

Chippewa Watershed Conservancy
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Mt. Pleasant, MI
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printed on recycled paper

Volunteer Opportunities

Do you have some time to help out with Conservancy activities? We can regularly use help with mailing newsletters, conducting membership drives and fund appeals. If you have computer skills and familiarity with MS Word or MS Excel, we are developing new mailing lists that can be compiled from home. Following are several opportunities available now:

- Capital campaign fund appeal
- Carls Foundation Matching Grant fund appeal
- New membership appeal mailing list development
- Sylvan Solace Butterfly Garden maintenance
- Education and publicity outreach
- Spring Banquet Committee
- Stewardship Committee



Call the office at (989) 644-5045 to volunteer or to get more details on these opportunities.

2006 Board of Directors

John Mitchell: President
Tim Odykirk: Vice-President
Ralph Hahnenberg: Secretary
Keith Frame: Treasurer, Investments
Donna Buckley: Sylvan Solace Monitor
Sue Ann Kopmeyer
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Wish List

- 2003/4 Osceola County Plat Book (\$25)
 - Paper Cutter (\$35)
 - Digital Projector (\$900)
- Don't have any of these, but want to help? Send us a check and designate it for these items.*

HERON TRACKS



Heron Tracks

The Official Newsletter of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy

Volume 13, No. 3

Williams-Blackburn Preserve is a Reality

We've done it! A year-long fundraising effort to acquire 25 acres of land bordering the Chippewa River off Leaton Road east of Mt. Pleasant has been an inspiring success. More than sixty family members, friends, neighbors and many of the contributors who made it happen gathered at the adjacent property of Marty and Sheila Murphy on Sunday, September 17th, for the dedication of our seventh and newest preserve, the Forrest and Berniece Williams and George M. Blackburn Memorial Preserve.

Mary Lewandowski and Tom Williams spoke poignantly about what it means to them to know that their late parents' land will be forever preserved in their memory. CWC President John Mitchell spoke about the long and important conservation contributions made by the late George Blackburn to the local area, including his service on the CWC Board of Directors. Framed, engraved photographs of the new preserve were presented to the family members and interested participants took short canoe rides along the preserve and a larger group made a walking tour.

The primary purpose of this acquisition was the preservation of the parcel as natural space for the quiet enjoyment of visitors and as critical habitat for wildlife. It seemed somehow quite appropriate when the walking group encountered a Wood Turtle, a Michigan Species of Special Concern due to declining habitat, during the tour. This marked the first time we have targeted a specific piece of land in our fundraising efforts.

We are grateful to the many contributors for their part in making this project a success. Now that the primary task is complete, we are putting together a development committee to raise funds for trail development. If you are interested in contributing or helping to raise funds, or in designing and creating the trails, or for helping with invasive species control and cleanup, please call the office at (989) 644-5045 or email Stan Lilley at cbirdey1@earthlink.net.

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Pictured (from left to right) are Tim Brockman, Elizabeth Brockman, Mary Ellen Blackburn, John Mitchell, Megan Blackburn, David Blackburn, Matthew Blackburn, and Carrie Blackburn.



Pictured (from left to right) are Erv and Mary Lewandowski, Stan Lilley, John Mitchell, and Marge and Tom Williams.



Executive Director's Corner



Stan Lilley,
CWC Executive Director

Cycles

Can you believe that another winter will be upon us in just a few short weeks? The birds and other animals have wrapped up their business of mating and nesting and bringing their next generations into the world. The flowers have pretty much finished the bloom and gone to seed. Leaves on the deciduous trees are already beginning to mark the end of the old season in a final blaze of glory just as they always have. And before we know it, with the proper infusion of the necessary raw materials, the cycle of life will begin again. Just like nature's life cycle, the life cycle of your conservancy requires the raw materials to keep it going. We have a few new ways to keep the cycle going and I end this article with a reminder about our tried and true ways. We are always thankful for all of the contributions of our supporters, whether monetary, labor, land or easement contributions.

A separate article in this issue reports two brand new ways to contribute. If you do any on-line shopping, please consider checking into www.iGive.com/cwc. Connecting to this link puts you in touch with more than 650 businesses that will contribute a portion of their sales to us. If you are going to shop on-line with Dell or Staples or any of the other supporting businesses anyway, why not have some of your purchase price come back to your favorite conservation group. If you are a business owner maybe you would be interested in following the lead of Jacob Wilkes of Buckley's Mountainside Canoes and pledging 1% of your annual sales to the CWC. This is a great way for a business owner to make a tax-deductible charitable contribution. More information is available at www.OnePercentForThePlanet.org.

