

# Heron Tracks

CWC

CHIPPewa  
WATERSHED  
CONSERVANCY



The Official Newsletter of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy

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## Volunteers Clean Up Stearns Preserve

Volunteers working on the Stearns Preserve in Riverdale pulled out over 1000 feet of old metal fence. CWC Director Tom Stewart and Stearns Preserve Land Steward Dave Shepherd worked with volunteer David Syckle II, a biology student from Mid-Michigan Community College, to clean up the area. The fence consisted of heavy gauge metal wire, including barbed wire, as well as metal posts. The fence began on the west side of the Pine River and ran along the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail. The team also removed other trash from the property.

After the heavy rains in late June, the team decided to tackle the fence removal project while the ground was still saturated and the fence posts could be easily pulled from the ground. Through water bogs and ditches, the team had to clip and cut out the fence because many trees had grown into the metal wire. Other refuse found included glass bottles and glass insulators for old electrical lines, food wrappers, plastic plant containers, old clothing, old metal railroad materials, etc. (Article submitted by David Syckle II).



## Earth Day Every Day

I believe Earth Day is a great tradition. I also understand that people are busy and may not be able to volunteer on a large project during Earth Day. I have always believed that Earth Day is a reminder to us to give back to the Earth. My hope is that people would GIVE back to the Earth and that we would DO our share in keeping the Earth healthy and beautiful. We can give our time when we can spare it, even if it isn't Earth Day.

The natural beauty of the forest along the Pine River called me out to volunteer at CWC's Stearns Preserve this summer. I have always enjoyed being outdoors and observing the forest environment. I was always looking for a reason to be in the woods. Whether hunting, fishing, camping, or just walking, I really enjoy the woods. In fact, I spent so much time in the forest that I figured I should work in it. I decided that I would attend college to study wildlife biology because of my love for the woods and the joy I feel when in the forest.

When Tom Stewart gave me the opportunity to volunteer on the Stearns Preserve I knew right away that I would enjoy this volunteer work. When walking in the forest, I have always tried to pick up trash, garbage, and other refuse left by people. Tom explained that there was a nasty metal wire fence running along a ditch line that needed to be cut and hauled out of the preserve. He also explained that it would be helpful if I could identify any plants or animals that I encountered while on the preserve.

I knew this volunteer work would be rewarding because I believe we are caretakers of the land and we are responsible to do our part in preserving the environment for future generations. Not only did I enjoy the forest, but I was able to help restore the natural beauty there by working with Preserve Steward Dave Shepherd by removing the wire fence from the property. I was also glad to have the volunteer team point out plant species and identify those unknown to me. This was a good experience for me. **David Syckle II.**

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**A Spontaneous Act of Charity.** I tend to think that I have reached an age where I'm not easily caught by surprise to the point of being emotionally overwhelmed, but I confess to being that surprised recently. I had the privilege of attending the annual Labor Day picnic and get together held by landowners and relatives out at Hall's Lake. I had spoken to the assembled group about our land acquisition project out there, what we've been doing, what we plan next. Shortly afterward, I was approached by a young man named Ryan Johns, who just celebrated his 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. Ryan promptly placed a ten dollar bill in my hand and said, "Here, Stan. This is for the Hall's Lake project." Wow! I'm not too old to know ten bucks can be a big deal to a thirteen year old. Both Mom and Grandma told me later that it was completely Ryan's idea to donate the money. Ryan is an enthusiastic user of the trails at the Hall's Lake Natural Area and just wanted to do his part to help preserve the land. Thank you Ryan, every dollar counts.



**Legacy Giving.** I have commented before that we are now in the midst of the greatest inter-generational transfer of wealth in the history of our country. I just want to offer a brief reminder to consider legacy gifts in your estate planning. Legacy gifts provide future support for charity. Contributions by will, trust, other forms of written designation, life-income arrangements and endowment gifts, all represent forms of legacy giving. Any individual, at any point in their life, can create a legacy gift. It can be as easy as naming a charity on the beneficiary form on a savings, checking or pension account, or through a more complex instrument like a charitable trust. All these gifts represent a powerful and meaningful way for individuals to create a philanthropic legacy for their community and the organizations they care about. I encourage anyone thinking about a legacy gift to the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy to discuss the options with your financial or estate planner and learn what may work best for you.

