Natural Area Preservation News

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

Volume 15, Number 2

Summer 2010

New Trail for Barton Nature Area

by William Kirst

On the first day, our goal seemed simple: close a degrading trail and save a sedge meadow. To accomplish this, we cut a stand of buckthorn to reroute one of the most popular trails in Ann Arbor. Past efforts at detouring hikers and bikers to a new trail have proven unsuccessful, and efforts to stabilize the banks have been no match for pounding feet, knobby tires, and the flow of the Huron River. The value of this sedge meadow's beauty to its visitors, and its importance to the critters that live there add complexity to implementing this task.

Sedge meadows are gifts upon our earth for the enjoyment of all. Their flowering season starts with one of the botanical world's most beautiful pairings. As they open to the sky, the yellow of marsh marigold with the indigo of blue flag is breathtaking. While the woodlands are putting on their dainty show with iridescent whites and purples, the meadows yell "wake up!" with this bold duo. Butterflies start early and find a good living in the meadow. Food abounds. If you take the time to look at



New path at Barton Nature Area provides river views and space for a sedge meadow.

the undersides of leaves, you may find some caterpillars fattening up. If you wait longer still, you might witness a bird swoop down to grab those caterpillars. By canoe, you may find a fallen log in the river where turtles sun themselves. Other reptiles inhabit the meadow, but they are wary of humans. Good luck finding more than an eastern garter or ribbon snake, though I promise others are there. In fact, they're stalking the frogs you hear calling.

On the second day of reclamation, I had a conversation with a skier whose usual trail had been blocked by shrub piles. Bothered by the sudden change, she rightfully questioned our work. I am always happy to answer people's questions, but especially those about Barton. I explained how Barton's intact sedge meadows were saved from the plow by virtue of their waterlogged soils, or by a farmer who delighted in their floral show, and that they abutted fallow hay fields. Prairie pockets along the adjacent railroad tracks provide a source of seed for areas cleared of invasive non-native shrubs. Rare orchids and diminutive sedges persist under heavy competition from goldenrod and autumn olive. The woodcock relies on remnants of open fields to perform its moonlit dance. With the enthusiasm of the approaching spring and a vision of diverse habitats, I shared with the skier our reasons for blocking and rerouting her well-worn path.

She then shared with me how grateful she was for our work. She spoke of the beauty of the meadow, and the pleasure she gets from seeing it change throughout the year. In this conversation, I realized that the work we were doing was much more than erosion control and invasive species management. I imagined how people commune here each day, immersing themselves in calm isolation, or seeing an oriole flash its brilliant wings, or taking that humbling step into an old field flanked by the ravines of

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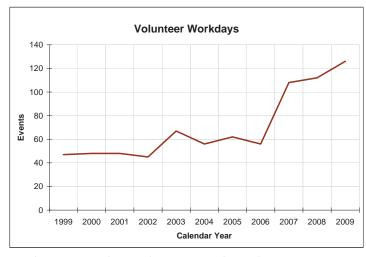
Coordinator's Corner

The Audacity of Hope

What an amazing spring it's been! Long-time readers will recall that I've often noted the intensity of spring around here, with everyone busy pulling garlic mustard, or burning, or surveying wildlife, or planting trees and wildflowers, or helping with one of the many other volunteer activities we sponsor. But I have to tell you, just when I thought we were as busy as we could possibly be in the spring, you helped us take it to a whole new level!

Some of the highlights are spelled out in the NAPpenings section on page seven, but here are a few of my favorites: during a one-week period in early May, 515 volunteers helped NAP pull weeds, clear shrubs, and maintain trails! This includes 240 new volunteers from Community High School, and a record-setting 224 volunteers for Garlic Mustard Weed-Out Day, who together pulled 10,800 pounds of garlic mustard on those two days alone! These are amazing numbers! What is happening out there?

The answer, perhaps, can be found in some thoughts that President Obama shared with me (and 80,000 others!) at the UM graduation in May. The President called on the graduates (and all of us) to get involved in our communities, to embrace public service, and to help make our world a better place. Apparently we're all hearing his message! Look at the incredible growth in the number of NAP workdays over the past few years:



Although this work is being done locally, NAP's story is being told to a much larger audience, including the 33 million listeners across the US who may have heard NAPper Jason Frenzel's interview about

Garlic Mustard Weed-Out Day broadcast on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" on April 30th.

What fun to ride this wave of public service and volunteerism, especially when so much other news we hear on the radio is more discouraging about society and less optimistic about our future. Here in Ann Arbor, at least, there are reasons to have what President Obama called "the audacity of hope." Land is being protected and managed. Exotic invasive species are being pushed back. Natural areas are improving. And volunteers are making this all happen! Come join us at a NAP or Adopt-a-Park volunteer workday. Climb aboard and ride this wave of hope as we continue to see our native ecosystems thrive.

