

## Concerned Hoosiers Protect Indiana's Waters

by *Lauren Travis*

Forty years after the passage of the Clean Water Act, more than 60 percent of assessed Indiana lake and river waters are unfit for human health and wildlife, according to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management's 2016 assessment. This staggering level of water quality impairment poses a continuing threat to human health and welfare. Degradation of most of Indiana streams and rivers is predominantly associated with runoff from agricultural fields, although sewage discharge and urban runoff also contribute. Despite these challenges, improvements to surface water quality are possible through sustained citizen support for assessment, restoration, and protection.

The Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter has demonstrated its support for active stewardship by partnering with Hoosier Riverwatch, a long-standing program coordinated by IDEM's Office of Water Quality. Recognizing that clean water is essential, the chapter is increasing its involvement in volunteer stream sampling to increase awareness of Indiana water issues among people across the state.



*Photograph by Steven Higgs*

The Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter partners with Hoosier Riverwatch, a long-standing program coordinated by IDEM's Office of Water Quality, for volunteer water sampling on Indiana rivers and lakes. The data collected enhances IDEM's ability to assess watershed health and prevent further water pollution.

Volunteers who become "citizen scientists" benefit from the program by increasing their understanding of the sources of water pollution, as well as developing a stronger connection to local waterbodies. Expanding participation in water quality sampling is critical for producing data that helps establish long-term water quality trends in the Riverwatch database. This data is integral to IDEM's ability to assess the health of watersheds and work to prevent further water pollution. Increased stream quality data creates a more complete picture of what threats waterways are facing and helps the chapter focus its resources towards identifying areas in danger. Our participation supports the effort to sustain ecosystems that depend on Indiana waterways and helps

us advocate for clean waters for all Hoosiers.

Since the major sources of pollution are diffuse and do not come from a single source, the chapter uses chemical monitoring kits. They allow volunteers to perform multiple tests designed to assess how contaminated a waterbody is and what is contributing to unhealthy stream conditions. Fertilizer, manure, and wastewater contribute to

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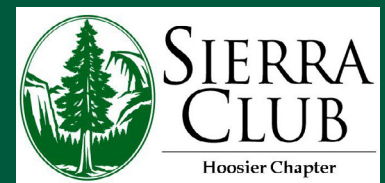
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reduced stream resiliency by elevating nitrate and phosphorus levels that may lead to algae blooms. This is also a public health concern because drinking water may be endangered if nutrient pollution is unchecked. While some nutrients are required for healthy streams, excessive nutrient levels in a stream are the primary cause of dense algal growth. As algae and aquatic plants decompose, they deplete the oxygen in the water that aquatic organisms need to live. The amount of oxygen in a stream directly determines whether the waterway can support aquatic life. If there is an insufficient amount of oxygen, fish and other organisms suffocate and die.

Other tests performed by volunteers measure other stream stressors, such as elevated temperatures. If the stream temperature is elevated, the rate of chemical reactions in the stream increases as well, also jeopardizing the stream organisms. Most plants and animals in a stream can only survive within a certain range of conditions. Volunteers also test the water's pH to measure whether the stream is too acidic or alkaline and whether the chance of survival for animals and plants is lower as a result. Chemical dumping, coal mine drainage, and emissions from automobiles and power plants all affect the ability for streams to support life. Another stream stressor assessed is the amount of sediment in the stream, which is important because it affects whether light can reach the riverbed. Sediment can also clog fish gills, smother eggs, reduce disease resistance and growth rates, and diminish the

diversity and number of food sources. All these chemical tests when taken together provide a profile of how healthy a stream is and what threats it might be facing at the time of sampling.

Chapter volunteers from the Winding Waters Group participated in a recent training in Columbus at Mill Race Park to learn how to conduct biological, habitat, and chemical surveys of local streams. The Riverwatch training provided these volunteers with the opportunity to increase their understanding of watershed issues facing the Columbus area and bolster their ability

***“Our participation supports the effort to sustain ecosystems that depend on Indiana waterways and helps us advocate for clean waters for all Hoosiers.”***

to safeguard Indiana streams. Volunteers also learned how to utilize Riverwatch's database to compare water quality data from two different locations or the same location over time at the watershed, county, river, or individual site level. Anyone can utilize the Riverwatch data visualization tools on [hoosieriverwatch.org](http://hoosieriverwatch.org) to investigate water quality.

