

# Natural Area Preservation News

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Autumn 1998

*The mission of the Natural Area Preservation Division is to protect, restore and champion the natural areas of Ann Arbor, especially those in the City's park and recreation system.*

Natural Area Preservation is funded by the Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Department's voter-approved Park Maintenance and Repair Millage.

## Butterfly Survey 1998 Update

by Chris Rickards

NAP's survey of Ann Arbor's butterfly population changed focus this year. For the past three years NAP inventory staff and volunteers have tried to cover most of the natural areas in Ann Arbor. This year in order to concentrate our efforts and to get a better idea of butterfly population fluctuations, only ten city parks were selected to survey. In this way we hope to get a more accurate picture of the effects of NAP's prescribed burn and exotic plant control programs.



Since May ten volunteer butterfly watchers and one part-time NAP staff member have been collecting information on the butterfly species and numbers in Marshall, Furstenberg, Barton, Dhu Varren, Brown, Kuebler Langford, Gallup, Greenview, Miller, and Bandemer parks. The parks were selected by NAP staff as areas important to NAP's conservation programs and to the butterflies found within each. So far in 1998 we have spent about 30 hours every week in the parks, and we are finding more butterflies than ever before. Sixty species have been recorded so far. Over 8,000 individual butterflies have been seen and documented, and this year's butterfly survey won't conclude until November! The annual National Fourth of July Butterfly Count took place in Washtenaw County this year on Sunday, July 5. Nine participants observed 41 species and 800 butterflies in 8 hours that day.

The Variegated Fritillary (*Euptoieta claudia*) has been recorded twice this year. Both specimens were seen in early July, one in Marshall Park and the other at Brown Park. This butterfly is a rare visitor to our area and has never been recorded by NAP before. It is one of the butterflies that migrate north each summer like the Monarch. If the weather permits, it may be seen in Michigan on rare occasions. Other less common migratory species recorded this year include Little Sulphur (*Eurema lisa*), Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*), Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*), and Eastern Tailed Blue (*Everes comyntas*). Look for migrants in open spaces with flowering plants.

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**Parks & Recreation**  
CITY OF ANN ARBOR

**Natural Area Preservation** is a Division of the City of Ann Arbor Department of Parks and Recreation.

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## Coordinator's Corner: Out of the Limelight

Someone who has been involved with NAP since our beginning five years ago, and who, in fact, was instrumental in getting us started, asked me an interesting question the other day: "So how does it feel not to be in the limelight anymore?" He was referring to the change which has occurred over the past few years as NAP has become more accepted among other staff and more integrated into the city. The novelty is gone. The honeymoon is over. Our shiny new finish has worn off.

When I started as NAP's first employee on November 15, 1993, much of my time was spent explaining to other staff and the public what my role would be and why the city needed someone to care for its natural areas. It was a new idea, without much precedence in other municipalities either locally or nationally. Certainly there were many individuals interested in protecting the biological diversity of our ecological treasures, but there was no organized, sustained effort to do so. As I explained the need for careful stewardship of these sites, the listener would typically give a nod of approval, an expression of "Hmm, that sounds like a worthwhile endeavor," and a comment such as, "Good for Ann Arbor for having such foresight."

But alas, those days are gone. Most folks I encounter on a daily basis already know about NAP and what we do and why we do it. They're familiar with our workdays, or our burns, or our native landscaping brochures, or some other facet of our existence. I still get the nod of approval, but the comments now are more along the lines of, "You work with NAP, right?"

This is a good change. It means, I think, that people accept us, that we've "proven" ourselves. It is akin to recycling--we don't hear a lot of people singing its praises on a daily basis, yet 93% of Ann Arbor's households regularly set their recyclables out on the curb. It makes sense and it's the right thing to do, so they participate.

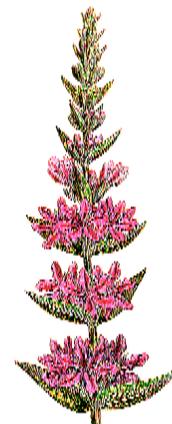
NAP has also broadened the scope of its activities over the past 5 years which has helped us weave our way into the fabric of the city's services. Now we're involved in a variety of projects spread throughout the department and the city. NAP staff not only remove invasive plants and set prescribed fires, we also review plans for other park projects, route new trails through woodlots, help with park clean-ups, organize hundreds of volunteers on a variety of tasks, and consult on everything from native landscaping, to plant and animal identification, to interpretive brochure design. Outside the Parks and Recreation Department, NAP reviews site plans for building projects, does wetland delineations, and serves on city-wide environmental committees. Our focus has broadened, and our impact has deepened.

