

Natural Area Preservation News

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

Volume 16, Number 1

Spring 2011

Park Focus: Argo Nature Area

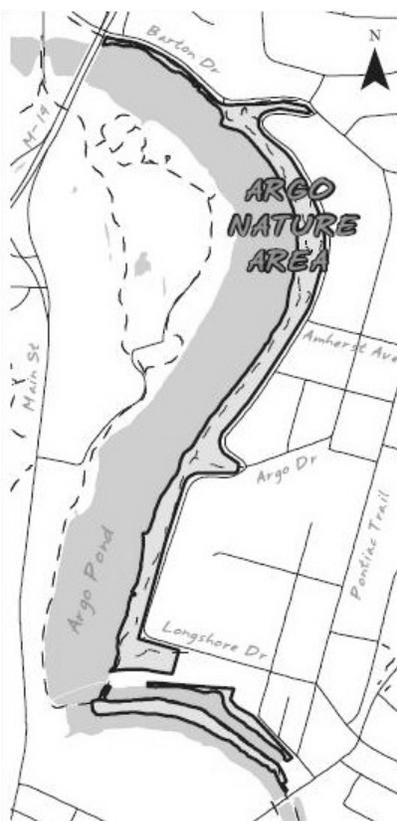
by Tina Roselle

Argo Nature Area, which stretches along the eastern shore of the Huron River between Barton and Argo dams, provides a wonderful trail for hikers to take in the scenic beauty of the river. It provides a popular route for runners looking for a shaded path, as well as some quiet places to sit along the shore to contemplate. Combined with the paths over the dams at each end and Bandemer Nature Area on the west shore, Argo is part of an exceptional hiking loop. Most significantly, though, it is an important ecological buffer zone to the river.

In my quest to learn more about Argo Nature Area, I contacted Park Steward Tom Kraft. We met at the corner of Argo and Longshore and headed into the nature area. As we picked our way down the snow covered hillside, Tom recalled sledding down that very hill as a kid. At that time, the hillside was clear of invasive shrubs so he could sled from the top of the hill right down on to the pond.

Tom's recollection of the open understory and learning the negative ecological impact of invasive shrubs was the impetus for him to begin volunteering as a Park Steward with NAP seven years ago. Tom is also a coach for one of the local high school's rowing teams that practices along that stretch of the river, so his connection to

Argo Nature Area is felt in his daily routine. He regularly recruits his team to volunteer to help clear invasive shrubs in Argo as a way to give back to the community. In just the past few years, his crew team has cleared over three acres of invasive shrubs and plans to continue working southward toward the canoe livery.



As Tom and I walked along the trail in Argo Nature Area he pointed out the areas of the woods which had been covered in invasive honeysuckle and buckthorn. Tom shared that once the invasive shrubs were removed, the hillside burst forth a beautiful blanket of trout lilies, trillium, May apples, and other native wildflowers during the spring and summer. On the day of my visit in January, we were able to enjoy a beautiful contrast between the bright, blue pond and the white, snowy hills. Because of its year-round glory, secluded feel, and easy access, Tom declared this trail to be one of "Ann Arbor's best kept secrets."

Bill Price and Colleen Vance are new Park Stewards at Argo. They have lived across the road from Argo Nature Area for over a decade, but just began volunteering at the park a little over a year ago. Through a closer involvement with NAP, Bill and Colleen learned about the invasive shrubs which were

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Coordinator's Corner

What "IS" the Spring for You?

In "A Sand County Almanac," Aldo Leopold writes, "One swallow does not make a summer, but one skein of geese, cleaving the murk of a March thaw, is the spring." It is true that there is something special about the honking of geese high overhead as they wing their way north. But around these parts, we're fortunate to also be treated to the raucous bugling of flocks of sandhill cranes coming and going from area wetlands – a sight that, for me, is an even more magical harbinger of spring.

How about for you? What is it that you especially looked forward to through those long, dark, winter nights? What "is the spring" for you? Is it the "chickadee-dee-dee" that was whistled to me from a treetop on my walk into the office this morning? Or the "peep-peep-peep" that will arise from the small vernal ponds as soon as there is open water for the spring peepers? How about the mysterious "peent" of the elusive American woodcock that always catches me by surprise the first warm twilight after the ground is bare? Maybe it's the mass migration of salamanders to their breeding ponds triggered by the first warm rain of the year? Or the first skunk cabbage flowers that are too impatient to wait for the sun to remove the snow and instead produce their own heat to melt off that winter blanket?

