

# HERON TRACKS

The Official Newsletter of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy  
Volume 26 Number 2 Summer 2019



# President's Statement



## The Positive Influences of Nature

Have you ever been told to "Take a Hike". Well, there are benefits to that old adage. Not only are the experiences of hiking in nature enjoyable, but they're good for you too. Hiking is proven to have many health benefits, ranging from the physical exercise you get when out on the trails, to emotional and mental relief and relaxation that come from being in nature.

We all know how good we feel when we are out in nature. The sounds of the forest, the scent of the plants and trees, the sunlight filtering through the leaves, and the fresh air, give us a sense of comfort. These combine to help us relax, spend time with our thoughts, and relieve our anxieties. Being in nature can boost our mood, refresh and invigorate us, and improve our mental health.

Spending quality time in the great outdoors reduces stress, according to a study done by researchers at Stanford University. In addition to having mental health benefits, being outdoors opens up your senses to our surroundings and improves our sensory perception. Taking in the sights, smells, and feelings of nature has many health benefits.

One link between nature and well-being is clear: the more time spent in natural surroundings, the higher our well-being. (Nesbit, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2011) A variety of studies has shown time spent

in nature boosts cognitive and physical health and increases well-being. There's truth to the idea that spending time outdoors has a direct link to happiness, say researchers.

Another way to exercise, hike the trails and feel a sense of accomplishment is to join us on our Volunteer Stewardship Saturdays. We recently enjoyed the spring weather while cleaning trails at Sylvan Solace. Join us at upcoming Stewardship Saturdays on June 22nd at Hall's Lake and on July 20th at Bundy Hill. These Saturday events provide opportunities to appreciate nature at one of our preserves while enjoying the camaraderie with other volunteers.

So, grab a friend or family member and "Take a Hike". You can enjoy the beauty of nature, get some exercise, and strengthen those friendships and relationships.

As John Mitchell used to write,  
"See you on the trails"

~Steve Pung, Board President

## CWC WELCOMES SUMMER INTERN

Say hello to Emma Bowen, our brand-new intern at the CWC. She was raised in Howard City, Michigan and is a recent graduate of Central Michigan University. She received a bachelor's degree in geography with a concentration in environmental and land use planning with a minor in environmental studies.

Emma loves the beach and enjoys going to concerts with friends. She is very excited to use this internship as a way to gain more experience before deciding her next step for graduate school. She is looking forward to working outside and learning more about the Chippewa River watershed.

Emma will assist with stewardship tasks on the preserves, helping to lead educational walks, and various office tasks. Welcome to the CWC team, Emma!



# Member Spotlight

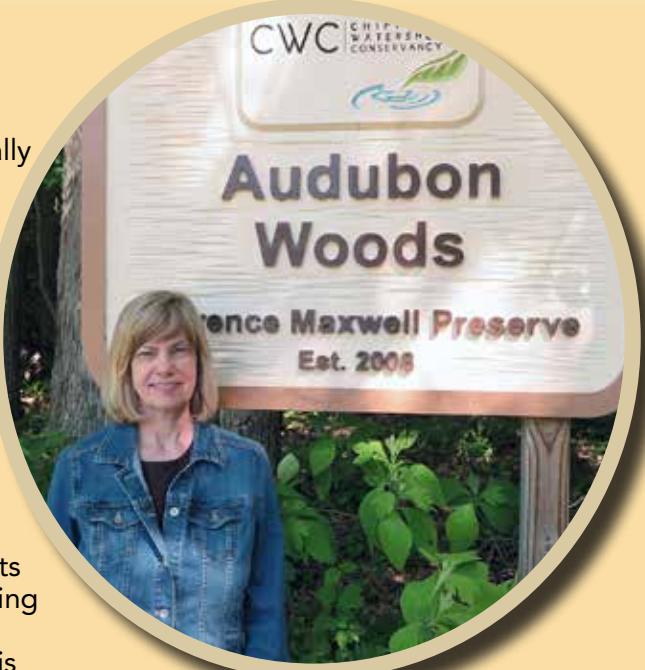
## Meet Pat Block

As a Professor of Art & Design at Mid Michigan College, Pat Block involved students in volunteerism with local non-profit organizations. Beginning in 2008, her graphic design students worked on CWC projects. A bit later on she began design work herself helping Stan Lilley with signage for the preserves, mapping, photography, brochures and PowerPoint presentations. After retiring from MMC in 2017, Pat has been able to support the CWC by creating a new series of identity brochures, signage for new preserves, trail maps, photography, presentations and logos for the new Preschool Preservers and Wilderness Wanderers programs.

