Sycamore Land Trust

2024 IMPACT REPORT

ACCREDITED™ LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

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Great egrets, a Species of Special Concern, visiting our new wetlands at the Sam Shine Foundation Preserve in Monroe County, and smaller little blue herons, which are white as juveniles. *John Lawrence*

From the Board Chair

Dear Sycamore friends,

In early August, members of our Land Stewardship team stood at the edge of the newly restored wetlands at the Sam Shine Foundation Preserve and witnessed an unforgettable sight: fourteen great egrets, a species of special concern in Indiana, gathered in the shallow water. Just a year before, this spot had been an abandoned farm field. This breathtaking sight marked a milestone in Sycamore's largest habitat restoration project to date, providing proof that, when we create high-quality habitat, wildlife responds.

In just the first year since we completed over 60 acres of new wetlands at Shine, a remarkable array of species have moved in. We documented a population of state-endangered Kirtland's snakes using the new crawfish burrows popping up along the wetland's edge. A pair of river otters, a species that had completely disappeared from Indiana waterways just a few decades ago, was seen playing in the willows. On spring nights, frog choruses filled the air with the sound of life returning. Four state endangered short-eared owls were spotted hunting over the native grassland habitat we planted nearby. These inspiring signs underscore what we believe so deeply at Sycamore – that effective stewardship transforms landscapes, supports biological diversity, and ensures a future for the species that depend on these habitats.

This work builds on decades of strategic land protection in a watershed that is critical not only for wildlife, but also for clean water, climate resilience, and community well-being. As wetlands, forests, and grasslands disappear across our state, we are showing what's possible when we act boldly and collaboratively. In 2024, Sycamore protected an additional 460 acres across southern Indiana, bringing our total to 11,727 acres of permanently conserved land. We expanded key nature preserves and improved public access by maintaining over 30 miles of trails. We restored vital habitats in our care and deepened our partnerships with researchers, conservation partners, and neighboring landowners.

Our Environmental Education program also continued to grow, offering more than 80 programs to over 2,200 participants. Through guided hikes and hands-on educational workdays, we are connecting more people to the natural world and cultivating the next generation of conservation leaders.

Sycamore earned its five-year reaccreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission in 2024, affirming our commitment to the highest national standards in land conservation. This rigorous review process recognizes Sycamore's excellence in ethical conduct, sound financial management, and lasting stewardship. We were especially honored to receive a special commendation for our habitat restoration projects, an endorsement of both our conservation practices and our vision for the future.

None of this would be possible without you – our generous donors, volunteers, and partners. Your support facilitates every acre we protect, every habitat we restore, and every child we introduce to the wonder of nature. As you read through this Impact Report, I hope you feel proud of what we've accomplished together. You are helping to safeguard what makes southern Indiana wild and beautiful.

With gratitude,

Jenny Stephens
Board Chair

Staff and volunteers planted over 10,000 native plant plugs on our nature preserves in 2024, grown from seed in our Native Plant Nursery. *Liz Robb*

Preserving southern Indiana's nature heritage *for Forever*

We protect the natural beauty and biological diversity of southern Indiana. The nature preserves in our care benefit wildlife, improve water quality, and support climate resilience. Through environmental education, community engagement, and over 30 miles of public hiking trails, we help people of all ages build lasting relationships with the natural world.

A tiny state endangered eastern box turtle found by Native Plant Nursery volunteers. *Chris Fox*

On the cover

Participants look for the iconic American woodcock "sky dance" mating ritual at our annual Sky Dance and Twilight Hike at Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve in Monroe County. *Chris Fox*

2024 IMPACT REPORT

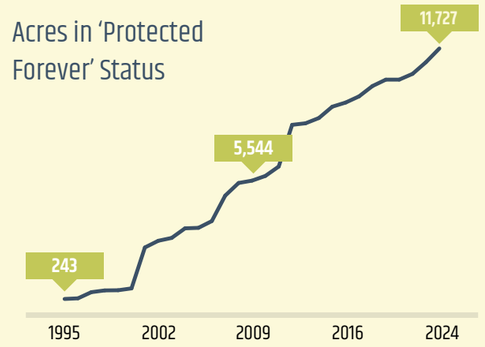
OUR MISSION

Sycamore is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a mission to preserve the beauty, health, and diversity of southern Indiana's natural landscape through strategic land conservation and environmental education.

