THE TWIG

SYCAMORE LAND TRUST // WINTER/SPRING 2018

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MONARCHS' MAGNIFICENT MIGRATION

By Chris Fox, Land Stewardship Manager
and
Abby Henkel, Communications Director

Shane Gibson, Sycamore's Environmental Education Director, photographed this monarch caterpillar on swamp milkweed in his backyard. Milkweeds are the only plants these important pollinators can eat in their caterpillar stage.

Many Sycamore supporters are concerned about the collapse of bee populations and the plight of other pollinators, including monarch butterflies. In fact, scientists fear this iconic insect and its amazing and epic migration could vanish in our lifetime.

The eastern population of monarchs, which numbered over 700 million in the early 1990s, has declined by nearly 90% in the past 20 years. The smaller western population that winters in southern California has experienced a similar drastic decline. Habitat loss on the breeding and wintering grounds combined with increased pesticide use, parasites, and climate change are pushing the monarch to the brink.

But could something so abundant actually go extinct so quickly? We don't have to look too far for the answer. The very last passenger pigeon, Martha, died just over a 100 years ago, not far from here at the Cincinnati Zoo. The last confirmed wild passenger pigeon was killed in southeastern Indiana just a few years before

that. A species that once numbered 3-5 billion went extinct in 40 years. Will the monarch face a similar fate?

At Sycamore, we're optimistic that humans have learned from the past and won't make the same mistake again. And we're taking action.

Rebekah Fielder holding a monarch butterfly caught at the Powell Preserve, to tag it for a monitoring project.

Since habitat loss is one major contributor to the monarchs' decline, Sycamore is actively working to restore places where they can safely breed, find shelter, and store up fat for the long migration. This includes planting native milkweeds at our nature preserves and in the native plant gardens that we create with students on schoolyards.

In 2017, Sycamore started participating in the monarch tagging project. Volunteers met up with staff to gently catch butterflies at our Powell Preserve in Monroe County, stick tiny numbered tags on their thoraxes, and set them free. We held this event in September to be sure we were tagging the generation that would migrate to Mexico. When scientists there find the bodies of butterflies that have succeeded on the long journey, they'll send us an alert.

ON THE COVER

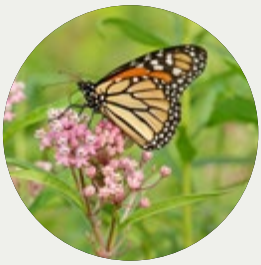


Photo by Steve Gifford

Steve Gifford, a former Sycamore board member, took this photo of a monarch butterfly on swamp milkweed at his home in Haubstadt, IN. Anyone with a backyard can create a small pollinator habitat for these special creatures.

Article continues on page 4.

While there are many insects that migrate, the monarch migration in North America is truly unique. They travel much farther than any other butterflies do – up to 3,000 miles. Few other insects make such a long, two-way migration every year. Even more incredible is that they all fly to the same small, remote wintering location in Mexico. Their migration is similar to the migration many birds undertake each year. However, a monarch only makes the journey once in its lifetime, if at all, and doesn't have experienced individuals to lead the way.

The tagging project helps monitor the health of the monarch population by tracking where they come from and how many are safely making the long trek. As we continue to restore their habitat, we hope these fascinating creatures will come back to a welcoming environment in southern Indiana, in greater numbers every year.

Want to get involved? Check future issues of The Twig for our next monarch tagging event! And no matter the size of your yard, you can create pollinator habitat by growing native plants and limiting pesticide use.

cool facts about MONARCHS

The caterpillars increase in weight by 2,700 times

They have slower wingbeats than other butterflies, and often glide on the wind

Butterflies smell with their antenna and taste with their feet

Monarchs breathe through vents in their abdomen and thorax, and don't have lungs

Monarch caterpillars can only feed on milkweed

There are four to five generations per year – most adults only live up to six weeks, but the migratory ones can live up to eight months

They can travel up to 200 miles a day, and up to 3,000 in one migratory season

What are we doing this for? See what it means to protect land forever, through breathtaking images and moving words captured by Blueline in our new video.

SYCAMORELANDTRUST.ORG/FOR-FOREVER

ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

By Ann Connors, Development Director

As part of its Grand Challenges Program, IU Bloomington recently launched the Environmental Resilience Institute (ERI) to study social and ecological responses to ongoing changes in Indiana's environment. Over the next five years, the interdisciplinary team of nearly 100 world-class researchers will provide the natural and social sciences research to develop recommendations and actionable tools for agriculture, industry, infrastructure, public health, and safety.

