

NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

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

Volume 20, Number 3
Autumn 2015

Park Focus: Hansen Nature Area

Catie Wytchak, Outreach Assistant

Driving down Maple Road, it is easy to whiz past Hansen Nature Area without even realizing that there is a hidden gem just off the road. Walking from the parking lot near Grace Bible Church into the deeply shaded woods, you are treated to a cool breeze. Although few people find their way into the nature area, the small pond in the western section of the park is home to Painted Turtles, Spring Peepers and Chorus Frogs. The circular pathway directs hikers through an oak hickory forest outfitted with a scattering of wildflowers like Jack-in-the-pulpit and May apples.



Spreading native seeds after the burn helped to strengthen the native plant population.

Aerial photos from 1940 show the area that would become Hansen Nature Area as one of the few pockets of woodland left untouched in that part of the city. Surrounding the area in the 1940s were orchards and farmland which gave way to housing developments in the 1960s.

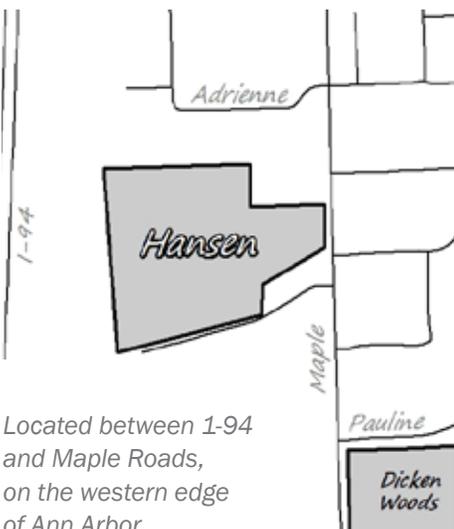
In March of 1964, H.E. Hansen donated the 10.3 acre parcel with the agreement that it would be preserved as a park and recreation area. A questionnaire was sent to neighbors to receive input on what they wanted in the park. Neighbors requested a walking trail and some wanted a playground for their children. During a public meeting, the question of a playground was put to a vote and with more people in favor, Parks and Recreation began

plans for a small “tot play area, with a split rail fence since it is so close to Maple road.” The playground is still in use and guarded by the split rail fence.

Restoration efforts started in 1997 under NAP’s leadership. Work in Hansen began with building the trail and removing invasive species. In 2003, NAP conducted a prescribed burn throughout the entire park. Prescribed burns are used to eliminate invasives and give natives a competitive advantage. Spreading native seeds after the burn also helped to strengthen the native plant population.

After the burn was conducted, a neighbor wrote that “Hansen is carpeted with yellow trout-lily – really beautiful. Also

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Located between 1-94 and Maple Roads, on the western edge of Ann Arbor,

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A unit of the City of Ann Arbor
Community Services Area,
Parks and Recreation Services.

*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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*Natural Area Preservation is
funded by the voter-approved
2013-2018 Park Maintenance &
Capital Improvements Millage.*

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

David Borneman, Deputy Manager for Volunteerism and NAP

This summer I attended my 35th high school reunion. I've heard complaints from alumni of large high schools who showed up for a reunion and didn't even know anyone in attendance. Not the case here. There were only 42 in my graduating class from our small rural school. And some of these people had been my classmates for 12 years of public school. So you'd think that I really knew them, right? There shouldn't be any surprises in where people ended up 35 years later. It should have been really clear back then who would end up where in life. Nope. There are always plenty of surprises: individuals who struggled through school, but thrived in later years, and others who seem to have peaked during those high school years. It would have been impossible to predict these outcomes 35 years ago, even though I thought I knew these people well.

