



CENTRAL
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Preserving the Heartland

Summer 2015



From the Leadership



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Cliff Chapman

There was never a decision made to create a science-themed newsletter for the summer of 2015, but decision or not, this issue is chockfull of stories about how science influences our work. I think sometimes when folks hear that we are local they may interpret that to mean that we sacrifice using strong science to guide our efforts. Nothing could be further from the truth. As you'll read in the following pages, we had dozens of researchers in our Hills of Gold Conservation Area this spring discovering countless new records for Johnson County, including some state and federally endangered species. The protection of this large block of forestland is the result of conservation planning based on the needs of "umbrella" species indicative of forest interior habitat. Pollinators are the en vogue species to design restoration projects for right now. The federal government will be granting dollars in the coming years to help bees, butterflies and other lesser known species. Our restoration at Wapihani Nature Preserve in Fishers was designed for pollinators seven years ago and is maturing into great habitat. While we battle invasive species like Bradford pear there, we are also seeing the rapidly declining monarch butterflies utilize the flowers we planted for them on the preserve. Just as we are preparing for a Lilly Global Day of Service to plant several thousand flowering shrubs and wildflowers along the White River stream bank at Oliver's Woods in Indianapolis, we found profound success with the restoration at Burr Oak Bend. June's flooding filled in our basin at Burr Oak Bend and our tree and sedge plantings trapped several truckloads worth of sediment before the water receded back into the White River in Noblesville. This was the exact result we were hoping for when we planned that restoration project back in 2008. When I snapped the photo of Shaun Ziegler showing the line of trapped sediment, I didn't say "Cheese" but rather "Applied Ecology." But perhaps the best way to express the results from science guiding our work was from retired ecology professor, Dick Miller. Dick was our photographer during the Bioblitz and while in the new Glacier's End preserve he said to me "Burnett Woods and Blossom Hollow are very pretty, I mean, I love them, but Cliffy, this place is something special. It's like nothing CILTI has done before. This is amazing; this is the real deal."

Cliff Chapman
Executive Director

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On the Cover:



Gray Tree Frog

Notes from the Field, Summer 2015



The heavy rains and flooding of June 2015 have caused destruction of property and negatively impacted many people's lives. But, what about Central Indiana nature preserves? CILTI has worked for more than a decade restoring habitats along the White River, specifically to lessen the impacts of flooding. So, what better time to monitor our sites along the White River? What we found has been nothing less than amazing. The 2008 wetland restoration at Burr Oak Bend was designed to trap sediment when the river filled it in during flood events. We planted riverbank tussock sedge plants in a way that they would spread, they have a rhizome so each plant could send up multiple clones and protected a border of willow saplings during the restoration. The wetland border now looks like a sedge meadow with many different species of native plants filling gaps between thousands of sedge clones. The trees have filled in too. And after the flood waters receded, we found the plants covered in sediment more than 7 feet high in places! Areas in-between the trees look as if a rogue gang of dump trucks came in and left behind loads of sand and gravel. The restoration is an amazing success and Burr Oak Bend is serving its purpose, storing water during floods and filtering it as it flows back into the White River.



Silene virginica (Fire Pink)

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

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*
Ralph Redmond
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 or 317-631-5263.

BioBlitz: 36 Hours with 75 Experts

Many believe there just isn't as much biodiversity in the central part of our state as the northern or southern parts. Some may even be wondering - why protect land here if there isn't as much biodiversity? We recently turned to the scientific community to help us determine exactly what we have at one of our sites. We partnered with the Indiana Academy of Science to conduct a Bioblitz, 36 hours of biological inventory of all living things, at our Hills of Gold Conservation Area. The final report takes 12 months to compile, so we can't speculate as to how many species will be identified but something interesting was a common denominator for nearly every research team. Over half the species found were new records for Johnson County. This doesn't mean nearly everything found was rare, but it definitely shows very little research has ever been done here. The gray tree frog (on the cover) as well as hundreds of other species were documented in the county for the first time.

We asked four of the participants to share their personal experiences.

