

THE ACRES QUARTERLY

Spring 2023 | Vol. 62 - No. 1



ACRES
LANDTRUST

ACRES: Now and Then

Land Acquisition Gains Momentum

Planting and Nurturing Future Forests

From Golf Course to Urban Nature Preserve

*How One Wildflower Responds to
Environmental Change*

Patching Together a Refuge

From the Executive Director

WELCOME 87newmembers!

Dear Members,

I'm very excited that we are acquiring land at a pace greater than ever before — \$7 million worth of land and over 752 acres! See page 5 for details.

ACRES current strategic plan challenges us to “grow the capacity of the organization.” Why? “To increase the amount of land acquired each year and to expand the care of existing land.”

This new year, we will do it again.

While 2023 should be a record year for ACRES, our goal is to make this year's success routine as we continue to grow our capacity.

While many more than 752 acres of land need protecting this year, I am both motivated and frustrated by the land we can't acquire this year due to lack of funding.

Thank you for making this year's success possible. We need more people like you to continue to expand our success. This spring, share with someone what ACRES is and does, and what it means to you. Take them on a hike, invite them to an event, gift them a membership, hand them this *Quarterly*. Many of you heard about ACRES from someone you knew — it's the most common way people discover ACRES.

You are key to our current success and our future. You helped create a great organization. Now — share it with others, with pride!

Sincerely,



Jason Kissel
jkissel@acreslandtrust.org
260-637-2273 ext. 102

Cover photo by Joanna Stebing: Christmas ferns begin to unfurl at Tel-Hy in Huntington County, Indiana. The curled up fronds of a young fern are called fiddleheads. As you walk the trails in early spring, keep your eyes peeled for the tightly coiled structures beginning to emerge.



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 7,400 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



Laurie & James Alifimoff
Nathaniel Anderson
from Samantha Anderson
Emily Aneshansley & Edward
Ondrejcek
from Jim & Gwen Seely
Sarah & Michael Beiswanger
Carol Bennett
Mary Berghoff Bundza
Jenna & Brian Biggins
Daniel T. Boyko
Bob & Marie Brewer
from Lisa Seiler & Rene Ramos
Josh Bruner
Mark Campbell
Jane C. Casey
Jeanine & Greg Childs
Ed Cook
Linda Derheimer
Paul DeRolf
Jenna Driver
Traci Dunn
Melody Ellert
from Max Hapner
Andy Fitzenrider
Rev. John P. Gardner
Anne & Cleveland Graham
Steve Graves & Stacey Cortez-
Graves
Mark Gunsenhouser
from Joy Maassel
Thomas Harris
from Barbara Harris
Alicia Hazelwood & Steve
Hazelwood, Jr.
Lew Herring
Carolyn & Brian Hillyer
Brice Holley

Adam Honegger & Ringo
Compean
James Jackson
JAR Charitable Foundation
Stephanie & Jeremy Johnson
Michaelleen & James Kasmier
Syndy & Ed Kelley
John Ketzenberger
Jackie Kolb
Mark & Tracy Korthal
Robert Kyle
from Amanda Kyle & kids
Henry & Courtney Leach
Troy Lehman
Linsey & Josh Leitch
Paula Linman
Rachel & Allen Loechner
Terry Lydy
Jon & Lauren Lynch
from Bob & Kim Hake
Bob & Connie Menzie
from Darryl & Susan Whittington
Diane Miller
from Mary La Rocque
Margaret Miller
Logan Moore
from Renee & Clint Moore
Kara Morris
from Dale & Jody Warner
Kyle & Kendra Morris
from Dale & Jody Warner
Amy Moser
Dennis Munk
Margaret Munson
Craig & Vinnie Nix
Erin Norton
from Lisa Seiler & Rene Ramos
Leticia Olivarez