Leading this initiative is Ellen Ketterson,

Ellen Ketterson
Courtesy photo

a globally acclaimed biologist, IU Distinguished Professor, longtime Sycamore member, and bird expert. During the recent public launch of the ERI, Ellen explained the urgency of the situation and the effects that have already impacted Indiana:

- In the last seven years, extreme weather events have cost the state $6 billion.
- Heavy rain events have increased 37% over the last 50 years, adding considerable volatility to crop yields and overall production.
- Temperatures across Indiana are projected to rise by about 4 degrees by mid-century, jeopardizing nearly $6 billion generated by corn and soybean production each year.
- The Great Lakes are projected to rise as much as 7 degrees by 2050 and 12 degrees by 2100, reducing water quality, causing more algae blooms, and harming fish populations.
- Shorter, less intense winters have contributed to a 430% increase in documented cases of Lyme disease since 2001 in the U.S.

"Making ourselves more resilient in the face of environmental change means protecting ourselves from invasive species, conserving plants and animals that sustain us, defending ourselves from weather disasters, and creating more livable cities," Ellen explains.

SUSTAINABILITY *(noun)*: capable of being supported so that necessary resources are not depleted

RESILIENCE *(noun)*: the capacity of a system – a person, a forest, a city, or an economy – to recover quickly from difficulties and to remain viable in the face of change

Some people will be skeptical of scientists' capacity to provide real-world solutions. For the ERI to communicate effectively with the public, they must: 1) find out how people, businesses, and governments currently think about the environment; 2) determine the validity of science-based theories and potential tools; and 3) communicate what works in easy-to-understand and creative ways, so that everyone can take action.

One pilot project will partner with local stakeholders to inventory baseline social and environmental conditions for the Lower Wabash, and the waters that feed into it. Part of that watershed is the 9,000-acre Patoka River National Wildlife

Refuge, which includes 1,100 acres owned by Sycamore and managed by the Refuge. Key deliverables include more short-term efforts to reduce pollution while improving wildlife habitats, and tools for farmers and land managers to improve habitat and public engagement while assessing the economic impacts on the land.

A key goal of the ERI is to help city planners, city councils, mayors, and the private sector assess their readiness for environmental change. They will face challenging topics to help plan for future scenarios, such as: sheltering the elderly during heat waves, reducing the consequences of more frequent natural disasters, minimizing carbon emissions, incentivizing green roofs and community gardens, encouraging the construction and public use of hiking trails, and providing habitat corridors for wildlife.

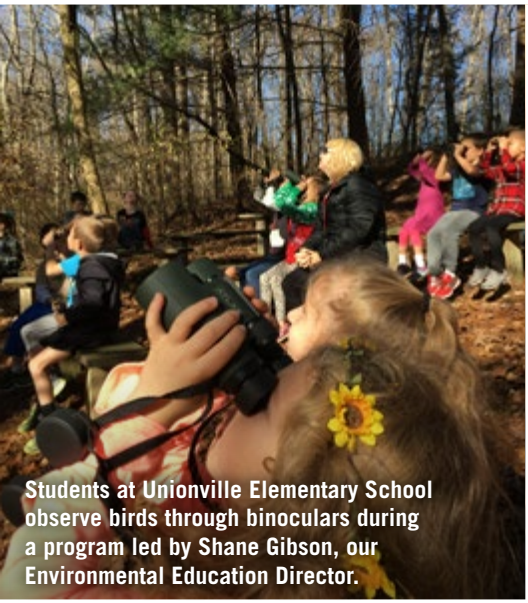
A recent study in the journal *Science* states that as temperatures continue to rise, the midwest could be hit with the type of agricultural losses last seen in the 1930s. And studies show that Indiana harbors some of the most polluted water, land, and air in the country. Amid these realities, how do we stay positive?

Take it from Ellen: "I think Sycamore represents the best of planning for the future, and its success is its own best testimony. Our understanding of the environment is often 'place-based.' That is, it is nested in locations we call home, e.g. writings of Scott Russell Sanders. And protecting our homes is part of our being. So I actually think local land trusts are the best protection for the environment. And as the acres donated to Sycamore grow, I think the evidence for that point of view grows every day. Indiana was a leader in setting land aside for state parks. Now Indiana citizens are returning private land to the public trust. Yet another reason to be optimistic."