Here's what they had to say:

Shaun Ziegler

Nature Preserves Field Representative, Ecologist, and Manager, Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission

The Bioblitz was a whirlwind of experiences. After spending time helping dozens of different researchers, I had the opportunity to help "Team Bat" at two different posts until the wee hours of the morning. Their large mist nets set up in Blossom and Pitcher creeks were quite a sight to see, being some twenty feet tall. I helped them set up and seeing the precautions they take to keep the bats safe and free from possible disease transfer was amazing. The decontamination and cleanliness protocols are really rigorous. From glove changes to Lysol wipes and the suits they wear, their adherence to best practices was impressive. I had a strong feeling that we may find something really special. The Blossom Hollow group had three nets set up, two large nets in the main channel and one smaller net in a side channel. There was a central base camp and in between net checking we would return there. This provided an opportunity to talk about the science and management aspects of bat conservation, which I found invaluable. After hours of conversation and catching only moths, we had a bat! Upon examination we realized we had netted a pregnant female Indiana bat. Wow! A federally endangered species! These inventories prove the valuable conservation work CILTI does and how effective the conservation planning is at identifying and protecting important habitats for protection. An amazing experience and one that I was so proud to be a part of, even at 3 a.m.



Alice Heikens, PhD

Franklin College

It is not often that one finds an endangered species in Indiana so imagine our celebration when we discovered timid sedge, *Carex timida*, early in our botanical survey of the Hills of Gold during the Bioblitz. The rainy weather could not dampen our enthusiasm because this was the first time that many of us had seen this very rare plant. Our sedge expert, Dr. Paul Rothrock, showed us the characteristic attributes to identify it. For many people, it would be easily dismissed as a clump of grass in the woods, but for us it was like finding buried treasure. To the best of our knowledge, this might only be the third sighting of the species in the state! We were primed to spend the day combing the hills for other unique plants. An example of what we found indicating a high quality area is the presence of beechdrops, a parasitic plant that lives only on the roots of beech trees. It was exciting to work with botanical experts who share your passion for plants, to work with former students who are now professionals (CILTI's Cliff Chapman was one of my students in 1997-1998), and to encourage students to follow in our footsteps to identify and conserve natural areas in Indiana.

Karl Werner

Johnson County birder

May is my favorite time of year for birding, and it was really exciting to be one of the first birders to document species at Glacier's End, along with the rest of the Hills of Gold area. To me, it feels as though 99% of the county is flat farmland, commercial establishments, and human residences. The discovery of such a large tract of hilly woodlands, that was mostly unknown to birders, caused a great deal of interest in the local birding community. What kind of treasures could be found there that would normally be confined to places like Brown County? To cover such a large area in two days, three birding teams were established, led by Kirk Roth, Tom Hougham, and myself. During the weekend, there were many highlights that represented very uncommon birds for Johnson County. For instance, we found both yellow and black-billed cuckoos, 4 different vireos, 6 different thrushes, and at least 25 species of warblers. Indicating great habitat, woodland warblers such as hooded, worm-eating, cerulean, and ovenbird were common. But for me, the best part was enjoying the quiet beauty of a thickly wooded area with deep ravines that felt untouched by human hands.



Dick Miller, PhD

Butler University emeritus

As a CILTI volunteer, I am familiar with many of our properties, such as Burnett and Meltzer Woods. While those two places are real gems, worthy of multiple visits, Glacier's End and the adjacent properties provide a wholly different experience. Among the first things you notice once inside Glacier's End is that you can't see the edge. You are in a forest, not just a woods. The vistas are breathtakingly beautiful. Part of this is due to the topography, all ridges and ravines, but mostly it's the size of the place. You can go from one ridge to the next to the next and still not get to an edge. As an ecologist, I know that preserving interior forest is the best way to safeguard biodiversity. And the Bioblitz has shown that Glacier's End has biodiversity worth protecting. As a nature lover, I know that a large expanse of forest is one of the most precious natural resources in Indiana. For me, being there is a sublime experience, creating a sense of reverence and awe.

The Hills of Gold Conservation area is home to hundreds of native plants and animals living in an area that will be protected forever. For them, and for you to enjoy. But it's more than that. It is magnificently beautiful. It's quiet. It provides solace. Central Indiana is an important place for biodiversity as well as beauty. It's not everywhere, but we are protecting the best examples of both.

