

HERON TRACKS

CWC | CHIPPEWA
WATERSHED
CONSERVANCY



The Official Newsletter of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy
Volume 26 Number 1 Winter 2019



President's Statement



Boy, it sure feels like winter!

The calendar has winter officially starting at the Winter Solstice on December 21 and going through March 19. Board member Mike LeValley recently

Steve Pung, Board President

led a guided Winter Solstice hike for 35 people at our 78 acre Sylvan Solace Preserve on December 21. With seasonal lag, the coldest time of the year usually follows the Solstice by a few weeks. January is traditionally the coldest month in Michigan when the average temperature overnight is 17.8 degrees. On January 1st, approximately 17 people woke up early and braved the cold to greet the new year for a First Hike at Bundy Hill led by Mike LeValley. Many more upcoming activities are planned for our preserves. Be sure to watch our newsletters or follow us online to see the many planned guided hikes that are scheduled throughout the year. We have many exciting events coming in 2019.

Our Executive Director Jon Breithaupt, along with the board of directors, has been actively engaged in working on fulfilling our mission of protecting and restoring Central Michigan's land, water, and wildlife resources to improve the quality of life for all. The CWC recently

added additional land to the Messinger Conservation Easement and as we move forward into this new year, we are excited about the potential acquisition of a couple of new preserves. We will share more on these as they develop. Also, look for new way-finding highway signs for several of our existing preserves. In 2019, we will once again be hosting stewardship work days at our preserves on the third Saturday of each month beginning April 20th.

While the weather has been very cold in recent days, winter can also be very pretty providing opportunities for hiking, snowshoeing and enjoying the outdoors. If you're someone looking forward to spring, you can again join us on March 23 for a guided hike at Sylvan Solace where we will be looking for early signs of spring. Speaking of spring, be sure to mark your calendars for our 2019 Annual Spring Banquet on April 18.

Until then, remember we live in the Mitten State, so be sure to take your mittens, hat, and scarf and dress warmly when you visit one of our preserves this winter. The winter scenery is beautiful and it can be enjoyable when you dress for the weather. In the words of John Burroughs, *"He who marvels at the beauty of the world in summer will find equal cause for wonder and admiration in winter.... in winter the stars seem to have rekindled their fires, the moon achieves a fuller triumph, and the heavens wear a look of a more exalted simplicity."*

A Conservation Conversation



Jon Breithaupt, Executive Director

When I look back at 2018, my first full year at the helm of Chippewa Watershed Conservancy, it is incredible to ponder all of this organization's accomplishments. We finalized two conservation easements with two different landowners who have both participated in land protection projects with us in the past. We built and maintained many miles of trail for people to enjoy. We offered more informal environmental education outings than any other year since our inception. We developed two new educational programs for preschoolers and at-risk youth -- two populations who were not adequately served by local institutions in our service area. All of this work has elevated our presence in the Central Michigan region. I am determined to make Chippewa Watershed Conservancy a pillar in our community, not just a nicety. At the heart of all this work is you. Here's to an even better 2019.

FIRST EVER VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD PRESENTED



On Thursday, December 6th, 2018, we honored all our hardworking volunteers at the first annual volunteer appreciation party. CWC preserve and easement monitors, trail builders, preserve stewards, graphic designers,

board members, educators and other volunteers gathered to celebrate the innumerable accomplishments they were involved in over the course of the year. The event, which took place in the Veterans Memorial Library Annex Room, featured food and drinks, a presentation highlighting volunteer accomplishments in 2018, and conversations on the group's many achievements.

"Volunteers in a large or medium size organizations are valuable. Volunteers in a small organization are essential," said Jon Breithaupt, CWC Executive Director. "We're delighted to be able to show our gratitude to our many volunteers. These hardworking folks take on many different roles, roles that are commonly fulfilled by staff members in larger organizations."

For the first time, we presented a volunteer of the year award. While there were many deserving candidates, Paul

Low of Mt. Pleasant stood out from the pack. Paul utilized his carpentry skills in helping us construct three informational kiosks at trailheads, several ecological restoration signs and never missed a trail building day at Bundy Hill Preserve. To further challenge himself, Paul would ride his bicycle from his residence in Deerfield Township to Bundy Hill each week. Many weeks, he would sandwich three hours of physically-demanding trail work between 25 miles of cycling. He led the effort to install three benches at Bundy Hill, including one which he carried to the tallest point in Isabella County on his own. Paul also contributed time with routine landscape maintenance at our trailheads. We're very grateful for his support and commitment to our mission. Congratulations Paul!

LAND

CONSERVED

In rural Deerfield Township, Isabella County, Anne Messinger took leadership of protecting the land where she resides. Anne reached out to the Conservancy in spring 2018 to see if several parcels adjacent to her 18 acres protected under a conservation easement with the CWC would make a good addition. When board member Stan Lilley and Executive Director Jon Breithaupt toured the 14 acres, they knew it made sense for inclusion into the Messinger Conservation Easement.