If you are concerned about your local water quality and are interested in receiving information regarding how to become more involved in Indiana water quality assessment, please contact Lauren Travis at [lmtravis@indiana.edu](mailto:lmtravis@indiana.edu).

*Lauren Travis is working with the Hoosier Chapter this summer as a Water Quality Coordinator Fellow as part of Indiana University's Sustainability Development Program. A graduate student at I.U.'s School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Lauren is taking the opportunity to “explore, enjoy, and protect” Indiana.*

## Local Astronomer to Discuss Impact of Light Pollution

Noted local astronomer Larry Silvestri will discuss the impact of light pollution on animal behavior, as well as on human health, at a Dunelands Group meeting on Thursday, September 14, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm., in the Kouts Public Library, 101 East Daumer Road, Kouts.

Silvestri, who lives in Michigan City, will explain what light pollution is and how it affects people and wildlife. Interested in astronomy for more than 55 years, he has witnessed the deterioration of the night sky over that time.

He is a member of the Chicago, Calumet, and Michiana Astronomical Societies and the International Dark Sky Association. He is a backpacker who has hiked in many national parks in the U.S. and Canada.

He wants to build a coalition of astronomy clubs, environmental groups, and the public, to urge cities and counties to control their lighting to protect the dark.



# Meet the Chapter's New Administrative Assistant

by *Rebecca Dien-Johns*

I'm so pleased to introduce myself to you as the new Administrative Assistant for the Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter. I'm going to tell you a little bit about myself and how I came to work here!

Environmentalism has always been a part of my life.

I grew up in Penmaenmawr, north Wales, population around 4,000. Penmaenmawr means 'Head of the Great Stone', and there is evidence of local axe factories dating back 5,000 years. Modern quarrying began there in the 1830s, and in the decades that followed an Iron Age hill fort was decimated, and the mountain reduced to a fraction of what it once was. The quarry was a major employer— my *Taid* (grandfather) and his forefathers found work there for generations. Now it employs but a handful of people, as technology means blasting can continue without a large workforce. Some estimate there is little left to blast.

I grew up a literal stone's throw from the quarry. I was used to hearing the blasts. When it rained, I avoided the dirty puddles that were gray with granite dust. Even by my childhood in the 1980s, the area was on its knees economically and times were hard with widespread unemployment. I can see a parallel with the plight of coal miners in Indiana and beyond, and the unsustainability of mining our non-renewable resources.

Growing up, my politically active mother was involved with Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, and took me on marches with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament from an early age. On my father's side, I am of Romany Gypsy descent, so just a few generations ago my family was living on — and at one with — the land. As a teenager, I became involved with road protesting, led by a group called the



*Rebecca with her husband and son at a sign-making event for the People's Climate March in*

Dongas who opposed the destruction of countryside for new highways (not unlike your battle to stop the new terrain I-69 route).

At 18 I moved to London, and after five years in the music industry, I moved to the nonprofit sector. I spent five years as a professional temp for a variety of charities, and five years at an organization working in quality standards, monitoring and evaluation. At the same time I worked as a musician, including playing events and releasing music with an ecological movement called the Dark Mountain Project.

Seven years ago, I met an American, also a musician living in London. We now have a child and are married, and we made the big move to his hometown of Indianapolis in October 2016. A couple of months later, I found a job I felt I could really give my all to — this one! Since then I've been schooling myself in all things Indiana and environmental, including volunteering to monitor the water of my local waterway, Pogue's Run.

I hope my past experiences in the nonprofit world and environmentalism will serve the Chapter well. I'm especially interested in social justice and increasing our diversity. I want to make sure our outdoors is protected and accessible to all. I'm also working on our social media and website. I love meeting new people, so do say hello if you see me at one of our hikes or events, or you may email me at [rebecca.dien-johns@sierraclub.org](mailto:rebecca.dien-johns@sierraclub.org).

*Rebecca Dien-Johns is a musician, mother, and administrative assistant for the Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter.*

## Chapter to Make Changes to Group Structures

by *Bowden Quinn*

The Hoosier Chapter executive committee (excom), in conjunction with our local operating groups and networks, proposes to make some changes to our groups to ensure that they comply with Sierra Club requirements.

