



A derecho history of change

by Natalie Haley, Allen County Park and Education Manager

Fox Island's worst Derecho now on record is obviously the one that hit us on June 13, 2022. It has been a few months now since we began the initial cleanup. Nearby Fort Wayne International Airport clocked the winds at 98 mph, and that was after they blew through Fox Island County Park. Not a single trail was left unscathed. We spent the first two weeks clearing roads and parking areas so we could bring people in to assess.

Acres of trees were laid down. Trees over 100 years old; oak trees, huge tulip trees, bitternut hickories and sassafras. The scent of black oak and sassafras filled my senses.

I began talks with the Indiana State Nature Preserves to gain their understanding of our situation and to discuss allowing loggers into the park for the first time since before it became a park.

In processing everything we had been through, I eventually realized that a 15-minute storm had effectively changed my career path at Fox Island for the foreseeable future. I have spent the past 15-16 years prioritizing 90% of my career with a focus on outdoor education, my passion and my life's work. After the storm, my career changed to a 90% focus on land restoration. I have a passion for land ethics, and I have studied Aldo Leopold's land ethics to the point that I wrote a year-long curriculum immersed in his theories of land management and observing seasonal change. Aldo Leopold is known as the Father of Wildlife Management, and I am a Wildlife Science graduate of Purdue University.

To keep up with planting, herbicide treatments of invasives, replanting again, renovating trails, and reassessments of nature's response, I will need to spend most of my time managing this restoration project.

I met with several specialists in the field: Tom Crowe from Crowe Forestry, who personally has donated much of his time and some materials; Bill Lambert, Area Easement Program Specialist for the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); Quentin Beers, our District's State Forester; and various plant/restoration experts, such as Ben Hess, retired SNP, Nate Simon of Blue Heron Ministries, and Nathan Pugh of Heartland Restoration. Tony Fleming, retired hydrogeologist, was recently consulted due to concerns about rising hydric areas after the loss of thousands of trees that would normally be pumping massive amounts of water out of the ground. Volunteer, Bill Seidel was also kind enough to come in and help me develop a priority list or Storm Recovery Master Plan. *(continued on next page)*

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A derecho history of change (cont.)

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Of course, like all plans, they need to allow for flexibility and change as we learn through the actual process of implementing it.

So, the plan began. Loggers removed down logs. In the meantime, staff were able to repair or temporarily fix many items placed on the back burner. Private donations started to arrive. Epic Racing Events sponsored a fun run for us. It was held at Metea County Park, and they donated \$3,400.

Healing Hands Spa & Boutique held a Sol Festival fundraiser at Parkview Field and donated 100% of the profits to Fox Island restoration efforts.

We will need to battle invasives constantly through several acres until the trees reach a height that overcomes and outcompetes the lower canopy for sunlight. This takes 10-20 years or more, especially with oaks, as they spend the first 5-10 years just rooting in.

Once the loggers were out of the nature center area, I had a meeting with Tom Crowe of Crowe Forestry and Bill Lambert of NRCS where we evaluated the freshly logged areas and assessed the logging effort and the affect on these areas. Neither was concerned, and both recommended opening the tree canopy more if we were going to plant oaks there. This area of the park was farmed up to 60-70 years ago and the pre-settlement forests had been removed long before. So, what we have here is an early successional forest of around 60 years in growth. The trees that commonly grow in these early forests are elm, soft maples (silver and red), eastern cottonwood, boxelder, cherry, hackberry, etc. We had one sandy knoll with a stand of older oak trees, which was not hit that hard and will do well in the future. Two large 3-acre areas openings were essentially left needing restoration. The rest would regenerate on its own.

Naturalists' recordkeeping of nature's response will become valuable in understanding storm recovery response of natural areas in northern Indiana. My husband, a Nature Resource Soil Scientist for NRCS, was also recruited to GPS the size of these openings to create a map of where we wanted to focus our first-year tree plantings.

We also received help worth mentioning from United Way Fort Wayne with their annual Day of Caring. We were sent a sizeable crew of county employee volunteers who helped us grade out and mulch some of the trails around the oak trees on the sandy knoll mentioned prior. This work needed to be done by hand to keep the trails small and narrow here. We call this sandy knoll "Ormiston Mountain," after our environmental educator, Jeff Ormiston, who has devoted much time and effort teaching here. It may also be responsible for why we are called "Fox Island." According to the Yahne tenant farmers of 1895, Frederick Yahne observed fox denning in its soft, sandy soil, and referred to it as "Fox Island" even then.

