr. Robert
and Liz Hathaway
from William Hathaway
Jake and Alyssa Moore and Liza Moore
from Stanley Moore
Kent and Heather Castleman, Jacob
Keirn, Victoria Kruse, Katie and Paul
Newberg, Dan and Kei Quinn,
Jessica Quinn, Pauline Quinn, Betsy
and Jon Yankowiak, and Danielle and
Joshua Walker
from Angie Quinn and Steve Nagy
Tony and Melissa Johnson, Ron and
Kari Miller, Nick and Jill Sloffer, and
Lindsay and Greg Solon
from David and Faith Van Gilder

life members

Carl and Barbara Bauer
Janet Canino
Josie and Geoff Fox
Allison Johnson
from Kitt Johnson in honor of
Robert and Rosella Johnson
Nathan Johnson
from Kitt Johnson in honor of
Robert and Rosella Johnson
Mark and Mary Ellen Maffey
Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters
Richard and Lisa Teets

PROTECTING LAND

CEDAR CREEK CORRIDOR UPDATE:

ACRES leverages \$1 million BNT award, protecting 193 acres appraised at \$3 million

by Lettie Haver, Outreach Manager

Photo by Jarrid Spicer

In honor of Indiana's 200th anniversary of statehood in 2016, Bicentennial Nature Trust (BNT) awarded ACRES \$1 million in matching funds to purchase land within a 20-mile stretch of the creek, from Auburn to Leo-Cedarville. Only a handful of awards for significant landscape-based conservation were granted statewide.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- **December 2016** Joan Garman donated 84 acres of Leo-Cedarville farm and forest to ACRES, forever honoring her late husband and his family's legacy of working this land. With this significant gift, a portion of the Dorothy and Ray Garman Nature Preserve protected new corridor land *and* provided matching funding for further acquisitions.
- **April 2017** With funding from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) and the BNT match, ACRES acquired 84 acres, expanding the James M. & Patricia D. Barrett Oak Hill Nature Preserve.
- **December 2017** ACRES purchased two side-by-side Founders Forest expansions, totaling 76 acres of predominantly farm field. For this acreage, ACRES matched BNT funding with Joan Garman's land donation, NAWCA funding, and a bargain sale discount on one of the new properties. The Cairn Foundation, The Fort Wayne Children's Zoo, ME Raker Foundation, and many individual donors invested additional funding to help ACRES protect this land.

ACRES needs \$101,966 to complete this project.



Photo by Joan Garman



REFORESTING FARMLAND

The majority of these newly protected Cedar Creek Corridor places are farmland. In time, ACRES will restore this land by planting native hardwood trees and native shrubs, thus further increasing the region's largest forested corridor. *To learn more about restoring land, see Ben Hess' article, "Restoring Land to Protect Ecosystems," on page 6.*

Your investment in ACRES grows—and grows, for good.

ABOUT THE CEDAR CREEK CORRIDOR

The Cedar Creek Corridor's unique topography features a tunnel valley—a sudden, surprisingly deep, gorge-like canyon cut by glacial meltwater into an otherwise relatively flat Indiana landscape. This area is so unusual it was considered for a state park site in the early 1900s.

In 1976, with help from ACRES Land Trust, Cedar Creek became one of only three rivers in the state to be designated an Indiana Scenic River under the 1973 Indiana Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers Act.

