



A frigid Saturday in February at Cedar Bend

Protecting and restoring Ann Arbor's natural areas and fostering an environmental ethic within the community.

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Lasting Changes

Last month we said farewell to Dave Borneman, NAP's now retired Parks and Recreation Services Deputy Manager of Natural Areas. In Dave's 28 years at NAP and the City, he made a huge impact on the stewardship community in Ann Arbor and well beyond. Below is a timeline of some of the highlights in Dave's career, including organizations that he helped found, and short excerpts from notable articles he contributed to *Natural Area Preservation News*.

1993

Natural Area Preservation is formed, with David Borneman as Coordinator.

[20 Years Later, Remembering NAP's Beginning](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, Autumn 2013, p. 1.

November 15, 1993. My first day of work as the City's Natural Area Preservation Coordinator. I stopped by City Hall for a "five minute chat" with my new boss, Ron Olson. On my way in, I decided to load the parking meter for one hour, just to be sure. At 9:05, I returned to my car to find my first parking ticket in my new home town – welcome to Ann Arbor!



One of NAP's first burns (you can tell how old this photo is based on the lack of PPE!)

1995

Founding member of the **Huron River Watershed Volunteer Stewardship Network**.

From [The Stewardship Network's History](#) page:

What began as small collective of influencers, activists, and stewards laid the foundation for the creation of **The Stewardship Network** in 2003, inspired by a vision to increase collaboration among communities engaged in ecological stewardship.



Volunteers gather for a workday at Cedar Bend in 1995.

1996

Founding member of **Wild Ones Ann Arbor**.

From [Ann Arbor Wild Ones](#):

Originally called **Michigan Wild Ones**, ours was the first Wild Ones chapter in Michigan and the third chapter in the nation. The Wild Elders of Ann Arbor, a group who helped bring the notion of native plants and natural landscaping to this area, provided inspiration in those early days. We first served as a nexus for native plant enthusiasts in this area. We are now happily one of many organizations who share a passion for environmentally friendly gardening and for preserving and restoring our natural landscapes and habitats. We work and play with members of other WO chapters that have grown across Michigan and neighboring Ohio. We continue to link with [The Stewardship Network](#), [Wildflower Association of Michigan](#), and the [Michigan Botanical Club](#), as well as other local and civic groups.

First edition of Natural Area Preservation News published.

[1996 Inventory Highlights](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, Spring 1996, p. 6.

Frogs and Toads

This year the Michigan DNR is launching a state-wide frog and toad survey organized much like our own. We will, of course, be cooperating and assisting with this effort, but I'm proud to say that our 1995 survey here in Ann Arbor was launched one year before the state's! Of the 11 species of frogs and toads found in southern Michigan, 8 were found in the immediate Ann Arbor area in 1995.

Birds

Ann Arbor is also on the cutting edge regarding breeding bird inventories. Last year, Mike Kielb read in an ornithological newsletter that the city of Washington D.C. was boasting that its 1994 effort was the first organized city-wide breeding bird census in the nation. OK, maybe they beat us by a year, but that still makes Ann Arbor #2 in the nation! Volunteers identified 90 resident bird species in 30 parks and natural areas, with an estimated 87 of those nesting here.



Inventory used to involve a lot of clipboards.

NAP moves to Leslie Science Center at 1831 Traver Road.

[Coordinator's Corner: WHAT A SPRING!](#)

The corner office at 415 W. Washington was a fine place from which to launch the NAP program, but we've quickly outgrown that tiny space. By the time you read these words, all the NAP staff should be re-united in our new headquarters at the Leslie Science Center at 1831 Traver Road. This marks a new beginning for us – one that we hope you will be a part of.

1997

[Coordinator's Corner: Ambassadors for Nature](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, Autumn 1997, p. 2.

We sometimes take it for granted within the city limits of Ann Arbor, but we are actually doing the kind of environmental stewardship that most other communities across the country are only now beginning to think about doing. We are preserving our urban natural areas (at least those in the City parks). We're recognizing that forests, prairies, and wetlands need to be taken care of, just like golf courses, playgrounds and softball diamonds.

1999

Second year-round full-time NAP staff member added, Conservation Crew doubled in size from 3 to 6.

[Coordinator's Corner: Here We Grow Again!](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, Spring 1999, p. 2.

