



NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

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

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Park Focus: Sylvan Park

Chris Robey, Conservation Worker

Perhaps you haven't heard of Sylvan Park, but if you've ever merged onto US-23 South from Washtenaw Avenue you've almost certainly blown right past it. Tucked in Ann Arbor's southeast corner, Sylvan Park is an unassuming twelve-acre wooded area boxed in by development on all sides.

A morning spent at Sylvan Park offers a view of two seemingly opposite worlds existing atop one another. Parents emerge from their homes in the Forestbrooke subdivision to whisk the kids off to school. Commuters cram onto the highway, just a minute too late to beat the morning rush. The bustle of commerce whirs to life at the Arborland shopping center. Real

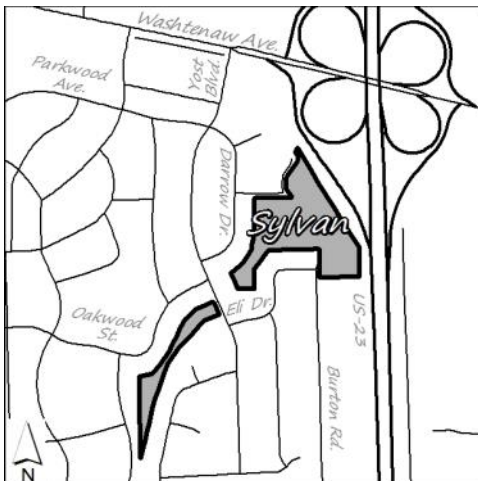


Sylvan Park is a peaceful oak-hickory forest next to busy US-23

estate agents, architects, contractors and other land developers coordinate to spur a nearby housing development toward realization. Meanwhile, a slower, steadier pace of life persists along Swift Run Creek and within the five-acre woodland for which the park is named.

"Sylvan" means wooded, and is used to evoke the tranquility and timelessness that we often associate with forests. Given its small size and proximity to the highway, Sylvan Park won't offer a respite so much as a reminder that even amidst the bustle and rush that characterize day-to-day urban life, there are pockets, still, where nature quietly goes its way.

At first glance, Sylvan Park is like any other city park. As you walk in,



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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.*

3875 E. Huron River Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Phone: 734.794.6627
Email: NAP@a2gov.org
Website: a2gov.org/NAP
facebook.com/ann.arbor.NAP
twitter.com/a2NAP

**Natural Area Preservation
Manager:**

Dave Borneman

Stewardship Specialists:

Becky Gajewski
Michael Hahn

Inventory Staff:

George Hammond, Field
Biologist
Juliet Berger, Ornithologist

Conservation Workers:

Anna Tawril
Amy Wells
Chris Robey
Liz Berghoff
Morgan Boyer

Volunteer and Outreach

Coordinator:

Tina Stephens

Outreach Assistants:

Alex Cherry
Dana Novak
Meija Knafel
Rebecca Snider

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funded by the voter-approved
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Capital Improvements Millage.*

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

How Do You Turn a Nut into a Tree – Part 2

In the last issue, I talked about the challenge that we and other land managers across the Midwest are facing regenerating our oak woodlands. We've got lots of old, large oak trees, but not so many young oak saplings ready to take their place in the future. Letting more sunlight in to the forest floor – either by cutting out dense shrubs or using controlled burns – is one way to encourage more acorns to germinate. But how do we keep those young, tender oak seedlings safe so they can grow into saplings, which will one day replace the overstory oaks? That's the focus of this article.

The conventional wisdom among researchers with the US Forest Service, trying to accomplish this same task on large tracts of public land, is this: use fire to help open up the forest floor and encourage acorn germination, then keep fire out of the forest for a number of years until those oak seedlings grow large enough (2-3 inch diameter) to withstand the heat of controlled burns. That strategy may work on large national forests, where the pressure from invasive shrubs is not nearly as great as it is here in Ann Arbor. But if we stopped burning our oak woodlands for 8-12 years, we would lose all the progress we've made in our battle against invasive buckthorn, honeysuckle, privet, and autumn olive shrubs in the past 25 years! We need fire to control the shrubs. But fire can also damage young oak seedlings. So far, our approach has been to take the long view: fire is known to benefit oaks in the long-term. Although young oaks may be sensitive to fire, they're not as sensitive as the invasive shrubs. So they'll eventually win out.

