



NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION NEWS – PRINTABLE VERSION
VOLUME 27, NUMBER 1 – SEPTEMBER 2021
A2GOV.ORG/NAP – NAP@A2GOV.ORG – 734.794.6627

Protecting and restoring Ann Arbor's natural areas and fostering an environmental ethic within the community.

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Welcome Back to NAP News!

After saying farewell to the printed, quarterly newsletter... we are moving on to the completely online version of NAP News. You'll find the same amount of yearly content as in the past, with the same kind of articles and information, now spread out over 12 months. Old content will always be available through the archives, and emails will continue to go out to alert subscribers when the new monthly issue is available. Any comments or questions about the new format? Please email us at NAP@a2gov.org or call 734.764.6627

New Invasive Species Alert: Black Swallow-wort

Becky Hand, Stewardship Specialist

It can grow so thickly and aggressively, that it's given rise to another, rather unpleasant name for the plant – dog-strangling vine.



Vincetoxicum nigrum, [jacilluch, CC BY-SA 2.0](#) via Wikimedia Commons

After facing so many challenges during the past two years, 2021 has brought us another hurdle to overcome, in the form of a new invasive plant. NAP recently received notification from the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network (MISIN) that black swallow-wort (*Vincetoxicum nigrum*), an aggressive invasive vine, had been found in Ann Arbor for the first time.

Although this invasive had been found in other parts of Washtenaw County, this was the first time it was identified within the city limits. Imagine our surprise when we investigated further, only to find that it was growing just a block away from our office on private land! Not known to back down from a challenge, the NAP team sprang into action, and we made contact with the homeowner where the population was discovered.

Monarchs can be fooled into laying their eggs on black swallow-wort because it is a relative of milkweed.

Once we verified that the identification was correct, several staff members and volunteers met on the property to learn the identifying characteristics of this plant, and to assist the homeowner in pulling some of it. Unfortunately, this isn't the most effective way to control the plant (more on that in a bit), but it was growing in the landscaping, which limited our options for control. We are currently getting in contact with other neighbors in the area so that we can better understand the distribution of this plant.



Black dog-strangling vine, black swallowwort, [Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org](#), via Forestry Images

Black swallow-wort is of particular concern because its dense growth habit can cause it to smother nearby vegetation if left unchecked. In fact, it can grow so thickly and aggressively, that it's given rise to another, rather unpleasant name for the plant – dog-strangling vine. It can grow in a range of habitats and cultivated settings, and it is shade

tolerant. In addition, it is toxic to insect larvae, such as monarch caterpillars. Monarchs can be fooled into laying their eggs on black swallow-wort because it is a relative of milkweed. After the eggs hatch, the caterpillars attempt to feed on the swallow-wort leaves, but soon get sick and die.

Black swallow-wort's flowers are small and dark purple, with 5 petals arranged in a star shape.



Vincetoxicum nigrum, [Frank Vincentz, CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons



Vincetoxicum nigrum, [Salicyna, CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

There are actually two different varieties of swallow-wort – black and pale (*V. rossicum*). As far as we know, pale swallow-wort has not been found in our area, but both varieties are present in nearby Oakland County. Both plants are perennial vines that can grow up to seven feet long. They have opposite lance-or heart-shaped leaves that are dark green and glossy, with smooth margins and a sharply pointed tip. Black swallow-wort's flowers are small and dark purple, with 5 petals arranged in a star shape. The petals are about as long as they are wide. Pale swallow-wort also has small 5-petalled flowers, but its flowers are pink to deep burgundy, and the petals are longer than they are wide. In late summer, both plants produce slender, hanging seed pods, which persist on the plant into the winter, after the flat, brown seeds with fluffy hairs have dispersed.

Controlling swallow-worts can be a bit tricky. Hand-pulling is not very effective because the stems are fragile and often break off at the root. If any of the roots are left in the ground, the plant will re-sprout the following year. Cutting, mowing, and burning also stimulate re-growth from the root crown. The plants can be dug up, but this method is time-consuming, and is only effective if all the roots are removed. Removing the seed pods from the plant can help to slow its spread, but herbicide applied to the leaves is the most effective way to control the existing plants. Herbicides with the active ingredient triclopyr are the most effective and should be applied in late spring or early summer. This herbicide is most commonly used because swallow-worts are often found growing in grasslands and old fields, and triclopyr does not harm surrounding grasses. Two leaf-eating moth species are currently being researched as a method of biocontrol, but they have not yet been approved for release.



