

Chippewa Watershed Conservancy
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(989) 644-5045



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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
- Williams property purchase fund appeal
- New membership appeal mailing list development
- Sylvan Solace Butterfly Garden maintenance
- Coldwater Preserve Steward
- 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
Barbara Allen
Donna Buckley: Sylvan Solace Monitor
Sue Ann Kopmeyer,
Don Nagler
Lori Rogers
Tom Stewart

Scientific Board

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John Grossa
Gilbert Starks
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Jim Hill
Jerry Jaloszynski
Ted Kjolhede
Kathy Ann Randall
Greg Schmidt
William Shirley
Paul Siers
Catherine Weber
Thomas Woiwode

Wish List

- 2003/4 Clare and Osceola County Plat Books (\$25 each)
 - 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. 1

We Owe Them More Than They Can Imagine

John Buckley and Ted Kjolhede were both there from the beginning. John was one of the few that sat around the campfire that first night as we hashed out how to protect more wildlife habitat in our community. It wasn't certain at first how that should happen. All we really knew was that everything we had tried through various organizations didn't come close to what any of us hoped for. But we quickly settled on bringing the land trust movement to our community.

One of the things we mulled over was who we should seek for the board. Few of us knew Ted. But we did know that he was well known in the community and we liked those letters to the editor he had been writing about the need for nature in our lives. Fortunately Ted was as enthusiastic about the cause as any of us.

If it weren't for John and Ted, and a few more, the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy would never have existed. We wouldn't have 14 conservation easements and 5 nature preserves totaling 2,835 acres. We wouldn't have more than 300 members working together to protect more habitat. We wouldn't have Stan Lilley as Executive Director. None of this would have ever happened.

Instead, many of the places we now protect would be meeting some other fate. The community would be different. It would have a little bit more pavement and a little bit less nature. And it would be a poorer place.

Most of all what John and Ted helped give this community is the chance for something different. And all it takes is for someone else to stand up and take their place on the board, their place working for a better world. That is how we honor their work, their sacrifice, by carrying on the cause.

Now, as John Buckley and Ted Kjolhede move on to the Board of Advisors, there is a place for someone else. Please consider the opportunity. Please ask yourself if this is your time to get more involved in the CWC. If it is, give me a call at 989 426 4002, and we can discuss what works for you. We have many volunteer opportunities. What we need is you.

John Mitchell

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Executive Director's Corner



Stan Lilley,
CWC Executive Director

It Was a Very Good Year

There is no doubt that the year 2005 went into the books as a very good one for the CWC. We completed six new conservation easements protecting an additional 167 acres of land. Thanks to Marv and Barb and Jeff Litwiller, Tom and Lori Owen, Garry and Carol Swetz, Gerald Carter, Bob and Dorothy Severson and Winifred Sponseller there are six more pieces of wildlife habitat, wetlands, fields and scenic open and wooded space protected forever. We are deeply thankful to these wonderful stewards of the land for their quiet dedication to preservation. We signed an option to purchase land for our sixth preserve and are making great progress toward raising the money needed. We made contact with many other supporters and landowners who are interested in protecting their property and we had opportunities to talk to a wide range of groups about the CWC. We had another successful spring banquet and increased our membership base. Thank you to everyone who helped to make it a great year. Now we've raised the bar a little higher and with your continued support we aim to do even better in 2006.

I want to take a moment to bid a heartfelt thank you to Katie Randall, who has done such a marvelous job producing our newsletter and maintaining our Web site as a volunteer for the past several years. Since well before I became active in the CWC Katie was hard at work behind the scenes, weaving raw articles, news and events into the fabric of *Heron Tracks* in a logical and coherent way to keep you up to date. She also devoted many hours to keeping the Web site fresh. For the past couple of years she has continued to support us from far away Montana. On behalf of the CWC, I thank her and wish her the best. Her editorial responsibilities have been assumed by Mike Brockman. I think you will agree that the transfer, which actually occurred with production of the previous issue of *Heron Tracks*, was virtually seamless.