So how does it feel to be out of the limelight? It feels great!

David Borneman, Natural Area Preservation Coordinator

## NAP-penings

**A.C. Turner** has been busy this summer monitoring and controlling purple loosestrife in Ann Arbor's parks and natural areas as a NAP volunteer. He answered our call for help in the summer edition of the *NAP News* to control this invasive, non-native wetland plant. He's been helping out in parks all over the city, controlling purple loosestrife at Gallup Park, Brown Park, and Bandemer Park, just to name a few. Thank you, A.C.!



purple loosestrife

Thank you, also, to a group of **missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints** who worked with NAP two mornings a week all summer long. They removed brush piles in Argo Park, maintained the NAP native plant garden at the Leslie Science Center, removed honeysuckle and buckthorn from Brown Park, and built a new nature trail through Cranbrook Park (see "New Nature Trail" on page 10).

The **25th Annual Natural Areas Association (NAA) Conference**, "Planning for the 7th Generation" will be held October 6 - 10, 1998 at Mission Point Resort in Mackinac Island, Michigan. This is a great opportunity to meet natural area managers from around the country and learn from each others' experiences. Attendance is expected to be between 500-800 people. NAP is one of the official supporters of this year's conference and will be organizing the annual raffle and silent auction as a fund raiser for NAA. If you'd like to donate any items for the silent auction (artwork, outdoor gear, environmental services, etc.) NAP will gladly accept them. If

*continued on next page*

## *Nap-penings* (continued)

you'd like more information on the conference, or would like to receive a registration form, please call (517) 241-2974.

**Conservation Planner** wanted! NAP is in the process of hiring a full-time, permanent staff member to focus on developing detailed natural area management plans for sites where NAP works. This person will also direct the activities of the conservation field crew and assist with reviewing plans for building projects and various park projects. The funding for this position was included in the Park Maintenance and Repair Millage which voters approved last November. If you'd like a complete copy of the job description, please contact the NAP office.

## Staff Updates

In August NAP hired two new conservation crew workers-- **Kristie Brablec** and **Dave Jenkins**. Kristie grew up in Tecumseh, Michigan, not far from Ann Arbor. She has studied outdoor recreation at Northern Michigan University and Washtenaw Community College. A newcomer to Michigan, Dave moved from his hometown of New Paltz, New York to Ann Arbor in June. He received his bachelor's degree from St. Bonaventure University. Dave has worked for the New York State Department of Parks and Recreation and recently worked for the Michigan DNR at Pinckney Recreation Area. Welcome Kristie and Dave!

## Help from Abroad

by Manuela Fritz



Hi, my name is Manuela Fritz. I am from Tuebingen, Germany (a sister city of Ann Arbor). This summer I had the wonderful opportunity to come to the United States and volunteer as an intern with the City of Ann Arbor.

I am studying Public Administration at the University of Ludwigsburg, Germany. This program takes four years, including two years doing internships in various administrations. As we can go abroad for these internships, I found out about Ann Arbor and its famous Department of Parks & Recreation. One of last year's interns highly recommended this place—and I am going to do the same! I worked on several projects for the Department of Parks and Recreation this summer, including a survey on parks in other cities around the country. I also worked with NAP doing photo monitoring and working on a new Adopt-A-Park Program. I did daily office work for Leslie Science Center, as well. I had many exciting experiences working for the Department of Parks and Recreation that I had never even thought of before!

In my spare time, I enjoyed summertime in Ann Arbor and also made several trips. I am so glad that I could come here and meet many wonderful people. I enjoyed working, talking and playing sports with many of you! By the time you read this, however, I will be back in Tuebingen, Germany. I am continuing another internship at the Water Utilities Department in Tuebingen. After another year of studies in Ludwigsburg I would like come back to Ann Arbor to see you again. I'd really love to!

