

THE ACRES QUARTERLY

Summer 2021 | Vol. 60 - No. 2



ACRES
LANDTRUST

New Acquisition: Wesdorp Nature Preserve

Sharing Our Vision for Working Lands

Art Hammer's Lasting Legacy

Students Document Life at One Preserve

Member Q&A with Alex Harkins

From the Executive Director

Dear Members,

Acquiring land, managing land, managing people (members, preserve visitors, volunteers, neighbors) and running the business aspects of ACRES comprise 95% of ACRES overall efforts. So the *Quarterly* primarily shares information about those activities. However, I want to give you a glimpse into other important activities comprising the remaining 5% of effort, activities that your support of ACRES make possible.

Protecting land beyond ACRES ownership or direct involvement:

- Giving general advice to private landowners on how to manage their land
- Helping other land trusts with policy development or general advice
- Referring landowners to other organizations when ACRES isn't the best fit for their land
- Assisting Indiana DNR's purchase of land for nature preserves
- Participating in the creation of comprehensive plans for three counties

Facilitating acceptable use of ACRES properties by other nonprofits as they fulfill their missions:

- Supporting forest preschool programs
- Accommodating outdoor religious services
- Providing venue for homeschool, private and traditional K-12 field trips

Research:

- Allowing university research projects on ACRES properties
- Conducting Massasauga rattlesnake inventory
- Coordinating research at Wing Haven as part of our 200-year Ecological Reflection

History:

- Relocating historic barn to partner nonprofit
- Relocating historic log cabin to Spring Mill State Park
- Returning herbarium collected in 1857 to its original location in Germany

Miscellaneous:

- Managing new barn construction and office renovation
- Adjusting use of preserves, office environment and events due to pandemic

Your support of ACRES does what you expect it to: it helps protect land and manage it well. In addition, a small portion of your support also allows these other important activities to occur. You are responsible for a lot of great things happening in nature—well done! Thank you,


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

Cover photo by Dave Fox: A male Indigo Bunting perches on the stem of a flowering plant. The bird's habitat includes brushy pastures and bushy wood edges, and its diet mostly consists of seeds and insects. The male's brilliant feathers actually lack pigmentation; they appear blue because their features refract and reflect blue light. Can you identify the plant that the Indigo Bunting is perched on?

ACRES Land Trust owns and protects natural and working lands, inspiring people to value, appreciate, and support these places for the benefit of all, today and forever. Today, we protect and manage more than 7,200 acres in northeast Indiana and portions of southern Michigan and northwest Ohio. In addition to helping care for and restore our local land, your support also offers trail systems where you and others can explore thriving natural places, from dawn to dusk, at no charge. Thank you!

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

acreslandtrust.org



WELCOME
136newmembers!

Gary Adsit
Dean & Kathryn Agee
Brian Alexander
Joanna & Nathan Asdourian
Mary Baker
Adam Balzer
Anna Baumgartner
from Audrey & Matt Hunnicutt
Sara & Steve Bentz
Anna Bergmann & Chris Farrell
Ursula Berry
Hannah Berz
Janice & Doug Bir
Brian Bouldrey
Amy & Jason Brandt
Gene Browand
Stephen & Jessica Brown
Edward & Sondra Camadine
Holly & Tom Chaille
Ellie & Michael Chenault
Joe & Cathy Clifford
James Cook
from Greg Griffis
Brian & Christa Crabill
Janice & Marc Daniel
Andrea Diehl
Beth & Mark Dlug
Jim & Susan Dumire
Richard & Casey Easterday
Gwyn & Brandon Eastom
Matt & Tamara Ellenberger
Angela Elliott
Jay & Peggy Farlow
John & J. Anne Farmer
Betty Feay
Linda Felger
Angie & Pete Felkner
Jeff & Dawn Frauhiger
Karl & Nancy Fuerste
Elwin Geyer
Paul & Sue Lyn Goldman
Katherine & Andrew Haff
Byron & Lesley Haflich
Jennifer & Jason Hammond
Ann Hartsough
Molly & Greg Harty
Lenora Hatfield
Jose & Mercedalia Hernandez
Christi Hille
from Nick Farran

