outdoors

200 YEARS, 200 MILES

Hiking challenge celebrates Hoosier state parks bicentennial

By Kami Mackin | Special to the Hoosier Times

On Dec. 11, 1816, Indiana gained statehood, becoming the 19th U.S. state. In honor of Indiana's 200th birthday, there are around 900 legacy projects happening in the 92 counties that make up the Hoosier state.

As part of the bigger celebration, the Hoosiers Hikers Council in Martinsville has created the Bicentennial Hikers Challenge. Young and old, hikers and adventurers are challenged to join the celebration by hiking 200 miles between now and June 30, 2017.

"We want to promote hiking trails in Indiana," said Mark Stuttgen, board member at Hoosier Hikers Council and mastermind behind the hiking challenge. "(It's a) great way to get hikers out there."

Although the list includes trails from top to bottom of the state, the list is grouped by region.

South-central Indiana alone — including Monroe, Brown, Orange, Crawford, Lawrence and other surrounding counties — currently has more than 35 trails with over 185 miles of trails.

Hidden in Martinsville is one of Stuttgen's favorite hiking spots. "Jimmy Nash Park, it's only about 2 miles long, but it's a rugged trail and it's right in the middle of the city," he said.

All trails on the statewide list are natural trails. That means they are not paved, blacktopped or a bicycle trail. The Hoosier Hikers Council built and cleared several, but not all, trails for the challenge in the area.

As participants start their 200-mile journey, they are advised to periodically check the official list, as the hikers' council will continue to add trails to it.

"(It's) an adventure to see how many different trails we can find and hike," Stuttgen said.

Trails from top to bottom of the state include state land and parks, land preservations and some hidden gems throughout. Those hidden hiking treasures include the Dilcher-Turner Canyon Forest in Greene County. The property is owned by Sycamore Land Trust, which has several hiking locales included on the list.

More inside

Find a list of area trails included in the Bicentennial Hikers Challenge on page F2.

SEE 200 MILES | PAGE F2

MATTHEW HATCHER | HERALD-TIMES

A trail winds through the woods of Brown County State Park.

www.tipmason ridge scout ridge trailtree lakes tecumseh hoosier national forest knobstone muscatatuck refuge

LEEWARD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE F1

couple of nights it was above freezing. I can't really complain about such warm weather at the end of January but if the trees were to bud because of it, game over on the syrup front.

On Feb. 4 conditions returned to flow range but there still wasn't much happening with my existing taps. Of the 5th, I took the afternoon off from work and decided to drill into the older tree just to have something to compare. Much to my surprise, sap practically gushed out of the hole before I had even drilled in a full inch. I was caught completely unprepared and found myself running down the hill to pull the spile out of one of my nonproductive trees so I could capture the sap that was literally running down the side of the older tree.

While I was running between the trees, I happened to spot a fourth maple tree that had hitherto escaped my notice. Once I had the spile and bucket in place on the older tree I went back to try my luck with this new one. It wasn't quite a gusher but there was definitely flow so I pulled the spile out of the other unproductive tree and hung a bucket. By the end of the afternoon I had two steady drips.

It was highly gratifying ... for about three days, before the mercury plummeted again. During this brief period I collected roughly 3 gallons of sap. It takes about 5 gallons to produce a pint of syrup, so I'd definitely like another flow window. As I write this column, there's supposed to be another three or four days of favorable conditions, but by the time it is published, it might be too warm again. With the way this winter has gone, there's no telling if there will be another opportunity.

Contact Lee Hadley at lhadley@heraldt.com.

Bicentennial Hikers Challenge

The Hoosier Hikers Council Bicentennial Hikers Challenge, which challenges everyone to hike 200 miles on natural surface hiking trails in Indiana between now and June 30, 2017, includes many in the Hoosier Times area. Those trails include:

