

# Summer Newsletter

# NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

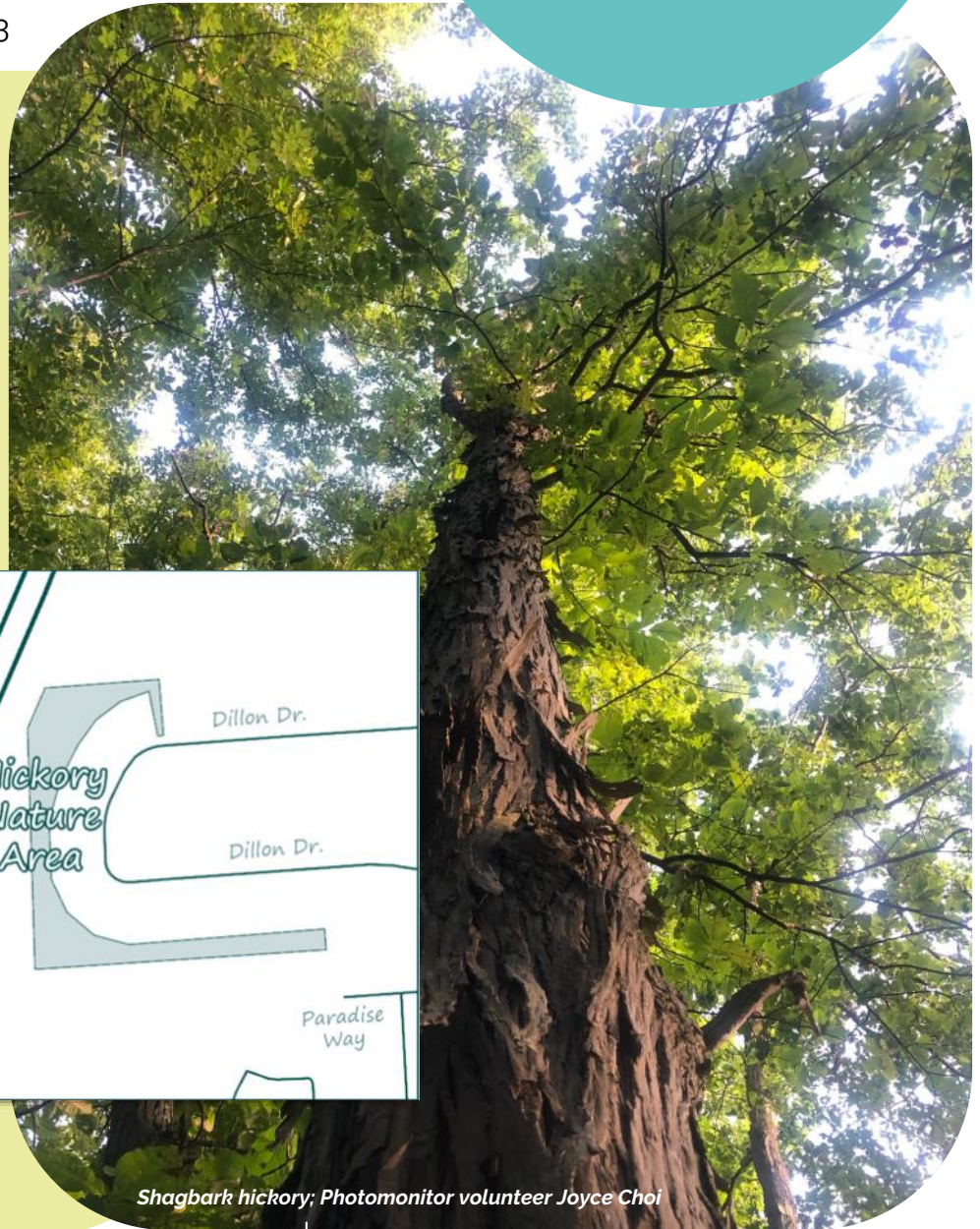
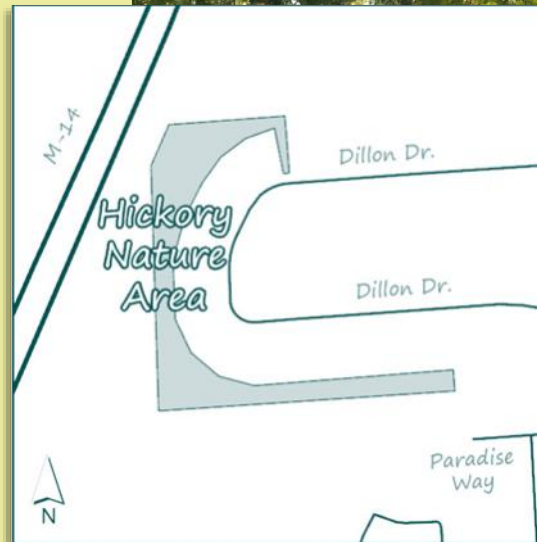