Many of the respondents to our banquet survey indicated that they would rather see more silent auction items and fewer certificates for goods and services. Here is an excellent way to make a non-monetary contribution to the CWC. Just donate an item for the silent auction. If you have an item that you would like to contribute, call the office anytime at (989)-644-5045. We will accept silent auction items throughout the year.

See the reminder about the Carls Foundation challenge. From now to June 1, 2007, up to \$40,000 of your contributions to the CWC Land Acquisition Fund will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Carls Foundation.

Please remember the tried and true ways to support the CWC via your annual pledge or quarterly contributions. Your annual contributions as well as proceeds from the spring banquet are vital to keeping the CWC operating to preserve land and to educate the public about the conservation of our critical open space and wildlife habitat. We need your new contributions and your help to bring in new supporters to keep the cycle going.

CWC Land Protection Scorecard	County	Acres
16 Easements-	Clare	1,966
7 Preserves -	Gratiot	103
Total -	Isabella	317
	Mecosta	60
	Montcalm	455



Thank you to the following contributors May 23 through September 12

- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Anonymous (4) | Bud & Mary Ann Fisher | Linda Neely |
| David & Carrie Blackburn | Ed & Nedra Fisher | Ross & Shelly Rapaport |
| William Bulger | Peter & Nancy Fries | Lori Rogers |
| Gerald Carter | Stephen & Teresa Frey | David Shepherd |
| Chippewa Valley Audubon Club | Hatt Herbert & Tracy Galarowicz | Bill & Peg Sowle |
| Michael & Jean Claus | Lee & Phyllis Jeppesen | Don & Karen Stearns |
| Bob & Elaine Connell | Richard & Barbara Kirchner | Betty Stephenson |
| Mary Ann Crawford | Michael J. Libby & Kristin M. Sheridan | Muriel Straight |
| John & Audrey Cumming | John & Priscilla Lorand | Bill & Dorothy Theunissen |
| David & Diane Current | Carol Miller | Jean Toner |
| Woody Eber | John & Diane Mitchell | Charlie Walmsley |
| Ruth Felter | Mt. Pleasant Rotary Club | Basil & Teresa Zimmer |
| | | Marilyn Zorn |
- Contributions in Memory**
Clara Lee R. Moodie in memory of Winfield Land
- Endowment Contributions**
Gary Collins

Help Us Meet the Carls Foundation Challenge

When the last issue of *Heron Tracks* went to press we had just announced the new \$40,000 matching challenge grant from the Carls Foundation. From now until June 2007, The Carls Foundation will match dollar-for-dollar, up to \$40,000, all contributions from local sources or those with interests in the CWC five-county service area (Isabella, Clare, Gratiot, Montcalm and Mecosta). These matching funds are to be used exclusively for land acquisition. We are thrilled by the initial response. We have received \$5,000 from the Mount Pleasant Rotary Club, \$1,000 from the Chippewa Valley Audubon Club, and more than \$6,000 from you, our loyal supporters. But we still need \$28,000 to take full advantage of this generous offer from the Carls Foundation. As the traditional end-of-year giving season begins, please remember to keep working to help us achieve our \$40,000 goal. One-time donations, quarterly pledges, business matching donations, they all count as qualified contributions. The Chippewa Watershed Conservancy Preserve Acquisition Challenge Grant gives us a tremendous opportunity to add \$80,000 to our funds to acquire critical habitat in our service area. Please use the following form to make a contribution, or pass it on to a friend. And thank you for your contributions so far.

Carls Foundation/ Chippewa Watershed Conservancy Preserve Acquisition Challenge Grant Contribution

Yes! I want to see my contribution to help preserve our valuable natural habitat doubled thanks to a Carls Foundation matching grant.

Here is my check for: ___\$25 ___\$50 ___\$100 ___\$1,000 ___Other

Name/Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Acknowledgement in publications is OK Please keep my donation anonymous

Mail to: Chippewa Watershed Conservancy, P.O. Box 896, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0896

Contributions are tax deductible. Federal Tax ID #38-381796 MICS #18767



Neyer Preserve Created

Thanks to a donation of two adjoining parcels in Hiawatha Hills west of Mt. Pleasant by Jack and Cora Neyer, we are now protecting over 2 acres for quiet enjoyment by the public as a nature preserve in this well-developed neighborhood. The Neyer Preserve protects a lowland hardwood floodplain and more than 300 feet of Chippewa River frontage. The parcel is habitat for Wood Turtles, frogs, salamanders, orchids and other native wildflowers as well as a peaceful haven for resident and migratory birds. The property is located on Hiawatha Drive, about ¼ mile west of Meridian Road. This gift by the Neyers is a gift to all the people of Isabella County, now and in the future. We are grateful for their generosity.