- Jimmy Nash Trail in Jimmy Nash Park, Martinsville
- Low Gap Trail, Morgan-Monroe State Forest, Morgan County
- Mason Ridge Trail, Morgan-Monroe State Forest, Morgan County
- Rock Shelter Trail, Morgan-Monroe State Forest, Morgan County
- Scout Ridge Trail: Morgan-Monroe State Forest, Morgan County
- Tree Lakes Trail: Morgan-Monroe State Forest, Morgan County
- Tecumseh Trail: Morgan-Monroe State Forest, Morgan County
- Hoosier National Forest trails: Hoosier National Forest, in Jackson, Washington, Monroe and Lawrence counties
- Knobstone Trail: Jackson-Washington and Clark state forests, Jackson, Washington, Clark counties
- Muscatatuck Refuge trails: Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge, Jennings and Jackson counties
- Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve: Sycamore Land Trust's preserve, Monroe County
- Beck's Mill hiking trail system: Beck's Mill near Salem, Washington County
- Brown County State Park trails: Brown County State Park, Brown County
- Buffalo Trace trail: Hoosier National Forest, Orange County
- Cedar Bluffs: Cedar Bluffs Preserve, Monroe County
- Flatwoods Trail: Flatwoods Park, Monroe County
- High King Trail: Yellowwood State Forest, Brown County
- Hitz-Rhodehamel Nature Preserve trail: Hitz-Rhodehamel Nature Preserve, Brown County
- Jackson Creek Trail: Yellowwood State Forest, Brown County
- Jackson-Washington State Forest trails: Jackson-Washington State Forest, Jackson and Washington counties
- Kora Meditation Trail: Tibetan-Mongolian Buddhist Cultural Center, Monroe County
- Leonard Springs Nature Trail: Leonard Springs Nature Park, Monroe County
- Lick Creek Trail: Hoosier National Forest, Orange County
- Lake Monroe trails: Lake Monroe, Monroe County
- Nebo Ridge Trail: Hoosier National Forest, Brown County
- Orangeville Rise: Orangeville Rise of Lost River Nature Preserve, Orange County
- Pate Hollow Trail: Hoosier National Forest, Brown County
- Patoka Lake trails: Patoka Lake, Orange, Dubois and Crawford counties
- Porter West Preserve: Porter West Preserve, Monroe County
- Resource Management Trail: Yellowwood State Forest, Brown County
- Scarce O'Fat Trail: Yellowwood State Forest, Brown County
- Shirley Creek Trail: Hoosier National Forest, Orange County
- Spring Mill State Park trails: Spring Mill State Park, Lawrence County
- Starve Hollow trails: Starve Hollow State Recreation Area, Jackson, Washington counties
- The Cedars Preserve: Sycamore Land Trust's Cedars Preserve, Monroe County
- Laura Hare Preserve: Laura Hare Preserve at Downey Hill, Brown County
- Yellowwood Lake Trail: Yellowwood State Forest, Brown County
- Yellowwood Trail: Yellowwood State Forest, Brown County
- Dilcher-Turner Canyon: Dilcher-Turner Canyon, Greene County
- Green's Bluff Trails: Green's Bluff Nature Preserve, Owen County
- McCormick's Creek State Park trails: McCormick's Creek State Park, Owen County
- Poplar Top Trail: Owen-Putnam State Forest, Owen and Putnam counties
- Shakamak State Park trails: Shakamak State Park, Greene County

DAVE SIMCOX | COURTESY PHOTO

Kathy Ruesink hikes at Sycamore Land Trust's Columbia Mine Preserve, which was purchased in part with a grant from the Bicentennial Nature Trust.

COURTESY PHOTO

Dilcher-Turner Canyon Forest in Greene County was recently purchased by Sycamore Land Trust.

OUTDOOR EVENTS

To add an event to the Outdoor calendar, email outdoor@heraldt.com or call 812-331-4359. Items need to be received by noon Monday to be included in that Sunday's paper.

Indy Boat, Sport and Travel Show

The Ford 62nd annual Indianapolis Boat, Sport and Travel Show will continue through Feb. 28 at the Indiana State Fairgrounds in Indianapolis. The Great American Fly Fishing Expo ends today. The show will include the Boat Pavilion, RV Pavilion, Travel and Tourism Pavilion, Quiet Sports and Outdoor Living Pavilion. Tackle Town will also be part of the expo with more than 100 exhibitors and talks by some of fishing's greatest legends, including Forrest Wood, Jerry McGinnis and Hank Parker. For more and ticket information, go to www.indysportshow.com.

Deer, turkey and waterfowl expo

The 19th annual Deer, Turkey and Waterfowl Expo will be Thursday through Feb. 28 at the Indiana State Fairgrounds in Indianapolis. From camo to treestands, there will be exhibitors with many items for sale as well as demonstrations. White-tail deer hunters will be able to bring in their deer to be officially scored by measurers from Boone & p.m. with the auction 8-10 p.m. Tickets are $65 each, $100 per couple or $400 for a reserved table for eight people. For ticket information, call Carol Newlin at 812-230-2782 or Jeannie Drake at 812-201-4537. Anyone who purchases two tickets will get one free ticket to the Indy Boat, Sport and Travel Show.

Goose Pond tours

IndiGo Birding Nature Tours is offering public and private trips to Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area in Greene County. IndiGo Birding has added sunset tours on March 3 and March 9 and is taking reservations. Visit indigobirding.com for more details. Call David at 812-679-8978 to reserve a spot or schedule a private tour.

Marsh Madness

The seventh annual Marsh Madness Sandhill Crane Festival in Linton and nearby Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area will be March 4-5. Festival headquarters are at Humphrey's Park in Linton. For more, go to www.friendsofgoosepond.org.

Li'l Hikers

Learn about about making maple syrup, from American Indian use to lore to pioneer methods and how to make it at home for very little money from noon to 2 p.m. March 5 at Sycamore Land Trust's headquarters in Bloomington. You'll learn how to identify a maple tree, practice using the tools of maple syrup tapping, and taste pure maple syrup.

200 MILES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE F1

"Absolutely gorgeous property with deep canyons (and) waterfalls," said Katrina Folsom, communications director for the Sycamore Land Trust, talking about the Dilcher-Turner property. "In the spring it is also an exceptional place to look at wildflowers."

There are currently more than 420 people registered take on the 200-mile challenge.

The only requirements to complete the challenge are:

- Register at www.hoosierhikerscouncil.org/bicentennial-challenge, where participants can find trails across the state that are part of the challenge.
- Participants must to hike at least 10 different trails. To make it more challenging, the hikers' council suggests trying to hike it all on different trails.
- All 200 miles must be logged and completed to be eligible to receive an Indiana bicentennial patch and certificate (while supplies last). Names of all those who completed it will be on the Hoosier Hikers Council website, www.hoosierhikerscouncil.org.

"More than getting something from us — a patch or certificate — it's your own feeling of success of saying, 'I hiked 200 miles this year,'" Stuttgen said.

To find a list of other legacy projects throughout the state, visit www.in.gov/ibc/ and look for "events & programs."