

# IMNature The newsletter for IMN hosts and certified graduates

## 2023 Summer Edition



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### Naturally inclined.....

#### ..... a note from the State Council President.

When I became a Master Naturalist, the first place I volunteered was Merry Lea Environmental Center in Noble County; and I continue to do so. Several years ago, Merry Lea gave copies of the book *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*, by Elisabeth Tova Bailey, to its volunteers. While I certainly appreciated the thoughtful gift, I have to admit that, at first, I was rather bemused by the subject. It sounded boring, and I probably rolled my eyes as I put the book on a shelf in my den with some of my other “to be read later” books.

A few months later, I decided to include it with some other books I was taking with me to Texas for a four-week babysitting stint at my daughter’s home. After finishing the other books I had taken with me, I started on Bailey’s book, not really expecting to

finish it. I was wrong. It is a thought-provoking book about a woman bedridden with a mysterious and debilitating illness; confined, and totally dependent on others for her care. One day, a friend brought her a pot of violets, with a woodland snail attached. With little else to occupy her time, she began observing the snail. Rather than go into further details about the book, let me recommend it to you as a quiet, reflective, and worthwhile read. (It’s currently available on Amazon in a variety of formats.)

As a result of reading the book, I figured it would be interesting to have a snail. Not really a surprise decision for me, since as a boy I had a wide variety of pets, some typical, some unusual, some purchased, some captured, some my parents knew about—some they didn’t. Anyway, I bought a small aquarium, got some soil and small plants and made a terrarium; then I began watching for snails when I was out hiking. I looked for a few years without success. Eventually I gave up. Just as well I thought, since the plants in the terrarium had died.

While out on a hike last October, much to my surprise, I spotted a snail about knee-high on a leafy plant right next to the trail. It was almost like it was saying, “Here I am, take me with you.” So, I did. On my way home I stopped and purchased some small plants for the aquarium, and got the tank ready for the “new arrival”. I also looked online for helpful information to care for it.

Land snails are

protection. They have two pairs of tentacles; eyes are located on the longer pair, and the shorter pair is used for smell and taste. Movement is accomplished by a “muscular foot” that, based on a kind of wave action, enables the snail to move forward from one place to another, but they cannot move backward. Snails secrete a mucus to slide on that reduces friction and protects their body. They have an average speed of .5 to .7 an inch per second. (One site I visited mentioned that there are clubs in the UK that have snail races. Sounds pretty exciting, right?) Snails have both male and female reproductive organs, and while they usually mate with a partner, they can self-fertilize. Eggs usually hatch in 2-4 weeks,

depending on species and weather, but the conditions have to be right for the eggs to hatch. A snail's

It never seemed to have a "favorite spot" and it liked mushrooms, lettuce, carrots and a cuttlebone. For a few months, it was pretty low maintenance: I'd give it fresh veggies and mist the tank every few days. I also needed to clean the snail poop off the glass occasionally. One day, I noticed a lot of little tiny orange spots on the glass. When I went to clean them off, I realized they weren't spots—they were tiny snails. (Baby snail shells are transparent, so I was seeing the carrot they had eaten.) I have absolutely no idea if the snail had mated before I picked it up, or if it impregnated itself, but evidently the "conditions were right" in my tank to lay eggs.

In a couple of days, I had more baby snails than I could count. The quantity of food I provided needed to be increased and cleaning the sides of the tank became almost a daily occurrence. Some of them evidently didn't care for the variety of food I was providing, because they completely demolished one of the plants in the tank. Since it was the middle of winter, I realized they were going to be mine for a while. I thought about setting up a larger tank, but decided to wait a bit before doing that. When I told others about my predicament, most thought it was pretty amusing, but none of them wanted a baby snail for a pet.

Earlier this year, on a warm day in late May, I followed Elisabeth Bailey's lead and took my original snail, and all but one of its offspring, back to the woods where I found it and released them. But unlike Elisabeth, I have never heard one eating.

*Chuck*

Did you know that the Junior and Teen IMN Programs were started in Indiana, and have spread from here to other states? Here's some news from a couple of our programs. Please send your story and pictures for inclusion in the next newsletter.