**Why the Water Trail Project?** In this newsletter you will read an update of our work on the Chippewa River Water Trail project. We have also written updates on the web site. Perhaps you have wondered why the CWC is leading the project. What does the production of a map and signage along the river have to do with the CWC's mission to protect open space and wildlife habitat? My answer is first of all, the river is wildlife habitat. Further, this project supports our mission to educate the public about the need for conservation. The Chippewa River, a gem in its own right, runs through some of the most ecologically sensitive natural habitat in central Michigan. If we are leaving trash behind or entering and leaving the river from other than established put-in and take-out points, thus creating erosion issues and trampling sensitive wetland and floodplain species, we need to stop this kind of behavior. Sometimes big changes come from simple solutions like the design and distribution of a map that tells river users the location of appropriate access points, while also promoting wise use, river etiquette and safety. Most people aren't seeking to deliberately harm the river. After all, most people who use the river do so many times, not just once, so why would they intentionally destroy a resource they want to use again? I believe that improvements in how we treat the river benefit not only water quality, but also the quality of the recreational experience and result in better treatment of the lands adjoining the river. I also believe that the more people use the river responsibly, the more they begin to understand why we need to conserve the adjoining riparian buffer. Stay tuned to the web site and look for the hard copy maps to be available soon at your local parks and river-related businesses.

**Hall's Lake Natural Area.** Have you visited the Hall's Lake Natural Area yet? There are now over two miles of trails on the Neely Preserve and the Kabana and Schaftenaar parcels (note: these two parcels are closed to access in October and November during deer seasons) that make up the Hall's Lake Natural Area, and more being built. There are several benches at interesting points and many signs identify tree species. This is a beautiful and peaceful area to walk and enjoy nature, but don't forget we are still seeking funds to keep the entire 175 acres permanently open to the public. We are working on putting challenge grants in place to help us raise \$300,000. If you can make a pledge or otherwise want to help us with this project, please call the office at (989) 644-5045.

**Changes are Coming to the Web Site.** With some sorely needed help from Myles McNally, the CWC website is getting a major overhaul. Look for the new and improved site soon, at the same location, [www.ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org](http://www.ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org).



### Got A Story?

Each of us has a reason we joined the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy. It may have been because the CWC protected a place that is near and dear to your heart. It may be that a friend asked you to join. It may be because, well, you know better than I do.

We'd like to hear your stories about why you decided to become part of the CWC. Or maybe you'd like to tell us about a place in our service area of Clare, Isabella, Gratiot, Montcalm and Mecosta counties that is special to you.

You don't need to write anything in particular, or on anything in particular. It doesn't need to be a particular length or even need to be in complete sentences. The only thing that matters is that you tell us. How else will we know? Please Email your stories to [info@ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org](mailto:info@ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org).

### Memorial Sign Dedicated

John Mitchell

On August 16, 2011, family and friends gathered at the Marl Lake Rest Area on M-46, west of Vestaburg to dedicate a sign in honor of George Douglass and his wife, the late Dorothy Douglass. In July of 2000, Mr. and Mrs. Douglass donated a permanent conservation easement to the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy (CWC) on 80 acres of land surrounding Marl Lake in order to ensure that it will remain in its scenic and natural condition in perpetuity. The easement prohibits subdivision of the property or construction of buildings and is designed to maintain the mature, forested character of the land.

Family members described how George Douglass, now in his 90's, has continued to cut firewood and hunt on the property over the years, and reminisced about playing on trees along the lake shore and swimming in the lake as children.

The CWC erected the memorial sign thanks to a special permit from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), on the rest area, the only portion of land not included in the easement. The sign is intended to explain how the selfless contribution by the Douglass family will always provide visitors an attractive and picturesque view of Marl Lake and the land south of it when they visit the rest area. George and Dorothy Douglass actually sold several acres to MDOT in 1979 for creation of the roadside rest area.



George Douglass with family members

The sign was installed with the help of Donald and Karen Stearns, and Dianne Wilson, all of Riverdale, who are also donors of conservation easements on their properties. Don Stearns said, "I just think it's nice to recognize what George and Dorothy have done for the benefit of the people of Michigan, and I'm happy that we could have a hand in it."

CWC President John Mitchell said, "It is because of the generosity of people like George and Dorothy Douglass that we are able to preserve a future of natural space for generations to come. We cannot thank them enough for their gift."

### Chippewa Watershed Conservancy Seeking Accreditation

The land trust accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. The Chippewa Watershed Conservancy is pleased to announce it is applying for accreditation. A public comment period is now open.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies and programs. The Chippewa Watershed Conservancy believes that this third party affirmation of our best management practices is important to demonstrate to our donors, supporters, members and easement landowners that we are doing those things necessary to ensure that we can meet our promises to protect and defend the conservation values of the land in perpetuity.