But maybe we can do better than that. Although city parks face more challenges from invasive shrubs than do the larger national forests, they do have some advantages over their larger forest cousins. The small size of our city parks, and their more intensive management, might allow us to protect individual oak seedlings. Maybe we can burn around individual oak seedlings while still burning the rest of the forest. That would allow us to continue using fire to control the invasive shrubs and keep them at bay, without also setting back the young oaks we've been trying so hard to encourage.

This spring, we started a pilot project to see if we can do just that. You may see small white flags on wire stakes scattered around some of our parks. These mark young oak seedlings that we're trying to protect from the heat of NAP's controlled burns. The protection is relatively easy: just blow the leaves away from the seedling, or wet it down with water during the burn. That should be enough to keep the young oak safe from the fire.

If this strategy works, we can hope to see more oak saplings in the forest understory in coming years. And, hopefully, these saplings will live long enough to eventually become giant oak trees for our grandchildren to enjoy.

For more information on this project, contact the NAP office.

-Dave Borneman, Natural Area Preservation Manager

Pollinators are in Decline But you can Help!

Ann Arbor Pollinator Subcommittee

Native bees, honey bees, and other pollinators are struggling because of habitat loss, disease, climate change, and the heedless use of pesticides. Creating pollinator habitat on all scales, from small spaces in your yard to larger open meadows, can have a positive impact on pollinators as well as local agriculture and economies.

Pollinators are animals, primarily butterflies and bees, which fertilize plants, resulting in the formation of seeds and the fruit surrounding seeds.

A new subcommittee of the Ann Arbor Environmental Commission, The Ann Arbor Pollinator Subcommittee, was established in 2017 with the aim of improving pollinator health. Member organizations/entities include: NAP, Leslie Science and Nature Center, National Wildlife Federation, Ann Arbor Bee City USA, Bee Safe Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor Farm and Garden Association, Ann Arbor Public Schools, Washtenaw County Water Resources Commission, University of Michigan Office of Campus Sustainability, and Washtenaw County Parks. The Pollinator Subcommittee meets monthly and is working to identify concrete actions that can be taken throughout the city, including engaging Ann Arbor residents to help. Even small steps can make a big difference.



Monarch Butterfly Photo Credit: Marianne D'Angelo

Bee Part of the Solution!

- Plant native pollinator-friendly flowering plants. Native plants are plants that have evolved, and occur naturally in an area. Native pollinators need native plants, and vice versa. To find local sources of native plants, visit the Michigan Native Plant Producers Association website (www.mnppa.org).
- Purchase plants that have not been treated with neonicotinoid pesticides. Neonicotinoids are included in insecticides, are systemic (incorporated directly into plant cells), and are known to be toxic to pollinators. Ask your retailer/grower if seeds or plants have been pre-treated with these chemicals.
- Use non-toxic gardening methods on food and ornamental plants and trees. Herbicides can reduce the food pollinators need for larvae and adults. Fungicides can also be toxic to pollinators. If you see some holes in plant leaves, that may be a good sign of caterpillar foraging. Watch for the next stages of caterpillars and chrysalis on plants, followed by butterflies! Stop and think before you spray anything outdoors.
- Reduce lawn mowing to every 2 to 3 weeks and leave some areas free of mulch for ground nesting pollinators. Add variety to your lawn! Turf grass is poor habitat for pollinators. Better yet, turn your lawn into a wildflower meadow.
- Encourage your landlord or homeowners association to create pollinator-friendly habitats and maintenance policies.
- Install a pollinator-friendly rain garden that both reduces runoff and attracts pollinators.
- Put up a native bee hotel or house in your yard.

For more resources and information, visit the Ann Arbor Pollinator Subcommittee page: www.a2gov.org/pollinators.



