

Natural Area Preservation News

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

Volume 13, Number 4

Winter 2008

Park Focus: Berkshire Creek Nature Area

by Bonnie Wessler

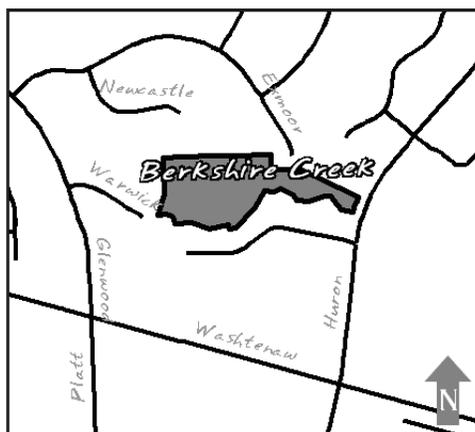
Tucked away behind Whole Foods and Berkshire Creek Condos, off of Huron Parkway, is a little-known natural area, Berkshire Creek. This five-acre site was acquired by the City in 2004 to aid in the restoration of adjacent Mallett's Creek. Berkshire Creek Nature Area has a lot of potential, and the Park Steward, Mary Matossian, is ready to help realize it!

In 2000, the Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner's office completed the Mallett's Creek Restoration Plan (available on their website). The four major goals in this plan are: achievement of a stable stream structure and a more natural flow regimen, improvement of water quality, improvement of coordination and planning, and enhancement of public support. NAP, Mary, and park neighbors are working to meet these goals in Berkshire by helping to establish native plant communities that restore and protect the stream's ecosystems. They are mobilizing citizens to restore and protect Mallett's Creek through workdays; broadening awareness of the vital connection between the watershed and stream health; removing invasives and litter in and around the creek; and protecting Berkshire and Mallett's Creek as major natural amenities that are attractive, pleasant, and part of a restored, robust Huron River system.

Mary Matossian has led a truly impressive restoration effort in Berkshire Creek this summer. Neighbors cut down invasive shrubs by the path along the creek. This path now provides an excellent view of Mallett's Creek and the invasive removal will allow native understory plants to thrive. Thanks to the efforts of Mary and her neighbors, what once was nearly impassible is now a pleasure to walk through. This park has brought the

neighborhood together for a common cause to protect and improve the creek and the park. Neighbors are now working towards a common goal and getting to know one another.

There are currently a lot of invasives in the park, but 120 of the 140 plant species in the park are native. Some particularly interesting species are green dragon (*Arisaema dracontium*), richweed (*Collinsonia canadensis*), and trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*).



Green dragon shares the family Arisaema with another native, Jack-in-the-pulpit. Green dragon is about a foot tall and typically has one large, compound leaf divided into 7-15 lance-shaped leaflets. It has a hood that looks similar to Jack-in-the-pulpit's, but has what looks like a long tongue protruding from the hood. Called the "spadix", this tongue-like feature houses the

plant's flowers. Green dragon blooms in late spring to early summer in moist shade along rocky slopes. The plants go dormant in the summer, with only the club-shaped cluster of maturing berries visible.

Richweed produces clusters of one to two-inch long, small, yellow flowers from July through September. A member of the mint family, the flowers have been described as smelling of lemon furniture polish. Early settlers and Native Americans used its leaves in poultices for bruises and wounds, as well using the roots to help treat digestive ailments.

Common trillium is easily recognized by its three-petaled, white flowers, blooming from late spring to early summer. This small plant can carpet the ground

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Coordinator's Corner

Singing to the Lake

Eight years ago I had the opportunity to attend a Natural Areas Conference on Mackinac Island, a place sacred to many indigenous people. I can't recall most details of the conference, but there are a few indelible memories. One of them was the keynote address by Henry Lickers, a citizen of the Seneca Nation and a member of the Turtle Clan. He spoke about the oral traditions of his people and about the deep connection they have to the land. I happened to cross paths with Henry later that evening and he was good enough to sit and chat with me – no, to deeply converse with me – far into the night.

