



CENTRAL  
INDIANA  
LAND TRUST

*Preserving the Heartland*

Fall 2014



# From the Leadership



*Cliff and Phil Meltzer,  
August 2014*

On Aug. 29th, with a few moves of a pen on legal papers, Phil Meltzer ensured that the last unprotected swath of old-growth forest in Indiana will be preserved forever. His signature sealed the Central Indiana Land Trust's purchase of land that has been in the Meltzer family since 1857.

At that signing, Phil officially protected the Meltzer Woods property forever, but the family actually has protected that land for more than a century. Even in the lean years of the Great Depression and at times when they could have made a small fortune selling the trees for lumber, the family left the forest intact, too much in love with it to surrender it to an ax or saw.

A few days before Phil signed those documents, I stood with him on the Meltzer property, and I was struck by the sense that we were standing on the shoulders of giants. Over the years, countless people have worked to preserve the best parts of natural Indiana ... surveying and cataloging land like the Meltzer Woods ... educating and informing the public and our leaders ... advocating and arguing for our natural heritage ... and spending hours – sometimes literally on hands and knees – caring for the land. Protecting the last old growth forest in Indiana means that every other one has been protected. It is humbling to be a part of such a noble effort.

I first stepped foot on the Meltzer property some 15 years ago, and I have returned as often as possible, to enjoy the land, to visit with Phil, to work with volunteers in tending to the forest, and to help move us closer to the milestone we passed on Aug. 29th. Through this time, I have seen in this process the components common to most successful preservation efforts: Patience. Persistence. Relationships. Good science. Collaboration. Volunteerism. Love of the land. Hard work. And the generosity of land owners and donors.

By embodying so much of what works in land preservation, this milestone will serve as a model for our work in the future, and as a demonstration that great things happen when we seize great opportunities.

The Central Indiana Land Trusts exists for days like Aug. 29th – but it also exists for the many days that lead up to such milestones. With your support, energy and passion, I look forward to many more such days, and many more opportunities to stand with you on the shoulders of giants.

Cliff Chapman  
Executive Director

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## On the Cover:

The old-growth oaks at Meltzer Woods Nature Preserve are home to several pairs of nesting Red-headed Woodpeckers.

# Welcome New Members!

Chris and Christa Adkins  
Karen Armstrong  
Joe Collins  
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Joseph and Ellen Hawkins

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## Meltzer Woods: Walk with Giants

Eighty-eight-year-old Phil Meltzer pulls off a pair of work gloves, makes his way through some underbrush and lays a weathered hand on a towering chinkapin oak tree that's estimated to be about four times his age. He squints up toward the tree's sundrenched crown, and softly pats the rough bark. It seems to be an act of affection, of appreciation.

That makes sense, because Phil Meltzer loves that tree. In fact, as he walks along a nearby path, pointing out other centuries-old oaks and telling stories of the mammoth trees that have fallen over the years, his affection for this entire old-growth forest shines like the sunlight dappling the forest floor.

It's that affection that has compelled him to protect these woods his entire life, just like his father and grandfather before him. Unlike them, though, he has decided that the best way to protect these trees is to sell this 60-acre site to the Central Indiana Land Trust.

A little more than a year ago, Phil Meltzer, his daughter Karen and son Kris agreed to sell the Shelby County land to the Land Trust for a 50 percent bargain price. On Aug. 29, purchase papers were signed, a bottle of champagne was uncorked and the ownership of the land officially passed to the Land Trust, ensuring the preservation of Indiana's last unprotected swath of old-growth forest.

Meltzers have owned this parcel since 1857, when John Frederick Meltzer bought 160 acres of farm land. Gesturing



*Burr Oak Tree*



*A hike at Meltzer Woods mesmerizes visitors young and old*



*Phil Meltzer*

toward his four-year-old great-grandson scampering among the trees, Phil underscores the family's longevity on the property by noting, "Little Brady is the eighth generation."

Over the years, the family added to the property, putting together a 280-acre farming operation where, today, Phil and his son-in-law, Tony Armstrong, farm soybeans and corn – except on the 48-acre stand of ancient timber that the family has left virtually untouched for generations, just a short walk from the house where Phil was born in 1926.

"You know, that attitude was in a lot of families that would come over from Germany," Phil says. "They didn't have any old-growth over there, so a lot of families would keep the trees."

Still, he adds, one-by-one, the old-growth forests did come down, usually when an older family member died.

