

Natural Area Preservation News

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Summer 2000

The mission of the Natural Area Preservation Division is to protect and restore Ann Arbor's natural areas and foster an environmental ethic among its citizens.

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Coordinator's Corner: Our Changing Ecological Perspective

by Dave Borneman

It used to be enough to just put a fence around the woods. That would keep the developers out and provide a nice delineation between the urban world and the natural world. But our philosophy about how to forever preserve pieces of nature in city parks has changed since that first Earth Day 30 years ago.

Back then, the only real threat, it seemed, was that someone would "pave paradise and put up a parking lot." So, once the papers were signed and the land officially became a city park, we could just congratulate ourselves on our far-sightedness and move on to the next "Save the Woods" campaign. While such grassroots efforts to set aside the nicest remaining fragments of nature ARE extremely important, they are not, unfortunately, enough to ensure that the small piece of paradise we've just saved will ever be enjoyed by our children.

The problem is twofold: first, and most obviously, that little postage stamp woodlot was once just a small part of a much larger complex of forest, prairie, and wetland which stretched, well, from sea-to-shining-sea, or nearly so. In 1701, when the explorer Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac first stepped from his boat on Lake Erie into what later became Detroit, all of Michigan was then just one big "nature preserve"

complete with resident caretakers (or perhaps we should say "natural resource managers") in the form of the tribal cultures living here then. There's been a severe problem of "fragmentation" of the natural environment since then, as we've well known for a long time.

The second part of the problem, and the one that many of us are just now starting to come to grips with, is that these pieces of nature are not merely final, complete works by the Creator which were set down here in their finished form like a pretty painting hanging on your wall. These are dynamic,

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Parks & Recreation
CITY OF ANN ARBOR

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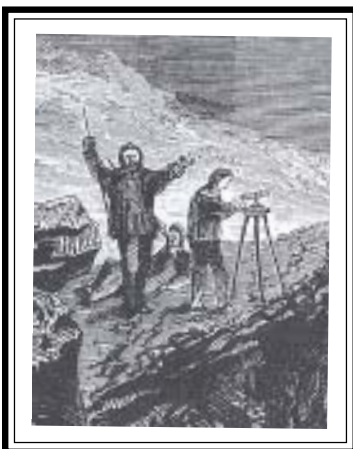
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Park Focus: Sugarbush

by Jen Maignet



Imagine walking through a moist woodland on a clear, crisp fall morning just as the night's frost begins to melt in the warm sun. Many of the trees are tapped and have metal buckets hanging on their trunks to collect sap as it drips. In the distance, clouds of sugary steam rise from the labor of boiling sap into syrup in a small wooden shack. These are images that may come to mind when speaking of "sugarbush." And although some of the neighbors of Sugarbush Park speak of a time when these images prevailed, today's Sugarbush offers a different experience.

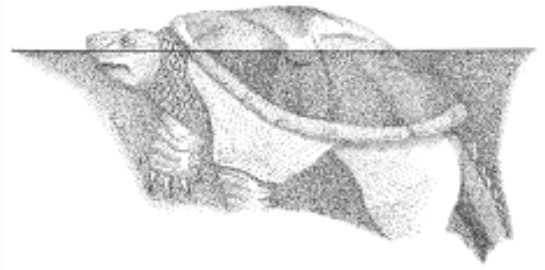
Sugarbush Park was acquired by the Department of Parks and Recreation in 1968. At the time, the only houses in that area were those on Bromley Court and the US-23 and M-14 sections of Ann Arbor's highway ring were not yet constructed. There were plans afoot for the construction of several housing developments thereby creating a future need for a neighborhood park. Since then, Sugarbush Park has evolved into a diverse park with play areas, a ball diamond and a natural area.