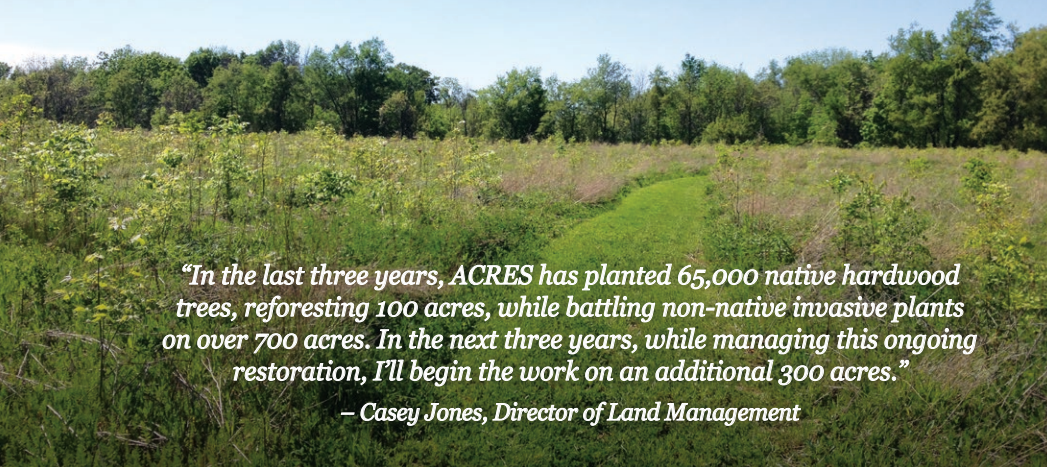


Photo by Jarrid Spicer

The corridor is home to vegetation unique in this area such as the yellow lady's-slipper orchid, gray beardtongue, tall meadow rue, and Allen County's only documented populations of painted cup (Indian paintbrush) and yellow puccoon. The area's wildlife includes bobcats, mink, and river otters, as well as Pileated Woodpeckers, Bald Eagles, Great Blue Herons, Green Herons, and Yellow-crowned Night Herons.

Cedar Creek serves as the primary recharge for the Huntertown aquifer system, which runs into the St. Joseph River and ultimately provides drinking water to the 264,000 residents of Fort Wayne.

While phenomenal, the completion of this BNT priority match funding merely ends an incredible phase, a short-term project in protecting, and adding to, this region's largest natural feature. Thank you for your continued support in protecting Cedar Creek as ACRES' work here progresses.



"In the last three years, ACRES has planted 65,000 native hardwood trees, reforesting 100 acres, while battling non-native invasive plants on over 700 acres. In the next three years, while managing this ongoing restoration, I'll begin the work on an additional 300 acres."

– Casey Jones, Director of Land Management

Four years after planting (above), the former field at Hathaway Preserve at Ross Run (below) requires active management to help saplings compete against non-native plants.

Restoring Land to Protect Ecosystems

by Ben Hess, Ecologist

In land conservation we sometimes have the benefit of obtaining farm fields adjacent to ecological gems, such as we have within the Cedar Creek Corridor. Since the fields' former use was agricultural, these areas are not considered a preservation, but rather a restoration.

Because restoration areas contain only a simple layer of subsoils (rather than an organic topsoil layer filled with living organisms to help plant growth and health), they lack a healthy diverse seed bank. Thus, they lack plant diversity. However, once the areas are protected, the soil will begin to heal, and the seed bank within the soil will come alive. Then succession will begin with annual grasses and broadleaf plants filling an essential niche.

Many restorations in our region are planted with trees so these areas can reclaim their rightful place next to the ecologically diverse woodlands dotting our landscape. These planting areas not only help protect the neighboring ecosystem, they may also connect multiple plots, thus creating a much larger conservation area. For these restoration sites, slower growing native tree species are selected, primarily late successional species such as oaks and hickories. Early successional species, such as maple, cottonwood, ash, hawthorn, and dogwood, usually are not chosen for these sites because these more aggressive native species often arrive on site on their own and multiply quickly.



The goal of these restorations is greater diversity of tree species.

In other words, to ensure the most diverse plant community survives after natural selection has been "reset" by a human or natural disturbance, we may selectively manage aggressive species within a tree planting. *Diversity not only provides the best chance for long-term sustainability of the site, it also enables the ecosystem to adjust to future environmental changes.* Although native and non-native aggressive species are treated similarly, the long-term goal is to provide time for slower-growing species to have a chance to reach the canopy. More shade-tolerant species will eventually return and mingle, branch to branch.



Planting day in this same field (left). ACRES plants seedlings, not saplings. Roughly four years after planting day, seedlings have grown into saplings (right). This restoration work reforested 19 acres of farmland, adding protection to the existing natural area.

Although actively managing aggressive species will not eradicate them from the land, it will, over time, bring a more balanced plant community.

From observing and working with plant communities, we have learned their resiliency comes from diversity. This means that *the larger the plant community, the larger, more complex, and more adapted to change is the ecosystem.* A larger ecosystem can adjust to prolonged floods, excessive drought, and long winters. The plant community works together to make this adjustment: Every species has its time of dominance, then cedes to the next.

