-2017-

IMPACT REPORT

SYCAMORE LAND TRUST

Do you ever go out into the wilderness after dark, perhaps on a night hike or a drive down a quiet country road? Camping in the fall or looking for woodcocks in the spring. On a clear night, right here in the heartland, you can look up at the stars and see the Milky Way. The dirt you're standing on, the air you're breathing in, your body itself – everything we know is made of star dust. What a magical feeling.

We are connected in intricate ways, from the expansive cosmos down to the muddy log where a great blue skimmer dragonfly rests. The actions we choose to take here in southern Indiana have implications that reach far beyond our own lives and our part of the planet.

At Sycamore Land Trust, we are committed to strengthening the health of the land we love and connecting people to nature so that future generations and the wild creatures that share this space can all enjoy it. For a picturesque and inspiring look at the work we do, watch the short video we created with Blueline at sycamorelandtrust.org/for-forever.

Because of your support, and that of more than 1,200 other Sycamore members and volunteers, 2017 was a successful year by any measure. We invite you to explore this booklet and see the impact you've made.

If you believe in what we are accomplishing together, we hope you will continue your support. We simply can't do it without you.

Sincerely,
The Staff & Board Members of Sycamore Land Trust

COVER PHOTO:
Nate Clark took this photo from the shore of our Amy Weingartner Branigin Peninsula Preserve on Lake Monroe. Find him on Instagram at @nateclarkski.

“Andi and I support the work of Sycamore Land Trust because we believe it is important to protect, preserve, and share the diverse landscapes and habitats of southern Indiana. We are happy to play a small part in that effort.”

JIM AND ANDI FERGUSON

Sycamore Sustainers, volunteer Property Stewards for the Laura Hare Nature Preserve at Downey Hill

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION 6

FINANCIAL UPDATE 12

HABITAT SAVED 14

PLANNED GIVING 18

SPECIAL EVENTS 22

LAND STEWARDSHIP 26

Environmental Education

Last year, our Environmental Education Director Shane Gibson worked with more than 5,000 people through hands-on activities and lessons in schools, community groups, summer camps, retirement homes, and public hikes. Here are some highlights from the year. Learn more at **sycamorelandtrust.org/environmental-education**.

COMMUNITY TRANSITIONS

Environmental Education isn't just about enjoying the great outdoors; all of us can learn useful skills and gain confidence by spending time with nature. Sycamore partners with Monroe County Community Schools Corp (MCCSC) in their continuing education program for students with disabilities. The goal of this program is to enhance students' functional skills and encourage community engagement. We meet with this class throughout the year and explore a wide variety of outdoor activities. Last summer, we took students to Lake Monroe and taught them how to fish, including catching, cleaning, and cooking. The smiles on everyone's faces speaks volumes about the impact this adventure had on all of us!

MONTESSORI ACADEMY OF EVANSVILLE

Our Native Plant Project has introduced thousands of students to the importance and joys of native Indiana plants. Students learn to grow them in the classroom, then take home the potted plants and/or plant them in gardens right on the school campus. At the Montessori Academy, every student in kindergarten through third grade grew native Indiana wildflowers and grasses. The process included creating "pretend winter" to awaken the seed from dormancy, potting the seedlings, and nurturing the plants from germination to transplanting. Learn more in our summer 2018 issue of *The Twig* at **sycamorelandtrust.org/the-twig.**

