

## FRIENDS OF CEDAR CREEK, JANUARY 24, 2017

David Van Gilder, President, called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm at the ACRES Tom and Jane Dustin Preserve offices. Dave requested members notify Dave, Heather Baker, or Faith Van Gilder if they do not receive something via email one to two weeks before the meeting. Minutes will be included from the prior meeting. Larry Yoder, of the Yoder sugar bush has noted the sugaring schedule this year would require we come Tuesday, March 21 at 5:30 pm to park and walk back to the sugar shack in the light, be able to see the area, have the tour, and get back before dark. INPAWS (Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society) is still a potential program. Mary Anna Feitler will check to see who might provide a program in May. (update: Betsy Yankowiak of Little River Wetlands will speak Tuesday, May 23, 2017).

Dave Van Gilder will be looking into filing for a 501(c)3 organization (tax exempt status) with the federal government. FOCC is already an Indiana tax exempt organization.

Jason Kissel, ten years as Executive Director of ACRES and a forestry graduate of Purdue University, introduced himself prior to his talk on winter identification of trees and forest ecology. His father had worked for the US Forest Service in Idaho and from the age of five, Jason had been in and around trees. His own professional life started in North Carolina as curator of trees in a zoo, followed by work in Indianapolis on urban trees.

Jason explained that ecology is everything within a forest: it controls what grows, where it grows and the succession. In the time of the great black swamp near Fort Wayne and prairie and wetlands to the northwest, the land was 85% forest and over time the area is down to 20%. 1907 saw the reduction to 7% from the beginning of settlers (1817 or so) of old growth, the 200-300 year old trees, but the forests are reverting back. For approximately the past 1000 years, the soils show forest in the Cedar Creek area. 1200 acres (of which ACRES has 600 acres) are still completely forested. This cover is clearly seen in a flyover.

A horizontal graph showing succession from bare ground/rocks to lichens, grasses and weeds, mixed herbaceous plants, shrubs, young forest (cedar, tulip poplar, cottonwood, sycamore), mature forest (white oak and hickory) and climax forest (beech and sugar maple) gave us a 'how to look at a landscape' idea.

In managing forests, early harvest of white oak and hickory can pay property taxes, make wood and will regrow oak and hickory for hundreds of years. If harvesting stops, the forest moves toward beech and sugar maple. Beech and maple will come up as undergrowth because they can handle the shade and cooler temperature. Squirrels will take hickory nuts and acorns out to the open. Sycamore have floating-through-the-air seeds and they, too, move out to the edges to sprout and grow.

A good forester can feel the history of the forest. Succession shows success in paving the way for what grows next: bacteria dominant to fungus dominant in the soil for trees to grow successfully. (A sapling in a field won't grow well until fungus [mycelium] develops and then the sapling will grow well). Acres has a tree farm in Spencerville where trees are the crop. A forest is a longer rotation, and the area around the trees is mowed. A return on investment might take 50 years.

Jason explained that different species of pollinators, mammals and large birds change over time with the above and below ground diversity changing over time, though diversity falls off a bit in a climax forest. And time makes a difference: you can't come back to the same forest twice over

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the years. Disturbance by fire, man, wind and water will change the forest. Native Americans knew what they needed and would manipulate the forest to get what they wanted. Flood plains will be in pioneer plants or fast growing intermediate trees.

ACRES will plant pioneer trees. Jason noted that succession will go faster north of here where conifers come in first and then pines and hardwoods grow next.

Jason shared that winter tree identification is tricky. Look at the shape of the trees and learn to know which of our natives trees have what outline; for example: round - maple, spreading - oak, oval - hickory, open - locust, irregular - weeping willow. The Tree Identification Book by George W. Symonds was recommended as a good source. We would need to study twigs, buds, learn the opposites: dogwood, ash, maple, sycamore. Slow growing bark will chunk or check. When you start in the summer with the leaves look at the bark and learn young versus old. He recommended using all the senses: eyes, ears, nose, taste, and feel in your identification journey. Native trees grow based on day length, not temperature so are not as damaged in cold or warm weather. A clue on walnut/butternut twigs is the chambered pith in the center. And walnuts tend to produce in 7-13 year cycles while oaks will produce acorns in 3-4 year cycles. Squirrels will reproduce in line with these cycles (more walnuts/acorns, more squirrels). In line with learning about trees and forests, Faith Van Gilder recommended the book Lab Girl (a guide to the secret lives of plants) by Hope Jahren.

Dave Van Gilder remarked that in the history of State Forests in Indiana, significant logging has been the pattern, and setting aside 10% for old growth is now being reversed with SB420 sponsored by Senators Bassler, Ford, Rooms, and Smith. Senator Sue Glick will be holding a hearing on this and individuals should support maintaining the 10% set aside. Statewide advocacy groups (Indiana Forest Alliance and Hoosier Environmental Council) are promoting the set aside through their websites and encourage all to contact our senators with the most effective contact being face to face, followed by phone calls, and then email. HB1089 is proposing prohibiting government regulation on private property. Individuals may want to oppose this as there can be poor consequences without regulation. There will be a rally at the State House at 1:30pm for the 10% old growth forest preservation on state lands. Indiana has a lot of clear cutting in its State Forests.

Sarah Jansen, a masters student at Ball State in Emerging Media and Visual Design, shared a program Circle of Blue ([circleofblue.org](http://circleofblue.org)) which reports on the fresh water resource crisis through the journalistic Blue Roots Project. This is focusing on the crises by looking at a series of smaller problems and trying to solve them by sharing information. She gave examples such as the Flint, MI lead in water problem, drought and the like and she wants to have stories to share with a mass audience. She is working with artists and environmental groups to get information prior to World Water Day, March 22. WET (Water Education Training) has resources for teachers.

Another opportunity for environmental advocacy will be a meeting at Homestead High School, February 21, 2017, 6pm on expanding the use of coal for AEP power generation.

More information on topics of interest is on the ACRES website and the FOCC website. Nature notes: pileated woodpecker was seen at Warren Mead's and Joe Conrad's homes. Great horned owls were mentioned by Dave Van Gilder. Mice, voles, cats are prey. Turkeys were seen at IWLA on Griffin Road. Meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm for more sharing of snacks.

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Respectfully submitted,

MA Feitler