The natural area of Sugarbush Park extends north from Bluett Road between Georgetown Boulevard and Yellowstone Drive. This area is primarily a beech-maple woodland with a somewhat unusual assemblage of plants including several that are found in no other park in Ann Arbor. If you enter from one of the two Bluett entrances and follow the trail north, you will come across a small Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) grove on the east side of the path. The Pawpaw is an understory tree that grows to a height of 10-20 feet. The fruit of this tree is the largest fruit native to North America and is reminiscent of a short, fat banana. It is considered desirable by some, although it is often eaten by wildlife before it is ripe enough to be palatable to human tastes. A second unusual tree found in the woods of Sugarbush is the Four-angled or Blue Ash (*Fraxinus quadrangulata*), so named for conspicuously four-sided corky ridges running along its twigs and a mucilaginous substance of the inner bark that turns blue when exposed.

As with many of the other natural areas of Ann Arbor, Sugarbush Park also has invasive shrubs within its woods. N.A.P. has hosted invasive removal workdays at Sugarbush in the past, but most recently has focused its restoration efforts on trail work. Sugarbush is greatly appreciated and visited, especially by its neighbors. Over time, several informal paths became established and trails began to widen from foot traffic. The widening trails threatened to impact the wildflowers alongside trail edges, therefore it became a priority to install trail liners to maintain a constant trail width throughout the park. Trail liners are simply logs arranged alongside trail edges and secured with wooden stakes. So wander this woodland, and with some luck you may be able to sample a pawpaw fruit.

Herpetofaunal Report

by David Mifsud



The annual Frog and Toad Survey was off to a rocky but productive field season this year. Due to the extreme fluctuations in the weather this spring, frog and toad activity has been sporadic. As such, surveying has been difficult at times. Many species have had extended or delayed breeding seasons due to the lack of spring rain and cold/hot spring weather. Fortunately, with the recent rains in May, amphibian-breeding sites are once again filled with water.

We have already had four field trips this season. While out we have seen and/or heard many amphibians and reptiles including: Chorus Frogs, Spring Peepers, Wood Frogs, American Toads, Gray Tree Frogs, Green Frogs, Spotted Salamanders, Spotted Newts, Snapping Turtles, Painted Turtles, and Garter Snakes. We are planning on having more field trips this summer so check with NAP for details.

With the early warm weather we have been experiencing, we can also expect to see a large variety of herps throughout the rest of the season. One thing to keep an eye out for will be the early nesting of turtles this year. Be sure to watch for them as they cross the roads looking for nesting grounds. You can help them to safe ground by lifting them off the road and depositing them to the side they were originally directed towards. Just be careful of the snapping turtles!

Welcome Home

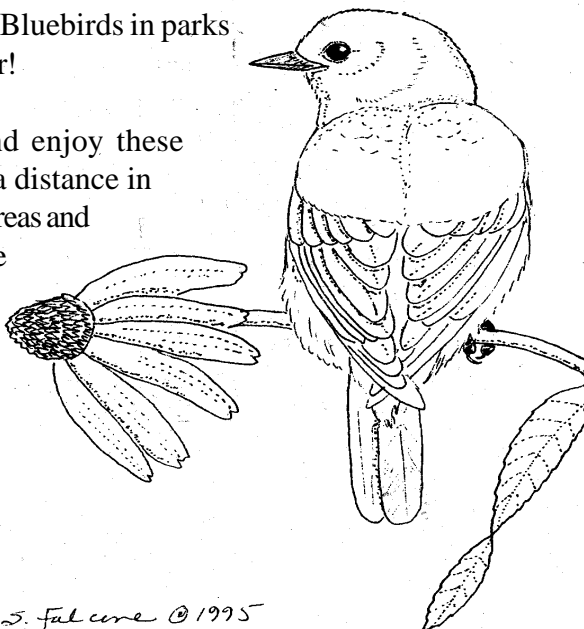
by Dea Armstrong

As of May 5, Ann Arbor Parks can proudly boast of nesting Eastern Bluebirds. Although birdhouses were put up last year to encourage nesting, the boxes only attracted Tree Swallows, House Wrens, Black-capped Chickadees and, unfortunately, House Sparrows. This year the old boxes were cleaned, and new boxes were added. At Gallup and Furstenberg Parks, nest boxes were paired-up and placed within 10 feet of each other. This method is recommended by Bluebird nest box enthusiasts because of the nesting habits of Bluebirds and their nest box competitors- Tree Swallows. Bluebirds are territorial and don't like to nest adjacent to each other, nor do Tree Swallows. However, by placing boxes close together the two species seem to tolerate each other and can occupy the same area.