Kyle & Suzie Pattison
Danielle Payne
Richard & Joann Piatt
from Jason Piatt & Veronica
Kwasny
Brenna Picco
Mel & Cindy Regier
David Riethmiller
Gwen Rinker
from Cathy & Steve Berlin
Stacy Roark
Kimberly Roe
Glenna Ross
Terry Ryman
Rita Schroll
Chelsey & Eric Shilling
Bob Shugart
Adrianne Silka
Kurt Simerman & Jacie Gray
Bernard Spieth
from Jenna & Kyle Bair
Abbey Stombaugh
from Lori Stombaugh
Melanie & Mike Tart
Stacey & Charles Taylor
from Lisa Seiler & Rene Ramos
Tommi Tucker
from Camilla Sauder
Jerry & Connie Uecker
from Jenna & Kyle Bair
Marilyn Vachon
Edwin & Sandra Vance
Jason Voors
from Deb Voors
Tammy & Robert Warner
Liz & Don Winsley
Bryce Wiseman
Logan Zuber

in memory of

Anita Donaldson
from Francis & Catherine Bir,
George & Patricia Hill, Janice &
Steve Maynard, Marilyn Taylor
Chris & Judy Eckert
from Rebecca Stockert
Shane Evans
from Ed & Sharon Burris

Jeff Gerardot
from Kay Alley, Jim & Susan
Berghoff, Diane Gerardot, Tim
J. Gerardot
Mark Robert Gunzenhauser
from Judith Lentz, Gary Thomas
Lee, Ferd, John & William Hand
from Hand Family Foundation

Al Hobson
from Margaret Hobson
Paul Hoehn
from Kevin Leech & Deborah
Hoehn
Skip Johnson
from Marna Johnson
Continued on page 18

in honor of

Harvey Hathaway
from Wendy Eisey
Carol Hess' birthday celebration
from Brian & Sally Witwer
Don Jervis
from Thomas & Janice Jervis

Crystal Jones
from Cathy Voors
Angie O'Neill
from Alice Kopfer
Tim & Liz Sprinkle
from Mel & Cindy Regier

Maureen Voors
from Cathy Voors



ACRES: Now and Then



ACRES is dedicated to protecting land forever, and we’re also committed to preserving all of the other things that come with land, from historic photos to correspondence with land donors. In recent years, we’ve put a lot of effort into digitizing these artifacts and ensuring they are stored in an acid-free environment so they can remain intact for years to come.

Stored on a secure server, the digitized archive can be searched by ACRES employees who are researching a property — whether looking up facts for an upcoming hike or referencing records for stewardship activities.

“It’s a wealth of information, and we want to make sure we’re bringing it as far into forever as we can,” said Jason Kissel, ACRES Executive Director.

One piece of ACRES history that has been particularly grounding for existing employees is a photo from 1960, the year 12 people founded ACRES by pitching in \$5 each to protect local land. The black and white photo captures seven of these original ACRES members. According to a typewritten description, they had spotted a great horned owl in a sycamore tree.

The photo encapsulates a spirit of camaraderie and appreciation for nature that continues to define ACRES culture as an organization.

The ACRES staff recently reenacted the photo, each team member choosing a founding member to represent (with the exception of two staff members who weren’t in the original photo).

“I love that they’re looking off into the distance, looking at what’s ahead. They all have this look of anticipation. We wanted to depict us currently with that same anticipation for the future,” Kissel said.

Thank you to photographer Jarrod Spicer for helping us recreate this moment in ACRES history! Visit [acreslandtrust.org/nowandthen](https://www.acreslandtrust.org/nowandthen) for a behind-the-scenes look at the photoshoot.

LAND ACQUISITIONS



Land Acquisition Gains Momentum

We’re excited to report that 2023 will be a record-breaking year for land protection! Recent and upcoming land acquisitions total 752 acres, meaning the amount of land ACRES owns and protects is about to increase by 10 percent.

These acquisitions include eight properties that are valued at \$7 million. Thanks to the full donation and discounted purchase of most of these properties, ACRES will acquire them for \$2.6 million! We’ve already secured 63 percent of this funding.

Recent & Upcoming Acquisitions

Location	Acreage
DeKalb County, IN	115
DeKalb County, IN	62
Elkhart County, IN	203
Elkhart County, IN	100
Fulton County, IN	120
Jay County, IN	40
Steuben County, IN	54
Wabash County, IN	58

We need your help to raise the remaining \$1 million to cover the costs associated with protecting these places.

