



Cardinal
LAND CONSERVANCY

10 YEARS
— OF PRESERVING —
LEGACIES

2015–2025

INTRODUCTION

As Cardinal marks its 10th anniversary, we're reflecting on a decade of growth, evolution, and impact. Over the years, we've expanded our geographic reach, scaled up our efforts, and broadened the diversity of the land and communities we serve.

Whether you're new to Cardinal or have been with us from the beginning, it can be hard to keep up with all that's happening. From exciting new projects to the 13,250 acres we've already protected, there's a lot to share. That's why this moment is a perfect opportunity to step back and consider the bigger picture: the importance of our role as a regional land trust and how our projects fit into a larger vision for land protection in the region.

Land is increasingly vulnerable to fragmentation and development, often at the detriment to our communities. Cardinal provides a path to protect land in perpetuity. We are in the forever business. Through strategic acquisitions and conservation easements, we ensure that land vital to people and nature is protected—permanently.

The land we protect generally falls into three categories: natural habitats, working farmland, and community-centered greenspace. At first glance, a public green space, a rural farm, and a wild nature preserve may seem unrelated. But they share a key feature: to function fully, they must be large enough and protected over long time-scales.

Healthy farmland soils and mature forest ecosystems take centuries, even millennia, to develop. Yet they can be degraded or destroyed in a single season. Communities, too, need confidence in the permanence of their green

spaces before they invest time and resources into improving them. A public green space that might disappear in a few years can't truly serve as a community anchor.

Conservation is the key to bridging these gaps. This past year, we worked with partners to create a strategic plan for conservation, including six targets:

- Habitat for threatened and endangered species
- Wetlands
- Mature forests
- Ecologically sound agriculture
- Urban open space
- Passive recreation on properties we own

It's important to recognize that all of these target conservation efforts across rural, urban, and suburban areas are deeply interconnected and part of a unified vision for land protection across the region. Farmland protection is essential for sustaining access to nutritious, locally grown produce for city residents. Accessible urban green spaces are crucial for slowing the suburbanization that threatens forests and farmlands.

Understanding this interconnectivity is the key to building a strategic approach towards land protection for a thriving, sustainable region.

As we celebrate 10 years, we reflect on the impact we've been honored to make, and we look to the future of an even greater path to preserving a legacy for generations to come.

10 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

2015

Cardinal Land Conservancy Begins

The Land Conservancy of Hamilton County, Clinton County Open Lands, and Southern Ohio Farmland Preservation Association **merge to form Cardinal Land Conservancy.**

Cardinal receives a capacity-building grant from the Greater Cincinnati Foundation to hire an Executive Director.

2017

The First Preserve

The Todd's Fork Nature Preserve is acquired—Cardinal's **first large-scale publicly accessible preserve and restoration project.**

2021

Donations Significantly Increase

Cardinal hires a development professional.

Bahr Farm is donated to Cardinal, and becomes Cardinal's **first fee-simple agricultural property.**

Cardinal receives multiple thousand-acre agricultural easement donations.

2024

Cardinal Finds a New Home

Cardinal's Loveland nature preserve and home office in Loveland, the former Grailville is purchased—**A new home office for Cardinal** and open space project to showcase the impact of our mission.

2016

The Mission Solidifies

The Board elects to include open space in **land protection focus**—Until this point, Cardinal primarily held agricultural easements.

2019

Accreditation and Growth

Cardinal receives accreditation via the Land Trust Alliance, securing **protection of all Cardinal land in perpetuity** and elevating our organizational status.

First additional staff members hired.



