

Natural Area Preservation News

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

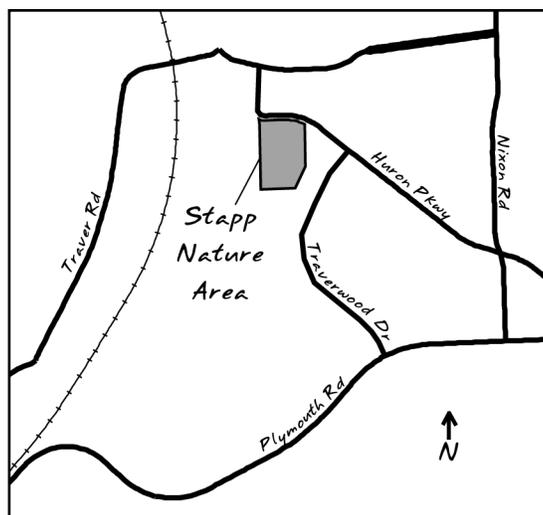
Volume 10, Number 1

Spring 2005

Park Focus: Stapp Nature Area *by Sabrina Hepburn*

Ann Arbor parkland includes small lush blocks in the middle of dense city streets and large tracts of forested land. Often the best strategy for conserving the biodiversity in an urban environment (including species that require larger areas like some birds and mammals) is to combat the fragmentation of the natural landscape by maintaining park connections. Parks like Stapp Nature Area, adjacent to Tuebingen Park and a planned connection to Leslie Woods, provides a corridor that extends the land area useful to wildlife.

Leslie Park Golf Course and Huron Parkway bound most of Stapp's 8.1 acres. The remaining land to the south of the park belongs to the First Martin Corporation, which sold the Stapp Nature Area parcel to the city in 2003. Plans are in the works to develop some of the non-park area, at which time a corridor to Leslie Woods will be established, maintaining the critical connection between parks. A trail will then be built that will allow guests (human and animal) to walk freely from Stapp to the other parks.



The park contains some towering red oaks as well as the less common chinquapin oak. It is the diversity of large trees in such a small area that makes the park remarkable, with species such as white, black, and bur oaks; shagbark, bitternut, and pignut hickories, as well as red maple, black walnut, white ash, and slippery elm. Wildlife also visit this small woodland; deer are common in the area, and your walk through Stapp could easily show you one of its cavity-nesting birds, such as Red-bellied or Downy Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches, or Black-capped Chickadees, that flourish year-round in the mature forest.

In spring, the edge habitat along the golf course adjacent to the trail can be a good place to hear singing House Wrens and see the male Baltimore Orioles flashing through the canopy as they challenge each other for territory.

Following the trail farther into the woods, as it veers away from the golf course, will show you a clear, open understory thanks to the quality of the woodland and the industrious work of NAP volunteers and staff. Flowering dogwood emerges beneath the canopy, while the ground is sprinkled with

woodland wildflowers like common trillium and May-apple that appear in the spring. In the interior, Eastern Wood Pewees have been heard calling in the spring and summer. The majority (78%) of the plant species in the park are native, and NAP expects that the burn last spring, along with clearing of invasive plants, will improve the quality still farther.

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Coordinator's Corner

A Spring of Renewal

By the time this newsletter reaches you, winter should be drawing to a close with spring waiting in the wings for its turn to perform. Skunk cabbages will be in flower, the first in a long procession of spring ephemerals to march across our woods and wetlands. Mergansers and other diving ducks will be heading north as far as the open water allows. There may even be an early red-winged blackbird loudly staking his territory in a clump of cattails. Spring is about to unfold in southern Michigan—the start of a new season of life and growth.

We here in NAP are also gearing up for spring and looking forward to a new season of sorts. Along with the usual welcoming back of field staff from their winter adventures away from NAP, there are some other changes in the air. Ever since Kee Condict left the staff nearly three years ago, there's been a vacancy in our permanent NAP Technician position. Other NAP staff members have done an excellent job filling in and divvying up those responsibilities, but the staffing gap has made it difficult for us to move forward and expand our program. Now, this spring, we're excited to have not one, but two new people wearing that title! Such growth is possible only through the support of Ann Arbor's voters, whose passage of the Parks' Repair and Restoration Millage in 2002 has kept our funding strong, even in these lean financial times.

