

# Natural Area Preservation News

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

Volume 5, Number 7

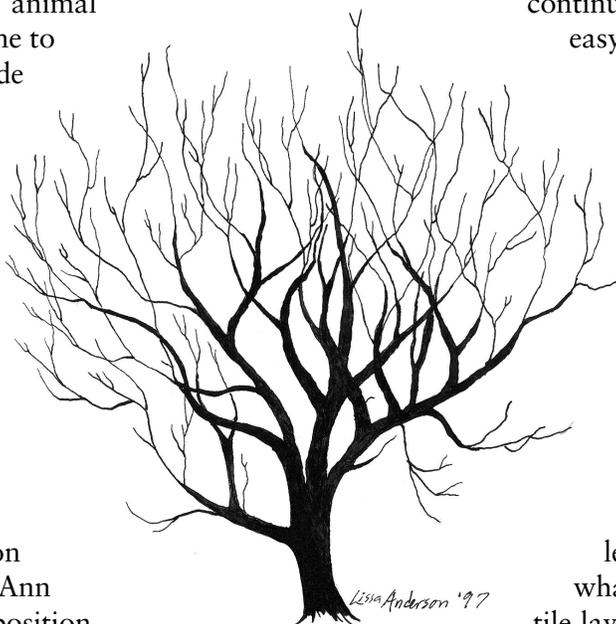
Winter 2001

## Park Focus: Bluffs Nature Area by Chris Cookingham

Over the past few years I've traveled many times across the lower 48 states, back and forth, north and south, east to west. In addition to entertainment value, these trips have provided me with a firsthand look at the amazing diversity and richness of our landscape. They have also instilled in me a preoccupation with comparing one place to another. Often, after being amazed by some new plant or animal from far away, I've returned home to find that it had been right outside my front door all along. There are even places here in town that summon memories of landscapes thousands of miles away. The prairie at Bluffs Nature Area is just such a place, with its thin, rocky soils and sparse cover of vegetation reminding me time and again of the deserts and high plains of the western United States.

Bluffs Nature Area, located on Main Street in north central Ann Arbor, occupies an important position along the western edge of the Huron River valley and as part of a 380-acre greenbelt including Argo, Bandemer, Kuebler Langford, Bird Hills, and Barton parks. With the purchase of the southern portion of the park in 1995 and the recent addition of the northern section earlier this year, the citizens of Ann Arbor have made a wise and excellent decision to keep

this vital parcel of land from development, thereby preserving the integrity of this urban wildlands system, protecting the river, and saving open space for everyone to enjoy. Here, one can walk for miles along wooded valley slopes and through open fields, leaving parkland only long enough to cross an occasional road. Canoeing down this section of the river, the almost-continuously forested banks make it easy to forget the surrounding city.



At 40 acres, Bluffs Nature Area isn't a large park, but its rugged topography and variety of plant communities offer many opportunities for exploration. Of these communities, my favorite is the above-mentioned prairie. Originally a wooded hillside, this area was mined for fill material for various road-building projects around town. When the last bulldozer left and the site was again quiet, what remained was a bare and infertile layer of sand and gravel, uninviting for prospective colonizers. Hardy native plants were able to turn this to their advantage, however, and a prairie arose, with big and little bluestem, Indian grass, mountain mint, butterfly milkweed, stiff and showy goldenrod, lanced-leaf coreopsis, and spiked lobelia widely interspersed with red cedar, quaking aspen, and eastern cottonwood.

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## Coordinator's Corner

# Becoming a Big Sister

There are obviously many major events of global proportion for which these past few months will be remembered. I won't attempt to put any of those into perspective here. Instead, I'd like to focus on a more personal event that will make this fall particularly memorable for those in my family: my 5-year-old daughter Molly is about to become a big sister!

She is tremendously excited about this new responsibility. For months now, she has been practicing all of the new duties she knows she'll need to master: changing dirty diapers, feeding hungry mouths, comforting crying babies, etc. At times Molly's been concerned that she won't be able to handle all of these additional responsibilities. So we've had to reassure her that we'll always be there to give her whatever help she needs, and that we will never ask her to take on responsibilities for which she's not ready. Still, it can be scary to take on new challenges, to step into a role for which you don't quite feel prepared. But how exciting when you do finally accept that responsibility!