When our natural landscape has been, or is being disturbed and altered by humans, we are charged with repairing these past and current faults. Ecological restoration and conservation requires patience and persistence. We must share why we should support diverse plant communities. We must continue and improve the restoration work started by others, creating a land canvas the next steward can improve upon.

To witness succession firsthand, hike a trail. Late successional trees tower powerfully above you, intertwined one with another. Journey under the high canopy to see how these trees, supported by century-old trunks, emerge higher than all the others. Then focus on the cool shade of the understory. How many plant layers do you see? Can you spot the herbaceous layer along the ground and the understory with shrubs and small trees? *This is the land telling its story*—of what it once was, how it was treated, and where its future is heading.

As stewards of the land, we protect, we manage, and we preserve to allow nature to paint its own portrait of the future, a future without the kinds of errors we humans made long ago.

The Next 199 Years

by Kevin McKelvey

In 2017, ACRES' 200 Year Ecological Reflections of Wing Haven launched with this painting of Little Gentian Lake by Gwen Gutwein and a plant inventory by botanist Scott Namestnik, pictured below sharing his results with project funders and ACRES members.



Something life-changing happened to Indiana native Kevin McKelvey in 2006 in Costa Rica. After a frustrating search for an elusive bird, he returned to the United States with a new perspective on wildlife, people, and place. Enjoy McKelvey's fascinating tale as part of the backstory of ACRES' 200-year Ecological Reflections initiative at Wing Haven Preserve, described in the Summer 2017 Quarterly.

— Carol Roberts, editor

Growing up on the edge of a cornfield near Lebanon, Indiana, I always thought you had to leave Indiana to see anything worth seeing. So I traveled, hiking and paddling all around the United States, from the Rocky Mountains to the Everglades, as well as overseas. I climbed the highest point in the United Kingdom and hiked its most remote peninsula.

The summer of 2006, I spent a month in Costa Rica, snorkeling, hiking, and looking for resplendent Quetzals and other wildlife. On one birdwatching hike during a rain storm in the Monteverde Cloud Forest, all I saw was a chicken-sized, pigeon-like bird, the Chachalaca. At the end of that hike, soaking wet, looking one final time for a Quetzal, I realized I could spend the rest of my life

learning Indiana's oaks and warblers and butterflies and wildflowers—that I didn't have to leave Indiana to see wild beauty. Eventually I finally did see a flock of Quetzals. The family I was staying with told me about them—“down the road, behind the market.” And yes, there they were, roosting in a giant tree behind what looked like a convenience store, their feathers and coloring profound.



This land was bequeathed to ACRES by Helen and Ben Swenson, who lived here in cabins they brought in.

Later that year, I served as Artist-in-Residence at H. J. Andrews Experimental Forest in the Cascade Range, home of the first Long-Term Ecological Reflections. Scientists there are conducting 200-year experiments; the Spring Creek Project of Oregon State University added the Reflections program to bring writers every year for 200 years. To produce poems, essays, stories, and other creative work, these writers visit and observe the same four spots while also interacting with scientists and researchers.

The following year, as Artist-in-Residence at Isle Royale National Park in Lake Superior, I stayed three weeks in a cabin on the archipelago's eastern end, reading, canoeing, writing, hiking, and fishing. I delivered two public programs (a common part of over 50 Artist-in-Residence programs in the National Park System and similar residency programs). To get a full sense of the island's length and ecosystems, I hiked across it in four days.

When I took my job at University of Indianapolis in 2008 and knew I would be able to stay in Indiana forever, I started thinking more about how to bring Long-Term Ecological Reflections to Indiana. Land trusts were the perfect fit for a 200-year project, so I talked with many land trusts around the state.

In 2014, NICHES Land Trust started an annual, century-long canoe trip on Wildcat Creek. Other land trusts have plans in the works, including ACRES. In 2017, Jason Kissell and ACRES staff and board worked to raise money to endow their ongoing 200-Year Ecological Reflections initiative at Wing Haven.

We cannot fully fathom the magnificent forests, prairies, and wetlands that covered the entire state 200 years ago. But over the next 199 years, these long-term projects will engage numerous visitors, community members, and experts in creative and scientific work, creating a deep record of these places, leading us to a fuller understanding of ourselves and our time on Earth.



A lively fiddle concert by the Goats' Beards kicked off the project.

