



CENTRAL INDIANA LAND TRUST

Summer 2017



From the Leadership



CENTRAL
INDIANA
LAND TRUST
Preserving the Heartland



Mark O. Blakely

When I took over as President of the Central Indiana Land Trust Board of Directors in 2014, I challenged our organization with ambitious goals that I wanted to accomplish during my tenure. Looking back, they were very stretchy goals for the time - we were in transition - conducting a national search for a new executive director and in the middle of revamping many of our internal structures.

My goals were; to hire an exceptional executive director, raise more money (I thought a 50% increase sounded ambitious) – for both our current operations and our stewardship endowment in order to advance our mission to conserve and care for land – and of course, protect special places.

I'm very proud to share with you – our members, friends and donors that we have been successful in achieving these goals. We had some amazing candidates but I couldn't have been more pleased than by hiring CILTI's own Cliff Chapman as executive director in June of 2014. It's been a pleasure working with Cliff over these last few years – we are both incredibly inspired by all you do to support CILTI.

I am especially pleased to share this news with you – our stewardship endowment has grown by 226% over the last 3 years alone. This fund, along with the support of conservation minded individuals like yourself, will help ensure the permanence of all the great work that has been accomplished since our founding - and help ensure the success of our future protection efforts.

It's been a wonderful time to be in a leadership role at CILTI – thank you for all you do to help protect land in Central Indiana and thank you for your belief in our little land trust. We often reflect that we literally couldn't do it without you. From Meltzer Woods to Glacier's End to White River Bluffs – we have you to thank for these accomplishments.

Josh Christie has assumed the role of President and I am encouraging him to think big for CILTI. I'm confident in our future and look forward to seeing our successes.

Sincerely,

Mark O. Blakely
Outgoing President of the Board

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1500 N. Delaware St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202
317-631-5263

On the Cover:



White River Bluffs

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
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*

Cherí 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 or 317-631-5263.

Welcome New Members!

Barbara Baker
Sue Ann Blessing
Jay and Willadean Duncan
Burke Geene
Dan and Beth Henkel
Julia and Mark Lowe
Steve Paddack
Jane Stegemiller
Dennis and Rebecca Tibbetts
D.R. Winkler



White River Bluffs

In May 2015, we received a phone call from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources regarding land along the White River in Indianapolis. They had been contacted by Charley Grahn, who lived near the property and was concerned about what might happen to it in the future. We met with Charley and another neighbor who both happened to be members of the Highland Golf and Country Club - the owner of the land in question. It was the first time we had ever toured a potential nature preserve from a golf cart.

Driving around looking at woods and fields, Charley took us to a spot and asked us to get out and look at the river down below. We were blown away! Eighty-five feet below us was the White River and across from it the town of Rocky Ripple. Looking up a little, you could see Hinkle Field House looking like a boat floating in a sea of suburban forest. Looking to the south, the Indianapolis skyline was popping up through the trees of the city. We were impressed.

We talked about a possible conservation easement that the state might take over the property and perhaps – even purchasing the land. The issue was the Club was already working with a developer to build 48 homes on the site. Time was of the essence.



Charley & Cliff

“I’m not opposed to development,” Charley told us, “but I love this area and this would change the character of the place forever.

This bluff is scenic, beautiful land. It’s important to the neighborhood and the golf club.” Everything sounded pretty routine until we were told the land was being sold for about \$3 million dollars.



Bluff overlooking White River

As time went by, the state DNR bowed out as a conservation easement turned out to be unlikely to work in this situation. This left the Central Indiana Land Trust to potentially buy the property at appraised value. Charley offered to organize a meeting of neighbors and see if there was interest in taking on the project as a community conservation project – one where the community comes together to raise the needed funds to purchase a property.

Happily, the neighbors were interested. Charley made connections with those who shared his love for the area and were interested in seeing the bluff protected. We attended a meeting of neighbors and explained how we work and how this project might

work. We were interested, but convinced the project would only be successful if approached as a community conservation effort.

Another meeting followed at the Club with about 70 of its members there. Someone asked how a land trust would raise so much money to which we replied “we won’t, you will.” Some in the room looked puzzled, but a few dozen people nodded their heads in agreement.

Several weeks went by testing the waters to see if there truly was enough money available to move forward. An appraisal came back at

\$2,700,000. We pitched a creative approach to purchase over four years with multiple closings providing we would raise the first million dollars pretty quickly then buy time to raise the rest. We also negotiated a significant bargain sale with a right of first refusal over the entire Club if it were to ever be available for sale.



White Oak



Lush ravine forest

To date, over \$2,200,000 has been raised with over 80 individuals contributing and 9.2 acres purchased. The entire river bluff is now protected along with a very interesting ravine forest. This bluff will now see restoration to curb erosion and promote native plants.

Why did we do it? The bluff is pretty special. There is no question about it. A glacial deposit laid around 12,000 years ago, it is one of the most scenic areas along the White River, from the river itself. It is a wall of color in autumn. Even though the purchase price was unusually high for a CILTI project, the dollars were raised by local volunteers who were passionate about the project.

What happens next? We are starting work on the property this year, with dollars raised through the project itself. We plan to open it to the public with a trail along the bluff top offering spectacular views of the river below and the City of Indianapolis. The site has very steep slopes so it will take some time to open a trail here that is both safe for users and sensitive to the site. We plan, along with the neighborhood, to have the additional \$700,000 raised by the end of 2019 to complete the purchase and the remaining restoration projects.

After we closed on the third piece of the project in early 2017, Charley called to talk about the process. “I’m pleased how the neighborhood and members of Highland came together and how CILTI worked with both the Club and the neighbors in a professional way. That bluff is protected forever now. I feel like we really made a difference together.” This is community conservation in a nutshell.

