

Natural Area Preservation News

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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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Fall 2000 Burn Season

by David Borneman

We had tried a fall burn season once before, in 1996, but the weather never cooperated, so we were caught off-guard last fall when glorious, dry, fall weather started in late October and continued week after week. By mid-November, we were finally organized enough to pull off a few good burns before the wet weather did eventually come in December. This year we plan to be prepared in case we get another stretch of good fall burn weather. October 23rd has been scheduled as "Opening Day" for NAP's 2000 fall burn season. By then, we will have obtained our permits, prepared our burn breaks, held our public meeting, and mailed several thousand letters to targeted park neighbors. Then, given the right mix of crunchy oak leaves and dry weather conditions, we'll be setting the woods on fire!



Why the big excitement about burning in the fall? Historians tell us that fall is the time when Native Americans traditionally did most of their burning. Burning off the dead grass and leaves in the fall allowed an earlier "greening up" in late winter/early spring which would attract deer and other game. It also gave the burners a better, safer place to camp for the winter where they could see farther and watch for approaching enemies. Just think about it: would YOU want to pitch your camp in the middle of a field of tall, dense, dead grasses and flowers which your enemy could easily ignite to encircle you in flames? I'd sleep better at night knowing that my camp was pitched in an area free of burnable fuel.

Whatever the motivation of the Anishnabe "Fire Nation" and later tribes who inhabited southeastern Michigan prior to European settlement, the native ecosystems evolved with this "ancient rhythm" of annual fall burning. Among modern day practitioners of prescribed fire, fall burning is generally recognized as being more desirable than spring burning, if you can get the weather to cooperate. One of the reasons is that after a fall burn, the blackened soil, free of thatch, warms up more quickly in

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Coordinator's Corner

Listen to the Plants and Become a Real Human Being

This summer I had the opportunity to spend a few days with Dr. Gerould Wilhelm on a tour of Illinois prairie remnants and restorations hosted by the Lafayette Home Nursery in northwestern Illinois. Jerry is well known to many Midwestern restorationists as a botanist and philosopher, and as co-author of *Plants of the Chicago Region*, 3rd edition, from his time at the Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois. Now he is with Conservation Design Forum in Elmhurst, Illinois.

I've learned lots of things from Jerry on this and previous occasions, too many to list here, although I will share a few of the biggies to give you a sense of his teachings: 1) Burn every year, preferably in the fall, since that is the "ancient rhythm" of the Indians; 2) Don't focus on the weeds; focus instead on restoring the native ecosystems; and 3) Change the habitat and you'll change the inhabitants.

Perhaps the greatest thing he's taught me, however, is that we restorationists really need to be careful observers of nature rather than just believing everything we read in books, especially if those books are written by experts in distant lands. As a botanist (and a poet), he puts it like this, "Listen to the plants; they will tell you what you need to know."

We restorationists describe this as an "iterative process": we try something, monitor the results, make modifications, try again, make more modifications, try again, etc... We're constantly learning new things from the plants and animals of our restoration. This can be frustrating for those new to the field (myself included!) who want a textbook answer to such questions as: What steps should I follow to turn my lawn into a prairie? Which species should I plant? When and how high should I mow the weeds? The answers to these questions will vary with each specific situation. There are no textbook answers.

Jerry explains it another way. Like many Native American groups, the name by which the Shawnee nation referred to themselves translated as "the people" or "the human beings." This name implied that "the people" were the ones who be-

longed in that place, on that piece of ground. It was their home, and they understood the plants and animals who lived there. They knew how to survive there, which plants to eat, where to find game and fish, when to plant, when to harvest, and when to burn. Other tribes who came from far away didn't have the same connection with that particular piece of ground so they were not "the human beings;" they were "the others." Thus when the Shawnee of southern Ohio were to be sent off to their new reservation further west, you can imagine their reluctance to relocate so far away, where the Illinois people were "the human beings" and the Shawnee were "the others."

Most of us are a long way from being able to consider ourselves "the human beings" of Ann Arbor, but this idea can serve as a model for us to emulate. There is good information to be found in the growing volume of restoration books and articles, but all of it should be scrutinized with a healthy dose of careful observation in our own settings and situations. What works in Illinois may not work in Michigan. The weeds of Wisconsin may not respond the same way as aliens of Ann Arbor. The literature can provide suggestions to our restoration questions, but the real answers can only be learned by us, in the field, locally.

Unfortunately, these answers take a long time to emerge. I can't tell you today, for absolute certainty, what the best burn frequency is for our prairies and savannas in Ann Arbor. I do have some good ideas based on what I've read and learned from others, and from what I've observed myself in the past 7 years. But give me another 10 or 20 years of "listening to the plants," and I'll be a bit closer to the truth, and one step closer to becoming a "human being" in Ann Arbor.