By way of background, groups are local entities created by the chapter excom to allow members to address local needs. The Club requires groups to have bylaws that adhere to Club guidelines. One of the major requirements is for groups to have their own executive committees, annually elected by Club members in the geographical area served by the group.

Realizing that holding annual elections for group excoms requires more volunteer time and commitment than some groups can muster, the Sierra Club introduced a new format eight years ago that members can also use to organize at a local level. These new entities are called alternative networks. Rather than requiring an excom that is elected annually by local membership, networks only need to have a four-person leadership team appointed by the chapter excom.

***“Groups are local entities created by the chapter excom to allow members to address local needs.”***

In all other ways, networks are the equivalent of groups, e.g., they may have their own bank accounts, raise funds for their own use, and have representation on the chapter excom.

Since that time, the Hoosier Chapter formed three networks, in Bloomington, Lafayette, and Evansville. Unfortunately, the Bloomington and Lafayette networks, formed three years ago, are no longer functioning. However, the Evansville network, formally known as the Southwest Indiana Sierra Club Network, which was formed last year, is going strong.

Of our long-established groups, only Winding Waters in Columbus has continued to meet the full requirements of a group. To make sure that we comply with Club requirements, the chapter excom has asked groups to come into compliance with their bylaws, transition to network status, or dissolve. Below is a list of our groups and networks, the counties that they are meant to serve, and our proposed action.

Bloomington Network (Greene, Lawrence, Monroe, Owen, and

*Continued on next page*

## • Chapter to make changes

Continued from previous page

western half of Brown): to be dissolved due to inactivity;

Dunelands Group (Jasper, Lake, LaPorte, Newton, Porter, Pulaski, Starke): will elect an excom by the end of the year to retain group status;

Five Rivers Group (Blackford, Delaware, Fayette, Henry, Jay, Randolph, Rush, Union, Wayne): to be dissolved due to inactivity;

Heartlands Group (Boone, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Johnson, Marion, Morgan, Shelby): will elect an excom by the end of the year to retain group status;

Michiana Group (Elkhart, Fulton, Kosciusko, Marshall, St. Joseph): to transition to network status;

Southwest Indiana Network (Dubois, Gibson, Perry, Pike, Posey, Spencer, Vanderburgh, Warrick): to maintain current network status;

Wildcat Group and Lafayette Network (Benton, Carroll, Clinton, Fountain, Montgomery, Tippecanoe, Warren, White): to be dissolved due to inactivity;

Winding Waters Group (Bartholomew, Decatur, Jackson, Jennings, eastern half of Brown): to maintain current group status.

Any members who object to the proposals above may contact me at bowden.quinn@sierraclub.org to voice their concerns.

I am very happy to report that at its July meeting the chapter ex-

***“One of the major requirements is for groups to have their own executive committees, annually elected by Club members in the geographical area served by the group.”***

com approved the formation of a Northeast Indiana Network serving Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Huntington, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wells, and Whitley counties and appointed a leadership team of Celia Garza (chair), Holly Benninghoff (vice chair), Pamela Pfrang, and Mary Pusti. My thanks go to those four for leading the effort to give us a presence in Northeast Indiana, and to lawyer and long-time environmental

activist David Van Gilder for helping put the group together. I want to give a shout-out to the leaders of the Heartlands and Dunelands groups who are determined to come into compliance and continue their group status. To reduce costs, they propose to conduct excom elections by email and internet by the end of the year. If you are a member who lives in either of these group areas and would like to participate in the voting by mail, you may contact

Dunelands Group Chair Julie Roesler (jroes@aol.com, 219-797-4955) or Heartlands Group Chair Jesse Kirkham (jlkirkham@earthlink.net, 317-833-9137) to request a paper ballot.

These groups represent the two areas of the state with the most Sierra Club members (2,989 in the Heartlands area and 1,351 in Dunelands, as of May). If you live in either area and can devote a few hours a month to help the Club to become more active in your area, please consider contacting the group leader to volunteer.

Thank you.