We talked more about the connection between people and nature, and about telling our stories of these connections. At one point, a friend of his joined the conversation. When Henry asked what he'd been up to the past few hours, this man replied that he'd been out along the shore in the moonlight "singing to the lake." That sent my head spinning! Here I was at a conference with hundreds of land managers and other scientists presenting papers and posters with the findings from their research into some narrow aspect of restoration ecology; and this man was out singing to the lake.

I've pondered this image over the years, and it's helped me realize that long-term restoration of nature can't happen without an accompanying long-term restoration of the connection between people and nature. That is one of the reasons I've been so excited about the work of the Stewardship Network, a non-profit organization NAP helped start years ago. The Network understands, better than any other membership organization with which I'm involved, the importance of these deep connections to nature, and to each other. In fact, the focus of the Network is to help us learn from each other and collaborate to increase our collective capacity to be good stewards of our environment.

The Stewardship Network's Annual Conference on Friday/Saturday, January 23/24, 2009 is entitled The Science, Practice, and Art of Restoring Native Ecosystems. We're thrilled that Henry Lickers will be giving our keynote address on Friday! There will be a special program that evening on The Power of Story. There will also be presentations around the themes of Fire, Water, and Wildlife.

I don't know if there will be anyone singing to the lake. And I'm not sure if I'll get to stay up half the night talking to Henry. But I'm really looking forward to hearing him speak. And I'm looking forward to re-connecting with other stewards from across southern Michigan and neighboring states. It should be educational, inspiring, and empowering. I hope you will join us! I think it would help in your "singing to the lake."

Dave Borneman, Manager



CITY OF ANN ARBOR
**Natural Area
Preservation**

A unit of the City of Ann Arbor
Public Services, Field Operations

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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David Mifsud, *Herpetologist*

If you would prefer to
receive your next newsletter
via e-mail, please call NAP

Volunteer of the Year

by Jason Frenzel-Wright

Congratulations to George Hammond: NAP 2008 Volunteer of the Year!

For the past four years George has served as a resource to other volunteers, webmaster, and press agent for the Frog & Toad, Salamander, and Mudpuppy Surveys. His work has aided inventory volunteers, and he has filled roles traditionally fulfilled by David Mifsud, NAP Herpetologist, as well as NAP office staff. All of this work is a testament to George's understanding and commitment to the animals around us all.



A twenty year resident of Ann Arbor, George grew up in numerous suburbs, mainly Chicago's north shore and near L.A. Attending nine different schools prior to graduating from high school, George notes, "I was always interested in herps, I thought they were cool." This helped lead him to Pomona College in California (for a B.S. in Biology), then to UM for graduate study, where he "spent a long time" and earned a Masters in Biology. His focus of study: insects and mites. George is Editor and Content Specialist for AnimalDiversity.org, a website of UM Museum of Zoology, which hosts a "giant database" of animals. This site is an educational resource for college and grade school students alike. While at work in the museum, George noticed a recruitment sign about NAP's salamander survey.

George has since created (and maintained!) the Yahoo groups for NAP's Frog & Toad and Salamander survey programs. He has also done the same for Pittsfield Township's surveys. George has been an active volunteer in these surveys, as well as a direct resource for other volunteers – answering all types of questions as they arise. More recently he has started attending NAP

stewardship workdays, "They're fun, and for a slacker like me, a good way to get some exercise." He has also served as a super sounding board and idea-generator for improving and expanding NAP's current volunteer and inventory programs. George's commitment to these surveys is demonstrated in his willingness to (repeatedly) auger through ice on the Huron River (often in negative temperatures) to look for mudpuppies.