Dave Borneman, Manager

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Robert Schubert

Wild Boars of Washtenaw County

by Drew YoungeDyke, technical writer and NAP volunteer

The most dangerous invasive species in Washtenaw County isn't buckthorn or garlic mustard. Neither of these species can run 30 miles per hour or has razor sharp tusks. No, the most dangerous invasive species in Washtenaw County is *Sus scrofa*, better known as the wild boar or feral swine.

The feral swine herd in Michigan is composed of escapees from enclosed hunting facilities, as well as some escaped domestic pigs. According to Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE), 25 feral swine were spotted in Washtenaw County between 2006 and 2009. These aggressive animals can attack pets, damage crops and vegetation, and can spread diseases to domestic livestock. They typically weigh approximately 150 pounds, but may grow bigger due to breeding with escaped domestic pigs. They have high reproductive rates, with the ability to have three litters of three to nine piglets per year. The large amount of food needed to support an animal that size, together with their feeding behavior of rooting through the earth, make them potentially destructive of groundcover vegetation, salamanders, and ground-nesting birds in natural areas. Swine tracks resemble those of deer, though feral swine tracks are

more rounded, with dew claws that face outward rather than forward. They travel individually and in small groups.

The MDNRE and Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) have instituted a plan to attempt to control the expansion of the feral swine range. The



Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

animals can carry pseudorabies, or PRV, which is a viral disease unrelated to rabies that can affect livestock. It has been found on some game ranches and in some escaped feral swine in Saginaw County, but not in commercial domestic swine, where it could threaten the state's \$230 million pork industry.

The State would like to be contacted by anybody who encounters feral swine, at either of the following numbers: DNRE at 517.336.5030 or Michigan Wildlife Services at 517.336.1928.

New Trail for Barton Nature Area

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Bird Hills. I understood our real goal: to close this trail and remove the shrubs in a manner that preserves the experience and the quality of the sedge meadow.



While the trail no longer runs entirely along the river, it offers exciting views and new opportunities. The north half of the trail, from the bridge at Barton Dam, runs slightly uphill from the former route and offers a nice down-slope view to the river. With the increased sunlight, a luxurious growth of forbs and sedges will begin to edge the trail. Approaching the southern end of the first sedge meadow, you will notice a large white pine. This is a great place to take a break in the shade, and quietly watch for birds in the native shrub layer that separates you from the meadow. South of the pine we have opened everything between the trail and the river. This area was under a thick cover of glossy buckthorn, and it will take many years to restore native vegetation there. You are again able to view the river from here as you proceed south.

We ask that you enjoy the sedge meadow from the path. Please stay on trail and keep your dogs on leash. There are many plants that have recently awakened and animals building nests or caring for young who want nothing more than to be undisturbed. Bottle gentian is now a common sight, where just a few years ago it was a rarity. Time will tell, but I think we may have exceeded our goal.

Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

June

June 5, Saturday Wheeler Service Center 7:30 to 9:30 am

Join Ornithologist Dea Armstrong at one of the best bird watching sites in Ann Arbor! Bring binoculars if you have them. Meet in the parking lot on the right, off the main entrance to the Material Recovery Facility off Platt Road, just south of Ellsworth.

June 5, Saturday Mary Beth Doyle Park 12:00 to 3:00 pm

Learn about native plants as you help establish native species during this gardening workday. Meet us at the parking lot off Packard Road, across from Easy Street.

June 6, Sunday Scarlett-Mitchell Nature Area 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Come help clear trails and spread woodchips to keep this park accessible to everyone! Bring your sleds with you to help us transport chips. Meet in the Scarlett Middle School parking lot off Lorraine Street.

June 8, Tuesday Stewards' Circle Bruegger's Bagels 709 N University Ave 7:30 to 8:30 am

This month's discussion topic: "Nature in the summer is filled with many beautiful things, including restoration activities. What do we do in the summer? How do we beat the heat while working in the field?"

June 11, Friday Main Street, Downtown Ann Arbor 6:00 to 9:00 pm Ioin NAP for the ninth annual Mayor's Green Fair on Main Street in downtown Ann Arbor. There will be exhibits, youth activities, clean energy info, green options, BikeFest 2009, WasteKnot Business Partners, walking tours, and more! For more information, call 734.794.6161.

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.