In March, Bluebirds were checking out the selection of boxes at Furstenberg and Gallup Parks. But the quiet natural areas of Furstenberg, Brown and Kuebler Langford Parks are where the Bluebirds have chosen to take up residence. Bluebirds seem to prefer open fields or old field areas and these parks provide the birds with the right habitat.

According to Kielbaso et al. in *Birds of Washtenaw County*, loss of nesting sites as a result of habitat loss and competition from European Starlings, along with the effects of DDT, led to the population's historic low in the 1960s. Nationwide, human intervention by many organizations and individuals has helped this bird make an amazing recovery, though habitat loss still keeps numbers low today. The Ann Arbor Parks Breeding Bird Survey had no records of nesting Eastern Bluebirds in parks until this year!

Observe and enjoy these birds from a distance in our natural areas and welcome back the Eastern Bluebird!



NAP-penings

The Michigan Chapters of the Wild Ones and Nichols Arboretum will host the **National Wild Ones Annual Meeting on Natural Landscaping** August 12, 2000 right here in Ann Arbor. The program will include talks from Craig Tufts, Chief Naturalist for the National Wildlife Federation; Janet Macunovich, Detroit Free Press "Growing Concern" columnist and Director of the Michigan School of Gardening; Joan Nassauer, UM Landscape Architecture Professor; and Bob Grese, Nichols Arboretum Director and UM Landscape Architecture Professor (and one of the founding members of the Ann Arbor chapter of the Wild Ones). Sessions will discuss natural landscaping topics such as attracting backyard wildlife, and introducing native plants to your traditional garden. Registration will begin August 1. Please refer to the Wild Ones Web site (<http://www.for-wild.org>) or call 248-601-2553 for more information.

Huron River Day will celebrate 20 years *Along the Huron*, Sunday July 9. A summer tradition in Ann Arbor, the day is full of activities and entertainment for all ages. Activities include running and walking races, a charity canoe race, a drum circle, magic and storytelling. The day will also host information and activities from local environmental groups, a butterfly walk and natural history walk, and a kids Enviro-Challenge. For a complete listing of events, check the newspaper or the Parks and Recreation Department website for more information <http://www.ci.ann-arbor.mi.us/framed/parks/index.html>

The **Huron River Watershed Stewardship Network** has been working over the last couple of years to offer activities and events to encourage us all to take a role in natural area stewardship. An upcoming event of interest is a **workshop** on "How to Develop a Management Plan" scheduled for June 24 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Our own Dave Borneman will lead the workshop. The workshop will discuss developing a proactive plan to manage, restore and protect a special natural area. There is a \$5.00 charge, payable at the door. Pre-registration is necessary- call Catriona at NAP 996-3266 or email cmortell@ci.ann-arbor.mi.us to register. Lunch will be provided.

more NAP-penings continued on page 8

Volunteer Focus: Quiet Fire

by Catriona Mortell

A Quiet Fire is an odd title for an article about a volunteer, but I do believe it's an accurate description of **Barbara Powell**.

Barbara initially joined NAP's burn crew in 1996 during our first training. She has returned each year since then, and has been a valuable member of the burn crew each season. She initially came to the training because of her interest in prairies and prairie burns. She may not have expected to catch the NAP firebug but she now is one of our most seasoned veterans. Barbara's friendly demeanor and quiet intensity are seen in all of the roles she's played on the burn crew, from public relations to ignition.



Barbara is one of NAP's exceptional volunteers, but we are not the only organization that has benefitted from her talents and interests. Through teaching and service projects, she volunteers her time in a number of places. Barbara volunteers at UM Matthaei Botanical Gardens as a Docent and at Ann Arbor Public Schools as an Environmental Education Field Trip Leader. Additionally, she is an active Sierra Club member and a leader for the Huron Valley Group's Inner City Outings program for city youths. Both she and her husband Ralph lead service projects for the North Country Trail Association and participate in service projects with the American Hiking Society.