These natural areas are spread out across seven counties in our service area. They contain vital forests, wetlands, grasslands and rare habitats that haven’t experienced human disturbance in recent history. Urban sprawl is the biggest threat to these places. Once undeveloped land is drained, cleared and paved over, it becomes very difficult to return to a natural state.

In other words, the places we protect are irreplaceable.

They are arks of biodiversity, sustaining a multitude of plant and animal life. Their contributions to our quality of life are immeasurable from cleaning our air and water to providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and scientific research.

Let’s take action to protect more lands so that they can remain intact for centuries to come. Please donate at [acreslandtrust.org/forever](https://www.acreslandtrust.org/forever), where we’ll share progress on our \$1 million goal.

Be sure to check your mailbox for exciting updates as well. Whenever ACRES closes on a property, we send a postcard to celebrate the newly protected land and share details about its history and features. With your help, we hope to send eight postcards this year!

ACRES members like you make this work possible. Thanks to your support, we’ve been able to build the capacity to protect more land. We need your help to keep the momentum going. By the end of the year, we’re on track to surpass 8,000 acres of land protected forever!

RESTORING LAND



Planting and Nurturing Future Forests

By Ben Taylor, ACRES Project Manager

Our restoration efforts are my favorite projects to coordinate at ACRES, particularly, tree plantings. Since the turn of the century, ACRES has planted roughly 300,000 trees on 600 acres of land!

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Much effort goes into planning and preparing before planting. We typically plant trees in areas of need on newer acquisitions, or in farm fields the land donor has requested we return to a natural state. Other times we consider whether continuing to farm the land makes the best ecological sense.

When we determine a need for tree planting, we reach out to various project partners that help us fund the project through cost-share programs. In the past, we have used programs in the Farm Service Agency and Natural Resource Conservation Service, as well as state programs like Lake & River Enhancement (LARE), and other conservation organizations like Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever.

Once funding is secured, we consult with a forester on the tree plan. We typically reach out to Crowe Forest Management with whom ACRES has had a longstanding partnership, due to their local knowledge. (Tom Crowe, owner of CFM, serves on ACRES stewardship committee.) In this phase we look at the land's soils, hydrology and topography to compile a list of the best trees for the site. Other criteria are considered when we are trying to promote a certain habitat type for wildlife or want to consider a selective timber harvest in the future. Determining these variables helps us determine the appropriate species and quantity for the property's size.



INTO THE SOIL

When the plan is finalized, it's time to order the trees. Most of our trees come from the DNR-managed Vallonia State Tree Nursery in southern Indiana. By ordering through the DNR, we can source local trees native to the area. While we occasionally order from private nurseries, we prioritize planting trees native to the region.

Site preparation is often performed by ACRES own stewardship staff, or by contractors if secured funding covers the expense. Preparing a retiring farm field may be as simple as applying a cover crop or forbs mix after the last harvest to prevent invasive species from establishing the following spring. Other times, site preparation requires killing established invasive species in and near the site to prevent the spread of species that potentially could outcompete saplings.

Come springtime, we are ready for the big event — the planting! This is actually the shortest and easiest part of the process. We most often contract out this part. A forester and their team typically come out with a tree planter — a specialized tool pulled by a tractor that plants the saplings directly into the soil. What used to take a person with a shovel several days can be accomplished in a few hours.

