

Natural Area Preservation News

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

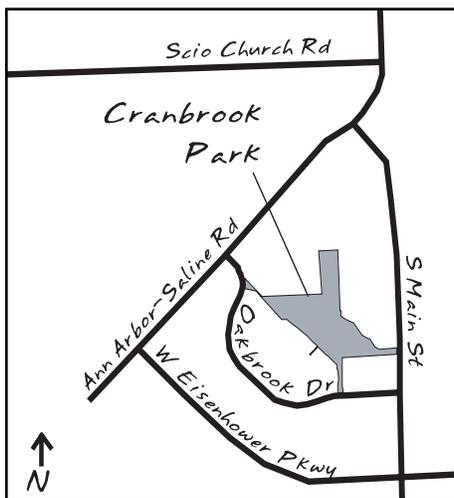
Volume 9, Number 1

Spring 2004

Park Focus: Cranbrook Park *by Bruce Hubbard*

Loved and much used by residents, Cranbrook Park is still growing nearly 20 years after it was born! The possible addition in 2004 of a small maple woods and wetland will enhance the south and east entries into Cranbrook, if approved by City Council. If that parcel is added, Cranbrook will reach a final size of 17 acres solely as the result of cooperation between farsighted City officials and developers. And no tax dollars were used to acquire the land! The preservation of open space and natural areas in the southwest quadrant of Ann Arbor is badly needed and greatly appreciated because of the dense residential, retail, and commercial development in the area. Cranbrook is a welcome oasis for anyone eager to enjoy some greenspace in an otherwise urban setting.

In the late 1970s a few key visionaries in the Parks and Planning Departments started to lay the conceptual groundwork for Cranbrook and other parks and open spaces adjacent to the rapidly developing areas near State Street, Ann Arbor-Saline Road, and I-94. At that time most of the area was still open cropland. Anyone driving on one of those roads or on Eisenhower could easily see where Cranbrook Park would someday be. Today the park is surrounded by housing developments and you catch only a tantalizing glimpse through the finger-like park entries from South Main and Oakbrook. At various times since 1986, Woodland Meadows, Brookside Commons, Oakbrook Condos, and Oakbrook Villas developments have contributed land and other improvements to what has become known as Cranbrook Park. It shows how the City, developers, and residents can come together to make something very special happen.



If you limit yourself to the peek-a-boo view of Cranbrook offered from Oakbrook or South Main, you will miss a chance to see a successful urban park created from bits and pieces of land molded into a cohesive whole by imaginative planners. Why not walk, jog, or cycle in and take a look? A wooded area stretches along the east side of the park and borders Mallet's Creek, which enters the park from the north, travels south, then swings east toward South Main Street. This part of the park has many soft-surfaced walking paths and several truly grand specimen trees, including a species rarely seen in Ann Arbor, a very large Chinkapin Oak that some of the neighbors have respectfully dubbed "Big Mel". The western half of the park is open and consists of rolling berms

and contours created from soil excavated from the adjoining developments—graded and planted consistent with Parks Department plans. Paved paths in this portion of the park link the two entries from Oakbrook with a play area, tennis courts, the woodland paths, and other paths giving direct access to the Woodland Meadows, Oakbrook Condos, and Oakbrook Villas residential developments.

Although land acquisitions for Cranbrook are near an end, in many, many ways the park is just getting STARTED!! NAP staff and volunteers

have made it easier for native plants like bladdernut, false dragonhead (obedient plant), and Michigan lily to grow by removing invasives like buckthorn and garlic mustard. Trails have also been blazed, maintained, and expanded much to the pleasure of local children. But the wooded area at Cranbrook did not begin its life as an undisturbed natural area as some other lucky City parks did.

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Coordinator's Corner

If You Restore It, They Will Come

During a recent discussion I had with the Park Advisory Commission about how NAP prioritizes sites in which to do restoration activities, one of the PAC members wondered if we were too focused on restoring just native plant communities, while ignoring wildlife issues. He suggested we expand our mission to include protecting and restoring all types of native biodiversity, not just plants. I responded that he was right about the need to protect all types of species, but there was no need to change NAP's mission because we were (I think) already focused on that broader goal. What is needed, however, is for us to do a better job of letting the public know what we're doing for wildlife, since those things are often not as conspicuous as a prescribed burn, or a pile of cut brush from a workday.