Barbara enjoys teaching and sees a real need for disseminating information about the natural world, especially to young people. This is one of the reasons she gives so much of her time to educational programs. She views her participation in service projects as both a learning experience and a chance to meet interesting people. Between these teaching and service projects, she is quite a positive force in the environmental field. The wonderful thing about Barbara is the time and effort she puts into volunteer activities; they are simply a part of who she is and how she (and Ralph) approach things.

So back to that title, like a prescribed ecological burn (fire) Barbara quietly and effectively acts to protect, restore and champion the environment.

Volunteer News and Notes

You really must check out the garden at Furstenberg Park. **Aunita Erskine** has been working diligently with other volunteers at making this native plant garden a real showpiece. Aunita also lends her energies to the native plant garden in the Project Grow Demonstration Garden at the Leslie Science Center. She has done a lot of research on the plants in these gardens and enjoys sharing her knowledge with volunteers. Join Aunita's group at the Furstenberg Native Plant Demonstration Garden workdays on June 11, July 15 and August 19.

We have had **wonderful help** these last few months with our workdays, burns, inventories and special projects. Brown Park has received special attention in the last month; Students from the **NEW School** put in over 75 hours removing non-native invasives from the park. The Park also received special attention from **Mark Charles**, who organized a neighborhood workday at the park to remove invasives. The **Professional Volunteer Corps** continues to wow us with it's energy both at Sugarbush and at Black Pond Woods workdays. Argo Park has a new steward, **Gillian Harris**. Gillian has been involved with NAP in the past and is currently conducting the breeding bird survey for Argo. As steward she'll take on many more activities! **Photo monitors** have been busy documenting restoration work in the parks. The **inventory volunteers** are also working hard to identify various fauna in the parks. **Workdays** have been very productive this spring. We appreciate all the time volunteers contribute. It is a great thing when we get a call from someone interested in volunteering. Summer evening workdays are always a nice way to unwind after a long day in the office! We hope you join us soon!

NAP is interested in tracking the location and extent that **Purple Loosestrife** is spreading throughout our parks. Help us monitor this purple plague. Call the NAP office to sign up for the purple patrol! While on patrol you'll map and notify NAP of locations plus you'll cut off the flowering (seed) head. As part of our purple patrol efforts, we will also be sponsoring a special loosestrife identification project for children during Huron River Day, July 9, 2000.

Summer 2000 Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

JUNE

June 14 Wednesday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: **Furstenberg Park**



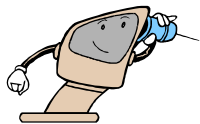
Time: **6:00 - 8:00 PM**
Join us in an effort to remove the dreaded spotted knapweed from the prairie. We will be hand pulling, and because of possible skin irritations caused by this plant, we strongly recommend long pants, long sleeves, socks and closed toe shoes.

June 17 Saturday
Breeding Bird Survey Walk
Location: **Landfill**



Time: **7:30 AM**
Join Dea Armstrong, NAP Ornithologist at this birding hotspot to learn how rewarding birding can be. Meet at the small parking lot at the Platt Road entrance.

When joining our stewardship workdays - Please come dressed for work outdoors! For your safety, long pants and closed toe shoes are required.



Would you like to receive a reminder of our events?

A few days before an event NAP can e-mail you a reminder of what, where and when!! Please send an e-mail to Cationa at cmortell@ci.ann-arbor.mi.us to get on the e-mail notification list.



JULY

July 5 Wednesday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: **Arborhills Nature Area**



Time: **6:00 - 8:00 PM**
This natural area is a small Beech-Maple woodland, with a small wetland area. Join us to remove any invasives we find. Meet at the park entrance on Green Rd.

July 9 Sunday
Huron River Day
Location: **Gallup Park**



Time: **9:00 AM to 4:00 PM**
Join the riverside celebration! Events include canoe and foot races in the morning, entertainment, activities and environmental information in the afternoon. A great day of events for the whole family! Join the **Butterfly Walk** led by Chris Rickards from 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

July 15 Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: **Furstenberg Native Plant Demonstration Garden.**



Time: **9:00 AM - 1:00 PM**
Continue to learn about gardening with native plants. Bring your own garden tools if you have them. Meet at the garden just east of the entrance drive off Fuller Rd.

