



CONSERVATOR

THE NEWSLETTER OF CARDINAL LAND CONSERVANCY / NOVEMBER 2022

Issue XIII

Adjacent to Bahr Farm — *Cardinal's Newest Nature Preserve!*



By Andy Dickerson,
Executive Director

Imagine the hustle and bustle of a big city...the speeding

cars, honking of horns, choking exhaust and oily water backing up on the streets. What if you could go to place inside the city where those things would not cross your mind?

Winton Nature Preserve is Cardinal's newest acquisition. Finalized in September, the property is almost 20 acres, located in the College Hill suburb of Cincinnati. We worked with the owner—Cincinnati Waldorf School—to purchase the property they bought 20 years ago, but never developed. They were terrific partners in helping us realize our dream of adding a nature preserve immediately adjacent to Cardinal's Bahr Farm.

This mostly forested property has a mature forest that contains hickory, blue ash, Kentucky coffee tree, white oak and more. While it has been mostly dormant the past 20 years, there is an existing trail that goes for about three-quarters of a

20-acre Winton Nature Preserve



mile through the lush understory. This property is within a quarter mile of Spring Grove Cemetery, so we see loads of migrating bird species, and have some great breeding birds on-site as well. This property is at the headwaters of Kings Run Creek which runs into Mill Creek near Ivorydale.

Now that this property is protected forever by Cardinal, we will take the rest of this year and into next year to focus on getting the invasives removed and performing trail improvements — before opening it up to the public.

We hope to use this property to encourage more people to get outside and participate in recreation like hiking and birding while enjoying the natural area. The tree canopy will continue to suck up carbon dioxide which is part of the larger system of forests throughout the region that help battle the deleterious effects of climate change.

VISIT www.CardinalLandConservancy.org

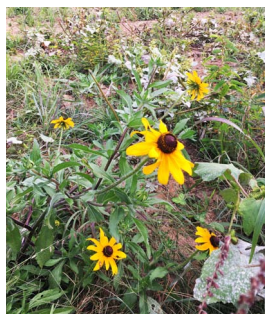
Bahr Farm Update — *Seeding for a sustainable future*

By Nick Hartley, *Facilities Manager*

This spring, Cardinal decided to reboot ten acres of pasture on the 32-acre Bahr Farm. Five acres will be used for grazing and the rest for haying. We chose to showcase the benefits of having warm season native grasses as part of the cattle's grazing plan. This also provided the opportunity to experiment with adding wildflower seeds to the mix, observing what the cattle would eat and what they would leave for pollinators like bees and butterflies.

While this was an exciting step in the evolution of the farm, the date the latest seed should be planted was quickly approaching. On June 6, we borrowed a seed drill from the state, and with the John Deere tractor from our Todd's Fork property, the team went to work. Thanks to a hurried pace, hard work, and most importantly a wet summer, we had a hugely successful planting.

The backbone of our seed mix is big and little bluestem, which are native warm season grasses that will thrive in the hot, humid and rainless Cincinnati summers. Also in the mix were partridge pea and Illinois bundleflower, both members of the pea family,



making them nitrogen fixers. The plants in combination with root bacteria take nitrogen from the air and put it back into the soil. Another reason to plant these grasses and wildflowers goes far



beyond the cattle, and that is the environmental benefit of carbon sequestration. Unlike many cool season grasses, including fescue, warm season native grasses have large deep reaching root systems. Big blue-

stem's roots can reach eight feet deep, little blue five feet. Black-eyed Susan, a staple of summer landscapes, can have root systems more than six feet deep. This unseen treasure is holding tons of carbon right below our feet. The decision to reboot a third of the Bahr Farm was not done lightly, but will be the right one for long-term success. Taking a long-term view on climate resilience, carbon



Volunteers from P&G cleared honeysuckle and debris from 100 yards of the fence line while the cows happily grazed.

sequestration, pollinator habitat, and sustainable grazing practices will showcase how these practices can make dramatic environmental improvements even in the city limits of Cincinnati. Our Harvest Cooperative — a year-round CSA — has been farming the front acreage of Bahr Farm since 2010, and will continue its sustainable practices.

Connect with Cardinal!

E-mail
info@CardinalLandConservancy.org
Website
www.CardinalLandConservancy.org
Facebook
Facebook.com/CardinalLandConservancy.org

Mailing & Office Address

PO Box 957 790 Garfield Ave.
Milford, Ohio 45150
Telephone 513-752-2828

Affiliations

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Coalition of Ohio Land Trusts:
www.ohiolandtrusts.org

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Cardinal's Mission

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

Outreach Events

We invite you to take part!

By Lauren Stanula, *Development Manager*

Cardinal has worked to raise awareness of our mission to new audiences through several outreach events over the last year. We gave presentations, participated in outdoor expos and sustainability events, led private and public tours through beautiful properties, and hosted a few parties at local breweries.

At the end of September, Cardinal had the chance to participate in Green Umbrella's Great Outdoor Weekend as an event host. Considering that the timing of the event overlapped with the fall bird migration, a bird-watching hike was the obvious choice for an outdoor program. We didn't request R.S.V.P., just put the event out into the universe, promoted it, and kept our fingers crossed that we'd have a few participants.

