



## Storm Recovery Continues

by Dan Preest

Recovery activities and restoration planning for Fox Island will continue through the winter months. Logging activities have opened up trails and made most areas of the park accessible although there are limitations. Approximately 100 truckloads of trees have been removed from the park with the majority of trees being cottonwood. Other varieties of trees removed were primarily downed or heavily damaged.

Unfortunately, even with the removal of so many trees, there remain masses of downed smaller trees, treetops and branches. To proceed with replanting in selected areas, debris management, i.e., pulling out logs and stacking treetops and branches for burning, will be required. The Park has secured, at no cost, 6,000 seedlings from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service for planting in 2023 and so the areas will need clearing over the next few months. The Park will also be receiving a donation next fall of 55 larger Northern Red Oak saplings as part of a developer’s mitigation project.

In conjunction with removing obstacles and hazards from downed trees, invasive plant management is a major activity for Park Manager, Natalie Haley. An aggressive invasives management plan is necessary both for prevention and control. With disruption of the soil from logging activities, as well as the increased sun exposure from the loss of tree canopy, invasive plants will have a welcoming environment.



Fecon mulcher for invasive species control.

Since September, Natalie has been spraying various areas throughout the park to target honeysuckle, autumn olive, multi-flora rose, and invasive trees. The usual cut and treat method is also being employed by Park staff and volunteers. In November, the Park rented a mechanical fecon mulcher and Natalie was able to attack large numbers of invasive plants using this skid loader-mounted device. While mechanical and chemical treatment will be the primary method of invasive control, planting of native grasses will enable the use of controlled burns in larger areas of the park. The gun club prairie and sections of the oak tree field will need to be burned in the fall of 2023.

*(continued on page 2)*

### See what’s inside:

- Park cleanup (cont.)—page 2
- Park tour—page 2
- Nature’s Christmas—page 3
- Volunteer—page 3
- Kit Kapers—page 4
- FIA president —pages 6-7



## Storm recovery continues (cont.)

### Invasive Plant Targets

#### January

- Woody shrubs
- Invasive trees
- Single-stemmed invasive shrubs

#### February

- Woody shrubs
- Invasive trees
- Single-stemmed invasive shrubs
- Garlic mustard

#### March

- Woody shrubs
- Invasive trees
- Single-stemmed invasive shrubs
- Garlic mustard, teasel, creeping thistle, bittersweet nightshade & dames rocket

*(continued from first page)*

For planning purposes, Natalie has created a monthly calendar of invasive plant management. The invasive targets for January through March are published nearby. As this will be a large undertaking for the next few years, volunteers will be needed to hold back the invasives until native trees, shrubs and grasses become established.

Finally, with the trails being cleared of downed trees, the next step will be preparation of the trails for restoration. This work will involve replacing rock, culverts and clay soil that were disrupted as the result of storm damage and logging operations.

If you are interested in volunteering for any of the restoration activities, please monitor the Park's website and/or Facebook page for planned activities. Volunteer opportunities may also be posted on FIA's new website.

## Fox Island Alliance board of directors tour Fox Island

by Clara Conroy, photos by Clara Conroy

On Sunday, Dec. 18, the Fox Island Alliance board of directors were offered a chance to tour portions of the park. We met in the nature center and prepared our bodies for the cold and our hearts for the damage caused by the June 13 derecho. Jeff Ormiston, naturalist for Allen County Parks, was to be the guide for this excursion. Before venturing out, he told the group about the logging company that is removing fallen and damaged trees, how the equipment they use works, and how many truckloads go out on an average day. One truck can hold 80,000 pounds of trees. Being a Sunday, no logging was being carried out that day.

The group exited the nature center for a short initial hike. A few of the large trees in front of the nature center had to be removed back in May for the new roof, but now they are all gone. The grassy area where the gazebo stands looks more open than in the past, but the structure itself was untouched. Jeff then led a us around the wetland trail loop behind the nature center. Along the way, he pointed out areas in the forest that have already been cleared by loggers. There are piles of debris near the pond and elsewhere that will need to be cleaned up. The big tree that fell across the pond has been trimmed, but will stay because herons and turtles use the limbs that go into the water.



Intersection of upper and lower dune trails.

*(continued on page 5)*

## Nature's Christmas a success

by Clara Conroy, photos by Liz Hincks

Metea County Park hosted a special holiday event for youngsters and the young at heart on Dec. 10. The return of Nature's Christmas after a two year absence, due to Covid restrictions, was a welcome day of fun.



