

Monday, October 20, 2025

Hike, birdwatch and explore

Green's Bluff Long Trail debuts after three years of volunteer work

The Hoosier Hikers Council (HHC) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) will celebrate the grand opening of the new Green's Bluff Long Trail in Spencer on Oct. 18, marking the completion of a three-year volunteer effort to expand public access to Indiana's natural spaces.

The event runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and will include remarks from HHC and TNC leaders, guided hikes, a trail-naming activity and family-friendly programming. Visitors can choose between a six-mile or shorter one-to-two-mile guided hike, enjoy light refreshments and coffee before heading out, and are encouraged to bring picnic lunches for the afternoon.



Green's Bluff Long Trail in Spencer, Indiana, built by Hoosier Hikers Council volunteers, officially opens to the public on Oct. 18, 2025. (Photos/HHC website)

Chris Bradley, an HHC board member and volunteer, said the project builds on earlier work in the area and fits squarely within the group's mission.

“The mission of the HHC is to build trails in Indiana to increase access to natural spaces and thus inspire people to feel a connection to them and a desire to protect them,” Bradley said. “The long trail just completed creates a great hiking opportunity of over six miles in the south central Indiana region, within easy reach of visitors to McCormick’s Creek State Park or people in the Bloomington and Spencer areas.”

He added that the trail expands on prior work the group completed at Green’s Bluff, including the Raccoon Woods Trail and a reroute of the Green’s Bluff Trail in 2021.

For HHC board member and volunteer Jeff McClain, collaboration was key to bringing the project to life.

“Relationships are key to the success of HHC trail building,” McClain said. “Strong and ongoing partnerships with land managers such as The Nature Conservancy are vital when planning and designing a trail.”



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McClain said TNC sought to enhance visitor access while protecting sensitive features of the property.

“At Green’s Bluff, TNC had a vision to expand and connect trails within the property to further enhance access and visitors’ experience,” he said. “Everyone involved aimed to ensure visitors find hikeable trails that have purpose and character.”

The rugged terrain made the work slow going for volunteers, who met monthly for more than three years.

“The property makes for great hiking, as it passes along, down, and then up through ravines, passing Raccoon Creek and a couple of waterfalls on the way,” Bradley said. “This did create the challenge of often having to build trails along steep slopes and working through quite a lot of roots and rocks. The main way we overcame them was by persistence.”



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McClain said simply getting to the work site was sometimes the hardest part.

“The hike in, while carrying tools to where the previous work had stopped, became a steady 45-minute warm-up reality before the actual work began,” he said. “The reversal hike out, after a tiring day of trail building to where we parked, became a real challenge on hot and humid days.”

McClain added, “Managing drinking water while trail-building is at the top of the must do list! It would be fun to know how many gallons of water were consumed by volunteers over the course of 3 years building this trail. A lot!”

Bradley said careful design helped protect the landscape from erosion and damage. HHC’s primary designer, Pete Banta, started with topographical maps before walking the property to identify ravines, formations and viewpoints to highlight.



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“The principal ecological concern in the exact layout is the prevention of erosion,” Bradley said. “We try to think about where water will flow with rainfall and build the trail so that the water won’t run right along the trail or puddle up on it. If it did, then over time, the trail would widen and erode, taking up more of the physical landscape than is necessary.”

Volunteers are at the core of every HHC project, meeting on the third Saturday of each month to cut, clear and finish new trail sections.

“The main trail building is done by volunteers on the third Saturday of each month,” Bradley said. “New volunteers are paired up with experienced volunteers so they can be shown the basics of trail-building. After a relatively short amount of time, they can be ready to build trail along with everyone else.”



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McClain said that sense of teamwork keeps the group motivated. “It is great to see (volunteers) sharing tips and tricks of the trade with new volunteers, all the while building teamwork and camaraderie which is so important to sustain quality and momentum doing this highly physical labor,” he said.

Both Bradley and McClain said they hope the trail will offer something for everyone, from hikers and runners to birdwatchers and families.

“The new long trail will be great for people looking for a longer hike,” Bradley said. “In the spring, there are several spots that are great for seeing wildflowers. The property is also good for birdwatching. The grades are not terribly steep, so trail runners could use it as well.”

McClain added that the trail represents pride and connection for everyone who helped build it.

“Everyone who invested some sweat equity in building this trail will take great pride in knowing yet another high-quality hiking trail has been added to the long list of incredible trails throughout the State,” he said. “It feels like there is a growing, or perhaps renewed, interest to get out into nature and enjoy the beauty and wonders of the Indiana landscape that sites like Green’s Bluff have to offer.”



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The Green's Bluff Long Trail Grand Opening will take place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 18, at Paw Paw Road in Spencer.

To learn more about TNC and their work in Indiana, visit [nature.org/indiana](https://www.nature.org/indiana). To read more about HHC, visit [hoosierhikerscouncil.org](https://www.hoosierhikerscouncil.org).

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