Did you have a chance to get outside and enjoy the beauty of this mild early winter weather? I like to start in January to build my new bird list for the year. I was out in mid-January with two of my birding friends in Isabella County. After driving around to see the waterfowl at Coldwater and Isabella Lakes, we decided to stretch our legs and check out a swampy area and woodland buffer where we knew there was a Great Blue Heron rookery the previous spring. It was a gorgeous day, mid-30's, no wind and just a little overcast to dim the brightness of a couple of inches of recent snow covering the woods and the frozen surface of the swamp. The ice was just thick enough to support a careful walker, allowing us to venture out where travel is difficult in spring. The abandoned heron nests stood out starkly, brushed with a highlight of snow and unobscured by the heavy foliage of the nesting season. There was promise in the air. The promise of a return to this site later in the year by these blue-gray ghosts of swamps and rivers, typically solitary and silent during much of their lives, yet so noisy and communal when called to the urgent business of the continuation of life. There was hope too. Hope that a Great-horned Owl might be seen peeking over the rim of one of these nests, answering its own urgent call as one of our first nesters of the new year and not at all averse to making a temporary home of its own from the remnants left by the herons. There was evidence of life going on all through the swamp, from the snow rubbed off the top sides of downed trees by the bellies of passing deer to the countless tracks left by smaller mammals, raccoons, weasels and mice. There was the momentary interruption of the still as a surprising pair of over-wintering Red-headed Woodpeckers chased off a Pileated Woodpecker three times their size, noisily voicing objection to its passage through "their" territory. Ah, yes, it was a great day to be outside.....This is a parcel of land not yet protected by easement or preserve, holding much promise of solitude and sanctuary, yet barely half a mile north of busy M-20, west of Mount Pleasant. The landowners are aware of the CWC and our mission. And that's our first goal – to be sure they know about us, and to be there at decision time.



Donor List (October 20 -Jan 23, 2005) -Thank you

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Anonymous (7) | Stephen & Teresa Frey | Tom & Gisela Moffit |
| Norma Jean Bailey | Peter & Nancy Fries | Francis & Mary Molson |
| Richard & Nancy Beckwith | Daniel & Meredith Gall | Jean Murray |
| Scott Bellinger | Patricia Gillis | Don & Nancy Nagler |
| Don & Claudette Bosscawen | Katherine & Richard Godbold | Jack & Cora Neyer |
| Arlin Briley | Roger & C. Joanne Grabinski | Dixie Nier |
| William Bulger | Heather & Todd Graham | Bruce & Judy Pape |
| Roy & Alice Burlington | Bradley & Joyce Hall | Dawn Polanco |
| John & Karen Caldwell | Fred & Millie Hamlin | Rose Prasad |
| Mike & Sue Carey | Tim Hauck Dykstra | Nancy Priestap |
| Annette Clark | & Phyllis Heinze | Betty Ragan |
| Betty & Bob Clason | Jan Hewlett | Gordon Risbridger |
| Robert & Joan Clute | Gregory Hoff | & Amy Shindorf |
| Bob & Elaine Connell | Eric Kadler | Ken & Bonnie Schaeffer |
| Dan & Terri Cowie | Lew & Carol Keim | John Scheide |
| Matilda Crane | Ted & Virginia Kjolhede | Robert Severson |
| David & Diane Current | Sue & Gary Knight | Winifred Sponseller |
| John & Nancy Davis | Sue Ann Kopmeyer | Herman & Tina Theeke |
| Kimber & Judy DeWitt | Gary Kramer | Bill & Dottie Theunissen |
| Norman & Marilyn Dzingle | Michael R. Kruscke | Doug & Barbara Valek |
| Woody Eber | Robert & Pat Lichtman | Sally Van Cise |
| Jim & Carol Erickson | John & Priscilla Lorand | Kent & Kathy Warner |
| Hans & Dorothy Fetting | Joan Loveland | Robert Welsh |
| Bud & Mary Ann Fisher | Dave & Helen MacGregor | Dan & Millie Wujek |
| Marilyn & Gordon Fosburg | David & Elizabeth MacLeod | Basil & Theresa Zimmer |
| Keith & Mary Frame | Daniel & Sharon Milan | Marilyn Zorn |
| Mark Freed & Brooke Harrison | John & Diane Mitchell | |