July 26 Wednesday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: **Maryfield-Wildwood Park**



Time: **6:00 - 8:00 PM**
We'll remove invasives from this west-side hidden treasure. Meet at the park backstop on Linwood near Brierwood St.

AUGUST

August 2 Wednesday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: **Fritz Park**



Time: **6:00 - 8:00 PM**
Join in removing invasives from this small west side woodland. Meet at the shelter. Street parking is available on Russett, and Northwood Streets.

August 5 Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: **Furstenberg Park**



Time: **10:00 AM - 1:00 PM**
Join us once again to remove invasive non-native plants. This park is off Fuller Rd across from the Huron High School entrance. Meet near the restrooms.

August 16 Wednesday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: **Brown Park**



Time: **6:00 - 8:00 PM**
Join us in removing non-native invasive plants from this south side park. Meet at the Packard Rd entrance.

August 19 Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: **Furstenberg Native Plant Demonstration Garden.**



Time: **9:00 AM - 1:00 PM**
Keep on learning about gardening with native plants. Bring your own garden tools if you have them. Meet at the garden just east of the entrance drive off Fuller Rd.

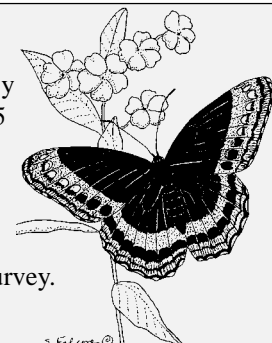
September

September 16 Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
Location: **Hollywood Park**



Time: **10:00AM - 1:00 PM**
We will remove invasives from this small westside woodland. Meet at the park on Sequoia Parkway.

Notice the lovely drawings on pages 3, 5 and 5? They were donated to NAP by local artist Susan Falcone. Susan also volunteers on the Breeding Bird survey. Thank you Susan!



S. Falcone ©

Continued from page 1...Our Changing Ecological Perspective

evolving, living ecosystems which are in their current state only because of past circumstances. So, a bottomland, floodplain forest is the way it is partly because it has gone through thousands of years of seasonal flooding. Stop that flooding, or alter its frequency or degree, and you alter that floodplain ecosystem. Likewise, prairies, oak savannas, oak forests, and many other fire-adapted ecosystems in southeastern Michigan looked the way they did in 1701 partly because they had just gone through thousands of years of frequent, perhaps annual, burning by Native Americans, for whom fire was an important cultural tradition. Take away those fires, and the future character of those ecosystems will change dramatically from what it was historically. This is especially true considering that there's a new group of players in the game now that weren't there historically - exotic, invasive species.

Exotic species are, by definition, species which were not here in Michigan historically - say, prior to widespread European settlement in the 18th and 19th centuries. These are species which have spent thousands of years evolving somewhere else in the world, perhaps Asia or Europe. In their native environment, their numbers are kept in check by various pests, diseases, and other competitors. But bring them over here to Michigan, and free them of those natural population controls, and their numbers can skyrocket, often to the detriment of our own native species. This is certainly not true of all exotic species, many of which cannot handle our cold winters. But those which do thrive here and out-compete our native species are called "invasive species."

Wait a minute, how can an "exotic" species out-compete a "native" species, which evolved here in Michigan and should, therefore, be best adapted to the conditions here? Ah, that's the problem! The current environmental conditions are not the same as they've been for the past ten thousand years. Remember the fragmentation, and the fact that the historic ecosystems were created through historic processes like flooding and fire? Well, since Europeans arrived, those fires are no longer sweeping through our oak woodlands and our prairies. In this radically new environment, one without fire, our native plant species have a much harder time competing with those exotic plant species. Remember, because the exotics

aren't living in their "home" environment, they don't have to worry about insects, diseases, and other pests which plague the natives. They're free to "multiply, and subdue the Earth."

