



OAK HERITAGE

CONSERVANCY

Protecting Southeast Indiana's Natural Heritage

Fall 2017

Connecting Hoosiers to the Land

By Liz Brownlee

Moving around the country for five years taught this nature-lover many lessons – perhaps most importantly: when you move to a new state, start by buying the local guide to natural areas, parks, and trails.

An in-depth guide, complete with maps, lists of trails, and the information you need about nearby public land lets you explore and connect to your new place.

When my husband and I moved home to southeast Indiana four years ago, buying a guide like this was at the top of my to-do list. I had adventured here as a child, of course, but I knew a guide would help me have fun getting reacquainted with my home state.

And frankly, I wanted a guide that would provide examples of what I knew in my heart: that Indiana is beautiful - if you know where to look.

I found a few to guides, but they were all dated and introductory. I was disappointed, but I cobbled together resources and started exploring.

When I started working for OHC, I realized that an updated guide could be more than an indulgence for a Hoosier returning home. It could be a community resource.

We could make a free, online map showing all of the land that was public and open for people to enjoy.

After all, if OHC wants more people to connect to the natural world, we



Kids hold a salamander at a hands-on nature hike we co-hosted with Indiana DNR Nature Preserves. The hike was part of our recent event series, aimed at getting more people outdoors in nature.

have to help people know where they can go to explore, hike, and relax.

Everyone needs more time outside, in nature. For instance, children who live close to natural areas have lower rates of obesity, lower rates of ADHD, and increased ability to focus.

People can only access these health benefits if they know where to find places to play for free in nature, right here in southeast Indiana. Our guide could show people where to find nature, nearby.

When I started compiling resources to create our guide last fall, I stumbled across a new book. Steven Higgs had just released *A Guide to Natural Areas of Southern Indiana: 119 Unique Places to Explore*.

I must admit that I was a teensy bit jealous – he beat us to the punch. But mostly, I was excited to find this guide about my home place!

I ordered Higgs' Guide, and I was delighted. His list of natural areas is comprehensive (and includes OHC preserves). It explains the natural history of southern Indiana. And of course, it is full of pictures of the Indiana I love: one of waterfalls, wetlands, and forests worth exploring.

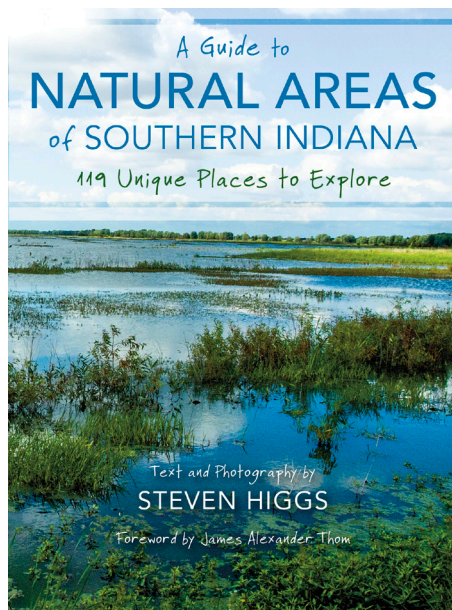
With Higgs' Guide in hand, I wondered: should we abandon our efforts to create a free, online guide, now that his Guide was available? I gathered my courage and asked Higgs if we could collaborate on a free, basic

guide focused on southeast Indiana. I shouldn't have fretted, of course: he was eager to join forces.

This summer, our intern, Holden August, is creating our online Guide to Natural Areas a reality (see his article on page 6). Log on to use it at www.oakheritageconservancy.org.

This fall, Higgs will be our speaker at the Annual Dinner. He will highlight a few of his favorite "gems": little known but high quality natural areas that every nature-lover should know.

Join us at the Annual Dinner, as we celebrate the public treasures that are right here in southeast Indiana for everyone to enjoy.



Our Annual Dinner speaker, Steven Higgs, just released this guide to parks and preserves in our area. He is collaborating with OHC to help connect more people with the natural world.

