

Natural Area Preservation News

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

Volume 18, Number 1

Spring 2013

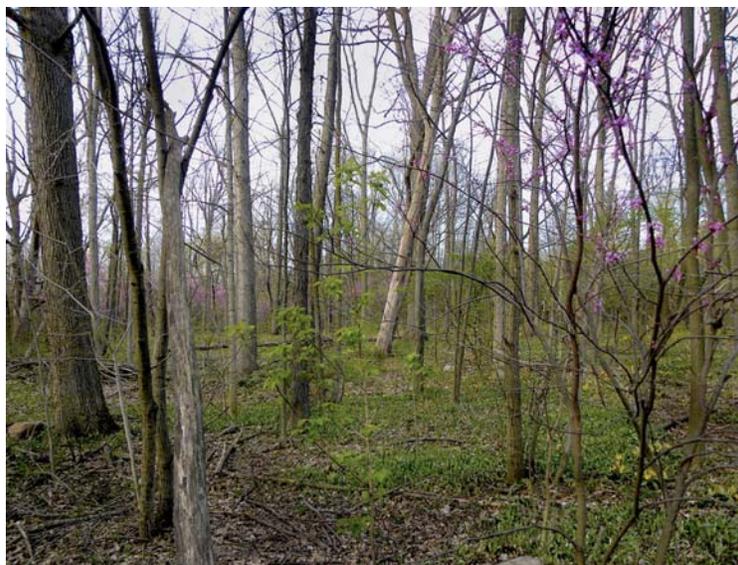
Redbud Nature Area: Reminiscing and Restoring

by Sara E. Jackson

When I was a kid there was a redbud tree in my backyard. It was near the back fence of our yard along with a few other varieties of trees creating a small wooded knoll. It was the perfect place to play on hot, sunny days, and the ground was a carpet of sticks, acorns, fallen leaves and other things to seasonally gather and sort during imagination games.

It was the redbud tree which made it a particularly magical place, though. The pink blossoms in the spring would beckon to me outdoors, the heart-shaped leaves which emerged soon after were a delight, and the seed pods were always fun to dissect.

There's good reason Redbud Nature Area got its name. Originally an unnamed plot, it was purchased by the City in 2000. The motivation was to protect the 5-acre site because it was the last remaining undeveloped and unprotected parcel of land along Mallett's Creek. When NAP staff began conducting a plant inventory of the parcel staff were excited to discover that it had over 120 native plant species, a stunning display of trout lily, and the largest stand of redbud trees in any of the city's nature areas.



The pink blossoms of redbud trees make Redbud Nature Area particularly beautiful in the early spring.

It needed some help, though.

Former NAP staff member, Jason Frenzel, grew-up near the area now known as Redbud. He reflected, "As a kid (almost 30 years ago) there were NO invasive buckthorn shrubs there. The streamside was completely clear – just cool season grasses. It was a great place to play in the woods and in Malletts Creek. I've always said that my time as an environmentalist is due to my time spent as a youth in nature."

Luckily, several neighbors to Redbud were dedicated to the beautiful area and willing to help restore it. Longtime Park Steward, Ron Emaus, has been instrumental in leading these efforts. In addition

to participating in countless volunteer events to remove invasive species, he also actively keeps neighbors (particularly new neighbors) informed about ways they can help keep the area nice.

One of Ron's biggest projects with NAP was to cap some existing debris piles with soil and turn the former eyesore along the edge of the park into a native prairie planting. The prairie planting is at the entrance to

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The Restorative Power of Fire

Anyone who knows me knows that I love to talk about fire, especially this time of year during our spring controlled burn season. It is a subject near and dear to my heart, mainly because I have repeatedly witnessed the amazing restorative power of a good burn in an oak woodland choked out by invasive shrubs, or in a prairie being overrun with weeds. I believe that reintroducing fire back into our native ecosystems is the single most effective restoration tool that we have in our toolbox.

In January, I was able to attend a great conference in Iowa on Controlled Burning in Tallgrass Prairies and Oak Savannas in the Midwest. Yes, there were interesting presentations and posters on recent research related to controlled burning. Yes, there was exciting new equipment and tools on display. And yes, there was wonderful networking with 350 other controlled fire professionals across the Midwest.

