

Natural Area Preservation News

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

Volume 17, Number 1

Spring 2012

Molin Nature Area: Soundtrack of Restoration

by Sara E. Jackson

While clearing-out invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle shrubs at a volunteer event at Molin Nature Area this past autumn, a melody softly began floating through the air. At first I thought it was a mourning dove by the timber of its low, hollow call, but then the tones changed so I assumed it was someone's cell phone. The music continued far too long than the average ring tone, though, so I became increasingly aware and puzzled of the source of the music. I pointed it out to Molin's park steward, Tom Kussurelis. "One of the neighbors likes to sit on her back porch and practice her wooden flute. I hear her quite regularly during the warmer months. It's really nice, isn't it?"



The dedication stone at the entrance to Molin Nature Area.

photo by Dwight Burdette

It was. As deeply as the sound of a wood flute is associated with nature due to its roots in Native cultures, its use in epic movie soundtracks featuring glorious landscape shots, and the prevalence of the instrument in meditative nature soundscape albums, it was quite unique to actually be out in nature and hear a wooden flute at the same time. Many other types of music might have been considered a distraction from the setting, but instead it was a peaceful enhancement.

We started the workday event earlier that afternoon with a hike through the nature area to help the volunteers get a sense of the space. Molin Nature Area is very long and narrow with backyards flanking both sides. Houses are visible throughout the hike through the park, but having this nature corridor in the neighborhood is a well-loved feature. The area was being looked at by developers interested in building additional single-family homes, but in 1978 the neighborhood recognized that it was the last remaining bit of nature in their neighborhood and a push to help the City purchase the land to secure it as public land began.

It took many years, but the Kimberly Colony Neighborhood Association (KCNA) was successful. In 1989, the 7.2 acre stretch of nature was originally dedicated as the Kimberly Colony Nature Park. It was the first park land acquired through a park acquisition millage which was active from 1988 – 1992, with the neighborhood raising the matching funds required. The park was then rededicated as Molin Nature Area in 1996 in memory of Peg Molin who was a member of, and later chaired, the Ann Arbor Park Advisory Commission from 1981 – 1990. It was her leadership

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Coordinator's Corner

Crucial Confrontations

I had the opportunity recently to attend an excellent training called “Crucial Confrontations: Tools for Resolving Broken Promises, Violated Expectations, and Bad Behavior.” I went into it looking for ways to better deal with the problems that other people bring into my life, whether they be employees, co-workers, friends, children, partners, etc... But much to my surprise and humble astonishment, what I left with was an eye-opening awareness of just how much I contribute to – no, *co-create* – those problems. Yuck. It was easier when I could just tell myself that others were the source of those problems, not me.

But if I *can* honestly confront the fact that I *am* part of the problem, that can also be a source of hope. That's because, as hard as it is to change my behavior, it is still far, far easier than trying to change someone else's behavior! So maybe there really *is* a chance that those problems can be solved! Of course, the solution then takes on a very different look: start by changing myself and *then* worry about persuading others to change themselves.

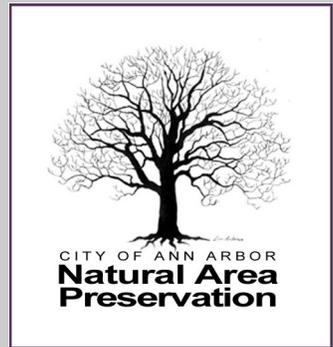
So, do you share my vision for Ann Arbor's natural areas? Do you see them as thriving, healthy, native ecosystems, actively cared for and enjoyed by neighbors and other park users? Do you envision forest floors lush with carpets of spring wildflowers and prairies bursting with rainbow colors of flowers and butterflies? Do you enjoy waking up to the beautiful melodies of songbirds, discovering a salamander on your morning walk, and watching turtles bask in the afternoon sun?