1,250
SYCAMORE LAND TRUST MEMBERS

60
NATURE PRESERVES WE OWN AND MANAGE

11,727
TOTAL ACRES PROTECTED

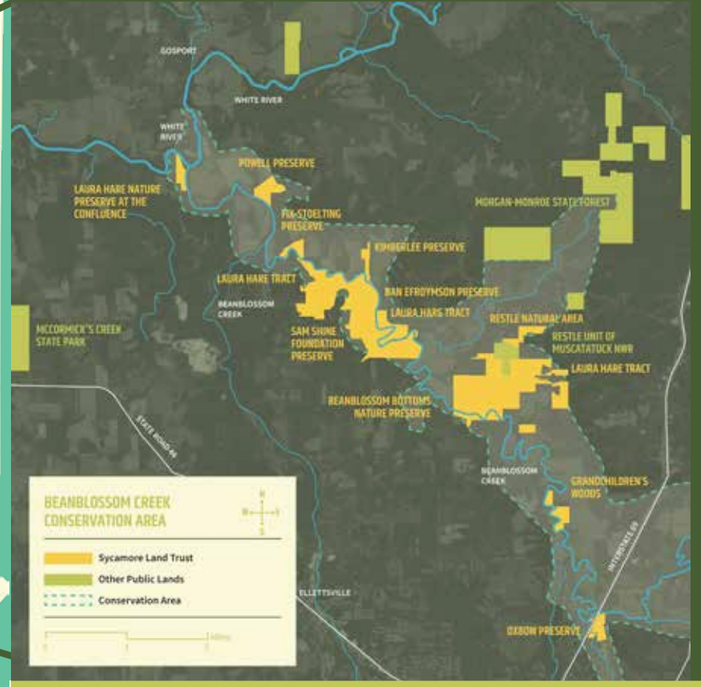


13
NATURE PRESERVES WITH PUBLIC ACCESS

30+
MILES OF HIKING TRAILS

156
TOTAL LAND PRESERVATION PROJECTS

Our Service Area



Beanblossom Creek Conservation Area

The Beanblossom Creek Conservation Area is Sycamore's priority focus area in Monroe and Brown Counties, where we protect and restore wetlands, bottomland forests, and other ecologically significant habitats along the floodplain of Beanblossom Creek, a major tributary of the West Fork White River. Since our first land acquisition in this area in 1993, this conservation corridor has grown to over 2,338 acres. We build relationships with neighboring landowners and conservation partners to protect and restore contiguous habitat, advancing habitat restoration and connectivity on a landscape scale to enhance biodiversity, water quality, and climate resilience in the Beanblossom Creek watershed.

Beanblossom Creek Conservation Area
John Lawrence

26
COUNTIES SERVED

11,727
TOTAL ACRES PROTECTED

2,338
ACRES PROTECTED IN OUR BEANBLOSSOM CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

Our 2024 Conservation Priorities

In 2024, Sycamore's land protection priorities included expanding conservation corridors and protecting critical habitat to support declining native species.

Conservation Corridors

We prioritize protecting land that is adjacent to existing Sycamore nature preserves and other preserved land to establish habitat corridors and expand conservation areas.

Wetland Restoration

We restore wetlands and streams in the Beanblossom Creek Conservation Area to expand these declining habitats and improve water quality.

High-Quality Natural Areas

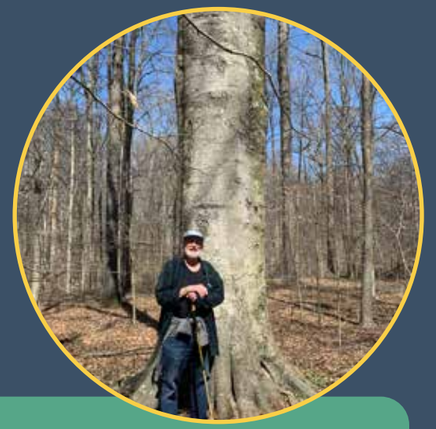
We protect properties that are outstanding examples of our natural heritage in Indiana.