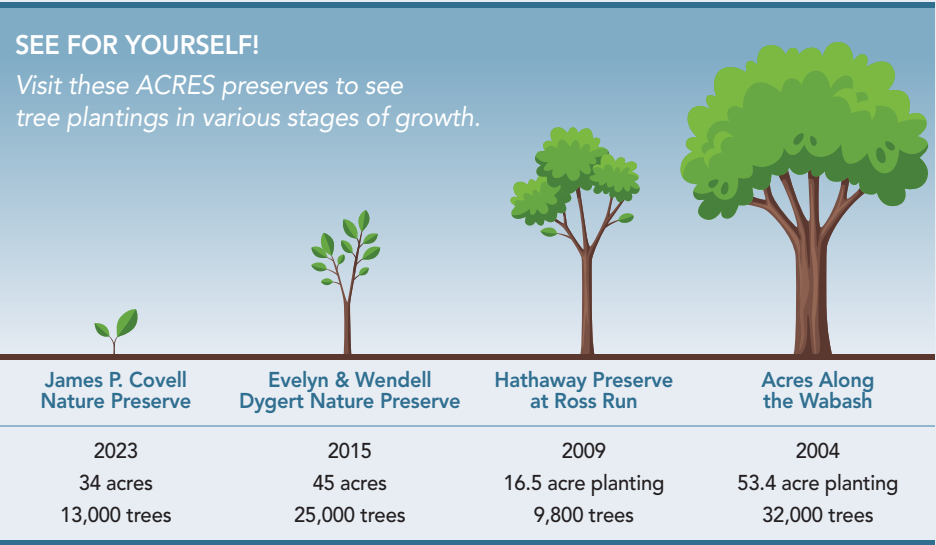
PROTECTING SAPLINGS

After the trees are planted, ongoing monitoring and maintenance commence. Routine monitoring of a young tree planting ensures we are keeping an eye out for diseases, pests or invasive species. Each year, Stewardship staff spend a large portion of our time managing invasives in these tree plantings. If the work gets beyond our capacity, we seek additional funding sources to contract out some of the workload.

I encourage you to meet me at Acres Along the Wabash May 13 to learn more about ACRES tree plantings in the various stages you may want to follow in your own tree planting. Details on page 18.

SEE FOR YOURSELF!

Visit these ACRES preserves to see tree plantings in various stages of growth.



ACRES PROTECTS 110 ACRES IN THE CITY OF AUBURN From Golf Course to Urban Nature Preserve

When an Auburn golf course went up for sale in 2013, it attracted the attention of developers. The 110-acre property, grounds of the former Greenhurst Country Club, offered scenic views of nature in a suburban setting.

Two couples, Abby and Mark Millett, and Rick and Vicki James, worked together to ensure the green space would remain intact for the community to enjoy. They purchased the property and opened to the public Greenhurst Common's paved trails.

Under their care, trees and native plants have started to reclaim the fairways. The property also serves as a venue for local organizations and schools to host programs and events.

To ensure the natural area will continue to benefit the community for centuries to come, the Millett and James families decided to donate Greenhurst Commons to ACRES.

Having raised a family in the neighboring subdivision, Abby and Mark Millett know the importance of this green space. Abby Millett explained: "When the golf course closed, Mark and I understood how important preserving and protecting this green space was to so many in our community who had similar attachments and memories."

"Our vision for Greenhurst Commons has always been to preserve and protect the land for future generations, providing a special place to come to be one with nature."

— Abby Millett

Abby Millett explained that ACRES Land Trust's mission aligns perfectly with their vision for the property: "Over the last few years, we have seen deer and fox make their homes here, pollinators spread, and bluebirds fly."

"ACRES is Indiana's first local land trust with a proven track record. ACRES will protect the land while restoring crucial habitat for native plants and animals. We are confident that with ACRES stewardship, Greenhurst Commons will be protected in perpetuity for all to enjoy."

These land donors did significant work to restore the former golf course to a native habitat. ACRES will build on their efforts with prairie installations, tree plantings, wetland restoration, and non-native invasive species management.

With the acquisition of Greenhurst Commons, ACRES now protects six properties and 582 acres in DeKalb County. This urban preserve also builds on ACRES work in the Cedar Creek Corridor. ACRES and other conservation partners protect over 1,500 acres along this scenic waterway.

Trails at Greenhurst Commons are open to the public from dawn to dusk, with parking at 1740 North Main Street, Auburn, IN 46706. The entire trail system is paved, making it suitable for wheelchairs and other mobility devices, as well as bicycles.



SAVE THE DATE!

ACRES will celebrate the protection of Greenhurst Commons with an opening celebration April 15. See details on page 13.



