



NAP

NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

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

Volume 24, Number 2
Summer 2019

Park Focus: Kuebler Langford Nature Area

Amy Lipson, Crew Leader

Sunlight on my arms makes the air feel warmer than it is. With the sweat of trail work making the dust and frass stick to my skin, I lean on my mattock and turn my face into the southerly spring breeze and smile. The melodious refrain of the Song Sparrows cover the din of the highway and the whole crew has long ago left our coats forgotten in a heap near the trail. At Kuebler Langford, there is always trail work to do. Despite our constant battle with erosion, this natural area offers a gorgeous compilation of prairie and forest, with the equally lovely forests of Hilltop Nature Area inconspicuously stitched onto the northern half.

Past the entrance just off West Huron River Drive, the earth is a faded scar. Used as a staging area in the 1970s for the construction of the bend in M-14, the topsoil was scraped off to build the overpass, while the remaining earth was compacted into a sandy, gravelly plate. While you can still see patches of the hard, bare earth, most of the ground is now hidden under the feathery blanket of prairie grasses and wildflowers. Last fall, we burned the prairie to spur new growth of native plants,



The forested ravine at Kuebler Langford Nature Area

and then over winter we laid down native seed. Our hope is that new plants will take hold and keep the soil in place, while also providing habitat for pollinators.

You may walk through the prairie and wonder why there are so many red-cedars on the ground. They are native, aren't they? Why did we cut them all down? Red-cedar plays a role in succession as a transitional element that shades and protects trees that aren't as hardy while they develop a foothold in what would otherwise be a hot, dry, and windy place. The progression of prairies into savannas and then forests may be ancient and natural, but we are running out of prairie. Without the natural disturbances that sustain prairies, we are losing them to the wheel of succession, and not gaining many new ones. So we pump the brakes, and slow down that wheel. Without the red-cedar to offer

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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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funded by the voter-approved
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COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Ann's Arbor- part 1

NAP's process for restoring our open oak woodlands has always been a slow and deliberate one: prioritize our sites of highest ecological quality (those with the most natives and the fewest invasives); and then work in a surgical manner to remove those unwanted invaders without impacting the natives. It's been relatively easy to get public support for removing things like European Buckthorn shrubs, whose very name tells you that it's not native, it's a shrub, and it has thorns, which some people find objectionable. After that, we've moved on to controlling things like Norway Maple trees – also clearly non-native, but it's a tree, with pretty fall foliage, and no thorns. A little harder to garner public support for removing pretty trees, but when they hear our reasoning, most folks can support that as well.

So, after removing all the non-native trees and shrubs, is our work done to restore our native oak woodlands? Unfortunately, no. Notice that I'm using the term "open oak woodland" to describe this native ecosystem. Some might call it an "oak savanna." Our City founders called it an "arbor" – "Ann's Arbor." Others at the time used the term "oak opening" to describe the open, park-like setting with large, open-grown oak trees scattered across the landscape. We have many colorful descriptions of this landscape in the 1820-30s from early travelers to the Ann Arbor area. Karl Neidhard wrote, *"The dense forests disappear ... and park-like woods, which the Americans call 'oak openings' meet the traveler's eye... where the trees stand a few paces apart and where the ground is overgrown with luxurious grass. Passage is obstructed neither by bushes nor by fallen trees."* J.W. Wing said, *"The plains were covered at intervals as far as the eye could reach with wide-spreading forest trees which gave it the appearance of an immense park."* And John M. Gordon declared, "Oaks of the circumference of 9-15 feet abound in the forests... White Oak and Burr Oak at intervals of 30-40 feet..."

THIS is the vision that NAP has for our highest quality natural areas! THIS is our natural heritage here in "Ann's Arbor!" It's not just about removing the non-native trees and shrubs. It's about opening up the canopy and letting in more sunlight to support a groundcover that is "overgrown with luxurious grass" (probably Pennsylvania sedge). And where "passage is obstructed neither by bushes nor by fallen trees." J.W. Wing described it this way: "The scene was beautiful beyond description. The timber consisted of large oak trees standing several rods apart and the intermediate space between them was covered with bright green grass and beautiful flowers... It did appear as if one-half of the vegetation was flowers. Most of them were about eighteen inches high and when moved by the wind the effect was wonderful. I have never seen in any of our large cities a park that was its equal."

