



# CENTRAL INDIANA LAND TRUST

Fall/Winter 2018





# From the Leadership

In this work of protecting nature, we also get a chance to connect with some really great people. People who are like family.

After eight great years serving in different roles but always with an eye on our fundraising needs, Rachel Eble left our team this summer for a wonderful career growth opportunity. She told me it was a really hard decision because CILTI was like family to her. I feel the same way. Rachel professionalized our fundraising and communications efforts, building both programs from the ground up. We are sad to see her go, but we know she will always be part of the CILTI family.

Behind each acre protected are countless individuals. And so often these individuals also become a sort of extended family to us at CILTI.

Cliff and Dixie Kunze, whom you'll meet in these pages, are among the landowners who work with CILTI to make land protection happen. Their Parke County property, a new addition to Mossy Point Nature Preserve, joined our 5,400 acres of protected land in one of our speediest transactions ever. That could only happen with the help of our talented board members and dedicated staff, along with you, the membership.

Meanwhile, our hardworking stewardship team and many volunteers tend to these special places we all love. Keeping invasives at bay and trails clear are never once-and-done tasks, and each hour of work is time well spent. Though I meet fewer volunteers than I once did, I'm grateful for each one's contribution, and count them as honorary CILTI family members.

Then there are the scientists and ecological consultants who work within our sites, whether to further scientific knowledge or to partner with us on restoration. It's a privilege to connect with so many brilliant folks who are also invested in keeping natural areas protected.

I am honored to have the opportunity to serve together with such an incredible group of people. People will come and go from our lives at CILTI, but one thing stays the same: our good fortune to work with so many individuals dedicated to the mission of protecting the best of Central Indiana. Thank you all for being part of our growing family. 🌱

  
Cliff Chapman  
Executive Director



**CENTRAL INDIANA  
LAND TRUST**



*Cliff Chapman*

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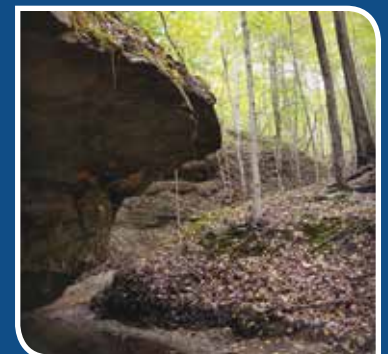
Shawndra Miller  
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Traci Willis  
*Executive Assistant*

Joanna Woodruff  
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1500 N. Delaware Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202  
317-631-5263

## On the Cover:





# 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 (8)

Christine Carlson

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Sharon Horvath and Andy Pike