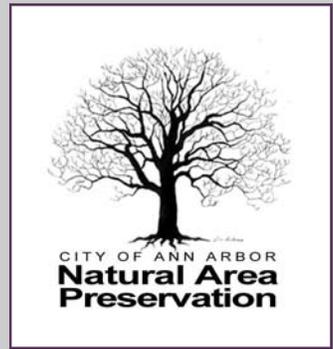
It's that last point that will stick with me the longest - 350 Midwesterners just like me all in one room talking about controlled burning! And most of them are burning at a much larger scale than we are. The folks in the Flint Hills of eastern Kansas, for example, burn about 420,000 acres a year! Impressive.

Of course, Ann Arbor has a very different geography than eastern Kansas. Our prairie remnants are tiny specks compared with theirs. And our oak woodlands and wetlands are chopped up into scattered fragments that make it difficult to ever burn more than a few acres at a time. But that doesn't mean that our burns are easy to do - quite the contrary. All of NAP's burns occur in what is widely regarded as the most difficult environment in which to use controlled burning - the Wildland-Urban Interface. Over the years that NAP's been burning, I've received many congratulatory pats on the back from my Western U.S. burn colleagues, who are impressed that we are able to do so much burning here in this Wildland-Urban Interface. They are also always very appreciative of the public outreach that we do concerning controlled burning and its benefits to nature. It is a message that is often lost in news coverage about large wildfires out west.

NAP is proud to be a local "torch bearer" for the restorative power of controlled burning. It is not a magic bullet. It is not the answer to every ecological restoration question. It can have negative consequences just as any tool can. But it is the ancient rhythm of this annual pulse of fire on the landscape that has created the native ecosystems that we enjoy here today. And we are pleased this spring - in concert with thousands of our brethren across the Midwest - to once again return this restorative force of nature to our parklands.

Dave Borneman, NAP Manager

You can be a part of NAP's volunteer burn crew if you attend our Burn Training on Wednesday Feb. 27th. You are also always welcome to come and watch a controlled burn being done. Call the NAP office for more information about either.



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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Improvements Millage.*

Photomonitoring

by Laura Mueller

Long time Ann Arborites can attest to the changes in our City's natural areas throughout the years. Many of these changes have been documented through NAP's Photomonitoring program.

The program began in 1994, with approximately 350 photos covering sections of 28 of Ann Arbor's natural areas. Photos were taken to document baseline conditions at many locations within the natural areas. More recently, a smaller number of "precise points" have been established with greater care being given to consistently capture similarly framed photos of each area, so that changes over time can be easily compared at a glance. More volunteers have joined the ranks of Photomonitors, while the task itself has become more refined.

Each precise point has a unique purpose, and is scheduled for photos during different times of the year to fit that goal. For example, photos taken in the late fall may be used to help monitor invasive shrub infestations, since invasive species tend to keep their green leaves after the native trees and shrubs have dropped their leaves for the year. Areas that have been cleared of shrubs and then reseeded with native plants are often monitored to document the success rate of the planting.

Some of the most dramatic and immediate changes occur following invasive shrub clearing, trail construction projects, and controlled burns. The photos to the right were taken at Miller Nature Area to document invasive shrub removal and subsequent herbaceous plant growth in the area which was previously too shaded. Photos of these large scale projects are not the only useful records, however. Several of the precise points help us to document the spread of invasive plant species.

Photomonitors use a set of written instructions, a compass, and sample photos to find their precise points. The process of finding the photopoints can sometimes be a challenge. A fallen tree, for example, can change the view dramatically. Photomonitors' observations help NAP staff keep directions up to date.

Some volunteers have been with the program for years, and over this time have developed their own knowledge of the park history and an understanding of the restoration techniques that are in use. Each year



BEFORE: Miller Nature Area March 2009.
Recently cut invasive shrubs are left to decompose.



AFTER: Miller Nature Area March 2012.
The same photomonitoring point three years later shows the shrub debris is gone and herbaceous plants now have a chance to grow.

also brings new volunteers with a fresh enthusiasm for the program. Veteran Photomonitors have often been instrumental in training the newcomers, and love to pass along stories of their experiences in the nature area. They note a feeling of attachment to the area they cover, and cherish the time that they spend outdoors while shooting their photos.