In addition to helping NAP, George volunteers for the Huron River Watershed Council (with their stonefly survey, river roundups, and associated ID days), and he and his girlfriend work with Neighborhood Senior Services (helping out a neighbor with weekly grocery shopping). He also enjoys canoeing on the Huron River, photography, and visiting the Arboretum with his family. George doesn't get to go camping as much as he used to. His most memorable locations: Navajo National Monument in Arizona, and North Manitou Island in Lake Michigan (even with terrible no see 'ems).

George has a strong belief (which overlaps with NAP's mission) that everyone has the ability to greatly add to our collective knowledge about the biodiversity surrounding us. Thank you George for all your contributions as well as the determination you bring to us!

Every year hundreds of volunteers bring their unique and wonderful talents to benefit the ecosystems in Ann Arbor. We like to shine a spotlight on one individual each year to highlight the amazing activities of that individual and the diversity of what we accomplish together.

"Gray Tree Frog"
by Nick Sobel,
3rd Place Winner
in Adult up Close
Category



Park Focus: Berkshire

Continued from page 1

in sunnier areas of the forest when not blocked out by invasives. Trillium spreads mainly by sending out roots to grow new plants, but ants often help disperse its seeds. It's always a pleasant surprise to wander through the forest into a clearing full of trillium!

Have we piqued your interest yet? Great! There are two ways to get into Berkshire Creek Natural Area. The first is through Exmoor Road to the north, which ends in a cul-de-sac at a trailhead. The other end of the trail

is best accessed on foot or by bike from the sidewalk along Huron River Drive — but it's a bit steep getting to the trail, so be careful!

Berkshire can use people to help maintain trails, help keep garbage to a minimum, or remove invasives at a workday! If Berkshire's a bit out of the way for you, but you're still inspired, there are many other parks that could use a neighbor, or a neighborhood, to look out for them. Visit our website at www.a2gov.org/napvolunteering to find out more about volunteer opportunities.

Inventory Updates

Herps

by David Mifsud

We have gone from eating farm-fresh strawberries and wearing t-shirts to picking pumpkins and digging out our warmest sweaters. This means the end of another field season. 2008 marked the start of the Mudpuppy Monitoring program, and although we did not find any of these fully aquatic salamanders while surveying, we all took away great stories to tell about negative five degree weather, frozen waders, auguring through a total of 40 feet of ice in one day, and most of all, catching a green frog tadpole in January! However, we met a number of local anglers who put us onto some really cool places to check out this fall when we try again!

This season has been more than sardines and rock hard mittens. We also had a great season with our Frog and Toad Survey and Salamander Monitoring programs. For starters, we had a great volunteer turn out for both events and, more importantly, great follow through with the surveys. This year marked the fourteenth season for the F&T survey and the fifth season for the Salamander Monitoring program. We have been able to attain a wealth of important information. Each season we learn more about the diversity of salamanders in our City's natural areas and monitor the health of our wetlands through the frog and toad calling survey. NAP staff have been working hard over the past year revising the databases so we can input data more efficiently and begin to do more detailed analysis. We have also integrated our database with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software so we can learn more about Ann Arbor's wildlife spatially! We began playing around with this last season and hope to do even more. Initial results indicate that the cool, wet spring was great for the breeding of frogs, toads, and salamanders. However, because many of the ponds dried up during the hot dry summer, the overall breeding success for amphibians depends on the specific site. Overall, early breeding frogs were able to transform and leave the ponds before they dried and a few salamander sites were also successful. We will be working with the data while most of the herps are sleeping. Of course, we will not be working indoors all the time. We hope to head out this fall looking for breeding mudpuppies. If you are interested in helping out, please contact the NAP office for more information.

I would like to take a moment to thank you all for your hard work. I know I do this every season, but it is because I truly mean it. I would like to let every volunteer past and current know how much we appreciate your efforts in helping document our more secretive residents!

