

Heron Tracks



The Official Newsletter of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy

Volume 17, No.2

A Walk in Audubon Woods

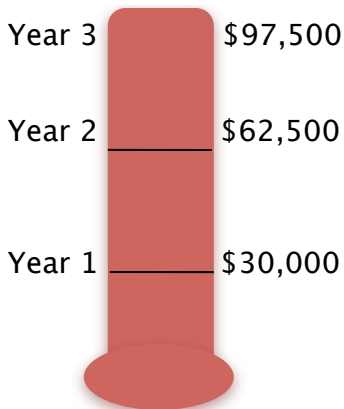
On Saturday, May 22, 2010, an adventurous group visited the Florence Maxwell Audubon Woods Preserve in search of resident and migrant birds and whatever else the morning would yield. This preserve has the well-deserved reputation of being the most reliable place in Isabella County to find Acadian Flycatcher. The bird is very similar in appearance to several other Empidonax flycatchers, such as Least, Willow, Alder and Yellow-bellied, but can easily be identified by its distinctive voice, as it blurts out an emphatic, "Pizza!" As expected, the bird was located in its characteristic habitat in mature hardwoods along the Chippewa River. A couple of hours netted an impressive 44 species of birds. The group also noted a healthy Wood Frog population. CWC member and local wildflower enthusiast Cathy Murray pointed out some late spring wildflowers and a number of different ferns growing in the forest.



CWC Executive Director Stan Lilley photographs a Wood Frog while others listen for birds

Dow Challenge

Our 3-year Goal
\$97,500



The **Herbert H. & Grace A. Dow Foundation** has pledged to match dollar-for-dollar all contributions up to \$30,000 in Year 1; \$32,500 in Year 2; \$35,000 in Year 3.

Amounts in excess of the match amount in the first year may be counted toward the second year; in the second year may be counted toward the third year.

Thanks to our generous donors we will be able to take full advantage of this challenge, and we've met the challenge 18 months ahead of schedule! But don't stop contributing now. This only means we will be able to work at the same level. There is so much more yet to be done. Send your tax deductible contribution today to CWC, P.O. Box 896, Mount Pleasant, MI 48804-0896.

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Random Notes

The benefits of membership. Did you take advantage of the discount opportunities offered to CWC members by several of our business partners over the past year? I hope you did, and that you thanked our friends at **The Broadway Barber Shop, Buckley's Mountainside Canoes, Chippewa River Outfitters, Max & Emily's Bakery Café and Motorless Motion** for their support of the CWC. We were very glad to have the support of these fine businesses and I'm excited to tell you that they have all agreed to offer discounts to CWC members again during the new business year, along with one new supporter, **The Pit Stop Quick Lube** in Mt. Pleasant. Details about the discounts offered are printed on the back of your membership card. Membership renewal reminders are in the mail. The new membership year runs from July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011. If you haven't renewed yet, please do, by using the contribution form we mailed to you, or use the form included with this issue of the newsletter. And be sure to thank our business supporters. Your membership also includes three issues of Heron Tracks each year, invitations to CWC events and activities, a sticker you can use to show your support, and the knowledge that your contribution will go to help sustain our efforts to protect important scenic and natural space in five counties here in central Michigan.



Land trusts protect family legacies. (For those who did not see my guest editorial in The Morning Sun some time ago, I want to repeat portions of it.) At a time when members of The Greatest Generation (those who experienced the Great Depression and WWII) are passing away in ever increasing numbers, we are seeing the greatest generational transfer of wealth, including ownership of land, in the history of our nation. Many of these people are also intent upon leaving a family legacy in the form of land or conservation easement donations intended to preserve the scenic, natural and historic character of their land. Why are the Greatest Generation and other conservation minded people donating land or easements? There are potential tax advantages. Some donors claim a charitable contribution on their income tax. Property taxes may be reduced. Since 2006, Michigan Public Act 446 has protected the tax cap on land under conservation easement when transfers of ownership occur. But most donors' reasons are more deeply personal.

Dr. Don and Nancy Nagler donated a 78-acre parcel of land along the Chippewa River west of Mount Pleasant in 1996 for what became the Sylvan Solace Preserve for use as a wildlife sanctuary, and for the public enjoyment of nature. "We share a common interest (with the conservancy) in keeping the land as it was when we purchased it," said Nagler.

Gerald Carter donated an easement on his 39-acre property in 2005. This property provides nesting habitat for two endangered species of raptors. "I've wanted to do this for a long time. I'm happy to know that my property will always exist in much the same condition as it is now."

