

HERON TRACKS

The Official Newsletter of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy
Volume 23 Number 2 **Summer 2016**

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SPRING BANQUET

The 21st Annual Spring Banquet and Fundraiser on Thursday, April 28, 2016, was another huge success. More than 160 members and supporters gathered at Buck's Run to socialize, have a delicious meal and raise thousands of dollars for conservation.

Our guest speaker, Jane Keon, captured the audience's attention as she told the story of the first 16 years of the Pine River Citizens Superfund Task Force and the efforts to clean up the Pine River after years of industrial pollution. It was a story made even more special because it was told by an average person (though many of us would argue Jane

is far from "average") about a fight to clean up our own watershed. The story is a true testament to what a dedicated group of local people can accomplish by perseverance and hard work over a long period of time.

This year's Robert Ball Award winner was Mike LeValley, Environmental Educator for the Isabella Conservation District, for his many contributions to environmental and nature education and other volunteer work with the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy.

Charlie Walmsley entertained again this year on the keyboard during the pre-dinner social hour. Andi Hofmeister

led the entire audience in singing an original song she created about Bundy Hill based on many of the memories posted by visitors to our social media and at other events. Norm Yoder led a spirited live auction that included not one, but two Zulu Nayala Game Preserve Photo Safaris and an assortment of handmade baskets and gift baskets donated by the board of directors.

Congratulations to Mary Spence, winner of the raffle for a \$400 gift certificate at Motorless Motion, and to Betty Wright, winner of the 50/50 raffle.

Thank you to everyone who made this event such a success.



Executive Director's Corner

RANDOM NOTES

It's a Wrap

The Bundy Hill fundraising campaign is complete. Can you believe we raised nearly a quarter million dollars in seven months? Thank you so much to everyone who contributed. We had support from foundations, businesses, major donors, and many, many small contributions down to the \$2 level. We received cash, checks and online donations through the Network for Good and PayPal and even a Go Fund Me page. With help from a multitude of sources we have met our goal. Soon, Bundy Hill will be forever accessible by the public for recreation and nature education and provide a legacy of natural space.

Banquet Patrons Rock

Two years ago we started a "20 for \$200" banquet sponsorship campaign in honor of our 20th Annual Spring Banquet and 23 people stepped up to cover the cost of the banquet by contributing \$200 each. This year we again asked for supporters to contribute \$200 each as

banquet sponsors and again nearly all of the costs were covered by these generous patrons. Because of these generous extra donations, virtually every dollar raised at the banquet will go directly to support our conservation and stewardship efforts. Thanks to all of our 2016 banquet patrons.

Check Out Our Facebook Page

Did you know you don't have to sign up for Facebook to see our page? All you have to do is click on the "F" symbol at the top right of the web site home page and you'll be taken straight to the Facebook page. You may not be able to post comments unless you are a registered Facebook user, but you can still follow us and see what others are saying. Give it a try. Not everything we are doing appears in the Heron Tracks newsletter.

And Now Farewell

This will be my last newsletter as the executive director of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy. It has been my honor and privilege to hold this position



for nearly twelve years. I'm grateful to all who have helped me on this journey and proud of what we have accomplished together. I'm not leaving the area, I'm simply retiring and will be serving in a new role as a volunteer just as so many of you do. So this is not goodbye, but rather, as I have ended my e-news comments, "See You on the Trails."

7 1/2
Square miles
permanently protected
by the CWC

Info from the Intern



By the time you read this, I will be somewhere in the Manistee National Forest logging out a multi-use trail, fighting a wildfire or enforcing a natural resource law. I will be living in Baldwin, Michigan, working for the US Forest Service on the Manistee National Forest. However, there has been no greater step in my personal and professional development to get me to this point than my experience working for the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy.

I have had the privilege of receiving a well-rounded and diverse work experience during my year and a half at the Conservancy. I am thankful for having an exceptional leader in Stan Lilley to learn from. After gaining his trust, he has given me the autonomy to create preserve brochures and trail maps,

supervise volunteer work sessions, lead environmental interpretation hikes, and design, construct and maintain trails in our sublime nature preserves.

I've grown personally so much through my work here, culminating in an even deeper passion for the preservation of natural space. I am committed to pursuing a career where I can balance natural resource protection and sustainable environmental recreation. Although my time is over as a paid worker for the Conservancy, I will never forget what I have learned working for this incredible organization. I still plan on volunteering and attending events in the future. I hope to see some of you on our trails, perhaps even on one I constructed myself.



President's Statement

The Evolution of an ED

To tell the story of how the CWC has grown in stature over the past 13 years is to tell the story of the man who made it happen. Stan Lilley became the CWC's first part-time paid employee in 2003. There was at that time little business on a day to day basis. But there was an office to organize, files to establish, and, of course, land protection deals to do. I had been performing those functions, although to be honest there was little that could be called organized.