July 2024 • Volume 30, Number 3

## PARK FOCUS HICKORY NATURE AREA

*Ian McClellan, Workday  
Coordinator*

Hickory Nature Area is a charming, two-acre park on the north side of Ann Arbor. Nestled between M-14 and Dillon Drive, this park offers visitors a peaceful retreat with its beautiful oak and hickory trees. The park is accessible through a pathway located between two homes on Dillon Drive, making it a hidden gem in the neighborhood.



*Shagbark hickory; Photomonitor volunteer Joyce Choi*



Natural Area Preservation's mission is to protect and restore Ann Arbor's natural areas and to foster an environmental ethic within the community.

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**Examples of  
hickory nuts**

*Photos: NAP Staff*

## HICKORY: MORE THAN A POCKET PARK

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**H**ickory Nature Area was acquired by the City of Ann Arbor in March of 2019. The land had previously been cleared and was farmed up until about the 1970s. At that time, the fields were abandoned and the forest began to take over. Much of the property was cleared again for development in the mid-2000s, but a patch of forest remained. This area, filled with oak and hickory trees, was deemed worth preserving. Large, old trees – remnants of the hedgerows between the old farm fields – are still visible in the park today.

Recently, volunteers working with Natural Area Preservation (NAP) worked to create a trail through the park. These efforts have made it easier for visitors to explore and enjoy the natural beauty of Hickory Nature Area.

One of the unique features of Hickory Nature Area is its namesake hickory trees. These trees are a common feature of the forests in Ann Arbor.

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## HABITAT AT HICKORY

### *Hibernaculum*

The park also features an old pile of rocks, probably removed from a farm field or garden many years ago. These kinds of rock piles may not seem special, but they can provide important shelter for many kinds of small animals. Chipmunks burrow under and through them, deer mice may nest in them, and some of our frogs species may spend the winter hidden in them. If the pile is deep enough that it doesn't freeze at the bottom, then it may be a special refuge for salamanders and snakes that need to escape freezing temperatures by finding shelter underground. A landscape feature used by an animal for winter shelter is sometimes called a hibernaculum, and hibernacula are vital for many of our species to survive in our climate.



***A clutch of rocks (not at Hickory Nature Area)***

*Photo: Jfcby, CCo, via Wikimedia Commons*

## FRIENDS OF NAP: ANN ARBOR GREENBELT INITIATIVE SELLS PROTECTED LAND TO NEW FARMERS

*Rosie Pahl Donaldson, Land Acquisition Supervisor*

The City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt has completed the final step of selling its first-ever conserved property under the program's new buy-protect-sell (BPS) initiative. This is a new city effort to create equitable and affordable conserved farmland-purchasing opportunities surrounding Ann Arbor, fulfilling the Greenbelt's primary goal of land conservation while stacking additional social and economic benefits.

The city purchased a 54-acre farm in November 2022 in Northfield Township with the intent to split and sell it in two parts via a public request for proposals, but at a fixed, reduced price to reflect the conservation easement that would be applied. To be eligible, applicants could not already own land, or they had to be a small farmer, and had to meet an income limit.

Through a scoring system developed for the initiative, the Greenbelt Advisory Commission selected Kristen Muehlhauser, owner of Raindance Organic Farm, as the buyer of the south side of the farm and Matt Demmon, owner of Feral Flora, as the buyer of the north side.

Muehlhauser has managed Raindance Organic Farm since 2018 on leased land in Northfield Township, selling her produce and cut flowers through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and the Ann Arbor Farmers Market. She will be transitioning her operations to her BPS parcel over the next year.

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### WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

## Ann Arbor Greenbelt

In 2003, residents of Ann Arbor approved the Open Space and Parkland Preservation Millage, which authorized a 30-year, 0.5 mil tax levy to provide funds for the preservation and protection of open space, natural habitats, and agricultural lands. To date, the Greenbelt program has successfully helped to preserve 7,600+ acres of land. A majority of that has been achieved by acquiring conservation easements on private land that permanently restrict the property's use, safeguarding its use for agricultural, recreational or conservation purposes. Money received from buyers via the BPS initiative is returned to the Greenbelt fund for more land conservation.



