Imagine a river running through woodlands lush with ephemeral wildflowers. Beavers, muskrats, and mink ply its free flowing waters. The stream winds past a stand of trees where great blue herons come to nest. Adjacent wetlands are filled each spring with a chorus of calling frogs. Eagles eye the river from high in the treetops, eager to swoop down and snatch a fish out of the currents. Turtles bask on semi-submerged logs. Migratory birds cavort in joyous song. Coyotes howl in the night. Tall grasses nod in the wind at prairie pockets along the floodplain periphery.

These idyllic scenes once existed along the entire length of the Little Calumet River. Then came decades of disrespect. Its waters were polluted with industrial waste and agricultural runoff. Suburban housing tracts encroached onto floodplain never meant for development. Parts of the river were straightened, making it more a drainage ditch than a wild natural stream. But, amazingly, you can still find all the natural wonders described above on parcels of riparian habitat protected by an array of private and public conservation entities.

Our dream is to connect these parcels with newly protected land, creating a ten-mile-long corridor of riverfront where nature prevails. We can’t hope to remake the wildness that existed before the arrival of European settlers, but we can provide a natural haven that offers many benefits: wildlife and bird habitat, reduction of flood impacts for nearby landowners, increased public access for recreation and education, improved air and water quality.

To that end, Shirley Heinze Land Trust led the charge – supported by more than twenty local partners – to have the river corridor designated a special conservation area for land acquisition funding under the Indiana Bicentennial Nature Trust. That successful effort led to the creation of a fund that makes money available to local land protection entities for acquisition of property in the corridor.

Shirley Heinze Land Trust began seriously pursuing riverfront property in 2009, and we continue those efforts. We recently obtained ten acres in Porter, directly across the river from Hawthorne Park. But other partners are also involved in this effort, some of them active for many years before our involvement. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore has preserved several spectacular properties in the corridor, including the Bailly Homestead/Chellberg Farm and Heron Rookery units. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources owns several parcels, including Reynolds Creek Gamebird Habitat Area. LaPorte County Parks controls the headwaters of the river at Red Mill Park. Other landowners are the Porter County Izaak Walton League, the Town of Porter, and Coffee Creek Watershed Conservancy.

As additional lands are acquired along the corridor, restoration efforts will be undertaken to enhance their natural qualities and protect native flora and fauna. Making the riverfront accessible for recreation is another important goal. There will be additional put-in sites for canoes and kayaks, more access for anglers, and enhanced trail systems.

Many opportunities to enjoy the corridor already exist. Why don’t you take advantage of them? May we suggest: a springtime wildflower walk at Heron Rookery, a paddle down the river from Little Calumet Wetlands, an exploration of our human history at Bailly Homestead, fishing for trout and salmon at numerous access points, birding during the spring and fall migrations, or a hike on the National Lakeshore’s Little Calumet River Trail.
J. Richard Brannan

He loved beauty . . . and his legacy lives on

Shirley Heinze Land Trust lost a dear friend with the passing of J. Richard Brannan on October 8, 2014. A resident of Dune Acres for forty-two years, he demonstrated his love of nature through his support of land conservation. After Richard’s death, we learned that he had designated a sizeable bequest for Shirley Heinze Land Trust to use in the fulfillment of our mission.

Brannan was born in Monmouth, Illinois, in 1936. He received his undergraduate and law degrees from Northwestern University, but he chose not to pursue a legal career. Instead, he used his talents in other ways. Richard made his living as an antique dealer – his specialty was English furniture, porcelain, and silver – but he found time for many other pursuits. He devoted himself to the study and enjoyment of the fine arts, he loved to learn about and travel to places far and near, and he took great pleasure in the natural delights of his own back yard.

“Richard loved beauty in all its forms,” says Timothy Ritchie, his partner for more than fifty years. “He listened to classical music, was very fond of reading, and he was fascinated by art, history, architecture, craftsmanship, gardening, and cooking. We enjoyed travel, and Richard loved the gardens in England and Scotland.

“The Indiana Dunes were very important to Richard,” Ritchie continues. “He loved to take walks in the area and learn about the local environment. We both were impressed by the work Shirley Heinze is doing to preserve these treasures. Richard felt that the best way to support land conservation in this area was to remember the Heinze Trust in his estate plan.”