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Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

Spring 2013

To register for any of NAP's spring trainings (unless otherwise noted):
NAP@a2gov.org / 734.794.6627

March

March 3, Sunday

Salamander Survey Kickoff
Leslie Science & Nature Center
Nature House - 1831 Traver Rd.
10:00 am to 12:00 pm

New and returning volunteers are invited to learn how to help monitor salamander populations and the health of habitats. Please register by March 1.

March 3, Sunday

Frog and Toad Survey Kickoff
Leslie Science & Nature Center
Nature House - 1831 Traver Rd.
1:30 pm to 3:00 pm

Help us monitor frogs and toads in the parks. Learn their calls, then go out to listen. Fun for all ages! No previous experience required. Please register by March 1.

March 16, Saturday

Restoration Tool Use & Maintenance Workshop
Leslie Park Golf Course Barn
9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Review sharpening and maintenance of hand tools, power tools, herbicide wands, and backpacks. Bring a hand tool to sharpen or a small engine to repair. Meet in the Leslie Park Golf Course in the historic barn on Traver Rd. This event is offered through The Stewardship Network. Cost: \$10 Stewardship Network Members/ \$15 Non-members. To register: www.stewardshipnetwork.org

March 16, Saturday

Photo Monitoring Kickoff
Leslie Science & Nature Center
Leslie House - 1831 Traver Rd.
10:00 am to 11:30 am

Taking photos of the same location season after season is one of the best ways to record restoration progress. All you need to participate is a digital camera. Register by March 15.

March 16, Saturday

Workday Leader Training
Leslie Science & Nature Center
Leslie House - 1831 Traver Rd.
12:00 pm to 5:30 pm

NAP can sometimes use extra help running events. Join us if you're interested in helping lead workdays and developing your leadership skills. Dress for time both indoors and outdoors. Register by March 15.

Please wear long pants and closed-toe shoes to all workdays. Minors must be accompanied by a guardian or contact NAP in advance to obtain a release form. Snacks, water, and tools are provided.

April

April 6, Saturday

Leslie Woods Nature Area
9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Help remove garlic mustard, dame's rocket, and other spring invasive plants. Meet at the north end of Upland Dr., just north of Plymouth Rd.

April 7, Saturday

Dolph Nature Area
9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Help cut back invasive shrubs. Meet at the parking lot on the east side of Wagner Rd., between Liberty and Jackson.

April 11, Thursday

Breeding Bird Survey Kickoff
Leslie Science & Nature Center
Leslie House - 1831 Traver Rd.
7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Some experience in bird identification necessary. City Ornithologist Dea Armstrong will train volunteers and also report on the 2012 data and survey highlights. Please register by April 10.

April 13, Saturday

Wurster Nature Area
9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Help pull garlic mustard and other invasive plants. Make sure to check out Wurster's own champion oak tree! Meet at the cul-de-sac of Edgewood Pl. off of W Davis Ave.

April 14, Sunday

Turtle Steward Training
Leslie Science & Nature Center
Nature House - 1831 Traver Rd.
10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Learn how to identify turtle species, monitor turtle nests, and report your observations. Please register by April 11.

April 20, Saturday

Lakewood Nature Area
9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Help spread woodchips and trim back plants from the trails. Bring a plastic sled if you have one. Meet at the entrance near Central St. and Dolph Dr.

April 20, Saturday

Onder Nature Area
9:00 am to 12:00 pm

This will be the first public volunteer event at Onder! Help make it a success by pulling garlic mustard, dame's rockets and other spring invasive plants. Meet at the park entrance on Brookside Dr. off of Pontiac Trail.

Volunteer Stewardship Calendar Spring 2013

April 21, Sunday
Earth Day Festival
Leslie Science & Nature Center
1831 Traver Rd.
12:00 pm to 4:00 pm
Free, family-friendly event. For more information: www.a2gov.org/green

April 21, Sunday
Sunset Brooks Nature Area
9:00 am to 12:00 pm
Help remove garlic mustard, dame's rocket, and other spring invasive plants. Meet us at the park entrance on Sunset Rd., at the end of Brooks St.

April 21, Sunday
Huron Hills Golf Course Woods
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm
Help remove garlic mustard, dame's rocket, and other spring invasive plants. Meet on Hunting Valley Dr. off of Provincial Dr.