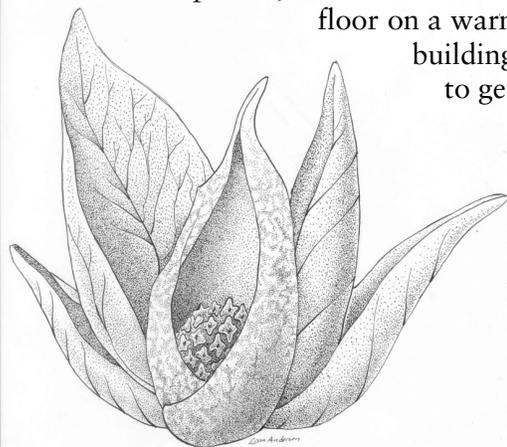
Maybe you're one of us who spent those long winter nights dreaming of spring burns peeling off the insulating thatch of last year's dead growth to prepare the way for this spring's tiny wildflower seedlings? Or maybe it's not really spring for you until you pull your first garlic mustard from your favorite woodlot that you are defending for the trilliums, or until you warm yourself on a chilly morning working a pair of loppers and pushing back the buckthorn thicket just a little bit further than you did last year?

Whatever it is that "is the spring" for you, chances are you can find it at a nearby Nature Area, and chances are there will be other NAppers there to enjoy it with you, if you want company. Or you can find your own secluded corner of the park if you prefer to honor that rite of spring in a more private fashion. Check out the calendar of such opportunities on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter. Or just call the office if you need suggestions of places to go to see the first bloodroot unfurl its leaves on a sunny southern exposure, or the first mourning cloak butterfly lift off the forest

floor on a warm day in March, or the first bluebird building its nest. The important thing is just to get out there and welcome spring back to Ann Arbor. It was a long winter, and you deserve to have a little spring back in your life!

Enjoy!

Dave Borneman, Manager



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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Naoko Matsudaira

Restoration for Wildlife Management

by Lara Treemore Spears and Dea Armstrong

NAP volunteers provide us with information about wildlife in our natural areas, but we often hear the question, "what does NAP do with that information?" Generally, we use the information to help us direct our restoration efforts to the places where we can provide the greatest benefits to the urban wildlife that use our parks and natural areas. Sometimes there is uncertainty about what might be beneficial or harmful, or how to prioritize our work. Knowledge of the animals, particularly their movement patterns and needs, helps us to make the best decisions. Here are some of our principles for managing parks for wildlife. You may be able to apply these same ideas to your own backyard.

The basic wildlife needs are: food, water, cover, and places for young to grow. In the Ann Arbor Parks, the variety of food, time of year the food is available, water sources, type of cover, and young-rearing habitat is as varied as the different species which use these areas. Our volunteers and staff have helped document in our parks over 1800 plant species; 200 species of birds (about 100 regularly breeding species and another 100 that use our parks as migratory stopover sites); 80 different types of butterflies as well as 20 species of amphibians and reptiles. Not regularly inventoried but often noted when found are various mammal species, insects and spiders. All of these living things are found in landscapes that range from dry sand hills to wetlands.

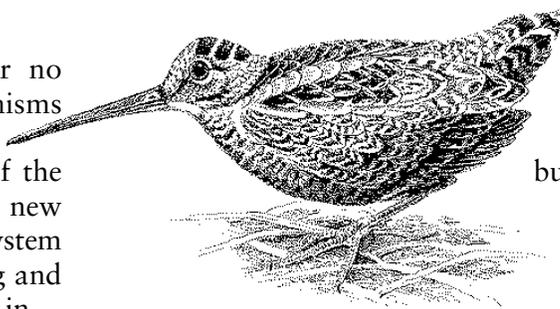
In a non-urban, "wild" world where little or no human interference exists, these various organisms would eventually establish an ecological balance that defines most natural systems. Human use of the same areas utilized by wildlife brings in a whole new variety of potential interactions, and often the system gets out of balance. Some key elements go missing and others are over-populated. One of the first steps in management is always to know what species are present, in what quantities, and to understand their basic requirements. For example, in Dolph Nature Area, where wetlands provide protein in the form of flying insects for birds during spring migration, NAP tries to maintain good bird cover around the lakes, even if that means leaving some of the invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle shrubs. Our long-term goal is to replace non-native with native shrubs, but ample moisture and nutrients in that location makes this challenging, so we adjust our goals accordingly.

