

Natural Area Preservation News

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

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Summer 2006

Park Focus: Huron Hills Golf Course Woods

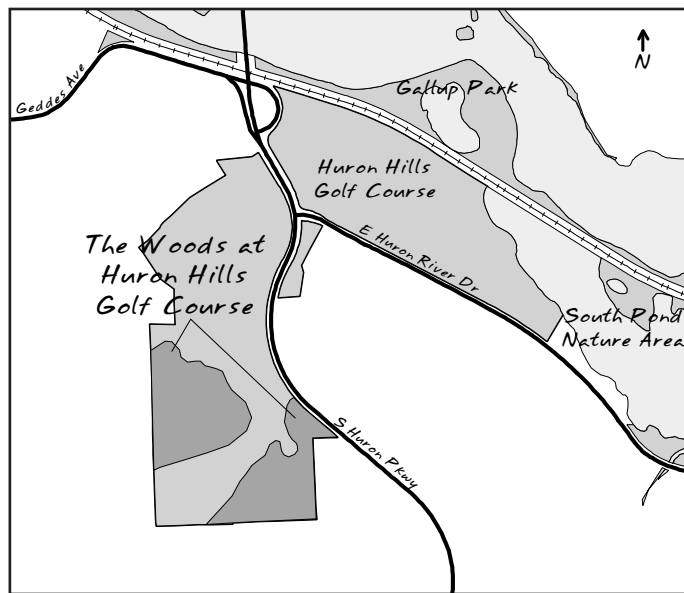
by Becky Hill

"Fore!" This isn't something you would typically expect to hear on a nature walk through the woods... or is it? Well, it is at the Huron Hills Golf Course. I'm not talking about the rolling, green fairways you might have in mind, but the beautiful woodlands that frame the western and southern edges of the course.

The people who know and love the Huron Hills Golf Course Woods best are its neighbors. I found this out in person at a recent volunteer workday. As part of NAP's conservation crew, I regularly help out with workdays, each one being different from the last. What invasive plant will we tackle today? Will the weather be nice? How many people will show up? I never know what to expect with each workday, but this workday on April 8th came as a pleasant surprise for me. One after another, the neighbors gathered. There were neighbors who had just moved in and those that had lived there for decades. Old friends saying hello, along with new introductions. The joy, excitement, and pride these neighbors share for their natural area was infectious. While we pulled garlic mustard and hauled brush, smiling faces shared stories about park happenings, sightings of local foxes, coyotes, and wild turkeys. I was thrilled to be part of a community that shares so much enthusiasm for its local woodland.

The unique habitat of the Huron Hills Golf Course Woods is home to a wide variety of vegetation. Its seepy slopes and sandy soils support an abundance of spring

wildflowers such as trillium, mayapple, wild geranium, jewelweed, skunk cabbage, and Dutchman's breeches. Once the splendor of the spring wildflowers fades away, the forest is still filled with black oak, sassafras, red maple, Hill's oak, white oak, and witch-hazel—a beautifully shaded environment in which to escape the heat of the summer sun. You can also be on the lookout for Pennsylvania sedge, Indian pipe, alum root, Carolina rose, hillside blueberry, and bracken fern.



Last spring, as the crew and I were out pulling garlic mustard we stumbled across a patch of what we thought was the pesky non-native celandine (*Chelidonium majus*). To our delight we had discovered a group of the native wood poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*). The two species look very similar with their 4 petaled showy yellow flowers. Both plants exude a bright yellow sap when damaged. The distinct difference that made us aware we had found something other than celandine were the seedpods.

The non-native celandine has long, smooth seedpods, while the native wood poppy has densely hairy, elliptical seedpods. We will be sure to monitor this population over the years and continue to be on the lookout for other wood poppy populations around Ann Arbor.

Next time you are out golfing at the Huron Hills Golf Course, don't be afraid to veer off the green grass into the woods and take a peek. You may even catch a glimpse of the Cerulean Warbler, which has Special Concern status in Michigan, singing in the trees!

