



NAP

NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

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

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 4
WINTER 2016

Park Focus: Buhr Children's Wet Meadows

Catie Wytychak, Outreach Assistant

While visiting Buhr Park this winter to go sledding, skating at the ice rink or touring the historic Cobblestone Farm, don't pass up the opportunity to walk by the Buhr Park Children's Wet Meadows. The first wet meadow was planted in 1997, and in the last 18 years the idea has spread. Two more wet meadows and about a half dozen rain gardens have been installed throughout the park. These native areas help capture, store, and infiltrate rain



Native plants of the wetlands provide habitat and act as a food source for birds, insects and other wildlife.

water from the parking lot, turf grass and surrounding neighborhood.

Wet meadows and rain gardens are shallow depressions where stormwater will pool briefly. Native plants with extensive root systems allow stormwater to infiltrate into the groundwater system where our soils naturally clean the water. Native plants also provide habitat and act as a food source for birds, insects, and other wildlife.

Where there are no rain gardens or wet meadows, rainfall runs off roofs and over pavement and turf, warming up and picking up pollutants, then rushing through stormdrains into the nearest creek. The sudden blasts of warm, polluted stormwater are harmful to aquatic plants and animals, carry nutrients that promote excess algae growth downstream, and cause erosion of stream banks.

The Buhr Park Children's Wet Meadow Project (BPCWMP) was

first championed by Jeannine Palms and her Blossom Home preschoolers. While volunteering with the Huron River Watershed Council, Jeannine became aware that stormwater flowing through her neighborhood's street drains flowed directly into Malletts Creek, untreated. Jeannine's preschool students visited the creek weekly to learn and play. As she learned more about the effects of stormwater on Malletts Creek and the Huron River, and the benefits of wetlands, she shared that with the preschoolers. One day she pointed it out when snow melt was pouring in to the storm drains in Buhr Park, and students responded with "Well, let's make a wetland here!" Naming themselves the Super Swampers,

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Three wet meadows and about a half dozen rain gardens have been installed throughout Buhr Park located off Packard.

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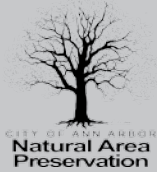
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A unit of the City of Ann Arbor
Community Services Area,
Parks and Recreation Services.

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

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

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

David Borneman, Deputy Manager for Volunteerism and NAP

“Rest!” cries the Chief Sawyer...

If you're not immediately familiar with this phrase, then you've never read the great classic "A Sand County Almanac" written by Aldo Leopold, often considered the father of the modern conservation movement. Much of the book is his reflections written each month of the year. His February chapter is entitled, "The Good Oak" and tells the story of sawing through an old oak tree that was killed by lightning, laying up firewood for the next winter. This endeavor provides ample opportunity to reflect on important events that transpired during the decades of the tree's life. Repeatedly throughout the story, this line is repeated: "Rest!" cries the chief sawyer, and we pause for breath."

**“REST! CRIES
THE CHIEF SAWYER, AND
WE PAUSE FOR BREATH.”**

— ALDO LEOPOLD

It's good advice, whether you're cutting firewood, or just finishing up another busy year of park stewardship. We can all look back on 2015 with great satisfaction. We've accomplished a tremendous amount, as summarized nicely by the stats on the back page of this newsletter. Much of our work the past 12 months has been about trying to maximize efficiency or results: pulling the most garlic mustard, getting the most acres burned, cutting the most buckthorn, counting the most species of birds, etc... Those are some of the main goals of NAP staff and volunteers at workdays and other activities.

And that's all good. But sometimes in the hustle and bustle of these busy fieldwork months, it's easy to lose touch – at least temporarily – with what is really most important. That may be different for each of us, but for many, it would include some kind of relationship in which we find ourselves. Maybe it's our relationship with a partner, or with our family, or with nature, or with some other divine presence. Maybe it's our relationship with our self, and taking good care of our self. Whatever you put in that top slot - your highest priority – deserves some serious good-quality, focused, attention from you. And what better time for that than now, as the field season is replaced with the holiday season at the end of the year. It's an obvious time to rest, and pause for breath.