The past few months I've had the pleasure of watching some other folks step into new roles as well. This year there has been a significant surge in volunteers who have stepped forward and answered our call to become "Park Stewards." By accepting this new role, these people are agreeing to take on some additional stewardship responsibilities that go beyond what we ask of our regular stewardship day participants. The main difference is that they are being empowered to work independently on jointly agreed-upon stewardship activities without having a staff member there with them. This can include clearing exotic shrubs, pulling garlic mustard, maintaining trails, or just being an extra set of eyes and ears for us on site.

This new arrangement can be a bit scary, both for the Park Steward and for the staff. The Parks Department does not have a long history of permitting volunteers to work independently in parks. We need to make sure that any shrub-cutting or plant-pulling is done with proper permission. But those concerns are easily addressed by working with the Park Steward to develop site-specific Stewardship Plans that are mutually agreeable to both staff and Steward.

The bigger hurdle to overcome is the trepidation that potential Park Stewards often feel about taking on new responsibilities. "Am I up to the challenge?" they ask. But individuals don't need to do it all themselves. As with my daughter, there are others standing by to help if needed. Besides staff, there are other Stewards. In fact, we encourage "Stewardship Teams" whenever possible so folks may share the joys and challenges of stewardship with a friend or a group.

How about you? Do you have a favorite natural area that could use a little additional attention? Are you up to the challenge of becoming a Park Steward? In its own way, it can be nearly as exciting and rewarding as becoming a big sister.

*On October 28, Molly finally did become a big sister and is now busy helping to care for Tess Elizabeth. If you'd like to take on new park responsibilities, call our Outreach Coordinator at 996-3266.*

David Borneman, *Natural Area Preservation Manager*

## Natural Area Preservation

is a Division of the City of Ann Arbor  
Department of Parks and Recreation.

*The mission of the Natural Area Preservation Division is to protect and restore Ann Arbor's natural areas and to foster an environmental ethic among its citizens.*

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For up-to-date information on stewardship activities, call the "hotline" at (734) 996-3266.

# Wild Indigo Duskywing Conservation at Northeast Area Park

by Barb Barton



The Wild Indigo Duskywing (*Erynnise baptesia*), a butterfly species of Special Concern in Michigan, occurs in several of our parks, but most notably in Northeast Area Park. This little duskywing has historically used wild indigo (*Baptisia spp.*) and occasionally lupine (*Lupinus perennis*) as its larval foodplant, but it has now adapted to feeding upon crown vetch (*Coronilla varia*). Northeast Area Park will undergo changes in the next year, with part of the site that currently supports crown vetch being developed into soccer fields and parking lots. Our challenge here at NAP is to try to provide habitat for the Wild Indigo Duskywing and other butterflies in sections of the park that will remain undeveloped. This makes for an interesting situation since crown vetch is considered an invasive plant and thus not one NAP would usually encourage.

The first step was to conduct weekly surveys in areas known to contain duskywings, both in the future development site and the area that will be left natural. With the

help of NAP volunteer Joann Cavaletto, we collected baseline information that will be compared with future surveys to determine how successful our efforts are to maintain the population. The next step was to develop a habitat enhancement plan that would increase the number of crown vetch and nectar plants in a Wild Indigo Duskywing "preserve" area. We will be mechanically moving several large patches of crown vetch and transplanting them into the preserve area, hopefully transferring duskywing caterpillars in the process. Nectar plants will be seeded in patches throughout the preserve. Suitable habitat already exists in part of the preserve area, and our expansion efforts should offset to some degree the loss of habitat from the construction of the soccer fields. It is our goal to extend crown vetch and nectar plants into all suitable areas of the park. Through our efforts, the Wild Indigo Duskywing should remain a resident of Northeast Area Park, and Ann Arbor, for years to come.