Photo spread on pages 10–11 by Jarrid Spicer: Trillium blooms cover the forest floor at the Evelyn and Wendell Dygert Nature Preserve in Whitley County, Indiana. Join us for a wildflower hike for ACRES members this season to learn more about these and other spring ephemerals. Details on page 13.



FORT WAYNE HOME AND GARDEN SHOW

MARCH 2-5

ALLEN COUNTY | Allen County War Memorial Coliseum
4000 Parnell Ave, Fort Wayne, IN 46805

Visit the ACRES booth to learn more about ACRES mission, renew your membership and purchase a trail guide. For more information, visit home-gardenshow.com.

ASHERWOOD MAPLE SYRUP & PANCAKE BREAKFAST FOR ACRES MEMBERS

SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 9 am - noon

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

It's sugar bush season! You're invited to a pancake breakfast and a guided tour of ACRES' maple sugaring operation. \$5/person, children 5 and under free. ACRES syrup will be available for purchase if you'd like to take home some of the harvest.

Presented by Grady Stout, Asherwood caretaker; Jason Kissel, executive director; and ACRES volunteers.



SPRING CLEANING

Get in the spirit of spring cleaning and help us keep our preserves beautiful! Gloves, bags, visibility vests and snacks provided.

SATURDAY, MARCH 4, 10 am - noon

DEKALB COUNTY | James P. Covell Nature Preserve
Approximately 2727 County Road 52, Auburn IN, 46706

Join our partners from the Auburn Conservation Team for a morning cleanup.

SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 2-4 pm

WABASH COUNTY | Multiple Preserves

Join a cleaning caravan from Hanging Rock Natural National Landmark to Hathaway Preserve at Ross Run, ending at Kokiwanee.



CONSERVATION ETHIC DISCUSSION FOR ACRES MEMBERS

SATURDAY, MARCH 25, 2 - 3:30 pm

ALLEN COUNTY | ACRES Office
1802 Chapman Road, Huntertown, IN 46748

This spring, listen to the podcast episode "Of Bombs and Butterflies" by Radiolab and read provided materials then gather with other members to share your thoughts and explore the ethics of conservation.

Presented by volunteers Natasha Manor and Bridgett Hernandez. Space is limited. Contact outreach@acreslandtrust.org or 260-637-2273 for a list of discussion material, or to RSVP by March 23.

SALAMANDER HIKE FOR ACRES MEMBERS

SATURDAY, APRIL 1, 10 - 11:30 am

WELLS COUNTY | Peace Farm, address available with RSVP

We'll stroll through prairie and beautiful open woods, and visit with the donor of Peace Farm, Jann Prince. ACRES Stewardship Assistant Gavin King will be on hand to help us keep an eye out for salamanders.

Space is limited. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or call 260-637-2273 by March 30.



GREENHURST COMMONS OPENING CELEBRATION

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 10-11:30 am

DEKALB COUNTY | Greenhurst Commons
1740 North Main Street, Auburn, IN 46706

Celebrate the protection of this urban preserve in Auburn, Indiana! Land donors and members of our board and staff will briefly address guests at 10:15 am. Afterwards, take a stroll on the accessible trails.



TAI CHI & QIGONG FOR ACRES MEMBERS

SATURDAY, APRIL 29, 1:30 - 2:30 pm

ALLEN COUNTY | Tom & Jane Dustin Nature Preserve
1992 Chapman Road, Huntertown, IN 46748

Follow Board Certified Tai Chi Instructor Alan Clayton through Tai Chi and Qigong practices. Learn basic exercises and postures, inviting renewal and restoration of mind and body.

Space is limited. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or call 260-637-2273 by April 27.

WILDFLOWER HIKES FOR ACRES MEMBERS

Hike with local wildflower enthusiasts and learn about the unique blooms that decorate our forest floor.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 5:30 - 7:30 pm

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

Presented by volunteer Tony Fleming and ACRES Stewardship Assistant Jenna Bair. Space is limited. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or 260-637-2273 by May 1.

SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2-4 pm

KOSCIUSKO COUNTY | Bock Nature Preserve, address available with RSVP

Presented by volunteer Dave Hicks and ACRES Executive Director Jason Kissel. Bock Nature Preserve is closed to the public. Space is limited. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or 260-637-2273 by May 4.



