



2023

COMMUNITY REPORT



45 Years of Conservation

For the past 45 years, you have shown your passion for nature by supporting Bur Oak Land Trust. While this means a lot to me, it means so much more to the countless birds, bats, and frogs that call our preserves home. I was reminded of this recently when on a foggy, December morning when I visited the Corriell wetlands to watch the overwintering geese and ducks.

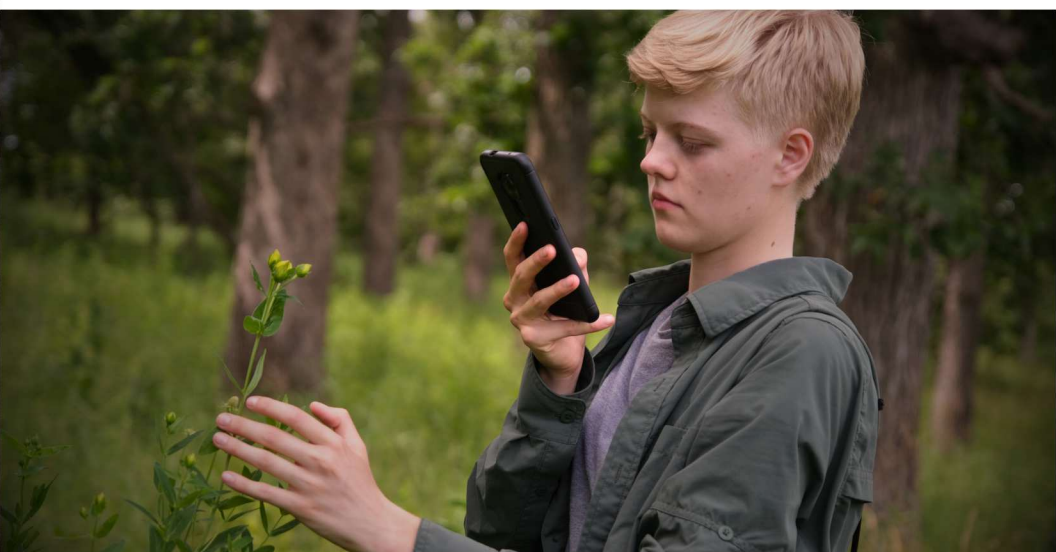
Arriving before sunrise, I was greeted by the primeval bugling of sandhill cranes that were hidden in the fog. While sitting near the beaver dam, I heard a gunshot on a nearby property, followed by the cacophony of waterfowl taking flight. Within a minute, I was treated to the amazing site of hundreds of birds landing in formation right in front of me. The birds were using the Corriell wetlands as a sanctuary in the truest sense of the word.

Numerous landowners have worked with Bur Oak over the last four decades to leave a legacy of refuge in eastern Iowa. Your support allows us to care for that land and to create safe spaces for wildlife. On behalf of the board, staff, and volunteers, thank you for making this all happen. We look forward to seeing you on the preserves in 2024.



Jason Taylor, Executive Director

J.T.T.



BUR OAK'S MISSION

Bur Oak Land Trust is advancing biodiversity in eastern Iowa by protecting resilient landscapes and connecting people to nature.

After a group of passionate volunteers started Bur Oak in 1978, they ran the organization for 27 years before hiring their first employee. Today, five staff members continue to restore more than 1,000 acres of vulnerable land to its native state.

Bur Oak actively manages preserves by removing invasive plants and replanting native species to benefit animals, birds, insects, and community members. In the last 45 years, hundreds of community volunteers and 62 AmeriCorps members have made an enormous impact on land conservation in eastern Iowa.

LAND TRUST LEADERSHIP

"I am really proud of the heavy lifting that we are doing with governance right now."

- Kate Reilly, Governance Committee Chair

In 2023, the land trust board of directors took on the task of rekindling the governance committee so policies could be updated and revised to reflect the changing organization. Policy work is something the general public doesn't usually see but is critical to the operation and sustainability of the organization.