HOOSIER HILLS CAREER CENTER

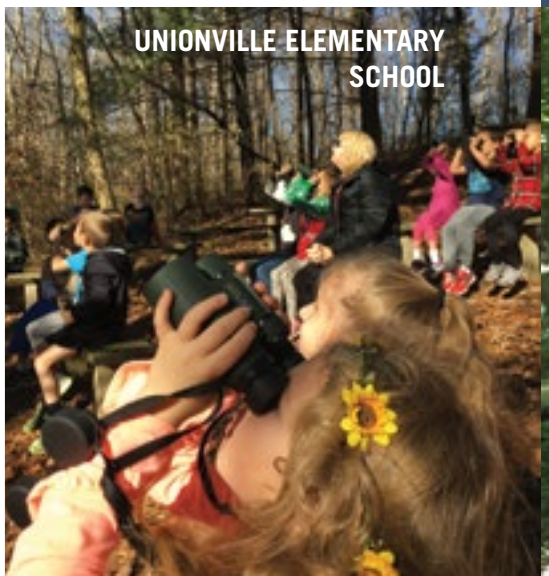
Many teachers want to connect their students with nature, but don't know where to find the resources to get a program started. We partnered with students of early childhood education at MCCSC's career center to give them tools to help kids learn about nature and engage in the outdoors, including books, activities, and games. We also facilitated a planting day with these high schoolers and the preschoolers they care for on their school campuses.

HETH-WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

"Build it and they will come." That's how we think of wildlife finding their way to the habitat we restore, and it's also true for creating inviting outdoor spaces for people to enjoy. At Heth-Washington Elementary in Harrison County, we led a woodland renovation project that entailed planting oaks and hickory trees in the woods with kindergarteners and sixth graders, carefully mowing forest edges and trails, and installing outdoor seating. After years of being inaccessible due to briars and invasive plants, teachers no longer have to tell the kids, "stay away from the woods!" This two-acre forest is now a welcoming natural space for exploration and learning.

CLASSROOM MEMBERSHIPS

We introduced this program in 2017 because so many teachers and their students were asking how they could give back to Sycamore. For $20, a class of any size can become a Classroom Member for the year. They receive their own copy of *The Twig* and a special poster acknowledging their gift. So far, 21 classrooms from 11 schools have become members, raising $1,319 for Sycamore's Monarch Environmental Education Endowment and general operating costs! For a list of 2017 classroom members, see our online donor list at **sycamorelandtrust.org/impact-report.**



UNIONVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

SYCAMORE BRANCHES

“If you’re like me, you don’t have to be an avid hiker or wilderness enthusiast to appreciate and support what Sycamore does. Their commitment to the environment and preservation ensures quality of life for each of us. Supporting their education programs for school-age kids or simply driving past a protected woods gives me hope for the future. Spring wildflowers and budding trees, butterflies and soaring eagles – all are enriched and cherished by Sycamore, today and tomorrow.”

SCOTT LOHMAN

Sycamore Sustainer, volunteer in the office

PHOTO BY JENNIFER FRENCH AT THE AMY WEINGARTNER BRANIGIN PENINSULA PRESERVE

Financial Update

We consider it a great honor to be entrusted with the generous financial support of our donors, and we're pleased to share this data with you. Thanks to a committed, expert board of directors and dedicated staff, Sycamore has completed yet another successful year, both financially and in our mission to preserve land and connect people to nature in southern Indiana.

OUR EXPENSES DURING THE 2016/2017 FISCAL YEAR:

PRIVATE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MEMBERS LIKE YOU ACCOUNTED FOR

OF OUR INCOME.

Fiscal Year 2016/17

Revenue		
Contributions, memberships and planned gifts	1,788,394	84%
Non-Cash Contributions	172,820	8%
Government Grants	30,476	<2%
Other Income	81,952	4%
Investment Income	38,568	2%
TOTAL	**2,112,210**	
Expense		
Program Services	536,435	73%
Management and General	117,064	16%
Fundraising	80,309	11%
TOTAL	**733,808**	
NET	**1,378,402**	

Net Worth

Land	10,262,145
Investments and Endowments	2,074,783
Operating Funds	1,092,153
Buildings and Equipment	570,729
TOTAL	**13,999,810**

Habitat Saved

HOOT WOODS 80 ACRES

When the Hoot family emigrated from Germany to Owen County 160 years ago, they probably didn't realize the implications of their seemingly simple decision to leave part of their forested property wild. But because they embraced and protected this bit of wilderness through the generations, and through their generosity in donating the land to Sycamore, we are now the proud protectors of Sycamore's first old-growth forest. These ancient trees will be protected forever, and the intricate habitats that have formed in Hoot Woods will continue to thrive. Thank you for your support, which helps us steward this land!

