

THE ACRES QUARTERLY

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ACRES
LANDTRUST

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The Humble Heroes of Summer



From the Executive Director

Dear Members,

In 1960, our founders recognized a critical need: the enduring protection of our natural landscapes. They understood that while government initiatives play a vital role, a complementary, community-driven approach is essential.

Now, more than ever, the wisdom of their vision is apparent. Due to shifting political winds and competing demands, government priorities can leave vital natural areas vulnerable. We at ACRES Land Trust are not burdened by competing priorities. While ACRES mission is clear and unchanging, government entities don't have the same luxury. They must balance defense, infrastructure, education and numerous other critical needs.

Recent governmental changes underscore the importance of how ACRES was designed to work. While we support government-funded land protection, we recognize the need for a resilient alternative. ACRES, supported by you, provides that stability.

Tax dollars do not drive our work; you do. Our work is fueled by a shared passion for preserving the places we love. It's about willingly participating in protecting these preserves, our favorite hiking trails and the rural character of our communities. It's about investing in a legacy that will endure for generations. You don't need to be forced (taxed) to support something you love.

We take our marching (hiking!) orders from you. You haven't mandated budget or hiring freezes, delays or work reductions. You are choosing to continue to support preserving the places you love. Thanks to you, we'll continue to care for the 8,300 acres under our care and increase the number of preserved areas.

Thanks,



Jason Kissel

jkissel@acreslandtrust.org

260-637-2273 ext. 102

Cover: A silver-spotted skipper drinks nectar from the flower of a prairie blazing star.



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 steward more than 8,300 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

171newmembers!

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Dave & Ellen Ahlersmeyer
Karla Alexander & Anthony Smith

Roger & Carol Allman
Jeffrey Armstrong
from Timothy Armstrong

Timothy Armstrong
Jeff & Tonja Ashton
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Dr. Jake Yager

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In Honor of

Joan Garman from Mark & Laura O'Shaughnessy
Jacob Schall from Nathan Schall

Kent Martz & Tommy Neumann's 70th birthdays
from John & Kathy Bennett
Jill Noyes from Doug Rood

In Memory of

Pat Barrett from Patricia & Sean Garrett
Brian Becker from Burton & Ann Brunner
Tom Bland from Gene & Susan Andert, Bob
& Margaret Blauvelt, Darcy Flora, Ella
Harmeyer, Janet & Mike Borst, Jill Kajouee,
Keith Gehring, Terry & Chuck Prael, Jamie
Strauss, Christine & Patrick Weigel

Amy Fry-Miller from Marsha Banicki Graham
& Greg Banicki, Jenny Faus, Jessica Kreider,
Pamela Leffers, Jan & Steve Sarratore, Ineke
Way, Tim & Bonni Whicker
Ruth Kern from Patricia & Noel Holmgren
Jane Munk from Tina Puitz
Danny Ochoa from Christina Ochoa

"In Honor of" and "In Memory of" continued on page 18

PRAIRIE POWER:

The Hidden Strength Beneath the Surface

photo by Jarrid Spicer

Step into a prairie at the height of the growing season, and you'll be overwhelmed by the sights, smells and sounds of the habitat. Brightly pigmented flowers adorn the landscape, beacons for busy buzzing insects. A breeze moves like ocean waves, bringing the earthy smell of wild grasses and flowering herbs. The horizon seems to extend forever. In the summer season, the prairie glows with life!

WHAT IS A PRAIRIE?

A prairie is an ecosystem dominated by grasses and wildflowers with little tree cover. Two main forces create and maintain this system: weather and disturbance.

In areas with little rainfall, trees and shrubs struggle to survive. High summer temperatures chase away cool-season grasses and flowers, creating the perfect place for prairie grasses and wildflowers to thrive. The prairie plants and their seeds are so well adapted to this environment that they even survive periods of drought by becoming dormant. Disturbances, like grazing from herbivores and fire, also work to eliminate trees and shrubs.

Prairie plants seem almost invincible, easily surviving harsh conditions and sudden disturbances, bouncing back even stronger. To understand their power, one has to dig a little deeper.

DIGGING DEEPER

Beneath the colorful, showy exteriors, prairie grasses and wildflowers house deep root systems. With roots sometimes two or three times the size of the plant, most of a prairie is actually underground!