Volunteers from Fox Island Alliance, Indiana Master Naturalists and Deer Run Wilderness helped the children at various stations. The many activities included making ornaments, greeting cards, jewelry and a keepsake box. Tim Ormiston, FIA board member, was kept busy carving wooden Christmas tree ornaments for the boys and girls to paint. Families had a good time playing Jenga and putting together a jigsaw puzzle. Cookies, hot chocolate and other yummy goodies were available,

and there were very few leftovers.

All attendees hoped that they made the "nice" list, as Father Christmas was in the nature center lobby. Photos with the jolly man were available to those who wanted one. The Dekalb Horseman Association was also on hand, giving horse-drawn wagon rides with a team of black Percherons. All in all, it was a very merry Nature's Christmas!



## Volunteer opportunity

Do you have a passion to enrich young minds and share the beauty of our county parks? Fox Island staff is in need of trail guide volunteers. Even with Fox Island being closed, programs are being held at Metea County Park for the time being. Staff could use nature lovers to help assist school hikes. You do not have to be an IMN graduate to volunteer. Hikes would take place during the week generally during school hours.

If you would like to help but feel that you would need more guidance, the Alliance would like to host a trail guide training come spring. This training would cover basic nature information as well as how to appropriately lead hikes in order to engage our audience.

If this sounds like something you would be interested in please reach out to Victoria Mumaw at [vaweso@gmail.com](mailto:vaweso@gmail.com) for more information. We look forward to hearing from you!



# Kit Kapers: Fox Island Park for Kids

By Pam George



## *The Tale of a Fox.....for the Fox Tale!*



Imagine my excitement last winter when I spotted this spectacular red fox (left) in my back yard! After all, I live in the middle of a subdivision not too far from Metea County Park. Why would a fox be roaming and sleeping in my addition? My primary concern was for the welfare of my neighbor's little Shih Tzu dog.

I immediately called Bob Dispenza, the park manager at Metea Park to see what I should do. His answer, "Nothing! The fox will only prey upon rabbits and mice. Nothing bigger. When he gets his fill, he'll leave". And, sure enough, he was right. After three days of sleeping under

my pine trees and leaving distinct footprints in the snow at night as a telltale sign he was on the prowl for food, he left. And he has never returned.

His departure left me wanting to know more about these magnificent creatures whose name is honored at Fox Island Park. Fox sightings used to be a rare occurrence as foxes are private creatures. However, urban and suburban sprawl has disturbed their established areas.

And the winter months are very important for foxes, as they usually stay within 2-5 square miles of their dens. They mate in January and have their kits in early spring. Female foxes remain close to their dens to care for their young during this time, while males venture out to gather food to provide for their families. This would explain why I spotted this male fox. He was just being a devoted father!

Foxes have many adaptations that allow them to survive during these long winter months:

- ✓ Foxes have thick, layered coats that keeps them warm and dry.
- ✓ Foxes store fat deposits in their bodies that work as additional insulation from biting winds and cold.
- ✓ Foxes don't need a den to survive the winter unless they have young. Instead, they will just curl up in the snow at the base of a tree, wrapping their bushy tails around their heads like earmuffs (again just like the fox I spotted!).
- ✓ Foxes grow hairs on the bottom of their feet that act like snowshoes as they race through freezing snow and ice. These furry feet also help the fox stay quiet when stalking prey or fleeing a predator.



### **Additional Foxy Facts:**

- o Fox urine smells like skunk spray.
- o Fox scat (poop) is about 4 inches long with pointed ends and may contain bone fragments & hair in winter and fruit skins or seeds in spring and summer.
- o A fox often walks in a straight line placing its rear feet into the same spots as its front feet, leaving a neat, dotted line.
- o Foxes have golden colored eyes with distinctive vertical slits like cats but are near-sighted.
- o Foxes have acute hearing that helps them locate small mammals scurrying through thick grasses. They can stay hidden until the prey comes close. Then they jump high into the air and pounce on the unsuspecting animal.
- o Foxes are quick, running at speeds of 30- 45 miles per hour.
- o Foxes have over 200,000 scent receptors in their noses.
- o Foxes lack the facial muscles to "bear" their teeth like other canines.



So, be on the watch for evidence of these fascinating animals in your neighborhood or along your favorite hiking paths. The yipping of courting foxes on a still winter night is one of the eeriest sounds in nature!

## Fox Island Alliance board of directors tour Fox Island (cont.)

*(continued from page 2)*

Jeff then led us down toward the Vera Dulin Wildlife Observation Building where some of the heavy equipment was being held. Stacks of logs were in the grassy area on the west end of the parking lot and large piles of stumps and smaller limbs are in the thinned out woods at the head of the main trail going back to the dunes. Hanging precariously above the trail was a large snapped limb that looked as if it should have already fallen. The trail is still blocked at the top of the dune, so we decided against going that way. Instead, Jeff advised driving down towards the lake.