## A Special Ceremony

On a cool day in April, a group of young students were awarded the title of Junior Master Naturalist, Advanced Junior Master Naturalist, or Teen Master Naturalist, depending on their level of attainment. This was the graduation ceremony for the program run jointly by Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College and the Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Site. The event was held in an outdoor pavilion at GSP in Rome City. Students were just finishing

up their final class with two instructors from the Purdue Extension, as their parents began arriving for the ceremony. Each student was asked to mention what was his or her favorite subject from the curriculum. IMN Council President Chuck Harvuot was present and spoke to the students and parents about the depth of the IMN and similar programs across the country, and encouraged them to continue with their care for the planet. After that, Kaitlyn Sproles called each student forward and presented each with a certificate and a patch. Each one was allowed to choose a book from a variety of nature books laid out on a table, which was followed by a group picture and then some cake. What a great way to end a class!

# Ouabache State Park Junior IMN Day Camp



June 5-9 was the Junior/Teen Indiana Master Naturalist day camp at Ouabache State Park. Each day the students learn something different about nature. From trees to soil to native plants to reptiles, a lot was taught! This was the ninth year for the park to host the camp.

Jarie Stronczek has been at the last eight camps! Jody Heaston, IMN State Coordinator and helped to organize the camp said "Jarie is a

great example of why the Jr/Teen IMN program was developed. She is very interested in nature and hopes to someday work at a state park." Great Job Jarie! Thanks to the 30 volunteers that helped to run the camp. The camp is sponsored by the Friends of Ouabache <https://friendsofouabache.wixsite.com/park>



There are lots of Junior and Teen IMN classes being offered in a variety of locations and in several formats. Click here for more information:

<https://www.in.gov/dnr/state-parks/programs/indiana-master-naturalist-program/indiana-master-naturalist-classes/>

Alumni groups have been busy also. Here's what's been happening in Elkhart County. What has your group been doing? Share your projects and activities to inspire others.

## Elkhart County IMN Alumni Group Spring Activities

### Group Workday at the Goshen Tree Nursery



We had a fun work day in May at the Goshen Tree Nursery. Ten of us all dug, pulled, laughed, and enjoyed the beautiful weather. Bluebirds were singing and robins were foraging.

Steve Shantz identified some trees and Carole Mitchell identified a praying mantis ootheca (egg case). We were treated to a good pizza lunch, too! We have also participated in the Goshen Arbor Day celebration and helped with Earth Day at the Elkhart Environmental Center.

## Field Trip to the Field Museum

Just under twenty Elkhart County Indiana Master Naturalists including family and friends chartered a bus to the Chicago Field Museum to explore many displays.

There were exhibits on animals, dinosaurs, plants, meteorites, gems, geology, and the ancient Americas to name a few. The main attraction for our group was the



Underground Adventure. We shrunk in size as we entered soil and experienced life in line with the creatures in the soil. From earwigs to crawdads and the roots

of blue stem grasses, there are many organisms that thrive in the soil. At the end of the trek watch out for the wolf spider. Lots of educational fun was had by all!



## New IMN State Council Member

Leslie Fisher is a Resource Conservation Specialist at the Benton County Soil and Water Conservation District. She also serves as the Coordinator for the Big Pine Creek Watershed. Leslie works closely with farmers, landowners, agricultural businesses, local community members, and other invested groups to address natural resource concerns, build continuous partnerships, and get conservation on the ground.

Leslie is the president of the Hoosier Chapter's Soil and Water Conservation Society, a member of the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy State Planning Team and a recipient of Field to Market's Advisor Spotlight Award.

Prior to working for the Benton County SWCD, Leslie worked for Purdue Extension-Benton County assisting with youth programs, as well as Extension in Georgia and Kentucky doing Environmental Education.

Leslie loves being involved in her local community by serving as the president of the 4-H Council, volunteering with several local organizations, and with her children's interests. When not working or volunteering you can find Leslie outside laboring on their livestock farm, particularly with her meat goats. She enjoys almost anything if it's outside and spends as much time in the Big Pine Creek as possible. Welcome to the Council, Leslie!



# Be a Champion for Nature

By Bob Mosshammer, AIMN

If you have watched the movie *Master and Commander*, you may remember part of the story line where the young midshipman loses his arm in battle, and learns to be a “Fighting Naturalist” due to his affection for nature. I wish to encourage all IMNs to have that same Fighting Naturalist spirit when protecting our county and state parks by being a Champion for Nature. At this point you may be asking, “What issues should a naturalist be so enthusiastic about?” A DNR naturalist at Potato Creek State Park once told me that not all members of the general public have the same level of respect for nature. I thought that was a perfect way of explaining how some people treat nature. This leads me to my three biggest pet peeves that I would encourage you to be a Champion for Nature for: littering, defacing nature, and hiking only on assigned trails.