"Generally, when they'd settle the estate, you see, somebody would say, 'Let's get the money out of it,'" Phil says.

Certainly, the temptation to clear the land at times must have been compelling. After all, the family could have increased its income by clearing the land for crops, or by cutting down trees for timber. But neither Phil's grandfather (Phillip), his father (Brady) nor Phil would let the first tree be felled, even during the lean years of the Depression or in times when timber prices soared ... and despite the fact that the family ran a sawmill.

What makes this preservation particularly impressive is that Brady Meltzer was an entrepreneur who was willing to pursue just about any endeavor as a livelihood. Brady wasn't originally a farmer, Phil says, but instead simply bought the farm land as an investment to have others farm it. He was focused on his sawmill business, and on other enterprises over the years. He bought old buildings and moved them onto the property – including some hand-hewn log barns that date back as far as the 1840s. He had a business raising smokestacks for a while and even worked for a short time as a teacher ... even though he never progressed past the sixth grade himself.

Despite this entrepreneurial spirit, though, Phil says Brady Meltzer decided he could live without the cash windfall that

*(continued on page 8)*

# The Best Slice of

## Long Ridge



This marks the northernmost point of the rocky hills that define southern Indiana. Southern plant communities dominated by chestnut oak (and at one time American chestnut) provide a home for forest interior birds and healthy box turtle populations.

## Indiana Bat



The state's largest summer population of Indiana bats lives in restored lands near the Indianapolis airport. **Future opportunities:** Buffering the protected lands and restoring additional habitat will benefit Indiana bats and scores of other species within sight of downtown Indianapolis.

## Browning Marsh



The only emergent marsh remaining in Central Indiana, the Browning Marsh area provides a home to a variety of both rare and common wetland species. Rails attract particular interest, with Virginia and king rails nesting here in the past.

## Sand Pond



This geologic anomaly – a naturally occurring pond in a sand deposit above the Wabash River – likely formed after the glaciers receded and when the Wabash was a glacial melt-water stream. Sphagnum moss, cinnamon fern and other acid-loving plants grow here.

## Lower Sugar Creek



This large area containing Turkey Run State Park as well as several other, smaller protected lands combines forests and potential restoration areas to create an unbroken forest canopy. Expect to see sandstone hollows and a number of rare species.

## Snake Creek



Oak woodlands and sandstone bluffs highlight this mostly forested landscape. **Future opportunities:** This site contains agricultural lands that can be restored to create a site large enough to support populations of forest interior species.

## Blue Bluff-Bradford Woods



Rare species – including the flowering raspberry, broad-winged hawk, and cerulean warbler – thrive in these oak-dominated ridges and ravines. **Future opportunities:** The White River bisects the forest with fertile silt laden flats that can be restored to create a larger contiguous forest block.

## Ice Block Ponds



These glacially formed natural ponds, like the kettle ponds and bogs of northeast Indiana, have existed since the last ice age. Most of the ponds in this area have been compromised. The ones in this site represent the best remaining examples.

Photo Credit: Scott Hecker

# Central Indiana



CENTRAL  
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*Preserving the Heartland*



### The Best Slice of Central Indiana: Core Conservation Areas

Core Conservations Areas offer unique glimpses of authentic Central Indiana landscapes. Rich with biodiversity and special ecological attributes, these areas present the best slice of Central Indiana and our greatest opportunities to protect the region's distinctive natural heritage.