The addition of two Technicians helps position NAP for the next season of growth within our organization. These supervisors will oversee NAP's field staff and office staff, as well as facilitate the continued growth of our volunteer programs. With more staff and volunteers, we can run more stewardship workdays and quicken the pace with which we're ridding the parks of invasive plants. We may even be able to employ two prescribed burn crews, to double our efforts with that important ecological restoration tool.

Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, I'm only able to introduce one of these individuals: Jason Tallant, who has been with NAP as a Conservation Worker and a Crew Leader for two and a half years. His co-worker has yet to be named, although that person will hopefully be on board very shortly.

These are exciting times for NAP and our natural areas, with more changes coming in the future. As we usher in a new season of growth in our natural areas and within NAP, we invite you to come along and be part of this exciting renewal. You'll find plenty of opportunities listed throughout this newsletter. Why not come out and see what's new with NAP this spring!

- David Borneman, *NAP Manager*

Natural Area Preservation

is a Division of the City of Ann Arbor
Public Services Area

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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Work Study

Sabrina Hepburn

For up-to-date information on stewardship activities, call the "hotline" at 734.996.3266.

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

"What we have done for ourselves dies along with us. What we have done for others is immortal." -Albert Pike

Michigan Stewardship Network *by Lisa Brush*

Imagine surrounding yourself with people who believe as strongly as you do in protecting the diversity of Ann Arbor's wetlands, prairies, woodlands, and waters. Imagine you're able to share resources, ideas, problems, and information in a way that makes you better at caring for these natural lands and waters. Imagine you sit at a table and say, "I'm trying to figure out how to remove autumn olive," and four people immediately share the strategies that have worked for them. You're able to walk away and be that much more effective in your own efforts to rid your prairie of this invasive menace. This is the idea that the Michigan Stewardship Network seeks to embody as we work to increase our individual and collective capacity to protect, restore, and manage Michigan's natural lands and waters.

The Southeast Michigan Stewardship Network began in Ann Arbor, in 1998, as a partnership between NAP, the Huron River Watershed Council (HRWC), and Nichols Arboretum. Since that time, the Network has grown to become an independent non-profit and broadened its geographic focus to the entire state, while still keeping its emphasis on creating local, collaborative, conservation communities—we call them "clusters"—to care for local natural areas.

Over the past six years, many local groups have participated in the Network including NAP and its Park Stewards, HRWC, Washtenaw County Parks, the Arb, Washenaw Land Trust, Southeast Michigan Land Trust, the Eberwhite Woods Committee, Thurston Nature Center Committee, as well as many individual volunteers.

Currently there are two active clusters—one in the upper River Raisin area and the other in the Oakland County Headwaters region. Recently, though, NAP staff Jason Frenzel and Laurel Malvitz, as well as other local folks, have been involved in creating a third cluster with Ann Arbor as its geographic center. We will be holding an initial planning meeting with any and all individuals interested in learning more about this new cluster. Come join us on Thursday, March 3rd, from 7:30 to 9:00 pm at the NEW Center. To learn more or RSVP you can contact Jason Frenzel or Laurel Malvitz at outreach@ci.ann-arbor.mi.us or 734.996.3266.

Don't forget that each month the Network hosts Stewards' Circles at Brueggers Bagels. These informal conversations with volunteer and professional stewards about a given stewardship topic are open to all. On the second Tuesday morning of each month you will find between ten and twenty people gathered on the second floor of Brueggers talking about prescribed fire, working with volunteers, growing plants for restoration, controlling invasive plant species, etc. Stay tuned for more training and networking events as we form the new local cluster.