Another important nature component for wildlife is habitat structure. Some species require two different types of habitat for their life histories. Beautiful Blue-winged Warblers (*Vermivora cyanoptera*) which nest in Marshall Nature Area, require both a thick stand of native shrubs and trees and a thriving and diverse herbaceous mix adjacent. This combination of habitats occurs at the edges of wetlands and upland habitats in Marshall. We try to maintain these areas using patchy burns and hand removal of invasives.

The Duke's Skipper (*Euphyes dukesi*) butterfly in South Pond Nature Area requires both a sedge plant for caterpillar development and nectar flower plants for adults. The proximity and amount of these different resources may influence whether a species will flourish or perish. It is often a matter of trial and error to encourage the establishment of the right amounts of the right resources in the right places. Tools like invasive species control and burning are wielded carefully to achieve this result.

It is also important to consider the potential negative effects of our actions. Sometimes even a small amount of additional fragmentation-such as a new trail, lawn, or playground-can create a barrier or stress for small animals such as salamanders. Because of this, we don't

put wood chips on trails that have known salamander populations, and we leave buffers around wetlands when we burn to remove invasive shrubs.



The American woodcock requires patchy open areas in order to perform their spring courtship ritual.

It can be challenging to weigh various effects of management, particularly when

both inaction and action have the potential for harm. Consider the American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*), a shorebird that uses the old field habitat at Barton Nature Area. If shrubs and small trees were allowed to take over the old field, the patchy open areas this species requires for its spring courtship ritual would not be available and the bird might not be able to nest in the park.

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Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

March

March 1, Tuesday

Controlled Burn Public Meeting

Leslie Science and Nature Center - Leslie House

1831 Traver Road

7:30 to 9:00 pm

Bring your questions about controlled burns to this meeting. If you plan on joining our burn crew for the first time this season, it is recommended that you attend this meeting.

March 2, Wednesday

Controlled Burn Crew Training

Leslie Science and Nature Center

Leslie Science and Nature Center - Nature House

1831 Traver Road

12:00 noon to 5:00 pm

Always wanted to participate in a controlled burn? Here is your chance! This training is required for new volunteers. Experienced folks also welcome for refresher training.

March 8, Tuesday

Steward's Circle

Bruegger's Bagels

709 N University Ave

7:30 to 8:30 am

Join the Stewardship Network's Huron Arbor Cluster for an informal discussion on a monthly topic with volunteer and professional land stewards and others interested in nature. This month's topic: Herbaceous Invasives: Successful approaches to controlling herbaceous invasive plants and monitoring for new threats.

March 12, Saturday

Salamander Survey Kickoff

Leslie Science and Nature Center - Nature House

1831 Traver Road

10:00 am to 12:00 noon

Help monitor Salamander populations and the health of local habitats. Field identification experience is helpful, but no previous experience required. Please register by March 10.

March 12, Saturday

Frog and Toad Survey Kickoff

Leslie Science and Nature Center - Nature House

1831 Traver Road

1:30 to 3:00 pm

Help us monitor frogs and toads in the parks. You will learn their calls, then go out to listen! No previous experience required. Please register by March 10.

March 15, Tuesday

Please wear 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.

AADL Series: Nature Talk

Traverwood Branch - A2 Library

7:00 to 8:30 pm

In this lecture and slideshow we will observe and discuss the beauty and natural wonders in our community. This is the first in a series of talks, walks and workdays in partnership with Ann Arbor Public Library to provide a more in-depth understanding of the natural areas and restoration work in the city.

March 19, Saturday

Photo Monitoring Kickoff

Leslie Science and Nature Center - Leslie House

1831 Traver Road

10:00 am to 12:00 noon

Help capture in photos the restoration progress in our natural areas. Must have personal digital camera.