# NAPPENINGS

## Thank You!

*Many thanks to the individuals and groups who helped out with volunteer work or other support during the last few months. We could not make such a difference without you!*

- Ann Arbor Open School
- Bishop Girl Scouts
- Community High School
- Criteo
- Cub Scout Pack 3005
- Girl Scout troop 40734
- HDR
- Motor City Bears (Cal Alumni)
- SBD Automotive
- St. Mary's Student Parish
- UM AM Society of Civil Engineers
- Yale Alumni Association



*Community High School students at an all-school volunteer event on April 30.*



*Volunteers at recent Public Workdays*

## Staff Updates

### Welcome!



**Ian McClellan**  
Workday Coordinator

Hello! After a wonderful few months of volunteering with NAP independently and at workdays, it is a delight for me to now be joining the Outreach Crew. Having experienced it first-hand, I am convinced of the value and impact of NAP's work—especially to cultivate an environmental ethic within the community. I am excited to become a part of the team carrying out that mission. Apart from my enthusiasm, I have a BA in Chemistry from Bard College and many unrelated interests; I enjoy reading scientific and news periodicals, meeting dogs, and playing all manner of games.

## NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

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*Natural Area Preservation is funded by the voter-approved 2020-2026 Park Maintenance & Capital Improvements Millage.*



# Summer Events

CITY OF ANN ARBOR PARKS & RECREATION



## NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

<http://vhub.at/NAP>  
[a2gov.org/NAP](http://a2gov.org/NAP)  
[NAP@a2gov.org](mailto:NAP@a2gov.org)  
 734.794.6627

### STEWARDSHIP WORKDAYS

Depending on weather and site conditions, volunteers will pull weeds from the ground by hand or cut shrubs using hand tools. **NAP staff will show you what to remove and how!**

Workday sites have unpaved trails and require going off-trail. For your safety, wear long pants, tall socks, and closed-toe shoes. More information: [How to prepare for a NAP workday](#) (PDF).

All minors should be accompanied by a guardian.

### PREREGISTER ON VOLUNTEERHUB HERE




### FOR ALL EVENTS

## JULY 2024

WED	FRI	SAT	SUN
<b>10</b>	<b>12</b> K-5 Forest Fridays: Turtle Time 4:30-6 p.m. <a href="#">Gallup Park</a>	<b>13</b> Stewardship Workday 9 a.m. - noon <a href="#">Ruthven</a> Nature Walk with AADL 10-11:30 a.m. <a href="#">Furstenberg</a>	<b>14</b>
<b>17</b> K-5 Nature Crafts: Build a Fish 3-4:30 p.m. <a href="#">Bandemer Park</a>	<b>DON'T FORGET TO WEAR YOUR CLOSED-TOE SHOES!</b>		<b>21</b> Stewardship Workday 9 a.m. - noon <a href="#">Kuebler Langford</a>
<b>24</b> Stiltgrass Workshop w/ Washtenaw County Parks 6-7:30 p.m.	<b>26</b> Stewardship Workday 9 a.m. - noon <a href="#">Furstenberg</a>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>

## AUGUST 2024

WED	FRI	SAT	SUN
<b>31</b>	<b>2</b> K-5 Forest Fridays: Seeking Snakes 4:30-6 p.m. <a href="#">Dolph</a>	<b>3</b> Stewardship Workday 9 a.m. - noon <a href="#">Furstenberg</a>	<b>4</b>
<b>7</b> K-5 Nature Crafts: Build a Bug 3-4:30 p.m. <a href="#">Island Park</a>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Nature Walk with AADL 10-11:30 a.m. <a href="#">Ruthven</a>	<b>11</b> Stewardship Workday 9 a.m. - noon <a href="#">Gallup Wet Prairie</a>
<b>20</b>	 <b>PREREGISTER ON VOLUNTEERHUB</b>		<b>23</b> Stewardship Workday 9 a.m. - noon <a href="#">Kuebler Langford</a>
			<b>TALL SOCKS HELP GUARD AGAINST TICKS AND POISON IVY!</b>



# Summer Events

CITY OF ANN ARBOR PARKS & RECREATION



## NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

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### FOR ALL EVENTS

## SEPTEMBER 2024

WED	FRI	SAT	SUN
3	5	6	7 <b>Stewardship Workday</b> 9 a.m. - noon <a href="#">Dhu Varren</a>
11 <b>Stewardship Workday</b> 1-4 p.m. <a href="#">Huron Parkway</a> 	 <b>PREREGISTER ON VOLUNTEERHUB FOR ALL EVENTS.</b>		15 <b>Stewardship Workday</b> 9 a.m. - noon <a href="#">Argo</a>
18	<b>19 THURSDAY</b> <b>Volunteer Appreciation Party!</b> 5-8 p.m. Island Park Shelter B		21 <b>Stewardship Workday</b> 1-4 p.m. <a href="#">Olson</a> 
25	27 <b>Stewardship Workday</b> 1-4 p.m. <a href="#">Hickory</a>	28 <b>Stewardship Workday</b> 9 a.m. - noon <a href="#">Ruthven</a> 	29 <b>DON'T FORGET TO WEAR YOUR CLOSED-TOE SHOES!</b>
<b>TALL SOCKS HELP GUARD AGAINST TICKS AND POISON IVY!</b>			