Butterflies

by D. Evelyn Frenzel-Wright

It's good to know our butterfly surveyors continue to monitor our natural areas and have a sharp eye for anything new! Roger Kuhlman reported seeing a good number of Silvery Checkerspots in Shanghai Prairie, bringing our number of breeding sites for this species up to three! Many different composite flowers are hosts for the caterpillars of the Checkerspot including black-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia*), sunflowers (*Helianthus*), and wingstem (*Actinomeris alternifolia*), making Shanghai Prairie a perfect location for the species.

The butterfly known as Long Dash was found in the wet prairie west of Gallup Park and had not been at this site since 2005. Long Dash caterpillars use blue grasses (*Poa spp.*) as a host plant.

Thank you Roger and all the other volunteers who keep an eye on our butterflies!

Breeding Birds

by Dea Armstrong

The 2008 BBS results are almost completely submitted and data-coded and there are some good things to report and some concerning news to report. It appears that this year Wood Thrush did not breed in Dolph or Scarlett Mitchell Nature Areas, after almost 10 years of doing so. These birds usually nest in shrubs or small trees, at an average height of 12 feet. We continue to find small numbers of singing males in Huron Hills, Marshall, and Huron Parkway Nature Areas — one or two pairs per site. Blue-winged Warbler, found only at Marshall in small numbers, were down to one pair this year. Of course, there is no way to know until next year if this is a trend for either species, but we'll certainly be interested in finding out. Both Wood Thrush and Blue-winged Warbler are on Audubon's Watchlist of declining birds.

On a more positive note, Bobolinks and Grasshopper Sparrows (a Michigan species of Special Concern) were found again at both the capped landfill sites at the Wheeler Service Center and at the Ann Arbor Airport fields. Both continue to do well. We found at least six singing male Grasshopper Sparrows and almost 30 Bobolink pairs between the two sites. This is the 8th year of delayed mowing at the landfill sites and the second year of delayed at the Ann Arbor airport. These programs seem to be doing well allowing these species to have a successful nesting before the mid-July mow.

Thank you to all the lovely Breeding Bird volunteers. See you in the Spring!

Third Annual NAP Photo Contest Winners!

by Nancy Lincoln Stoll

The response to this year's NAP photo contest was terrific! We received many wonderful pictures, and the judges had a tough job making a choice.

Spirit of the Seasons, Adult

First place: Rob Judy
Second place: Michael Seabrook
Third place: Tom Bethell
Honorable mention: David Read

Spirit of the Seasons, Youth

First place: Olivia Thorp
Second place: Harold Eyster
Third place: Olivia Thorp

Nature Close Up, Adult

First place, Ann Glista
Second place, Michael Seabrook
Third place: Nick Scobel
Third place: Jude Walton

Nature Close Up, Youth

First place: Grace Eder
Second place: Harold Eyster
Third place: Olivia Kohler

Some of the winning photos are featured on this page, throughout this newsletter, and in our 2009 calendar! To view the winners' pictures in their original splendor, visit NAP's website (www.a2gov.org/NAPphotocontest).

A big thank you to all who submitted photos! It was wonderful to hear from everyone. Your photo contributions are helping us build a NAP archive of pictures to use for future publications, outreach, and public education. (Your photos credited, of course.)

Next year's categories will be: Stewardship (showing people caring for nature) and Native Trees and Shrubs of Southeastern Michigan. Youths are encouraged to submit! So keep your cameras ready, and watch out for that special shot that will capture the gold in 2009. More information can be found on our website (see above).

NAP would like to thank: Bivouac, Format Framing, Foto 1, Huron Camera, Ivory Photo, and Jordan Lovell Picture Framing for donating prizes. We are also grateful to contest judges Don Werthman, David Cappert and David Borneman for donating their time and expertise.



"Differential Grasshopper" by Harold Eyster, 2nd Place Winner in Youth Up Close Category



"Purple Passion Posy" by Olivia Kohler, 3rd Place Winner in Youth Up Close Category

NAP has a yearly calendar you can pick up, free of charge at our office or any of our events. You'll also see them at various locations around town.