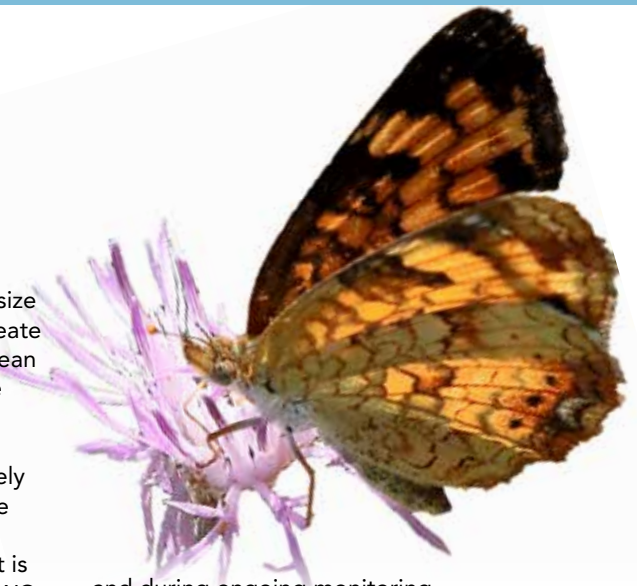
"When we explored the hardwood swampland, open meadow full of butterflies, and the trails Anne was maintaining on her recently purchased property, we knew it made sense to amend her current conservation easement and include these four parcels which totaled just over 14 acres," said Breithaupt. "We value protecting lands adjacent or nearby other conservation easements, parklands

or nature preserves. Increasing the size of protected areas is essential to create viable wildlife corridors, preserve clean air and drinking water, and enhance scenic views."

Conservation easements are a cost-effective tool to protect privately owned natural space. They conserve natural resources by limiting certain development rights. Each easement is carefully crafted so goals of both CWC and the landowner may be achieved. Landowners can negotiate the terms of each conservation easement to fulfil their short and long term desires. "Working with the CWC to protect the conservation value of my land has been exceedingly gratifying and has required small effort from me. Working with Stan in 2015 to establish the easement and Jon in 2018 to extend it couldn't have been easier or more rewarding. I truly felt informed, understood and supported through each process,

and during ongoing monitoring. Being treated so personally is a great advantage of working with the CWC. It is a local organization whose staff, board and members treat each other like friends!" proclaimed Anne.

Anne continued, "My 32-acre parcel is just a very small part of the world, but I'm deeply grateful to CWC for providing me the choice of protecting this little tract. My beloved fields, wetlands and forest will still be beautiful and natural, long after I'm gone."



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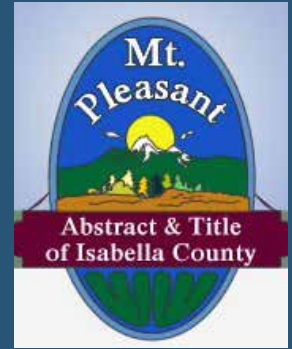
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Board Member Returns to Vietnam for Unique Birding Trip

by Stan Lilley

During two tours of duty in Vietnam with the U. S. Army in the late '60's and early '70's, I don't recall seeing even one bird. I do remember thinking, "Wow, if it weren't for a war, there are some beautiful tourist spots in this country. I'd love to see this under different circumstances." In November/December 2018, I finally went back.

I spent three weeks visiting the country, from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City, in the company of eight other birders, two American guides from the Field Guides birding tour company, and a local bird guide from Vietnam Birding. During that time I saw more than 300 species of birds and over 70 species of butterflies. The trip began a short distance from Hanoi.



White-rumped Shama

I was surprised to learn Cuc Phong National Park, in the Red River Delta, the country's oldest and largest national park (more than 54,000 acres), was established by President Ho Chi Minh all the way back in 1962. It is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country. Comfortably cool just days after the end of the rainy season, it offered up our first views of the exotic birds of Asia, such as Common Green Magpie, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo and White-rumped Shama.

A few days later, after an internal flight, we saw the other end of the spectrum. Approximately 90 miles north

of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), lies hot and humid Cat Tien National Park, established in 1978. Oh, and there, our introduction to the brown leech, but I'll save the leech stories. Here, we added the likes of Yellow-vented Flowerpecker, White-crested Laughingthrush, and Green Peafowl. And many, many butterflies.



Mapwing Butterfly

Between the two extremes we visited a number of birding spots in the Central Highlands, adding specialties like Gray-crowned Crocias, Dalat Shrike-Babbler and Black-crowned Barwing. We passed through towns and cities such as Danang, Pleiku, Kontum, Di Linh, Bao Loc, and Dalat, places that evoked memories of my past times in Vietnam, times when birds were the farthest thing from my mind. And part of the reason I wanted to come back; to see what life was like there now, nearly 50 years after my first trip.



Black-Crowned Barwing

What I saw was a thriving third world country with an apparently well-functioning middle class and happy,

welcoming people. I saw no evidence of the scars of war. Instead, I saw proof of the amazing resilience of nature, both plant and animal. I'm sure beneath the surface, scars remain, but we even drove on portions of the old Ho Chi Minh Trail near the Laotian border, now a paved, limited access highway, and simply saw lush, green hills and valleys, new hydroelectric projects, massive electric power transmission lines. Hanoi is a bustling city of 7.8 million people. Ho Chi Minh City is a huge international mecca of 10 million, complete with skyscrapers and neon. Bicycles and mopeds have been replaced by motorcycles, lots of motorcycles, and many more cars than before. And unbelievable traffic. Dalat, a resort city of more than 400,000, has no traffic lights. Somehow, traffic manages to move and drivers generally get along.



What Vietnamese kids do with their friends

It certainly doesn't qualify as the easiest place to see birds. A significant caged bird industry and the fact that songbirds are still eaten in many places makes the remaining wild birds very shy. Still, over three weeks I saw many birds and butterflies, and more of the country than I ever saw in my first two years there. Tourism opportunities are beginning to attract attention. As for me, I have a lot of new memories. And some closure.



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24th ANNUAL BANQUET

THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 2019

Time: 5:30 pm
Venue: Buck's Run Golf Club
1559 S. Chippewa Rd.
Mount Pleasant, MI
Menu: Ultimate Dinner Buffet,
including hors d'oeuvres,
dessert selection and cash
bar.

Ticket Price:
Before event \$60/person
At the door: \$65/person

Follow us on Facebook for banquet updates

Keynote Speaker:
Dan Eichinger, Director
of Michigan Department
of Natural Resources,
CWC Supporter and
CMU Alumnus



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