2022

Innovation In Land Monitoring

Cardinal launches the drone program—modernizing and increasing the **efficiency of easement monitoring.**

2025

Expanding Our Impact

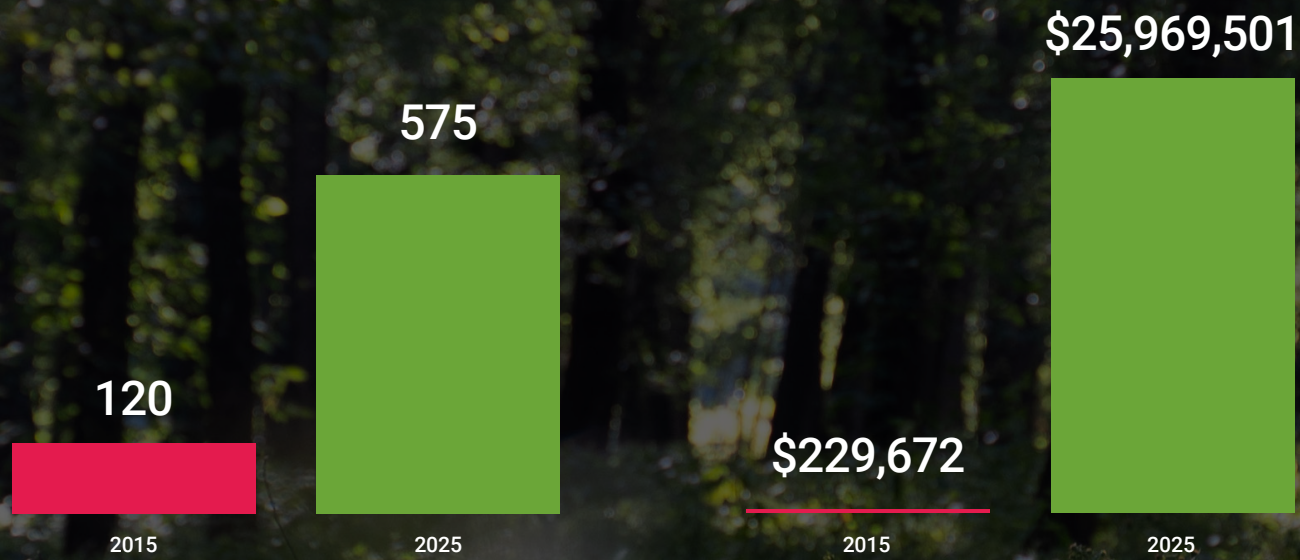
Cardinal's **community-centered conservation** project is launched.

OHC merger: Cardinal **expands its service area to Southeast Indiana** by merging with Oak Heritage Conservancy and acquiring their 3,000 acres of protected land.

