



Mud Creek Conservancy  
8080 Sargent Road  
Indianapolis, IN 46256



#### Board of Directors

Frank Smietana, President

Dr. Jackie Morice, Vice President

John Lindstaedt, Treasurer

Diantha DeGraw, Historian

Rachel M. Simon,  
Communications Director

Rick Marrs,  
Biodiversity Specialist

#### Contact us:

Mud Creek Conservancy

8080 Sargent Road

Indianapolis, IN 46256

317.985.0992

[www.MudCreekConservancy.org](http://www.MudCreekConservancy.org)

[frank@MudCreekConservancy.org](mailto:frank@MudCreekConservancy.org)

# The Tributary

Newsletter of the Mud Creek Conservancy

Fall 2010 / Winter 2011

## Scout Projects Enhance Easement Wildlife Habitat

MCC's conservation easements have been the beneficiaries of numerous volunteer hours logged by local Eagle Scout candidates. In September Daniel Roberts, a member of Scout Troop 276 at Castleton United Methodist Church, built and erected four bluebird houses on the Biesterfeldt easements, bringing the total number of bluebird houses on their three easements to eleven.



*Austin Conner and his parents Gary and Paula running an auger for bat house mounting poles*

In November, Austin Conner built nine bat houses. When finished and mounted, the south-facing bat houses will stand 12—15 feet above ground. Austin is also a member of Scout Troop 276. With suitable bat habitat disappearing in Indiana, these houses can help provide a nesting and resting place for local bats. While bats are known as voracious consumers of mosquitoes, eating up to 1200 in a single hour, bats also feast on beetles, moths, cutworms, corn ear-worms, and other agricultural pests.

Over the summer, scouts under the supervision of MCC Biodiversity Specialist Rick Marrs spent several weekends creating MCC's third ephemeral pond on the Smietana/Adler easement. These small bodies of water serve as watering holes, food resources, living quarters, and breeding grounds for many kinds of animals.

The first of these ponds was created in 2009 on the IWC easement's sparsely wooded flood plain. Because it dries up completely by mid- July, it is a true ephemeral pond. Chorus Frogs, American Toads, and Gray Treefrogs have bred in it, as well as dragonflies, damselflies and other invertebrates. (Continued on next page)

# Scout Projects Enhance Easement Habitat

(continued from page 1)

Dug in 2010, the second pond is situated in a forested ravine on the DeGraw easement. This pond retained water even throughout this past dry summer. Green Frogs, Bullfrogs, Leopard Frogs and a baby Painted Turtle have already discovered it. Tadpoles were seen in late October, indicating that



Nicholas and Taylor Connor standing next to one of the recently built bluebird houses

frog breeding is taking place. Two-lined Salamanders were found under pieces of bark along the pond's edge. Normally, these small amphibians inhabit a nearby creek, which had completely dried up. Because they were able to access the life-sustaining moisture of this tiny woodland pond, the population was saved.



Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*)

The pond on the Smietana/Alder easement is situated near Mud Creek, a small spring-fed tributary, and a swampy area in the floodplain. Although finished too late in the season for any amphibian to have bred, several Green and Leopard frogs were seen splashing about in its water only days after it was created.

Some people are concerned that the ponds will provide places for mosquitoes to breed. While this is often true, they also provide opportunities for dragonflies, damselflies, water beetles, salamanders and numerous other predators of mosquitoes, thus keeping their numbers in check. It is the mosquitoes that breed in old tires, buckets, clogged gutters and other such predator-free environments that become problematic.