Some of you may think that ecological restoration is the same way: there's no way of predicting the outcome. Maybe we just cut shrubs and pull weeds and hope for the best. Maybe predicting restoration success is as impossible as predicting where our childhood friends will end up later in life? Again, nope. I'm pleased to say that restoration is a bit more predictable. Sure, there are always some surprises. Some areas recover slower, or quicker, than we anticipated. But in hindsight, we can often make sense of that outcome once we better understand the specific variables at play onsite. The seedbank wasn't what we expected; we underestimated the negative impacts of historic over-grazing; weather conditions kept us from using controlled burns as effectively as we had planned, etc... In most cases, if we had just been a little smarter, we could have read the site better and made better predictions.

**"WE HOPE
YOU'LL COME
AND BE PART
OF THESE
SUCCESSSES."**

Fortunately, that suggests that we should be getting better with our predictions as we gain more experience. And I do believe that's true. After 22 years of assessing Ann Arbor's parks and implementing management activities that we thought would be appropriate for each particular site (and learning from our successes and failures along the way), NAP has a pretty good idea of what to expect from each site, and what it will take to get there. Can we maintain this prairie just by burning it every year or two? If we removed all the garlic mustard and invasive shrubs from that woodland would the forest floor be covered in native wildflowers? Is there enough sunlight getting to the ground to get oak regeneration in that savanna? For those of you who volunteer with NAP, the most important question might be, "What activities should we ask volunteers to do that will achieve the greatest ecological benefit at this particular site?"

So rest assured when you come to NAP's stewardship days that we are not just making "busy work" for you. And we're not asking you to do something that will be a waste of your time. We don't have unrealistic restoration goals for these sites. These sites really have been voted "most likely to succeed" in restoration. We hope you'll come and be part of these successes. ■



Controlled fire is the application of fire to a natural area, performed in a well-planned fashion by a trained team. Without fire, our ecosystems are starved for light and nutrients, but with it, they flourish.

Controlled Fire: Our Most Important Tool

Mike Hahn, Stewardship Specialist

Land managers use many different techniques to help restore native ecosystems, all of which have an appropriate place and time when they are most effective. Some techniques such as hand-pulling are geared towards reducing invasive species populations. Others encourage native species to thrive, such as sowing seed. There is one method that does a little of everything at the same time – controlled fire. Just as the name implies, controlled fire is the application of fire to a natural area, performed in a well-planned and thought-out fashion with a properly trained team. The benefits that controlled fire has on our ecosystems are countless, but a couple of the most noticeable ones are how well it keeps encroaching brush at bay while putting nutrients back into the soil. It also helps to scarify seeds of plants in a fire-adapted ecosystem. Financially, controlled fire is one of the most cost effective techniques used by land managers.

Fire is also our most historically accurate management tool, as Native Americans regularly set fire to the landscape for a variety of reasons including hunting, warfare, and to clear farmland. In fact, fire has been a part of our ecosystems since the last glaciers retreated from this land. Not only did our native plants adapt to this and other disturbances, they have become dependent

on it. When European settlers started to arrive and disperse throughout the United States, so did the suppression of wildfire. This suppression of wildfire had many unforeseen effects on our historic landscape. Trees and shrubs had the opportunity to fill in woodlands, savannas, and prairies, and over time started to shade out ever-important sunlight from the forest floor. Historically woodland habitats in this area had on average about 60% canopy cover. Today most of our woodlands are closer to 80% or higher canopy cover. That means that not enough sunlight reaches the forest floor, which reduces regeneration of both the woody and vegetative plant communities. Add in competition with invasive species and the floristic quality starts to fall apart fairly quickly. I say all of this to demonstrate the importance that fire has on our ecological communities. Without fire, our ecosystems are starved for light and nutrients, but with it they flourish.