***You are cordially invited to OHC's Annual Dinner
on Saturday, October 14, 2017, 6:30pm
at The Sherman, 35 South Main Street,
in downtown Batesville, Indiana***

Your \$30 admission includes:

- ▶ Presentation by environmental journalist Steven Higgs, author of the newly released book, *A Guide to Natural Areas of Southern Indiana*. Higgs will tell us about little-known natural areas in southeast Indiana
- ▶ Fine dining with cash bar at this historic restaurant
- ▶ Silent auction featuring fine items for conservationists
- ▶ An update on OHC's conservation progress

To reserve your ticket, send a check for \$30 per guest to Oak Heritage Conservancy, P.O. Box 335, Hanover, Indiana 47243.

President's Note

By Richard Dickie

Oak Heritage Conservancy is the guardian of several places of natural interest. I like to think that all the members of OHC and the general public will visit them and become acquainted with what these sites have to offer us – plants, animals, and the quiet.

Let's face it: for many of us these places are just a bit remote, and I'll bet that some of you have yet to visit any of them.

Let me encourage you to check out our new guide to parks, and our calendar of events. Get out there to see what you are supporting.

Or come to our Annual Dinner and hear about some real treasures that are nearby.

But don't forget that nature is all around you wherever you are. So get out of the house! Take advantage of this great weather and see what Mother Nature is offering you right there where you are.

You might be surprised!

Board Passion Creates Conservation

Planting Pollinator Habitat

Chrys Cook, one of OHC's newest Board members, quite literally wears her love for pollinators on her sleeve. She can often be found wearing a shirt that shows monarchs, milkweed, and a snappy slogan calling for efforts to save the butterflies.

Chrys has converted 27 acres of her own farm to pollinator habitat - a place where butterflies, bees, and other pollinators can find food and shelter. Now, helping OHC create habitat for these important species, too.

This year, she took over stewardship responsibilities for Hilltop Farm Nature Preserve in Dearborn County, near her home.

Thanks to Chrys' initiative, we decided to convert thirteen acres of old hay field into native prairie grasses and wildflowers. This push to action would have been contribution enough, but Chrys didn't stop there.

She works full time, but in her spare time, Chrys has made this pollinator planting a reality, from selecting what to plant to finding the contractors who would plant the seed.

Chrys has made this project happen, and we couldn't be more grateful. We can't wait to see those thirteen acres blooming next year.

We also owe thanks to the Dearborn Community Foundation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife for their generous support of our pollinator planting!

New Trail at Hall-Carmer Wetland

Longtime Board member Paul Carmony, who recently turned 87, is an avid conservationist. As our Stewardship Chair, he organizes invasive species control and tree plantings, and monitors the 750 acres of land that we protect.

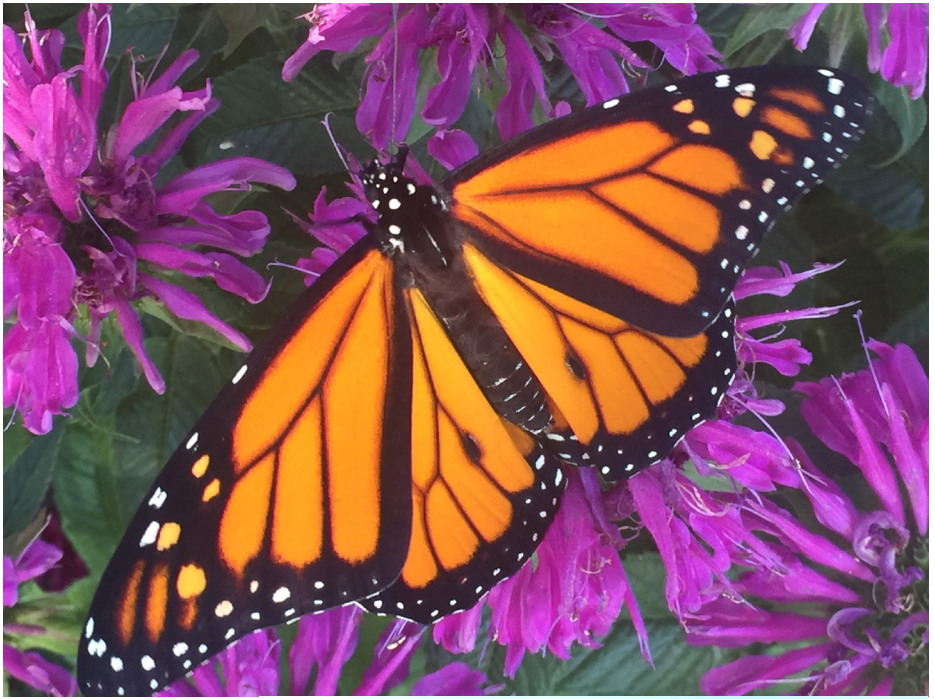
Most recently, Paul has focused on a new trail at Hall-Carmer Wetlands., a forty-acre wetlands in Jennings County.