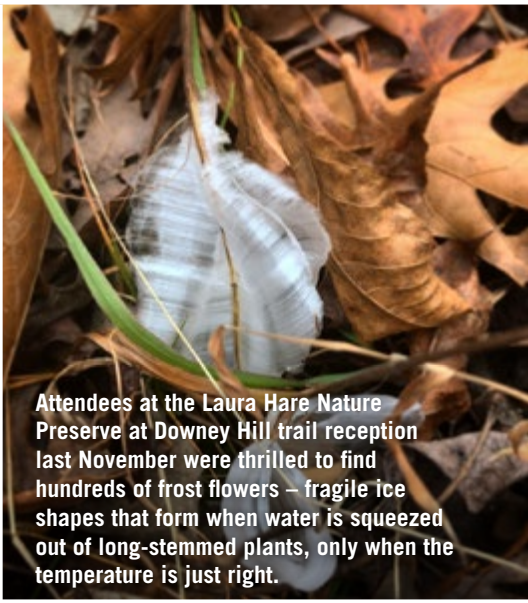
"I think Sycamore represents the best of planning for the future, and its success is its own best testimony."

Sycamore Sightings

This Western Lesser Siren salamander and about a dozen others were found by workers at Sycamore's Columbia Mine Preserve, managed by the Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge.



Students at Unionville Elementary School observe birds through binoculars during a program led by Shane Gibson, our Environmental Education Director.



Attendees at the Laura Hare Nature Preserve at Downey Hill trail reception last November were thrilled to find hundreds of frost flowers – fragile ice shapes that form when water is squeezed out of long-stemmed plants, only when the temperature is just right.

-THE-
GROUNDSWELL
Winter 2018

OWNED LAND & EASEMENTS

105	9,320
PROJECTS	ACRES

PROJECTS ASSISTED

8	10,010
PROJECTS	ACRES

MAPLE -ON THE- MENU

By Shane Gibson, Environmental Education Director

The sound of melting snow in the gutter of my home, the drip…drip…drip of icicles, the trill of north-migrating sandhill cranes, and mud-caked boots accompany sugaring season. Sugaring, as the making of maple syrup is often called, happens during the freeze-thaw-freeze-thaw of late winter and early spring. Also known as "mud season" for the sloppiness that the thaw creates, sugaring provides opportunities for family and friends to gather, enjoy the outdoors, celebrate, and relish this delicacy just like in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House in the Big Woods:*

> *For days the sun shone and the weather was warm. There was no frost on the windows in the mornings. All day the icicles fell one by one from the eaves with soft smashing and crackling sounds in the snowbanks beneath…Then one day Laura saw a patch of bare ground in the yard. All day it grew bigger, and before night the whole yard was bare mud…That night Laura woke up, shivering. The bed-covers felt thin, and her nose was icy cold…Pa came in, shaking the soft snow from his shoulders and stamping it from his boots. "It's a sugar snow," he said.*

Following the chapter "Sugar Snow" is "Dance at Grandpa's." The fiddle strings were readied for Pa's rendition of "Buffalo Gals" and other dancing tunes

as friends and family celebrated the maple syrup season. The skirts swirled and the boots stamped, Wilder wrote. Once the syrup was waxing, the party-goers filled plates with snow and Grandma poured hot syrup on the snow to make a soft candy.

My sons, now 15 and 13, have helped make maple syrup almost every year of their lives – tapping trees, collecting sap, starting a fire, and licking clean the pots of sweet syrup. My youngest and I make maple frosting; maple cheesecake is a favorite desert; and the adults love a sap-bucket highball. Here are some of my family's favorite recipes from the Michigan Maple Syrup Association's cookbook, but I encourage you to get creative and try your own!

MAPLE FROSTING

¼ cup butter, softened
2 cups powdered sugar, sifted
maple syrup

Slowly cream butter with powdered sugar. Add maple syrup until desired consistency is reached.

MAPLE MILKSHAKE

½ cup maple syrup
1 ½ pints milk
½ pint cream
2 scoops ice cream

Mix all ingredients in a blender, pour into glasses, and serve.

MAPLE CHEESECAKE

1 cup graham cracker crumbs
2 Tbsp butter, melted
3 8-oz packages cream cheese
3 eggs
¼ tsp salt
1 ¼ cup maple syrup
2 ½ tsp vanilla extract
1 cup sour cream
1 tsp honey

Preheat oven to 350° F.

In a small bowl, combine graham cracker crumbs and butter. Lightly butter a 9-inch springform pan. Dust the sides with crumbs, and press the rest into the bottom of the pan. Chill in the fridge.