“Shirley Heinze Land Trust is honored to receive Richard Brannan’s bequest,” Executive Director Kris Krouse says. “We are touched by his generosity, and we accept the gift as a challenge and an opportunity to redouble our efforts to save the special natural areas in Northwest Indiana that he loved. The kindness of people like Richard Brannan will make it possible for future generations to enjoy the beauty of nature in our area. His legacy will live on. We are very grateful.”

Join the Legacy Circle

There are a number of ways your estate plan can be tailored to meet your needs and benefit Shirley Heinze Land Trust.

– Make a charitable bequest in your will. This can be a fixed dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, or specific property, such as real estate or securities.
– Designate Shirley Heinze Land Trust as beneficiary of your IRA, 401(k), or other retirement plan.
– Name Shirley Heinze Land Trust the beneficiary of your insurance policy.

Consult with your financial planner or legal advisor to determine what option works best for you.
We're very excited to present our brand-new Guidebook to the Nature Preserves of Shirley Heinze Land Trust. This 92-page full-color publication contains trail maps, photographs, and information about how to visit and enjoy our nature preserves.

You'll find information about each property and the many partners and donors who help us acquire and protect these special places. You'll also learn about the origin of Shirley Heinze Land Trust, including the answer to the question, "Who Was Shirley Heinze?" And much more!

Production and printing of the guidebook were made possible by generous donations from the Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation and Northern Indiana Public Service Company. We are extremely grateful for their support.

You can own one of these shiny new guidebooks by making any donation to our Capital Campaign. If you've already made a donation, we thank you! You'll be receiving your copy in the mail soon. You can make a donation by visiting our website, www.heinzetrust.org/campaign.html. Or call us at 219-242-8558.

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REACHING FOR THE TOP

**Total raised as of August 21st:**

$3,191,791

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Capital Campaign Update

What started as a hopeful sapling planted three years ago among our strongest friends and supporters has matured into a mighty tree nurtured by a root system that spreads throughout our region. Shirley Heinze Land Trust had never attempted a capital campaign before, and we weren’t sure how one would be received. Our goal of $3.5 million was daunting. Could we even come close to such a number?

Well, we have an answer now. Northwest Indiana has responded with a rousing demonstration of support! As of August 2015, we’ve raised nearly $3.2 million, about ninety percent of our goal. Most of that total is designated for land acquisition, and we’ve already added 195 acres to our holdings of protected natural land. About $450,000 will go to our stewardship program to fund the management of those precious acres. More than $200,000 will support environmental education activities.

The contributions have come in many forms: cash and stock gifts from individual supporters, donations from corporate entities, foundation support and grants, gifts of land, and bargain sale donations from property sellers. All are important, and all are pushing us toward our goal.

We’re exhilarated by our success thus far. But we still have a way to go. Shirley Heinze Land Trust needs your help to ensure that we will be able to fulfill our mission for years to come. Your donation could be the one to put us over the top! Go to our website www.heinzetrust.org to learn how you can support the campaign.

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PRESERVE GUIDE

NOW AVAILABLE

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Guidebook to the Nature Preserves of Shirley Heinze Land Trust

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Eric Bird is new Stewardship Director

Joining our staff in August was Eric Bird, who has become the new Director of Stewardship. A longtime resident of Cedar Lake, Eric brings to the job a wealth of skills and experience and a knowledge of the natural history of our area.

Growing up in what was then a semi-rural setting, Eric loved to explore the local woods, meadows, and wetlands. That’s when he developed an interest in nature, particularly the plant world. He worked for several years at an orchard and a commercial nursery. Then Eric headed to Purdue University at West Lafayette, where he earned an associate’s degree in interdisciplinary agriculture. Those early jobs ultimately proved unsatisfying. “I didn’t want to go back into the commercial world of marketing plants,” Eric says. “I wanted to get deeper into the sciences, learn about restoration ecology, and do field research.” He enrolled at Purdue University Calumet as an undergraduate student in the Department of Biological Sciences.