It was the CREP easements where Stan got his feet wet, literally. CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program) is federally funded and state administered. It was a new program and everyone was stumbling around trying to make it work. Stan had little to go on but found a sensible way forward that would meet conservation objectives while minimizing future monitoring and enforcement headaches. As a result of this program miles of riparian lands serve as a buffer to field runoff. Miles of streams run clear for his effort.

Stan came into his stride with the Hall's Lake Natural Area project. We had long sought the opportunity to bring permanent protection to the east end of Hall's Lake, but that opportunity did not materialize until after the death of John and Betty Kabana. Suddenly, an estate with five heirs needed to be settled. Stan brought all his skills to bear on a complex problem. Fortunately, we had a willing partner in the Kabana's son John; but the final protection of 160 acres involved everything from five-figure private donations and matching grants from several foundations, a trade land donation, smaller donations from

dozens of individuals, and even a garage sale by Hall's Lake residents. Stan prudently bit it off in chunks. Piece by piece he, along with an enthusiastic group of Hall's Lake partners, saved what might have been just one more Michigan Lake ringed with cottages. Today, the east half of Hall's Lake remains wild and free. Its varied habitat provides a home to wildlife ranging from warbler to bobcat. It took a lot of people to make it happen, but it would not have happened without Stan.

There have been many other deals. For Stan has doubled the protected acreage of the CWC and has increased owned preserves six-fold roughly from 100 to 600 acres. But a telling of this story must also dig into the inner workings of the CWC; the daily work that goes unseen. When Stan took over the job he worked out of my old house at Seldom Seen Conservation Easement. We soon moved the office to Stan's basement. Finally, in 2013, we moved into our present quarters in the Hersee House at 306 S. University along with the Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation. Stan promoted that move; a move that brought greatly increased visibility, awareness, and credibility throughout the Mt. Pleasant community.

Stan led the charge as the CWC achieved accredited status with the Land Trust Alliance in 2012. As one of the early land trusts achieving accreditation the CWC proved its mettle, but accreditation would not have happened without Stan. The CWC would not have matured, would not have grown in protected acreage, would not have the diverse program of outings, and would not be receiving the publicity and respect it now receives.

The crowning glory of Stan's tenure as CWC ED must be the permanent protection of 100 acres at Bundy Hill. Long protected by the family of the late Wakelin and Katy McNeel, Bundy is not only the highest point in Isabella County, it is a place apart. Visitors enjoy majestic views and a peace that comes only come from venturing away from the traffic and noise of everyday life. In less than 7 months from negotiating the deal, Stan led the campaign that raised

\$240,000. About half of the funds came from grants that Stan secured. Bundy Hill will forever stand as a monument to his efforts. Thousands will hike to the summit, listen to the whispers in the pines, refresh their souls, and leave better for the experience.

Stan has grown from a part-time employee to a widely respected naturalist, photographer, and full-time Executive Director of a nationally accredited land trust; a land trust that serves as a model of what the small organization, the small group of dedicated individuals, can do to make their community a better place. It takes donors and volunteers, it takes board members and outings leaders, and it takes the leadership of a person like Stan Lilley.

Stan, you gave us more than 12 years of your life. We will miss your steady hand, your steady head, your heart. We know that you are not going away; just evolving into a new role in an organization that owes so very much of its success, credibility, and opportunity to you. On behalf of the Board of Directors, the members, the community, and all the little live things - Thank You.

CWC LAND PROTECTION SUCCESS

County	Acres
Clare	2,494
Gratiot	149
Isabella	839
Mecosta	491
Montcalm	816
Midland	8

34 Easements	4,284 Acres
19 Preserves	511 Acres
1 Government Transfer	(2 Acres)
TOTAL	4,795 Acres

We've Done It!

We are excited to announce that in just seven months we have successfully raised the funds needed to purchase 100 acres encompassing Bundy Hill in western Isabella County, south of Lake Isabella. At 1,270 feet, Bundy Hill is the highest point in the county.

Bundy Hill has been owned by the Wakelin and Kathleen McNeel Family since the mid-1950's. Our aim has been to buy the land and create a preserve that will be permanently accessible for recreation and nature education.

At our fall fundraiser hosted by Dianne and Mike Morey in October 2015, we launched a campaign to raise \$240,000 to cover acquisition costs, create new trail signage and provide an endowment for stewardship. Little did we know at the time how popular this project would be.

We received matching challenge grants from Isabella Bank, The Carls Foundation, the Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation and the J. A. Woollam Foundation totaling \$100,000.00. Several local businesses and more than 170 individual donors contributed another \$143,000.00 to meet the challenges and then some.

We are especially pleased with how quickly the public got behind this project. It has been clear that Bundy Hill has touched the lives of many people from all walks of life. We look forward to inviting visitors in the very near future.

The purchase is expected to be complete before the end of June. It may take some time to get the new signage installed, but we plan to open the property to visitors as soon as the paperwork is complete.



