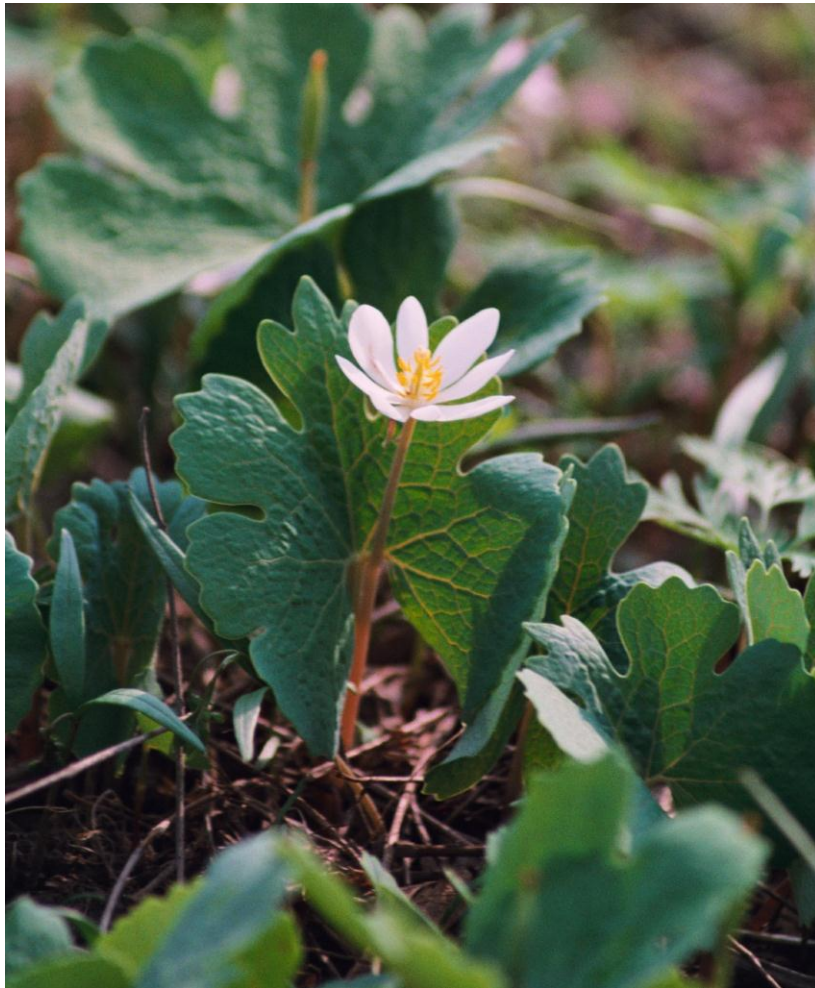


# **RED-TAIL CONSERVANCY ANNUAL REPORT 2006**



Native woodland wildflower

Bloodroot

**Prepared by**  
**Barry Banks,**  
**Executive Director**

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## Overview

As Red-tail Conservancy completes our seventh year, I once again present to the membership and community our annual report. It has been a year of extraordinary accomplishments, partnerships, and community involvement. Individuals, state agencies and corporations have become involved with RTC's land acquisition program. Our membership levels continue to trend upward. Our Friend-raising efforts continue to provide for our operations budget, stewardship activities, and endowments.

It has also been a year of sadness. A giant in east central Indiana land conservation, Phyllis Yuhas past away. Phyllis supported RTC from the beginning with generous donations to our operations budget. In December 2004, she established her legacy by being the lead beneficiary who enabled our land trust to purchase what would become the Phyllis and Frank Yuhas Woods. She seldom missed an opportunity to visit the woods. She is missed, but *never* will she be forgotten.

## Land Acquisitions and Stewardship

This past year has seen a shift in the type of land transactions. Heretofore, our acquisitions have involved individual landowners. Seventeen individuals chose a land conservation option to permanently protect and restore their precious parcels. This year title acquisitions have involved bequests in wills, and conservation agreements involved partnering with government agencies. Here are the projects.

**WILL BEQUESTS:** Three landowners have selected RTC to permanently protect land with will bequests. While these transactions are revocable, they are the result of RTC becoming established as a reliable, professional land conservation organization. These tracts of land could one day join the portfolio of sites that we are dedicated to protecting for future generations.



