



OAK HERITAGE

CONSERVANCY

Protecting Southeast Indiana's Natural Heritage

Spring 2021

Celebrating Our 1,000th Acre Protected

One thousand acres. This winter, Oak Heritage crossed a major threshold, and we invite you to join us in celebrating.

“This feels like a big step – it shows that we’re gaining momentum for land conservation” says Andy Kain, president of Oak Heritage Conservancy.

“Last year, we broke our membership record by welcoming 50 new families, bringing us to over 145 member families. We protected over 200 new acres of land, which let us reach the 1,000-acre milestone. We

still have lots of work ahead, but it feels like we’re making progress for conservation.”

Kain points to a laundry list of goals for 2021, from tackling invasive species control projects at our preserves to building new trails and adding a planned giving program. All of that work is more feasible because of our growing base of supporters.

In fact: everything we’ve accomplished so far is because of our supporters. Richard and Karen Dickie, long time

Photo by Erin Schuerman, one of the winners of the 2020 Nature Photo Contest.



Oak Heritage members and board members, shared about how Oak Heritage has grown.

Richard says that at first, he was simply curious. “The main reason I went to that meeting was to figure out what we were going to do with our 78 acres when the time came,” says the retired teacher.

Before long, though, he was serving as the Board Secretary. “I thought, maybe I could be a part of this – part

of conservation in southeast Indiana.” Karen joined the Board as well, and served as Treasurer for years. In her first years, the membership roster was filled with about 30 devoted members. She’s delighted with how Oak Heritage is growing.

“I think that in these trying times, conservation is something that can bring people together. The land is a universal goal – and something we all need.”

Help Make Conservation Happen

Protecting 1,000 acres is an important milestone, but we have big goals ahead. If you’re looking for a way to make a difference, look no further. We want you to volunteer as a Preserve Steward.

“Of the many things to feel bad about right now, the way we treat the natural world is one of the most abiding and most serious. Rather than just feel bad, I’d like to do something about it with some like-minded people,” said Kate Johnson. Kate is one of our new Board members – and she’s volunteering as a Preserve Steward.

We’re looking for 5-8 more people to join Kate: folks who want a good excuse to spend time outside, getting to know one of our preserves and doing something tangible for nature.

Preserve Stewards are matched up with an Oak Heritage preserve. They

visit regularly (4+ times per year) to monitor what’s happening on the land. They look for good things like increased visitors and signs of wildlife as well as things that we need to address (i.e. litter along the road, invasive species spreading, etc.).

Preserve Stewards might also help maintain trails, post signage, cut back invasives, clean up litter, and take pictures for our outreach efforts. Most importantly, Preserve Stewards have the chance to get to know the preserve, and to help ensure its protection.

To volunteer, email us at oakheritageconservancy@gmail.com. We will host a training this Spring for all of our new Preserve Stewards (details to come).

Launching this volunteer program is possible thanks to support from the Rising Sun Regional Foundation.

Protecting the Family Land & Legacy

“From the time I was born until about 14, we spent every weekend, every summer at the farm,” says Hilary Beall, of Madison. She describes exploring the woods and helping her dad with work on the farm. “There are just a lot of memories there.”

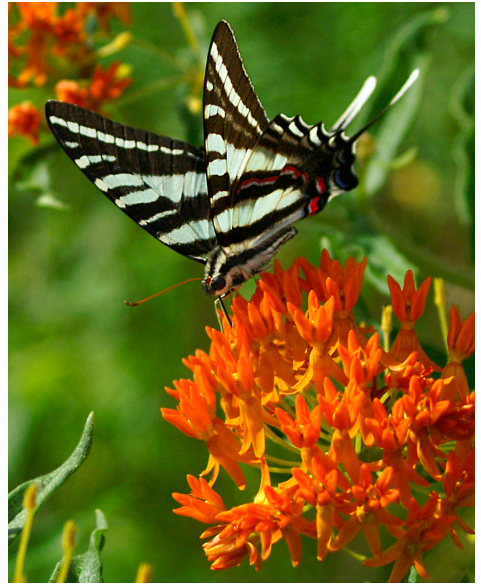
In December, Hilary protected that land forever by donating a Conservation Easement to Oak Heritage. Her donation pushed us over the 1,000 acre mark. She hopes that sharing her story will help others who are considering how to honor their families’ legacies.

The family farm, in Ripley County, includes over 200 acres of mature, rolling forest, a large lake bordered by woods and meadows, and farmland.

Hilary knew she wanted to protect her land, but she had some questions. “How do I do that? How do I find someone I trust? It’s something I’ve been thinking about for about probably 10-15 years.” Finding Oak Heritage was “a weight off of my shoulders.”

“Conservation is really important to me. It’s something that was really important to my father – but the family history, family memories – those are really important, too. To be able to solve both of them is great.”

Hilary’s family has deep roots in the area. Her ancestors acquired a portion of the land through the land grant, and her father added on to it. Now, she’s



Zebra swallowtail on butterfly weed in a forest opening on Hilary Beall’s newly conserved family land near Versailles. Photo by Hilary’s husband, Joe Tesoriero.

conserved the land forever.

The Easement protects the land from subdivision and development. Her donation helps us fulfill our mission: to protect the natural heritage of southeast Indiana. Hilary retains ownership. If she decides to sell, the easement is tied to the deed, so Oak Heritage will be there to protect the land in perpetuity.