By creating a strong support and storage system right below the surface, prairie plants can easily survive





Greyheaded coneflower (Ratibida pinnata) and Wild bergamot (Monarda fistulosa) bloom in the prairie sections of Greenhurst Commons.

drought and disturbance. Prairie plants strategically place their “growing points” underground. These are the spots where new cells are developed and form into different plant parts. Hiding these points under soil allows prairie plants to bounce back quickly after cattle or bison grazing, or fire.

The web of roots beneath the surface becomes a “carbon sink,” a place that absorbs and stores more carbon from the atmosphere than it releases. Prairies store enough carbon to be comparable to a forest! As old roots die off each year, nutrients are added back into the soil.

MANAGING PRAIRIE

To keep our prairie habitat healthy, ACRES mimics disturbances. Mowing functions as a substitute for grazing, while our stewardship team relies on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) for burns. TEK is the accumulation of knowledge about an ecosystem that was acquired and handed down by indigenous peoples over long periods of time, through direct contact with the environment. The stewardship crew initiates controlled burns that originally would have been ignited by lightning strikes or by indigenous people groups who utilized fire for a variety of purposes. All of these disturbances keep woody plants at bay and stimulate prairie plants to grow.

Want to enjoy the blooming fields this summer season? Explore trails at Wildwood, Pehkokia Woods and Greenhurst Commons. Join us for a Field Flower Hike to learn more about some of the specific plants that live in this system. Learn more on page 13.

Butterfly Milkweed (Asclepias tuberosa)



FROM ASHES TO GROWTH

The Role of Fire in Grassland Management



Wildfires are integral to forest and grassland ecology worldwide, playing a crucial role in ecosystem health. From lightning strikes during dry summers to intentional burns by Native Americans for hunting and land management, fire has shaped our local ecosystems for millennia. ACRES Land Trust continues this tradition as a carefully controlled conservation practice.

Each spring, ACRES Stewardship staff conducts controlled burns within a variety of fire dependent plant communities.

Fire plays a significant role in grassland health. After years of growth, dead material called “duff” builds up. Burning this layer every three to five years allows sunlight to reach the soil and stimulate new growth. The heat improves soil quality by increasing microbial activity and releasing nutrients, creating more plant diversity for insects and birds. In grasslands, routine fire also prevents tree growth and woody invasives, maintaining an open habitat for grassland species.

Although using fire as a land management tool may seem concerning, each burn is meticulously planned. ACRES Stewardship staff undergo extensive prescribed fire training covering everything from tools to techniques and best practices. The process begins with a detailed burn plan that includes information about the area, necessary preparations like mowing burn breaks, required tools and staff, allowable weather conditions and specific techniques based on wind direction.

Safety is paramount. Stewardship Director Evan Hill carefully monitors weather forecasts to identify optimal burn days, considering wind direction and speed, temperature and humidity. On the chosen day, the staff ensures conditions remain within the required parameters, reviews the plan, notifies county dispatch and assigns specific roles for every participant.

This past spring, ACRES conducted six controlled burns across four properties, with more planned for next year. These carefully managed fires represent one of our most effective tools for maintaining healthy ecosystems and preserving biodiversity.

Want to see the results? Visit Tel-Hy later this summer to witness the remarkable regrowth and diversity that emerge after a burn!



200-YEAR ECOLOGICAL REFLECTION

"I believe that we are all part of the same being, the planet Earth. Our health is dependent on our relationship with and within that greater being."

— Bridget O'Brien

BETWEEN LIGHT AND SHADOW: *Wing Haven in Charcoal.*



ARTIST STATEMENT

"I believe that we are all part of the same being, the planet Earth. Our health is dependent on our relationship with and within that greater being. For that reason, my work interweaves the natural world with the human figure, seeing them as analogous systems. These images are deeply place-based, so I begin painting outdoors, sketching land and water with charcoal or pastels and layers of diaphanous paint. As I continue to work, I improvise. Recognizable forms deteriorate and reseed themselves. Images of humans emerge from the flux.

