



NAP

NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

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

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Winter 2018

Park Focus: Foxfire West Park

Rebecca Snider, Outreach Assistant

The sounds of hand saws and snapping twigs greet me as I enter Foxfire West Nature Area. It is a NAP Stewardship Workday and volunteers are cutting invasive shrubs that are encroaching on the sedge meadow near the entrance. We often have workdays here in fall and winter so volunteers can help us with the monumental task of keeping non-native plants out of this wetland.

But the workday is not why I'm here. This is my first time visiting this park and I want to see the fen. A fen is a peat-forming wetland, like a bog, except fens are fed by groundwater and are less acidic. This particular fen is a prairie fen, which are dominated by grasses, sedges, and wildflowers, and often



The fen at Foxfire West

have standing water only in the spring. Because the landforms needed to create a fen are the result of glaciers, most are found in the upper midwest. But even in this part of the world they have become rare, destroyed to make room for agriculture and development.

Since Foxfire West has no trails, I wander, map in hand, heading roughly west. The woodland is mostly open and easy to walk through. Historically this was likely oak savanna, but now there are many maples in the canopy as well. It's early fall and only a few wildflowers can be found here and there on the forest floor. I see jack-in-the-pulpit, flowers long-gone, with its red berries, and blue-stemmed goldenrod, one of a few species of shade-growing goldenrods.



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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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COORDINATOR'S CORNER

The Healing Qualities of Nature

I'm writing this in the final days before the mid-term election. And you'll read it after the election is done and over with. That's probably for the better. This way, there will be no possibility of me advocating for a candidate, or a ballot initiative, that you don't support. There can be no wedge driven between us here based on politics.

I'll leave it to the social scientists to tell us why we are so divided now as a society. All I know is that I miss the old days. Perhaps it's just that I was more naïve then, but it didn't matter to me in the olden days whether the person I was out in nature with leaned to the left or the right politically. And most of the time, I didn't even know.

I've heard firsthand accounts from participants in week-long Outward Bound courses who tell me that during their entire 7 days of intensive, challenging, group survival in the wilderness, they were forbidden to discuss politics, nor any other details about their personal lives or their careers. The point was to get to know each other as people, as colleagues, there in the moment, during that shared experience, free of the constraining barriers that labels often foist upon us. In those trying circumstances, your political party doesn't matter. All that matters is if you are part of the team, if you're working together toward the common goals of survival and group accomplishment.

I think that's what our country, our society, needs now. How refreshing it would be to work alongside a stranger, or an acquaintance, in a park this winter, cutting invasive shrubs and dragging them through the snow. Enjoying the physical exertion to help keep you warm. Squinting at the dazzling sunlight on the brilliant white snow. Unknowing, and indifferent, about your coworkers' political views. Just appreciative of their camaraderie and their efforts to work alongside you toward the common goal of making our parks a little better, a little more natural, a little more like what they were in the good old days.

Our fractured society is in desperate need of some healing, and that healing has to start with each of us, individually. Nature can do that for us, if we will only give it the opportunity. That's one of the many immense benefits of our magnificent city park system. You don't need to drive three hours to commune with nature; you can probably do it with just a short walk out your front door, right here in Ann Arbor.

So whether you join us for a stewardship workday, or just enjoy a tranquil hike through your favorite natural area, I hope you will let Nature help to calm and re-center you after this divisive election season. And may we all resolve to treat each other with a bit more civility in the New Year.

-Dave Borneman

I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order. - John Burroughs, American naturalist and essayist

A Winter Day's Work

*Chris Robey
Conservation Crew*

7:55 a.m. We roll up to the NAP office, snow rasping beneath our trucks' tires. We stomp the snow from our boots—*thwak, thwak*—then punch in the code to unlock the front door and step inside. It's quiet—we're the first ones in. Yesterday's work gloves sit drying in front of the floor heater, lined in rows. In the kitchen, we set a pot of coffee to brewing.

Soon Mike pulls up, along with other NAP staff. Hunched around our steaming mugs in the main conference room, we run through our day's work. We're headed to Barton, where we'll push back the buckthorn and honeysuckle thickets encroaching on the high-quality prairie remnant near the railroad. While we're there, we can also nab a stand of black locust poles edging the railroad right-of-way.