A neighbor recently sent Hilary a video of her dad on a bulldozer, when the lake was under construction. “That was a massive undertaking. It was something he was passionate about. He put his mark on that place.”

Protecting the land with Oak Heritage “is my opportunity to put my mark on the land – or set its path forward.”

Reverse Field Trips Help Teachers Bring Nature to the Classroom for Grades 3-5

Guest Article by Kirsten Carlson

This winter, Oak Heritage launched our “Reverse Field Trips.” These lessons help 3-5th grade teachers bring nature to the classroom and meet Indiana science standards. The lessons are based on nationally-recognized curricula, but tailored to Indiana’s flora and fauna. Thanks to grant support from the Rising Sun Regional Foundation, we vetted these lessons with local 3rd-5th grade teachers. The lessons are available for free on our website. Try them in traditional classrooms, after school programs, and homeschool settings.

Kirsten Carlson, a longtime Oak Heritage member and life science instructor, helped develop the curriculum and co-presented the Reverse Field Trips at the Hoosier Association of Science Teachers winter conference. She writes:

A few years ago, a high school student excitedly told me that she was going to Costa Rica to see all the different wildlife there.

I shared my excitement for her and then asked: Did you know you have a Costa Rica in your yard?

She was puzzled. I said, I bet you could have just as many different critters in your yard - but you just don’t know it. She could only name the most common residents: robins, worms, ants, mosquitoes, bees.

I challenged her to enjoy the trip, and then find the “Costa Rica” in her yard.

This student’s thinking is common, especially with children. They have big, beautiful animals from around the world at their fingertips via TV and the Internet. But few can list the plants and animals in nearby habitats.

If we want current and future

generations to develop an intrinsic sense of place, respect, responsibility, and love for our local communities and ecosystems, we have to encourage a sense of wonder.

We must encourage them to investigate the living and non-living connections that tie us to the land.

Just the other day, I saw a “rat”- looking critter going in and out of a bush (to get the birdseed I scattered for the ground-feeding birds).

I took a few pictures, and used the photos to take measurements of its length. I magnified the picture to see if it had hair on its tail and the color of its feed and belly. With help from a couple of websites, I finally decided upon a wood rat.

I was so excited! I read that these creatures are beneficial to the community: prey, herbivore, seed disperser, home-builder for other



animals, and it's a pack rat. Here's another species that I live with!

My husband joined in and did his own research: disease carrier, chews wires...we need to get rid of it. Ah, no: It's part of the community and it stays. Teaching an old dog new tricks is hard, but teaching young pups the way of the world is a whole lot easier.

Reverse Field Trips can help. We take ecological concepts and make them local. Students and their teachers begin to develop an appreciation for the community in which we are a

part without having to "go see nature" in far off place. Nature happens everywhere, including southeast Indiana.

We are currently seeing the largest rate of extinction of this world's biodiversity. To preserve our future as a species, we must start close to home learning to wonder who we share a habitat with. For that, my friends, we must allow our children to explore their curiosities. If they are not already, we must give them reason to be curious.



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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.

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Facebook & Instagram: [@oakheritageconservancy](#)
www.oakheritageconservancy.org

Socially Distanced Events in Nature

Events are free. RSVP required. Details: www.oakheritageconservancy.org



March 17 - April 22 - Jefferson Co. Park Hop

The Park Hop is a scavenger hunt for the whole family. Kids explore parks and earn prizes. New: a journal to record your observations. Kid friendly!



TBA - Trail Building Volunteer Days

Help expand the trails at Webster Woods Nature Preserve. Funded with support from the Community Foundation of Madison and Jefferson County.



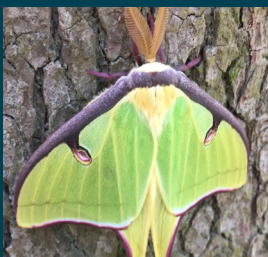
April 10 & 18 - Spring Wildflower Walks

Join new Oak Heritage Board member Jamie Schantz for casual wildflower walks at Sunman's Woods and Leblene Woods Nature Preserves. There are no trails at either preserve, but the woods have an open understory. Plan to walk 1-2 miles. Kid friendly!



Through April - Photo Exhibit & Challenge

Vote for a Grand Prize Winner, and sign on for an Earth Day Every Day Challenge. Activities are made possible in part by the Indiana Arts Commission, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.



May 19, 9:30pm - A Night of Nocturnal Insects

Moths, cicadas, beetles, and more. Join Glené Mynhardt, an entymologist at Hanover College and a new Oak Heritage board member, for a peek at the night life that surrounds us. Glené and her students will set up sheets with black lights to attract nocturnal insects. Kid friendly!

Photos by: John Krantz, Liz Brownlee, Stephen Glasser, Zolt Levay, and Public Commons

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Celebrate Earth Day. Join the Flock.



Photo by Angela Eveslage

Become a Member today.

You can join, renew membership, and set up monthly giving online at 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

____ Individual - \$25

____ Family - \$40

____ Cornerstone - \$100-\$499

____ Sponsor - \$500 - \$999

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*Natural Insect Hop!
and
Get Outside this Spring with
Wildflower Walks,*