



# OAK HERITAGE

---

## CONSERVANCY

*Protecting Southeast Indiana's Natural Heritage*

2015

## *OHC Hires Executive Director*

By John Miller

Welcome Elizabeth Jessica Brownlee to the OHC family as Executive Director.

She was born and raised on the north bank of the Muscatatuck River east of I-65 and west of the old Jefferson Proving Grounds. She calls Crothersville home and she goes by the simple name of Liz. She was born into the Otte family and her Mother and Father are well known in the area. With her husband Nate she runs a CSA farming operation known as Nightfall Farm. You can look it up on the web.

Liz graduated from Hanover College with a degree in Biology. She later earned a master's degree from the University of Vermont in the area of Natural Resources Management.

She has worked at several non-profits and along with Nate worked on sustainable farms while they learned how to create their own operation.

Looking at her resume, I sense that her life to this point has been aimed at making herself a good candidate for her new position.

Now for some back story.

We met Liz at a tree planting we did at Smith Woods, located a short walk north of Guthrie Woods. This would have been in 2006. Dr. Daryl Karns brought her with carload of kids to help plant.

Maybe she stuck in my mind because she is the same age as my daughter Liz, maybe because I took a picture of her and Dr. Karns working together, a picture I have used a few times over the years.

At any rate when I received an email through the website about conserving land from a Liz from Crothersville the little grey cells were stimulated. Eventually we met and she proved to be the same.

I determined then that in some way I wanted Nate and Liz to be involved with OHC, so I invited them to be my guests at our annual meeting in Madison last fall. At that meeting I laid our problems with succession on the table. By her own account Liz went home stimulated to create a plan to help us.

I soon had an invitation for lunch at the farm on the Muscatatuck. By the way; I was served the best grilled cheese I've ever eaten,



*Liz Brownlee, our new Executive Director, started work in April. She is working hard to build OHC's activity, name recognition, and membership.*

onions and kale on it.

Liz laid out her ideas and I felt pretty good when I left. I took her proposal to the board, we considered and vetted her, and after several months we have our first employee.

She is working as a salaried part-time executive director for a very fair wage which allows her plenty of flexibility to work the family farming operation and address our needs. Please support her as we will be doing the same.

# *Envisioning Conservation*

By Liz Brownlee

Maps get people talking. Gather a friend or two around this map of southeast Indiana. You'll likely start pointing out places you love, towns you've always meant to explore, or your own homes.

Perhaps you will start talking about where conservation is working well and how we ought to focus our efforts next.

That is exactly why we made the map.

The map highlights protected places of all shapes and sizes. It shows private lands protected by OHC, other land trusts, and the federal government. The map also shows conservation efforts on public land, from state parks to school natural areas.

The map took a fair bit of work to gather, but it was worth the effort. Why? Because it can help us move forward.

The Board is inviting all OHC members to think and dream about how our next years can look and how we can best protect southeast Indiana.

This map helps us start that conversation. This year, at the Annual Meeting, we're going to invite you to examine this map.

Together with other OHC members, we're going to ask you to mark your favorite places, sites where OHC could lead neat field walks, properties where the landowner is interested in conserving her land, and more.

We hope you will use this map and start brainstorming now. Look it over as you fill out the short survey included with your annual membership form (page 7).

Consider where and how OHC can work in the coming years.

Ask yourself: How can we be most effective? Where can we work to connect intact, high quality habitats, or restore degraded ones? Are there places we ought to build trails or create public access? Are there special places we want to conserve?

And if you can't wait to share your ideas until the Annual Meeting, by all means: write us a note or an email. We are eager to hear your input.

# *Land Trusts Protect Over 47 Million Acres*

By Liz Brownlee

Recall the last time you visited a national park. Perhaps, like me, you stood and gazed in wonder at the scale of it all: of deep gorges and tall waterfalls, yes, but also the massive amount of land set aside for conservation.

Now consider that, as of 2010, individual landowners have protected more than 47 million acres of land through land trusts in the United States.

That's an area more than twice the size of all national parks in the contiguous U.S. I don't mean to insult our national parks; they are truly a treasure. I'm simply impressed by land trusts' success.

This success is an excellent reminder that individual actions really do matter.

It's easy to dismiss individual action, to say that one person's commitment to recycling or driving less or installing solar panels doesn't make a difference.

At least in the case of land trusts, we have proof that individual landowners can help create positive change. Regular people all over the country have donated their land or donated easements on their land, or perhaps sold to a land trust at a low price.