What's wrong with that? Well, nothing - unless you find enjoyment in a rich carpet of diverse spring wildflowers, or you like butterflies of many different colors, shapes, and sizes, or you prefer a ground-cover which absorbs rainwater rather than letting it wash away bare soil. Native ecosystems are diverse, stable, and ecologically very functional. There's a "balance of nature" there which you don't find in a dense buckthorn thicket, or a monoculture of purple loosestrife. With plant diversity comes insect and bird diversity. With them comes other wildlife diversity. With diversity comes stability, and sustainability.

So, one of the big changes to hit Ann Arbor in the past 30 years was the realization that if we really want to preserve part of nature for our kids, we need to do more than just put a fence around it. We need to manage it, not because we humans know how to improve on Mother Nature, but simply because we are the ones responsible for disrupting things in the first place. It's too late to just say, "Let Nature take its course" because we have already so dramatically changed that course ever since we began settling this continent. Like it or not, we're left in the role of Steward for our natural areas.



Spring 2000 Prescribed Burn Report: Thinking Small

by Dave Borneman

Well, the smoke has cleared following another NAP burn season, so it's time to sit back and reflect on what happened. This was a record burn season for us in several areas. But first, let's do the numbers: This spring, between March 7th and April 28th, we burned on 16 different days, in 21 different parks. We burned about 150 acres, in about 30 "burn units," which gives us an average burn unit size of 5 acres. Our first burn, in Brown Park, was the largest at nearly 20 acres.

A "burn unit," by the way, is a discrete area bounded on all sides by some type of burn break - such as the river, the railroad tracks, a trail, a mowed lawn - anything that is free of combustible material and thus will stop the spread of fire. Typically, we entirely ignite, and then allow to burn completely, one "burn unit" before going on to the next. But where there are several trails bisecting one block of habitat, we sometimes burn them all as one "burn unit," so the actual number of "burn units" is somewhat arbitrary. But, as long as we count them the same way from year to year, we can still make some comparisons.

In the spring of 1997, we burned 205 acres - the most ever - in 20 different "burn units" for an average of about 10 acres per unit. This is double the average size of our "burn units" this past spring. So, why are we now doing smaller burns? Well, it certainly isn't because it's more convenient! It would be much easier to burn a 30 acre block all at once than to just burn 10 acres this year but have to return next year to do another 10 acres and a third year to do the final 10 acres. No, the reason we're making things more difficult for ourselves is primarily because of our concern about butterflies and other insects.

You see, although fire does great things to butterfly habitat, it does terrible things to individual butterfly eggs laid the previous fall within that habitat. The same is true of many other insects. Like the fire-adapted oaks, grasses, and other native plants of our historical landscape, these creatures have all evolved with fire. In fact, the loss of fire as a natural process has led to the loss of much suitable habitat for these creatures.

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Native Plant Focus

By Michelle Michney

Wandering near wetlands or moist woodland edges this summer, you are sure to spot some plants with a unique botanical history. You are likely to see the white flowers of common boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*), and the striking, tall, flat, pinkish-purple flower heads of Sweet Joe-pye weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*) and Spotted Joe-pye weed (*E. maculatum*). All three bloom from July to September. Also noticeable because of its height, Joe-pye weed can reach six feet in height, with common boneset close behind at five feet.

There seem to be at least two different legends surrounding the name "Joe-pye," and where it came from. The most common legend is that Joe Pye was a Native American man who wished to become a healer. One day, he was presented with a young boy with a bone injury. The herb he needed for a cure was boneset, but when he went into the marsh to collect it, he mistook Joe-pye Weed for it, and it didn't work. The gods became very angry, and turned Joe Pye into the plant he had collected. The other story is that Joe Pye was a healer who used Joe-pye weed to cure typhoid and many other diseases.

It is easy to mistake Joe-pye weed for boneset when they are not in bloom. They grow to almost the same heights, and the dry flower heads have a similar shape. The difference becomes apparent when you take a closer look at the leaves. The leaves of the Joe-pye weed have distinct petioles, and there may be anywhere from three to seven leaves growing from the same point on the main stem. Boneset has opposite leaves, with no petioles, and the two leaves come together at the main stem in a way that give the impression they are one leaf.