## *Butterfly Survey 1998 Update* (continued from page 1)

Of our resident butterflies, some of the wetland skipper species appear to be the rarest. Mulberrywing (*Poanes massasoit*), Black Dash (*Euphyes conspicua*), and Broad Winged Skipper (*Poanes viator*) are all found in the boggy areas in our parks, feeding specifically on wetland sedges. Dhu Varren Park is a good place to look for these butterflies. Only one Compton's Tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis vau-album*) has been seen this year. This is possibly our rarest resident butterfly. Only seen in Marshall park, it is an arboreal species which feeds on the leaves of birch and poplar. Unfortunately, this butterfly, like all butterflies, is susceptible to applications of *Baccillus thuringensis* (Bt), a bacteria used to control Gypsy Moths. It was a pleasure to see 200 or more Silvery Checkerspot (*Charidryas nycerties*) flying together throughout June in Marshall Park. This butterfly is most abundant at Marshall Park, and the larval food plant is probably false sunflower (*Heliopsis helianthoides*).

Finally, thank you to all NAP's butterfly survey volunteers! With your help NAP has gathered valuable information about Ann Arbor's butterflies. If you are not a volunteer yet, but are interested in helping with the NAP butterfly survey, it's not too late. Contact the NAP office at 734-996-3266 or e-mail me at [Heliconia@juno.com](mailto:Heliconia@juno.com).



# Frog Survey 1998 Update (or “Listening for Frogs is All it’s Croaked Up to Be”)

by Alan Wolf

The news this year is good. The volunteers have made as many observations this year as last year--more than 900. I still hold out hope that we will surpass the excellent performance of the past year. From speaking with volunteers throughout the spring, I know there are data sheets out there that have not yet been returned. It is the fourth year of the survey, so you might well ask, “What do we know about Ann Arbor’s frogs and toads?” I would answer, “A lot.” We have an excellent picture of where they live in the city and a basic idea of their population levels. Also, we are reasonably certain that two species (the cricket frog and the pickerel frog) no longer occur in the city. What we do not know yet is whether any of the frogs currently found in Ann Arbor are declining. Based on research presented at an international meeting of herpetologists I attended last month, I would say we need another 5 years of data (minimally) before we can draw any conclusions. Does this mean we should sit back and wait another five years before we take any action? NO! The overriding factor in the decline of all species is the loss of habitat. Only by protecting what remains do we have any hope of protecting our frogs.

There were few surprises this year. As has been the case in past years, the only predictable thing about our weather patterns was their unpredictability. (Sorry for the cliché, but it is true as you all know.) These patterns make it difficult to survey. Warm weather can accelerate the calling patterns of our frogs, and then a cold snap can stop all activity. Several volunteers and I observed this first hand when we met one evening at the Scarlett Mitchell area after two nights of sub-normal temperatures. We heard one lonely, cold chorus frog, but saw many blue spotted and spotted salamanders. Weather made the calling patterns of our frogs variable throughout the city.

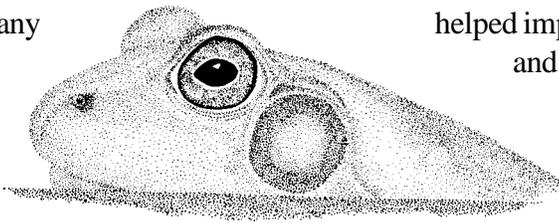
A few notes about the frogs. American toads were extremely abundant this year. They were heard at many sites which have had no observations for at least two years. I also heard bullfrogs calling from some of the backwaters of the Huron River near Gallup Park. It

is a place they are known to occur but had not been reported from for awhile. I hope that this signals a return of Michigan’s largest frog to this area. Another hopeful sign is that our most sensitive species, the leopard frog, was heard from most of the sites from which it was known from previous years. I will publish a more detailed summary of our data later this year.