The sun rises over snowy South Pond Nature Area

We pour our coffee into thermoses then head out to the garage to load the trucks. Brush cutters, chainsaws, and associated gear—personal protective equipment, fuel, two-cycle and bar oil. It's not yet started snowing again but it's supposed to later in the day. Looking out over South Pond, the sun's first auburn rays kiss its frozen edge. When we're all loaded up, we pile back into the trucks and head out over roads whisked by fine ice flurries.

After picking up herbicide from the storage shed, we arrive at the worksite. We'll work in pairs, one to cut brush and another to apply the herbicide—Pathfinder II, an oil-based solution of triclopyr—directly to the cut stumps with a sponge applicator. This method, called a cut-stump treatment, is best done in cold weather when the sap flow of woody invasives has shifted downward, into the roots. The oil-based solution ensures that the herbicide doesn't freeze and is fully absorbed by the plant.

We split the necessary tasks amongst ourselves in the traditional way—a quick, fierce round of rock-paper-scissors. Partway through the day, we'll switch so everyone gets the chance to stay warm while running a power tool. The brush cutters fuel up their respective tools and test-start them to see which ones are acting finicky. The applicators check their herbicide levels, mix more if necessary, and retrieve their favored herbicide wands. When the old wands proved difficult to use, we devised a jury-rigged solution: old hockey sticks affixed with sponges zip tied to the ends. Works like a charm, until it doesn't. The work is hard on the sponges, especially when there's thorny black locust involved, and by day's end they'll be in tatters.

This is not to say that running the power tools is the fun, easy job. Some of the tools are particularly finicky, especially in cold weather. For instance, Holly, one of our chainsaws—yes, we name them—flat out won't start some days. Or it'll work like a charm for a time then, as soon as you set it down to pause for a breath and let the applicators catch up, it'll burp and give you nothing more when you try to start it again.

You've also got to remember to strip layers as you work to avoid getting too sweaty, crew leader Amy Wells reminds us. It's good to be warm, but not too warm. Sweat too much and you'll become chilled.

Patience is a virtue well-served when the cold weather makes every little task just that much harder. But winter restoration work is not without its redeeming moments. As second-year crew member Kayla McGuire recalls, you may be bitterly cold and unable to think of anything else until you pause to look out over the Huron just as big fat snowflakes start to fall. It seems like you'll never be warm again, but for one moment, as fleeting as a snowflake's trail through the air, you're able to look out and experience the feeling of being totally absorbed by just how beautiful the world can be. You felt it often as a child, and now, even as an adult grown wary of the world's discomforts, its loveliness can still stun you.



NAP

VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR WINTER 2018-2019

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 dress in layers for snow and wet ground. 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.

DECEMBER

Stewardship Workday
Saturday, December 8, 9 a.m. to noon
Oakwoods Nature Area

Take the opportunity to admire the starker beauty of winter while fostering native habitat by removing non-native plants. Meet us at the park entrance off Dunwoodie.

Stewardship Workday
Saturday, December 8, 1 to 4 p.m.
Bluffs Nature Area

Bluffs Nature Area is around 40 acres of beautiful Michigan habitat. Take part in our effort to restore this area by removing invasive shrubs such as honeysuckle. Meet us at the entrance on Sunset Road near Wildt Street.

JANUARY

Stewardship Workday
National Bird Day
Saturday, January 5, 1 to 3 p.m.
Olson Park

Help us improve the habitat for native birds by removing invasive shrubs from the meadow. Meet us at the park entrance on Dhu Varren Road, just east of Pontiac Trail.

Stewardship Workday
Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service
Monday, January 21, 1 to 3 p.m.
Barton Nature Area

Turn your "day off" into a "day on" for community service. Help improve the wetlands along the river at Barton Nature Area and create habitat for turtles. Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot off Huron River Drive.

FEBRUARY

Stewardship Workday
World Wetlands Day
Saturday, February 2, 1 to 3 p.m.
Gallup Park

Join in our effort to remove invasive shrubs such as buckthorn from one of Ann Arbor's wetlands. From Gallup's main entrance, drive across the wooden bridge, meet in the first lot after the bridge.

Stewardship Workday
Sunday, February 17, 1 to 3 p.m.
Foxfire West Park

Help improve the habitat for frogs by cutting non-native shrubs from around the wetland. Meet us at the park entrance on Birchwood Drive, between Hickory Point Drive and Timbercrest Court.