- David Borneman,
Natural Area Preservation
Coordinator

NAP-penings

The **27th Annual Natural Areas Conference** will be held October 16-20, 2000, in St. Louis, Missouri, with the theme "Managing the Mosaic: Connecting People and Natural Diversity in the 21st Century." NAP has been invited to give two presentations at the conference: one to celebrate the success we've had as a municipal government protecting natural areas at the local level, and the other to focus on our ever-growing volunteer program and how volunteers have contributed to the success of our efforts.

The newly formed **Southern Michigan Prescribed Fire Council** held its very first meeting of the full council on August 19th in Bath, Michigan, with 60 participants. The Council's mission is to promote the safe use of prescribed fire as a tool for managing natural areas. It is open to anyone with an interest in the use of prescribed fire. NAP Coordinator David Borneman serves on the Council's Steering Committee as a representative of municipal government. He also led two educational sessions on "Strengthening Public Education and Public Relations" at the August meeting.

The **Stewardship Network** -- a collaborative effort organized by the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment, the Huron River Watershed Council, and NAP -- continues to grow and evolve in its efforts to develop a network of local natural land stewards. In June, NAP's David Borneman led a one-day workshop on "Developing a Management Plan for Your Natural Area." See page 10 for additional information on Stewardship Network activities.

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A Wild Goose Chase

by Kirstin Condict



The control of nuisance geese is an on-going problem in the parks. This past July, NAP once again joined ranks with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to band local resident geese. The banding is part of a three-year study, begun last summer, to track the migratory habits of local geese, the outcome of which will determine whether we will qualify for an egg replacement program. (Egg replacement involves the exchange of real goose eggs in nests for imitation eggs.) Staff from MDNR and NAP and a handful of dedicated volunteers worked together to round up geese in both Gallup and Fuller Parks. Canoes were used at Gallup to herd the geese out of the water and onto shore, where a corral was set up to contain them. But as luck would have it, many of the geese were already wearing those sporty green bands from last year's goose round-up, and it didn't take long for *deja-vu* to set in. As we attempted to drive the geese closer to shore, they realized something was amiss and began darting past our canoes like feathery little torpedoes. Unable to maneuver as gracefully and as quickly as the geese, some of us wound up taking a refreshing dip in the Huron River. But after all was said and done, 152 geese were banded and released and only one canoe capsized. We also recaptured and collected data from an additional 50 geese that had been banded the previous year.

In addition to the banding study mentioned above, we are also working with MSU/MDNR to pilot the use of radio telemeters (collars) to track geese via satellite. This spring biologists banded 6 female geese at Gallup Park with radio collars and afterwards destroyed their nests in an attempt to induce a molt migration. (Geese that are unable to nest successfully often migrate north.) During the migration and at their Hudson Bay destination, the geese are more susceptible to natural predation and hunting. According to the MDNR, inducing molt migration could prove to be the most effective control program and the most acceptable to the public.

Lastly, the Parks Department is looking at a third way of controlling nuisance geese in our parks. The secret weapon? Professionally trained border collies. Used for centuries to herd sheep, border collies are gaining popularity as a goose-control technique. The wiry, energetic dogs are a non-violent, environmentally friendly alternative to shooting or injuring the pesky flocks. The dogs, employees of a goose management service, will work as a team to drive off the hundreds of geese that foul the City's golf courses and parks. The dogs will begin making their appearances at Leslie and Huron Hills Golf Courses this fall but will be most active next spring in an effort to prevent the geese from nesting.

Volunteer News

Mark your calendar --

October 23 through December 8,

Fall Prescribed Burn Season

Where there's smoke, there's NAP. This marks the start of the *fall* burn season. The burn crew will be all over town (see the article on page 1 for more information). Volunteers who have been through the NAP burn crew training are welcome to participate in these burns. Please notify the NAP office of your availability, email address and daytime phone number. Please note that the next new volunteer burn crew training will take place the second week of February; please check the Winter newsletter for more information.

Bring the Gang!

Get your group involved! Are you part of a group that would like to contribute time to NAP? If a meaningful environmental or community service project is what your group seeks, we can accommodate you. Depending on your group's size, we may have them join one of our regularly scheduled activities or we may be able to schedule a special day for your group. Some group project examples include "After-the-Fire Trash Patrol," or "Garlic Mustard Weed-Out Day." Volunteer projects are typically scheduled from March through November. Please submit your request at least a month in advance.



Fall is the perfect time to see the golden colors of the prairie, like this Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) found at the following parks: Furstenberg, Gallup (Wet Prairie), and Barton.

