

NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

NAP's mission is to protect and restore Ann Arbor's natural areas and foster an environmental ethic within the community.

Park Focus: Bluffs Nature Area

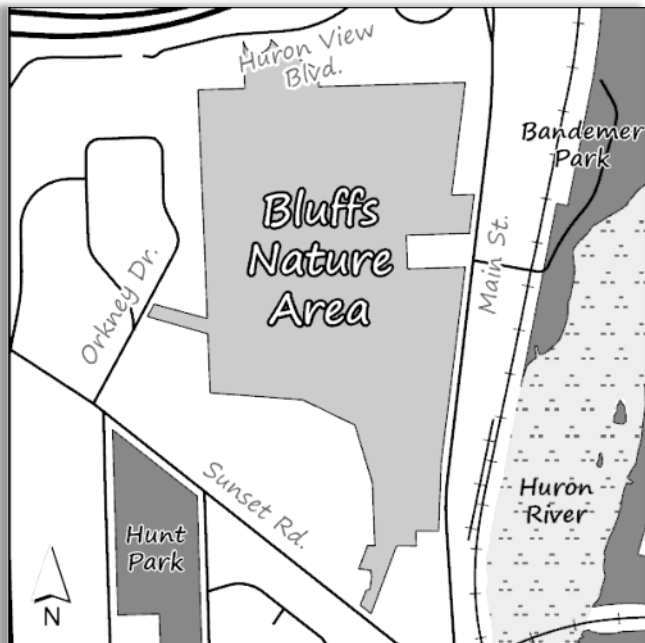
Renée Hytinen, PR and Special Events

There are some amazing views from the trails that run along the eastern edge of Bluffs Nature Area, parallel to North Main Street. For one, the river is down there! It's a little bit harder to see when the trees are fully leafed-out, but it's still there, flowing along, doing its thing supporting the countless organisms (including us human beings) in the watershed. Argo Nature Area and Argo Canoe Livery are visible across the river, and you can watch excited paddlers hopping in and heading for the Cascades. Other times you can see rowing crews at practice—they launch from Bandemer Nature Area. North Main Street is often a bustle of vehicles going in and out of downtown, a fun counterpoint to the steady river flow.

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Baltimore Oriole at Bluffs Nature Area, John Lloyd



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Bluffs Nature Area

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Top: Ghost pipe blooming at Bluffs
Bottom: Blooms at Bluffs, Margot Mehringer



Left: Bee balm blooming at Bluffs
Right: American toad at Bluffs

Besides the river and the road, you can also hear and see trains going down the tracks between the river and North Main. So much movement to see while strolling amid the stationary trees and relatively calm forest of Bluffs.

How did these amazing views come to be?

I found this wonderful description of the glacial process and the formation of the area in a September 2013 Ann Arbor Observer [article](#) by Stephanie Douglass:

About 14,000 years ago, as the climate began to warm, the Huron-Erie Lobe [part of the Laurentide Ice Sheet, a continental glacier covering practically all of Canada and much of the upper Midwest] stalled over Ann Arbor, its forward movement pretty much equal to its melt. The western edge of the glacier, or ice margin, lay atop the west side of the city. Although the glacier was relatively stationary, the internal movement of the ice proceeded to dump massive quantities of glacial till—unsorted sediment including sand, gravel, silt, and clay—in a ridge known as an end moraine. This process of deposition built the sudden rise along Ann Arbor’s west side. If you’ve ever labored to bike up the incline on westbound Liberty between 7th and Stadium, or if you’ve ever sweated the walk up Spring Street to the northwest tip of Hunt Park, you’ve climbed this moraine, and have an idle glacier to thank for your rock-hard calves. It is formally known as the Fort Wayne Moraine, because it extends all the way to Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Scaling back down from the glacial to the local, Bluffs in itself contains many smaller wonders. Habitat here ranges from shrubland, to prairie and prairie remnants, a ravine, and woodland. During the nature walk following a fall workday in 2022, workday leaders brought volunteers to the Bluffs prairie and pointed out the many native plants flourishing there. Dana Novak, NAP’s Workday Coordinator shared her awe of the changes she has seen during her time at NAP. **CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**

Bluffs Nature Area

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Due to hard work by volunteers removing invasive shrubs, and conducting prescribed burns, this spot has expanded and developed significantly. Notably, Park Stewards Catherine Riseng, Joann Constantindes, and John Lawter have put hours and hours of time into monitoring and caring for Bluffs.

Indeed it has been a memorable location for many years, delighting NAP staff and volunteers alike. Chris Cookingham, former NAP Conservation Crew member, highlighted the prairie beautifully in a 2001 NAP Newsletter [article](#):

Originally a wooded hillside, this area was mined for fill material for various roadbuilding projects around town. When the last bulldozer left and the site was again quiet, what remained was a bare and infertile layer of sand and gravel, uninviting for prospective colonizers. Hardy native plants were able to turn this to their advantage, however, and a prairie arose, with big and little bluestem, Indian grass, mountain mint, butterfly milkweed, stiff and showy goldenrod, lanced-leaf coreopsis, and spiked lobelia widely interspersed with red cedar, quaking aspen, and eastern cottonwood.



Conservation Crew member Chloe Hernandez leading a nature walk at Bluffs mid-summer.



Burn Crew members burning the prairie at Bluffs.

What else can be seen at Bluffs?