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Coordinator's Corner

Spring Makeover

Stop by our offices at the Leslie Science Center and you'll see that the property has gotten a makeover this spring. New decorative fencing, a new stonewall, several sets of new steps, and lots of new landscaping have really transformed the site. It's amazing how much better the place looks with all these new touches.

I'm always a little jealous of how relatively easy it is to "fix up" a site like the Leslie Science Center, or any of our other more developed city parks. If one can find the money, you can really dress it up with some new amenities or remodeling of the existing structures.

Of course, it's not quite that easy or straightforward in our natural areas, where we are much more constrained by the existing ecological conditions on-site. Want to replace that buckthorn thicket with a nice mature oak-hickory forest? Sorry, but that's going to be a loooooong-term project – several decades at least – that can't be significantly accelerated, even if we found additional funding to put towards the project. Sure, we could remove all the buckthorn shrubs and even tree-spade in a bunch of large trees, but that would be a long way from the mature forest that we're looking for.

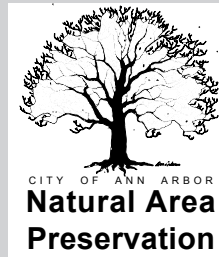
Nature doesn't work with budgets and project deadlines. Instead, it deals in terms of ecological factors such as soil microorganisms, nutrient cycling, mycorrhizal fungi relationships, seed banks, pollinators, and all the other components of an unimaginably complex web of life.

That doesn't mean we can't influence our natural areas, or steer their development toward a target ecosystem. Indeed, we can and have been doing just that throughout the park system. But it is just a reminder that we're working in a different time frame and that we need to look for progress in small, but still significant, increments: Pennsylvania sedge re-establishing itself where buckthorn once dominated, wildflowers blooming where garlic mustard flourished five years ago, and new oak seedlings appearing after a prescribed fire. These are all important steps as we transform our natural areas from buckthorn thickets to mature, flourishing, healthy native forests.

Come be a part of this transformation process. But be patient with Mother Nature!

- David Borneman, NAP Manager

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead



Natural Area Preservation

a Division of the City of Ann Arbor Public Services Area

The mission of the Natural Area Preservation Division is to protect and restore Ann Arbor's natural areas and to foster an environmental ethic among its citizens.

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If you would prefer to receive your next newsletter via e-mail please call NAP.

Photopoints *by Maggie Hostetler*

It is a typical photopoint day in May and I am heading to Hansen Nature Area, a ten-acre woods off of South Maple Road, to take the spring photos. With map in hand, my work is a little like a treasure hunt. I must find the exact spots in Hansen where photos have been



Hansen Nature Area: Photopoint 4, April 29, 2003

taken periodically for the last ten years. NAP relies on these photos to track our work, choosing not to use our limited resources to conduct more quantitative monitoring. Taking a photo at a designated spot every year or so provides a visual record of progress. We have set up over 400 such spots scattered among the nature areas that NAP works in.

At Hansen I park my car and consult my photopoint booklet. There are five points in Hansen, some are off the beaten path and a little difficult to find. The photopoint booklet contains the clues that will help me search them out, including a map created from GPS data, detailed written descriptions of how to find each spot, and photos of each one.

The instructions say to enter the woods parallel to the second basketball hoop in the parking lot, find the pile of stones ten feet in, and take the photo with the pine trees centered. I find it after some minor searching, snap a shot, and then am off to the others. The last one is far off the trail, near a tall red oak and another pile of stones. The spring photos in a woodland such as this tell us two things: how extensive the invasion of non-native plants is and how the wildflowers are doing. This spring day the woodland is full of trout-lily, mayapple, and cut-leaved toothwort—with very

few invasives. NAP has burned in Hansen woods and these photos document that the woods are thriving.

Wetland and prairie photopoints are taken in August. In wetlands, we are looking to see how much, if any, purple loosestrife is present and to observe the state of the native wildflowers. At Foxfire West Nature Area, off of Dhu Varren Road, my photopoints show a couple of loosestrife plants. Since loosestrife can spread quickly, the crew may soon be called upon to control it. This wetland is well worth preserving because it is habitat for many rare plants and animals.

