



NAP

NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

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

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Spring 2018

Park Focus: Furstenberg Nature Area

Alex Cherry, Outreach Assistant

A springtime walk through Furstenberg Nature Area is an absolute feast for the senses. The air feels warm, seemingly for the first time in years after a long winter. Droplets of water fall through the oaks and hickories. It is not raining but the sensation of precipitation coupled with the rushing, high waters of the Huron River gives that feeling. It is migration season. A chorus of languages only understood by our feathered companions floods the canopy. Touching the brilliantly white petal of a dogwood puts a word to the feeling: rejuvenated.

The springtime display of the riverfront's flora and fauna was not always this beautiful. Recent dedication to this natural area has allowed it to flourish.



The oak savanna at Furstenberg Nature Area

The land that is now Furstenberg Nature Area was acquired in 1971 by the City of Ann Arbor. It was not until the 1990s, however, that major ecological and aesthetic improvements began. The boardwalk and bridge connecting Gallup and Furstenberg gave greater access to the park. Fire management and invasive shrub removal improved the area's ecological quality and biodiversity. Today, one can see the changes by strolling through or paddling by the marvelous 38 acres.

It is easy to appreciate the giant oaks while gazing through the woods and savanna of the park. What many miss are the small, but important treasures that lie closer to the forest floor. The inconspicuous sedge, mistaken commonly for grass,

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A unit of the City of Ann Arbor
Community Services Area,
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*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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COORDINATOR'S CORNER

How Do You Turn a Nut into a Tree?

In his 1977 book *The Nature of Vegetation: Its Management and Mismanagement*, Ecologist Frank Egler says, "Nature is not only more complex than we think, it's more complex than we can think." That's a humbling notion, and it outlines the daunting challenge for those of us tasked with managing our public natural areas.

Initially the task seems pretty straightforward: protect remnant natural areas from being destroyed by human activity. Put a fence around it, and make it a park. That's the initial step. After that, it gets a bit more complicated. We control invasive species. We sow native plant seeds. We re-introduce fire. And those are all good steps to take. We're making progress. But are we making enough progress? Are we reaching our goal of actually restoring and sustaining our native ecosystems? That's a question I ask myself more and more these days, after a couple decades of trying to achieve this elusive goal.

What would success look like? Well, in many of our parks, I think that would include a healthy native oak woodland ecosystem, reminiscent of what existed here prior to European settlement, relatively free of invasive species. And to be "healthy," I'd want to see not only big, old oak trees, but young ones as well, oak seedlings and saplings in enough abundance that they could be expected to replace the canopy oaks that have been here, in many cases, since before Ann Arbor was even founded. I'd like us to be able to create and sustain an "arbor" of oaks like that which gave our city its name. But how do we do that?

The first step in creating new oak trees is getting acorns to germinate on the forest floor. That alone has been a challenge. Wander through most of our parks and you'll see plenty of large oak trees, but look down and it's hard to find any oak seedlings on the forest floor. Why is that? Well, in order to germinate, acorns need two things: contact with bare mineral soil, and plenty of sunlight. Those conditions don't exist in many of our parks today, although we're making progress. Removing invasive shrubs and re-introducing prescribed fire is a tremendous help in creating conditions conducive to germinating acorns. And those sites where we've done the most burning are the sites where we see the most young oaks germinating, such as in Furstenberg Nature Area, which you'll read about in Alex's article in this newsletter. Burning removes the leaf litter so acorns can reach the soil. And it helps more sunlight reach the forest floor. The result: we get oak seedlings!

Unfortunately, creating oak seedlings is only the first step; we still need to get those seedlings up through sapling stage. And that too is a big challenge. Lots of things feed on tender young oak seedlings, such as rabbits, mice, voles, and yes – deer. And the same prescribed burns that create conditions conducive to acorn germination can have a negative impact on the oak seedlings themselves, either killing them or severely setting them back.

How do we deal with these challenges? What's our plan for getting those oak seedlings into the sapling stage so our grandchildren can look forward to the same oak arbor that our grandparents enjoyed? Those questions will be answered in the next newsletter...

-David Borneman, Natural Area Preservation Manager

A Morning in the Life of a Burn Boss

*Tina Stephens,
Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator*

By now, most of you have heard about NAP's controlled burn program. Perhaps you've seen the skeletons of invasive shrubs we've killed, read about the number of acres burned in our last edition, or maybe you've even joined our volunteer burn crew. It goes without saying that a lot of effort and planning goes into each and every burn we conduct to ensure the safety of crew and community as well as accomplish the ecological objectives. For a bit of fun, I thought I'd pull back the curtain a little bit and give you a glimpse into what a typical morning looks like for a NAP burn boss.