The new trail winds through the tall grasses near a pond, and then into the cool of the hardwood forest. It crosses two bridges, but Paul Carmony is eager to add a third. Paul is tireless.

"We didn't have a trail in that part of southeast Indiana," said Paul. "And it's got such a nice pond and wetlands. That's unique."

This summer, Paul led the inaugural hike on the trail. He plans to put the finishing touches on the Hall-Carmer Wetlands trail this Fall.

He's had help from OHC members along the way, and he would welcome you to join him. If you would like to help with the trail, let us know!



Above: A monarch butterfly at Board member Chrys Cook's farm in June. Chrys led OHC's efforts to create a 13-acre pollinator habitat at Hilltop Farm Nature Preserve in Dearborn County. We can expect visitors like this monarch starting next year!



Right: Planting native prairie grasses and wildflowers at Hilltop.

Right: The view of the pond at Hall-Carmer Wetlands - the first stop along our new hiking trail at the preserve. Paul Carmony built the trail, with help from other OHC volunteers.



Free Online Guide to Natural Areas

By Holden August

As a Millennial, if something can't be found quickly online, it doesn't exist. It's sad, but it's the truth. In the digital age, being found online is key.

That's why originally, when I was asked to create an online guide to natural areas, I couldn't understand why it would be hard to find the public parks in southeast Indiana. I thought all the information was already there.

When I started, I was given a list of parks in the area, compiled by a class at Hanover College. But we still needed information for some of the counties in southeast Indiana.

I was responsible for finding the parks in three counties. It seemed like an easy job, and I thought that I could finish the work in about 3 hours.

I found that only the biggest parks could be found easily online. There was no magic list of places to hike or where people could go spend time outside. I hopped from website to website, stumbling along and finding parks one at a time. It took 3 hours to research just one county.

This process showed me what Oak Heritage Conservancy was doing by creating this guide.

Now, you can type in your zip code and see a map showing how far you

are from parks. The OHC guide gives you the information you need to get to the park, and tells what you can do at each property.

The online guide cuts the hours of searching down to just seconds and makes these amazing spaces accessible for those who don't know where to look.

You can find the online guide and an accompanying printable guide on OHC's website. I hope you can use this tool to find a new place to enjoy, or share it to help others discover what they are missing.

Holden August, pictured below, is serving as an intern for OHC as part of the McManaman Internship Program at Hanover College, which funds political science students' work with area nonprofits. August is helping OHC connect a wider cross-section of the public with nature.



Be A Part of Conservation, Right Here in Southeast Indiana

*Join Oak Heritage Conservancy today.
Together, we can protect southeast Indiana's
natural heritage for the generations to come.*

You can now join, renew membership, and donate online - or complete this page and mail it, along with your payment, to Oak Heritage Conservancy, P.O. Box 335, Hanover, Indiana 47243.

____ Student - \$10

____ Individual - \$25

____ Organization - \$25

____ Family - \$40

____ Cornerstone - \$100-\$499

____ Sponsor - \$500 - \$999

____ Benefactor - \$1000+

Name(s):

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone:

Email:



OAK HERITAGE CONSERVANCY

Our mission is to preserve, protect and conserve land and water resources that have special natural, agricultural, scenic, or cultural significance. Oak Heritage Conservancy will help landowners personally protect their land so future generations can enjoy the rural landscapes of southeast Indiana.

P.O. Box 335
Hanover, IN 47243

oakheritageconservancy@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/oakheritageconservancy

(317) 258-5217

www.oakheritageconservancy.org



Oak Heritage Conservancy
P.O. Box 335
Hanover, IN 47243

*Be A Part of Conservation -
Be A Part of Southeast Indiana!
Right Here in OHC Today!
Join*