Some of you may remember the Crying Native American Public Service Announcement (PSA); this commercial ran for 10 years in the 70’s. The PSA commercial is about a Native American paddling a canoe down a river through trash floating in the water; at the end of the commercial the last scene portrayed him crying due to people disrespecting nature with all the littering. (The PSA is available on YouTube about Iron Eyes Cody). I feel the same way when I visit parks and need to constantly pick up paper, glass bottles, all types of plastic containers, and fishing line off the trails. I see littering as laziness! I would encourage you to be a Champion for Nature to not only help pick up litter but also educate others to refrain from littering. Working together maybe we can keep the Native American from crying.

My second pet peeve that I would like all IMNs to become Champion for Nature about is defacing nature. Defacing nature is a more deliberate act and more destructive to nature’s beauty. Carving words, initials, pictures on the smooth bark of American Beech trees is called arborglyph. Sad to say I have seen arborglyphs on many American Beech trees in every state park that I have visited. We need to educate the youth on how carving on living trees damages the protective coating (bark) of the tree. Carving initials in the bark opens up the tree to fungus and insect infestation. During my recent hiking trip to Chain O’ Lakes State Park, I found a large American Beech tree that has not yet been carved on, thus the park DNR staff posted an informative sign and fenced off the tree to educate and deter people from carving on the tree. It’s sad that this degree of protection is necessary.



Another destructive act is carving on rock formations; this is called petroglyph. Unfortunately, when visiting Shades and Turkey Run state parks I saw numerous rocks with carvings on them. Again, we all need to be Champions for Nature to educate people about the damage they do when defacing our natural beauty.

Late last summer I hiked the Blood Root trail at Salamonie Lake followed by hiking at Salamonie River State Forest to see the Three Sisters waterfalls. It was on this trip that I learned first-hand just how important it is for hikers and horses to stay on the assigned trails. There are a few reasons why we need to stay on assigned trails:



- **Soil Compaction** – Over years of traveling on the same trail, the soil slowly compacts (similar issue occurs for farmers when traversing large tractors over the same area of land). It is better for animals, worms and microbes that live in the soil when only a small percentage of the total acres of the park’s soil are compacted. We should all stay on the designated trails, rather than randomly hiking all over the park land.
  - **Erosion Control** – While hiking Salamonie River State Forest, I observed that the horses have randomly created new trails up and down the ravines. This not only kills the delicate plant life attempting to live under the canopy of a mature forest, but also disturbs the soil which promotes soil erosion. I am sure we have all witnessed the effects of soil being washed down the side of a hill. This is bad for the environment when the nutrients of the top soil are washed down the stream.
  - **Getting lost** – During my adult life, I have hiked several hundred miles of state park trails and I have never felt the fear of being lost. However, during my hiking in Salamonie River State Forest, I truly felt that I had gotten lost. The true reason why I had gotten lost was the fact that horses and past hikers have created so many “new” (i.e., unofficial) trails. It was only my levelheaded thinking and past hiking knowledge that enabled me to find my way out of the forest. Always stay on the trail, so if you ever do get lost, someone can easily locate you.
- These are just three reasons why we as Master Naturalists should inform others to stay on the assigned trails.



Using the Champion for Nature spirit, I wish to encourage all of us to actively protect our parks from littering, defacing, and erosion. Whenever you have a presentation to give, a hike to lead, or a class to teach, remind others that Mother Nature needs to be treated with care and respect so future generations may enjoy what you are enjoying now!

## News from the Indiana DNR

### 2024 Eclipse Info

Here’s everything you need to know about the 2024 total solar eclipse in Indiana. We’ll have more information in a future IMN Newsletter, but for now, enjoy this link: <https://www.visitindiana.com/eclipse2024/>

### New free DNR Smartphone App Available

The upgraded, free smartphone app of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources is available now to help you maximize your enjoyment of the outdoor recreation the DNR offers in the Hoosier state. Although there are many options in app stores about DNR recreation, the information in the DNR app comes straight from the source. The app is available to iPhone and Android users and is also formatted for use on tablets like iPad and Galaxy Tab.

Returning users will notice that the app has been completely rebuilt on a new platform for better device compatibility, featuring a new interface, better maps, more content, and the ability to receive notifications.