Peter Iadicola & Dawn Oetting
Kenna Jackson
Dustin & Robin Johnson
from Preston & Amy Morrow
Lisa & Greg Johnson
Tylanna & Jeremy Jones
Sue Karst
Tom & Renee Keihn
Kyle & Mindy Kinduell
Roxanne Kingsbury & Joel Mix
David Klopfenstein & Karol Lu
Diane Kneller
Kimberly Koehne
Amanda & Matt Kolkman
Jessica Kreider
Leslie Krock
Emily & Andre Krouse
Dan Kruse
Robert & Jill Lange
Julian Lauzzana
Gary Lee
Regina Leffers
Rachel L. Lent
LuAnne Letizia
Allison & Austin Lucas
from Kathy & Chuck Dowe
Jessie Malone
Courtney Mangan
from Kirk Swaidner
Mary Lou McDaniel
Nancy & Vernon McDonald
Michelle McKee & Thomas Sheets
Erin McKeever
Alice McMahon
Ed & Mable Mendoza
Laura Miller
Michael & Robin Miller
Matt & Julie Minnick
Julia Monteroso
Laura Nonneman
Jim & Laurie O'Donnell
Mark Osburn
Barbara O'Connor & John O'Connor, Jr.
Rachel Pals
Rob Parker
Joan Pauley
from James Eisenbraun
Phillip Penny
from Kirk Swaidner

John & Beth Petersen
Deborah Prater
Daniel Przybyla & Vivianne Bélanger
Sarah & Nathan Randolph
April Raver
David Redding
Kara Robinett
Ben & Kayla Ruhl
Niko Schafer
Deb & Paul Scheffler
Jill Seitz
Jake & Abbey Shinneman
Alma & Jasmin Smajlovic
Brent Smith & Claudia Ibarra
from Mike & Nancy Smith
Desolee Smith & Lloyd Walker
Eric Smith & Kristin Coryea
from Mike & Nancy Smith
Tamara Smith
Chandler & Lisa Sonafank
Vanessa Souliere
Barb Spice
Jarrid Spicer & Emily Eisenhauer
Katie Stephens
from Kathryn Baker
Terri Storms
Bill & Ellen Stouffer
Kim Strnad
Michaela Taulil
Sarah Taylor
Brian & Diane Thayer
The Deli at Sixth & Main
Jim & Connie Thompson
Kelly Trusty
Michael Vorndran
Dottie Vossler
Wabash Woman's Clubhouse
Barbara Walter
Charles & Kay Weikel
Eric & Judy Weitz
Carol & Steven Weld
Nancy Wheeler
Thomas Wheeler
from Nancy Wheeler
Anne & Will Williams
Manford & Connie Wise
from Marvin & Quoda Troyer



NEW ACQUISITION

WESDORP NATURE PRESERVE ACRES protects land along Little Elkhart River

ACRES Land Trust recently acquired a 38-acre property along Little Elkhart River in Elkhart County. Located in the town of Middlebury, Wesdorp Nature Preserve protects farmland and wooded wetlands, providing habitat for wildlife and native plants like blue flag iris and green dragon.

"The floodplain of the Little Elkhart River spreads out on this property, slowing flood water and creating a diverse forested wetland," said Jason Kissel, ACRES executive director. "The upland areas had high development pressure; now its future is a natural system rather than the next subdivision."

The land played an important role in Middlebury's history. Land donor Karen Wesdorp's father, Clarence Wesdorp, was vice president and general manager of Krider Nurseries, a business that helped put the town on the map.

In 1933, the company's founder, Vernon Krider, created a display garden for the 1934 Chicago World's Fair. Over 250,000 visitors signed the guestbook for the display, and the company used this list to establish the largest mail-order nursery business in the United States. The Middlebury Post Office even received a First Class rating due to the number of shipments made by the nursery.

Preserving Memories

Karen Wesdorp grew up near the nursery, her childhood home surrounded by fields of nursery stock. "It was always so beautiful to look out the windows of our house and see green space on both sides," she said.

She enjoyed tagging along with her father as he worked. She joined him as he worked in the field with the cultivator, and after supper in the summer, she followed him to the pump house on the Little Elkhart River to watch him start the pump engine to irrigate the field.

After the nursery closed in 1990, Wesdorp purchased the growing field and surrounding woods and wetlands when she learned they were at risk of being developed. It cost her "an arm and a leg," but the property's sentimental value made it a worthy transaction, she said.

Over the years, the property has been the setting for many memories for Wesdorp and her family: wading in the creek while watching colorful dragonflies, hiking the trails, canoeing and kayaking on the Little Elkhart River, and spending summer nights in her cabin's screened-in porch.

Wesdorp's gift to ACRES ensures the land will remain the way she remembers it. "I know my parents would be really pleased to know that I'm doing this," she said.

Because the Preserve is located near the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, thousands of people have already admired the property's beauty from this trail and bridge overlook.

"Now (and forever) trail users can be assured that view will always be there. It won't be replaced by a housing development or another land use."

