

HERON TRACKS

The Official Newsletter of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy
Volume 25 Number 3 Fall 2018



President's Statement

As I write this letter, I reflect back on a large number of accomplishments for the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy this summer. We have had a deepened interest in our many activities and expanded programs. One I would like to highlight is a new environmental education partnership with Odyssey Middle/High School in Shepherd. Our newest staff member, Alexis Wixson, Development and Outreach Coordinator, is working with at risk students on their 80 acre forested campus. Alexis teaches weekly environmental education programs and Jon Breithaupt leads monthly discussions on stewardship, identifying invasive species, trail management, and teaches students about the importance of conservation. The CWC, through both Alexis and

Jon, is helping kids connect with the environment. The semester will culminate with the students working on a project at one of our preserves.

This summer has been busy as we have been actively managing invasive species at various preserves and trail building at our Bundy Hill Preserve. The two miles of newly constructed trails feature a Bundy Hill History Trail with interpretive signs along the way. On September 27th, the Mt. Pleasant Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a Ribbon Cutting ceremony celebrating the new hiking trail system with approximately 60 community members in attendance. Our Executive Director, Jon Breithaupt provided a guided hike on the trails to the summit of Bundy Hill, which at 1,270 feet is the tallest geological point in



Steve Pung, CWC Board President

Isabella County. If you haven't been out to this Preserve to hike the new trails, I would encourage you to find the time to enjoy a nice colorful fall afternoon and the solitude on the 100 acres or visit one of our many other beautiful Preserves with family or friends.

A Conservation Conversation

In the words of L.M. Montgomery, "I'm so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers." It is easy to take for granted the sublimity of seasonal changes we get to experience as full or part time Michiganders. The essence of experiencing our nature preserves ebbs and flows throughout the year. In winter, the eerie silence and monochromatic backdrop of the surrounding environment provide a unique setting for different ways to traverse our permanently protected properties, such as on ski or snowshoe. Springtime provides us a resurgence of chlorophyll and life. In the summertime, we enjoy lush landscapes full of sounds and smells. In my opinion, though, nothing can compete with fall in the upper Midwest. The crunching of leaves beneath boots, the array of colorways and the smell of crisp air create an invigorating experience in the natural world second to none. The temporary burdens of bugs and humidity reside. For me, there is no finer time to set foot on one of Chippewa Watershed Conservancy's many nature preserves. I would encourage all of you to pencil in some time to do so as well.



Jon Breithaupt, Executive Director

WILDERNESS WANDERERS PROJECT CONNECTS AT-RISK YOUTH TO NATURE



In late August 2018, the Conservancy launched a brand new partnership with Odyssey Middle/High School called the Wilderness Wanderers Project. Odyssey is an alternative school which is a part of the Shepherd Public School District. Set on a sublime 80-acre campus, Odyssey boasts several miles of trail, thousands of feet of frontage on Onion Creek and many other unique recreational resources for students. CWC Development and Outreach Coordinator, Alexis Wixson, has been delivering weekly environmental education programs to students which focus on topics such as invasive species, Leave No Trace ethics, wildlife habitat and more. Jon Breithaupt, Executive Director of CWC, engages students in environmental stewardship projects on Odyssey's campus such as trail building, boardwalk and recreational infrastructure construction and more. At the end of trimesters one and three, the project will culminate with students spearheading a stewardship project on one of CWC's 22 nature preserves. The benefits of the project run much deeper than what meets the eye, however. Students gain real world job skills, discover how connecting to nature can be therapeutic, and obtain self-efficacy and a belief in the power of something bigger than all of us.

Bundy Hill Preserve Trail System

COMPLETED

We're very proud to announce that a two-mile long hiking trail system has been completed at our 100-acre Bundy Hill Preserve. Every Thursday evening from April 26th through September 20th a hardy crew of volunteers led by CWC staff helped build a sustainable trail network on the preserve. We estimate that more than 60 volunteers gave up 21 of their Thursday nights to commit over 600 hours of volunteer labor over the duration of the project. On September 27th a ribbon cutting ceremony was held with the Mt. Pleasant Area Chamber of Commerce to celebrate the official opening of the completed trail system.

In addition to the Summit Trail, Ridge Trail and McNeel Trail – named in honor of the McNeel Family – The Bundy Hills History Trail contains 12 interpretive signs that disseminate the fascinating cultural and natural history of the area. On the Ridge Trail, hikers are greeted with outstanding views to the north and a glimpse of Lake Isabella as the leaves drop in the fall. Other improvements on the preserve include a split rail fence at the trailhead, an informational kiosk and blue diamond wayfinding markers. If you have not experienced the new trail system yet, we encourage you to add it to your bucket list. We believe it is one of the best in the region.