"In my work, natural elements represent sublimity and truth, while artificial objects and human detritus represent untruths. In this way, my work is a meditation on the false sense of stability and control the anthropocentric objects possess. The image, then, an object of negotiation. My images seek to return our attention to the natural world, which is not static but changeable and fluid. Recognizing ourselves within the landscape, we open ourselves to the awe of being alive—both in our own bodies and on our planet."



The art depicted above offers a thoughtful glimpse into humanity's relationship with nature through time. While the artwork thoughtfully explores this connection, we kindly remind all visitors that foraging is not permitted on ACRES preserves. By leaving all natural elements undisturbed, we help ensure these special places continue to thrive for generations to come.

The Sounds of Wing Haven

ACRES is now eight years into a 200-year ecological reflection project at Wing Haven in Steuben County, Indiana. During this time, we conducted floristic inventories, surveyed small mammals, and sampled the lake and adjacent wetlands for eDNA analysis. All this information allows us to build a baseline to compare against future research.

Because 200 years is a long time, and there are only so many things to sample within a 160-acre property, our study design focuses on resampling many of the same taxa (a scientifically classified group) at recurring intervals. Resampling will allow us to identify trends and predict species presence and population sizes. This information may also help guide management decisions.

To date, we have obtained a lot of helpful information about species inhabiting the preserve year-round. However, we have little information on migratory species that use the preserve for breeding or as a stopover location to rest and feed before heading further north or south. To fill this gap, ACRES purchased two passive wildlife recording devices. These two devices listened from April 2024 until November 2024 while constantly recording. Together, they allowed us to collect considerable data over six months, with relatively little staff time spent on the project. Once the 2 terabytes of data were processed, we had a species list containing four to six species of bats, 150-167 species of birds, 11 species of insects and six species of frogs (plus an occasional firework).



American bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*)
photo by Robert So

Ten species of endangered birds have been identified in Wing Haven, along with an additional 13 species of special concern (as designated by the Indiana DNR). While some recorded species are new county occurrences, others have not been reported in several decades. The recording devices detected several species of wading and marsh birds, often very difficult to locate. Most notable were the King and Virginia Rail, Common Gallinule, Black Tern, American and Least Bittern, and the Marsh and Sedge Wren.



photo by Thomas Sprunger

Wing Haven's adjacent uplands also contained some pretty neat species, including the following warblers (to name a few): Golden-winged, Hooded, Black-and-white, and Worm-eating. It did not go unnoticed that a range of species was detected for both bats and birds. That range indicated additional analysis is needed before we can confirm the presence of several species. There are likely two state-endangered species of bats using the site and possibly two to three additional endangered birds. Please stay tuned for an update; we will soon have local experts listening closely to these isolated recordings.

Wing Haven is one of ACRES most biologically diverse properties. The high level of biodiversity can be attributed to the mosaic of plant communities and the overall quality and amount of available habitat within and surrounding the preserve. Large, contiguous, high-qualifying natural areas are crucial for the survival of many species that inhabit them. Through careful planning and partnerships made long ago, this priority area and others like it will remain protected and serve as valuable breeding and resting habitats for 100 or more species of migrating birds for generations to come.

ACRES plans to utilize the recording devices within the site again in 2029 and, in the meantime, will be deploying them within other priority areas across the service area.



Photo spread on pages 10 – 11: The prairie at Wildwood erupts in a symphony of color during the summer months. Vibrant greyheaded and purple coneflowers dance alongside wild bergamot. This living tapestry offers visitors a spectacular seasonal display.



SUMMER HIKES & events

RSVP for events by visiting acreslandtrust.org/events or calling 260-637-2273.

SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

ALLEN COUNTY | Tom & Jane
Dustin Nature Preserve

Enjoy live music on the preserve every month from June to September. Bring your own drinks, snacks and camp chair or blanket. Come early to explore the trails.



Farmland Jazz Band

THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 6–8:30 pm

The Matchsellers

THURSDAY, JULY 24, 6–8:30 pm

The Supernovas

THURSDAY, AUGUST 21, 6–8:30 pm

Debutants

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 6–8:30 pm

NATIONAL TRAILS DAY TAPS & TREK

SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 3 pm

WELLS COUNTY | Acres Along The Wabash

Explore scenic river views of the Wabash River and the young oak-hickory forest of Acres Along The Wabash. After the hike, continue the celebration with fellow nature enthusiasts at Parlor City Brewing Company for optional refreshments.