Volunteer Focus: Spending a little more time

by Catriona Mortell

Over the coming years, we hope to establish stewards in many of the park natural areas. Each steward will work in an adopted park on specific projects set forth in that park's management plan. Here in the office we often discuss how to keep volunteers engaged and active in the program. I spoke with three of our current volunteer stewards to find a few answers. Aunita Erskine is in charge of the Furstenberg Native Plant Demonstration Garden, Katherine O'Brien has just started as a steward at Hollywood Park, and Steve Bean works in Hansen and Fritz Parks. While not a very scientific study, it does provide a little insight into why people volunteer on a long-term basis.

First I'll share what Aunita told me about herself and her work at the Furstenberg Garden. This is her second season working at the garden. She is a financial counselor to patients at UM Hospital and still finds time for her hobbies. Gardening is her chief hobby; she is a Master Gardener, a member of the Michigan Botanical Club, a member of Wild Ones and a garden ambassador at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, where she is working on a study of their prairie. Besides gardening, she entertains and does various crafts including crewel embroidery and working with flowers she dries herself. That's a lot of activity even for the most energetic of us! For Aunita, volunteering offers an opportunity to meet people who share her interests, another chance to garden, and an outlet from her job. Working on the native plant garden has opened doors for her in the botany 'field,' bridging her love of nature and gardening. Through this volunteer project, she has set goals for both the garden and herself. She wants the garden to be a guide to as many species as possible. Her personal goals are to teach people about native plants that can be included in home landscapes and to keep volunteers interested. Keeping good records of the garden and maintaining its integrity are ongoing tasks. I worked with Aunita at the beginning of August; her enthusiasm is infectious!

I also spoke with Katherine O'Brien, the new Hollywood Park steward. Katherine has worked with us 10 hours a week this summer as an intern and has gained insight into the working world. Being a steward at her neighborhood park is sure to open new areas of discovery for her. She is drawn to the natural parks by the peacefulness they offer and the excitement of exploring the variety of life natural areas hold. Katherine has earned her Associates degree in Math and Natural Science and is pursuing a BA in Environmental Policy and Behavior at UM. She is also busy being a mom to her 5-year-old daughter. If she has any time left at all, yoga and reading are what she chooses to fit in. Volunteering provides the sense she is helping her community. She finds it fulfilling to extend herself to others and her surrounding environment. By being a steward, she hopes to make a difference in the natural area at Hollywood Park, which she has been rediscovering. As a child she played there, and now as an adult and homeowner in the neighborhood she can explore the park all over again.

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Volunteer Stewardship Calendar Autumn 2000

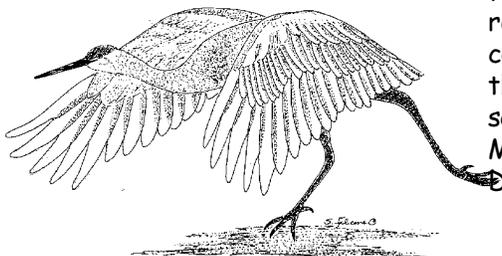
September

September 10, Sunday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
 Location: **Furstenberg Native Plant Demonstration Garden**
 Time: **10:00am to 2:00pm**
 Help with end-of-the-season garden chores and learn about the multi-season beauty of a native plant garden. Led by Master Gardener and NAP Steward Aunita Erskine. Bring garden tools and gloves if you have them and pack a lunch! Meet at the garden, near the Furstenberg Park entrance on Fuller Rd.

September 16, Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
 Location: **Hollywood Park**
 Time: **10:00am to 1:00pm**
 Join NAP at this west-side park to remove invasives and maintain trails in the woodland area. Meet at the park on Sequoia Parkway, near Center Drive.

September 23, Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
 Location: **Miller Nature Area**
 Time: **10:00am to 1:00pm**
 Trails! Trails! Trails will be the focus today. Join us to close trails, line trails and install waterbars. Meet at the Arborview Blvd. park entrance.

Remember, please wear sturdy closed-toe shoes and long pants to the workdays!



October

October 3, Tuesday
Public Meeting About the Prescribed Burn Program
 Location: **Leslie Science Center - Leslie House**
 Time: **7:30pm to 9:00pm**
 This meeting will provide information and an opportunity for discussion about the Prescribed Ecological Burn Program conducted by Natural Area Preservation.

October 8, Sunday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
 Location: **Furstenberg Native Plant Demonstration Garden**
 Time: **12:00pm to 4:00pm**
 This is the last garden workday of the season. Join Aunita Erskine in 'putting the garden to bed' for the winter. Bring garden tools and gloves if you have them. Meet at the garden, near the Furstenberg Park entrance on Fuller Rd.

October 21, Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
 Location: **Barton Nature Area**
 Time: **10:00am to 1:00pm**
 Seed collecting is the focus of this workday. Staff will review plant identification and collection techniques, then volunteers will wander the park in search of seed for use in future restoration efforts. Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot off Huron River Drive.