Winifred Sponseller donated an easement on 13.3-acres in Union Township, including over 500 feet of frontage along both sides of Johnson Creek, in memory of her parents, Alva and Tressa Smith, who were great lovers of nature.

Reflecting back on his 1,648-acre easement donation, Delos F. "Fred" Hamlin noted that if more easements such as his were not created, there would be few large tracts of undeveloped and undivided land left 50 or more years into the future. "I've always had a sacred feeling about growing things from seed. One of my greatest pleasures in life is creating a sustainable forest. I've always wanted to see this land remain natural and be able to demonstrate what effective timber management can do to keep the land healthy. My easement has allowed me to do both."

Want more details about donating land or easements? Call the office at 989-644-5045 or visit the Web site at www.ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org.



You're So Vain

Remember that song? "You're so vain. You probably think this song is about you. Don't you?" Well, I have news for you. This column IS about you. Yeah, you. You're the one I'm writing about. You thought it was safe to pick up the newsletter, kill a few minutes, and find out what we're up to. And here I am, hiding between the pages. You probably didn't see me sneak into the living room and hide on the coffee table.

The CWC needs you. We need your talent and your time. We need you whether you know a lot about birds and butterflies, or nothing at all. We need you whether you are in town all year, or only for a few months. We need you to help share the load that is borne by too few volunteers. We need you to step forward, to call 989-588-4919 and say "I want to help". It is as simple as that. You call. I help you figure out which committee best fits your interest and talent and suddenly you are part of the solution.

Here is a brief list of just some of the things we need help with.

Preserve Steward: What onerous task do they perform? They take walks.

Easement Monitor: More walks.

Stewardship Volunteer: Add your name to a list of people who want to be notified when we schedule work outings. You might have to walk and stoop on this one.

Membership and Events: Do you like to plan parties?

Fundraising: Willing to ask for silent auction items?

Governance: You did say you could run things better than your boss does?

Education and Outreach: Kids, grants, spreading the word.

Operators are standing by. Call today! 989-588-4919

By the way, it was Carly Simon. And while the song wasn't about you; if you don't call me, she may write one about you.

John Mitchell

Thank You Volunteers!

Pat Block for graphics support and training **Mike Brockman** for production of Heron Tracks

Loretta Davidson for GPS mapping support **Pat Lilley** for help with mailings

Thanks to all of these volunteers for help with the spring banquet:

John Mitchell, Sue Ann Koprmeier, Keith Frame, Tim Odykirk, Marilyn Fosburg, Mandy Oberholzer, Kurt Lauzcher, Ray Davies, Scott Bellinger, Loretta Davidson, Mike Brockman

We get so much more done because of our volunteers who generously give their time and energy



John and Emma Bush after signing the easement at their home

Chippewa Watershed Conservancy will be protecting the conservation values of the land long after we are gone," said John.

Had our association with John and Emma Bush only resulted in the creation of this conservation easement, the experience would have been very satisfying. These are people who show a deep love for their land and a desire to preserve it for the benefit of others now here and yet to come. But John Bush quickly became an ardent advocate for conservation on behalf of the CWC. He has generated publicity with the local news media and organized and hosted two meetings with neighbors so that we could tell them our conservation story and answer questions. Largely as a result of his work, conservation easements have already been established or started on 158 acres of nearby lands, with more yet to come. For all of his work in the area, John was acknowledged as the recipient of the 2010 Bob Ball Award for conservation excellence at the CWC annual spring banquet.

Pleased and honored by the award, in his typically modest fashion though, Bush says, "For me it is about the land, and not about me."

On March 8, 2010, Joe F. Bush and his mother, Emma M. Bush signed and donated a conservation easement on 92 acres of their land near Big Rapids, to be preserved as scenic open space and wildlife habitat. The easement includes a 10-12 acre shallow lake and a substantial sedge meadow along Ryan Creek, a beautiful trout stream emptying into the Muskegon River, as well as some hardwood forest and red pines.

The property has been in the family for three generations. John Bush described his childhood on the land as a "Timmy and Lassie," (from the Lassie television series) experience.

"I'm an outdoor lover. As I've grown older I've wondered what would happen to the land after I'm gone. I'm very happy that the



A sedge meadow now permanently protecting a stretch of Ryan Creek on part of the easement



On February 5, 2010, Joe D. Hayes executed a conservation easement on 118 acres of his land northeast of Big Rapids. Hayes, a retired firefighter with the Grand Rapids Fire Department, says the majority of the property, a mix of open fields, bogs and mature hardwood forest, has been in and out of family ownership since 1940, and portions used to include corn fields and an orchard.

"I grew up here, but worked in Grand Rapids, where I met and married my wife, Arlene," he said.