## Feeding the Birds This Winter

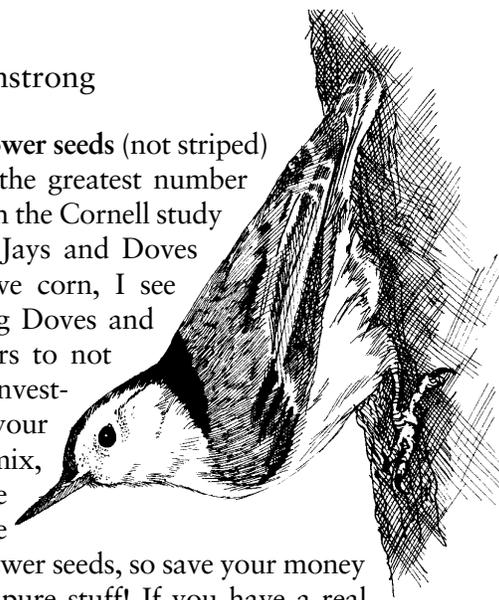
by Dea Armstrong

You can't deny it: seed birdfeeders bring you closer to the birds (or vice versa, as the case may be). This fall I have enjoyed the sparrow migration (White-throated and White-crowned especially), and just recently I began to see American Tree Sparrows, Pine Siskins, and Red-breasted Nuthatches, although not the Evening Grosbeaks that briefly visited my feeders a few years ago. "How can I attract these birds to my yard?" you ask? Here is some advice from the bird experts. My house is more suburban than many Ann Arbor residents, so I checked with my friends Julie Craves, head of Avian research at Rouge River Bird Observatory, and Mike Kielb, naturalist, author and former NAPper, to get a more "urban" perspective.

### Feeders and Food

Cornell Laboratory has done a research project on birdseed preference. While more varieties of seeds will bring more varieties of birds, three main types of food will attract all the birds in our area in the fall and winter. Different types of feeders will also give all types of birds access to your buffet. *For all of our feeders, Julie, Mike and I use only freestanding feeder poles with stovepipe-style baffles.*

**Black-oiled sunflower seeds** (not striped) are preferred by the greatest number of species. Though the Cornell study shows that Blue Jays and Doves would rather have corn, I see enough Mourning Doves and Jays at my feeders to not make the corn investment. If you fill your feeders with a mix, you will watch the birds pick out the black-oiled sunflower seeds, so save your money and just buy the pure stuff! If you have a real House Sparrow or European Starling problem, you may want to try safflower seeds, as these non-natives don't like safflower quite as much as sunflower seeds.



Julie, Mike and I all prefer to serve sunflower seeds in a tube feeder because the seeds stay drier. Julie cuts off 1/2 inch of the perches and turns these feeders upside down so that the trays don't provide a place for the larger birds, such as those urban House Sparrows, to hang out and chow down (though they do eventually learn how to feed upside down).

*Continued on page 8*

# Park Focus: Bluffs Nature Area *continued from page 1*

The southeastern corner of the park, adjacent to St. Thomas the Apostle Cemetery, is densely covered with a mixture of mature trees. Large, open-grown white and black oaks mingle with black walnut, white ash, sassafras, black cherry, and pignut, shagbark, and bitternut hickories. Between late fall and early spring, the absence of leaves allows an excellent view over Argo Pond to the opposing side of the valley.

Walking through the rest of the park, one passes through a quickly changing patchwork of plant communities: dense shrublands of gray dogwood, hawthorn, and sumac; prairie remnants no bigger than a modest-sized living room; a ravine with a small population of locally rare butternut trees; and an emerging forest of red and white oak mixed with ash, elm, and an understory of shrubs. A switchbacking and somewhat random trail system connects it all together and allows for walks of various lengths. Access to the park

is currently a bit of a challenge—although informal trails enter the park from several directions, the only official entrance is on Main Street.

It's nice to live in a town where the preservation of open space has been made a priority. Hopefully, we will continue to protect the natural areas we have and seek to acquire more land like Bluffs Nature Area. Despite having visited many of this country's public wildlands and becoming acquainted with incomparable landscapes of mountains, oceans, deep forests, and vast deserts, it has been the city parks that have provided me with a daily opportunity to learn much of what I know about the natural world. In the end, the prairie at Bluffs is more than a reminder of these distant places—it's an opportunity to better understand what it means to be located in southeastern Michigan, perched at the edge of a steep valley bluff overlooking the slow, brown waters of the Huron River.