**CITY OF ANDERSON:** RTC has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the city of Anderson and FlatLand Resources to oversee a 36-acre floodplain restoration and bank stabilization project along White River. This project will eradicate non-natives from the floodplain and restore native plant communities at these sites that are owned by the city. A significant portion of this project will serve the community by stabilizing the western bank of White River where there is a severe erosion problem that threatens the municipal golf course. Three hundred ball-rooted will be planted to act as a buffer.

These efforts will increase the quality of the riparian habitat while offering education opportunities for the people of Madison county. Anderson has a very aggressive trail building program underway, that

will extend existing trails immediately adjacent to RiverBend II, which will offer the public a view of these newly restored habitat areas. RTC will hold a Conservation Agreement that will permanently protect this portion of the river corridor.

**CITY OF MUNCIE:** RTC has also entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the city of Muncie and AquaTerra to oversee wetland mitigation on the John M. Craddock Wetland Nature Preserve. This project will create approximately 6 acres of wetlands, enhancement of 3 acres of existing wetlands, and install 12 acres of associated upland buffer on this 23 acre site.

Like the project in Anderson, this restoration is also located along the White River, and as can be seen in this photo, the Craddock Wetland is directly across the river from the Hughes Nature Preserve. Protecting habitat areas along our wildlife corridors in east central Indiana has always been the highest priority land acquisition for our land trust. The membership should take satisfaction that with these projects, RTC is accomplishing that goal. Both of these restoration projects should be completed this growing season if the weather cooperates.



**SLETTVET FEN:** Our land trust partnered with the Nature Preserve division of IDNR to protect a high quality example of a central Indiana prairie fen and surrounding peatland. Fens are characterized as an open (treeless) wetland, generally of low stature sedge meadows, which are watered by groundwater seeps. This twenty acre site is a high quality example of this land type, which has high diversity of plant species. These fens are fragile and most have been lost to different types of development.

Tom Swinford, regional ecologist, prepared and presented an outstanding proposal to the Indiana Heritage Trust. Their selection committee recently recommended this project to Governor Michell E. Daniels, Jr., who approved the \$40,000 project in April of this year. The land owner, Donald Slettvet, is returning from his home in Lakewood CA this summer to work out the final details of the purchase.

This site is located north of Knightstown along the Big Blue River. It is the result of an ongoing effort to preserve habitat areas along this river in Henry County that we refer to as the Big Blue River Heritage Corridor. We continue to identify significant sites and approach landowners to expand our protection of this unique and valuable natural resource.

**CABIN CREEK WATERSHED:** Cabin Creek, located in southern Randolph county, is known throughout the state and nation because in its watershed is a raised fen known as the Cabin Creek Bog. In December 1974, the National Park Service designated the bog as a National Natural Landmark. CCB is included in Alton Lindsey's hallmark book "Natural Areas of Indiana". The creek has been

included in IDNR's trout stocking program. It also has a reputation as being one of the best Small-mouth Bass streams in the area.

RTC has established a presence in this ecologically rich watershed with two protected sites: The Conkle Wildlife Preserve and Phyllis & Frank Yuhas Woods. We are currently expanding our involvement with two stream restoration projects in which an addition half-mile of Cabin Creek will be buffered with native grasses, forbs and trees. Shade provided by the trees will help moderate stream temperatures, and woody plantings will stabilize the streambanks and decrease sediment loss. Elimination of cattle in the stream will decrease bacteria levels in Cabin Creek and allow the regeneration of a native plant community. The projects will also extend the wildlife habitat corridor into this area dominated by agricultural development.

STEWARDSHIP: Two items stand out when looking back at the last twelve months of RTC land stewardship. First, our land trust was presented the Randolph County, Conservation Stewardship Award by that county's Soil & Water Conservation District. This organization recognized RTC's efforts to improve the quality of life in their community through sound land conservation practices.

Second, RTC successfully completed a long, complicated grant project to reforest a portion of the Hagerstown Nature Preserve. Numerous agencies were involved in this effort, including IDNR, the Archaeological Resources Mngmt Service at BSU, Fish and Wildlife Div. of US Interior Dept, Cinergy Services, Turner Forestry and ArborTerra.

Two RTC volunteers stand out for their efforts to enhance our stewardship efforts. Don Ruch, Ph.D. and Byron Torke, Ph.D. have conducted comprehensive plant species inventories on two sites; the Red-tail Fen and Yuhas Woods. Their programs to scientifically document the plant communities at these sites establish a baseline of data which will guide out stewardship of these sites for years to come. Along with volunteers John Taylor and Kevin Tungsveick, these men have contributed their expertise by guiding tours at our Spring Wildflower Celebrations.