If you share that vision, you also know that we're not there yet, not completely. Garlic mustard still threatens our spring wildflower displays in some parks. Buckthorn still cloaks some forest floors in darkness. Some of our park natural areas still do not enjoy the restorative benefits of *any* stewardship activities by NAP staff or volunteers. At these sites, nothing is being done to slow the spread of invasive species and preserve a slice of native Ann Arbor for future generations. What will these areas offer our grandchildren? A dense buckthorn thicket, impenetrable and uninviting? Or a soothing oasis of wildflowers and butterflies under the sheltering canopy of a giant oak?

Either future is possible. One requires us to do nothing, and the other requires that we act, that we step up and confront the invasive species that threaten our native ecosystems. This is the *Crucial Confrontation* for us here in our local natural areas. This is the long-standing problem that we need to finally address. If you'd like to be part of the solution to this problem, we'd love to have your help. There are lots of volunteer stewardship activities coming up this year! And perhaps this year, this spring, is the time to step up and become a Park Steward at your favorite natural area. Then you can really be a co-creator of the long-term solution to the problems our natural areas are facing.

Dave Borneman, Natural Area Preservation Manager

If you'd like to talk to someone about possibly becoming a Park Steward, call the NAP office and ask for Christine Chessler, or email nap@a2gov.org for more information.



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

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

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Management in Natural Areas: Garlic Mustard

by Jill Sweetman



Spring is a wonderful time to rejuvenate your love of being outside by taking an afternoon trip to one of Ann Arbor's natural areas. While you are there, you may recognize some of the beautiful native spring wildflowers

such as trout lilies, trillium, or mayapple. You will also likely find an intruder amongst them called garlic mustard that is threatening important native populations. The concerns with garlic mustard stem from its ability to create a monoculture of plants where native flowers and saplings are not able to compete. It also produces a chemical that changes the soil and inhibits the growth of other plants. A European native, garlic mustard was introduced to the United States in the 1800s, spread quickly, and work to control it's population in Ann Arbor's natural areas began around 1995.

Since 2009 the Stewardship Network has organized an annual Garlic Mustard Challenge, a region-wide competition which strives to encourage people to work together to pull and safely remove at least 100,000 pounds of garlic mustard between mid-April and late June each year. Additional goals of the Challenge are to increase understanding of the importance of healthy native ecosystems, threats of invasives, and the concerted effort needed to eradicate an invasive plant population. The way it works is the Stewardship Network records the number of bags reported by each group or Cluster who compete for the Cluster Cup and a year of bragging rights. You can get involved and find more information by contacting the Stewardship Network (stewardshipnetwork.org) or participating in one of NAP's many spring work days, including Garlic Mustard Weed Out Day on May 5th (see right).

So when you take a walk this spring, I hope that you notice that garlic mustard creeping into your yard or along favorite path through your neighborhood park and can spare a few minutes to pull it, bag it, and toss

it in the garbage or municipal compost bin (not a home compost pile which may not get hot enough) to prevent the spread of seeds. Don't despair! Management efforts have been successful in keeping many of the most pristine preserves in our natural areas garlic mustard-free. Visit Dhu Varren, Sugarbush, Mary Beth Doyle, Black Pond Woods, Scarlett Mitchell and many more of our natural areas that are garlic mustard-free in areas that are of the highest priority for conservation.

14th Annual Garlic Mustard Weed Out Day



May 5th, Saturday
10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Garlic Mustard Weed-Out Day is an annual event in which volunteers hand-pull garlic mustard in natural areas throughout Ann Arbor! See the list below to find the location nearest you. Identifying and pulling garlic mustard is fun and easy for all ages, so this is a great volunteer opportunity for families.

A sweet treat meet-up will follow! Watch our website, facebook or twitter for details.

Participating Parks:

Berkshire - Meet at the end of Exmoor Road off of Glenwood north of Washtenaw Ave.

Bird Hills - Meet at the Bird Road entrance, west of Huron River Drive (additional parking at the Barton Nature Area-Dam Entrance).

