

Heron Tracks

CWC

CHIPPewa
WATERSHED
CONSERVANCY



The Official Newsletter of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy

Volume 18, No.2

Help Us Save a Special Place

We need your help now to save an important part of Isabella County for future generations. Hidden away in the far western part of the county is 70-acre Hall's Lake. The western half of the lake is bordered by summer cottages and full-time residences. But the eastern half consists of 3,200 feet of lake shore and an undeveloped 200-acre wooded buffer that harbors a variety of micro habitats from cattail edges to bogs, glacial moraine and tree-covered hills. Two families are currently holding 139 acres of this land adjoining the 22-acre Neely Preserve and have agreed to sell it to the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy below market value. But we must act now. We need to raise \$400,000 to save this land. Our success in raising these funds will ensure that we can protect this property for recreation, water quality enhancement and wildlife habitat. Visitors will have access to nearly a mile of footpaths through an otherwise undisturbed tract harboring a mature hardwood forest, many varieties of wildflowers and a wide array of wildlife, and the scenic view from the lake will be preserved forever.



Please help us today. **The Chippewa Watershed Conservancy** is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization incorporated to hold property or conservation easements to protect land in the counties of the Chippewa River watershed, including wetlands, critical wildlife habitat and other significant sites. Contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. MICT# 18676. Please indicate your support of this acquisition on the donation form included in this newsletter.

4th Thursday @ Halls Lake Nature Adventures

The Chippewa Watershed Conservancy is sponsoring monthly guided nature walks at the Hall's Lake Natural Area at 9:30 AM on Thursdays, June 23, July 28 and August 25.

Come visit our secret treasure, with 1.5 miles of nature trails on 200 acres. There are always surprises. Will an eagle or osprey land above you? Will an otter, loon, or mink splash ahead of you? Will bobcats, turkeys, coyotes or fawns scurry away from you, or stop for a photo? What flowers and mushrooms will be in season? Will one of our aged aspen, pounded and plundered by pileated woodpeckers, decide this is the day to return to the soil? Will you see more than the 40 different bird species typically seen on each trip? If there is a flower, tree, or critter you want identified? We can usually do it!

Our expert guides will adapt their talks to the observations of the day and the questions of the guests, however each visitor will see as many as 10 different habitats, moraine from the end of the last glacier, clear evidence of forest succession, a sphagnum bog, swamp, marsh, creek, flood plain, dozens of species of trees and 100's of different flowers, plants, ferns and mushrooms. After a relaxing 1 mile walk, guests will enjoy a pontoon boat ride for ½ mile along the pristine lake habitat, and then walk a leisurely ½ mile back to their vehicle, along The Old State Road Living History trail.

Directions: Load the family in the car and go west of Mt. Pleasant on M-20 toward Remus. One mile after Rolland Road, turn left on Wyman Rd. In one mile turn right onto Broomfield Rd. and go ½ mile to the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy's Neely Preserve. When the road angles left, park in the grassy trail area with a gate. Remember the route and COME BACK OFTEN.

These events are free, but a donation to the Halls Lake Natural Area land acquisition project is encouraged. RSVP to 989-644-5045.

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Corner



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Random Notes

Preserving Family Legacies. “I really love my land. I’ve put a lot of hard work into it over the years and I would love to know it will look like this even after I’m long gone.” These words are spoken by so many members of “The Greatest Generation,” and now by the “Baby Boomers,” as they enter retirement eligibility and begin to seriously think about what happens next. Perhaps the children have moved away, or perhaps there are no heirs. Or perhaps the children have competing ideas about what will become of the land after you are gone. This is really a big part of what the conservation movement is all about. It’s your land and you can decide what it will look like after you are gone simply by placing a permanent conservation easement on it. A conservation easement does not mean that your heirs don’t inherit or that they can’t sell it. But it does mean that the conservation values, be they scenic views or critical wetlands or important wildlife habitat or open space, will continue to be protected in accordance with the terms of the easement regardless who owns the land in the future. In fact, the presence of a permanent conservation easement may make it easier for heirs to keep the land because, under the provisions of Michigan Public Act 446 of 2006, the taxable value of the land (not a home or other buildings, but the land) will not “pop up” to the fair market value when ownership transfers, but will remain capped. If you want more details about how a conservation easement can work for you or for someone you know and what it does and does not do, please contact us. I promise we will not hassle you, nor pressure you into a decision. But I’m delighted to provide information and if or when you are ready, meet and discuss options. We currently hold 26 conservation easements and I know many of our easement donors would be happy to talk to you independently of us, and tell you their experience with the process and what it has meant to their sense of well-being. **So please, don’t wait until it’s too late and the decision about what happens to your land is in someone else’s hands.** Contact us at the office at (989) 644-5045 or info@ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org and ask for information to be sent to you.



