



# CONSERVATOR

THE NEWSLETTER OF CARDINAL LAND CONSERVANCY / OCTOBER 2020

## ANNOUNCING: *New Nature Preserve in Cincinnati!*

Cardinal Land Conservancy has made great strides to protect land in Southwest Ohio. Last year Cardinal acquired 2,500 acres in conservation and agricultural easements, and almost 200 acres of full ownership of property to be protected as nature preserves.

As we continue to evolve our strategic planning efforts here at Cardinal, there are some properties that we absolutely believe should be protected.

After careful analysis of green-spaces in the Greater Cincinnati area that warranted such protection, a particular area rose to the top.

### **Our newest Preserve**

We are pleased to announce that Cardinal Land Conservancy has purchased and established a nature preserve on a valuable ecological floodplain where the mouth of the Little Miami — a *National Wild and Scenic River* — meets with the Ohio River.

The new nature preserve is not yet open to the public. Cardinal is raising funds for trail work including signage, a boardwalk and bird viewing blinds.

As outlined by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the 119-acre property contains 7 threatened or endangered species and several additional habitats.



*Above: Three Bald Eagles fledged in Spring 2020 in this nest atop a cottonwood tree in Cardinal's newest preserve in Cincinnati*



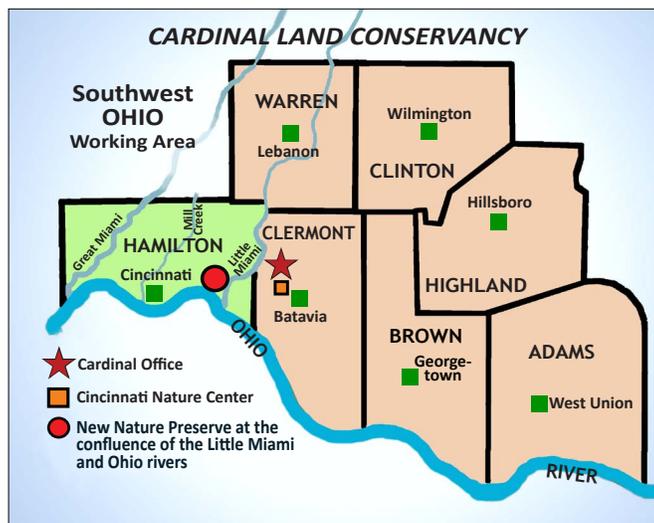
OTHER site photos by Andy Dickerson

This property is also the site of an active Bald Eagles' nest which successfully fledged three eaglets – a rarity – in June 2020. Cardinal received a **Clean Ohio Greenspace Conservation grant** to purchase the property, with additional funding from **Duke Energy** to help maintain the property and install an “eagle web cam” this fall.

Having the preserve deed-restricted by the State of Ohio will also help to permanently protect a buffer to the City's Waterworks plant located on adjacent parcels.

**Towne Properties** is a thrilled and willing participant in the creation of this new nature preserve in the City of Cincinnati and looks to continue to work with Cardinal to add value over time to this incredible piece of local natural heritage.

Area **Eagle Scouts** are currently working to install a kiosk at the entrance to the preserve, and develop the 1.8 mi. loop trail. This trail will allow for public access to the river during the dry season for bird watchers, recreational hikers/joggers and fishermen. The **East End Area Council** of the City of Cincinnati has a strong interest in getting the area's youth out to this site to learn more about nature in their backyard.



# CARDINAL LAND CONSERVANCY, INC.

**Connect with us!**

Website

[www.CardinalLandConservancy.org](http://www.CardinalLandConservancy.org)

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## Affiliations

Land Trust Alliance: [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org)

Coalition of Ohio Land Trusts:

[www.ohiolandtrusts.org](http://www.ohiolandtrusts.org)

## Our Mission:

*Preserve natural habitats, waterways, agricultural lands and open space we love in Southwest Ohio by working with individuals, families and communities.*



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# The importance of greenspace

Everyone's lives have been impacted by the Corona virus pandemic—everyone's! I am pleased to report Cardinal has been working without interruption these past six months to continue to protect land in SW Ohio. Your staff, volunteers and board members have had to change the way we do things, but as you can see in this issue of the Conservator, we have had many successes. Special thanks to everyone for your hard work and support.