The major threat to local wildlife is habitat loss. Some wildlife species, especially insects such as the butterflies we survey annually, are very picky about the quality of their habitat—they may even require specific plant species to survive. Thus, by protecting those native plant communities, we're also preserving habitat for those types of wildlife. We can also help improve the habitat quality by putting up birdhouses to bring back eastern bluebirds, distributing extra logs on the forest floor for salamanders, and restoring grassland bird habitat at the landfill by getting staff and local farmers to delay their initial mowing of hayfields. In recent years, we've also started a campaign to keep dogs on leashes in natural areas in an effort to control predators of ground-nesting birds like American woodcocks.

Some other wildlife species are more concerned about the quantity of their habitat. They need big blocks of habitat to survive, and are less concerned about things like what individual plant species are present. For them, a tall hayfield may be as suitable as a tall-grass prairie, as long as there's enough of it in one big block of habitat.

For these species, there's a limit to what NAP can do in terms of restoration activities in existing city parks. It's difficult to create such large blocks of habitat. Instead, we need to identify and protect existing large blocks of unprotected, contiguous habitat with corridors between them. That's why NAP is so involved in the City's process to identify and acquire new parkland, and in the planning and development review process. It's the best way for us to help protect really useable habitat for wildlife.

Since 1995, NAP staff and volunteers have been surveying undeveloped parcels in the City for birds, butterflies, reptiles, and amphibians. We're trying to identify those parcels that are most important for wildlife, just as we prioritize those that are most important for native plants. If you've never gotten involved in these wildlife surveys, I'd encourage you to get involved this year, or least to learn more about them. The various survey kick-offs are all listed in the calendar on pages 4 and 5. Come learn more about our local wildlife and NAP's efforts to identify, monitor, and restore their populations. Then you can help NAP achieve its mission of protecting all of Ann Arbor's native biodiversity!

- David Borneman, *NAP Manager*

Natural Area Preservation

is a Division of the City of Ann Arbor
Public Services Area

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

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For up-to-date information on
stewardship activities, call the
"hotline" at 734.996.3266.

If you would prefer to receive
your next newsletter via e-mail
please call NAP.

Two College Students and NAP *by Mera Keenan and Scott Smith*

As freshmen at the University of Michigan we did not know what to expect entering this new phase of our lives. We envisioned meeting new friends and studying for hours on end, but never expected our academic requirements would include learning outside of our classrooms and textbooks. Imagine our surprise on the first day of school, when our English professor announced that volunteer work would be required to pass the course. We both thought this would be a great opportunity and were very excited to participate in such a unique class.

Choosing to get involved with NAP was an easy decision because we enjoy being outside and caring for the environment. Although we did not initially know a lot about the organization, we were immediately welcomed by friendly staff members and volunteers at the five public stewardship workdays we attended. At Brown and Scarlett-Mitchell we cut buckthorn and cleared trails, at Barton and Gallup we collected seeds, and at Miller we hauled trash out of the park.

The staff turned out to be amazing. They took the time to explain our goals, purpose, and tasks. The most rewarding part came towards the end of the workdays when we were taken on tours of the parks, many of which we did not know existed. On our treks through the parks we learned all about the plant life and why it is necessary to maintain the natural balance of the ecosystems. Prescribed burning was often discussed and we must admit, it sounds pretty fun to set fires—especially when their purpose is to improve the parks.

While NAP staff members provide factual information about the parks, we also learned lessons from working with other volunteers. People of different ages and various backgrounds volunteer with NAP. Although we all had different values and beliefs, what brought us together was the common goal of maintaining local plant ecosystems so that we have a healthy place to live.

After several weeks of attending workdays, it is as if we have become part of a family. Recognizing familiar faces is comforting and working with familiar people makes accomplishing tasks easier. The community of NAP volunteers and staff offers a friendly atmosphere. At a large university it is sometimes difficult to become part of an intimate and involved group similar to the one NAP provides. Working alongside others who care about the environment and witnessing the hard work committed to the parks contributes to a great feeling of accomplishment. We now feel as if we are a part of NAP and we love it.

No wonder our professor selected community work as a necessary element of our course. It is, after all, an experience that contributes a great deal to a well-rounded education.