Chippewa River at the Neyer Preserve

CWC Volunteers in Action - Thanks for the Time !

Isabella Abstract & Title for title work and closing support for the Williams-Blackburn Preserve land acquisition project

Mike Brockman for Web site management and production of *Heron Tracks*

Michael & Diane Morey for stewardship at *Sylvan Solace*

Diane Pifer, Kathleen Martin, Katherine Valkos and Pat Lilley for labeling, and mailing

John & Donna Buckley for trail maintenance at *Sylvan Solace*

Doris Dale for work on the *Sylvan Solace* butterfly garden

Sara Muszynski, Scott Bellinger, John & Donna Buckley, Keith & Mary Frame, Sue Ann Kopmeyer, John Mitchell, Tim Odykirk, Kate Odykirk, Emily Odykirk, Brianna Zimmer, and Tom Stewart for help with the Williams-Blackburn Preserve dedication

We are able to accomplish so much more thanks to all of the volunteers who have so generously given of their time and resources

Two New Ways to Support the CWC

We are pleased to announce two new ways to contribute to the CWC.

Igive.com. Igive.com is an Internet "mall" that receives a portion of any sale that originates from its site and gives up to 25 percent of all sales to the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy. Igive.com has created a program in which retailers donate a percentage of each sale made through Igive.com to a registered charitable organization of your choosing. All you have to do when shopping on-line is go through www.Igive.com/cwc when making a purchase from one of more than 650 retailers, including Dell, REI, Timberland, Land's End, and many others, purchasing products you need and helping the CWC at the same time.

One Percent for the Planet. One Percent for the Planet is an alliance of businesses committed to donating 1% of their sales to approved non-profit organizations working to protect the environment. Initiated in 2001 by Yvon Chouinard, founder of the outdoor clothing retailer Patagonia, and Craig Mathews, owner of Blue Ribbon Flies, One Percent for the Planet aims to provide support for grassroots efforts that are typically under-capitalized. Both had seen the success environmental commitment had brought to their businesses. Patagonia, Inc. has been contributing 10% of pre-tax profits or 1% of sales, whichever is greater, each year to environmental groups since 1985. Chouinard calls this an "earth tax," recognizing that his company has a responsibility to conserve and protect the natural resources it utilizes to make and market its products. One of the aspects of One Percent for the Planet that particularly appeals to many businesses is the freedom to contribute to whichever organization they feel as a company is most in line with their objectives or interests. Jacob Wilkes, who has taken over Buckley's Mountainside Canoes from John and Donna Buckley, came to us with this idea and pledged to contribute 1% of his company's annual sales to the CWC. Buckley's Mountainside Canoes is the first canoe livery in the State to make this commitment through One Percent for the Planet. If you have a business that would be interested in participating in this tax-deductible program, check out the Web site at www.OnePercentForThePlanet.org or call the CWC office at (989) 644-5045 for more information.

New Federal Law Expands Tax Benefit for Conservation Agreements

Generous landowners who donate voluntary conservation easements to the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy are inspired by many things: they love the natural beauty of the Central Michigan area, they feel connected to their land, and they wish to leave a legacy for future generations. This inspiration is at the heart of our work to permanently protect valuable natural resources. But for almost all of our donors, donating a conservation easement is a major financial decision, and the federal income tax deduction that comes with a donation often helps make easements more attractive for landowners in our community.

Congress recently passed a new law that *enhances* the tax benefits of protecting private land for many landowners. The legislation improves the tax incentive for conservation easements by allowing conservation easement donors to:

- § Deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%);
- § Deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income if the majority of that income came from farming, ranching or forestry; and
- § Continue to take deductions for as long as 15 years (up from 5 years) after the initial deduction.

The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) led the effort to get Congress to approve this new law. LTA is a national organization that sets national standards for conservation organizations like ours, provides training and networking opportunities, and represents the land trust community in Washington, DC. The Chippewa Watershed Conservancy has been a member of LTA for 10 years.

Each day we are touched by the generous and inspired landowners who work with us. The new law will make it easier for others in our community to build on their love of the land and permanently protect the valuable natural space of Central Michigan.

Potential donors of conservation easements should ask their attorney or tax preparer how the new law may apply to their particular circumstances.



Recently the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy had what must be described as a defining moment. The acquisition of the 25-acre Williams-Blackburn Preserve represents the first time this organization has raised the funds to purchase highly developable land along the Chippewa River.