Center Spread by Thomas Sprunger at Kokiwanee featuring marsh marigolds which bloom in bright profusion in wet places on this preserve and others, typically beginning in early April and sometimes lasting throughout spring. Will they be on display for our spring hikes and events? For the May 6 Kokiwanee Spring Celebration? See for yourself. Event details on page 13. Happy trails!



SHARE THE TRAILS HIKES

Free to the public, donations encouraged. These are casual, easy-going, social hikes aimed to welcome new visitors to the preserves and to join ACRES.

Saturday, March 3, 10 am – noon

LAGRANGE COUNTY | Maple Wood Nature Preserve
4550 E. 100 S, LaGrange, IN 46761

Hike two preserves in one visit: ACRES' preserve is adjacent to and shares trails with the LaGrange County Parks Nature Preserve. The county preserve has a visitor center and a maple syrup camp. (See the *Swift Grand Tour* below if you're interested in a *FAST* hiking series immediately following this casual walk.)

Saturday, April 7, 10 am – noon

FULTON COUNTY | Ruth Kern Woodland Preserve
3681 W. 450 N, Rochester, IN 46975

Explore with land donor, Shirley Needham and discover this place's unique history and a family's deep love of land. (See the *Swift Grand Tour* below if you're interested in a *FAST* hiking series immediately following this casual walk.)

Saturday, May 5, 10 am – noon

WHITLEY COUNTY | Evelyn and Wendell Dygert Nature Preserve
4245 N. 50 W, Columbia City, IN 46725

Expect an abundance of wildflowers: Trilliums blanket this forest floor at the first of May.

SWIFT GRAND TOURS

Join ACRES volunteer Janelle Windsor for fast-paced multi-preserve treks, caravanning and possibly ride-sharing in between. Each excursion is unique—and very fast. You'll get an overview of the preserves—and a workout. You're welcome to drop to your own pace and to skip parts of the tour as needed.

If you'd like to carpool for these events, leaving from the Tom and Jane Dustin Nature Preserve in Huntertown, please email Janelle at emailjanelle1@gmail.com.

Saturday, March 3, 1:30 – 5 pm

LAGRANGE COUNTY | Fawn River Nature Preserve
just west of 101000 E. 800 N., Orland, IN 46776

Then caravan to Beechwood Nature Preserve, then Robb Hidden Canyon for a total of 4.5+ miles at a fast pace.

If you'd like to make a day of it, pack a sack lunch and begin with the casual Share the Trails hike at Maple Wood Nature Preserve at 10 am (see above), take a break afterward for lunch in Maple Wood's Visitor Center, then caravan with Janelle to Fawn River Nature preserve and on from there.

Saturday, April 7, 1 – 3 pm

KOSCIUSKO COUNTY | Bock Nature Preserve
11630 S. SR 14, Akron, IN 46910

Then caravan to Wildwood for a total of 5.3+ miles at a fast pace.

If you'd like to make a day of it (and add more miles!), pack a sack lunch and begin with the casual Share the Trails hike at Ruth Kern Woodland Preserve at 10 am (see event above), take a break afterward for lunch, then caravan with Janelle to Bock Nature Preserve, followed by Wildwood. Shwew!

Saturday, April 28, 1 – 3:30 pm

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

Then caravan to Lloyd Bender Memorial Forest, then to the Evelyn and Wendell Dygert Nature Preserve for a total of 4+ miles at a fast pace.

Spring wildflowers are expected to be profuse, blanketing these preserves. Will you keep the speedy pace—or will you stop to admire these natural wonders? Happy trails!

SPRING CLEANING WALKS

The cure for spring fever is here: explore the preserves and lend a hand cleaning up litter in good company. Hosted by Kelly Shepherd.

Tuesday, March 13, 10:30 – 12:30

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

Tuesday, March 20, 10:30 – 12:30

NOBLE COUNTY | Detering Nature Preserve
1421 Kammerer Road, Kendallville, IN 46755

Tuesday, March 27, 10:30 – 12:30

KOSCIUSKO COUNTY | Wayne Township Prairie, a closed preserve
Just west of Eastlake Skating Center, 3010 Frontage Road, Warsaw, IN 46580

EVENTS AND WORKDAYS

WILDFLOWER HIKE FOR MEMBERS

Sunday, April 22, 2 pm

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

Discover waterfalls and a diversity of wildflowers on what was once a Girl Scout camp. Hosted by Dave Hicks. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or 260-637-2273.