Contributions in Memory and Honor

- Mary Ellen Blackburn in memory of the late George M. Blackburn
- Prisca & Alan Gamble in memory of Sylvester Drigo
- David & Debora Hines in honor of Rosemary Reid
- Vicki Lewis in memory of the late Forrest Lewis
- Marv, Barb & Jeff Litwiller memory of Evan & Shirley Litwiller
- John & Diane Mitchell in memory of the late Dr. Kenneth Magnell
- Dr. Mary C. & Dr. Peter Obuchowski in memory of Joyce Carter
- Rosemary Reid in memory of Melissa A. Hines
- Diane Tope in memory of Esther & Jack Brewster
- Catherine Weber Memory of Daniel Weber

Endowment Contributions

- Gerald & Georgianna Irvine
- John & Diane Mitchell

CWC Volunteers in Action - Thanks for the Time !

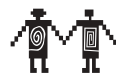
- Mary Frame** for bookkeeping and mail assistance
- Freda Southworth and Mt. Pleasant Staples** for donated envelopes for mailings
- Doug Valek** for vegetative surveys
- Katie Randall** for Web site management and editing and production of *Heron Tracks*
- Mike Brockman** for taking over Web site management and production of *Heron Tracks*
- Michael and Diane Morey** for stewardship at Sylvan Solace
- Pat Lilley and John Mitchell** for labeling, mailing newsletters and fund appeal
- John and Donna Buckley** for trail maintenance at Sylvan Solace
- Jacob Wilkes** for maintaining the Buckley's Mountainside Canoes tradition of can/bottle collection and Chippewa River cleanup
- Amy Shindorf and Chad Shelters** for help on the Banquet Committee

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

CWC Land

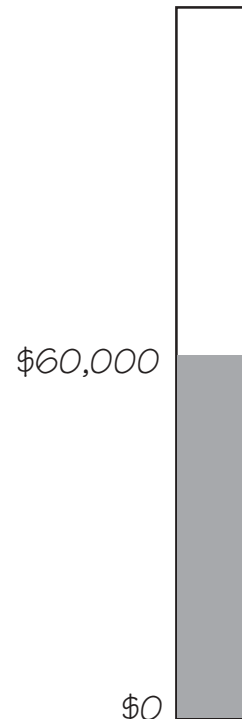
Protection Scorecard

14 Easements-	2,729 acres
5 Preserves -	106 acres
Total - 2,835 acres	
County	Acres
Clare	1,966
Gratiot	103
Isabella	251
Mecosta	60
Montcalm	455



Williams-Blackburn Memorial Preserve

Goal \$127,500



Thank you to the following contributors October 20 to January 23

Business Patron (\$5,000 and up)
Central Michigan Inns

Patron (over \$1,000)
Mary Ellen Blackburn
James and Elizabeth Dealing
Michael and Rhea Dow (\$10,000)

Benefactor (\$501 to \$1,000)
Jakob Wilkes

Sustaining (\$101 to \$500)
Anonymous
Al and Cindy Bryan
Veha Chamichian
Muriel Straight

Supporting (Up to \$100)
Janet Chiesa
-in Memory of Joe and Ann Bay
Mary Ann Crawford
Louis and Sue Ecker
Mary S. Hageman
David and Deborah Hines
Gary Kramer
Kenneth R. Magnell
David C. Sheperd
Lucille Wysong

Please send your contribution today; we need to raise \$127,500 by July 6, 2006

Yes! I want to invest in the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy's mission to protect open space and wildlife habitat by contributing to the Williams-Blackburn Memorial Preserve acquisition project.

Enclosed is my donation of: \$25 \$50 \$100 \$Other _____

Name/Address: _____

City/State, Zip: _____

Telephone: () _____ Email: _____

Acknowledgment in publications Please keep my donation anonymous

Please make check payable to Chippewa Watershed Conservancy, P.O. Box 896, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0896.
Contributions are tax deductible.

My gift is in memory of _____

I have property I would consider donating or selling for permanent protection.

Easement or Preserve?

All right, so you know the CWC has 14 conservation easements and 5 preserves protecting 2,835 acres of land. That seems pretty impressive, but are you clear about the difference?

Easement - A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust, or conservancy, which contains permanent restrictions on the use or development of land in order to protect clearly defined conservation values, such as wildlife habitat, scenic or open space, prime farmland or historical significance. It limits but does not necessarily prohibit all development. For example, there may be a provision for some future land splits to allow homesites for family members.

