



OAK HERITAGE

CONSERVANCY

Protecting Southeast Indiana's Natural Heritage

Fall 2018

Pollinator Habitats Bloom & Grow

Hilltop Farm Nature Preserve

The group seemed puzzled: could a butterfly really be that large?

They had gathered at Hilltop Farm Nature Preserve for a "Pollinator Walk" on a hot July morning.

The group, including everyone from retirees to a four-month-old, meandered through 13-acres of restored pollinator habitat. They stopped to learn about cup plant and other native wildflowers in bloom.

Oak Heritage Conservancy volunteers have spent the last year converting these former fescue hay fields to a diverse pollinator planting. The new habitat was awash with yellows, purples, and green.

Coming around the farthest bend of the new walking trail, Oak Heritage Board member, Chrys Cook, spotted

Monarch butterflies - and many other species - are thriving at our pollinator habitat. Photo by Nate Yazel, at our new preserve, Monarch Meadows Nature Preserve.



something unusual. The butterfly flitted from one flower to the next, eating its mid-morning meal and pollinating flowers along the way. It stayed for more than a minute, giving the group time to observe its wing colors and patterns – and to marvel at its size.

Chrys shared with the group: this was most likely a Giant Swallowtail.

Their wingspan can measure almost

seven inches across, and their black and yellow pattern is showy.

“Just a year ago, this was all a monoculture of grass,” says Oak Heritage Executive Director Liz Brownlee. “Now this place is teeming with life, from turtles to toddlers.”

The habitat restoration project, including the new walking trail (more below), was only possible because of generous support from the Dearborn

New Trails Open at Hilltop Farm Nature Preserve

The restored pollinator habitat at Hilltop Farm wasn't just planted for pollinators – it's also a place for people. Our preserve has been “open to the public” for years, but it hasn't been especially inviting. Thanks to a Dearborn Community Foundation grant, we're now welcoming the public to enjoy and utilize this community space. The grant helped fund several key improvements:

A welcoming entrance. The parking area for the preserve is now a U-shape, so multiple cars can safely use the parking area. Before, a locked gate greeted visitors. Now, a “corral” style entrance welcomes visitors on foot (or in strollers), but prevents ATVs or vehicles.

A shorter trail for a “ramble” or picnic. Walk about a quarter mile on an easy trail through open meadows, and end at a bench positioned beneath towering oak trees. Parking for the trail is at the corner of Stout and Kocher Roads.

A longer trail for an adventure. Ready for some hills and distance? The short trail connects through the woods to a loop around the new pollinator habitat. Walk over two miles of grassy trail through forest, creek, and meadow habitats.



To find the preserve, enter “Hilltop Farm Nature Preserve” into Google Maps, or call us for driving directions.

Community Foundation, and the many hours volunteered by Chrys Cook and Larry DiGiovanele.

Monarch Meadows Nature Preserve

Last winter, over 100 individuals, foundations, and families helped purchase and protect forever a remarkable Monarch butterfly habitat near Rising Sun.

The property, now called “Monarch Meadows Nature Preserve,” is now almost 85 acres. This Spring, we were able to purchase four acres of adjacent land, thanks to the initiative and generosity of Josie and Geoff Fox.

We’ve spent the Spring getting to know the land. There is an opportunity to add even more pollinator habitat to the preserve.

Here is our plan:

1. Maintain existing habitat.

We’ll manage the prime Monarch habitat in much the way it’s been maintained: We will mow the land annually to encourage a late bloom of milkweed and butterfly weed. This migrating Monarchs with food and a place to lay their eggs – and young with the food they need to thrive.

2. Restore adjacent fields into pollinator habitat.

Two fields adjacent to the Monarch habitat are ideal for pollinator habitat establishment.

We’ll add native flowers that bloom throughout Spring to compliment the late-blooming habitat that exists on the property. Pollinators need food and shelter throughout the year.

3. Partner with our neighbors.

Establishing pollinator habitat on this scale can be expensive, but we have a creative solution. For decades, the neighboring farmer hayed this land.

We’ve agreed to keep a few fields on the preserve (those furthest from the key Monarch habitat) in hay. The farmer will establish and maintain the pollinator habitat in exchange for taking a hay crop from those other fields. Well-managed hay fields can provide habitat for a number of pollinators, since plants like clover and alfalfa offer food for native bees and butterflies.



Pollinators need plants that provide nectar, as well as places for their young to grow and eat. Monarch Meadows Nature Preserve provides both!

Students Serve and Learn with OHC

Students at Hanover College are honing their skills – and helping us welcome the public to Oak Heritage Conservancy nature preserves.

