

Group seeks to turn tract into preserve
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A conservation group hopes to make a large forest in southwestern Johnson County a public nature preserve.

The Central Indiana Land Trust is raising money to buy about 112 acres of wooded land called Blossom Hollow. The conservation group wants to add trails to the property so people can hike around the rolling woods, watch birds or just enjoy nature.

Blossom Hollow is near Lamb Lake in southern Hensley Township. The old-growth forest around a small creek in Blossom Hollow is the largest left in Johnson County and includes rare bird species, including types of warblers, land trust conservation director Cliff Chapman said.

A nature preserve at Blossom Hollow would be the second in Johnson County run by the nonprofit land trust. The group also owns a heron rookery in White River

Township that's open to the public only on special occasions because it's too ecologically sensitive.

Blossom Hollow's owners have offered to sell their land for a second nature preserve and to donate the development rights of an additional neighboring 242 acres if the sale goes through. The woodland next to the proposed site of the nature preserve would remain privately owned and off-limits to the public but would be preserved, Chapman said.

The land trust is trying to raise \$505,000 to buy the nature preserve.

So far, about \$100,000 has been donated. Once the land trust can raise the amount needed, it would put in a small parking area and dirt trails.

The land trust already protects the nearby Bob's Woods and another neighboring forest in northern Brown County. More than 600 adjoining acres of woods in Brown and Johnson counties could be protected if the deal works out, Chapman said.

Photo Caption: A conservation group hopes to make a large forest in southwestern Johnson County a public nature preserve.

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