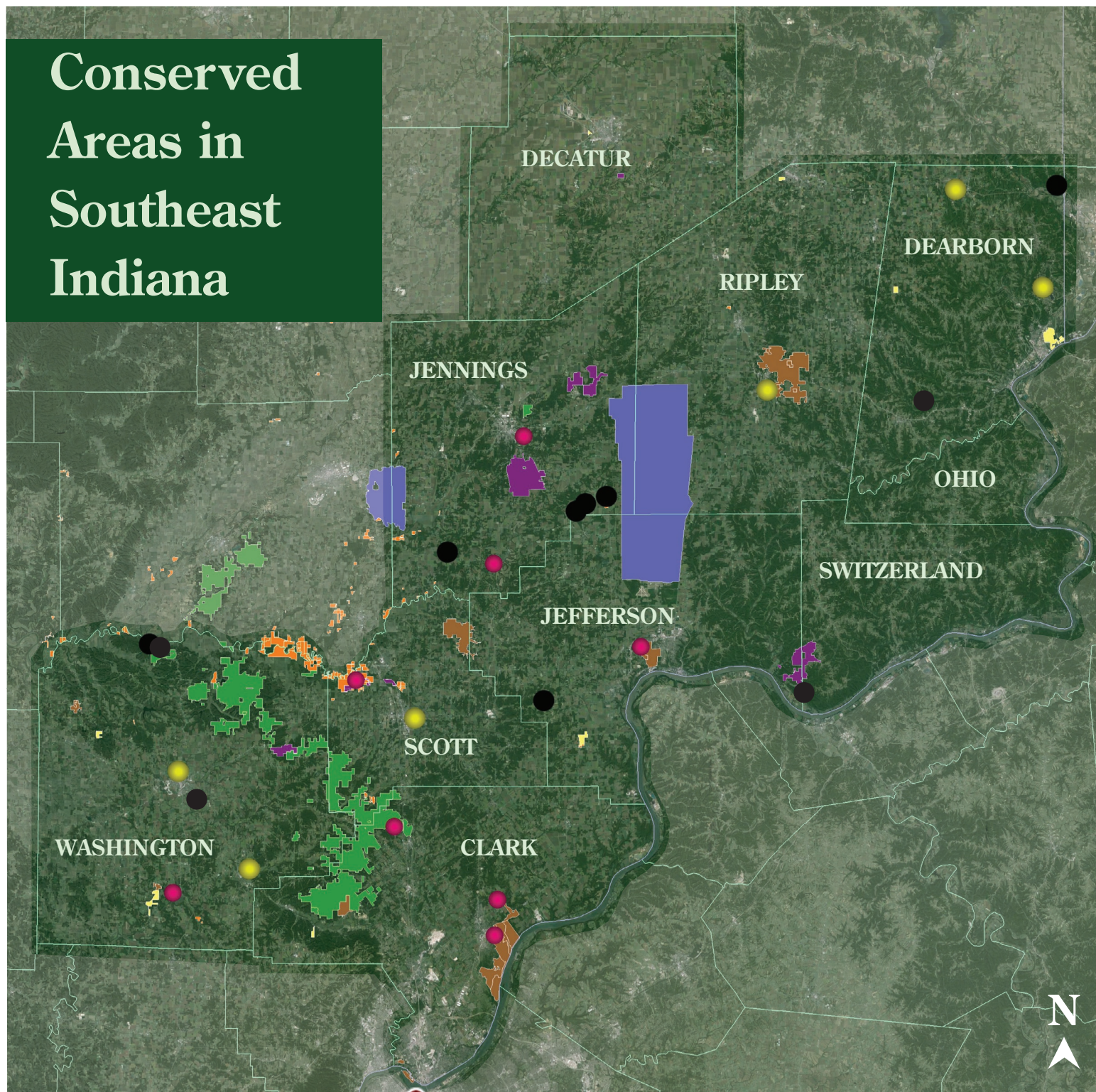
Each contribution matters because together, these lands protect

millions of special places and a remarkable amount of land. The land trust movement is continuing to gain momentum. People see the value of conservation on private land, where individuals and communities enjoy the place and have a stake in caring for it.

There are over 1,700 land trusts active in US, including 37 in Indiana. Hoosier land trusts are conserving new land every month and acting as stewards every day.

OHC is proud to be part of this good work. We know that our effort matters, and we know we are helping to build something incredible.

# Conserved Areas in Southeast Indiana



## KEY

- National Wildlife Refuge
- State Forest
- State Park or State Recreation Area
- State Fish and Wildlife Area
- State and Federally Protected Wetlands

- Other Land Trust's Conserved Area or Locally Protected Area
- State Nature Preserve
- School Natural Area
- OHC Conserved Area

*This map uses data from the IndianaMAP program. We are grateful to the State of Indiana and the Indiana Geological Society for making this data available to the public.*

*Map compiled by Oak Heritage Conservancy, Summer 2015.*

# Stewardship Update

By Paul Carmony

## Webster Woods: Jefferson County

A mile long, easy-to-walk trail is now open to the public. It can be reached by taking Hwy 56 west out of Hanover to County Road 1066 West. Turning south brings visitors to a dead end road. Parking is usually available at the unused church.