**Please stay safe**  
Shelter in Place and Social Distancing have reinforced the critical importance of greenspace and time in nature for ALL people. Everyone needs to get outdoors for their physical and mental health. Parks, nature centers, and bike trails have

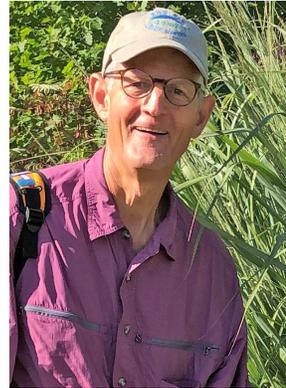
all seen significant increases in utilization. Unfortunately, not all people in our region have equal access to natural amenities. The combination of Covid-19, heightened awareness of social injustice and accelerating effects of climate change have reinforced just how vital Cardinal's work is!

## More access to nature

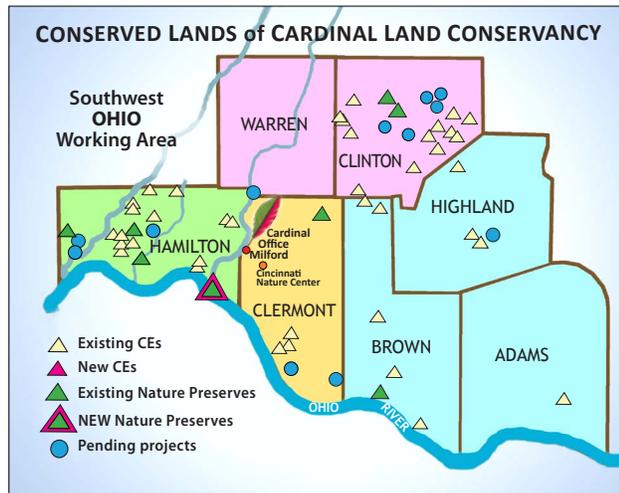
The seven counties we serve include a wide range of habitats and environments—rural and urban, agricultural and natural, forest and stream, flat land and extreme slopes. We strive to balance our efforts to protect priority lands in all of these areas of our seven counties. However, the social justice movement has reminded us we also need to consider access so that the nature

preserves we protect can serve all the inhabitants of our region. We need to work harder to overcome the cultural, economic, and geographic barriers hampering access to nature by underserved people in SW Ohio.

Our purchase this summer of a 119-acre nature preserve in Hamilton County, at the confluence of the Little Miami River and the Ohio River, meets many of these criteria: it protects critical habitat and is in close proximity to many people in Cincinnati. We will be working to make



Bill Hopple



our community aware of its availability to hike, fish, watch birds, or simply enjoy the river rolling by. Learn more about this preserve in the feature article

in this issue.

## Zoom on Sun., Oct. 25

In closing, I want to encourage everyone to “attend” our virtual Annual Meeting on Sunday, October 25 at 2 PM.

This will be a Zoom meeting. Those with email addresses on file will receive the Meeting link. Others may request the link by visiting Cardinal's website or visiting our social media pages.

One of our highlights will be a report on the development of a regional Land Protection Priorities Map which will guide our project selection in the future to meet our objectives described above.

Appreciatively,

Bill Hopple, Board President

**CARDINAL LAND CONSERVANCY** is in the business of protecting precious land. The nature preserves we own, as well as the many Conservation Easements (CEs) we hold, are under our protection.

We would like to remind everyone of Cardinal's efforts to assure that these preserved properties are stewarded well. Our gratitude goes to Cardinal's volunteers—landowners, members and friends—who help to protect the lands we love.

Mark Besserman, Cardinal's land steward, coordinates all efforts. Each year Mark and his crew inspect properties protected by Conservation Easements. Cardinal has a commitment to protect the conservation purposes of all CEs held, and has the resources

## *Caring for our conserved lands*

to enforce the restrictions. This assures that the preserved lands remain true to the stated protections of their permanent easement.

In Cardinal's nature preserves, volunteers assist with critical work: they build trails, mow, plant trees, maintain prairies, and more.

Stewardship is a community effort supported by volunteers. Thank you to all those committed to being helpful stewards.

### **WON'T YOU JOIN US?**

Please let us know that you are interested in helping with stewardship efforts. Call Andy Dickerson at Cardinal: (513) 752-2828.

## *Scouts at work in Cardinal's nature preserves*

**T**his year, area Scouts worked on Cardinal's nature preserves. These and other volunteers provide support at critical junctures, and some are also building long-lasting relationships with the land and with their communities.