Her interest in land preservation and management began early. Pat's father was a District Ranger in the Forest Service, so childhood activities involved outdoor nature

experiences. She is originally from northern Minnesota and later moved to Michigan when her father transferred to the Huron-Manistee National Forest. She came to the Mt. Pleasant area to attend graduate school at CMU in 1982.

Pat feels the work that the CWC does is so significant in preserving the land, water and habitats in this five county area. Being an educator herself, she appreciates the work that is being done by the CWC in providing opportunities to learn about wildlife habitats, trees, plants, and many other aspects of nature. The guided hikes on the preserves allow anyone to get out in nature, appreciate the beauty of this area and learn interesting facts about nature on the preserves. She is excited about the new programs



for children that will provide a variety of nature experiences.

Working with the CWC has allowed Pat to pursue a passion that she found early in life, provided her with nature inspiration for her paintings and prints, and she looks forward to new opportunities to work on projects with CWC staff and volunteers.

“Just as **ripples** spread out when a single pebble is dropped into water, --the **actions** of individuals can have far-reaching effects.” ~Dalai Lama

What started as a tiny pebble of an idea 34 years ago has created ripples throughout a 5 county service area, giving life to a multitude of conservation-based programs that allow this community to take an active role in preserving the places you know and love.

Please help us continue to steward these precious places by renewing your membership to CWC. Your decision to continually support our efforts is a part of the greater ripple, enhancing the quality of life for the land, wildlife and people living in the rustic landscape of the Central Michigan region.

# Little ripples make BIG waves

To renew your membership, please visit [cwc-mi.org/membership](http://cwc-mi.org/membership) or use the form on the back of this newsletter

# CWC Banquet Celebrates Change

Organizational transitions, additional staff and interns, new trail systems, recently acquired properties and budding partnerships were all mentioned during Board President Steve Pung's remarks at the opening of the program. Many new faces and even more long-time supporters filled the banquet hall at Bucks Run on Thursday, April 18th. The evening met at the intersection of fresh and familiar, and was a momentous fundraiser for CWC, bringing in over \$22,000 towards conservation work in Central Michigan.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Bob Ball Award to this year's recipient and CWC Board Vice President, Marnie Basney. In 1996, the Bob Ball award began as a way to honor individuals who contribute significant time or talent towards

CWC's mission of protecting natural resources throughout Central Michigan. The late Robert (Bob) Ball was one of the founders of CWC who dedicated much of his life to protecting and advocating for nature. Basney, who is a realtor with Coldwell Banker Mount Pleasant Realty & Associates, has contributed her professional expertise to help guide CWC through some very intricate property dealings in the past few years. Along with serving as Vice President of the board, she is also a member of several CWC committees and is a major asset to our organization.

Keynote Speaker, Dan Eichinger, Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MI DNR), gave an engaging talk about his personal experiences with conservation, captivating the audience with

humorous tales from his youth in the outdoors. Eichinger eloquently connected his comments on natural resources management to CWC and the environmental work being done in our region. He spoke about current MI DNR projects and ended with a question and answer period, giving folks the chance to gain insight into natural resource management concerns.

With the successful addition of a Wine Pull and tons of great live and silent auction items, guests had several entertaining outlets to contribute to the fundraiser. Overall the evening was a success, thanks to our volunteers, sponsors and members, and our banquet planning committee. We look forward to the year ahead, and express our gratitude to all those who continue to support conservation efforts in our region.



# NO EXCUSE FOR SINGLE USE: QUITTING WASTEFUL PLASTIC HABITS

by Alexis Wixson

Development and Outreach Coordinator

Until you really pay attention, it is hard to fathom how much plastic waste one human being really creates in a day. An innocent trip to the grocery store became a pivotal moment for me, as I stood in shocked, sickened, silence while the cashier eagerly swathed my already plastic wrapped chicken into not 1 but 2 more plastic bags before placing it next to my other items. I got home and unwrapped my supplies to find that \$20 worth of dinner groceries had created 17 pieces of one time use plastic. I had just watched the documentary "Plastic Ocean", so seeing the mountain of packaging waste in front of me was hitting me like a



ton of bricks. In the aftermath of my revelatory grocery store trip I decided to go 1 week with no single use plastics in an effort to learn the ways I could alter my lifestyle and reduce my overall waste.