I would like to thank all of the frog survey volunteers. Without their efforts we would not have any idea how our frogs are doing in the city. We have received data from 28 volunteers, most of whom have made two to four “runs.” While every effort is appreciated, I would like to tell you about the special efforts of two teams of our volunteers. In the category of widest range of coverage, I would single out **Gwen and John Nystuen**. They actively surveyed three of the eleven areas covered by our survey. They helped implement the survey in 1995 and have been volunteering for it ever since. In addition, they participate in the Michigan DNR frog survey. They are the best friends the frogs of Ann

Arbor could hope to have. In the category of most intensive coverage of an area, I would select the mother and son team of **Karen and Sean Zera**. It is their second year with the survey, and Karen and Sean have spent a considerable amount of time surveying the southeastern part of town. They have provided the best data we have on daily variation in calling activity of these frogs. Their observations will allow us to better explain why some people go out and hear nothing one night, while people who go out the next night hear frogs at every site. This is important because I suspect it is the frustrating nights where nothing is heard that cause people to drop out of the survey.

We hope that these groups and all of our volunteers continue with this effort for years to come. If you wish to join in the fun, please call the NAP office and have your name added to the frog survey mailing list.



# Autumn 1998 Volunteer Calendar

- S E P T E M B E R - - O C T O B E R - - N O V E M B E R -

**Please note:** Long pants and sturdy shoes are strongly recommended for all outdoor workdays.

**September 9, Wednesday**  
**Volunteer Stewardship Workday**  
**Greenview Park, 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm**  
 Help remove invasive, non-native shrubs to improve conditions for our native plants. Meet at 5:30 pm at the park entrance on Greenview Drive.

**September 19, Saturday**  
**Volunteer Stewardship Workday**  
**Maryfield/Wildwood Park, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm**  
 Join us in removing invasive, non-native plants. Meet at 10:00 am at the intersection of Linwood Avenue and Wildwood off of Dexter Avenue.

**October 3, Saturday**  
**Volunteer Stewardship Workday**  
**Dolph Park, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm**  
 Help maintain and improve trails at Dolph Park! Meet at 10:00 am at the trailhead off of Parklake Avenue, just south of Lakeview Drive.

**October 17, Saturday**  
**Volunteer Stewardship Workday**  
**Leslie Woods Park, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm**  
 Our task will be removing invasive, non-native shrubs. Meet at the end of Upland Drive off of Plymouth Road at 10:00 am.

**October 31, Saturday**  
**Volunteer Stewardship Workday**  
**Barton Park, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm**  
 Help us collect native seeds to be used in future restoration projects! Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot at 10:00 am.

**November 7, Saturday**  
**Volunteer Stewardship Workday**  
**Brown Park, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm**  
 Join us in removing invasive, non-native shrubs from Brown Park. Meet at 10:00 am at the park entrance on Packard Road between Stone School Road and Platt Road (directly across the street from Cobblestone Farm).

**November 21, Saturday**  
**Volunteer Stewardship Workday**  
**Leslie Science Center, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm**  
 We will be cleaning seeds collected earlier this season to prepare them for storage or sowing. The work will be indoors. Meet at 10:00 am inside the Leslie Science Center, 1831 Traver Road.

- D E C E M B E R -

**December 5, Saturday**  
**Volunteer Stewardship Workday**  
**Leslie Science Center, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm**  
 Join us in cleaning native seeds collected earlier this season to prepare them for storage or sowing. The work will be indoors. Meet at 10:00 am inside the Leslie Science Center, 1831 Traver Road.

**December 8, Tuesday**  
**Volunteer Appreciation Night and Potluck Dinner**  
**Cobblestone Barn, 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm**  
 Join us as we celebrate the close of the 1998 field season and the wonderful work of our volunteers! Please let us know if you're coming so we plan for enough people! Call 996-3266.

## SPECIAL NAP VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### Fall Burns

NAP may be conducting prescribed burns this fall, and we are looking for volunteers to help out. We need people to help with every aspect of the burns including ignition, mop up, smoke monitoring, and PR. If you are interested in participating in a prescribed burn, please call 996-3266. No previous experience is necessary!

### Photo Monitoring

We are looking for volunteers to help monitor restoration projects in our city parks and natural areas by taking photographs from set points. No photography experience is needed--you don't even need to own a camera! Please call 996-3266 for more information.