PHOTO BY STEVE GIFFORD

EAGLE SLOUGH ADDITION 80 ACRES

Alcoa donated this wetland property, just a stone's throw from our 127-acre Eagle Slough Natural Area in Evansville. It contains a rare bald cypress grove and excellent habitat for migratory songbirds. We are excited to expand our protected land in Vanderburgh County and further steward this wetland area for the more than 160 species of birds and other animals that have been spotted at Eagle Slough.

SAM SHINE FOUNDATION PRESERVE 116 ACRES

Expanding Sycamore's protected land in the Beanblossom Creek Conservation Area to 1,345 acres, we purchased two properties using funds from the State of Indiana's Bicentennial Nature Trust and the Sam Shine Foundation. The Sam Shine Foundation Preserve is located near Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve in Monroe County, which is home to at least 20 endangered or protected species. These former farmlands will be restored in the next few years to help them become healthy wetland and upland habitats.

GOOSE POND FISH & WILDLIFE AREA 85 ACRES

In only the second addition ever to Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area in Greene County, Sycamore purchased this land from a couple who needed to sell it quickly, and held it until the Indiana DNR was able to purchase it a year later. The land adds to this important protected area where whooping cranes, snow geese, and many other wetland birds migrate each winter.

“I’ve been involved with Sycamore since 2000 and continue to be surprised by the amount of positive change the organization is able to accomplish year after year. I’m confident that every contribution I make is being well managed and maximized to ensure an enduring natural environment in south central Indiana.”