GARLIC MUSTARD WORKDAYS

This is a great time of year to remove the easy-to-pull invasive garlic mustard weeds. Gloves, bags and light snacks provided. RSVP appreciated.

SUNDAY, MAY 7, 1-2:30 pm

ALLEN COUNTY | Spring Lake Woods and Bog
12905 Lake Everett Drive, Fort Wayne, IN 46818

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 10 - 11:30 am

ALLEN COUNTY | Bicentennial Woods
340 E. Shoaff Road, Huntertown, IN 46748

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17 4 - 5:30 PM

ALLEN COUNTY | McNabb-Walter Nature Preserve
16138 Davis Road, Spencerville, IN 46788



TREE PLANTING TREK

SATURDAY, May 13, 10 am - noon

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

Trek through a tree planting with ACRES Project Manager Ben Taylor. Learn about ACRES reforestation efforts and how tree plantings are managed.

Space is limited. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or call 260-637-2273 by May 11.

Continued on p18



How One Wildflower Responds to ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

Photo by Thomas Sprunger

In 2021, we shared the story of Emma Boehm, a doctoral student at Indiana University, who was beginning research on blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia verna*). She wanted to learn how populations of the wildflower respond to environmental changes.

Her research included studying a phenomenon called “phenotypic plasticity,” an ability to quickly change traits without changing the underlying genes. An example of this in plants is stem length.

“If you’ve ever put a house plant in a shady part of your house, especially seedlings, you might notice that it gets a taller stem to help it find light. But put this same plant in a sunny spot or start it there, and that stem growth stops at a point since it doesn’t need to look for light anymore,” she said.

Understanding plants’ ability to adapt and survive an extreme or novel environmental change can help inform conservation practices. In some parts of its range, blue-eyed Mary is endangered or threatened. Boehm hopes her work can help prevent it from getting to that point in other places.

She collected seeds across seven places where blue-eyed Mary occurs, including two ACRES sites. These populations spanned latitudinal gradients and varied across environmental factors such as canopy cover and soil moisture. She then planted the seeds and grew them under the same controlled conditions in a greenhouse.

Boehm recently shared an update with ACRES Stewardship Director Evan Hill. She found that even though the seeds were from the same species and grown under the same conditions, they took varying amounts of time to germinate depending on which location they were from. These preliminary findings suggest that blue-eyed Mary populations from across their range are exhibiting an adaptive response to the environmental conditions they experience.

“This can be interpreted as good news for the species. As we head toward mid-century, climatologists predict more extreme weather events, increasing average temperatures, and for plants such as the blue-eyed Mary, a shortened dormant season,” Hill said.

He added that there’s a need for additional research on numerous other species, both common and more conservative, to help determine plasticity and generic evolution potential.



Illustration by Reena Ramos



Larry and Delilah Watson

Volunteer preserve steward Larry Watson of Wabash, Indiana, describes his service as a “win-win.” Helping to care for ACRES properties and keep the trails clear for visitors is a way for him to give back while spending time in nature. He stewards Seven Pillars Nature Preserve, Kokiwanee and Hanging Rock National Natural Landmark.

“I was always raised to give back — your time, your talent, your money — to a cause that you believe in,” Watson said. “You don’t have to earn a buck for everything.”

His childhood was filled with outdoor adventure like camping and visiting state parks, and although he didn’t always enjoy it at the time, he looks back on it fondly. As an adult, spending time in nature feels spiritual and restorative.

“It’s a connection with our Creator. It helps you recharge,” he said.

Watson has a special appreciation for each ACRES preserve. At Seven Pillars, he enjoys the challenging new trail that connects the new parking lot with the existing trail. At Kokiwanee, he appreciates the diversity of habitat types. Hanging Rock has an interesting history.

“What’s neat about the preserves is each has a little something different to offer. So is there a favorite? Not really. They’re all great!”

In addition to stewarding three properties, Watson and his family — his wife Delilah and their three children — often lend a hand at volunteer workdays and help with special projects. Last summer, Larry and Delilah Watson, along with other volunteers, helped ACRES clear the trail at Fogwell Forest after a strong windstorm downed numerous trees, many were more than four feet in diameter.