We now have seven nature preserves. Five were donated and range from a fraction of an acre to our crown jewel – 78-acre Sylvan Solace. Only one other preserve has been purchased, the 25-acre Coldwater Lake Preserve in 2000. Make no mistake about it, Coldwater Lake Preserve is beautiful. It contains much of the remaining natural shoreline on the lake and both sides of the Coldwater River for several hundred yards as it enters the lake. This wetland area is critical wildlife band could easily have been destroyed.

But the Williams-Blackburn Preserve has something that Coldwater doesn't – it could easily have been divided into at least a half dozen prime building lots. This marks the first time that we have raised the funds to change the direction of development in this community.

We aren't out to stop development. What we do hope to accomplish is to provide balance. As a result of our acquisition approximately 1/2 mile of the Chippewa River will be forever wild. Man will be but a visitor. In this place nature reigns supreme. Meanwhile, homes will continue to be built in other areas along the river.

We believe that this community is a better place when the people living here know that they, and future generations, will always have access to nature - and when nature always has a place in our community.

We have a responsibility to acquire wisely. The Williams-Blackburn Preserve is home to the Wood Turtle, a Michigan Species of Special Concern. In fact, some of the participants in our dedication ceremony witnessed one of the turtles while taking a hike after the ceremony. We will continue to seek out and protect critical habitat.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will read about the \$40,000 Challenge provided to the CWC by the Carls Foundation. Please respond generously because our ability to protect additional habitat depends on our ability to meet this challenge. We came together to protect the Williams-Blackburn Preserve. Each of you should feel very, very good about your part, your role in what we have accomplished – and in what we will continue to do tomorrow to ensure that nature remains a vital part of our community.



River view from the Williams - Blackburn Preserve



Ash Trees (*Fraxinus sp.*)

- Height: about 30 – 80 feet

• Description: Branches and buds are opposite with a single bud at the end of the branch (terminal bud). Twigs are gray to brown and do not have a waxy coating. Leaves are compound, 8 to 12 inches long, 5 to 9 leaflets/leaf. Leaves may be finely toothed or have smooth edges. Four varieties of ash are native to Michigan. The most common ash trees planted in the landscape are white ash (*Fraxinus americana*) and green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*). Other native ash trees less commonly found include black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*) and blue ash (*Fraxinus quadangulata*). Black ash has 7 to 11 leaflets and is found in wet woods; blue ash has 7 to 11 leaflets and distinctive 4-angled corky wings on the stem. Individual fruits are shaped like single wings and occur in clusters. White ash lumber is used when very solid wood is required, especially for sporting goods and handles of all kinds. It is also useful in cabinetmaking and for lathe-turned items. Of special significance to Native Americans is the Black Ash, which is used extensively for basket making.

- Range: The ashes occur throughout Michigan.



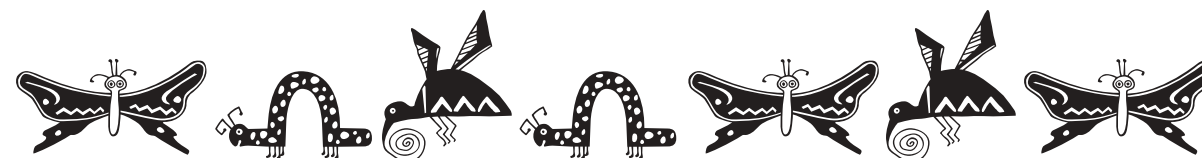
Ash Leaf



White Ash Tree

Ash trees, especially in southern Michigan, are currently under devastating attack by a non-native insect, the Emerald Ash Borer. Much of the continuing spread of this Asian pest northward is believed to be from movement of firewood from infected to non-infected areas of the State. For more information about the Emerald Ash Borer threat, visit www.EmeraldAshBorer.info.

Source: MSU Extension Bulletin E-2892, May 2003, Diane Brown-Rytlewski and Rebecca Thompson.



Sixth Annual Butterfly Walk

On Saturday, July 22, 2006, 24 people met for a visit to the butterfly garden and fields of the Sylvan Solace Preserve. Among the species observed this year were: Black Swallowtail, Cabbage White, Clouded Sulphur, Pearl Crescent, Eastern Tailed Blue, Red-spotted Purple, Great Spangled Fritillary, Monarch, Common Wood Nymph, and Dun Skipper. There was an abundance of Monarch caterpillars and Praying Mantis. Many species of butterflies appeared to have been severely impacted this year by early spring cold spells in Isabella County. On the positive side, it has been a very good year for Monarchs, which have made a remarkable comeback after a massive die-off on their wintering grounds in Mexico some three years ago.