

Self-Guided Tour:

Wildlife Habitat Practices



Take a roadside look at a variety of local wildlife habitat projects. Use the map and driving directions to visit 10 sites across northwest Tippecanoe County. The tour will run from August 9 – 16, and you can drive it at your convenience. Numbered signs will be posted near the road at each site. Information on each location is included in the driving directions below, giving you an overview of each site.

Please note that some sites have parking areas, where others can only be viewed from the road. Please use caution while on the tour and be courteous to other drivers. Be aware that some sections of the route are gravel roads.

If you have any questions, please call the Tippecanoe County Soil and Water Conservation District at 765-474-9992, extension 3.

Enjoy the drive!

STOP 1 – 4850 N 250 W, West Lafayette, IN 47906 (south of intersection with Morehouse Road)

You may park in the driveway at this site, which is the gravel drive in the woods.

Conservation Practice: Pollinator Habitat

These fields were some of the earliest plantings in our area enrolled as a pollinator habitat in a USDA program. Previously in alfalfa, these fields were sprayed with herbicide prior to being planted in the spring of 2014 using a Truax no-till drill. The seed mix consists of 1 species of grass and 9 species of forbs at a rate of 14 seeds per square foot. Additional species were added in later after portions of the field were disked. This disturbance helped to re-establish forb species that had begun to dwindle, as well as allowed newly added forbs to be sown. The additional seed mix added another grass species and included 12 forbs.

Species of note: Rosinweed (tall, yellow flowers), Ironweed (dark purple flowers), Purple Coneflower (pink/purple with brown centers)

Continue north on County Road N 250 W. Turn left (northwest) onto Morehouse Road. Then, turn left on County Road w 500 N (west). This will be the second road on the left (Taft is first). Continue straight for 0.6 miles. Stop 2 will be on your left (south).

STOP 2 – Bayer Crop Science, 3221 W 500 N, West Lafayette 47906

You may park in the first gravel lot facing the pollinator planting.

Free books available at this stop! You are welcome to walk around the pollinator planting, but please stay out of surrounding research plots.

Conservation Practice: Pollinator Habitat

This pollinator habitat was planted over a septic mound for the Bayer research buildings onsite. Originally in fescue, the grass was killed with glyphosate in the fall of 2017 and then frost seeded in the late winter of 2018 with a prairie seed mix. This small site provided pollinator habitat for many beneficial insects that may not find suitable nectar from the surrounding corn and soybean fields. This practice is an excellent example of the type of pollinator habitat project that can be done at a home or business. Some dominant species in the mix include Wild Lupine, Wild Bergamot, Common Milkweed and aster species.

Species of note: Gray-headed Coneflower (yellow flowers with drooping petals), Purple Coneflower (pink/purple flowers with brown centers), Bergamot (light purple flower), Royal Catchfly (red flower on south end of planting)

Turn left (west) onto County Road W 500 N. Go 2.5 miles. Turn right (north) onto Asrec Lane (towards Purdue Farm). Can turn around at gravel drive on the right.

STOP 3 – Off of Asrec Lane, west side of road near open ditch

Conservation Practice: Filter Strip & Pollinator Habitat

Filter strips are bands of permanent vegetation planted along water bodies to limit contaminants from entering the water. According to the standards set by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) these plantings must be at least 20 feet wide. This practice is 120 feet wide. Filter strips can be planted to either pasture grasses or prairie grasses. This practice has been planted to a prairie mix, consisting of 6 grass species and 17 species of forbs. The mix composition is approximately 60% grasses and 40% forbs and was seeded at a rate of 37 seeds per square foot.

The rest of this field north of the filter strip was planted into pollinator habitat in May of 2020. Since prairie-type plantings typically take three years to establish, this planting is still in that phase. The seed mix consists of 4 species of grasses and 20 species of forbs, seeded at about 40 seeds per square foot. The mix is about 40% grass and 60% forbs. The species composition is similar in both seed mixes. The pollinator seed mixes emphasize providing flowers throughout the growing season to provide a food source for pollinators. Both mixes provide multiple species of milkweed for Monarch butterflies. Both fields were converted from cropland.

Species of note: Showy TickT refoil (purple flowers), Partridge Pea (yellow flowers), Switchgrass (grass with open, airy seed head), Canada Wild Rye (grass with drooping, wheat-like seed head)

Turn right (west) onto County Road N 500 W. Continue for 0.7 miles. Planting is on right side of the road (north).