Cedar Bend - Meet us at the Island Park parking lot, at the end of Island Drive.

Dolph - Meet at the parking lot on the east side of Wagner Road, between Liberty and Jackson.

Hannah - Meet at the west end of Bath Street, west of 7th (between Miller and Huron).

Redbud - Meet at the park entrance at the intersection of Parkwood Ave. and Jeanne St.

Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

Spring 2012

March

March 10, Saturday

Salamander Survey Kickoff
Leslie Science & Nature Center
Nature House - 1831 Traver Rd.
10:00 am to 12:00 pm

New and returning volunteers are invited to participate in salamander surveys that monitor their populations and the health of habitats. Please register by March 8, 734.794.6627.

March 10, Saturday

Frog and Toad Survey Kickoff
Leslie Science & Nature Center
Nature House - 1831 Traver Rd.
1:30 pm to 3:00 pm

Help us monitor frogs and toads in the parks. You will learn their calls, then go out to listen. Fun for all ages! No previous experience required. Please register by March 8, 734.794.6627.

March 17, Saturday

Photo Monitoring Kickoff
Leslie Science & Nature Center
Leslie House - 1831 Traver Rd.
10:00 am to 11:30 am

Having photos of the same location taken season after season is one of the best ways to record restoration progress. All you need to participate is a digital camera. Register by March 15.

March 17, Saturday

Workday Leader Training
Leslie Science & Nature Center
Leslie House - 1831 Traver Rd.
12:00 pm to 5:30 pm

NAP sometimes has large groups come out to volunteer and could use some extra help running the event. Join us if you're interested in helping NAP staff lead workdays and developing your leadership skills. Dress for time both indoors and outdoors. Register by March 15, 734.794.6627.

March 24, Saturday

Dolph Nature Area
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Get outside and lend a hand helping cut back invasive shrubs for increased bird watching. Meet at the parking lot on the east side of Wagner Rd., between Liberty and Jackson.

April

April 10, Tuesday

Breeding Bird Survey Kickoff
Leslie Science & Nature Center
Leslie House - 1831 Traver Rd.
7:30 pm to 9:00 pm

Some experience in bird identification necessary. City Ornithologist, Dea Armstrong will train volunteers and also report on the 2011 data and survey highlights. Please register by April 8.

April 14, Saturday

Wurster Nature Area
10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Bring friends and family out to lend a hand combating garlic mustard and other invasive plants so the native plant species have a chance to thrive. While you are here, make sure to catch a glimpse of Wurster's own champion oak tree! Meet at the cul-de-sac of Edgewood Pl. off of W Davis Ave.

April 22, Sunday

Earth Day Festival
Leslie Science & Nature Center
1831 Traver Rd.
12:00 pm to 4:00 pm

This free, family-friendly event features displays from local environmental, non-profit, and governmental organizations; live animal exhibits; hands-on activities; live entertainment; and green building features. For more information, visit www.a2gov.org/green.

April 22, Sunday

Scarlett Mitchell Woods Nature Area
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Help on Earth Day to keep the trails beautiful and accessible in this oak-hickory woodland. We will be pulling spring invasive plants, clearing trails and spreading woodchips. Please bring your own plastic sleds to help with the hauling. Meet in the Scarlett Middle School parking lot off Lorraine St.

Please wear long pants and closed-toe shoes to all workdays. Minors must be accompanied by a guardian or contact NAP in advance to obtain a release form. Snacks, water, and tools are provided.

April 29, Sunday

Mary Beth Doyle Nature Area
9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Come celebrate Arbor Day by lending a hand planting native shrubs. Meet at the end of Verle Ave., west off of Platt Rd. between Packard and Ellsworth.

May

Throughout May 2012

getDowntown Commuter Challenge
Test out a sustainable commute during the month of May. This is a fun and friendly competition between Ann Arbor area organizations. For more information or to register for the Commuter Challenge, visit www.getdowntown.org.