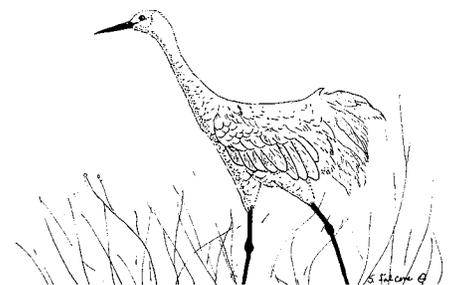
October 28, Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
 Location: **Marshall Nature Area**
 Time: **10:00am to 1:00pm**
 Once again seed collecting is the focus of today's workday. After a review of plant identification and collection techniques, volunteers will then wander through the park in search of specific seeds. Meet in the Marshall park parking lot off Dixboro Rd., north of Plymouth Rd.

November

November 4, Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
 Location: **Scarlett Mitchell Nature Area**
 Time: **10:00am to 1:00pm**
 Join the effort to remove invasive shrubs from this south-side park. Meet at the Mitchell School parking lot off Lorraine Street.

November 14, Tuesday
Volunteer Thank You Party
 Location: **Leslie Science Center - Nature House**
 Time: **6:30pm to 9:00pm**
 It's time to celebrate the end of the field season and another wonderful year working with our volunteers! This potluck party always has excellent food, great company and creative door prizes. Everyone associated with NAP is welcome to join us in honoring this year's volunteers. The event will take place in the new LSC building built to be an environmental model in construction and features. Please join us! Check your mailbox or call the office for more information.

November 18, Saturday
Volunteer Stewardship Workday
 Location: **Oakwoods Nature Area**
 Time: **10:00am to 1:00pm**
 This workday will focus on removing non-native invasive plants from this northeast-side woodland. Meet at the park entrance on Green Rd. between Whisperwood and Kilburn.



NAP-penings

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With the passage last fall of the **Land Acquisition Millage**, department staff and citizens from the Park Advisory Commission have been busy developing criteria by which potential parkland acquisitions will be evaluated. They have also begun looking at a few of the many parcels of land which have already been offered for sale. NAP has played a critical role in this process by assessing the ecological quality of each potential acquisition being considered, helping to shorten the list of parcels considered for acquisition as undeveloped parkland.

In June, a **yard waste** letter was mailed out to many park neighbors notifying them of the growing problem in city parks. The dumping of grass clippings, brush and other debris onto park property by homeowners and landscape contractors is of particular concern to natural areas. Not only do the piles of yard waste take years to decompose, they also smother and kill the plants growing beneath them. The same piles also have the potential to introduce non-native, invasive plants, as well as pests and chemicals, into a park natural area.

Piles of yard waste
take years to decompose.

If your property backs up to a park, resist the temptation to extend your yard into the woods. If you have questions about where your property ends or what you can do to help, please contact the NAP office at 996-3266.

Park Focus: Kuebler Langford Nature Area

by Jennifer Maignet

On a recent trip to Death Valley, California, a good friend took me on a weekend side trip to a neighboring valley. We drove up over the mountain pass and then down into Saline Valley, a place she described as a “miniature Death Valley, only better.” Saline Valley’s canyons, salt flats and sand dunes were on a smaller scale, but every bit as impressive. The valley also had the added attraction of hot springs--a jewel in the middle of a high desert. I had been shown a treasure overshadowed by its internationally renowned neighbor.

In the same way, I would venture to say that Kuebler Langford is a “miniature” Bird Hills, only better. Its woodlands, ravines and wildflowers are on a smaller scale, but every bit as impressive. Kuebler Langford also has the added attraction of a prairie remnant--a jewel in the middle of an urban setting. And like Saline Valley, Kuebler Langford is overshadowed by its (perhaps not internationally) renowned neighbor, Bird Hills.



Kuebler Langford Nature Area is located on the northwest side of Ann Arbor. There are entrances to the park from Huron River Drive and Beechwood Drive, with parking at the Beechwood entrance. A wide mowed path connects these two entrances, and the most interesting and diverse areas of the park are located to the north of this path. On the northern boundary of Kuebler Langford is Camp Hilltop, a Girl Scout camp that uses part of the park as an educational resource. Natural Area Preservation has been fostering a relationship with Camp Hilltop to emphasize the proper uses of the natural area to help preserve its ecological diversity.

In the late 1970s, parts of Kuebler Langford were used as a staging area during the construction of M-14. Most of the topsoil was removed and heavy machinery was stored on site. These activities resulted in compaction of the soil and an increase in soil erosion resulting in steep gullies. The recent construction activities on M-14 have again affected a small portion of the edge of the park, but will be restored with native plantings once the construction is complete. This area is also transected by utility lines and regularly cleared of vegetation in the right-of-way. Fortunately, these activities have all overlapped in the open areas near the highway and left the rest of the park in remarkably good ecological condition.