To learn more about the Stewardship Network visit www.snre.umich.edu/stewardshipnetwork or contact Lisa Brush at 734.395.4483, lbrush@umich.edu

Stewards' Circle 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7:30 to 8:30 am Bruegger's Bagels, North University, Ann Arbor



March 8, Tuesday

This month's topic: Streambank Restoration. How does one go about restoring a streambank? What are the keys to long-term success? What are the pros and cons of using plants vs. more hardscape material to restore banks? What time of year is ideal for this activity? How does bank restoration effect the downstream environment?



April 12, Tuesday

This month's topic: Using herbicides as a restoration tool. What herbicides can you use on which species and when? What are some ways to control species without herbicides?



May 10, Tuesday

This month's topic: Recruiting, training, and retaining volunteers. The field season is upon us, how can we get new people out to help our efforts? How can we keep those who have loyally been contributing to our work? What types of training do volunteers want/need?

"Plans to protect air and water, wilderness and wildlife are in fact plans to protect man."
-Stuart Udall

Spring 2004 Natural Area Preservation Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

NAP is located at the Leslie Science Center (1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor, 48105). Our phone number is 734.996.3266. Workday orientations start promptly at listed times. Please wear pants and closed-toe shoes. Minors must either be accompanied by a guardian or contact NAP in advance to obtain a release form.

March

March 1, Tuesday

Public Meeting - Prescribed Ecological Burn Program, 7:30 to 9:00 pm

Leslie Science Center Nature House 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 conducted by Natural Area Preservation. Burns will be conducted in City Parks throughout the spring and fall.

March 2, Wednesday

Prescribed Burn Crew Training, 12:00 to 5:00 pm

Leslie Science Center Nature House This is the required yearly training session for all volunteers interested in assisting with the prescribed burns to be held this spring and fall. Burns take place Monday through Friday between 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Pre-registration is required by February 18, as enrollment is limited. Please call the NAP office to register or for more information.

March 3, Thursday

Michigan Stewardship Network - Ann Arbor Cluster Kick-Off Meeting, 7:30 to 9:00 pm

NEW Center, 1100 North Main, A2 Join others interested in stewardship as we brainstorm local needs and resources. Please contact NAP for more information or to RSVP. See related article on page 3.

March 6, Sunday

Salamander Survey Kick-Off Meeting, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon

Leslie Science Center Nature House

Join Ann Arbor's (and Michigan's) first Salamander monitoring program, in it's second year! With your help, we will learn more about these species' population densities and distribution around town. Volunteers with a bit of identification experience and a willingness to get muddy, please apply. There will be a \$10 fee associated with the kick-off and survey to cover the cost of materials provided to volunteers. Please register by calling NAP.

March 6, Sunday

Frog and Toad Survey Kick-Off Meeting, 1:30 to 3:00 pm

Leslie Science Center Nature House Volunteers can learn more about Ann Arbor's amphibians while contributing to our inventory efforts. The meeting will cover general information about the annual survey and is required training to participate in the survey. Route sign-up will also take place. Please call the NAP office to register or for more information.

March 19, Saturday

Furstenberg Native Plant Garden, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Park Steward and Master Gardener, Aunita Erskine, will lead this workday and a botanical walk. Help do some spring cleaning in the demonstration garden. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

March 19, Saturday

Dolph Nature Area Stewardship Workday, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

Dolph is one of Ann Arbor's premier birding hotspots, so whether you enjoy birds and nature or just want to help us maintain one of our favorite parks, please join us. Help us get

Dolph trails in shape for bird watching before spring migration begins! Meet at the parking lot off Wagner Road promptly at 11:00 for the workday orientation. We will conduct a short nature walk at the end of the workday, and look for signs that spring is around the corner!

March 20, Sunday

Amphibian Walk, 5:00 to 8:00 pm

Meet at the Leslie Science Center, 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor. Hear the calls of Ann Arbor's frogs and search for salamanders with NAP's Herpetologist, David Mifsud. Bring a flashlight to help you navigate the trails. Please register by calling NAP.