May 3, Thursday

Spring Nature Walk
Bird Hills Nature Area
7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

On this walk we will observe and discuss native plants present in the spring, as well as restoration efforts

Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

Spring 2012

which have occurred over the past few years at this site. This is part of a series of walks in partnership with Ann Arbor Public Library to give participants a more in-depth understanding of the natural areas and restoration work in the City. Meet in the Bird Hills parking lot off Newport Rd. just north of M-14.

May 5, Saturday Greenview Nature Area 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Bring friends and family out to lend a hand wood chipping trails and combating garlic mustard and other invasive plants so the native plant species have a chance to thrive. Meet on Greenview Dr., in front of the Project Grow garden, across from Barnard Rd.

May 5, Saturday 14th Annual Garlic Mustard Weed Out Day 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

See page 3 for complete details.

May 12, Saturday Miller Nature Area 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Help improve Miller's 22 acres of woods, flowers, and bird habitat by hand-pulling invasive plants, such as dame's rocket and garlic mustard. Miller is easily accessible by bus and less than a mile from downtown. Meet us at the Westwood entrance, north off of Arborview Blvd.

May 12, Saturday Huron Parkway Nature Area 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Bring friends and family out to lend a hand combating garlic mustard and other invasive plants so the native plant species have a chance to thrive. Meet in front of 3470 Woodland Rd. off of East Huron River Drive.

May 11, Friday

Bird Walk Gallup Park 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Free for all ages and family-friendly! 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 necessary. Meet at the paddleboat dock in Gallup near the canoe livery.

May 19, Saturday Furstenberg Native Garden 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Help us weed and preserve this native garden amidst the 38-acres of Furstenberg Nature Area, featuring some of the most diverse flora anywhere in Ann Arbor. Plus, you're certain to learn a lot about native plants, particularly spring wildflowers from Park Steward and Master Gardener Aunita Erskine. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

May 19, Saturday Spring Adopt-A-Park Kickoff Various Park Locations 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Would you like to help beautify your neighborhood park and learn more about it? Would you enjoy planting a tree or some native flowers to make it more inviting? We rely on volunteers to support stewardship efforts in city parks. Training, tools, and support is provided. For more information contact the Adopt-A-Park coordinator at 734.794.6627 or Adopt-A-Park@a2gov.org, or visit us at www.a2gov.org/adopt-a-park.

May 19, Saturday Downtown Blooms Day 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Help plant flowers and spruce-up downtown Ann Arbor. Fun for your whole family! Please meet the coordinators on Maynard St. between Liberty and William. Free t-shirt. Free pizza for lunch. To pre-register, or for more information, call 734.794.6000 ex. 43112.

Stewardship Network's Stewards' Circle

Bruegger's Bagels - 709 N University Ave
7:30 am to 8:30 am

Are you interested in learning more about how to care for natural areas - woods, creeks, prairies, wetlands? Then join the Stewardship Network's Huron Arbor cluster for an informal discussion on a monthly topic with volunteer and professional land stewards, plus others interested in nature. Free and open to anyone interested.

March 13, Tuesday Native Plant Propagation:

Plants are one of the powerhouses of ecosystems. How do we introduce plants? How are they propagated?

April 10, Tuesday Birds:

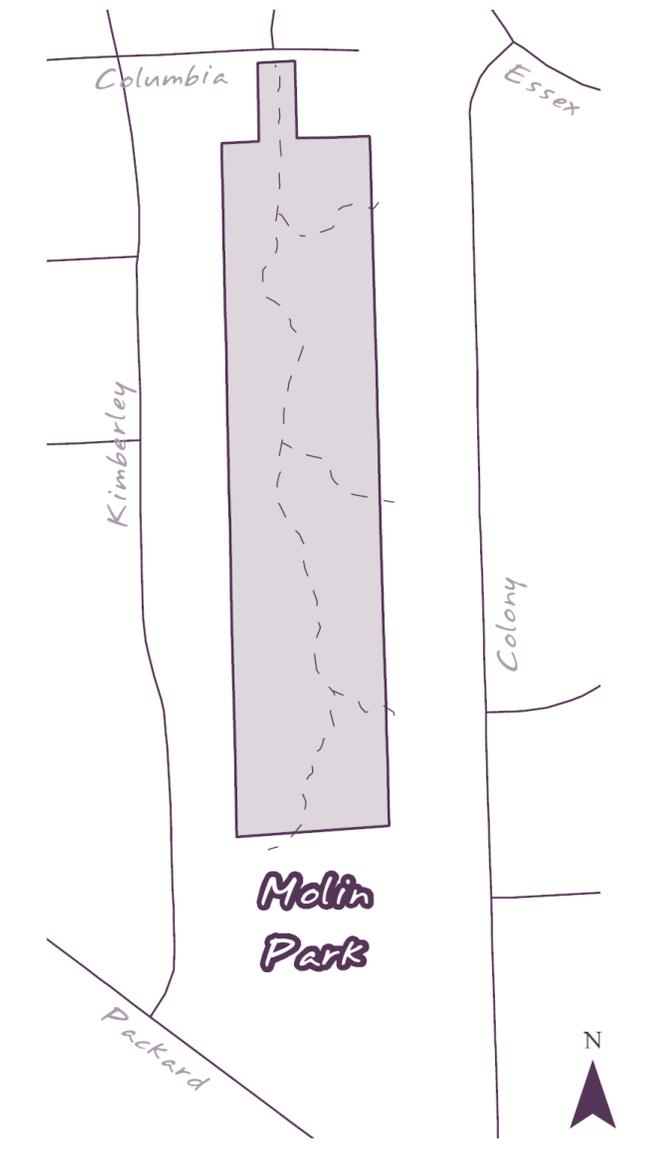
How do we create restoration goals for our avian friends? What stewardship is helpful for birds and what should we be careful doing? What can be done about those pesky invasive birds?

May 8, Tuesday Herbaceous Invasives:

What are proven approaches to controlling herbaceous invasive plants? Is anyone testing out innovative techniques? How do we monitor for new threats?

Molin Nature Area

Continued from page 1



and work with the KCNA and Ann Arbor City Council that ensured the preservation of this land.

Today there is a plaque commemorating the establishment and dedication of Molin on a large boulder that greets visitors at the entrance. The trail leading into the park just beyond this can be quite muddy and uninviting at times, though, so one of the projects that Kussurelis has been working on as a Park Steward is figuring out a creative and site-appropriate way to manage the water there. The first attempt at planting water-absorbing native plants on either side of the trail was almost completely thwarted by a rain storm hitting shortly after the planting and washing-

out many of the plants before they could get established. However, one of the species planted that day, Grays Sedge (*Carex grayi*), was successfully established. It should be interesting to see how it spreads over time through the area and if its presence helps with the standing water issues there.

Inside the nature area, positive restoration efforts are becoming noticeable. A significant amount of invasive shrubs have been cut down along the first third of the trail. This effort has opened up the area around many native trees, including a beautiful Bur oak. Hopefully opening the ground to allow more sunlight in will encourage a new generation of these native trees to take root, as well as allow native herbaceous plants to make a comeback. Kussurelis has worked with NAP to organize efforts to remove garlic mustard and other spring invasive plants in Molin, too.

One of the greatest rewards of a hike through Molin is reaching the furthest point of the trail and admiring the magnificent Bur oak residing there. It truly is an impressive display and well worth a trip to explore the nature area. Along your hike back out perhaps you will be lucky enough to hear a flute performance, too.

Staff Updates

Congratulations to...

Reneé and Dave Hytinen for welcoming their first child, Aaron Frederick, into the world on January 20th. He's got quite the sneeze! Gesundheit!



