

NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

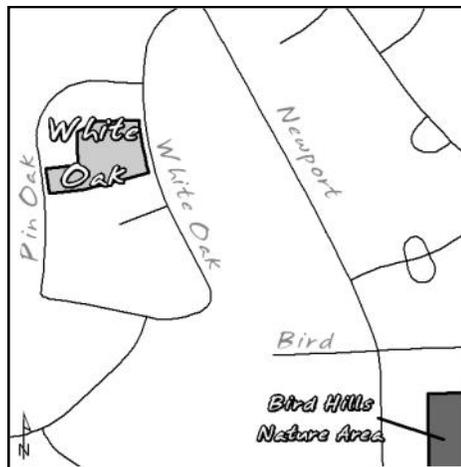
Protecting and restoring Ann Arbor's natural areas and fostering an environmental ethic among its citizens

Volume 19, Number 4
Winter 2014-15

Park Focus: White Oak Park

Kristen Schotts

Some of Ann Arbor's parks are overlooked by the general public, tucked away in neighborhoods not frequently visited by the masses; White Oak Park is one such place. Few outside of the Newport Hills subdivision know of this 3-acre natural area bordered by White Oak and Pin Oak Drives. The subdivision was developed in the 1990s and the park was set aside with as few trees removed as possible so that when the neighborhood was established the residents would have a green space to enjoy. The park has faced its challenges: the dumping of yard waste, invasive species, and a nearly impassable understory that made the park uninviting to use. In the early 2000s, plans were set in motion to improve the park so



as to be more accessible to residents. A single path running east to west was created. Along the path, two benches, a picnic table, and a small play structure were installed to give the local children a place to play outdoors. Though the park was recreationally improved, it still faced an uphill battle with invasive species.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



White Oak Stewards
David Repp and Richard Geglio

IN THIS ISSUE:

Park Focus: White Oak
Page 1

Coordinator's Corner
Page 2

2014 Program Reports
Page 3

Stewardship Calendar
Pages 4-5

NAPpenings
and Staff Updates
Pages 6-7

Eagle Scout Projects
Page 8



EAGLE SCOUTS

Each year, a handful of Eagle Scouts work in Ann Arbor natural areas to plan, develop, and give leadership to others in service projects benefiting the parks and park users.

See page 8 to read about one of these Eagle Scout projects in progress.





COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Home

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.*

3875 E. Huron River Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Phone: 734.794.6627
Email: NAP@a2gov.org
Website: a2gov.org/NAP
facebook.com/ann.arbor.NAP
twitter.com/a2NAP

**Deputy Manager for
Volunteerism and Natural
Area Preservation:**

Dave Borneman

Stewardship Specialists:

Becky Gajewski

Michael Hahn

Inventory Staff:

Dea Armstrong, Ornithologist

Patrick Terry, Herpetologist

Volunteer and Outreach

Coordinator:

Tina Stephens

Outreach Assistants:

Dana Burnette

Dana Novak

Mary Adams

Quentin Turner

Conservation Workers:

Cristine Santanna

Drew Zawacki

Kristen Schotts

Michael Ryskamp, Intern

Nathan Helms

Rachel Nagel

*Natural Area Preservation is
funded by the voter-approved
2013-2018 Park Maintenance &
Capital Improvements Millage.*

A few years ago, when Skyline High School was being built, NAP conducted a “herp rescue” of reptiles and amphibians headed to the wetland that had been destroyed during construction. I was amazed to learn from our herpetologist that frogs and salamanders return each year to breed in the same pond where they themselves were hatched, and some salamanders may live 20 years or longer. If that pond is destroyed, and those herps are moved to a different pond to breed, some of them will accept that new pond. But some will reject it and keep trying to get themselves back to where they think they are supposed to be. As the years go by, the number of frogs and salamanders trying to get back to that old pond has decreased. I suppose that’s either because the old herps die off or because they “give in” and finally accept that the new pond is their new home.