Species Spotlight: Brown-headed Cowbird, *Molothrus ater*



Brown-headed Cowbird, Molothrus ater

One of the more common birds you might find on your backyard bird feeder is the Brown-headed Cowbird, *Molothrus ater*. It is in the family *Icteridae*- the blackbirds. Brown-headed Cowbirds are smaller sized blackbirds with a shorter tail and thicker head. Their bill has a distinctive shape- shorter and thicker-based than other blackbirds. Male Brown-headed Cowbirds have a glossy black plumage and a brown head. Females are plain brown in color, lighter in their head and undercarriage. They have a fine streaking on their belly. Often, you will find Brown-headed Cowbirds flocking with other species of blackbirds.

Although the Brown-headed Cowbird is one of our more common birds, it has a peculiar way of raising its young, or perhaps...not raising its young at all. The Brown-headed Cowbird is a brood parasite which means it lays its eggs in the nests of other bird species. The female cowbird will search for other female birds laying eggs and will sneak into the resident bird's nest while it is away. The cowbird will usually damage or even remove one or more eggs from the resident bird's nest and lay her own. The resident parents unknowingly become foster parents to a new egg(s). Typically, cowbird eggs require shorter incubation time than other forest interior birds so they will hatch first. Cowbirds are also known to grow very quickly, demanding the most food from their foster parent and outcompeting the other nestlings.

Despite the Brown-headed Cowbird being parasitic, they are native to the United States. They prefer open grasslands, urban and suburban habitats, agricultural areas, and fragmented forests. They once followed bison herds on the Great Plains, feeding on insects flushed

from the grass. Today, the Brown-headed Cowbird continues to follow cattle and use the same feeding techniques.

Brown-headed Cowbirds have benefited from forest fragmentation and the expansion of agricultural land, providing more overall habitat and access to new host species. This bird has been known to parasitize over 220 different species of North American birds, adversely impacting numerous populations including rare species like the Kirtland's Warbler and the Black-capped Vireo. Here at CILTI, we are strategically working to deter Brown-headed Cowbirds. We protect habitat critical for forest interior birds and work to eliminate forest fragmentation that benefits species like the Brown-headed Cowbird. Our work regionally is paying off for forest interior birds and giving them the opportunity to thrive. A recent survey conducted at the Glacier's End Nature Preserve found 20 Red-eyed Vireos, 25 Woodthrush and zero Brown-headed Cowbirds. It's your support that makes this work possible!

What can you do to help control Brown-headed Cowbirds?

- 1** Support CILTI – we plan our preserves to help prevent Brown-headed Cowbirds by helping to eliminate forest fragmentation
- 2** Use feeders for smaller birds with short perches, smaller ports and no catch basin.
- 3** Avoid using platform trays or spreading feed on ground and clean up any spills on the ground.
- 4** Fill your feeders with suet, nectar or safflower seeds – avoid sunflower seeds, cracked corn, and millet.

Volunteer Spotlight: Melissa Bryant

My name is Melissa Bryant and I'm obsessed with all things nature. When I was five, my parents moved us out to the country in northern Morgan County where my siblings and I caught toads in five gallon buckets and played house in a small cluster of trees. My dad has always been an excellent steward of the land. The outdoors didn't call to me much as I progressed through my teen years and I chose to focus on my love of art.

After high school, I was accepted into Herron School of Art and Design where I

received my BFA in painting and drawing. Months later, I married my husband and over the span of eight years, we had three rambunctious boys. Throughout this time, I worked on illustrations that progressively became more nature oriented. While we lived on a small lot on the northeast side of Indianapolis, we (quite possibly) explored every square inch of Ft. Harrison State Park. It was satisfying to expose my children to the same environment I grew up in; watching their faces burst with joy when finding a fossil or their skipping rock complete the long journey across a creek.

In 2016, I finally heeded the call that had been slowly growing louder in every fiber of my being - to fully reconnect with nature. I completed both the Master

Gardener and the Master Naturalist programs. I'd hoped that the plethora of new knowledge I had absorbed would suffice, but I found quite the opposite to be true.

I began volunteering with CILTI and Sycamore Land Trust (most often with my oldest & youngest in tow) on their invasive removal days.

This year, I completed a Tree Stewardship program through the DNR, became a property steward for CILTI'S Wallace F. Holladay Nature Preserve, and am continuing my volunteer work with both land trusts. I'm an enthusiastic member of INPAWS and attend every wildflower, tree ID, and

property hike possible.

Nature education is something that has become increasingly more important to me as my two homeschooled kids & I spend at least one afternoon a week exploring a new-to-us nature preserve.

I've been watching my dad wander through his woods slowly & methodically for many years now. He becomes one with it. I find myself stopping and staring in admiration at the quirky curve of a branch or a giant perfect spiderweb, illuminated by the sun's dappled light- just like him. Instilling in my children a passion for nature by watching my journey is my greatest hope in life.



Enjoying nature in Central Indiana

Thank you for the following tributes

In honor of...

Priscilla Johnson
Mary and Lane Ferree

Rachel Eble
Lance Cline and Sue Nonweiler

In memory of...

Wilson and Elizabeth Adams
Thomas and Priscilla Johnson

Oliver Daughtery
Suzanne Blakeman

Gretchen Robertson
Sue Arnold

Dorothy Gore
Jay and Willadean Duncan

David Lakin
Catherine Lakin
Charles Lakin
Sally Swan
Keith and Angelina Walls

Gordon Schmitz
Thomas and Priscilla Johnson

Lisa Tanner
Thomas and Priscilla Johnson

Doris R. Thomas
Robert Thomas



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Central Indiana Land Trust, Inc.
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Indianapolis, IN 46202

Please visit our website:
www.conservingindiana.org



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