Witch-hazel
(*Hamamelis virginiana*)

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Butterfly Survey Update

by Chris Rickards

The 2000 NAP Butterfly survey has so far yielded 61 species of the 71 previously recorded in Ann Arbor parks. The cooler weather conditions associated with good, deep, regular rains have provided us with a wonderful opportunity to see good numbers of most local butterflies.

A warm May brought some unexpected migrant butterflies. Both Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*) and Variegated Fritillary (*Euptoieta claudia*) were seen earlier than usual this year, appearing in May and June. Fiery Skipper (*Hylephila phylus*) made an unusual June appearance in Furstenberg Park and a single Little Sulphur (*Eurema lisa*) was observed in Gallup Park in June. The Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) also took advantage of strong southerly winds early in the year and we have been seeing this butterfly throughout the parks since then. One notable absence is the migratory Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*), which has yet to show up in the parks after its regular northerly migration across the country. Keep your eyes peeled for this beautiful pinkish-orange butterfly throughout the fall.

The resident species have also been numerous. Early surprises include the confirmation of the Mustard White (*Pieris napi*) as an Ann Arbor butterfly; it has now been seen in Barton Nature Area and the Foster area of that park and also at Foxfire South. The Roadside Skipper (*Amblyscirtes vialis*) has also been seen once again in the forest scrub of Marshall Park, and I have been able to confirm previous sightings of Southern Cloudywing (*Thorybes bathyllus*), which flits madly around Furstenberg in June and July. The rarer wetland species continue to be found in the damp corners of our park system. Mulberrywing Skipper (*Poenes massosoit*) and Black Dash (*Euphyes conspicua*) are now confirmed along the Huron from Barton through to Gallup, as is Acadian Hairstreak (*Satyrium acadica*), which perches face down on the cattails.



Acadian Hairstreak (*Satyrium acadica*)

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Park Focus

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The areas of greatest biological diversity are on the north side of a large wooded ravine that bisects the park from northeast to southwest. You can reach this area from the Beechwood entrance by following the main mowed path, then veering left when the trail splits. Go to where the utility line crosses the trail, then leave the trail and go west (left) to the first utility pole. (Look for a utility pole with a large, metal culvert pipe behind it.) There is a path to the right (north) into the woods near this first pole. The path meanders through a shrubby section before it reaches a more mature, forested habitat. You can expect to see many species of birds, perhaps even the Blue-winged Warbler, sometimes found in Kuebler Langford in the summer but otherwise uncommon in Ann Arbor. The forested area hosts many of the same plants and animals found in the ravines of Bird Hills. Some of the best displays of wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) can be found on the slopes of the ravine along with maiden-hair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*), doll's eyes (*Actaea pachypoda*), and clustered-leaved tick-trefoil (*Desmodium glutinosum*). Large black oaks and white oaks (*Quercus velutina* and *Quercus alba*) cast moderate shade suitable for understory plants such as witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*), a delicate shrub unique for its subtle yellow flowers that bloom in fall and persist into winter. Stands of hazelnut shrubs (*Corylus americana*) are scattered throughout the forest as well, their clonal shoots springing up from their shallow roots. In total, Natural Area Preservation's plant inventory lists 296 plants found within the entire natural area, 215 of which are native to Michigan.



As the summer progresses into fall, there will be colorful leaf displays along the woodland edges and throughout the forest canopy. The next time you are headed out to explore one of the City's natural areas, consider Kuebler Langford. Its varied habitats and less-visited trails provide an opportunity to slow down and admire many of the local plants and animals of Ann Arbor.

Frog and Toad Survey 2000

by David Mifsud

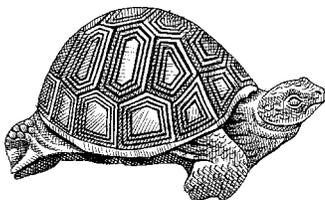
Well, it's true what they say: all good things must come to an end. So too must another wonderful season of frog and toad surveying. That's right, we have completed our 6th frog and toad survey season! We had an outstanding 30 people turn in surveys this season, the best participation yet! We are still getting surveys turned in and are in the process of entering the survey data into our Natural Features Database.

It has been anything but an easy field season for our hard-working and very dedicated volunteers. They have had to cope with delayed rains and unseasonable warm and cold weather, which affects the frogs' activity and calling and makes surveying that much more difficult. Yet they triumphed over these obstacles to provide us with much-needed data to add to our ever-growing pool of information on the location and status of frogs and toads in Ann Arbor.

