

# Natural Area Preservation News

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

Volume 17, Number 3

Autumn 2012

## Bluffs Nature Areas: Welcoming Additions

by Anne Rueter and NAP staff

"It feels like a wild oasis in the midst of Ann Arbor," wrote one Bluffs Nature Area fan a few years ago.

Bluffs, with its steep wooded slopes high above North Main Street, is a fine perch for viewing the sunrise. Soon it will gain a key missing ingredient - easy access.

Small park signs, on the south side of the property on Sunset Road and on the north on Huronview Boulevard, will mark the new public entry points to the property.

Twelve years ago, the City of Ann Arbor was able to double the size of Bluffs Nature Area to 39.34 acres by acquiring nearly 20 key additional acres of wooded ravines and uplands, saving the land from a condominium development. Until now, though, the only official entry has been off North Main. You can reach Bluffs there only by crossing the busy thoroughfare on foot near Lakeshore Street and then climbing up a steep incline.

The City recently acquired two small parcels, on Sunset and on Huronview, that at last provide the needed access. Once these entrances are more formally established, visitors will find footpaths that lead to the existing informal network of trails, some of them rather steep. The trails have developed thanks to hikers and mountain bikers who have come to enjoy the great views of the Huron River valley in fall and winter, the

rugged terrain and the oak-hickory woods, as well as other plant communities.

A small prairie, one of the more notable plant communities, has sprouted on an exposed gravelly slope that once served as a staging area when nearby M



*The prairie at Bluffs Nature Area is just one of the plant communities which will be easier to access with the soon to be developed entrances on Sunset and Huronview.*

-14 was built. On late summer days, the prairie displays vivid colors. It's an intriguing place anytime, revealing how tough prairie species can take hold and thrive in the most droughty, scarred places. NAP's periodic controlled burns here encourage the existing prairie species, which include big and little bluestem grasses, stiff and showy goldenrod, mountain mint, butterfly weed, boneset, lanceleaf coreopsis, blue-eyed grass, and vervain.

NAP has extensively cleared buckthorn and other invasives from wooded slopes, so that oak seedlings are now reaching for the sunlight. With more careful management, NAP envisions much of Bluffs as oak savanna, interspersed with patches of prairie. That would take these river corridor highlands back to the way they were in pre-settlement times, when Native Americans used fire to encourage grasslands and woodlands for game, berry production, and other purposes.

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# Coordinator's Corner

## Coming Home to Parks

Those of you who don't follow City government proceedings may not be aware that NAP has not officially been part of the City's Parks and Recreation Department for about ten years. In 2002, the City actually did away with "departments" and reorganized into four different "service areas." Part of what had been the old Parks and Rec. Dept. (the Recreation Facilities staff and the Park Planners) went into Community Services; and part of it (the Park Maintenance and the Forestry staff) went into Public Services, specifically into the Field Operations Unit. After weighing both options, NAP joined the others in Field Operations, and that has been our organizational home for the past ten years.

But the City has changed in the past decade. NAP is no longer the only one who works with volunteers in city parks. Following NAP's lead, the "Give 365" volunteer program was created to accommodate those interested in volunteering at the City's recreational facilities. And there are other areas where volunteer interest is growing. "Adopt-A-Park" inspired "Adopt-A-Median" and there is talk of many other twists on that theme. Nationwide, volunteerism is on the upswing, in part because many Baby-Boomers are reaching an age where they now have more time to devote to volunteer activities.

Within this broader context, the City decided to rethink its ability to respond to this growing culture of volunteerism. After Jason Frenzel vacated his position as Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator at NAP in spring 2011, the City undertook a year-long strategic planning process to consider the issue of what to do with these various volunteer programs. One of the outcomes is that NAP, Adopt-A-Park, Give 365 and any other park-focused volunteer efforts will now be reunited in the Parks and Recreation Services Unit. NAP has moved out of Field Operations and has come home to Parks.

Another outcome is that all of these programs will now be overseen by one person, the newly created Deputy Manager of Parks and Recreation Services – Natural Area Preservation and Volunteerism. As I assume that role, my responsibilities will expand slightly to include the Give 365 Program and some other administrative responsibilities to help lighten the load of Colin Smith, Parks and Recreation Services Manager.

And a final outcome of this year-long reshuffling is that NAP's vacant Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator position has now officially been filled. Tina Roselle, who had been filling in after Jason Frenzel left, was hired in August to fill that position more permanently.