So, how do we reclaim this natural heritage? That will be the subject of my next installment in the fall newsletter. Until then, if you'd like to read more of these wonderful historic quotes, check out NAP's webpage. Or take a stroll through Furstenberg Nature Area, where we're having some early success in this effort.

-David Borneman, Natural Area Preservation Manager

Scarlet Tanager

A Winged Beauty

Juliet Berger
NAP Ornithologist

Follow me to Bird Hills Nature Area, Ann Arbor's largest nature area, which overlooks Huron River Drive near Barton dam. On a clear early morning in May, we hear a varied chorus of bird song. There's a cacophony of sound now, more than we can process, so we breathe for a few minutes and take it in. The woods smell green and damp with dew. Some spring ephemeral wildflowers still linger in the shade, especially the May-apple, with its green umbrella and hidden white flowers, just beginning to turn to green fruit. Among the birds we hear is the American Robin, with his clear "Cheerio, Cheer-up" song echoing through the forest. Listen, there is a bird singing now, with a hoarse voice, very much like the Robin we just heard, but this fellow sounds like he has a sore throat — we've encountered the elusive male Scarlet Tanager.



Male Scarlet Tanager

Since Scarlet Tanager males are scarlet red with black wings and tail, we ought to easily pick him out among the green leaves of the towering trees overhead. But Scarlet Tanagers are canopy nesters and thrive in the upper branches, in foliage which is fairly leafed out by this time of year, so at first he eludes us. Also, he is singing without fluttering about and drawing attention to himself, so he's even stealthier than we thought. Finally we spot him, shining out like a red beacon from a branch tip, croaking out his steady five-phrase song, "Churry, burry, flurry, hurry, worry." As we raise our binoculars, we get to see his bill open with each phrase, projecting his song into the morning air. What a treat!

Scarlet Tanagers are long-distance migrants to our area, nesting only in tracts of mature deciduous trees or mixed deciduous and coniferous forest. They arrive in Ann Arbor and other areas in eastern North America in late April to early May, and stay only to nest and raise one brood of young. When the young are strong and grown, parents and their young make the up-to 5,000 mile journey to their wintering grounds in South American rainforests, in lowlands just east of the Andes. There, they feed on insects and fruit, foraging with other species with similar dietary needs, both resident and migratory species.

Scarlet Tanagers eat mostly insects and other invertebrates during the breeding season, and feed their young this diet as well, with the occasional berry for variety. The olive-green female, who also sings, builds the nest without the help of the male, from fine plant fibers lined with soft rootlets and pine needles. She incubates the 3-5 eggs by herself, while the male sings constantly, to defend their territory. Once the young hatch, both parents make many trips to the nest with juicy bugs for the nestlings. After about 2 weeks, the young fledge from the nest, though the parents continue to feed them for several more weeks before they disperse.

Other natural areas in Ann Arbor also may harbor the colorful Scarlet Tanager. Explore eBird for reports of current locations of this bird (www.ebird.org), or visit Marshall Nature Area, Kuebler Langford Nature Area, Scarlett Mitchell Nature Area, and Huron Hills Golf Course Woods to look and listen for Tanagers. Natural Area Preservation (NAP) maintains these high-quality, mature woodlands through controlled burns, cutting of invasive shrubs like honeysuckle, and pulling of invasive plants, such as garlic mustard. Those of us who volunteer for NAP workdays and burns help keep areas like Bird Hills a healthy home for the Scarlet Tanager and many other fascinating and unusual species of plants and animals.