Critical Habitat

We preserve critical habitats to support threatened species, including in close proximity to winter habitat for the endangered Indiana bat.

Land Preservation

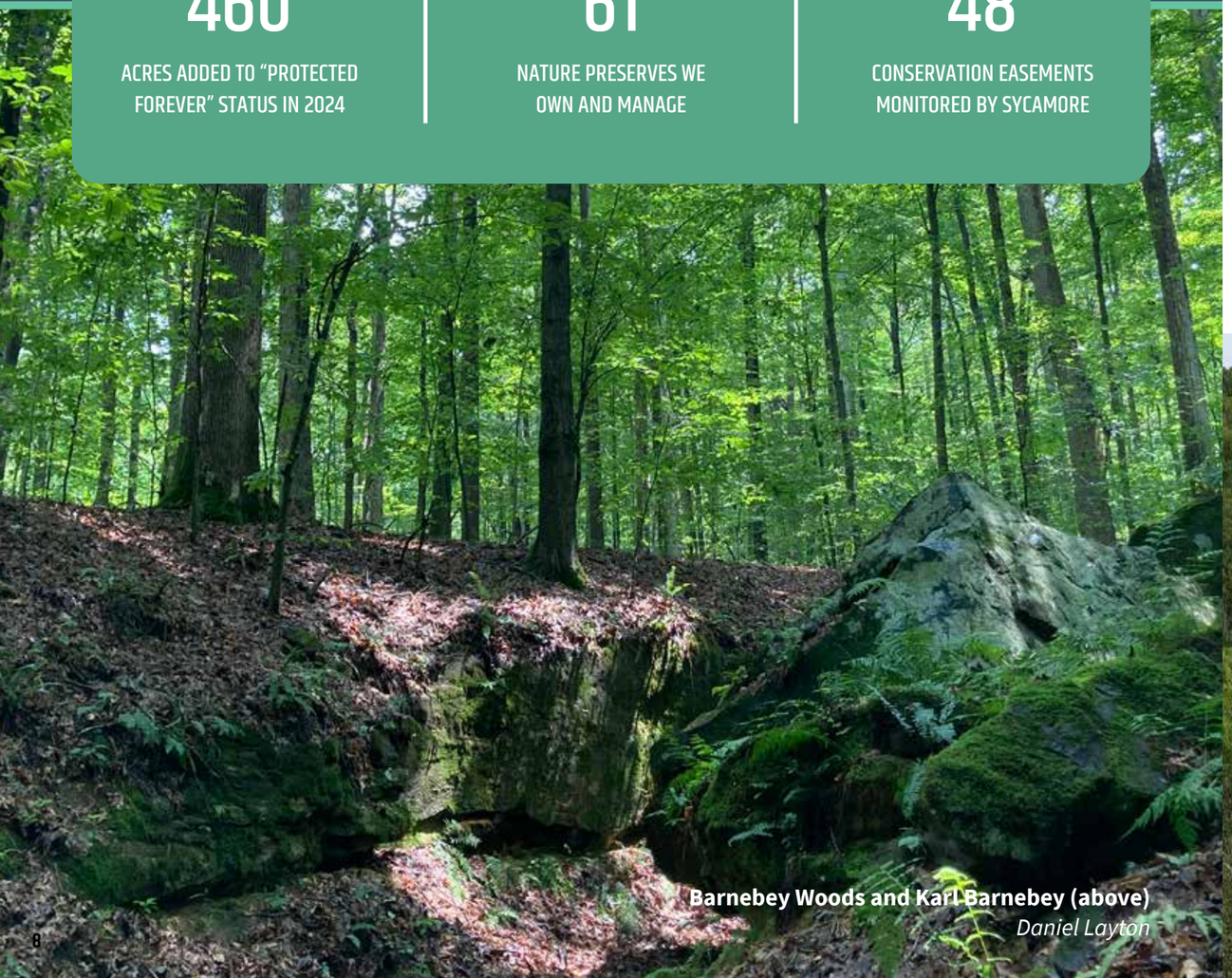
Sycamore works to ensure the long-term conservation of southern Indiana's wild landscapes, recognizing their vital role in supporting biological diversity and quality of life. In 2024, we advanced this mission by acquiring additional properties for permanent protection and by partnering with private landowners to monitor conservation easements, which are voluntary, legally-binding agreements that safeguard land in perpetuity.