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## Staff Update

**Dana Wright** is joining us part-time while working part-time at the Leslie Science Center. Dana is not new to NAP, however — she joined our burn crew this spring after first burning with The Nature Conservancy. Dana also substitute teaches in the Ann Arbor Public Schools and teaches natural childbirth. And in what must be the little remaining time when she's not working, you'll find her gardening, climbing, and dancing.

My name is **Jason Frenzel** and, as of mid-December, I am the new Outreach Coordinator. I have called Ann Arbor my home for the vast majority of my life, working at such locations as the Road Commission, the Drain Commissioner's office, and the County Conservation District. I have also volunteered at NAP for the past two years! I know that following in Tara's footsteps will be difficult, but I am excited to have the challenge.

**Tara Griffith.** Yes, it is true, I am leaving my beloved NAP to further my education in the field of social work. I am thankful to have had the opportunity to connect the two things I feel most passionate about: people and nature. NAP has certainly inspired me to incorporate my love of nature into my future social work practice! Thank you to everyone at NAP (volunteers, too) for sharing your love of the green world with me!!!

**Jen Lewis (and Chris Cookingham).** someone once said that life is what happens to you when you are making other plans. it's probably my favorite saying because i can think of so many times when it has applied to my own life. so there i was, taking my first job doing ecological restoration, a field i'd really been wanting to get into—right here in ann arbor even. i end up meeting this guy who works there too and we get to talking. it turns out that, like me, he'd always dreamed of living out west and maybe even traveling throughout the u.s. and mexico on the way from here to there. so chris and i, after our approximately 4 combined years with NAP, are bidding our fond farewells in december and then it's wyoming or bust... not exactly what i had planned when i started my tenure with NAP!

i know that when i think about my time with NAP, before buckthorn or burning even come to my mind, i will think of all the people that i worked with here, staff and volunteers alike. since michigan will always be "home" for chris and me, we look forward to visits back here, to see both the people and the parks that we've come to love while we were here.

and we promise to send postcards along the way!

# Volunteer Year in Review by Tara Griffith

"The parks belong to those who use them." - *John Muir*



*Temple Beth Emeth youth group cleans up Cranbrook.*

This statement couldn't be more true for those individuals and groups who have been using and, more importantly, caring for Ann Arbor's natural areas in 2001! Together, over 200 volunteers contributed over 2,600 hours to various stewardship projects during the 2001 field season! These numbers include volunteers who joined scheduled events as well as

individuals working

independently on NAP-sponsored activities. NAP volunteers worked on a variety of restoration projects including invasive plant removal, trail maintenance, native seed collection, trash removal, native plant gardening, photomonitoring, prescribed burning, and surveying plants and animals!

In addition to the countless volunteers who participated in our 30 Volunteer Stewardship Days, many groups gave their time for the betterment of Ann Arbor's natural areas.



*Furstenberg Native Plant Garden Steward Aunita Erskine has flower power!*

These include Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Rudolph Steiner School, Emerson School, Community High School, Wedgewood School, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Jewish Federation, Temple Beth Emeth, Professional Volunteer Corps, YMCA Youth Volunteer Corps, and three UM Project Serve event groups! Thanks, folks!

NAP's Park Stewards have been spending more time than ever caring for their favorite natural areas this year. Aunita Erskine organized six workdays at the Furstenberg Native Plant

Demonstration Garden; Mark Charles helped coordinate five workdays at Brown; Katherine O'Brien looked after Hollywood; Gillian Harris shared the beauty of Argo through her nature sketches; A.C. Tanner and Manfred Schmidt battled buckthorn at Scarlett Mitchell, and Steve Bean did the same at Fritz.

2001 also welcomed several new volunteers to our Park Steward family:

Bob Heinold has begun monitoring Bird Hills for invasives and helping maintain the trails; Bruce Hubbard will be recruiting neighbors of Cranbrook to lend a hand; Ted Hejka will be helping with restoration projects at Black Pond Woods; Catherine Riseng will be keeping an eye on Bluffs; and a team of volunteers led by Jeannine Palms and Jesse Wood has taken a special interest in newly acquired Redbud Nature Area.

Our Natural Features Inventory celebrated its seventh year of surveys this season. Over 40 volunteers logged over 140 hours listening for the calls of frogs and toads; 22 birders spent 337 hours searching for our feathered friends; 16 volunteers spent 234 hours monitoring butterflies, and 6 botanists spent over 40 hours recording our native plants!