Tina, working as a burn boss in 2017

5:35 am Wake up and check the weather – high of 67°F, wind speed of 18 mph, wind direction SSE, relative humidity getting down to a low of 42% at 1:30 p.m. Sure looks like a burn day! Cross-reference the weather with the list of burn sites and acceptable wind directions. Text Dave, Becky, and Mike to discuss site options. After a bit of back and forth discussing upcoming workdays, which sites are highest priority, and where we have concerns about rare and endangered species, we settle on Marshall Nature Area.

5:43 am Roll out of bed and put on yesterday's dirty burn gear. No point taking a shower on a burn day. Grab a quick breakfast.

6:28 am Arrive at the NAP office. Check the weather forecast. Still the same. Submit a spot weather forecast request to the National Weather Service. A spot forecast has more site specific fire-related details than a general regional forecast. Text the NAP ornithologist and herpetologist to make sure they're okay with the plan. Make a few copies of the site map, grab flagging, marker, and some more flagging.



The signs placed by NAP staff before a burn can begin

6:47 am Get to Marshall Nature Area just before sunrise. Take just a moment to enjoy the beauty and peace of a natural area at dawn – this is likely the only moment of silence for the rest of the day.

6:49 am Start flagging the unit. This flagging marked with letters will be used by the burn crew to orient during the burn. While flagging, I'm marking down all of the points on a map and beginning to plan exactly how I will conduct the burn. I also make notes of where hazards or fire-sensitive things are, such as hollow trees or benches.

8:04 am Make it back to the NAP office to copy the map of the flagged points and give the field crew directions for how to prep the site. Check the spot weather forecast, making sure the hyper-local forecast is similar to the expected conditions. Inform the Outreach team that it's a burn day.

8:17am Have a quick second breakfast. All that flagging and mapping makes a girl hungry!

8:20 am Run the smoke modeling forecast and make a map of where "Prescribed Burn Ahead" road signs should be placed.

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NAP

VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR **SPRING** 2018

Volunteers assist NAP in all aspects of our work. Community involvement is vital to the success of NAP's conservation and education efforts. Please join us for one of these events!

For all of our **Stewardship Workdays**, please wear long pants and closed-toe shoes. Workdays are **free** and suitable for all ages. Minors must be accompanied by a guardian or have a signed release form. Contact NAP for release forms. Tools, snacks, and know-how provided.

To register for any of our Kick off & Training events, call 734.794.6627 or send us an email at NAP@a2gov.org

MARCH

Salamander Survey Kick-off & Training **Saturday, March 3, noon to 2 p.m.** **Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.**

Learn how to help NAP monitor salamanders in Ann Arbor's parks. Volunteers will be trained to identify salamanders and select parks to survey. Must be willing to walk in the woods on rainy cold nights in early spring, and take day surveys in spring and summer. Please register by March 1.

Frog and Toad Survey Kick-off & Training **Saturday, March 3, 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.** **Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.**

Everyone is invited to help monitor frog populations in Ann Arbor! Volunteers will be trained to identify frogs by ear and eye and will select a route to survey. No previous experience required! Surveying is done on night trips, at least once per month, March through June. Most routes require driving. Please register by March 1.

Photomonitoring Kick-off & Training **Saturday, March 24, 10 to 11 a.m.** **NAP office, 3875 E. Huron River Drive**

Do you like photography and spending time outdoors? We need volunteers to take beautiful photos at specific locations in parks throughout the year to record the progress of our restoration work. Come join us at this informational meeting for more details about this volunteer opportunity! Please register by March 22.

Workday Leader Training **Saturday, March 24, noon to 5 p.m.** **NAP Office, 3875 E. Huron River Drive**

This is for volunteers interested in leading volunteer stewardship workdays. We will focus on procedures, and tips and tricks to lead a successful event. An interest in ecology is desired, but not required. Participants should be dressed for classroom and possible field training. Minimum age of 18. Please register by March 22.

APRIL

Breeding Bird Survey Kickoff & Training **Thursday, April 12, 7 to 9 p.m.** **NAP Office, 3875 East Huron River Drive**

Learn how to survey for breeding birds in Ann Arbor's parks! Some experience in bird identification is necessary. Sign up for your favorite park and pick up survey materials. Please register by April 9.