This challenge was a daily struggle to resist the conveniences of modern society. Not only did I have to carry reusable tote bags into the grocery store, but I had to remember them each time I went shopping. I often opted for no bag at all if I was only getting a few items. I

also found my normally thrifty self willing to spend a few more dollars on items with less packaging, or buying raw items with no packaging at all. Upon investigation I found that my house was littered with plastic: shampoo bottles, milk cartons, laundry detergent, food wrappers, tooth brushes, diaper packaging, and more all awaiting an inevitable trip to the landfill. It had been months since I quit using plastic straws but I started telling people with me to nix the straw as well, and found that most people gladly would, if not for fear of germs lurking on the restaurant glasses. For the first time since living with my parents, I used bar soap that was sold in a box, rather than buying body wash in a plastic bottle. I took a cue from my sister and looked into purchasing a bamboo toothbrush, which turned out to be surprisingly inexpensive. At one point in the week I was feeling crushed by the anxiety of diminishing such a huge piece of my waste and feeling like it was hopeless, but ultimately I found solutions to every one of the single use plastic items I would have normally used that week.

**By attempting to eliminate single use plastics from my life, I discovered that we live in a throwaway society**

Everything from food and drinks to hygiene products and all that falls in between comes swathed in a plastic ensemble to be thrown away without ever serving any meaningful purpose. This thought saddens me, as I think about the effect the unimaginable piles of plastic waste have had and will continue to have on this planet into the future. However, humans have proven themselves to be incredibly adaptable and inventive. I believe that we can reverse the

cycle of our material devouring habits and come to a solution that is safer for the planet we so very deeply rely upon.

This article is not meant to instill guilt, rather to inspire action. We all live in a world with daily challenges and seemingly insurmountable issues, but every little bit of positive action helps. Do what you can and love the Earth and you will be on the right track!

## Simple Solutions

- Drinking without a straw
- Using reusable tote bags rather than plastic shopping bags
- Eliminating the produce plastic bags in favor of a tote or no bag at all
- Buying local (eliminates shipping packaging)
- Buying products with less packaging
- Buying products with reusable/recyclable packaging
- Investing more in long lasting products rather than buying frequent and multiple throwaway products
- Carrying a reusable water bottle
- Eating out less and cooking at home more
- Using dishes or food cloth to wrap food rather than plastic wrap or plastic bags
- Supporting businesses that work to eliminate plastic waste
- Recycling all recyclable plastic products
- Reusing plastic products that are still in working order
- Buying items packaged in cardboard or paper rather than plastic
- NEVER littering
- Using compostable or recyclable materials whenever possible

# Custodians of Nature

There are many phrases used throughout the land management profession to describe the work that we do; conservation, preservation, stewardship, management, protection, maintenance, the list goes on. As a conservancy in the business of protecting land, we consider ourselves stewards. But what exactly does stewardship mean?



By definition stewardship is the prudent monitoring and management of something placed in one's care. In practice land stewardship is a behavioral ethic, a conscious and purposeful



effort to do as much or as little as necessary to maintain land in a safe and natural state. That means sometimes doing nothing and leaving the environment to grow as it may. Other times intervention is needed in the form of invasive species removal, or planting of trees, or the placement of a sustainable trail where frequent use will take its inevitable toll on the landscape. Successful

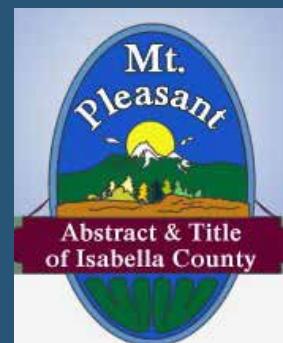
stewardship begins with careful surveillance and monitoring of a landscape, getting to know the features and flaws of a place before taking any physical action. Becoming familiar with the flora and fauna, the bodies of water, the slopes and valleys and the native and non-native species allows for the creation of responsible stewardship plans. These plans define how we will nurture the land, and the extent of intervention that is necessary over a given period of time. As stewards, we are obligated to take these steps, to get to know the land and follow through on



necessary action plans because we are responsible for its future. Stewardship is an idea as much as it is an act. It is a responsibility and an obligation that comes with ownership. Much like parenting a child, stewardship requires just the right meld of involvement and detachment in order to assist a landscape in flourishing in perpetuity.

As an organization, we continually steward our preserves and easements. If you love the natural areas near you, I encourage you to join us in maintaining trails, removing invasive species, picking up trash, removing downed trees or a number of other stewardship activities across our preserves. Join us for a Stewardship Saturday or an Invasive Species Removal Workday and find out what stewardship means for yourself.

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