

Blackburn Bluffs Preserve

Connecting Wildlife in
Southern Washington County

A signature conservation project by
Northwest Arkansas Land Trust



NORTHWEST ARKANSAS
LAND TRUST

CASE FOR CONSERVATION

CORE, CORRIDOR, CONNECTION

These are more than just words to our native wildlife. 8,500 plant and animal species in North America face the threat of extinction. That's 1/3 of all the species on the continent. The cause- habitat loss. Northwest Arkansas loses 9 acres to development every day. By 2050, our population will swell to 1 million. Habitats are being fragmented by roads, neighborhoods, and shopping centers. These amenities are fantastic for growing our vibrant communities but can have serious consequences for local wildlife. As we expand our urban core, wildlife is being pushed to the margins. Protecting large cores of land for wildlife in our rapidly growing region is the preeminent conservation challenge of our time. Along with saving these habitat cores, we must save corridors which connect these protected lands. Wildlife need free movement between these cores to find food, rear young, and escape human disturbance. Once connected, an entire landscape is protected, providing the resources plants and animals need to survive.

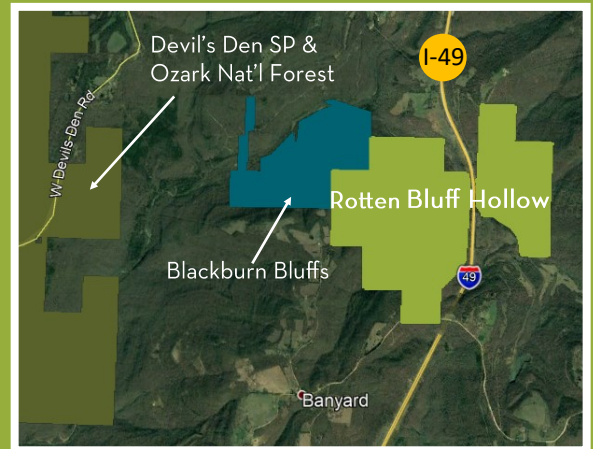
Northwest Arkansas Land Trust has been hard at work protecting one such landscape in Southern Washington County. Our goal is to bridge the gap between public lands and connect Ozark National Forest in the east to Devil's Den State Park and National Forest land in the west. With the conservation of Rotten Bluff Hollow, we have saved 725 acres in the middle of this landscape. This is the hub from which our conservation efforts extend. With your help we can save Blackburn Bluffs, 300 acres of Ozark Forest on Blackburn Creek, protect a 1,000 acre habitat core, and get within 1 mile of public lands.

IMPORTANCE

The 6 mile corridor between Ozark National Forest and the Devil's Den area is one of the most significant landscapes in Northwest Arkansas. Nestled in south Washington County, it is our southern gateway and one of the largest intact tracts of forest in Washington County. Blackburn Bluffs is key to the permanent protection of this corridor. The conservation of this property will create a contiguous 1,000 acre habitat core along Blackburn Creek, protecting vital habitat for wildlife as well as protecting drinking water quality for over 200,000 people. The property is critical habitat for threatened and endangered bats, black bear, white-tailed deer, and a menagerie of migratory bird species. Rural water and electricity are already available in the area. As infill in urban centers reaches its natural climax, rural areas will face development pressure. Development of the area will have serious impacts to wildlife and water quality.

You can help save land, our most valuable resource for wildlife and future generations of Arkansans.

Help Northwest Arkansas Land Trust save Blackburn Bluffs.



What's at Stake?



Loss of Habitat Connectivity

Blackburn Bluffs extends west from 700-acre Rotten Bluff Hollow, permanently protected in 2019. This land protects a valuable corridor under I-49, allowing wildlife to move freely under the highway. Blackburn Bluffs will add an additional 300 acres to this protected land and extend the corridor to within a mile of Devil's Den State Park and Ozark National Forest lands. Blackburn Bluffs is a critical piece in connecting privately owned conservation land to public lands.

Destruction of Scenery and Sense of Place

The highest peak at Blackburn Bluffs can be seen by southbound travelers on I-49. This stretch of highway is part of the Boston Mountains Scenic Loop, a state designated scenic byway. Logging or construction of vacation homes will forever stain this view.

Degraded Water Supply and Higher Utility Costs

Blackburn Bluffs will protect an additional mile of Blackburn Creek, a major tributary to Lee Creek. Lee Creek is the source water for the Lee Creek Reservoir, a drinking water source for 200,000 people. Degradation of the watershed from logging or poor management will have negative consequences for water quality down stream.