One of the most exciting changes occurring at NAP is the addition of a second year-round full-time staff member, which should be completed by the time this newsletter reaches you. Although each of the current NAP staff members is very professional, very competent, and very productive, the addition of another year-round full-time staff position will help NAP to develop more efficiently and grow to its full potential. The willingness of the public to invest in the new NAP Technician position indicates, I believe, its long term commitment to preserving and restoring our urban natural areas.

[Along the Huron](#) is published, announced in the [NAPpenings](#) section of the NAP newsletter.

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, Autumn 1999, p. 2.

This book, written by NAP staff and funded by a grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Natural Heritage Program, was



recently published by the University of Michigan Press. It is a guide to the natural communities along the Huron River and includes detailed information about the natural areas bordering the Huron River in Ann Arbor.

Working on materials that would later be developed into 'Along the Huron'

2000



Demonstration by the Southern Michigan Prescribed Fire Council, 2003

Founding member of **Michigan Invasive Plant Council** and **Southern Michigan Prescribed Fire Council** (later expanding to the [Michigan Prescribed Fire Council](#)), announced in the [NAPpenings](#) section of the NAP newsletter.

Natural Area Preservation News, Spring 2000, p. 4.

NAP has gotten in on the 'ground floor' of two recent advances for ecological restoration in Michigan. The **Michigan Invasive Plant Council** is a

new collaboration to address the growing threat that invasive plant species pose to our natural areas. This collaboration involves state, federal, local and

private agencies and is one of only a few of its kind in the U.S. The second group that NAP will be involved with is the **Southern Michigan Prescribed Fire Council**, an inter-agency, effort to bring together various public and private parties that utilize prescribed fire in restoration efforts. NAP will participate as the Municipal Gov. Representative to the Steering Committee. The goal is to increase communication between parties, increase public awareness, establish professional standards, and generally advance the use of prescribed fire where appropriate.

[Coordinator's Corner: Our Changing Ecological Perspective](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, Summer 2000, p. 1.

These are dynamic, evolving, living ecosystems which are in their current state only because of past circumstances. So, a bottomland, floodplain forest is the way it is partly because it has gone through thousands of years of seasonal flooding. Stop that flooding, or alter its frequency or degree, and you alter that floodplain ecosystem. Likewise, prairies, oak savannas, oak forests, and many other fire-adapted ecosystems in southeastern Michigan looked the way they did in 1701 partly because they had just gone through thousands of years of frequent, perhaps annual, burning by Native Americans, for whom fire was an important cultural tradition. Take away those fires, and the future character of those ecosystems will change dramatically from what it was historically. This is especially true considering that there's a new group of players in the game now that weren't there historically - exotic, invasive species.

NAP's **Natural Features Inventory Program** is honored by the **Michigan Municipal League**, announced in the [NAPpenings](#) section of the NAP newsletter.

Natural Area Preservation News, Winter 2000, p. 3.

NAP was honored recently at the **17th Annual Michigan Municipal Achievement Awards** Competition sponsored by the Michigan Municipal League. We received Honorable Mention (and a nice plaque!) in the Growth Management category for our Natural Features Inventory Program, which is helping us identify and record the biodiversity of Ann Arbor. A special thanks to all the inventory volunteers who make these surveys possible! Your efforts can now officially be called "award-winning!"

2001

David Borneman **promoted to Natural Area Preservation Manager.**

[Coordinator's Corner: A Line in the Leaf Litter](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, Summer 2001, p. 1.

After seven years of carefully inventorying the plants and animals in our parks, then undertaking some restoration activities, then reinventorying the sites to monitor the response, we've come to some important conclusions. First, not all of our 1000 acres of City-owned natural areas are of the same caliber ecologically. Some are true remnants of Ann Arbor's original native landscape, models for our restoration efforts, and refugia for the historical plant and animal communities. Others are more disturbed and thus less useful as ecological models, but still valuable as plant and wildlife habitat, not to mention their value as public open space.

2002

The City of Ann Arbor is honored by the Michigan Municipal League for the Huron Parkway Prairie Project.

2003

NAP shifts from the Department of Parks and Recreation to become a unit of **Field Operations** in the **Public Services Area**.

NAP Park Stewards receive an award from the **Michigan Recreation and Park Association**, announced in the [NAPpenings](#) section of the NAP newsletter.

Natural Area Preservation News, Spring 2003, p. 7.

The Park Stewards received a **Community Service Award** from the Michigan Recreation and Park Association! Their combined 800



hours of service to Ann Arbor's parks, as well as the assistance they have given to NAP, the Parks Department, the City, and other park users is an inspiration. We all owe you a much-deserved pat on the back, thank you!