“We couldn’t believe how much damage had occurred. It was a lot of work to open the trails.”

Watson said the experience was an “enjoyable challenge.” It feels good to know he is helping inspire people to support ACRES’ mission to protect local land.

“The reason we have the trails to begin with, and the reason I like maintaining the trails, is people get out there, they hike the trails, they see what ACRES is, they get connected with nature and maybe they help ACRES expand their mission.”

Thank you to Larry and the Watson family for volunteering with ACRES and keeping our preserves healthy and beautiful!

RETIRING TRAILS

Patching Together a Refuge

By Chris Fairfield, ACRES Volunteer

Each day people traveling on the Indiana Toll Road and Highway 827 rush by Ropchan Wildlife Refuge with minimal time to appreciate the natural setting Sam and Adeline Ropchan envisioned and provided for in this corner acreage.

This glacially sculpted refuge bordering and overlooking the 1879 Lakeside Cemetery includes flowing waterways. Its upland oak-hickory mixed mesophytic forest and lowland swamp forest provide a necessary island of varied habitat to some of Northern Indiana's most beautiful and endangered flora and fauna. Vital to all, the Ropchan Wildlife Refuge is also part of the Clear Lake-Fawn River sub-watershed and the Greater St. Joseph River-Lake Michigan Watershed. While there are many places to stop, observe, and contemplate the interacting land and residents today, this was not always the case.

What later became Ropchan Wildlife Refuge was, for many years, a complicated puzzle of multi-purposed, private parcels. But Sam and Adeline Ropchan imagined stewardship of the whole. They believed in the words of Chief Seattle: "All things are connected." The Ropchans engaged ACRES Land Trust to piece together the preserve by negotiating with individual landowners. Together, they connected the Penner, Skelton, Huss, Wilkins, Carpenter and Smith family parcels. This combination of donations and purchases extended from 1976 to 1982. Indiana approved a Master Plan and dedicated the ACRES land on May 14, 1977. Under the terms of the Wetlands Preservation Act, a Cooperative Management Plan was established between ACRES Land Trust, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, and The Nature Conservancy.

The trail system at the Ropchan Wildlife Refuge is slated for retirement, closing to the public December 31, 2023, as part of ACRES comprehensive plan to update visitor amenities (see acreslandtrust.org/raisingourstandards).

WINTER PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

LANDSCAPE



Jana Fuller
Fire and Ice

*Beautiful in every season.
James P. Covell Nature Preserve*

WILDLIFE



Sam Guy
Crawler

*Millipede adventuring
over leaves.
Fogwell Forest*

PEOPLE ON PRESERVES



Cole Buffenbarger
A Nature Seat

*Isaac enjoying an afternoon
adventure and a downed
Sycamore tree.
Bicentennial Woods*

SELFIE



Tina Alford
Winter Hike

*We love hiking!
Tel-Hy*

MACRO



Jared Christiansen
Frosty Leaf

*An orange leaf caught in the cracks
on the wooden walkway.
Fogwell Forest*

Congratulations to all the winners! And thank you to everyone who submitted entries. Take a closer look at these winning photos online at acreslandtrust.org/winter2022

announcements



Welcome, Jenna Biggins!

A warm welcome to Jenna Biggins, the newest member of our ACRES team! She recently joined the staff as office manager.

Biggins first gained experience at ACRES as an office intern in 2012. A decade later, she was excited to seize an opportunity to return to the organization. "It's a great mission and a great group of people. I wanted to remain a part of it," she said.

As office manager, Biggins will ensure that resources are used effectively to support ACRES mission of protecting local land. This work includes processing financial transactions and preparing and monitoring the annual budget. Biggins will also oversee human resources functions such as employee benefits, orientation, payroll, and policy development.

Biggins' professional background is in environmental health and safety; she has experience ensuring compliance in industry and higher education. She holds a bachelor's degree in environmental policy from Indiana-Purdue University Fort Wayne and a master's degree in environmental health from the University of Saint Francis.