Tom Hougham and Ann Deutch

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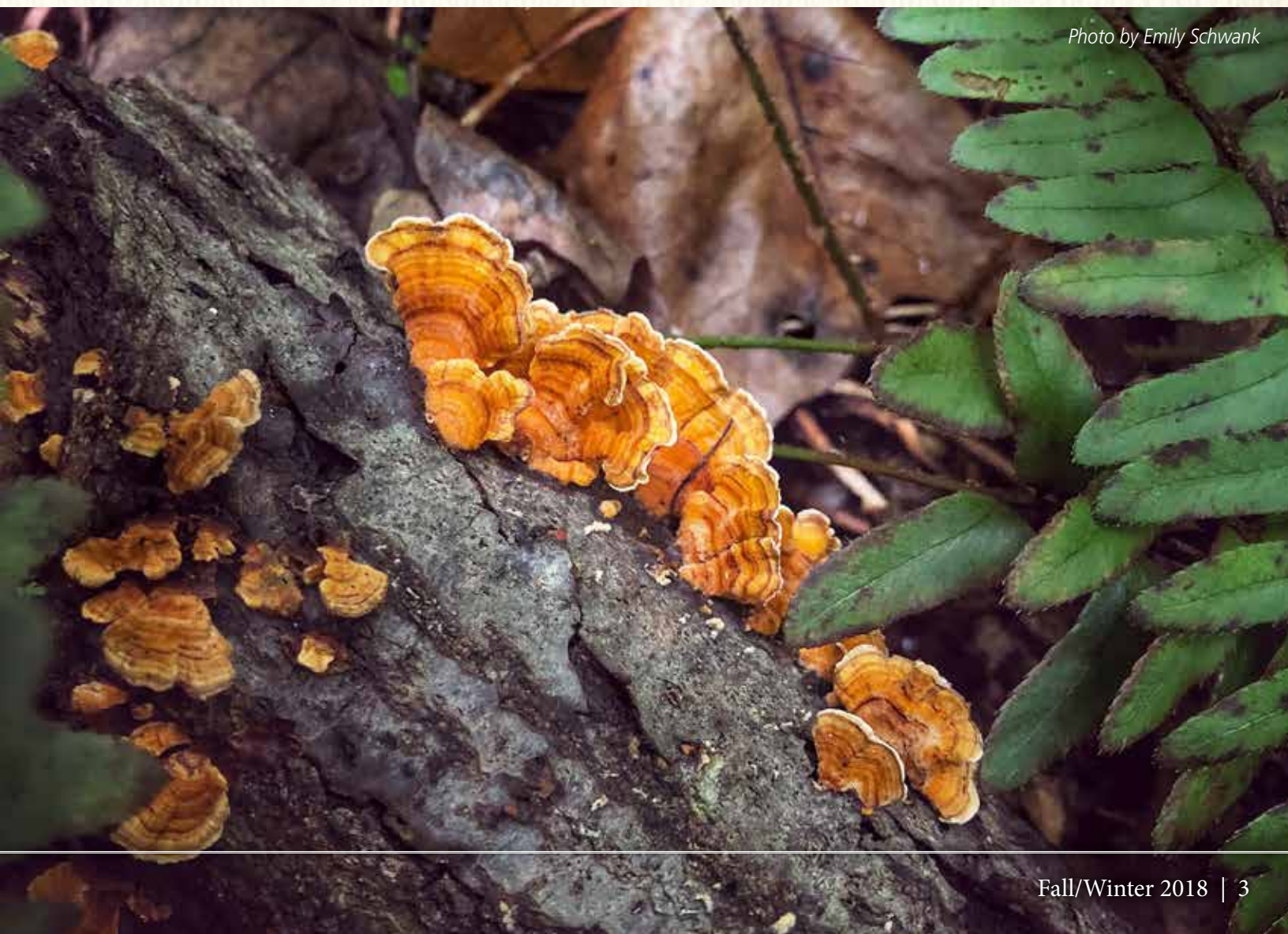
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Deb Smith

\*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 Stacy at [scachules@conservingindiana.org](mailto:scachules@conservingindiana.org) or 317-631-5263. 🌿

*Photo by Emily Schwank*





# Parke County Land Extends Mossy Point Nature Preserve

Majestic cliffs, a tiny salamander, a gleaming Eastern box turtle, surprising flora, the sound of trickling water—these were some of the delights that awaited CILTI staff on a recent Parke County hike. In early October we explored one of Indiana's most iconic landscapes while visiting our newest acquisition: 25 acres of land adjoining Mossy Point Nature Preserve.

We closed on the purchase this summer with Cliff and Dixie Kunze. The couple had owned the land since 2006 and managed it meticulously, while also stewarding Mossy Point as volunteers. This property is special for so many reasons, containing a woods free of garlic mustard and Japanese stilt grass, studded with white oaks, and loaded with wildflowers in spring. The land is dotted with ramps (wild leeks), whose white blooms in high summer can turn hillsides snowy. And autumn brings stunning vistas of fall foliage.

But the star of the show here is a sandstone canyon that's breathtaking through all seasons. Known as Rocky Hollow, this geologic wonder extends into Mossy Point. With this addition, CILTI now stewards the whole of the canyon, which offers an experience comparable to Turkey Run State Park, but more secluded.

The siting of this addition only adds to its importance in terms of conservation. Part of the Lower Sugar Creek Conservation Area, the new property links several parcels of protected land into one large block of forest interior habitat. CILTI owns Mossy Point; the DNR has the Covered Bridge Retreat; and Wabash College holds the state-dedicated nature preserve Allee Woods.

With the addition of this land, 696 conjoined acres are now under protection.

This unbroken forest canopy is crucial for wildlife from migratory warblers to the Eastern box turtle. It gives them more of a shot at raising their young, more protection from "edge effect" (see sidebar), and potentially more swapping of genes—all good news for populations that are on the decline.

For humans, the acreage offers more chances to be awe-struck, as we found during our recent visit.