### Indian Prairie

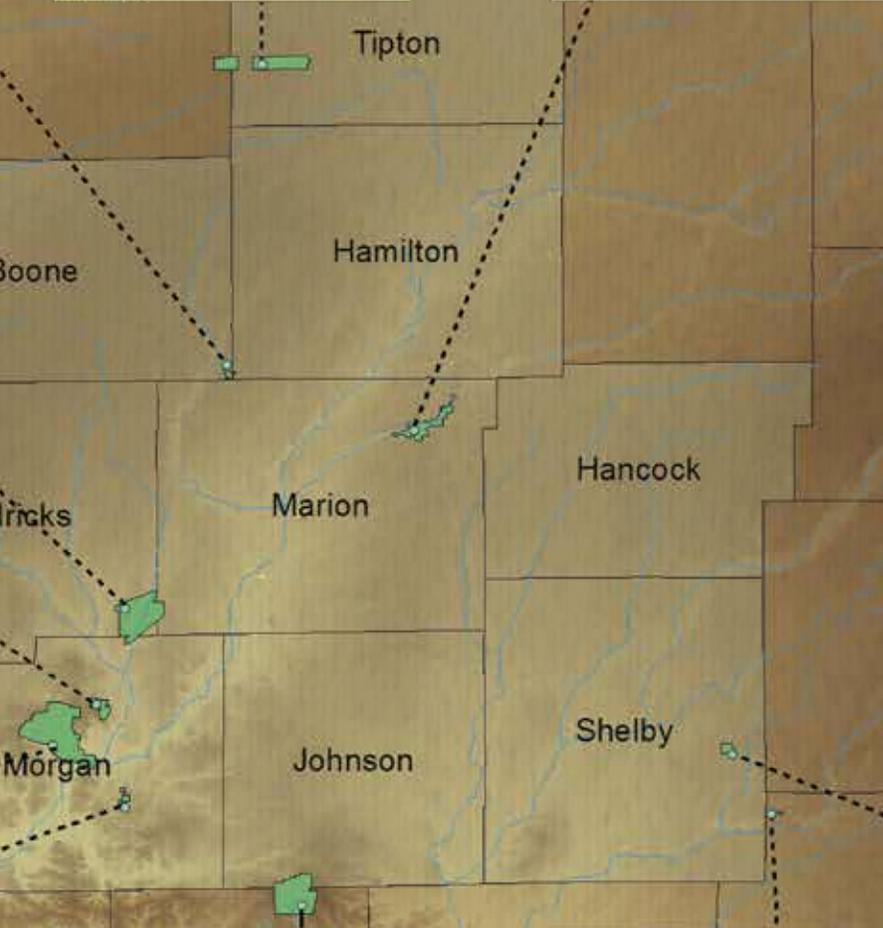


This eastern extremity of the prairie peninsula is dominated by agricultural land, with the exception of railroad right-of-way that supports dozens of prairie plants. **Future opportunities:** Restoration of farm land to prairie using the local seed source can give a glimpse to a time when prairie stretched from here to the Rocky Mountains.

### Fort Harrison- Fall Creek



An unusually large urban forest, this area also contains an old-growth forest and a variety of nesting birds and native wildflowers. **Immediate concern:** Invasive species.



### Hills of Gold



This large block of hardwood forest sits where the glaciers met the Brown County Hills. The resulting mixture of glacial soils and bedrock make these rugged hills rich in plant diversity and, consequently, wildlife. Expect to see rare birds, including worm-eating and hooded warblers.

### Flatrock Fen



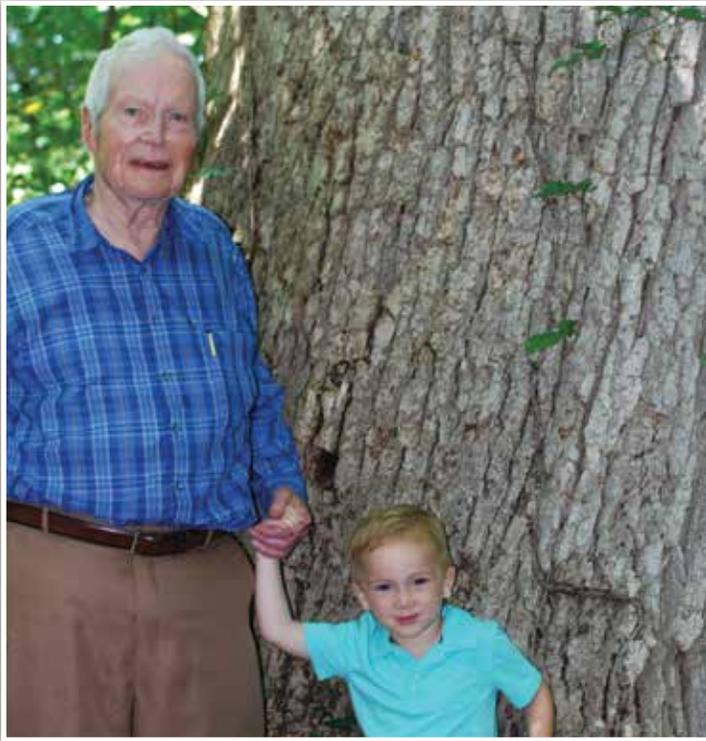
A perched fen on a bluff above the Flatrock River, this area offers a unique glimpse of exposed bedrock covered with lufa (limestone residue). In addition to several rare wetland species, the site features disjunct populations of forest plants not seen again until near the Michigan border.