Scout **Dylan Stoutenborough**, who attends Milford High, is on the front lines to prepare Cardinal's newly-acquired nature preserve at the confluence of the Little Miami and Ohio rivers in Cincinnati for visitors. He will be building an informational kiosk at the trail head of a new 1.8-mile loop through Cardinal's 119-acre wooded preserve.

### *Todd's Fork Preserve*

A dedicated volunteer, Girl Scout **Grace Fuller** of Wilmington has attended Cardinal's workdays for years. She also spearheaded a project with her Scout troop to build habitat for the Eastern Bluebird in

Todd's Fork Preserve in Clinton County.

When time came for Grace to plan her Gold Award project for the Scouts, she chose to help make improvements on Todd's Fork Preserve. The Gold Award is the highest award a senior Girl Scout can earn. The goal of a project is to "tackle the root cause of a community issue—developing and carrying out an innovative and sustainable solution."

Grace will continue work to tackle invasive species and create trails at Todd's Fork Preserve.

### *Rinsky Woods Preserve*

Created last year, Rinsky Woods in Clermont County has already been greatly improved by the efforts of several young land stewards. Scout **Payton Gage**, who attends Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy, built a

bat condo that could house 10,000 native bats. This striking structure is designed to supplement habitat for bat maternity colonies.

The creatures that will dwell in this luxurious home will most likely be Big Brown Bats and Little Brown Bats, but could include Evening Bats or even the federally endangered Indiana Bat.

Also at work on Rinsky Woods, Scout **James McBeth**, a senior at Milford High, built six permanent trail markers and a wooden bench. James, his father and brother, Parker have blazed a trail in this significant flatwoods. Cardinal will soon be ready to lead hikes there.

Scout **Ethan Schaefer**, who attends Milford High, has built a kiosk at the entrance to Rinsky Woods which will provide information about Cardinal and display interpretive guides to the trail.



Scouts Grace Fuller & Sophia Tugrul



Scout Payton Gage



Scout Jim McBeth



**Cardinal**  
LAND CONSERVANCY  
[www.CardinalLandConservancy.org](http://www.CardinalLandConservancy.org)

A land trust working in the 7 counties of SW Ohio:

- Adams ■ Brown ■ Clermont ■ Clinton
- Hamilton ■ Highland ■ Warren

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## Eagles fly in Cardinal's new Nature Preserve at the confluence of the Little Miami and Ohio River



PHOTOS Andy Dickerson

*Ohio River*

## Coming soon — Cardinal's new Preserve will host nature, views, trail

Those of us who live in urban areas may have felt especially cooped up over the last six months. To enjoy the outdoors, the many parks of Cincinnati and Hamilton County provide a refreshing experience. Soon, Cardinal's new wooded preserve will provide more outdoors to explore. A short drive on Kellogg Avenue in downtown Cincinnati will bring you to Cardinal's newest nature preserve at the confluence of the Ohio and Little Miami rivers.

This 119-acre preserve will offer respite in deep and cool woods, as well as views of the wide Ohio River and of the Little Miami's "Emerald Shores" — which Ohio poet W H Venable describes in many of his verses (*To the Little Miami River*, 1904).

Over the coming months, guideposts, a kiosk, and a 1.8 mile trail loop will be built with help from Cardinal volunteers (for more information on these projects, visit page 3 of this issue.)

The diversity of this land contributes to its



PHOTO Jim Meyer

*Enjoying a view of the Emerald Shores of the Little Miami*

appeal for wildlife, as well as humans. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources determined that this land is likely the home of the endangered Indiana Bat, as well as several endangered species of mussels, but they are not alone.

### *The eagles' home for all to see*

Overlooking the confluence of these two great rivers is the nest of an American Bald Eagle, atop a towering cottonwood tree. The couple occupying this nest fledged three eaglets this season.

Andy Dickerson, Cardinal's Executive Director, whose background is in zoology, explains the significance of this brood in this way: "It's very rare to see three eaglets fledged in one season—particularly in the city. Most eagles near urban areas struggle to find adequate food. These eagles have access to abundant fish in both rivers."

Cardinal's staff is working to prepare an "eagle cam" which will allow members to check out their activity, without disturbing the eagles. They will start renewing their pair bond right after the new year. This is the equivalent of dating for this thrill-seeking species. Before they have eggs to watch over or eaglets to tend, they court their mates in mid-air, demonstrating their affection with wild dives and high arcs.

We look forward to sharing this view into the lives of these fascinating creatures with casual nature enthusiasts and citizen scientists, alike.