2005

NAP reaches milestone of **four year-round full-time staff positions**.

[Coordinator's Corner: Permanent Shelving](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, Winter 2005, p. 2.

Now, for the first time ever, we are fortunate to have four NAP staff in year-round full-time positions. Joining me are Jason Tallant and Lara Treemore Spears, who share the title of NAP Technician, and Jason Frenzel, who is our Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator. Two of these people were already at NAP in temporary positions, and one replaces another temporary position, so they do not represent an increase in staffing, just a “solidifying” of it. It’s like reinforcing my old temporary shelving unit and rebuilding it more permanently. Some of the boards get re-used, others are new. But together, in their new assemblage, they represent a solid structure that is able to hold up quite a load.



Lara Treemore-Spears and Jason Tallant

2009

[Coordinator's Corner: Transitions](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, Winter 2009, p. 2.

I think our restoration projects need to be less targeted to a set “endgoal.” Although we may use images of Ann Arbor’s landscape in 1800 to set our restoration direction, we shouldn’t view them as our final destination. First, we may never get there due to inconvenient obstacles like extinction and humans’ fragmentation of the landscape. Second, that ecological condition may no longer be appropriate for the environmental conditions that exist on-site today. Restoration is a journey, not a destination.

2010

NAP receives **Take Pride in America** award from **Department of the Interior**, announced in the [NAPpenings](#) section of the NAP newsletter.

Natural Area Preservation News, Autumn 2010, p. 3.

Take Pride in America is a nationwide program authorized by congress to promote stewardship of the nation’s public lands. On July 16th, **NAP won first place, National Volunteer Award, Local Government Program**. Because of all the wonderful folks that give their time to the parks and natural areas in Ann Arbor, NAP qualified for this award. Thank you volunteers!



2012

NAP shifts from the Public Services Area back to the **Community Services Area** as part of **Parks and Recreation Services**. David Borneman is promoted to **Deputy Manager of Parks and Recreation Services – Natural Area Preservation and Volunteerism**.

[Coordinator's Corner: Coming Home to Parks](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation*, Autumn 2012, p. 2.

Those of you who don't follow City government proceedings may not be aware that NAP has not officially been part of the City's Parks and Recreation Department for about ten years. In 2002, the City actually did away with "departments" and reorganized into four different "service areas." Part of what had been the old Parks and Rec. Dept. (the Recreation Facilities staff and the Park Planners) went into Community Services; and part of it (the Park Maintenance and the Forestry staff) went into Public Services, specifically into the Field Operations Unit. After weighing both options, NAP joined the others in Field Operations, and that has been our organizational home for the past ten years.

But the City has changed in the past decade. NAP is no longer the only one who works with volunteers in city parks. Following NAP's lead, the "Give 365" volunteer program was created to accommodate those interested in volunteering at the City's recreational facilities. And there are other areas where volunteer interest is growing. "Adopt-A-Park" inspired "Adopt-A-Median" and there is talk of many other twists on that theme. Nationwide, volunteerism is on the upswing, in part because many Baby-Boomers are reaching an age where they now have more time to devote to volunteer activities.

2014



NAP moves to South Pond and sets up office in a 1938 house at 3875 East Huron River Drive.

[South Pond – Prairie, Pond, Marsh...Home](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, Spring 2014, p. 1.

This former "prairie turned-pond" is undergoing yet another significant

change: after decades of serving as a retention pond to protect the Huron River from sediment and nutrients, South Pond is turning into a marsh. Gone are many of the duck species that once dove for their food. Here now are the wading birds that hunt in the shallow waters. Whether this is good or bad depends on one's fondness for ducks versus wading birds. It is what it is. If there is one lesson nature teaches us, it is that things are always changing. And that's an important lesson to remember, lest we find ourselves clinging too strongly to how things used to be.

2016

[Coordinator's Corner: Help Nature Take Its Course](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, Spring 2016 p. 2.

Sure, it might be easier to look at a remote wilderness and say that we humans should stay away and “let Nature take its course” there (although, of course, we now understand that this planet is not as large as we once thought, and human impacts are, literally, everywhere on Earth). But here in Ann Arbor, in our city parks, among this fragmented landscape, we are centuries past the point of being able to “let Nature take its course.” Our natural areas may be fragments of a former wilderness, but they are missing many key components of that wilderness, and are instead burdened with many other stresses and challenges that are the result of centuries of accumulated human impacts. Nature now needs our help to “take its course.”