Stewardship Workday **Saturday, April 14, 1 to 4 p.m.** **The Ponds Park**

We need help removing invasive species to improve the habitat for wildlife. Meet at the park entrance at the corner of Emerald Avenue and Candlewick Drive.

Stewardship Workday **Saturday, April 21, 9 a.m. to noon** **Cedar Bend Nature Area**

Cedar Bend is Ann Arbor's oldest park. Help NAP remove invasives and restore this natural area. Meet at the Island Park parking lot, at the end of Island Drive.

Turtle Steward Kickoff & Training **Saturday, April 21, 10 a.m. to noon** **Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.**

Help us protect nest sites, monitor populations, and look for turtles along the river and creeks! We'll cover species identification, nest maintenance and monitoring, and how to report your turtle observations. This training will be indoors. Please register by April 19.

Earth Day Events

Stewardship Workday **Sunday, April 22, 9 a.m. to noon** **Maryfield Wildwood Park**

Celebrate Earth Day with NAP by pulling invasive species, allowing more native plants to grow. Join us at the intersection of Linwood and Wilton Streets.

Stewardship Workday **Sunday, April 22, 1 to 4 p.m.** **Miller Nature Area**

Get outside and protect biodiversity on Earth Day! Join NAP to continue the restoration process in this park by pulling invasive plants. Meet at the park entrance on Arborview Blvd., just east of Wildwood Avenue.

Ann Arbor Earth Day Festival **Sunday, April 22, noon to 4 p.m.** **Leslie Science and Nature Center** **1831 Traver Road**

Join us to celebrate the Earth! This free, family-friendly event features displays from local environmental, nonprofit, and governmental organizations. For more information please visit www.lesliesnc.org/a2earthday.

Nature Walk With AADL
Thursday, April 26, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.
Mary Beth Doyle Park

NAP staff will lead a family-friendly nature walk through the woods and around the pond. Meet us at the parking lot off Packard Road, across from Easy Street. Wear comfortable clothes and bring water if desired. Some of AADL's Science Tools will be available for use during the walk!

Stewardship Workday
Arbor Day Weekend
Saturday, April 28, 9 a.m. to noon
Mary Beth Doyle Park

On Arbor Day, join NAP to plant shrubs along Mallets Creek and increase the native habitat in this beautiful park. Meet at the parking lot off Packard Road, across from Easy Street.

Stewardship Workday
Arbor Day Weekend
Saturday, April 28, 1 to 4 p.m.
Molin Nature Area

Celebrate Arbor Day with us by pulling invasives and restoring native habitat. Meet at the park entrance at the intersection of Powell Avenue and Columbia Avenue.

Stewardship Workday
Sunday, April 29, 1 to 4 p.m.
Marshall Nature Area

This beautiful area is threatened by non-native species. Help us preserve biodiversity by pulling invasive plants. Meet in the parking lot off Dixboro Road, north of Plymouth Road.

MAY

Stewardship Workday
Saturday, May 5, 9 a.m. to noon
Lakewood Nature Area

Help us preserve Lakewood Nature Area's habitat by removing invasive plants. Meet us in the Lakewood Elementary School parking lot off Gralake Avenue.

Stewardship Workday
Saturday, May 5, 1 to 4 p.m.
Dolph Nature Area

Dolph Nature Area is a great birding spot. Help NAP remove invasive species and maintain the quality habitat. Meet at the parking lot off Wagner Road.

Stewardship Workday
Saturday, May 5, 1 to 4 p.m.
Folkstone Park

Help NAP maintain this woodland habitat by pulling invasive species. Meet at the park entrance at the north end of Folkstone Court.

Stewardship Workday
Sunday, May 6, 9 a.m. to noon
Oakridge Nature Area

Over 100 native species are found here! Join us to preserve this nature area by pulling invasive plants. Meet us in the southwest corner of the intersection of Glazier Way and Huron Parkway.

Stewardship Workday
Sunday, May 6, 1 to 4 p.m.
Furstenberg Native Garden

Ready to do some spring gardening? Help create a beautiful display of Michigan's biodiversity while spending time in one of Ann Arbor's beautiful parks. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road.

Stewardship Workday
Sunday, May 6, 1 to 4 p.m.
Furstenberg Nature Area

Come pull invasive plants with us in order to continue to preserve and protect this habitat. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road.

