

HERON TRACKS

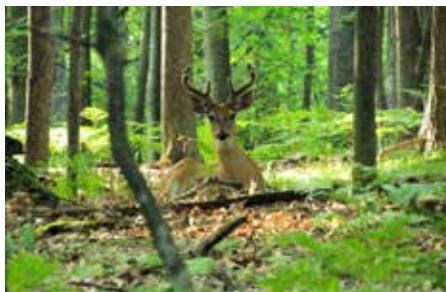
The Official Newsletter of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy
Volume 22 Number 3 Fall 2015



BUNDY HILL -- SAVING OUR SCENIC, HISTORIC AND RECREATIONAL HERITAGE FOR THE FUTURE

On the day CWC executive director Stan Lilley first visited Bundy Hill, there were tendrils of vapor rising off the warming grasses and shrubs. The still air carried virtually no sounds save the laughter of a distant pileated woodpecker and the repetitive, slow drone of red-eyed vireos calling, "see me, here I am, over here."

"It was one of those blue sky days," said Lilley, "when I can't get enough of being outdoors. I headed up the ridgeline pointing to the top of the hill, encountering not one, but a pair of bedded bucks in velvet, a fresh northern pearly-eye butterfly, found the 20-ton boulder near the top and immediately fell in love with the surroundings."



The Chippewa Watershed Conservancy has had on-going discussions with the McNeel Family for many years about someday ensuring that the land is permanently protected as natural space, with public access for recreation and education. Now, we have the opportunity to purchase a 100-acre parcel of land that encompasses the hill.

Bundy Hill is an iconic geologic feature with significant scenic, historic, cultural, recreational and educational importance both to local residents and visitors. If you have lived in Isabella

County longer than a couple of weeks, chances you have heard of Bundy Hill, even if you haven't visited. It is the highest point in the county. At nearly 1,300 feet, it is a glacial moraine remnant, as can be seen by the presence of several large boulders on its slopes, including one near the summit that is over 40 feet in circumference and is estimated to weigh more than twenty tons.



Here are some of the features that are so special about the property:

Scenic

The summit offers sweeping views of Isabella County, though tree growth means the view is governed by the amount of seasonal leaf-out. Walking up the ridge line from the beginning of the parcel, gorgeous views beneath the forest canopy include looks downhill and in places, across from ridge to ridge.

Historic/Cultural

The summit of Bundy Hill is marked by a U. S. Coast & Geodetic Survey marker dated 1932, embedded in concrete. This parcel of land has seen multiple uses over the years, some not so environmentally friendly, but it has shown a

remarkable resilience. Once part of the holdings of lumber barons Edmund G. Hall and John S. Weidman in the early 1900's, it and much of the forest in the county was logged heavily. Some of the logging was actually accomplished by "Old Settlers", the first black residents of the area, who came from Canada via the Underground Railroad.

Since being held by the current owners, the McNeel family, who acquired it in 1955, it has been more selectively logged and thinned and planted with seedlings. It now has many fine mature oak and maple trees as well as scattered clumps of mature red and white pine.



Aerial photography shows the presence of four openings from one to two acres in size on the flat ground before the terrain begins to rise sharply. These are old oil exploration pads. Three of those were oil wells drilled in the early 1980's and plugged between 1983 and

(continued inside)



Executive Director's Corner

RANDOM NOTES

Protecting a Landmark

It isn't often that we have an opportunity to protect a true historic and cultural landmark, but we have that chance now, thanks to the children of the late Wakelin and Kathleen (Katy) McNeel. The landmark I am speaking about is Bundy Hill. The highest geologic point in Isabella County, Bundy Hill is familiar to everyone. I have already heard stories about Bundy Hill that run the gamut, from people who remember nature walks and tree planting excursions there with Wakelin, to downhill skiing and tobogganing, to Quaker Sunday meetings there, to ownership of the land by early 20th Century lumber barons Edmund G. Hall and John S. Weidman and by the St. Mary's Falls Ship Canal Company. I've heard about land ownership and logging activities by members of the Old (Black) Settlers of the Remus area. I've heard about sanctioned, organized activities and unsanctioned party times. It seems

everyone has a story about Bundy Hill. As we kick off our fundraising campaign, we will be asking people to share their memories of Bundy Hill on our social media, so that we can share them with all of you. You can expect to be hearing a lot about Bundy Hill in the coming months, beginning with a more detailed story in this newsletter.

