

HERON TRACKS

The Official Newsletter of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy
Volume 24 Number 2 Summer 2017

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(are awesome)



Katie's Korner

It is not often that I find myself surprised at the weather. As a bit of an earth science geek, I actually like weather happenings. There is a difference, however, between climate change and every day weather. Often, the challenge is to find the difference, and to understand how you can help.

June's weather event, which caused major flooding in the bay area watershed, is the type of event that signals a wake-up call to a changing climate. As much as we do not want change, a changeling earth thrusts it upon us. Our geologic history begs us to pay attention.

How to manage our risk and the risk to the wildlife whose habitat we protect?

Inundation took place on several preserves. Larger animals were able to move to higher ground, but the plant life they depend upon cannot move on a moment's notice. Smaller forms of life that crawl, whose purpose of pollination or nutrient provision provide sustenance to higher forms of life, were overwhelmed. Such is the circle of life. How quickly they must adapt before succumbing to change.

You can help by keeping us afloat, literally and figuratively. We work to provide the refugia wildlife need



Katie Randall, CWC Executive Director

in changing climes. We ask you to give of your time and any amount you can spare to help us acquire and manage the ever-increasing safety net needed to save a shrinking landscape. As a community, we share the gift of nature with one another. As the resource, nature shares with us.

President's Prose



John Mitchell, CWC Board President

There seems to be a pattern here. I wrote last winter of Edward Wilson's *Half Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life* and how it reinforced my desire to work toward renewable

energy and expanded natural habitats. Now, here I am in June reading his "The Social Conquest of Earth." Despite appearances I do read other authors. That aside, there is a message.

One of the key aspects of human evolution is our unusual status as a eusocial animal – our preoccupation with the group, often over the individual.

So what does that have to do with the CWC?

Thanks for asking. The CWC is a eusocial enterprise. Our easement and land donors, our financial supporters, our volunteers; all may think they do things to meet some internal need. But in reality all of us involved in the CWC are busily engaged in making life better for everyone in our community, our group. The CWC is a perfect example of the higher (eusocial)

order of our being.

Perhaps that is why it feels so good to be part of the CWC. It is a natural expression of the eusocial aspect of our human character. So give in. Get involved. Go on an outing. Volunteer for stewardship activities. And, as always, be the change in society you seek.

See you on the trails.



CWC SUMMER PROGRAMS

Chippewa River Water Festival

Sunday, July 9—Noon to 9 p.m. / Children's area 1 to 5 p.m.
Mill Pond Park—Mount Pleasant

Bring the kids for a whole day of educational activities, music, storytelling and more. Look for our table at the Children's Pavilion, ready with hands-on learning fun for families to enjoy. See you there!



“Float the Chip for the Chip”

Sunday, July 16—10:30 a.m. at Chippewa River Outfitters

Reserve your ride* for a 3-hour float trip down the Chippewa River, Winn Road put-in to Meridian Park take-out. Lunch at Deerfield Nature Park provided. Participants can bring snacks and drinks (no glass). A percentage of float fees go to the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy. If it rains, July 23 is reserved as an alternate. For fees and information, refer to www.chipoutfitters.com/schedule.html or call Chippewa River Outfitters at 989-772-5474.

*Your own ride? Shuttles are available at \$10 per boat. Extra fee for lunch. Spend the day with us on the river we all love. See you there!



“Hall's Lake Natural Area Mushroom Foray”

with Sister Marie Kopin

Thursday, July 20—9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Meet at the parking area off Old State Road

Find your fungi at Hall's Lake Natural Area with Sister Marie Kopin, certified mycologist and mushroom enthusiast. Program participants will learn the skills of identification and marvel at the incredible world of colorful, shapes-in-all-sizes fungus that awaits. The foray will wrap up with a discussion of finds. Cameras are encouraged.



“Moth Madness” A Moth Viewing Delight

Friday, July 28—9 to 10 p.m.

Sylvan Solace Preserve

Join nature educator Mike LeValley for a fantastic view of the nocturnal world of moths. Only at night (for the most part) can you witness moths nectaring and pollinating. Get a close-up look thanks to a little night magic, a white sheet, and light to attract the brightly colored insects.



“Sylvan Solace Mushroom Hunt”

Saturday, July 29—9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Sylvan Solace Preserve

Hone your skills finding these colorful denizens of the underfoot. These spore-bearing reproductive wizards persist in all types of environments without the assist of sunlight. They are the secret heroes of the forest, aiding in the accession of nutrients for growth. Wrap-up session includes further identification and discussion of all finds.



“Prairie Wildflower Walk”

Saturday, August 12—10 a.m., Peterson Natural Area

Meet at Chipp-A-Waters Park for carpooling no later than 9 a.m.