Stewardship Workday
Saturday, May 12, 9 a.m. to noon
Sunset Brooks Nature Area

Help pull invasive species to make room for spring wildflowers. Meet us at the park entrance on Sunset Road, at the end of Brooks Street.

Stewardship Workday
Saturday, May 12, 1 to 4 p.m.
Bird Hills Nature Area

Join the effort to restore this hilly woodland by removing invasive species such as garlic mustard. Meet at the entrance on Beechwood Drive.

Stewardship Workday
Saturday, May 12, 1 to 4 p.m.
Bluffs Nature Area

Hikers and mountain bikers alike enjoy the trails in this park. Help NAP remove invasive species that threaten native wildflowers. Meet us at the entrance on Sunset Road near Wildt Street.

Butterfly Survey Kickoff & Training
Saturday, May 12, 1:30 to 4 p.m.
NAP Office, 3875 E. Huron River Drive

Ann Arbor is home to 80 species of butterflies! Come learn our survey protocol and help us search our prairies and woodlands for these beautiful insects throughout the spring and summer. No experience in butterfly identification is necessary, though it's helpful. Space is extremely limited, so please register by May 9.

Bird Walk
Friday, May 18, 6 to 8 p.m.
Gallup Park

Take an evening walk in Gallup Park and Furstenberg Nature Area with NAP Ornithologist, Juliet Berger. We'll look for the Baltimore Orioles that nest there, and see many other birds along the river as well. Bring binoculars if you have them, but they are not necessary. Meet at the Gallup Canoe Livery, 3000 Fuller Road.

20th Annual Garlic Mustard Weed Out Day
Saturday, May 19, 9 a.m. to noon

Garlic Mustard Weed Out Day is an annual tradition! We will need lots of hands to pull invasive garlic mustard in natural areas all around Ann Arbor. This is a great volunteer opportunity for families. See page 8 for details.

Huron River Day
Sunday, May 20, noon to 4 p.m.
Gallup Park

Enjoy the beautiful Huron River with free family-friendly river activities. Listen to live music, eat delicious local food, and paddle a boat with \$5 canoe and kayak rentals (free if you ride your bike!) For more information visit www.a2gov.org/hrd.

Nature Walk with AADL
Thursday, May 31, 6 to 7:30 p.m.
Bird Hills Nature Area

Join NAP staff on a family-friendly walk through these hilly woods to learn more about the natural features of this park. Meet at the Newport Road entrance, just north of M-14. Wear comfortable clothes and bring water if desired. Some of AADL's Science Tools will be available for use during the walk!

Furstenberg Nature Area

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is an important plant native to the natural areas of Ann Arbor. Look for species like the woodland sedge (*Carex blanda*) or Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pennsylvanica*) in the oak-hickory forest and savanna of Furstenberg. Two important identifying factors for these species are their triangular stems and small flowers that form “spikes”. The sedges are an important food source for small mammals, birds and invertebrates living in the park.

One of the most delightful activities to do within Furstenberg is to watch wildlife. The system of trails winding through the park hold benches and viewing points to catch a glimpse of some of the interesting species that establish themselves in the spring. The swaying cattails of Furstenberg’s marsh offer a chorus of animal vocalizations. Gray tree frogs, Green frogs and Wood frogs call to



Trumpeter Swans, Cygnus buccinator

one another, especially in the evening hours. During the day, Red-winged blackbirds make their famous “konk-la-ree” song, an indicator of the spring. Along the Huron River, there are more observation opportunities. The rare Trumpeter swan will take a breather here while making its journey to the northern United States. Painted turtles, after a long winter snooze, will begin to sun themselves during the first balmy days at Furstenberg. Wildlife is abundant and exciting at this park.

There is more to the value of a natural area than just its physical beauty. Nondescript plants and animals may have important characteristics that allow an ecosystem to thrive. Riverside vegetation can reduce run-off into the water and control erosion.



Woodland sedge, Carex blanda
Photo by Patrick J. Alexander, hosted by the USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

Join us on May 6 for workdays at Furstenberg. See the calendar on pages 4-5 for details.

STEWARDSHIP NETWORK STEWARDS' CIRCLE

7:30 to 8:30 a.m.

Second Tuesday of every month

Bruegger's Bagels

709 N. University Avenue

Are you interested in learning more about how to care for natural areas? 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.

www.stewardshipnetwork.org

March 13: How can cities help save the planet's biodiversity?