June 12, Saturday Gallup Park Canoe Livery Dock 7:30 to 9:30 am

Join Ornithologist Dea Armstrong at this beautiful site along the Huron River. Bring binoculars if you have them. Meet at the paddleboat dock in Gallup, near the canoe livery.

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

Help us weed this native plant garden. Learn about prairie plants with Master Gardener Aunita Erskine, and have a great time planting! Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

June 17, Thursday Mary Beth Doyle Park 7:00 to 8:30 pm

Join us in a nature walk through Mary Beth Doyle Park. Meet at the parking lot off Packard Road, across from Easy Street. A naturalist will answer your questions, point out plants, and talk about restoration.

June 19, Saturday Mary Beth Doyle Park 9:00 am to 12:00 pm Add to the tremendous progress that has been made in this large preserve! We will be clearing brush and chipping trails. Bring sleds if you have them to help transport chips. Meet us at the parking lot off Packard Road, across from Easy Street.

July

July 10, Saturday Cedar Bend Nature Area 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Cedar Bend is one of Ann Arbor's oldest parks. Lend a hand building water bars and clearing trails. Bring sleds with you to transport woodchips and brush. Meet at the park entrance near the perennial gardens on Cedar Bend Drive, off Broadway.

July 11, Sunday Huron River Day Gallup Park & Parker Mill Park 8:30 am to 4:00 pm

Enjoy the Huron River and participate in outdoor family activities. There will be a run along the river, free canoeing and kayaking, fishing, storytelling, information about river animals and rain gardens, and more! For further information, call 734.662.9319 or go to www.a2gov.org/green.

July 13, Tuesday Stewards' Circle Bruegger's Bagels 709 N University Ave 7:30 to 8:30 am

Join us for an informal discussion. This month's topic: "Land and water are inextricably linked, but many restorationists work on the land. What invasives do we control in the watery environment? How do we work in an environment that crosses jurisdictional boarders?"

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July 15, Thursday Wurster Park 7:00 to 8:00 pm

Come enjoy a nature walk through Wurster Park. Meet at the cul-de-sac of Edgewood Place off West Davis Avenue. A staff naturalist will point out plants and critters and talk about ecological restoration, volunteer activities in the parks, recreation opportunities, and responsible use of public lands.

July 17, Saturday Cranbrook Park 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Come help clear trails and spread woodchips to keep this park's nature trail accessible to everyone. Bring sleds if you have them to help us transport woodchips and brush. Meet in the Church of Christ parking lot at 2500 South Main.

July 17, Saturday Wurster Park 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Bring friends and family out for this workday to lend a hand. With a picnic table and grill, open field, and play equipment, this multi-use park is the perfect place to have a picnic after the workday if you are so inclined. Meet at the end of Edgewood Place off West Davis Avenue.

July 31, Saturday Furstenberg Native Garden 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Furstenberg Nature Area features some of the most diverse flora anywhere in Ann Arbor! Help us weed and preserve the native plant garden with Park Steward Aunita Erskine, and learn about native plants, particularly prairie plants. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

August

August 7, Saturday Dolph Nature Area 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Dolph is home to the only natural lakes in Ann Arbor. Help us clear trails and spread woodchips. Bring sleds if available to help us transport woodchips and brush. Meet at the parking lot on the east side of Wagner Road, between Liberty and Jackson.

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

This month's topic for informal discussion: "What's your favorite bagel?" We're intentionally having no topic. Bring your questions!

August 19, Thursday Furstenberg Nature Area 7:00 to 8:30 pm

Join NAP for a walk through Furstenberg Nature Area. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

August 21, Saturday Scarlett-Mitchell Nature Area 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Come help preserve the mature oakhickory woodland in this natural area by removing invasive shrubs. Many volunteers have made a big difference over the years in this park, and you can join them. Meet in the Scarlett Middle School parking lot off Lorraine Street.

August 21, Saturday Narrow Gauge Nature Area 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Join us at Ann Arbor's newest park to remove invasive plants and help the native plants thrive. Meet at Narrow Gauge Way and South Green Road off Glazier Way.

August 21, Saturday Furstenberg Nature Area 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Furstenberg is a riverside park, home to wetlands, woodlands, prairie, and oak savannah. Help us remove invasive plants from the nature area so the native ecosystem can thrive! Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

August 28, Saturday Oakridge Nature Area 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Join us at Oakridge to remove invasive plants. Meet us in the southeast corner of the UM parking lot at the northwest corner of the intersection of Glazier Way and Huron Parkway.

August 28, Saturday Buhr Park Children's Wet Meadow 4:00 to 6:00 pm

We need help maintaining the wet meadow in this popluar park. Come out for an evening of seed collection, weeding, and a tour of the park. Meet in the parking lot next to the tennis court at Cobblestone Farms.