“Our DNR team is continuously looking for ways to improve our guests’ experience at our properties across the state,” said Dan Bortner, DNR director. “With this new app, finding a campsite, a trail, or your new favorite fishing hole is now even easier while you’re on the go. Whether you’re new or seasoned in outdoor recreation, this is an app you’ll definitely want to download.” This is the third major rewrite of the app, which was first launched in 2010. To install, search the app store for Indiana DNR, where you’ll see the DNR logo in the icon. More details on how to install are at [on.IN.gov/dnr-apps](https://on.IN.gov/dnr-apps).

While downloading this app, you may also be interested in downloading the [Indiana State Nature Passport](#) from Visit Indiana, which allows users to collect check-ins at DNR properties to exchange for prizes.

## Help DNR study blotchy bass syndrome

Blotchy bass syndrome (BBS) is the occurrence of black ink-like spots (hyperpigmentation) on the skin, fins, and/or mouths of freshwater bass species.

Researchers once thought that melanosis was caused by sun exposure or stress related to fishing, temperature, or pollution; however, researchers recently discovered that a family of viruses was associated with the black spots in fish that were in poor body condition.



The Division of Fish & Wildlife is partnering with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to collect samples from black bass species to test for BBS and needs your help. DNR encourages anglers to report observations of affected bass when you are fishing, so they and USGS can learn more about the effect of this family of viruses.

### How to participate:

- Download the MyCatch app from [Angler’s Atlas](#).
- Register for the “Blotchy Bass Bonanza.”
- Take photos of all the bass you’ve caught (preferably on a measuring board) while fishing and upload them to the MyCatch app.
- The Blotchy Bass Bonanza runs from March 1, 2023 —Feb. 29, 2024. The Indiana DNR is not associated with the MyCatch app or the Blotchy Bass Bonanza.

## Where Will YOU Volunteer on Sept 23 – 24?

National Public Lands Day, which is Sept. 23, is the nation’s largest single-day volunteer effort involving public lands. Many DNR properties are hosting volunteer events, but every act of kindness counts. Whether you pick up trash on a walk on your own or volunteer at an event, you will be leaving the place better than you found it. On Sunday, Sept. 24, Indiana State Parks, State Forests, and State Recreation Areas will offer free admission where entrance fees are normally charged. And remember, there is never a fee to visit a DNR Fish & Wildlife area. This is a great time to explore a DNR property that you haven’t visited before.

The entire weekend serves as a reminder that public lands are places for outdoor recreation, conservation, and making memories with families and friends. Events include hikes, pioneer activities, crafts, live bird shows, and more. By getting outside and participating in National Public Lands Day, you can create lasting bonds with loved ones and nature while helping conserve Indiana's natural resources. For a complete list of programs and volunteer events, see [calendar.dnr.IN.gov](https://calendar.dnr.IN.gov). Information about how to be a DNR volunteer is at [on.IN.gov/dnrvolunteer](https://on.IN.gov/dnrvolunteer). For more on National Public Lands Day, see [neefusa.org/npld](https://neefusa.org/npld).

## News from Turkey Run State Park

Turkey Run State Park was recently voted the 7<sup>th</sup> best state park in the U.S. by TravelAwaits, a travel website, and Trail 3 at the park was voted best hiking trail in the midwest by *Midwest Living* magazine. If you were at the 2021 IMN Gathering you might remember Aaron Douglas, the Turkey Run Naturalist. He is now working at Custer State Park in South Dakota! So welcome Jenny Fansler as the new Interpretive Naturalist for Turkey Run and Shades. Jenny is an IU graduate with a degree in Geology and a minor in Environmental Science.

## Olin Lake Nature Preserve

By Elma Chapman

**Hiking with the IDNR.** Saturday, May 20, the Indiana DNR scheduled a hike at the Olin Lake Nature Preserve. It was advertised state-wide, with a limit of 20 reservations accepted. Since I have been to Olin Lake several times on foot and more frequently by kayak, I explained that I would like to go on the hike, but I didn't want to take the space away from someone who might be seeing it for the first time. The organizer said that was no problem—she'd let me know if there was still room available closer to the event. Sadly, she only got 14 reservations, so she emailed me that I was good to go. Even sadder, not all of the 14 people who had made reservations showed up. So many good opportunities passed up!

