



CENTRAL
INDIANA
LAND TRUST

Spring 2017



From the Leadership



CENTRAL
INDIANA
LAND TRUST
Preserving the Heartland



Cliff Chapman

For several months, CILTI's Board of Directors have been busy working on a new strategic plan and vision for the organization. There are some pretty exciting goals they are setting that they, along with staff and volunteers, will be stretching to achieve.

The days are past that land trust boards just focus on number of acres to protect and amount of dollars to raise. The philosophy of "bucks and acres" conservation has always been flawed. Rather, our Board is interested in continued focus on protecting the highest quality natural areas remaining and improving the preserves we own. They are attentive to the integrity of ecosystems and what threats our protected areas face and how we will react to or preempt those threats (including how our preserves may adapt with climate change).

Easily, the largest task in the new plan is to take another look at Central Indiana and create a new conservation plan. This larger planning effort is then what future strategic plans try to break down over shorter periods of time to achieve in chunks, as a strategic conservation plan can take decades to complete.

As a preview, please know we plan to stay proactive and focused on Core Conservation Areas that target areas for land protection based on specific attributes – like forest interior habitat or groundwater wetlands like fens etc... but we will also be a regional land trust for all of Central Indiana and evaluate opportunities as they arise. This part is harder to plan for as it is more than science-based, but can be community based as well (we currently call these "Lands of Community Significance").

I would love to hear from you, our members and supporters, what criteria you believe should be used to evaluate sites that are not part of an identified conservation area. Should they be small gems like our Laura Hare Preserve at Turtle Bend in Parke County with its super cool sand bluff or more like an urban farm that produces vegetables for a community? Do you want to see more focus within and near Indianapolis, or more concentration on unique places wherever they occur?

I'd like to hear your thoughts on community conservation. I can be reached at cchapman@conservingindiana.org, on the phone at 317.631.5263 or shoot me a text at 317.525.3329. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas and putting them into action.

Cliff Chapman

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On the Cover:



Large-flowered Trillium

Indiana's Nature Preserve System Celebrates 50th Anniversary

*A guest article by John A. Bacone,
Director, DNR Division of Nature Preserves*

The Indiana Legislature passed the Nature Preserves Act in 1967, creating the Division of Nature Preserves. The Division is charged with working with partners to set aside and preserve areas of unusual natural significance for the benefit of present and future generations, to benefit from the scientific, aesthetic, cultural and spiritual values they possess. Since the Division was established, staff has worked with partners throughout Indiana, to catalogue Indiana's flora, fauna, and natural areas, striving to set up a system of nature preserves that includes examples of all the natural areas and rare species habitat that occur in Indiana. At least one example of almost every type of the 61 natural communities found in Indiana at the time of settlement is included in Indiana's nature preserve system. Ninety percent of the 416 plants considered endangered, threatened, or rare have viable populations in Indiana nature preserves.

Nature Preserves are the most widely and evenly distributed system of state significant public properties in Indiana. There are nature preserves in 70 of Indiana's 92 counties. As of January 2017, there are 274 dedicated nature preserves, protecting 51,836 acres. A dedicated nature preserve has the highest level of protection of any land in Indiana, as it is intended to remain in its natural ecological condition in perpetuity. These nature preserves are owned by 46 different entities, including DNR Divisions of Nature Preserves, Forestry, State Parks, and Fish and Wildlife, Land

Trusts, City and County Park Departments, and colleges and universities.

The Division of Nature Preserves (DNP) has had a significant conservation partnership with the Central Indiana Land Trust (CILTI) for many years. Together, CILTI and DNP have partnered on acquisitions of many natural areas, utilizing funding from the Indiana Heritage Trust, which has just been replaced by the President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust.