Hiking along (and sometimes in) a tributary of Sugar Creek,



we saw firsthand the dramatic geography of this region. Deep ravines led down to the streambed, which transitioned from a muddy trickle to a stone-lined creek complete with little waterfalls.

The farther we followed the winding gorge, the more stunning the scenery. We marveled at the first glimpse of hulking sandstone outcrops overhanging the waterway, but every bend took us to a more spectacular view. The craggy 300 million-year-old formations dwarfed human and salamander alike. Seams of black revealed coal, and red secretions indicated hidden bits of iron in the overlaying glacial deposits.

Head-high, a few Eastern phoebe nests clung to the underside of these cliffs. Water pooled in a "devil's punch bowl," while epipetric ferns sprouted from the rocks.

Also hanging from the cliffs was club



*Photo by Emily Schwank*





Photo by Emily Schwank

moss (*Lycopodium*), the spores of which have an interesting historical use. *Lycopodium* spore powder is highly flammable when mixed with air, and the resulting explosion can create a photographic flash. Though the day was cloudy and we did have a professional photographer along, we decided not to put this to the test.

From the top of the bluffs, once we scrambled up and out again, the wooded ridges offered views of the creek below. Mushrooms popped up everywhere, some resembling coral, some evoking tiny flying saucers or miniature pumpkin pies. Moss-blanketed fallen trees looked like they'd been there for eons.

In fact, one ferny, moss-covered mound high on a ridge suggested the remains of an ancient tree that had long since decomposed, from its rootball on up. We often talk about “nurse logs” and the critical role they play in an ecosystem, but seeing the life springing forth from that former giant gave the concept new meaning.

Like that log, CILTI's work nourishes life, providing critical support to the natural areas we all cherish. Thank you for your help as we protect land in Parke County and throughout Central Indiana—and connect more Hoosiers to our state's natural wonders. 🌿

## What do we mean by “edge effect”?

In ecology, “edge effect” refers to changes in community or population occurring at the boundaries between two habitat zones. Species like the Eastern box turtle and migratory warblers fall prey to threats at the edge of a forest, requiring deep interior habitat to thrive.

## What is a Core Conservation Area?

CILTI's core conservation areas represent the best remaining natural areas in Central Indiana. Lower Sugar Creek is just one of 34 areas that we aim to protect. Each core conservation area encompasses at least one of our eight conservation targets:

- Old Growth Forest
- Groundwater Wetland
- Forest Interior Habitat
- Endangered Species Habitat
- Tallgrass Prairie
- Unique Geologic Feature
- Emergent Marsh
- Glade/Barrens

In the case of Lower Sugar Creek, we have a wealth of targets: forest interior habitat, unique geologic features and groundwater wetland. With the new Mossy Point extension, we've made significant progress in this core conservation area. More to come, with your support!



## Field Staff Spotlight: Rob McKibben



### ***Tell me a childhood experience in nature that you can point to today as formative.***

My first memory of nature was when I was around 4, when we lived out in the country. There was an oak grove with big oak trees in our front yard. I remember being in my mom's arms and her holding my hand against the oak tree and talking about the oak tree. I

remember looking up and being basically struck with awe at the size and the immensity of the tree.

(Today) I find myself in the woods stricken with awe at the beauty and majesty of the moment.

### ***How did you get connected with CILTI?***

I learned about CILTI at a volunteer event with my scholarship program. We went out to Oliver's Woods and helped build a trail to the river. I was enthralled to learn about the work being done by the land trust and decided I was going to help them with their mission. Not long after that a friend reached out to me and said, "CILTI just posted a position, you ought to check it out." And the rest is history.

### ***What is the task you enjoy the most about your field work?***

The act of being in service to others by creating spaces that they can enjoy. I enjoy clearing trails and removing invasive species so that the native plant life can flourish.

**Rob McKibben** has been a field assistant for the last two years while studying as a Nina Mason Pulliam Scholar in IUPUI's Mechanical Engineering Technologies program. We sat down with Rob to learn more about what drives him in the work he does for CILTI.

### ***Any favorite experiences you want to share from your time on the job?***

My all-time favorite experience was last spring, at Meltzer Woods on a brisk morning. Three or four of us were pulling garlic mustard. It struck me that I was deep in the woods on a misty morning and the birds were singing. I think I was just overcome with appreciation for being in a position to see this special sight that not many people get to enjoy.