In 2001 three volunteers joined us for photomonitoring-documenting NAP's restoration efforts

through photos: Kit Steinaway at Marshall, and Nancy and Erika Taylor at Bird Hills. They join current NAP Photomonitors Beve Shepard and Ralph and Barbara



*Girl Scout Troop #1180 spruces up the trails at Brown.*



*Eagle Scout candidate Wes Weaver and family with new footbridge at Dolph.*

## Volunteer Year continued from page 6

Powell, who have spent over 40 hours snapping photos at Furstenberg and Barton Nature Areas this year.

As for the Burn Crew, 18 volunteers chalked up 154 hours helping out with 17 burns this past spring, and 11 volunteers have already put in 86 hours at 7 burns this fall. Thanks to all of you! We hope to see you again next spring.

Thanks again to everyone for their time and effort this year! Truly, we could not accomplish all that we do without you. NAP offers many ways for folks to give something back to the beautiful natural areas that make Ann Arbor so special, so we hope to see you again in

## Amphibian Abundance by David Mifsud

Hello, fellow amphibian enthusiasts! As we put away our dip nets and waders and begin to rake leaves in our yards, we are reminded that another year of frog-and-toad surveying has come to a close.

I have spent the last few weeks looking at our survey data. After compiling and reviewing the frog and toad data collected over the past seven years, we are now able to start seeing trends in the abundance of our amphibian friends. Many wetlands within Ann Arbor contain stable populations of certain species of frogs and toads. Based on the data, Chorus Frogs, Spring Peepers, Gray Tree Frogs, and American Toads are found within the greatest range of wetlands and wetland habitats in the city, as well as having the highest densities during the breeding season.

Other species have more variable ranges and densities within the city. The Wood Frog has stricter habitat requirements, which affects its overall population size and distribution in Ann Arbor. Where found, it is usually maintaining a fairly stable population size. This is not true for the Bullfrog, however, whose range and population size are decreasing within the city. There are many possible causes for these changes; additional research is necessary to understand the situation.

Other species are increasing. This is particularly true for the Leopard Frog, which is beginning to bounce back. As early as the mid-1980's, a large drop in populations of Leopard Frogs was observed in southeastern Michigan. In recent years a natural recolonization from remnant populations has begun. Although there are few historical records of Leopard Frog sightings to quantify the popu-

## Natural Features Inventory Database Update by Bev Walters

NAP's Natural Features Inventory database is now in full swing, thanks to Craig Fruth of the City's Information Technology Services Department. All of the inventory staff are pleased with the program he has assembled for us. A large amount of information has been gathered over the past eight field seasons and this database will help us keep it organized in one place. Armed with this information NAP will be better able to assess local natural areas and track changes over time as our restoration efforts continue.

lation size prior to the decline, recent data show that this anuran is rebounding and continues to colonize wetlands throughout Ann Arbor. This species is very sensitive to water quality and is an excellent indicator of environmental health, so its growing presence in Ann Arbor is a good sign!

Water quality is not as critical for the other anurans whose populations are increasing. The Green Frog is slowly expanding in range throughout Ann Arbor. Some likely causes of this expansion are declines of more environmentally sensitive species, habitat alterations (development, introduction of non-native plants and animals, and pollution), the adaptability of this species, and its role as a predator to smaller frogs and toads.

It is exciting to learn that Blanchard's Cricket Frogs (a Special Concern species in Michigan) are still present within the city. This year a couple of NAP volunteers and experts at the U of M have observed these tiny frogs calling, so for the first time we can officially add this species to our survey list! Additional research is necessary to detail the status of Blanchard's Cricket Frogs in Ann Arbor.

We here at NAP would like thank all those responsible for making the frog and toad survey such a success. Without your efforts, this program would not be what it is today. I would also like to take this opportunity to invite volunteers to come back next year! If you think you might be interested in listening for the calls of frogs and toads in the upcoming field season, please contact the NAP office and plan to attend the 2002 kickoff on Wednesday, February 27, from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.!