The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards see [www.landtrustaccreditation.org/getting-accredited/indicator-practices](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org/getting-accredited/indicator-practices).

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org). Comments may also be faxed or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: (fax) 518-587-3183; (mail) 112 Spring Street, Suite 204, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. Comments on the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy's application will be most useful by January 9, 2012.



Our summer series of nature walks at the Hall's Lake Natural Area, dubbed, "4<sup>th</sup> Thursday at Hall's Lake Nature Adventures," has been a hit with those who have taken advantage. We were quite pleased to even have State Representative Kevin Cotter as a participant in the July walk.



Some of the participants in the July 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday at Hall's Lake walk pause at the end of the trail.



The August 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday walk yielded a large variety of edibles.

The walks are designed to get the public out to the Neely Preserve and the adjoining two parcels of land we are fundraising to buy. The combined lands are known as the Hall's Lake Natural Area. A wonderful set of foot trails has been installed throughout the three parcels, as well as several benches where it is possible to stop and rest while enjoying a special view. The trails also feature signage identifying some of the trees encountered along the route.

The summer walks have been led by very knowledgeable experts, including biologist Doug Valek, whose walk focused on trees and shrubs, and Sister Marie Kopin, who focused on mushrooms. Although each walk features a specialized topic of interest, we also stop to enjoy the discovery of a red-backed salamander or a bald eagle fly-by.

The last scheduled walk of the series is set for October 20<sup>th</sup>, at 9:30 a.m. Although this date is the third Thursday of the month, not the fourth, we are sticking with the series name. Interested participants will meet at the Neely Preserve parking lot, located at Old State and Broomfield Roads, at 9:30 a.m.

A downloadable map showing the Hall's Lake Natural Area and current and future trails, benches and signs is available on the website, [www.ChippewaWatershedConservancy.com](http://www.ChippewaWatershedConservancy.com)



### Neely Preserve Spruced Up

On July 12, 2011, a hard working crew met at the Neely Preserve for a major sprucing-up session. Tasks were assigned and everyone scattered to get it all done. Larry Schaftenaar, Bob Kohrman and Frank Hufnagel were busy installing a new bench and removing larger debris from the trails. Kathy Johns pushed a mower down much of the trail while, Doug Valek identified and staked out future tree identification points. Joan Loveland, Sister Marie Kopin and Stan Lilley worked on autumn olive removal.

Trail maintenance is a never ending need, and trail building also continues at the Neely Preserve and Hall's Lake Natural Area. Call the office at (989) 644-5045 if you have time to help.



## Heydenburgs Donate to Hiawatha Hills Preserve

On August 24, 2011, Carole Heydenburg, widow of the late Paul Heydenburg, and Robert Hydenburg, President of Heydenburg Builders, donated Lot 41 of Hiawatha Hills to the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy.

It is always exciting to receive a donation of land in the riparian corridor of the Chippewa River. This donation was even more special because it was the last remaining undeveloped lot in the Cedar Court cul-de-sac at the Hiawatha Hills subdivision, and its donation to the CWC constitutes the completion of an effort over many years to preserve a scenic stretch of the river through the residential neighborhood.

This donation adds another 542 feet to the permanently protected river corridor. In a stretch of slightly more than .6 mile of the river, the CWC has created three complementary preserves (Neyer, Hiawatha Hills and Meridian Road) that provide nearly half a mile of protected habitat on one side or the other of the river. The three preserves, small though they are, serve several important purposes. First, they guarantee a continued natural view from the houses on the opposite side of the river. Second, they protect a natural view from the river into each of the preserves. Third, they are a linked series of safe havens for migrating and resident wildlife along this stretch of the river. Fourth, they are places where the public, primarily the local residents, can enjoy a quiet natural space close to home.



We are grateful to Carole and Bob Heydenburg and to the other property donors for their generosity.

## Wysong and Fagan Gifts Add to Hiawatha Hills Preserve

On July 19, 2011, long-time friends and neighbors Lucille Wysong and Betsy Fagan penned their names to deeds gifting Lots 39 and 40 of Hiawatha Hills to the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy. Both lots had been purchased years ago on the opposite side of the river from their homes, primarily to preserve their views of the river.



### Hiawatha Hills Preserve



“We’ve both known for years about the CWC’s efforts to protect the river frontage in Cedar Court,” said Betsy Fagan. “We recently talked about it and decided now was the time for us to join the project.”