NAP

VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR SUMMER 2018

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.

JUNE

Bird Walk

Friday, June 1, 9 to 11 a.m.

Argo Nature Area

Join NAP's ornithologist Juliet Berger for a bird walk around the Argo Cascades and nature area, to celebrate the River Hop. Bring binoculars and dress for the weather. Meet at the Argo Canoe Livery.

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, June 2, 9 a.m. to noon

Leslie Woods Nature Area

This woodland has some of the largest oaks in the Ann Arbor parks. Join us to pull non-native species. Meet at the park entrance at the north end of Upland Drive, north of Plymouth Road.

National Trails Day Workdays

Saturday, June 2, 1 to 4 p.m.

Stapp Nature Area

Stapp Nature Area boasts a large diversity of trees in a small area. Help us build a new entrance trail to the park. Meet at the park sign at the corner of Huron Parkway and Tuebingen Parkway.

Sunday, June 3, 9 a.m. to noon

Bird Hills Nature Area

Bird Hills is a favorite hiking destination, with 3.7 miles of trails. Join us to maintain these trails. Meet at the Beechwood entrance off of Sunset Road.

Sunday, June 3, 1 to 4 p.m.

Brokaw Nature Area

Brokaw Nature Area is one of Ann Arbor's newest parks! Help us create some trails on this property. Meet at the entrance off W. Huron River Drive, just south of Wagner Road.

Mayor's Green Fair

Friday, June 8, 6 to 9 p.m.

Main Street between Huron and William

Enjoy displays of environmental information, "green" products, live music, and the urban environment. Come visit us at NAP's table!

Bird Walk

Saturday, June 9, 7:30 to 9:30 a.m.

Wheeler Service Center, 4150 Platt Road

We'll look for grassland species and waterfowl. Please come prepared to walk in fields of tall grass. Bring binoculars if you have them. Use the Platt Road entrance and meet in the small parking lot at the first turnoff on the right.

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, June 9, 9 a.m. to noon

Onder Nature Area

Onder Nature Area is a small park, but part of a larger green corridor on the north side. Join us to pull non-native species such as dame's rocket. Meet at the intersection of Hilldale Drive and Brookside Drive.

Stewardship Workday

Sunday, June 10, 1 to 4 p.m.

Fuller Park

The natural area at Fuller Park is a floodplain forest with water-loving trees. Help us pull invasive species to protect this special community. Meet in the Island Park parking lot at the end of Island Drive.

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, June 16, 9 a.m. to noon

Furstenberg Native Garden

Do you love native plants? Lend a hand weeding the native garden at Furstenberg and learn more about native gardening. Meet in the parking lot off of Fuller Road.

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, June 16, 1 to 4 p.m.

Riverwood Nature Area

This small park is home to many native plant species. Help us maintain the quality of this woodland by removing exotic plants. Meet us near the park sign on Riverwood Drive, just west of Newport Road.

Pollinator Week Workdays

Saturday, June 23, 9 a.m. to noon

Barton Nature Area

Barton Nature Area is one of the top spots to see butterflies in Ann Arbor. Help us protect their habitat by pulling invasive species in the prairie. Meet at the Barton Dam parking lot just north of Bird Road on Huron River Drive.

Saturday, June 23, 1 to 4 p.m.

Kuebler Langford Nature Area

Love butterflies? This nature area is home to 35 species! Join us to maintain butterfly habitat by pulling non-native plant species. Meet at the park entrance on Beechwood Drive, north of Sunset Road.

Sunday, June 24, 9 a.m. to noon

Bluffs Nature Area

This once-disturbed site is now home to a prairie and many butterflies and other insects. Help us pull invasive plants that threaten pollinator habitat. Meet at the entrance on Sunset Road, near Wildt Street.

Sunday, June 24, 1 to 4 p.m.

Olson Park

This park is home to many butterflies. Help improve habitat for pollinators by pulling non-native plants out of the prairie. Meet us at the entrance on Dhu Varren Road, just east of Pontiac Trail.

STEWARDSHIP NETWORK
STEWARDS' CIRCLE

7:30 to 8:30 a.m.