For more information about the Scarlet Tanager and other North American birds, visit www.allaboutbirds.org or www.washtenawaudubon.org and come along on one of our NAP-sponsored bird walks. We'll be birdwatching at the Wheeler Service Center on June 2, from 7:30-9:30 a.m. See the calendar on pages 4-5 for more details.



NAP

VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR SUMMER 2019

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

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

JUNE

NATIONAL TRAILS DAY WORKDAYS

Saturday, June 1, 9 a.m. to noon
Barton Nature Area



The trails here wind through 83 acres of various habitats. Lend a hand to maintain these trails. Meet at the Barton dam parking lot on Huron River Drive.

Saturday, June 1, 1 to 4 p.m.
Brokaw Nature Area

Help us build trails through one of our newest nature areas. Meet at the park entrance on Huron River Drive, just south of Wagner Road.

Sunday, June 2, 9 a.m. to noon
Swift Run Marsh

Swift Run contains a prairie and a large pond. Help us trim the trails to allow access for birdwatchers and other nature enthusiasts. Meet on Eddy Street, off of Verle Avenue.

Sunday, June 2, 1 to 4 p.m.
Bird Hills Nature Area

Bird Hills Nature Area is a wonderful place to take a hike. Join us in protecting and repairing the trail leading into the park. Meet us at the Beechwood entrance, off of Sunset Road.

Bird Walk

Sunday, June 2, 7:30 to 9:30 a.m.
Wheeler Service Center, 4150 Platt Road

We'll look for grassland species in the fields and waterfowl on the pond. Please come prepared to walk in tall grass. Bring binoculars if you have them. Use the Platt Road entrance and look for us in the small parking lot at the first turnoff on the right.

National Get Outdoors Day
Stewardship Workday
Saturday, June 8, 1 to 4 p.m.
Onder Nature Area



What better way to get outdoors than volunteering? Onder Nature Area is a quiet neighborhood park with natural beauty. We need your help to keep invasive species from degrading this park. Meet on Brookside Drive, just west of Hilldale Drive.

Stewardship Workday
Sunday, June 9, 9 a.m. to noon
Mary Beth Doyle Park

NAP staff and volunteers have been working to protect the biodiversity here, but there is still work to do in these woods! Join us to continue the restoration by removing non-native species such as bittercress. Meet at the parking lot off Packard Road, across from Easy Street.

Mayor's Green Fair
Friday, June 14, 6 to 9 p.m.
Main Street between Huron and William

Enjoy displays of environmental information, "green" products, live music and the general urban environment. Information, entertainment, and hands-on activities for all ages will be provided. Come visit us at NAP's table!

Stewardship Workday
Saturday, June 15, 9 a.m. to noon
Furstenberg Nature Area

As spring turns to summer, the native prairie plants begin to bloom. Help us work to maintain the native garden or pull invasive species in other areas of the park. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road.

Stewardship Workday
Saturday, June 15, 1 to 4 p.m.
Forest Nature Area

This floodplain forest is home to native water-loving plants. Join NAP and Washtenaw County parks for a joint workday to pull non-native plants in this park. Meet in the Parker Mill parking lot, off Geddes Road, 1/4 mile east of Dixboro Road.

Stewardship Workday
Sunday, June 16, 1 to 4 p.m.
Marshall Nature Area

Over 120 species of birds have been spotted in this woodland. Help us care for this habitat by removing aggressive non-native plants. Meet in the parking lot off Dixboro Road, north of Plymouth Road.

National Pollinator Week Workdays

Saturday, June 22,
9 a.m. to noon
Kuebler Langford Nature Area



A prairie has been restored to this once-disturbed site. Help us remove invasive species such as sweet clover to keep the native prairie plants thriving. Meet at the park entrance on Beechwood Drive, north of Sunset Road.

Sunday, June 23, 1 to 4 p.m.
Olson Park

Olson Park is home to a variety of pollinators, including the uncommon wild indigo duskywing butterfly. Help improve the quality of their habitat by removing non-native plants. Meet at the park entrance on Dhu Varren Road, just east of Pontiac Trail.