March 19, Saturday

Workday Leader Training

Leslie Science and Nature Center - Leslie House

1831 Traver Road

1:30 to 5:00 pm

If you are leading a workday, how do you make it a safe, fun, and productive event? This training is for anyone interested in helping NAP staff lead volunteer workdays. Please register by March 14.

March 26, Saturday

Furstenberg Native Garden

12:00 noon to 3:00 pm

Help us weed and preserve the native plant garden at Furstenberg Nature Area, featuring some of the most diverse flora anywhere in Ann Arbor. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

April

April 9, Saturday

Dolph Nature Area

9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Help clear trails and spread woodchips to keep the trails accessible. Bring your plastic sleds to help us transport woodchips and brush. Meet in parking lot on the east side of Wagner Rd, between Liberty and Jackson.

April 12, Tuesday

Steward's Circle

Bruegger's Bagels

709 N University Ave

7:30 to 8:30 am

This month's topic: "Education: Local education efforts in restoration and opportunities for improved messaging."

April 16, Saturday

Wurster Park

10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Help combat garlic mustard and other invasive plants so the native plant species have a chance to thrive. Meet at the cul-de-sac of Edgewood Place off of W Davis Ave.

April 16, Saturday

Scarlett Mitchell Woods Nature Area

1:00 to 4:00 pm

Help clear trails and spread woodchips. Please bring your own plastic sleds to help with the hauling. Meet in the Scarlett Middle School parking lot off Lorraine Street.

Spring 2011

April 17, Sunday
Stewardship Network Workshop -
Identifying Woodland Wildflowers
Creekshead Preserve

1:00 to 4:00 pm

Learn to identify local spring woodland wildflowers. Then we'll hit the trail to see what we can find and identify. Participants will also receive a handy flower identification book. \$10 members/\$15 non-members

April 19, Tuesday
Breeding Bird Survey Kick-Off
Leslie Science and Nature Center - Leslie House
1831 Traver Rd.

7:30 to 9:00 pm

Sign up for your favorite park and pick up materials for our annual survey. Some experience in bird identification necessary. City Ornithologist Dea Armstrong will also report on the 2010 data and survey highlights. Please register by April 15.

April 21, Thursday
AADL Series: Nature Walk
Mary Beth Doyle Nature Area
7:00 to 8:30 pm

This is part of a series of talks, walks and workdays in partnership with Ann Arbor Public Library to provide a more in-depth understanding of the natural areas in the city. Meet at the Packard Rd entrance.

April 30, Saturday
Mary Beth Doyle Nature Area
9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Celebrate Arbor Day by helping clear trails and spread woodchips. Bring your plastic sleds to help transport woodchips and brush. Meet at the end of Verle Road, west off of Platt Road between Packard and Ellsworth.

Please wear 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.

May

Throughout May 2011

getDowntown Commuter Challenge

The Commuter Challenge is your chance to try a sustainable commute during the month of May. For more information visit www.getdowntown.org.

May 1, Sunday
Earth Day Festival
Washtenaw Community College
4800 E. Huron River Drive
12:00 noon to 4:00 pm

For more information, <http://a2gov.org/green>.

May 7, Saturday
13th Annual Garlic Mustard Weed-
Out Day and Barbeque!

See back page for full details!

May 10, Tuesday
Steward's Circle
Bruegger's Bagels
709 N University Ave
7:30 to 8:30 am

This month's topic: "Restoring Soils: Natural nutrients and soil enriching techniques."

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

Free and family-friendly! Bring binoculars if you have them. Meet City ornithologist Dea Armstrong at the paddleboat dock in Gallup near the canoe livery.

May 15, Sunday
Redbud Nature Area
1:00 to 4:00 pm

Help pull invasive plants from the natural area. Meet at the park entrance at the intersection of Parkwood Avenue and Jeanne Street.

May 19, Thursday
AADL Series:
Spring Invasive Plant Removal Walk
Stapp Nature Area
7:00 to 8:30 pm

This is part of a series of talks, walks and workdays in partnership with Ann Arbor Public Library to provide an in-depth understanding of the natural areas management work in the city. Please wear long pants and closed-toe shoes for this event. Work gloves will be provided. Meet at the Stapp Nature Area entrance near the corner of Traverwood Dr. and Huron Pkwy.