Second Tuesday of every month

Bruegger's Bagels

709 N. University Avenue

Are you interested in learning more about how to care for natural areas? 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

June 12: Soil microbes and restoring prairies

Restoring prairie habitat to former agricultural land in Michigan is a widespread practice, but restored communities rarely resemble the communities in remnant prairies. Altered microbial communities may explain why. Join us to discover whether we can use microbes from remnant prairies to help desirable plant species thrive in restored prairies.

July 10: Building management plans

Do you have a natural area that you want to manage but don't know where to start? How do you prioritize stewardship activities? Come learn about building management plans so you can get the most out of your restoration work.

August 14: Monitoring ecological restoration

Monitoring the results of stewardship activities is a critical component of adaptive management. Setting stewardship goals is an important first step in establishing a monitoring program. Monitoring can vary from simple qualitative assessments such as meander surveys to statistically robust, quantitative sampling. We will discuss how land managers are setting stewardship goals and the techniques they are using to monitor their progress.

Nature Walk with AADL

Thursday, June 28, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Bandemer Park

Join NAP and AADL staff on a family-friendly walk through this diverse park. We will meet at the south end of the park, in the parking lot off Lake Shore Drive (via Main Street). Some of AADL's Science Tools will be available for use during the walk!

JULY

Stewardship Workday

Sunday, July 1, 1 to 4 p.m.

Marshall Nature Area

Join us to pull summer invasives and preserve the biodiversity of the prairie pockets in this park. Meet in the parking lot off Dixboro Road, north of Plymouth Road.

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, July 7, 9 a.m. to noon

Bandemer Park

A patch of dry prairie can be found along the railroad tracks. Help us pull exotic weeds to maintain the quality of this habitat. We will meet at the south end of the park, in the parking lot off Lake Shore Drive (via Main Street).

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, July 14, 9 a.m. to noon

Furstenberg Nature Area

Join Master Gardener Aunita Erskine to tend to the native garden or help pull invasive species in the prairie. Meet us in the parking lot off of Fuller Road.

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, July 14, 1 to 4 p.m.

Ruthven Nature Area

Extensive progress has been made in restoring the native habitats here. Help us continue this work by pulling invasive plants in the prairie. Meet at the Gallup Park boat launch parking lot, at the corner of Huron Parkway and Geddes Road.

Nature Walk with AADL

Thursday, July 26, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Black Pond Woods Nature Area

Join NAP and AADL staff on a family-friendly walk through these woods. Meet us on Tibbits Court, off of Pontiac Trail. Some of AADL's Science Tools will be available for use during the walk!

AUGUST

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, August 4, 9 a.m. to noon

Black Pond Woods Nature Area

Black Pond Woods is an oak-hickory forest with beautiful wildflowers in the understory. Help us keep this habitat healthy by pulling exotic weeds. Meet on Tibbits Court, off of Pontiac Trail.

Stewardship Workday

Sunday, August 12, 9 a.m. to noon

Swift Run Marsh

Swift Run Marsh is a favorite spot for birders. Help us pull invasive plants out of the prairie and maintain the trails. Meet on Eddy Street, off of Verle Avenue.

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, August 18, 9 a.m. to noon

Olson Park

Olson Park is home to many butterflies including the declining Monarch. Help us pull non-native plants in the open meadows to protect pollinator habitat. Meet us at the entrance on Dhu Varren Road, just east of Pontiac Trail.

Stewardship Workday

Saturday, August 18, 1 to 4 p.m.

Dhu Varren Woods Nature Area

The diverse trees here provide habitat for wildlife. Join us as we pull non-native Japanese hedge parsley in the understory. Meet at the intersection of Birchwood Drive and Dhu Varren Road.

Stewardship Workday

Sunday, August 26, 9 a.m. to noon

Furstenberg Nature Area

This riverside nature area contains many plant communities including a restored prairie. Help us improve the habitat by pulling invasive species. Meet in the parking lot off of Fuller Road.