SUNDAE SAUNTER SERIES

Take a summer stroll along the trails every month. Afterwards, join us for a “treat-yourself” ice cream stop!

SUNDAY, JULY 13, 10 am–noon

HILLSDALE COUNTY | Kauffman Nature Sanctuary

Ice cream at Sandbar Cafe, Coffee & Creamery in Addison, MI.

SUNDAY, JUNE 22, 3–5 pm

JAY COUNTY | Bibler Nature Preserve

Ice cream at Tutti-Frutti in Portland, IN.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 10, 2–4 pm

KOSCIUSKO COUNTY | Wildwood

Ice cream at The Igloo Ice Cream Shop in Silver Lake, IN.



INVASIVE PLANT WORKSHOPS

Join the stewardship team for an in-depth look at identifying the many non-native invasive plant species present in our region. Learn about the methods used to eradicate these invasive plants and how you can manage your own property.

FRIDAY, JULY 18, 5:30–7 pm

WABASH COUNTY | Asherwood

Hosted by ACRES Stewardship Manager Gavin King.

Space is limited. **RSVP by July 16.**

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13, 5:30–7 pm

ALLEN COUNTY | ACRES Land Trust Office

Hosted by ACRES Stewardship Manager Jenna Bair. Space is limited. **RSVP by August 11.**



NEW MEMBER OPEN HOUSE

SATURDAY, JULY 19, 1–2:30 pm

ALLEN COUNTY | ACRES Land Trust Office

Are you new to ACRES? This open-house-style event allows you to meet other members and learn how your support helps protect local land. Come when you can, leave when you must. Refreshments provided.

MOTH NIGHT FOR ACRES MEMBERS

FRIDAY, JULY 25, 9–11 pm

STEBEN COUNTY | Wing Haven

Spend an evening spotting nocturnal moths along the trails. ACRES Conservation Manager Joanna Stebing and Stewardship Assistant Carman Draves will demonstrate safe trapping techniques and help identify any flying visitors. Space is limited. **RSVP by July 23.**

CREEK STOMP XV FOR ACRES MEMBERS

SATURDAY, JULY 26, 10 am

WABASH COUNTY | Hathaway Preserve at Ross Run

This spectacular creek is off-limits the rest of the year, so here's your chance! Make your way through the cliffs and waterfalls of the Ross Run gorge while watching for fossils and fish. Hosted by preserve steward Kirk Swaidner and the Kissel family. Space is limited. **RSVP by July 24.**



FIELD FLOWER HIKE

SATURDAY, AUGUST 9, 10 am–noon

HUNTINGTON COUNTY | Pehkokia Woods

Enjoy the last of the summer blooms! Take a stroll through the fields and learn to identify some of these native flowers and grasses that thrive in the sun. Presented by Preserve Steward John Laatsch. Space is limited. **RSVP by August 7.**

STEVENS FAMILY FARM & FOREST RESERVE CELEBRATION FOR ACRES MEMBERS

SATURDAY, AUGUST 16, 10:30 am–noon

STEBEN COUNTY | Stevens Family Farm and Forest Reserve (Address available with RSVP)

Join us in celebrating the permanent protection of one of ACRES newer protected lands. Guests will have an opportunity to thank the donor of this special place in person, explore the classified forest and celebrate the joy of protecting local land together. This preserve is closed to the public. Space is limited, **RSVP by August 9.**



MACKEL OPEN HOUSE FOR ACRES MEMBERS

SATURDAY, AUGUST 23, 4–7 pm

ALLEN COUNTY | Mackel Nature Preserve (Address available with RSVP)

Explore the historic Mackel residence, located right along Cedar Creek! Take a short hike through the woods and learn how this preserve is protected forever. Limited spots are available for a tour of the historic residence. Bring a camp chair to chat around the fire pit; hot dogs and s'mores provided. This preserve is closed to the public. Hosted by Mackel caretakers Isaac and Kelsey Saxton. Space is limited, **RSVP by August 15.**