Attendees get rare thrill

We ended up with over 30 new and familiar faces! As we trekked through the recently finished trails of the Bortz Family Nature Preserve, hikers had the opportunity to see our eagles Bonnie and Clyde soaking up the



Cardinal volunteer Ann Oliver leads a bird watching hike at Bortz Family Nature Preserve during Great Outdoor Weekend

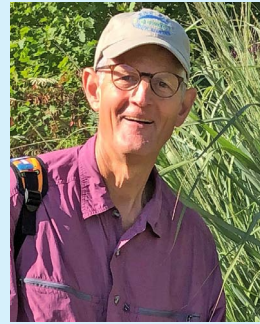
morning sun in a tall, barren tree just across from their nesting site. At one point an eagle flew directly overhead, curious for a closer look at us. The group was awestruck and mesmerized. The excitement was palpable.

The almost 1,200 acres of native habitat that Cardinal protects allows for opportunities like this and more. Right now, our staff is working on creating a schedule for group events, presentations, and tours for 2023.

If you are affiliated with or lead a group that would be interested in an event with Cardinal, let us know! We will also be sharing volunteer dates and public events through our website and social media platforms over the course of the year.

Additionally, I want to encourage anyone with an affinity for nature — or a skill set that you'd like to lend — to contact us about volunteering as a hike leader, photographer, land steward, etc. We'd love to have your help! Those interested should reach out to Lauren through the 'Contact' page on Cardinal's website.

President's Letter



— By Bill Hopple

As you have read in the *Conservator* this year, Cardinal has enjoyed tremendous growth in 2022!

Thanks to the hard work and financial support of many, we now protect over 8,500 acres of family lands. This includes prime farmland,

unique natural areas, open spaces and nature preserves. Four of our preserves with trails are open for members and the public to enjoy.

Eagles' lifestyle for all to see

The highlight of our year was the live-feed camera focused on the eagles' nest in a treetop on the Bortz Family Nature Preserve at the confluence of the Little Miami and Ohio rivers. Not only did the camera's images thrill members, it significantly increased Cardinal's visibility in the community. It will be reactivated in January 2023 when Bonnie and Clyde hopefully return to the nest.

Please support Cardinal's work

Based on the number of projects in process and the inquiries to our director Andy Dickerson, our growth will continue through 2023 and beyond. Clearly, Cardinal is no longer the best kept secret in SW Ohio!

We can do more with your help. Please tell your friends about Cardinal and direct them to our website: www.CardinalLandConservancy.org Also, shortly, you will be receiving our annual appeal. If you have already supported Cardinal this year with a gift of land, volunteer time or finances—THANK YOU! Please consider an additional gift, it would be greatly appreciated. If you are not already a member or donor, I hope you will consider a contribution before year end. Once greenspace is lost, we cannot get it back!

On behalf of the Cardinal Board of Directors and our dedicated staff, I wish you, your family, and friends a wonderful holiday season. I hope your celebrations will include experiences in the natural world! Four of our nature preserves are open for hiking.

Appreciatively, Bill Hopple



Cardinal photographs the 142-ac. cattle farm in Brown Co., OH by drone



Owners James & Alta Beasley with Cardinal's drone pilot Josh Matheson



Cardinal
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www.CardinalLandConservancy.org

790 Garfield Ave., Milford OH 45150

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***A land trust working for you in the
7 counties of Southwest Ohio:***

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

Drones for Conservation

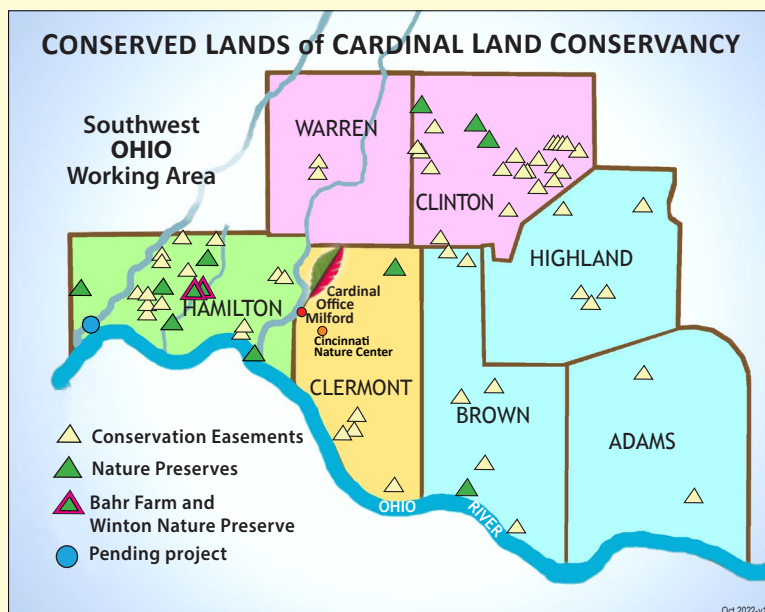
See photos above

Cardinal has held the agricultural Conservation Easement protecting the Beasleys' 142-acre cattle farm in Brown Co., Ohio since 2017. With this easement, owners Jim and Alta Beasley have protected their family farm from any future development.

