• Dream Big!
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• Volunteer Profile: Peggy Foster
The aerial photo on the cover shows Meadowbrook Nature Preserve, a place that is near and dear to my heart and has become my second home! We acquired the initial property – a 74-acre former Girl Scout camp – in January of 2013. Just closing the deal at first seemed an insurmountable task; it involved multiple partners and donors and required complicated real estate and financial transactions that we’d never attempted before. Then we began transforming the place into our new organizational headquarters and a regional hub for land conservation. More than one hundred volunteers undertook renovation projects, and a successful capital campaign brought in new resources. Now, six years later, Meadowbrook has grown to 224 acres, and thousands more local residents are engaged in land conservation. Without a doubt, our success at Meadowbrook was a game-changer for Shirley Heinze Land Trust.

It set the stage for even more strategic initiatives. We took on the East Branch of the Little Calumet River, a riparian corridor where we have now protected over 450 acres and connected properties owned by other conservation entities. Much of the river is now accessible to kayakers and canoeists. We also expanded geographically into St. Joseph County with the acquisition of Lydick Bog, recently dedicated as our sixth state nature preserve. Now we are setting our sights on even more ambitious plans and developing strategies to further build upon each of these conservation hubs.

At Meadowbrook we are developing a master plan to guide our improvements there. A major reforestation project begun in 2015 continues to show impressive progress. The already extensive trail system will be enhanced. Facilities for educational programming and citizen science projects will be augmented. Public access and engagement with local residents are priorities. Earlier this year we received a generous gift specifically designated for these purposes.

In the Little Calumet River Corridor, we’ve opened up new opportunities for outdoor recreation and begun restoration of large swaths of wetlands and former agricultural fields. Climate science is being integrated into our management plans to make our preserves more resilient to changing weather patterns. We are assessing wetlands to determine what sites have the greatest potential to provide flood storage and be successful wetland mitigation projects.

Our vision for Lydick Bog goes well beyond protecting one of the few remaining high-quality bogs in the state. We hope to acquire adjoining natural lands and open space to create wildlife corridors and buffers. Agricultural fields will be reforested, and invasive plant species will be removed from wetlands and forested areas. A master plan for public access improvements has already been created. The overwhelming public support for our work at Lydick makes us confident we can successfully engage new partners and the broader community in our conservation work.

So, now take another look at the cover. The growth we attained in six short years at Meadowbrook was beyond our wildest dreams when it all began in 2013. Why shouldn’t we expect similar success at our other two hubs? All three are associated with a single geographical feature, a moraine. This band of debris was left by retreating glaciers thousands of years ago and stretches all the way to Michigan. Maybe one day they could all form one interconnected expanse of protected forest and wetlands, a wonderland for nature and humans alike. Why not dream big?

I’m confident we can accomplish anything we set our minds to thanks to the collective and unwavering support of so many partners, volunteers, donors, and people who simply value our work.

Thank you!
Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve in Gary

We’re connecting more pieces along the East Branch of the Little Calumet River, moving closer to our vision of a protected river corridor. This spring we purchased thirty-four acres of wetlands and floodplain along the river in Chesterton. The property consists of three separate parcels, situated immediately south of the intersection of I-94 on either side of State Road 49.

The acquisition is significant in that it will help connect our 66-acre Keith Richard Walner Nature Preserve, located just west of SR49, to a number of our other properties to the east, including the 87-acre Wykes-Plampin Nature Preserve, the 165-acre Dale B. Engquist Nature Preserve, as well as the 42-acre J. Timothy Ritchie Nature Preserve, located along Sand Creek, which flows into the Little Calumet River nearby. It will become an important part of the management of the wetlands and the river, including control of invasive species and reintroduction of native plants.