Our goal is to raise \$240,000 to buy Bundy Hill and the surrounding 100 acres. We'll use these funds to purchase the land, add new trail signage, support closing and fundraising costs, and provide for stewardship and endowment funds to ensure that we can properly maintain and monitor it now and forever.

*Can you imagine it?
Bundy Hill permanently
protected and publically
accessible forever.*

What will the acquisition of Bundy Hill mean to you? It means that this iconic



piece of Isabella County's landscape will be forever protected as natural space, and open to the public for recreation and scenic enjoyment. We'll hold events there, nature walks, natural science education activities like Wakelin McNeel did 40 years ago. In addition to our organized outings, you will be able to visit on your own whenever you want. But first, we have to raise the necessary funds.

Read on in this newsletter about Bundy Hill, and please, please, help us make this dream a reality with your tax-deductible contribution. Tell everyone you know about the project. Every dollar counts. This is a goal that matters to us all.

Info from the Intern



Jon Breithaupt, Intern

Federal Wilderness and CWC Preserves: A Comparison

I was fortunate enough to spend this summer on North Manitou Island working as a wilderness ranger intern for the National Park Service. In April 2014, roughly half of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, including North Manitou Island, was designated Wilderness by Congress. While my experience there was captivating, I couldn't help but ponder the similarities between federally designated wilderness and CWC nature preserves.

Federal Wilderness, per the Wilderness Act of 1964, is "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man." In order for an area to become designated Wilderness, Congress must pass a unique piece of legislation. Further, to qualify as Wilderness, these tracts of land must possess

incredible opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, have minimal human imprint, and typically must encompass 5,000 acres or more. Additionally, all motorized and mechanized activities are prohibited.

CWC nature preserves, similarly, allow for passive and primitive recreation (i.e. hiking, fishing, birding). Like Wilderness, motorized and mechanized transport is also prohibited. Our preserves offer excellent opportunities for solitude, and the works of man are generally undistinguishable from the natural landscape.

While the size and scope of these two types of protected areas may differ, their purpose is strikingly similar. Aside from providing opportunities for primitive recreation, CWC preserves and Wilderness both protect clean air and water, preserve significant wildlife habitat, and enhance the quality of life of all nearby organisms. Land protection for the purpose of preservation of natural resources and passive recreation is a noble cause indeed, no matter the scale.

President's Statement



As Long as It Shall Stand

We sat together and yet alone in our thoughts; the wind in the pines the only sound.

How many times had she stood there?

What had it meant to her?

The sparkle in her eyes danced across the hilltop.

The joy that was her voice echoed through the forest.

A toast, memories shared, and then it was time to go.

But it felt as if there was some unfinished business.

We slowly picked our way back down Bundy Hill.

Said our last goodbye to Katy McNeel.

And knew that if we got the chance the CWC had to make it happen.

Make What Happen?

Buy and Protect Forever this hill called Bundy.

It isn't just a hill.

It is an institution in this community-- a place where generations have gone to play.

They skied, or hiked, or picked berries or mushrooms.

Maybe they wanted to say they had been there.

Or maybe they just went to be away.

It is, at least for some, the Mount of Mount Pleasant.

The highest place in Isabella County; it feels a place apart.

It is a place apart.

We stand before you grateful that the McNeel family has entrusted us with its care.

We stand before you eager to begin the challenge of raising the funds needed to make this a reality.

And when the funds are raised we will stand again on its summit and proclaim:

As long as Bundy Hill shall stand - it will be protected.

John Mitchell, President, CWC

(BUNDY HILL, CONTINUED)

1990. The fourth was a dry hole drilled in 1988 and plugged in 1989. These openings now provide grassy fields and forest edge habitat for wildlife.