Today the ecological restoration industry views controlled fire as an important tool in its arsenal. Here at NAP one might argue that it is the most important tool we use. Controlled fire has served as a way to protect and restore Ann Arbor's natural areas since its infancy, with our first burn on May 3, 1994 at the prairie that runs along Traver Road at the Leslie Science and Nature Center. That year NAP performed burns at two different parks. Over the past 22 years, we have continued to grow our controlled burn program to both a spring and fall season and even at times running multiple

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NUMBER OF BURN DAYS BY YEAR

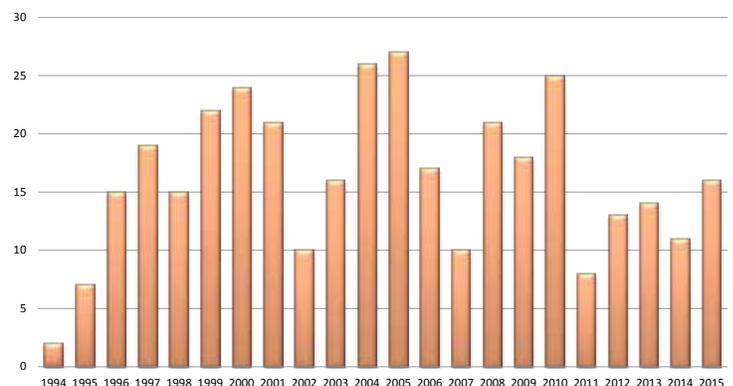


Photo: Bryan Mitchell Photography



NAP

VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR AUTUMN 2015

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.

SEPTEMBER

Thursday, September 10
AADL Nature Hike | Black Pond Woods Nature Area | 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Join NAP and the Ann Arbor District Library on a nature walk through Black Pond Woods. Observe late summer native plant species. Meet in the Leslie Science and Nature Center parking lot, 1831 Traver Road.

NATIONAL DAY OF SERVICE ★

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

A nationwide day of service and remembrance for 9/11. Help remove invasive shrubs at one of these events.

Dhu Varren Nature Area
9 a.m. to noon

Meet at the intersection of Birchwood Drive and Dhu Varren Road.

Black Pond Woods Nature Area
1 to 4 p.m.

Meet at the Leslie Science & Nature Center parking lot, 1831 Traver Rd.

Sunday, September 20
Cedar Bend Nature Area
1 to 4 p.m.

Cedar Bend Nature Area is the oldest park in Ann Arbor, dating back to the 1900's. Enjoy some of the same scenic views that nature lovers enjoyed over 100 years ago while helping to cut and remove invasive shrubs. Meet at the Island Park parking lot, at the end of Island Dr.

Thursday, September 24

Nature Walk
Huron Hills Woods and Rain Garden
7 to 8:30 p.m.

Join NAP on a nature walk. Meet in the back of the parking lot at 3465 E. Huron River Drive.

NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY ★

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

Celebrate National Public Lands Day by volunteering to remove invasive shrubs at one of these events.

Oakwoods Nature Area
9 a.m. to noon

This oak-hickory woodland includes a small pond for listening to frog calls. Please meet at the park entrance off of Dunwoodie.

Wurster Park
9 a.m. to noon

Please meet at the cul-de-sac of Edgewood Place off of West Davis Ave.

OCTOBER

Saturday, October 10
Huron Parkway Nature Area
9 a.m. to noon

Maintain the floristic diversity of this 19-acre natural area by collecting native seeds. Meet at 3470 Woodland Dr.

Saturday, October 10
Scarlett Mitchell Nature Area
1 to 4 p.m.

Help remove invasive shrubs and keep this mature woodland beautiful and accessible. Bring plastic sleds to help with the hauling. Meet at the park entrance near Scarlett Middle School.

Wednesday, October 14
Public Meeting
Controlled Ecological Burn Program
Downtown Branch of Ann Arbor District Library, aadlfreespace
7 to 8:30 p.m.

Learn more about the ecological benefits of burning, and hear about the specifics of effectively and safely using fire as a restoration tool.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY ★

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24

Make a Difference Day is hailed as "The Nation's Largest Day of Service." Come celebrate the 24th anniversary of this event by volunteering!

Dicken Woods Nature Area
9 a.m. to noon

Meet at the end of Dicken Drive, off South Maple Road.