April 27, Saturday
Mary Beth Doyle Nature Area
9:00 am to 12:00 pm
Come celebrate Arbor Day by lending a hand planting native shrubs. Meet at the end of Verle Ave., west off of Platt Rd.

April 27, Saturday
15th Annual
Garlic Mustard Weed Out Day
10:00 am to 1:00pm
See page 7 for complete details.

May

Throughout May 2013
getDowntown Commuter Challenge
For more information visit www.getdowntown.org

May 2, Thursday
Spring Nature Walk
Bird Hills Nature Area
7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Learn about native plants and recent restoration efforts at this site. This is part of a series of walks in partnership with Ann Arbor Public Library. Meet in the Bird Hills parking lot off Newport Rd. just north of M-14.

May 4, Saturday
Greenview Nature Area
9:00 am to 12:00 pm
Help with wood chipping trails and combating garlic mustard. Meet on Greenview Dr., in front of the Project Grow garden, across from Barnard Rd.

May 5, Sunday
Furstenberg Native Garden
12:00 pm to 3:00 pm
Help Master Gardener Aunita Erskine weed and preserve the native garden. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Rd., across from Huron High School.

May 11, Saturday
Bluffs Nature Area
9:00 am to 12:00 pm
Help remove garlic mustard, dame's rocket, and other spring invasive plants. Also the potential for trail work. Meet in front of 220 Sunset Rd.

May 17, Friday
Bird Walk
Gallup Park
6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
Join City Ornithologist Dea Armstrong as she leads a walk to look for birds in the evening. Bring binoculars if you have them. Meet at the paddleboat dock in Gallup near the canoe livery.

May 18, Saturday
Spring Adopt-A-Park Kickoff
Various Park Locations
9:00 am to 12:00 pm
Help beautify your neighborhood park and plant some native flowers. Training, tools, and support provided. For information Adopt-A-Park@a2gov.org,

734.794.6627, or www.a2gov.org/adopt-a-park.

May 18, Saturday
Downtown Blooms Day
9:00 am to 12:00 pm
Help plant flowers and spruce-up downtown Ann Arbor. To pre-register, call 734.794.6000 ex. 43112.

Stewardship Network's Stewards' Circle

Bruegger's Bagels - 709 N University Ave
7:30 am to 8:30 am

Are you interested in learning more about how to care for natural areas - woods, creeks, prairies, wetlands? Then join the Stewardship Network's Huron Arbor cluster upstairs at Bruegger's Bagels 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.

March 12, Tuesday
Forest Health: You may know all about Emerald Ash Borer, but can you identify an Asian Longhorned Beetle or signs of other pests? Join us to discuss lesser known threats to urban forests.

April 9, Tuesday
Transforming Your Home Landscape: What can do with your small backyard to better care for nature? Bring your questions about rain gardens, pollinator gardens, neighbor relations and the like.

May 14, Tuesday
Perils of Working in Nature: Stinging insects, west nile, poisonous plants, etc.

Redbud Nature Area

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Redbud along Parkwood Avenue at the end of Jeanne Street. It's now a beautiful and colorful feature for the neighborhood to admire and provides wonderful butterfly viewing.

The main trail in Redbud can easily be accessed from the prairie planting and quickly invites visitors into the woods. Spring visitors will enjoy

wonderful expanses of bloodroot, wild ginger, and skunk cabbage. Oh, and so many of those magical redbud trees!

It's always wonderful to find places which remind me of those childhood days, and anywhere there is a redbud tree I instantly reflect back to that knoll. While I can't return to my original place of nature discovery, Frenzel is thrilled he can and that it is now protected and being restored by NAP and its volunteers. As Jason put it, "Redbud Nature Area was definitely one of my formative places in growing-up to appreciate and love nature, being outside, discovery, and learning on my own – all the things that the "Get Outdoors" and "Last Child in the Woods" folks talk about. I'm glad it will be there for many future generations to enjoy."

Redbud Nature Area is participating in NAP's 15th Annual Garlic Mustard Weedout Day on Saturday, April 27th. See page 7 for more information.

Redbud is located south of Washtenaw Ave. and east of Platt Rd. The main entrance and parking can be found along Parkwood Ave.