BUR OAK PRESERVES

JOHNSON COUNTY

Big Grove Preserve
Belgum Grove
Hora Woods
Muddy Creek Preserve
Oak Crest*
O'Mara-Newport Woods*
Pappy Dickens Preserve
Shimek Ravine

Strub Prairie
Turkey Creek Nature Preserve

MUSCATINE COUNTY

Corriell Nature Preserve*

POWESHIEK COUNTY

Kessler Prairie

*Access available by invitation only.

2023 REVIEW

A Year of Revival

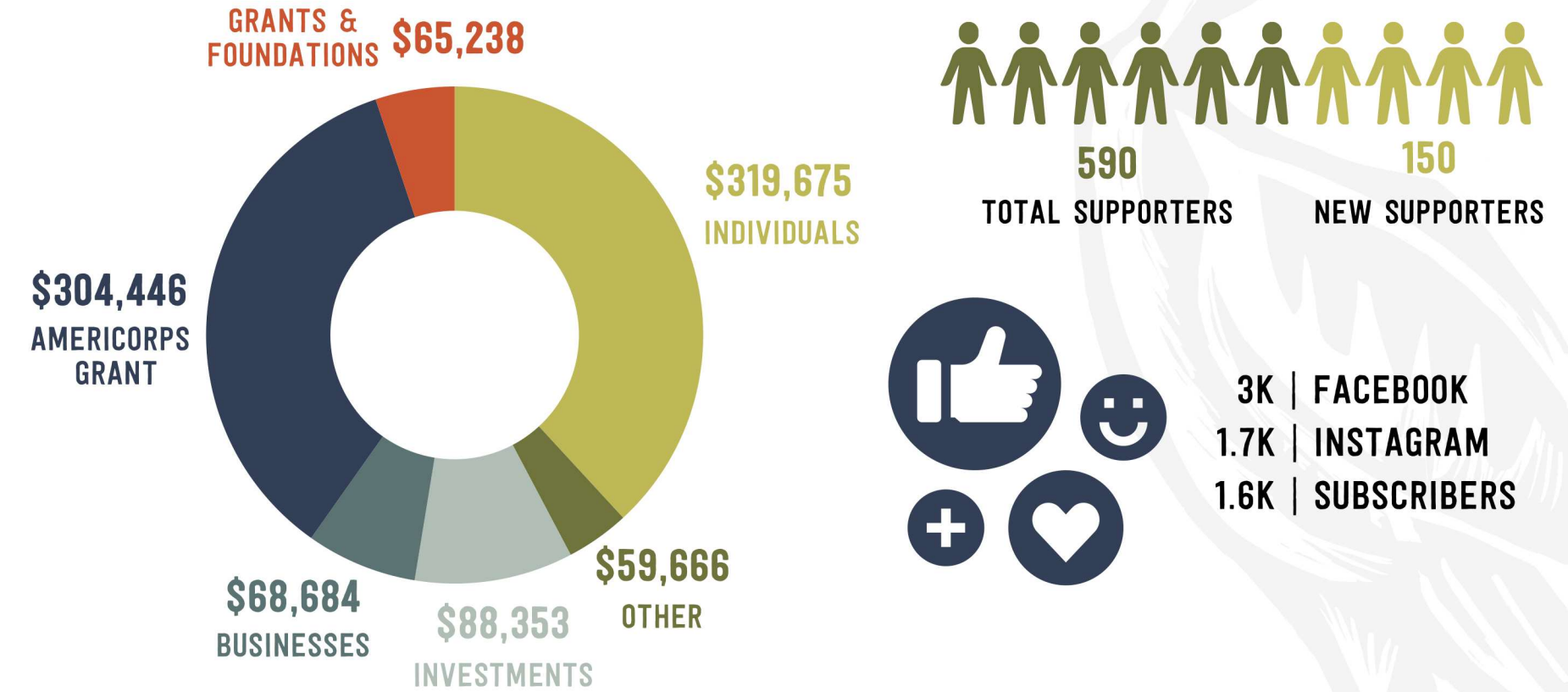
The work of conserving land in eastern Iowa is ongoing. It takes thoughtful planning and continual action to change natural places for the better. In addition to a years worth of land management activity across the Bur Oak preserves and beyond, these are some of the highlights of the year.