STOP 4 – County Road N 500 W, just east of US Highway 231

Conservation Practice: Quail Habitat

This field was planted in the spring of 2018 using a Truax no-till drill. Originally in row crops, this 113-acre field now provides a substantial amount of habitat for quail and other wildlife. Additionally, this field connects other nearby wildlife plantings, helping to create an even bigger contiguous stretch of habitat. This seed mix consists of 6 species of grasses making up 77% of the mix, and 13 species of forbs at about 23% of the mix. It was seeded at a rate of 30 seeds per

square foot. This mix includes both large and short stature prairie grasses. For quail and other grassland birds, these bunch grasses provide cover from predators and the elements as well as nest sites. Spaces between bunch grasses allow for easier movement while feeding along the ground while still having some cover from predators. Shrubby areas adjacent to the planting provide additional cover.

Species of note: Gray-headed Coneflower (yellow flower with drooping petals), Big Bluestem (tall grass with “turkey foot” seed head), Common Evening Primrose (lemon yellow flowers)

Continue straight on County Road N 500 W for 0.5 miles. Gravel parking lot on left (south). Look for NICHES Mulvey Pond sign.

STOP 5 – Mulvey Pond, County Road N 500 W, west of US Highway 231

Pull into Parking Lot on south side of road.

Conservation Practice: Wetland Restoration

Owned and managed by NICHES Land Trust, the Mulvey Pond property is 52 acres and consists of the eastern 2/3 of open water and the surrounding uplands. NICHES acquired the property in 2011 and has planted diverse native grasses and forbs. The southern portion of the property is being managed as an oak savannah. Prescribed burns are conducted on site as a management tool. This site is open to the public and is known as a hot spot for bird watching. There are mowed trails throughout the prairie. Additional information can be found on the NICHES Land Trust website.

<https://nicheslandtrust.org/properties/tippecanoe-county/mulvey-pond>

Species of note: Prairie Dock (yellow flower with tall stalk and large leaves at the base), Bergamot (light purple flowers), Ironweed (purple flowers)

Turn around and go back east on County Road N 500 W. Turn left (north) on US Highway 231. Continue for 1 mile. You will pass by the same field that you saw at Stop 4 on the right side (east). Turn right on County Road W 600 N. Continue 2.8 miles and turn left (north) onto County Road N 375 W. The road will turn 90° to the left and then again to the right. Turn right (east) onto County Road W 750 N. In 0.5 miles, turn left (north) onto County Road N 350 W. Stop 6 is south of intersection with County Road W 850 N. You will pass several other habitat plantings along the way.

STOP 6 – County Road N 350 W, south of intersection with County Road W 850 N

Conservation Practice: Pheasant Habitat

This prairie planting encompasses 99.52 acres that was converted from row crop agriculture. Brushy draws throughout the field were challenging to farm around. These brushy areas now compliment the surrounding grassland by providing cover for species like pheasant and quail. This seed mix consists of 5 species of grasses and 17 species of forbs. Species like Roundheaded Bushclover, Showy Tickseed and Partridge Pea were included as food plants for upland game birds. The forbs in this planting also provide a food sources for a variety of pollinators. Flags throughout the site are part of a

Purdue University pollinator habitat study. The seed mix is approximately 47% grass and 53% forbs, with a seeding rate of 47 seeds per square foot. Seed was applied using a Valmar air seeder, essentially broadcast seeding it.

Species of note: Switchgrass (grass with open, airy seed head), Brown-Eyed Susan (yellow flowers with brown centers)

Continue north on County Road N 350 W. Turn left (west) on County Road W 850 N. In 1 mile, turn right (north) on County Road N 450 W. Go 1.4 miles. Turn left (west) on W County Line Road N/1300 S. The road curves 90° to the right. The site is on the left side of the road (south).

STOP 7 – 5125 W County Line Road N

Conservation Practice: Pollinator Habitat

This 1.7- acre planting was installed in May of 2018 in an area that was previously lawn. The landowner killed the turfgrass using an herbicide application in the fall of 2017, followed by an additional application in April of 2018. The pollinator habitat seed was then installed using a Truax no-till drill rented from the SW CD. Two separate seed mixes were used due to different soil types at the site. The area closer to the road tends to be much wetter than the sandy area up by the house. The wet area established quickly, but there was pressure from crabgrass in the upland portion. The landowner continues to manage the planting by spot spraying non-desirable plants and adding seed to sparse areas. The seed mix for the wet area contained 35 species and the dry mix contained 34. Both mixes contain about half grasses and half forbs (seed per square foot). Since pollinator habitat was the focus, a wide array of native forbs were included to provide flowers throughout the growing season.

