

NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

Protecting and restoring Ann Arbor's natural areas and fostering an environmental ethic among its citizens

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Summer 2014

Park Focus: Sunset Brooks

Molly Notarianni

I began my investigation of Sunset Brooks with a personal visit to the park. As I hiked through the deep snow of late February, the first thing I noticed was the park's gentle topography. Oaks and hickories dotted the woods, and a homemade bridge spanned a small stream. I also noticed several strategically placed benches, one at the top of a hill, another under the spreading canopy of a tall pine. I was struck by these thoughtful gestures: this was clearly a site that was well-loved, and well-used, by its neighbors.

The entrance to Sunset Brooks Nature Area is nestled between



houses on a quiet street in the Water Hill neighborhood: the gateway to 7.8 acres of rolling woods and wetland hugged on the north by M-14. Located just south of larger natural areas such as Bird Hills and Kuebler Langford, Sunset Brooks can be easy to overlook. While it may be small in size, Sunset Brooks definitely deserves a second look. This tiny park is a gem, with an amazing history of involvement by dedicated neighbors.

Park Steward Jim Crosby has lived adjacent to Sunset Brooks for more than thirty years, and has been a Park Steward working with NAP for nearly 10 years. We met one chilly March morning to

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Photo: Nancy Wellman

TAKE A HIKE

This summer, take a nature walk with NAP and the Ann Arbor District Library, or look for birds with NAP Ornithologist, Dea Armstrong.

On pages 4-5, find out more about this summer's nature walks, bird walks, and other events and workdays!





A unit of the City of Ann Arbor
Community Services Area,
Parks and Recreation Services.

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

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COORDINATOR'S CORNER

I am NAP

A few years ago, NAP got a button-maker. Perhaps you're even the proud owner of one of our buttons. We have a wide variety of styles, and have some custom-made for different types of volunteers. Staff had fun creating all of these designs, one of my favorite being a button that says simply, "I am NAP."

It's been a year of tremendous staff turnover at NAP. Three staff with 30 years of collective experience with the City moved on to other opportunities. Another handful of shorter-tenured staff also left. At a recent all-staff training, during introductions, some newer staff were surprised to realize that they were, in fact, the veteran staff present, despite being with NAP for less than a year themselves!

How does an organization like NAP get through such major change, where a large percentage of our staff wasn't even here a year or two ago? Sure, this happens at many park facilities, but the special challenge for NAP is that our work is spread out across 1300 acres in 100 or so city parks. Well, fortunately, NAP is not just about the staff. It's about ALL of us, all of YOU. The hundreds of long-time, returning volunteers helping to restore our natural areas have provided an unbroken backbone of continuity through the years in many of our parks. For some Park Stewards, their connection to that natural area started long before NAP came into being.

More and more, the role of NAP staff is to help facilitate the stewardship work of volunteers in the parks. We provide some expertise in the field of ecological restoration, and apply that knowledge to help set restoration goals for sites. And we maintain records that track work done over the years by a variety of staff and volunteers. We also provide and maintain the equipment needed to do that work. But a large part of the staff's efforts is to facilitate volunteers doing much of the restoration work that is needed.

So, yes, the tremendous staff turnover does create some challenges for us. And yes, there will be things that slip through the cracks. We ask for your patience during this time of transition. But fortunately, and very thankfully, much of the detailed on-the-ground knowledge about the restoration work that has been done, and still needs to be done at individual parks remains intact in the minds of the hundreds of volunteers who have done this work in the past, and will continue - in partnership with NAP staff - to do this work well into the future.

If you're not currently one of these "knowledge keepers" - if you aren't currently a Park Steward of your favorite natural area - I invite you to step up and volunteer to accept this responsibility. After all, YOU are NAP. Each of you working out there pulling garlic mustard, or cutting buckthorn, or maintaining trails or volunteering in dozens of other ways can proudly proclaim, "I am NAP!" We'll even give you a button that proclaims that to the world!

-David Borneman, Deputy Manager for Volunteerism and NAP

GARDENING *with* INVASIVES?

NAP loves gardening! It's a great way to provide a little extra support and habitat for the insects, birds, and other pollinators so essential to the ecosystem. Be careful about the plants you chose, as many of the readily-available, "easy care" plants offered at garden centers are not native to Michigan, and some can escape from your landscaping and become invasive in our natural areas. Below are some invasive plants that are commonly used in landscaping and some native alternatives.