CARDINAL: THEN & NOW

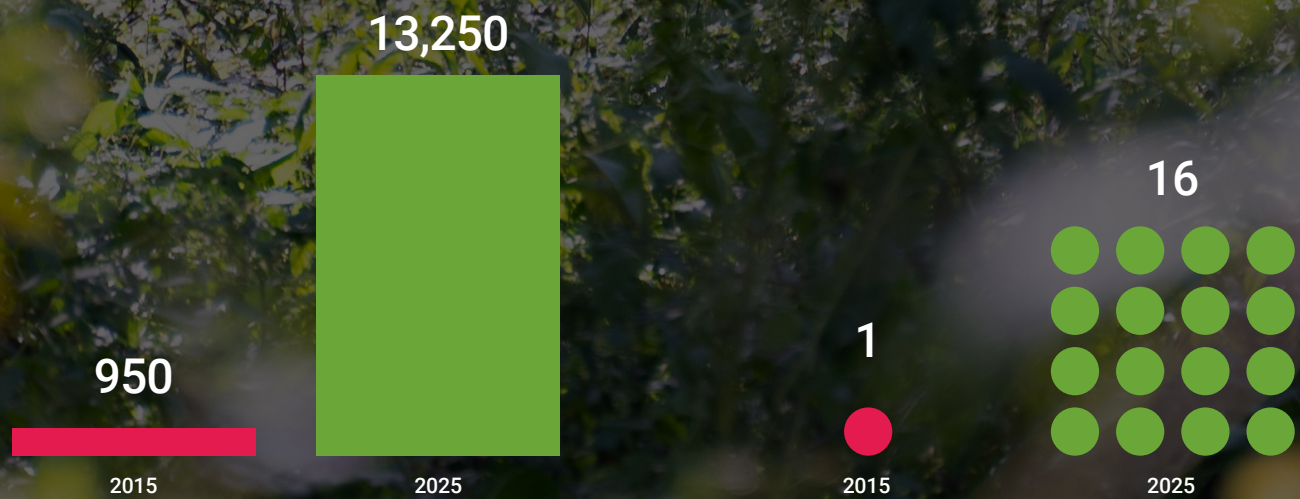
2015

2025



MEMBERS

ASSETS



ACRES

STAFF

CARDINAL LAND CONSERVANCY & OAK HERITAGE CONSERVANCY

Following a decade of growth, Cardinal merged with Oak Heritage Conservancy, an incredible organization doing similar work across the border in Indiana since 2002. This expansion marks a bold step in our 10th anniversary year, securing the future of conservation.



Expanded Acres, Expanded Impact

- By acquiring Oak Heritage Conservancy, Cardinal now protects 3000+ acres in Indiana.

Cardinal Stronger Than Ever

- This merger brings OHC's properties, supporters, and history under Cardinal's care.

Greater Regional Footprint

- Cardinal's work now spans both Ohio and Indiana, connecting communities through shared conservation goals.

Accelerated Protection

- With more properties and resources, Cardinal can move faster to safeguard threatened lands.

United Footprint

- OHC's members and supporters join Cardinal's network, growing our conservation family.

Built for Permanence

- Cardinal's unified governance and endowment ensure permanent protection of OHC's lands.

THE PRESERVES OF CARDINAL LAND CONSERVANCY

Our preserves are living proof of what grassroots conservation can achieve—special places that might never have been protected if not for the passion and dedication of local people who believed in their value. They are rare landscapes where opportunities to safeguard land like this may never come again. And while their protection is a remarkable achievement, they also remind us that there are still so many more places worth saving for future generations. Our public preserves are openly accessible lands perfect for hiking and enjoying nature. **For details about how to enjoy these preserves, visit <https://www.cardinallandconservancy.org/cardinal-preserves>**

QUICK FACTS



Todd's Fork Nature Preserve ----- 220 Acres, Clinton CO

- Cardinal's largest restoration project and best example of habitat restoration to date.
- Excellent habitat diversity: stream, mature forest, pond, and prairie.
- Site of two projects specific to increasing habitat for wildlife: federally endangered Indiana bats and native thickets for native and migrating birds.



Bortz Family Nature Preserve ----- 120 Acres, Hamilton CO

- Home of the famous breeding bald eagle pair, Bonnie and Clyde, and Cardinal's live streaming Eagle Cam.
- Located at the confluence of the Little Miami and Ohio River, an area that is ever changing due to the ebb and flow of water levels.
- Perfect example of mature bottomlands and mature floodplain forest.



Kope Hollow ----- 54 Acres, Brown CO

- Thriving and highly variable native plant community.
- Most topographically variable public preserve, excellent for more challenging hikes.
- Beautiful waterfalls as a result of the Kope Formation



Rinsky Woods ----- 59 Acres, Clermont CO

- An incredible and accessible example of a historic ecosystem.
- A rare mature forest and intact flatwood swamp.



*East Fork Wetlands ----- 67 Acres, Clermont CO

- Cardinal's newest public preserve
- Prime amphibian habitat.
- A former goldfish hatchery that was abandoned, this site experienced natural re-wilding over time.



Cardinal's Protected Properties

In addition to the public preserves that anyone can enjoy, Cardinal manages protected properties that are closed to the public for habitat preservation. These include:

- * Anderson Fork
- * Westmark Woods
- * Winton Nature Preserve
- Laurel Ridge I Preserve
- Hunter Glen Preserve
- Styer Preserve
- Berninghaus Preserve
- Cowan Creek Nature Preserve



Indiana Preserves

As part of the acquisition of Oak Heritage Preserve in Indiana, the following preserves have been added to Cardinal Land Conservancy. All preserves are public unless marked.