The nature preserve surrounds Olin Lake, which is the largest undeveloped lake in Indiana. The preserve itself is 269 acres, 100 acres of which is the lake. Olin Lake is fed by seven seeps in the preserve. The seeps are mucky areas that are choked with dense skunk cabbage at this time of year. There is some run off from the surrounding farmers' fields, but erosion control measures have helped to mitigate this.

Saturday was sunny but quite cool—a perfect day for a walk in the woods. Tina, one of the two DNR employees who accompanied us on the hike, guaranteed that there were no ticks because there are so many red-backed salamanders in the preserve and they eat the ticks. While we didn't see any salamanders (you mostly need to flip over logs and leaf litter to find them), we didn't get any ticks, either.

The prolific trillium bloom was past, but a few flowers remained. Wild phlox and wild geranium were still blooming, and sweet cicely and/or anise root were at their peak. (I did some research on these two, and some sites said they were the same plant and some said they were different but related plants—quite confusing to us amateurs!) Another interesting plant we saw was squawroot, also known as cancer root, which is a type of fungus that grows on oak tree roots and pushes up through the forest floor looking somewhat like a pine cone. Apparently they do no



Cancer root



harm to the host oak tree, although they are parasitic and derive all their nutrition from the oak's root system. Our best find, however, was a showy Orchid that was just starting to bloom!

The storms of the past few years have taken a toll on the trees, but there is still dense forest in most places with a few openings created by blow-downs. One of the more unusual trees growing there is a bing cherry tree. Austin, our other guide from the DNR, said it was there because someone walked through the forest eating cherries and spit out a pit a very long time ago. Bing cherry trees are either male or female and it takes one of each to produce flowers and fruit, so this tree stands alone in the forest. There were several wild cherry trees in the area, but only the one, very large bing.



Showy orchid



Kentucky Coffee Tree seed pod

Another interesting tree was the Kentucky coffee tree. It is a tall, straight tree (60 – 75' at maturity) that produces large pods containing seeds. We found some of the pods on the ground from last season. When open, they contain seeds that somewhat resemble coffee beans, but they are surrounded by a green sticky goo. It was speculated that the green substance might be some form of nutrition to help the seeds to germinate.

When this land became a nature preserve, there were 30 giant beech trees. Now there are only nine left after the storm damage, but those that remain are impressively huge.

There are also ironwood trees, an understory tree in the birch family. They are so named because the wood is so tough. It was used in the construction of wheels for the wagons in which early settlers bumped across our continent. Another interesting tree was the muscle wood (a.k.a. blue beech or American hornbeam), also an understory tree that only grows to 15 – 30' tall. It has a smooth bark with ripples that look a bit like a flexed muscle. It is also a very hard wood which is used for tool handles, canes, and golf clubs, and is used by many birds and mammals for food, and beavers use it for lodges and dams. And we walked through a pawpaw patch. A few of the deep red flowers still remained on the trees, but they were past their prime.

We also learned a fun survival skill from Austin: if you are ever stranded in a woods with wild grape vines, you can cut the vine and drink the water that is inside. I had heard something similar about doing that with barrel cactus in the desert, but not about grape vines. Some of the vines we saw were about as big around as my leg. (But don't mess with the hairy vines—that's poison ivy!)

We walked for about two hours on the 1.5 miles of trail, stopping on the new boardwalk to admire the lake shore, in addition to all the flowers, fungi, and trees. We saw a lot more specimens than I can recount here. Olin Lake Nature Preserve is definitely worth a visit, and especially with a guide from the DNR. [https://www.in.gov/dnr/nature-preserves/files/Olin\\_Lake-color.pdf](https://www.in.gov/dnr/nature-preserves/files/Olin_Lake-color.pdf) Take advantage of these programs!

The Indiana Master Naturalist program is sponsored by the Resource Conservation & Development Councils, Indiana Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Purdue Cooperative Extension Service and Indiana Department of Natural Resources. [www.indianamasternaturalist.org](http://www.indianamasternaturalist.org)

Want to promote your alumni group, highlight a volunteer, or tell about your favorite experience with nature? Have an article and/or pictures you would like to submit? Or does your organization need volunteers? Let us know by contacting [chapman\\_ej@yahoo.com](mailto:chapman_ej@yahoo.com)

Deadline for submissions for the **fall edition** will be **September 15**.

Submitted articles may be awarded volunteer hours!



Extension



The mission of the Indiana Master Naturalist program is to bring together natural resource specialists with adult learners to foster an understanding of Indiana's plants, water, soils and wildlife, and promote natural resource volunteer service within the State of Indiana