Heading down the west end of the sand dune.



Iconic sassafras trees destroyed in storm.

On the lake road, the further west we travelled, the loss of trees became more evident.

At the salamander pond, there was much dismay that the little wetland was full of brush piles. Rounding the turn, the forest almost disappeared. From this point, the dune is visible from the road and the woods are reduced to only having a few smaller trees here and there. The iconic stand of crooked sycamore that lined the road approaching the lake parking lot are all lying in a heap of broken trunks and limbs. The grassy area on the east side of the parking lot is now a huge staging area for piling logs until they are loaded on a flatbed trailer to be hauled away.

The group proceeded to follow Jeff on foot back into the area where the logging is currently being done. We took a new 15-foot wide trail, carved out by the heavy equipment and full of ruts, back toward the dune. At this point there are more stumps than standing trees. Large areas have very little of the former canopy left, and resemble a war zone more than a park. We hiked on back to the dune and finally got our bearings. Part of the west end of the upper dune trail has been cleared, but most other trails in this area are unrecognizable. The buildings on Olde Canal Place are easily visible now, as is most of Eagle Marsh.



Somewhere near the marsh trail.

With heavy hearts, the group hiked back to the parking lot, passing more snapped off trees, stumps and big piles of limbs along the way. A large piece of logging machinery stood like a quiet sentinel, just above the road in a new clearing, as we drove back to the gate on this chilly, somber afternoon.



## Seasons Greetings!



The winter season is upon us once again, reminding us to slow down and take a moment to reflect. It is with great pleasure that I share with you some of the activities that have taken place over the past ten months. We continue to make great strides in upholding our mission as a nonprofit corporation.

The Fox Island Alliance is powered by a group of dedicated members who are passionate, experienced, and resourceful. Through generous contributions of time and money, we are able to carry out business practices assigned to us in our by-laws. In addition, we are able to perform tasks and make decisions that allow us to connect with our members and strengthen our lines of communication.

One of the most noticeable and unforeseen events occurred on June 13th. It is hard to put into words the transformation that took place at Fox Island County Park from the derecho. This tragic event has brought forth an immense outpouring of support from our community. As a result, we received generous donations, earmarked for storm damage. Even after six months, we continue to receive donations. The board of directors will make decisions regarding the use of storm damage funds based on the priorities communicated to us from park staff.

In March, the board voted to approve a budget which designated funding for the support of various programs and projects taking place at Fox Island for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. I would like to share a few of the highlights from conservation, research and exhibits.

The conservation committee brought forth a robust proposal for tools and equipment to assist in land management practices at the park. With boots on the ground, the committee worked under the direction of park staff over the summer and fall to assist in the restorative efforts.

For the past few years, the Alliance has allocated and approved a stipend that allows Purdue University Fort Wayne graduate students the ability to conduct research at Fox Island County Park. One study conducted from 2019 - 2021 documented roosting behavior of northern long-eared bats in an urban-adjacent forest fragment. Galen Burrell, under the leadership of Dr. Scott Bergeson, Assistant Professor of Biology, performed research that was published in *Forests*. This peer-reviewed journal in forestry and forest ecology is a monthly online journal supported by Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute. The timing of this publication was impeccable. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service announced their final rule to reclassify the northern long-eared bat as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, which will take effect on Jan 30th 2023.

Another bright spot this year was the overhaul of existing and the creation of new exhibits located within the nature center and at kiosks surrounding the park. This transformation has been a remarkable process to see. Details of exhibit updates were first shared with you in the fall edition of the Fox Tale, however this was only the beginning. Even though the park has been closed to the public, the work on updating exhibits will continue for some time.

*(continued on next page)*



## Seasons Greetings! (cont.)



*(continued from previous page)*

I am proud to highlight that the Alliance continues to provide support for our local chapter of Indiana Master Naturalist (IMN). Alliance members ensure the program management of the Allen County chapter continues (Thank you to Pam G. and Jeff O.!) We contribute as guest speakers, local experts, program volunteers and assist from behind the scenes. All of which supports our award winning chapter. Our region is so fortunate to have this valuable program serve as a connection for educating and engaging volunteers. Many organizations benefit from IMN graduates and alumni groups.

As you may have read in our summer edition, Nature Camp was a success. Not even the derecho could stop the quick thinking and fast acting camp director and volunteers. With special thanks to our friends at Little River Wetlands Project, Nature Camp was able to relocate to Eagle Marsh while still carrying out education stations.