## Hickory Nature Area

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The park is home to a variety of wildflowers, such as trillium and goldenrod, which add a splash of color and attract butterflies and other pollinators. Other plant species that can be found in the park include prickly gooseberry, ironwood, and hackberry.

While the noise from M-14 can be disruptive, Hickory Nature Area still provides a valuable green space in the city, connecting wildlife corridors and contributing to the overall health of the local ecosystem. If you listen closely, you will hear calling birds, chattering squirrels, and maybe even the song of a frog.

Hickory Nature Area is a wonderful place for a short walk or an escape into a wilder portion of Ann Arbor's ecological landscape. The park's unique shape, resembling a "fringe on a bald man's head," as

one staff member described it, adds to its charm. Whether you're interested in the hickory trees, the wildflowers, or just a place to be with nature, this park has something to offer.

The park land was donated to the city by the developer of the surrounding housing development, and the City Council approved naming the area "Hickory Nature Area" in September 2019. The City of Ann Arbor continues to invest in the park, ensuring that it remains a valuable resource for the community.

Hickory is the first acquisition in what may become a larger network of protected natural areas in this part of the city and is a testament to the importance of preserving natural spaces within urban environments.

## SAVE THE DATE

*Nature Stewardship*  
VOLUNTEERS ARE LOVED

**Annual  
Volunteer  
Appreciation  
Party!**

Thursday, September 19, 5-8 p.m.  
Island Park Shelter B



## WHY BUY-PROTECT-SELL?

### *The City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt created the buy-protect-sell (BPS) initiative to continue fulfilling its primary goal of land conservation while achieving additional social benefits*

The goal includes helping to address the **challenges faced by the future of farming** seen in Washtenaw County and across the United States:

Finding and securing land to farm is the biggest challenge that beginning farmers face in starting a career in agriculture.

Farmland prices are at a record high across the country, and land has become increasingly unaffordable for farmers.

The land surrounding our nation's cities, where market opportunities are greatest for beginning farmers, is often the most difficult to access.

These innovative BPS transactions help directly facilitate affordable farmland access opportunities in communities. **The city is the first land preservation program in Michigan to wield BPS for this purpose.** The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission assisted financially with the cost of the property's conservation easement.

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"I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity to steward this land for a lifetime," says Muehlhauser, "After growing food and flowers on leased farmland for six years, we now have a farm to call home. That long-term commitment means we are able to invest our time, labor and funds in building healthy soil, in water lines, in pollinator plantings, in fruiting trees and perennial shrubs, in four-season structures for year-round harvests."

Matt Demmon has also managed his native plant growing and ecological landscape business, Feral Flora, on leased land since 2018. As the new owner of the north buy-protect-sell parcel, Demmon will grow native perennials and prairie species inground for

seed production. Within four years, he plans to produce 500 pounds of native seeds annually, enough seed to sow 50 acres of prairie plantings every year.

"In our current landscape installation practice," writes Demmon, "we are constantly seeking to reduce negative impacts on the environment by reduction of mown areas, omitting regular applications of fertilizer and chemicals, shaping the land to slow and infiltrate water runoff, and increasing the diversity of plant resources and other habitat needs of all life including insects, birds, mammals, etc. I intend to put these practices to work on the Nollar Road property. I care deeply about the health of the land and all life that might utilize it, far into the future."

Both farms will use a transitional hay period as the new owners work to implement their farm plans.





# Nature Stewardship VOLUNTEER REWARDS 2024

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME  
WITH NAP TO EARN POINTS!

FREE



BUTTONS

2  
points



CARABINER

**UPDATED!**

1  
volunteer  
event

=

1  
point

*Spend  
points to  
get prizes!*

3  
points



EMBROIDERED CAP

6  
points



LONG SLEEVE T-SHIRT

9  
points



HOODED SWEATSHIRT

20+  
points



ANNOUNCED IN  
DECEMBER!

GRAND PRIZES

- Use your points to get prizes at any time!
- Prizes (except buttons) can be picked up at the NAP office
- Eligible events: workdays, park steward activities, survey outings, photomonitoring activities, burns
- Not eligible: trainings, lectures, educational events, and walks