### Meltzer Woods



A National Natural Landmark, this old-growth forest is filled with centuries-old trees, including several current or past state- or national-champion trees. The expanded site will serve as a buffer between the old-growth forest and restored agricultural areas.

## Meltzer Woods: Walk with Giants (continued)



*Phil Meltzer with great-grandson Brady, the 8th generation of their family to protect the woods*

*(continued from page 5)*

could come from the wooded lands. “My dad loved the trees more than the money,” Phil says. “He thought that, if he cut them down, every time he’d see the stumps it would upset him.”

Over the years, the family has followed a fairly steady route toward the sale to the Land Trust. In 1928, Brady Meltzer registered the land as part of Indiana’s Classified Forest Program, meaning he agreed not to graze livestock among the trees. In 1945, the land came to the attention of conservationists as the family cooperated with a Butler University study. Over the next few decades, Meltzer Woods continued to be watched and studied. It’s believed some of the trees might have sprouted in the years before Columbus stepped foot on North American soil, and trees on the property were regularly cited as “state or national champions.” Phil has seen many of those most ancient trees fall, and some are still slowly decomposing on the forest floor.

Phil says he and his father were especially affected by a Purdue University study in the 1960s by Lindsey, Schmelz and Nichols, which catalogued the best remaining natural areas in the state of Indiana. The timing for this

study was fortunate, Executive Director Cliff Chapman notes, because it coincided with a general preservation awareness movement nationally and within Indiana.

In 1973, Meltzer Woods was designated a National Natural Landmark by the National Park Service. Around that time, a photo was snapped of Phil standing next to the chinkapin oak he recently revisited. In 1999, Chapman, who was then an ecologist with the Indiana Division of Nature Preserves, visited the site for the first time – and was immediately smitten and became dedicated to preserving what had already been identified as one of the state’s few remaining old-growth forests.

Chapman continued his connection to the property over the years, and has worked since joining the Land Trust on efforts to ensure its long-term protection. In 2008, the Land Trust’s relationship with the Meltzer family led to a stewardship agreement allowing the Land Trust to work to combat invasive species and maintain the forest. Hundreds of volunteers have spent time on the land, Chapman says, having considerable success in controlling the winter creeper and garlic mustard that threatened the character of the woods.

Now that kind of work will increase, as the Land Trust begins the process of creating a parking area and hiking trails that will allow visitors to enjoy this remnant of Indiana’s natural past. It’s expected the property will be open to the public in 2016.



*The giants of Meltzer Woods dwarf a young explorer*

# Burnett Woods reopens with 1.7 miles of trails

Closed as a result of ash trees that fell over its popular hiking trail, the Burnett Woods nature preserve reopened on Sept. 13.

The Avon-area preserve is open seven days a week from dawn until dusk. Its marked 1.7-mile trail is ideal for hikers of all ages and skill levels, and convenient parking is available at the back of the Light and Life Methodist Church, at 8264 County Road 100 S, Avon.

The preserve had a shorter trail until a local Boy Scout, Stephen Schafer of Troop 358 in Zionsville, worked with the Land Trust to build a 1.2-mile extension as part of his Eagle Scout project. Now the site has a blue trail that's .5 miles and a red trail that's 1.2 miles.

The 80-acre property has been owned and managed by the Central Indiana Land Trust since 1998, and it features tall black walnut, oak, hickory, maple and tulip poplar trees. Historically, about 10 percent of the property's trees were ash. When the area was struck by the emerald ash borer, Burnett Woods' ash trees were weakened, creating a dangerous situation for preserve visitors. As a result, the Land Trust closed the preserve until the area could be stabilized.

The Land Trust does not treat trees in its preserves to combat emerald ash borer invasions (see sidebar).

For more information about Burnett Woods, or directions to the property, visit [conservingindiana.org](http://conservingindiana.org).



*New signage at Burnett Woods*



*A view down the newly expanded trail*

## Why we aren't fighting the emerald ash borer

At Burnett Woods, as in its other preserves, the Central Indiana Land Trust did not try to stop the emerald ash borer. Instead, it allowed the trees that the beetle struck to die and decompose in the woods.

The reason for this approach is simple. If the Land Trust wanted to stop the invasion, the cost of doing so would be prohibitive. "There's no way to know how long we would have to try to protect the trees," Executive Director Cliff Chapman said. "It costs hundreds of dollars to treat one tree per year, and we have thousands of ash trees. There's just no way we could do it."