STEWARDSHIP NETWORK
STEWARDS' CIRCLE

7:30 to 8:30 a.m.

Second Tuesday of every month

Bruegger's Bagels

709 N. University Avenue

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

June 11: Planning Native Plantings

We've all spent time removing non-native plants, but what about planting natives? Let's discuss developing and implementing planting plans. Bring your feedback on what works and what doesn't.

July 9: Ann Arbor's Salamanders

Ann Arbor is home to five species of salamanders and a unique group of all female salamanders that actually steal DNA from other species. Come learn about these amphibians and what we can do to protect their habitats.

August 13: Rare plant locations: to share or not to share

The locations of rare plant species are often blocked from plant inventory websites or herbarium specimen websites. Blocking these locations may help slow down harvesting rare plants but it also blocks data that could be useful to scientists and amateurs that help conservation efforts. Should we share rare plant locations or block them?

Nature Walk with AADL

Thursday, June 27, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Barton Nature Area

Join us on a family-friendly nature walk to explore the prairies, woodlands, and along the river. Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot on Huron River Drive. Wear comfortable clothing and bring water.

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, June 29, 1 to 4 p.m.

Barton Nature Area

A tallgrass prairie can be found along the railroad tracks. Lend a hand to remove invasive species threatening the native plants. Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot on Huron River Drive.

JULY

Stewardship Workday

Sunday, July 7, 9 a.m. to noon

Bluffs Nature Area

This prairie blooms with white, pink, and yellow flowers. Take part in our effort to allow the native plants to thrive by pulling invasive species. Meet in the parking lot off Main Street, just north of Lake Shore Dr.

Stewardship Workday

Sunday, July 14, 9 a.m. to noon

Black Pond Woods Nature Area

Help us protect these woods by removing non-native plants such as Japanese hedge parsley. Kids can help too, so bring the family! Meet us on Tibbits Court, off of Pontiac Trail.

Stewardship Workday

Sunday, July 21, 9 a.m. to noon

Ruthven Nature Area

You can foster the native plants and butterflies here by removing the exotic species intruding in this habitat. Meet at the Gallup boat dock parking lot, at the southeast corner of Huron Parkway and Geddes Road.

Nature Walk with AADL

Thursday, July 25, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Marshall Nature Area

Join us on a family-friendly nature walk to learn about native plants while looking for birds and butterflies. Meet in the parking lot off Dixboro Road, north of Plymouth Road.

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, July 27, 1 to 4 p.m.

Marshall Nature Area

Marshall Nature Area is a wonderful place to spend a summer afternoon. Join us to remove non-native invaders and keep the park beautiful. Meet in the parking lot off Dixboro Road, north of Plymouth Road.

AUGUST

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, August 3, 1 to 4 p.m.

Dhu Varren Woods Nature Area

This woodland provides plenty of shade on a hot day. Assist us in pulling Japanese hedge parsley and protecting the native habitat. Meet at the intersection of Birchwood Drive and Dhu Varren Road.

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, August 10, 9 a.m. to noon

Olson Park

Take a walk around this prairie and you're sure to see plenty of butterflies and birds. Join us to remove invasive species from the prairie to preserve the native habitat. Meet at the park entrance on Dhu Varren Road, just east of Pontiac Trail.

Stewardship Workday

Sunday, August 11, 9 a.m. to noon

Kuebler Langford Nature Area

The summer flowers are blooming! Spend a summer morning pulling exotic plants such as spotted knapweed. Meet at the park entrance on Beechwood Drive, north of Sunset Road.

Stewardship Workday

Sunday, August 25, 9 a.m. to noon

Barton Nature Area

Many of the butterfly species seen here rely on native plants. Take part in our effort to protect butterfly habitat by pulling non-native plants. Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot on Huron River Drive.