We highly evolved primates must still retain a bit of this primitive, reptilian brain matter. As flexible and adaptive as we are as a species, some of us still find ourselves clinging stubbornly to our past. I reflect on this during these holiday months. I officially left home when I was 17, heading off to my first summer job after high school, then away to college. For the past 21 years Ann Arbor has been my home. Still, every year of my life, whenever it is at all possible, I am drawn to return to my boyhood home - the family farm in northern Illinois - for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and other major holidays. Intellectually, I know there is nothing ecologically unique or special about these 160 acres of Midwest farmland. I drive past hundreds of similar farms on the 353-mile pilgrimage that I make several times a year. Still, there is something that stirs deep within me when I come up over the last little rise and see the familiar red barn, the old silo, the broken windmill, the big shade trees, and the old house where my dad was born nearly 100 years ago. I’m home.

We really aren’t so different from those frogs and salamanders. Many of us are imprinted with a “sense of place” that profoundly feels like home to us. So what do we do when that old home disappears, or is taken away from us? Some of us will more easily adapt to a new home. We’ll put down new roots, make new friends, start new traditions, begin a new life. Others of us will keep trying to get ourselves back to that old pond, year after year, even when it’s no longer there. So how do you make a new place truly feel like “home?” How do you make that transition? Here’s a suggestion: roll up your sleeves, jump in, and start working to improve your new location. Invest in your local natural areas. Take ownership in them. Join NAP or Adopt-A-Park at some upcoming workdays. Better yet, step up and volunteer to be a Park Steward there. Doing so will make those areas more valuable to you. Before long, you may just find that you’ve put down some new roots. And you may once again enjoy that sense of “home” without even needing to go in search of your old pond.

- Dave Borneman, Deputy Manager for Volunteerism and NAP

2014 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

From Workday Coordinator, Mary Adams:

- NAP has hosted 65 public and 42 private workdays
- Forty-four groups and 2,473 individuals volunteered at NAP workdays
- We've recorded 8,079 volunteer hours this year!



From Adopt-A-Park Coordinator, Quentin Turner:

- AAP hosted over 70 workdays
- We increased the number of adopted parks by 10%
- Over 100 individuals volunteered in more than 60 parks

From Park Steward Coordinator, Dana Burnette:

- NAP has 75 Park Stewards across 39 city natural areas
- Brooks Curtis has accrued an impressive 110 volunteer hours in Sunset Brooks Nature Area
- Richard Geglio and David Repp worked as a team to clear White Oak Park of invasive honeysuckle, autumn-olive, and buckthorn in the 3-acre park
- Stewards at Bluffs Nature Area are moving forward with the installation of a new trail entrance so that park neighbors have official access to the park from the west
- Dicken Woods Nature Area's stewards removed invasive species and replanted with natives along South Pauline Drive and around oak trees they planted years ago
- Bill Kidd and Aunita Erskine teamed up to maintain a native plant garden and push back the invasive species in the prairie and woodland at Furstenberg Nature Area
- Leonore Gerstein is tackling the Asian bittersweet vines that threaten to take over Oakridge Nature Area
- The stewards at Stapp Nature Area spent many hours removing shrubs around the sensitive vernal pond
- Judy and Manfred Schmidt spent countless hours in Scarlet Mitchell Nature Area and attended every possible workday at the site
- Shannan Gibb-Randall and Kay Werthan worked together at Hannah Nature Area to be the neighborhood liaisons and recruit others to public workdays
- Jeannine Palms led the Buhr Park Wet Meadow Project, maintained the meadows, and partnered with community groups to expand the project

From NAP Herpetologist, Patrick Terry:

- Over 500 hours of herp volunteer effort were recorded along with over 250 herps counted
- Rare and uncommon species sightings for the year include: Musk Turtle, Blanding's Turtle, Tiger Salamander, Spiny Softshell Turtle and American Bullfrog
- 120 Day Campers were educated through the Gallup River Camp
- Corrie Navis volunteered an impressive 65+ hours with the herp program and attended every group event



Blanding's Turtle

VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR WINTER 2014-15

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

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

JANUARY

Saturday, January 10
Volunteer Citizen Pruner Training
Cobblestone Farm, 2781 Packard Rd
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Citizen Pruners volunteer during work days to care for newly planted city trees. We'll teach you everything you need to know. Training includes both indoor and outdoor time, so come prepared to be comfortable in both settings. Please register by January 2, tstephens@a2gov.org or call 734.794.6627.

Monday, January 19
Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service
Stewardship Workday
Black Pond Woods Nature Area
1 to 3 p.m.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service is an opportunity to make your day "off" a day "on" for community service. Help remove invasive shrubs from Black Pond Woods Nature Area. Meet in the parking lot at 1831 Traver Rd. Please wear long pants, closed-toe shoes, and dress in layers.