“While I’ve only visited Bundy Hill once, its incredible natural beauty left me awe-struck.”

Jonathon Breithaupt

Educational and Nature Walks Offer New Experiences



Saginaw Chippewa Academy Students remove a tire from Audubon Woods



Reading the Land walk at Sylvan Solace



Morning walk at Sylvan Solace on National Trails Day



Audubon Woods National Trails Day walkers examine a frog



Mike takes a core sample to determine the age of the tree



Participants at the National Trails Day walk at Audubon Woods

Isabella Conservation District Environmental Educator and CWC volunteer Mike LeValley has led a series of walks on the preserves, beginning with a visit to Sylvan Solace on February 20th to talk about timber harvesting and how foresters use various tools to estimate the age and height of trees and how much timber is present on a tract of land.

On April 9th, he offered a walk-about through Sylvan Solace to discuss how past land uses may be determined by looking at clues. He pointed out that the type of remnant fencing (barbed wire vice square mesh) present may point to whether cattle, sheep or hogs

were raised; the presence of oak trees to provide acorns may even point further to hogs. The location and distribution of boulders and rocks (are they piled on the property edges or scattered throughout, suggesting whether farming may have occurred. The relative age, height and nature of trees (deciduous trees with multiple trunks suggest past logging and re-sprouting from the stumps) might show when or whether logging occurred.

On May 6th, he brought a group of students from Winn Elementary School to Audubon Woods to learn about how to estimate the numbers of trees, and even the number of leaves present on the 40-acre parcel.

On May 17th, he brought students from the Saginaw Chippewa Academy to Audubon for a similar lesson in estimating tree and leaf numbers and learning about the plants and animals found on the preserve. Thank you to the group for finding and removing a tire.

Saturday, June 4th found Mike again leading walks, this time in recognition of National Trails Day, first with a visit to Sylvan Solace in the morning, then a walk at Audubon Woods in the afternoon.

Watch the web site for details of future activities. We have a number of additional events planned throughout the summer.

By letting our children lead us to their own special places we can rediscover the joy and wonder of nature.

~ Richard Louv, "Last Child in the Woods"

What Stewardship Looks Like

We think the Land Stewardship Centre of Canada in Edmonton, Alberta has a very good definition of stewardship:

"In its broadest sense, stewardship is the recognition of our collective responsibility to retain the quality and abundance of our land, air, water and biodiversity, and to manage this natural capital in a way that conserves all of its values, be they environmental, economic, social or cultural." A Stewardship Roadmap for Canada, National Stewardship Conference, 2009

Stewardship of our preserves is an important and never ending responsibility.

It is not enough to merely hold the land. We must also care for it. It means building and maintaining trails in a way that opens access but does not create erosion or unduly disturb the conservation values of the land. It means combatting invasive, non-native species that threaten the natural landscape and stopping the arrival of new invasive species. And it means picking up trash, keeping signage in good condition and monitoring the preserves for encroachments, vandalism or inappropriate conditions.

We are looking for a volunteer stewardship coordinator to recruit other

volunteers to help with our stewardship requirements and to oversee projects. If you are interested in serving as a stewardship coordinator, or in volunteering on projects, go to our web site, click on "Get Involved," then, "Volunteer Opportunities," and download a volunteer form. We need your help.

So what does stewardship look like on the preserves? Here are examples of some of the stewardship projects our volunteers have recently helped us accomplish.



Joan Loveland pulling Dames Rocket at Williams-Blackburn Preserve



A happy crew poses with a Dames Rocket bouquet



New trail work by Jonathon Breithaupt



Coach Molly Pelowski (foreground) with some of the members of the CMU Women's Field Hockey Team working on autumn olive



The CMU Women's Field Hockey Team at Sylvan Solace



John Mitchell removing downed trees from the trail at Audubon Woods

As part of our mission to be good stewards of the land, the CWC is now sending out donation acknowledgements and newsletters via email. If you would like to receive information from the CWC electronically, please call the office at 989-772-5777 or email us at cwc@chippewawatershedconservancy.org

Thank You!

Volunteers

Preserve Stewardship

Jon Breithaupt, Cathy Murray, Larry & Judy Schaftenaar, Eric Torgersen, Mike LeValley, Joan Loveland, Ruth Chapman, Deb & James Simmons, John Mitchell, Central Michigan University Women's Field Hockey Team

Easement Monitoring

John Mitchell

Forestry, History, and National Trails Day Walks

Mike LeValley

Graphic Arts for Bundy Hill Signage

Pat Block

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Make Check To: Chippewa Watershed Conservancy

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Su-16



CWC Wishlist

We can always use your help with these items:

First Class stamps • Business-size envelopes • Gas cards • Newsletter print sponsorship
Call us at (989) 772-5777 or send an email to info@chippewawatershedconservancy.org to discuss ways you can help.