NAP would like to thank Mera and Scott for all their hard work. We would also like to thank Jean Berger, Professor at the U of M, for inviting her students to volunteer as part of her English classes.



Park Steward Erudition

Tom Kraft—Age 44, born in Ann Arbor and lived on the north side of town for all but 6 years of his life. Tom grew up playing in Argo Park, even though he didn't know that it had a name. It was just, "I'll be down by the river." And now HIS three kids play there. "Its only right for me to give a little back to a place so much a part of my life."

Ron Emaus—First attracted by orchids, but volunteering with The Nature Conservancy alerted him to the dangers of invasives. He joined some of NAP's first volunteer crews and rescued some woodland plants. Then he replaced his lawn with prairie plants. He's a volunteer with the Malletts Creek Association and finds being a Steward of Redbud Nature Area especially rewarding.

Spring 2004 Natural Area Preservation Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

NAP is located at the Leslie Science Center (1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor, 48105). Our phone number is 734.996.3266. Workday orientations start promptly at listed times. A short nature walk will be held at the end of each workday, time permitting. Please wear pants and closed-toe shoes. Minors must either be accompanied by a guardian or contact NAP in advance to obtain a release form.

February

February 29, Sunday

Salamander Survey Kick-Off Meeting, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon

Leslie Science Center Nature House - 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor
Join Ann Arbor's (and Michigan's) first Salamander monitoring program. With your help, we will learn a great deal about these species' population densities and distribution around town. Volunteers with a bit of identification experience and a willingness to get muddy, please apply. There will be a \$10 fee associated with the kick-off and survey—to cover the cost of materials provided to volunteers. Please register by calling NAP.

February 29, Sunday

Frog and Toad Survey Kick-Off Meeting, 1:30 to 3:00 pm

Leslie Science Center Nature House - 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor
Volunteers can learn more about Ann Arbor's amphibians while contributing to our inventory efforts. The meeting will cover general information about the annual survey and is required training to participate in the survey. Route sign-up will also take place. Please call the NAP office to register or for more information.

March

March 2, Tuesday

Public Meeting - Prescribed Ecological Burn Program, 7:30 to 9:00 pm

Leslie Science Center Nature House - 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor
Fire is used as a restoration tool in some of Ann Arbor's natural areas. This meeting will provide information and an opportunity for discussion

about the Prescribed Ecological Burn Program conducted by Natural Area Preservation Division. Burns will be conducted in City parks throughout the spring and fall.

March 3, Wednesday

Prescribed Burn Crew Training, 12:00 to 5:00 pm

Leslie Science Center Nature House - 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor
This is the required training session for all volunteers interested in assisting with the prescribed burns to be held this spring and fall. Burns take place Monday through Friday between 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Pre-registration is required by February 14, as enrollment is limited. Please call the NAP office to register or for more information.

March 9, Tuesday

Native Landscaping Workshop, 7:00 to 9:00 pm

Leslie Science Center Nature House - 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor
Interested in native plants? Would you like to learn how to establish them in your yard? Then this workshop is for you! Topics will include site assessment and preparation, seed and plant selection, installation, and maintenance. Program fee: \$15. Please pre-register by March 1, by calling NAP.

March 13, Saturday

Dolph Nature Area Stewardship Workday, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Help us clear trails to ensure good viewing of migrating birds. Dolph is one of Ann Arbor's best bird watching parks. Opening up the trails is essential to inventorying the birds here. Meet at the parking lot off Wagner Road.

March 17, Wednesday

Butterfly Survey Kick-off, 7:30 to 9:00 pm

Leslie Science Center Nature House - 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor
Would you like to spend some time watching butterflies this year? If so, join us for our annual field survey! This required training will provide information about the survey, park assignments, and training walks. Registration by March 12 is required. Please call the NAP office to register or for more information.

March 28, Sunday

Brown Park Stewardship Workday, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Bring the family out to continue restoration work in this lovely woodland. We'll be removing some invasive dame's rocket and improving the trails. Meet us at the parking lot off Packard Road, across from Easy Street.

April

April 3, Saturday

Cranbrook Park Stewardship Workday, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Come one, come all! We'll be working on numerous cleanup activities that will greatly benefit this neighborhood park. Meet in the Church of Christ parking lot at 2530 South Main.