### Seed Collectors Wanted!

As the days grow shorter and the growing season winds down, thoughts turn to the harvest. In addition to the scheduled volunteer workdays, NAP is looking for folks interested in offering their time to aid in the gathering of native seeds. Each fall we search through prairies and woods collecting pounds of seed from dozens of species of native trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers. The seed we collect is cleaned, weighed, and then sown into park natural areas undergoing restoration. With so many parks and so little NAP time, we need your help. Please call the office for more information.

## OTHER STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR AREA

### Adopt-A-Stream Program at the Huron River Watershed Council

Sept. 12, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, Aquatic Roundup  
 Sept. 27, 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm or 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm, Creature ID  
 Call Joan Martin at (734) 769-5971 to register.

### Nature Conservancy Workdays

Hillside Prairie (near Ypsilanti) Sept. 19, Oct. 10, Nov. 7, Dec. 12  
 Ives Road Fen (near Tecumseh) Sept. 12, 20, 26; Oct. 3, 11, 17, 31; Nov. 14; Dec. 5, 19  
 Call Liesl Bohan at (517) 332-1741 to register.

### Nichols Arboretum Wordays

Call Mike Kielb at (734) 936-2652 for information.



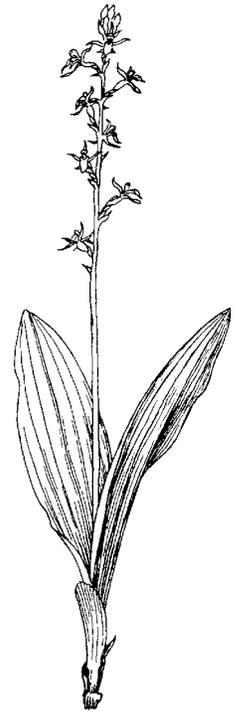
# Plant Survey 1998 Update

by Bev Walters

Good news from some of the burned areas! The orchid fen twayblade (*Liparis loeselii*) has made an appearance in a small fen west of Foster Savanna (Barton Park) that NAP burned in 1996. Slender mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*) has been found in profusion in a burned area of Barton Park, as well. This record is new both to the NAP inventory and to Washtenaw County.

But this summer's botanical progress actually began when the snow still obscured any hint of green, as I searched through the plant specimens at the University of Michigan Herbarium. I was looking for records of rarer species that had previously been collected in the Ann Arbor area. Due to continual loss of natural habitat over the past 150 years, many of these plants are unlikely to be rediscovered. Some have been relocated, like the broad leaved sedge (*Carex careyana*) which is still hanging on at Bird Hills where it was collected 60 years ago. Other uncommon plants known in the area but new to the NAP plant inventory are burning bush (*Euonymus atropurpurea*) and a distinctive sedge (*Carex squarrosa*), both of which are listed as species of "Special Concern" in Michigan.

This season I've also had good success locating and collecting specimens to document the rarer plant species already known in NAP's plant inventory. Hopefully, our preservation efforts will enable us to pass on living organisms to the next generation, not just dead, dried specimens that are now the only evidence of some of the former flora of Ann Arbor. Having high quality natural areas is essential to maintain Ann Arbor's botanical diversity for those in the future to enjoy.



orchid fen twayblade  
from *Michigan Wildflowers*

# Breeding Bird Survey 1998 Update

by Dea Armstrong

Sleeping late was not an option for 18 die-hard breeding bird inventory volunteers this spring and summer! Our team of birders committed to taking dawn point counts of birds within their chosen parks several times over the summer. These point counts (a count of all birds seen or heard within 10 minutes from one or more locations in the park) give NAP staff an idea of the type and location of breeding birds in our city parks. Repeating these point counts over the years will help indicate any major changes in breeding bird populations in the parks. Early results for this year indicate that over 80 species probably use city parks as their breeding habitat.



Green Heron

Notable results in the early data show Swamp Sparrows nesting at the South Pond Marsh and present at Furstenberg. Hooded Warblers were found at Bird Hills Park as well as the M-14 Property. Two active Green Heron nests were located, and watching these long-legged, awkward nestlings "climb" through the trees was pure entertainment! Carolina Wrens appear to have had a great '98 season, as they were found in at least 5 parks this year, while in only one last year.