Many locals tell stories about their childhood experiences at Bundy Hill. These range from hiking the property, to sneaking out to party there while in high school, to skiing and tobogganing in winter. Members of the local Quaker community recall Sunday meetings and tree planting there. Others remember participating in natural science field trips and tree planting with the late Wakelin McNeel, Jr., a Central Michigan University professor who was tragically killed in a bicycling accident.

Recreational/Educational.

A gated two-track begins near the NE corner of the parcel, at River Road. After passing through the largest of the downslope openings, the two-track peters out, but the McNeel family has maintained a footpath for many years along the ridgeline to the summit of Bundy Hill. There is old trail signage and there are wooden signs in memory of Wakelin and Kathleen McNeel, parents of the surviving siblings. Public access to



the property, with permission from the family has been available, with a telephone number to call, but most locals did not realize it was accessible.

The CWC plans to upgrade the footpath to the summit and replace the signage. This property is ideal for future educational events and nature walks like the ones the late Wakelin McNeel, Jr. conducted there. The CWC plans to schedule many such activities in the future. The footpath will be open to the public for use as well.

Speaking for the McNeel Family, Wakelin McNeel III said, "We all have our own special memories of this property, and we know that our parents would be immensely pleased to know that it will

always be protected by the CWC for public access, recreation and learning."

We are seeking to raise a total of \$240,000 to acquire the 100-acre parcel, to include administrative and closing costs, signage and stewardship endowment to ensure that it can be properly maintained and monitored in perpetuity. Look for details about how you can contribute to this project on the CWC web site and other social media. We have already asked several foundations to partner with us to help, but this is going to be largely a local effort. This is an important parcel of land to all of us for many reasons. It is up to us all to ensure that it is permanently accessible to the public.

*"We can do this.
We owe it to our
history and to
future
generations."*

Summertime on the Preserves

It's been a busy summer here at the CWC and we were delighted to have so many wonderful events on our preserves. Here's just a brief sample of some of the activities. Please feel free to visit our website for more pictures, descriptions and events, www.chippewawatershedconservancy.org

PHOTO CONTESTS

Congratulations to Karen Green and Cathy Murray, winners of our summer photo contests. We held two contests this year, one at Audubon Woods and one at the Peterson Natural Area. Pictures were posted on Facebook and favorites were voted. We have featured Karen's Peterson Natural Area winning picture on the cover of this newsletter, and Cathy's Audubon Woods winner was showcased on the cover of our Summer Newsletter. Here are some honorable mentions:



Photo by Mike LeValley



Photo by Karen Green



Photo by Cathy Murray



Photo by Ralph Crew



Photo by Cathy Murray



Photo by Stan Lilley

PHOTO SCAVENGER HUNT

Searching for flora and fauna along the trails at Hall's Lake Natural Area, and documenting finds by pictures and notes, was the theme of this scavenger hunt mid summer. Trekkers were greeted by experts along the path, and everyone went home with a prize for participation.



Preserve Stewardship

A NEW FEATURE AT THE PETERSON NATURAL AREA

We have been fortunate to be the recipients of a lot of volunteer help from student groups this year. Most recently, on September 19th, a group of students from Ferris State University offered their Service and Learning Day time to help us to repurpose the last remaining building on the Peterson Natural Area. The building has been transformed from a small pole building/barn into a covered, concrete floored pavilion that will make an ideal spot for small group meetings or picnics, with a view south of the rolling hills and wet meadows. Thanks to the generosity of these students and our neighbors and long-time preserve stewards, Rocky and Yvonne Symon, Dillon Carey and John Hazlett, nearly a full week worth of equivalent staff time accomplished the transformation in one Saturday.



CWC BOARD IN ACTION

CWC executive director Stan Lilley led several members of the CWC Board of Directors on a field trip to the Quigley Creek Natural Area, where they met to evaluate future forest management options.



Don't miss out on any of our upcoming events! Please visit our website for future activities, such as our Birds, Branches and Brunch coming up in October.