She lives in rural Huntertown with her husband and their daughters. The family enjoys spending time outside, gardening, and exploring the woods in their backyard. As a parent, she's passionate about protecting land so it can be shared with future generations.

"We're raising two children here; it's very personal," she said.



ACRES recently bid a fond farewell to communications manager Bridgett Hernandez. She played a key role in many projects, including updating the ACRES Trail Guide, publishing the *Quarterly* member magazine and incorporating new and fun ideas like more video content into our storytelling. Her positive attitude, genuine curiosity and warm smile made her a pleasure to have on the ACRES team. We look forward to a continued relationship with her as a volunteer, member, event participant and helping out in other ways.

Please join us in wishing her well as she transitions into the very important job of stay-at-home mom. Thank you, Bridgett, for your contributions in service of protecting land. Best of luck!

KIDS SCAVENGER HUNT HIKE

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 5-6 pm

ALLEN COUNTY | McNabb-Walter Nature Preserve
16138 Davis Road, Spencerville, IN 46788

Explore the trails with fellow families and join a springtime scavenger hunt. All ages welcome, but plan to walk one mile. Presented by ACRES Office Manager Jenna Biggins. Space is limited. Registration is required for all attendees: children, parents and caregivers. RSVP to outreach@acreslandtrust.org or call 260-637-2273 by May 16.

NATIONAL TRAILS DAY

SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 10 am

KOSCIUSKO COUNTY | Wildwood, 409 East State Road 14, Silver Lake, IN 46982

Join us on a hike through the forest, wetlands and prairie of Wildwood to celebrate National Trails Day!

SPECIAL thanks

Deb & Gary Grider
donating bird seed and suet cakes
Hornberger Family
Volunteering to be in an ACRES video for
PBS Fort Wayne
Kohl's
donating a case of hand sanitizer
Jeri Kornegay & Lyn Winchell
donating bottled water
Kay Musgrave
donating ground coffee and insect repellent
Jim & Gwen Seely
donating a gas-powered leaf blower and
spin trimmer
Jarrod Spicer
Photo reenactment
Cathy Voors
donating postage stamps
Larry Watson
Interview for Quarterly article
Many thanks to Greenhurst Commons, LLC for
including various equipment and supplies with
their gift of land.

ACRES Board of Directors and
committee members
Archive project volunteers
Chris Fairfield, Mary Anna Feitler, Bob Palmer,
Carol Spallone
Larry Biggerstaff, Louise & Keith Pomeroy
Hosting Popp Open House
Joe & Nancy Conrad
Leading First Day Hike
Chris Fairfield
Article on retiring trails
Janelle & Larry Hicks
Leading a swift hike
Lonidaw weed wrangle volunteers
Mark Maffey
New Member Open House volunteer
Office support volunteers
Louise Pomeroy, Sue Diefenbach
Quarterly assembly and distribution volunteers
Volunteer preserve stewards, caretakers and trail
monitors
Winter photo contest participants

wish list

To order from ACRES Amazon Wish List, visit acreslandtrust.org/wishlist

Gently used cell phones (required operating
systems: Android 8.0 and up or iOS 14.5 and
up) Please remove all data and restore to
factory setting before donating

ACRES memberships

Your stories and photos
Forever postage stamps
Insect repellent
Mike's Carwash gift certificates

in memory of (continued from page 3)

Ruth Kern
from Noel & Patricia Holmgren,
Bill Kern, Shirley Needham
Paul Krummen
from Jeffrey Heller
Andrew Palmer
from Kim Lyman
Lyle Reiff
from David Riethmiller

Dr. Robert Robb
from Christine & Keith Beard,
Kathryn A. Bloom, Mary
Houser, Raymund & Shawna
Niblick, Angie & Dan O'Neill,
John Robb, Beverly & Ralph
Scheiwe
Jack Ronald
from Constance Ronald

Shawn Stiver
from John Stiver
Carol Summers
from Diana Harris
Dick Walker
from Noreen Walker

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ACRES member Eric Roberts captured this photo of a snapping turtle while picking up litter at a closed ACRES preserve in the Cedar Creek Corridor.

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