Photomonitoring

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It's common for Photomonitors to return from the natural areas with much more than just their precise points. Along with some beautiful artistic photos, many return with questions or comments on a new plant they've noticed, or wildlife they've spotted along the way.

Interested in helping out? We're always excited to welcome new volunteers into the program. NAP's Photomonitoring Kickoff event is Saturday, March 16 from 10:00 am to 11:30 am. Please contact the NAP office for more information and to register for the training. NAP@a2gov.org or 734-794-6627.



BEFORE: Scarlett Mitchell November 2005.

Invasive shrubs commonly have green leaves until late in the growing season, making it easy to see that the shrubs have been removed from this area.



AFTER: Scarlett Mitchell November 2010.

15th Annual Garlic Mustard Weed Out Day



**April 27th,
Saturday
10:00 am to 1:00 pm**

Garlic Mustard Weed-Out Day is an annual event in which volunteers hand-pull garlic mustard in natural areas throughout Ann Arbor! See the list on the right to find the

location nearest you. Identifying and pulling garlic mustard is fun and easy for all ages, so this is a great volunteer opportunity for families.

Participating Parks:

Argo - Meet in the Argo Canoe Livery parking lot near the entrance to the woods. 1055 Longshore Dr.

Bird Hills - Meet at the Bird Road entrance, west of Huron River Drive (additional parking at the Barton Nature Area-Dam Entrance)

Cedar Bend- Meet us at the Island Park parking lot, at the end of Island Drive

Hannah- Meet at the west end of Bath Street, west of 7th (between Miller and Huron)

Huron Parkway- Meet at 3470 Woodland Road, off East Huron River Drive

Miller - Meet at the Arborview Boulevard entrance, just east of Wildwood Avenue

Redbud - Meet at the park entrance at the intersection of Parkwood Ave., and Jeanne St.

NAPpennings

thank you...

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

Ann Arbor YMCA - Youth Volunteer Corps
Emerson Middle School
Foundation of International Medical Relief for Children
Junior Panhellenic Council
REI
Rudolf Steiner School
Skyline Interact Club
UM Alpha Pi Mu
UM Circle K
UM Economics 108 students
UM Engineering Honors Society
UM Environment 201 students
UM School of Information

Thank you also...

Stacie Printon and Jeff Vornhagen for becoming new Park Stewards at Leslie Woods Nature Area.

Karin Monnett for becoming a new Park Steward at Arbor Hills and Oakwoods Nature Areas

Downtown Home & Garden, Abbott's Nursery, and Fraleigh's Landscape Nursery for donating bulbs and plants for Broadway Park and the nearby traffic median.

Staff Updates



Farewell...

Jane Sherry

Over the past year, I had the unique opportunity to work as both a member of the field crew and in the office. NAP provided me with a wide range of invaluable experiences that I hope to use as an Americorps volunteer. My favorite activities were burning, turtle relocation, and native seed collection and dispersal. I will miss working in Ann Arbor's natural areas, but most of all I will miss the people. A special thanks to my fabulous coworkers and NAP's lovely volunteers for making this year unforgettable!

Hiking for Health

NAP is partnering with Matthaei Botanical Garden, Nichols Arboretum, Washtenaw American Heart Association, and the UM Medical System to develop recommendations for a Park Prescription Program. The goal is to make it easy for doctors to prescribe local hiking trails to help prevent or treat health problems resulting from inactivity and poor diet. Similar programs are becoming popular across the country through the efforts of American Trails.

2013 Collector Button Series—Join the Green Team!

The Collector Button's are back, and this year they are going to be green. Show-off that you are part of NAP's Green Team by volunteering and earning buttons at different events throughout the year. Collect three different types of green buttons to qualify for a fun prize. Collect six unique ones for an even greater prize. Prizes will be distributed at our annual Volunteer Appreciation Potluck on October 23, 2013. Show-up wearing your buttons! Show-off your Green Team spirit by wearing them throughout the year!

NEW for 2013! Our resident artist, Robb Johnston, has added two new buttons to the collection. The Turtle Steward program now has its own official button, plus we've added a Special Events button as a way to thank volunteers who help in so many other unique ways.



Spring 2013

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Printed on recycled paper with soy-based ink.
If you would prefer to receive your next newsletter via email, please let us know!



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