April 4, Sunday

Redbud Nature Area Stewardship Workday, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Join friends and neighbors to remove invasive plants from this amazing little park. Meet at the park entrance on Parkwood Avenue at Jeanne Street.

April 15, Thursday

Native Plant Garden Cleanup, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Help Park Steward Monica Milla keep the demonstration gardens at the Leslie Science Center tidy. Meet her in the Science Center parking lot (1831 Traver Road), just east of Barton Drive.

April 17, Saturday

Huron River Cleanup by Canoe, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Help the Huron River by removing trash while canoeing. Please register with the coordinator of this event, David Fanslow, at 734.741.2353 or dave.fanslow@noaa.gov as participation is limited.

April 18, Sunday

Miller Nature Area Stewardship Workday, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

The trails in Miller are used by many, many people in the neighborhood. With your help, all will benefit throughout the year by the improvements we make today. Meet us at the Arborview Boulevard entrance, just east of Windwood Avenue.

April 22, Thursday

Native Plant Garden Workday, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Help Monica with her second cleanup day. This demonstration garden is used by Ann Arbor residents to identify native plants. You may learn a few too! Meet her in the Science Center parking lot (1831 Traver Road), just east of Barton Drive.

April 22, Thursday

Breeding Bird Survey Kick-Off, 7:30 to 9:00 pm

Leslie Science Center Nature House - 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor

This is the night you may sign up to cover your favorite park and pick up maps and instructions. NAP Ornithologist Dea Armstrong will also report on the 2003 data and survey highlights. Please register by April 16. Call the NAP office to register or for additional information.

April 24, Saturday

Furstenberg Native Plant Garden, 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Park Steward and Master Gardener, Aunita Erskine, will lead a wonderful cleanup workday and botanical walk. Join her in improving her demonstration garden. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

May

May 1, Saturday

6th Annual Garlic Mustard Weed-Out Day

Three great locations!

10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Join this citywide effort to stop invasive garlic mustard from taking over our natural areas! Young garlic mustard is easy to pull so this is a great activity for all ages. Last year over a ton of garlic mustard was pulled. Choose from one of these locations:

Bird Hills Nature Area - Meet at the park entrance on Bird Road, west of Huron River Drive. Additional parking is available in the Barton Dam parking lot.

Cedar Bend Nature Area - Meet at the park entrance near the perennial gardens on Cedar Bend Drive, off Broadway.

Marshall Nature Area - Meet in the parking lot off Dixboro Road, north of Plymouth Road.

May 6, Thursday

Dolph Nature Area Bird Walk, 7:45 am

Dea Armstrong, City Ornithologist, will lead this walk. If you helped at the March 13 stewardship workday, please witness the fruits of your labor. Meet at the parking area just off Wagner Road.

May 14, Friday

Gallup/Furstenberg Evening Bird Walk, 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Join City Ornithologist Dea Armstrong as she leads a walk in Gallup Park and Furstenberg Nature Area. Bring binoculars if you have them, but they are not necessary. A great walk for beginning birders! Meet at the paddleboat dock at Gallup.

May 15, Saturday

Frog and Toad walk, 7:30 to 9:30 pm

Meet at the Leslie Science Center, 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor. Hear the calls of some wonderful nightlife with NAP Herpetologist David Mifsud. Bring a flashlight to help you navigate the trails. Please register by calling NAP.

May 16, Sunday

Two stewardship workdays today, make it to one or both!

If you live on the west side of town come to

Lakewood Nature Area, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Meet us at the Lakewood Elementary School parking lot off Gralake Avenue (three blocks south of Jackson Avenue).

If you live on the north side of Ann Arbor come on out to

Leslie Woods Nature Area, 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Meet us at the park entrance at the north end of Upland Drive.

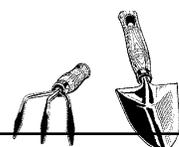
May 22, Saturday

Gallup Park Butterfly Walk, 9:30 to 11:30 am

Come join Natural Area Preservation Entomologist Barb Barton and explore the many habitats in the park as she searches for butterflies. Participants will learn about the life cycle, habitat preferences, and life history for each species you find. You will even be able to put names to those beautiful winged wonders you see fluttering about.