Species Spotlight: Milkweeds



Asclepias incarnata (Swamp Milkweed)

Milkweeds are garnering more attention as they are so closely tied to creating habitat for monarch butterflies. Monarchs are amazing migratory insects passing through Indiana twice a year and unfortunately, they are in steep decline. Indiana milkweeds deserve a closer look beyond the simple 'food source for monarchs.' There are a dozen species in the genus *Asclepias* native to Indiana. Collectively called asclepiads, it is one of the more diverse plant families in the world with over 2,000 species including herbs, vines, shrubs and succulents. There is a species of milkweed in 49 states in the United States. And although the plants can look amazingly different, most have milky sap and the seeds typically burst from a paper-like seed pod - similar to the plants we are familiar with in Indiana. The individual flowers in the genus *Asclepias* are more complicated than they might appear. The petals are recurved, below what you might suspect are the flower petals. Above them is a corona with five hoods and horns. The hoods are what many might think are petals. The hoods surround a gynostegium, which is where the male and female parts of the flower are fused together. The horns seem to direct right to where pollen needs to go. This is not a bashful plant. Nectar is found in the hoods and as insects visit, they transfer pollen from one flower's gynostegium to another's. The nectar of milkweeds have a sweet, seductive perfume that is sometimes noticed before plants are seen. You can check out several species of milkweed at the prairie restoration at Wapihani Nature Preserve in Fishers, and hopefully see some monarch butterflies if you visit between June and September. You can also plant milkweeds in your garden and enjoy seeing them all summer long.

Thank you for the following tributes

In honor of...

Connie Douglas
Scott and Jamie Douglas

Ed Gallagher
Thomas and Priscilla Johnson

Hannah and Miles Goss and Cai Dorwin
Lee Goss

Luke Mongin
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In memory of...

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John Sumner and Rebecca Lomax-Sumner

Armin and Dorothy Schramm
Paula Schramm

Richard N. Turner
Jerry and Susan Turner

Volunteer Spotlight: Ann Deutch and Tom Hougham



Retired National Park Service employees volunteer skills to help the land they love

CILTI met Ann and Tom about 6 years ago when Tom's family donated a conservation easement on 246 acres of their family property in the Lamb Lake area of Johnson County. But their involvement with CILTI goes far beyond this partnership.

Tom and Ann serve as the volunteer site stewards for the Laura Hare Preserve at Blossom Hollow, which is practically their backyard. Tom and Ann use their experience from their combined 50 years of service in the National Park Service to help guide their volunteering with CILTI. Just this spring Ann worked to organize the logistics of the Hills of Gold Bioblitz (see cover story on page 4) saving CILTI staff hours of time. And Tom is actively conducting a breeding bird survey of the area.

On a recent walk in the woods of Blossom Hollow with the couple they elaborated on why this area is so special and why they are involved with CILTI.

What makes this area so special to you?

Tom: From our time in the National Parks Service we have lived in some of the most beautiful places in the world (Yellowstone, Denali, Carlsbad, and Everglades National Parks just to name a few) and we are so happy to call this place home... its perfect. We provide for our needs from the land – we fish the lake and we grow vegetables in the garden.

Ann: There are so many different plants and animals that make this old forest their home from magnificent trees to tiny fungi, from the common trout lily to that endangered sedge found this spring. And the rate of growth here is astonishing, when a tree falls in the forest you can almost hear the new plants grow to fill up that sunny spot.

What is your favorite thing about working with CILTI?

Ann: We couldn't accomplish our shared goals without each other. At the end of the day we both want to preserve this land and CILTI is making that possible. For years we had been looking for the key for increased scientific knowledge of our land and CILTI has been that key.

What keeps you motivated?

Ann: Knowing that this special place will be protected forever for future generations.

Tom: My father started acquiring land here in 1938. Making sure this area stays a protected natural area is very important to me.

Join the fun this fall!

Organize a volunteer day for your company or group. These days make a great team building activity and your group will be working to improve natural areas right here in Central Indiana.

Contact Stacy at
info@conservingindiana.org





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