Saturday, January 31
World Wetland Day
Stewardship Workday
Foxfire West Park
1 to 3 p.m.

Take advantage of this winter opportunity to explore and improve one of Ann Arbor's special wetlands while it's frozen over. The wetlands in Foxfire West are part of a corridor for wildlife that depends on water. Help NAP restore this area by removing invasive species using loppers and hand saws. Meet at the entrance off Birchwood Dr.

perennial forbs, grass, and sedge mixtures that grow in saturated soils. Accessible when the ground is frozen, volunteers will cut invasive woody shrubs that compete with native species for water, nutrients, and sun. Enter Gallup from Fuller Rd, cross the wooden bridge, and meet NAP staff in the first parking lot.

Saturday, February 21
Furstenberg Nature Area
Stewardship Workday
1 to 3 p.m.

Build a "Fursty" the snowman after helping to cut invasive shrubs like honeysuckle and buckthorn at Furstenberg Nature Area. Although the weather outside might be frightful, NAP is prepared to improve this 38-acre park containing wetlands, woodlands, prairie, and a rare oak savanna. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Rd, across from Huron High School.

FEBRUARY

Monday, February 16
Presidents' Day
Stewardship Workday
Gallup Park
1 to 3 p.m.

Gallup Park is one of Ann Arbor's most popular recreation areas, and its wet meadow deserves some volunteer attention during the winter season. This high quality sedge meadow is composed of

STEWARDSHIP NETWORK STEWARDS' CIRCLE

7:30 to 8:30 a.m.

Second Tuesday of every month

Bruegger's Bagels

709 N University Ave

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

January 13: Soil Restoration

February 10: Prescribed Fire

March 10: Volunteer Engagement: The Psychology of Environmental Stewardship

CONTROLLED BURN SEASON KICKOFF

Wednesday, February 25

Controlled Burn Public Meeting

Veterans Memorial Park, Meeting Room

2150 Jackson Ave

7 to 8:30 p.m.

Fire is used as a restoration tool in many of Ann Arbor's natural areas. This meeting will be a discussion about our Controlled Ecological Burn Program. Ask questions and learn more about the benefits of effectively and safely using fire as a restoration tool.

Thursday, February 26

Volunteer Burn Crew Training

Matthaei Botanical Gardens, Auditorium

1800 N. Dixboro Rd

Noon to 5 p.m.

Become a part of NAP's Volunteer Burn Crew! This is the required training session for anyone interested in assisting with NAP's controlled burns. Burns typically take place Monday through Friday between noon and 5 p.m. Registration is required by February 24, as enrollment is limited. Call 734.794.6627 or email NAP@a2gov.org to register or for more information.



MARCH

KICK-OFFS AND TRAININGS

Please register for all *Kick-offs and Trainings* by contacting NAP at 734.794.6627 or NAP@a2gov.org.

Most trainings may have indoor and outdoor portions, so please dress for the weather.

Sunday, March 8

Salamander Survey Training and Kick-Off

Gallup Canoe Livery, Eli Gallup Meeting Room

3000 Fuller Rd

Noon to 2 p.m.

Did you know we have at least five species of salamanders in Ann Arbor? If you have a willingness to get muddy, you're invited to help monitor populations and the health of their habitats. Surveying takes a few hours and is done three to six times in early spring at multiple sites. Please register by March 5.

Sunday, March 8

Frog & Toad Survey Training and Kick-Off

Gallup Canoe Livery, Eli Gallup Meeting Room

3000 Fuller Rd

2:30 to 5 p.m.

Everyone is invited to join us to help monitor frog populations in Ann Arbor! It's fun learning to identify

the frogs of Michigan by ear and eye. No previous experience required. Family-friendly! Surveying is done three to six times from early spring through June, and each round lasts a few hours. Register by March 5.

Saturday, March 21

Photo Monitoring Kick-Off

NAP Office, 3875 E. Huron River Dr

10 to 11:30 a.m.

Do you like photography and spending time outdoors? Photo monitoring may be the perfect volunteer opportunity for you! We need volunteers to take photos at specific locations each season to record the progress of our restoration work. You must have your own digital camera. Come join us at this informational meeting for more details about this opportunity! Please register by March 19.

