

SOUTH INDIY

Eagle Scout project aids wetlands effort

3 teens spearhead work to plant trees and vegetation and create a wildlife habitat on 2 acres of airport-owned land

By Bruce C. Smith

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Mosquitoes, heat and rocky soil haven't stopped a group of Boy Scouts, including two from Perry Township, who are building a wildlife and wetlands preservation project on land south of Indianapolis International Airport.

"These volunteers are battling mud and bugs and rocks and sun to get this job done," said Tim Method, environmental and conservation director for the Indianapolis Airport Authority. Matthew Martin and James Roach, both 17 and seniors at Perry Meridian

High School, along with Cole Crouch, 15, a freshman at Ben Davis High School in Wayne Township, are working toward an Eagle Scout award.

"We were looking around for something worthwhile that needed to be done, and we heard the airport might have projects," Martin said.

"It was hard work. It was difficult out there," Martin said of the three-day work schedule last weekend, "but it is pretty gratifying to see it done and start to grow."

The three Scouts recruited teams of helpers — mostly family and a few friends — to join in planting about 4,000 trees, shrubs and other vegetation to create a wildlife habitat and wetlands on 2 acres in Hendricks and Marion counties.

The site between Plainfield and Mooresville is adjacent to Marthen Creek, between Hendricks County

Walking to a wetlands preservation project on land south of Indianapolis International Airport are (from left) James Roach, Brian Nevitt and Matthew Martin, all 17 and seniors at Perry Meridian High School. Roach, Martin and Cole Crouch, 15, organized the project as they work toward an Eagle Scout award.



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Brian Nevitt (left) and James Roach place flags to mark where trees will be planted on a 2-acre tract that will become a wetland owned by the Indianapolis Airport Authority. The project involves planting about 4,000 trees, shrubs and other vegetation to create a wildlife habitat and wetlands on 2 acres in Hendricks and Marion counties.



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roads 700 South and 800 South. The area is west of Ind. 67 and Canby.

It is part of a conservation and wildlife preserve including some privately owned land. It also includes nearly 2,000 acres bought by the Airport

Authority over the past 20 years to mitigate the effect of airplane noise on neighbors and to replace damaged wildlife habitat.

Marvin Brethauer, environmental and wildlife manager for the Airport Authority, said the goal is to create more habitat to be preserved indefinitely. "It is all permanently protected under agreements with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior," he added.

He said the three Boy Scouts have been working in an area that will become forested and covered in vegetation within a few years. The new wetlands will replace another natural wetlands area of about 1 acre that was disrupted during construction of the new midfield passenger terminal that opened last year at the airport north of I-70.

Including these three, Brethauer said

19 Scouts have earned Eagle Scout status by working on Indianapolis airport property environmental projects. A fourth Eagle candidate from Danville has a similar project lined up for the fall.

"These become a win-win from everyone because the Scouts complete an important project, and we get a lot accomplished for the airport," Brethauer said.

Even the endangered Indiana cave bat is a winner, he said, because the trees selected for the plantings include several varieties with large sections of loose bark the bats favor as nesting sites.

Method said the Scouts' work has long-term consequences.

"Wetlands are important to our environment. They are areas that mimic natural functions, like providing overflow protection during storms. They also provide erosion control, act as natural filters for pollutants in storm water, help to recharge ground water tables, and they serve as natural habitat for many wildlife species."

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