Member Spotlight

Daniel Patterson

Because of the U.S. Air Force, Daniel was born in one of Napoleon's stables in Fontainebleau, France, where his father was stationed, and where his mother joined him. He grew up in rural western South Carolina, almost always playing and exploring outdoors with his brother. His family didn't own any land, but for some reason they felt free to roam through the fields, forests, and streams all around them so long as they were home for dinner.

For college Danny attended the nearby and then-inexpensive Clemson University, where he found that the only profession he could imagine for himself was university teaching. For graduate studies, he headed north to Kent State, where he caught the academic bug bad. In pursuit of his academic goals, subsequently he lived in Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, southern California, southwestern Idaho, eastern Oregon, and finally central Michigan. Danny is a scholar of nature writing and natural history, in recent years especially the life and work

of John James Audubon. He retired from CMU's English Department in May 2017 but will complete two more books on Audubon before he hangs up his guns, so to speak. With the freedom retirement brings, he has been deliberately developing his knowledge and skills as a woodworker.

Danny had never been involved in a watershed conservancy before he came to Michigan in 2002. At the invitation of his new friends Pete and Marie Koper, he attended that first spring banquet in April 2003 and saw immediately that he must support, even in his own small way, the work of this group. In a World gone largely mad environmentally, here was a kernel of sanity. John Mitchell was leading his colleagues' informed and strategic efforts to preserve, protect, and open to the public the land, water, and wildlife of our extensive watershed. Danny saw that the CWC was playing the "long game," essentially following the Native American principle that all our decisions today should benefit the next seven generations to follow us.



Both he and his wife, Alison Miller, have recently become grandparents and so feel all the more urgently the need to support the work of the CWC. When Jon Breithaupt asked if Danny would build some park benches for several of the preserves, he said yes, of course, and quickly imagined a day when they would follow their grandkids along the trails to the top of Bundy Hill where an inspiring view of the watershed awaits-- and a possible nap on a bench.

Newest CWC Staff Member Embraces Role



As I begin to take root in my new role as Development and Outreach Coordinator here at CWC I could not be happier with the opportunity. In his celebrated work *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold writes that "we can only be ethical in relation to something we can see, understand, feel, love or otherwise have faith in." My goal is to get the people of Central Michigan to see our preserves, understand our mission, feel the benefits of our programs, love our watershed and have faith in our organization.

To reach these objectives I have been working towards acquiring grant funding, helping to launch new educational programs for youth, and seeking out ways to widen the network of relationships throughout the community while creating new paths to grow as an organization.

The weeks have passed quickly since I began in July. I have been lucky enough to spend my Wednesday afternoons out in the woods with the Outdoor Nature

class at Odyssey Alternative High School and my Thursday mornings enjoying the vibrant atmosphere of the Mt Pleasant Farmer's Market, where I have been spreading the word on our preserves and programs. In the office I stay busy creating lesson plans, planning upcoming events and seeking out new partners and funding sources. I look forward to taking an active role in fundraising and will be involved in planning the banquet for 2019 and several other smaller events throughout the year. While I am still settling into this new position, I am becoming more and more familiar with the organization and its members, who have all shown their support and made me feel welcome.

I would like to thank everyone I have worked with so far, or had the opportunity to meet, for your help in making my transition into this position a smooth and pleasant one. As CWC continues to grow, and I become more proficient in my new role, look for the continued enhancement of our impact in the community.

Fall and Winter Educational Programs and Volunteer Opportunities

Stewardship Sundays Volunteer Work Day

Sunday, October 21st, 2018

10 am to 1 pm
Williams Blackburn Preserve

Sunday, November 18th, 2018

10 am to 1 pm
Williams Blackburn Preserve

Join Chippewa Watershed Conservancy for our monthly Stewardship Sundays volunteer outing. We'll work to remove the highly invasive Autumn Olive shrub from the property to promote biodiversity and prevent the species from taking over. All tools and training are provided. Please wear long sleeves and bring eye protection and plenty of water

CWC Speaker Series

There's an App for That – Connecting to Nature through Technology

Wednesday, October 24th, 2018

7 to 8:30 pm
Veterans Memorial Library Annex

Used wisely, smartphones and tablets can be powerful tools in the outdoors. From identifying birds and trees, mapping hikes or kayak trips, connecting to citizen science projects and much more, apps and other smartphone features can be used to investigate and connect with the natural world. Join CNC Interpretive Naturalist Michelle Fournier for this indoor program as she shares her favorite naturalist-approved apps, some of which are even free! If you love nature and also love your smartphone, this program is for you!

How Birds Survive Winter

Wednesday, November 28th, 2018

7 to 8:30 pm
Veterans Memorial Library Annex

Birds have much more than warm downy feathers to ward off the cold temperatures and long nights of winter. Many species wintering in northern climates have a variety of adaptations enabling them to survive weather extremes, reduced food supplies, shorter days and competition. CNC Interpretive Naturalist Jeanne Henderson will present this indoor program and share some of these fascinating adaptations.