Lots of big, important changes for NAP and staff here. But that shouldn't result in any big changes to what NAP, AAP, or Give 365 currently do. Hopefully it will lead to more uniformity in how we work with volunteers citywide. And hopefully it will help the City better accommodate the growing demand from people of all interests to volunteer in our park system.

~ Dave Borneman  
Deputy Manager of Parks and Recreation Services -  
Natural Area Preservation and Volunteerism



CITY OF ANN ARBOR  
**Natural Area  
Preservation**

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 2007-2012 Park  
Maintenance & Capital Improvements  
Millage.*

# Inventory Results 2012

By Lara Treemore Spears, Dea Armstrong, and David Mifsud

When you go out into nature, you never know what you will see. Some NAP volunteers actively survey for the animals that call our parks “home,” and some just happen to have the opportunity to observe them when they visit or participate in other activities. That was the case for volunteers at Garlic Mustard Weed-Out Day in May, who saw a female wild turkey on nest in Cedar Bend Nature Area. The observation was even more special because this particular turkey had a rare mottled white/grey coloration pattern (the biological term is “leucistic,” in which pigment is lacking in certain body cells). The excitement of this find had only begun to wear off when volunteers from the U-M law school a month later spotted another female turkey (with the normal color pattern) in the same park!



*A harmless Garter Snake at Ward Park playground this past March.*

*Photo by Laura Holladay*

Our “herp” volunteers (short for “herpetofauna”) have many opportunities for surprises when they go out seeking frogs, toads, salamanders, snakes, and turtles in our ponds, woods, fields, and... playgrounds! Variable Michigan weather, and the dependence of these species on warm temperatures and plenty of moisture, sometimes contribute to unpredictable herp survey results. The playground conditions at Ward Park must have been super for a mid-March warm-up for

the harmless Garter Snake pictured here. The snake was spotted by a survey volunteer checking her sites during daytime hours, in preparation for going out at night to listen for the breeding calls of our local frogs and toads.

It was an exceptionally early year for amphibian breeding, in which volunteers documented mating calls from American Toad on March 17th (the earliest calling date in the City previously was March 26) and Leopard Frog on March 21 (previously March 30). This is the first year since our survey started in 1995 that five species of frog and toad—Chorus Frog, Spring Peeper, American Toad, Gray Treefrog, and

Green Frog—were heard on the same night (March 28), which was also the second-earliest date we have heard Green Frog (March 18 was the earliest, in 2002). This is also the first year we had volunteers surveying for turtles, and nests of Painted Turtles and Snapping Turtles were documented in Dolph, Gallup, and Scheffler parks.

This spring and summer also brought some uncommon birds into our city. A Black-crowned Night Heron showed up in April to have a look at the area around the new whitewater at Argo and allowed Eric Arnold to get some great photos.



*A Black-crowned Night Heron in Argo Nature Area. Photo by Eric Arnold*

(A Red-headed Woodpecker showed up as well!) At least one Cerulean Warbler (a state-threatened species) seemed very interested in the tall oaks at Bird Hills and Kuebler Langford as reported by Breeding Bird Survey volunteers Kelly McKinne and Laurent Fournier. And for the first time ever, a Dickcissel was found at the airport city property.

This is also the first year NAP has encouraged volunteers to enter their own observations into the Michigan Herp Atlas ([www.miherpatlas.org/](http://www.miherpatlas.org/)), and Cornell’s eBird system (<http://ebird.org/>). In particular, turtle stewards were trained to enter data into the herp atlas in addition to sending their data to NAP, and breeding bird survey volunteers were encouraged to enter migratory bird observations into eBird. While NAP continues to enter volunteer data into our own record-keeping system to analyze populations geographically and generate park reports, we also want to support broader efforts to understand species dynamics on a statewide or nationwide basis. We hope to convert our data going back to 1995 for use by these data systems, putting our volunteer nature observations literally “on the map” for all to see.

*Any data not returned yet? Please send it in now so we can report your results at the volunteer potluck. Also, for turtle, salamander, and frog/toad volunteers, please report your hours to us if you spent time other than what was shown on your data sheets.*



# Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

## Autumn 2012

### September

**September 9, Sunday**  
**Hannah Nature Area Workday**  
9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Help remove invasive shrubs. Meet at the west end of Bath St., west of 7th (between Miller and Huron).

