In 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 adventure 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 Stutgen, 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 25 trails with over 185 miles of trails. Hidden in Martinsville is one of Stutgen'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, black-top 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," Stutgen said.

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

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

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couple of nights it was above freezing. I can't really complain about the weather. At the end of January but if the trees were to harden because of it, game over on the syrip front.

On Feb. 4 conditions returned to flow range. But there wasn't much happening with my experience. Of the 5th, I took the afternoon off from work and went to drill into the older tree just to have something to do. Much to my surprise, sap practically flowed 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 up the could've been running down the side of the older tree. I happened to spot a fourth maple tree that had hit its water mark in the bark. Once I had the sap and buried in place on the older tree I went back to try my luck with the new one. It wasn't as much as I'd like but there was still a chance. I pulled out the other unmarried tree and hung a bucket. By the end of the afternoon I had two steady drips, it was barely gratifying for about three days before the snow started panning all over 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 two 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 hadley@herk.net.

OUTDOOR EVENTS

To add an event to the Outdoor Events calendar, email outdoor@indiana.com or call 812-331-4328. Items need to be received by noon Monday to be included in that Sunday's paper.

Indy Boat, Sport and Travel Show

The 22nd 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, Park View Pavilion, Quiet Sports and Outdoor Living Pavilion. Tackle Town will be part of the event with more than 100 exhibitors and by-standers. Visit indyboatshow.com for more information.

Deer, Turkey and Waterfowl Expo

The 23rd annual Deer, Turkey and Waterfowl Expo will be held Thursday through Saturday, Feb. 28, at the Indiana State Fairgrounds in Indianapolis. From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., there will be exhibits with many items for sale as well as demonstrations. While all deer hunters are welcome to bring in their deer to be officially scored.

Bicentennial Hikers Challenge

The Hoosier Hikers Council Bicentennial 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 Trails area. These trails include:

- Jiminy Creek Trail in Jiminy Creek Park, Martinsville
- Lovejoy Trail, Morgan-Monroe State Forest, Monroe County
- Mason Ridge Trail, Morgan-Monroe State Forest, Monroe County
- Rock Shelter Trail, Morgan-Monroe State Forest, Monroe County
- Scout Ridge Trail, Morgan-Monroe State Forest, Monroe 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
- High Bluff Trail: Hoosier National Forest, Brown County
- Hoosier Nature Preserve trail: Hiatus-Rhodehamel Nature Preserve, Brown County
- Jackson Creek Trail: Yellowwood State Forest, Brown County
- Sprit Tail Trail: Columbia Lake Mine Preserve
- Shirley Creek Trail: Hoosier National Forest, Orange County
- Spring Mill State Park trails: Spring Mill State Park, Lawrence County
- Stave Hollow trails: Shawnee State Park Trail, Lawrence County, Washington counties
- The Cedars Preserve: Sycamore Land Trust's Cedars Preserve, Monroe County
- Lake Monroe trails: Lake Monroe, Monroe County
- Shaker Trail: Hoosier National Forest, Brown County
- Orangeville Ridge Trail: Orangeville Ridge Preserve, Orange County
- Porter West Preserve: Porter West Preserve, Monroe County
- Resource Management Trail: Yellowwood State Forest, Brown County
- Scarecrow Trail: Yellowwood State Forest, Brown County

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

200 MILES

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

There are currently more than 150 people registered to participate in the 200-mile challenge. The only requirements to complete the challenge are:

- Register at www.hoosierhikerscouncil.org/bicentennial-challenge.html, where participants can find trails that are part of the challenge.
- Participants must hike at least 200 miles by the end of June. To make it more challenging, the hikers' council suggests trying it all on different trails.
- All 200 miles must be logged and completed to be eligible for a special recognition.
- Names of all those who completed the challenge will be posted 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 in doing this," Stuttgen said.

To find a list of other hurricanes, visit www.in.gov/ibis and look for "outdoors & programs."