



# Sycamore Land Trust

## Media Coverage

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## Fourth annual Bug Fest is place for all ages to learn more, have fun

Bees, butterflies and praying mantises will be the featured "guests" Saturday at the fourth annual Bug Fest, open 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Hilltop Garden and Nature Center.

Whether you're interested in helping monarch butterflies that migrate through south-central Indiana or have always wanted to eat an insect, there's a tent or booth just for you. The final event will be the cricket-spitting contest.

One "bug" that won't be at this year's Bug Fest is the tarantula, an arachnid, which was one of the more popular exhibits, according to Sandy Belth, coordinator for the event and a naturalist with the Monroe County Parks and Recreation Department. "It died during the winter," she explained.

But there will be new exhibits this year, including crafts in the craft tent and praying mantises. Belth said the Bug Fest team, which includes people from Bloomington and Monroe County parks and rec departments, Hilltop, Sycamore Land Trust, Sassafras Audubon Society, WonderLab Museum and Purdue University Extension Office, have been working since October to present a good event this year.

"It takes a lot of time to put one of these together, with all the speakers and exhibits," Belth said. This year there will also be musicians providing what Belth calls "background music," food for people to purchase and free parking.

"The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be joining us this year to let us know about pollinators," Belth said. "The White River Beekeepers will be there with some live bees." Belth said besides the "bee tent," there are several bee hives on the Hilltop property.

For kids of all ages, Joe Lee will perform with his "flea circus," and there will also be the chance to visit with Purdue entomology professor Tom Turpin, who will have edible insects for people to taste. This year he's cooking mealworms and larvae of beetles.

For those more interested in how to help insects, Reni Winter-Evans will share how to set up a monarch way station, which is a garden with milkweed and other nectar-producing flowering plants. Tom Swinford, with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources' Division of Nature Preserves, will talk about dragonflies, and Belth will explain what makes an insect an insect. For those interested, that includes having an exoskeleton, breathing in a unique way, having six legs and, for most, having four complete life stages.

When prompted, Belth, who has spent hours searching for aquatic insects, butterflies and more, said that the female Zabulon skipper (a butterfly) is her favorite. "They're very shiny but when you see them up close, they're beautiful," she explained.

While the skippers will probably not be present at this year's Bug Fest, there will be live aquatic insects and "critters" for people to see in the stormwater management tent, where people can talk with officials from the City of Bloomington Utilities Department. There will also be burrowing and dung beetles that are part of a lab at Indiana University, and walking sticks and hissing cockroaches from WonderLab.

Some booths will not be manned but instead will have exhibits where visitors can learn about invasive insects, including the emerald ash borer and tiger beetles, as well as what a compound eye is, and more about ants and flies.

Bug Fest is a free activity, but everyone attending is encouraged to bring a donation of canned fruits or vegetables that will be given to Hoosier Hills Food Bank. The bins for the cans will be at the Hilltop entrance.

Visitors will be able to pick up tote bags donated by Bloomington Hardware to keep all the information and goodies they collect during their visit, Belth said. And children can pick up a passport that can be stamped as they do various activities throughout the day that will allow them to get a small prize as they leave, she said.

There will also be prizes for the cricket-spitting contest, courtesy of Learning Treasures.