This union of the leaves around the stem is what gives boneset its name. To early herbalists, the way the leaves grew from the stem indicated it would be useful in setting bones. So the leaves were used to wrap broken bones. It was also used medicinally for treating influenza, rheumatism, and fevers.

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Thinking Small



But now we're left in a delicate situation because, although all the butterfly habitat would benefit from a burn, it's probably best to not burn all of it at the same time. It's like painting the floor of your house: Either you paint half of it at a time and live in the other half while it's drying, or you paint all of it and then move out for a few days. The only difference with the butterflies and other insects is that they can't move out for a few days, especially if they're in the egg stage. So, we have to rely on populations surviving in the unburned areas to repopulate any areas which may have lost insects during the burn.

This creates a lot of logistical headaches for the burn crew, and a lot of extra work. In 1997, for example, we burned on 18 days, but only two of those were "multiple burn" days, where we burned two different sites. This past spring, we only burned 16 days, and two of those were 2-burn days, and four of them were 3-burn days! To do that, the crew has to work really hard to prep the various sites, do the burn, and finish it up quickly so we can pack up the signs and move to a different site to do another small burn.

This is one of the reasons that NAP surveys butterflies every year - to monitor the populations of these lovely insects. This survey has helped us to realize the need to shrink the size of our burn units, and to shrink it even more in the future. In the past few years, we've just tried to not burn all of the park at one time. In the future, we'll focus more on not burning all of the prime butterfly habitat at one time.

For example, the Slivery Checkerspot butterfly is abundant in no city park other than Marshall. But it doesn't occur throughout the park, only in a relatively small section which is old field rather than forest. This summer, we will map the exact location of this butterfly's old field habitat, and divide that into several burn units, only one of which will be burned in any given year. This will help maintain the long-term health of this population by ensuring that there will always be some unburned butterfly eggs to replace any that may have been lost in the burn.

To maintain this pace, we rely heavily on volunteers. This spring, they really came through for us. Thirty different people, the most ever, showed up to help with at least one burn this spring, and many of them came back for more. Truly, we could not have done these burns without these individuals. Thank you for those efforts; we really appreciate them. And more importantly, the butterflies, moths, grasshoppers, ants, leafhoppers, beetles, and other insects appreciate them too.



continued from page 3 **NAP-penings**

Another new staff member has joined us since the last newsletter. **Jen Lewis** is our latest conservation worker. She's a part time student at Eastern studying biology. She may look familiar to some Veterans Park users; she has taught skating there for a few years. Also this summer we have a student from UM School of Natural Resources and Environment interning with NAP. As part of her internship **Katherine O'Brien** will be working with the conservation crew and is assisting with outreach projects.

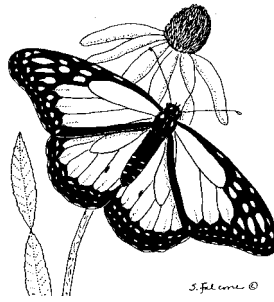
In an effort to manage the City's **ever growing Canada Goose population**, NAP is working with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to pilot a new goose tracking program. In May, the MDNR placed radio telemeters (collars) on two female geese from Gallup, with the intent of tracking their migration via satellite. Someday if we can prevent the geese from successfully nesting here, they may be induced to make a 'molt migration' to Hudson Bay for the summer. This new tracking program will also be piloted in a handful of other select sites throughout the state. Stay tuned for the results of this study.

The City of Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Department will receive a **medallion award** from the American Society of Landscape Architects for the landscape designs of Gallup, Cedar Bend and Furstenberg Parks. It is part of ASLA's 100 year celebration to recognize significant landscapes. Parks and Recreation will team with Nichols Arboretum to host the presentation of the awards in conjunction with Arb Fest, Saturday, June 10. The designers of Gallup and Furstenberg will speak and Bob Grese, Nichols Arboretum Director and UM Landscape Architecture Professor will talk about design and history of Cedar Bend and Island Parks as well as the Arboretum. The event will take place at 3:00 PM at the Reader Center in the Arboretum.