Saturday, March 21

Workday Leader Training

NAP Office

3875 E. Huron River Dr

Noon to 5:30 p.m.

This training is for volunteers interested in leading and/or co-leading NAP volunteer stewardship workdays. We will focus on procedures, ecological considerations, and tips and tricks to lead a successful event. An interest and background in ecology (and plant ID) is desired, but not required. A strong commitment to preserving the environment, while fostering community and engaging the public is necessary. Minimum age of 18. Please register by March 19.

White Oak Nature Area

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

This past June, White Oak Park gained two park stewards: David Repp and Richard Greglio. They each began individually removing an aggressive vine, Asian bittersweet from the park land that bordered their backyards. When they ran into each other in the park and realized they were doing the same thing, they wondered if it was actually illegal to be making these alterations. They checked in with the City and to their surprise were offered the positions of park stewards. After visiting high quality woods in other parks, David and Richard saw what White Oak could become if restored. They were determined to help White Oak reach its full potential.

THE OAK TREES THAT DOMINATE THE PARK NOW HAVE ROOM TO EXPAND AND BRING UP NEW SEEDLINGS TO BASK IN THE LIGHT THAT IS FINALLY ABLE TO MAKE ITS WAY TO THE FOREST FLOOR.

In a few short months, and after over 70 hours of work, the stewards have cleared an enormous amount of invasive shrubs and small trees (honeysuckle, buckthorn, and autumn olive). The local deer check in on them while they work, following behind them a short distance to munch on the honeysuckle leaves as the shrubs are felled. In my visit to the park, I looked behind me to see a young, 4-point buck standing 20 feet away, watching expectantly. After following along for a few steps, it realized I wouldn't be giving it an easy buffet, and it trotted off through the woods. With the understory freed of the dense, invasive shrubs, the park can be better used to observe wildlife. The oak trees that dominate the park now have room to expand and bring up new seedlings to bask in the light that is finally able to make its way to the forest floor. Other native plants now have a better chance to grow and develop into mature trees that will provide habitat for wildlife in this small refuge between the houses.

The restoration process for White Oak Park is far from over. Invasive species will need to be continually managed for years to come. Restoration never relies on one tool. Invasives here can be controlled via cutting shrubs, pulling herbaceous plants, applying herbicide where necessary, and seeding the park with natives. The park may even benefit from NAP's controlled burns. Weather permitting, White Oak is one of the parks on the wish list this fall to use fire to control invasive species, and encourage native plants – especially oaks. However, the one tool that restoration always relies heavily upon is enthusiastic volunteers. Without volunteers, we would be far lacking in the amount of manpower needed to oversee and maintain Ann Arbor's numerous parks. If you ever doubt the impact you can make, visit White Oak. See the changes David and Richard were able to make. With continued effort and patience, the park will only continue to improve and become yet another of Ann Arbor's hidden natural gems.

NAPpenings

Thank you!

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

- Youth Volunteer Corps
- General Electric
- Phi Beta Sigma
- Concordia University
- Emerson Staff and Faculty
- Greenhills Staff and Faculty
- UM Law School
- EMU Vision
- Michigan Community Scholars Program
- Washtenaw Technical Middle College
- Greenhills 7th grade
- Toyota Boshoku America
- Pioneer Interact
- UM Environment 201
- UM Alpha Phi Omega
- St. Francis Middle School
- UM Epeians
- EMU Delta Tau Delta
- Westminster Church
- Michigan Community Scholars Program
- Asa Gray Neighborhood

Osprey Platforms Coming

Keep your eyes out for two osprey nesting platforms which we are planning to install soon in or near the Huron River as part of a joint project between NAP, the Huron River Watershed Council, the Washtenaw Audubon Society, and Osprey Watch of Southeast Michigan. The platforms serve as a safe place for osprey to nest and rear their young. Specific locations are still being finalized.

New County Natural Area

Next time you visit Marshall Park, be sure to follow the trails to the west and check out Washtenaw County's newest preserve. The recently acquired Tom A. Freeman Preserve now connects nearly 300 acres in northeast Ann Arbor between Marshall Park, the Goodrich Preserve, and Horner-McLaughlin Woods.