— Jason Kissel

"ACRES provides assurance and consistency not only for people passing by, but also for all the life that calls that place home," Kissel said. "Another little bit of Elkhart County will always be preserved—for the benefit of all."



Expanding in Elkhart County

Wesdorp Nature Preserve joins Caprarotta Family Natural Area and Eby Bog as ACRES third Elkhart County property. In addition to protecting these properties, ACRES has also partnered with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to expand its Elkhart Bog Nature Preserve.

Wesdorp Nature Preserve is closed to the public. However, Kissel hopes its high visibility along the Pumpkinvine Trail will introduce new people to ACRES and inspire them to get involved. "We aren't well known in Elkhart County, but we are eager to change that," he said. "We have several potential acquisition projects in the county. We have members, properties, partners and even an endowment at the Community Foundation of Elkhart County. We are just getting started."

ACRES needs your help to raise \$54,200 to cover costs associated with this newly protected land. To make a one-time donation to this project, visit acreslandtrust.org/donate. Thank you!

ACRES VISION For Working Lands

By Jason Kissel

ACRES Land Management Director Evan Hill plants 20 species of native grasses and flowering plants at Founders Forest, a closed preserve where ACRES is restoring a former agricultural field to a prairie habitat.

That 594 acres of ACRES land will be farmed this year often surprises people.

However, none of the farmland we currently own will be preserved as farmland in perpetuity; eventually, all the fields will be converted to natural systems. In the meantime, we cash-rent the farmland, a practice that generates income for land management activities. We require the tenant farmers to meet all best management practices, including using continuous no-till practices and cover crops.

ACRES would preserve land in perpetual agricultural production if the land donor requested this. In fact, we are eager to find such a donor. ACRES values the role of agriculture within our service area and would like to always stay an active manager of farmland. ACRES offers the donor of agricultural land the ability to preserve a family farm forever—not just for the next generation or two—and the assurance that the fields will be responsibly managed.

All of the farmland now owned by ACRES was acquired as part of a larger natural area. For example, a “back 40” was purchased or donated as part of a larger 100-acre tract of forest. Most of our fields are small. We currently have 15 fields in production, with an average field size of 40 acres. The number of acres farmed each year varies as we acquire new fields and restore existing ones. Over the past 10 years, the farmed fields have varied from 365 to 673 acres.



ACRES preserves Claxton Woods, a 93-acre timber stand donated by Bill and Shirley Claxton.

Our preference would be to own larger tracts of agricultural land so we could restore the smaller fields currently in production. If we had one 600-acre field, rather than fifteen 40-acre fields, we’d earn the same (or more) income, be much more efficient, and be able to more quickly convert the small fields into natural systems. This would expand the habitats of the preserves, of which the small fields are a part.

Farming families tend to be supporters of ACRES. Like ACRES, these families know, work on, care for and love land. Some choose to donate the natural areas of their farms to ACRES. Many may not have considered that ACRES would also be interested in preserving their farmland.



When families donate their farmland to ACRES, they have preserved the farm forever, ACRES receives a perpetual income, and the land is well cared for. Those acres help protect natural areas by allowing us to eventually restore (return to nature) our currently farmed fields that are part of nature preserves.

ACRES has been in the farming business for decades, and we plan to remain so for centuries and millennia.



If you would like to explore options for preserving your farmland forever, give me a call 260-637-2273 x 2 or email me at jkissel@acreslandtrust.org.

ART HAMMER'S LASTING LEGACY

"A living memorial such as this is better than a tombstone"

By Chris Fairfield

The words in this title were spoken by Arthur W. Hammer at the dedication of the Anna Brand Hammer Nature Preserve in Wells County. Art (as he was known) purchased the 40 acres in 1951, gifted a primary part of it to ACRES in 1982, then expanded it through his Last Will and Testament in 2004.

The property was partly cultivated and partly forested. It became a place that he and his mother, Anna, would visit to enjoy nature. Art said, "If you wanted to go out there in the afternoon, it was like having your own park. I go out there and read the newspaper. It's kind of a retreat."

Art Hammer lived and worked in Fort Wayne. He played and supported competitive tennis. He dedicated himself to preserving, revitalizing and creating natural sanctuaries in and around Allen County. His land efforts went from seed to landscape to habitat. He collected tree seeds from places like McMillen Park, Lutheran Hospital and Allen County Public Library to plant and grow into hundreds of trees. A reporter once remarked, "His face and eyes light up as he speaks about the more spectacular specimens he started from seedlings."