Take advantage of this time to look back on what you've accomplished this year, and to celebrate your successes. Take time to reflect on your failures and make sure you have fully learned from those experiences. Take time to rebuild and strengthen those relationships that are most important to you, because these are the relationships that will sustain you through the hectic times ahead, when you may find it harder to make time to nurture them. Take time to get out and enjoy the parks this winter, as the next article suggests. And if you've never read "A Sand County Almanac," or if it's been awhile, take time to read that, or another good nature book that you've been wanting to read. Take care of yourself and your relationships this winter. Rejuvenate yourself and them. We'll look forward to seeing you next year, refreshed and reinvigorated and ready for another great year! ■

Parks in Winter

by Rafa Contreras-Rangel

When we think of nature areas, images of vast green forests and prairies full of flowers often come to mind. In the depth of winter, we often yearn for spring to arrive so we can go back and hike our favorite parks. During this time, many of us like to stay indoors with a good book in hand and a warm cup of coffee while we wait for spring, leaving our parks and natural areas we love so much throughout the year nearly forgotten.

We forget our parks and natural areas because winter makes days cold, wet, and gloomy, but not all days are like that. Sometimes winter gives us a day that is not windy, snowy, or overcast. Sometimes it give us a windless day with a clear blue sky, making us wonder if spring has come early. If you have never visited your favorite park over the winter, then I suggest that you put on your best snow boots and visit it on one of these bright sunny days. The world is a different place during winter. The foliage is gone, allowing for different and distant views of the Huron River, small creeks, distant big trees, the cityscape, and other features of the landscape that are obscured by leaves or just easy to miss in other seasons.

If you are not sure where to start your winter visit, or if you think the park you want to visit might be too much to handle at the moment, a great place to start is the Border-to-Border trail (B2B) along the Huron River. The B2B trail runs along the open spaces of the Huron River Greenway, and in the city it connects many of the parks along the Huron River, including Bandemer, Argo, Fuller, and Gallup, among others.

If this is your first time visiting a park during winter, Gallup would be a great place to start. On a sunny day, you will be able to see the spectacular view of the sun's reflection off the ice-coated Huron River. You can also make your way west on the paved B2B trail to view the snow-covered wet prairie against the background of the Huron River, now visible thanks to the recent restoration efforts. At the end of your walk, if you're feeling adventurous, you can always jump over to Ruthven Park across Geddes Road. Ruthven contains a special kind of hill called a glacial kame. The sand and gravel that makes up the hill were first deposited in a depression in glacial ice, and then left behind when the ice containing it melted away. Now the fast-draining soil of the kame is home to many wildflowers and other native plants adapted to drought dry condition. From the top of the kame you can look across the river valley, and with the leaves off the trees see the bluffs cut by the river below. Add the snow-cover of winter to the landscape and you are able to step back in time a few thousand years and see the shadow of an ancient ecosystem.

The world can be a harsh place during winter. Plants go



Put on your best snow boots and visit your favorite park on bright sunny days during the winter months. The world is a different place during winter.

Photo: Dea Knopf 2008

dormant, many animals sleep or migrate, and humans seek refuge. But winter is also magical in a way. It marks the end of a year, the end of a cycle. It completely changes landscapes compared to the other seasons, and it rewards those who are willing to explore it. So while the cold of winter might discourage you from venturing to the outdoors, remember that the most precious treasures are often hidden in the harshest of places. You might find that your favorite park is ten times better during winter. All you have to do is brave the cold for a day. ■



NAP

VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

WINTER 2016

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! Workdays are free and suitable for all ages. Minors must either be accompanied by a guardian or bring a signed release form. Contact NAP for release forms. For workdays please wear sturdy shoes good for wet ground or snow, and dress in layers. Tools, snacks and know-how provided.

JANUARY

Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service
Monday, January 18, 1-3 p.m.
Barton Nature Area

This day is an opportunity to make your "day off" a "day on" for community service work and environmental stewardship. Volunteers will remove invasive shrubs. Please meet at the Barton Dam parking lot near the corner of Huron River Drive and Bird Road. You can learn more about the MLK Day of Service mission by visiting www.MLKday.gov.

Citizen Pruner Training
Saturday, January 23, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Love trees? Looking for a new and unique way to volunteer in the community? Citizen Pruners volunteer for special workdays to care for newly planted city trees. We'll teach you everything you need to know. Training includes both indoor and outdoor time, so come prepared to be comfortable in both settings. Please register by January 20, email tstephens@a2gov.org or call 734.794.6627 for more information.