NAPpenings



2015 Stewardship Network Conference: The Science, Practice & Art of Restoring Native Ecosystems

The Stewardship Network will be hosting its 2015 annual conference in East Lansing from Jan 23-24. The conference will offer an array of plenary talks, focused presentations, networking opportunities, and workshops. For more information, visit www.stewardshipnetworkconference.org.



Ann Arbor, Community Wildlife Habitat

A coalition of Ann Arbor citizens and environmental groups including NAP has begun the process of applying to become a Certified Community Wildlife Habitat, as designated by the National Wildlife Federation. They are working towards certification for both the city of Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County.



STAFF UPDATES

WELCOME...



DREW ZAWACKI
Field Crew

I graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a B.S. in Biology. After graduating, I moved out west where I worked in invasive plant management for the National Parks Service and did ecological restoration for a private ecosystem management company. I'm excited to move back to Ann Arbor and to help restore the natural areas in the area where I grew up.

CONGRATULATIONS...



NAP Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator, Tina Stephens (Roselle), married Peter Stephens on September 20 at Matthaei Botanical Gardens. Several past and current NAPpers were in attendance at the wet and wild celebration.



NAP Field Crew member, Rachel Nagel (Weston), was married on September 12 at St. Thomas the Apostle Church to Paul Nagel of Dexter, Michigan. Rachel's husband is a videographer and is a welcomed addition to NAP's extended family. Rachel and Paul live in Ann Arbor and spend their free time playing Frisbee and Nintendo games.

FAREWELL...



LAURA MUELLER
Field Crew, Adopt-A-Median, and Photo Monitoring

I started at NAP in 2008 and will miss all of the friends I made while working on the field crew, as the photo monitoring coordinator, and as the Adopt-A-Median Coordinator. During the past year, I was able to share my years of experience and institutional knowledge when welcoming new Stewardship Specialists and crew members. I will be moving on to the Matthaei Botanical Gardens to serve as the Great Lakes Garden Field Tech. Come visit me at Matthaei any time!



RENÉE HYTINEN
Communications and Events

The last three and half years have been a whirlwind of fun with volunteers and fun at home with my growing family. Sadly, it is time for me to move on. I will be working for The Hope Foundation, a public charity with the mission of raising and contributing funds for the treatment and prevention of cancer. I already miss everyone at NAP and serving this fantastic community of volunteers!



RACHEL VOYT
Outreach Assistant

I had a great time this year at NAP, pursuing my interest in making environmental knowledge accessible to the public. I will miss working with NAP and Adopt-A-Park volunteers!

Natural Area Preservation

City of Ann Arbor
3875 E. Huron River Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Return Service Requested

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ANN ARBOR, MI
PERMIT NO. 178



Printed on recycled paper with soy-based ink.
If you would prefer to receive your next newsletter
via email, please let us know! NAP@a2gov.org



Eagle Scout to Install Signage at Dolph Nature Area

Nate Helberg, Eagle Scout

I have been in scouts since I was six years old. I have progressed through the Cub Scout ranks, earned my merit badges and other requirements for multiple Boy Scout ranks, and now I am working on my Eagle Scout project. The whole point of an Eagle Scout project is to show leadership throughout: create the project idea, work with your troop leader to approve the idea, coordinate fundraising, create and assign jobs that need to be done, and execute your entire plan while leading adults and younger scouts.

For my Eagle Scout project I have decided to install directional signage in Dolph Nature Area. There will be five four-sided signs pointing to landmarks throughout the park. I have cleared my project with the Eagle Scout Committee and am working on stenciling, routing, and painting the letters now.

Throughout this project I have learned how incredibly challenging it is to design and execute an idea. I was not anticipating all of the expectations and requirements I had to meet in order to just approve my project. I spent about four months just planning out my project idea; my signage layout has changed three times in those four months. It has been a lot more work that I had originally anticipated, but I am having fun watching my project as it unfolds.

2014 EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS

Nate Helberg has planned, designed, and is now installing directional signage at Dolph Nature Area. These posts will direct park users to street accesses, the parking lot, and various park features such as the pond and First and Second Sister Lakes.

Congratulations to Jonathan Lee! He recently completed his Eagle Scout project building a bridge over a small tributary to the Huron River in Argo Nature Area. Because of Jonathan's efforts, the trail at Argo will be safer and the sensitive wetland ecosystem that had previously been disturbed by foot traffic will be restored.