Nature Walk with AADL

Thursday, August 29, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Cedar Bend Nature Area

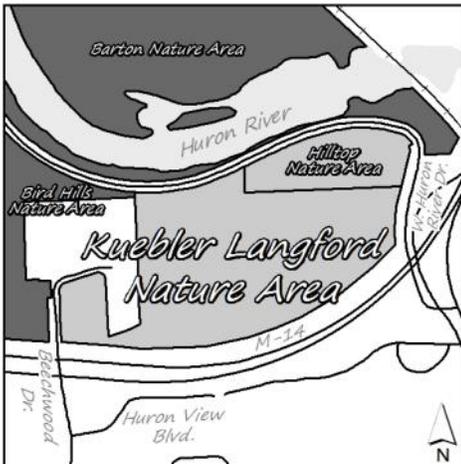
Cedar Bend was Ann Arbor's first nature area. Join us for a family-friendly nature walk to explore this historic park overlooking the Huron River. Meet at the Island Park parking lot, at the end of Island Dr.

Kuebler Langford Nature Area

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

shelter, our forest hardwoods can't get a foothold, and the prairie stays a prairie.

In case you, like a shagbark hickory, can't handle the heat of the open prairie, Kuebler Langford and Hilltop Nature Area also offer a lovely forest, with plants I haven't seen anywhere else in our parks. Though not the rarest treasure here, my favorite sight is the wild sarsaparilla. A relative of ginseng, it has three compound leaves that cover the blooms like an umbrella. Hidden under their shadow, the flowers make globe-shaped clusters like pale fireworks, inches from the forest floor. Finding them feels like digging up treasure. A variety of birds and mammals enjoy the purple fruit that follows soon after the flowers fade.



Wandering through the cool, rich forest, you won't even know when you cross the line from Kuebler Langford into Hilltop Nature Area, though a faded trail sign identifying some natural feature will clue you in soon enough. The city purchased the formerly named Camp Hilltop from the Girl Scouts of Huron Valley after a fire in 2006 destroyed their main building. It boasts thrilling views from its steep slopes. On one side, there is the oxbow bend in the Huron

River, with all the birds that prefer the slower waters there, and on the other side, a deep valley runs along the length of the park, prolific in the spring with the demure, downturned flowers of the trout lily.

Spring and summer are the best times to ensure that this forest remains high-quality, so the conservation crew sweeps the steep hillside for any herbaceous invasive plant that might infiltrate our woods. As we brace our feet perpendicular to the slope and grip trees for balance, the reddest bird I've ever seen flashes through the trees. The Scarlet Tanager prefers larger, unfragmented forests, so the connected woods of Kuebler Langford, Hilltop, Barton, and Bird Hills offer habitat our smaller parks can't. Preventing invasive plants from crowding out our native ones ensures that beauties like the Scarlet Tanager have tasty insects and berries for many years to come.

If you feel the same as the Scarlet Tanager, driven to explore wider tracks of natural beauty, the continuity that Kuebler Langford and Hilltop offer will appeal to you. You can work your way from park to park, finding connections and working your way through the city. Perhaps you're using these connections to make your run less repetitive, as is popular here, but come back later for a slower exploration. Maybe you'll find a little toad, or a red-backed salamander. Or perhaps you'll find the elusive spicebush and enjoy its fragrance, or admire the delicate fronds of a maidenhair fern.

Join us for workdays at Kuebler Langford on June 22 and August 11. See the calendar on pages 4-5 for details.

NAPpenings

Welcome, new Park Steward!

Tom Armstrong
Sugarbush Park

Thanks and congratulations to these Boy Scouts who completed their Eagle Scout projects in our parks:

Justin Alexander
New trail at Earhart Park

Thank you!

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

- Ann Arbor Running Fit
- Bodman PLC
- Community High School
- Duo Security
- Early College Alliance Student Leaders
- Ecovia Renewables
- EMU VISON Volunteer Center
- UM Alpha Chi Sigma
- UM Circle K
- UM Delta Sigma Pi
- UM Ecological Issues Class
- UM Industrial Operations Engineering Classes
- UM Postdoctoral Association
- UM Running Club
- UM Tau Beta Sigma
- UM Young Life College Campus Ministry
- YMCA Youth Volunteer Corps
- YSA Ann Arbor



STAFF UPDATES

FAREWELL...