Thanks to Crowe Forestry, we have an order with Indiana's State Tree Nursery for 7,100 trees to be planted in the two 3-acre plots as well as the 12-acre plot north of the lake road. Scott Fetters, a representative of U.S. Fish and Wildlife, was contacted via Tom Crowe and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife has agreed to pay for these seedlings out of U.S. Fish and Wildlife funds! Ideally, we will plant in mid-late April this year. We will rely on volunteers and local organizations to aide us in this effort.

I have organized a couple of groups of invasive plant warriors coming in every week in January and February. One local company, Vision Scapes Lawn and Landscaping Inc., have kindly donated several of their workers to remove invasive shrubs in key locations of the park through the end of February.

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FIA annual meeting of members

**We hope that you will join us for our Annual Meeting of Members on
Saturday, April 15, at 2:00 p.m. in the Fox Island Nature Center!**

Our guest speaker is Helen Frost, international author, who will also autograph any of her books that you bring with you. Helen's presentation will start at 2:00, followed by the Annual Meeting of Members, refreshments, and the Annual Meeting of Directors. IMN volunteers will be at the gatehouse to let you into the park. The park is still closed to the public and, for your safety, there can be no hiking while you are at Fox Island. If you have any questions or concerns about the meeting, contact Liz Hincks at lizhincks11@gmail.com.

A derecho history of change (cont.)

(continued from page 2)

Brickley Construction and Andrew White of Capitol Property Management are offering labor and equipment to help us manage the log debris piles in time to plant this spring.

I have spent the last week intentionally focusing on putting together this report, a scrapbooked history and a Power Point presentation on what happened to Fox Island. I will present this for the Indiana Master Naturalist class this winter.

Clearing of invasive plants

by Dan Preest



Treated stumps from very large "mother" honeysuckle bushes. The north side of the lake contained several very large bushes.

At its January meeting, the FIA Board approved the expenditure of \$7,500 for the employment of a professional restoration company to assist with the clearing of invasive plant species. Laura Stine Gardens was selected for the project and work began in early February with clearing invasives from around Bowman Lake. While workdays are limited by weather (freezing weather and rain limit herbicide application windows), cut-and-treat work has been nearly completed along the north and south sides of the lake. The elimination of these extensive invasive plant seed sources will be very beneficial in limiting competition for recovering native species and for the oak seedlings that will be planted this spring.



Piles of removed invasives. Principally honeysuckle but also autumn olive and multiflora rose.



Kit Kapers: Fox Island Park for Kids

By Pam George



Trekking Spring Trails

With harbingers of spring all around us, we're motivated to head out for long and inspiring nature hikes. One sure sign of animal life found along almost every trail you travel is that tunneled mound you trip over or sink into along the way. If you're brave enough, plunge your fingers down inside the tunnel. What type of critter would dig such a tunnel? Is the animal still there? Could it bite you?

Have no fear! You have just stumbled across a mole hill. And the eastern mole is probably the culprit that dug this amazing network of tunnels right under your feet.



- Moles are insectivores (insect-eaters), not rodents (like rats).
- Moles are VERY sensitive to touch and vibrations, like footsteps. Your tunnel-building mole sensed your arrival long before you spied its tunnel and fled underground to another location!
- Moles are about 6 to 8 inches long with long, curved, **webbed** claws with thick nails for digging.
- Moles have hairless, pointed snouts, lack external ears, and have fur that lays down in either direction so they can tunnel through the dirt without getting stuck at the rate of over **18 feet per hour!** Their eyes and ears are also covered with fur to keep out the dirt as they dig.
- Moles have toxins in their saliva that paralyze earthworms and other small critters (grubs, slugs, etc.) they snack on, so they can carry the prey to a storage tunnel for later consumption.

Living In An Underground World:

Moles are active all the time through all the seasons. They tend to eat for four hours, then rest for four hours day and night, consuming 60% to 100% of their body weight every day. With their metabolism in high gear, they're able to keep digging those tunnels! A mole's tunnel system can cover over an acre of land or more!! The entire system is guarded through scent marking.