Nature Walk with AADL

Thursday, August 30, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Oakwoods Nature Area

Join NAP and AADL staff on a family friendly walk through this favorite birding destination. Meet us at the park entrance off of Dunwoodie. Some of AADL's Science Tools will be available for use during the walk!

Sylvan Park

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

you're faced first with a tennis court, a play area with a swing set and jungle gym, and an open grassy area edging Swift Run Creek—nice, but nothing special. Then, just as you cross the small footbridge spanning Swift Run Creek, you have a feeling of déjà vu. A trickle of dimly recalled sensations cascades into moments vividly relived.



The bridge over Swift Run Creek

You remember the sun's warmth on your face and legs, your mud-speckled feet and the grit under your toenails. You remember wading up a creek—not this creek but one just like it—searching for minnows and tadpoles, or pausing on the bank to gather stones and arrange them in patterns. You remember dragging branches and building lean-tos where you'd retreat for spanless breadths of time. You were smaller then, closer to the ground and more attentive to its particularities—the scatter of leaves and twigs and the empty hulls of hickory nuts chewed by squirrels. You remember how once there was nowhere else you'd rather be.

It is the promise of reliving such moments, and creating them anew, that makes Sylvan Park a wonderful place to bring children, especially if it is their first up-close exposure to the natural world. The playground may hold their attention for a time. But when the creek and woods beyond call to them, lead them there. Show them what there is just beyond the ordered play of swings and jungle gyms. Bring them close to the towering trees. Let them feel their rough bark, test the difference between the different species. Share what you know. Teach them the names of things, and imagine how they're experiencing them, as you did when you were their age—for the first time.

Here is a hickory nut shell. See the teeth marks? See where he chewed through to get to the nut inside? Squirrels and other animals hide these to eat all through the winter.

This is an oak leaf. See the rounded lobes? That means it's a white oak. You can also tell by the bark. It's pale and rough and scaly, like the neck of a big dragon.

After crossing the bridge, you will come out into an open field with picnic tables shaded by tall oaks and hickories. The specimens here are the same as the woodland's overstory—white and red oak, shagbark and bitternut hickory. The trail lies just ahead. It is a brief jaunt, at times bringing you close to the highway, but look about you and you will find yourself wandering through a historical fragment, a pocket of the oak-hickory forests that once covered the area that is now Ann Arbor. Scattered throughout you will find other characteristic species: black cherry and basswood in the overstory, sugar maple and hop-hornbeam in the subcanopy, and choke cherry, jack-in-the-pulpit, and enchanter's nightshade in the understory. Look close, and if you're lucky a drooping trillium may even grace you with an appearance.

NAP may have had an opportunity to reintroduce fire to this historic oak-hickory fragment this past spring. As with other natural areas managed by NAP, the objective of these burns is to kill woody invasives and clear out the understory to make way for native plant growth. With continued care, oak-hickory remnants like Sylvan Woods may continue to offer a buffer against day-to-day stresses for the current generation and vital first contact with the natural world for the next.

New Signs at Dolph, Argo, and Gallup Parks



Going off of a tip from a park user, the DEQ Aquatic Invasive Plant Response Team, working with NAP, removed 60 lbs. of the Watch List species, Water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*), from First Sister Lake last fall. Water lettuce is commonly used in backyard ponds and water features. Given that, there is a high probability that this plant was dumped into First Sister Lake. In an effort to stop the movement of invasive species, park users will find new signs at First and Second Sister Lakes, Gallup and Argo parks reminding people to stop aquatic hitchhikers.

NAPpenings



STAFF UPDATES

Thank you!

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

Alpha Phi Omega, UM
Alpha Phi Omega – Lambda Phi Chapter, EMU
Alpha Sigma Mu, UM
Ann Arbor Open
Ann Arbor Running Fit
Ann Arbor Spartans
Circle K, UM
Community High School
Ecological Issues, UM
Greenhills School
School for Environmental and Sustainability, UM
Skyline Environmental Club
Tau Beta Sigma, UM
UM Bands
YMCA, Plymouth
You Beautiful Black Woman
Youth for Understanding
Youth Volunteer Corps

Tri-colored Bats in Ann Arbor

We have the results from the bat survey we conducted last summer with the Organization for Bat Conservation. We recorded calls from 5 species of bats along our route in Ann Arbor, including 1 call of a little brown bat and 3 calls of tri-colored bats, both of which are species of special concern. This is exciting because this is one of only a few times anyone has ever documented tri-colored bats in Michigan in the summer! You can help bats in Ann Arbor by planting native plants and putting up bat boxes.