# Reflections from the Field: Our Favorite Things by The Crew

*The Crew decided to make this year's Reflections a group effort. Read on for four different perspectives on the best parts of doing hand-on restoration in Ann Arbor's parks.*

## Kristie

Let me take just a moment to say that I have found this small project difficult. It's hard to think of one specific moment that makes my smile widen. It seems that here at NAP, faces shine with laughter and feelings of amazement take over often.

Many of you do not know me, but if you did you would have heard by now of my desire to see the Eastern Massasauga, Michigan's only rattlesnake. It all began on a hot summer day at Foxfire West (there were MANY of those days). Even the Gray Tree Frogs found it nice to lie around on the leaves of the joe-pye weed. We had finished our day and were making our way out to the truck when Tony stopped abruptly with a look that all of us have seen before. He had spotted something; the question was WHAT?! "Come quick, Kristie!" he shouted. "What, what? Is it a Massasauga?" I screeched back. Just as I arrived at the spot where he had spotted it, he turned to me and said that it had slithered away. "Which direction did it go?" I shouted at him. He grabbed my shoulder and looked into my eyes and told me I had missed my chance. "Missed my chance?" I said back. "You have only been here for a week and you tell me I have missed my chance?!" I was crushed; I felt I had been robbed of all that I had believed in. It is on that note that I would like to make two short comments: "TONY, I STILL DON'T BELIEVE YOU!" and "JEN AND CHRIS, I'M GOING TO MISS YOU GUYS!"

## Tony

The Swift Run prairie: prairie dock standing tall, its rough leaves scraping my pants; deer beds scattered throughout; and the grasses waving in the wind. Sitting on the back of the tailgate with Kristie, shooting the you-know-what during a break before heading out to pull spotted knapweed. Singing some Motown song full-bore with the crew at the end of the day. All the seeds: different shapes, sizes, colors and packages. The big orange-white mushroom in the Dhu Varren woods this summer. Taking off the steaming hot, non-breathable, full-length, herbicide-protective Tyvek suit. Pulling spotted knapweed for hours (really). Looking across the Barton prairie to the fantastic fall colors in Bird Hills. Lunchtime with da crew. Jen's easy laugh, Chris's excellent company, Jana's enthusiasm, Kristie's insistence on having fun, and



Beth's hardcore self. Favorite thing of all: giving back a little bit for all that the land has given me.

## Jana

Every season of the year has a theme that makes me love my job at NAP. Being outside every day to witness the cycle of nature is absolutely fulfilling. In early spring, after I come back from being mostly locked indoors by Old

Man Winter, burn boss Dave gives me a nice wake-up call with his enthusiasm for prescribed ecological burns. It's also good to see the other members of NAP again, catch up, and start the year's journey to protect and restore nature in Ann Arbor together.

Just as I think our surroundings will stay gray and dreary forever, early spring brings the birth of breathtaking spring ephemerals. Amazing how these pretty flowers can bring a smile to my face as I scan the woods with the crew or determined volunteers looking for the spring evildoers-garlic mustard and dame's rocket.

By the end of spring, nature has so many shades of greens that it's almost overwhelming. This is the time I enjoy the beautiful songs of the birds and the deafening calls of the frogs, as I try to identify each and every one of them in the field. And if I am lucky, I might discover a rare plant among the buckthorn and honeysuckle we take down.

In summer, wetlands are on my mind. I am continually learning about the complexity of this community as I wade through to clip every purple loosestrife head in sight. The warm weather also makes an ideal time to meet countless volunteers eager to learn what I know about nature. It feels good to pass the NAP message along.

As the days become shorter again, the grasses stand tall and in full bloom. The bright yellows of the many different goldenrods match perfectly with the purples and blues of the asters. Mother Nature makes the landscape so colorful in the fall! I love to wander through our parks to collect seeds of all those plants I have watched emerge, grow, and bloom. And to add even more celebratory hues to the end of the growing season, the trees show off their festive outfits, too.

*Continued on page 8*

## Feeding the Birds *continued from page 3*

Julie also has a hopper or house style feeder for sunflower seeds, and Mike has a platform feeder.

Nyjer (thistle) seed is a favorite of finches (American Goldfinch, Pine Siskin and, if we get lucky, Redpolls). Thistle seed feeders with small holes and short perches that limit the size of visitors are more expensive but definitely worth the investment. Julie and I have these special thistle feeders. Mike has a sack feeder that he picked up at a local bird feeder store.