Halls Lake. Please help us now with the Halls Lake acquisition project. As I mentioned last issue, we need to raise approximately \$400,000.00. Some have already made pledges to the project, and for that I am grateful. I’m asking again that you consider helping in these three areas: 1) volunteer to serve on the Halls Lake acquisition fundraising committee. We need to identify and contact potential major donors for this effort; 2) if you can't serve on the committee, but can offer suggestions about possible supporters or fundraising events/activities pass your suggestions on to us; 3) use the form in this newsletter to make a contribution of your own to the project. Let’s act now to preserve the rural and scenic character of the area and guarantee the presence of a beautiful and important recreation opportunity at Halls Lake.

Trail Map Project Update. The initial feature point collection phase of our Chippewa River Water Trail project is complete. We have contracted with the University of Michigan-Flint to produce the print-ready version of our tri-fold map and plan to print the first 2,500 copies of the map later this spring as part of our Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) grant. We are about to begin production of Chippewa River Watershed boundary signs. We will be working in partnership with the road commissions in three counties and with The Little Forks Conservancy (LFC) in Midland to install the signs at some of the major roadways where they intersect the watershed. The design of the signs is consistent with similar signage that has been placed in the Kawkawlin and Cedar River watersheds by LFC. There may be volunteer opportunities to help with collection of photographs and GPS coordinates of feature points. Call the office if you are interested in volunteering.



Got More Stuff?

Last year we put out a call for members like you to donate unwanted items of value. Maybe now is the moment that works for you.

One of our members donated an unwanted boat, motor, and trailer. This well-loved rowboat has been recycled in the best possible way - into the home of one of our other members. In the process the donor has earned a charitable tax deduction. Best of all; something that was in the way is now in use.

Do you have things of value that you just don't want to go thru the bother of selling? They're in the way and need to go. Maybe they're heavy. Maybe you're not sure how to dispose of them.

Donate salable items to the CWC and you get three benefits:

- 1) They're gone. We pick up and find a new home for your items. You get your storage space back.
- 2) You get a tax-deductible donation for the fair market value of the items.
- 3) The funds raised by selling the items go into the CWC Endowment Fund.

So say goodbye to that old car, boat, antiques, tools, sporting goods and other things that are just too good to throw out. Of course we reserve the right to refuse items, but we'll do our best. So, give us a call. In your way today - wildlife habitat tomorrow.

Don't miss this opportunity. Call John Mitchell at 989 330 2929 to arrange pickup.

Help Us Connect

We need to know what sorts of activities are important to you

- **Programs you would attend.** Would you attend a field trip, workshop about mushrooms, butterflies, birds/birdwatching, insects, wildflowers, trees, building nest boxes or bird feeders? Are you interested in any other type of program?
- **Activities or events you would volunteer to lead.** Would you like to lead a field trip or find a field trip leader for an activity on one of our preserves? Want to lead a workshop about river ecology or invasive species control? Have a new idea?

We want to create programs and events that are meaningful to our members and supporters and that bring people out to enjoy the outdoors, but we need your input to help us design the most effective and interesting activities we can. Please help us by downloading a survey form from the web site. Go to the home page and click on the "Find out more" link at "What Activities Do You Want to See." Then email, fax or snail mail it to us so that your voice is heard when we begin to develop new programs.

If you would prefer to have a form mailed to you, or you wish to provide your input telephonically, call the office.

Web site: www.ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org

Telephone and fax number: (989) 644-5045

Email address: info@ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org

Thank You Volunteers!