April

April 9, Saturday

Greenview Stewardship Workday, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Help maintain this beautiful neighborhood park by sprucing up the trails and seeding areas where buckthorn was cleared last year. Meet at the Greenview Park sign, on Greenview Road across from Barnard Road.

April 9, Saturday

Cranbrook Park Stewardship Workday, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Bring the family out to help us clear and maintain trails at Cranbrook. A well-kept trail system helps to provide access while minimizing the ecological impact of recreation in this wonderful park. Come and be part of the solution! Join us at the Church of Christ parking lot at 2500 South Main Street. Enjoy a short nature walk with us at the end of the workday.

April 16, Saturday
Huron River Cleanup by Canoe,
10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Help the Huron River by removing trash while canoeing. Please register with the coordinator of this event, David Fanslow, at 734.741.2353 or dave.fanslow@noaa.gov as participation is limited.

April 14, Thursday
Breeding Bird Survey Kick-Off,
7:30 to 9:00 pm

Leslie Science Center Nature House - 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor
This is the night to sign up for your favorite park and pick up materials. NAP Ornithologist Dea Armstrong will also report on the 2004 data and survey highlights. Please register by April 8 by calling the NAP office a.

April 30, Saturday
Marshall Nature Area Stewardship
Workday, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Help us stop garlic mustard and dame's rocket from crowding out our native wildflowers! Join NAP for a morning of weed pulling and great fun for the family. Meet in the parking lot off Dixboro Road, north of Plymouth Road. Afterwards, join us for a short nature walk to look at some of the native plants we're helping.

April 30, Saturday
Argo Nature Area Stewardship
Workday, 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

What could be better than doing a little gardening on a spring afternoon, while helping the community to restore our parks? Join us in pulling some herbaceous invasive plants to protect the natural riparian ecology of the Huron River. Meet us in the parking lot north of the Argo Canoe Livery, off Longshore Drive. We will hold a short nature walk along the river at the end of the workday.

May

May 5, Thursday
Dolph Nature Area Bird Walk,
7:30 to 9:30 am

Join City Ornithologist Dea Armstrong as she leads a walk to look for birds in the morning around First and Second Sister Lakes. Bring binoculars if you have them. A great walk for all levels of birders! Meet at the parking lot off of Wagner Road, between Jackson and Liberty Roads.

May 7, Saturday
Furstenberg Native Plant Garden,
9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Park Steward and Master Gardener, Aunita Erskine, will lead a wonderful cleanup workday. Join in improving the demonstration garden. Following the workday, Aunita will lead an ethnobotanical walk of Furstenberg Nature Area. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

May 13, Friday
Gallup Park Bird Walk, 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Join City Ornithologist Dea Armstrong as she leads a walk to look for birds in the evening in Gallup Park and Furstenberg Nature Area. Bring binoculars if you have them, but they are not absolutely necessary. A great walk for beginning birders! Meet at the paddleboat dock in Gallup, near the canoe livery.

May 14, Saturday
7th Annual Garlic Mustard Weed-
Out Day

This year at four locations!
Join NAP as we combat invasive garlic mustard in our natural areas citywide! Young garlic mustard has a root system that is easy to pull so this can be a great activity for any age. We've pulled over a ton of garlic mustard in previous years, so let's see if we can top that record this year! Come for a morning or afternoon, or help us at two locations and spend the day. Workday orientations will start promptly at listed times, and we will hold a short nature walk at the end of each workday. Snacks provided!

Choose from these locations:

Bird Hills Nature Area, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon – Meet at the park entrance on Bird Road, west of Huron River Drive. Additional parking is available in the Barton Dam parking lot.

Marshall Nature Area 9:00 am to 12:00 noon – Meet in the parking lot off Dixboro Road, north of Plymouth Road.

Barton Nature Area, 1:00 to 4:00 pm – Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot on Huron River Drive, across from Bird Road.

Cedar Bend Nature Area, 1:00 to 4:00 pm – Meet us at the Island Park parking lot, on Island Drive.