INVASIVES



Vinca, Myrtle, or Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) This thick groundcover, pictured at left, is attractive for its evergreen leaves, small violet flowers, and its ability to grow in a variety of light conditions. In a natural area, however, it forms thick mats and crowds out native vegetation. Instead, try planting wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*), creeping strawberry-bush (*Euonymus obovata*) pictured at right, or partridge-berry (*Mitchella repens*).



Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) This low-growing shrub, pictured at left, is very common in landscaping. Known for its densely flowering stems, red fall foliage, and red winter berries, this shrub displaces native plants, alters soil chemistry, and its prickly stems make poor habitat for wildlife. As an alternative, try planting Michigan holly (*Ilex verticillata*), ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*) pictured at right, or prickly gooseberry (*Ribes cynosbati*).



Lily-of-the-Valley (*Convallaria majalis*) Lily-of-the-valley, pictured at left, is widely planted as a ground cover, especially in shady areas. Its delicate, fragrant flowers are pleasant in the spring, and its leaves can stay green throughout the winter. But in natural areas, the plant takes over native habitat, and every part of it is highly poisonous. Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), false rue anemone (*Enemion biternatum*) pictured at right, and zigzag goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*) are possible native substitutes.



Dame's Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*) This fragrant garden plant, pictured at left, with showy pink, white, or purple flowers is easily confused with native phlox. When attempting ID, know that dame's rocket's flowers have four petals instead of five. This woodland invader is almost as aggressive as garlic mustard, and it quickly uses up resources needed by native plants. Wild blue phlox (*Phlox divaricata*), wild bergamont (*Monarda fistulosa*) pictured at right, and wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) make good alternatives.

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES



If you'd like to learn about how to choose native plants for your garden, check out NAP's native plant page on our website, <http://www.a2gov.org/nativeplants>. NAP also offers an informative brochure series, Your Landscape and our Natural Areas. Written with the home landscaper in mind, each brochure provides tips and useful information on creating a native plant garden. Contact NAP at 734.794.6627 or NAP@a2gov.org to order a set of these brochures for use in your garden planning.



VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR SUMMER 2014

Volunteers assist NAP in all aspects of our work. Community involvement is vital to the success of NAP's conservation and education efforts. Please join us for one of these events!

For all of our **Stewardship Workdays**, please wear long pants and closed-toe shoes. Workdays are **free** and suitable for all ages. Minors must be accompanied by a guardian or have a signed release form. Contact NAP for release forms. Tools, snacks, and know-how provided.

JUNE

Thursday, June 5
AADL Nature Hike at Argo Nature Area
7 to 8:30 p.m.

Take a guided hike with a NAP naturalist for some great views of the river, and to learn about native plants, trees, and local ecology. Meet in the parking lot north of the Argo Canoe Livery, off Longshore Drive.

Saturday, June 7
Bird Walk at Gallup Park
7:30 to 9:30 am

Look for birds at this morning walk with NAP Ornithologist, Dea Armstrong. Meet at the paddleboat dock in Gallup near the canoe livery.

Saturday, June 7
National Trails Day Workdays

Join this annual, nation-wide celebration by helping maintain and improve trails at these parks:

Argo Nature Area, 9 a.m. to noon

Meet in the lot north of the Argo Canoe Livery, off Longshore Drive.

Mary Beth Doyle Park, 9 a.m. to noon

Meet at the end of Verle Avenue, two blocks west of Platt Road.

Marshall Nature Area, 1 to 4 p.m.

Meet in the parking lot off Dixboro Road, north of Plymouth Road.

Oakwoods Nature Area, 1 to 4 p.m.

Meet at the park entrance off Dunwoodie.

Saturday, June 14
Furstenberg Native Garden Workday
Noon to 3 p.m.

Help us weed and preserve this native garden amidst the 38 acres of Furstenberg Nature Area, featuring some of the most diverse flora anywhere in Ann Arbor. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

Sunday, June 22
Sunset Brooks Nature Area Workday
1 to 4 p.m.

Great progress has been made to reduce the encroachment of invasive plants at this nature area. Help continue this effort by removing invasive shrubs, such as buckthorn and honeysuckle, to give native plants a chance to thrive. Meet at the park entrance on Sunset Road, at the end of Brooks Street.