### ***What is your favorite CILTI preserve?***

The work being done at Oliver's Woods is a fantastic opportunity, and I really cherish that property because of its potential for drawing awareness to the work we do and the importance of valuing nature. Where Oliver's Woods is situated in our community, it's a great way to show that we can preserve nature and value biological diversity right in our back yards. You don't have to have 1,000 acres in the middle of nowhere for it to be nature. We can embrace these thoroughfares, these greenways down to the river. We can have spots in our neighborhoods where we choose to create a sanctuary. Oliver's Woods is a great opportunity to embrace that notion and share it with others. 🌿

## Progress Report: Oliver's Woods

Oliver's Woods Nature Preserve is on track to open to the public in 2020! Thanks to a grant from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, we are opening this 54-acre urban preserve and increasing access to the White River.

We have begun work on a low-water crossing over Carmel Creek, placing slabs of stone that will allow foot traffic when the creek is low. With this amenity, visitors can move back and forth between the western and eastern halves of the property. (Much of the eastern side is managed by Indy Parks Department.)



*View of White River from Oliver's Woods*

With zoning approval, we are also moving ahead with a new gravel parking area just like the one found at Meltzer Woods, that will accom-

modate visitors and school groups.

Our next projects will be a public canoe launch and a short ADA-compliant trail to a White River lookout.

Many of you have assisted us over the years at Oliver's Woods—some 1,700 volunteers have contributed their time and muscle to removing invasives and clearing trails since we acquired the property in 2010. We look forward to sharing this special preserve with the wider public. Stay tuned for more updates and information on how you can help in the future! 🌿



## Notes from the Field: Putting the "Old" in Old Growth

When dendrochronologist Justin Maxwell first set foot in Meltzer Woods, his initial thought was, *Those are the shaggiest shagbarks I have ever seen.*

The IU Bloomington geography professor uses tree rings to analyze historic climate conditions, and he had obtained a permit to sample dead trees in this popular Shelby County nature preserve. Ohio Valley climatic history is not well documented since so many of our forests were cut down to make way for farms. So the information revealed by ancient trees has been largely lost.

Could the old growth forest offer the missing link? Maxwell's research turned up a bonanza of tree-recorded information.

His permit allowed sampling of downed and dead standing trees. Most of them, according to his analysis, appeared to have died during the 2012 drought.

Those beautiful living shagbark hickories don't betray their age just from a glance, since this species grows so slowly. "Shagbarks could be 120 years old or they could be 250 years old—they don't look

that much different," says Maxwell.

By coring the dead trees and measuring ring widths microscopically to the nearest thousandth of a millimeter, Maxwell discovered that some Meltzer shagbarks held more than three centuries of information in their ring patterns. Maxwell pegged one shagbark's origin to the year 1664, and another to 1670. The youngest shagbark dated from 1870, with many more from the mid-1700s, well before our nation was founded.

Though Maxwell only gathered data from dead trees, the live ones nearby are assumed to be within the same age range—or even older.

He also assessed Meltzer's enormous Shumard oak, which stood as the tallest tree in the state, of any species, until it fell in 2011. Because of its height it was assumed to be one of the oldest trees, perhaps dating back before the birth of the nation.

Maxwell learned that the venerable Shumard was 216 years old, younger than most of the smaller, slower-growing shagbarks.

He knew that a huge tree could be younger than smaller ones, but he was still startled by the result of his analysis. "I expected it to be much older," he admitted.

In forest remnants, shagbark hickory often turns out to be older than other species, indicating that people cut down coexisting trees for building material or other purposes. Maxwell speculates that hickory nuts made the difference—whether for hogs or people, shagbarks made their appeal known.

And about that Shumard: Despite its relative "youth," Maxwell believes it to be the oldest known tree of its kind in the world, dead or alive.

The wealth of scientific discovery available at Meltzer Woods—and our other nature preserves—confirms yet again how important they are to protect. 🌿



*Shagbark Hickory at Meltzer Woods*



*Shumard Oak at Meltzer Woods*

### Thank you for the following tributes

#### In memory of...

**Sharon Cachules**

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**Ruth Ann Wade**

Ann Strong and Harry Wade





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Central Indiana Land Trust, Inc.  
1500 North Delaware Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202

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