Most of the farm's rolling hills are devoted to pasture and hay production, a significant woods and a small vineyard. The preservation of this farm as well-managed agricultural land protects an important wildlife habitat and a substantial part of White Oak Creek—which runs along the eastern border of the land.

Cardinal is committed to monitoring the entire property annually, to confirm that the easement's terms are honored. With the addition of a high-powered drone, Cardinal's Monitoring team has the ability to photograph more information, enhance safety, and improve overall efficiency of our work.

Cardinal is proud to announce that with your support, we have preserved 8,500 total acres of land to date. Since 2021, Cardinal has had an increase of 810 acres preserved by both Conservation Easements and fee simple acquisition of nature preserves.



Drones for Conservation

By Josh Matheson, *Land Manager*

The term 'drone' (aka, an unmanned aerial vehicle) is a word we're hearing a lot about these days. Perhaps mostly as military tools or cool toys for kids. Over the last decade, drones have also become important tools in conservation work.

But beyond cool aerial pictures, what can drones do for conservation? Thanks to a generous grant Cardinal received this summer, we have started using a drone to help us with our annual easement monitoring visits to larger farm properties.

A typical visit to an easement property requires staff to walk to multiple points across the property and capture photos with their cell phones. This process is used to document the condition of the property and any changes that occur over time. Depending on the size of the property, a monitor visit can take an hour or an entire day to complete on foot.

Photos from on high

Sure, navigating to each photo point is sometimes a nice walk, depending on the weather and terrain, but when a property is full of corn fields or muddy after a few rainy days, it can be challenging. This is where the drone shines! Our drone can capture large aerial photographs that saves our staff time and eliminates the struggle of finding ways to walk around planted fields and collecting data.

So, what are the take-away benefits of using a drone during monitoring visits? They can capture more information, enhance safety, and improve overall monitoring efficiency.

Most importantly, drones capture some amazing aerial photos that Cardinal is happy to share with easement landowners! So next time you hear the word drone used, don't think of toys or nuisance flying machines, but think what wonderful conservation tools they are.



Above is Cardinal's MAVIC drone with camera mounted underneath. At right is the drone's command console.



Photo taken from Cardinal's new drone at the Bahr Farm. Accompanying Josh (at far right), are Gabriela Waesch (OKI Lead Pilot) and her assistant Jackson Shiffert, and Cardinal's Nick Hartley (Bahr Farm Facilities Manager).

We've seen the future — and it's Green!

By Andy Dickerson, *Executive Director*



Cardinal Land Conservancy's staff has grown to seven people over the past year. With each new addition the quality of our staff continues to be of the highest caliber, lifting us off like a rocket in achieving our mission of protecting land. This includes agricultural, scenic

and natural resources, greenspace and open space.

It's no easy task to pull off a property acquisition, whether it be an easement or outright purchase. It takes a team of people many hours to perform the due diligence that we owe to you, our members, in order to reduce risk and protect the future with each purchase.

Cardinal is actively participating in the update of the **Green Cincinnati Plan** through roles on the **Natural Resources Team** and **Local Food Team**.

Shaping a future in which preserving greenspace that includes supportive habitats for wetlands, freshwater mussels, migratory birds, and endangered species is critical to us and also the City of Cincinnati. Sharing goals of protecting land for local food production is something that we hope our members can be proud of as we navigate hurdles that urban farmers face while trying to eek out a living helping our com-

munities eat healthy and fresh food.

We have also participated in **OKI's Strategic Regional Policy Plan** where we focused on natural resources of the region. Identifying the key attributes of the greenspace that we care about in the tristate helps OKI make decisions about funding infrastructure projects. For example, more points are given to communities that want to add new roads and bridges when they know where their best ecological communities are located and can minimize negative effects with their project.

I continue to co-lead **Green Umbrella's Greenspace Impact Team** where the focus lies on developing a regional plan for greenspace conservation, raising public awareness and leveraging grant funding, influencing key funders, stakeholders and political entities. We seek to migrate this group from being an impact team to being a regional coalition.

Planning is important, but so is doing! We at Cardinal have a “ready, aim, fire” approach where we set our sights on a conservation target, carefully aim and then pull the trigger on permanent protection and restoration. There are several more plans that we are either helping with or leading that we will share with you later this year. **For now, let's go green!**



Cardinal Land Conservancy received Accreditation status in 2020. It is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

Each Accredited land trust completes a rigorous review process and joins a network of organizations united by strong ethical practices.

New staff members join Cardinal



Josh Matheson, Land Manager, brings his passion for conservation and technology to Cardinal. At the University of Cincinnati, he pursued a B.S. in geography with a focus in GIS, remote sensing, and spatial statistics.

After graduation, he worked as a land steward and used his expertise to develop a conservation drone program.



Shannon Disbennett, Office Manager, has many years of service in government and nonprofit organizations along with a degree in public administration.

She is grateful to be pairing administrative skills with her interest in environmental stewardship to enhance the contribution Cardinal makes to our community.