460
ACRES ADDED TO "PROTECTED FOREVER" STATUS IN 2024

61
NATURE PRESERVES WE OWN AND MANAGE

48
CONSERVATION EASEMENTS MONITORED BY SYCAMORE



Barnebey Woods and Karl Barnebey (above) *Daniel Layton*

2024 Land Acquisition Highlights

Barnebey Woods

160.3 ACRES | OWEN COUNTY

Sycamore acquired Barnebey Woods through a bargain sale from Karl Barnebey and Laura Fredendall, who sold the property to Sycamore at half its appraised value, and support from the Indiana DNR's President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust. Barnebey Woods protects high-quality, mature upland forest with large diameter beech trees that are approaching old-growth size. It connects to a large tract of Owen-Putnam State Forest, creating a corridor of protected land that runs 7.5 miles north to south.

Laura Hare Nature Preserve at McCalla's Woods

65.3 ACRES | ORANGE COUNTY

This acquisition expanded the McCalla's Woods preserve, established in 1998, to 185 acres with support from the Laura Hare Charitable Trust and Atira Conservation, Inc.

Oliver Preserve

61.1 ACRES | MONROE COUNTY

This new nature preserve adjacent to Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve was donated by Bill and Kathleen Oliver. At its southern end, Beanblossom Creek is spanned by the reconstructed Cedar Ford covered bridge, originally built by the Kennedy Brothers in 1885, which brings Old Maple Grove Road across Beanblossom Creek. Sycamore planted 10,000 native trees at Oliver Preserve in 2025.

John Allen England Nature Preserve

26.4 ACRES | MONROE COUNTY

This land purchase supported by Marian England in memory of John Allen England added to Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve in Monroe County, connecting the preserve to the Restle Natural Area, Sycamore's first acquisition in the Beanblossom Creek area in 1993, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Restle Unit of the Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge.

Oliver Preserve *John Lawrence*

2024 Land Acquisition Highlights

Bill & Janice Young Woods

102.5 ACRES | MONROE COUNTY

Sycamore has permanently protected 102 acres along Beanblossom Creek, including 0.43 miles of creek frontage and upland forest on steep slopes that drain into the creek. This property shares 0.3 miles of boundary with a neighboring private property that is enrolled in The Nature Conservancy's Forest Bank, and is near to two Sycamore preserves and Morgan-Monroe State Forest.

The Young family, who purchased the property in 1995, chose to sell the land to Sycamore for its appraised value, declining a higher offer from a timber company, to ensure it remains protected. Sycamore secured funding from The Conservation Fund to protect suspected bat habitat. The Indiana bat, northern long-eared bat, and tri-colored bat, all listed as state endangered species, have been documented in the area, and the site offers excellent summer habitat for feeding and roosting. The property hosts mature oak-hickory forest with varied age structure, native understory plants, and minimal invasive species. A powerline right-of-way creates additional habitat diversity and is home to species like the prairie warbler, a bird of conservation concern.

This will serve as an anchor preserve in an area along the creek where we do not yet have many protected properties, and will promote further habitat connectivity in our Beanblossom Creek Conservation Area.

