



# OAK HERITAGE

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## CONSERVANCY

Protecting Southeast Indiana's Natural Heritage

Fall 2019

## Students Offer Sneak Peek at Preserves

Old growth forests. Restored prairie. Forested trails. It's hard to decide which Oak Heritage nature preserve to visit next!

Thankfully, Hanover College students made a series of short videos and 3-4 minute podcast episodes (short radio pieces) that provide a sneak peek at our preserves. Their work entices people to visit – and lets visitors know what to expect at each preserve.

The videos and podcasts are a partnership with Hanover College. This May, we worked with students in a communication course taught by

Assistant Professor Elizabeth Winters and a political science course led by Dr. Ruth Turner and Liz Brownlee.

The students put their classroom knowledge to work by creating the videos and podcasts – and learning about how our preserves serve as a community asset.

Late summer and fall are an ideal time to visit many of our preserves – so why not take advantage of the students' work and start planning your trip now. Details on Page 2.

Students visited our preserves and other natural areas in Jefferson County.





## Buttonwood Nature Preserve

Hogan Creek runs clear and cold through the bottom of this nature preserve. Look for mussels and fossils at the water's edge, or venture into the woods to listen for birds. Watch a video about Buttonwood, listen to the students' podcast, and find a map of the preserve at the Oak Heritage website.



## Monarch Meadows Nature Preserve

Hear about the native wildflowers - and community support - that make this place remarkable. When you visit, look for recent additions: our new gravel parking area, interpretive signs, and new pollinator habitat (thanks to support the Ohio County Community Foundation, Rising Sun Regional Foundation, and Bayer's Feed a Bee program).



## Webster Woods Nature Preserve

Frogs, salamanders, and turtles thrive in this forest. When you hike our trail through the quiet of the forest, keep an eye out for "vernal pools" - the small bodies of water that dry up each summer. They are perfect places for frogs and others to lay their eggs. Find out more about the preserve from the students' podcast and video.



## Hilltop Farm Nature Preserve

Hilltop Farm offers you miles of hiking trails through woods and prairie, restored native pollinator habitats, forests, and more. We regularly see native bees and butterflies, turtles, turkey, and a wide diversity of native wildflowers. The students' podcast tells about the history of the preserve and provides all you need to plan your visit. Listen at our website.

Listen to the students' podcasts and watch their videos on our website - it's all available at [www.oakheritageconservancy.org](http://www.oakheritageconservancy.org). Simply click "Find Parks" and choose "Nature Seek Podcast and Videos." Photos on this page by Hanover College students and Chrys Cook.

# Research at Our Old Growth Forest

Eastern red-backed salamanders (*P. cinereus*) seem like rather shy creatures.

They live in forests, and spend their days under rocks and logs throughout spring and fall. At night, they come out to forage in the leaf litter. In winter and summer, they take shelter in burrows created by worms or insects.

These photos offer a rare glimpse of the juvenile and adult. The photos were taken by Brian P. Waldron, a PhD candidate at Ohio University.

He will be studying the salamanders at sites all over the Midwest this year – including our old growth forest at Guthrie Woods Nature Preserve in Jennings County.

The preserve feels like an ideal site: it was protected in 1925 for the Nature Study Club of Indiana, and for wildlife.

Waldron wants to understand how this tiny salamander’s population is spread all around the Midwest. He studies “biogeography” - that’s the study of the distributions of life on earth.

“We seek to answer the seemingly simple question,” says Waldron: “Why are species where they are? And, why do they not occur elsewhere?”

For a small terrestrial salamander, *P. cinereus* has an impressive geographic range. They are found as far south as North Carolina, as far north as southern Ontario and Quebec, and as far west as Minnesota and Illinois.

“Part of what makes this range so impressive is that most of it was covered in ice sheets as little as 12,000 years ago,” says Waldron.

“*P. cinereus* came to colonize these parts of its range relatively recently.” Based on previous genetic research,

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Two of our preserves are old growth forests. Their lush habitat is home to more wildlife than meets the eye. Here, an eastern red-backed salamander blends in with the leaf litter. Photo by Brian P. Waldron, who will be studying the salamanders at Guthrie Woods.