The trailhead can be reached a hundred feet or so down the road, to the right. There, a sign will announce your arrival at Tulip Tree Trail.

Traveling west on the trail, you will see how blown over trees have left behind depressions that are now nurseries for frogs. The trail loops northward next, through patches of mayapples and a grove of nice-sized Tulip trees. Interpretive signs are posted along the way.

Dan and Juanita Webster bought the woods in 1976, partly, I suspect, as a get-away from Hanover College where Dan taught biology for many years, but also for a place where Dan could

take his classes to study forest recovery.

The Websters presented the woods to OHC and it became our first nature preserve before their deaths in 2010 and 2011. They would be pleased to know that you spent time in the woods they loved so much.

Many thanks to the volunteers who built Tulip Tree Trail and to the Community Foundation of Madison and Jefferson County Foundation, who generously helped fund the work.

## Hilltop Farm: Dearborn County

The exciting news from Hilltop is tree planting. This 120-acre property consists of steep wooded slopes and 30 acres of flat farmland.

Thirteen acres of fields have now been planted into trees: five acres last year and eight more acres this year.

We are indebted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Susan Knowles, Wildlife Biologist, for providing 9200 hardwood



*The trail crew spotted this frog in a vernal pool at Webster Woods. Photo by Jan Kleopfer.*

seedlings free of charge.

We also wish to thank Larry DiGiovenale, who lives on the original farm, for bush hogging the fields prior to planting.

Larry is the nephew of Mary T. Doud, who left this tract to OHC upon her death in 2006. She and her husband, Bill, bought the property in 1946.

This area is not open to the general public yet, as more work needs to be done.

Mary wanted the land returned to its natural state. We are pleased that the tree plantings are moving in that direction and we are eager to keep fulfilling Mary's vision for this special place.

# Updating Our Online Presence

By Liz Brownlee

A Jennings County resident recently asked me about OHC. We talked and I invited her to our birding trip at Versailles State Park this August.

She was eager to get to know our group before August and asked about a website or Facebook page.

Like many folks, she wanted to use our online presence to gauge our real-life substance.

OHC is committed to making it easier for people to find us online, to learn about our events, and to see that we are an active, effective organization.

A more robust online presence ensures that people who want to get involved with OHC can and do.

We're starting with three simple changes that should make a large impact:

# President's Comments

By John Miller

Ever since Oak Heritage Conservancy formed it has been a concern of mine to make the corporation sustainable. Thinking back, if we had known all the potential pitfalls we might not have started. There are more ways to fail than to succeed and we are lucky to have found a way forward. It takes a wide community of friends. Thank you for your help.

Back then, older groups said a big problem would be transitioning from the founders to the next leaders. I took that to heart and all along looked for new leaders to replace me. It hasn't happened, small wonder. The joys of running a volunteer non-profit business are subtle.

We haven't settled the issue of leadership change, but it is time to make some changes. When I was younger I thought I would be able to do so much more when I retired, but it hasn't worked out that way.

OHC and Indiana need somebody who gets up in the morning and works on land trust needs. To that end, the board has acted to hire an

executive director. This newsletter is one of the first tasks we set her to. I think you will notice the difference going forward.

We are committed to this change and we need your help in making it work. The board's job is changing from doing everything to more of fund raising and supervision. Your continued financial support is critical as we change and grow. Please help.

Those of you who have followed us for some years know that I usually mention my honey bees. The bees are doing well but they are no longer mine. I'm still involved in the beekeeping world but I can't keep anymore.

While we haven't protected any additional land since the 2014 newsletter, I'm pleased to say that we have been diligent in taking care of the land we hold.

I have to give the lion's share of credit for this to Paul Carmony. He proposed and saw to completion the trail at Webster Woods. Again at Hilltop Farm he has seen to the planting of more than 9200

trees over the last two years. He also organized the replacement of several thousand feet of fence and the repair of a car-struck fence on the same property.

Thank him for all of us when you see him, and join us for our next tree planting, invasive species removal, or trail work project when you can.



*Paul looks proud of the trees planted at Hilltop Farm. OHC planted 9200 trees in 2014 and 2015.*

## Facebook

This is a low-budget and proven way to attract and keep people's attention. We're adding more information about our own events, naturalist sightings in southeast Indiana, and area classes and workshops. We hope that this emphasis on local events will encourage people to notice OHC - and get outside and enjoy nature.

We invite you to "Like" us on Facebook and share our posts so that you and your friends can keep an eye on OHC throughout the year.

## Website

We are working hard to make our website easier to find and navigate. We especially want people like the Jennings County resident to be

able to find out who we are and what we do. Look for the new content by October.