COME JOIN US

BOOTS & BREWS

3RD SATURDAY OF THE MONTH

Boots & Brews is an ACRES Land Trust hiking group for nature-loving young adults in their 20s and 30s. Come solo or bring a friend; hike and stay for a brew or two afterwards! See [acreslandtrust.org/series/boots-brews](https://www.acreslandtrust.org/series/boots-brews)



PARTNERSHIP EVENTS

GRIEF HIKES WITH STILLWATER HOSPICE

3RD FRIDAY OF THE MONTH, 10 am

Stillwater Hospice is partnering with ACRES for another year of Grief Hikes. Join a group hike to process grief in nature. Call **260-435-3261**, email GriefCenter@stillwater-hospice.org, visit [stillwater-hospice.org/complementary-grief-programs](https://www.stillwater-hospice.org/complementary-grief-programs), or scan the QR code to register for a hike.



PINK BLOOMS AND MUCK BOOTS: *Surveying Conley Woods' Plant Diversity*

by Reena Ramos

Though the September day was damp, cool, and overcast in gray clouds, I was excited to don my knee-high muck boots. Today, I was tailing the legendary botanist Nathanael Pilla, owner of Midwest Biological Survey. We were sent to scour the uncharted hills, forests, wetlands and roadsides of Conley Woods Nature Preserve.

This 100-acre property in Elkhart County, Indiana was acquired by ACRES in late 2023. The last species list was from the 1980s, so ACRES contracted Pilla to conduct a new botanical survey.

A botanical survey is an inventory of what is growing in a specific space at a particular time. A tool used to understand a site's conditions and habits, this survey can influence future research, monitoring or management practices. For example, we can identify which non-native invasive plants need to be managed, and whether there are rare, threatened or endangered plants to monitor.

The trek through the preserve proved difficult as thick walls and prickly thickets of non-native invasive plants slowed our steps. I pondered how much restoration work the preserve needed. Were the aggressive invasive plants outcompeting all the high-quality native plants?

Pilla showed me the first of many unique discoveries at this wetland: the Indiana State-Threatened Carolina mosquito fern (*Azolla caroliniana*), a fitting name for its small delicate leaves clumped across the surface of the dark water, similar to duckweed. Speaking of duckweed, Pilla found the floating bright green fronds of Dinky Duckweed (*Lemna minuta*), one of Indiana's tiniest state-endangered plants! Two more state-threatened water plants appeared with stringy net-like leaves: Lesser Bladderwort (*Utricularia minor*) and Sword Bogmat (*Wolffiella gladiata*). Near the wetland edges,



Herb Roberts (*Geranium robertianum*)
photo by Nathanael Pilla



Carolina mosquito fern (*Azolla caroliniana*)
photo by Nathanael Pilla

the grass-like leaves and seedy heads of the state-endangered Awned Sedge (*Carex atherodes*) bobbed in the misty breeze.

Climbing up the forested ravines, Pilla hoped to find more colonies of state-threatened Herb Roberts (*Geranium robertianum*). When we arrived at the property boundary at the side of a calm rural road, we discovered a few of the plants and crouched down to appreciate the bright pink blooms and parsley-like leaves (dusty from traveling vehicles). As we stood to scan, we were shocked at the bright pink blooms dotting the ditch. The whole roadside of the preserve was covered in Herb Roberts!

Nearing the end of our journey, I was filled with admiration. Even with aggressive, non-native invasive plants overtaking sections of the preserve, nature is resistant. With proper care and restoration, I have no doubt the plant communities at the property will continue to thrive.

This September survey was the last of three Pilla conducted in 2024. With the final report, ACRES is excited to have a list of 346 native and non-native plants. This updated survey will benefit ACRES for years to come while strengthening the greater scientific community. Surveys like these wouldn't be possible without ACRES and its members who protect Conley Woods Nature Preserve forever in its natural state.



PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION: *The Collaborative Effort to Save the Raymond Steinbicer Property*

“The only way forward, if we are going to improve the quality of the environment, is to get everybody involved.” – Richard Rogers

What does it take to protect vital natural areas? It takes patience, persistence, and preservation. It requires research, planning, conversations, relationships, land to protect, property owners who want to make a lasting difference, and organizations with the means to help safeguard these spaces. Sometimes, this can happen quickly (especially during land auctions). In the case of our latest acquisition, this process involved a 40-year relay and three different organizations passing the baton to protect one of Indiana’s largest remaining contiguous fen wetlands.