By 2050, the amount of urban habitats is projected to grow 3-fold. Are cities one of the primary contributors to biodiversity loss or do cities harbor more biodiversity than they are often given credit for? We will discuss the role of cities in biodiversity loss, using Ann Arbor's past and present development practices as a warning, or exemplar, of the role cities play in conservation.

April 10: Simplifying field work

Washtenaw County staff have found a new way to monitor and assess a wetland restoration project at Trinkle Marsh Preserve. Collector is a surprisingly easy program that gives staff a lot of information to use in, and understand, the greater landscape. Join us to discuss how this technology can be useful in your restoration project.

May 9: Japanese stiltgrass

Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) is regarded as one of the country's top invasives and was discovered in Michigan in 2017. Come learn how it was detected, documented, and destroyed in Scio Township, and how you can be on the lookout for it on your land.

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Thank you!

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

Circle K, UM
Ecological Issues Class, UM
EMU VISION
Epsilon Eta, UM
Michigan Running Club, UM
Phi Chi Theta, UM
Sigma Chi, Kettering University
Sigma Chi-Theta Theta Chapter, UM
YVC, Ann Arbor

Congratulations!

NAP Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator Tina Stephens is now a Certified Volunteer Administrator. The achievement was awarded by the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration. There are only 1,131 CVAs worldwide and very few are from organizations like NAP. Congratulations, Tina!

Good News!

NAP has received a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to enhance 11 acres of monarch butterfly habitat at Furstenberg, Kuebler Langford, and South Pond Nature Areas. These funds will ensure the land is managed with pollinators in mind for a minimum of 3-5 years.

Check in with Dave for approval of the maps and my intended ignition pattern.

8:39 am Check in with the Outreach team to see how notifications are going. Return a call to a park neighbor who requests that we burn her favorite mushroom hunting spot.

8:58 am Time to triage emails! Since I'm only at my desk for a short time today, this is the only chance I'll get to return emails and phone calls about everything that can't wait until after burn season.

9:55 am Lunch time! I've got just 20 minutes to eat lunch, get on the rest of my burn gear, use a flush toilet for the last time today, finish up this one last email, and copy enough maps for all of the crew and volunteers. Eek!

10:15 am One last check to make sure I have everything I'll need for the day and a final read of the prescription before I leave for the park.

10:45 am I get to Marshall Nature Area and check in with the field crew to see how prep is going and if they found any hazards that I missed during my early morning walk through. Then check in with the outreach team to make sure we are ready for the volunteers to arrive.

10:58 am Greet the volunteers as they arrive and help them get geared up. I also check in about any physical or time limitations.

11:14 am I find a quiet spot to make my final plans:

- who will be our smoke monitor
- which volunteers and staff should be paired up to spread out experience and continue to train everyone on each position
- which teams should be on interior ignition
- which team gets to light the head fire, etc.



Pre-burn briefing

11:20 am Briefing time. This is the pre-burn meeting where I give all of the burn crew members their assignment for the day, talk through expected fire behavior, review the objective for the burn, and point out any potential hazards. I also do one last check on the weather forecast to make sure the wind, humidity, and sky cover are still as expected.

11:30 am Let's do this! I give the fire department a quick call to let them know we're ready to get started just as I light the test fire.

All of that and it's not even noon! I hope you've enjoyed this little peek into my morning. If you're interested in knowing what happens next, I invite you to join us on our next burn. Check a2gov.org, facebook.com/ann.arbor.NAP, or twitter.com/a2NAP for announcements about controlled burns.

Natural Area Preservation

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20th Annual Garlic Mustard Weed Out Day Saturday, May 19, 9 a.m. to noon

Garlic Mustard Weed Out Day is an annual tradition where volunteers hand-pull garlic mustard in natural areas all around Ann Arbor. Garlic mustard is an aggressive Eurasian species that can quickly crowd out native plant species and decrease natural diversity in the woods. Identifying and pulling garlic mustard is fun and easy for all ages, making this a great volunteer opportunity for families.

Participating Parks:

- Huron Hills Golf Course Woods– Meet us on Hunting Valley Road off Provincial Drive.
- White Oak– Meet at the park entrance on White Oak Drive.
- Huron Parkway– Meet at the Park Steward's house: 3470 Woodland Road, off East Huron River Drive.
- Hannah– Meet at the west end of Bath Street, off 7th, just north of W. Huron Street.
- Black Pond Woods– Meet us on Tibbits Court, off Pontiac Trail.
- Argo– Meet in the parking lot north of the Argo Canoe Livery, off Longshore Drive.