"She died in 2006, but always wanted the property to be protected as a special place for our children and grandchildren."

The east half of the property includes an excellent example of a mature beech, maple, hemlock forest representative of the area's pre-settlement vegetation.

Joe Hayes donated the easement to the CWC in memory of his late wife and we are delighted to play a part in ensuring it remains much the same as it currently is for the benefit of future generations.



CWC President John Mitchell congratulating Joe Hayes on signing the easement



A pond on the NW corner of the Hayes easement



CWC member and support Bob Mills hosted 14 CWC preserve stewards at his Pine Hill Hunt Club facilities on Sunday, May 23, 2010. The group, serving as primary "eyes and ears" at the CWC properties, gathered to hear about a wide range of topics, including CWC goals and plans from the Guided Organizational Assessment facilitated by experts from the Land Trust Alliance and Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy in January 2010, progress on development of comprehensive preserve management plans for each property, and issues to look out for when visiting the preserves and how to handle situations they might encounter. It was a good opportunity for the stewards to network with each other as well as a chance for the CWC staff to provide updates and answer questions.



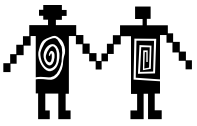
Some of the CWC preserve stewards listening for marsh birds on the Pine Hill property before getting down to training business

Bob Mills not only offered the use of the Pine Hill facilities, but also donated and hosted lunch, personally prepared by him. We are grateful for his generosity.

Many of the stewards also took advantage of an opportunity to tour part of the nearly 600-acre property and see and hear some of the special birds present.

Spring Banquet a Winner

The 15th annual CWC spring banquet on April 22 was attended by an all-time record 160 guests! After expenses the event netted about \$4,700 for future land protection efforts. Congratulations to 50/50 raffle winner, Ari Berk, who won \$930. Our social hour included live music courtesy of Ray Davies, and one lucky winner at each table went home with the live plant centerpiece provided by Mark Ellis and Four Seasons Floral. We switched to a plated meal this year, and the chef and staff at Buck's Run did their usual outstanding jobs. A special taste treat courtesy of Paul Siers and Autumnberry Hill, was a delightful Autumnberry garnish on the chicken breast. Guests also enjoyed a very interesting and entertaining presentation about the mussels of the Chippewa River from CMU Biology professor, Dr. Daelyn Woolnough. John Bush of Big Rapids, was honored as this year's recipient of the Bob Ball Award for outstanding conservation contributions to the central Michigan area for not only his donation of a conservation easement on 92 acres of land along Ryan Creek in Mecosta County, but also his organizing efforts on behalf of the CWC, which have resulted in an additional 158 acres of donated conservation easements. It was a scintillating and enjoyable evening to raise money and share stories in the name of land protection.



Contributors February - May 2010

Thank You for Your Support

Benefactor (\$1,000)

Dianne Wilson

Sustainer (\$500)

Joe D. Hayes

Guardian (\$250)

Rose Prasad

Defender (\$100)

Roy & Alice Burlington

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Rosemary Reid

John & Audrey Cumming

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Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe

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Carey Pauquette-Schalm

Patricia Gillis

Daniel Patterson

Susan Schiller

John & Carol Grossa

Rose Prasad

Donna Stensrud

Harry & Virginia Herman

Nancy Priestap

Tom & Chris Stewart

Memory of Richard Kirchner

Anonymous

John & Carol Grossa

Memory of Joan Clute

Anonymous (2)

Glen & Catherine Hackey

Sally Deck

Richard & Diana Moreau

Betty Dickey

Tom Stewart

**Yes! I want to support the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy.
Here is my tax deductible contribution to help sustain operations:**



\$25 (Regular) \$50(Supporter) \$100(Defender) \$250(Guardian) \$500(Sustainer) \$1,000(Benefactor) \$_____Other

Donations of \$250 or more will receive a CWC Mug Don't send the mug I wish to remain anonymous I wish to receive the newsletter electronically

Member Name(s) _____ Phone _____
As you want it to appear in our newsletter

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Check enclosed or Bill my charge card: Visa MasterCard # _____ Exp. _____

Name on card _____



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Volunteer Opportunities

Do you have a helping hand that is itching to help the Conservancy? 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
- Education and publicity outreach
- Stewardship Committee
- New membership appeal mailing list development
- Spring Banquet Committee

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

Board of Directors

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Paul Siers

CWC Land Protection

Successes

26 Easements- 3,148 acres
14 Preserves - 305 acres
Total - 3,453 acres

County	Acres
Clare	1,966
Gratiot	147
Isabella	438
Mecosta	391
Montcalm	511