Molin Nature Area
1 to 4 p.m.

Meet at the entrance near the corner of Powell Ave. and Columbia Ave.

Saturday, October 17
Miller Nature Area
9 a.m. to noon

Help us maintain the unique landscape Miller has to offer by removing invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle. Meet at the Arborview Blvd. entrance, east of Wildwood Ave.

Sunday, October 18
Mary Beth Doyle Park
1 to 4 p.m.

Help with seed collection! Meet at the end of Verle Ave., west, off of Platt Road between Packard and Ellsworth.



**VOLUNTEER
APPRECIATION
POTLUCK**

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22
COBBLESTONE FARM,
2781 PACKARD ROAD
6:30 TO 9:30 P.M.
COSTUMES ENCOURAGED

**SEE BACK PAGE
FOR DETAILS**

NOVEMBER

Sunday, November 1
Argo Nature Area
9 a.m. to noon

Help remove invasive shrubs such as buckthorn and honeysuckle. Meet in the parking lot near the entrance to the woods, 1055 Longshore Drive.

STEWARDSHIP NETWORK

STEWARDSHIP CIRCLE

EACH EVENT HELD FROM 7:30 TO 8:30 a.m. BRUEGGER'S BAGELS | 709 N UNIVERSITY AVE

Are you interested in learning more about how to care for natural areas? Then join the Stewardship Network's Ann Arbor cluster for an informal discussion on a monthly topic with volunteer and professional land stewards. Free and open to anyone interested. For more information go to www.stewardshipnetwork.org.

Tuesday, September 8 | Novel Ecosystems

Local ecosystems and plant communities will change over the coming decades. Which topics remain unresolved?

Tuesday, October 13 | Conservation Ecology

How to prioritize land acquisition decisions to create a network of green spaces that would maximize the protection of biodiversity, or maximize the benefits and services provided by nature.

Saturday, November 7
National Public Lands Day
Ruthven Nature Area
1 to 4 p.m.

Support Ruthven's biodiversity by maintaining the trails. Meet at the Gallup boat dock parking lot, at the corner of Huron Parkway and Geddes Road.

Sunday, November 8
Bluffs Nature Area
9 a.m. to noon

Tucked away within Bluffs' 39 acres is an open field filled with native prairie species. Preserve the prairie and other hidden gems by removing invasive shrubs. Meet at the entrance off of Sunset Road.

Sunday, November 8
Sunset Brooks Nature Area
1 to 4 p.m.

Get outside and help remove invasive shrubs in this lovely eight acre oak-hickory woodland. Meet at the park entrance on Beechwood Drive.

Sunday, November 15
Stewardship Workday
Black Pond Woods Nature Area
9 a.m. to noon

Collect native plant seeds in this beautiful nature area. Meet at the Leslie Science & Nature Center parking lot, located at 1831 Traver Rd.

DECEMBER

Sunday, December 6
Leslie Woods Nature Area
1 to 4 p.m.

We'll be removing invasive shrubs, such as honeysuckle and buckthorn to increase the native habitat. Meet at the north end of Upland Drive., north of Plymouth Road.

Saturday, December 12
Stapp Nature Area
1 to 4 p.m.

Help native plant species thrive by removing buckthorn and honeysuckle. Please meet at the park sign at the corner of Huron Parkway and Tuebingen Parkway.

FAMILY VOLUNTEER DAY ★

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21

Celebrate by volunteering at one of these family friendly events.

Barton Nature Area
9 a.m. to noon

Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot on Huron River Drive, North of Bird Road.

Hannah Nature Area
1 to 4 p.m.

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

Tuesday, November 10 | Soils

How can we maintain high quality soils and what can be done about poor soil conditions? How does soil quality affect competition between native and non-native species?

Tuesday, December 8 | Winter Restoration

What types of fun and successful restoration work can be done in the winter? What should we be trying to accomplish before spring?

NAPpenings

Welcome, new Park Stewards!