Red-tail Hawk

The Ann Arbor Landfill property and Brown Park are still the sites with the greatest variety. This is not surprising since they are large areas with multiple habitats. The landfill property's nesting Bank Swallows and Red-tailed Hawk fledglings were wonderful sights to see. One of the most interesting species for those of us at NAP has been the Bobolinks at the landfill property. These birds have a wonderful song, as well as a beautiful appearance. They are easily watched from the edges of the fields. Please see "The Bobolink" on page 8 to learn more about them!

# The Transformation of Stories to Numbers— NAP's Master Database

by Jennifer Maigret

Although the stories that come from the inventory volunteers are colorful tales of Buckeyes, Yellow-breasted chats and chorus frogs (so loud no planes out of Detroit Metro could be heard!), this information lives on by more than word of mouth. As the inventory season comes to a close, volunteers transcribe their observations onto forms that are passed on to the inventory staff. The staff then works hard to read the legible codes that describe which birds, frogs and butterflies were found in the parks this season and to compile this information within tables in an Access 7.0 database. This completes a transformation from the sounds and sights captured in Ann Arbor's natural areas to rows and columns of numbers that help us remember a more balanced picture than oral history often offers.

After many years of inventories and many styles of storytelling, however, the various databases have begun to evolve and diverge. For this reason, NAP is currently working to reorganize and restructure the data tables from the numerous years of inventories. NAP's goal is to create a single "master" database that can pull specified information from any or all of the available inventories (bird, butterfly, frog and plant). Such a system would enable NAP to utilize all of the inventory information more efficiently for current and future management of Ann Arbor's natural areas.

This project has begun and will likely go on into the fall and winter when recollections of the summer inventory season seem dim. Its completion, however, is expected to precede next year's inventories. We hope to use it next spring to "recall" which parks hold the gems we have been waiting all winter to see.

## Plant Focus: Warm Season and Cool Season Grasses?

by Kathy Sorensen



Indian grass  
from  
*Restoring the  
Tallgrass  
Prairie*

Grasses are a major component of prairie ecosystems and are, therefore, well worth understanding and preserving. You may have heard grasses referred to as being either "warm season" or "cool season." Basically, cool season means that the plant prefers to grow when it's cooler and may even be found green in the winter. A cool season grass starts growing in very early spring or late winter (4-6 weeks before warm season grasses) and will continue to grow until late fall. The warm season grasses prefer summer weather and don't do well in cool weather.

*Most* of our native grasses (and wildflowers) are warm season and *most* of the non-native, invasive grasses are cool season. This helps us understand how non-native grasses can invade our prairies. In March and April, when the temperatures are still chilly, the prairie begins to green up with grasses like non-native Kentucky bluegrass.

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# Huron River Day 1998

by Courtney Babb

A gentle breeze blew off the river, swishing through tall grasses and the brilliant purple-pink blossoms of purple loosestrife (a highly invasive but attractive plant) that flanked the water's edge. Music echoed softly through the tent, its melodies barely audible above the friendly chatter of old friends and new acquaintances. People made their way slowly through the rows of tables covered with important and interesting facts about wildlife, native plants, water, and how to make a difference in our community—how to restore and preserve our home place. It was a day to learn, a day to appreciate, and a day to celebrate our Huron River.

Such was my experience at Huron River Day this July. Huron River Day is an annual celebration of the Huron River at Gallup Park organized by Ann Arbor's Department of Parks and Recreation. The day is always filled with a variety of fun and educational activities such as a youth fishing derby; running races; canoe races; plant, butterfly, and nature walks led by NAP staff; entertainment of all kinds; and an exhibit tent with displays provided by local environmental organizations. NAP coordinates the exhibit tent each year in addition to staffing our own display, so this is where I enjoyed most of Huron River Day. This year the exhibit tent was fortunate to host twenty exhibiting organizations.

We thank the great organizations who participated and all of you who celebrated the Huron River with us, whether you just stopped by to see what was going on, or you joined in the festivities. For those of you who didn't get out for Huron River Day this year, we hope you'll join us next year. It's an experience you don't want to miss!

## Still Fruit with Life

by Chris Rickards



It is well known that many tropical butterflies supplement their diet with or feed exclusively on various rotting fruits. Butterflies of the genus *Caligo*, native to South and Central America, may be seen feeding on decomposing bananas at many of the tropical butterfly exhibits so popular around the world today. These large Brushfoot butterflies feed almost exclusively on the sugars released as fruits break down in hot, humid conditions. Less well known is the fact that many of our native butterfly species visit decaying apples and other fruiting bodies when flowering plants are scarce in the fall.