Since moles can live four years or more, where do they go during the blustery cold winter months? They migrate.....not to a warmer climate, but to a warmer place deep down in the ground. Moles can't hibernate because they can't store fat in their bodies. Instead, they follow worms deep into the ground as both try to avoid freezing. Older, deeper tunnels usually remain cozy warm throughout the winter.



This pointed-nosed, short-tailed mole is missing an essential body part that lets it dig up to 18 feet of tunnels in one hour. Draw this important body part and don't forget the webbing between the toes.

Project feeder watch at Fox Island

by Ed & Cynthia Powers

Project FeederWatch is a program sponsored jointly by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Canada. Feeder watchers all over North America observe birds at their feeders for two consecutive days each week from November through April and submit their counts of each species to a central database.

Fox Island, with the help of FIA, has been participating in the effort since 2004. This winter, even with the park closed, nobody wanted to break the string, so several volunteers, working in two-hour shifts each Monday and Tuesday, have been given access to the Vera Dulin Wildlife Observation Building to count birds.

It is mid-March as I write this, so the data for the full season is not in yet, but here it is so far.

There have been 25 species seen thus far. Over the 18 weeks of the season four species have been seen every time: Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Carolina Chickadee, and White-breasted Nuthatch. Seven others have appeared 16 or 17 weeks: Mourning Dove, Hairy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Tufted Titmouse, American Goldfinch, Dark-eyed Junco, and Northern Cardinal.

But the ones that really interrupted conversations are those that appeared only one to three times. They were: Cooper's Hawk (if suddenly all the little birds disappear or freeze in place, you look around for a Cooper's), American Robin, Song Sparrow, Eastern Towhee (a sure sign spring is coming), Red-winged Blackbird (another harbinger of spring), and even Brown-headed Cowbird.

But a couple of birds that were common at the feeders but nevertheless always draw everyone's attention. Eastern Bluebirds came to the feeders during ten count periods, to eat mealworms or have a drink at the birdbath. But the bird that always thrilled everyone was the Pileated Woodpecker, a bird as big as a crow, with a flashy red crest and big white patch in its wings. One or two of these impressive birds came by 13 count periods.

Volunteers participating in Project FeederWatch this winter were Barb Bauer, Carl and Vicky Foltz, Nancy Kildusky, Belinda Lewis, John Moore, Cynthia and Ed Powers, Dave Reichlinger, and Bob and Donna Streeter.

New Fox Island Alliance website to be revealed in 2023!

by Sarah Maloy

The FIA Website Development Team has been working diligently to bring you a new website in 2023, providing a variety of new functions and options. This project began this past spring with the Board of Directors approval and the team has since partnered with a professional website developer. New features will include, but not limited to, the option to establish or renew membership online, review the history of our organization and newsletters, make donations, and sign up for volunteer opportunities!

If there are any questions about the website, or any general Alliance business, members should contact: admin@foxislandalliance.org.

Ancient artifacts display

by Liz Hincks

Installation of the new top and sides on the ancient artifacts display in the nature center. This project was funded by FIA and the exhibits Committee.



Meet Terri Habig, Fox Island Alliance board president

Terri has been president of the FIA board of directors for two terms.

Are you from Fort Wayne, or how did you get here?

My hometown is West Branch, MI. I was living in metro Detroit when I met Greg. After a few years of long distance dating, he proposed and I moved to Fort Wayne in 2014.

Your presidency is ending this spring. What did you most enjoy about being FIA president?

Establishing protocols that streamline our practices. We have a clear understanding of essential functions and operations.

What are you proud of during your presidency?

The work that was accomplished in order for us to develop & launch a new website.

What advice do you have for the next president?

Be flexible and collaborate often.

You graduated from the Indiana Master Naturalist (IMN) program in 2016. What did you learn through the program?

I learned a lot about our native plant and animal species and how to identify trees. What surprised me most was that Indiana has 43 native orchid species.

What is your favorite native flower?

Dutchman's breeches always makes me smile but do I love great blue lobelia.

What is your favorite native bird?

In my hometown, it is the sights & sounds from the common loon that I love most.

