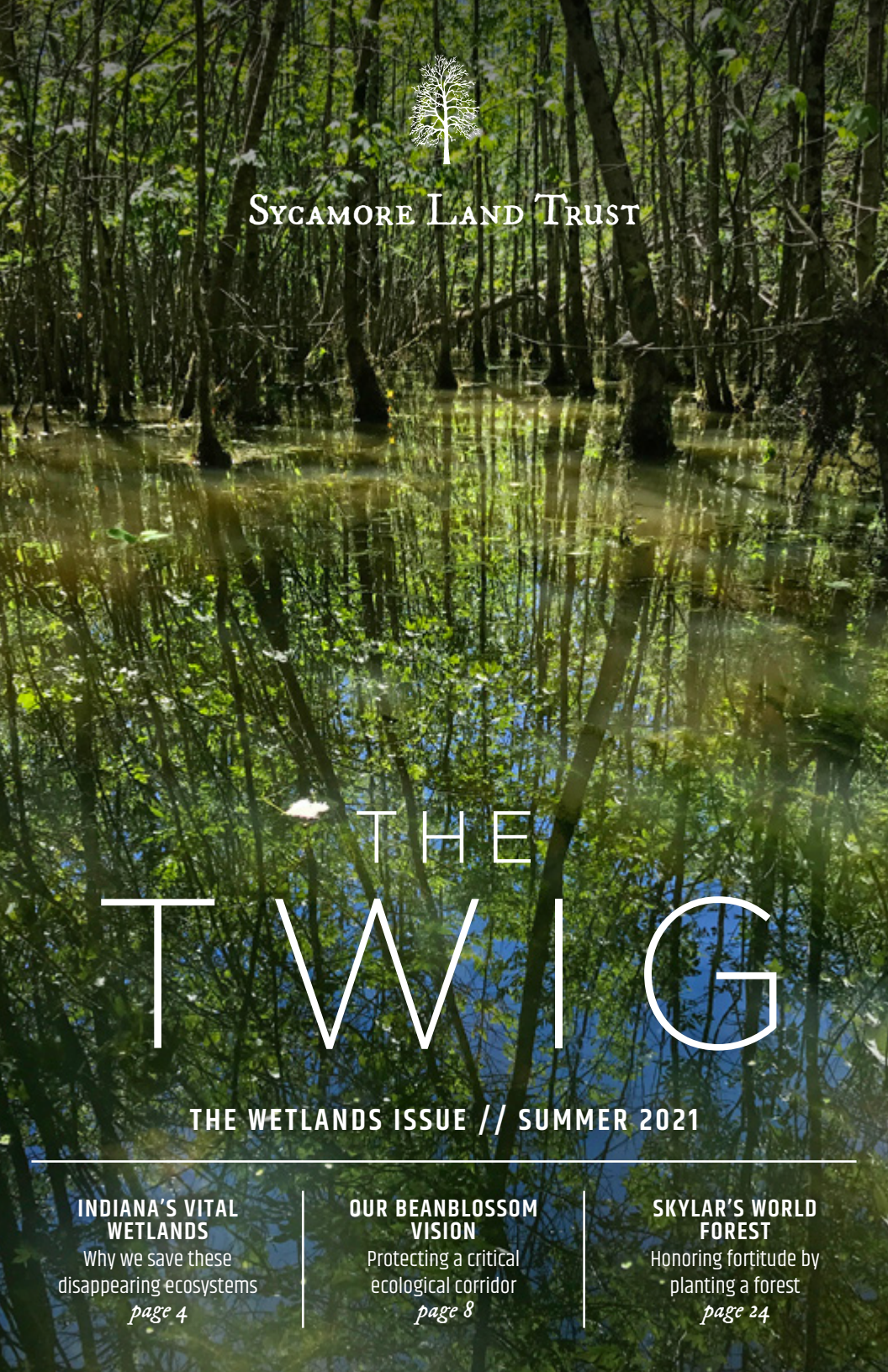

Sycamore Land Trust

THE TWIG

THE WETLANDS ISSUE // SUMMER 2021

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FROM THE

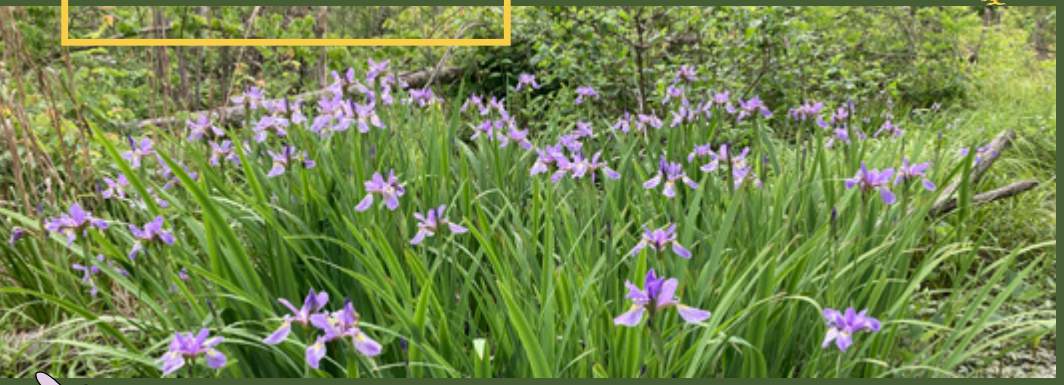
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Sycamore Friends,