Visit one of the prairies of Michigan—and it's ours! Join us for an adventure in prairie-dise (sorry, I had to) and see what all the fuss is about. Bring cameras and binoculars—there's so much to see! Recommendation: carpool or follow the group from Chipp-A-Waters Park.



**For more information please see our website:
www.chippewawatershedconservancy.org.**

A Patch of Prairie

Native grasslands come in a variety of make-ups; so many, in fact, that the genetics of prairie vary according to where they exist over a certain amount of time. Wisconsin prairie differs from Ohio prairie, even though they are both remnants of tall-grass prairie systems originating from the heart of prairie country – the Dakotas. The Dakotas differ from each other, and depending upon which state you reside, and which side of those two states you inhabit, depends upon what type of prairie you see. Tall-grass prairie to the east utilizes more rainfall and sets much deeper root systems than short-grass prairie to the west – those rolling moonscapes of grassland that seem to have escaped housing or the plow. Short-grass prairie transitions to rockier ground and receives much less moisture. The transition area to high desert in the north – the leeward side of the Cascades – gets less rainfall. However, where short-grass prairie thrives, ranchers discover its benefits and prairie gobbling takes place quickly, providing cattle with much-needed grazing area. Further south, deserts rule due to lack of rainfall. Grasslands convert to sparsely vegetated clumps of nutrition fighting for survival, and suffer from over-grazing.



Burr Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*), Millenium Park (Chicago)

If you grow up in prairie country, you identify with the prairie type of your landscape

I, for instance, am a tall-grass, fen-loving prairie kind of gal, completely enamored with the ecosystems that make up Ohio-country prairie. Fens spring from pools bubbling up in limestone formations, feeding the sparse landscape in flat sheets. Prairie wildflowers hug the alkaline soils lain down by wind in places where the water skirts away. Spotted turtles greet the sun yet enjoy the colder waters of the spring-fed system. In farm country, the tall-grass prairie waves from lonely cemeteries in mid-Ohio, saved from the plow to lay our ancestors to rest. The bluffs of southeastern Ohio at the foot of the Appalachians feature an adaptation by the

same prairie of sunshine and open plains. It is the same, yet different prairie dependent upon the gene pool from whence it sprang, and its subsequent adaptation to its current hillside environment.

Michigan prairie features a multitude of prairie types

All adapted to where they are and what they receive nutritionally from above and below the surface. Both Michigan and Ohio share savannahs of grassland with a smattering of oak. Burr oak, so named due to its acorn looking very much as if it wears a bur cap inhabits these grasslands and does not share its space. The oak spreads itself out like a whirling dervish of the plains



Karner Blue Butterfly
(*Lycaeides melissa samuelis*)
USFWS; Phil Dephey

– arms flung wide receiving all the rain it can send down its very thick stems. Sand prairies distinguish themselves with sand-loving flora and the butterflies that love them, particularly the Karner Blue, which lays its eggs on lupine, in preference for the nutrition and protection lupine give the hungry larval young. Michigan breathes water, from its porous underbelly fed from a glacial era. The sand deposited by those glaciers and from a series of lakes occurring between glacial periods during warmer times created the well-watered state we live in now. The sandy lake plains remaining host the prairie types endemic to this state and the western edges of the Great Lakes. Prairie is among us. All different, yet sharing the same tenacious characteristic of adaptation: sunshine, a little water, and a place to set root.



Gallagher Fen State Nature Preserve
<http://naturepreserves.ohiodnr.gov/gallagherfen>

22nd Annual Spring Banquet



The 22nd Annual Spring Banquet was another successful round of live auction winners, newly gained silent auction prized possessions, a wonderful presentation by Kyle Bagnall of his trials and tribulations solo canoeing his way down the Chippewa River, and the big surprise of the evening (to her), our Bob Ball Award winner: Louise Hammer.

Louise does a fantastic job of organizing the office, training the new executive director, and making sure that it all comes together. If I can't find it, don't know it, or wouldn't know it if she didn't tell me, it would be a long day at the office. In fact, Louise did a great job of keeping the Banquet Committee organized. In no small



part is Louise responsible for the fun that everyone had at this year's event.

Thank you to everyone who did a great job organizing, contributing and creating an entertaining event!

Sue Ann Kopmeyer, Banquet Committee Chair
Kathy Johns, Silent Auction and Live-auctioned Trip
Ann Brockman, Silent Auction and Live Auction
Marilyn Fosburg, Silent Auction and Live Auction
Carey Pauquette, Live Auction
Jaime Griffiths, Donated tickets
Tim Odykirk, Gift Certificates/Silent Auction
John Mitchell, our Master of Ceremonies and President

Thank you to Kyle Bagnall, our speaker from the Chippewa Nature Center. From this event forward, we all live vicariously through you.

