

HERON TRACKS

CWC | CHIPPEWA
WATERSHED
CONSERVANCY



The Official Newsletter of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy
Volume 32 Number 4 Fall 2025

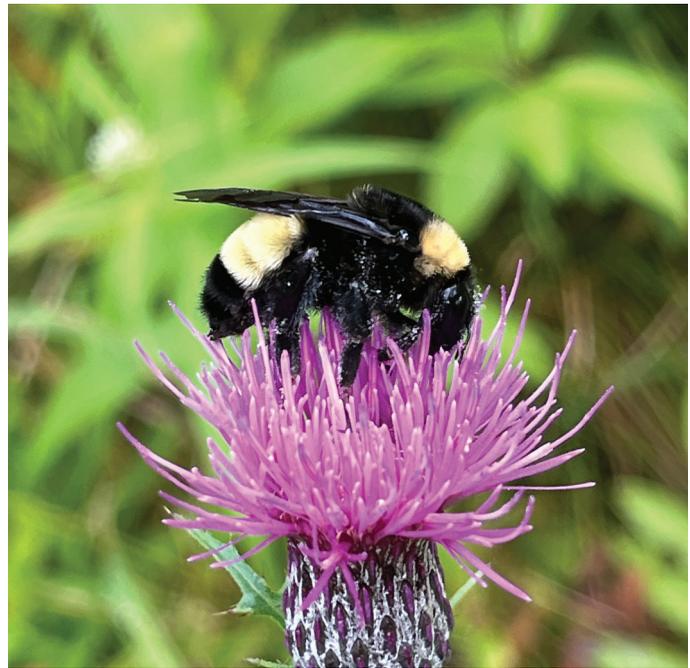


Robert and Dorothy Ball Preserve

Executive Director's Corner

At last year's Fall Fundraiser, I was pleased to share the discovery of a population of a rare plant, the Forked Aster (*Eurybia furcata*) on one of our preserves. This year, I was equally excited to announce the news of a sighting of a rare bumble bee.

In late August during a monitoring visit to Quigley Creek Natural Area, I noticed a large bumble bee visiting a swamp thistle flower. This bee easily dwarfed several common eastern bumble bee workers feeding nearby and was not a species that I immediately recognized. I did not attempt to make a field identification but took several photographs which were later added to the website iNaturalist.org in the hope that others recognize it. After several days without an identification, I reached out to a handful of experts who regularly identify bumble bees on the site and they quickly identified it as an American bumble bee!



Why is this an exciting find?

The American bumble bee (*Bombus pensylvanicus*) was historically found throughout much of the eastern two thirds of the United States and into southern Canada but it has extirpated from much of the northern part of this range. In Michigan, it is estimated to have disappeared from 98% of its former range since the 1990s. Because of this swift drop in abundance, the species was formally listed as Endangered by the State of Michigan in 2023. The species has become so rare in the state that only nine Michigan observations were reported on iNaturalist this year. With the exception of my sighting, all other records for the year occurred south of an east-west line running through Lansing.

The individual bee that I spotted at Quigley Creek was a young queen. Hopefully, she was able to successfully find a mate and has since retreated to a hibernation site where she will overwinter before emerging in the spring to form a new colony. I will definitely be on the lookout for this species every time I visit Quigley Creek next year!

This species was found as part of our ongoing efforts to identify and catalogue the numerous species found on CWC preserves. To read more about these efforts visit our website at <https://cwc-mi.org/2025-flora-fauna-and-fungi-surveys/>

Stay Well and Happy Trails!

CWC Chair Notes

Hard to believe, but another year is wrapping up. It has been another great one for the CWC (the 40th in fact!). Thanks to all of you who support our mission! Congratulations again to our Bob Ball Award winners – John and Julie Arnold and Linda Walterreit – it is so wonderful to see the dedication and enthusiasm that landowners bring to preserve some of the great places here in central Michigan. As a board member, I get to hear many of the stories of different individuals who donate properties, protect lands with conservation easements, work to create trails and remove invasive species, or give to the organization in other ways. As the CWC continues to grow, it seems that the support of the community only becomes more and more important to this organization. Keep spreading the word – invite friends to join you as you view the (remaining) colors on the preserves, or perhaps you know some people who would like to learn more about mushrooms, or amphibians, or owls – this is the place! Over the next few years, we would love to add staff to support Mike and Autumn, continue to add preserves and easements, and make our existing properties even better places for wildlife to thrive and people to enjoy. We look for your continued support to help us achieve this goal!