A Discovery Decades in the Making

In the 1980s, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources conducted a natural areas inventory to identify high-quality ecosystems. After numerous flyovers of the state and a close examination of the photos taken during those flights, the project identified a large wetland complex in the northern portion of Elkhart County. Included in their findings was a fen, a rare type of wetland fed by mineral-rich groundwater that creates a unique habitat for plants and animals that can’t survive anywhere else. That was when conversations with Ray and Helen Steinbicer began.



Over the next two decades, employees from both DNR and The Nature Conservancy spoke with Ray and Helen about the significance of their land. From Jim Aldrich, who first visited the site in 1984, to conservation professionals Paul Carmony, Les Zimmer and Rich Dunbar, who all maintained contact with Ray, each wanted to see this place protected. Although they made multiple proposals for the permanent protection of this rare ecosystem, they could never finalize a deal before Ray’s passing in 2003.

For the next 15 years, the land passed through the family while biologists occasionally visited to study the unique ecosystem. The Steinbicer family kindly allowed these visits, but the future of the land remained uncertain.

Breakthrough

The email that changed everything came in March 2023. The Nature Conservancy and DNR saw an opportunity to finally protect this high-quality land and needed a partner that could move quickly. They knew ACRES had something special—the ability to act fast when nature needs help.

“We’ve been in this situation before,” Stewardship Director Evan Hill said. “In 2018, the DNR called us about a piece of land adjacent to Elkhart Bog that was heading to auction. We had just two weeks to secure the funding and make the purchase. After acquiring it, we transferred the property to the DNR for long-term protection.”

The 327-acre Steinbicer property sits just half a mile west of the already-protected 228-acre Elkhart Bog. This acquisition is one step closer to helping the state piece together these natural areas, allowing plants and animals—including rare and endangered species—to thrive across a more extensive, healthier ecosystem.

Understanding Transferable Properties

You might wonder how a land trust known for “protecting land forever” can purchase property it plans to transfer to another organization. The answer lies in ACRES three-tiered approach to land:

Nature preserves: This highest level of protection is for exceptional natural areas that often contain rare features or endangered species. These places remain forever wild, managed primarily to protect their natural values. These places are permanently protected and will never be sold, transferred, developed or divided.

Protected lands: These properties stay with ACRES permanently and include working lands like family farms, managed forests, tree farms, recreational areas and hunting/fishing properties. Properties given this status remain permanently protected and will never be sold, transferred, developed or divided.

Transferable properties: These are special cases that make up a small portion of ACRES work. Think of these as “helping hand” properties. Unlike our protected lands, these properties are acquired strategically to support broader conservation goals. When we acquire these lands, they aren’t offered protection, and we don’t plan to keep them forever. Instead, we might:

- **Hold them temporarily for another conservation group** (like we’re doing with the Steinbicer property)
- **Sell them and use the proceeds to protect other natural areas**

Properties can move up this protection ladder but never down. Once protected, they stay protected. While this protection progression exists, most lands skip the “transferable” stage altogether and are acquired directly as Protected Lands or Nature Preserves.

“Unlike our forever-protected nature preserves that we will never sell or transfer, we purchased this property as a transferable land that we’ll hold temporarily, in this case, on behalf of a trusted conservation partner,” says Jason Kissel, executive director. “We’re grateful to our generous donors who make it possible for ACRES to be nimble in acquiring priority land in support of the conservation community.”

ACRES finalized the purchase earlier this year and will hold the property until the DNR secures funding to take ownership. After 40 years of patient work by multiple organizations, this special place is finally on the path to permanent protection, proving that persistence and teamwork pay off when it comes to saving Indiana’s natural treasures.

THE HUMBLE HEROES OF SUMMER

Reframing Our Perspective on Nature’s “Annoyances”

by Joanna Stebing

We love summer and eagerly await its return, but once there, we are often reminded that living isn’t always truly easy. For every wonderful summer memory, there are plenty of “annoyances” that make it bittersweet.

However, many of them are necessary and even beautiful components of the natural world. For instance, male mosquitoes help pollinate local wildflowers! During one sticky summer studying plant communities during my graduate studies, I watched these “team players” land on wild orchids growing at the margins of an ephemeral pool and appreciated that as frustrating as female mosquitoes can be, the males don’t eat blood and do a lot for habitat stability.