Scott Bellinger for photography at the spring banquet

Mike Brockman for production of Heron Tracks

Sue Ann Kopmeyer for help at the spring banquet

Pat Lilley for data input

Mike and Diane Morey for stewardship at the Sylvan Solace Preserve

Cathy Murray for stewardship at the Neyer Preserve

Tim, Kate and Emily Odykirk for help at the spring banquet

Dave Shepherd and Tom Stewart for stewardship at the Stearns Preserve

John Mitchell & Jean Staffin for silent auction item pickup

Larry & Judy Schaftenaar for hosting Hall's Lake acquisition project planning sessions.

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



May saw the CWC engaged in many outdoor activities for both kids and adults.

Environmental Education Day. We had a great time Friday, May 20, 2011, taking part in the Isabella County Conservation District's Environmental Education Day for 3rd graders. More than 425 students, accompanied by teachers and parents, visited the dozens of booths and hands-on demonstration projects offered by governmental agencies and nonprofits. Stan Lilley manned the information table while Dick Moreau, who sits on the CWC Board of Directors and serves on the Scientific Advisors Board, ran our hands-on project, which consisted of several water quality tests, including pH, water hardness, phosphate levels and soluble salts. By the end of the day Dick and Stan were tired, but happy to see so many kids enjoying science.



Kids line up for Dick's water quality testing demo



Dick Moreau teaches about conductivity



Sarsaparilla at Audubon Woods

Audubon Woods Preserve Bird Walk.

On Saturday, May 21, 2011 a group of eight birders gathered at the Audubon Woods Preserve west of Mount Pleasant for an early morning bird walk. The target bird for this trip is always Acadian Flycatcher, a Species of Greatest Conservation Need according to the Michigan State Wildlife Action Plan. The mature deciduous forest of Audubon Woods has for several years been a reliable location for this species and this year was no exception, as it put on a good vocal demonstration with its distinctive "pizza" call. As is so often the case this time of year, spring wildflowers were numerous. Among those observed were starflower, spring beauty, lily of the valley, wild ginger, jack-in-the-pulpit, fringed polygala and trillium. The birding trips are a perfect opportunity to botanize as well as see



Group observes Acadian Flycatcher at Audubon Woods

the birds. Wildflower enthusiast Jim Dealing was pleased to discover wild sarsaparilla during the walk.

Neely Preserve Bird Walk. On Sunday, May 22, 2011, nine birders hiked the Neely Preserve and the two adjoining parcels at Hall's Lake that we are working to acquire, the 99-acre Kabana Tract, and the 40-acre Schaftenaar Tract. The first bird to appear was a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, a Species of Greatest Conservation Need according to the Michigan State Wildlife Action Plan. By the end of the day 32 species were seen or heard, including a pair of Bald Eagles. This was a wonderful opportunity to see and hear the birds, but especially to walk the two parcels we are seeking to acquire. By the end of the day it was clear from visiting the multiple micro habitats present here that we must do everything possible to preserve these two tracts. Two families are currently holding these parcels to sell to the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy at below market value. But we must act now to raise \$400,000 to save this land. An insert to this newsletter provides additional information and offers a form you can return along with your contribution to help us save these important parcels.



Taking a break on the Schaftenaar Tract during the Neely Preserve bird walk



Lisa Prasad-Hanweck and Rose Prasad talk bidding strategy

To the surprise and delight of all, the 16th annual CWC spring banquet, held at Buck's Run on April 28, 2011, again broke the attendance record with 164 paid reservations.

After expenses the event netted more than \$7,300 for future land protection efforts. This year's 50/50 raffle offered up \$1,090 and the winner was Marilyn Fosburg, who very graciously donated the entire amount back to the CWC. Thanks to a generous donation by Dr. Al Bryan and Barb Grewe, co-owners of M-Z Air Charter of Mount Pleasant, we held a special 52-card raffle that was only available to those in attendance. Lori Rogers won the opportunity to fly with M-Z Air and CWC Executive Director Stan Lilley, along with four guests, on an hour-long bird's eye view of mid-Michigan and all of the CWC's 14 preserves.

Talented guitarist Joel Allen played a fabulous variety of music during the social hour. Mark Ellis and Four Seasons Floral again donated beautiful live plant centerpieces for each dinner table.