- Monarch Meadows
- Riverview
- Webster Woods
- Hall-Carmer Wetlands
- Harrel Cohron Conservation Area (protected)
- Leblin Woods
- Hikers Knob & Wheeler Hollow
- Guthrie Woods
- Tribbett Woods
- Smith Woods
- Hilltop Farm
- Buttonwood
- Hiker's Knob

* Public access in development.

CARDINAL LANDS



COUNTY EASEMENT COUNT:

ADAMS: 2	HAMILTON: 14	RIPLEY: 1
BROWN: 6	HIGHLAND: 5	WASHINGTON: 1
CLERMONT: 4	WARREN: 3	
CLINTON: 22	JEFFERSON: 2	

FEATURED PRESERVE: RINSKY WOODS NATURE PRESERVE

A CLOSER LOOK

At its core, Cardinal is a grassroots effort to protect land that matters—to people, and to nature. While we've grown to include a full-time staff of 16, we still rely on the passion and commitment of volunteers, landowners, and community members. Every land protection project requires partnership, and we've been fortunate to work with many families who share our vision for lasting conservation.

Rinsky Woods Nature Preserve, in Clermont County, is an excellent example of what that partnership can achieve. The 59-acre preserve is a forest of federally endangered Swamp White Oak, Beech, and Red Maple Flatwoods.

The forest has been part of the Rinsky family farm since the early 1900s. In 2019 Cardinal was honored to work with the late Robert (Bob) Rinsky and his family to protect the land permanently. Thanks to the Rinskys' foresight and generosity, this exceptional woodland is permanently protected—and open to the public. Since Cardinal acquired the property, Jess Rinsky, has served as a valued member of Cardinal's Land Committee. The preserve is more than a meaningful legacy for one family—it's an ecological gem that aligns with two of Cardinal's strategic conservation priorities: protecting mature forests and safeguarding wetlands.

Rinsky Woods is home to a habitat known as Wet Till Flatwoods—a globally imperiled ecosystem that supports incredible biodiversity. Because the land is so flat, even small changes in elevation result in changes to the plant communities, which creates a diverse mosaic of plant types.

A walk through the preserve will take you underneath the most visible example of this floristic diversity—mature oaks, including Pin, Swamp White, Bur, White, Northern Red, and Black Oak. It's only a matter of time before you hear a noisy group of Red-headed Woodpeckers that call the preserve home. In spring, the forest floor often holds ponded water, creating perfect breeding grounds for frogs and salamanders, which rely on these temporary, fish-free pools to reproduce before they dry out in summer. The higher-elevation areas have an excellent spring wildflower community.

Of course, the flatness that defines this landscape also made it historically vulnerable to drainage, logging, agriculture, and now, suburban development. That's what makes Rinsky Woods so special today. It is one of the few remaining examples of the mature flatwood forests that covered much of the Illinoian till plain.

Thanks to the Rinsky family and our community of supporters, this living forest remains intact, thriving, and open for all to experience.



VOICES OF CARDINAL LAND CONSERVANCY: OUR FOUNDING



Laura Curliss

CLINTON COUNTY OPEN LANDS

Q Looking ahead, what excites you most about Cardinal's future and the role it will play in protecting our region for generations to come?

A I'm excited about the capacity we have built as an organization. The challenge is focusing strategically on saving our best natural areas and our best farmland before it is lost. Sometimes a "project" is a willing landowner. Hopefully it's both a key, strategic property and a willing landowner! We now have the ability to use mapping tools, scientific information to take a hawk's view of the southwest Ohio region, and save our last great places—if we have the help of our members and supporters in the region.



Jerry Schwallie

SOUTHERN OHIO FARMLAND PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

Q Looking back to when Cardinal was founded, what inspired you to help start this organization, and what did you hope it would become?

A I was inspired to help the organization to protect and preserve our farmland for the next generation whether they are related to me or not and, so individuals can have the opportunity to farm, not just the larger corporation farmers.



Patrick Hornschemeier

SOUTHERN OHIO FARMLAND PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

Q Looking ahead, what excites you most about Cardinal's future and the role it will play in protecting our region for generations to come?