ANDREA LUTZ

Sycamore Member and Development Committee volunteer

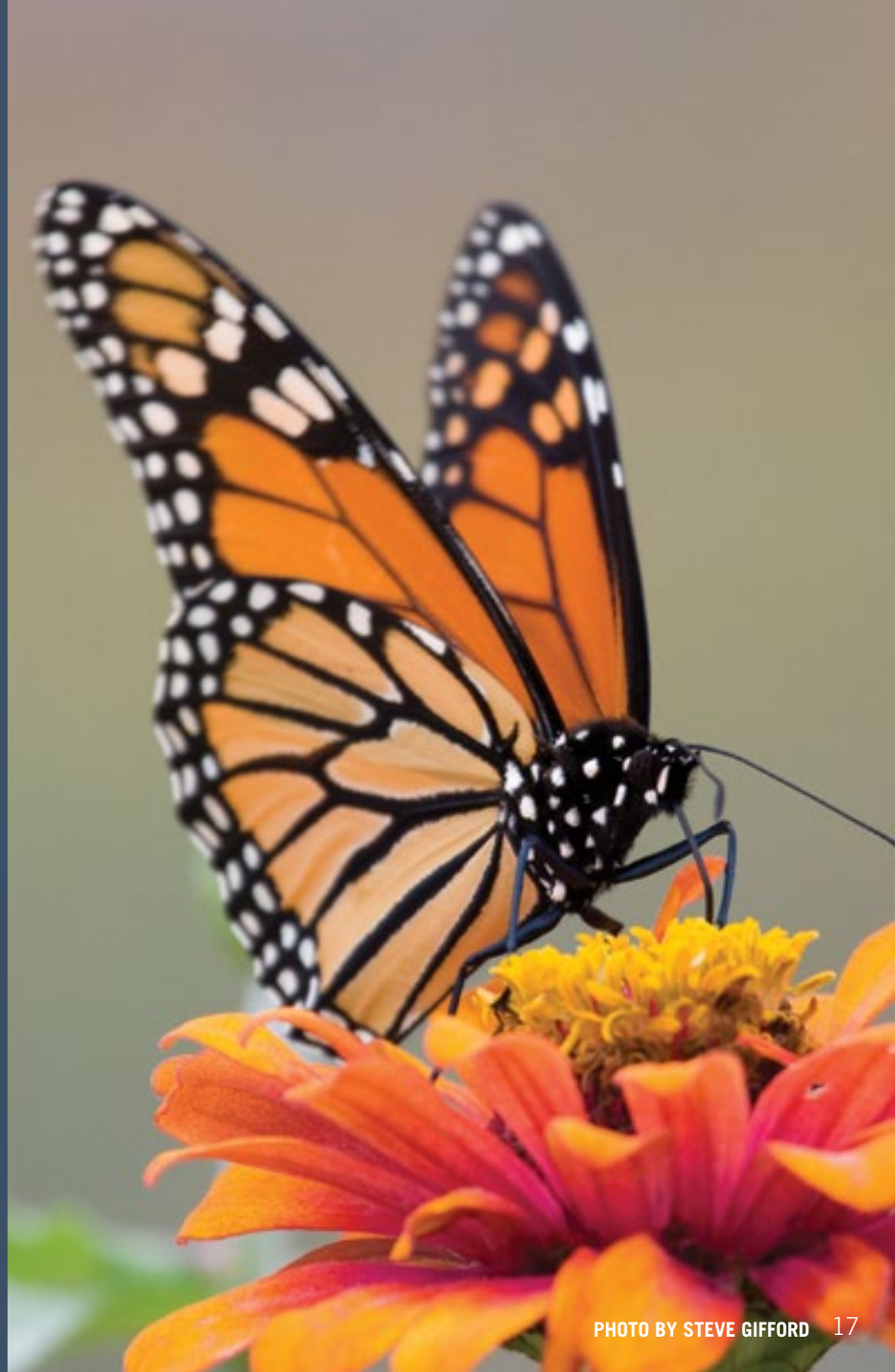


PHOTO BY STEVE GIFFORD

Planned Giving

Conservation is a lasting investment in the future of our beautiful home, and there is no more fitting way to support land protection and environmental education than with a planned gift. For many people, it's also one of the most affordable ways to make a significant gift to Sycamore.

Our Legacy Circle now has nearly 70 members – people who have designated Sycamore Land Trust as a beneficiary of their life insurance, will, trust, IRA, 401(k), or other qualified retirement plan.

We are very grateful for everyone who chooses to include Sycamore in their plans at any level, and we'd like to share one of their stories with you.

Martha Barclay-Giel

Born on her parents' property near Paoli in 1916, Martha always held a fondness for her Hoosier home even though she spent many years away, mostly in Fort Myers, Florida. Her family had lived in southern Indiana for generations. Martha attended Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, and later earned a Master of Science in Public Health. She was a commissioned officer in uniformed service with the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corp.

Martha's support of Sycamore began with a $100 contribution in 1999. Over the years her financial support grew, and in 2004 we were honored to receive Martha's donation of 10 acres of forested land in Orange County. We loved keeping in touch with her through phone calls and on a visit to see her in Florida.

When Martha passed away in 2017, we learned that she bequeathed Sycamore 260 acres of forest adjacent to her prior donated property, and a substantial contribution from her estate. The overwhelming gratitude we felt at headquarters that day cannot be overstated. Martha's gift will leave a lasting impact on Sycamore's ability to protect and restore land and connect people to nature, for generations to come.

When you visit a Sycamore nature preserve or take part in an environmental educational program, you will be touched by Martha's generosity, and her legacy will live on *forever.*

If you would like to discuss options for planned giving to Sycamore, please contact Ann Connors, Development Director, at 812-336-5382 ext. 104 or ann@sycamorelandtrust.org.

20 PHOTO BY CHIP METHVIN AT BEANBLOSSOM BOTTOMS NATURE PRESERVE

> It's very rewarding to contribute to an organization that is so active in the community and whose work is so visible. Visiting newly acquired preserves, encountering fellow conservationists on the trails, participating in outreach events, and working beside other volunteers -- there are constant reminders that my contributions are being compounded with those of thousands of other donors and volunteers to make a substantial and continuing impact on our shared environment and community.