As our native Nymphalid butterflies, the Brushfoots [such as Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*), Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*), and Milbert's Tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis milberti*)], prepare for the long winter hibernation as adults, they must store as many sugars as possible. In September and October rotting apples attract these butterflies and are an important supplement to their diet.

This spring I wondered if fruit would attract butterflies "out of season" in Michigan. I decided to experiment, so I placed several bananas, an apple, and an orange on a makeshift bird table in my backyard. The results were spectacularly surprising.

The "butterfly table" attracted many species in a short time. On the second day of my experiment, May 10, an old female Red Admiral claimed the apple as her own and stayed in the vicinity for several days. Early evening seemed to be the favorite time for fruit feeding. Over the next few weeks, the butterfly table received visits from Question Marks (*Polygonia interrogationis*), Eastern Comma (*Polygonia comma*), Mourning Cloak, Milbert's Tortoiseshell, a single Silver Spotted Skipper (*Epargyreus clarus*), and several Peck's Skippers (*Polites peckius*).

With the onset of the hot summer conditions during the middle of June, the frequent visits of the Nymphalid species were unexpectedly and amazingly cast into shadow by large numbers of Michigan's Satyrids, or Brown butterflies. These beautiful, often shy species seemed to prefer a nice rotting banana, and I switched to using bananas alone. First to arrive were a couple of Little Wood Satyrs (*Megisto cymela*), followed a week later by Eyed Browns (*Saturates erotic*) and a single Appalachian Brown (*Saturates Appalachia*). These three wonderful little Browns were frequent visitors, but it was the large numbers of Northern Pearly Eye (*Agnate anhedon*) that were a real treat. One evening between 16 and 25 individuals of this streaky gray and eye-spotted gem fed on two pungent bananas just outside my window. They arrived at dusk and fed well into the night, not even moving during light rain.

Putting fruit out on an open bird table is sure to attract butterflies to your garden, too, especially in this fall season. However, you must be aware that as well as attracting butterflies and a few flies, you may catch a few weird comments from your friends.



## The Bobolink

by Dea Armstrong

Each spring in early May, the complex yet distinctive song of the Bobolink is heard across the meadows and hayfields of Michigan. These birds have traveled over 5000 miles from their winter homes in the grasslands of Argentina and arrive in Michigan and other parts of the northern U.S. and southern Canada ready to find mates. Remarkably, many return to exactly the same field where they bred the previous year. The Ann Arbor Landfill property is a summer home to many Bobolinks, even though their numbers throughout southern Michigan are decreasing as a result of loss of habitat and changes in agricultural practices.

The Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) is a starling-sized member of the blackbird family. The males arrive in breeding areas in meadows and hayfields a few days before the females, and they begin to establish territories about one acre in size. As soon as the females arrive, courtship begins. Nests are built in a scrape on the ground and are made of soft grasses and sedges. Five to seven brownish-blotched eggs are incubated only by the female starting in late May. Bobolinks produce only one brood and will build a second nest only if the first nest is destroyed early in the season. By the time fledglings are capable of flight, they will join with other fledglings and adults to form flocks within the breeding field. The flock gradually increases in size and moves as a unit, even though adults continue to care for their own young. Flocks stay in the breeding area until late July or early August. Eventually, these birds will make the long journey back to fields in Argentina.

Although Bobolinks are not endangered, their numbers are in decline. This is a result of loss of breeding habitat due to land use changes. Since 1940, the total area of hayfields in North America has

*continued on next page*



Bobolink

from *The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Michigan*

**The Bobolink** (continued)

declined by more than 50%, and some of the hayfields that are planted are of a vegetation type not preferred by Bobolinks.