There may be tax benefits. Donation or sale of an easement at less than fair market value to a qualified conservancy may be treated as a charitable gift of the development rights, and may be deductible on the landowner's federal income tax return. There may also be estate tax benefits or property tax benefits based on the reduction in the value of the land as a result of the permanent restriction on future development.

A conservation easement "runs with the land." It is not eliminated by a change in ownership. It is filed with the Register of Deeds and its existence will show up any time a title company, lender or individual does a title search of the property. Along with this permanence comes a responsibility for the conservancy, the easement holder, to monitor the land to ensure the terms are being met, and to protect against any violations. This creates a burden on the conservancy to ensure the time and expense to conduct the monitoring and the funds required to defend the easement in any necessary court action are permanently available, but this is both our promise to the grantor and our legal responsibility as the grantee.

It is also important to know what a conservation easement does not do. It does not, by its nature, allow public access. The landowner still controls who does and does not have access to his land. It does not prevent the transfer of ownership. A landowner can sell or lease the land if he wishes, but the terms of the easement remain in effect. Finally, an easement does not restrict any property rights that don't negatively impact the conservation values of the easement. For example, a landowner can lease hunting rights or farming rights or otherwise continue to do whatever he wishes on the land, subject to the terms of the easement.

Preserve - A preserve is land that the conservancy owns. It may be purchased or it may be donated, but we are the actual owners of the land in our preserves. When land is transferred to us the conservancy pays associated transfer taxes and the property taxes due for the remainder of the year in which the transfer occurred. After that, due to the conservancy's status as a nonprofit conservation organization, the land is removed from the tax rolls. (It should be noted that the land must be held and used for conservation purposes in order to be removed from the tax rolls. If it is not being held for conservation purposes, e.g., if we receive a donation of land and intend to sell it with no use restrictions, it remains on the tax rolls).

Preserve lands are generally open to the public so long as public use does not conflict with the conservation purposes of the preserve. Of the five preserves currently owned by the CWC, only Sylvan Solace, our 78-acre parcel off West Pickard Road, near Littlefield Road, has been developed. This "development" consists of a small parking area and series of foot trails through the preserve. Some 300 yards south of the parking area is the Memorial Grove consisting of a pedestal holding plaques in memory of people and events as provided by special memorial donations. Details about the Memorial Grove and how to contribute have been described previously in *Heron Tracks*.

We may manage the preserves for the benefit of wildlife. At Sylvan Solace we created a butterfly garden with native plants to support caterpillars and adult butterflies. At both Sylvan Solace and the Coldwater Preserve we have installed nest boxes for bluebirds, Tree Swallows, House Wrens, Wood Ducks, and Screech-owls. Occasionally we have volunteer opportunities to eliminate invasive plant species. There has been no other development of our preserves to date.

If you would like more detailed information about what a conservation easement contains we can provide you with a copy of the "Michigan Model Easement," that serves as a template for any easement we create. To get a copy of the Michigan Model, or for answers to any questions you may have about easements or our preserves, call the office at (989) 644-5045, or email Stan Lilley at cbirdy1@earthlink.net.



Conservancy Awarded Norcross Grant

The CWC has received a technology grant of \$4,800 from the Norcross Wildlife Foundation to purchase desktop and laptop computers and software and an all-in-one fax/copier/scanner/printer.

The Norcross Wildlife Foundation of Wales, MA, has supported grants that have helped many nonprofit organizations purchase computers and computer-related equipment to further local conservation goals and programs.

It will be a major boost to our productivity because it allows us to replace seven-year old technology with state-of-the-art equipment. It also demonstrates on a regional basis, recognition of the accomplishments of our organization to date, and a belief in our potential to preserve additional open space and wildlife habitat for future generations. We are grateful to the Norcross Wildlife Foundation for their generous gift.