Safe Passage Great Lakes Days

by Deaver Armstrong, City Ornithologist



During seasonal peak bird migration, residents and property managers are reminded to close shades or turn out lights between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. (or dawn) on tall buildings from the 5th floor and above. This action assists birds to maintain their natural night navigation patterns and helps prevent the unnecessary death of migrating birds from becoming disoriented and flying into lighted tall buildings. A 2009 State of Michigan proclamation designates the periods of March 15 to May 31 and August 15 to October 31 as Safe Passage Great Lakes Days.

“More than 250 species of night-migrating birds, including warblers, thrushes, and tanagers, fly over Michigan during their spring and fall migrations,” explains Will Weber, a Park Steward at Barton Nature Area and member of the Washtenaw Audubon Society. He adds that the deaths of millions of birds each year has been tracked to the apparent effect of tall building lighting, which interferes with the navigation systems of migrating birds flying nearby, causing them to repeatedly circle the illuminated buildings until they either die from exhaustion or from colliding into windows.

A copy of the resolution and more information on the Safe Passage Great Lakes project, plus information on what to do if you find a bird injured by a collision are posted on the City of Ann Arbor’s web site at: www.a2gov.org/government/publicservices/fieldoperations/NAP/birds/Pages/SafePassage.aspx

NAPpenings

thank you...

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

Emerson Middle School
EMU Alpha Phi Omega, Lambda Phi
EMU Green Club
Pioneer High School Wildlife Preservation Club
Rackham Student Government
Rudolf Steiner High School
St. Francis Cub Scouts, Pack 27
St. Thomas Cub Scouts
UM Alpha Phi Omega
UM Circle K
UM Economics 108 Class
UM Engineering Council
UM ENVIRON 201 Class
UM MESO (Medical Educational Service Opportunities)
UM Phi Beta Sigma

Thank you also to David Baker for becoming a new Park Steward at Bird Hills Nature Area!

NAP Receives MLK JR. Day of Service Mini-Grant

NAP was the proud recipient of a \$250 MLK Jr. Day of Service mini-grant from the **Michigan Community Service Commission**. NAP used the funds to purchase handsaws and insulated work gloves for colder weather volunteer events. A volunteer event was held at Bluffs Nature Area on January 16th, 2012. Thanks to Starbucks Coffee for donating hot beverages for the event, too.

NAP’s Online Newsletter Now in Color!

We are very excited to announce that NAP’s online version of the newsletter is going to be in color from now on! View it online at www.a2gov.org/NAPnewsletters. You may also send an email to napnewsletter@a2gov.org to sign-up to receive a notification via email when the latest edition is up and ready for online viewing.

New! Gold Star Collector Button Series

NAP staffer and local artist, Robb Johnston, drew these amazing designs which we will be using in our first ever Gold Star Collector Buttons Series! We'll be giving the appropriate button out at our various volunteer events throughout the year.

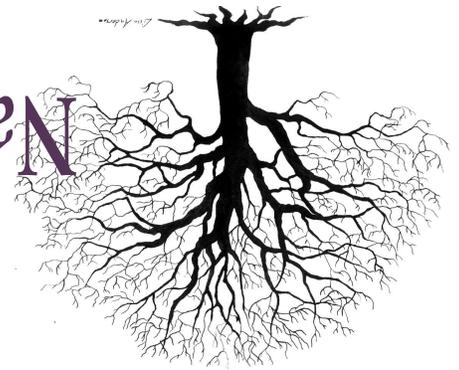
Collect three different 2012 buttons to qualify for a fun prize. Collect six unique ones for an even greater prize. Prizes will be distributed at our annual Volunteer Appreciation Potluck on October 24, 2012. Show-up wearing your buttons! Show-off your volunteer spirit by wearing them throughout the year!

Check out our events calendar inside for details on all of our spring kickoff events and upcoming workdays.



Spring 2012

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If you would prefer to receive your next newsletter
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