Another of his gifted properties is the Art Hammer Wetlands in northern Noble County, on the banks of the Elkhart River and Waldron Lake. From 1986 to 1994, Art wisely negotiated with neighboring families and family estates to collect and care for the 356 acres. Then, from 1990 to 1995, he intermittently gifted parcels to ACRES. This vital wetland preserve is now partially bordered by neighborhoods of lake homes and private properties.

Although Art Hammer passed in 1994, he posthumously continued to care for his beloved land by willing it to ACRES Land Trust to be preserved forever. Art said, "I've always thought buying ground was better than leaving money in the bank." He formally planned his and the land's eventuality by willing financial support, a portion of the sale proceeds of his adult home and other specifically transferable property to ACRES for its service to his and to other natural settings. Three of the many properties he willed to ACRES as Allen County preserves are Cypress Meadow, Little Wabash River Nature Preserve and Herman F. Hammer Wald Nature Preserve.



Cypress Meadow on Zubrick Road in south Allen County is now a 19-acre natural oasis in an industrial area near the Interstate 69 corridor, just south of the Vera Bradley headquarters. After purchasing this formerly farmed land in 1993, Art transformed it into a diverse forest habitat surrounding a beautiful pond, including a small cypress stand to be enjoyed.

Little Wabash River Nature Preserve is 24.30 acres on Ernst Road just west of the Fort Wayne International Airport. The land was once part of the NE-AH-Long-Quah Reserve. Art purchased the parcel in 1980, constructed and stocked a pond, planted trees and established it as an IDNR classified wildlife habitat. In a typewritten report from the ACRES archives, an unknown author wrote, "Art loved those trees, knowing the exact history for nearly every individual one of them ... he pruned them and helped keep back the herb competition in their early years."

Herman F. Hammer Wald Nature Preserve, a 70-acre property on Rupert Road in Grabill, is named for Art's father, who immigrated from Germany in 1892. The preserve continues to memorialize the compassion Art's father instilled in him as they planted and tended trees at his boyhood home. Once cultivated farmland, this preserve is now a maturing forest habitat. Art gifted portions of the property to ACRES during his life and willed a remaining portion at his death.

Arthur W. Hammer set a fantastic example for individuals and families to come together in reverence for the land, their heritage and legacy. He set a gold standard for gifting and preplanning land into forever care with ACRES Land Trust, for the benefit of all.

RETIRING TRAILS: The trail systems at Anna Brand Hammer Reserve, Cypress Meadow, Little Wabash River Nature Preserve and Herman F. Hammer Wald will close to the public Dec. 31, 2021, as part of ACRES comprehensive plan to update visitor amenities at its nature preserves. Trails at Art Hammer Wetlands will also be retired at a later date. For more information, visit [acreslandtrust.org/raisingourstandards](https://www.acreslandtrust.org/raisingourstandards).

Photo spread on pages 10–11 by Chuck Fletter: A snapping turtle lounges on a sunny log. Common habitats for these large reptiles include shallow ponds and streams. Snapping turtles are omnivores and play an important role in the aquatic ecosystem by cleaning up dead organisms from the body of water they inhabit. Snapping turtles travel long distances over land to reach new habitats or to lay eggs, so keep an eye out for these roving reptiles during your next preserve visit!

ART HAMMER'S IMPACT AT A GLANCE

473.1 ACRES

of permanently protected land

Anna Brand Hammer Reserve

Art Hammer Wetlands

Cypress Meadow

Herman F. Hammer Wald Nature Preserve

Little Wabash River Nature Preserve

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Investment property provided farm income for many years; sold in 2020 to help fund the new maintenance facility, the Art W. Hammer Barn

Cash bequest allowed ACRES to purchase Kokiwanee and Wildwood, significantly grow ACRES endowment and establish funds at several community foundations

To learn more about planned giving, contact ACRES Advancement Director Heather Barth at 260-637-2273 ext. 5 or hbarth@acreslandtrust.org.



NATIONAL TRAILS DAY

SATURDAY, JUNE 5, 3-4:30 pm

WELLS COUNTY | Acres Along the Wabash
182 S.E. SR 116, Bluffton, IN 46714

Join us on a hike along the ravines and bluffs of the Wabash River to celebrate Trails Day! *Space is limited. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or 260-637-2273 by June 3.*

TREKS AND TAPS

SUNDAY, JUNE 13, 2 pm

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

Explore the forested ravines of Spurgeon, then join us afterwards for a "treat yourself" stop at Harry Stuff Brewing Company. *Space is limited. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or call 260-637-2273 by June 11.*