“Growing up in Chicago with limited exposure to prairies, I did not understand the importance of pollinators. My husband, Cedar Rapids native Matt McGrane, and I moved to Iowa in 2018, and since then, I have developed an appreciation that pollinators are essential for ecological diversity and survival. Matt and I support the Bur Oak Land Trust because it helps educate our community of the benefits of pollinators and actions we can take to support pollinators.”

– David Maier, Cedar Rapids City Council

BY THE NUMBERS

Individuals accounted for 71% of donations in 2023 and allowed us to reach our fundraising goals.



TOTAL REVENUE
\$906,062



TOTAL EXPENSES
\$776,021

ADMINISTRATION: \$105,405

DEVELOPMENT: \$123,279

PROGRAMS: \$547,337

OUR MISSION IN ACTION

BIODIVERSITY SPOTLIGHT

In 2023, Bur Oak marked a turning point in its land stewardship efforts. The land trust expanded in both the depth and breadth of its contributions to the conservation of eastern Iowa's ecosystems. Bur Oak staff and AmeriCorps field crew built upon years of previous effort to cover more new ground than ever before.

MUDDY CREEK PRESERVE

In the last couple of years burning on Bur Oak preserves has expanded vastly. Muddy Creek had not seen fire since its acquisition, and likely had experienced longtime fire suppression for decades. In the summer of 2022, the AmeriCorps field crew installed semi-permanent fuel breaks around two units at Muddy Creek to create a burnable zone. In 2023, the crew was able to perform a prescribed burn in this zone to remove invasive plants for the first time in around 100 years.

OAK CREST

Oak Crest was donated to Bur Oak in 2021 largely due to the magnificent bur oak trees cresting the hill along Highway 218. Efforts in 2022 and 2023 focused on freeing up these mature oak trees from the subcanopy pressure from invasive shrubs. The AmeriCorps team removed over an acre of dense invasive plants and burned more than 30 wood piles over the winter to reduce ground-level woody fuels.



SERVICE TO THE LAND

Since 2019, Bur Oak Land Trust AmeriCorps members have served more than 59,000* hours in the field to make better habitat throughout eastern Iowa.

The fifth year of the program started in September with seven new members and two returning members.

There was extra reason to celebrate the start of the service year. Over the summer, the Iowa Boards and Commissions Review committee made initial recommendations to eliminate hundreds of commissions and boards including The Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, the commission necessary for distributing AmeriCorps funds across the state. Due to an outpouring of support and feedback, the committee reversed its recommendation.



AmeriCorps programs have a huge impact on the state and local environment. The land trust has greatly increased its capacity for land management and is able to get more done for the outdoors through national service.

Total hours from *Sept. 2019-Nov. 2023



CONNECTION WITH THE COMMUNITY

In 2023 Bur Oak brought back many beloved community events including Prairie Preview and Belgum Groove (Music on the Prairie). Bur Oak held 10 public events in 2023, **nine of the events were free!** Two public Chainsaw Academy training courses were also sold out.

YOU SHOWED UP!

Prairie Preview, Belgum Groove, Crayfish Crawl, and Golden Hour reached full capacity. Hundreds of community members got to learn about and experience the joy of the outdoors.

Prairie Preview, a free community fair, had 275 people in attendance. There were 33 conservation groups exhibiting and local experts Connie Mutel, Larry Weber, and Thomas Rosburg shared from the book, "Tending Iowa's Land."

Belgum Groove, a free concert, had 175 people in attendance at Belgum Grove, a Bur Oak preserve. Performances by local musicians, free cookies, a preserve tour, and food by Marco's Grilled Cheese were the highlights of the event.

Crayfish Crawl, a free family day, had more than 60 people at Turkey Creek Nature Preserve; 40 of which were kids! Families got to see and touch crayfish, make bird feeders, join a scavenger hunt, enjoy ice cream, and play in the creek.