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

December 11: Controlling Invasive Shrubs

During the fall and winter our work often turns to non-native shrubs. What can be done to keep these aggressive invaders out? Join us to discuss the dynamics of controlling invasive shrubs and restoring with natives.

January 8: Maximizing the Benefits of Controlled Burns

Some controlled burns can be more effective than others. Let's discuss how we can be more rigorous about choosing where to burn and how to maximize the benefits. Bring your examples of burns that have had minimal or maximum effects.

February 12: New Invasives

We all know too well about buckthorn, Phragmites, and garlic mustard and what they can do to our native habitats, but what are the newer SE Michigan invaders to be on the lookout for? What are the key characteristics to identify them and how do you report and control them when seen?

March 12: Personal Safety in the Field

Are you concerned about doing field work alone? What should you do if you see suspicious activity? What can you do to protect yourself? Join us and Ann Arbor police to discuss keeping yourself safe while out in the field.

Stewardship Workday

Presidents Day

Monday, February 18, 1 to 3 p.m.

Leslie Park

Spend your day off volunteering to help wildlife! Clearing shrubs from this wetland will benefit both frogs and butterflies. Meet at the parking lot at the end of Leslie Park Circle, off Dhu Varren Road

PUBLIC MEETING

Controlled Ecological Burn Program

Tuesday, February 19, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Northside Community Center, 815 Taylor St.

This meeting provides information and time for discussion about NAP's Burn Program. All persons are encouraged to participate in public meetings. Accommodations, including sign language, may be arranged with the Clerk's office 734.794.6140; cityclerk@a2gov.org; or by written request mailed or delivered to: City Clerk's Office, 301 E. Huron St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104. Requests should be made at least two days in advance.

Volunteer Burn Crew Training

Wednesday, February 20, noon to 5 p.m.

DTE Energy Nature House, Leslie Science and Nature Center, 1831 Traver Road

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 7 p.m.

Registration is required by February 20, as enrollment is limited. Some portion of the training may be outdoors.

Winter Nature Walk

Sunday, February 24, 10 a.m. to noon

Furstenberg Nature Area

Kickoff National Invasive Species Awareness week with us by learning to identify native and non-native trees and shrubs in the winter. Please dress for the weather and be prepared for a long hike. Meet at the parking lot off Fuller Road.

National Invasive Species

Awareness Week

Each morning this week we will be working to remove non-native invasive species such as honeysuckle and buckthorn from Ann Arbor's Nature Areas. Join us to improve native habitat in our city.



Monday, February 25, 10 a.m. to noon

Oakwoods Nature Area

This oak-hickory woodland includes a small pond and wetland, which are great spots for bird watching or listening for frog calls. Meet at the park entrance off of Dunwoodie.

Tuesday, February 26, 10 a.m. to noon

Dhu Varren Woods Nature Area

This park is 13 acres of woodland surrounded by oak, hickory, and maple trees. Meet us at the intersection of Birchwood Drive and Dhu Varren Road.

Wednesday, February 27, 10 a.m. to noon

Leslie Woods Nature Area

This woodland has some of the largest oaks in the Ann Arbor parks, plus a very diverse understory. Meet us at the park entrance at the north end of Upland Drive, north of Plymouth Road.

Thursday, February 28, 10 a.m. to noon

Argo Nature Area

The oak-hickory woods here overlook Argo Pond, and owls and hawks nest in the trees. Meet in the parking lot north of the Argo Canoe Livery, off Longshore Drive.

Friday, March 1, 10 a.m. to noon

Arbor Hills Nature Area

Arbor Hills Nature Area is a small park, but is home to an intricate community of wetlands and woods. Meet at the park entrance on Ashburnham.

Saturday, March 2, 10 a.m. to noon

Furstenberg Nature Area

This park along the river has high ecological diversity, including restored prairie and oak savanna. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road.

MARCH

Salamander Survey Kick-off & Training

Saturday, March 9, noon to 2 p.m.

Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave

Learn how to help NAP monitor salamanders in Ann Arbor's parks. Volunteers will select parks to survey and learn how to identify these rarely seen amphibians. Must be willing to walk in the woods on cold rainy nights in early spring, and look under logs in spring and summer. Please register by March 6.

Frog and Toad Survey Kick-off & Training

Saturday, March 9, 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.