**September 9, Sunday**  
**Furstenberg Native Garden Workday**  
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Help weed and preserve the native garden. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Rd., across from Huron High School.

**September 16, Sunday**  
**Sugarbush Nature Area Workday**  
9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Help cut and remove invasive shrubs. Meet at the Rumsey Dr. entrance by the tennis courts.

**September 22, Saturday**  
**Miller Nature Area Workday**  
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Help improve the trails in Miller Nature Area. Please bring your plastic sleds to help with hauling woodchips. Meet at the Arborview Blvd entrance, just east of Wildwood Ave.

**September 22, Saturday**  
**Sunset Brooks Nature Area Workday**  
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Help keep the trails beautiful and accessible. Please bring your plastic sleds to help with hauling woodchips. Meet at the park entrance on Sunset Rd., at the end of Brooks St.

**September 23, Sunday**  
**Marshall Nature Area Workday**

9:00 am to 12:00 pm  
We'll be removing invasive shrubs, such as buckthorn and honeysuckle, to give native plants a chance to thrive. Meet us in the parking lot just north of Plymouth Rd. on Dixsboro Rd.

**September 29, Saturday**  
**National Public Lands Day**  
**Scarlett Mitchell Woods Workday**  
9:00 am to 12:00 pm

National Public Lands Day is the nation's largest hands-on volunteer effort to improve and enhance the public lands that Americans enjoy. Join this effort by removing invasive shrubs to help preserve the mature oak-hickory woodland. 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.*

### October

**October 6, Saturday**  
**Greenview Nature Area Workday**  
9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Join NAP, neighbors, the Friends of Greenview, and the Ann Arbor Public Schools to spread woodchips and to plant prairie flowers. Visit [www.friendsofgreenview.org](http://www.friendsofgreenview.org) for more information about Greenview. Meet at the Greenview Park sign, on Greenview Dr., across from Barnard Rd.

**October 6, Saturday**  
**Wurster Park Workday**

10:00 am to 2:00 pm  
Bring friends and family out to lend a hand cutting invasive shrubs. Meet at the cul-de-sac of Edgewood Pl. off of W Davis Ave.

**October 6, Saturday**  
**Mary Beth Doyle Nature Area Workday**  
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Tremendous progress has been made to increase the native habitat in this large preserve- help continue this effort! We'll be continuing the work and removing invasive shrubs. Meet at the end of Verle Ave, two blocks west of Platt Rd.

**October 7, Sunday**  
**Leslie Woods Nature Area Workday**  
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Join us and help remove invasive shrubs, such as buckthorn and honeysuckle. Meet at the north end of Upland Dr., just north of Plymouth Rd.

**October 10, Wednesday**  
**Public Meeting – Controlled Ecological Burn Program**  
**A2 District Library, Downtown**  
343 South Fifth Ave.

7:00 pm to 8:30 pm  
Fire is used as a restoration tool in many of Ann Arbor's natural areas. This meeting provides information and an opportunity for discussion about the Controlled Ecological Burn Program. This is the perfect opportunity to ask questions, learn more about the ecological benefits of burning, and hear about the specifics of effectively and safely using fire as a restoration tool. Burns are conducted in city parks throughout the spring and fall.

# Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

## Autumn 2012

*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.*

**October 14, Sunday**

**Narrow Gauge Nature Area Workday**  
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm  
Help with removing invasive shrubs. Meet at Narrow Gauge Way and South Green Rd off Glazier Way.

**October 24, Wednesday**

**Volunteer Appreciation Potluck**  
Cobblestone Farm, 2781 Packard Rd  
6:30 pm to 9:30 pm  
All volunteers are invited to our annual appreciation event! Awards, door prizes and fun activities for all. Please bring family and a dish to pass. Costumes are encouraged. **RSVP by Oct 22nd:** NAP@a2gov.org or 734-794-6627.

**October 27, Saturday**

**Make a Difference Day Workdays**  
Make A Difference Day is hailed as "The Nation's Largest Day of Service." Come help celebrate the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of this event by removing invasive shrubs at one of these three events:

•**Kuebler Langford Nature Area**

**9:00 am to 12:00 pm**

Meet at the Beechwood Rd. entrance.

•**Dicken Woods Nature Area**

**10:00 am to 1:00 pm**

Meet at the end of Dicken Dr., off South Maple Rd.

