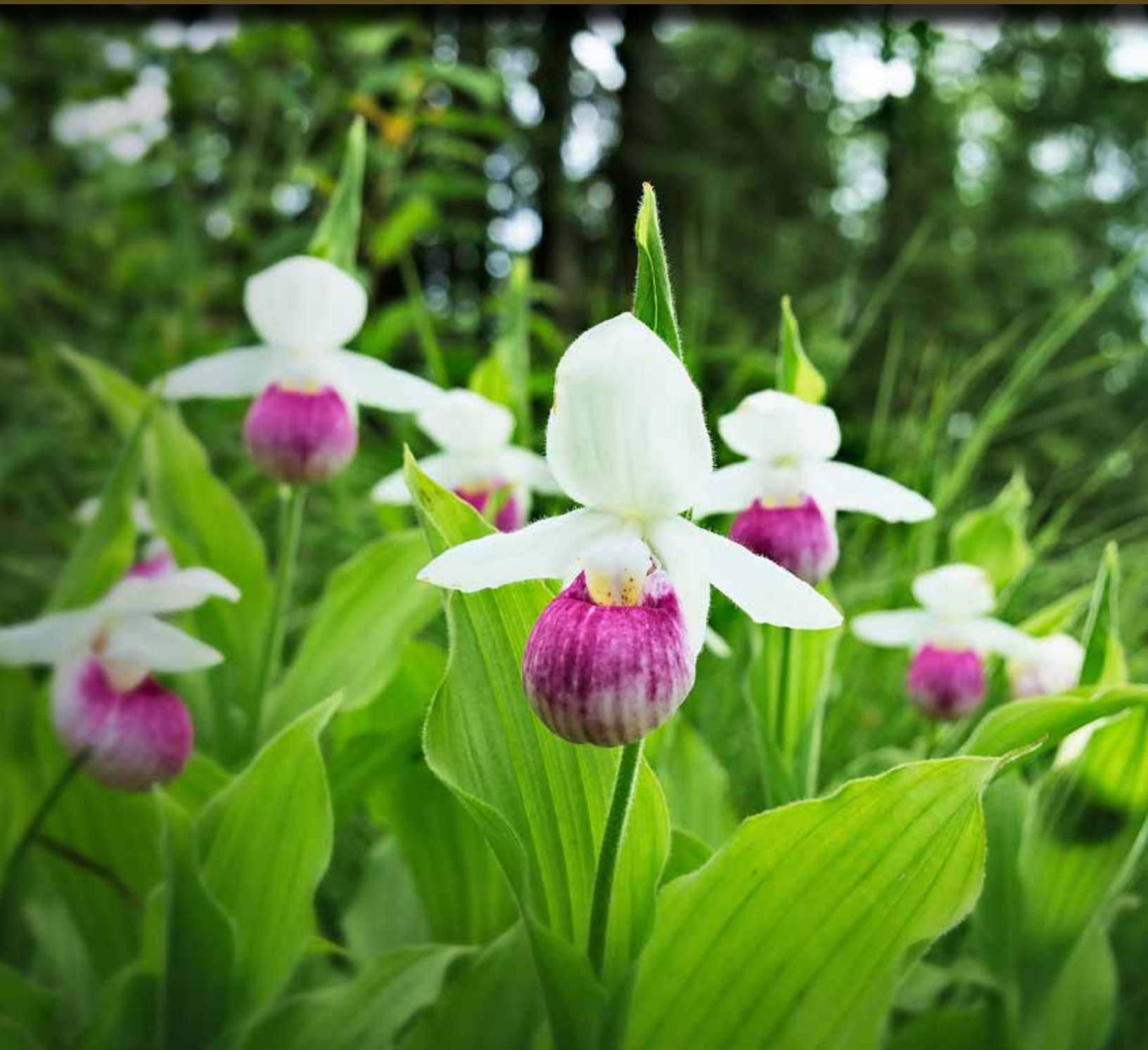




# CENTRAL INDIANA LAND TRUST

Summer 2018



## From the Leadership

A few months ago, John Bacone, the director of the Indiana DNR Division of Nature Preserves, came to our office for a meeting and brought along a folder titled "CILTI." He told me he was cleaning out his files and thought these documents might have a better home at our office than his.

It took me a while to go through the file, but it has some fascinating history from the late 1980s and early 1990s. What I found most interesting was an exchange of letters between John Bacone and Eleanor "Dickie" Bookwalter from the late 1980s, when John had already been the Nature Preserves director for nearly 10 years. Dickie wrote that she was a long-time supporter of national conservation organizations. She had traveled the country seeing the great work of local land trusts. So why wasn't there one in our state's capital?

Subsequent letters show steady progress toward this dream. Likeminded folks connected in many one-on-one conversations and group meetings to talk about how to establish a local land trust. The final letter from John to Dickie shares the news: Central Indiana Land Trust was forming.