Species of note: Bergamot (light purple flowers), Ironweed (purple flowers), Blue Vervain (blue/purple candelabra-like flowers), Gray-headed Coneflower (yellow flower with drooping petals)

Turn around in driveway and backtrack. Turn right (south) onto County Road N 450 W. Turn left onto County Road W 850 N (east) and continue 3.75 miles. Road dead ends at I-65. There is a gravel parking lot where you can turn around.

STOP 8 – County Road W 850 N near dead end at I-65

Conservation Practice: Wetland Restoration & Prairie Strip

On the south side of the road there is a strip of prairie vegetation between the tree line and the cropfield. The area is part of a 60-acre wetland restoration planting that was installed in the spring of 2018 using a no-till drill. This seed mix consists of 6 species of grasses, comprising about 57% percent of the seed mix. It also includes 18 species of forbs, making up 43 % of the seed mix. It was seeded at a rate of 40 seeds per square foot.

The strip of vegetation on the north side of the road is a prairie strip. This was planted this past winter (2020/21) using a broadcast seeder. This site looks typical for many habitat plantings during their first growing season, which take about 3 years to establish. A common description for this process is “first the sleep, then they creep, then they leap”. Meaning that in the first year they put down a root system but show little top growth. In the second year, planted species become more obvious and more flower begin blooming. By the third year, the planting begins to look like a prairie. This

seed mix contains 7 species of grasses (52% of mix) and 14 species of forbs (48% of mix). Plants current visible include Lambsquarters, Foxtail and Maretail. All of these species will greatly decrease as the planting becomes more established.

Although these plantings are enrolled in programs as “wetland restoration” and “prairie strip” they are very similar in appearance to field borders, which are strips of prairie vegetation planted along the edge of crop field. These areas were formerly in row crop agriculture, but since they tended to stay wet the landowner opted to convert them to a wildlife habitat planting.

Note – You can see the bigger portion of the wetland restoration on the north side of County Road W 790 N.

Species of note: Switchgrass (grass with open, airy seed head), Blue Vervain (blue/purple candelabra-like flowers), Canada Wild Rye (grass with drooping, wheat-like seed head)

Continue west on County Road W 850 N. Turn left (south) onto County Road N 100 W and continue for 1 mile. Turn right (west) onto County Road W 750 N and continue for 1.6 miles.

STOP 9 – 2620 County Road W 750 N, West Lafayette

Pull into the driveway. At the top of the hill you can turn around at the teardrop-shaped drive encircling a native plant garden.

Conservation practice: prairie planting

This prairie planting is over 20 acres and was originally in alfalfa and soybeans. It was converted to a prairie approximately 10 years ago. It was planted in the spring using a Truax no-till drill. The site is burned periodically to keep the trees down and reinvigorate the prairie species. Mowed lanes are maintained through the planting to act as paths and for fire breaks during prescribed burns. About 4 years ago, additional forbs were added to the planting. The landowner also collects seeds in the fall and sows them in other areas of the planting.

The native plant garden is an example of using native plants in a landscape setting. The plants were installed as plugs over several years.

Species of note in garden: Cardinal Flower (red flowers), Dense Blazing Star (pink spike flower), Common Mountain Mint (white flowers)

Species of note in prairie: Wild Senna (yellow flowers with compound leaves), Purple Coneflower (pink/purple flowers with brown centers), Bergamot (light purple flowers)

Turn right(west) onto County Road W 750 N and drive 0.2 miles.

STOP 10 – north side of County Road W 750 N, east of County Road N 300 W

Conservation Practice: Quail Habitat

This 37- acre planting was installed in early June of 2018 using a Truax no-till drill. The site was previously farmed in a corn-soybean rotation. Since the planting is adjacent to the road, the landowner planted shorter statured seed mix near the road and a taller seed mix in the center of the planting. The shorter mix is composed of grasses like Sideoats G rama and Little Bluestem, while the taller mix includes species like Big Bluestem, Indiangrass and Switchgrass. The seeding rate was approximately 50 seeds per square foot. The tall mix is about 46% grass and 54% forbs, while the short mix is about 36% grass and 64% forbs. This composition contains more flowers than the required to meet the N R C S practice standard for this type of planting. The landowner wanted greater plant diversity and well as a more flowers visible along the road.

Species of note: Purple C oneflower (pink/purple flowers with brown centers), Partridge Pea (yellow flowers), Sideoats G ramma (short grass with seed heads that hang off the side of the stem)

This completes the Wildlife Habitat Tour!

We appreciate your willingness to take a drive and look at a few of the habitat projects happening in our area. If you would like assistance in creating wildlife habitat on your own property, please reach out to us at 765-474-9992, extension 3. We offer free technical assistance and can help you in applying for cost-share funds through a variety of programs.