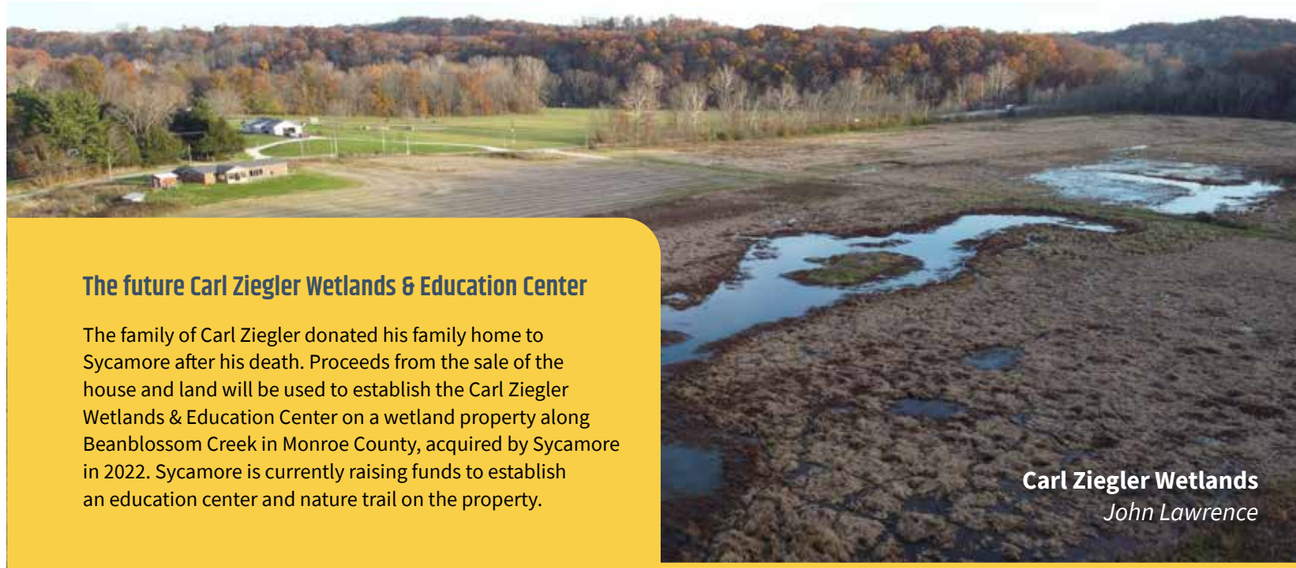
Bill and Janice Young
Tom Swinford

Bill and Janice Young Woods
John Lawrence

Lawrie Woods

30.5 ACRES | WASHINGTON COUNTY

Sycamore received 31 acres in Washington County from the estate of Lawrie Hamilton, as well the proceeds from the sale of her house in Bloomington, which will be used to create a land stewardship fund for the property and support Sycamore's conservation and education work. This new nature preserve protects upland forest and productive agricultural land.



Carl Ziegler Wetlands
John Lawrence

The future Carl Ziegler Wetlands & Education Center

The family of Carl Ziegler donated his family home to Sycamore after his death. Proceeds from the sale of the house and land will be used to establish the Carl Ziegler Wetlands & Education Center on a wetland property along Beanblossom Creek in Monroe County, acquired by Sycamore in 2022. Sycamore is currently raising funds to establish an education center and nature trail on the property.

Black-eyed Susans growing in the restored native grassland and meadow habitat at the Sam Shine Foundation Preserve in Monroe County. *Saige Sentell*

Accreditation Renewal through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission

In 2024, we earned our five-year accreditation renewal through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. The Land Trust Accreditation seal is a mark of distinction awarded to land trusts that meet the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence. This seal affirms we meet national quality standards for land conservation, including sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship.

Each accredited land trust completes a rigorous review process to join a network of over 450 accredited land trusts who are united by strong ethical practices. We received a special commendation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission:

"Sycamore Land Trust has made an extraordinary commitment to excellence, trust, and permanence in land conservation. The Commission especially recognizes Sycamore Land Trust for its prescribed fire program and related wildlife habitat restoration efforts."

Land Stewardship

Once we protect a property, we begin the essential work of long-term land stewardship to enhance ecosystem health and resilience. Our Land Stewardship team develops science-based management plans to restore native habitats and maintains and expands hiking trails on 13 public nature preserves to connect more people to nature.

11,400
NATIVE TREES PLANTED ON OUR PRESERVES IN 2024

67
ACRES OF HABITAT PLANTED WITH NATIVE SPECIES

400
ACRES OF HARMFUL INVASIVE PLANTS CONTROLLED

In the new wetlands we constructed in 2023 at the Sam Shine Foundation Preserve, Sycamore staff and volunteers planted thousands of native plant plugs grown from seed in our Native Plant Nursery. A grant from the Pollinator Partnership provided 2,000 more plants grown from seed collected in this region. *Chris Fox*