*Bowden Quinn is director of the Hoosier Chapter.*

# Beyond Coal launches Statewide Teams

by *Wendy Bredhold*

For many of us, the last six months can be summed up with one word: Resistance. Thousands of Hoosiers have committed acts of resistance in a variety of ways, whether by engaging in the legislative fight against Senate Bill 309 or pressuring Senator Joe Donnelly to do the right thing in response to President Donald Trump's cabinet appointments.

So many of you joined these efforts that Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign decided in January to launch statewide teams focusing on defending hard-won federal environmental protections, working toward policies in Indiana that will encourage affordable renewable energy, and ensuring democratic accountability by state legislators and regulators. So far, teams are forming in Indianapolis, Bloomington, South Bend, Fort Wayne, Lafayette, Columbus, and Evansville.

This summer, Beyond Coal organizers Matt Skuya-Boss and Megan Anderson, along with volunteer team leaders, will facilitate the development of a vision for the team through a series of community conversations throughout the state. The community conversation process will culminate in September, when participants will reconvene and finalize the vision.

It's already been a busy year. On the state front, there was a focus on Senate Bill 309, a utility-led attack on rooftop solar that was signed into law by Governor Eric Holcomb despite wide and broad opposition across the state from advocacy groups, faith communities, school

districts, and technology and business leaders. Thanks to the work of the Sierra Club, our allies, and volunteers, SB 309 was the most controversial bill of the 2017 legislative session.

We have also worked at the federal level in response to the onslaught of environmental rollbacks by the Trump administration, engaging on such issues as cabinet appointments, attacks on justice and fair treatment of all members of our society, and the investigation of the Trump campaign's ties to Russia. With support from Sierra Club members, Senator Donnelly opposed the nominations of Scott Pruitt for administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and Jeff Sessions for attorney general.

On April 29, heavy storms across the state did not stop Hoosiers from showing up for the People's Climate Marches. About 500 people gathered at Roberts Park United Methodist Church, the designated rain location in Indianapolis, and 200 came together during a break in the storms at the Four Freedoms Monument in Evansville.

For more information about Indiana's Beyond Coal Campaign or to join the statewide team, email Matt Skuya-Boss at matt.skuya.boss@sierraclub.org or Megan Anderson at megan.anderson@sierraclub.org. You can also go to the Indiana Beyond Coal website at content.sierraclub.org/coal/Indiana.

*Wendy Bredhold is a campaign representative for the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign. She is based in Evansville.*

# The Columbus Community Solar Initiative

by Mike Mullett

Globally, the United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in Paris, France, in December 2015. In anticipation of this conference, Pope Francis released an environmental encyclical calling for a transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy as a moral responsibility to care for God's creation and His people, including local action at the parish and community levels.

Nationally, the Environmental Protection Agency formally issued its Clean Power Plan in August 2015. This plan called for significant steps at the state level to transition the production of electricity from fossil fuels to renewable sources, such as solar and wind power, as well as to reduce the consumption of electricity through efficiency. The plan had the support of millions of individual Americans and a diverse array of civic, business, religious, public health, environmental, and other interest groups.

In this context, the Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter's Winding Waters Group and the Energy Matters Community Coalition of Columbus, Indiana, proposed, discussed with other community groups, and launched in June 2016 the Columbus Community Solar Initiative.

## THE INITIATIVE

The goal of the initiative is to install 1,000 solar panels within Bartholomew County by December 31, 2017. This goal was based on the demographics of the county as well as the experience of other communities in "going solar" by following what is known as the Solarize Model.

The initiative contemplates three types of solar installations: residences; public or non-profit organizations, including housing projects, churches, schools, and community centers; and one or more "community solar garden", which would allow households and organizations without suitable settings of their own to "go solar" together. All potential sites require suitable location and building configuration.

## THE SOLARIZE MODEL

The Solarize Model was originally developed in Portland, Oregon, and later adopted in many communities across the country, officially endorsed and promoted by the U.S. Department of Energy. The model is a grassroots, volunteer-driven process of community social change based on the well-established theory that innovations spread in a predictable manner and that social networking is the key to their diffusion through society.

Studies have shown that the key reasons why the Solarize model has worked so well in so many places are:

- Community Buy-In through extensive prior consideration and discussion among interested groups and individuals.
- Trusted Installers selected through a competitive, credible Request for Proposals process.
- Structure and Support for Participants in "going solar" together rather than alone.
- Incentives for Action, notably the combined economic benefits of group purchasing, the 30% federal tax credit, and local utilities' net metering or billing tariffs.