Golden Hour, Bur Oak's annual fundraiser, was held at the Webster which was at capacity with over 60 people in attendance for the special 5-course mushroom-themed meal. The event raised more than \$14,000 for Bur Oak's general fund! **This fundraiser helps make it possible for the land trust to offer its free events throughout the year.**

"I was born and raised in Iowa, close to Belgum Grove. I spent most of my time outdoors as a child. Today, I still love spending time in nature ... now with a family of my own. I want to help protect and conserve our state's natural areas so everyone can enjoy Iowa's rolling landscapes and wildlife like we've been able to do."

- Kyle Grout, Grout Electric

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Your donations makes it possible for Bur Oak Land Trust to serve our community.

CONSERVATION LEGACY \$10,000+

Anonymous gift in memory of Travis
Barbara Beaumont and Kurt Hamann
Mike Feiss and Cathy Cole
Helen M. Harrison Foundation
Holthues Trust
Jeff Klahn and Elisabeth Swain
Louise Murray in memory of Ed Heffron

RUSTY PATCHED BUMBLEBEE SOCIETY \$5,000-9,999

Linda Bergquist
William Blair
Holly Carver and Lain Adkins
Community Foundation of Johnson
County
Chris and Sheral Jensen
Mary and Ken Lowder
Jane McCune and Bob Wachal
Cheryl Miller
Connie and Robert Mutel
River Products Company, Inc
Stanley Center for Peace and Security
Maria and Ryan Story
John and Jean Van Rybroek
Paul Weller and Sara Rynes-Weller

\$2,000-4,999

David and Sally Dierks
Judith and Robert Felder
Sam and Riene Gelman, the Webster
Iowa City Landscaping & Garden Center
Johnson County Auditor
Steve and Karen Laughlin

Ed and Ann Lorson
Jenn Lynch
David Maier and Matt McGrane
MidWestOne Foundation
Martha and Russell Noyes
Angela and Martin Roerman
Dr. Suzanne Stock, Orthodontist
Anne and Byron Vandenberg
Larry and Miechelle Weber
Kirsten Winter in memory of Carol
Winter

NANCY SEIBERLING CIRCLE \$1,000-1,999

ACT Inc
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Mary Sue Bowers
Karen and Tom Casavant
Davisson & Son Millwork
Jerry Denehy
Charlotte Fairlie and Edward Agran
Jeffery Ford and Lynette Marshall
Blair Frank
Gay & Ciha Funeral and Cremation
Service
Tom and Becky Gelman
GreenState Credit Union
Grout Electric
Tom and Laura Hahn
Raymond and Patricia Hamilton
Don and Kathryn Hodson
Hills Bank
ITC Holdings Corp
Valerie Kemp in honor of the Ralph
Richardson Charitable Giving Fund
Jude and Val Langhurst
Martin Construction

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George and Alliene Schrimper
Holmes Semken
Shive-Hattery
Louise and Jeff Smith
Sally and Roger Stutsman
Kristin Summerwill
Yamaha Motor Corporation, USA
Brendan Young and Jim Summers
Gail and Frank Zlatnik

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF JOHNSON COUNTY ENDOWMENT FUND

Susan Frye
John and Patricia Koza
Arnold Meenal Menezes
Don Merryman
Armond and Polly Pagliai

ENDANGERED BAT GUARDIANS \$500-999

Diane Atkins
Diane and Gary Baumbach
Peg Bouska
Deborah and Richard Boyles
Anne Burnside and Linda McGuire
Caplan Family Fund
Michael Chibnik
Lon and Barbara Drake

Edward Jones Investments
Polly Ferguson
Patrica Grady
Joe and Nancy Holland
Kenneth and Janis Hubel
Ryan Kinser
Dennis and Emily LaMantia
Rachel Larson
Larkspur Ecological Restoration
Gregory and Nancy LeFevre
Gary and Sharon Lust
Carolyn and Joseph Martin
Jeff Murray and Anne Marie McCarthy
Wade Nash
Judy and Bill Nauseef
Okoboji Wines
Armond and Polly Pagliai
Richard Platte
Kate Reilly and Tyler Budding
David and Harriet Reynolds
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Frank and Mary Scamman
Collen Schmitt
Joan Schnabel and Jeff Falk
Matt and Brianna Seberger
Ken and Marybeth Slonneger
True Endeavors Concerts LLC
Ted and Trina Weiland
Seth and Wendy Zimmermann