Eric enjoyed outstanding success at PUC, eventually earning both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in biology. He was awarded a Flora Richardson Foundation fellowship to fund his thesis research. As an undergraduate, he was named departmental student of the year and was a research assistant, participating in various field projects at sites throughout Northwest Indiana. As a graduate student, Eric was a teaching assistant responsible for microbiology and ecology laboratory courses.

While still earning his master’s, Eric took a job as field assistant with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, working under regional ecologist Derek Nimetz. There he gained experience in invasive species control, prescribed fire, and rare species monitoring at high-quality sites featuring the same ecosystems as Heinze Trust nature preserves. Eric later worked as a restoration technician for The Nature Conservancy at Indian Boundary Prairies in Illinois.

Most people can identify a person who played a key role in their professional development. For Eric, that person is Dr. Young Choi. “Professor Choi was definitely my mentor at PUC,” Eric says. “He passed on his love for ecological science and opened doors for me in field research and the classroom. I wouldn’t be where I am today without his reliable support.”

Eric is starting his new job with great enthusiasm. “I’m passionate about land conservation, and working for Shirley Heinze gives me a terrific opportunity to have a positive impact on the natural resources of the region where I grew up.”

Welcome on board, Eric! We’re pleased to have you as part of our family.

WANT TO BECOME A VOLUNTEER?

If you’d like to get out of the house and do some field work for Shirley Heinze Land Trust, we’d be happy to have your help. A volunteer workday is scheduled one Saturday a month (typically 10am-3pm, Central Time) at one of our nature preserves.

You don’t need any special skills; we’ll provide equipment and training. We can also arrange individual volunteer opportunities to suit your time schedule and special skills. Once you are on our mailing list, you’ll receive regular notification of volunteer workdays by email.

For information, call 219-242-8558 or visit our website: www.heinzetrust.org.

WISH LIST

You can help Shirley Heinze Land Trust by donating equipment that will assist in fulfilling our mission. If you have any of the items below – or are able to finance their purchase – we’d be very grateful. All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

- Snowmobile
- Flat-bottom jon boat
- Hand-held spotlight
- Crosscut paper shredder for small to medium office
Wetland Restoration Begins Along Grand Calumet

A multi-year sediment remediation project authorized by the Great Lakes Legacy Act continues to make impressive progress on the Grand Calumet River. The cleanup project is jointly managed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. Hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of contaminated sediment have been removed from the river channel.

Dredging has recently been completed between Kennedy and Cline Avenues in Lake County. That portion of the waterway now boasts 1.8 miles of clean river running past some 300 acres of rare dune-and-swale nature preserves managed by The Nature Conservancy, Indiana DNR, and the Heinze Trust. These conservation entities will partner in long-term stewardship, working to maintain the ecological improvements that the remediation project has provided.

As part of the project, contaminated material was eliminated from the floodplain at Shirley Heinze Land Trust’s Seidner Dune & Swale Nature Preserve. The floodplain area, which makes up nearly half of our 43-acre property, had been overgrown with hybrid cattail and invasive Phragmites. Work has now begun to restore it to a complex of emergent marsh and wet prairie with open water and islands that will provide habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife.

The growing presence of wildlife along the riverfront demonstrates its improving environmental health. Herons, egrets, and cormorants are seen with increasing frequency. Bald eagles regularly perch at the tops of riverside trees. A rare willet was recently sighted. The ongoing wetland restoration should attract even larger numbers of waterfowl and other birds.

For decades, the Grand Calumet River was an embarrassing eyesore and public health hazard. Its resurrection as a healthy wildlife habitat with great potential for recreational use is a remarkable achievement. It’s really good news for Northwest Indiana!

New Grant Will Fund Restoration and Acquisition at LaPorte County Sites

The Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) program has awarded $117,000 to Shirley Heinze Land Trust to fund restoration activities at Ambler Flatwoods Nature Preserve and three newly acquired properties in LaPorte County. The grant will also permit the acquisition of privately owned boreal flatwoods parcels adjacent to the current preserve.

The project has three components: 1) restoration of seventeen acres at Ambler Flatwoods to complete work begun under a 2011 SOGL grant; 2) initial management of three recently acquired properties nearby, totaling ninety-three acres; and 3) the protection of as many as thirty-five acres of boreal flatwoods habitat now outside the preserve.