***"The goal of the initiative is to install 1,000 solar panels within Bartholomew County by December 31, 2017."***

## THE RESULTS

To date, the initiative has attracted 37 people who executed non-binding Letters of Intent to install solar panels. Sixteen participants have completed installations, two have installations contracted and scheduled, ten have preliminary or final proposals pending, and nine have had their sites determined unsuitable or declined preliminary proposals.

Of the eighteen participants who have completed or pending installations, 17 are residential households and one is a church. These 18 participants have purchased 448 solar panels. The ten additional active participants, one of which is a community center, have proposals pending for approximately 250 additional panels. There are also several other community organizations that, while not yet having executed Letters of Intent, are actively considering solar installations, which if completed by December 31, 2017, would take the initiative beyond its goal of 1,000 panels installed.

*Mike Mullett is a member of the chapter's energy committee and of the Winding Waters Group in Columbus, and he is volunteer administrative coordinator of the Columbus Community Solar Initiative. For more information about Solarize Indiana's efforts around the state, please visit <https://www.facebook.com/SolarizeIndiana/>.*

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

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One-time Contribution Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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1100 W. 42nd St., #140  
Indianapolis, IN, 46208

**Monthly contributions can be set up at:**

[www.sierraclub.org/indiana](http://www.sierraclub.org/indiana)



# Sierra Club Battles for Solar, Forests, Safe Water at the Statehouse

by Brian Hasler

In the 2017 General Assembly session Sierra Club battled investor-owned utilities, logging proponents, and water utilities on issues of solar power, protection of state forests, and the continuing concern for safe water in our communities. An all-out assault by the utilities to take control of solar power in Indiana received the greatest attention with significant changes due to Sierra Club action.

With Republican super majorities in both the House and Senate, the utilities felt the time was right to push for a phaseout of net metering for homeowners and small businesses that invest in solar power. The utilities contributed over \$1 million to the campaigns of legislators of both parties and have considerable resources with which to lobby legislators. More than 30 power company employees and contract lobbyists descended on the Statehouse to make their case.

As introduced, Senate Bill 309, authored by Senator Brandt Hershman (R- Buck Creek) but in reality written by the utilities, called for an immediate end to net metering and a "buy-all, sell-all" market, meaning the companies would own all the solar electricity generated from any source. Buy-all, sell-all would have erased the benefit to homeowners and small businesses for investing in solar by turning all the value of solar-generated power over to the utilities. The unfairness of this provision, as pointed out by Sierra Club and our allies, soon forced the author to withdraw that part of the bill.

We generated a substantial number of calls and e-mails to members of the Senate Utilities Committee and its counterpart in the House calling for defeat of the bill. The majority of all calls, e-mails, and letters that General Assembly members and Governor Eric Holcomb received during the session were in opposition to this bill. That grassroots effort was bolstered by Sierra Club members attending town hall meetings with area legislators and turning up the heat on local senators and representatives. In a remarkable show of strength, pro-solar advocates flooded the committee hearings in the Senate and House, forcing committee chairs to extend testimony to more than six hours in each chamber.

Despite the overwhelming opposition and numerous critical op-eds, articles, and letters-to-the-editor, Senate Bill 309 advanced, albeit with several changes. The attack on net metering was scaled back to provide a staged phase-out: existing homeowner and small businesses with solar and those able to install before December 31, 2017 would be grandfathered for 30 years; those installing solar within the next five years would be grandfathered for 15 years; and those installing after five years would be compensated at a rate of 1.25 times the average marginal price of electricity paid by the electricity supplier during the



Photograph by Steven Higgs  
*Logging in Indiana State Forests, like Morgan-Monroe, was one of many issues that the Hoosier Chapter and environmental allies fought tough battles for in the 2017 General Assembly. Others include solar energy, confined feeding operations, drinking water contamination and social justice.*

most recent calendar year.