Thank you to our incredibly entertaining auctioneer, Norm Yoder, who made the Live Auction a spotlight event. If you were singled out by Norm during the auction, you know exactly what I mean.

And a huge thank-you to our Banquet Sponsors and Donors:

Anonymous
Ann Brockman
Larry Collins
Marilyn & Gordon Fosburg
John & Carol Grossa
Adonna Kennedy
Michael Libbee & Kristin Sheridan
Anne Messinger
Daniel & Sharon Milan
John & Jean Mitchell
Scott & Sharon Parks
Larry & Judy Schaftenaar
Muriel Straight
Diane Tope

Thank you to everyone who attended. We hope your time spent with us was wonderful, that your plates were full, and that you went home wishing you could come back again the next night!

SAVE THE DATE BUNDY HILL DEDICATION

August 19, 2017
Bundy Hill Preserve
Trail walks starting at 3:00 pm
Dinner at 6:00 pm
Dedication at 7:00 pm

WEEKLY WANDERINGS

With Dave DeGraaf

Wednesday, Remi and I traveled 20 miles northwest of Alma to hike in the 13-acre Sponseller Preserve, a new acquisition of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy, located off Deerfield Road, west of Wildwood Drive in Isabella County. The early afternoon weather was mostly sunny with a temperature of 82 degrees and a stiff south wind.

Leaving the car, we headed about 100 feet and crossed a footbridge over Johnson Creek. This narrow stream continues due north about 2 miles before it empties into the Chippewa River at Meridian Park. With no obvious trail to follow, I wandered through lush undergrowth sprinkled with thousands of dainty blue forget-me-not. Since the Germans are given credit for this flower's name, it's natural that there is a tale of two lovers walking along the Danube River. Seeing the bright blue blossoms, the man retrieved the flowers for the woman, but was swept away by the river as he pleaded with her not to forget him. Whether the story is true or not, it's certainly made the flower a lasting symbol of remembrance. Nearby, I stopped at a large patch of Mayapple and looked under several leaves before finding a blossom. Turning south, I came across colorful blossoms of pheasant's eye daffodil, beard-tongue, and Lunaria. In addition, some fresh dryad's saddle fungus caught my eye. Circling around to the east, I came upon Johnson Creek again where I paused to look and listen while Remi cooled off with a quick dip. Meanwhile, on the far bank, I spotted a green frog basking in the sunlight. Turning back toward the car, I noticed a snag that showed frequent foraging by woodpeckers. Next, I paused to look up at the closing tree canopy being swayed by the strong southerly wind.

Finally, we made it back to the car for a water break before heading home.

Dome of autumn
Yellow on red
Oaks and maples
Begin to shed
Bare branches
Backdrop of blue
Winter clouds
Showing through
Curtain closes
Springtime scene
Forest canopy
Gathering green



The Winifred A. Sponseller Preserve is located on the south side of East Deerfield Road between Wildwood Drive and South Meridian Road at Johnson Creek.

Grasslands and native flora sustain the pollinators, who in turn, sustain us

Nature consistently gives

Now it is our turn

Help us restore and keep those wild and special places that mean so much to the community of life

Donate

www.chippewawatershedconservancy.org



Thank You

Donations In Memory Of

Tim Brockman

by John & Jean Mitchell

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by Nancy Priestap & Kirk Sponseller,
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Thank You Volunteers

Thank you . . . to our land stewardship volunteers, whose boundless energy (or it would seem) makes for habitat renewal and growth. You allow natives to flourish, and safe-keep our preserves so that others may share in them. You are the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy.

Cathy Murray
Eric Torgersen
Daniel Patterson
Deb and James Simmons
Mike LeValley
Malcolm Fox
Dave Jaber
Dick and Diana Moreau
David DeGraaf
Larry and Judy Schaftenaar
Joan Loveland
Anne Messinger
Misty Davis
Cheryl Meyer
Maddie Spooner
Stan Lilley
John Mitchell



Hiawatha Hills Trails Maintenance April 2017



Williams-Blackburn Preserve
Dame's Rocket Pull, June 2017

CWC PROTECTED LAND

County	Acres
Clare	2,494
Gratiot	149
Isabella	939
Mecosta	491
Montcalm	816
Midland	8
35 Easements	4,347 Acres
22 Preserves	626 Acres
1 Government Transfer	(2 Acres)
TOTAL	4,973 Acres

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CWC Wishlist We can always use your help. Call us at (989) 772-5777 or email katie@chippewawatershedconservancy.org to discuss ways you can help.