May 21, Saturday
Huron Parkway Nature Area
Stewardship Workday, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

The ecological integrity of Ann Arbor parks is threatened by alien species that crowd out native plants. Come help us keep garlic mustard and dame's rocket out of Huron Parkway Nature Area. Bring family and friends to help clear this area. We'll meet at the Park Steward's house-3470 Woodland Road, off of East Huron River Drive. Join us at the end of the workday for a short nature walk. Snacks provided.

May 21, Saturday
Redbud Nature Area Stewardship
Workday, 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Help us restore biodiversity to Redbud by removing invasive plants! Spring is a great season to volunteer some time to help your local parks! Meet at the park entrance on Parkwood Avenue at Jeanne Street. At the end of the workday we will take a short walk to explore the natural wonders of Redbud.

Many groups participate in NAP workdays or arrange special workdays for their organizations. Contact the NAP office if a group you are involved with is interested in planning a volunteer stewardship event.

Park Focus: Stapp Nature Area *continued from page 1*

On the north end of the park, a small pond surrounded by buttonbush attracts wildlife, while areas with groundwater near the surface allow some wetland and moisture-tolerant species to persist, including a handful of sedges. Amphibians live and breed in the pond, their calls rising as the weather gets warmer. Species such as Spring Peeper, Gray Tree Frog, Chorus Frog, and Green Frog have all been heard in the area. Near the south end is a detention pond (on golf course property), where the Great Egret has been recorded. This long-legged, majestic wading bird stands statue-like at the pond's edge as it waits to spear its next meal. Belted Kingfisher has also been seen here, diving for a meal.

Stop briefly on your way out of the park to notice the dedication plaque that stands at the entrance on Huron Parkway. Stapp Nature Area was dedicated in honor of William B. Stapp on September 17, 2004. Dr. Stapp lived in Ann Arbor and was a Professor in the School of Natural Resources and Environment at the University of Michigan. He is known internationally for founding



Dedication plaque on boulder at entrance to Stapp.

environmental education programs in 135 countries and beginning the Global Rivers Environmental Education Network, which grew from a project that involved local students in monitoring the Huron River.

NAPpennings

Thank you...Sara, Sally, and Bob Neill for their donations honoring Arthur and Mary Coscia!

Herbicide Wand 2.0



In a previous newsletter we showcased an herbicide wand designed by Ross Orr (former NAP Crew member/ technoguru), which improved our ability to exterminate woody invasive plants in

Ann Arbor Natural Areas. His simple yet ingenious design took recovered material (i.e. tent poles, cutting boards, ripped jeans) and transformed them into an efficient and safe herbicide delivery tool. Just fantastic. Now we're introducing our Herbicide Wand 2.0 with a remodeled design that uses the limbs of vanquished woody invasive plants for increased structural strength and improved aesthetic.

Since September 2004, NAP staff members have been serving on a **Park Maintenance Task Force** with other city park staff and members of the Park Advisory

Commission. Our goal is to get a better handle on how well we're maintaining our city parks, mainly by asking citizens for some feedback. We sent surveys to 5000 residents throughout the city, asking them how important various aspects of park maintenance were to them, and how well we were accomplishing them. We also surveyed several dozen peer communities across the country to see how our standards compared with theirs. Results of both surveys should be available shortly. Another exciting outcome of this effort will likely be the creation of a new Adopt-A-Park Program—modeled after NAP's successful Volunteer Park Steward Program—but expanded to all city parks.

Vines, Ferns, Grasses, Rushes, and Sedges anyone? In the past few years NAP has revamped some of our native landscaping brochures, for instance the ones on Shrubs and Wildflowers. While this edition of NAP News is at the printer, so is our new version of Vines, Ferns, Grasses, Rushes, and Sedges. Expanded to include a total of 46 species (from 31), we've reviewed the species to ensure consumers can find them locally. Make sure you have a copy for yourself!