I can only imagine the satisfaction this development must have brought them both—and their excitement about the possibilities.

I used to say that Dickie backed CILTI from the beginning, as one of our longest and most consistent supporters. Now I know that she was advocating for a land trust *before we even got started*. She has championed us through our first land acquisition, our first land purchase, our first staff person getting hired...right through to today, when we manage over \$20,000,000 in assets.

That's the kind of continued support that enables us to realize the dream of protecting even more natural areas—and taking excellent care of them.

As we look back on our history, we must look forward as well. You and hundreds of other like-minded supporters have built on the original dream of a local land trust. Thirty years after those initial discussions, we are rolling out a new conservation plan that identifies the best remaining natural areas in the central third of Indiana. We are in the exciting early stages of implementing the plan: meeting with partners, reaching out to landowners, prioritizing land to protect. As you'll read in the lead story, there are exciting projects ahead.

We'll work to buffer our old growth forests to create forest interior habitat. Right now our old growth forests are like living museums with a lot of windows. We want to take the windows out and give species a chance to expand their territory.

We'll restore prairie remnants, and while we won't see the bison's return, the land will support rare grassland birds and butterflies.

We'll look to protect groundwater wetlands, including fens—the kind of place where jumping up and down can move a nearby tree.

Read on to learn more about these and other great examples of Indiana's natural heritage—and how you can help preserve them for future generations.



Cliff Chapman  
Executive Director



CENTRAL  
INDIANA  
LAND TRUST

*Preserving the Heartland*



Cliff Chapman

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## On the Cover:



*Showy lady's slipper*



# 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 CILTI'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

Anonymous (4)  
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  
Phil G.D. Schaefer  
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 Cliff at [cchapman@conservingindiana.org](mailto:cchapman@conservingindiana.org) or 317-525-3329.

### Correction:

We inadvertently omitted Janice Holley's name from the Spring 2018 newsletter's donor listing.

### Clarification:

In the Spring 2018 newsletter's letter from the leadership, Cliff wrote that CILTI does not allow clear cuts "based on the weak science supporting them." The intent was to say, "when there is weak science supporting them."



# The Essence of Central Indiana, Naturally

To the uninitiated, it's easy to overlook Central Indiana's natural features, but our members know better. This region is home to incredible biodiversity, compelling geological formations and plenty of understated beauty. So, what does CILTI look for when choosing areas to preserve?

We employ a three-tiered approach to our conservation plan for Central Indiana. We strive to: 1) preserve core conservation areas; 2) protect land of local or community significance; and 3) assist partners with their priority lands.

The bulk of our work falls under the first priority, preserving core conservation areas. These natural areas represent the best remaining natural areas in Central Indiana.

Our overarching goal is to create a functioning system of preserves that best represents nature in Indiana. "Nature" refers to what can't be created by human hands — meaning not just flora and fauna, but geological elements as well.

But why do we focus on the particular natural areas we do? Here are some highlights of core conservation areas from our new conservation plan.

**Forest interior habitat** is a major priority — converting fragmented forests into large forested blocks. We've concentrated much of our future work on old growth forests — wooded areas that have been allowed to age without significant disturbance over hundreds of years. Pre-settlement Indiana was largely forested, but now the old growth forests exist only in remnants. Since the last of these venerable sites came under protection in Indiana (with Meltzer Woods in 2014), we have turned our efforts to buffering them.

As of now, most of Indiana's protected old growth forests are small islands amidst cleared and developed areas. Though critical spaces, their small size limits their impact to some degree, both in terms of human interaction and ecosystem complexity.

To change that, we need to restore areas around the old growth forests. By working to surround the fragments with at least a



*Longtime CILTI supporter Reta Rutledge admires prairie dock in a remnant prairie.*

square-mile block of trees, we can magnify the old growth forests' impact exponentially. Working at this larger scale, we can protect whole populations of species, vs. individual members of species. This type of restoration can bring isolated animal populations in contact with each other to interbreed. In a larger block of habitat, species like turtles have a wider exchange of genetics, boosting their resilience.

Additionally, migratory songbird populations severely decline in fragmented woods because of the parasitic egg-laying behavior of brown-headed cowbirds and nest predators like raccoons. But cowbirds and raccoons rarely venture into deep forest, where species like the worm-eating warbler and the Eastern wood pewee prefer to nest. By expanding their habitat, we give migrating birds a safe home to raise their young.

Other critical species thrive in such a place as well, from beetles and spiders to fungi and rare plants. An entire web of life reknits itself when given enough territory.

We have a few forest interior habitat preserves under stewardship. In Johnson County, the Laura Hare Nature Preserve at Blossom Hollow is part of a large unbroken hardwood forest block, one of few remaining forest interior areas in Central Indiana.