JULY

Saturday, July 12
Barton Nature Area Workday
9 a.m. to noon

Help keep Barton beautiful by hand-pulling spotted knapweed, bittercress and other invasive plant species that threaten the native habitats of this natural area. Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot at the corner of Huron River Drive and Bird Road.

Saturday, July 12
Kuebler Langford Nature Area Workday
1 to 4 p.m.

Kuebler Langford Nature Area offers lush woodlands, dramatic ravines, and a diverse array of rare plants and wildflowers. Join in the preservation effort by removing invasive plants. Meet at the park entrance on Beechwood Drive, north of Sunset Road.

Sunday, July 13
Huron River Day Celebration
Gallup Park
Noon to 4 p.m.

Come celebrate the Huron River and participate in FREE family activities. This event will be full of fun activities for children, music, animals, a guided canoe trip, fishing, and more! For more information, call 734.662.9319.

Saturday, July 26
Mary Beth Doyle Park Workday
9 a.m. to noon

Walk along Mallets Creek, check out the wildlife at the pond, join a game of disc golf, or ride your bike on a paved path – no matter what you're doing at this park, you're sure to see the benefits of ongoing restoration work by dedicated volunteers. We'll be continuing the restoration work by removing invasive plants. Meet at the end of Verle Avenue, two blocks west of Platt Road.

STEWARDSHIP NETWORK
STEWARDS' CIRCLE
7:30 to 8:30 a.m.
Second Tuesday of every month
Bruegger's Bagels
709 N University Ave

Are you interested in learning more about how to care for natural areas? Then join the Stewardship Network's Huron Arbor cluster for an informal discussion on a monthly topic with volunteer and professional land stewards, plus others interested in nature. Free and open to anyone interested.
www.stewardshipnetwork.org.

June 10: Pollinators

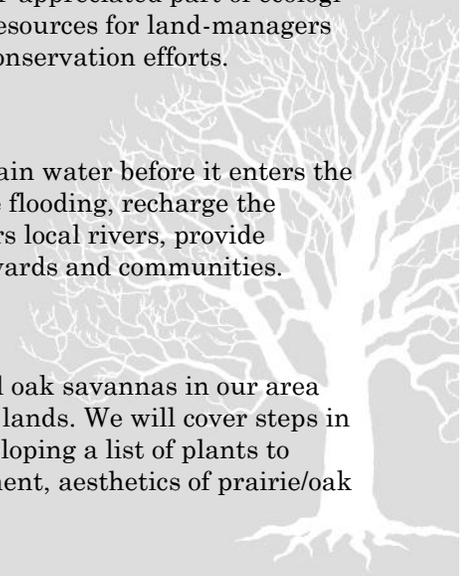
Pollinators are an important and at times under-appreciated part of ecological restoration. We'll share information about resources for land-managers and others who want to include pollinators in conservation efforts.

July 8: Establishing a Rain Garden

Rain gardens are shallow gardens that collect rain water before it enters the stormwater pipe system. Rain gardens alleviate flooding, recharge the ground water supply, filter water before it enters local rivers, provide habitat for wildlife, and enhance the beauty of yards and communities.

August 12: Prairie Restoration

Join this discussion about remnant prairies and oak savannas in our area and the many facets of restoring these precious lands. We will cover steps in restoring a prairie or oak savanna, tips for developing a list of plants to include, planting strategies and early management, aesthetics of prairie/oak savanna restoration, and fire management.



Sunday, July 27
Furstenberg Nature Area Workday
9 a.m. to noon

Join in the effort to remove invasive plants at Furstenberg Nature area, featuring some of the most diverse flora anywhere in Ann Arbor. Meet in the parking lot near the Native Plant Garden. Furstenberg is just off Fuller and across from Huron High School.

Saturday, August 9
Furstenberg Native Garden Workday
9 a.m. to noon

Help us weed and preserve this native garden amidst the 38 acres of Furstenberg Nature Area. You're certain to learn a lot about native plants, particularly prairie plants, from Park Steward and Master Gardener Aunita Erskine. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

Sunday, August 17
Miller Nature Area Workday
9 a.m. to noon

The trails in Miller Nature Area wind through prairie remnants as well as forested areas. Hiking the trails at Miller is one of the best ways to "get lost" in Ann Arbor! Help improve the trails by clearing the way, trimming back overgrowth, and spreading woodchips. Please bring your own plastic sleds to help with the hauling. Meet at the Arborview Boulevard entrance, just east of Wildwood Avenue.