Soon (hopefully within the next 4 years) we will have enough data to get a general picture of which species are declining and which are thriving in the city. Of course this doesn't mean we will stop doing surveys. This will just help us make better management decisions for the future to help preserve the frogs and toads of Ann Arbor and their habitat (habitat loss being a major cause of population declines).

In addition to the NAP frog and toad surveys, the City Herpetologist visits all Ann Arbor natural areas to get a better understanding of what species actually and potentially occur within these areas. In the future, it is our hope that volunteers will be able to assist in such projects and so gain a better perspective on how biologically diverse our community is (especially the herps)!

At this time I would like to send a special thank you to all the volunteers for their outstanding assistance this field season. Without your help this venture would truly be impossible. I hope to see all of you again next season. Be sure to bring a friend or two with you. The more, the merrier! Also, don't forget about the end of season volunteer get-together on November 14. More information will be mailed to you about the party at the beginning of November.



Butterfly Survey Update

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Our prolific yet most localized butterfly, the Silvery Checkerspot (*Charidryas nycertis*), was once again found in huge numbers in the meadows of Marshall Park. Due to the wonderful weather, I expect a second



Silvery Checkerspot
(*Charidryas nycertis*)

brood will be forthcoming this fall. Another local butterfly "delicacy", the Bronze Copper (*Lyceana hyllus*), has once again been rare in the parks. This is another wetland-associated butterfly and has only been found in Barton and Furstenberg so far, however there is a second brood in the fall. A close relative of this butterfly is the Harvester (*Feniseca tarquinius*), which, aside from being one of the more beautiful butterflies of the Huron River edge, exhibits a most unusual life cycle. It eats other bugs! Harvester caterpillars eat the woolly aphids they closely resemble.

Fall butterflies include many second broods of the spring species, but one species is particular to September and October: Leonard's Skipper (*Hesperia leonardus*). This is the fastest of all the skippers and you may catch a glimpse of it in the drier areas of Barton Park. Look out for fall migrants from the south such as Fiery Skipper, Buckeye, Painted Lady, Grey Hairstreak (*Strymon melinus*), Pipevine Swallowtail (*Battus philenor*) and Variegated Fritillary as well as southerly moving Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*) and Compton's Tortoise shell (*Nymphalis vau-album*).

If you would like more information on how you can participate with the other 22 volunteers in the NAP Butterfly Survey, please contact the NAP office or email me directly.

heliconia@juno.com

Getting Grubby

by Kirstin Condict

This past spring you may have noticed large patches of dead grass developing throughout the city parks, as well as in medians and residential lawns. The likely culprit: an invasive insect species called the European chafer (*Rhizotrogus majalis*). Native to western and central Europe, the European chafer is a destructive beetle that was first discovered in the United States in the 1940s. It appeared in Michigan 20 years ago and became increasingly problematic in the '90s. Last year the European chafer was virulent and now is considered the most serious lawn pest in this area.

When in the grub stage, the European chafer feeds primarily on the roots of grasses. This feeding occurs during spring and fall months, but damage is most severe during drought times when water-stressed grass cannot regenerate new roots to replace the root systems destroyed by these voracious insects. Areas infested with European chafer grubs may also be frequented by birds or other animals looking for an easy meal. Crows, skunks, raccoons, and opossums will tear up the sod in search of tasty grubs, leaving the lawn in disrepair.

Although several insecticides exist to control grubs, the City Parks & Recreation Department is looking for a less toxic and more environmentally sustainable approach to controlling this destructive pest. With assistance from David Cappaert, MSU European chafer Project Coordinator (and former NAP Entomologist), the City hopes to find an alternative turf grass that will prove resistant to the European chafer. This summer, Cappaert will be conducting greenhouse trials on several different species of native warm-season grasses. Because warm-season grasses differ from cool-season grasses in root structure, mass, growth rate, and chemistry, they are likely to differ in their response to root-feeding grubs as well. Their extensive root systems are apt to give them a competitive advantage over shallow-rooted turfgrass, hopefully allowing them to tolerate a given grub density better than standard turf. Stay tuned for the results of this study!