2024 Stewardship Highlights

Chris Fox

Caring for the land we love

Sycamore's land stewardship team supports healthy, resilient ecosystems by removing invasive species, planting native vegetation, and improving wildlife habitat. Regular monitoring and data collection help guide science-based management plans tailored to each property's unique needs. In 2024, invasive control and forest management projects at Grandchildren's Woods, Touch the Earth Natural Area, and the Laura Hare Nature Preserve at Downey Hill helped to restore native plant communities and support biological diversity. At Grandchildren's Woods in Monroe County, we completed a three-year invasive removal project funded by the National Resources Conservation Service to remove 22 acres of invasive species across the 55-acre preserve. A great blue heron rookey protected on the preserve has expanded to 46 nests.

Chris Fox

Connecting people to nature

Our Land Stewardship team maintained over 30 miles of hiking trails on our nature preserves in 2024. At Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve in Monroe County, they replaced over 400 feet of wetland boardwalk, hauling over five tons of material out of the wetland by hand. They rerouted and repaired over 3,000 feet of trail and cleaned up significant storm damage in the mature forests protected at Porter West Preserve and Amy Weingartner Branigin Peninsula Preserve in Monroe County. At Powell Preserve, Sycamore repaired streambank erosion that has temporarily closed the preserve to public access, funded by Indiana DNR's LARE Program, and constructed a new parking lot with support from Duke Energy Foundation. We are also expanding the hiking trail in partnership with the Hoosier Hikers Council. Powell Preserve will reopen in 2025.

Indiana DNR

Building a community of conservation

We partner with researchers, scientists, and students to survey species that inhabit our nature preserves, helping to inform our habitat management practices. Our partnerships include working with the Indiana DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife to monitor populations of amphibians and reptiles at our nature preserves along Beanblossom Creek. These herpetological studies recorded a total of 549 observations of 28 different species of reptiles and amphibians in 2024.

Photo: Staff joined the Indiana DNR at the Sam Shine Foundation Preserve to add coverboards for monitoring and create habitat.

Environmental Education

Developing a love for nature is the first step toward embracing a lifelong conservation ethic. Sycamore strives to help all people feel comfortable in nature and embrace their role in protecting it. We foster lasting connections with the natural world through inclusive Environmental Education programs, guided hikes, and educational volunteer workdays.

80
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN 2024

2,225
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

1,200+
EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP INTERNSHIP HOURS WORKED

Students at Templeton Elementary School in Bloomington plant native trees on Arbor Day with Sycamore's Environmental Education Program. *Kirby Hammel*

Chris Fox

Inspiring a lifelong appreciation of nature

Our Environmental Education program helps to grow an inclusive movement for nature and inspire future conservation leaders. Sycamore invites people of all ages and backgrounds to experience the beauty and wonder of nature through our public trails and Environmental Education programs in partnership with over 50 local partner organizations and schools.

Photo: Students from Franklin College visited our new wetlands at the Sam Shine Foundation Preserve to learn about reptiles and amphibians with State Herpetologist Nate Engbrecht of the Indiana DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife.

Saige Sentell

Inclusive guided hikes and workshops

We believe that access to nature should be available to everyone. In 2024, we hosted more than 20 inclusive guided hikes, providing opportunities for community members to explore our nature preserves, learn from expert naturalists, and discover the diverse habitats we protect. We also offer nature-themed educational workshops. Through these experiences, we aim to foster a deeper appreciation for the natural world and inspire a lasting commitment to conservation.

Photo: At our Winged Wonders Bat Box Building Workshop, participants learned how to add habitat to their backyards that supports endangered bat species.

Saige Sentell

Educational workdays and plantings

Sycamore's educational volunteer workdays offer hands-on learning experiences that empower participants to care for the land. Volunteers of all ages and experience levels join our staff on nature preserves to learn how to plant native species and identify and remove invasive plant species, an essential part of maintaining healthy habitats. We also provide conservation guidance to local landowners, helping extend the impact of our habitat restoration efforts beyond our nature preserves.

Photo: Indiana University's Women in Conservation planted 1,500 native plant plugs at Amy Weingartner Branigin Peninsula Preserve.