World Wetland Day
Saturday, January 30, 1-3 p.m.
Bandemer Nature Area

World Wetland Day is February 2. We'll celebrate by working in a fen! Fens are rare ecosystems in Michigan, formed by a special combination of groundwater flow and natural disturbance. We'll take advantage of the frozen ground to remove exotic shrubs that are invading this wetland. Meet at the south end of the park, in the parking lot off Lake Shore Dr. (via Main Street).

STEWARDSHIP NETWORK

STEWARDS' CIRCLE

SECOND TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH,
EACH EVENT HELD FROM 7:30-8:30 a.m.
BRUEGGER'S BAGELS | 709 N. UNIVERSITY AVE.

Are you interested in learning more about how to care for our 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!

For more information go to www.StewardshipNetwork.org.

Tuesday, January 12 | Ornithological Inventory

Discussion topic: How land managers make their spaces more bird and birdwatcher "friendly?" How can birders be better stewards of the lands they visit? The discussion may include working with local birdwatcher-volunteers and eBird as well as other habitat management tools.

Tuesday, February 9 | Formal Approaches to Native Landscaping

Discussion topic: how formal approaches to native landscaping can be an effective demonstration tool in showing others how natives can be beautiful and provide important ecological value.

Tuesday, March 8 | Managing Habitats for the Massasauga Rattlesnake

Discussion topic: Michigan's only venomous snake, the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake. We'll talk about how the life cycle of this species drives its habitat needs, and how habitat restoration can affect it.

FEBRUARY

Presidents' Day

Monday, February 15, 1-3 p.m.

Foxfire West Nature Area

Take advantage of this winter opportunity to explore and improve one of Ann Arbor's special wetlands, usually inaccessible in warm months. Volunteers will help restore this area by using hand tools to remove invasive shrubs. Meet at the park entrance off Birchwood Drive.

Saturday, February 20, 1-3 p.m.

Furstenberg Nature Area

This 38-acre park contains wetland, woodlands, prairie, and a rare oak savanna. We'll take advantage of the frozen ground to cut invasive woody shrubs in the sedge meadow, home to many special wetland plants. Meet in the parking lot off Fuller Road, across from Huron High School.

SEASON KICKOFF

CONTROLLED BURN

Public Meeting: Controlled Burn Program

Tuesday, February 23, 7-8:30 p.m.

Natural Area Preservation Office

3875 E. Huron River Drive

Fire is used as a restoration tool in many of Ann Arbor's natural areas. This meeting will be a discussion about our Controlled Ecological Burn Program. Ask questions and learn more about the benefits of safe use of fire as a restoration tool.

Volunteer Burn Crew Training

Wednesday, February 24, noon-5 p.m.

Leslie Science & Nature Center's

Nature House, 1831 Traver Road

Become a part of NAP's Volunteer Burn Crew! This is the required training session for anyone interested in assisting with NAP's controlled burns. Burns typically take place Monday through Friday between noon and 5 p.m. Registration is required by Feb. 22, as enrollment is limited. Call 734.794.6627 or email NAP@a2gov.org to register or for more information.



MARCH

KICKOFFS AND TRAININGS

Please register for all Kickoffs and Trainings by contacting NAP at 734.794.6627 or NAP@a2gov.org.

Salamander Survey Kickoff & Training

Sunday, March 13, noon-2 p.m.

Eli Gallup Meeting Room, Gallup Park

Canoe Livery, 3000 Fuller Road

Did you know we have at least five species of salamanders in Ann Arbor? If you have a willingness to get muddy, you're invited to help monitor populations and the health of their habitats. Surveying is done three to six times in early spring at multiple sites. New participants must attend this indoor training. Space is limited. Please register by March 9.

Frog and Toad Survey Kickoff & Training

Sunday, March 13, 2:30-5 p.m.

Eli Gallup Meeting Room, Gallup Park

Canoe Livery, 3000 Fuller Road

Everyone is invited to join us to help monitor frog populations in Ann

Arbor! It's fun learning to identify the frogs of Michigan by ear and eye. No previous experience required. Family-friendly! Surveying is done 3 to 6 times from early spring through June. New participants must attend this indoor training. Space is limited. Please register by March 9.