Wetlands are places of exceptional natural diversity and tremendous conservation value, where there are always new discoveries waiting to be made. I was reminded of this on a visit to Sycamore's Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve with botanist Dr. Paul Rothrock this May, when Paul found the 209th plant species to be recorded at the preserve. Experts like Paul and Ellen Jacquart had built the plant list to more than 200 species over 20 years, and yet, here was something new – *Carex muskingumensis*, Muskingum sedge – growing right along the boardwalk. Although the blue flag iris flowering in abundance nearby was a lot more eye-catching, seeing the Muskingum sedge, and Paul's delight at finding it, was a real treat.

Preserving and restoring wetlands has been a focus for Sycamore since our early all-volunteer days. The Restle Natural Area and Habitat for Herons properties, donated and purchased respectively in the mid-1990's, became the foundation of the now 735-acre Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve. We've added significantly to the area in the past several years through our ongoing Beanblossom Creek Bicentennial Conservation Area project, thanks to our many generous members like you, and funders including the Indiana Bicentennial Nature Trust, the Sam Shine Foundation, the Efroymson Fund, the Laura Hare Charitable Trust, the Ropchan Foundation, and Oliver Winery. The Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust and the Duke Energy Foundation supported the recent major renovation of the boardwalk trail at Beanblossom Bottoms, enhancing the public's ability to experience this special natural area. Sycamore also protects the Eagle Slough Natural Area, a vibrant wetland just south of Evansville near the Ohio River.

Blue flag irises bloom next to the boardwalk at Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve. | John Lawrence



Botanist Dr. Paul Rothrock examines *Carex muskingumensis*, the sedge that became the 209th plant species to be recorded at Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve.

Earlier this year, a new state law removed legal protections from many privately-owned wetlands here in Indiana. While this has caused a lot of public concern, it is also a reminder of the importance of the work that Sycamore does. The surest way to protect a wetland is to own it yourself, and that's what we do. Changes in laws won't change the fact that Sycamore owns our nature preserves and will care for them for forever, thanks to your ongoing support. And we'll keep working to protect and restore more wetlands, forests, and other natural areas here in southern Indiana, and to connect people to the land and nature that we all rely on. Thank you for making Sycamore's work possible!

John Lawrence
Executive Director,
Sycamore Land Trust

OUR MISSION

Sycamore Land Trust is a nonprofit conservation organization founded in 1990 to preserve the beauty, health, and diversity of southern Indiana's natural landscape through strategic land conservation and environmental education. We protect 119 properties totaling 10,126 acres.

Learn more at sycamorelandtrust.org

Spring flowers surround the wooden boardwalk in the bottomland forest habitat at Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve. | Chris Fox

INDIANA'S VITAL WETLANDS

KATE HAMMEL, COMMUNICATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

Each spring, as the winter world wakes up with the warming soil, the chorus of frogs at Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve begins. Soon you can hear them long before you arrive in the parking lot, as thousands sing out after emerging from a long winter rest at the bottom of the wetland's frozen pools and muddy depths.

An important part of Sycamore's mission is to connect people with nature. Nowhere is this more apparent than at Beanblossom Bottom's boardwalk, where visitors are given a unique glimpse into the heart of a protected wetland habitat that is haven to an abundant and thriving wildlife community. The frogs are hidden from view for most of the year, but each spring the crescendo of their riotous chorus leaves no doubt to the importance of this environment and just how many call it home.

The biodiversity of Indiana's wetlands is staggering. Like rain forests and coral reefs, wetlands are considered among the most productive ecosystems in the world, containing an immense variety of microbes, plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish, and mammals. About 900 species of vertebrate animals depend on wetlands at some point in their lives.

There were once over 5.6 million acres of wetlands in Indiana and 25% of our state was covered in bogs, fens, wet prairies, dune and swales, marshes, and swamps. Yet as European settlers moved west, eager for farmland and profitable resources, they drained the rich, dark soil at the expense of our fragile, interconnected ecosystems. Many early settlers also considered wetlands to be health hazards, believing that even breathing the air could be deadly.

Since the 1780s, over 85% of Indiana's wetlands have been lost, with most of the habitat drained and converted to agricultural land. Wetlands now cover less than 4% of Indiana. Organizations like Sycamore strive to protect what remains and correct early misconceptions about the importance of these vital environments to Indiana's future.

CRITICAL HABITAT

Many of wetlands' valuable functions and benefits are due to their unique plant communities. Although wetlands constitute only about 5% of land surface in the contiguous United States, they are home to 31% of our plant species. Considered "biological supermarkets," they play an integral role in the ecology of Indiana's watersheds by providing vast quantities of food to sustain wildlife. As dead plants break down in the shallow water, nutrient-rich organic material called "detritus" forms and feeds many aquatic insects and fish, which in turn provide food for reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. Almost half of North American bird species

WETLAND SPECIES HIGHLIGHT

Frogs

If you visit a wetland in spring or summer, you are likely to hear one of the 17 species of frogs or toads native to Indiana. Amphibians spend part or all of their lives in an aquatic environment and can breathe and absorb water through their skin. This leaves them vulnerable to pollution and other environmental changes, but also makes them good indicators of ecosystem health.