SEAN LEVIN-POMPETZKI

Field Crew

Although my season with NAP has been short, I have learned a lot. I appreciate the knowledge and experience I have gained, and for the new opportunities, such as prescribed fire. I am continuing my career in natural resources, this time with the National Park Service. Thank you NAP for the opportunity you have given me.

WELCOME...



KRISSY ELKINS

Workday Coordinator

I am so lucky to be part of the team of wonderful people dedicated to preserving and restoring our natural areas. I am a graduate of the University of Michigan in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and I have spent time working for the UM Herbarium. Now it is time to shift from curated flowers to the real thing! I look forward to organizing workdays that help connect anyone and everyone to our beautiful planet.



BECCA NAUMENKO

Field Crew

I am so excited to be joining the NAP crew. During my time at U of M, I volunteered with NAP and really loved it. The volunteers and staff were exceptionally kind, and getting the chance to help our local community felt great. I can't wait to experience that environment again, along with the chance to breathe some fresh air. I grew up in the U.P. and since coming south, my time outdoors has been limited. So I'm looking forward to some time in the woods!

Would you like to be part of the NAP Staff team? Follow the city jobs website (a2gov.org/jobs). Positions can open throughout the year. NAP also has unpaid internships that provide valuable experience! For internship information contact NAP directly: NAP@a2gov.org or 734.794.6627.

Correction

In our spring newsletter, we mis-identified white, or concolor, fir as Douglas fir. Here's how to tell the difference between these similar species.

Douglas fir (left)

Pseudotsuga menziesii

- Needles are brighter green and more crowded onto the stem.
- Buds are pointed.
- Needles are soft and less fragrant than white firs.

White fir (right)

Abies concolor

- Needles are longer, more grayish blue, and spaced out along the stem.
- Buds are rounded.
- Needles are thick, leathery, and very fragrant.



Photo credit:
Jacqueline Courteau

Lookout for Japanese Stiltgrass

Japanese stiltgrass has been found in Washtenaw County. This non-native grass can spread very quickly. It has short, alternate, lance-shaped leaves, with a pale, off-center midrib. The roots can grow from the nodes, giving it the appearance of stilts.

If you see this plant, please let us know immediately, and report it using the MISIN online tool: www.misin.msu.edu/report

For more information:
www.michigan.gov/invasives.



Natural Area Preservation

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Fight the Bite

Lyme disease is spread by the bite of an infected blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*), also known as a deer tick. Untreated Lyme disease can produce a wide range of symptoms, including fever, rash, facial paralysis, arthritis, and more. Prompt diagnosis and treatment with antibiotics can cure the infection and prevent later complications.



Lyme disease is an emerging issue in our community. The following have occurred locally:

- In 2018, the 5 cases of Lyme disease in Washtenaw County were all likely from local exposure.
- The State of Michigan conducted tick dragging and collection in Nichols Arboretum and Bird Hills in 2018. Blacklegged ticks were found in both of these locations.
- A blacklegged tick was recently found in Rolling Hills Waterpark. The tick tested negative for Lyme. However, this indicates that the species of tick that carries Lyme disease has been found in the eastern part of the county.
- Blacklegged ticks found in the northwest part of Washtenaw County near Pinckney/Waterloo Recreation Areas in fall 2016 tested positive for Lyme.

We urge you to "fight the bite" against ticks and tick-borne disease. Transmission season for Lyme disease in Michigan typically occurs from May through August, with a peak in June. The Washtenaw County Health Department recommends the following precautions to prevent Lyme disease:

1. Avoid direct contact with ticks.
2. Repel ticks with DEET or permethrin repellent.
3. Conduct tick checks.
4. Remove embedded ticks by using tweezers.
5. Submit ticks for identification and testing to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

You can find this information and a lot more about Lyme disease and tick identification at www.washtenaw.org/lyme.