Preserve Hikes

Audubon Woods Forestry Hike

Saturday, October 27th, 2018

10 am to 12 pm
Audubon Woods Preserve

A guided hike will be led by CWC board member and Isabella Conservation District education coordinator, Mike LeValley, through the beautiful Audubon Woods Preserve. Mike will talk about tree measurement practices and some of the studies he's conducting with elementary school children on the preserve.

Veterans Day Sunrise Hike

Sunday, November 11th, 2018

7 to 9 am
Bundy Hill Preserve

Join Mike LeValley for a guided hike on Veterans Day to the summit of Bundy Hill, the tallest point in Isabella County. While this hike is designed to honor military veterans, it is open to all members of the public.

Volunteer Appreciation Party

Thursday, December 6th, 2018

5:30 to 7:30 pm
Veterans Memorial Library Annex

Come celebrate a year of volunteerism with CWC staff and board members. All preserve and conservation easement monitors, trail builders, graphic designers, invasive species managers and other volunteers are invited to join us for heavy appetizers, beverages and a presentation recapping 2018's volunteer efforts.

Winter Solstice Full Moon Hike

Friday, December 21st, 2018

7 to 9 pm
Sylvan Solace Preserve

Mike LeValley will lead us on a guided winter hike at Sylvan Solace Preserve on the shortest day of the year. The preserve will be fairly well lit with a full moon occurring the following day.

2019 First Day Hike

Tuesday, January 1st, 2019

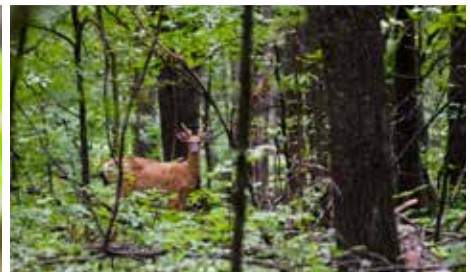
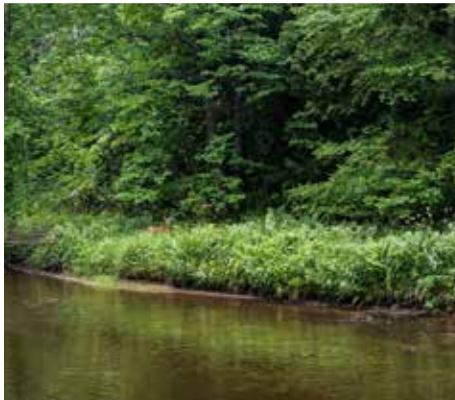
10 am to 12 pm
Bundy Hill Preserve

Connect with CWC staff and board members as we summit Bundy Hill on the first day of 2019. First day hikes are a growing national trend that encourage people to enjoy the outdoors on the first day of the year every year.

Snapshots on the Preserves

Capturing the beauty and uniqueness of the preserves is a favorite past-time of many folks in the mid-Michigan area. Recently a talented photographer reached out to us and shared his preserve pictures with us. Meet Jason Mahokey, a freelance graphic designer and employee at Terry's Cycle in Alma. Jason and his family moved to Mt. Pleasant 8 years ago from Pennsylvania. He is a long-time cyclist who often traverses the back roads of rural Michigan with his camera. He says "The CWC preserves—and the trails and paths around them—are a perfect four season exercise alternative for days when time or poor weather won't allow for a bike ride. Hiking through the CWC's preserves has also proved a great way to find new ways for me to be creative as I grow as a photographer while enjoying the outdoors of central Michigan."

We think Jason's photographs are pretty spectacular. We hope you enjoy this sampling of his work.



Thank you to the following Volunteers

Audubon Woods Trail Building

Fabiano Brothers and Kennedy Thayer

Autumn Olive Removal

David Stoner, Stan Lilley, Cathy Murray, Bob Kohrman, Mike LeValley, Katelyn Maylee and Larry Schaftenaar

Bundy Hill Trail Building

Paul Low, Bill Low, Liisa Low, Nathan Tubbs, David Stoner, Malcolm Fox, Kennedy Thayer, Lynda Thayer, James Simmons, Debra Simmons, Eric Lindstrom, Steve Pung, Stan Lilley, Katelyn Maylee, Ray Davies, Gary Kramer, Mary Lou Schilling, Alan Schilling, Kelley Moss, Bob Busch, Ryan Litwiller, Taylor Fillmore, Pete Little, Carl Miller and many more!

Educational Event Leaders

Sister Marie Kopin, Mike LeValley, Dr. Fred Heck, Kyle Bagnall, Dr. Bob Dvorak, Jordan Bruursema, Peter Sinclair, Stan Lilley and Dr. Tracy Galarowicz

Preserve Bench Construction and Installation

Paul Low, Bill Low and Danny Patterson

Preserve Stewardship

Bill Low, Paul Low, Dave DeGraaf, Cathy Murray, Mike LeValley, Kay Purtill, Kennedy Thayer, Katelyn Maylee, Larry Schaftenaar and Judy Schaftenaar

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