NAP
CALENDAR
AVAILABLE!

We won't be mailing the calendar to everyone this year, to help reduce costs and make sure the calendars get to folks who will use them, so make sure you let us know if you want one! If you can't make it into the office, give us a call and we'll mail one to you.



"Third Eye Dragonfly" by Jude Walton, 3rd Place Winner in Adult Up Close Category

Reflections From the Crew

by *Billy Kirst*

It was a hot, dry summer. The long, tangled roots of the knapweed clung to the parched and cracked clay, happy to bake in the heat of an unforgiving sun. Your weary crew of NAPpers waded through the head-high bluestem in search of that vicious pink flower, silhouetted by its silky grey leaves. What a ragtag group of people we must have looked like – 92 degrees outside, blazing sun, long shirts tucked into long pants, tucked into long socks and an effervescent cloud of DEET perfume to add a touch of class. Sweating, thirsty, but bound in a common cause, we pushed on through the native grasses.

Earlier, in the first week of spotted knapweed season, Laura and Steve learned their lesson about walking willy-nilly into a prairie. At the end of the first day they were covered in red sores, inflamed skin around the hardened feeding tubes of engorged mites. Molly and Billy had tried to warn them, though they weren't safe either. Chiggers, as they are commonly called, are just one of the many perils of the field. We share in the pain, the itching, the strange weeping wounds, and the scratched off skin.

But now that Autumn has settled in and Old Man Winter approaches, we will shed our DEET and don our steel toes, ear plugs, safety glasses, and flannel-lined pants. New burdens of cold air and wet feet will occupy our lunch-time dialogue. And in the field we will happily march through the snow-trodden grasses in search of stumps from your wonderful workday efforts, shirts tucked in to keep out the cold.

Chigger larvae (Trombicula alfreddugesi) await their host on tall blades of grass and other plants found in a prairie. When hosts brush against the plants, larvae get onto the host's clothing and find their way to a tight spot between skin and clothing. The chigger then injects its host with digestive enzymes that liquefy skin cells and harden surrounding tissues to form a feeding tube. After a meal of liquefied cells, the larva drop off the host leaving the feeding tube in place. Scratching the swollen area caused by the chigger's feeding tube can cause secondary infection and prolong the itch.

Staff Updates

hello...



from left to right:

Elissa Trumbull — Elissa is an educator who has enjoyed running and exploring in the city's parks and natural areas throughout her years in Ann Arbor. She loves organizing and working with volunteers of all ages and is thrilled to put her experience to good use as part of the dynamic NAP team! She also continues to cultivate environmental awareness and land stewardship for youth through school gardening efforts.

Bonnie Wessler — Bonnie has begun working in Outreach after spending about a year and a half, on and off, working on NAP's many fine databases. She is happy to be interacting with people instead, and quite enjoys getting outside and visiting many of Ann Arbor's beautiful parks and natural areas — often with volunteers in tow!

Tina Roselle — Tina is very excited about her new roll as the Adopt-A-Park Coordinator! She has spent the last few years doing a variety of outdoor and environmental education jobs in Michigan, Taiwan, and Japan. She says, "it's great to be settling in back home in the Ann Arbor area and working to conserve the green spaces so close to my heart. I'm looking forward to getting to know all the park adopters as well as our other fantastic volunteers."

Nell Burger Kirst — By legal and social-spiritual arrangement NAP would like to welcome the newest addition to our family; Nell Burge... wait, Nell Burger Kirst. Nell and Billy (Conservation Crew Member) will be married on November 29th in Urbana, Illinois. Congratulations!



farewell...

Anna Shipley — Adopt-A-Park Anna has moved on. She writes to us from Montana, "I have made my way northwest to Missoula, MT. All in all life is good. For work I am spraying spurge and cheat grass for the University of MT. I have found two good yoga studios in town. I intend to establish residency here and go back to school for some type of advanced degree. I hope fall is treating everyone well. Much love! Good thoughts, good words, good intentions."