Isabella Tiger Moth and Woolly Bear Caterpillar by Mary Welz

Thank You

With sincere gratitude, we would like to thank all of our donors for your generous investment in our work! The work shared in this report was made possible by over 1,250 supporting members. While space doesn't allow us to list all donors, every gift is critical to supporting the work we do. *Thank you.*

We are honored by the trust our donors place in us through their generous support, and we are committed to upholding that trust through strong financial management practices. We are accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and received the GuideStar Gold Seal of Transparency in 2024.

We partnered with the Indiana DNR in 2024 to install a Motus Wildlife Tracking System tower at the Sam Shine Foundation Preserve, the first in our Beanblossom Creek Conservation Area. This tower uses radio telemetry to track tagged migratory species like wood thrushes and monarch butterflies, helping researchers better understand migration patterns and protect critical habitats. *Chris Fox*

BUSINESS & FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS *January-December 2024*

$20,000 AND ABOVE

Community Foundation Alliance
Community Foundation of Bloomington & Monroe County
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
Indianapolis Zoological Society
Namaste Foundation

$1,000-19,999

Anonymous (2)
Ayres Foundation
Bloomingfoods Market & Deli
Bluespring Caverns Park
Bluestone Tree
Brabson Family Foundation
Brown County Community Foundation, Inc.
Bussing-Koch Foundation
CFC Properties
Cook Inc.
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Eco Logic LLC
Fowler Tree Services, Inc.
Freitag & Martoglio, LLC
Harmony Gardens
Hirt Family Foundation
IU Health Bloomington
IU Credit Union
John Bethell Title Company, Inc.
Johnson Ventures
Land Trust Alliance
Logan Family Foundation, Inc.
Lorenz Family Charitable Trust
Louden Family Foundation
Old National Bank
Oliver Winery
ProBleu
Robert Dietrick Company
Ropchan Foundation
Sarkes and Mary Tarzian Foundation, Inc.
Simtra BioPharma Solutions
Stars End Inc. dba Tracks
United Way of Monroe County
USDA National Resources Conservation Service
VET Environmental Engineering, LLC
Wild Birds Unlimited - Bloomington
World Arts Printing

Mysterious Moths Night at Touch the Earth Natural Area
Chelsea Malwitz

LEADERSHIP SOCIETY *Individuals and families who made gifts totaling $1,000 or more January-December 2024*

VISIONARY ($15,000+)

Anonymous (2)
Jim and Bobbi* Diehl
Allen* and Marian England
Sandrine and Hal Evans
Laura Fredendall and Karl Barnebey
Darlene Gerster
Lawrie Hamilton*
Margaret Harter
Judy Ann Hohl*
Connie and Terry Marbach
Gregory G. Meyer Charitable Fund in the Vanderburgh Community Foundation, an affiliate of the Community Foundation Alliance
Judy and Gary Norris
Bill and Kathleen Oliver
Kathy Ruesink
Jenny Stephens
Dr. Robert* and Judy Decker Wargel* Fund in the Vanderburgh Community Foundation, an affiliate of the Community Foundation Alliance
William and Janice Young

TRAIL BLAZER ($5,000 - $14,999)

Anonymous (6)
Annette Alpert and Darrell Haile
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Tim and MaryAnn Dunfee
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Emily Mason and Jonathan Helm
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NATURALIST ($1,000 - $4,999)

Anonymous (10)
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Edward and Claire Robertson
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Hutch and Kevina Schumaker
Peter Haralovich and Lynn Schwartzberg
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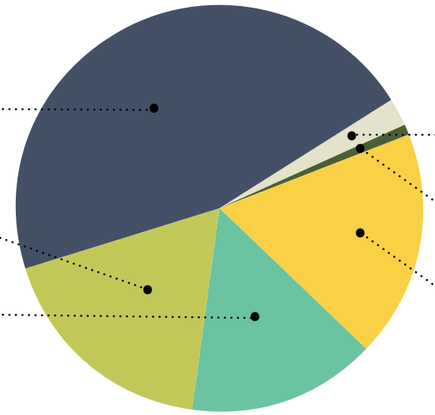
Melinda Swenson and Carol McCord
Amy and Bob Tank
Tom Tarzian and Cathy Steele
Jeff McClain and Lisa Tavormina
Dwight and Lisa Thompson
Dennis Tibbetts and Rebecca Lorenz
Katie Edmonds and Sam Tobin-Hochstadt
Turkel Giving Fund
Maria and Paul Viterisi
Martha Wailes
MIchael Welber
Jeff and Legene White
Michael J White
Don* and Betsy* Whitehead
Pam Whitehead and Paul Almond
Deborah Widiss and Douglas Goldstein
Arl and Carol Williams
Susan Yoon and John Keith
Paul and Debbie Zisla and their children