Ambler Flatwoods Nature Preserve is the jewel in Shirley Heinze Land Trust’s crown, our largest property with more than 350 acres. The protection of boreal flatwoods habitat, one of the state’s rarest natural communities, is among our highest priorities. The new SOGL grant adds significantly to our abilities to enlarge and protect this important natural resource.

Earlier SOGL grants have benefited Shirley Heinze restoration work in the Hobart Marsh area of Lake County and at the Great Marsh and Meadowbrook Preserves in Porter County.
BUILDING THE CONSERVATIONISTS OF THE FUTURE

The 2014-2015 school year was another banner year for the Northwest Indiana Mighty Acorns Partnership. More than 3,500 elementary students benefited from the program in the public schools of East Chicago, Gary, Hammond, Hobart, Michigan City, and Portage, as well as the Discovery Charter School in Porter and the Charter School of the Dunes in Gary.

The Mighty Acorns curriculum, which had been in use for twenty-two years, was completely overhauled this summer. Teachers and staff will be transitioning into the new system for the 2015-2016 school year.

Created around the idea of connecting urban youth with nature, Mighty Acorns is a conservation education program that engages third- through sixth-grade students and teachers through classroom lessons in environmental science and hands-on stewardship activities. Dunes Learning Center, the Field Museum of Chicago, and Shirley Heinze Land Trust comprise the local partnership. The Northwest Indiana Mighty Acorns Partnership has grown to become the largest provider of the program in the Chicago region.

Major funding for the Northwest Indiana Mighty Acorns Partnership is provided by ArcelorMittal. Additional financial support has come from generous grants from the Indiana Lake Michigan Coastal Program, the Legacy Foundation of Lake County, the Porter County Community Foundation, and Foundations of East Chicago.

The Partnership is also providing environmental education programs for high school students and middle schoolers. Calumet Is My Backyard (CIMBY) is serving more than 150 students at Hammond Clark, Michigan City, and Westville High Schools. A pilot program called Earth Force was introduced to sixty-four students at Clark Middle School in Hammond.

Reforestation project underway at Meadowbrook

A major reforestation project at Meadowbrook Nature Preserve promises to return former agricultural fields to the morainal forest that once dominated the area. A major goal of the project is to enhance breeding habitat for forest birds. The 154-acre Meadowbrook property was acquired in two parcels by Shirley Heinze Land Trust in 2013-2014.

Initial work in Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 will focus on 60 acres of old field, beginning with the eradication of invasive species to reduce competition for the trees and shrubs to be introduced. This will be followed by the installation of bare-root seedlings and older trees in five-gallon containers. Some 29,000 trees will be planted, including white oak, red oak, sugar maple, black walnut, American hazelnut, black oak, tulip tree, shagbark hickory, black cherry, and flowering dogwood.

The reforestation will build on smaller-scale tree planting efforts that have been ongoing for two years. Scout troops and other volunteers have given their time and labor during several volunteer workdays at the site.

This project was made possible, in part, by funding and technical assistance made available as mitigation for impacts caused by the construction and maintenance of the 6B Pipeline by Enbridge Pipelines, LLC. The Conservation Fund and US Fish & Wildlife Service administer the mitigation fund.

“This grant gives a healthy kick start to our long-term hopes to improve woodland habitat in the greater moraine forest area of Porter and LaPorte Counties,” says Executive Director Kris Krouse. “Ultimately we’d like to connect blocks of forest habitat to provide greater space for birdlife and other animals to thrive. The project fits in well with the Moraine Forest Conservation Planning Project, begun in 2009, and other regional conservation efforts.”

The Indiana Department of Nature Preserves is also a partner in the project. The grant will fund reforestation on an 11.5-acre old field in the nearby Moraine Nature Preserve, a 465-acre natural area that has been dedicated as an Indiana state nature preserve.
EAGLE SIGHTINGS EVERYWHERE

Shirley Heinze Land Trust nature preserves have been filled with activity this year as prospective Eagle Scouts, accompanied by fellow troop members and families, worked on various projects.

Seth Fickle of Troop 998 has constructed two wooden bridges at Meadowbrook Nature Preserve, one thirty-six feet long and the other sixteen. (See photo.)