JAVA JAUNT

FRIDAY, JUNE 25, 9 am

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

Get your blood pumping with a morning hike and cup of coffee! This casual hike through protected forest will be followed by a "treat yourself" stop for coffee at Brew'ha coffeehouse in Columbia City. *Space is limited. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or call 260-637-2273 by June 23.*



Shane Perfect

FIELD FLOWER HIKE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 7, 6 pm

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

Enjoy the final blooms of the season along trails at Wildwood. Learn how these native flowers and grasses thrive in the sun and provide a unique habitat. *Space is limited. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or 260-637-2273 by JULY 5.*



NEW MEMBER OPEN HOUSE

SATURDAY, JULY 17, 1-2:30 pm

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

Are you new to ACRES? Welcome! Meet other new members and longtime volunteers while learning how your membership protects land. Hear ACRES history and updates on new projects, and get answers to your questions: How do we acquire new land? How will we protect it forever? Refreshments and light snacks provided.

Social distancing (keeping at least 6 feet of distance between individuals at all times) will be implemented at all events. Please stay home if you feel ill or have been recently exposed to someone with COVID-19. Masks are required at all indoor events.

To check the status of an event please call 260-637-2273, email outreach@acreslandtrust.org or visit acreslandtrust.org/events

WETLAND FLOAT FOR MEMBERS

SATURDAY, JULY 24, 2-4 pm

NOBLE COUNTY | Art Hammer Wetlands
Launch address provided with RSVP

Grab a paddle and join fellow members as we explore Art Hammer Wetlands from the water. During this casual float, learn about the protected wetlands and Art Hammer's legacy.

Limited canoe/kayak rentals available for \$30 per person. Payment must be made in order to secure your spot. Cash, credit and checks accepted (pay in-person at the ACRES office or call 260-637-2273). Please send checks to PO Box 665, Huntertown, IN 46748 with "member float" on the memo line. Or feel free to bring your own (just be sure to RSVP)! *Space is limited. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or call 260-637-2273 by July 9.*



KAUFFMAN NATURE SANCTUARY GRAND OPENING

SATURDAY, AUGUST 7, 1-3 pm

HILLSDALE COUNTY | Kauffman Nature Sanctuary
13127 Beecher Rd, Hudson, MI 49247

Join us in celebrating ACRES first Michigan property, Kauffman Nature Sanctuary. Acquired in winter 2019, this 78 acre preserve features wetlands, grasslands, forests and a headwater stream. Come anytime between 1 and 3 pm to chat with staff and explore a new trail system!

CREEK STOMP XIII

SATURDAY, AUGUST 14, 2 pm

WABASH COUNTY | Hathaway Preserve at Ross Run
1866 E. Baumbauer Road, Wabash, IN 46992

This spectacular creek is off limits the rest of the year, so here's your chance! Get up close and personal with minnows, pinching crayfish and fossils as you make your way through the cliffs and waterfalls of the Ross Run gorge. You'll get wet, dirty—and inspired. Water shoes are recommended. *Presented by the Kissel family.*



ART WORKSHOP FOR ACRES MEMBERS

SUNDAY, August 15, 2 pm

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

Get creative with local artist Julie Wall, owner of The HEDGE art and custom print shop. Learn to bookbind your own nature notebook using the Japanese stab binding method. Each participant can create two hand-bound books using different patterns and colors. *Space is limited. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or call 260-637-2273 by August 13.*



Julie Wall

BOOK DISCUSSION FOR MEMBERS

FRIDAY, AUGUST 27, 6-7:30 pm

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

Take time this summer to read "The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier and More Creative" by Florence Williams. We will gather on the deck (weather permitting) to discuss nature's restorative benefits and share our takeaways from the book. *Space is limited. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or 260-637-2273 by August 25.*

Watch for more events online: acreslandtrust.org.



INTO THE WOODS Students Document Life at One Preserve

By Reena Ramos, photos by Joanna Stebing

Although ACRES protects many preserves with notable features like waterfalls and other unique formations, every ACRES preserve holds hidden gems sometimes seen only through closer inspection.



In 2019, a group of students from Purdue University Fort Wayne set out to conduct an ecological and floristic survey of Little Wabash River Preserve. The southwest Allen County preserve protects 24 acres of floodplains and forest near Little River, a tributary of the Wabash River.

Recent graduates Tessa Aby and Joanna Stebing led the survey. Since the last survey was from 2010, both were eager to update the site's records.

"This research can help us understand what plant communities are present and how they change through time," Stebing said.

Such surveys can help ACRES target land management strategies, from protecting rare species to targeting non-native, invasive species for removal.

During the year-long survey, Aby and Stebing frequently visited the site to record species in the understory, midstory and overstory of the forest. They also catalogued all plant species, birds and insects they found.