The good news is that various agencies have collected seeds for the future. Once the emerald ash borer has run its course, the Land Trust might replant to replace its ash trees. "It will be difficult watching them go," Chapman says, "but the forests I've grown up loving in Indiana are without American elm and American chestnut – I feel inspired by what we have, not sorrow for what we've lost."

# Where there's a will there's a way...

...to make a gift that lasts for conservation in Central Indiana.

By including the Central Indiana Land Trust in your will, your passion for nature serves as a legacy for generations to come.

The Burr Oak Society was established in recognition of CITLTI's donors who have created such a legacy. If you have made a provision for the Central Indiana Land Trust in your will or trust, please let us know so we can include you as a member of the Burr Oak Society and thank you during your lifetime.



## Members of the Burr Oak Society

Christine Carlson  
Joe Collins  
Oliver Daugherty\*  
Aron DiBacco

Rebecca and Thomas Dolan  
Van Eller\*  
Sharon Horvath and Andy Pike  
Tom Hougham and Ann Deutch

Marjorie Jones  
Eleanor Krauss\*  
Cheri O'Neill  
John\* and Mary\* Pelton

Ruth Ratcliff\*  
Reta and Rob Rutledge  
Deb Smith

\*deceased

If you would like more information about including the Land Trust in your plans and becoming a member of the Burr Oak Society, please contact Rachel at [reble@conservingindiana.org](mailto:reble@conservingindiana.org) or 317-631-5263.

## Thank you for the following tributes

### *In memory of...*

**Randy Lewis**  
Tina Jenkins

**Dr. Michael Lomax**  
John Sumner and Rebecca Lomax-Sumner

**Frank Pisarski**  
Walt and Marilyn Prouty

**Wendell Trogdon**  
Art Harris

### *In honor of...*

**William Basil Chapman**  
Cliff and Carrie Chapman  
Tom and Priscilla Johnson  
Randy and Sandy Lamb

**Connie Douglas**  
Scott and Jamie Douglas

**Rebecca Ristow**  
Bill Gitlin  
Tanya Stephens  
Marla and Mark Tasch

## Stewardship efforts are ramping up

2015 will be an exciting year for stewardship in Central Indiana. CITLTI is in the final stages of hiring its first ever full-time stewardship specialist. This new position will oversee activities for all nature preserves and conservation easements. This will include working with volunteers like our Wednesday Warriors, leading hikes for our members and working to keep our preserves healthy and looking great! CITLTI is also in the process of investing in some much needed equipment to support stewardship – a truck, trailer and ATV! Opportunities to get involved and volunteer with our new stewardship specialist will be posted in the coming months.

## Survey Delivers Surprising Results



*Worm-eating warbler*

The Hills of Gold Core Conservation Area is all atwitter.

A bird survey done as a collaboration between the Central Indiana Land Trust and the Natural Heritage Data Center found areas within the Hills of Gold to be home to a surprising number of state-registered bird species.

Conducted in June, the survey of the Glacier's End parcel found 39 species of breeding birds in the area. The findings confirm the larger area's role as a forest interior habitat and endangered species habitat. It's not the presence of a species found that is as important as the frequency of habitat-indicative ones encountered. For example, 11 Acadian flycatchers, 14 red-eyed vireos, 11 wood thrush, and incredibly for two state-listed species, 13 worm-eating warblers and 7 hooded warblers were documented at Glacier's End in the Hills of Gold area.

"We knew the habitat was good, but we didn't realize it was this good," said Executive Director Cliff Chapman. "This shows us how important that area is for rare species."

A bird survey is conducted by trained individuals who visit the site and walk its entirety, listening for the calls of different birds. The researchers are careful not to retrace



*Roger Hedge, an ecologist with the Indiana Natural Heritage Data Center, take a closer look during the bird survey*

their steps – to avoid identifying the same bird twice – and they adhere to exacting standards for species identification and verification.

By collaborating with the Natural Heritage Data Center, Chapman said, the Land Trust ensured that it participated in a science-based, carefully managed survey.

"We wanted to do the bird survey with the heritage program because they are the best field scientists around," Chapman said. "We wanted a better understanding of what we really had in terms of rare and endangered birds."

Established in 1978, the Natural Heritage Data Center works to create an inventory of the state's natural resources and areas. A part of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources' Division of Nature Preserves, the Natural Heritage Data Center maintains a database with records for 1,500 federally endangered species, with 1,500 records of federally endangered species, 16,000 records of state listed species, of what it terms "high quality natural communities," and 1000 significant natural areas. of what it terms "high quality natural communities," and 1000 significant natural areas.