WILDFLOWER & GEOLOGY HIKE FOR MEMBERS

Saturday, May 5, 3 pm

NOBLE COUNTY | Lloyd W. Bender Memorial Forest
1891 N. River Road W, Albion, IN 46701

Here, you'll find diverse habitats and wildflowers that you won't see in many other ACRES preserves. Hosted by John J. Smith and Tony Fleming. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or 260-637-2273.

FOREST BATHING FOR MEMBERS

Friday, May 11, 6 pm

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

Explore the preserve, following certified forest therapist Christy Thomson's playful prompts, engaging your sense of wonder, inviting renewal and restoration. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or 260-637-2273.

NATIONAL TRAILS DAY

New and current members receive a free water bottle!

Saturday, June 2, 1 pm

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

Trek the trails with fellow ACRES lovers, then become a member to participate in preservation all year long. All members, new and current, bring home a complimentary ACRES water bottle, valued at \$10. Stay after to enjoy the Birding Basics presentation to prepare for Bird Blitz. See page 15 for details.

Spring Hikes & Events Listings continue on page 14.



ACRES members, you're encouraged to bring friends and family to members-only events.

Watch for more events online: acreslandtrust.org.

EVENTS & WORKDAYS (continued from page 13)

ASHERWOOD MAPLE SYRUP MAKING & PANCAKE BREAKFAST FOR ACRES MEMBERS

Saturday, March 10, 9 am - noon

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

Can you smell the warm pancakes and fresh-made syrup? Feel the cool, crisp air of the winter woods on your cheek? It's sugar bush season! You're invited to breakfast and a guided tour of ACRES' maple sugaring operation.

Hosted by Bill Harmsen and Jason Kissel.

No reservations required. \$5/person, children under 5 free. Come early or stay late and explore this incredible place that your membership helps protect.



Photo by Heather Baker

TAI CHI FOR MEMBERS

Saturday, March 17, 2 pm

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

Tai Chi instructor Hitomi Griswold will lead you through this gentle, energizing practice on a beautiful preserve. All levels. Space is limited. *RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or 260-637-2273.*

WING HAVEN ADOPT-A-TREE SPRING FESTIVAL

Saturday, April 14, 10 am - 2 pm

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

Bring the whole crew out to make a nature journal and trail mix, share a wild rumpus hike and a listening walk and bring home a tree to plant: Ninebark, red and white oak or shagbark hickory. See our 200-Year Ecological Reflections art commission for 2018: a hand-sketched map of Wing Haven by Adam Johnson of Yonder Clothing Co.

Hosted by Lettie Haver and ACRES volunteers.

"POTS AND POTLUCK" FOR MEMBERS

Thursday, April 19, 6 pm

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

Break bread and celebrate spring with fellow members! We will provide the entrée; last names A-L please bring a side dish, and M-Z a dessert. Discuss readings from various writers. Take home a native plant or tree. *Hosted by Theresa Ransbottom. Space is limited. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or 260-637-2273.*

RIP RAP ROCKING WORKDAY

Saturday, April 21, 9 am

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

Help replace rip rap rocks that washed away when a preserve pond overflowed.

Hosted by Bill Harmsen and Jason Kissel.

KOKIWANEE SPRING CELEBRATION

Sunday, May 6, 1-4 pm

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

ACRES volunteers have been hard at work making repairs to the pavilion and bridges at this former Girl Scout camp. Join us for a spring celebration that features live music and guided hikes that explore the waterfalls and wildflowers found here. A special thanks to Morsches Builders Mart and the Community Foundation of Wabash County for their support of the repairs and event.

Spring Hikes & Events Listings continue on page 18.

2ND ANNUAL BIRD BLITZ: COUNT YOURSELF IN

Backyard birders and beginners welcome!

Celebrate the preserves and have fun helping ACRES track bird species.



NEW FOR 2018

New to birding? If you're looking for pointers before blitzing, enjoy a **Birding for Beginners** workshop presented by local Audubon chapters.

Plus: Bird Blitz patches! If you join in the fun, you will receive a sweet patch from the Bird Blitz logo (left), designed by Adam Johnson of Yonder Clothing Co.

BIRDING FOR BEGINNERS

Saturday, June 2, times TBD

Addresses and possible additional locations will be in the packet sent to Bird Blitz registrants in May.