•**Molin Nature Area**

**1:00 pm to 4:00 pm**

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

## November

**November 3, Saturday**

**Berkshire Nature Area Workday**

**9:00 am to 12:00 pm**

Come to Berkshire to help cut out and remove invasive shrubs so that native plants have a chance to thrive. Meet us at the end of Exmoor Rd. off Glenwood, north of Washtenaw.

**November 3, Saturday**

**Olson Nature Area Workday**

**1:00 pm to 4:00 pm**

We'll be removing invasive shrubs, such as buckthorn and honeysuckle, to give native plants a chance to thrive. Meet at the entrance on Dhu Varren Rd., just east of Pontiac Tr.

**November 17, Saturday**

**Family Volunteer Day**

**Barton Nature Area Workday**

**9:00 am to 12:00 pm**

Help collect native plant seeds in this beautiful nature area. Learn to identify native plants in the seed-bearing stage of their growth cycle. It's fun and educational for the whole family. Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot on the corner of Huron River Dr. and Bird Rd.

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.

[www.stewardshipnetwork.org](http://www.stewardshipnetwork.org).

**September 11, Tuesday**

**Funding:** We're great at preserving and restoring lands - as long as we have the money. Where do we find our funding? What are additional sources to augment our work?

**October 9, Tuesday**

**Volunteer Management:** Expect the unexpected! The human component of our work is often as complex as the natural ecosystems we work in. Join us to share your experiences and learn from others.

**November 13, Tuesday**

**Herbicides:** Herbicides are a powerful tool in ecological restoration. How do we use them safely and appropriately? How do we navigate all the regulations and label instructions? Which ones are most effective?

# Bluffs Nature Area

Continued from page 1



*The newly acquired acreage at Bluffs (circled) will soon be restored to expand the nature area and create more welcoming entrances for hikers and mountain bikers.*

If you want to see a variety of our native nut trees, Bluffs is a great place to visit. Near a creek that crosses the southern part of the property, you'll find several one-foot-diameter butternut trees, a more delicate cousin of black walnut which is now uncommon locally due to a non-native fungal disease. Some say the small group here is the largest collection of butternut trees in Ann Arbor.

Elsewhere, you can find examples of three species of hickory trees: shagbark hickory, pignut hickory, and bitternut hickory. Mature trees grow in the southeast portion of the property and in the northern ravine, including a 43.8-inch-diameter white oak and a 41-inch black oak. Other trees include red and swamp white oak, black walnut, and black cherry. In Bluffs, you'll also find uncommon, interesting understory trees and shrubs such as blue beech, witch-hazel, hazelnut, and highbush cranberry.

Bluffs Nature Area hosts a variety of wildlife, too. It's part of a much larger conservation corridor along the Huron River, connecting with habitat in Bandemer

and Argo Nature Areas to the east and Kuebler Langford, Bird Hills and Barton Nature Areas to the north. Rabbits, deer, coyotes and foxes find cover in Bluffs, along with a variety of birds. A woodcock nested in the prairie this spring.

Bluffs has long been a favorite spot for mountain bikers, who enjoy the steep climbs and descents in a wild, out-of-the-way spot right in Ann Arbor. The Michigan Mountain Biking Association and NAP staff plan to partner in devising better ways for the trail system to work, so that it accommodates walkers and bikers, protects against erosion, and sustains the plant communities.

Looking out for Bluffs' best interests are Park Stewards John Lawter and Catherine Riseng. Both are park neighbors who walk the area frequently and keep NAP staff informed about changes that need attention, such as trash and impromptu campsites that periodically appear in the area.

This special place, so close and yet so remote in feel, is another reason to feel good about living in a community that supports and values protected green spaces.

## Mark Your Calendar!

### NAP's Annual Volunteer Appreciation Potluck!

Wednesday, October 24<sup>th</sup>  
6:30pm - 9:30pm  
Cobblestone Farm - 2781 Packard Rd.

- Learn about NAP's 2012 accomplishments!
- Meet fellow NAP volunteers & staff!
- Enjoy great food, fun activities, and door prizes!
- Costumes encouraged!
- Bring a dish to pass & your family!