August 28, Saturday Leslie Woods Nature Area 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Leslie Woods is home to some of the largest oaks and hickories in the Ann Arbor park system! Your help is needed to remove the invasive shrubs. This is a beautiful shady place to spend the afternoon. Meet us at the park entrance at the north end of Upland Drive, off Plymouth Road.

Trees Can Be Invasive Too

by Robb Johnston

It may be difficult to imagine that the towering, sprawling trees that preside over your daily stroll through Ann Arbor's natural areas can be indicative of anything but a vibrant, healthy ecosystem; but we would all do well to take a moment and reflect upon the trees that make the forest. Some of these species weren't exactly here when Europeans first stepped off their boats. Here at NAP, our ecological restoration efforts include removing three such species: Norway maple, black alder, and tree-of-heaven.

Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) is a native of Europe and Asia. When this maple was first brought across the Atlantic, it was extremely popular as an ornamental tree and for city plantings. Although it is still greatly favored in landscaping, it has proven to be a problem when it occurs in native ecosystems. The shallow root stystem of the Norway maple and the shade cast by the dense foliage allow the tree to outcompete native vegetation in forest ecosystems. Norway maples can be identified by their leaves, which are unique among maples in that they are wider than they are long. Leaves and twigs also ooze a milky sap when torn. Look for Norway maple in Cedar Bend and Bird Hills Nature Areas, among others, and along city streets.

Black alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) is a member of the birch family native to Europe, Asia, and parts of Africa. Like the Norway maple, black alder was brought to this continent and subsequently escaped cultivation into natural areas. Black alder grows quickly and reaches heights up to 65 feet. The bark is smooth and dark brown. The leathery leaves are serrated and can range from slender ovals to more circular in shape. In spring the trees produce three-to-five inch catkins, and later bear small, pine-cone-like fruits around a half-inch in length. Black alder favors wetter areas such as mesic forests and sedge meadows where it chokes out



Black alder "cones" and catkins

native wetland plants. You can see black alder all along the Huron River and in such nature areas as Barton and Argo. Some black alder is being preserved in Ann Arbor parks, as it is a host plant for the larvae of the harvester butterfly.

The last invasive tree we'll discuss here bears the misnomer tree-of-heaven (Ailanthus altissima). An exotic species from Asia, tree-of-heaven was first brought to North America



Very little grows beneath a Norway maple due to the dense shade and the trees's shallow root system.

by a Pennsylvania gardener. It escaped into native ecosystems and spread throughout the United States. Although tree-of-heaven is typically a smallish tree, it can grow up to 80 feet tall. The leaves are pinnately compound, and can have 10 to 41 leaflets. During the early days of my tenure at NAP, many staghorn sumac fell victim to my loppers, all innocent victims of misidentification. An easy way to avoid such confusion and the ensuing ridicule of your conservationist co-workers is to note that the leaflets of tree-of-heaven not only lack serrations, but have two notches at their base, each containing a tiny gland. This tree can be seen growing, well . . . everywhere. It is welladapted to thriving in low-quality environments. So while you'll see it growing in Bird Hills Nature Area, you can just as easily see it happily sprouting up through cracks in the asphalt driveway or abandoned parking lot next door.



Tree-of-heaven can sprout six to eight feet in one year!

Don't let the knowledge that invasive trees exist in the natural areas of Ann Arbor diminish your enjoyment of your daily or weekly walks. They are, after all, beautiful species. (Why else would anyone bother to bring them across entire oceans?) But always be aware that we have so many native trees that are every bit as beautiful and impressive, and all the more so because they complement and sustain native ecosystems in ways non-native trees do not.

NAPpennings

thank you . . .

- Keith Miller for his continued monetary support through Pfizer's United Way Campaign.
- UM Economics 108 class for their help in the office.
- Greenhills eighth-grade class for volunteering at Leslie Science and Nature Center in February.
- UM Alpha Phi Omega for work at Fuller Park in the spring.
- Community Volunteer Club at Pioneer High for shrubcutting at Dolph Nature Area.
- Rackham Graduate School students for clearing shrubs at Cedar Bend Nature Area.
- UM Engineering students for Miller Nature Area shrubclearing.
- UM Circle K for clearing shrubs at Argo Nature Area.
- Jiffy Corporation and Cheryl French for donating work gloves.

Thank you Disney Volunteers

This spring Disney Corporation offered free passes to any Disney theme park for volunteering with a participating organization. NAP had over 300 volunteers sign up for workdays as part of this program. Disney's goal to inspire one million people to volunteer was met on March 8th, so the opportunity to earn passes is no longer available. We thank everyone who participated in the program!