The property was purchased from the Diocese of Gary, with funding from the Laura Hare Charitable Trust. A portion of the acquisition runs along the private grounds of the Catholic Community of St. Patrick in Chesterton. Father Jon Plavcan, Pastor of St. Patrick Church says, “It is wonderful that we were able to offer the wetlands around Saint Patrick Catholic Community to Shirley Heinze Land Trust for its present and future protection. The educational possibilities for our students in learning more about wetlands and how to care for nature is a gift to all of us.” Richard Rupcich, Principal at St. Patrick School adds, “I am very excited about the possibilities for our students. Our campus, with its expanse of wetlands, native plants, various forms of wildlife, as well as access to the Calumet River, lends itself to a great backdrop for environmental science.”

The rich wetland complex found here makes it a spectacular place for paddling, fishing, and birding. The new property may be viewed by paddlers on the river. Nearby Walner and Wykes-Plampin Preserves offer access to the river for paddling and fishing.

If you’ve visited Seidner Dune & Swale Nature Preserve in Hammond in the past, you could be forgiven for wondering if you were trespassing on a work site instead of entering a beautiful state dedicated nature preserve.

Due to the surrounding industry and roads, this special place doesn’t reveal itself until you have passed through a chain link fence, and walked a short distance down a gravel road.

Now, thanks to funding from a Legacy Foundation grant, we have designed and installed new preserve and interpretive signage, and improved access with a new people gate. The chain link fence remains, for contractors and staff who need to access the preserve with equipment, but the fence now sports a sign with access information for Seidner and the DNR and Nature Conservancy properties beyond.

New signage has also been installed at Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve in Gary. We invite you to visit these beautiful preserves soon!

Learn more about these places at heinzetrust.org/nature-preserves.
Dedications, Three Ways

We’ve had quite a busy season of dedication celebrations! In May, our Sand Creek Nature Preserve in Chesterton was renamed in honor of the late J. Timothy Ritchie, a long-time friend and generous patron. Supporters and friends gathered in Chesterton to dedicate the 42-acre nature preserve in his name. Tucked within a neighborhood, a .82 mile trail traverses the property.

In mid-August, more than 100 people joined us to celebrate the dedication of Lydick Bog Nature Preserve, located near South Bend, as an Indiana State Nature Preserve. This special designation from the Indiana Department of Nature Preserves, bestows extra protections on the 178-acre preserve and its natural communities.

Remarks were given by Ron Hellmich, newly appointed Director, Division of Nature Preserves of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Roger Hedge, Ecologist with the Natural Heritage Program of the DNR, and Scott Namestnik, a local botanist who was instrumental in the discovery and protection of the property, told the story of the discovery of this special place.

Guided hikes were offered on the newly-opened 1.4 mile loop trail that traverses the lovely upland forest here. Stay tuned for further public access enhancements, including more trail signage, a parking lot, and a boardwalk!

On a beautiful late August afternoon, we gathered to dedicate the trail at Cressmoor Prairie Nature Preserve in Hobart in honor of the late Keith Board, whose legendary “botanizing” explorations resulted in the discovery of this rare remnant of black soil prairie. Keith’s son Brandon read the speech that his father delivered at the original dedication of the nature preserve twenty-three years ago. Life Board member Myrna Newgent, who was Board President at that time, also spoke, along with Tom Post, DNR Regional Ecologist, and botanist Nathanael J. Pilla, of Orbis Environmental Consulting. Guided hikes of the trail offered views of the prairie in its late summer finery, the tall grasses waving in the wind, and purple and yellow wildflowers visited by colorful butterflies.

Guests at the dedication event hold up photos of Tim Ritchie in celebration

Scott Namestnik tells the story of discovering Lydick Bog

DNR Ecologist Derek Nimetz leads hikers on the Keith Board Nature Trail at Cressmoor Prairie

Did you know?

With the dedication of Lydick Bog, six Shirley Heinze Land Trust nature preserves are now state-dedicated. Cressmoor Prairie in Hobart, Seidner Dune & Swale in Hammond, John Merle Coulter in Portage, and Barker Woods and Ambler Flatwoods in Michigan City, have all been dedicated to the people of Indiana as state nature preserves. For information on visiting our preserves, go to heinzetrust.org.
Making a Difference

by Jaimee Janiga, Education Assistant

Our stewardship staff are passionate individuals who care deeply about the environment and want to make a difference by caring for the natural areas of our region. Much of their hard work happens deep in the heart of each of our nature preserves, places off the trail that few ever see. To get a sense of what this work is like, we followed along with them to experience a typical “day in the boots” of the stewardship crew.