In a large bowl or stand mixer, beat the cream cheese well, adding eggs one at a time and beating after each addition. Add salt, maple syrup, and 1 ½ tsp vanilla. Beat well.

Pour wet ingredients into chilled crust. Bake 45-50 minutes, or until firm.

Combine sour cream, honey, and 1 tsp vanilla. When cake is firm, pour sauce on top, then bake for 5 more minutes at 400° F.

Chill overnight. Drizzle maple syrup over each piece before serving.

HOOT WOODS

ANCIENT TREES

by Christian Freitag, Executive Director

> *"Do not let what you can not do interfere with what you can do."*
> – COACH WOODEN

This past December, Sycamore acquired ownership of Hoot Woods, 80 acres of genuine (pronounced jen-u-wine in this instance) Hoosier homegrown Owen County old-growth forest. Not just old, but ancient. Evidence suggests it is one of the only stands of never-been-cut woods remaining in Indiana. Only 2,000 acres of old-growth remain in the state, of the 200 million acres of forest in Indiana at the time of European settlement.

Countless studies have shown how important old-growth forests are to various species of plants and animals, especially in places where the forest has been so fragmented. Eighty acres of anything isn't going to change the world single-handedly. But sometimes spirit matters as much as ecology.

Knowing that there are places like this in southern Indiana, largely intact, remnants of a different time, going back possibly thousands of years — that says something about our values, about the quality we want our home to have. It says we care about what southern Indiana was because that's a connection to what it can be.

Climate change will challenge much of our previous understanding of old-growth forests, along with all of our natural ecosystems. We continue to study these systems and seek greater understanding of how they work. One thing we do know — nothing remains the same. How systems adapt to change is a world of study. Places like Hoot Woods provide a tremendous opportunity to learn.

Of course, the real heroes of the story are the members of the Hoot family, who protected these woods since the family emigrated from Germany in 1860. Their vision, together with Sycamore's shared commitment, will ensure this natural cathedral is protected forever. We may not be able to save all the places like Hoot Woods left in Indiana, but never underestimate what will be accomplished together by staying positive and focusing on "we can."

Because of the sensitive nature of this property, we do not plan to open Hoot Woods to general public use. We do plan to have some guided hikes for Sycamore members, so keep your eye on sycamorelandtrust.org/events for more info. You can find more facts and articles on Hoot Woods at **sycamorelandtrust.org/hoot-woods.**

OUR COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE GROWS

By Susan Haislip Daleke, Administrative Director

As Sycamore Land Trust continues to grow and evolve, we remain ever aware of our obligation to our supporters to be good stewards of the land, and of your financial and other donations. This spring, Sycamore will apply for accreditation with the Land Trust Alliance (LTA). Founded in 1982, LTA is a national land conservation organization with the mission "to save the places people need by strengthening land conservation across America." LTA represents more than 1,300 member land trusts, including Sycamore. Each member organization has committed to following LTA's Land Trust Standards and Practices – guidelines for operating a land trust legally, ethically, and in the public interest.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of LTA, inspires excellence, promotes public trust, and ensures permanence in the conservation of open lands by recognizing land trusts that meet rigorous quality standards. After a thorough application and review process, such organizations are awarded accreditation, the highest mark of distinction a land trust can achieve.

Sycamore staff and members of our Board of Directors have been working diligently over the past year to prepare for accreditation. Accreditation gives you, our supporters, even more assurance that your contributions are being applied effectively and responsibly. We believe we owe it to you to maintain the highest standards our line of work has to offer.

As part of the accreditation process, the Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending accreditation applications. Comments must relate to how Sycamore Land Trust complies with national quality standards and must be received no later than May 20, 2018. To learn more about the accreditation program and about how to submit a comment to the Commission, visit sycamorelandtrust.org/accreditation.

Thank you for your support!

ANNUAL CELEBRATION

Photos by Robert Stoffer Photography

Board member Rob McCrea chats with Sycamore members Rachel Glago and Alison Pitt, volunteers at the merchandise table.

Bonnie and John Bittner browse the silent auction, which included items donated by more than 100 businesses and individuals.

Board Chair George Huntington addresses the audience about another successful year for Sycamore and our wonderful supporters!

Carrie Newcomer performs her moving song "Sanctuary" for the 400 attendees.

The table is set for a delicious feast, with local wine and beer donated by Oliver Winery and Upland Brewing Co.

LAURA HARE NATURE PRESERVE
- AT -
DOWNEY HILL

The full six-mile trail is now open at our 600-acre preserve in Brown County! Many thanks to the Hoosier Hikers Council for their incredible three years of work on this beautiful, hilly trail.