\$250-499

Constance Aldridge
Mike and Phyllis Avesing
Ethel Barker
John Barr
Jake Beal
Florence Boos in honor of William Boos

Brian Bourgeois
Jeff and Sara Braverman
Angie Burr
Bryan and Virginia Clemons
Rhawn Denniston
Karen Eldridge and Tom Charlton
Maggie Elliott
James and Patricia Ephgrave
Carl and Saturnina Fagenbaum
Ray and Jennifer Fagenbaum
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John and Claudia Knutson
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Andrew Liu
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Mark and Judy Madsen
Paul McCray and Linzee Kull
McCray
Dan McRoberts
Keith and Jodessa McSweeney
Kerri and Chuck Mead
John Menninger
Joann Moore and Grant Brown
Dylan Murray
Sarah Murray

Mary Palmberg
Nathan Peters
Wayne and Linda Petersen
Patricia and Scott Peterson
Philip and Barbara Peterson
Rot's Bounty Gourmet Fungi LLC
John and Kristen Rummelhart
Hutha Sayre
Jacqueline Scroggs and Mart Berst
Joy Sheeley
Short's Eastside
Susan Shullaw
Edwin Stone
John and Elizabeth Stratton
Sonia Sugg
Jill Ten Eyck
Jane Van Voorhis and Kurt Anstreicher
Jim and Christine Walters
Kelly Wells Sittig and Erek Sittig
Michael and Anne Welsh
Steve and Victoria West
Carol Winter
Christopher York and Tina Tootle
Sue Zaleski
Richard Zehrbach
Lori Ziegenhorn and Murray Bouschlicher

MEMBERS \$25+

Thank you to the 304 households that gave between \$25 and \$250.

We are passionate about preserving our native environment. We support Bur Oak as it is instrumental in helping with acquiring and maintaining native lands and habitat.
– Jeff and Louise Smith

PROGRAM SPONSORS



PRESENTING SPONSORS



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Amanda Stallman

HOST SITES

Charlie Berggren

(Iowa Project AWARE)

Chelsea Cozad

(Johnson County Conservation)

“To us, nothing is more important than supporting the basis of human life, which is nature with all its diversity, complexity, and resilience. This is exactly what Bur Oak Land Trust strives to do.”
– Connie and Robert Mutel



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024

Bur Oak has many free events planned for this year.

Prairie Preview will feature more than 30 groups ready to share their nature projects and programs with the public **Thursday, March 28** at the **Iowa City Senior Center**. New this year, the land trust has pawpaw kits for sale to raise awareness of the importance of native plants and the native insects that depend on them.

Belgum Groove | June 8 | Belgum Grove

Crayfish Crawl and Fall Family Day | July 20 and October 12 | Turkey Creek Nature Preserve

Golden Hour | October 17 | To be announced

People of all ages can also contribute to land stewardship and community science through Bur Oak volunteer events. Some of these opportunities include collecting native milkweed seeds to plant across Bur Oak preserves and donate to monarch conservation groups, and improve habitat and forest health on the preserves.

There are also plenty of guided tours and bioblitz nature surveys on the calendar. These are chances to get a better look at the local environment and contribute to conservation research through community science.

Spring Ephemeral Wildflowers tour
April 13 | Big Grove Preserve

Blooming Cactus Weekend tours
June 14-16 | Corriell Nature Preserve

Preserve tour
July 13 | Kessler Prairie

Pollinators tour
August 10 | Turkey Creek Nature Preserve

Bioblitz surveys
May 25 | Big Grove Preserve

June 15 | Corriell Nature Preserve

August 10 | Turkey Creek Nature Preserve

“Supporting Bur Oak Land Trust offers us a way to actively participate in the restoration of ancient ecosystems. Future generations have a right to experience their connection to the natural world, but that only happens if we act. Bur Oak offers us the opportunity to act.”
– Brendan Young and Jim Summers

Rattlesnake master, *Eryngium yuccifolium*
Kessler Prairie, Poweshiek County

More details about events and programs at buroaklandtrust.org or by scanning the QR code.



Scan Me





BUR OAK
LAND TRUST

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