As you spend time in the parks in the late summer and fall, please keep your eye out for this nasty invader, and let us know if you think you've found it! It would be great if you could send us a picture as well, so that we can verify the identification. If you'd like more information about black swallow-wort or its control methods, feel free to reach out to us at NAP@a2gov.org, or call the office at 734.794.6627.

NAPpennings

Announcing a New Stewards' Circle Format

Tuesday, October 12, 2021, 5:30 – 6:30 p.m., Veterans Memorial Park Meeting Room (Followed by happy hour nearby!)

For the last 10 years, the Huron Arbor Cluster of the Stewardship Network has been gathering monthly with a local expert to answer your questions; now it's time to flip the script! You are invited to join us at the newly renovated Veterans Memorial Park Meeting Room to share your experiences and learn from your peers. October's topic: planning resources. "What methods do you use to keep track of your restoration work? Are there any tools for planning that have helped you? What doesn't work?" After the discussion group, join us for a happy hour just up the street at HOMES Brewery to further connect with other land stewards!

Thank you!

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

Ann Arbor LDS Institute
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
Concordia University
Michigan Community Scholars Program
UM Campus Conservation Corps
Youth Volunteer Corps

Staff Updates

Welcome...



Chloe Hernandez
Conservation Worker

Hi there! I graduated from Eastern Michigan University where I studied Environmental Science with a concentration in Environmental Biology. I took a number of field courses that reinforced my passion for protecting our native flora and fauna. When I'm not working, you can find me exploring our natural areas learning to identify new plants, fungi, and butterflies. I am thrilled to be working on a team with such

wonderful people who share my interests in a city that I love so much!



Kathryn Beauchamp
Workday Coordinator

Hello! I am a recent graduate of Michigan State University where I studied Environmental Studies and Sustainability and Geographic Information Systems. In my free time, I love to be outdoors hiking, camping and practicing yoga. I am so excited for the opportunity to join the NAP team and to be part of this community of great people! I am looking forward to helping protect Ann Arbor's natural areas!

Farewell...



Krissy Elkins

Workday Coordinator

My time as Workday Coordinator at NAP has come to an end. Although I will miss all of the amazing volunteers and beautiful parks in Ann Arbor, I am excited to move to Winnipeg, Manitoba. I will be attending a graduate program in biology at the University of Winnipeg studying the effects of grazing on wet meadow rangelands. I am thankful to have worked with such wonderful colleagues and dedicated volunteers. I'm happy to leave knowing these parks are cared

for and loved by so many.

Congratulations...



Kathleen Gosselin

Conservation Worker

Cooper Scott Gosselin arrived on July 16th, 2021 at 9:30am! He was 8lbs 6oz and 20in long. NAP has rubbed off on Cooper. He is only happy when he is outside and he loves the sound of running power tools. We love him so much! Thank you to all my NAP coworkers for the continued support.



Becky Hand (Gajewski)

Stewardship Specialist

After postponing our wedding in 2020, my fiancé Eric and I finally tied the knot on a beautiful sunny day in June. Our outdoor ceremony took place almost exactly six years after our first date. We're looking forward to seeing what life has in store for us next!

Events

Annual Volunteer Appreciation Gathering

Sunday, October 3, 2021, 1:30-4:30 p.m.

Olson Park Shelter

Drop in for our annual Volunteer Appreciation event!! We'd love to have you join us on Sunday, October 3, for a casual gathering to celebrate your hard work and stewardship. We will have some refreshments ready for you, as well as fun activities like guided walks, games, informal storytelling, and lots of time to chat, catch-up, and celebrate! Hope to see you there! Register for this event [here](https://tinyurl.com/NAPVolunteers2021). (<https://tinyurl.com/NAPVolunteers2021>)

Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

Check out our volunteer opportunities and other events at a2gov.org/NAPEvents, and/or view and register at yhub.at/NAP.



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