As a child, I remember sneaking treats to the ants who steadfastly marched into our home every summer to seek food (much to my mother’s chagrin). These little cupboard invaders are important seed dispersal agents for many native spring ephemerals, spreading around the beauty we enjoy on those early spring hikes. They also serve as better soil builders than earthworms and have a more evolved local function since most earthworms are recent inhabitants of our local natural communities.

(For more excellent information on ants, check out E.O. Wilson’s *“Tales from the Ant World.”*)

Burrs (seed capsules of the plants they belong to) in late summer often belong to plants like agrimony or geum, and they enjoy hitching on clothing. This experience can easily garner a chuckle if you consider that you’re being used as a “bus” to carry flowers to new homes. Congratulations, agent of dispersal—a very old organism is using you to get things done. Creating fun perspectives is a great way to deal with environmental annoyances.

Droughts and long, dry years can be important or even essential for oak pollination and growth. Humidity, in turn, assists with many vascular plant functions, like moisture retention and photosynthesis support. Without humid days, our local preserves wouldn’t have healthy plant communities.

As we near summer, take some time to rethink what irritates us and consider the functions these irritants fulfill. Stopping to ask why we think what we do about things in the world creates space for humility toward that which serves a purpose outside of people and deepens the connection to what we may consider beautiful.



photo by Thomas Sprunger

wish list

Your generous donations of these supplies help keep our overhead costs down to focus on our mission. Thank you!

acreslandtrust.org/wishlist



Answers: 1. Prairie, 2. Duff, 3. Botanical, 4. Burs, 5. Sixty, 6. Migratory, 7. Traditional, 8. Ten, 9. Ephemeral

SPECIAL thanks

Volunteer preserve stewards, caretakers and trail monitors

Archive project volunteers, Chris Fairfield, Carol Spallone, Jannice Hubbard, Julie Samek, John Shire

AJ Rambo, leading Boots & Brews hikes

ACRES Board of Directors and Committee Members

Office support volunteers

Indiana Millwright Services for getting our tractor ready for tree planting season

Matt Dunno & family, clean-up at Peace Farm

Leslie Carmin, general office support

Laura Colpitts, writing new member welcome notes

Julie Wall, hosting an Art Workshop for Members

Earth/Arbor Day partners: Auburn Parks & Rec, City of Huntington, Little River Wetlands Project, MacFood Mart Royville, City of Marion, University of St. Francis, Zimmer Biomet

Townhouse Retirement Community, hosting an ACRES presentation

Amy Kissel & Kirk Swaidner, leading the Winter Creek Stomp

Steve Etheridge & Tom Crowe, aiding at the Fort Wayne Farm Show

Bicentennial Woods stair repair volunteers

Bonnie Bloom, hosting a kids art workshop

New Member Open House volunteers Jeri Kornegay, Lyn Winchell

Bridgett Hernandez, hosting a Nature Journaling Workshop

Dan Morford, leading a World Wetlands Day Hike and aiding in Lonidaw tree work

Asherwood Pancake Breakfast volunteers

Home and Garden Show booth volunteers

Spring Cleaning Caravan volunteers

Bridgett Hernandez and Natasha Manor, hosting a book discussion

New Members *(continued from page 3)*

Julie & Adam Michell

Mike Miller

Amanda Montgomery-Davis & Chris Davis

David & Brittany Morris

Jenni Mykkanen

Chris Nichols

Angelina & Sebastian Nolan

Cristina Ochoa

Michele & Craig Parsons

Heather Peyatt & Chris Egolf

Greg & Shelly Ping

Jennifer Potter

Sedona Purdy

Corbin & Mary Reed

Amy Renz & Angie Boyd

Kelly Rietman

Alison Roby & John Roby, Jr.