It’s a cool, summer morning and the eleven-member crew is starting the day with a group meeting. They will determine the locations and work that are most pressing, and divide up the work. Crew members Allison Visnyak, Cody Banks, and Deirdre James load up the Ford 150 pickup truck, or Daisy as they call her, with equipment and supplies. They will head to Wykes-Plampin Nature Preserve in Chesterton. Their plan is to help prevent the spread of an invasive plant, purple loosestrife, on this 87-acre wetland preserve along the Little Calumet River. *Lythrum salicaria* spreads profusely, choking out healthy wetland ecosystems that provide critically important habitat for many species of fish, birds, mammals, and insects. A single patch left untreated can spread to cover a site in one growing season.

With heavy packs of herbicide on their backs, they head into a dense area of the preserve. As the day heats up, they cross through water and mud, branches, leaves, and thorns on the hunt for patches of purple loosestrife to treat. The wet, muddy ground makes it difficult to move forward. Deirdre leads the way to the largest patches. Cody identifies plants along the way. Allison keeps an eye on the team to make sure they are staying safe.

Throughout the day as they work, dragonflies follow them from time to time. They hear and see woodpeckers perched at the tops of dead trees in the marsh. As they witness this beautiful, peaceful, wetland, teeming with a multitude of plants and wildlife, they are rewarded with the knowledge that they are indeed, making a difference.

Annual Stewardship Gathering

by Cody Banks, Stewardship Technician

As everyone arrived around midday on the 21st, we got to know each other over lunch and a hike around Meadowbrook where a nearly constant discussion of management tactics was held. Later, we took a trip to Indiana Dunes State Park and hiked to the lakeshore so those who traveled from farther away had a chance to see the dunes and Lake Michigan. That night, our guests camped at Meadowbrook where we held further discussions about land management. With the help of the National Park Service and the Northwest Indiana Paddling Association, the next day included a beautiful paddle down the Little Calumet River where we were able to talk about the work that we and other groups have done to preserve lands along the river. This was followed by a hike around the unique dune and swale habitat around the Douglas Center in Gary, and hikes through our Greiner and Cressmoor Nature Preserves in Hobart, where we were able to discuss the unique challenges associated with preserving lands in a residential area.

While this was a great opportunity to enjoy some gorgeous hikes and paddles, it was also a perfect chance to hear from people who do work similar to ours. We hope that our guests were able to gain as much insight into our shared issues as our own staff did. Hopefully next year’s stewardship gathering, which will be hosted by a different organization, will attract an even larger group of people eager to share their ideas about the best ways to preserve the land that we all care about.
Peggy Foster recalls that she was first inspired by nature when she was in the first grade. She has a vivid memory of digging into the soil and being fascinated by the different layers. She recounts this childhood memory now, just as you might expect this veteran Master Gardener/Master Naturalist would, by describing those layers she observed, as the organic matter, the topsoil, the subsoil, and on down.

Growing up in Hammond, her interest in the outdoors continued to grow through her experiences in Girl Scouts, earning badges and going to camp. It made an impression. The natural world continues to call, and Peggy has followed. She is “drawn to the activities of its inhabitants, every little bitty thing,” she says. From the seasonal awakening of plants, to the migration of birds, being in nature to her is “being fully whole, and in balance and harmony.”

This passion for nature was fueled by a mentor, Joy Bower, longtime Naturalist at Gibson Woods, and it led Peggy to become a Certified Purdue Master Gardener in 2007. In addition, she earned the Certified Indiana Advanced Master Naturalist status. Both of these programs require hours of training, testing, and then lots of volunteering, and Peggy has taken that mission to heart. Since 2004 she has been a member and past Vice-President of the Gibson Woods Chapter of Wild Ones, a national organization that promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to encourage biodiversity through the use of native plant communities. She continues to serve as the volunteer Manager, Coordinator, and Trainer for the greenhouse at Gibson Woods Nature Preserve in Hammond. She has also designed and implemented native plantings at Deep River County Park in Hobart, and finds time to be the caretaker for the park’s native garden bed.