ON THE COVER

A young wetland forest is reflected in the water of Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve after June flooding. Beanblossom Bottoms is part of the remaining 3.5% of Indiana that is covered by wetlands. | Ellen Bergan

nest or feed in wetlands, and they are the principal habitat for virtually all species of waterfowl.

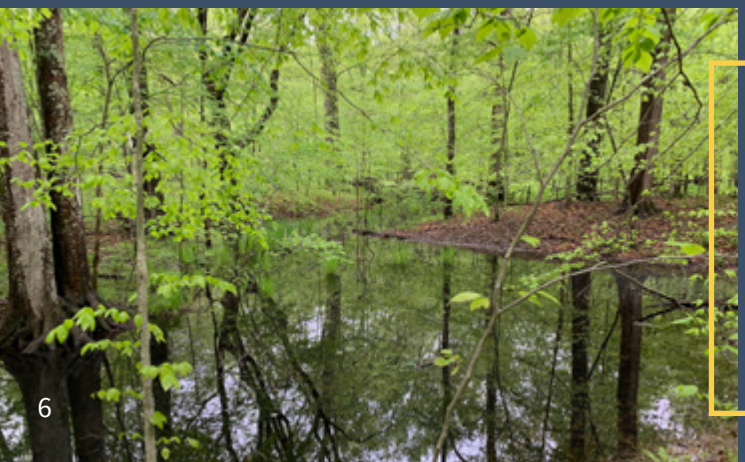
Because so many wetlands have been lost or degraded, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources reports that Indiana has more than 120 species of wetland plants that are now endangered, threatened, or rare, and over 60 wetland-dependent animal species that are listed as endangered, threatened, or of special concern. Nationally, nearly 35% of all rare and endangered animal species depend on these dwindling habitats for survival.

WATER QUALITY

Wetlands also play an important role in improving Indiana's water quality, making our lakes and streams cleaner and our drinking water safer. Their plants and soils naturally store and filter nutrients and sediments, including those within farm fertilizers and septic system runoff. They also trap and hold pollutants such as pesticides. Calm waters allow these materials to settle out of the water column, where wetland plants take up certain nutrients from the water, "recycling" them within the wetland system. Man-made wetlands can even be used to clean wastewater.

FLOOD AND EROSION CONTROL

Like giant sponges, an acre of wetland can store up to 1.5 million gallons of floodwater, protecting homes and businesses from flood damage by soaking up and slowly releasing the flow of stormwater down rivers and streams. Wetlands also hold soil in place and buffer strong currents, protecting shorelines and watersheds from erosion.



Ephemeral wetlands like this one at Trevlac Bluffs Nature Preserve are temporary ponds that fill in the spring and dry up later in the year, creating ideal breeding habitat for amphibians where larvae are safe from fish. | Kate Hammel

CARBON SEQUESTRATION

As we face the threat of a rapidly warming planet and more frequent dangerous weather events, scientists now understand wetlands play an additional vital function to help moderate global climate conditions by storing carbon within their plant communities and soil instead of releasing it into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide.

Wetland protection and restoration is vital to the future of Indiana. Often called the "kidneys of the landscape," they play an indispensable role in circulating groundwater and removing waste to maintain a healthy ecosystem. Just as our bodies deteriorate without functioning kidneys, Indiana's natural environment suffers greatly from the loss of its critical wetland habitats.

As an ever-changing legislative environment leaves these sacred spaces increasingly vulnerable, Sycamore remains more focused than ever on our important and ongoing responsibility to protect wetlands, strengthened in the knowledge that the precious acres we preserve and restore will endure, benefiting our community long into the future.

The "Dam Cam"

This year along the Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve boardwalk, Sycamore staff noticed signs of beavers hard at work creating openings for new vegetation growth. Curious to watch the activity, we set up a motion-activated trail camera at a beaver dam.

We were pleasantly surprised by the number of species captured by our "Dam Cam" in just a few short weeks, including deer, bobcats, raccoons, opossums, muskrats, foxes, owls, wood ducks, geese with their goslings, and this majestic Great blue heron. Although great blue herons spend most of their time alone, they usually nest in colonies. A colony or rookery, like the one found at Sycamore's nearby Grandchildren's Woods, can have more than 500 nests and is very sensitive to disturbance.

"We were hoping to see deer because we found prints in the mud," Executive Director John Lawrence explained. "But wow, everybody uses this dam as a crossing. We are recording these animals not only crossing the dam but really using this important wetland environment." Follow along on social media for more "Dam Cam" photo updates: @SycamoreLandTrust on Facebook or Instagram.

Sycamore's enduring protection of a critical ecological corridor

ON THE BANKS *of the* BEANBLOSSOM

BY ELLEN BERGAN, LAND STEWARDSHIP ASSISTANT

Beanblossom Creek shines in the sun as it flows through Fix-Stoelting Preserve, part of the Beanblossom Creek Bicentennial Conservation Area. | John Lawrence

The creek beckons as Chris Fox, Land Stewardship Director, and I trudge through the sodden cornfield at Fix-Stoelting Preserve. Breaking through the brush at the field's edge, it's only a few more steps past blooming ephemerals and spicebush until we're standing on the sheer embankment of Beanblossom Creek.