Everyone is invited to help monitor frog populations. No experience required! You will learn to identify frogs by ear and eye, and will select a route to survey. Then once per month, March through June, travel a route through the city at night, stopping to listen for frogs along the way. Most routes require driving. Please register by March 6.

Photo Monitoring Kick-off & Training

Saturday, March 23, 10 to 11 a.m.

NAP Office, 3875 E. Huron River Drive

Do you like photography and spending time in the outdoors? We need volunteers to take photos at specific locations in parks throughout the year to record ecological changes and the progress of our restoration work. Come join us at this informational meeting for more details about this volunteer opportunity! Please register by March 21.

Workday Leader Training

Saturday, March 23, noon to 3:30 p.m.

NAP Office, 3875 E. Huron River Drive

This is for volunteers interested in leading or co-leading NAP volunteer stewardship workdays. We will focus on procedures, and tips and tricks to lead a successful event. A strong commitment to preserving the environment and engaging the public is necessary. Participants should be dressed for classroom and field training. Minimum age of 18. Please register by March 21.

Foxfire West Park

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

A patch of jewelweed grows on the edge of a small stream. I carefully step on the wet rocks to cross. The ground gets muddy here and I wish I had brought my boots. I spot several crayfish holes in the mud. Most of Foxfire West is wetland and the drier parts of the woodland are south of the stream. Soon I find myself stepping on scattered branches of buckthorn... the workday volunteers were cutting here too.

As I get to a thick patch of horsetail the hum of insects picks up. I know I must be close. Because it somewhat resembles bamboo, I always think horsetail looks out of place in Michigan, even though it's native. Perhaps that's just because it belongs in a different time: horsetail has survived since before the days of the dinosaurs. I delicately walk through this soggy patch and then push my way through a wall of shrubs, feeling the warm sun on my head as I emerge. I've made it to the fen.



Horsetail

Since there is no standing water here, I can walk through the plants. The flora is very similar to the sedge meadow at the entrance to the park. I see Canada goldenrod, with its plume of yellow flowers, and some white asters. The pink flowers of Joe-pye-weed have turned to fluffy brown seed heads. I'm amazed at how tall the plants are. I'm almost six feet tall and I can barely see over them.

I hear something moving in front of me, but I can't see what it is. Several species of frogs live here, as well as milk snakes, which are rare in the city. Catbirds and Song Sparrows have been spotted here as well as spring migrant birds. Elsewhere, prairie fens are habitat for the federally threatened eastern massasauga rattlesnake and the federally endangered Mitchell's satyr butterfly, both at risk due to habitat loss.

NAP hopes to conduct a controlled burn here soon. Historically Native Americans would have burned the adjacent oak savanna and fire would have spread to the fen. Today, we use fire to control non-native plants. Fire can also be a rejuvenating force. By removing the duff layer, it allows seeds that have been sitting in the soil, potentially for years, to grow. A burn would bring new beauty to this fen next summer.

I've lingered long enough. It's time to get back to my family and the busyness of life. Spending time out here, surrounded by the tall plants and the buzzing insects has refreshed me. Before I leave I wonder: how many people have stood in this special place? How many people even know it's here?

Join us on February 17 for a workday at Foxfire West Park. See the calendar on pages 4-5 for details.

NAPpenings

Welcome, new Park Stewards!

Michael Benham
Swift Run Marsh

David Ferguson
Argo Nature Area

Brian Glass
Cedar Bend Nature Area

Bill Rosen
White Oak Nature Area

Peter Smith
Miller Nature Area

Thank you!

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

Ann Arbor Trail Runners
Beth Israel Congregation High School Program
Concordia University
EMU Delta Zeta
EMU Vision
Expedia Ann Arbor
Greenhills School
IMG College
Indian American Student Association
Mission Earth Environmental Group
UM Community Scholars Program
UM Delta Sigma Pi
UM Environment 201 Class
UM Medical School
UM Running Club (MRUN)
Wesley Foundation at UM
YMCA YVC

Thank you to the local organizations that donated prizes for our Volunteer Appreciation Potluck!