CILTI's eight dedicated nature preserves protect high quality examples of a variety of natural community types, including old growth forests (Meltzer Woods), geologic features (Blue Bluffs), floodplain forest and heron rookery (Millard Sutton Audubon Sanctuary), relict populations of Eastern hemlock (Hemlock Ridge), spectacular wildflower displays (Burnett Woods), and forest interior birds in a large unfragmented forest complex (Laura Hare Nature Preserve at Blossom Hollow). Large landscapes have also been protected, along Sugar Creek in Parke County (Mossy Point). Numerous endangered, threatened, and rare species call these nature preserves home.

During 2017, and in the years to come, I hope you will visit as many of these special places as possible, and enjoy these remnants of the "original Indiana" that have been protected for your enjoyment. We look forward to continuing our partnership with CILTI, protecting more special places as dedicated Indiana nature preserves.

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Conservation 101: The McCurdy Conservation Easement

We often joke about what a project would look like if we taught a college class like “Conservation 101: Basics in Conservation Planning.” What would a textbook project look like? For us, it would look something like:

High quality natural area? *Check*

Part of a Core Conservation Area? *Check.*

Adjoining a property already protected? *Check.*

Home to rare or endangered species? *Check.*

Beautiful? *Check.*

Projects don't come along very often that “check all the boxes.” But the McCurdy Conservation Easement in Parke County does. At 394 acres, it is also the largest property CILTI has ever protected. We use a scoring sheet that is reviewed by our Conservation Committee and then our Board of Directors for evaluation, and as you might guess already, this property received the highest score we've ever seen.

The McCurdy Conservation Easement is more than a high score or a textbook project: it is amazingly beautiful and part of a larger whole. Its western boundary is adjoined on three sides by state property managed by the DNR. Totaling more than 1,800 acres now, what was originally going to be Covered Bridge State Forest is managed by several divisions of the DNR and securing the



Fire Pink and Shooting Star

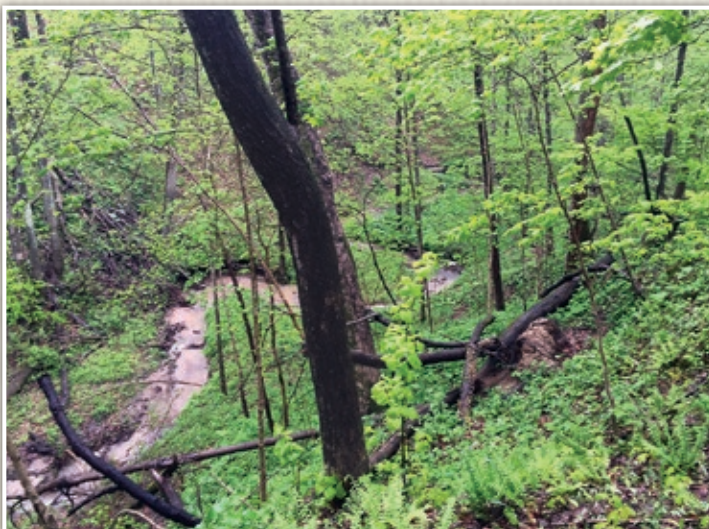
394 acres makes the DNR property that much more stable.

And, wow, is it beautiful! Blooming alongside fire pink, there are displays of shooting star on slopes that almost make it look like there is snow on the ground in May. Hundreds of large-flowered trilliums, a rare plant in Central Indiana and one of the state's most attractive species of any kind, are found on the slopes here blooming in clumps.

The property is within ½ mile of Turkey Run State Park and Green Creek flows through it. Just outside its boundaries, Green Creek flows into Sugar Mill Creek as it exits the park. With so much forested watershed here, these streams sparkle in a way that captures the eye and reminds you that this is a special place.

Joe McCurdy, owner of this beautiful place, knows that better than anyone. Joe has been purchasing property in Parke County near Turkey Run State Park for many years now and loves it there. He also owns the nearby gas station/convenience store/restaurant as well as a campground and canoe business.