"That was the most time we've spent at a site, ever. You get to know the curves of the trails and where to see certain birds or plants. We developed this special relationship with the site. I feel like we got attached to it," Stebing said.

AN EXCITING DISCOVERY

While surveying the floodplains, Aby and Stebing discovered an undescribed species of wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulos*).

"We were thrilled! The state botanist, Scott Namestnik, even had us call to confirm what we'd found, and take a sample," Aby said. "It's potentially a new species or a new subspecies of the floodplain wild bergamot," Stebing said. "There's only a couple sites in Fort Wayne where this particular wild bergamot has been spotted, and one site happened to be Little Wabash River."

Another point of interest was an 11-acre field. Since ACRES acquired it in 2015, the area has been left to return to nature. Here, species like Slender Ladies Tresses orchids (*Spiranthes lacera*) have moved in as the forest reclaims the open area.

It was fascinating to see the habitats change throughout the seasons. They noticed something new during every visit. "From spring wildflowers to warm season grasses, it was amazing to see the seasonal changes up close and personal," Aby said.

They were able to observe birds and insects throughout their life cycle. "In spring we saw caterpillars and would take note of what plants they were on to help identify them," Stebing said. "For example, we found a caterpillar amongst hackberry trees, and later identified it as a Hackberry Emperor (*Asterocampa celtis*). We started noticing small details like that, and making these connections. It was really rewarding!"

The students also noted non-native, invasive species common throughout the Midwest, including bush honeysuckle, autumn olive and multiflora rose. ACRES has long-term management plans to combat these aggressive plants.

INSPIRING SUPPORT FOR PROTECTING LAND

Aby and Stebing hope sharing their findings will inspire others to protect land, including natural areas that aren't remarkable at first glance. "Some people might consider it a mundane patch of woods. But when you really spend time there throughout the year, you see how much it changes and how much life is there," Stebing said.

Aby added, "It's possible that someone has a passion to protect one of the species of plants, insects or birds we found. They can protect that species and its habitat forever by supporting ACRES."

The trails at Little Wabash River Nature Preserve are scheduled to retire Dec. 31, 2021, as part of a four-year plan to improve visitor amenities at ACRES preserves. Although daily public access to this property will end, the natural communities documented in the students' survey will remain protected forever. "I think it's exciting that ACRES plans to retire that preserve, both to help manage it better and give it a much needed rest from human impact," Aby said.

Thank you, Tessa Aby, Joanna Stebing and the rest of your team (Madison Beckstedt, Liz King and Zach Heck), for sharing your survey results with ACRES!



Monarda fistulos

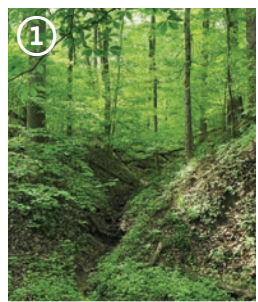


Spiranthes lacera

TAKE A SUMMER ROAD TRIP WITH ACRES

Thanks to member and volunteer support, ACRES offers many places to explore throughout our region. Each preserve is unique, featuring diverse landscapes. If you're looking for some new-to-you trails, why not make a day of it?

We're starting a road trip series to suggest some routes to check out. So fuel up, grab your walking shoes, and pack your lunch (or support a local restaurant—see our suggestions for pit stops!). For the first route in this series, we're heading to Huntington and Wells counties.



Start at Pehkokia Woods

Located northwest of Huntington just off U.S. 24, Pehkokia Woods takes its name from the Miami word for “peace.” The property offers a 1.9-mile trail for easy walking. As you enter the preserve, veer off to the left (west) for trails through rolling upland woods bisected by 20-foot-deep ravines. Continue straight (north) for a loop through Pehkokia’s grassland area.

Next stop: Tel-Hy

From Pehkokia, take State Road 9 (also known as the “Highway of Vice Presidents” because four of Indiana’s six vice presidents lived in cities along the route) south to Tel-Hy Nature Preserve, a 7-minute drive.

Here you will find a moderately challenging 1.1-mile trek that includes some steep grades. In Hebrew, Tel means “high” and Hy means “life.” It’s a fitting name for this property which offers visitors a view of the winding Wabash River from a bluff high above.



Follow the River

From Tel-Hy, head southeast, following the direction of the Wabash River to reach Acres Along the Wabash, a 20-minute drive. This preserve offers 2.3 miles of trails through hilly terrain. As its name suggests, much of the trail runs parallel to the river bank. Here you’ll find trees that have stood for over 100 years, overlooking the river and those who have paddled these waters. Look for nesting birds like the wood thrush and red-eyed vireo.