Another Fabulous Burn Season

Special thanks to the NAP staffers and 40 hardworking volunteers who participated in burning all 25 sites on our list this year. We exceeded expectations and couldn't have done it without such loyal volunteers. Thank you!

Harold Eyster Honored

NAP intern Harold Eyster was recently recognized by the American Birding Association as winner of the 2009 Young Birder of the Year competition. Excerpts from his winning entry can been seen at: www.aba.org/yby/win.html. Harold also won a birding competition in Ohio this Spring, and earned a trip to Ecuador. Congratulations, Harold!

Residents Pull Together for Spring Weed-out Day and NAP Receives National Attention

On May 1st, NAP was joined by 224 volunteers to remove 5,600 pounds of garlic mustard from the parks! A few days earlier, NAP partnered with 240 students and staff from Community High School who removed 5,200 pounds of the plant in 2.5 hours! Thank you!

NAP and the invasive plant issue also received national publicity on National Public Radio's "All things Considered." On April 30th, Melissa Block from the Washington NPR studio interviewed NAP's volunteer coordinator Jason Frenzel, and the story was broadcast later that day. Here is the link to the interview:

www.npr.org/templates/story.storyphp?storyId= 126422157.

Staff Updates

Clare Berklich

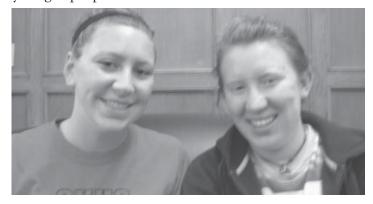


I recently received my associate's degree in photography from Washtenaw C o m m u n i t y College. I enjoy many kinds of photography. I have been focusing on nature photography, and I have always

had a love for the outdoors and our natural planet. Photography is one way I express myself. I hope people see the beauty of our planet through my photographs. I also hope to increase their interest and raise awareness of how precious and amazing nature is. I'm very excited to be taking pictures for NAP!

Ali Lunau (left) and Stephanie Dority (right)

Over the 2009/10 school year we continued the research started for NAP by Omatara Kufeji. This research compares the demographic background of Ann Arbor and the known demographics of NAP volunteers. We interviewed high school students about their roles as volunteers, and hope to find out what can make younger people in Ann Arbor become more involved.



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Wood Frogs Find New Home!

by David Mifsud and Lara Treemore Spears

Since 1995, NAP volunteers have monitored frog and toad populations in and around Ann Arbor. In cooperation with the public schools during construction of Skyline High School in 2005, we used these data to modify plans, develop protection measures, manage natural areas, and coordinate rescuing amphibians and reptiles from the building areas. Some animals were relocated on-site after construction and some were moved to other parks (translocated).

Although amphibians are present in many urban wetlands, they have disappeared from others. Habitat fragmentation reduces amphibian movement between natural areas and may cause populations to decline or collapse, particularly in combination with other stressors such as drought, disease, or pollution. These environmentally sensitive animals do not readily recolonize areas separated by human development. Active augmentation of amphibian populations in urban landscapes may be required in some cases to maintain viable populations.

Moving animals from one location to another is not to be taken lightly, however, because it can have unanticipated effects on both the animals being relocated and on the receiving environment. Animals should be moved only because their habitat is going to be permanently removed or substantially altered, and they should be moved only to a location that has a documented ability to support them in balance with the existing

fauna. Precautions such as disease testing are recommended before moving animals, because of the possibility of introducing pathogens or parasites to the receiving population.

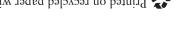
NAP addressed these concerns in the Skyline project by using the volunteer monitoring data and field assessments to select two sites at which wood frogs had not been observed for several years (Arbor Hills and Sugarbush Nature Areas). Wood frogs require particular conditions that were met in both locations. The former presence of this species suggested the system could support their reintroduction without affecting other species that inhabit the area. The number of animals translocated to each park was based on the size and quality of the recipient wetland habitat. Post-translocation monitoring looked for presence of multiple age classes and calling during the breeding season.

In 2005, 703 wood frogs were released. Shortly afterwards, wood frogs were calling to find mates in their new habitat. During summer 2005, surveys for larvae and metamorphs documented wood frog reproduction, and this species is now doing well at both sites, with calling, reproduction, and survival occurring annually! NAP is excited to have found that a carefully-implemented amphibian translocation can be successful. By protecting habitat, engaging volunteers, managing natural areas, and reconnecting landscapes and their inhabitants, we hope to play a role in re-establishing disrupted habitat corridors and animal populations.

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