AUGUST

Thursday, August 7
AADL Nature Hike
Furstenberg Nature Area
7 to 8:30 p.m.

Furstenberg Nature Area is a 38-acre park on Fuller Road, west of Gallup Park. Enjoy wetlands, woodlands, prairie, and oak savannah on this nature walk. Learn about native plants and trees, invasive plants, ecological restoration, and lots more. Meet near the restrooms near the parking lot off Fuller Road (across from Huron High School). This event is for all ages.

Saturday, August 9
Barton Nature Area Workday
Noon to 3 p.m.

Tremendous progress has been made to increase the native habitat in this large preserve—help continue this effort! We'll be hand-pulling spotted knapweed, and other invasive plant species to give native plants a chance to thrive. Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot at the corner of Huron River Drive and Bird Road.

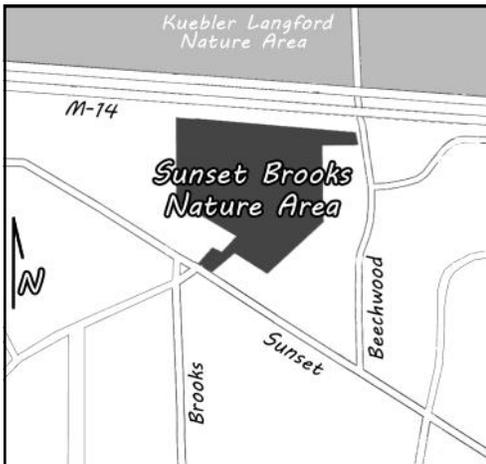
Saturday, August 23
Stapp Nature Area Workday
9 a.m. to noon

Much is contained within Stapp Nature Area's eight acres, including a mature oak-hickory forest and a vernal pond, home to many amphibians and reptiles. Come out and help native plant species thrive by removing invasive plants. We'll also be dispersing native seeds, to increase the natural area's biodiversity. Meet at the park sign at the corner of Huron Parkway and Tuebingen Parkway.

Sunset Brooks, Decades of Neighborhood Care

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

talk about the park. Jim handed me a sheet he created entitled "Sunset Brooks features," which listed many of the elements I had already noticed, as well as some I'd missed, like a grove of dogwoods whose beautiful flowers Jim enjoys each spring. He explained how he had worked hard to make sure park users of all ages and abilities could enjoy the woods. The trails are kept wide and leveled, and those benches I'd noticed were installed so park users could take a rest at the most scenic spots.



In the course of our conversation, we finally made it to the exciting part: the neighborhood saved the park from development!.As the story goes, the site was bought and sold in quick succession by several developers, and was ultimately slated to be developed into 33 condominiums. Jim and the other park neighbors didn't want to see the neighborhood woods

demolished, and attended many Planning Commission and City Council meetings to voice their concerns. Eventually, they decided to take matters into their own hands, advocating for the City of Ann Arbor to purchase the site for parkland.

David Leroy, another neighbor, organized the Greater Sunset Brooks Neighborhood Association. The group committed to raise the funds for 25% of the purchase price of the site. In a partnership with the Ann Arbor Community Foundation, the group developed a fund for community donations. Within a year's time, 96 neighbors contributed to the project, raising more than \$93,000. After this demonstration of support from the community, and with this financial assistance, the City decided to purchase Sunset Brooks Natural Area.

Twenty years later, people continue to be inspired to care for this small neighborhood park. In 2013, longtime NAP volunteer, Brooks Curtis, decided to become a Park Steward and Sunset Brooks stood out to him as the obvious choice. Brooks has been hard at work through the fall and winter months, removing invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle.

The final item on Jim's list of Sunset Brooks features is "nice neighbors." This struck me as a perfect summary. While this natural area may not be home to endangered wildflowers or rare salamanders, it is well-used, and well-loved by its neighbors. Through their hard work and dedication, Sunset Brooks was preserved, and remains to this day a beautiful spot for all to enjoy.

You can enjoy Sunset Brooks Nature Area while lending a hand with the restoration efforts there at a Stewardship Workday on Saturday, June 22. See page 4 for more information.