May 21, Saturday
Adopt-A-Park Spring Kick-Off
Various park locations
9:00 am to 12:00 noon

We rely on volunteers to beautify our city parks. 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 21, Saturday
Downtown Blooms Day
9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Help plant flowers throughout the downtown area! To pre-register, or for more information call 734-994-4176.

May 22, Sunday
Miller Nature Area
9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Help hand-pull invasive plants, such as Dame's Rocket and garlic mustard. Meet us at the Arborview Boulevard entrance, just east of Wildwood Avenue.

May 22, Sunday
Furstenberg Native Garden
12:00 noon to 3:00 pm
Help us weed the native garden at Furstenberg Park. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

Park Focus: Argo Nature Area

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crowding their view of the river. That's when Bill decided to get involved and become a Park Steward. Since that day, Bill has cleared more than a quarter mile stretch along Longshore Drive, improving the



A view of Argo Nature Area taken from across the Huron River in Bandemer Nature Area. The two parks, linked by Barton Dam and Argo Dam, create a wonderful loop trail around the river.

photo by Wendell McKay

ecology and the view of the river for many neighbors and walkers. Now, all but the steepest sections of hillside along Longshore Drive are clear of invasive shrubs.

With great pleasure, Bill and Colleen shared with me the many things they enjoy about Argo Nature Area. They love seeing the lights of the Ann Arbor skyline over the snowy trees and glistening water when driving home after an evening out. In the spring, they are treated to their favorite wildflowers including Jack-in-the-pulpit. Just after the snow melts, they begin to hear their favorite sound in the park, that of the rowers on the pond. Then, when autumn arrives, Bill and Colleen enjoy walking along the boardwalk, watching the migrating birds that briefly make this nature area their home.

Argo Nature Area offers a variety of splendors for visitors. From the peaceful views of the river to the calls of migrating birds, from a woodland trail to the shoreline boardwalk for hiking or running, from the view of the city skyline at night to the stars reflecting off the pond there is something for everyone to enjoy in Argo.

Restoration for Wildlife Management

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However, if the controlled burning which we do happens too late in the spring, American Woodcock nests (as well as nests of other breeding birds) could be destroyed.

This leads to the important consideration of timing. All of our prescribed burns and other more involved activities are coordinated with the timing of amphibian and reptile emergence, nest building, egg laying and plant emergence. Similarly, homeowners might want to check for wildlife use before changing a cracked porch foundation, removing a rock pile or a dead tree, or mowing an area that has been allowed to grow for a while. Timing the work to avoid the hibernation or nest season can make a big difference for animal survival and reproduction.

Observing habitat use by animals is one of the most important and rewarding parts of understanding how to benefit them. We are very thankful to have so many inventory volunteers reporting back to us on what they are seeing. NAP truly couldn't do as good a job for our wildlife without your help!



Editor's Note: If you'd like to get involved, check our calendar on pages 4 & 5 for information on our Frog & Toad, Salamander and Breeding Bird Survey kickoffs.

NAPpennings

thank you...

Many thanks to the following groups who attended NAP workdays in October, November and December. We could not make such a difference without you!

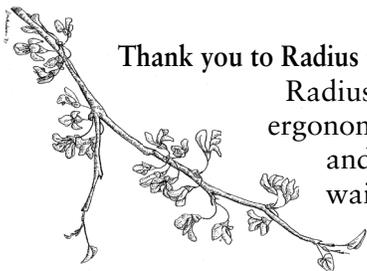
Black & Veatch
CHS Group LLC
Circle K
Community and Pioneer High Schools
EMU Econ 108
EMU Green
Friends of Dicken Woods Nature Area
Friends of Greenview Nature Area
Girl Scout Troop 157
Glacier Area Homeowners Association
Great Sauk Trail Council of Boy Scouts,
Pack 111, Den 1
Great Sauk Trail Council of Boy Scouts,
St. Francis School Troop
Northville Rotary Interact
Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc-Delta Rho Chapter
REI
Rowing teams from Huron, Pioneer,
and Skyline High Schools
UM BSE Chemical Engineering 2013
UM Ecological Issues Fall term students
UM Greek Life Service Day Participants
UM MCSP Environmental Action Team

Grants and Donations

NAP Receives MLK JR. Day of Service Mini-Grant

NAP was the proud recipient of a \$400 MLK Jr. Day of Service mini-grant. NAP used the funds to purchase safety goggles and insulated work gloves for colder weather volunteer events. A volunteer event was held at Furstenberg Park to cut shrubs in the frozen wetland.