Pit Stops

Here are a couple staff picks for local restaurants to fuel your trek!

Joseph Decuis Emporium

151 N Main St, Roanoke, IN 46783

Mon–Sat, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

260-672-1715

www.josephdecuis.com/emporium

Nick’s Kitchen

506 N Jefferson St, Huntington, IN 46750

Mon–Tue, 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., Wed–Sat, 6 a.m.

to 8 p.m., Sun, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

260-356-6618

www.nicksdowntown.com



MEMBER Q&A with ALEX HARKINS

Tell us about yourself.

I grew up in Auburn, and I now call Fort Wayne home. I first learned about ACRES when I was a teenager, some 20 years ago. Some friends took me to Vandolah, and I thought it was the coolest thing ever! I grabbed a *Quarterly* out of the sign-in box on my way out, and my interest in ACRES grew from there.

What made you want to support ACRES as a member?

There are two main reasons I support ACRES as a member. First, I use ACRES a lot, especially this last year! Membership is a ridiculously small price to pay for the dozens of times I go to ACRES properties in a year.

My second reason is Cedar Creek. In my opinion, Cedar Canyon is the most unique geological feature in Allen County. I am an avid kayaker and have kayaked through it several times. When you are floating on the creek and look up, stately old trees form a cathedral above you. It is simply beautiful. Sadly, I think Cedar Canyon may be the most vulnerable natural area in the county as well. As that area becomes more and more developed, I think the task of protecting the canyon becomes more important. ACRES is the predominant force in preserving the Cedar Creek Corridor, so supporting that is a no-brainer for me.

Tell us about your New Year’s resolution.

I set out to hike all the open ACRES preserves. This is actually the second time I have hiked all of them in a calendar year. The first time was in 2013. Indiana is a place that kind of hides her natural beauty, so my motivation then was to find as much of that beauty as I could locally. My motivation the second time was to reconnect with that. Coming out of 2020, I knew I needed to clear my mind and regroup myself. Like a lot of Midwesterners, I can sometimes suffer from a bit of cabin fever and seasonal depression in winter. For 2021, I adopted the Scandinavian saying, “There’s no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes” and got to hiking!

How long did it take you?

This year, it took me 62 calendar days, with 17 or 18 days of hiking. I grouped preserves into geographic clusters and would go hike several in a day. Also, I made info sheets so I would know how many miles I would have to drive and hike for certain clusters. That helped a lot with time management, as the setting sun was usually the limiting factor for me time wise.

Do any of your visits stick out in your mind?

Seeing how the preserves have changed over the last eight years was amazing. At preserves I visit frequently like Bicentennial Woods and Hanging Rock, it can be harder for me to notice change. However, I had not been to Robb Hidden Canyon in nearly a decade. The last time I was there, the front section was barely more than a field, now it has trees! Seeing nature reclaim the land is a beautiful thing!

Do you have a favorite ACRES preserve?

Vandolah will always be my number one because I have made so many great memories there. Also, I’ve always been struck by the dichotomy that it enshrines, between natural areas and human progress. As you walk the first part of the preserve you very quickly come upon the interstate and its gigantic, noisy footprint. For some, this may not be a feature that they look for at a nature preserve, but for me I have always looked at it as a teachable symbol for why we need nature preserves. We must protect some of this land before progress in one form or another changes it forever.

Anything else you want to share?

A lot of people think that Indiana, especially this part of it, can be dull, boring and devoid of geological beauty. ACRES preserves prove otherwise, and I am so grateful for that.

announcements

We're Back!

We're pleased to announce that the ACRES office renovation is complete! The ACRES team worked remotely for two months while construction crews made our Hometown headquarters more efficient and accessible. Although finishing touches (like tidying our native garden) are still underway, we're excited to welcome visitors and volunteers into the updated space.

"The renovation has made the building even more welcoming than it was before," said ACRES Executive Director Jason Kissel. "You will be greeted with accessible parking and walkways, someone to welcome you as you walk through the front door and new, accessible restrooms." The updates also include two new office areas.

Built of wood and stone on a bluff high over Cedar Creek, the office was originally the home of Tom and Jane Dustin, two of ACRES founding members. "We've maintained the building's character—its history and architecture, while enhancing its functionality and increasing everyone's access to it, making it the ideal place from which to facilitate protecting land," Kissel said.

With the office renovation and construction of the new maintenance barn (among other campus improvements), the ACRES expansion plan is nearing completion. Later this summer, work will begin on a stroller- and wheelchair-accessible trail, and a Cedar Creek overlook deck at the Tom & Jane Dustin Nature Preserve.