A Visit to the Stearns Preserve

David DeGraaf, Guest Columnist

A short distance from the Fred Meijer Heartland (Rail) Trail in Riverdale, lies the 14-acre Stearns Preserve. The initial one-acre area is mainly open grassland with a few small blue spruce and red oak trees scattered about. Invasive autumn olive shrubs were removed and treated with herbicide. Mixed in with the grasses are goldenrod, aster, and thistle. I followed a mowed path due east to the edge of the Pine River where I saw a mix of small trees including: mulberry, American elm and box elder as well as a mix of wildflowers including: Joe-Pye weed, cranesbill and Jewelweed. I came across a wooden sign marking an access point for the Pine River Canoe Trail that begins north of here at Lumber Jack Park and



ends east of here at Pine River Park in Alma. Following the riverbank east, I hiked through a small wedge-shaped wooded area of mainly silver and sugar maple trees with occasional Virginia creeper and wild grape vines snaking up their trunks. Also, I spotted a few of the invasive banded wood snails crawling on plants.

The other 13 acres of the preserve are located east across the river, so I got on the rail trail and hiked across a bridge. Immediately north of the rail trail, I found a spot to descend the steep railroad berm and wandered around on a mud flat transected by small rivulets where mature sugar and silver maples as well as American elm were spaced out with a few Honeysuckle in the

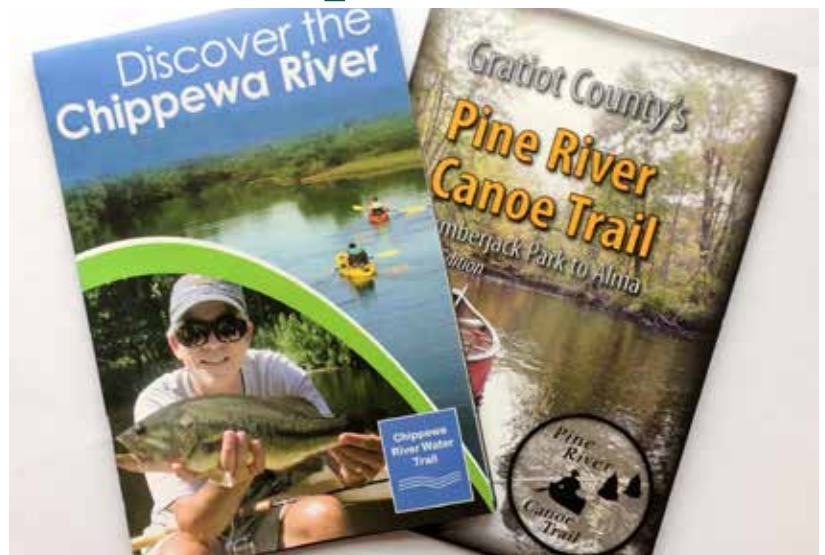


understory. Tracks in the mud indicated whitetail deer activity while a large fresh hole in a snag indicated recent pileated woodpecker activity. Further east was a dense cedar swamp dominated by white cedar trees. In addition, there were a few huge tamaracks, some tag alder, a few dead white birch and several large, dead standing green ash trees. A variety of ferns and mosses were seen on the ground.

I remained on the rail trail while carefully scanning the preserve land on the south side. As with the north side, it was densely wooded with cedars, birch and aspen on the east end and large maples and dead green ash closer to the river. The land closer to the river was slightly higher and drier than the mud flats north of the rail trail. Next to the bridge, I walked on a primitive footpath along the riverbank where I spotted mature maples as well as tag alders. This was a nice day to be on the preserve. Thanks to the Stearns Family for making its preservation possible.

River Maps Remain Popular

With a grant from the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, we have just ordered a third printing of our "Discover the Chippewa River" map, and grants from the Midland Area Community Foundation and Gratiot County Community Foundation are funding a new Pine River Canoe Trail map, a joint effort of the Friends of the Pine River. The new version of this map will include an update of the section from Lumberjack Park to Alma, and an addition on the other side of the section from Alma to downtown Midland. We will have copies of both maps at the CWC office.



Thank You!