A group of Advanced Graphic Design students tackled outreach projects, including creating a new brochure for handing out at events. We've printed 2,500 and distributing them widely.

Holden August, a Political Science major, interned for Oak Heritage this summer. He put his academic skills to the test creating persuasive (and visually beautiful) pieces that were tailored to the socioeconomics and demographics of southeast Indiana.

“My goal was to make sure more people in the community know that Oak Heritage preserves are places for

everyone to enjoy,” says August.

Last but not least, an introductory political science course launched a podcast for Oak Heritage this Spring.

The episodes are short, public radio-style pieces. Each podcast invites the public to visit one of our preserves. You'll hear sounds from the forest, approaching thunderstorms, and young people's take on why people should spend time in nature.

You can listen to the first three episodes on our website. Expect more episodes next Spring, when the class is offered again.

The students' service was supported by Campus Compact and the McManaman Internship Program.



Hanover College students, including Nate Skowron and David Andrusiak, above, are helping Oak Heritage invite the public to visit our nature preserves.

Come Explore: Events in Nature

Details at www.oakheritageconservancy.org. All events are free , and everyone is welcome.

September 15 & TBA - Point-and-Shoot Photo Workshops

Bring your phone or point-and-shoot camera for a fun, hands-on workshop to hone your photography skills. No fancy cameras allowed. This is a chance to learn to capture the beauty of everyday life in Indiana – our communities, forests, farms, and parks. We'll learn from nature and farm photographer Joshua Marshall. Kids of all ages (and people of all skill levels) are invited!

Workshops are scheduled for Madison, Charlestown, and Lanesville. Details, including dates, times, and where to meet, are available on our website, www.oakheritageconservancy.org.

September 30 - Great Outdoor Weekend at Monarch Meadows

Drop in any time between 1-4pm for our scavenger hunt. This family-friendly event is a perfect chance to learn a little about pollinators, spend time outside, and enjoy this new preserve. This event is one of over 100 events happening outside, in nature, during the Great Outdoor Weekend. Learn more at www.greatoutdoorweekend.org and spend the weekend playing.

Now - Oct 31 - Nature & Farm Photo Contest

What's the "Indiana" that you imagine? That's our invitation to you: submit a photo in this year's contest that captures the Indiana you cherish – and that you want to see flourish and grow. This year's categories include:

- ▶ Forests, creeks and wetlands; Wildlife and wildflowers; People in nature & life on the farm; and Barns, crops and livestock.

All photos must be taken by amateurs, in Indiana. For details or to submit your photo, visit www.oakheritageconservancy.org. The photo contest (and the photo workshops) are a partnership with George Rogers Clark Land Trust, and made possible by a grant from the Indiana Arts Commission.

October 19 - Oak Heritage Conservancy Annual Dinner

Join us for food and fellowship with other nature lovers. The evening includes fine dining, a short talk by conservationist Andy Ertel about the community-wide pollinator efforts in Jennings County, a pollinator-themed silent auction, local libations, and plenty of time to enjoy good company. Tickets are \$30 each. Mail in your check (or purchase tickets online) to reserve your seats today!

*You are cordially invited to OHC's Annual Dinner
on Friday, October 19, 2018, at 7pm
at the Ohio County Historical Society
in downtown Rising Sun, Indiana*

Your \$30 admission helps fund conservation, and includes:

- ▶ Presentation by conservationist Andy Ertel. Ertel will share about the award-winning and community-wide pollinator efforts happening in Jennings County, and provide tips for your pollinator habitat
- ▶ Fine dining with local beer and wine available
- ▶ An evening in this restored 19th century factory. The Historical Society museum will be open for us to enjoy
- ▶ Pollinator-themed silent auction
- ▶ An update on OHC's conservation progress
- ▶ A chance to connect with other nature enthusiasts

Purchase your tickets on our website, or send a check for \$30 per guest to Oak Heritage Conservancy,
P.O. Box 335, Hanover, Indiana 47243.



Be A Part of Conservation - Join Oak Heritage Conservancy!

Join a growing community of Oak Heritage members.

Protect the best of southeast Indiana.

Become a member today.

You can now join, renew membership, and donate on our website, www.oakheritageconservancy.org, or complete this page and mail it, along with your payment, to Oak Heritage Conservancy, P.O. Box 335, Hanover, IN 47243.

____ Student - \$10

____ Cornerstone - \$100-\$499

____ Individual - \$25

____ Sponsor - \$500 - \$999

____ Organization - \$25

____ Benefactor - \$1000+

____ Family - \$40

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

*Join us for fun in the sun!
New events for Fall.*