Introduced Swans *by Deaver Armstrong*



Whether in flight or on the water, swans are some of the most majestic waterfowl in North America. Few Ann Arbor residents may be aware that our most common swan, the Mute Swan, is an introduced, non-native species, which began colonizing the Great Lakes watershed in the 1960s. Though these Eurasian birds were released in the northeastern United States in the late 1800s, biologists have only recently become attuned to the extraordinary growth in their population sizes. These increases have been confirmed locally by Christmas Bird Count data. This may be because Mute Swans are protected by Michigan law, while not protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (which protects all local birds except House Sparrows, Starlings, and Mute Swans).

Here in Ann Arbor, a second species of swan, the Trumpeter Swan, has also been introduced. Trumpeter

Swans were likely common in Michigan in the early 1700s but by 1933 only 66 birds remained in the United States. A program to reintroduce the birds began in the 1980s, with parents first nesting successfully in Ann Arbor in 1994 at the Geddes Lakes townhouses. While the original Trumpeter Swan parents have been removed from that site, at least one of the young, along with a mate from Ohio, has nested there successfully for several years. This winter at least one pair of Trumpeter Swans have been seen on the Huron River near Gallup Park.

Trumpeter Swans are easy to distinguish from Mute Swans, as the native Trumpeter Swan's bill is all black while the Mute's is orange with a black knob at the base. Gallup patrons can see (and often hear) the Trumpeters most frequently during the winter and early spring. Unfortunately, every spring thus far, the Mute Swans have discouraged the Trumpeters from nesting in the Gallup/South Pond area with aggressive, territorial behavior. While southern Michigan was not in the historical breeding range of the Trumpeter Swan, the birds certainly are capable of nesting here. The dominant Mute Swan may well discourage the efforts of the reintroduction program here in southeastern Michigan, but efforts are underway by waterfowl managers to examine the problems more closely.

For the time being, learn to tell the difference between the two species of swan and, if you're lucky, you may get to hear the spectacular "trumpeting" of our native swan.

Staff Updates

Jason Tallant



After more than two years on NAP's conservation crew, as Crew Member and Crew Leader, I'm excited to be transitioning into a new role with NAP as one of our two new Technicians. This means taking on additional respon-

sibilities, restricting myself to appropriate silliness, and perhaps spending a bit more time in the office. Nonetheless, I'll still be at our prescribed burns and other volunteer events, hope to see you there!

"I would feel more optimistic about a bright future for man if he spent less time proving that he can outwit Nature and more time tasting her sweetness and respecting her seniority."

-Elwyn Brooks White

7th Annual Garlic Mustard Weed-Out Day



We're hoping you and 100 of your closest friends can help us pull a few tons of garlic mustard. **Saturday, May 14**, will be NAP's big push to clear some very important areas in four wonderful parks. If you and a friend, your family,

or your service group has the day free, please come out for a few hours. NAP will supply some friendly faces, a pair of gloves, and (of course) some bagels.

This year at four locations!

Join NAP as we combat invasive garlic mustard in our natural areas citywide! Young garlic mustard has a root system that is easy to pull so this can be a great activity for any age. We've pulled over a ton of garlic mustard in previous years, so let's see if we can top that record this year! Come for a morning or afternoon, or help us at two locations and spend the day. Workday orientations will start promptly at listed times, and we will hold a short nature walk at the end of each workday. Snacks provided!

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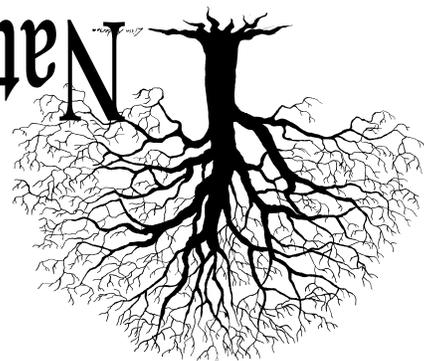
Barton Nature Area, 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot on Huron River Drive, across from Bird Road.

Cedar Bend Nature Area, 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Meet us at the Island Park parking lot, on Island Drive.

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