Among the notable plant species here, Ann Reuter, former NAP Staff member, highlighted nut trees in a 2012 Park Focus [article](#):

If you want to see a variety of our native nut trees, Bluffs is a great place to visit. Near a creek that crosses the southern part of the property, you'll find several one-foot-diameter butternut trees, a more delicate cousin of black walnut which is now uncommon locally due to a non-native fungal disease. Some say the small group here is the largest collection of butternut trees in Ann Arbor.

And finally, this park is an [eBird Hotspot](#), with spring reports of Hairy and Pileated Woodpecker, Ovenbird, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. [American Woodcock](#) has been found here several times, and maybe you'll see one of their famous "dances" on a spring evening this year. From eBird, Woodcock can be found "always on the ground, except during well-known elaborate courtship displays performed from dusk to dawn in spring. Listen for loud nasal 'PEENT!' calls from the ground and high-pitched chirps and twitters (produced by the outer wing feathers) from high in the sky."

The unpaved trail system at Bluffs has expanded and developed over the years, with the newest entrances at [Huron View Boulevard](#) on the north side of the park, and [Orkney Drive](#) to the west. An entrance is also available on Sunset Road, between the cemetery and the Elks Club. The [nearest bus stop](#) is less than a five minute walk from the Sunset Road entrance.

NAPPENINGS

Staff Updates

Congratulations!



Brady Friss

Conservation Crew Leader

Congratulations and gratitude to Brady Friss for stepping into the role of Conservation Crew Leader after two years on the crew. NAP is already benefitting from

Brady's knowledge and dedication, as well as his cool cucumber attitude. Kudos, Brady!

Thank you!

Many thanks to the individuals and groups who helped out with volunteer work or other support over the winter months. We could not make such a difference without you!

- **UM Alpha Tau Pi** and **Tau Beta Pi** for excellent work on a chilly workday.
- **Elyce Rexer** for helping get the message out.
- **Craig Perdue** for invaluable help keeping NAP on its feet.
- **Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation** for event support.
- Our colleagues at **Cobblestone Farm** for excellent service.

EVENTS

March-April Volunteer Workdays

Find full details at a2gov.org/NAPEvents

- Hansen Nature Area 3/18
- Bluffs Nature Area 3/19
- Furstenberg Nature Area 3/25
- Braun Nature Area 3/25
- Barton Nature Area 3/26
- Folkstone Park 4/1
- Lakewood Nature Area 4/2
- Brokaw Nature Area 4/8
- Argo Nature Area 4/15
- Huron Hills Golf Course Woods 4/16
- Mary Beth Doyle Park 4/22
- Furstenberg Nature Area 4/22
- Bluffs Nature Area 4/23
- Riverwood Nature Area 4/29
- Bird Hills Nature Area 4/30

Community Science Kickoffs

Breeding Bird Survey Kickoff

Thursday, April 13, 2023, 7 to 9 p.m.

Online

Learn how to put your birding skills to use and survey for breeding birds in Ann Arbor's parks! Learn how NAP uses eBird to record survey results, sign up to survey your favorite park, hear about last year's survey, and access the survey materials. Note that **experience in bird identification is necessary, and you must be able to identify birds by sight and sound to participate in this survey.** Pre-register through [VolunteerHub](https://VolunteerHub.org).

Turtle Survey Kickoff

Sunday, April 16, 2023, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Ann Arbor Senior Center

At least 6 species of turtles live and nest in the city, maybe more! Help NAP maintain and protect nest sites, monitor populations, and look for turtles in habitats along the Huron River and nearby waters.

Volunteers survey monthly through September. NAP will teach you species identification, nest maintenance and monitoring, and how to report your turtle observations. And yes, you can survey for turtles while paddling down the river on a sunny morning! This event will be recorded, so you are welcome to register even if you cannot attend the live training. Please pre-register each participating individual through [VolunteerHub](https://VolunteerHub.org).

NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

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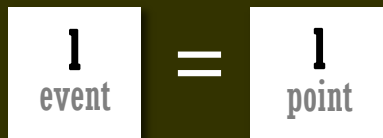
Facebook: [@ann.arbor.nap](https://www.facebook.com/ann.arbor.nap)

*Natural Area Preservation is
funded by the voter-approved
2020-2026 Park Maintenance
& Capital Improvements Millage.*

Nature Stewardship VOLUNTEER REWARDS 2023



Attend NAP events in 2023 to receive points!



Register now for NAP events at vhub.at/NAP, and start earning points!

How far can you level-up this year?



30
points

bur oak
exclusive NAP event



14
points

buttonbush
NAP hoodie



6
points

big bluestem
NAP shirt*



3
points

bee balm
NAP cap



1
point

bloodroot
NAP 2023 pin

General info

- Points are tracked in your VolunteerHub profile.
- Level-ups are announced monthly.
- When you level-up, you will be contacted through VolunteerHub and we'll send instructions for getting your level-up reward.

Eligible events

One point per program per day.

- Public and Private Workdays
- Trainings
- Park Steward activities
- Survey outings for breeding birds, turtles, salamanders, frogs and toads, and butterflies
- Photo Monitoring sessions
- Prescribed Burns
- Other events as identified by program coordinators

**Regular NAP volunteers should note that we will no longer be giving t-shirts out at the Volunteer Appreciation Party—so get leveled-up to get your shirt this year!!*