Butterfly Sightings

by Catriona Mortell

Warm southerly winds and regular rains have brought about an explosion of butterfly activity recently with many early sightings – some as early as 3 weeks. Examples of early migrant sightings include the Monarch, and an unusual sighting of a summer migrant, the Buckeye. Butterfly identification can be challenging, but with binoculars, an identification book, and practice we all can get to know these wondrous creatures.



Butterflies are part of the animal kingdom in the insect order Lepidoptera, which also include moths. The layperson may confuse butterflies and moths because of their similarities, and because moths are more numerous. However one distinct difference is that butterflies fly during the day and moths at night. Butterflies rest their wings vertically over their back while moths have a few positions – tent like over the back, extended at sides, or wrapped around them. Almost all butterflies have club like endings to their antennae while moths do not. Butterflies are divided into two ‘superfamilies.’ True butterflies, the Papilionoidea, have narrow bodies, long antennae and brightly colored wings. Skippers (Hesperioidea) make up the second family. They are more compact and hairy, with short triangular wings and muted coloration of tawny orange, brown, black or gray.

Besides figuring out what plants and habitats are likely to host specific butterflies, getting to know coloration and wing shape will help in identifying various butterfly species. Coloration of butterfly wings is due to millions of shingle-like overlapping scales. Solid colors are from pigmented scales, while iridescent hues are from faceted scales that refract light. Once you begin to learn the wing color patterns, you’ll notice some of the defenses butterflies have evolved. For example, false eyespot markings are found near wing edges or a conspicuous tail will help to distract predators away from more vulnerable body parts. Since predators learn which species are toxic by their color, some butterflies have evolved to mimic the coloration of the toxic butterflies in order to fool predators. Some species have under wing colors that resemble bark, but their top wings are colored vividly which, when quickly displayed, can have a startling effect.

There is still time to join the butterfly survey team. We conduct the survey through September. Please contact the NAP office if you’d like to join Chris Rickards and the inventory volunteers.

A Haven for Grassland Birds

by Dea Armstrong

Grassland species of birds such as Grasshopper Sparrows, Bobolinks, Savannah Sparrows, and Eastern and Western Meadowlarks have declined to less than 50% of their population levels of 30 years ago. The decline can be attributed to a general loss of grassland habitat as well as more frequent and, consequently, earlier mowing of these areas for agricultural or cosmetic reasons.

All of these bird species can be found breeding in the grassy areas of the City landfill on Platt Road. In mid-May David Borneman and I sat down with landfill staff, Danny Cozart, Anne Sibole, Nancy Stone and Peter Hoke. We talked about the needs of breeding grassland birds that have begun to use the capped landfill areas as breeding grounds (four to six weeks of breeding and brood-raising time in a field that won’t be cut just as nestlings are beginning to hatch). And as we talked, the grass management staff and the education staff at the landfill listened. Then it was our turn to listen as Danny Cozart told us about how often he needed to mow the grass on and around the capped landfills in order to maintain vigorous root growth and keep erosion to a minimum.

The outcome of sharing all of our information was that we learned that certain areas of the capped landfills must be mowed frequently per MDEQ regulations. However, with very minor adjustments in the mowing schedule of a substantial area of the capped landfills, Grasshopper Sparrows, Bobolinks and other grassland species of birds should have enough time to fledge at least one brood. And so this year, the landfill staff will adjust their mowing schedule while we at NAP follow the life cycle of the grassland species as

they raise their offspring. We are excited to be a part of this wonderful “alternative” mowing plan and congratulate the landfill staff on their willingness to look at the situation with a “bird’s-eye view!”



Become a native plant sleuth.

Find out more about these plants on page 7 in the *Native Plant Focus*.

If you stop to enjoy the wetland flowers this summer, be sure to look for Joe-pye weed and common boneset. You may also spot some Yellow and Black Tiger Swallowtail butterflies, as they are especially fond of the Joe-pye nectar.

Photo's from "eNature.com" the National Audubon Society Online Field Guides



Common Boneset
(*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)



Spotted Joe-pye weed
(*Eupatorium maculatum*)

Natural Area Preservation
City of Ann Arbor
Dept. of Parks and Recreation
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