In prairies, we are monitoring for invasive plants such as spotted knapweed and also for the health of the native grasses, black-eyed Susans, bee balm, and other wildflowers. At Swift Run Marsh my photos this year reveal that the beautiful seven-foot tall native prairie dock is much more plentiful where the crew has burned regularly—another sign that our work is paying off.

All of the photos that the six photopoint volunteers and I take each year are archived on the City computers—providing a permanent record of the health of our city's natural areas.

If you'd like to help Maggie with NAP's photo documentation, contact our office.



Foxfire West Nature Area: Photopoint 6, August 30, 2004

Summer 2006 Natural Area Preservation Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

NAP is located at the Leslie Science Center (1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor, 48105), 734.996.3266.
Workday orientations start promptly at listed times. Please wear long pants and closed-toe shoes.
Minors must either be accompanied by a guardian or contact NAP in advance to obtain a release form.
Our website is www.a2gov.org/nap

June

June 3, Saturday Ann Arbor Landfill Bird Walk 7:30 to 9:30 am

Meet at the small parking area just inside the Platt Road entrance, which is south of the intersection of Platt and Ellsworth Roads. These walks are for all levels of birders, but beginners are especially welcome. Binoculars are nice but not essential. Leader: Dea Armstrong.

June 3, Saturday Lakewood Nature Area Workday 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Let's get some work done! Lakewood needs some trails trimmed and invasives controlled. Meet us in the Lakewood Elementary School parking lot off of Galake Avenue (three blocks south of Jackson Road) promptly at 9:00 am for a morning nature hike, or at 9:30 am for the workday orientation.

June 3, Saturday Bird Hills Nature Area Workday 1:00 to 4:00 pm

The hills are alive with the sound of weed pulling! Wear your noisiest workpants and shoes and meet us at the Bird Road entrance for an afternoon of invasives pulling. We will provide snacks, water, and tools.

Many groups participate in NAP workdays or arrange special workdays for their organizations. Contact the NAP office if a group you are involved with is interested in planning a volunteer stewardship event.

June 10, Saturday Gallup Park Bird Walk 7:30 to 9:30 am

Join City Ornithologist, Dea Armstrong, as she leads a morning walk to look for birds in Gallup Park and Furstenberg Nature Area. Bring binoculars if you have them, but they are not necessary. A great walk for beginning birders! Meet at the Gallup Livery dock.

June 10, Saturday Furstenberg Native Plant Garden 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Park Steward and Master Gardener, Aunita Erskine, will lead a wonderful cleanup workday and botanical walk. Join her in improving the demonstration garden. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School. A short nature walk will be held at the end of the workday, time permitting.

June 10, Saturday Leslie Woods Nature Area Workday 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Here is your chance to help us maintain the trails and have an opportunity to get to know the woods of this wonderful park! We will meet at the end of Upland Drive, north of Plymouth Road, at 10:00 am for a workday orientation. We will provide tools and refreshments..

June 13, Tuesday Huron Arbor Stewards' Circle Bruegger's Bagels on North University Avenue, Ann Arbor 7:30 to 8:30 am

GIS & Mapping. How do we use GIS and GPS to enhance our restoration efforts? What is the cost for these systems? What other software are folks using?

June 17, Saturday Stapp Nature Area Workday 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Help us spruce up the trails and collect local seeds to disperse in other parks. There will be a short nature walk at the end of the workday. Meet in the parking lot at Traver Ridge apartments, at the intersection of Lancashire Drive and Tuebingen Parkway.

June 18, Sunday Wetlands by Canoe 10:00 am to 12:00 noon

Paddle by canoe or kayak with a naturalist guide to discover the wonderful wetland areas of the Huron River. Fee: \$20 per canoe or kayak, \$16 for Ann Arbor residents. Contact the Gallup Livery to register at 734-662-9319.