We're here to assess areas of the field for potential habitat restoration, but enjoying the unique sights of the property is a priority as well. A pair of wood ducks, alerted by our presence, smack the water as they fly downstream. The creek is languid, cutting deep into the earth while a canopy of sycamores, oaks, and beeches arch over it. Warblers flit between the trees, and a scoured path on the muddy slope down to the creek suggests regular beaver or muskrat activity. I take a deep breath, appreciating a moment of peace in this sheltered spot alongside the stream.

This parcel of land is part of the nearly 1,600 acres Sycamore protects along Beanblossom Creek. Since our first acquisition of land in the Beanblossom Creek area in 1993, Sycamore has made protecting and restoring the stream and its floodplain a priority in our conservation efforts. The Beanblossom Creek Bicentennial Conservation Area in northern Monroe County embodies this focus and the progress we have made in protecting the area's critical ecosystems. It is one of only five Bicentennial Conservation Areas in Indiana, celebrating and protecting the state's most sensitive and important natural areas.

A CREEK RUNS THROUGH IT

Winding its sinuous path through Brown and Monroe counties before flowing into the West Fork of the White River, Beanblossom Creek drains nearly 92 square miles throughout its journey. During this route, the stream crosses an array of landscapes that characterize our southern Indiana home.

Beginning in northern Brown County, it passes by farmed fields and under covered bridges, flows through lakes and developing oxbows and over logs felled by beavers. It bisects our Trevlac Bluffs Nature Preserve, where it is bordered by a sandy bottomland to the north while the steep bluff towers

over it to the south. It sweeps past Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve and its unique, vibrant wetland habitat, and follows along a mile of frontage at the Sam Shine Foundation Preserve. It flows downslope of the native prairie planting at our Powell Preserve, and finally empties into the White River beside The Laura Hare Nature Preserve at the Confluence.

Beanblossom Creek shapes these environments it passes through, especially the lowland areas that lie within its floodplain. Precipitation and spring thaws naturally flood areas surrounding the creek, bringing in nutrient-rich sediment and creating a variety of wetland habitats in which a diverse array of wildlife and plants thrive. The ecological diversity and productivity that results from Beanblossom Creek's presence, as well as the important functions the wetlands themselves provide, has distinguished this stream and its watershed as invaluable to our regional environment.

PROTECTING THE WATERSHED

Sycamore Land Trust has been protecting land in the Beanblossom Creek watershed for almost as long as the organization has been in existence. Our first land acquisition in the area came from Barbara Restle in 1993, who entrusted a 42-acre parcel of land to Sycamore. This property, the Restle Natural Area, laid the foundation for the focus of our conservation efforts in protecting land within the watershed.

A few years later, Sycamore made its first outright land purchase in the Beanblossom Creek area. The 80-acre parcel, then known as "Habitat for Herons," was recognized for the great blue heron rookery and stunning biodiversity found in its wetland habitat. As we have continued to add surrounding land over the years, this acquisition has grown to become the 736-acre Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve we know today. Land donated by Patsy Powell in 2003 further added to the protected area along the creek in what is now the Powell Preserve.

In 2015, Sycamore began acquiring more creekside land when the Bicentennial Nature Trust approved our proposal to make part of Beanblossom Creek in northern Monroe County a Bicentennial Conservation Area, one of just five in the state. With this designation, the state of Indiana allocated $1 million towards land conservation in the

Beanblossom Creek flows into the West Fork of the White River at The Laura Hare Nature Preserve at the Confluence. | John Lawrence