Photo Monitoring Kickoff & Training

Saturday, March 19, 10-11:30 a.m.

Natural Area Preservation Office

3875 E. Huron River Drive

We need volunteers to take beautiful photos at specific locations each season to record the progress of our restoration work. You must have your own digital camera. Come join us at this informational meeting for more details about this volunteer opportunity! Please register by March 16.

Workday Leader Training

Saturday, March 19, Noon-5:30 p.m.

Natural Area Preservation Office

3875 E. Huron River Drive

This training is for volunteers interested in leading and/or co-leading NAP stewardship workdays. We will focus on procedures, ecological considerations, and tips and tricks to lead a successful event. A strong commitment to preserving the environment while fostering community and engaging the public is necessary. An interest and background in ecology (and plant ID) is strongly desired, but not required. Participants must be 18 years old or older, and should be dressed for classroom and time outside. Please register by March 16.

NAPpenings

THE STEWARDSHIP NETWORK

THE SCIENCE, PRACTICE, AND ART OF RESTORING NATIVE ECOSYSTEMS

Each year, in January, our friends and colleagues at The Stewardship Network organize a conference: The Science, Practice, and Art of Restoring Native Ecosystems. This year the conference is January 15 & 16, in the Kellogg Center in East Lansing. Registration is open now. For more information, visit www.StewardshipNetworkConference.org.

Buhr Children's Wet Meadows

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

older Blossom summer camp students (7-9 year olds), most of whom had learned about Malletts Creek as Blossom preschoolers, took up the challenge and began organizing. An adult support team was also formed.

The Super Swampers, with the aid of the adult team and other wetland professionals, created a design to build a wetland habitat in the park. Full of



**THE CHILDREN'S WET MEADOWS
ARE AN EXAMPLE OF HOW
A COMMUNITY CAN COME
TOGETHER TO DEVELOP
CREATIVE SOLUTIONS.**

native plants, it would help absorb stormwater before it reached Malletts Creek, provide habitat for wildlife, and be an educational site for the community. After securing funding, coordinating with local officials, and organizing volunteers, they planted the first wet meadow in 1997. Over 1,600 seedlings and a pound of seeds were planted with the help of 100 volunteers over two weekends.

With funds left over from the first wet meadow project, the BPCWMP paid for a design for all of Buhr Park, with the goal of zero runoff from the park. Implementation of the design has continued with the installation of two more wet meadows and an extension of the first one. Two of the Super Swampers, Celia Haven and Yousef Rabhi, now adults, each took on the management for one of those wet meadow installations.

Natural Area Preservation conducts controlled burns of the wet meadows to promote the growth of the native plants and keep the landscape open. These events have become a great opportunity for the public to learn about controlled burns and participate by spreading seeds after the burn. The burns at the Children's Wet Meadows are great teaching opportunities, a valuable chance for NAP to explain why we have controlled burns in many of our parks. Some neighboring families have attended the prescribed burns annually and enjoy the sight of wildflowers popping up a few weeks after the burn.

The Buhr Park Children's Wet Meadows Project is an example of how a community can come together to develop creative solutions. NAP staff are happy and grateful to have been able to facilitate the process, and look forward to continuing our participation in the Project. If you want to be involved in any of these community efforts, there are plenty of opportunities! To learn more, visit www.WetMeadow.org. ■

Welcome, New Park Stewards!

Tim and Robin Damschroder
Ruthven Nature Area

Michelle Camilleri
Miller Nature Area

Jeff Vornhagen and Stacie
Printon
*Transferred to Oakwoods
Nature Area from Stapp and
Leslie*

Shawn Severance
The Ponds

Thank you!