Bløm Meadworks
www.drinkblom.com
Huron Hills Golf Course
www.a2gov.org/golf
Leslie Science and Nature Center
www.lesliesnc.org
Motawi Tileworks
www.motawi.com
Radius Garden Tools
www.radiusgarden.com
Veterans Memorial Park Ice Arena
www.a2gov.org/vets
Wild Type Nursery
www.wildtypeplants.com
Washtenaw Audubon Society
www.washtenawaudubon.org

Conferences sponsored by NAP

The Stewardship Network The Science, Practice, and Art of Restoring Native Ecosystems Conference January 11-12, 2019

The Stewardship Network presents this annual conference at the Kellogg Conference Center at Michigan State University in East Lansing. Presenters cover a wide range of topics including environmental justice, watershed conservation, and much more! See www.stewardshipnetwork.org to register or for more information.

2019 Burning Issues Workshop February 5-6, 2019

Presented by:

**Lake States Fire Science Consortium,
Michigan Prescribed Fire Council,
Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savanna Fire
Science Consortium,
Michigan National Guard**

This annual wildland fire workshop explores topics that are relevant to those working with fire across the state of Michigan and the Upper Midwest. It takes place at Fort Custer National Training Center in Battle Creek. See www.lakestatesfiresci.net to register or for more information.

Citizen Pruner Training

2 part training: both sessions required

Classroom Session:

Wednesday, January 23, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Outdoor Skills Session:

Saturday, January 26, 10 a.m. to noon

Looking for a new and unique way to volunteer in the community?

Consider becoming a Citizen Pruner! Citizen Pruners attend workdays to care for newly planted city trees.

We'll teach you everything you need to know. Please register by January 22, by emailing tstephens@a2gov.org or calling 734.794.6627.



STAFF UPDATES

FAREWELL...



ANNA TAWRIL

Field Crew

Thank you to everyone at NAP for the wonderful experience. I've learned so many valuable skills and information about implementing restoration. I'm sad to leave the NAP community and to trade in my outdoor office, but I'm excited to further my education. I have recently started graduate school at Oakland University and am pursuing a M.S. in biology; my research focuses on native plants and pollinator conservation. I hope to see you all when I come back as a volunteer!



MORGAN BOYER

Field Crew

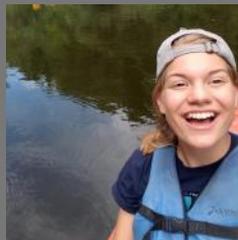
It has been a pleasure working with NAP for the past three years. I will miss the smoky burns and exploring and restoring the remote corners of the parks. Most of all, I will miss working with some of the most wonderful people I have had the good fortune to meet. This goodbye from NAP does not mean goodbye to the city. I have accepted the new Deer Educator position within the city government and I look forward to continuing to serve the community that I have come to cherish.



ALEX CHERRY

Workday Coordinator

After over a year at NAP as the Workday Coordinator, I decided to follow my dream of working and living in the mountains. I would like to thank everyone for the great experiences. It was a joy to talk with people every day about their passions. Prescribed burns and volunteer workdays produced many of my favorite memories while part of the NAP team. I look forward to what this great organization has in store for the future!



LIZ BERGHOFF

Field Crew

I've had an amazing year working with the crew and learning what I can from fellow NAPpers. I'm excited to continue my career in conservation at Niswander Environmental where I'll be working as an ecological technician. It's difficult to say goodbye, but I'm thankful for the support I've gained from everyone at NAP.

Would you like to be part of the NAP Staff team? Follow the city jobs website (www.a2gov.org/jobs). Positions can open throughout the year.

NAP also has unpaid internships that provide valuable experience!

For internship information contact NAP directly.

Natural Area Preservation

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NAP by the NUMBERS: 25 Years in Review

Here's a look at just how much we've accomplished in the last 25 years:



Volunteers

22,245 total volunteers
147,792 total volunteer hours
1,686 volunteer workdays



Butterfly Survey

2,222 volunteer hours
18,153 sightings
88 species recorded



Frog and Toad Survey

3,858 volunteer hours
18,213 observations
10 species recorded



Plant Survey

1,127 volunteer hours
33,822 observations
1,959 species recorded



Salamander Survey

2,771 volunteer hours
6,611 observations
7 species recorded



Other Surveys

7 species of snakes recorded
5 species of bats recorded



Turtle Survey

743 volunteer hours
2,280 observations
7 species recorded



Photo monitoring

829 volunteer hours
7,500 photos taken



Breeding Bird Survey

6,344 volunteer hours
240,822 observations
243 species recorded



Invasive species control

113,980 staff and volunteer hours
463 total burns