Marisa Persaud
and Ryan Reich
Hansen Nature Area

Deanna Owen
Riverwood Nature Area

Odette Petrini
White Oak Park

Thank you!

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

Adventure Guides
Ann Arbor Cub Scouts Troop 4
Arbor Prep High School
Canton Prep High School
Community High School &
Ann Arbor Open School
Emerson School
First United Methodist Church
Green Apple Garden Preschool
Honey Creek Community
School
Hot Spot Life Group
Huron High School
Biology Class
Lawton School Cub Scouts
Martin Luther King
Elementary School
Northridge Church
REI
Team Awesome
Toyota Boshoku America
UM Dental School
UM Family Medicine
Residency Program
UM Inter-university
Consortium for Political and
Social Research
UM Nam Center for Korean
Studies
UM Law School
YMCA Youth Volunteer Corps
Women Indeed

Michigan Prescribed Fire Council Annual Meeting September 10-11, Camp Grayling, MI

Research on pine and oak forest restoration will be presented with heavy emphasis on lessons learned and facilitated learning analysis in the practice of prescribed fire. Expect presentations, a visit to the Roscommon Equipment Center and a field trip to Mack Lake. More information, registration and cost will be available soon at www.firecouncil.org.

Join Us to Say FAREWELL to Dea Armstrong

Dea Armstrong will be retiring from NAP this autumn, after 17 years. We are planning several opportunities for you to celebrate her time with NAP and wish her well. The first will be at our annual **Volunteer Appreciation Potluck** – see the back page for details. We are also planning on farewell party for Dea on **Tuesday, November 10th from 5-7 pm** at the **Leslie Science and Nature Center**. RSVP to NAP@a2gov.org or 734.794.6627.

Controlled Fire: Our Most Important Tool

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crews. This past spring we performed controlled burns at 19 different parks and burned a total of 120 acres of park land. Whether we are able to burn one or 50 natural areas in a season, the benefits of fire to the land are evident by the charred, dead-standing remains of invasive brush and the dramatic increase of flowering forbs the following growing season. One noteworthy example from this spring was NAP's successful burn in the main woodland at Mary Beth Doyle Nature Area which has not been burned for the past 9 years due to wet conditions. A few weeks later, park visitors were treated to a brilliant, overwhelming display of spring wildflowers. I encourage you to get out into our parks this autumn to enjoy the benefits that NAP's controlled burn program is having on your natural areas. ■

**THE BENEFITS
OF FIRE TO PARK LAND
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THE FOLLOWING GROWING SEASON.**

Hansen Nature Area

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some large patches of toothwort, and smaller spots of wild geranium and Mayapple with a few happy Jacks and a couple trillium. Do you suppose that burn had anything to do with it?" The controlled burn likely did encourage the native wildflowers to flourish.

Two new park stewards began working at Hansen Nature Area this spring. Marisa and Ryan are

continuing to remove invasive shrubs like honeysuckle and buckthorn, and invasive herbaceous plants like garlic mustard and dame's rocket. Marisa and Ryan are also volunteering with NAP to survey for frogs, toads, turtles and butterflies.

Located on the western edge of Ann Arbor, Hansen has the highest elevation (990 feet above sea level) of any City park. Beyond elevation superiority, Hansen is a beautiful spot to walk through with your friends, family or dog. ■

FAREWELL DEA ARMSTRONG

When I first interviewed with Dave and NAP for the job of Ornithologist, it was 1995, and I knew I liked birding and birds. Apparently they wanted a bit more expertise and hired well-known birder and Birds of Washtenaw County author, Mike Kielb. I wanted the job so much



Photo: Margie Teal

that I decided to go to graduate school to beef up my credentials. After a stint first as a NAP Breeding Bird Survey volunteer and then as Mike's assistant, I received my Masters degree in Avian Ecology from SNRE at the University of Michigan in 1998. By then, Mike had moved on from NAP and I finally got the job. It was a perfect part-time job for a mother of two busy sons and I have loved it for many years now! I am grateful to have worked with so many wonderful folks (both volunteers and staff) at

NAP over the years - so many of you have gone on to do incredible things in addition to the outstanding work you did with NAP! I am particularly grateful to Dave Borneman for giving me a chance to take on new challenges and for being interested in novel ways to manage urban parks and properties that would increase bird habitat. My long-time relationship with Washtenaw Audubon Society (WAS) has been invaluable to help me do my job. Thank you to all of the WAS folks that have worked with me and NAP over the years.