In the hospital and recovering from a recent injury, Lucille Wysong said, “This is too important to wait. I want to finish it now.” In an inspirational demonstration of determination, she signed her deed in the middle of moving to a different room at the hospital.

The two friends reflected on the changes that have come to the Chippewa River in the years since they moved to the Hiawatha Hills neighborhood. Wysong said, “My late husband, Richard and I were among the first to move here. We watched many of the neighborhood kids grow up and start families of their own. We always enjoyed the beauty of the river and the natural look from our home to the land on the other side. I’m glad to know that it will always be natural land over there.”

Fagan continues to enjoy canoeing and kayaking with family and friends in the river. “This is a precious resource that is worthy of being saved for others to enjoy,” she said. “It’s a good feeling to know that we’ve had a part in protecting it for the future. I know the CWC will be good stewards.



Since receiving grants from the Bay Area Community Foundation (\$12,000) and the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) (\$22,550) early in the year, the CWC has been busy on the details of the Chippewa River water trail project.

In an effort to help residents and visitors to understand the true extent of the watershed, some signs will be erected on secondary roads identifying entry into the Chippewa River Watershed. The design of these signs is consistent with that of similar signs that were erected in the Kawkawlin and Cedar River watersheds in an earlier project undertaken by the Little Forks Conservancy of Midland.

A hard copy map of the Chippewa River from Barryton to Midland, featuring canoe and kayak put in and take out points and amenities, some cultural and historic points of interest, known safety issues, and distance and time suggestions between points will be available soon. Signage will be installed on the upstream side of bridges to aid river travelers in determining locations and additional signage will be installed at eight locations promoting wise and safe use of the river.

The final piece of the project is the creation of an interactive Web-based map that will allow for the future addition of much more detail about features to be found along the river.



The CWC has been working with many partners on this project. The print ready version of the map was produced by the University of Michigan – Flint using data collected by the CWC and from meetings with the public and local businesses. Major collaborators and partners on the project include the Isabella County Community Development Department, Isabella County Parks and Recreation, Central Michigan University Writing Center, Charter Township of Union, and Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. We also appreciate the assistance of the Clare, Isabella and Midland County Road Commissions, Mt. Pleasant Parks and Recreation Department and Chippewa Nature Center. None of this work would have been possible without the funding provided by the Bay Area Community Foundation and Saginaw Bay WIN. Stay tuned, the hard copy map will be out very soon.

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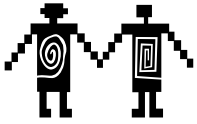
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### CWC Land Protection Successes

26 Easements- 3,148 acres  
 14 Preserves - 309 acres  
 Total - 3,457 acres

County	Acres
Clare	1,966
Gratiot	147
Isabella	442
Mecosta	391
Montcalm	511



## Contributors and Membership Renewals, May - August 2011

### Thank you for your support.

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### Thank You Volunteers

**Scott Bellinger and John Buckley** for photography of river feature points **Pat Block** for graphic arts assistance **Mike Brockman** for production of Heron Tracks **Marilyn Fosburg** for pictures at Marl Lake **Bob Kohrman** for stewardship at Hall's Lake Natural Area **Sister Marie Kopin** for leading a nature walk at Hall's Lake Natural Area and Sylvan Solace **Big L Lumber** for donating a culvert for Peterson Natural Area **Pat Lilley** for data input **Myles McNally** for web site design support **John Mitchell** for easement monitoring **Mike and Diane Morey** for stewardship at the Sylvan Solace Preserve **Cathy Murray** for stewardship at the Neyer Preserve **Lori Rogers, Larry & Judy Schaftenaar** for grant writing support **Larry & Judy Schaftenaar** for hosting Hall's Lake acquisition project planning sessions **Larry Schaftenaar** for Neely Preserve stewardship **Dave Shepherd, Tom Stewart and David Syckle II** for stewardship at the Stearns Preserve **Don & Karen Stearns and Dianne Wilson** for sign dedication support at Marl Lake **Rocky Symon** for stewardship at Peterson Natural Area **Eric Torgerson** for stewardship at Williams-Blackburn Preserve **Doug Valek** for leading nature walks at Hall's Lake Natural Area and Sylvan Solace Preserve

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



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

**CWC Wish List**

We can always use your help with these:

1<sup>st</sup> class stamps - Business-size envelopes - Gas cards - Newsletter print sponsorship  
 Call 989-644-5045 or email info@ChippewaWatershedConservancy.org to discuss.

**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

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