June 21, Wednesday Summer Solstice Paddle at Argo 8:00 to 11:00 pm

Let the moon light your way as you paddle on Argo Pond. Make sure to bring a flashlight! Fee: \$20 per canoe or kayak, \$16 for Ann Arbor residents. If you would like further information call the Argo Livery at 734-668-7411.

July

July 9, Sunday Huron River Day Gallup Park 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

The day will begin with a 5K run and one-mile fun run, followed by a dog walk. From noon until 4:00, FREE festivities for the whole family, including children's activities, interesting river exhibits, live animals, walking trips on the border to border trail, live music, and more! At Parker Mill there will be grist mill tours, and rubber duck races. There will also be discounted canoe rentals trips down the river. Don't miss this wonderful day of fun and celebration! For more information, check www.a2gov.org/hrd.

July 11, Tuesday
Huron Arbor Stewards' Circle
Bruegger's Bagels on North University Avenue, Ann Arbor
7:30 to 8:30 am
Wetland Invaders. What are the invasives you control in wetlands? How and when do we control them?

July 15, Saturday
Gallup Park Stewardship Workday
9:00 am to 12:00 noon
Meet us in Gallup for a morning of pulling weeds and stay, if you like, for a social paddle on the river! We'll meet you in the Gallup Park parking lot, just over the wooden bridge. Bring canoeing attire if you plan to stay.

July 22, Saturday
Argo Nature Area Workday
9:00 am to 12:00 noon
This hilly park needs some help with erosion control and trail maintenance. Join us in this rewarding work at 9:00 am in the parking lot north of the Argo Canoe Livery, off Longshore Drive. Snacks and tools provided.

July 23, Sunday
Turtle Paddle
10:00 am to 12:00 noon
Discover our local turtles as we explore the Huron River, paddling in a canoe or kayak. David Mifsud, Herpetologist, will be leading our turtle adventure. Fee: \$20 per canoe or kayak, \$16 for Ann Arbor residents. Contact the Gallup Livery to register, 734-662-9319.

July 29, Saturday
Furstenberg Native Plant Garden
9:00 am to 12:00 noon
Park Steward and Master Gardener, Aunita Erskine, will lead a cleanup and botanical walk. Join her in improving the demonstration garden. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School. Workday orientation starts promptly at 9:00 am. A short nature walk will be held at the end of the workday, time permitting.

July 30, Sunday
Wetlands by Canoe
10:00 am to 12:00 noon
Paddle by canoe or kayak with a naturalist guide to discover the wonderful wetland areas of the Huron River. Fee: \$20 per canoe or kayak, \$16 for Ann Arbor residents. Contact the Gallup Livery to register, 734-662-9319.

August

August 5, Saturday
Riverwood Nature Area Workday
10:00 am to 1:00 pm
You get to be Indiana Jones! We need to make a new trail; will you help us? Meet us near the park sign on Riverwood Drive, just west of Newport Road. We will provide the snacks if you provide the muscles.

August 8, Tuesday
Huron Arbor Stewards' Circle
Bruegger's Bagels on North University Avenue, Ann Arbor
7:30 to 8:30 am
Stewardship Match. It's like a dating service, but it pairs up folks that need help with identification and restoration, with people who have some expertise. The Stewardship Network website will be able to help us link up with people professionally!

August 19, Saturday
Bluffs Nature Area Workday
9:00 am to 12:00 pm
It's buckthorn season! How many of you know the allure of cutting down this invasive shrub? Come find out what it's all about. We'll meet at 9:00 am in the James L. Crawford Lodge parking lot (220 Sunset Road). See you there! Don't forget long pants and closed-toe shoes.

August 19, Saturday
Black Pond Woods Workday
1:00 to 4:00 pm
Help us keep the invasives in check in this amphibian-friendly park. Meet in the Leslie Science Center parking lot off Traver Road at 1:00 pm for our workday orientation. We will have a nature hike on the way and learn more about invasive and native plants.