Volunteers

Preserve Stewardship

Dave DeGraaf, Mike and Dianne Morey, Rocky & Yvonne Simon, Dylan Carey, John Hazlett, Larry Schaafteaar, Jake Pollock

Easement and Preserve Monitoring

John Mitchell
Richard & Diana Moreau
Judy & Larry Schaafteaar

Hall's Lake Photo Scavenger Hunt

Larry & Judy Schaafteaar, Doug Valek, Kathy Johns, Adonna Kennedy, Kristin Sheridan, Cil Lorand

Deer Exclosure Construction

Doug Valek, James Simmons, Larry Schaafteaar, Joan Loveland, Kathy Johns, Adonna Kennedy, and Frank Hufnagel

Peterson Natural Area

FSU Student Volunteers: Rebekah Betts, Stephanie Neuman, Rachel Mitchell, Desiree Miller, Alex Costa, Amber Hubbard, and Charlie Malone

Strategic Planning

Amy McGinnis, Kevin Love, Dyke Heinze, Tim Odykirk

Donors

Donations in Honor of

Hud Keenan by Larry Collins

Donations in Memory of

Christopher Ehren Hay Sandara by Stephen and Tammy Holder, Mary Ann George, Doug & Barbara Valek, Adonna Kennedy, Martha Neilsen

New Donors

Sally Goodrow
James & Debra Simmons

Board of Directors

John Mitchell, *President*
Sue Ann Kopmeyer, *Vice President*
Marilyn Fosburg, *Secretary*
Keith Frame, *Treasurer*
Marnie Basney
Jaime Griffis
Dyke Heinze
Ken Hofmeister
Kathy Johns
Tim Odykirk
Carey Pauquette
Steve Pung

Business Sponsors & Partners

Platinum

Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe
Tri-county Electric Cooperative

Patron

Dayco Products
American Mitsuba
My 104.3/WMMI Radio

Benefactor

Avalon & Tahoe Manufacturing, Inc.
Garr Tool Company
Remus Tavern
Summit Petroleum
Trendwell Energy Corporation

Supporter

Coyne Oil Corporation
Isabella Bank
Krapohl Ford Lincoln
Mt. Pleasant Agency, Inc.

Partners

Broadway Barber Shop
Buckley's Mountainside Canoes
Chippewa River Outfitters
Home Depot of Mt. Pleasant
Max & Emily's
Motorless Motion
Stein & Higgs PLLC
The Pit Stop Quick Lube

Thank You to Our Foundation and Other Funding Supporters

Herbert H. & Grace A. Dow Foundation
Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation Policy
Land Trust Alliance
Midland Area Community Foundation
Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation
Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network

CWC PROTECTED LAND

County	Acres
Clare	1,966
Gratiot	149
Isabella	839
Mecosta	491
Montcalm	816
Midland	8

32 Easements	3,756 Acres
19 Preserves	511 Acres
1 Government Transfer	(2 Acres)
TOTAL	4,269 Acres

6 2/3

Square miles
permanently protected
by the CWC

72%
of Adults Use Facebook
Have you visited our Facebook page?

Board of Advisors

Scott Bellinger
Ann Brockman
Michael Brockman
John Buckley
Donna Buckley
Norm Dzingle
Jerry Jalszynski
Mike LeValley
Cathy Murray
Don Nagler
Lori Rogers
Paul Siers

Scientific Board

John Grossa
Richard Moreau
Gilbert Starks
Doug Valek

Staff

Stan Lilley, *Executive Director*
Louise Hammer, *Administrative Program Assistant*
Jonathan Breithaupt, *Intern*



Presorted Standard
US Postage Paid
Mt. Pleasant, MI
48859
Permit No. 93

PO Box 896
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0896
(989) 772-5777
www.chippewawatershedconservancy.org



YES!
I want to support the
Chippewa Watershed
Conservancy.

Protecting Central Michigan's
Valuable Natural Resources

Here is my tax deductible contribution to help sustain operations:

- \$25 (Regular) \$50 (Supporter) \$100 (Defender) \$250 (Guardian)
- \$500 (Sustainer) \$1,000 (Benefactor) Other \$ _____
- I wish to remain anonymous
- I wish to receive the newsletter electronically
- Please send my acknowledgement by email

Member Names _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

- Check Enclosed Bill My Card Visa Mastercard

Card Number _____ Exp. _____ CVV# _____

Name on Card _____

Make Check To: Chippewa Watershed Conservancy

Mail Check To: PO Box 896
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0896

Fa-15



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.