As alluded to in the “From the Leadership” column in the Fall 2016 Newsletter, we first walked this property with Joe in 2008. During the eight years since first talking about its protection, Joe worked with state-wide and national conservation organizations exploring ways to protect his property while we stayed in contact with him. Our message stayed the



McCurdy Conservation Easement



McCurdy Conservation Easement

same from the first visit: we want to work together to make this something we are both happy with in the end. This often means negotiating a sale price, but that isn't what Joe cared about most.

“I wanted to leave this beautiful property to my family and future generations to appreciate and enjoy” Joe told us. “Donating the easement to CILTI assures me it will always be kept intact and never divided, while also helping my daughter, Cheyenne, plan for the future and providing a way for her to respect my wishes.” During those eight years, we spent several days walking the land, and around 2010, we even created a report highlighting the various wildflowers found on the property with notes on when and where to look for them.

“I’ve taken the six week woodland owner class offered by Purdue University, attended many educational field days and events to better understand forestry practices such as tree planting, invasive control, timber stand improvement (TSI) and sustainable harvesting and woodland management. Walking with Cliff Chapman from CILTI and Tom Swinford from DNR helped me realize that there is a whole new active world of plants on the forest floor.” Spending those days in the woods together built the trust needed so Joe was willing to donate a conservation easement to permanently protect the land.

All those visits also helped inform CILTI what species were present at different times of the year. The woods are loaded with neo-tropical migrant birds including some rare species like the endangered cerulean warbler and rare worm-eating warbler and a population of Eastern box turtles. And along with large-flowered, prairie, sessile, and drooping trilliums, there are snow trilliums, a lovely member of the lily family, that bloom each spring.

Since this was the largest project CILTI had ever attempted, it also quickly became the most expensive real estate transaction. While Mr. McCurdy generously donated a significant gift via the conservation easement on this property, there were additional costs that were substantial. These costs were covered through generous support from the Efroymson Family Fund.

If there were to be a take home message in “Conservation 101” it would be this: although we focus on science-based conservation and a thorough understanding of plants, animals and ecosystem function, conservation is about people. The way to protect our most precious natural resources is through building relationships and following through with the landowners who have been protecting important sites. The McCurdy Conservation Easement is a textbook example of this.

Species Spotlight: Shooting Star and Large-flowered trillium

Spring is upon us and it's time to take a walk in the woods to find spring wildflowers again. These are two species of spring wildflowers that are simply lovely, but rare in Central Indiana. If you find one of these beauties, please admire it and then leave in place for your visit the following year! Both of these wildflowers can be found at CILTI's newest conservation easement as featured in the cover story.

Shooting star, *Dodecatheon meadia*, is in the Primrose family. It is a common spring wildflower that is found in high quality habitats, including: prairies, upland forests, limestone glades, and bluffs along rivers and fens. This plant consists of a basal rosette of leaves with one or more flower stalks. The leaves can be up to six inches long and two and a half inches across. They are greyish green with a prominent central vein and smooth margins. The foliage of the plant is hairless. Each flower of the shooting star has five petals which can be white, light pink, or rosy pink. The flowers tend to dangle in a downward direction. Although the plant is beautiful, there is no floral smell. The flower gets its name by the striking inflorescence appearing as a collection of shooting stars. The blooming period of shooting star occurs during late spring and lasts for about a month.



Shooting Star

Large-flowered trillium, *Trillium grandiflorum* is an herbaceous perennial wildflower up to 1 ½ feet tall. It is found in rich deciduous woodlands, swamps, and shaded river banks. This showy trillium is common in the Smokey Mountains and in northern Indiana, but rare throughout Central Indiana. It has a central stem with three terminal leaves that are arranged in a whorl at the apex of the stem. Each leaf of the trillium can be up to six inches long and five inches wide and is oval in shape. The color of the

leaf is medium green with a glossy look. It has smooth margins and parallel primary veins. This plant has a single flower that is about three to four inches across on a 1-3 inch stalk. The flower has 3 large white petals that are ovate and wide spreading. The petals are known to turn a light pink with age. The blooming period for the Large-flowered trillium occurs mid to late spring and lasts for about three weeks. Of all the various species of trilliums, this species is thought to be the most attractive with large showy flowers and nice glossy leaves. And we have this gorgeous flower right here..in Central Indiana!