WETLAND SPECIES HIGHLIGHT

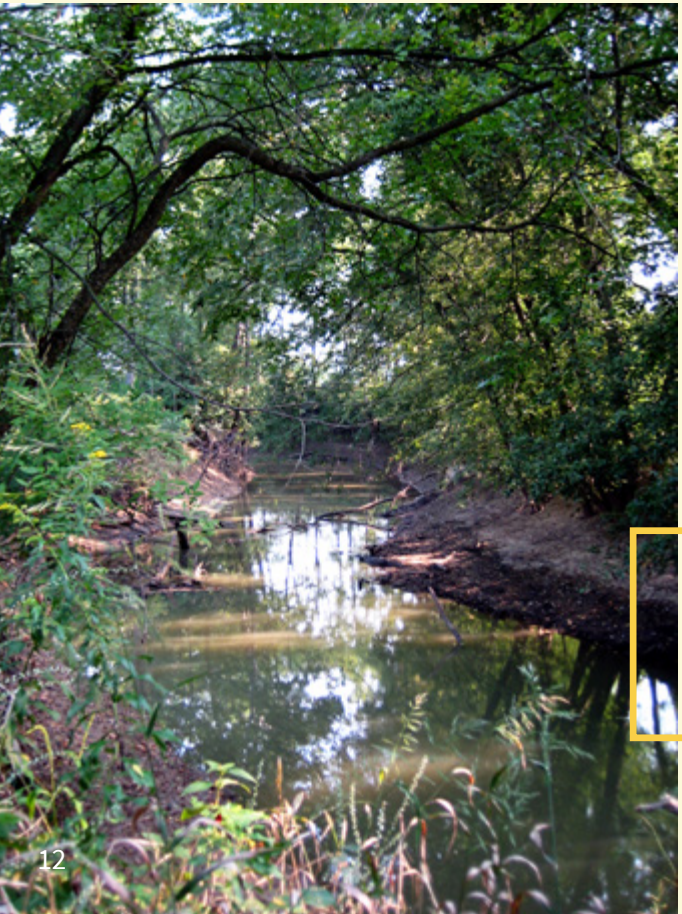
Beaver

Castor canadensis

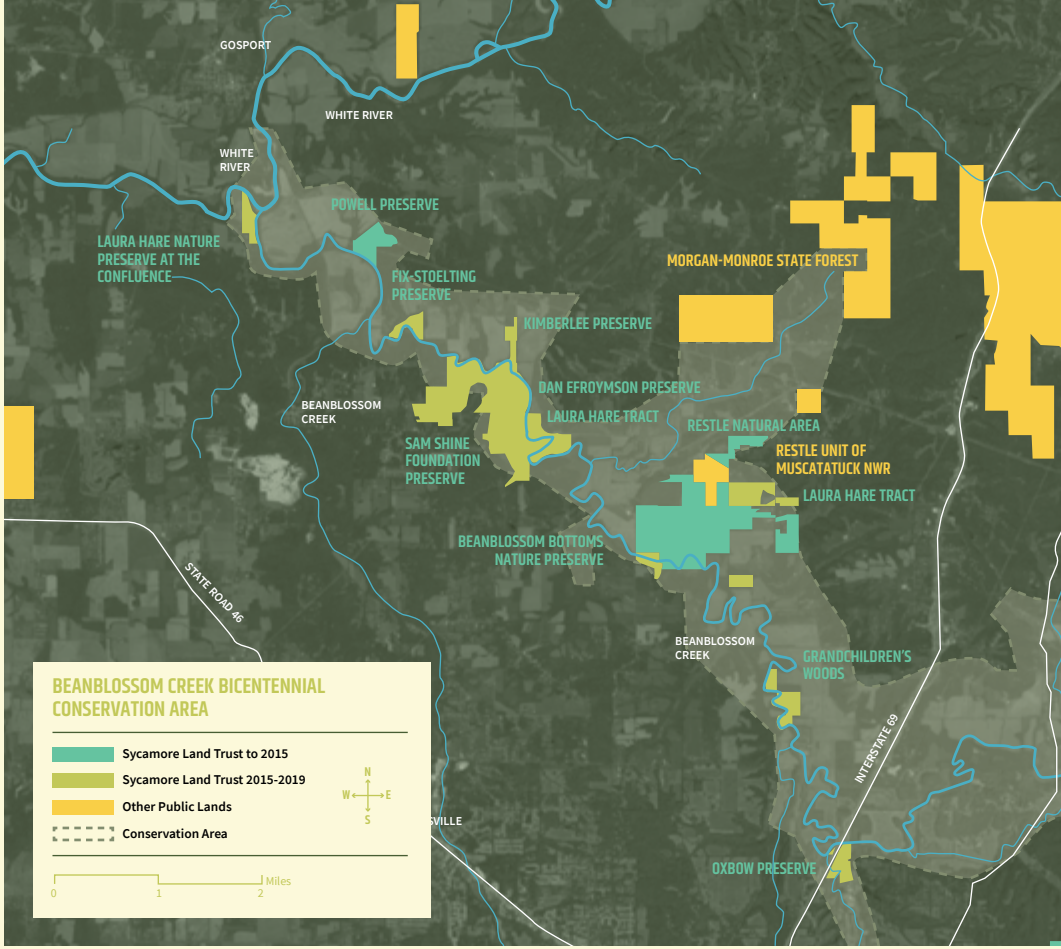
Once nearly trapped to extinction, North American beavers are so dependent on wetlands that they have developed the ability to create them by building dams. By creating such a vital space for other wetland species, beavers are considered keystone species in these habitats.

Beanblossom Creek watershed, requiring that all projects be matched in funding. The support we received in this matching grant exemplifies the dedication Sycamore supporters have to the conservation legacy of this significant natural area. In addition to the support from the Bicentennial Nature Trust, funding has come from many generous donors, including the Sam Shine Foundation, the Efroymson Fund, the Laura Hare Charitable Trust, the Ropchan Foundation, Oliver Winery, and more than 200 individuals and businesses, resulting in more than $2 million of support for land conservation.

Since the Beanblossom Creek Bicentennial Conservation Area project began, Sycamore has purchased over 900 acres in the Beanblossom Creek watershed. With your help, we now protect nearly 1,600 acres in the Beanblossom Creek area in Monroe County and 260 acres along the creek in Brown County. While some of our properties in this area are open for public use and enjoyment, including our flagship Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve, much of the land acquired during this project has been dedicated towards habitat restoration and preservation.



Beanblossom Creek flows alongside our Sam Shine Foundation Preserve for more than a mile. | Katrina Folsom



CREATING A CORRIDOR

Our work in the Beanblossom Creek area is far from over. As we continue our outreach to landowners and restoration projects, we are realizing our long-held vision of an ecological corridor through the Beanblossom Creek watershed. By connecting tracts of natural land together, we are providing a contiguous space for plants and animals to thrive. Ecological corridors are well-recognized as important avenues for species to move in a broader, protected range of habitat, a function that will only become more crucial as climate change drives shifts in species habitat ranges.