Will Weismann of Troop 904 performed trail maintenance at Meadowbrook and will plant 200 trees and shrubs as part of the reforestation effort at the site.

Nathan Vas of Troop 995 is fabricating trail directional markers to be placed at trail junctions at Meadowbrook.

Colin Topping of Troop 907 is rehabilitating a seventy-foot boardwalk and installing a culvert pipe at Meadowbrook.

Shyam Rahman of Troop 995 is performing trail maintenance and constructing a forty-eight-foot bridge at Bur Oak Woods.

We are delighted to welcome these projects on our properties. The volunteer work provided by scouts and their families is an integral part of our stewardship program and contributes significantly to our efforts to improve public access at our preserves. Well done, guys!

WHAT THE BEAR DID IN THE (FLAT)WOODS

Northern Indiana was surprised and delighted (most of us, anyway) when the state’s first wild black bear in more than 140 years was sighted north of South Bend in June. A young male apparently looking to establish his own territory, the animal headed south from the Michigan north woods where his species is more commonly observed. After having a look at St. Joseph County, he turned west and entered LaPorte County, where he took up residence in the heavily forested area east of Michigan City.

The beast soon became a nuisance, raiding garbage cans and bird feeders and venturing onto backyard decks and patios. Fearing that his increasingly bold behavior would lead to a dangerous encounter with humans, the DNR has plans to capture the animal and transport him back to Michigan, where he’ll be released in more suitable habitat.

When the bear wasn’t foraging for food in residential neighborhoods, he was exploring the trails at Ambler Flatwoods Nature Preserve. Not far from the main trailhead on Meer Road, he left his calling card, a pile of scat that a DNR official identified as that of a bear. We’re not surprised that such a creature would be attracted to the 350 acres of pristine boreal flatwoods at Ambler. It’s Shirley Heinze Land Trust’s largest nature preserve, and it’s a haven for a wide variety of wildlife.

The bear may not a permanent resident, but we’re pleased that he made a visit. We’re happy to report that our revised fauna species list now has a record for *Ursus americanus*.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sat, Oct 17</td>
<td>Bus Tour of Shirley Heinze Nature Preserve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri, Nov. 6</td>
<td>Annual Community Luncheon at The Spa in Porter, IN, featuring a keynote address by Ty Warner, Executive Director of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission.</td>
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Save the Date!
Shirley Heinze Land Trust’s 35th Anniversary

Annual Spring Benefit
Saturday, June 4, 2016
Harre Union at Valparaiso University
NORTH TO ALASKA

My family made a drive to Alaska this summer. It was a wonderful opportunity for Heidi and me to bond with our two children – Jak, 13, and Abigail, 10 – before the notion of hanging out with the parents becomes too unbearable for them. We shared lots of car time together, marveled at spectacular scenery, endured squalid campsites, and had our share of wildlife adventure. We even got the kids to disconnect for a while from the cyber world, although we had less success in controlling backseat squabbling.

During the course of our month-long journey, we visited many special locations: national parks like Banff, Denali, and Badlands; national forests, wildlife refuges, and monuments; state parks like Custer in South Dakota; and spectacular Stanley Park, the gem of Vancouver’s city park system. All these places share one thing in common: their protected status ensures that they will always be there for our enjoyment and for the health of our planet. They exist today because concerned people – scientists, government officials, ordinary citizens – had the remarkable vision and dogged persistence to insist that they be preserved.

We in Northwest Indiana can never match the grandeur of the scenery we witnessed up north and out west. Our slice of nature is surrounded by an urban industrial environment. But we have some pretty amazing sights here, too. The setting sun over the great sand dunes along the Lake Michigan shoreline. Bald eagles returning after a decades-long absence to soar over our rivers. There’s even been a black bear ambling down local hiking trails recently.

Our land conservation successes here are smaller in scale than what’s been accomplished in less developed areas, but they are just as important, maybe more so. I return from Alaska rejuvenated and more determined than ever to make certain that our work today will leave a legacy for my children and for theirs. Your continued support will make it happen.

Sincerely,

Kris Krouse

WANTED:
FACEBOOK 'LIKES'

We have a goal this year to double our Facebook page 'Likes.' Help us achieve that goal by inviting your friends to 'like' our Facebook page and share our posts!