

# Sycamore Land Trust protects another 2,300 acres in 2011: [www.heraldtimesonline.com](http://www.heraldtimesonline.com)

Land trust's goal to preserve area's natural and agricultural landscapes

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12/30/2011

For the past 20 years, Sycamore Land Trust has worked diligently to protect southern Indiana's natural areas and family farms while educating the community on the importance of preserving the local landscape.

In fact, 2011 proved to be one of the biggest land years in SLT's history, with an estimated 2,300 acres of land protected, according to Christian Freitag, executive director of SLT.

"That's our primary mission, to protect important natural areas," he said.

SLT is a nonprofit organization founded in 1990 whose mission is "preserving the disappearing natural and agricultural landscape of southern Indiana."

Throughout 2011, SLT land protection initiatives included completion of the Trevlac Bluffs Nature Preserve, which resulted in the protection of about 200 acres at the headwaters of Lake Lemon, near Trevlac in Brown County.

The property contains more than 100 acres of bottomland hardwood forest, about a mile of Beanblossom Creek and a rare post-glacial remnant stand of eastern hemlock trees, according to Freitag.

There are plans to designate SLT's portion of the property as a state nature preserve, Freitag said. The organization also is working on purchasing additional land adjacent to the preserve in an effort to protect the entire bluff system.

SLT, along with the help of donations, also purchased another rare hemlock bluff system in 2011. Back Creek Nature Preserve, located in Lawrence County, is 43 acres along Back Creek.

That property is also in the process of being named a state-dedicated nature preserve, which according to Freitag will be called the Hare Preserve at Back Creek.

Other land projects during the year included Clemens Place on Clifty Creek, which contains a portion of the Clifty Creek canyon, and Malad Conservation Easement, 170 acres of woods and wetlands located in Owen County.

Rick Malad, an attorney in Indianapolis, owns the Malad property, which he originally purchased in the 1970s as a place to hunt.

Since that time, Malad said, he has continued to fall in love with the property and wanted to make sure its beauty was preserved for years to come.

"It's really a great getaway," Malad said. "That was really a lot of my motivation for doing what I did. I wanted to keep it like it is and preserve it and keep it a place that family and friends can go and enjoy nature."

Under the terms of the easement, the Malad family can continue to hunt and responsibly manage their timber resources.

The easement will ensure permanent protection for the area's wildlife, which include bald eagles, bobcats, river otters and great blue herons, according to Freitag.

"The Malad property is one of those iconic southern Indiana pieces of land — rolling hills, fertile fields, hardwood forests, free flowing creeks, wetlands full of wildlife. It's a picture postcard kind of place," Freitag said.

"Making sure special places like that are protected, and helping those families who want to make sure their children's children can enjoy them, that's what Sycamore Land Trust is all about," he said.

In addition to having a record breaking year in land preservation, SLT also grew with the addition of two new staff members — Shari Woodbury as development director and Patrick Petro as communications director.

Entering the new year, Freitag said SLT will continue its award-winning Environmental Education Program, which teaches science-based lessons to students from kindergarten to college, using nature as a learning tool.

Educating young people about the importance of protecting our natural areas is essential, Freitag said.

"(Local author) Scott Russell Sanders said, 'You only protect what you love and you only love what you know.' We are doing that at the grassroots level. We are trying to build that love by building that knowledge," Freitag said.

Throughout the upcoming year, Freitag said, he will continue to seek SLT members and support from the community, which he said is invaluable to the organization.

"We can't do anything without the people's support," he said.

For more information, visit [sycamorelandtrust.org](http://sycamorelandtrust.org).

Second-graders study wetland plants as part of Sycamore Land Trust's Environmental Education Program. Courtesy photo



**Clemens Place is seen on Clifty Creek. The Owen County land, which includes a portion of the Clifty Creek canyon, was donated to Sycamore Land Trust this year by William Clemens Jr. to protect and commemorate his family's heritage. Courtesy photo**



**Students from Bloomington High School South measure plants at Griffy Woods as part of Sycamore Land Trust's Environmental Education Program. Courtesy photo**