Full bags of invasive weeds pulled from Black Pond Woods

2019

[Coordinator's Corner: Keep Up the Good Work](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, Winter 2019, p. 2.

Climate change will undoubtedly bring profound changes to many parts of the planet, in ways far too numerous and complex to expound on here. In Michigan, the changes seen during our lifetimes may well be far less than in many other locations. I do expect that things will be warmer overall, and weather events will be more extreme. So, how are we as ecological restorationists preparing for these changes? Are we planting our parks with seeds native to Tennessee? Or converting our oak-hickory forests to longleaf pine ecosystems? Nope. None of us alive today will see range shifts that extreme. In recent decades, plant and animal ranges have shifted north about one mile per year, on average. It's 45 miles south to Toledo, and about 90 miles to Findley, Ohio. So if Appalachian ecosystems are ever going to shift north as far as Ann Arbor, it's not going to happen in the near future. No, let's not give up quite yet on our own resilient native southeastern Michigan ecosystems. Now is not the time to abandon them; now is the time to strengthen them! We've already been invaded by Japanese Stiltgrass, a weed formerly found mostly in the southeastern U.S. We can expect that others will follow, some spurred on by climate change. The more we do to keep our native forests, savannas, prairies, and wetlands healthy now, the more resistant they will be to invasives in the future.



UM Sustainable Living
Experience Volunteers

2021

[Coordinator's Corner: Park Stewards](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, Summer 2021, p. 2.

We've grown it over time, even designating a NAP staffer as "Park Steward Coordinator." And we've had success, as our current roster includes more than 80 Stewards! But more than high numbers, the Park Stewards recently reached a new milestone: they've started to self-organize. Although NAP has tried to encourage "Stewardship Teams" over the years, that idea never really took hold. That's not surprising. One of the great models that NAP tried to mimic is the Volunteer Stewardship Network that emerged in the Chicago area in the 1970s and '80s. But that was a grassroots effort, started without much assistance from the governing body. It's been a different challenge for us to "impose" such a program from the top-down.

2022

David Borneman retires from NAP after 28 years of service.

[Coordinator's Corner: Acorns, Saplings, Old Trees, and Light Gaps](#)

Borneman, David. *Natural Area Preservation News*, January 2022, p. 2.

It's part of the cycle of the forest: trees mature, spread out their branches, and dominate that part of the forest canopy. Younger trees, unable to bask in the sun, wait in the old tree's shadow, until finally, the big tree succumbs to lightning, or wind, or disease, or maybe just old age. A light gap forms, and now it's time for the next generation of trees to have their chance to take over.



Dave passes on his many "hats" and receives a canoe paddle as a farewell gift

And so it is here at NAP. After 28 years, this old tree is moving on, making room for others to spread their branches. In February 2022, I will be retiring from NAP.

NAPpenings

Thank you!

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

EMU Vision

Epsilon Delta Pi

Parks Project

Rotaract – Ann Arbor

UM Running Club



Ann Arbor Rotaract Club at Cedar Bend in February

Events

Photo Monitoring Kickoff and Training

Sunday, March 20

11 a.m.

Zoom

Do you like photography and spending time outdoors? We need volunteers to take photos at specific locations in parks throughout the year to record ecological changes and the progress of our work. Join us at this online informational meeting for more details. Please register by March 18. Register [here](#).

(<http://tinyurl.com/PhotoMonitor2022>)

Winter Nature Walk at Dolph Nature Area

Sunday, March 27, 2022, 1-2 p.m.

A winter walk can be just the thing to lift our spirits and access the healing power of nature. Dolph is a 75.2-acre park of forest and shrubland, as well as two naturally formed lakes, wetland, and marsh habitat. A great place to spot some interesting native species

whether plant or animal. Make sure to dress for the weather (we recommend layered clothing in winter) and bring a water bottle. **Registration is strongly encouraged so we can accommodate everyone!** Register [here](https://tinyurl.com/DolphWalk032722). (<https://tinyurl.com/DolphWalk032722>)



Gallup Park February workday with 38 volunteers!!

Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

Check out our volunteer opportunities and other events at a2gov.org/NAPEvents, and register at tinyurl.com/NAPVolunteerHub



NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION NEWS

VOLUME 28, NUMBER 3 - MARCH 2022

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