Lissa Anderson

Many groups participate in NAP workdays or arrange special workdays for their organizations. Contact the NAP office if a group you are involved with is interested in planning a volunteer stewardship event.



Southeast Michigan Stewardship Network



Are you interested in learning more about care and monitoring of natural areas—woods, creeks, prairies, etc? Then join the Southeast Michigan Stewardship Network from 7:30 to 8:30 am on the second Tuesday of each month for an informal conversation with volunteer and professional stewards about various topics. We meet at Bruegger's Bagels on North University Avenue, in Ann Arbor.

March 9, Tuesday

Topic: The prescribed ecological fire season is upon us, so let's talk about burn regimes. How often to burn? When to burn? Is there a difference in timing for prairies and woodlands?

April 13, Tuesday

Topic: Controlling invasive plant species. What methods have you used to control specific species? What has worked? What hasn't worked? What method have you always wanted to try, but haven't had enough information to actually do?

May 11, Tuesday

Topic: Site assessment. How does one go about beginning to assess a natural area? What are the things to look for? What clues to the cultural and biological history of the site can be found? How does this information inform management?

NAPpenings

Naturalized Zones Growing in Buhr Park

Over the past several years, Buhr Park has been home to a wonderful plot of native plantings. It was developed and is now maintained by the Buhr Park Children's Wet Meadow Project team in cooperation with the City's Parks Department. This fall, a 600-foot long swale was installed along the eastern portion of the park, intended to direct stormwater toward the existing wet meadow area. Native seed mix similar to wet meadow plantings was then sown on the disturbed soils.

A second wet meadow is currently in the design phase and will be located southwest of the pool. Construction could potentially occur next spring! The work this fall and next spring spearheads implementation of the first phases of the adopted Buhr Park Stormwater Management Plan.

City Re-organization

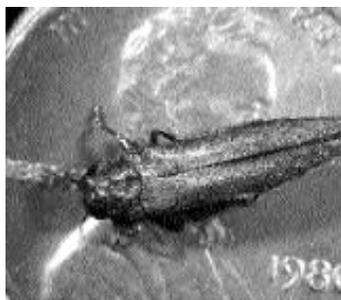
There has been a re-organization of City government over the past year. As a result NAP is no longer a part of the Parks and Recreation Department. In fact, there no longer is a Parks and Recreation Department! The City is now organized into five "service areas". The recreation side of our former department is in the Community Services Area. NAP, Forestry, Horticulture, and Park Operations are in the Public Services Area, headed by Sue McCormick. Within Public Services, there are several "units," one of which is Field Operations, headed by Terry Rynard. That is our new home in the organizational chart. Others in "Field Ops" are Solid Waste, Signs and Signals, Street Maintenance, Utility Field Services, and the Airport. Our goal is for this re-organization to result in no negative impacts to NAP or its volunteer programs. In fact, we hope it will result in some improvements in customer service, as we are now able to coordinate more closely with others doing work in the parks. But please bear with us as we continue through this time of changing titles, work responsibilities, lines of communication, etc...

Cranbrook Park *continued from Page 1*

When NAP first started volunteer clean-up days, the woods and creek were pretty degraded. Over the last few years volunteers have rid the area of many varied and unlikely items such as a toilet, several shopping carts, a ten-foot metal culvert, parts of a corrugated metal storage shed, and even the cap for a pick-up truck. Our annual

spring clean-up day is always fun and well attended. Many volunteers return each year, perhaps because they can easily see what a huge difference their efforts make. We're eager for our next clean-up on Saturday, April 3, 2004... and "Big Mel" is looking forward to getting a few more buckthorn out of his roots!!

NAP Helps With Emerald Ash Borer Research *by Dea Armstrong*



The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is an invasive beetle that has infested millions of ash trees in southeastern Michigan. The ecological impact of this pest has the potential to be tremendous and may well eradicate

white, green, blue, and black ash from forests. Researchers at Michigan State University are currently studying the effects of the EAB outbreak in Michigan, as well as potential cures. And they have asked NAP to help! Specifically, MSU Entomologist, Dave Smitley, believes that NAP has the information and infrastructure to provide quantitative data on “before and after EAB infestation” activity of woodpeckers. Woodpeckers are known to feed on the tunneling larval stage of the Emerald Ash Borer beetle. Therefore, increased woodpecker feeding activity may be one of the first signs of EAB infestation. Dave Smitley and his graduate student Joe Frazier will be looking at NAP’s Breeding Bird data from previous and future years to see if woodpecker populations show observable changes in areas of EAB infestation. Thanks to our excellent volunteer surveyors and staff, NAP has woodpecker data from 1995 to the present. Well over a dozen of these parks have enough ash trees that they are good sites to observe infestation and woodpecker activity.