The battle continued after the bill went to the governor's desk. Opponents jammed his phone lines. At one point his staff stopped answering the phone due to the huge volume of calls in opposition to the bill. Regrettably, the Governor signed the bill, claiming that current homeowners and small businesses would benefit from the grandfathering protections. Sierra Club and our allies can take pride in the amazing public response that we generated in opposition to this bill. We also built important relationships with key legislators and identified solar advocates, particularly in the House on both sides of the aisle. We will build on these relationships going forward.

While SB 309 dominated our efforts, Sierra Club spoke out on several other bills to promote protection of forests on public lands and to address confined feeding operations, drinking water contamination, and social justice issues. Senate Bill 420, authored by Senator Eric Bassler (R-Washington), sought to set aside 10 percent of state forest lands to protect them from logging. The Department of Natural Resources stridently opposed the bill, summoning to its aid the Indiana Hardwood Lumbermen's Association, which called the bill's proponents "eco-terrorists." For the first time in years, the chair of the Senate Natural Resources Committee agreed to hear a forest protection bill, but she didn't call for a vote, knowing that it would go down to defeat.

Several water bills were introduced to address lead contamination in drinking water in East Chicago. House Bill 1344 (Rep. Earl Harris, D-East Chicago) called on state agencies to assist the E.P.A. with testing, excavation and removal of contaminated soil and to work with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development regarding the relocation of families impacted by the lead contamination. Several provisions in House and Senate bills were combined to study the delivery of water to underserved areas.

Sierra Club continues to influence key energy, conservation, and environmental issues at the Statehouse. While the odds are tough at times, we have forced our opponents to accept changes to legislation. We have also paved the way for future success. Sierra Club remains an effective force for the environment, for the advancement of alternative energy and the closure of coal-fired power plants, and for social justice and fairer legislative districts.

*Brian Hasler is an Associate for Capitol Assets LLC. He is a former four-term member of the Indiana House of Representatives, and lobbied for the Hoosier Chapter and the Beyond Coal Campaign during the 2017 session.*

# Outings with the Southwestern Indiana Network: Education, Activism, and Fun

by Eric McCloud

As we ramp up our newly formed group, the chapter's Southwestern Indiana Network is developing an outings program to generate recreation-oriented opportunities for conservation education in southwestern Indiana. Our network, formed a little less than a year ago, is centered in Evansville but includes 8 counties in our corner of the state (Posey, Vanderburgh, Warrick, Spencer, Perry, Gibson, Dubois, and Pike).

We started trying to organize our first outing in late summer 2016. I completed online training with the Sierra Club and first-aid training with the Red Cross and we attempted to take advantage of an excellent opportunity to do a hike at Ferdinand State Forest as our first outing.

In our outings program, we seek to develop opportunities to take members and friends to locations with conservation significance so we gain firsthand knowledge of local conservation issues. We want to make conservation activism more present in people's minds by getting outside and into places where conservation issues arise.

Ferdinand State Forest in Dubois County is one such place. As it does in many forested lands under state control, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources sells logging rights to tracts within it. Such timber sales have increased in recent years creating conservation concerns about forest fragmentation, habitat loss, habitat degradation, invasive species, and water quality in streams of affected watersheds.

Our intent with our first outing was to partner with the Indiana Forest Alliance to provide an opportunity for people to see firsthand the fragmentation and loss of forest habitat within an otherwise beautiful and ecologically healthy forest.

Planning our first outing for the fall of 2016, I learned a bit about advertising the hike, about getting folks to sign up ahead of time,



*The chapter's new Southwestern Indiana Network is using outings, like this one to Ferdinand State Forest, to raise awareness about conservation issues. In their first outing, they partnered with the Indiana Forest Alliance to allow participants to see for themselves the fragmentation and loss of forest habitat within an otherwise beautiful and ecologically healthy forest.*

***"In our outings program, we seek to develop opportunities to take members and friends to locations with conservation significance so we gain firsthand knowledge of local conservation issues. We want to make conservation activism more present in people's minds by getting outside and into places where conservation issues arise."***

and about how half a dozen or so people might wait until after an advance sign-up deadline has passed to try to register for a hike that had already been canceled due to weather concerns. I tried again in the spring of 2017, adding a second outings leader, Gena Garrett.

The hike went beautifully and we were able to talk about logging in state forests while standing in front of and hiking through the logged areas. We are now planning a second outing at Eagle Slough near Evansville for later this summer.