Our stewardship activities remain at the top of RTC's priorities. We remain grateful for the many community members who choose to spend their free time performing the rewarding work of maintaining our natural areas. Our challenge is to increase volunteer participation in the field as our stewardship responsibilities increase. This will be addressed by naming a Volunteer Coordinator who's primary task will be to compile and implement a plan to grow this vital activity.

### **Friend-raising**

Looking back at the year of Friend-raising, I see many highlights to share with the membership. This unique approach to fundraising and community outreach has accomplished much in the past twelve months.

Fund-raising is a vital and constant activity of all not-for-profit organizations. I've included our end of the year Income Statement with this report, to clearly present the details of our fund-raising program. Particularly encouraging are the strong increase in membership donations and the "bottom line".

A financial milestone took place this year with the opening of RTC's second endowment fund. With an anonymous \$25,000 contribution, RTC initiated the fund at the Henry County Community

Foundation. Our goal to provide for long-term financial security by opening an endowment in all of the counties has gained momentum as we stand ready to soon open our third endowment fund with the Madison County Community Foundation.

Another financial and outreach milestone was reached this year with the funding of Phase III of the Red-tail Nature Preserve project. RTC was awarded four grants to link our 18-acre prairie, pictured here, to the popular Cardinal Greenway by constructing a trail-head and loop trail. Completion is slated for late summer, after which the public will be invited to enjoy this natural amenity. Our heart-felt



thanks go out to Ball Brothers Foundation, Community Foundation of Muncie and Delaware County, Kitzelman Fund, and George & Francis Ball Foundation for their generous support and vision.

A new approach to public outreach was undertaken this year by holding two events we called “A Conversation about Conservation”. We invited the public to join us at our headquarters and on William Buskirk’s land included in our Conservation Easement program. We began the conversations with testimonials from RTC landowners who shared their ideas and motivations to permanently protect their land with RTC. The testimonials were followed by lively and informative conversations that mostly included people new to the land conservation movement. The highlight of these events was an announcement by two landowners that they had bequeathed their land to our land trust.

RTC tried another new event this year. In January we held Red-tail Day at the Blue Bottle Coffee Shop in downtown Muncie. RTC board members joined me behind the counter and serving orders to customers throughout the day. It was a grand opportunity to discuss land conservation with an entirely new constituency including the president of Ball State University, Jo Ann Gora and her husband Ray Budd. We plan to expand this event to include more restaurants next winter.

Our annual fund events continued to enhance our presence in east central Indiana as well as provide funding for operations. OPEN SPACE: Art About the Land had a phenomenal year with nearly a hundred artists entering and RTC netting over \$6,000. Minnetrista Cultural Center plays a key role in providing numerous hours of planning and implementation. This event could not take place without Brian Gordy and MCC’s expertise. Much credit goes to the Art Association of Henry County and Anderson Fine Arts Center for hosting this premier art exhibit. RTC held an Opening Reception dinner this year at the Anderson Fine Arts Center. With fifty-six people in attendance, we celebrated the connection of art and nature in that elegant facility.

One last event should be mentioned in this report; the Red-tail Moonwalk. The winter full-moon lights up a woods in a surprisingly inviting way. However, the weather did not cooperate, and we had to endure a cold, cloudy weather system that night. A small band of Red-tail folks gathered around a campfire at Yuhas Woods to enjoy a delicious meal and wait for a break in the clouds. We were rewarded with brief periods of moonlight that enable us to enjoy our night time hike in this glorious woodland setting. Of course, Phyllis Yuhas was among the brave ones that enjoyed that evening.

## **In Conclusion**

At Red-tail Conservancy's annual board retreat, our mission statement was reworded to read: "RTC preserves, protects, and restores natural areas and farm land in east central Indiana, while increasing awareness of our natural heritage." As a practical matter, it made our statement more concise and easier to say. Even more importantly, it illustrates the Board of Director's continuing efforts to maintain focus on and dedication to our land trust's mission.

It has been my privilege for these last seven years to champion wildlife habitat protection and land conservation in my homeland. I will remain forever grateful to the Board of Directors, volunteers, benefactors, foundations, and to the communities that have been the driving force responsible for our success.

Respectfully submitted  
For the land,

Barry Banks,  
Executive Director