NAPpennings

Thank you...

- ♥ Community Plunge group from EMU for their hard work at Furstenberg
- ♥ Greenhills Schools 7th graders who woodchipped trails at Barton for the 5th year running
- ♥ Northville Rotary for their help at Furstenberg Native Garden and Hansen Nature Area
- ♥ ERB Institute for helping at Redbud Nature Area
- ♥ REI volunteers' help at Bird Hills
- ♥ The rockin' volunteers from Toyota who worked at Argo
- ♥ PVC and Eagle Scout, Nathan Patel, for the new trail at Onder
- ♥ The Boy Scouts who chipped the trails at Barton
- ♥ EnAct from UM for their help controlling invasives at Scarlett-Mitchell Woods
- ♥ Johnson Control volunteers for their dedication to buckthorn eradication
- ♥ Gates Millennium Scholars from UM for their work at Mary Beth Doyle Nature Area
- ♥ Girl Scouts of the Huron Valley Council for their help collecting seeds at Swift Run Marsh
- ♥ Old House Gardens, Zingerman's, Great Harvest Bread Company, Trader Joe's, Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum, Arbor Brewing Company for their donations for our Volunteer Appreciation Potluck

The Annual Convention of Michigan Association of Conservation Districts will be at Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort in Mount Pleasant on December 10-12. Registration and further information are available at www.macd.org.

On Saturday, December 6th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm, the Stewardship Network's Huron Arbor cluster will be holding its year end celebration at Matthaei Botanical Gardens. Bring a dish to share and join the celebration! To RSVP, call 734.996.3190.

The Stewardship Network's Annual Conference will be held on January 23 & 24 in East Lansing, MI. (See related article on page two.) For information and to register, visit www.stewardshipnetwork.org.

9th Annual National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week
The 9th Annual National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week will be February 22-28, 2009 to focus national attention on the impacts of invasive weeds. Events address the role of the federal government in dealing with invasive weed problems. For more information, check out www.NAWMA.org.

The Wildflower Association of Michigan Conference will take place March 8 and 9, 2009 at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing. For more information, please check out their website at www.wildflowersmich.org.

SALAMANDER SURVEY KICKOFF

Sunday, March 1, 2009

10:00 am to 12:00 noon

Leslie Science & Nature Center

Volunteers with some identification experience and a willingness to get muddy, please apply.



FROG & TOAD SURVEY KICKOFF

13th Annual

Frog & Toad Survey!

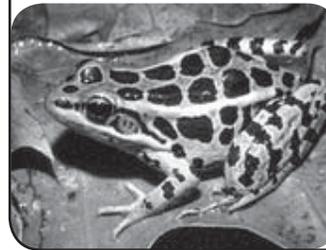
Sunday, March 1, 2009

1:30 to 3:00 p.m.

Leslie Science &

Nature Center

Open to all volunteers!



Prescribed Ecological Burn Public Meeting and Crew Training



Public Meeting

Tuesday, March 3, 2009

7:30 - 9:00 pm

Burn Crew Training

Wednesday, March 4, 2009

12:00 noon - 5:00 pm

Fire is used as a restoration tool in some of Ann Arbor's natural areas. This meeting will provide information and an opportunity for discussion about the Prescribed Ecological Burn Program. New burn volunteers are encouraged to attend.

This is the required training session for all new volunteers interested in assisting with prescribed burns. Burns typically take place Monday-Friday between 10:00 am and 6:00pm. Pre-registration required by February 27th.

THE NAP PUZZLER!



IN WHICH ANN ARBOR
NATURE AREA WAS THIS
PHOTO TAKEN?
(ANSWER ON PAGE 5)

Natural Area Preservation News

Winter 2008



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