Seven years ago, Peggy and her husband Sam moved to Porter County, “for some more acreage, a property we could rework and a house to remodel,” she says. The land had been farmed as a cornfield, and they have now brought it back to its original natural habitat, restoring a small meadow and planting a number of beds of native plants on the property.

And here’s where the story brings Peggy to us. Her new home settled, she began looking for additional volunteer activities nearby. We are fortunate that she heard about a seed cleaning workshop offered at Meadowbrook. “This was right in my wheelhouse,” she says, and she was also curious to see the moraine landscape here. That was four years ago, and Peggy has since become a regular, dependable, and committed member of the team.

Peggy enjoys the variety of volunteer opportunities, from workdays at Barker Woods Nature Preserve in Michigan City, where volunteers have been cleaning up and restoring the old greenhouse and other historic structures; to the weekly Meadowbrook Mondays, maintaining the native plant gardens on the premises by weeding, mulching, identifying plants, and she adds, “having great educational and motivational conversation while on task with other volunteers.” The rain garden near the parking lot is one of her favorites, as is seed gathering, cleaning and dispersal. She also enjoys tasks such as preparing the lodge for various gatherings, and as if all of these activities weren’t enough, Peggy also serves as a Preserve Steward at Walnut Woods Nature Preserve, visiting regularly and reporting any issues to staff.

Topping all of this off is her positive attitude and cheerful disposition, which have helped to nurture a wonderful spirit of camaraderie. “Inspiration is always nearby,” she says. “Smiles abound and get bigger with a day’s accomplishments.” Peggy adds, “It is a joy to work with Christine [Volunteer Coordinator Christine Maloney]. Her leadership and great enthusiasm keep us on track on our journey.”

Peggy was recently honored as our 2019 Volunteer of the Year. She encourages others to get involved. “One can be welcomed at any level of interest and grow through the years. The beginning is the best place to be. Lend your talent, start a new path!”
For the second year, Shirley Heinze Land Trust is partnering with the Indiana Audubon Society to study the Northern Saw-whet Owl in the Valparaiso Moraine and Indiana Dunes. These small owls are common and widespread, but their secretive lifestyle makes population trends difficult to identify with common bird count protocols.

The banding station at Meadowbrook Nature Preserve will operate nightly in October and November, and we will offer opportunities for the public to observe these migratory owls on select evenings. Check out our Facebook for scheduled presentations, and sign up to receive alerts when an owl can be observed by visiting http://bit.do/owlalert

Register online at www.heinzetrust.org.
RSVPs are requested no later than Wednesday, October 30th. Please contact Bonnie Hawksworth for more information at bhawksworth@heinzetrust.org or 219-242-8558
**Carol Lerner**

We remember Carol Lerner, who passed away in January. Carol was member of Shirley Heinze Land Trust’s board of trustees from 2001 until 2006. She was also a talented author, artist, and naturalist, who wrote and illustrated eighteen children’s nature books, and illustrated several more during a thirty-plus year career. She shared her talents with us for a number of years in the form of a newsletter nature essay, often accompanied by one of her sketches. This story about female birdsong ran in the spring issue of 2010.

*She Sings Too ~ by Carol Lerner*

One of the pleasures of spring is the explosion of bird song that heralds the season. We look to males for most of the singing. Males that breed in the area, whether year-round residents or summer visitors, use their voices to repel would-be competitors from their chosen territory. Equally important, they sing to impress a female, to entice her to join him in the demanding business of parenting a new generation. The vigorous songster advertises his fitness as breeder and defender, while the female silently weighs his apparent assets and makes her choice.

But not all female birds are mute observers of their vocalizing mates, and some male-female exchanges are prolonged and elaborate. The purpose of these complex dialogs is not obvious. Are they simply instances of pair bonding?