Thanks to the support this project has received so far, we've raised more than 75% of our \$600,000 goal! If you haven't already, will you make a contribution toward the Capital Campaign? Your gift will have a long-lasting impact across our region. Donate at acreslandtrust.org/grow or by sending your check with "Capital Campaign" on the memo line to: **ACRES Land Trust, P.O. Box 665, Hometown, IN 46748-0665**

Thank you!



in memory of

Wesley Adams
from Diana Smith

John Crowley
from David Crowley

Burdette Eagon
from Michael & Stacey Schliesmann

Art & Marion Eberhardt
from Lee & Pat Casebere

Frances W. Headings
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& Cynthia Powers, Nannette Rang, Richard & Lois
Rodenbeck, Samuel & Jan Schwartz, Stockbridge
Audubon Society, Merisa Windell

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Kathleen Sorg
from Tim Kitagawa & Marissa Sheppard
Eldon James Summers
from Diana Harris
Darwin "Pete" Zehr
from Nick Ferran, John Stiver

in honor of

All teachers, everywhere
from Susan & Kevin Brockberg

Chris Fairfield and Carol Spallone, for preserving
ACRES history
from Jim & Penny Kindraka

Fran Kattau-Bolton
from David Kattau

Reena Ramos
from Larry & Donna Seiler

SPECIAL thanks

ACRES Board of Directors & Committee Members
Archive projects
Chris Fairfield, Mary Anna Feitler, Diane Jones
and Carol Spallone
Janet Canino
Leading a workday at Covell
Tony Fleming, Dave Hicks and John J. Smith
Wildflower hikes
Jeri Kornegay
Preserve Guide stickers
Alex Harkins
Member Q&A

Thank you, Casey!

A big thank you to Casey Jones for seven years of land management efforts! He modernized the division, utilizing technology to increase efficiency and digitize documentation of the work performed within the preserves. This made preserve information more readily available now, and for future staff. Casey remains part of the land management team as he and his family will continue to serve as caretakers of Wildwood. All the best in your new endeavors, Casey!



Office support volunteers:
Laura Colpitts & Louise Pomeroy
Bob Palmer
Archiving ACRES news articles
Spring *Quarterly* assembly & distribution Volunteers:
Dave Brumm, Mary Campbell, Laura Colpitts, Kris
Connerly, Nancy and Joe Conrad, Norm Cox,
Mary Daly, Barb & Terri Gorney, Jim Haddock,
Tedra Hemingway, Mark Maffey, Shane Perfect,
Judy Schroff & April Steury
Spring workday & cleanup volunteers
Volunteer preserve stewards, caretakers, trail
monitors

Thank you, Matt!

ACRES recently bid farewell to land management specialist Matt Dunno. Matt was a pleasure to work with. We all admired his enthusiasm and ability to take on a wide range of jobs in service of protecting land. His positive, can-do attitude was well suited for connecting with volunteers and preserve visitors alike. We wish you the best of luck in the next step of your career. Thank you!



wish list

Order from ACRES Amazon Wish List: Under "Find a List or Registry," search for "ACRES Land Trust" or request a link at acres@acreslandtrust.org.

ACRES membership and your stories
2-cycle oil
Bar oil
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Bottled water
Chainsaw backpack(s)
Coffee
Compostable cups, plates, bowls and dinnerware
(no Styrofoam, please)
Extricator Classic, Up Rooter, and/or
Weed Wrench
Facebook and Instagram followers
Gas cards

Hardware store gift cards
Mike's Carwash gift cards
More Farm Store credit (money may be added
to ACRES Inc account)
Mosquito repellent
Paper towels
Safety glasses
Snacks for events (individually wrapped)
Trash bags (33 gallon or larger)
USB flash drive
Used iPhones for field work (needs to support at
least iOS 13 updates: iPhone SE, 6, 7, 8, X or 11)
White copy paper (letter size)

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ACRES Land Trust
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Moonlight, Summer Moonlight

by Emily Jane Brontë

*'Tis moonlight, summer moonlight,
All soft and still and fair;
The solemn hour of midnight
Breathes sweet thoughts everywhere,*

*But most where trees are sending
Their breezy boughs on high,
Or stooping low are lending
A shelter from the sky.*

*And there in those wild bowers
A lovely form is laid;
Green grass and dew-steeped flowers
Wave gently round her head.*

Emily Jane Brontë (1818-1848) was an English novelist and poet who is best known for her only novel, *Wuthering Heights*. Brontë used nature in her writing to draw parallels between the natural world and human nature.



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