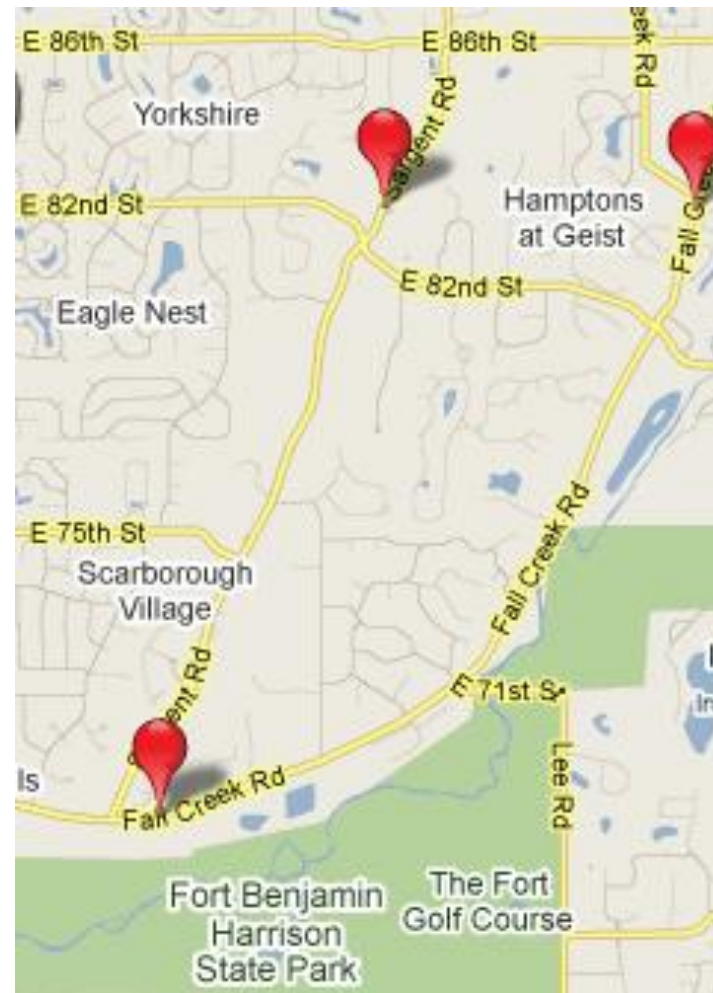
Ephemeral ponds are designed to fill up during spring floods and slowly dry up during the summer months. These ponds serve as great breeding grounds for a rich array of native Hoosier reptiles and amphibians. By the time the ponds dry up, these species have migrated elsewhere. As wetlands get developed or drained, conservation organizations work to create man-made ponds to fill the void.

# Mud Creek's Pioneer Cemeteries

Indiana is home to thousands of pioneer cemeteries, some of which predate Indiana's incorporation as a state in 1816. Three of these cemeteries, Hopewell, Salem, and Silvey, are located in Lawrence Township and within the Mud Creek watershed. The earliest settlers of the watershed are buried in the Hopewell cemetery on Sargent Road just north of 82nd Street.

The 14 cemeteries in Lawrence Township contain 520 identified graves in addition to 284 unmarked headstones. The oldest identified grave dates to 1790.

The Lawrence Township Trustee maintains a website containing maps of each cemetery and a listing of identified gravestones at each cemetery. The website ([www.lawrencetownshiptrustee.org/cemeteries](http://www.lawrencetownshiptrustee.org/cemeteries)) listings provide a fascinating glimpse into the early post-settler history of the watershed.



Three of Lawrence Township's pioneer cemeteries lie within the Mud Creek Watershed.



While problems relating to cemetery vandalism and general neglect garner the lions share of media coverage, a more encouraging trend is also emerging: grassroots groups mobilizing to restore and steward Indiana's pioneer cemeteries.

The Indiana Pioneer Cemeteries Restoration Project ([www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~inpcrp/](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~inpcrp/)) was begun in October 1997 as an effort to generate public awareness about the neglected pioneer cemeteries of Indiana. Their website displays a number of useful guidelines and resources for volunteers wishing to help restore pioneer cemeteries.

Closer to home, the Sargent Road Association is partnering with the Lawrence Township Trustee to schedule work days at our three local cemeteries in 2011. More information can be found on their website ([www.SargentRoadAssociation.org](http://www.SargentRoadAssociation.org)).



## Upcoming Events

MCC is a partner organization of the Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District Backyard Conservation Program. The following events have been scheduled for 2011:

- |               |                           |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| February 17th | Backyard Conservation 101 |
| May 21st      | Invasive Plant Workshop   |
| July 3th      | Pond Edge Enhancements    |

Workshop times & locations can be found on their website ([www.hamiltonswcd.org](http://www.hamiltonswcd.org)).