When this corridor includes stream and wetland habitat, its conservation becomes even more critical. These areas act as dynamic crossroads in ecosystems, providing a space where water, soil, energy, and organisms

The sun sets over the Beanblossom Creek Bicentennial Conservation Area. | John Lawrence

interact. This intersection drives essential functions that promote ecosystem resilience, such as cycling nutrients, filtering contaminants, supporting biodiversity, and regulating streamflow.

The importance of these ecological corridors has driven our focus on land conservation in the Beanblossom Creek area for almost 30 years. And the conservation of these local natural features has downstream significance as well — the White River, to which Beanblossom Creek is a major tributary, supplies water to over a million Hoosiers. None of our accomplishments in this conservation area would have been possible without support from our generous members, donors, and volunteers. By creating a corridor in the Beanblossom Creek watershed and protecting the diverse ecosystems and species that are within it, we are working towards creating a more connected and resilient future – for both ourselves and the environment.

Do you have land near Beanblossom Creek or one of Sycamore's nature preserves?

Our successful protection of land in the Beanblossom Creek watershed would not be possible without the help of landowners in the area. We'd love to talk with you about your options for working with Sycamore to preserve your land as a natural area forever.

Please get in touch with Rob McCrea, our Land Preservation Director, at rob@sycamorelandtrust.org or 812-336-5382, extension 106.

Sycamore also protects the 127-acre Eagle Slough Natural Area, an important wetland just south of Evansville near the Ohio River, and over 80 acres nearby. The preserve is an oasis of wetland and mature bottomland forest, home to some of the northernmost native bald cypress trees in the US and visited by over 160 species of birds. It offers a walking trail along an old trolley line and two observation decks overlooking the wetlands and lake.

Double-crested cormorant at Eagle Slough Natural Area | Steve Gifford

WETLAND SPECIES HIGHLIGHT

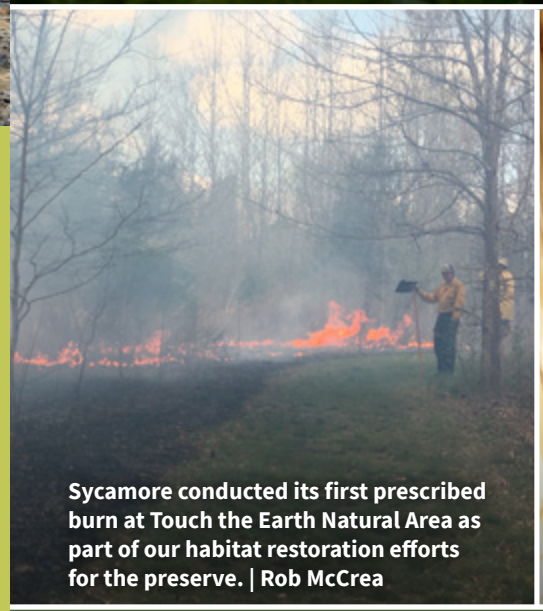
Bald Cypress

Taxodium distichum

Native to southern swamps, these deciduous conifers earn their name by shedding their needlelike leaves after they turn bright orange in the fall. They are one of the longest living trees in the world and grow up to 120 feet tall. Indiana once had about 50,000 acres of cypress swamps but after being drained for agriculture and development, only about one percent of those remain.

Did you hear that? Southern Indiana was a hotspot for the emergence of Brood X, the 17-year periodical cicadas. These noisy visitors covered shrubs in a bottomland field in our Beanblossom conservation area. | Ellen Bergan

Sycamore Sightings



Sycamore conducted its first prescribed burn at Touch the Earth Natural Area as part of our habitat restoration efforts for the preserve. | Rob McCrea

A mother bluebird would not budge from her eggs during our routine checking of bluebird houses set up at Sam Shine Foundation Preserve. | Chris Fox

-THE-
GROUNDSWELL
SUMMER 2021

119 PROJECTS

10,126 ACRES

Water pools in the bottomland field at Sam Shine Foundation Preserve, where Sycamore will be undertaking one of our large-scale wetland restoration projects. | John Lawrence

BY ROB MCCREA, LAND PRESERVATION DIRECTOR

WETLAND RESTORATION

Sycamore to begin ambitious projects along Beanblossom Creek

Sycamore Land Trust has exciting news for wetlands in the Beanblossom Creek Bicentennial Conservation Area. This summer, Sycamore will be starting work on two major habitat restoration projects at our Fix-Stoelting and Sam Shine Foundation Nature Preserves, located downstream of Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve along Beanblossom Creek. Each project will reclaim existing farmland in the floodplain of Beanblossom Creek and convert them to functioning wetland habitats and native bottomland hardwood forests. These will be Sycamore's largest and most complex land restoration projects ever undertaken.

The Beanblossom Creek area in Monroe County is one of Sycamore's priority areas for land protection. This is where we made our first land purchase as an organization in 1995 and now have over 1,600 acres of protected land. The 338.5-acre Shine and 31.5-acre Fix-Stoelting Preserves are near other Sycamore land along Beanblossom Creek, enhancing overall habitat connectivity and the potential for wetland restoration.