ALLEN COUNTY | Tom and Jane Dustin Nature Preserve
Presented by the Tippecanoe Audubon Society

ELKHART COUNTY | Location, TBD
Presented by the South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society

WABASH COUNTY | Asherwood
Presented by the Mississinewa Audubon Club

You can count birds either as an individual or on a team, on any ACRES preserve from June 3 - June 9.

2ND ANNUAL BIRD BLITZ

Sunday, June 3 to Saturday, June 9

Explore any open ACRES property between dawn and dusk and make note of each bird species you see/hear. You have all the fun while helping enhance ACRES bird species inventories. Count as an individual or as a team.

Registration is \$5 per person and includes a patch designed by Adam Johnson of Yonder Clothing Co. Registrants will receive a packet with notes on how to enter your birding data into **ebird**, an online citizen science bird tracking tool. Be sure to join us for the after-party on June 10 to celebrate your success!

Register online at acreslandtrust.org/birdblitz or by phone at 260-637-2273.

BIRD BLITZ AFTER PARTY

Sunday, June 10, 2-4 pm

ALLEN COUNTY | Tom and Jane Dustin Nature Preserve
1802 Chapman Rd, Huntertown, IN 46748

Celebrate your hard work! Report your final tallies, learn who spotted that elusive Green-tailed Towhee. Door prize drawing that night!



Hooded Merganser

Rose Breasted Grosbeak

Black Crowned Night Heron

Cooper's Hawk

Photos by Dave Fox

ACRES Land Trust 15

2016 – 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

YOUR STORY | Through sharing ACRES stories, joining hikes and events, becoming a member and renewing your membership, volunteering and investing in land, you supported tremendous growth.

YOUR LAND | As of June 30, 2017, you helped protect **eight new properties, two additions, and one new investment property**—eleven new parcels totaling **714 acres**, for a grand total of **6,686 acres cared for and protected, every day, forever**. Together with five Olive B. Cole Foundation student interns, community volunteers, and eight partner organizations, our Land Management team **invested more than 500 hours** fighting non-native invasive plants on more than 347 acres.

YOUR PARTICIPATION | As the collective ACRES community and as individual members, donors and volunteers:

- **1,417 members** shared the pride and joy of protecting places, together, for good.
- **Your average gift to ACRES was \$1,714.36** (excluding land donations, memberships and in-kind support). The **largest gift from an individual was \$254,014.26** and the smallest was \$1. Contributions from families, individuals, local businesses and foundations **totaled \$1,306,341.95** in support.
- You helped launch our first annual Bird Blitz and our Autumn Olive Volunteer Project.
- **Your support helped** the Boys & Girls Club, church groups, libraries, senior centers, students of all ages, YMCAs and more, **celebrate protected land**.
- **Your participation engaged new and longtime members** in book discussions, campfires, concerts, hikes, kayak trips, nature play days, wildlife encounters and workdays.
- **More than 150 of you volunteered, investing nearly 2,500 hours, an estimated value of \$60,350 in labor, in the lands you love.**

YOUR INVESTMENT: FINANCIAL REPORT *(July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017)*

NET WORTH		REVENUE / EXPENDITURE STATEMENT	
Value of Nature Preserves	\$22,152,890	Revenues	\$7,043,384
Bank Accounts	\$1,477,655*	Expenditures	\$739,130**
Equipment	\$106,317	Net Revenue	\$6,304,254
Investments & Endowment	\$4,150,051		
TOTAL	\$27,886,913		

*\$500,000 is restricted as a self-loaning account for new acquisitions.

**By accounting standards, cost to purchase land is considered a 'transfer of an asset' and cannot be shown here as an expenditure.

2018 – 2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

During tremendous, unprecedented growth, ACRES' board of directors presents our strategic plan for the next two calendar years:

ACRES has remained relevant and strong for the past 57 years, but our leadership does not take it for granted that doing what we did in the past will necessarily be the best approach for success in the future. This strategic plan challenges the organization to ensure its continued success through internal and external evaluation, refining the organization based on these evaluations, and attracting more people to the organization.

ACRES will conduct a thorough evaluation of the organization and how we operate.

We undertake this evaluation from a position of strength. Our organization is well respected, has diverse funding sources, is growing, and has great board and staff members. Now is the time to perform an evaluation—to maintain the health of the organization with a focus on our mission of ensuring existing and future acquired land will be preserved forever.