Suet (beef fat) is the preferred food for woodpeckers. You can use the supermarket variety or the suet cakes sold in specialty stores. Many people, like Julie, hang their suet in a mesh bag. Mike uses a sturdy wire cage from a specialty store for his suet feeder. At our house, we have had to resort to an upside-down basket feeder to deal with crows and other critters. The crows still come and try to knock suet off by jumping up from the ground, but it just isn't as lucrative for them as the simple wire cage was.

### Feeder Placement

First and foremost, put feeders where you can see them, otherwise you'll miss the best part of feeding the birds and you won't know when the feeders need to be refilled. Ideally, natural shelter should be nearby or your birds won't have a place to take cover if predators show up. But try to keep about ten feet between the cover and your feeders-otherwise squirrels will easily jump onto the feeders for a meal. If your yard is shelterless, try making a brush pile near your feeders at least for the winter.

### Maintenance

The folks at Cornell recommend cleaning your feeders about every two weeks. They suggest scrubbing feeders with soap and water, rinsing well, dipping into a solution of one part household bleach and nine parts water, then rinsing well and drying thoroughly before refilling. From time to time you should also rake the area under your feeders because decomposing hulls can harbor bacteria that may harm ground-gleaning birds.

For more information, check with local stores that specialize in feeding birds or see Cornell's web site at

[http://birds.cornell.edu/pfw/AboutBirdsandFeeding/abt-birds\\_index.html](http://birds.cornell.edu/pfw/AboutBirdsandFeeding/abt-birds_index.html)

## Reflections from the Field

*continued from page 7*

Before I know it, I hear the burn boss say again with great enthusiasm, "We're burning today!" That is when I know that my season at NAP has almost completed its cycle, while providing me with an everlasting burning desire for nature and its majestic themes. Next year, we'll start that journey again.

### Jen

*Arisaema dracontium*

early may in forest park  
too early, may it never come?  
furstenberg - too soon, you too  
for first sightings

then where?  
argo?  
are we to go  
down there?  
so overgrown  
down by that lazy river

diversion

forgotten now -  
(spring having sprung)  
the dragon lies waiting  
creeping, curling  
always unfurling  
barely baring  
green teeth  
hiding beneath  
hood so sleek  
it comes  
out of the brown (park) mud  
it strikes as i,  
with weapon in hand  
*my* weapon - whirling blades, killing tonic -  
no match for the

elusive  
magic  
am rendered

amazed

"oh, my gosh..."  
"is it really?"  
"it must be..."  
at last

the green dragon

# Seeds, Seeds, Seeds by Bev Walters

Seeds are miraculous capsules with tiny blueprints for constructing new plants stored in their genetic code. From the tiniest dust-like seeds of orchids to tough, hardened acorns, they protect the embryo and have its first meal packed inside, patiently waiting for the proper condition to germinate. For seven years NAP staff and volunteer have been gathering seeds from native plants in our park lands and dispersing them, often after a prescribed burn into natural areas that need a boost in plant diversity. It's been very exciting to see the impact this simple act has had on improving the quality of our natural areas. This fall I've been able to become more involved in the process and have found it thoroughly enjoyable. In addition to directing the crew to populations of plants with ripe seed, I've been collecting some of the rarer and more difficult-to-identify species that were not collected in previous years. Picture yourself feeling seeds pop into your hand as you rake your fingers along a stem, seeing stray parachute float away in the breeze when you pluck fluff from flower heads, or peeking into your bag of doll's eye's fruits to see 100 black pupils staring back at you. Not only is collecting seed a very relaxing activity in and of itself, a level of satisfaction is gained by knowing that the seed in your hand will grow into plants in our natural areas, helping preserve them for future generations. If you didn't get a chance to participate in any of our NAP seed collection workdays this year, be sure to give it a try next year!



Milkweed seeds from *Faith in a Seed*\*

\*Thoreau, Henry D. *Faith in a Seed: The Dispersion of Seeds and Other Late Natural History Writings*. Bradley P. Dean, ed. Abigail Rorer, illus. Washington, D.C.: Island Press/Shearwater Books, 1993.