**25**  
year  
ANNIVERSARY



**Founded in 1990, CILTI will be celebrating  
25 years of conservation in 2015.**

A committee will be gathering soon to begin planning a celebration. If you are interested in getting involved, or have a story to share about the early years of CILTI, please email Rachel at [reble@conservingindiana.org](mailto:reble@conservingindiana.org).

**We look forward to hearing from you!**

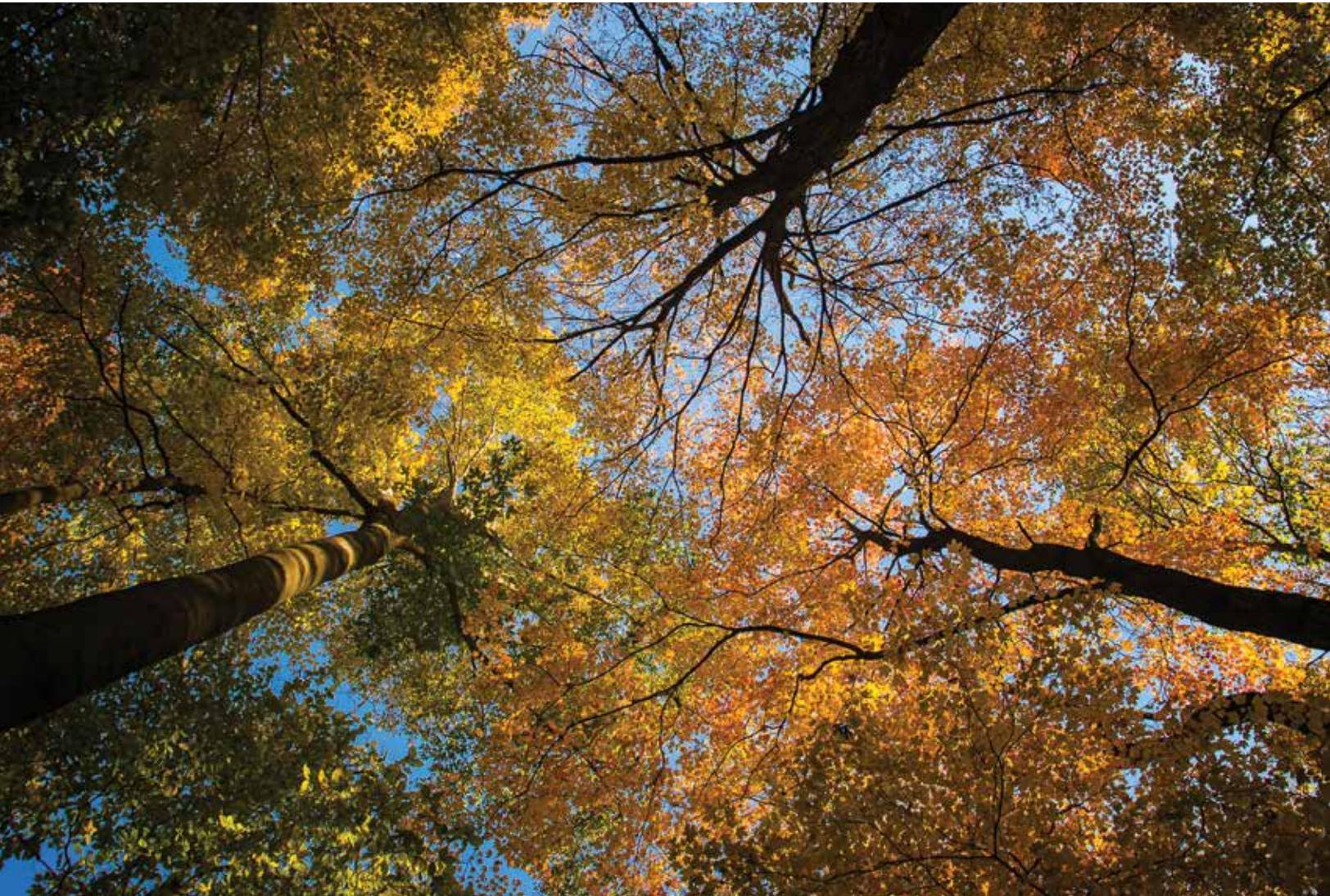


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Indianapolis, IN 46202

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