Moving ahead, our task is to identify and pursue parcels that are big enough to create this kind of forest block. That might look like a strategically placed cornfield that could be planted in oaks, plums, pawpaws and hazelnuts. After a decade or two of growth, such plantings could significantly alter adjacent old growth forests for the better.

**Tallgrass prairie** represents a high priority for protection since very little of Indiana's prairie heritage still exists. Central Indiana holds the eastern edge of an ecosystem that once stretched all the way to the Rocky Mountains. As the continent's largest continuous ecosystem, the prairie supported immense numbers of plants and animals. Statewide, we've lost 99.9 percent of our prairielands, and even more than that in Central Indiana.



Though we will never see a return of this high-functioning system of tallgrass prairies in Central Indiana, we can focus on restoration in and around the tiny prairie remnants that remain.

A one-acre prairie remnant surrounded by agriculture has nowhere for its blown seeds to take root. But with acquisition and management of surrounding land, the cornfield where those seeds would have landed becomes potential prairie. Collecting seeds from the parcel and spreading them in an outward ring is the goal. Due to the small size of these remnants, most of which are in railroad rights-of-way and pioneer cemeteries, the primary objective would be to provide habitat for grassland birds and butterflies.



*Emergent marsh is home to the state-threatened Virginia rail.*

**Emergent marsh** is another ecosystem that's nearly gone from Central Indiana. These wetlands feature plants that root in the soil with foliage extending from the water. Emergent marsh is ideal habitat for the state-threatened Virginia rail. Rails typically run rather than fly from threats, with the singular ability to slenderize their bodies to get through tight spots in the dense marshland grasses. In fact, some believe this is the origin of the expression, "skinny as a rail."

**Groundwater wetland** is another priority target, and in particular the bouncy places known as wetland fens. In this globally rare ecosystem, the groundwater flows at or just under the surface, making an extremely calcium-rich environment with a thick layer of peat. Water flowing at a constant rate robs the soil of nutrients, producing a mineral-rich, nutrient-poor medium for

some of the Midwest's rarest plants. A 13-acre fen in Central Indiana can host up to 500 vascular plant species. (By comparison, Badlands National Park's 244,000 acres contain 444 plant species.)

**Unique geologic features**, such as waterfalls and kettle ponds, are a key part of our state's natural history. Kettle ponds are extremely rare in Central Indiana. These naturally occurring small lakes, a product of the Ice Age, formed in places where glacier melt resulted in a big chunk of ice calving and making a depression in the ground. While most lakes and ponds in our region are manmade (or formed by an oxbow in a river) kettle ponds are special and worthy of protection.

**Endangered species habitat** preservation will be extremely selective, focused around rare plants like the federally endangered running buffalo clover and state-endangered rock cress. Animals, on the other hand, tend to move their territories, so targeting their habitat is more problematic. Unfortunately, we can't protect every spot where endangered species are found. But we'll look for special situations where we can save part of our natural heritage by protecting relatively small areas that are home to endangered species.

**Glades**, or natural openings in a forest, are distinguished by their rocky and desert-like terrain. Though derogatorily named "barrens" by some early settlers because of seemingly fallow soil, in actuality glades support unusual assemblages of plants. In this hot, dry habitat, species associated with prairies and deserts (such as aloe, prickly pear cactus and prairie dock) are surrounded by open woodlands with smallflowered sunflower, blackjack oak and yellow lady's slipper.

Places that exemplify each of these "ecotypes" will be our mission-critical projects in the future. Stay tuned for ways you can get involved!



*Kettle Pond, Parke County*



## Species Spotlight: Showy Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium reginae*)

From damp and often limy soil, one of our state's most extraordinary orchids blooms. The showy lady's slipper grows in the moist soil of wetlands, such as fens, woodsy swamps and dune-and-swale habitats. Just a few inches long and resembling feminine footgear of yore, its flower is a true stunner. A deep pink suffuses the flower's pouch under a trio of white petals.

Showy lady's slipper is our tallest northern orchid, at 10 to 27 inches. Its Latin name, "reginae," means "of a queen."

And who wouldn't feel like bowing in reverence when encountering her in the wild? Especially in favorable conditions: up to 200 flower stems can arise from a single rhizome. Other common names, like fairy queen, queen's lady's slipper and royal lady's slipper, evoke these queenly associations.

By any name, this is a treasure of a plant—difficult to cultivate, slow to flower. Touching the leaves or stem can give some people a rash, but this hasn't kept it safe from a major threat: human disturbance. Unfortunately, its rarity and beauty too often tempt people to displace the plant from the wild. Once dug up, the delicate plants usually die. Whole colonies can be decimated at the hands of horticultural collectors.