It's Turtle Nesting Season

In our area, May and June is turtle nesting season! Please keep an eye out for turtles laying eggs in our parks this time of year, and let us know when and where you see them so we can protect their nests. Female turtles dig a hole with their hind legs, lay their eggs, then cover the nest and return to the water.

FAREWELL...



KATIE CARLISLE

Park Steward Coordinator

It's been such a pleasure working with Natural Area Preservation the past couple years! I have enjoyed getting to know all the Park Stewards and other volunteers. From walks in the park to pulling garlic mustard, it's been a lot of fun. I'm excited to take the knowledge and experience I've gained on to my new position with Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation. I look forward to continuing to see you all around Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County!

WELCOME...



CHRIS ROBEY

Field Crew

As a recent transplant from North Carolina, I'm eager to come to know Ann Arbor's natural areas as a member of NAP's conservation crew. Connecting people to places through stewardship and storytelling lies at the heart of what I do. I graduated from Appalachian State University with an Environmental Humanities degree and minors in English and Sustainable Development. I've written articles for the Appalachian Voice, worked on and led trail crews for Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards, and learned the ropes (quite literally!) as a groundsman for a local arborist. Now, I am thrilled to join NAP's staff and our wonderful volunteers as we work to fulfill our mission.



MEIJA KNAFL

Park Steward Coordinator

A recent graduate from the University of Maine's wildlife ecology program, I am incredibly excited to be joining the NAP team! Born and bred in Ann Arbor, it's a dream come true that I've been given the opportunity to bring my passion for the outdoors home. I've spent several summers as a seasonal naturalist for the MDNR leading groups of children in nature-based outdoor programming. These summers have further fueled my drive to create opportunities for people to involve themselves with the nature that surrounds them every day. I'm looking forward to working with Park Stewards and other independent volunteers, connecting people with our wonderful wild spaces in meaningful ways.

Would you like to be part of the NAP Staff team? Follow the city jobs website (a2gov.org/jobs). Positions can open throughout the year. NAP also has unpaid internships that provide valuable experience! For internship information contact NAP directly: NAP@a2gov.org or 734.794.6627.

Natural Area Preservation

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Ann Arbor is Helping Pollinators

Becky Gajewski
Stewardship Specialist

Did you know that the City of Ann Arbor has joined several national initiatives to help protect and restore pollinator habitat? A newly-formed Pollinator Subcommittee of the Environmental Commission is working hard to ensure Ann Arbor is a friendly place for bees, birds, and butterflies, both today and into the future. NAP and our volunteers play a huge role in carrying out the objectives of these initiatives by actively restoring and enhancing the natural communities pollinators call home, and by getting the word out about the importance of these hard-working species.



Photo Credit: Therese Roth

Learn more about each initiative below.

- Mayor's Monarch Pledge – Mayor Taylor has committed to specific action items to increase pollinator habitat and celebrate monarchs. Check out www.nwf.org/mayorsmonarchpledge
- Bee City USA – City officials and community members are working together to spread the word about the importance of bees and to increase bee habitat in private yards and parks. Check out www.beecityusa.org
- National Wildlife Federation Community Wildlife Habitat – Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County are recognized for providing habitat for and raising awareness about wildlife throughout our communities. Check out www.nwf.org/community
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Monarch Fund – Coming soon! NAP will be adding additional native seeds to several prairie habitats in our parks to make more diverse habitats for monarchs. Check out www.nfwf.org/monarch
- Ann Arbor Pollinator Subcommittee– Read more about their efforts on page 3 and www.a2gov.org/pollinators