

# Oneida County Success from the Field

## Farming for Pollinators in the Northwoods

### Background

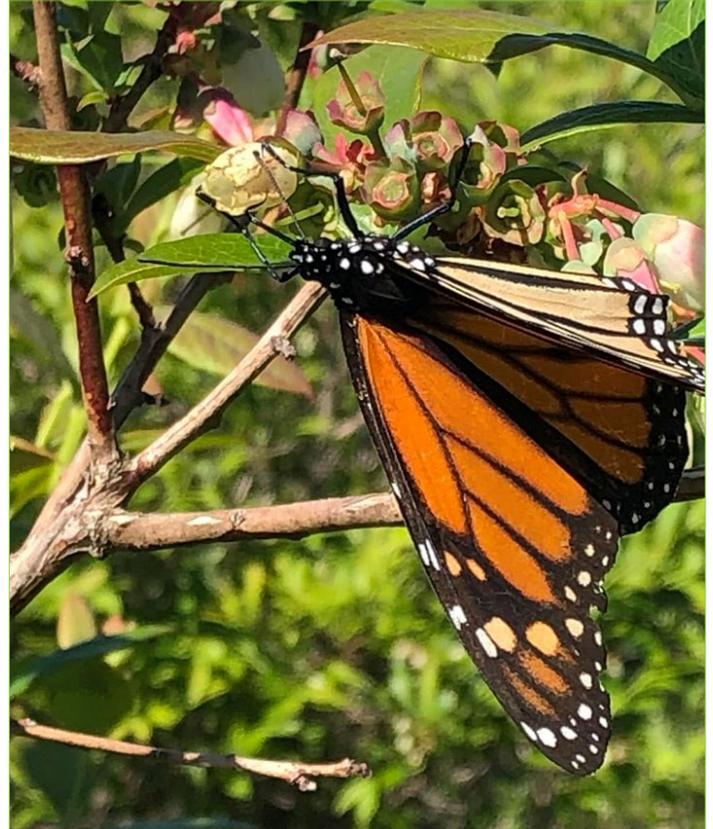
Scarlet and John Sweeney own Camp Four Farm, a diversified operation near Sugar Camp, Wisconsin. The Sweeneys raise beef and honeybees, sell pick-your-own blueberries, aronia, apples, grapes and other fruits and vegetables. The family also uses organic practices on the farm. Camp Four Farm is named after a historic lumber camp; the fourth of several camps linked to Rhinelander by the narrow-gauge, Thunder Lake Logging Railroad, which operated from 1893 to 1941. Scarlet, who has a degree in horticulture from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is the one with the green-thumb, and works full-time, off the farm, in agricultural research. John is recently retired, as Chief Deputy Sheriff for Oneida County, and has settled in as a full-time cattleman and part-time hockey player.

### Program Successes

Camp Four Farm was farming for pollinators before working with NRCS, but redoubled their efforts through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). They inter-seeded old hay fields with honeybee-friendly Ladino clover and implemented a rotational grazing plan that deferred haying and grazing to maximize food and habitat for honeybees.

“John and Scarlet didn’t need NRCS to sell them on the importance of conservation—they came to us with a strong conservation ethic,” according to Michael Stinebrink, NRCS District Conservationist. “Our job was to help them achieve their conservation objectives, by offering technical and financial assistance, and to encourage additional steps by floating new ideas. The Sweeneys ran with those ideas; if it was good for conservation, they got it done.”

The Sweeneys voluntarily set aside lands adjacent to their pastures and farmstead to allow milkweed and other native forbs to flower and remain undisturbed through winter. They also fenced cattle out of an alder swamp to protect habitat and improve water quality. Though the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Camp Four Farm began to use a flush-bar on their haying equipment and retrofitted their stock water tanks with escape ladders for birds and other animals. They also installed roof gutters on their barn to intercept clean water and divert it away from their barnyard.



*Hundreds of Monarchs may be found on any given summer day at Camp Four Farm, including this one, on blueberry blossoms. More information about the farm, its wildlife, and its berry- and fruit-picking seasons may be found on their Facebook page.*

### Future Plans

Through CSP, Camp Four Farm will soon have a bat box and additional bluebird nesting boxes. John and Scarlet will also be controlling a patch of black locust that established on an adjacent homestead. They’ve settled on a herd size of approximately 45 black and red angus on 100 acres of pasture with room to expand the herd.