I am planning to bird more after I retire, and in some places quite far away from Ann Arbor. However, I have some great projects lined up that will continue to focus my interest on bird and habitat conservation. I also hope to continue to teach my March-April Field Ornithology class with the amazing Francie Krawcke! So I am retiring, but, hey who knows? Maybe I will volunteer for the NAP Breeding Bird Survey! Let's go birding!

FAREWELL MARY ADAMS

Working for NAP has been a great experience for me over the past year. I was able to meet some great volunteers as the Workday Coordinator, and really see the difference that NAP is making in the Ann Arbor community. I will be starting graduate school in the fall at the College of Charleston in South Carolina. I am thankful for all of the people I've met and worked with, and will miss all of Ann Arbor's wonderful parks.



STAFF UPDATES



FAREWELL CRISTINE SANTANA

I really enjoyed my time working for NAP's field crew. It was a great opportunity to meet a lot of people that are passionate about nature, and get some restoration done. It is very rewarding to go for a hike in one of the nature areas where we have removed invasive species, and to be able to see that positive change. Thank you and keep up the good work!



FAREWELL & CONGRATS DANA BURNETTE

I sincerely enjoyed working with the Park Stewards of Ann Arbor's parks. Everyday I was amazed by NAP volunteers' selfless attitudes and their investment in their local environment. I think of their great examples of service often. I am sad to leave NAP but enjoying this time getting to know my new baby girl and spending time as a family.



WELCOME CATIE WYTYCHAK

Working for NAP as the Park Steward Coordinator combines my interests in public land preservation and volunteer coordination with my love for the great outdoors. I'm excited to apply my degree from the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and the Environment to improving the natural areas of Ann Arbor by working with Park Stewards and other volunteers. I look forward to learning from the strong network of neighbors and nature enthusiasts in Ann Arbor. ■





NAP

Autumn 2015

Natural Area Preservation

City of Ann Arbor
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Ann Arbor, MI 48104

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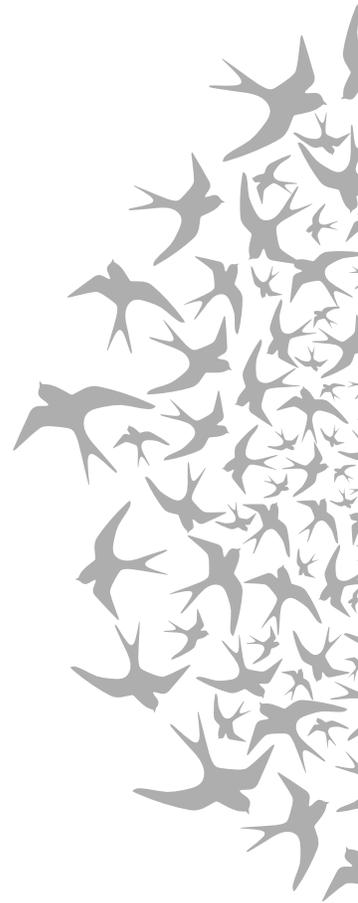


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..... please come

*Volunteer
Appreciation
Potluck**



Thursday, October 22nd
Cobblestone Farm | 2781 Packard Rd | 6:30-9:30pm

Volunteers (past, present, and future) are invited to our annual celebration of your hard work!

R&R

by October 19th | nap@a2gov.org | 734.794.6627