A I am most excited about urban land engagement. I would like to see vegetables grown for inner city residents and our role in that by holding real estate.



Roland Johnson

THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF HAMILTON COUNTY

Q Over the past 10 years, what accomplishment or moment stands out to you as a defining milestone for Cardinal?

A Among the most significant accomplishments was the hiring of a brilliant and talented Executive Director, Andy Dickerson. Together with our knowledgeable Land Preservation Chairman, Patrick Hornshehemeier, and our influential President, Bill Hopple, we expanded to awesome proportions.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Why & How: The categories of impact we aim to achieve. These are long-term commitments that define the organization's purpose.

Biodiversity and Habitat Protection

Wildlife need connected, thriving habitats. From grassland birds to mature forests; rare plants to aquatic habitats, we protect and restore landscapes that sustain diverse species and strengthen ecological health.

Farmland Preservation

Working lands are part of our heritage and our food security. We partner with farm families to keep fertile soils in production, safeguard rural character, and ensure farmland remains viable for future generations. Ecologically sound agriculture is the future of a diverse, connected ecosystem.

Community Access to Nature

Conservation is about people as much as land. We are working with the community and associated neighborhoods to provide accessible greenspaces that serve the surrounding communities and directly benefit large numbers of people. Exposure to nature for passive recreation and access to local, nutritious food improves the health of all residents.

Culturally Important Lands

We greatly value the history of the region and the inhabitants of the land that came before us. We seek to preserve the story those lands tell by conserving the lands that were vital to the people that lived, worked, and played here many generations ago.

CONSERVATION TARGETS

The What: The specific land types or ecological assets we focus on protecting or restoring. These are measurable or identifiable conservation elements that guide project selection and stewardship actions.

Habitat for Threatened and Endangered Species

This includes habitat for freshwater mussels, endangered bats, wildflowers, amphibians, and birds.

Wetlands

The kidneys to our waterways and a home to many at-risk species, they are our most valuable ecosystem.

Mature Forests

The strongest forests are old (over 100 years), climate resilient, climate connected, and large enough to make a difference to the native plants and animals that reside in them.

Ecologically Sound Agriculture

Mainly through agricultural easements, our agricultural protection efforts will focus on water quality, pollinator habitat, and putting carbon back into the soil.

Urban Open Space

Our newest addition to our mission, we have the capacity to protect urban environment lands more effectively than our government partners.

Passive Recreation on Properties We Own

Connection with nature makes a positive impact on our physical and mental health. We seek to make it easier for our members and the public to access and enjoy the last great places.

LOOKING AHEAD: OUR NEXT FIVE YEARS

With your support, Cardinal Land Conservancy is stepping into an exciting new chapter.

In the years ahead, we will build on strong partnerships, deepening our impact across southwest Ohio and extending our work into southeast Indiana, with the potential to expand into the entire tri-state area. This means ensuring more forests, farms, and waterways are permanently protected. This growth allows us to protect more critical lands and serve more communities.

We will also prioritize urban green spaces, restoring green spaces that bring nature closer to where people live.

Our commitment doesn't stop at protecting land — it extends to caring for it forever. Every acre we conserve is a forever promise. Stewardship is at the heart of our mission, ensuring every property we conserve thrives for generations to come. We are committed to ongoing monitoring, restoration, and funding to ensure we are building the resources needed to safeguard these places in perpetuity, so that today's gifts continue to make an impact far into the future.



Cardinal

LAND CONSERVANCY

Thank you for your impact! Together with our community of supporters, we are creating a legacy of conservation, resilience, and sustainability. Every gift, every partnership, and every volunteer hour helps build a healthier landscape and a stronger connection between people and the natural world. The last ten years are thanks to you. We're looking forward to the next ten years and beyond.

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Roland Johnson
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Andy Dickerson

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Jack Stenger - Director of Conservation
Susan Sprigg - Director of Operations

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Laura Curliss, Esq.



info@cardinallandconservancy.org

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EIN: 31-1673211