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

Concordia University
Ann Arbor first year students
Deloitte Consulting
EMU Biology 226
EMU Vision
Greenhills School
UM Indian American Student
Association
UM Michigan Community
Scholars Program
UM Delta Sigma Phi
UM Environmental Ecology
UM Epsilon Eta
UM Law School
UM Medical School
YMCA Ann Arbor
Youth Volunteer Corps

*Thank you to the local
businesses and organizations
that donated prizes for our
Volunteer Appreciation
Potluck!*

Sweet Gem Confections
– www.annarborchocolate.com

Radius Garden, LLC
– www.radiusgarden.com

Leslie Science & Nature
Center
– www.lesliesnc.org

City of Ann Arbor's Huron
Hills and Leslie Park Golf
Courses
– www.a2gov.org/golf

STAFF UPDATES



WELCOME... GEORGE HAMMOND

After years as a volunteer, I'm now a staff member at NAP! At last, all the secrets of the parks are mine! Mwah ha h-ahem. Ok, actually not so many secrets, but a place on a hard-working team of friendly folks, and a chance to work in our parks. Very exciting! Previously I worked at the UM Museum of Zoology, for the Animal Diversity Web educational website. The ADW is still online (and worth a look), and I still work with them too, but we're not in the Museum anymore, and I'm wearing both NAP and ADW hats. I'm happy to be able to put my ecological and editorial training to work for NAP.



LOGAN NEVINS

I am excited to be at NAP as the Workday Coordinator to work with the great network of volunteers that Ann Arbor has. This volunteer network takes great pride in managing their parks and I am glad I get to be a part of it. I am excited to bring the skills I learned from earning a Conservation Biology degree from Lake Superior State University to NAP and work at continuing the conservation efforts NAP has been known for. Workday Coordinator allows me to enjoy my passion for the outdoors while helping others get involved in managing our great nature areas.



DAN ENGEL

I recently graduated with a Master's degree from the University of Michigan studying Conservation Ecology and Environmental Informatics. Ever since taking an ecology course in undergrad, my career goal has been to restore degraded ecosystems to benefit both people and wildlife. I am excited to make that a reality here in Ann Arbor by serving with NAP and the amazing volunteer crews!



MEGAN BOYER

I graduated from the University of Michigan – Flint, earning a degree in Wildlife Biology with a minor in Environmental Studies. My previous work with the DNR and the Genesee County Parks has focused on public education and conservation. I am excited to join the NAP field crew to see the restoration practices I have taught other people about put into use within the city park system. I look forward to working with the wonderful people of Ann Arbor in helping promote natural areas for everyone to enjoy!



UPDATE... YUSEF RABHI

Yousef Rabhi, former NAP staffer and Wet Meadows kid writes.... "In preschool we were very interested in how our actions impact the environment around us. From an early age I remember studying the critters in the segment of Malletts Creek that runs through Scheffler Park and planting plugs for what would soon become the Buhr Park Children's Wet Meadow Project! Many of my policy approaches and deep love of nature can be linked to these early experiences. It certainly was central to my run for County Commissioner back in 2010 and remains foundational as I run for State Representative!"



FAREWELL... LIZ BANDA

I thoroughly enjoyed my time with NAP, although I was only with the crew a short time, I learned a great deal about native flora as well as increased my knowledge of invasive plants and how to manage them. I will very much miss interacting with all of the great volunteers as well as my former co-workers. I will now be working with Davey Resource Group and will be using many of the skills I learned at NAP in my new position as a Consulting Utility Forester. ■



THANKS TO NEW EAGLE SCOUTS!

- Nate Helberg and his team built and installed trail markers at Dolph Nature Area.
- Will Norton and his team built viewing benches and a picnic table at South Pond Nature Area.



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Winter 2016

Natural Area Preservation

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NAP by the NUMBERS | VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS OF 2015



This year, volunteers spent over **8000** hours working in **50** parks around the city!
■ NAP crew spent **1500** hours working on **337** acres in **38** parks! ■ We had over **3000** volunteers at workdays (public and private) this year alone. ■ Bird Survey volunteers observed **135** species and volunteered **150** hours. Since 1990 **235** species of birds have been seen in city parks! ■ Frog, toad and Salamander Survey volunteers gave almost **375** hours this year, and logged **325** observations of amphibians and reptiles in our parks. ■ Photo monitors spent **36.5** hours taking photos in the parks.

YOU CAN HELP OUR NUMBERS GROW! Volunteers help us keep track of the plants and animals in our nature areas. Check the calendar inside for the survey training and kickoff events coming in early spring. We would also be delighted to have you come to our public workdays, or contact us about organizing a private workday for your group!