August 26, Saturday
Sunset Brooks Workday
10:00 am to 1:00 pm
Neighborhood round up! Get your friends and meet us at the park entrance at Sunset Road and Brooks Street to do some trail maintenance and invasive shrub removal. Snacks and tools provided! Non-neighbors invited too!

August 26, Saturday
Furstenberg Nature Area Workday
10:00 am to 1:00 pm
Enjoy a morning at Furstenberg with your friends and a pruning saw, while combating invasive shrubs. Snacks and refreshments provided! We'll meet in the Furstenberg parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School. At the end of the workday we will take a short nature hike through the park.

Lissa Anderson



Natural Areas Management

Invasive Plant Control Certificate Workshop Series

Workshop 1 - Invasive Plant Identification - Learn to identify the 25 worst invaders and their native look alikes. Hands-on in the field. 7/15/06

Workshop 2 - Assessment and Prioritization - Discover how to prioritize your work to control invasives and where to begin. 8/19/06

Workshop 3 - Invasive Plant Control Techniques - Learn and practice the most effective control techniques in this hands-on workshop. 9/16/06

Take one, two, or complete all three workshops and earn a certificate in invasive plant control. Workshops will take place at Kensington Metropark & Island Lake.

Call 734/996-3190 or visit
www.stewardshipnetwork.org
for more information or to register.



The Stewardship Network

Pulling together for nature

Staff Updates

farewell...

Becky (and Jason) Hill

I am sad to say goodbye to NAP and all the great people I have met during my time here. I am setting off with my husband on a new adventure to Tanzania, Africa, where we will become Peace Corps volunteers. I will always think fondly of Ann Arbor's natural areas and all that I have learned and experienced here. I wonder what kind of invasive plants await me in Tanzania. Tutaonana! Goodbye!



Bill Bennett

I can think of no better way to finish up a Masters degree in Restoration Ecology than by putting it into action. The last couple of months at NAP have been an invaluable experience allowing me to learn about prescribed fire and removal of those pesky invasives. I am now taking things back into the water, where I will work as a Stream Restoration Biologist for the Virginia Department of Game. Thanks to all the NAP Crew and volunteers for making this such a memorable experience.



NAPpennings

Michigan Prescribed Fire Council

This year the Michigan Prescribed Fire Council will be holding its annual 2-day conference in collaboration with the Society for American Foresters. The theme this year is "Perceptions, Partnerships, and Prescribed Fire." The September 8-9 gathering will be held in Cadillac. For more information, visit MPFC's website at www.firecouncil.org.

Huron River Day

Join the fun on Sunday, July 9! There will be tons of outdoor activities and family related fun! See the calendar for more information.

Spring Burn Wrap Up

Another successful spring burn season for NAP! This year was characterized by cool conditions, which slowed down the wildflowers long enough for us to get quite a few woodland burns done before "green-up." A preliminary count indicates that we burned about 19 different sites on 17 burn days for well over 100 acres! Thanks to the MANY volunteers who helped make all these burns possible.

Brown Update

Lately we've heard quite a few people ask, "what's going on at Brown Park?" This Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner's construction project will improve water quality in Malletts Creek by creating a 15-acre wetland to filter out nutrients and sediment from storm water, and help control flooding. The park will be closed during the work, until August 2007. The wetland will be named Mary Beth Doyle Wetland Preserve, and the whole park will be renamed as Mary Beth Doyle Park, to honor the memory of the local environmental activist. The wetland is expected to improve wildlife habitat in the park by providing native wetland plants for food and cover, and increasing the size and connectivity of natural areas adjacent to Malletts Creek and Swift Run Creek. Please excuse the dust, and look for the finished product in 2007!



NAP staff and volunteers at Furstenberg

Book Review: Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest: An Illustrated Guide to their Identification and Control. Elizabeth J. Czarapata

Excerpted from a review by Doug Landis

“I’ve been noticing that plant for years. If I had known it was an invasive species I could have controlled it before it became such a problem.”

At one point or another, everyone interested in preserving natural areas has heard a similar lament. Now thanks to the work of dedicated Wisconsin land steward, Elizabeth Czarapata, there is an excellent guide to the identification and control of invasive plants in our region.

Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest is aimed at land stewards, homeowners and educators who desire practical information on how to recognize and manage these species. It starts with an overview of invasive plants and contains an interesting section on “convincing the skeptics” about why invasives are detrimental. Chapter two outlines how to prioritize areas for control and then describes control techniques in detail, including cultural, chemical, and biological approaches.

The bulk of the book is dedicated to invasive plant profiles, detailing over 160 species, with 282 color photographs and drawings. Following the descriptions are specific recommendations for manual, mechanical, chemical and biological control methods where available. Readers could easily become overwhelmed with so many plants described, however chapter three focuses on a group of 28 plants of “major concern.” These worst of the worst invaders are further broken down into trees and shrubs, vines, forbs, grasses and aquatic plants. Chapter four addresses “species of lesser

concern” at nearly the same level of detail. Chapter five contains information on “potential problem species,” and chapter six describes “native species that sometimes need control.” Finally, chapter seven provides practical information on education, community action, and ecological restoration to support effective long-term change.

Overall, *Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest* is a much needed and highly useful tool in the fight against weeds in our region. While written in a style the novice can understand, even veteran weed warriors will undoubtedly find new tips and tools in its pages.

Doug Landis is professor of Invasive Species Ecology and Biological Control in the Department of Entomology at Michigan State University.

Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest is available from University of Wisconsin Press: www.wisc.edu/wisconsinpress/books/3601.htm



Lythrum salicaria,
purple loosestrife

NAP Alumni News

Eric Ellis (Crew/Leader 2002-2004) is working on his Master’s degree, studying the management preferences of Idaho big-game bow hunters. He’ll be finishing his research from Marquette, Michigan, where his wife works in a public health clinic.

Bill Schneider (Stewardship Coordinator 1994-1995) has been living in Mason, Michigan, growing native plants from wild collected seed, consulting, and contracting on a variety of restoration issues and projects since the year after he left NAP. He says that he loves this field because, “there is so much to learn—this well will ne’er run dry.” Check out his business at www.wildtypeplants.com.

Congrats to **Lauren Theodore** (Crew 2003-2004), recipient of the Doris Duke Fellowship at the UM School of Natural Resources and Environment. She is pursuing her MS in Resource Ecology and Management, studying the impacts of aquaculture in China!

Jana Vanderhaar (Crew 2000-2002) finished her Master’s in Landscape Architecture, using the experience to create and implement an ecological schoolyard design for St. Paul Lutheran School and a “Habitat for Children” at Nichols Arboretum. Her excitement about plants, children, and play is sure to be contagious. She and her family just moved to Reno, NV for a new landscape architecture job.

A Pair of Peregrines and a Rafter* of Turkeys!

by Dea Armstrong

Wild Turkeys have shown up in the City of Ann Arbor! In April they were seen on North Campus by Plymouth Road and near the intersection of Arlington and Washtenaw. They have been seen in groups of six to nine birds. Turkeys fly quite well and may have thought they'd try city life for a while. In the early 1900s, the Wild Turkey was extirpated from Michigan, but a successful reintroduction program has brought the numbers up enough to allow for some regulated hunting. Still, it is unusual to see them in the city!

A pair of Peregrine Falcons has taken up residence on the bell tower on U of M's main campus. Although no one has seen eggs from this pair as of press time, if they are nesting, chick activity would be visible sometime in late April or early May.

Historically, Peregrines would not nest this far south in Michigan and would have chosen cliff ledges as nest sites. Peregrine reintroduction programs, like the one in Detroit, have acclimatized the species to nesting successfully on building ledges.

Some enterprising people have taken to collecting inedible "bird parts" at the base of the bell tower that the pair has discarded. So far they've identified Rock Pigeon, American Woodcock, and Belted Kingfisher as Peregrine food favorites!

*A group of turkeys is called a "rafter."



*Peregrine on the Burton Bell Tower
Photo by Rich Miller*

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