Another agricultural practice change that has had an effect on Bobolink numbers is mowing time. In years past hayfields were cut later than today by about two or three weeks. This means that today the preferred mowing time is concurrent with the peak nestling period. No eggs and very few nestlings can survive a mowing. However, because of synchronous nesting, mowing at a later time (after July 4th in Michigan), would allow most breeding Bobolinks to produce offspring. Unfortunately, the resulting late hay is of lower quality than that from the earlier mowings which are harmful to Bobolink nestings. So, mowing early is more profitable for the landowner but not very good for Bobolink nesting success. This is an example of one of the many conservation dilemmas that face us as growth and development occur all over Michigan. We at NAP are working with staff at the landfill to provide a “win-win” solution for all species with interests in the fields at the landfill, including farmers who use the fields for hay and the Bobolinks who travel so far to create more of their kind.

**Warm Season and Cool Season Grasses** (continued from page 7)

By the time our native species begin to emerge, the bluegrass has already taken quite a bit of space and keeps the ground cool with the shade it casts. This can be tough competition for a warm season grass seed that’s trying to germinate. As the years go on the cool season grasses get the upper hand, and our native warm season prairie grasses dwindle.

However, the cool season is well gone by the time July rolls around. Everyone with a typical American lawn knows what happens when it gets hot in the summer and we don’t get much rain; growth slows down for the Kentucky bluegrass and other cool season plants. Some may even go dormant until the temperature drops. Meanwhile, our native grasses and wildflowers are lush and green. One of the most important adaptations of native plants is that they tend to have much deeper roots which provide better access to ground water.

Another very important advantage native prairie plants have due to their deep roots and love for hot soil involves fire. If a prairie is burned during the growing season, the top part of the plants is killed, but the roots remain intact. This gives the warm season grasses a chance to come up without having to compete with the cool season grasses. Also, the blackened soil left after the fire heats up quickly with a little bit of sun, creating conditions that favor warm season grass growth and seed germination. The warm season native grasses have something else that the non-natives just can’t rival—vibrant color. The beautiful greens and blue-greens of native grasses in summer give way to an array of bronze, red, purple and orange in the fall, colors that stay visible throughout the winter. Perhaps our perception of the seasons would change if there weren’t any non-natives greening up in March and falsely heralding the arrival of spring. I don’t know for sure, but I’d guess that the Native Americans weren’t as easily confused about the seasons. When they saw prairies starting to green up, they knew that summer was truly near. And when the big bluestem transformed into it’s fall colors, the time to prepare for winter was at hand.

Here’s a list of some of the more common grasses in our area and their growing seasons:

	Natives	Non-Natives
Cool Season	Canada wild rye June grass porcupine grass	bluegrass fescue brome timothy orchard grass quack grass red top
Warm Season	big bluestem little bluestem Indian grass switch grass	



little bluestem  
from *Restoring the Tall Grass Prairie*

# New Nature Trail!

by Greg Vaclavek

The Natural Area Preservation field crew, along with a dedicated group of volunteers, invites you to check out the new nature trail at Cranbrook Park on the city's south side. A group of **missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints** came out each week to contribute more volunteer hours than staff hours to the trail construction. NAP couldn't have done it without their help, and once again, we're very grateful for the enthusiasm of our volunteers.

Cranbrook Park is a relatively new park, located between Main Street, Ann Arbor-Saline Road and West Oakbrook Drive. The park is nearly 18 acres and contains a playground, mowed field and paved path. The natural area follows Mallet's Creek. The nature trail is an offshoot of a more formal path scheduled to be put in this fall. The formal path will be surfaced with gravel and include a bridge over the creek. It will run through the woods from the park entrance on Main Street and continue west to the open field area.

The nature trail takes you from one end of the park, just north of Oakbrook, to the other end, near the basketball court. The nature trail begins at the south end in a forest of black maples and runs parallel to Mallet's Creek. It stays on higher ground,

providing an excellent opportunity to experience the beauty of the floodplain forest without getting your feet too wet. Along the way you'll see bladdernut, a shrub or small tree with interesting bladder-like fruits that rattle in the fall breeze. Be sure to look for the huge chinquapin oak on the woods edge—it's hard to miss. The trail meanders through the woods of elm, boxelder, ash and buckthorn, popping out into a small opening of wildflowers and raspberries, then returning to the woods. Near the northwest end, the trail skirts the edge of a seasonal wetland before heading up the slope and out of the woods.

If you're looking for a new park to visit on a crisp, clear autumn day, head out to Cranbrook Park and check out the new nature trail!



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