Melissa Rogers & Patrick Klein

Mara J.F. Rose

Scott & Susan Rumage

Benjamin Ryan & Aja Cornwell

Christie & Reynaldo Santos

Nicole & Arthur Schultert

Carol & Todd Scott

JoAnn & Kevin Scott

Sue & Steve Sherburne

Ken Shields & Rob Tomlinson

Lisa Sorg

Michael & Vicki Sperry

Deborah & Russell Stallings

Lisa Stephens

Holly & Mykyl Stewart

Peter & Lydia Stilwell

William Stoltz & Brenda L. Stoltz

Ann Strebig & Chad Adams

Jen & Tom Stuff

Jim & Jen Sturgeon

Elizabeth & Larz Swager

Ken Taylor

Michelle & Andrew Temple

Rachel Thompson

Stan & Connie Tipton

John & Mary Tourney

Traditions Tree Farm

Thomas Trick

Chester & Kathleen Tulley

Jeff & Cindy Underwood

Rudy Valdez

Neil & Ioana Van Zyl

Andrew Vaught

Roy & Lori Von Alman

Lindsey & Brad Walker

Lora & Ricky Ware

Patti & Tom Webster

Kate Weimer

Jacqueline & Jeffrey Weinstein

Amber & James Wiist

Kathleen Wiley

Jamie Wozniak

Michelle & Steve Ziegler

In Memory of *(continued from page 3)*

Joan Peryam from Gary Crabill

Jan Schwartz from Steve & Beth Hague

Dahlia Siders from Sherman & Katy Gray

Jim Summers & Carol Jolly Summers, Dick Summers, Linda Summers Harris from Diana Harris

Eugene & Margret Winicker from Laura & Michael Dauscher

DIRECTORS: Brittany Hall, President; Scott Mattson, Vice President; Jill Noyes, Vice President; Dan Ernst, Secretary; Veronica Mertz, Treasurer; Shannon Connors; Dick Donovan; Alexis Hathaway; Jeri Kornegay; Sara Manning; Jordan Marshall; John Michaels; Melissa Rinehart; Rick Samek; Al Spice; Terry Thomsbury; Chris Fairfield, Recording Secretary

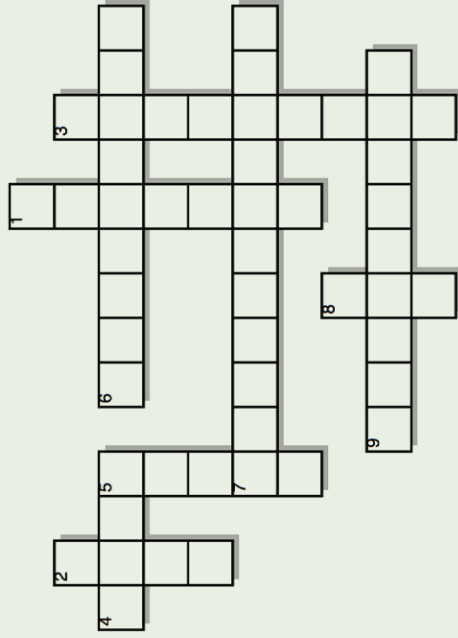
STAFF: Jason Kissel, Executive Director; Jenna Bair, Regional Stewardship Manager; Heather Barth, Advancement Director; Carman Draves, Land Steward; Evan Hill, Stewardship Director; Jenna Justice, Administrative Director; Gavin King, Regional Stewardship Manager; Taylere McCoy, Land Steward; Reena Ramos, Outreach Manager; Joanna Stebing, Conservation Manager; Elijah Stewart, Communications Manager

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MEMBERSHIP: Life Member, \$1,000; Corporate Member, \$500; Annual Member, \$20. Dues payable annually.

Find nine words from the Summer Quarterly in this crossword puzzle! (Answers on page 18)

1. Ecosystem dominated by grasses and wildflowers with little tree cover.
2. Burning this buildup of leaf litter and other dead material in a prairie allows sunlight to reach the soil to stimulate new growth.
3. A _____ survey is an inventory of what is growing in a particular place at a _____ time.
4. Seed capsules of plants.
5. ACRES was founded in the year Nineteen-_____.
6. _____ species move from one habitat to another during different times of year.
7. _____ Ecological Knowledge is the accumulation of knowledge about an ecosystem acquired and handed down by indigenous peoples over long periods through direct contact with the environment.
8. How many species of endangered birds did ACRES identify in the Wing Haven Nature Preserve?
9. An _____ pool is a wetland that has water during only part of the year.



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