The Adopt-A-Park program received a 2011 Customer Service Improvement Plan Grant from the City of Ann Arbor. AAP used the \$500 to purchase pole pruners for the new Citizen Pole Pruner Program.



Thank you to Radius Garden for Donating Tools
Radius Garden donated several ergonomic shovels, transplanters and rakes to NAP. We can't wait to start using them this spring at our workdays!

Staff Updates

hello...

Naoko Matsudaira

Having worked in Tokyo, Japan for several years, I came to Ann Arbor for my husband's study in the University of Michigan and started volunteering for the NAP office in October. I mainly help NAP staff with volunteer recruitment, and also assist with special events such as preparation for the volunteer appreciation potluck. When time allows, I enjoy visiting national parks and cooking Japanese dishes.



farewell...

Nancy Stoll

During four years of being an office volunteer and then a NAP staffer it was great to learn about restoration ecology and meet many wonderful like-minded folks. I enjoyed walking by NAP's ever-changing prairie every morning and working in a building that was also frequented by a bald eagle and owls! And thank you to NAP staff for teaching me everything I know about computers. Although it is time for me to move on to another job, I will continue planting natives in my own yard, and I hope to see NAP friends at workdays.



Amanda Nimke

After almost two years of fun with the conservation crew, I've moved on to another exciting adventure. I'll miss burning with all the enthusiastic burn volunteers and pulling weeds at Bird Hills, my family's previous homestead. I'm sure I will see folks at workdays and perhaps a burn or two. Thanks for all the fun!



Jill Sweetman

This past fall was my final semester as an undergraduate studying environmental sciences with a focus on restoration ecology. I'm excited to be done with school and to sink my teeth into restoration activities outside of academia. With NAP, I took part in invasive shrub removal, seed collecting, prescribed burning, and got an insider's view of the goings on at a really great organization. Thank you to the crew and staff for a very fun and educational autumn!



13th Annual

Garlic Mustard Weed Out Day & Barbeque



May 7th, 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 on the right 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.



Barbeque Potluck:
Leslie Science & Nature Center
1831 Traver Road
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Join us after the garlic mustard weed-out event to celebrate at an **afternoon potluck barbeque!** We will provide hot dogs, burgers (veggie too!), soft beverages, and a few side dishes made with garlic mustard.

Please bring a dish to share. Family and friends are welcome. Please RSVP to nap@a2gov.org or call us at 734-794-6627 if you plan to attend!

Participating Parks:

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

Bluffs- Meet in front of 236 Sunset Rd

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)

Huron Hills Golf Course Woods- Meet on Hunting Valley off Provincial Drive, in Arlington Eight neighborhood

Huron Parkway- Meet at 3470 Woodland Road, off East Huron River Drive

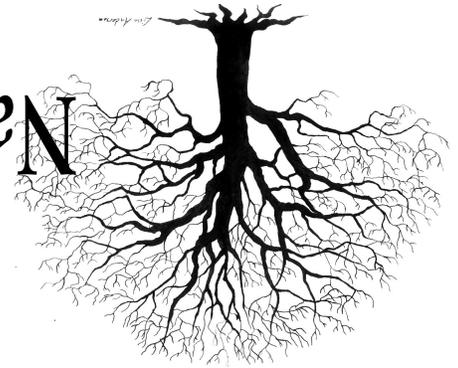
Leslie Woods- Meet us at the park entrance at the north end of Upland Drive, north of Plymouth Road

Marshall- Meet in the parking lot off Dixboro Road, north of Plymouth Road

Miller - Meet at the Arborview Boulevard entrance, just east of Wildwood Avenue

Spring 2011

Natural Area Preservation News



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