



CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE SIGNS?

Evidence of our restoration efforts is all around! Some will be obvious, while other signs require a well-trained eye. On your next hike, look for:

ACCESS ROUTES

- Trail closures – during or after a burn
- New service roads or wider trails
- Mowing of invasive saplings in restoration areas

BIOLOGISTS AT WORK!

- Land stewards and volunteers
- Flagging or survey equipment
- Numbered tags on trees



BRUSH PILES

- Mounds of natural debris; some burned, others left for habitat

CHAINSAW WORK

- Fresh sawdust, especially in fall/winter when impacts to migratory birds are minimized
- Downed trees or stumps



EVIDENCE OF CONTROLLED BURNS

- Smoke! (especially November–March)
- Charred ground or logs
- New growth on burned ground...signs of a healthier ecosystem!

GIRDLING

- Strip of bark removed from the circumference of a tree
- Standing snags in a restoration area; animals may be using these as homes!



HACK AND SQUIRT

- Hatchet marks on tree trunks
- Smaller trees that are slowly dying



HIKES THAT EXPLORE PAST & FUTURE OAK WOODLAND & SAVANNA:

- Riverview Boardwalk, third loop
- Ridge Trail
- Oak/Indian trail

Grab a trail map and head out to experience one of our most endangered ecosystems.

Restoring the balance is a long process. With the help and support of sponsors, members, and our community, the iconic oaks of Fontenelle Forest will flourish again!

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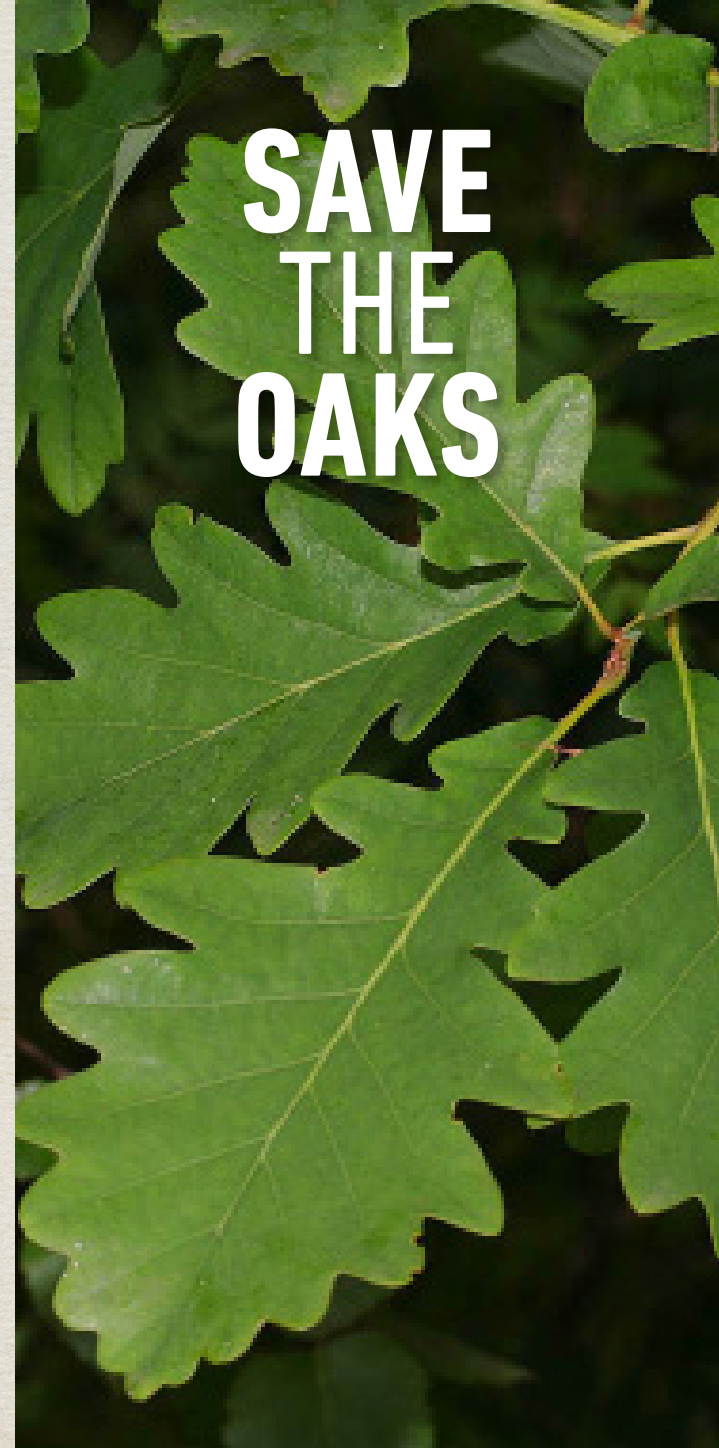
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SAVE THE OAKS



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Oak savanna is one of the most endangered ecosystems. Of the 30 million acres that once supported oak savannas, less than 1% remains today. Once these complex ecosystems are gone, they are impossible to replace.

We have a responsibility to care for the natural world and understand that human interaction is not separate, but a part of ecosystem management. For thousands of years, Native Americans intentionally set fire to this landscape. This practice attracted game and maintained a rich diversity of native flowers, grasses, sedges, and oaks. Oak woodlands and savannas thrived.

When burning stopped 150 years ago, invasive plants and fast growing, shade-loving trees began to take over. Historic plant surveys indicate that, in the absence of fire, 49 plant species have disappeared from Fontenelle Forest. Without human intervention, that number will continue to increase.



A HEALTHIER ECOSYSTEM

The goal of Fontenelle Forest's 'Save the Oaks' effort is to restore and enhance historic oak savannas on the ridgetops, bur oak/hickory woodlands on the slopes, and areas of open prairie. Our 100 year management plan includes a multi-faceted approach:

1. THINNING:

Open woodland allows for more light and airflow. When light can stream through the canopy, oak seedlings have a better chance to germinate and grow and native plant and animal diversity increases with more sunlight. Open canopies allow refreshing breezes to help disperse seeds. More circulation also means fewer mosquitos!

2. MONITORING + SURVEYS:

Three research projects are underway to monitor our delicate ecosystems. Avian point counts, vegetation transect surveys and insect surveys help us measure our impact and inform future work.



Entomologist Tony Palmer conducts light trapping for an insect survey.



3. INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL:

Garlic mustard, autumn olive, honeysuckle and other exotic plants pose some of the biggest threats to wildlife, soil, and native plants. Mitigating the spread of these plants provides oak trees and other native species the best chance of survival.

4. CONTROLLED FIRE:

Fire returns nutrients to the soil and increases organic matter. It also kills fast-growing saplings of unwanted tree and shrub species while sparing fire-resistant oaks. The regrowth of grasses, sedges and wildflowers slows run-off and minimizes erosion.

