

SHIRLEY HEINZE LAND TRUST

Annual Donor Appreciation Day

Shirley Heinze Land Trust hosted its annual donor appreciation hike and luncheon at Ambler Flatwoods property east of Michigan City recently. The site was designated a state-dedicated nature preserve in a gala ceremony in 2006. The Heinze Trust owns and manages the nearly 200-acre Ambler nature preserve. State recognition attests to the importance of its biological resources and assures the highest level of protection in the future.

Over 60 Heinze Trust donors were offered a guided hike of the nature preserve by staff and volunteers. *Screw stem* and *starflower* were among the rare plants donors were able to view during the course of the hike. After the hike concluded, Heinze Trust supporters were treated to chilled gazpacho for lunch at Red Mill County Park. It was a refreshing treat on such a hot and humid day. After lunch, Kris Krouse, Executive Director and stewardship program manager, Paul Quinlan delivered a brief presentation to highlight key accomplishments of the organization over the past year. Kris Krouse commented, “Our donors truly appreciate the opportunity to see our restoration work up close and hear firsthand about our successes.”

Ambler Flatwoods nature preserve is the Heinze Trust’s largest and perhaps most ecologically diverse site. It is the largest protected example of one of Indiana’s rarest natural communities-flatwoods typical of woodlands at more northern latitudes. It is generally described as a “boreal flatwoods,” a poorly drained forest with an extremely rich plant community. Some species are typical of places far to the north, including Labrador and Newfoundland. Others are at the southern limit of their range. It is the largest such protected landscape in Indiana and one that is very rare in the Chicago region.

Surveys have found about 260 native plant species, including club mosses, paper birch, sedges, white pine and a variety of wildflowers. Ambler also provides habitat for thriving populations of reptiles, amphibians, butterflies and moths. This fascinating and unusual place was identified by the state Department of Natural Resources’ Natural Areas Inventory in the 1980s. The Heinze Trust assembled the preserve from four parcels acquired since 1999 in partnership with state and federal conservation agencies and a private land protection organization.

A trail system allows visitors to experience Ambler Flatwoods while protecting its fragile habitats. A loop trail can be accessed from the trailhead parking lot on Freyer Road (County Road 900 N). A through trail begins at one end of the loop trail and extends south through the property to the trailhead parking lot on Meer Road (County Road 600 W). Ambler Flatwoods Nature Preserve is open to the public from sunrise to sunset for non-consumptive recreation (e.g. no hunting, fishing, collecting etc.). Hiking, skiing, bird watching and photography are all allowed. Motorized vehicles are not.

Since 1981, Shirley Heinze Land Trust has preserved, protected and restored natural lands in the southern Lake Michigan watershed since 1981. It has preserved over 1,000 acres, representing a great variety of landscapes and natural communities: tallgrass prairie and oak savanna, interdunal ponds and woodlands, boreal flatwoods and dune-and-swale, and numerous types of wetlands. Five of the properties it owns and manages are dedicated Indiana State Nature Preserves.

To learn more about Shirley Heinze Land Trust properties in LaPorte, Porter and Lake Counties, please visit www.heinzetrust.org, contact us at (219) 879-4725 or e-mail land@heinzetrust.org

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