AUSTIN ROACH

Sycamore Sustainer, volunteer on the Sycamore Branches committee

Special Events

PHOTO BY BLUELINE

ARBOR DAY TREE GIVEAWAY

Friday, April 28

250
NATIVE TREE AND SHRUB SEEDLINGS HANDED OUT

7
NEW MEMBERS SIGNED UP

15
VOLUNTEERS

Sponsored by Bloomingfoods, Eco Logic, and the Indiana DNR

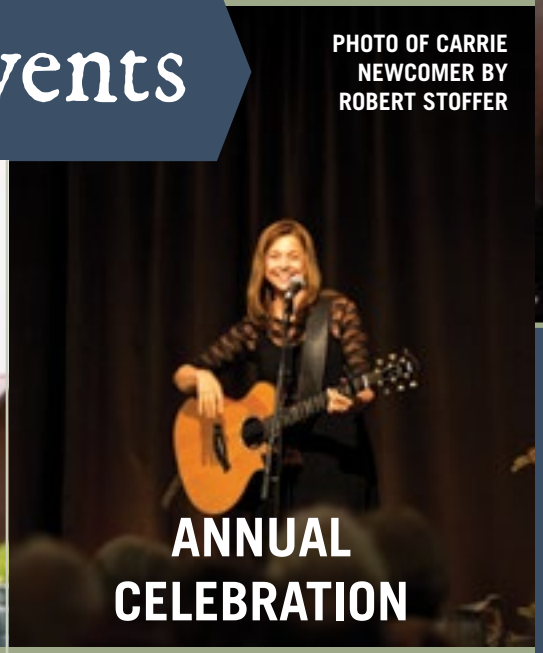


PHOTO OF CARRIE NEWCOMER BY ROBERT STOFFER

ANNUAL CELEBRATION

Friday, October 20

400
ATTENDEES (SOLD OUT!)

171
SILENT AUCTION ITEMS

$58,800
RAISED

Tickets to the 2018 Annual Celebration on October 6, 2018 are now on sale at **sycamorelandtrust.org**

REEL ROCK FILM TOUR

Creative Outreach and Fundraising

In the spring of 2017, Rachel Glago approached Communications Director Abby Henkel about hosting REEL ROCK Film Tour, a national traveling film festival about rock climbing, to raise funds for Sycamore. Rachel took the lead gathering cash sponsors with volunteer Mike Waterford, soliciting donations for the raffle, coordinating logistics with the Buskirk-Chumley Theater and Reel Rock, and promoting the event.

By raising enough sponsors to cover the production costs, every dollar raised from admissions and raffle tickets went to Sycamore -- $3,500 in all! Not only that, but we reached an entirely new audience of people who didn't know about Sycamore, brought in new members, and connected with folks who love climbing and the outdoors as much as we do.

"I organized REEL ROCK because, besides BANFF, there wasn't any other arts programming that celebrates climbing culture and the outdoor adventure community. I decided to turn it into a fundraiser specifically for Sycamore Land Trust because their mission aligns so closely to what matters to outdoor adventure enthusiasts. Sycamore provides a landscape for climbers and other outdoors adventurists, preserving our playgrounds, and ultimately, the environment. Without Sycamore, those natural spaces for us to explore and challenge ourselves may not exist one day. I don't want that to happen. I want future generations to have the opportunity to boulder, climb, and explore Indiana's natural landscape. Sycamore gives me hope of that continuing."

In 2018, Sycamore Branches will officially host this event at the Buskirk-Chumley Theater with expert guidance from Rachel. Keep an eye on sycamorelandtrust.org to see when the date and films will be announced.

“The entire experience with Sycamore Land Trust has been amazing. It has helped me to feel more confident and passionate about teaching my students about nature. It has given me ideas to piggyback off of and has helped me to feel more comfortable in nature. I have taken environmental education further than I ever thought possible.”

KELLY MISHEIKIS

Teacher at Unionville Elementary in Bloomington

Land Stewardship

We are stewards of the land entrusted in our care. We are responsible for carefully protecting it, helping the environment flourish so that the living creatures on it may thrive and future generations can enjoy it as we have.

Last August we made enormous progress in our land protection and habitat restoration efforts when we hired our first full-time Land Stewardship Manager, Chris Fox. A grant from donor Darlene Gerster will fund this position for several years, helping Sycamore further our legacy of hands-on land restoration and nature preserve management. Managed by Assistant Director John Lawrence, who has been with Sycamore for 11 years and single-handedly ran the stewardship program for most of that time, Chris is out in the field nearly every day, often with one or more of our committed stewardship volunteers and Trail Rangers.