Eagle Slough is small tract of wooded wetland on the Ohio River north of the Ellis Park racetrack. The area is either home to or a stopover for dozens of bird species.

Unfortunately, Eagle Slough is now in the path of one of three options under consideration for construction of a new Ohio river bridge crossing associated with the route of Interstate 69 as it extends up from Kentucky to connect with I-69 on the east edge of Evansville. Clearly, Eagle Slough is an ideal spot for real-life conservation education in Evansville. We have planned a hike there on Saturday, July 22, to occur in concert with a celebration of National Moth Week in late July.

Additional outings under consideration include canoe/kayak trips on Evansville's Pigeon Creek, which currently receives effluent from combined storm water/sewage overflow and is the subject of a consent decree to improve water quality.

In our outings program we want to make conservation issues real for people and give concrete demonstration of John Muir's sentiment: "When we try

to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."

*Eric McCloud is secretary/treasurer and outings chair of the Southwestern Indiana Network of the Sierra Club.*



Explore, Enjoy, Protect

# Sierra Club Outings

## Sierra Club Dunelands Group Kankakee Sands Outing

by Jen Woronecki-Ellis

Small dark shapes dot the sunny prairie landscape. Dunelands Sierra Club members raise their binoculars and the blurs come into focus: a herd of American Bison. The country's largest land mammal has returned to Indiana, in care of The Nature Conservancy at its Kankakee Sands preserve in Newton County near Morocco.

The outing, led by Hoosier Chapter Vice-Chair and Dunelands Group Secretary Dave Woronecki-Ellis, was certainly worth the wait. Canceled a month earlier due to storms, the group was lucky this day when we were treated with a good view of the herd's young calves, with more than a dozen new members added to the herd since its introduction last year.

The herd of 23 came from South Dakota to a 1,060-acre pasture here as the latest phase of the Conservancy's restoration that has gone on for 20 years. We learned how bison, which disappeared from the state almost 200 years ago, are vital to the restoration of tallgrass prairie. Once roaming the continent in the millions, they were important to the landscape—an integral component of grasslands diversity. Because they like to rub their horns on saplings, bison keep trees from out-competing grasses and wildflowers.

Their hooves also help carve out space for wildflowers, as well as aerating and loosening the topsoil. Through these activities, the bison improve the habitat for an array of prairie wildlife, from rare birds to unique reptiles.

The late spring date of our outing provided us with a chance to see some of that handiwork, as prairie flowers such as spiderwort and coreopsis were beginning to bloom. Colorful butterflies flitting through the wildflowers also drew our attention, but they were outdone by overly friendly beetles that clambered over us. Still, the bison stole the show on this educational excursion. Quite distant when we first arrived, they drew closer to watch us as much as we were watching them.

As we descended from the Bison Viewing Area, we were greeted by the songs of two common yellowthroats calling to each other from nearby shrubs. One of the new people on our hike spotted the pair—she's a birder from the local Audubon chapter. It was great to have a meeting of our two organizations.

At the Conservancy's office nearby, we were delighted to see a few six-lined racerunners, one of only two lizard species at the prairie, scrambling across the gravel paths to sun themselves briefly, then darting back into the bunches of yucca-like rattlesnake master that lined the paths.

As the heat of the day increased, we took a cue from them and also dashed off.

Jen Woronecki-Ellis is vice chair of the Sierra Club Dunelands Group. You may email her at [jenwildlife@gmail.com](mailto:jenwildlife@gmail.com).



Photograph by Jen Woronecki-Ellis

American Bison once again roam free in Indiana. A herd of 23 live on the Kankakee Sands nature preserve, near Morocco, after The Nature Conservancy relocated them there from South Dakota as part of an ongoing effort to reintroduce North America's largest mammal nationwide.





*Outings leader Dave Woronecki-Ellis, left, and Heartlands Group Chair Jesse Kirkham, second from left, talk about the return of the bison to Indiana at The Nature Conservancy's Kankakee Sands Nature Preserve.*

*Bison, which were driven from Indiana more than two centuries ago, are an integral component of grassland diversity.*

*Photograph by Jen Woronecki-Ellis*



*Photographs by Jen Woronecki-Ellis*

*Among the critters that became part of the Kankakee Sands hike were a friendly beetle left, and a six-lined racer, right.*



# Nature Play Day at Beanblossom Bottoms

*Families enjoy nature during Hoosier Chapter outing in June*



The Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter hosted a Nature Play Day, in the form of a family hike, on June 10 at The Beanblossom Bottoms Nature Preserve, near Ellettsville, Indiana. We had 12 children and 10 adults participate.