Threatened and Endangered Species

According to US Fish & Wildlife Service, development could impact 9 federally protected plant and animal species including 3 endangered bat species.

Why is it threatened?

Rural/Suburban Development

The entire corridor has high potential for rural development and offers appealing sites for vacation and retirement homes with views from high elevations, convenience to urban amenities, and access to popular recreational opportunities. There is county water and electricity available on several neighboring parcels. NWA's estimated population growth through 2030 is 58%. As infill in urban centers reaches its natural climax, rural areas will face development pressure.



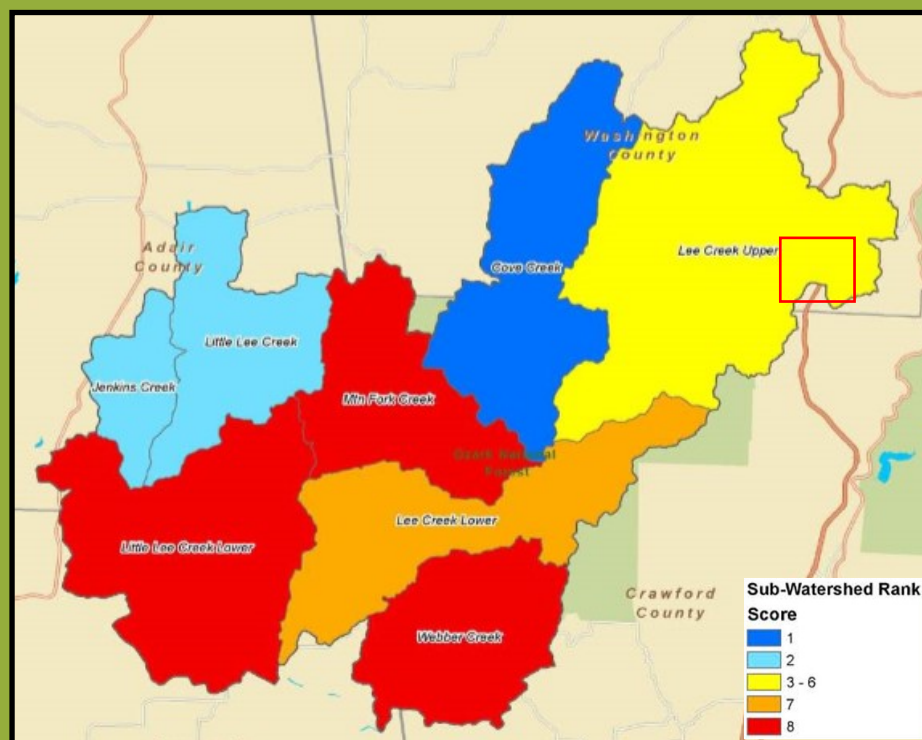
Timber

The area has high potential for timber harvest with large tracts of mature hardwoods. Removal of large stands of trees will negatively affect habitat, wildlife, and water quality within the watershed and destroy the scenery.

