

## Sycamore Land Trust: Preserving, protecting: [www.heraldtimesonline.com](http://www.heraldtimesonline.com)

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Sycamore Land Trust has purchased 600 acres of rugged Brown County woods east of Nashville.

In addition to preserving another piece of Brown County natural heritage, the property is important for conservation because of both its size and location.

Nearly one square mile in size, the Laura Hare Nature Preserve at Downey Hill is near Brown County State Park, as well as Gnawbone Camp, which is protected as a permanent conservation easement held by the state. Thus, the newly protected Laura Hare Nature Preserve at Downey Hill property helps create a block of nearly 18,000 acres of contiguous forest habitat.

In the mid-1980s, the Downey Hill property was nearly sold in parcels as a large subdivision.

Instead, a group of investors purchased it, and it remained essentially untouched.

When they were ready to part with the land, they saw value in preserving the woods they had long enjoyed for recreation, and chose to work with Sycamore Land Trust to achieve their objectives.

Thanks to a generous bargain sale by the owners, as well as a grant from the Laura Hare Charitable Trust, Sycamore was able to protect this large piece of rugged Brown County hills forever. "Brown County is a beautiful, unique place — personally my favorite place in Indiana," said Christian Freitag, Sycamore executive director. "This project is one of our biggest ever and helps protect the rugged natural habitat that so many critters need and people enjoy."

Founded in 1990, Sycamore Land Trust is a nonprofit conservation organization that helps private landowners protect their important natural areas and family farms across 26 counties in southern Indiana. The organization has increased the number of acres it has helped protect from 500 to 8,000 in the last decade. Sycamore Land Trust owns land by acquiring it through donation or purchase, or by holding conservation easements for private landowners who then continue to own and manage the land. The organization also operates an award-winning environmental education program in regional schools, connecting children with nature at a time when funding constraints and academic testing have forced many schools to curtail field trips and other outdoor offerings.

For more about Sycamore Land Trust and its work with private landowners, see [www.sycamorelandtrust.org](http://www.sycamorelandtrust.org), or call 336-5382.

The woods glisten in the snow at the Laura Hare Nature Preserve at Downey Hill.  
john lawrence | Courtesy photo

