



Sycamore Land Trust

Media Coverage

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Creating more conservation-minded Hoosiers



(photo by Carol Kulger)

In groups of two or three, some with dogs, all in warm coats and hats, people piled out of cars and formed a semi circle around Josh Nickelson. It was a large group, about 30 people, who braved the windy, cold weather in early February to participate in the Sycamore Branches winter tree identification hike.

Sycamore Branches is a group of mainly 20- or 30-something people who are interested in conservation. The group was begun by Sycamore Land Trust to provide events highlighting in some way the work of the land trust, according to Austin Roach, one of the people who coordinates the group.

“We’ve done several Hike and Brew events, where we visit a Sycamore Land Trust preserve and then meet after for food and drinks,” Roach said, adding that most events include some type of educational component.

That was true for the winter ID hike: The group carpoled to the Porter West Preserve for the hike and then enjoyed more talk and brews at the Upland West Side Beer Bar.

While at the preserve on the west side of Bloomington, Nickelson, who is a forester who works for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the city of Bloomington, stopped at various trees to talk about different species growing on the property. From hackleberry to shag-bark hickory, Nickelson talked about how to identify the trees when there are few or no leaves on the branches. He also gave information about which trees grow best in swampy areas, which trees are more rot-resistant and which trees are dying due to invasive insects.

Nickelson and Roach have both been part of Sycamore Branches since it formed about 11/2 years ago as a way to get younger adults involved in conservation-related activities. Even though the group was formed for younger adults, anyone is welcome to attend, Roach said, adding that there were many older adults who took part in the tree ID hike. “We welcome whoever wants to come along,” he said.

Other events have included a wild edibles hike, an introduction to backpacking and an introduction to beekeeping. There’s also the “recurring nature bar trivia event,” Roach said.

Roach is hoping to add some volunteer service opportunities.

Last spring the group was supposed to have a garlic mustard pull but it was rained out.

Whether it’s pulling the invasive plants out of the ground at one of the preserves or another volunteer activity, Roach expects to have something for the group this year.

More info

Sycamore Land Trust, , has several different groups with activities that are free to members and for nonmembers usually cost about \$5 per person or \$10 per family. These groups include:

- Sycamore Branches, for 20- to 30-somethings interested in getting together to learn about conservation-related issues.
- Little Hikers, for youngsters and their families.
- Third Thursday Preserve-A-Preserve days that allow volunteers to help out at various Sycamore Land Trust preserves

- Weekday Walkers, for people who don't mind a more rugged hike to some of the land trust's properties.

For more, go to sycamorelandtrust.org.

Upcoming events

- 5:45-7:15 p.m. March 11: Dance of the Woodcocks at Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve in Monroe County. Join Sycamore Branches in observing the annual courtship of the American woodcock. Due to limited parking at the preserve, please meet at the Marsh supermarket parking lot at 1825 N. Kinser Pike. No RSVP required.
- 1-4 p.m. March 16: Third Thursday Preserve-A-Preserve Day at Scarlet Oak Woods Nature Preserve in Monroe County. Join the group for an off-trail hike where participants will pull invasive periwinkle vines that threaten to choke out spring wildflowers and other native plants.
- Noon to 3 p.m. March 29: Weekday Walkers Lichen Hike at Laura Hare Nature Preserve at Downey Hill in Brown County. Join naturalist, artist and Sycamore Land Trust member Gillian Harris as she leads participants on a rigorous, hilly hike to investigate the organisms of the forest that often go unnoticed.