The Fix-Stoelting restoration project will encompass a total area of 9.7 acres and include a 2.6-acre pollinator habitat planting, a 2.7-acre native bottomland hardwood reforestation, and a 4.4-acre wetland restoration. The wetland restoration will entail the removal of existing field tile and the construction of embankments to catch and retain periodic floodwater from Beanblossom Creek. In addition to creating habitat for wetland-dependent plant and animal species, this project will also mitigate downstream flooding along Beanblossom Creek.

The Shine restoration project extends across a larger area, consisting of a 5-acre native bottomland tree planting and an 80-acre wetland restoration. The wetland restoration will include similar construction techniques used at Fix-Stoelting but on a much larger scale. We hope to create several permanent open water areas for waterfowl and other bird species that depend on wetlands.

These ambitious projects represent the maturation of Sycamore from a land trust that merely acquires land for protection to one that actively engages in large-scale habitat restoration. While we have performed active land management and projects such as tree plantings in the past, Sycamore has never undertaken projects of this scale.

While passive land restoration (protecting the land and allowing it to recover on its own) has been effective, taking a more active role will enhance the quality and speed of the restoration at these two sites. Sycamore will be directly leading the restoration and monitoring its success by making sure native plant species become established while minimizing encroachment of invasive plant species.

Sycamore has already started collecting baseline data at the two sites so we can monitor the impact of these restoration projects. Partnerships with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have been critical in this regard. Sycamore is also grateful for our support from the Indiana Bicentennial Nature Trust and the Sam Shine Foundation, for making these land acquisitions possible and having the vision to see what is possible in the Beanblossom Creek area. The staff at the Monroe County Natural Resource Conservation Service have been critical in site planning and helping Sycamore receive project funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Without the support of our partners and Sycamore members, these projects would not be possible. Thank you for your commitment to protecting and restoring land in southern Indiana.

WETLAND SPECIES HIGHLIGHT

Kirtland's Snake

Clonophis kirtlandii

This small (12-18"), non-venomous snake prefers to stay well-hidden, even sometimes staying underground in crayfish burrows. It is imperiled in all states in which it still occurs due to loss of wetland habitat. Sycamore is working with Indiana DNR to conduct surveys on our properties to learn more about this state-endangered species.

There are many ways to show your love of nature by supporting Sycamore's work, and earn tax benefits while doing so:

- Donate cash online or send a check
- Donate appreciated stock, securities, or other property
- Give directly from your donor-advised fund or IRA
- Request a matching gift from your employer
- Give from your company or foundation
- Add Sycamore as a beneficiary to your will, estate plans, IRA, or insurance
- Give in honor or memory of a loved one

However you choose to support Sycamore — now and in the future — thank you!

To learn more, visit sycamorelandtrust.org/give or contact Ann Connors, Development Director, at ann@sycamorelandtrust.org.

DONOR TIP!

INTERESTED IN DONATING MONTHLY AS A SYCAMORE SUSTAINER, BUT WOULD RATHER NOT HAVE YOUR CREDIT CARD CHARGED?

Most banks offer free online bill pay that can be set up as a recurring monthly charge deducted directly from your checking account and mailed from your bank. It's an easy way to space out your annual donation and avoid dealing with expiring credit cards.

Thank you for supporting Sycamore!

OUR WETLAND COMMUNITY

BY CHRIS FOX, LAND STEWARDSHIP DIRECTOR

A state-endangered American bittern peers out of the brush at Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve. | Chris Fox

Throughout this issue of *The Twig*, we have highlighted several species, both common and rare, that depend on wetlands. I have been fortunate to witness many of these species on our preserves as I go about my land stewardship duties.

I have been face-to-face with a beaver as I waded through its flooded wetland home. I have stood motionless looking into the eyes of an American bittern. I have cheered at finding a state-endangered Kirtland's snake under a cover board during recent surveys. I have stared in awe at the magical display of the rare cypress firefly on a warm summer's night.

However, one encounter has become quite special to me. As I walked the boardwalk at Beanblossom Bottoms one evening, I came across a mother raccoon out with her cubs. The mother picked up my scent and quickly disappeared into the sedges, but the kits were more curious. Soon, the young cubs went back to foraging in the water, unconcerned about me standing right above them. As I watched and listened, I saw them not as garbage-rummaging scavengers, but as animals perfectly adapted to a life in the wetlands.

WETLAND SPECIES HIGHLIGHT

American Bittern

Clonophis kirtlandii

More often seen than heard, the odd calls of this secretive wading bird have earned it some colorful nicknames, such as "thunder pumper," "stake driver," and "water belcher." Unfortunately, this member of the heron family has experienced a decline in population due to habitat loss and is listed as State Endangered.

I have likely seen hundreds of raccoons in my lifetime, but this was different. It was like seeing them for the first time, living the life they were meant to live in a place they belonged. And then it happened! Suddenly, one young kit reached up and touched the tip of my boot ever so gently. As if to say, "Hello! What are you doing?" Instantly, I felt connected to that moment, connected to that family of raccoons, and connected to the wetland itself. It felt like I was part of something bigger than myself.