Volunteer Focus

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The steward of Hansen and Fritz Parks also shared his insights with me. Steve Bean works in these parks and on other NAP projects because natural areas provide beauty, clean air, natural sounds and interesting forms of life. Currently a computer database programmer, Steve has studied natural resource management, education, environmental policy and physics. Previously he worked for the Ecology Center, Recycle Ann Arbor, and Resource Recycling Systems. Environmental and political activism are among his hobbies. Over the years he's worked on a number of community organizations and campaigns, from organizing a statewide Green Party in the late '80s to assisting the Eberwhite Woods Committee and the Allens Creek Watershed Group. Steve says volunteering provides "*an opportunity to exercise my mind and body doing the important, life-enhancing work that too few people are paid to do. The work I do might ensure that a plant or animal that might otherwise become extinct, either locally or globally, sometime in the future, will survive. That's a very good feeling. It gives me the opportunity to leave my son a legacy that money can't buy.*" His personal goal for working in the park natural areas is to "*reverse the degradation of natural areas by invasive species and human activities so the species that evolved in those ecosystems can thrive there again and we can enjoy them, free of guilt and despair over the threats that they face from our past mistakes.*"

Stewards often work on their own in a park. Just as homeowners know every nook and cranny of their backyard, stewards get to know their parks intimately. Brian and Mary Glass keep a naturalist notebook for Cedar Bend. Manfred Schmidt can tell you all the birds that have come through Scarlet Mitchell. Gillian Harris has recently moved near Argo Park, and after helping with the breeding bird survey there, she was ready to take on more in her neighborhood park. Each steward will have a different story and perspective as to why they commit themselves to spend a little extra time and effort in a park natural area. We hope that stewardship provides each volunteer the chance to escape the hectic pace of life and form a bond with a natural area.

Staff Updates

Michelle Barnwell, our chainsaw queen, is leaving us in September. She is getting married and moving to Cincinnati. Michelle figures it would be too much of a commute to stay with us. Perhaps while she is job hunting she can do chain saw carvings?

We had the pleasure again to work with an intern from Tübingen, our sister city in Germany. **Sven Lauriat** is a Public Administration student with an emphasis in environmental law. He worked with both the field and office staff. Besides the slang he picked up, he was most impressed by the chainsaw-wielding women of the conservation crew.

Jennifer Maigret, our “what would we do without her” woman is going to make us do without her for much of the workweek. She’ll be reducing her hours to pursue a master’s degree at U of M School of Architecture. Jen will continue to use her background in ecology as she focuses her studies on environmental design.

Craig Michaels, our clerk and keeper of the paychecks, is also moving on. He is moving back to the city of his ‘yute’ (youth) New York City. After working for a while, he is considering pursuing an environmental law degree.

Katherine O’Brien completed an internship with NAP this summer. A student with UM SNRE in Environmental Policy and Behavior, she wanted to see what the working world was like. We put her through the paces by working with the field crew, helping with Huron River Day and doing those sometimes-tedious-but-necessary office tasks. She still says she had a great summer and enjoyed working with us. Katherine is joining us this fall as a temporary part-time staff member helping us with the clerical end of things.

Nancy Novitski has also joined us as a temporary staff member and is soon becoming a Jill-of-all-trades. Nancy completed her studies at Stanford, with a BS in Biology. Originally from Mt. Pleasant, she’s chosen Ann Arbor as her new home to be close to family, but still in an interesting place.

Stewards’ Circle

by **Lisa Brush**,

Volunteer Stewardship Network

Are you interested in learning more about care and monitoring of natural areas - woods, creeks, prairies, etc.? Then join the Stewardship Network (a partnership of NAP, the Huron River Watershed Council, and UM’s Nichols Arboretum) from 7:30am to 8:30am on the second Tuesday of each month (note September’s Stewards’ Circle will be on the third Tuesday) for an informal conversation with volunteer and professional stewards about a given topic. See below for schedule and topics.



Tuesday, September 19th, 7:30am to 8:30am, Bruegger’s Bagels on North University in Ann Arbor. **Discussion topic: Fire.** Have you heard that fire is an important management tool? Have you thought about using fire in managing your natural area? Join us for a discussion of this important tool.

Tuesday, October 10th, 7:30am to 8:30am, Bruegger’s Bagels on North University in Ann Arbor. **Discussion topic: How do you educate neighbors about their impact on your natural area?** Issues such as dumping yard waste, runoff from lawn fertilizer, invasive plant species creeping from yards into natural areas, creating trails, etc. will be discussed.

Tuesday, November 14th, 7:30am to 8:30am, Bruegger’s Bagels on North University in Ann Arbor. **Discussion topic: Invasive species.** Join us for this discussion about the many ways of controlling invasive plant species that are threatening our natural areas.

Tuesday, December 12th, 7:30am to 8:30am, Bruegger’s Bagels on North University in Ann Arbor. **Discussion topic: How can we get more people involved in our activities?** Share ideas and learn of some successful efforts in getting more people out.

The most effective way to cope
with change is to help create it.
- L. W. Lynett

Fall Burns

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the late winter/early spring, thus encouraging the growth of native warm-season grasses which generally need soil temperatures of 70°F to germinate (compared with the minimum 60°F needed by exotic cool-season grasses like Kentucky Bluegrass). The sooner the soil warms up, the better for the native warm season grasses.