NAPpenings

Welcome, new Park Stewards!

Bill Kidd
Furstenberg Nature Area

Emerson School
Barton Nature Area

Thank you!

Many thanks to the groups who volunteered with NAP recently. We could not make such a difference without you!

Envirodems
EMU VISION
Organizing for Action
Skyline High School Interact
Temple Beth Emeth
UM Alpha Epsilon Delta
Pre-Health Honor Society
UM Circle K
UM ECON 108
UM Theta Xi

Nature Areas as sites for scientific research

University of Michigan SNRE student Ari Kahan studied Black Pond Woods as part of his Master's thesis, which looked at whether increased urbanization affects soil chemistry in protected forest areas. Soil chemistry is important because it affects the plants and animals that may be found in protected areas, as well as the management strategies that may be used in those areas. Kahan found that there is an increase in the amount of nitrogen in forest soil as housing density in the surrounding landscape increases. This increase in nitrogen is also related to increased overstory biomass.



STAFF UPDATES

FAREWELL...



ROBBY JOHNSTON
Field Crew

I've worked at NAP as long as I've lived in Ann Arbor; so, it's impossible for me to separate living in this city from the experience of working to restore its

natural treasures. I'm committed to continued work in stewardship, education, and conservation, as well as working as an artist, author, and illustrator. [You can keep up with Robb at robbjohnston.com!]



RACHEL MARANTO
Field Crew

After two years on the field crew, I have taken a job with Michigan Nature Association as their Regional Stewardship Organizer for the southeast

lower peninsula. I made many lasting friendships at NAP. I will miss Ann Arbor's nature areas, although I look forward to enjoying them without having to think about work!



KEGAN SCHILBERG
Field Crew

Over the past year I've learned and grown a lot, and worked with some really awesome people. I'm reluctant to go, but I'm excited to take on new

challenges with Oakland County. I'm going to miss the crew and the awesome volunteers.



MOLLY NOTARIANNI
Park Steward Coordinator

After the past ten years working in sustainable agriculture, I enjoyed the opportunity to get back to my "roots" in ecology and botany. Unfortunately,

my time at NAP is nearing its end: In April I set out for Portland, OR to start a new job managing several large farmers markets. I'll miss all of you!

WELCOME...



JESSICA CRAWFORD
Workday Coordinator

I am a graduate of Michigan State University with a BA in Geography and Specialization in Environmental Studies. A nature enthusiast, I served as

an AmeriCorps member with Huron Pines, a nonprofit conservation organization. I am excited to get started helping volunteers take part in restoring Ann Arbor's natural areas.



CRISTINE SANTANNA
Field Crew

I have a B.S. in the Program in the Environment from the University of Michigan, where I specialized in terrestrial ecosystems and did research on

Michigan's vines and lianas. After working for Matthaei Botanical Gardens & Nichols Arboretum in Ann Arbor, and for The Nature Conservancy in Swanton, OH, I was certain I wanted to pursue a career in ecological restoration and conservation. I am very excited for being part of NAP's field crew this year and help to restore our beautiful nature areas to health!



NATHAN HELMS
Field Crew

I am a graduate of Humboldt State University, with a B.S. in Wildlife Management and Conservation. I have worked in the fields of endangered species

management, and as a research technician for the last five years in California. I am excited for this new opportunity at NAP, conducting ecological restoration within Ann Arbor's beautiful natural areas. Furthermore, I look forward to working with the community, and helping to facilitate a learning experience for all of our dedicated volunteers.

Natural Area Preservation

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GIVE 365 Welcomes New Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator

NAP and Parks and Recreation are excited to welcome Erika Pratt as the new Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator for the GIVE 365 Program. GIVE 365 is NAP's sibling volunteer program under Parks and Recreation, providing exceptional experiences for volunteers working at Parks and Recreation facilities and venues.

Erika has an MS degree in Parks, Recreation and Tourism Resource/Urban Affairs from MSU, and has been a member of MRPA (Michigan Recreation and Parks Association) since 2000. Her recent work experience includes time with the Novi Parks Foundation and the Pleasant Ridge Recreation Department.

NAP is looking forward to working with Erika and the GIVE 365 team to help improve and maintain all of Ann Arbor's parks and park facilities!

You can find Erika and GIVE 365 at NAP's new office location: 3875 E. Huron River Drive.