That experience has replayed in my mind many times since then. It serves as a reminder that we must expand our circle of compassion and respect to include all living things. We need to realize that wetlands and the species that call them home are not separate from ourselves, but part of the greater community of which we are also a part. If we can do that then maybe, just maybe, we can begin to truly appreciate their value.

I first encountered this idea in Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*. Leopold called this concept a "land ethic" and explained it as such:

> *"All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively the land."*

I think there is no better time than the present for a renewed sense of ethics. Let us put Leopold's words into action by extending our community boundaries to include all living things. For in the end, we are all part of one community. We all share one home.

DEDICATION OF

- the future site of -

SKYLAR'S WORLD FOREST

BY ANN CONNORS, DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Skylar (in pink pants) and her family gather at the dedication ceremony for the future 20-acre Skylar's World Forest to be planted along Beanblossom Creek.

Last December, on a cool and sunny afternoon along Beanblossom Creek in northern Monroe County, an extended family came together at a former farm field to celebrate the future Skylar's World Forest.

Skylar is a beautiful 10-year-old girl who has been battling cancer for years. She has inspired her family and everyone she meets (including Sycamore staff) with her positivity, strength, and joyful presence. Skylar's Uncle Caleb hoped to find a way to honor Skylar's fortitude by planting a forest, as Skylar loves nature, animals, and all things outdoors.

Fortunately, Caleb works for Salesforce in Indianapolis, which is leading a global collaborative effort to plant and protect 1 trillion trees by 2030 to fight climate change. Salesforce contacted their partner American Forests, who asked Sycamore if we could help.

Thanks to the online fundraising efforts of Caleb's *TryForSky* project, over $40,000 was raised to enable Sycamore to plant over twenty acres of trees along Beanblossom Creek next spring. This planting will be within an over 600-acre tract that includes our Sam Shine Foundation Preserve and Dan Efroymson Preserve.

Recently, Caleb gave Sycamore wonderful news: *"First, Skylar is doing great! She's 4 months into her treatment plan and is getting stronger every day. TryForSky was founded on 3 guiding principles: Family, Forests and Faith. There's an undeniable connection between the planet and a person, a beautiful one. On the other hand, both our people and our planet are in daily battles that may seem impossible to overcome. Our mission is to connect difficult, life-changing experiences to positive environmental impact. The global warming crisis is real and it's time for organizations, corporations and every human being to take action. We believe Forests are the best nature-based solution to combat climate change and are 100% committed to innovating within this space for life."*

Eric Sprague, Vice President of Forest Restoration at American Forests tells us: *"Thanks to Sycamore Land Trust, we will be able to create a forest for people to enjoy for generations. Skylar's World Forest will also be transformational in many other ways, by providing habitat for wildlife, cleaning the air around us and helping in our mission to curb climate change."*

Inspired by Skylar's story, Sycamore partners Studio Loupe, Everywhere Signs, and Harmony Gardens donated their services to provide the wonderful sign and the beautiful swamp white oak that marks the site of the future forest. Even nature took part in the dedication ceremony – as Caleb started to speak, huge flocks of Sandhill cranes flew overhead and circled above us, calling out before continuing on their journey.

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APRIL 1, 2020 - MARCH 31, 2021

$20,000 AND ABOVE

CenterPoint Energy

Community Foundation Alliance

Community Foundation Bloomington • Monroe County

DNR Indiana Department of Natural Resources

Namaste Foundation

Cummins Foundation

Laura Hare Charitable Trust

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Bloomingfoods

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CFC Properties — A Cook Group Company

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Fowler Tree Services — "a courteous tree service"

Community Foundation Harrison County — Building our future together

JohnBethell Title Company, Inc.

PROBLEU

Raymond Foundation

TC Energy Foundation

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LEADERSHIP SOCIETY

INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES WHO HAVE GIVEN $1,000 OR MORE IN THE PAST YEAR.

APRIL 1, 2020 – MARCH 31, 2021

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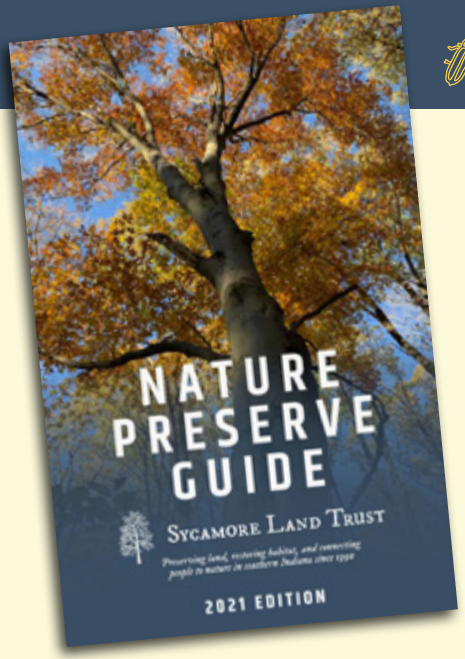
*deceased

- 2021 -

NATURE PRESERVE GUIDE



Our new Nature Preserve Guide is out, with updated maps, photos, and more! To request your free copy in the mail, visit **sycamorelandtrust.org/explore**

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