Another obvious advantage of fall burning over spring burning is that there's no worry of burning off new shoots of woodland spring wildflowers, as most native woodland flowers are brown and dormant by the fall. Of course, if you are hoping to control garlic mustard by burning, you may still be better off waiting until the spring when you can catch the new young seedlings just as they emerge from the soil. But leaf litter doesn't burn as well in the spring after it has been compacted under winter snow.

So with any luck you'll be seeing some of our smoke around town this fall, from mid-October into early December. A final list of fall burn sites has not yet been put together, but it will be especially focused on wooded sites where lots of spring wildflowers make spring burns difficult. If you want to learn more about the ecology of burning, and the benefits of burning in the fall, come to our public information meeting on October 3rd at 7:30 p.m. at the Leslie Science Center. No new burn crew training is scheduled this fall but it is scheduled for February of 2001. With all our preparations we hope that it won't be too wet to burn. We can always look forward to spring when we are sure to have good burn weather.



Breeding Bird Survey Update

by Dea Armstrong

The Breeding Bird Survey for 2000 is winding down and our 21 BBS volunteers are sleeping a bit later these days. After our sixth year of surveys, it's hard to find new birds, but once again the landfill properties came through. Roger Kuhlman found several breeding Sedge Wrens (*Cistothorus platensis*) in the hayfields south of the big pond. *The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Michigan* (Brewer et. al. 1991) shows no records for Washtenaw County, so this is a particularly big find for our BBS. Congratulations and thanks, Roger! Other first-time species for the landfill were the Hooded Warbler (*Wilsonia citrina*) and Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*), both of which were found in the large woods south of the landfill road. Regrettably, only BBS volunteers have access to the hayfields and woods, but the Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) seen at the pond over a several day period in June was available for any interested birders. The landfill pond continues to draw birders from southeastern Michigan to see the rare migrants that drop in. Don't forget: if you do go to the landfill, all visitors are required to check in at the scale house across from the pond upon arrival. The capped landfills were the location again for breeding Bobolinks (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*), Grasshopper Sparrows (*Ammodramus savannarum*), Savannah Sparrows (*Passerculus sandwichensis*), Eastern Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*), and Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*). The less frequent mowing schedule adopted this year most likely contributed to the nesting success of these species in 2000 (see NAP News, Summer 2000).

A Blue-headed Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*) was found singing in Marshall Park by Roger Wykes over several weeks during the breeding season. While this species is often found during migration, it is a rare resident in the county and this is the first record for city parks.

In our last newsletter we reported that we had seen nesting Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) in Furstenberg, Brown, and Kuebler Langford Parks. We can now add that Barton Park had nesting Bluebirds and that all of these parks had Bluebird fledglings present by mid-June - a great success story for these parks. Unfortunately, Gallup Park had no nesting Bluebirds this year, though they showed much interest in the boxes in late winter. We'll continue to follow these boxes and see if the Bluebirds will be able to make use of them in this more "people-oriented" park. Tree Swallows (*Iridoprocne bicolor*) are a native species that have used many of the Gallup boxes successfully and these birds are quite entertaining to watch as well.

We covered over 40 parks and properties during this breeding season and found close to 100 different species. Thanks again to all of our volunteers for a job well done!

In response to frequent inquiries, here's a sampling of some environmentally related internet web sites:

www.nps.gov/plants

Plant Conservation Alliance - The PCA is a consortium of ten federal government Member agencies and over 145 non-federal Co-operators representing various disciplines within the conservation field: biologists, botanists, habitat preservationists, horticulturists, resources management consultants, soil scientists, special interest clubs, non-profit organizations, concerned citizens, nature lovers, and gardeners. PCA Members and Cooperators work collectively to solve the problems of native plant extinction and native habitat restoration, ensuring the preservation of our ecosystem.

www.great-lakes.net

The Great Lakes Information Network (GLIN) is a partnership that provides one place online for people to find information relating to the bi-national Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region of North America. GLIN offers a wealth of data and information about the region's environment, economy, tourism, education and more. Thanks to its strong network of state, provincial, federal and regional partner agencies and organizations, GLIN has become a necessary component of informed decision making, and a trusted and reliable source of information for those who live, work or have an interest in the Great Lakes region.

www.enature.com

This site contains online field guide information. The eNature.com Online Field Guide is a searchable database for identifying more than 4,000 plant and animal species of North America. Additional species and other nature content are constantly added to the database

www.rce.rutgers.edu/weeds/index.html

This site covers invasive plants found in New Jersey. but its photos and descriptions are useful for us here in Michigan.

www.blm.gov/education/weed/weed.html

This is a Bureau of Land Management environmental education site concerning invasive weeds.

www.bbg.org/index.html

This is the home page for the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, a great resource for gardeners, including native plant gardeners.

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