The adult EAB beetle lays eggs in the bark of ash trees in the fall. These eggs mature into adults over the winter, emerging as adult beetles in late April or early May. Emerging adult beetles leave a small, hard to see, D-shaped exit hole in the bark of the tree. Thus human detection of the first phase of the beetles’ lives is not always easy. More definitive information of infestation occurs in successive years, when there is severe dieback, but at a point too late to save the tree. The larval stage of EAB does the most significant damage to trees. This is when the woodpeckers may begin to feed at a particular tree. Of course, not all affected trees will have woodpecker activity present, but the extent to which woodpecker numbers may increase in an infested area is what the researchers from MSU will be using NAP’s data to examine.

Currently, no information exists about whether one woodpecker species responds more than another. Ann Arbor’s most common woodpecker, the Downy Woodpecker, is one of four woodpecker species found in our parks. As you walk thru the parks you will likely be able to observe this species, as well as Red-bellied Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, and Northern Flicker. If you’d like to help survey our parks for these species and others, think about volunteering as a participant in our breeding bird survey. You could be contributing to solving the EAB problem. See the NAP website for a link to additional resources.

Staff Updates

goodbye...

Life is a closed circle. I begun my career at NAP pulling out weed at Furstenberg... and I finished it up hauling brush at Furstenberg as well. Seriously now, I’m leaving you guys and I know that it will be hard for you to find another one like me. I mean, how many Chileans who live in Ann Arbor willing to spend their summer dealing with invasive species you know, ah? Thank you all for the good time, hard work, and endless (and sometime pointless...) conversations. I learned and I laugh quite a lot. Take care of the parks while I’m gone and keep Jon away from the power tools! Bye Jason, Shira, John, Eric, Katherine, Bev, Steve, Lauren, Laurel, and Dave. Bye needy Parks...

Adieu,
Max (Barahona)

Shira Diem’s send-off haiku:

Snow falls where I left
And I fly south with the birds
NAP I bid thee well

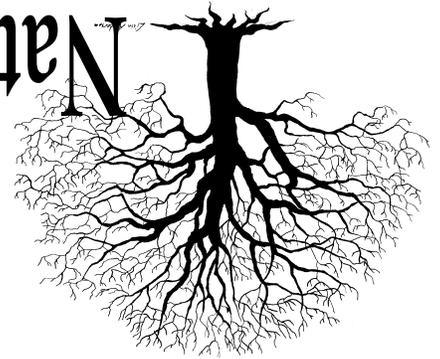


Invasive Alert: Bittercress—A New Invader *by Bev Walters*

Narrowleaf bittercress (*Cardamine impatiens*) is now running rampant in Ann Arbor's parks. This highly invasive species first turned up in New England in the early 1900s and is now quite a problem there. The first Michigan colonies were found in Ann Arbor in 1978. By 1994 it was common in only one of our local parks, but now, just a few years later, pioneer plants can be found scattered in many of our wooded sites and it may become as problematic as garlic mustard. NAP staff and volunteers are controlling it in the same way as that cruciferous cousin—by hand-pulling the plants before they set fruit. Narrowleaf bittercress has lacy leaves that appear in late winter or early spring as rosettes. In this early stage it can

easily be mistaken for a delicate fern. But don't be deceived by that look of innocence! As the season progresses it rears its ugly inflorescence and can reach a height of two feet. The tiny white flowers mature into long, narrowly cylindrical pods that forcibly spit out their small seeds when ripe. These seeds likely spread to new locations by hitching a ride on muddy shoes or boots, as it often shows up first along trails. Animals certainly transport it too. Watch for narrowleaf bittercress, especially in moist wooded sites, and clean your footwear if you tromp through it! Visit NAP's website for links to more information.

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