Call for Volunteers

As spring arrives, our stewardship staff will be gearing up for another season of treating invasive species on our nature preserves. At CILTI, we are always looking for more volunteers to join us. We work hard in the field accomplishing our mission, but we also like to take the time to collaborate with one another and learn from individuals with similar interests. We would love for you to be an addition to our team! Check out our website for volunteer opportunities and to learn more about the work we do!



Large-flowered trillium

Notes from the Field: THE LAYER CAKE

Invasive species are like a “layer cake of badness.” At first glance, a frosted layer cake and an invasive species may appear simple. However, by cutting deeper we can uncover just why CILTI spends time eradicating invasives from our nature preserves. As you’ll see, invasives can cause devastating problems for our ecosystem. As an example, here’s a description of the multiple layers of badness brought on by Asian bush honeysuckle, in no particular order.

Layer 1: It leafs out early. Asian bush honeysuckle breaks its buds and has green leaves out much earlier than native woody plants. This gives it an advantage as it can harvest more energy from the sun and store it for bad times. It usually stays green longer in the fall as well.

Layer 2. It poisons other plants. Honeysuckle is alleopathic, which means it releases enzymes in the soil which inhibits the growth of other plants around it. This creates a muddy desert under the canopy of honeysuckle.

Layer 3. It has a higher than normal canopy cover. Many people notice that forests with lots of sugar maple are darker in the summer than those dominated with oaks. Honeysuckle actually creates more shade below its canopy than maple, nearly 100%, which impedes the growth of any native plants.

Layer 4. It has very dense wood. Native shrubs are pretty flexible, which is good for birds that nest in them. A study was conducted in the late 90’s monitoring over 600 nests of American robins and wood thrush (shrub nesting birds) in Asian bush honeysuckle and they had



Volunteers removing Asian bush honeysuckle

100% mortality of eggs and young. The study found that predators like raccoons were able to easily climb into honeysuckle and get to the nests, where they often fall out of native shrubs trying to do so.

Layer 5. The berries are like junk food. You might be asking yourself “but wasn’t this plant recommended by wildlife agencies in the past to help birds” – and it was. The bright red berries appear in the fall in time for migration. Unfortunately, analysis has shown that the berries are essentially filled with simple sugars and don’t give any lasting power for the birds. So when they need to be filling up on proteins, fats and complex carbs for a long flight, they are eating the equivalent of ice cream.

Layer 6. It causes erosion. Because nearly nothing grows under honeysuckle, when it invades a river bank it makes it very unstable. This causes increased erosion and sedimentation of rivers. This negatively impacts freshwater mussels, macroinvertebrates and fish.

Layer 7. Nothing eats it. Native insects rarely if ever lay eggs on honeysuckle and so there are no larvae chewing away at its leaves. In fact, a 2017 study published in the *Natural Areas Journal* found 92% more herbivory in plots where honeysuckle was removed when compared to sites with honeysuckle. White-tailed deer don’t like it either, so our area’s largest herbivore browses surrounding plants creating more opportunity for honeysuckle and other invasive species to invade.

That’s one bad cake. So when you see Asian bush honeysuckle or other invasive species, don’t think about the plant itself, but rather, all the plants and animals it is negatively impacting.



Volunteer removing Asian bush honeysuckle

2016 Financial Report

Income	2016 (unaudited)	2015 (audited)
Contributions and Grants	\$2,391,754	\$1,270,771
Investment Income and Interest	\$14,722	\$11,119
Other Revenue	\$60,792	\$65,804
Total Income	\$2,467, 268	\$1,347,694

Expenses	2016 (unaudited)	2015 (audited)
Conservation Programs	\$311,845	\$303,314
Fundraising	\$67,033	\$54,201
Administration	\$82,689	\$41,782
Total Expenses	\$461,689	\$399,297

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*April Morning at Shalom Woods
 by Jeanne McLeish*

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