## Email

We're making it easier for people to contact us via email. If you have suggestions for our online presence, email us at our new email address: oakheritageconservancy@gmail.com



# Upcoming Events

*Cut this page out and post it on your fridge or some place you will see it often. It's full of information about upcoming events, how to find other nature-based activities in southeast Indiana, and the OHC Challenge.*

## **Birding and Hike Versailles State Park Aug. 8, 9am-lunch**

The birds are calling to us. Join the park naturalist and fellow birders for a morning out. The general public and the park's Friends groups are invited, too, so plan to make friends.

After birding, OHC folks will take a hike in the cool of the woods and enjoy a picnic lunch. Bring binocs, guides, cameras, and your picnic lunch. Meet at the Nature Center. Remember, admission to the park is \$7 per vehicle.

## **Sustainable Farm Tour Nightfall Farm Sept. 26, 9:30am-lunch**

Liz Brownlee, our new Executive Director, and her husband, Nate, invite you to their sustainable farm on the Muscatatuck River. We'll stroll through their woods and wetlands and then spend most of our time with the animals. Come see how Liz and Nate raise chickens, pigs, turkeys, and lambs on pasture and sell meat locally. Wear long pants and boots. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy after the tour.

## **OHC Annual Meeting Location To Be Announced 6-9:30pm**

Spend time catching up with your OHC friends, learn, eat excellent food, and help us envision OHC's future. Don't miss out on the fun!

**There's  
so much to do in  
southeast Indiana. Like  
us on Facebook to stay up  
to date on OHC's events. We'll  
also post events that others  
are hosting in the area, from  
hands-on paleontology to  
butterfly counts and  
beyond!**

## OHC Challenge

It's time for a challenge, ladies and gentlemen, and you are the participants. OHC cordially invites you to go out and enjoy southeast Indiana. Here's how the OHC Challenge works.

### **Rules:**

- 1. Complete the challenges in southeast Indiana.**
- 2. Prove you completed the challenge.** Take photos, draw a sketch, or jot down a note when you complete a challenge. Share your proof by posting to OHC's Facebook page, sending us an email (oakheritageconservancy@gmail.com) or mailing us a note. We'll enjoy cheering you on!
- 3. Come Claim Your Prize.** You must attend the Annual Meeting to receive your prize! On October 17, bring along this page or a list of which challenges you completed. If you complete at least eight challenges, you earn the prize.

### **The Challenges**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plant a native tree or plant         | <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in an OHC event                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visit a state park                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Find a fossil                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Look for bugs in a creek             | <input type="checkbox"/> Find a bird nest or build and hang a bird house |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a walk at sunset                | <input type="checkbox"/> Bring a friend to an OHC event                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tell a friend about OHC              | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch for pollinators in your yard              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learn a new bird, bug, plant or tree | <input type="checkbox"/> Stargaze  |



## Call for Members and Input

Let's work together to protect southeast Indiana's natural heritage for generations to come.

If you share a vision of protecting Indiana's resources and special places, please contact us and join the Oak Heritage Conservancy.

Your annual membership works hard, helping OHC:

- Fund land acquisitions.
- Protect natural resources on our conservation easements and properties.
- Provide stewardship on our more than 700 protected acres, including tree plantings, invasive species control, trail building, and much more.
- Educate the public about southeast Indiana's special places and the importance of conservation.

### Join OHC Today

Please select a category, include your contact information, and send this page along with your check to:  
Oak Heritage Conservancy, P.O. Box 335, Hanover, IN 47243.

____ Student - \$10	Name:	_____
____ Individual - \$25	Address:	_____
____ Organization/Club - \$25	City:	_____
____ Family - \$40	State:	_____
____ Cornerstone - \$100-\$499	Zip:	_____
____ Sponsor - \$500 - \$999	Phone:	_____
____ Benefactor - \$1000+	Email:	_____

### What Do You Think?

We're curious to hear your ideas about OHC. Please send your answers in with your membership.

What is the OHC's biggest strength? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is a weakness that you would like to see us improve? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How can OHC have more of an impact on conservation efforts in southeast Indiana? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your input! We look forward to talking with you more at this year's Annual Meeting. Come ready to share ideas, contemplate our future, eat delicious food, and enjoy time with friends.



# OAK HERITAGE

---

## CONSERVANCY

### *Mission Statement*

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.

*Let's work together to protect  
southeast Indiana's natural  
heritage for generations to come.*

Members help protect drinking water,  
clean air, healthy soil, strong wildlife  
habitat, and beautiful places.

Contact us to learn more or get involved:

**(513) 404-8268**

**(812) 866-4299**

**[www.oakheritageconservancy.org](http://www.oakheritageconservancy.org)  
[oakheritageconservancy@gmail.com](mailto:oakheritageconservancy@gmail.com)**

**Like us on Facebook to see what  
we're up to and join in the fun.**

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