Conserving habitat for this species requires some measure of caution to mitigate that risk. This plant is so special that conservation groups typically don't announce when the land it's found on comes under preservation. In meetings discussing the protection of places where showy lady's slippers grow, often the orchid itself is never even mentioned. The risk of people finding and digging up the plant is too great.

It may be showy, but this lady's slipper can be cagey too, with a special talent for hiding. Its rhizome can go dormant under ground for years between growth cycles. This form of "vertical escape" is thought to protect it from environmental hazards.

Even above ground, the plant can take up to 16 years to flower for the first time. Left undisturbed, a plant could live for half a century, while its rhizome can live indefinitely.



*Showy Lady's Slipper*

However, this rare plant is becoming even more rare. Aside from poaching, threats to the showy lady's slipper include habitat loss and water quality deterioration. White-tailed deer like to eat the plants, and in areas where the deer population is high, their browsing creates a significant threat.

In Indiana, showy lady's slipper is considered vulnerable. In many other states this species is considered imperiled or critically imperiled.

We know of unprotected populations of showy lady's slippers in high-quality natural areas in Central Indiana, and we intend to protect them. As to their locations...we'll never tell.

### Thank you for the following tributes

#### In honor of...

**Sarah Evans Barker**

Thomas and Priscilla Johnson

**Mary Ferree**

Thomas and Priscilla Johnson

**Leonard and  
Kathryn Betley**

Thomas and Priscilla Johnson

**Carolyn McConkey**

Thomas and Priscilla Johnson

**Margaret Crosby**

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#### In memory of...

**Sharon Bienz**

Thomas and Priscilla Johnson

**Randy Lewis**

Howard Lewis

**Patricia Gifford Butsch**

Thomas and Priscilla Johnson

**Brady Meltzer**

Nick Runnebohm

**Katie Crossen**

Joy and Dana Florestano

**Marjory Peters**

Bill and Janet Wagner

**Oliver Daugherty**

Suzanne Blakeman  
Cliff and Carrie Chapman

**Doris R. Thomas**

Mr. Robert Thomas

**Suzi Hudnut**

Thomas and Priscilla Johnson



## Then and Now: Taking the Long View

Back in 2008, when CILTI staff and volunteers planted trees at what was then called Wapihani Nature Preserve, the town of Fishers was just that: a town. Now it's a city that's growing exponentially, while the county surrounding it is one of the most populous in the state.

In the midst of this tremendous expansion, a quieter process is at work. Nonie Werbe Krauss Nature Preserve, as it is now called, little resembles the open agricultural land it was when it came into our hands.

With support from CILTI members, over 19,000 trees were planted in one segment. Elsewhere, a mix of prairie species and islands of oaks were planted in a field that had been seeded into grasses by the previous owner.

The long view of this planting: bottomland forest along the White River to the south, burr oak savanna to the north. (A savanna is a mixed woodland/grassland ecosystem, where sparse trees leave an open canopy.)

At first, the little woods could barely be distinguished from grasslands. That first summer saw grasshopper sparrows nesting in the tree planting area. These slight birds, which typically nest in grasses, bent the tree seedlings halfway to the ground with their weight.

Over half of the saplings were oak, a tree that spends the first three years of life sending all of its energy downward into its root system, showing no visible growth. It's no surprise that by summer of 2010, ragweed grew so high around the saplings that the "forest" could barely be found. Staffers mowed between the trees to keep them thriving.

And thrive they did. The preserve has changed a lot in the ensuing decade, judging from the size of the trees and ro-

bustness of the prairie natives. But the change is not just evident to human eyes. As the plantings grow, the bigger picture of how the animals inhabit them also evolves.

In the summer of 2018, the grasshopper sparrow's raspy call is heard not from the trees, but from the forbs and grasses of the savanna. From the young forest, we hear a new song, the hoarse "fitz-bew" of the willow flycatcher. This bird, which

the Audubon Society lists as declining, prefers the habitat of open woods.

Looking forward 20 years, it's intriguing to speculate what the land will attract next. Perhaps by 2038 the mournful fluting of wood thrush songs will ring through the maturing trees.

It's likely that the preserve will also shelter other nesting birds like orchard orioles and warblers, along with amphibians like tree frogs and uncommon mammals like least weasels. The oaks, with their deep foundation within the soil, will support dozens if not hundreds of species of butterflies and moths. These species not only pollinate flowering plants—in larval form they represent the foundation of the food chain, offering a key nutrient source for nestlings.

What's happening at Nonie Werbe Krauss, though so slowly and quietly as to escape notice, is no less in-

tegral to our state's future than the expansion of the urban spaces around it.

This long view is what makes your ongoing support so critical in giving Central Indiana's best natural places the care they need to mature into their full splendor. Just as the foundational root system of the oak tree supports life, your legacy is the protection of countless species.



*Tree planting, 2008*



*Today*





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