Another important part of land stewardship is monitoring the 4,000 acres of land protected by conservation easements with Sycamore. Chris visits each property at least once per year to make sure the unique stipulations of each easement are being followed.

2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Worked to **control invasive species**, especially Asian bush honeysuckle, garlic mustard, multiflora rose, and Japanese stiltgrass
- **Repaired sections** of the Beanblossom Bottoms boardwalk trail
- **Rebuilt the observation deck** at Touch the Earth Natural Area
- Conducted a **monarch butterfly tagging day**
- **Repaired bridges and sections of trails** at several preserves
- Began planning for the **Beanblossom Bottoms boardwalk renovation**
- Visited and reported on all **conservation easement properties**

Interested in volunteering at a workday?
Sign up for our e-news at **sycamorelandtrust.org/subscribe**.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LAND STEWARDSHIP MANAGER:

Wake up bright and early

Wear layers and be ready for all weather – sleet, rain, or blaring sun!

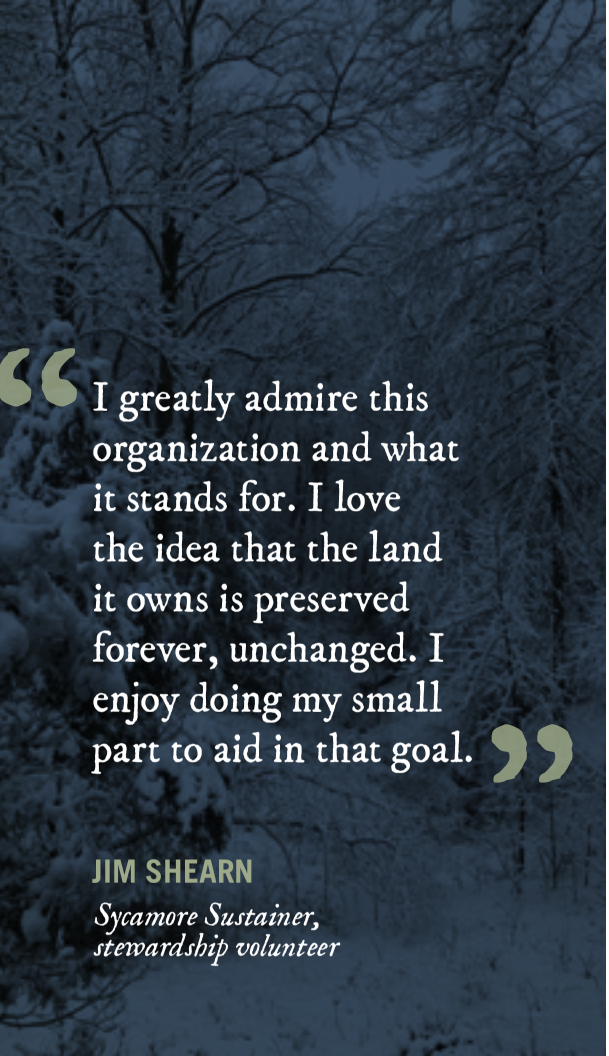
Load the truck – chainsaw for fallen trees on the trail, loppers for woody weeds, backpack sprayer to tackle invasives, trash bags for the garbage you'll surely find

Meet up with volunteers to carpool, or head out for a solo trek

Enjoy the great outdoors while taking care of the land

Take some great photos

Head to the office to record notes, answer emails, and catch up with staff



“I greatly admire this organization and what it stands for. I love the idea that the land it owns is preserved forever, unchanged. I enjoy doing my small part to aid in that goal.”

JIM SHEARN

Sycamore Sustainer, stewardship volunteer

Sycamore Land Trust
P.O. Box 7801
Bloomington, IN 47407-7801

812-336-5382

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT No. 333
Bloomington, IN

PRINTED ON RECYCLED CONTENT PAPER