Chippewa Watershed Conservancy History

The Second Twenty Years (2006-2025)

2006

**Neyer Preserve, Williams-Blackburn Preserve, and Winawa Preserve established
Winnie Conservation Easement, Van Acker Conservation Easement,
and Isabella County 4H Camp Conservation Easement all signed**

2007

**Rader Conservation Easement, Rutledge Conservation Easement,
Ora Kohler Conservation Easement, and Charlie Kohler Conservation Easement all signed**

2008

**Stearns Preserve (Griiot County) and Peterson Natural Area (Mecosta County) established as the
first CWC preserves outside of Isabella County**

**Audubon Woods Preserve and Ball Preserve transferred to the CWC by
the Chippewa Valley Audubon Club**

Neely Preserve established

Tluczek Conservation Easement signed

2009

Riverbank Preserve established

Britten Conservation Easements signed

2010

Hayes Conservation Easement and Bush Conservation Easement signed

2011

Jacobson Conservation Easement signed

2012

Quigley Creek Natural Area established

2013

Lake Steven Preserve (first preserve in Montcalm County) and Kabana Preserve established

**Fosburg Conservation Easement, Arnold Conservation Easement,
and Wegner Conservation Easement all signed**

CWC moves into current offices at the Hersee House, 306 S. University, Mt. Pleasant

2014

Schaftenaar Preserve and Fox Run Preserve established

Szok Conservation Easement (Midland County) signed

2015

Messinger Conservation Easement and Hickory Hill Conservation Easement signed

2016

Bundy Hill Preserve and Hagen Preserve established

Walterreit Conservation Easement signed

Continued on page 6

Fall Fundraiser and Bob Ball Award Presentation



Thursday, October 2nd, marked the 5th year of Chippewa Watershed Conservancy's annual Fall Fundraiser. It was a lovely evening of celebration amongst old and new friends, bringing more than \$16,000 for the Conservancy!

For the first hour, attendees were able to socialize over appetizers and drinks, while trying their luck at the many raffle prizes available to win. There were over a dozen curated packages available, including various art prints, books, apples from a local orchard, a handmade afghan, and a basket of goods generously donated from local vendors from the Mt Pleasant Farmers' Market. A photo booth added to the enjoyment, giving folks a chance to bring home a fun memento of the evening. The warm fall evening created the perfect opportunity to enjoy all the beauty that encompasses the Little Flower Barn.

We were also thrilled to unveil the work of our 2025 Artists-in-Residence, all of whom were in attendance to discuss their work and experiences. The five artists spent months working on pieces directly inspired by CWC nature preserves. The artists' work spanned various mediums and offered a unique experience for the attendees to appreciate. You can read more about the art here: <https://cwc-mi.org/2025-artist-residency-program/2025-artist-residency-completed-work/> (see QR code below).

After a delicious dinner, Executive Director Mike LeValley gave a presentation about our continued work to catalog species on CWC nature preserves. By understanding the species present on the landscape, the Conservancy can better manage and maintain the habitat requirements needed for these flora and fauna to thrive. We were excited to report the recent sighting of the State-Endangered American Bumble Bee, *Bombus pensylvanicus*. After this presentation, Mike announced the Bob Ball Award winners.

The evening closed traditionally, with the drawing of the raffle winners. Excitement ran through the crowd as winners were drawn for each of the in-person raffles. Three beautiful bouquets generously donated by Oakbrook West Farms were also given away as door prizes. Finally, the 50/50 and Northwest Michigan Trip raffles were drawn to finish the evening. Jenelle Bartlett won and graciously donated back the 50/50 drawing. Long-time supporter and volunteer Anne Messinger won the Northwest Michigan Trip raffle.



Bob Ball Award Recipients: John Arnold, Julie Arnold, and Linda Walterreit

This year, we broke tradition slightly and presented the Bob Ball Award to multiple individuals. Many people know the CWC for our public nature preserves, but the bulk of the land that we protect is in the form of conservation easements on private lands. Conservation easements are a permanent agreement between a landowner and a land conservancy that protects the conservation values of a property in perpetuity; even if ownership changes, the land remains protected by the easement. All of our easement landowners entered into these agreements voluntarily because they love the land and want to see it protected even after they are gone.



While we've had 38 individuals/families protect their property through conservation easements, it is a rare occasion when those landowners come back to us and want to add additional land to the easement. That's why the 2025 Bob Ball Award was presented to John and Julie Arnold and to Linda Walterreit. John and Julie initially placed 149 acres of their Montcalm County property in an easement in 2013. In 2025, they added an additional 40-acre parcel that includes 1/4 mile frontage on the Pine River.

