



# SYCAMORE LAND TRUST

## *Media Coverage*

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## Beanblossom Bottoms to close for boardwalk renovations



Hugh Hazelrigg | Even when the sun is shining there's often water on the boardwalk at Beanblossom Bottoms, as there was in this 2009 photograph.

Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve will close on March 26 and remain closed until renovations of the boardwalk are complete.

Signs are posted in the parking area off of Woodall Road at the Sycamore Land Trust preserve, letting let people who visit the almost 600-acre site in northern Monroe County know what will happen. When the renovation work begins, the parking area will be roped off so no one will be able to use it.

About one-third of the front portion of boardwalk that leads into the nature preserve will be removed and replaced with a durable, nonslip plastic material that will be placed on a wooden framework. The plastic decking is of the type often used for boat docks and has an open grid structure on top that allows water to drain through it. The front section of boardwalk, closest to the parking area, is the most used area and also is where much of the wetland property is located, according to John Lawrence, assistant director of Sycamore Land Trust. That front portion often floods, as it did recently. The back portion of the 2.5-mile trail loop will remain as it is — a mixture of wooden boardwalk and mowed grassy trails.

In addition to installing a new boardwalk, one of the four observation areas also will be renovated using the nonslip material, Lawrence said.

There is no end date for the project, because it's unknown how long the removal and construction will take; variables including weather and flooding probably will influence when work can be done. The project will be paid for with a \$250,000 grant from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust.

"(The trust) wanted to increase public access," said Abby Henkel, communications director for Sycamore Land Trust. Since Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve is used for educational programs for students in grades K-12 as well as Indiana University students, using the trust's funds to help with public access to the nature preserve was "a perfect fit," Henkel said. Even though the boardwalk already allows access into the preserve, the wooden boardwalk wears down faster and requires more maintenance than the sturdy, plastic material. The wood also floats, which can be a problem when the wetland is flooding. The plastic decking also is less slippery and will allow people to use the boardwalk during more of the year.

The work will be done by staff members and volunteers, including employees of Vectren, which helped pay for the original educational trail at the nature preserve.

"It's challenging and truly a unique situation of building in a wetland," Lawrence said, adding that access to the nature preserve can be "tricky" because the ground can be easily disturbed. Low-impact equipment from Eco-Logic will be a huge help, Lawrence said.



John Lawrence | Late February rains led to flooding in Monroe County, including along the boardwalk path into Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve in Monroe County. The boardwalk in the flooded area will soon be replaced. Work will begin on March 26 and temporarily will close the popular nature preserve to visitors.

Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve is one of Sycamore Land Trust's more popular preserves. With the closure, Henkel offers some advice: "I really think this is a good chance to try our other preserves." Her suggestions included the Laura Hare Preserve at Downey Hill in Brown County, where members of the Hoosier Hikers Council recently completed a 4.5-mile trail; Porter West Preserve on West Vernal Pike; and Dilcher-Turner Canyon Forest in Greene County.

[More about the preserve](#)

The first parcel of land for Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve was acquired by Sycamore Land Trust in 1995. Since

then, more acres have been added to the area in northern Monroe County. It now covers 598 acres and has a 2.5-mile trail loop that includes four observation areas for visitors to see parts of the wetlands, meadows and woodland areas. The preserve is home to the endangered Indiana bat, Kirtland's snake, rare orchids and other threatened species.

For more about Sycamore Land Trust and its preserves, go to [www.sycamorelandtrust.org](http://www.sycamorelandtrust.org).