Regional Scientific Support

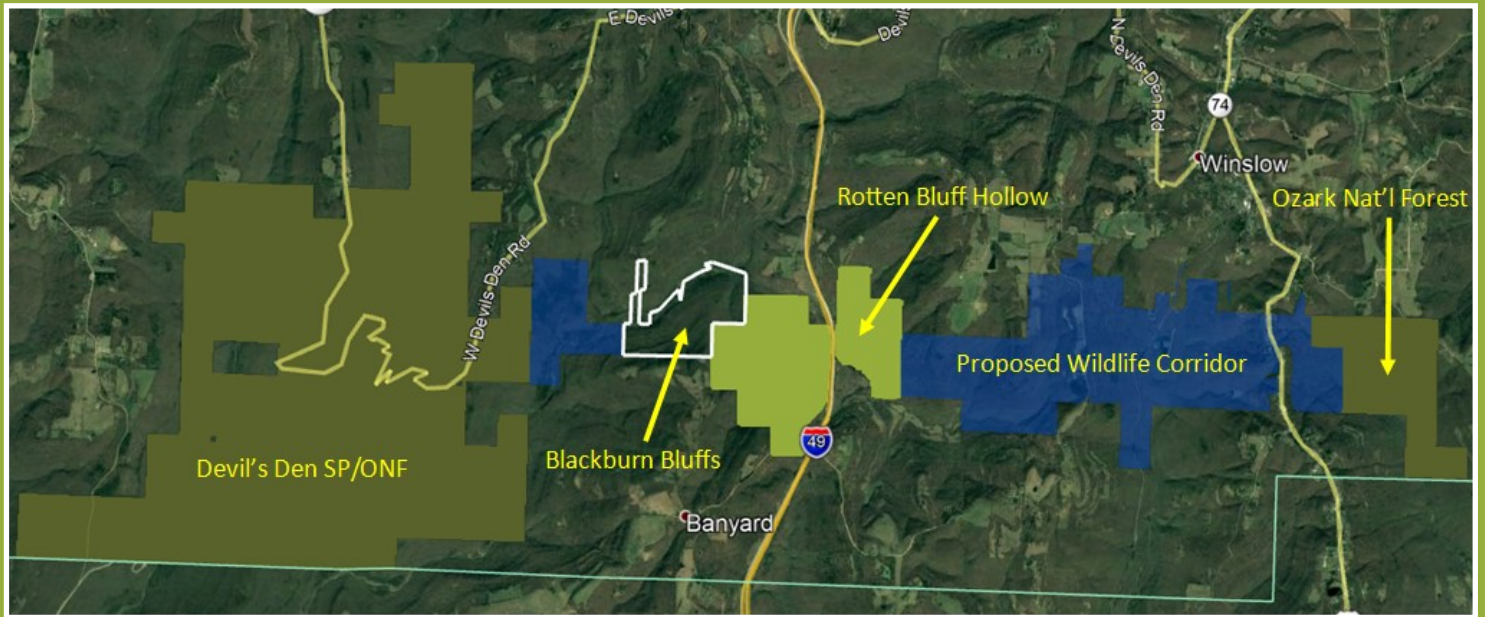
1. The Northwest Arkansas Open Space Plan commissioned by the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission identifies the project area as having high value as a wildlife core and corridor. Blackburn Bluffs received top ranking for its conservation value. These lands are crucial for wildlife in our rapidly urbanizing region.

2. The Lee Creek Watershed Management Plan identifies the Upper Lee Creek Sub-basin as a critical area for conservation for the reduction of non-point source pollutants, primarily sediment which carries high phosphorus loads into streams. High phosphorus means algae blooms, fish kills, and increased treatment costs and utility bills for people dependent on the reservoir. Blackburn Bluffs will protect a mile of Blackburn Creek, a tributary to Lee Creek.



The Case for Corridors

Just as roads and bridges link people to towns and cities, wildlife corridors link habitats for plants and animals across a landscape. As growth continues in Northwest Arkansas, habitats are increasingly being fragmented by roads, neighborhoods, and shopping centers. These amenities are fantastic for growing our vibrant communities, but can mean disaster for local populations of wildlife. Many animals require large tracts of uninterrupted open spaces to raise young, find food, and migrate during winter. Allowing places for animals to move across the landscape supports this natural system and reduces conflicts between people and wildlife.



#SaveOurScenery

Our region is home to one of the last great wild and open mountainous landscapes in the central United States. Indeed, the reason why our region continues to grow at such a rapid pace is the high quality of life provided by our breathtaking surroundings. Visitors and residents of Northwest Arkansas alike are here because of the accessibility of natural lands and the recreational opportunities and solitude they provide. Our landscape is the backdrop to our lives and brings cultural and ecological connection to our communities. Open spaces in Northwest Arkansas drive our economic growth while allowing us to find solitude and pleasure in the outdoors. Our communities wouldn't be the same without the backdrop of wooded hills, expansive bluffs, and crystal clear streams. Blackburn Bluffs will protect this backdrop by forever conserving the scenic beauty of our home. Preventing the development of this gateway to our region will keep visitors coming, preserve our sense of place, and leave a lasting legacy for the next generation of Arkansans.



Looking West from I-49



Condos on Sugar Mountain, North Carolina



Clear Cut in Cascades, Washington

The power to protect nature is in your hands.

Through a generous financial contribution, you will help Northwest Arkansas Land Trust save this important tract of wilderness for wildlife and future generations of Arkansans.

Where we stand...