**Deceased*

Financial Summary

FISCAL YEAR 2023–24

How our work is funded



Contributions, Memberships, and Planned Gifts *46%*
$1,513,664

Government Grants *18%*
$593,757

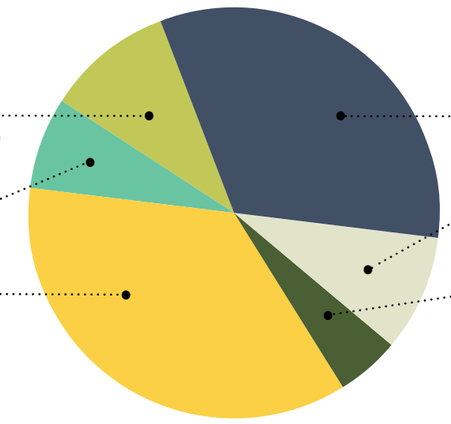
Land and Other In-kind Contributions *15%*
$495,000

Other Income *2%*
$55,386

Special Events *1%*
$50,621

Investment Return *18%*
$584,302

What your support made possible



Environmental Education *10%*
$246,052

Outreach *7%*
$175,315

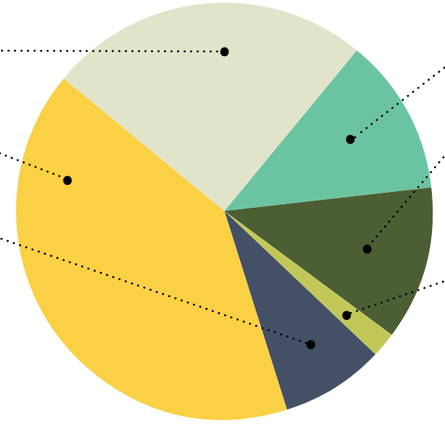
Land Acquisition *36%*
$866,376

Land Stewardship *33%*
$797,959

Management *9%*
$216,381

Fundraising *5%*
$128,127

How gifts and grants were designated



Operations (Unrestricted) *25%*
$657,421

Land Acquisition *41%*
$1,081,354

Land Stewardship *8%*
$217,306

Forever Fund *12%*
$319,606

Carl Ziegler Wetlands and Education Center Project *12%*
$328,386

Environmental Education *2%*
$59,386

There are many ways to show your love of nature by supporting Sycamore's work

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

To learn more, visit **sycamorelandtrust.org/give** or contact Jenny Stephens, Interim Director, at jenny@sycamorelandtrust.org

River otter tracks in our new wetlands at the Sam Shine Foundation Preserve
Chris Fox

Become an annual member or a monthly sustaining member to support conservation in southern Indiana.

Sign up for our e-news at sycamorelandtrust.org/subscribe.

Donate appreciated stock, securities, your home or other property.

Create a conservation legacy by adding Sycamore as a primary or contingent beneficiary to your will, estate plan, IRA, or insurance.

Spread the word about our programs and the importance of conservation to your family and friends.

Give in honor or memory of a loved one.

Volunteer for a workday, join us for a guided hike, or attend a special event.

Give from your company or foundation or request a matching gift from your employer.

Give a gift membership, and/or make an extra donation.

Donate to name a bench, trail, preserve observation deck, or Sycamore property for you or a loved one.

Board of Directors

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Jenny Stephens
Judith Stewart (2024)
Maria Viterisi (2024)
W. William Weeks (2024)
Susan Yoon

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John Lawrence

Land Stewardship Director
Chris Fox

Administrative Director
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Communications Director
Kate Hammel

Land Steward
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Karen Pitkin
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A family of wood thrushes at the Sam Shine Foundation Preserve in Monroe County. *Wyatt Downey*