Sponseller Easement Completed

On December 27, Winifred Sponseller put pen to paper to complete the donation of a permanent conservation easement on a 13.3-acre parcel of wooded property in Isabella County's Union Township. The land includes over 500 feet of frontage along both sides of Johnson Creek. This easement was completed in memory of her parents, Alva (1883 – 1959) and Tressa (1885 – 1980) Smith, who were great lovers of nature. The north end of the parcel includes remnants of a domestic flower and rock garden that was well-known in the Mt. Pleasant area in the 1960's, and free-flowing natural springs. The center of the property contains a wetland hardwood swamp, while to the south the land rises and includes a natural northern hardwood forest consisting of American Beech, American Basswood, Eastern Hemlock, Red and White Oaks, and Black Cherry. We are very pleased to be able to include this parcel in the inventory of permanently protected land in Isabella County. We are hoping to work with other interested landowners to protect additional portions of Johnson Creek in the area.



Winnie Sponseller and Stan Lilley share the moment during the placement of a conservation easement sign.

Seversons Grant Permanent Conservation Easement

Robert F. Severson, Jr., and wife Dorothy signed their permanent conservation easement on December 16, 2005. By their generous donation they have ensured that the scenic and wildlife habitat values of their 40-acre property will be permanently preserved for future generations. This easement is located in Coldwater Township of Isabella County, just across Vernon Road from the north end of Lake Windoga. Bob reports that this parcel is known as a "Dakota 40," for its long and narrow (660' x 2,640') shape. This layout was done so that farmers in days of old would not have to turn their horse teams around so many times to plow the fields. Its plow-days long gone, this land now includes about 11 acres of organically managed apple trees in the center. The southern third of their property is a wetland/swamp and there is a forested wetland in the northern third.



Bob and Dorothy Severson look over the baseline documentation for their conservation easement



Wood Turtle (*Clemmys insculpta*)

The scientific name of this species means sculptured turtle, because its rough, brownish carapace appears to have been carved from wood.

- Carapace (Shell) length: about 6 to 9 1/2 inches
- The head and upper legs are mostly black or dark brown while the neck, lower legs and other soft parts are yellow or orange.
- Underside: Yellow, with black blotches along the outside surface
- Range: Naturally occurring in the Upper Peninsula and Northern Lower Peninsula. Scattered records from the Southern Lower Peninsula may be released specimens



Wood turtles occur in and near rivers and streams. They prefer sandy bottoms and avoid rocky sections with fast current. They may wander through adjacent swamps, woods and meadows, especially during summer, but are never far from moving water. They may live 40 years or more in a small range of just a few acres. They feed both in and out of the water on insects, worms, slugs, snails, algae, berries, carrion and similar items. Once widely common in suitable habitat, they have become uncommon to rare over much of their Michigan range. They are currently listed as a **Species of Special Concern** in the Michigan Natural Features Inventory. They are protected by wildlife regulations and may not be taken from the wild or possessed without a scientific collector's permit from the Department of Natural Resources. Several Wood Turtles were observed during the initial wildlife survey of the proposed Williams-Blackburn Memorial Preserve.

(Source: **Michigan Turtles and Lizards, A Field Guide and Pocket Reference**, James G. Harding and J. Alan Holman, Michigan State University Extension, 1997)

Williams-Blackburn Preserve Fundraising Tops \$60,000

If you have been in warmer climes of late or otherwise not up to date on our current effort to raise funds to buy land for the Williams-Blackburn Preserve, this should be very exciting news. Two substantial contributions, \$5,000 from Central Michigan Inns of Mt. Pleasant, MI, and \$10,000 from Michael and Rhea Dow of Charlevoix, have pushed our total raised over the \$60,000 mark. This is the 25-acre parcel of land along the Chippewa River east of Mount Pleasant where we intend to create our sixth preserve. The property includes nearly half a mile of heavily wooded river frontage north of the Soaring Eagle Casino and east of the airport. Plans include creation of footpaths through an otherwise undisturbed tract for the public to quietly enjoy nature. These two very generous contributions are a tremendous boost to the grassroots efforts of our membership. We still need about \$68,000 more to complete the acquisition. If you haven't contributed yet, or if you need to make additional contributions for tax purposes, this is a wonderful opportunity to preserve land for future generations in an area of the county undergoing tremendous growth. Your contributions are tax-deductible to the maximum extent of the law.

This tract will be known as the Williams-Blackburn Memorial Preserve, in memory of Forrest and Berniece Williams, the parents of the current landowners and of George M. Blackburn, a major CWC supporter.