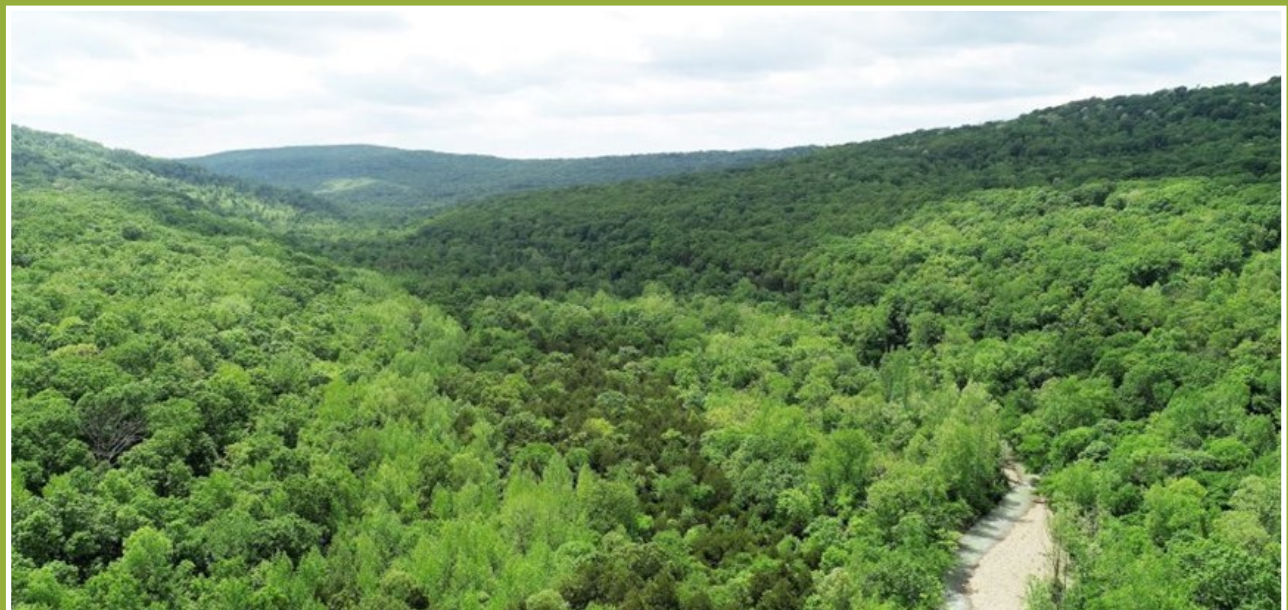
Contracted Price for Property	\$400,000
Due Diligence & Closing	25,000
Stewardship Endowment	75,000
Cash on Hand	200,000
Funding Gap	\$300,000



#SAVELAND

Contact

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NORTHWEST ARKANSAS
LAND TRUST





Your support for Blackburn Bluffs will help us reach our ambitious 3 year goals.

We need your help. Please join our effort to preserve what you love about Northwest Arkansas during our Land for Life campaign.

We've committed to protect an additional 5,000 acres of critical lands throughout Northwest Arkansas and raise \$2.8 million to acquire and steward the landscapes which make our region special.

HOW WILL LAND BE PROTECTED?

First, we rely heavily on conservation-minded landowners, just as we have for the past 15 years. The vast majority of high-value conservation land is privately held.

Land owned by the Land Trust is permanently protected as preserves. The Land Trust also sometimes facilitates the purchase of properties to be owned by a city and permanently protected by a conservation easement and stewardship collaboration with the Land Trust.

WHERE WILL PROTECTED LANDS BE?

The majority of land protected through this campaign will be in Benton and Washington counties, the two most rapidly urbanizing counties in Northwest Arkansas. The Land Trust will continue to work with landowners in all counties throughout our service region.

The Land Trust focuses on landscape-scale conservation, an approach that maximizes public benefit by protecting whole landscapes. Our priority landscapes protect drinking water, wildlife habitat, local food and farms, outdoor recreation and scenic resources.

CAMPAIGN INVESTMENTS - \$2,800,000

LAND ACQUISITION FUND

\$1,500,000

The Land Trust works with willing landowners to find a conservation path that works best for them. This includes land donations, conservation easements and other arrangements. In some cases, however, the only way to save key properties is to buy them. Through this campaign, the Land Trust will establish a land acquisition fund to quickly act on the purchase of vulnerable lands.

LAND STEWARDSHIP FUND

\$500,000

With every project approved by our Board, we assume the obligation to steward those properties forever. Annual stewardship activities include monitoring and enforcing conservation easements, managing preserves, installing and maintaining public access, and restoring habitat. As we protect more land each year, our need for long-term land stewardship reserves increases.

OPERATING RESERVE FUND

\$800,000

We are committed to excellence. From providing opportunities for our community to connect with nature; to habitat protection; to building relationships and working with partners to enhance and protect natural resources; and to attract and retain the most talented staff possible, it takes a reliable stream of annual resources to maintain excellence and serve our thirteen-county service region.