ACRES is experiencing momentum and building capital (human, financial, reputation) like never before. The period of evaluation this plan prescribes will help us invest this momentum in a targeted and successful way.

In summary, for 2018–2019 ACRES will:

ATTRACT new investors, members, donors and volunteers while maintaining the accelerated rate of land acquisition we achieved during the past five years.

EVALUATE our mission statement, values and vision, perform community needs assessments, assess office space and function, and assess staff utilization.

REFINE OUR WORK BY IDENTIFYING AND CREATING acquisition plans for large conservation areas, reducing impact to nature preserves by shifting some agricultural and recreational activities to protected lands, expanding members' connection to the ACRES story through a Preserve Portfolio book, and growing our commitment to land management of our growing number of preserve acres and protected lands

These goals will take your land trust into our next period of operations, during which ACRES will complete the evaluation as planned, while achieving the goals. New goals in a new strategic plan will be created after the evaluation is complete.

To view the complete 2018–2019 Strategic Plan, visit acreslandtrust.org/stratplan



Little Cedar Creek, Barrett Oak Hill Nature Preserve

ACRES is at the Fort Wayne Home & Garden Show at the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum March 1-4. Stop by our booth in the Garden Center to help us celebrate our anniversary: ACRES became a nonprofit on March 2, 1960. To celebrate our 58th anniversary of protecting the places you love, new and existing members can pick up a new ACRES acorn window cling, designed by Yonder Clothing Co., throughout the show. Happy trails!



Volunteers

SHARE THE TRAILS GUIDE SEMINAR

Saturday, March 17, 10 am - noon

Calling all Share the Trails volunteers—and outgoing, enthusiastic folks who'd like to join in the fun of leading people through the preserves: we're gathering to welcome new volunteers, review program guidelines and updates and share experiences.

Share your approach to leading people along the trail and discover hiking style and tips and tricks that new volunteers have brought to ACRES, including speedy wellness walks and a few ways to incorporate sharing nature literature and the arts and humanities.

Participants will receive a small gift as a token of appreciation. Your work as a Share the Trail guide is vital to ACRES' success in growing participation through membership, donations and volunteerism. Thank you!



VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DINNER

Thursday, May 10, 6-8 pm

ALLEN COUNTY | Tom and Jane Dustin Nature Preserve, Dustin Barn 1802 Chapman Road, Huntertown, IN 46748; The Barn entrance is east of the main drive.

All volunteers welcome. Spend some time getting to know new and seasoned volunteers as we celebrate your efforts and show our appreciation of your time and talents. Dinner compliments of ACRES' staff. *RSVP by May 3 to tpuitz@acreslandtrust.org or call 260-637-2273, ext 4.*



Welcome New DIRECTORS for the 2018-2020 term:

Bob Hake and Marc Levy of Fort Wayne, Stan Moore of North Manchester, and Janel Rogers of Columbia City, Indiana. Follow the ACRES blog to learn more about the experience this new group brings.

(SPRING HIKES & EVENTS continued from page 14)

GREAT AMERICAN CLEANUP

Saturday, May 19, 10 am

ALLEN COUNTY | Mengerson Nature Reserve 5895 Stellhorn Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46815

Join fellow ACRES volunteers to participate in the City of Fort Wayne's city-wide workday to clean up litter and debris in this popular urban preserve.

SPECIAL thanks

Autumn Olive Project volunteers

Donating coffee: Mark Maffey

First-of-year outreach letter stuffers:

Dave Brumm, Kris Connerly and Jodie Frecker

Flowers Creek tire cleanup crew: Kellie Adkins, Craig Bobay, Mary Boswell, Jane Deeds, Steve Doud, Rick Duff, Tim Gerardot, Jeff and Kathy Hawkins, Stan Moore, Jon Reese, Bryce Runkle, Lynette Smith, Carly Sorge and Kirk Swaidner

Flowers Creek tire cleanup breakfast cooks

Hosting Emanuel M. Popp Open House: Larry Biggerstaff and Keith and Louise Pomeroy

Hosting ACRES hikes and presentations:

Bluffton Rotary Club, Boys and Girls Club, Fort Wayne Children's Zoo, Fort Wayne Parks & Recreation Community Center, Fort Wayne Garden Club, Heartland REMC, The History Center, Huntington City-Township Public Library, ITT Retirees, North Manchester Kiwanis, Outdoor Adventurers of Northeast Indiana (OANI), Outdoor Writers Association, Parkview YMCA, Parkview Huntington YMCA, Timbercrest Senior Living, Unity Spiritual Center, Visit Fort Wayne, Wellspring Interfaith Social Services, Wells County Master Gardeners and more

Huntington North High School intern:

Lauren Farrell

Preserve stewards, caretakers and trails monitors

Quarterly stuffers: Dave Brumm, Laura Colpitts, Chris Fairfield, Jodie Frecker, Tedra Hemingway

Share the Trails Orion Woods hike host: Jack Hunter

Share the Trails volunteer hike leaders: Joe and Nancy Conrad, Matt Dunno, Chris Fairfield, Danielle Faurote, Carol Spallone, Janelle Windsor and Fred Wooley

Year-end fundraising letter stuffers: Kris Connerly, Carol Gaham, Lucy Hess, Sandy Lamp, and Darrell and Sue Will

wish list

Coffee

Copy paper

Forever stamps

Postcard stamps

memorials

Ruth Brake
from Lani Currado

Norman and Edna Braun
from Lon Braun

Russell Hathaway
from Eric and Erin Hathaway

Sam Ropchan
from Alice Ropchan

Matthew Shumaker
from Suzanne Dunn

Eugene Winicker
from Laura and Michael Dauscher

Carol Summers
from Dorothy Conley, Diana Harris, Doyle and Rheta Igney, Dan and Barb Tatman, Phillip and Ngoc Lockwood, Wayne and Cathie Lockwood, Dan and Diane Lockwood, Tim and Carol Lockwood, Pat and Chris Lockwood, Larry and Sue Mertz

Merrill Swaidner
from Dave and Barb Kissel and Pam and Jay Sagers

in honor of

John Gevers and Gregory Fryzel
from Laura Michney and Noah Haefner

Mark and Mary Ellen Maffey
from Sarah and Kyle Groves

Angie and Dan O'Neill
from Alice Kopfer

Cecelia Newton
from Mary Pat and Greg Veerkamp

Rob Place
from Chris and Emily Ford

Maureen Voors
from Cathy Voors

DIRECTORS: Steven Hammer, President; Carol Roberts, Vice President; Joe Conrad, Vice President; David Schnepf, Treasurer; Norm Cox, Secretary; Craig Bobay, Connie Haas Zuber, Bob Hake, Ashley Motia, Marc Levy, Stan Moore, Mark O'Shaughnessy, Angie Quinn, Dawn Ritchie, Janel Rogers, David Van Gilder and Michelle Briggs Wedaman.

STAFF: Jason Kissel, Executive Director; Heather Barth, Director of Fund Development; Lettie Haver, Outreach Manager; Evan Hill, Land Management Specialist; Casey Jones, Director of Land Management; and Tina Puitz, Office and Volunteer Manager.

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

MEMBERSHIP: Life Member, \$1,500; Sustaining, \$500; Corporate, \$500; Club/Organization, \$50; Family, \$40; Individual, \$25; Senior or Student, \$15. Dues payable annually.



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ACRES Land Trust 19

PRAISE

*I wake one morning and all that I love is alive.
Light across frost-glazed field, pale green
where yesterday it was brown, and the day before
dusted with snow. Clear indrawn breath is what wakes me.*

*Light across frost-glazed field, pale green—
cows, wolf, moccasins, mud of a sycamore forest, mastodon
dusted with snow. Clear indrawn breath is what wakes me.
Grey weight of these fossiliferous rocks has shown me*

*cows, wolf, moccasins, mud of a sycamore forest, mastodon,
sea fans waving in aqua light an epiric sea.
Grey weight of these fossiliferous rocks has shown me
all who have swum or walked here and loved*

*sea fans waving in aqua light an epiric sea
shimmering over the whole wide land.
All who have swum or walked here and loved
I see you this morning and sing, clear green*

*shimmering over the whole wide land
where yesterday it was brown and the day before.
I see you this morning and sing, clear green.
I wake one morning and all that I love is alive.*

— Helen Frost, ACRES member, is a poet
and children's author. The form of
this poem is a pantoum.

photo by Shane Perfect