We celebrated the completed trail on a chilly day in November with many HHC volunteers and Sycamore staff in attendance! Learn more and find driving directions at **sycamorelandtrust.org/downey-hill**

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

By Chris Fox, Land Stewardship Manager

What do we mean when we talk about land stewardship? Generally defined, it's the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; especially the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.

That's an impressive responsibility, especially when our members have contributed their own financial resources to help Sycamore protect more land. And that is why I take this job so seriously. People have entrusted Sycamore to care for the beautiful natural places we all depend on. I think we all share in that responsibility! We all must care for the land that we will leave to future generations.

Now, how we manage and care for that land isn't easy to define, and strategies are often hotly debated in the conservation community. Staff and the stewardship committee are continually working on that very question to see how we can best care for the land entrusted to us.

In addition to our land management duties, we also work on keeping preserves open to the public. During this past fall, I have been busy conducting annual property visits for our 4,000 acres of conservation easements, and repairing bridges, boardwalks, and other structures that make our nature preserves accessible to the public. I love the challenges I face in my job, because in the end, it's all so rewarding. And it's my pleasure to serve our members and visitors so that all may get in touch with the great outdoors.

To visit a nature preserve near you, check out sycamorelandtrust.org/visit-a-preserve. And thanks to our members for enabling us to steward 9,320 acres of nature (and counting)!

Check out future issues of *The Twig* for more in-depth updates on specific projects Chris has been working on!

Chris Fox (left) and his dad Tom after repairing a broken bridge at Tangeman Woods in Bartholomew County.

Join us for a hike, workday, or special event! Hikes are free for members; the fee for non-members is $5/person or $10/family unless otherwise specified. Volunteer days are always free. For more details on an event and to RSVP (required for hikes and volunteer days), visit **sycamorelandtrust.org/events.**

FEBRUARY

2/3

SOLITUDE HIKE

Saturday, February 3, 12-2pm

The Cedars Preserve (Monroe County)

Often interpretive hikes involve so much discussion that you may never be fully aware of the sights and sounds around you. Join this hike to quietly explore The Cedars with shared readings and inspirational quotes along the way.

2/10

LITTLE HIKERS: PINE NEEDLE TEA

Saturday, February 10, 12-2pm

Cedar Crest (Monroe County)

We will learn how to identify local evergreens including the white pine, which we will use to make a delicious and nutritious tea to warm our souls on this winter day.

2/15

WEEKDAY WALKERS: FRESH AIR & FITNESS

Thursday, February 15, 10am-12pm

Yellowwood Farm (Brown County)

Enjoy a refreshing winter hike through meadow, creek, and upland forest at this conservation easement located at the edge of Yellowwood State Forest in Brown County.

2/15

THIRD THURSDAY PRESERVE-A-PRESERVE DAY

Thursday, February 15, 1-4pm

Scarlet Oak Woods (Monroe County)

Join us for an off-trail hike, where we will pull invasive periwinkle vines that threaten to choke out spring wildflowers and other native plants.

2/17

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Saturday, February 17, 8am-8pm

Several Sycamore preserves

Birding expert and Sycamore member David Rupp will lead a full day of free bird counts to participate in the National Audubon Society's annual Great Backyard Bird Count. Drop in on one session or attend as many as you like! See sycamorelandtrust.org/events for a full list of locations and times.

2/18

SYCAMORE BRANCHES: WINTER TREE ID HIKE & LUNCH

Sunday, February 18, 10am-2pm

Scarlet Oak Woods & Lennie's (Bloomington)

Josh Nickelson will show attendees how to identify common Indiana trees by their bark and other winter characteristics. After the hike, we'll warm up with lunch and beers at Lennie's on 10th St. Our young adults group hosts this event, but all ages are welcome. No RSVP needed; carpooling is encouraged. The hike is free; optional lunch is on you.

2/22

YEAR IN REVIEW

Thursday, February 22, 6-8:30pm

Vectren headquarters (211 NW Riverside Dr, Evansville)

Our annual update for members and friends in the Evansville area! Learn about 2017 accomplishments and what to look forward to in 2018. Light appetizers and drinks will be served at this free event. RSVPs are required: please email ann@sycamorelandtrust.org by February 8th if you would like to attend.

MARCH

3/15

THIRD THURSDAY PRESERVE-A-PRESERVE DAY

Thursday, March 15, 1-4pm

Tangeman Woods (Bartholomew County)

Help us maintain and beautify this wooded preserve along State Road 46 by assisting with trail work and roadside trash pick-up.

