

RED-TAIL CONSERVANCY ANNUAL REPORT 2003



Photo: White River along the Arellano property protected with a CE.

Prepared by

**Barry Banks,
Executive Director**

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ANNUAL REPORT
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Overview

Once again, Red-tail Conservancy, in our fourth year of operation, has experienced its best year ever. Our land trust has continued a high rate of growth in land acquisition and membership while keeping pace with our fundraising efforts. During the last year our economy has remained rather stagnant, presenting challenges to businesses and individuals alike. However, RTC has moved forward gaining the support of an even larger portion of the communities we serve. Let's look at the details.

Land Acquisitions and Stewardship

STOUT WOODS STATE NATURE PRESERVE: I am very pleased to report to the membership that the combined efforts of Red-tail Conservancy, Indiana Dept of Natural Resources, and Purdue Research Foundation resulted in this magnificent upland flatwoods in Henry County being dedicated as a state nature preserve. We have cut and marked a walking trail to allow the general public to visit this fine example of our natural heritage. RTC will not hold title or a Conservation Easement on this property, but our members should take great satisfaction in the role we played in permanently preserving this east central Indiana property. Our region owes a huge debt to the Stout Family for having the foresight and wisdom to allow this woodland to remain intact.

MILLER CONSERVATION EASEMENT: This project protects from inappropriate development an area that defines ecologically significant land. These 283 acres are prime agricultural and wildlife habitat areas that stand between the small town of New Lisbon and the Wilbur Wright Road intersection of Interstate 70. Mrs. Miller had been approached for years by developers to buy her land near the intersection which includes the wooded habitat area. The last offer she received called for leveling the woods in the picture to the right to construct a parking lot. A Conservation Easement was recorded in Henry County that will keep her land forever in agriculture and wildlife habitat.



ROBERT L. HUGHES NATURE PRESERVE: RTC's top priority is to preserve habitat areas along the waterways of east central Indiana. This is because these waterways are among the last remaining corridors to allow wildlife to move freely between fragmented habitat areas. The Robert L. Hughes

Nature Preserve lies between the White River and yet another significant wildlife corridor, the Cardinal Greenway. There will soon be a loop-trail constructed through the woods to allow the users of the trail to take an excursion through this recovering hardwood forest.

William and Richard Hughes donated a Conservation Easement to RTC; then gifted title of the property to the city of Muncie. The Hughes brothers realize that a future city administration might not value the natural character of this woods and allow it to be developed. By donating all the development rights to Red-tail Conservancy first, that option will no longer be available. They have entrusted our land trust to permanently hold those development rights and allow the woods named after their father to return to its natural state.

INDIAN CREEK PROJECT: This project consists of two Conservation Easements that will protect 128 acres of significant riparian habitat along White River just west of Anderson. Also included is a restoration plan that will eradicate non-native plants and reforest over 20 acres of fallow fields in the active floodplain. Just days ago, RTC acquired the development rights to the 103-acre Arellano property by entering into a Conservation Easement which entrusts our land trust with the development rights to this property. The boundary of the CE is delineated by the black line in the photo to the right. When combined with the soon to be completed CE on the Green property, this project will protect nearly a mile of the north bank of the White River. RTC purchased the development rights with funds from the White River Restoration Trust Fund. The property will not be open to the public, but this agreement will ensure that this significant habitat area will be preserved for future generations of our non-human community.



Along with a successful land acquisition program comes an obligation to expand our stewardship program. Many of our properties require monitoring just once year and enforcement of the terms of the Conservation Easements. As long as all the terms of the CE's are being followed, there are no major time consuming activities. I am happy to report that, to date, there have been no violations. We must be vigilant and prepare for the day when we will be called on to enforce and correct violations. RTC has started an endowment fund to cover the expense of stewardship as well as enforcement of our CE's.

However, owning nature preserves calls for ongoing programs to maintain and enhance their natural characteristics. RTC's stewardship committee, Kevin Tungsveck and Jeff Ray, are spending many hours planning, implementing, and overseeing the enhancement of our nature preserves. Chores such as trash pickup, tree planting, trail maintenance, and non-native plant eradication provide opportunities for RTC members to become involved in caring for our properties.

These latest land acquisitions raise our total acres protected to 838. Red-tail Conservancy continues to be one of the most successful land trusts in Indiana. We most certainly will surpass the 1000-acre milestone by the end of this calendar year. RTC members are encouraged to visit and experience the beauty and serenity that awaits them at our nature preserves. Call our office for directions or to arrange a tour.

Memberships

This time last year, we set a goal to have 150 new members by the 2003 annual meeting. I am delighted to report to the membership that, while we fell short of that goal, we have added 145 new members. This brings our individual membership total to 342! This was accomplished through current members recruiting, events, public speaking, staffing booths at fairs, and press coverage.

The biggest gain in membership continues to be from our two major fundraising events. The Red-tail Run and our juried art exhibit, OPEN SPACE: Art About the Land realized increases in participants and plans are underway to hold both of these innovative and popular events again this year. We staffed booths for the Madison and Randolph County 4-H Fairs and spoke to numerous public service organizations throughout the year.

RTC also realized a significant increase in Corporate Council membership. New members this year are Delaware Box & Pallet, The Pottery Place, Integrated Services, Inc., Cardinal Healthcare Pharmacy, Tom Ray Handyman, Indiana Public Radio, and Ring for Service. These new members supply vital funding, goods and services to our land trust and once again demonstrate that our corporate community cares about the quality of life in east central Indiana .

An example of the impact of our corporate support is our new website: www.fortheland.com. Delaware Box & Pallet has commissioned their computer service to take on the tasks of servicing RTC's computers on a monthly basis and supplying a webmaster for our website. Steve Baldwin of Technical Minded Computer Service immediately redesigned the website and solved many time consuming problems with our computer.

Fundraising

Having completed our third year of funding a budget that includes a full time staff person, we have become firm believers in the old adage that fundraising is a never-ending process. RTC has been most fortunate to have the talented board member Carla Caudell-Waechter serving as our fundraising committee chair. She, along with husband Ron, attended a Land Trust Alliance fundraising seminar last Fall and has been making an impact ever since.

While we kept our operations budget for fiscal year 2003 the same as 2002 (\$51,000), it has become a major challenge to reach our goals. It gives me great motivation and inspiration to see our corporate and individual members find ways to donate money in these times when extra money is hard to come by. Board members are pitching in their time to coordinate our fundraising events that provide significant funding. Corporate Council leaders had to look long and hard in coffers that weren't as full

as last year for the funds to help us move forward. Some gave less, but all of them gave and that's what's important. Red-tail Conservancy is truly an organization of folks who care about preserving our natural heritage, believe in the structure we have built, and are willing to put their money where their heart is.

In Conclusion

Once again I have the pleasure of saying, "This has been our most successful year for RTC. We had our largest acres-protected year. Our workdays and events are well attended and productive. Our membership roles continue to grow. Our board of directors remains an energetic, maturing, dedicated team that works through issues and provides guidance and inspiration to the Red-tail Conservancy."

Red-tail Conservancy is in the business of taking on long-term obligations. We sign contracts designed to *permanently* protect our natural heritage. As your executive director, I am committed to leading this land trust well into the 21st century and am preparing for when I'll pass the baton to the next generation. Don't think that will be any time soon. I just prepared for and completed the 13.1-mile Indy Mini-marathon. I'm in this for the "long run". It pleases and inspires me to know that the members of Red-tail are right there with me. We are showing the world that the people of east central Indiana care about our natural heritage and are willing and able to preserve, restore, and protect it.

Respectfully submitted,
Barry Banks
Executive Director