## Cuisinart Needed!

If you have an old food processor that you no longer use, please consider donating it to NAP. We'll use it to rough-clean seeds before dispersing them in natural areas. Call 996-3266.

# Butterfly Season Passes with Flying Colors by Barb Barton

This year's butterfly survey was one of the best ever, with 14 volunteers searching 9 parks for these colorful insects. These volunteers put in over 215 hours this season and for that we say a big thank you! I covered 17 sites, many never before surveyed for butterflies. We gathered some good information about what species occur in our parks and how abundant they are. This information will be used by the NAP team in planning habitat management activities that will benefit both plant and animal species.

So what did we find this year? Lots and lots of Red Admirals! It seemed to be a very good year for them, with 502 observations made. Red Admiral caterpillars feed exclusively on nettles, and those of you who visited Gallup Park this summer might have noticed that the big nettle patches were eaten down to the stems! We also documented 7 sites for the Wild Indigo Duskywing, a Special Concern species in Michigan. This information will be

provided to the Michigan Natural Features Inventory to assist them in determining the status of this tiny brown butterfly. (See page 3 for more on the Wild Indigo Duskywing.)

Again this year we enjoyed the Fourth of July Butterfly Count, sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association. Ten volunteers participated in this day-long event, during which we saw a total of 39 species at 14 sites. Be sure to let us know if you would like to participate in the 2002 count.

I would personally like to thank all of the volunteers who helped make 2001 a successful butterfly survey. It is people like you who help to make the natural areas in Ann Arbor some of the best in the state. Congratulations on a job well done!

# When It Rains, It Pours... by Dave Borneman

And when it's dry, it's a drought! That could be the motto for our fall weather. After setting a record in October for the most rainfall in any month ever, the Ann Arbor area settled into a bit of a drought. The dryness came just as the leaves were falling, resulting in perfect conditions for a great **Fall Burn Season!**

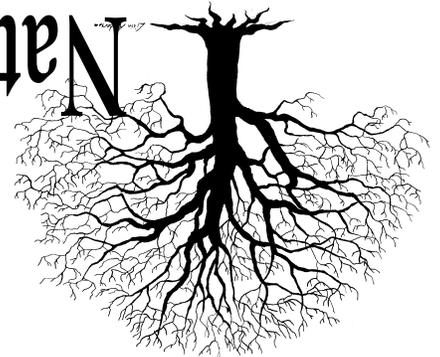
NAP was ready with drip torches in hand to take advantage of the situation, and on Monday, November 5, we started what became our longest ever fall run of good burn days! For seven straight work days (we gave ourselves the weekend off) the burn crew—staff and volunteers—conducted prescribed ecological burns in woodlands throughout Ann Arbor. We try to target woodland sites in the fall for two reasons: 1) the leaf litter burns better before it sits under a blanket of snow for the winter, and 2) we don't need to worry about negatively impacting wildflowers like we would in a late spring burn.

So far this fall (and there may be more good weather yet to come!), we've burned about **60 acres** in Barton, Bird Hills, Black Pond Woods, Marshall, Mitchell Scarlett Woods, and South Pond. This is the most we've ever burned in the fall, and is especially impressive considering

that these were all woodland burns (which, as any burn crew member can tell you, means a lot more "mop up" of smoldering logs than in a prairie burn). If you've never dodged smoke while trudging up and down through Bird Hills with 50 pounds of water on your back for four hours, and done this day after day for over a week, you may not fully appreciate the effort that went into accomplishing this feat. If you'd like a more complete description, just ask any of the 11 volunteers who have burned with us this fall, and without whom there would have been no fall burn season: Barbara Powell, Jason Frenzel, Ted Fasing, Steve Weaver, David Brooks, John Ballou, Andy Henriksen, Manfred Schmidt, Jim Hope, Mindy Milos-Dale, and Maryann Whitman. A big NAP "Thank You" goes out to each of you.

If you missed the fun this fall but would like to join us in the spring, sign up now for the Burn Crew Training on Thursday, February 21, 2002, from 12:00 to 5:00 p.m., at the Leslie Science Center. This training is required of all new burn crew members, regardless of their role. (Don't worry, there are less strenuous jobs than carrying 50 pounds of water on your back!)

## Natural Area Preservation News



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