Linda placed an easement on 73 acres of her Isabella County property in 2016. In 2022, Linda purchased an adjoining 60-acre parcel and immediately sought to place it in the easement. This was completed in 2023.



John and Julie Arnold at their Montcalm County home

Arnold Conservation Easement



Linda Walterreit and then Board President Marilyn Fosburg at the easement signing.

Walterreit Conservation Easement



Thank You to Our Event Business Sponsors!



Chippewa Watershed Conservancy History Continued from page 3

2017

**Sponseller Easement property deeded to CWC and established as Sponseller Preserve
Lane Conservation Easement (Gladwin County) transferred from Little Forks Conservancy**

Martz Conservation Easement signed

2019

Szok Riverbend Preserve established

2021

Weting Conservation Easement signed

2022

Mill Pond Natural Area established

2023

Starks Preserve and Hubscher Preserve established

**Weting Easement property deeded to CWC and established as Weting Preserve; becoming first CWC
preserve in Clare County**

Honoring Bob Ball's Conservation Legacy

We wanted to recognize the person behind the name of our President's Award, Robert (Bob) Ball. Bob Ball was a co-founder of the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy, but his enduring legacy and significant contributions to conservation in our region go far beyond that.

Bob Ball was a man who cared deeply for the land and people in his community. He worked for Hubscher in the gravel pits and was also a beekeeper. He lived in the same house on Whiteville Road all his life. Friends recount how he loved to travel during the winter, especially to the American West, and gave numerous slide show talks throughout the community.

Bob Ball served on the Isabella County Parks & Recreation Commission for 15 years. During that time, he led the effort to acquire Meridian Park. If not for his advocacy, Meridian Park would be a subdivision. Meridian Park was the first local project approved by the Michigan Land Trust Fund. He also arranged for the donation of Majeske Landing and laid out the trail system at Deerfield Park. He also assisted Rolland Township with the acquisition of Paydon Park. During his time as a member of the Isabella County Sportsmens Club, the group acquired the 40-acre parcel that was sold to the Chippewa Valley Audubon Club and is now the CWC's Audubon Woods Florence Maxwell Preserve.

Bob and his wife, Dorothy, acquired and donated what is now CWC's Bob and Dorothy Ball Preserve.

Bob was also honored with the following achievements:

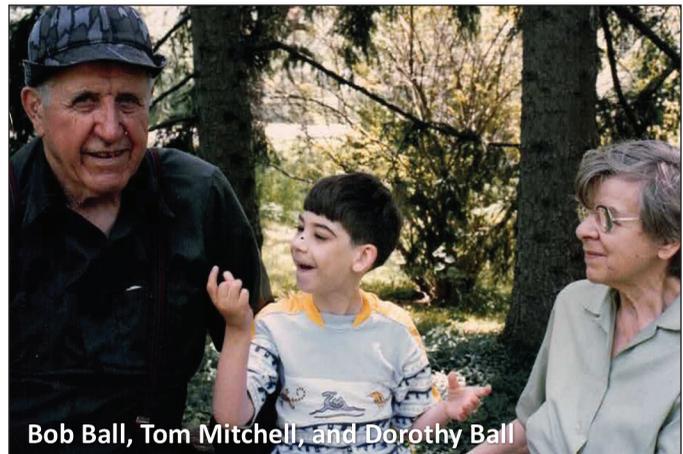
Chippewa Valley Audubon Club Conservationist of the Year 1996

Wakelin McNeel Group of the Sierra Club Service Award 1987

Isabella County Parks and Recreation Life Service Award 1986

A quote by CWC co-founder John Mitchell from 1997, while serving as CWC President, rings as true today as it did then: "I don't know of anyone who has knocked on more doors, talked to more people, asking them to save what is wild and best about our area. When you hear that the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy has saved another parcel, think of Bob, because the organization wouldn't exist without him."

Because of the vision of Bob and others, the Chippewa Watershed Conservancy celebrates 40 years of land protection today. We will continue to stand on the shoulders of giants and, with the generosity and heartfelt support of community members, guide this vital work into the future.



Bob Ball, Tom Mitchell, and Dorothy Ball

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Steve Pung, *Vice President*

John Mitchell, *Treasurer*

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Donations in Memory of

Wanda Odykirk

Laurie Smith

Thank you to our recent volunteer groups:

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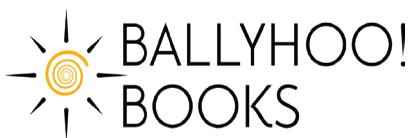
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