With a few months left to go in our fiscal year, the Alliance will be unveiling a new website in February. I am so proud of the work that has gone into such an endeavor. What started as a dream is now becoming a reality.

On behalf of the board of directors, *Thank you*, for making this past year a success. It has been an honor to represent such a wonderful group of caring individuals. In anticipation of the park reopening to the public, the Alliance will be working to coordinate volunteer efforts on behalf of park staff. So stay tuned! There are so many more positive actions yet to come.

Sincerely,

*Terri Habig*

Board President

### **Bat research published**

Information on the full journal article on the bat research conducted by Dr. Bergeson and Galen Burrell at Fox Island County park is as follows:

Burrell, G.E.; Bergeson, S.M. Roosting Behavior of Northern Long-Eared Bats (*Myotis septentrionalis*) in an Urban-Adjacent Forest Fragment. *Forests* **2022**, *13*, 1972. <https://doi.org/10.3390/f13121972>



# Fox Island Alliance Membership Renewal

Since a derecho closed the park in June 2022, and since it will probably remain closed until spring 2023, members have not been able to take advantage of all their benefits. To compensate, the board is offering to discount dues for the 2023-2024 year. If you wish to take advantage of this offer, check the appropriate box below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, state, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

	Full dues	50% discount
<b>Individual</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> \$7.50
<b>Veteran/Military/Spouse</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> \$5 each	<input type="checkbox"/> \$2.50 each
<b>Family</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20	<input type="checkbox"/> \$10
<b>Senior (55+)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> \$5 each	<input type="checkbox"/> \$2.50 each
<b>Full-time Student (any age)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> \$5	<input type="checkbox"/> \$2.50
<b>Sustaining</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15
<b>Patron</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25

Check if you would like to receive your Fox Tale by e-mail

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

### Contributions

Fox Island Alliance, Inc is a 501 (c) (3) organization. Contributions are deductible.

Exhibit Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

General Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Some companies will match your gift to FIA. Check with your Human Resources/Personnel Department.

**Make your check payable to FIA, Inc, and mail this form and your check to: Ed Powers, Membership, 12206 W Yoder Rd, Roanoke, IN 46783**





# Fox Island Alliance

**Ed Powers**  
**12206 W. Yoder Road**  
**Roanoke, IN 46783**

Officers:

- Terri Habig, President
- Liz Hincks, Vice President
- Grace Danel, Vice President
- Dan Preest, Secretary
- Tim Ormiston, Treasurer

**Board of Directors:**

Clara Conroy, Grace Danel, Pam George, Terri Habig, Liz Hincks, Lisa Esquivel Long, Sarah Maloy, Tori Mumaw, Tim Ormiston, Ed Powers, Dan Preest, Kate Sanders, Carrie Vrabel

**Directors Emeritus:**

Kate Ferguson, Phil Herrick, Dr. Solomon Isiorho, John McCrory, Iona Mensch and Jeff Ormiston

Fox Tale Editor:

Lisa Esquivel Long

The **Fox Island Alliance** is a volunteer not-for-profit organization. Its purposes are to help preserve the natural features of Fox Island County Park, to assist its orderly development as a nature preserve, to raise funds to facilitate its development, to promote Fox Island's use as an educational center, and to coordinate volunteer efforts.

MEMBERSHIPS EXPIRE ON MARCH 31. CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL TO BE SURE.

**Use the application to the right and check "Renewal"**

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

**Fox Island Alliance Membership 2023**         **New**      **Renewal**

Since a derecho closed the park in June 2022, and since it will probably remain closed until spring 2023, members have not been able to take advantage of all their benefits. To compensate, the board is offering to discount dues for the 2023-2024 year. If you wish to take advantage of this offer, check the appropriate box below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

     Check if you would like to receive your Fox Tale by email

	<b>Full Dues</b>	<b>50% Discount</b>
Individual	\$15	\$7.50
Veteran/Military/spouse	\$5 each	\$2.50 each
Family	\$20	\$10
Senior (55+)	\$5 each	\$2.50 each
Full-time student (any age)	\$5	\$2.50
Sustaining	\$30	\$15
Patron	\$50	\$25

**Additional gift** \$\_\_\_ General \$\_\_\_ Exhibits

**Total Dues and Gifts** \$\_\_\_\_\_

If this membership is a gift, enter donor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

     Check if you are interested in volunteering. You will be contacted.

Will your employer match your gift to FIA? Check with your Human Resources/Personnel Department. FIA is a 501 (c) (3) organization; extra gifts are tax deductible.

**Make your check payable to FIA, Inc. and mail with this form to:**  
**Ed Powers, Membership 12206 W. Yoder Rd., Roanoke, IN 46783**