3/22

SYCAMORE BRANCHES: NATURE TRIVIA

Thursday, March 22, 7-9pm

Friendly Beasts Cider Company (Bloomington)

Question Master Austin Roach is scheming to stump participants yet again with his clever questions about all things nature. Bring a team or join one when you arrive. Our young adults group hosts this event, but all ages are welcome. Free to participate; drinks are on you.

APRIL

4/6

LITTLE HIKERS: NIGHT EXPERIENCE

Friday, April 6, time TBA

Touch the Earth Natural Area (Bartholomew County)

What is night vision? Why do owls see better at night than people? How do bats catch their food? Our hiking group for kids and their guardians will answer these questions and more while experiencing the transition from daylight to dark.

4/20

THIRD THURSDAY PRESERVE-A-PRESERVE DAY

Thursday, April 20, 9am –1pm

Amy Weingartner Branigin Peninsula Preserve (Monroe County)

We'll pull invasive garlic mustard at this lovely preserve on Lake Monroe, and afterwards enjoy a light lunch provided by Sycamore. Please plan to carpool from our office due to limited parking.

4/25

GARLIC MUSTARD WORKDAY

Wednesday, April 25, 1–4pm

Scarlet Oak Woods (Monroe County)

We'll return for another off-trail hike to a scenic creek valley filled with native wildflowers, this time to pull garlic mustard.

4/26

WEEKDAY WALKERS: BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY TOUR

Thursday, April 26, 10am

Touch the Earth Natural Area

We will start the morning with a walk and discussion of area history at Touch the Earth Natural Area, then enjoy lunch at Upland Pump House that overlooks the White River. Follow that with an afternoon walk at Tangeman Woods. Meet at Bloomingfoods East at 9:15am to join the carpool/caravan.

4/27

ARBOR DAY TREE GIVEAWAY

Friday, April 27, 11am-5pm

Bloomingfoods East (Bloomington)

Our annual native tree seedling giveaway is back, and bigger than ever! Stop by for a free tree seedling (we'll have many favorite Hoosier varieties), renew your membership, buy some Sycamore swag, and help us spread the love of trees all over southern Indiana.

4/29

LITTLE HIKERS: WETLAND EXPLORATION

Sunday, April 29, 12-2pm

Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve (Monroe County)

The flooded bottomlands in northwestern Monroe County provide critical habitat for many plants and animals. Get your feet wet and discover benthic macro invertebrates, pollywogs, crustaceans, and more. Little Hikers is for kids and their guardians.

MAY

5/1

GARLIC MUSTARD WORKDAY

Tuesday, May 1, 1–4pm

Fix-Stoelting Preserve (Monroe County)

Help out our land stewardship efforts as we pull garlic mustard and pick up roadside trash at this newer preserve along Beanblossom Creek.

5/5

WINGS & WILDFLOWERS HIKE

Saturday, May 5, 10am-12pm

Porter West Preserve (Monroe County)

Spring brings new life to the landscape, including wildflowers and migratory birds. The varied habitats of Porter West include pond, scrubby bottomland, and upland forest, and provide wonderful viewing opportunities of flora and fauna. Before or after the hike, visit neighboring Eco Logic's native plant sale and add beauty and habitat elements to your home.

5/9

WEEKDAY WALKERS: BLUEBIRDS & MARTINS

Wednesday, May 9, 10am

Private Property (Greene County)

Join us at a 90-acre private preserve to learn about building, maintenance, and properly monitoring of bluebird and martin boxes. Our hike will take us through open meadow, early succession forest, and the edge of two ponds. Bring binoculars, and an appetite if you'd like to eat lunch afterward at the nearby historical Yoho General Store.

5/16

THIRD THURSDAY PRESERVE-A-PRESERVE DAY

Thursday, May 16, 9am-1pm

Touch the Earth Natural Area (Bartholomew County)

We'll pull garlic mustard and cut invasive bushes along the edge of the preserve and share a light lunch provided by Sycamore.

BUSINESS AND FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS

JANUARY 1 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2017

$20,000 AND ABOVE

ALCOA

Raymond Foundation

St. John Associates — Physician Employment Specialists

VECTREN — Live Smart

Namaste Foundation

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Lucky's Market

MARIAN

MARKEY'S — Rental & Staging

McCrea & McCrea — Attorneys at Law

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Old National Bank

OLIVER — Winery & Vineyards

one world Catering

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Thank you!

Kroger

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