What do you like most about Fox Island—the Fox Island we knew before the derecho?

The upper dune is my favorite section of Fox Island.

What would be a benefit of members joining the board of directors?

The board of directors performs a lot of the heavy lifting in carrying out our mission. Board members keep committees functioning and make decisions that directly impact FIA's future.

What nature activities do you like to do?

I like to take meditative walks in forest. I enjoy journaling from a sit spot. The artist in me is constantly making observations and noticing the tiniest details found in nature. I'm a curious person.

What do you do for your "day job"?

I teach BIO3220. It is an ecology fieldwork laboratory course offered at Indiana Tech. I love working outdoors, so this course is perfect for me. It's a gratifying process to watch my students develop skillsets for a career in biology. Plus, I work in tandem with a great team of women in science.

Although my masters is in Environmental Education from Goshen College, I received undergraduate degrees in two-dimensional Art and Interior Design from Central Michigan University.

Anything else you'd like to mention?

On my third date with Greg, he took me to Fox Island for a hike. I remember being awestruck by a heartshaped leaf that had I discovered on our hike. Now, the rest is history. (And I know now that the basswood tree has heart shaped leaves!)



Southwest Allen Christmas bird count, held 12/31/22

by Cynthia Powers

The 8th official SW Allen Christmas Count was headquartered at Fox Island again. Even though the park was closed, well-behaved birders were given special permission; we were shocked to see the devastation caused by the derecho last June! Many thanks to Natalie Haley for opening the gate for us, and for our fantastic chili makers, Brett Fisher and Lori Healey. For me, the chili lunch is the high point of the day; at that time 33 species had been seen and were tallied on the overhead projector.

By the end of the day, we only totaled 41 species compared to around 50 in previous years. But it wasn't for lack of participants, as we had 25 field observers and 18 feeder watchers, some of whom took short hikes as well. 4835 individual birds were seen. The highest number seen was European Starlings (1312!) and Canada Geese (1118). Also, I was struck by the number of robins (321) and bluebirds (98). (No Snowy Owls this year, though.)

Species seen by only one party were the Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, Brown Creepers, White-Crowned Sparrows, and Belted Kingfisher all seen by Stephanie Wagner; Red-breasted Nuthatches seen by Jann Prince and Kathy Wagner at Peace Farm in Wells County, and Jerry Smith's Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Eagle Marsh West also had the only Ring-billed Gull, seen by Sue Zwierko and Rachel Osborne, and another gull that was either a Lesser Black-backed or a Herring Gull, seen and photographed by Carolyn and Jeffrey Area. Two Pileated Woodpeckers were seen, one of which stayed for an hour and a half eating suet at the Fox Island feeders. Extra points to the Ariebe family, who included their children Mae (8) and Walter (5). The world needs more young birders!

Christmas Bird Counts began in 1900 as a protest against Christmas Bird Shoots, where people actually went out to shoot as many birds as they could! (Hard to imagine!) So we are part of a 123-year old tradition that has contributed valuable data for scientists. Each count covers a 15-mile diameter circle, divided into territories for teams of birders to cover by hiking in public areas, driving slowly down rural roads, or simply watching their home feeders. Our circle includes Eagle Marsh, Fogwell Forest, the Homestead Environmental Area, and the new LC Nature Park. Counts were also held around Pokagon State Park, and Limberlost State Historic Site.

The 2023 count is scheduled for December 30, 2023. Mark your calendar!

Please send your volunteer hours

Please remember to send your volunteer hours in so that they can be counted. It helps the park with grants to keep track of these hours. Sarah Maloy is in charge of compiling member volunteer hours. Please make sure to send your hours to her by April 10, at volunteer@foxislandalliance.org.

In the future, we hope to have a volunteer timesheet template to make this process even easier.



Fox Island Alliance

Ed Powers
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Roanoke, IN 46783

Officers:

Terri Habig, President
 Liz Hincks, Vice President
 Vacant, Vice President
 Dan Preest, Secretary
 Tim Ormiston, Treasurer

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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

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

	Full Dues	50% Discount
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Veteran/Military/spouse	\$5 each	\$2.50 each
Family	\$20	\$10
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Additional gift \$___ General \$___ Exhibits

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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:
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