Please RSVP by Oct 22<sup>nd</sup> at [NAP@a2gov.org](mailto:NAP@a2gov.org)



# NAPpenings

## Thank you...

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

Ann Arbor Technical School's English as a Second Language Program  
Campfire Interactive, Inc  
Emerson Middle School  
Peace Neighborhood Center  
REI  
Starbucks  
Students Today Leaders Forever  
Toyota Boshoku America  
U of M Law School  
Yoga Serves  
Youth Volunteer Corps - Ann Arbor

## Thank you...

**Nancy Witter** for becoming a new Park Steward at Onder Nature Area!

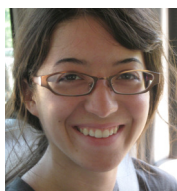
**John Lawter** for becoming a new Park Steward at Bluffs Nature Area!

**Arbor Brewing Company** for hosting their annual Arbor Day Spruce Beer fundraising event for Adopt-A-Park.

**Anne Rueter** for volunteering in the NAP office and assisting with newsletter writing and editing.

## Staff Updates

### Hello...



#### **Dana Wloch**

Fresh out of college, NAP is my first real job, albeit only for the summer. Nevertheless, it has been a wonderful experience thus far. I graduated from the University of Michigan-Dearborn this spring with a B.S. in Environmental

Studies and minors in Biology and Statistics. Although my duration with NAP is brief, I know that I will have contributed my time to a cause that I deeply believe in for the greater good of ecology.



## Bittersweet Wreaths

The orange-berried wreaths and sprays that you can buy at many local stores this time of year sure are pretty, but did you know they are generally made with an invasive vine, Asiatic Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)? If you do buy these decorations, please dispose of them by either burning them in your fireplace, or placing them in a sealed plastic bag and putting them in the trash. Do not put the berries in your compost or in the woods. NAP has been working with the Ann Arbor Farmer's Market and other local merchants to spread the word about proper disposal. Thank you for your help in controlling this invasive plant!



#### **Josh Goldman**

Having grown-up in Ann Arbor, it had always been my dream to attend the University of Michigan. I am now working to finish up my senior year with a B.S. in Environmental Science. I have been involved in various environmental student groups on campus and am very excited to intern here at NAP. I go out daily with the field crew and assist in GIS projects. I am excited to develop my knowledge in the environmental field and work on restoring our beautiful natural landscape.

### Congratulations...



#### **Tina Roselle**

Having spent the last four years at NAP, I am very excited to accept the position of Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator. I started with NAP as the Adopt-A-Park Coordinator and thoroughly enjoyed getting to know all the park adopters and the in's and out's of volunteer management. Since the departure of my friend and mentor Jason Frenzel over a year ago, I have been doing my best to keep things moving along in the outreach office and learning all about NAP. I am honored for the opportunity to continue growing NAP's volunteer and outreach programs in a more official capacity.

# Planting Native Shrubs in the Fall

By Robert A. Schubert and Dea Armstrong

Whether or not you live next to a natural area, your landscaping has a definite impact on the local ecology. Many of us choose to deliberately garden for the benefit of wildlife, while others are simply looking to add interesting plants to our gardens and yards. Then there are those of us hoping to find a type of fast-growing shrub that will provide privacy or perhaps shade. Fall is a perfect time to plant many shrubs, so as you decide what trees and shrubs to use in your landscapes, it's a great idea to consider native plants whenever possible.

Some non-native shrubs used for landscaping, such as exotic honeysuckles, privet, burning bush, buckthorn, black jetbead, cork tree, spindle tree and barberry, seem just perfect for landscaping needs: fruit for wildlife, and fast-growing, dense foliage. Unfortunately these non-native shrub fruits are dispersed by birds and other animals such as deer into local natural areas where their presence disrupts the local ecology. Though there may be a short-term benefit to some wildlife that eat these berries, there are far greater long-term negative consequences of having these shrubs in

our landscape. The negative impacts of these non-native shrubs range from decreased diversity of native species through competition, to increased populations of deer ticks and incidence of Lyme disease in humans.

Many native shrubs may serve as wonderful alternatives to invasive, non-native species and several resources are available to help one choose native alternatives. So please, choose wisely when deciding which shrubs to plant this autumn. There are many books and/or web sites to help you select the right plant for the right place and to get an idea of the quantity you might need for the site. You could start with the NAP pamphlet, *Native Shrubs of Southeastern Michigan*. See how to order here or call us at NAP:

<http://www.a2gov.org/government/publicservices/fieldoperations/NAP/NativePlants/Pages/NativePlants.aspx>

Whenever possible, buy your plants from reputable native plant suppliers. Check out a list of good ones here: <http://www.mnppa.org/>

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