Donald Kroodsma has spent his academic life trying to unlock the mysteries of bird song and the purposes it may serve. In his recent book, *The Singing Life of Birds* (Houghton Mifflin, 2005), he describes his investigations of two of our resident bird species that engage in prolonged male-female duets.

Many of us have heard pairs of barred owls booming from the woods in cacophonous conversation, the familiar "Who cooks for you-all" sometimes giving way to "hoo-whoos, hoots, shrills, and tremulous wailings." Though the female may be a third larger than her mate, the pitch of her voice is higher. Kroodsma assures us that the difference will be apparent if we listen for it. He further asserts that her voice can be distinguished by her prolonged drawl on the "you-allllll" accompanied by a definite vibrato.

The duets of paired cardinals are considerably more euphonious. The male, perched on a high branch, opens the conversation on an early spring morning. Kroodsma distinguishes eight to ten different songs, delivered with many repetitions, in his repertoire. Then the female, hidden in a shrub, joins in—quietly at first, sometimes matching her mate song for song, sometimes overlapping her song with his. Finally she repeats her song four times in rapid succession and with increasing volume, and apparently calls the duet to an end.

Just what, asks Kroodsma, was going on here? Was she testing him? Evaluating his responses? Did he measure up? It does appear that she had the last word.

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An IRA Charitable Rollover can be an excellent tax strategy for donors 70 1/2 and older who wish to support Shirley Heinze Land Trust.

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**How do you make this gift?** As IRA rollover gifts must be transferred directly from your IRA to us, contact your IRA plan administrator to let them know of your intentions. If you’d like to send a letter, we offer a sample letter you may utilize to initiate the transfer. Please contact us after you direct the transfer so we can look for the check from your IRA administrator.

**How will Shirley Heinze recognize this gift?** Your gift will be recognized in our annual report and will support our work to protect natural lands in Lake, Porter, LaPorte and St. Joseph Counties.

Important: Please be sure to check with your financial advisor to determine whether this gift plan is right for you. This information is not meant as tax or legal advice.

For more information, please call the office at 219-242-8558.

In advance, thank you!
The pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) is an iconic Hoosier tree found throughout the state in rich, damp soil, often along streams. It’s not very imposing in height – twenty feet is typical – but the mature tree is usually surrounded by an eye-catching thicket of clones, each bedecked with drooping, foot-long leaves that are dark green in color. These “pawpaw patches” are easy to spot and can be quite dramatic from midsummer to fall when the trees bear clusters of large, heavy fruits shaped somewhat like sweet potatoes. The biggest ones can be six to ten inches in length.

The pawpaw is the most northerly member of a family of fruit trees common in the tropics. The fruit is covered in a hard skin that changes from green to yellow to black as it develops to full ripeness in September or October. Inside are dark seeds suspended in an orange, custard-like flesh that is savored by both people and the creatures of the forest. Many compare the taste to some combination of pineapple, mango, and banana. Hence the fruit’s local nickname: Indiana banana.

This beloved tree figures prominently in Hoosier folklore. Generations of school children grew up repeating a nursery rhyme called “Way Down Yonder in the Pawpaw Patch,” based on a traditional song that probably dates to nineteenth-century Appalachia. Legendary Hoosier poet James Whitcomb Riley, popular around the turn of the twentieth century for his tales of the simple rural life in Indiana, made frequent references to the fruit and the patches they inhabit.

The pawpaw may not be very familiar to most modern Hoosiers, but it never lost its popularity among its most fervent supporters. And it may be on the threshold of a comeback as interest grows in local products, natural foods, and a healthier lifestyle.

Pawpaws are easy to find in the riparian habitat they favor here, and early indications suggest that spring’s heavy rainfall is producing a banner crop this year. Several patches can be found along the small streams at Meadowbrook Nature Reserve, and they are plentiful near the bridges at Coffee Creek Watershed Preserve. But before plucking a fruit to taste at home, be sure you know the landowner’s policy on foraging.

**Ron Trigg** is a past Executive Director and former board member of Shirley Heinze Land Trust. An author, photographer, and naturalist, he volunteers his photography and wordsmithing talents.