The weather was on our side, and the trail was resplendent with colors and wildlife in the sun. The trees provided some welcome shade, and we were lucky enough to see a fawn up close, as well as frogs, dragonflies, butterflies, a woodpecker and several other birds.

This was our first dedicated family hike and we hope there will be many more!

*Participants photo by Jesse Kirkham, Fawn photo by Rebecca Dien-Johns.*



# Exploring Indiana Lake Country



*Little Gention Lake, above, is one of a series of natural, connected lakes called the Seven Sisters in Steuben County. The lake is surrounded by the 255-acre Wing Haven Nature Preserve, which is owned and managed by ACRES Land Trust.*

*This water lily, center right, thrives on Troxel Lake, which is part of the 11,794-acre Pigeon River Fish & Wildlife Area in Kosciusko County. While Troxel is not part of a Dedicated State Nature Preserve, the fish and wildlife area does include two, one of which -- the Tamarack Bog Nature Preserve -- is a National Natural Landmark.*

*Crooked Lake, bottom right, which spans the county line between Noble and Whitley Counties, is one of the state's deepest and cleanest lakes. Like most of Northern Indiana's lake country, much of it is developed. But 145 acres are set aside as a Dedicated State Nature Preserve that is owned and managed by the Division of Nature Preserves.*

*by Steven Higgs*

As one who has spent his entire adult life in Southern Indiana, I've come to associate Indiana lakes with muddy, Corps of Engineers reservoirs like Monroe and Patoka.

So, spending much of my time in June with my Nikon and granddaughter exploring the state's Northern Lakes Natural Region was a pleasant natural culture shock. These waterbodies were left by the last glaciers when they retreated more than 10,000 years ago. They shimmer blue.

The Northern Lakes Natural Region spans 11 counties and stretches some 85 miles from St. Joseph, Marshall and Fulton Counties on the west to Steuben, DeKalb and a touch of Allen on the east.

The waterbodies, known as *kettle* lakes, were formed when melting blocks of ice broke loose from chunks that were embedded underground.

On sunny days, there can be magnificently photogenic.

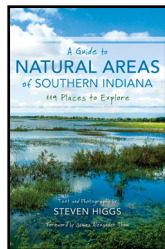


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The *Indiana Sierran* is the official publication of the Hoosier Chapter of the Sierra Club. It is published three times a year.

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# Attention Runners!

Team Sierra wants you! Not all races are alike. Some have a challenging course, some have beautiful scenery. And some can help save our planet.

Team Sierra Indianapolis Monumental Marathon Runners wants you to join our team. This may be the most important race of our lives because we're raising funds for the Sierra Club.

Nature has done good by us. Now it's our turn to do good by nature. You don't always get to make a difference when you race, but with Team Sierra you can.

We care about the places we live. The funds you donate will enable the Sierra Club to:

- Provide cleaner, cheaper, energy.
- Protect our land, water, and air—from our backyards to the other side of the globe.
- Save animals threatened with extinction.
- Make the outdoors accessible to all of us.

Our goal is to raise \$5,000, which will be split 50/50 between the national Sierra Club and the Hoosier Chapter. Please help us cross the finish line by donating here: <http://www.teamsierra.org/MyFinishLine/RunIndy>.



When you do, let us know why you care about doing good by nature in the "Words of Encouragement" box. We'd love to hear from you!

You may also volunteer to join our team in the Indianapolis Monumental Marathon on November 4, 2017. Team members who raise at least \$500 will get some cool Team Sierra gear!

Find out more at: [www.teamsierra.org/MyFinishLine/RunIndy](http://www.teamsierra.org/MyFinishLine/RunIndy).

Use the promo code "Hoosier Chapter" when joining the

team.

For more information, contact team captain Dave Woronecki-Ellis at [ellis012@gmail.com](mailto:ellis012@gmail.com) or 219-730-7913.