Alma College professor, Dr. John Rowe's presentation about turtles included the results of his investigation of adaptability to the color of shell coloration to blend into the background upon which turtles live. Dr. Rowe even brought live examples to see.



Guest speaker John Rowe



Guitarist Joel Allen



Mike Brockman receives Ball award



John Olson, Barb Grewe and Bud Fisher

Mike Brockman joined the distinguished list of recipients of the Bob Ball Award for outstanding contributions to conservation in the central Michigan area. As a volunteer, Mike has filled the thankless position of editor of Heron Tracks since 2006 and formerly maintained the CWC web site. He has also tirelessly supported the silent auction and sold raffle tickets to help raise funds for conservation. Accepting the award, Mike said, "There are many lists one might find oneself on, but I am proud to be on this one."



In late March, while ice was still solid enough to walk on in the Pine River floodplain at the Stearns Preserve near Riverdale, Tom Stewart and Dave Shepherd installed nest boxes for use by cavity nesting birds. A wide variety of birds may choose to use the boxes provided, but those we are most hoping to attract are Wood Duck and Prothonotary Warbler. Wood Duck is not considered a sensitive species in Michigan, but the colorful plumage of the male and the gray feathers and white tear-drop eye ring of the female are unique and make these birds popular with the public. Prothonotary Warbler is a State-listed Species of Special Concern and is also listed as a Species of Greatest



Tom Stewart installs a nest box for warblers (l) and Dave Shepherd installs one for ducks (r)

Conservation Need in the State Wildlife Action Plan. Michigan is on the northern edge of the range of this species and, while they are present in southern Gratiot County, attracting them to the northern edge of the county would be a good achievement. If you happen to visit the Stearns Preserve or the nearby Fred Meijer Heartland Trail and see a bright yellow bird with dark blue-gray wings going into a nest box, or hear a clear, single toned "sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet," song, please call the office and report it.

Memorial Grove Remembrances

If you would like to remember loved ones in a very special way and contribute to conservation at the same time, please consider the Memorial Grove at Sylvan Solace Preserve. Thanks to Laura Yuncker of Absolute Granite in Mt. Pleasant, we have a beautiful black granite slab in a lovely and quiet setting. There is a nice bench there and it's peaceful to listen to the murmur of Big Toothed Aspen as you reflect on your particular memories.

For a minimum donation of \$100, additional names may be added to this commemorative monument, a display that should last virtually forever. If you would like to add names, please call the office at (989) 644-5045.



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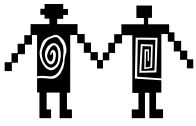
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CWC Land Protection Successes

26 Easements- 3,148 acres
 14 Preserves - 308 acres
 Total - 3,456 acres

County	Acres
Clare	1,966
Gratiot	147
Isabella	441
Mecosta	391
Montcalm	511



Contributors, January - April 2011

Thank you for your support.

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Benefactor

John & Tom Mitchell
Marilyn Fosburg

Sustainer

Paul Murray
Don & Karen Stearns
G. Thomas Mitchell
James & Dianne Wilson

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Gary Collins
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Dan & Sharon Milan
Tom & Rhonda Montgomery
Nancy Priestap & Kirk Sponseller
Tim & Elizabeth Odykirk

Bob & Laurie Peters
Rosemary Reid
TerraCycle, Inc.
Bob Tolley
John & Sandy Warriner
Jack & Meghan White
Nancy White

In memory of William Farley

Mike & Sue Carey

Thank You to Our 2011 Silent Auction Donors and Business Partners

4 Seasons Flora
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Volunteer Opportunities

We need help from interested volunteers in the following areas:

- **Education and outreach.** Would you like to lead a field trip or find a field trip leader for an activity on one of our preserves? Want to lead a workshop about river ecology or invasive species control? Have a new idea?
- **Fundraising.** Do you have experience raising funds for deserving nonprofits? Would you like to help raise operating, endowment or acquisition funds for the CWC? Do you have an idea for a new event or do you know an individual, business or foundation that might be willing to support the CWC?

Call the office at (989) 644-5045 to volunteer or discuss details.

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

Check this box to designate all or part of your donation to the Hall's Lake Acquisition \$ _____

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

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