Photo by Brian P. Waldron

# Research at Old Growth, Continued

scientists believe that as the glaciers receded, the eastern red-backed salamander populations expanded from the southern Appalachians into the rest of its current range, including more southern sites such as Guthrie Woods.

Today, scientists like Waldron are collecting more genetic data from these sites near the edge of the species range to better understand how populations expanded.

Simply put, Waldron hopes to find out: “What routes did they take, and how quickly did they do it?”

These data can help scientists understand how individual populations fit into a greater context, and how they have traversed the changing landscape to occupy its current range.

“And as the climate continues to change, we can better predict how species distributions will respond,” says Waldron.

This year, Waldron will be taking DNA samples from sites like Guthrie Woods. Note: he will not be killing any salamanders.

Then, he’ll head back to the lab.

“It’s a wonderful balance of visiting the species in the field all across its range, and then spending time in the lab and at the computer to explain the patterns that I’ve observed.”

Look for updates about Waldron’s research and findings on our Facebook and Instagram pages. “Like” or “Follow” Oak Heritage today to see what the salamanders teach us.



Photo by Brian P. Waldron

*Join us for a Nature-Filled Night Out:  
Oak Heritage Annual Dinner  
Saturday, October 12, 2019, at 6pm  
Red Bicycle Hall  
Downtown Madison, Indiana*

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

- ▶ Presentation by Scott Russell Sanders about the natural history of the Ohio River. His short talk will be illustrated with photos by the beloved local photographer, Bernie Kasper.
- ▶ Fine dining with local beer and wine available,
- ▶ An evening in a restored 19th century venue,
- ▶ A nature-themed silent auction,
- ▶ An update on our conservation progress, and
- ▶ 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,



**OAK HERITAGE**  

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**C O N S E R V A N C Y**

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.

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(317) 258-5217

[www.oakheritageconservancy.org](http://www.oakheritageconservancy.org)

# Come Explore: Events in Nature

*Details at [www.oakheritageconservancy.org](http://www.oakheritageconservancy.org). All events are free, and everyone is welcome.*

## **September 15, 6:30pm - Monarch Butterfly Tagging**

Are you curious where the monarch butterflies go? Each Fall, they migrate through Indiana, en route to Mexico (their winter home). You can help scientists learn more about the butterflies' migration by "tagging" them. Join Oak Heritage and experts from the Indiana Wildlife Federation at Monarch Meadows Nature Preserve for this close encounter with monarchs.

## **Now through October 31 - Nature & Farm Photo Contest**

What makes you proud to live in Indiana? We love Indiana for all that it gives us: natural areas, farms, and endless excuses to spend time outside, exploring nature. This year, submit a photo that captures what makes you proud of this place we call home. Note: this year, we have a youth category!

All photos must be taken by amateurs, in Indiana. For details or to submit a photo, visit [www.oakheritageconservancy.org](http://www.oakheritageconservancy.org). The photo contest is a partnership with George Rogers Clark Land Trust, and made possible by the Indiana Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts.

## **October 12, 6pm - Oak Heritage Annual Dinner**

This event is one part fun, one part fundraiser.

Join us for food and fellowship with other nature lovers. The evening includes fine dining, a short talk by Scott Russell Sanders (illustrated with Bernie Kasper's photography), a nature-themed silent auction, local libations, and plenty of time to enjoy good company.

Last year, we broke our attendance record for the third straight year. Help us continue the streak: invite a friend along to the dinner. It's a fun night out!

Tickets are \$30 each. Mail in your check (or purchase tickets online) to reserve your seats today.

## **Monthly Outings on Our Preserves**

Each month, we invite you to visit one of our preserves. The hikes are led by volunteers. Enjoy a relaxed hike, conversation with fellow nature lovers, and perhaps learn a little along the way.

# Be A Part of Conservation - Join Oak Heritage Conservancy!

*Join a growing community of Oak Heritage members.  
Become a member today.*

You can now join, renew membership, and donate on our website, [www.oakheritageconservancy.org](http://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

\_\_\_\_ Family - \$40

\_\_\_\_ Benefactor - \$1000+

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Be the wind in our wings all year long!



Even \$5 per month  
can be a big gift for nature.

Plus, it's easy on the pocket book.  
Set your automatic monthly donation  
today at [www.oakheritageconservancy.org](http://www.oakheritageconservancy.org).



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