

Natural Area Preservation News

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The mission of the Natural Area Preservation Division is to protect, restore and champion the natural areas of Ann Arbor, especially those in the City's park and recreation system.

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People To Know...

Manfred and Judy Schmidt by Greg Vaclavek

The first time I visited Scarlett-Mitchell woods was this spring, the day after the ice storm. I walked down the path beneath mature shagbark hickories and red oaks coated with ice. Looking up into the canopy, branches sparkled as if made of fine crystal. The wind brushed across the tree tops and sent down a shower of ice into the pond. Interlacing ripples danced over the reflective surface. Dogwoods, choke cherry and other small trees gracefully stood beside the trail. On some branches the shell of ice melted on one side and separated from the real twig, leaving a glistening ice shadow in the twig's wake. In the old field, stalks of last year's bee balm and thimbleweed wavered in the breeze. Their heads sealed in ice, frozen in time. I drew a deep breath of cool spring air and took in the beauty around me. It is a beauty we too often overlook. The concrete, mown lawns and sterile, manicured landscapes of urban society push the natural environment further from everyday life. Fortunately, if you are in Ann Arbor, you don't have to go far to find yourself surrounded by the beauty of nature. As I walked in the woods that morning, little did I know of the history of how Scarlett-Mitchell Park came to be.

Twenty-five years ago, Manfred and Judy Schmidt walked this same path, admired these same trees and took the time to enjoy the beauty and tranquility that only a walk in the woods can bring. Manfred, with a background in landscaping, and Judy, a junior high school librarian and avid bird watcher, lived at the Colonial Square Cooperative in southeast Ann Arbor. They were happy to have these woods right in their own backyard. Like a tree rooted in the earth, their frequent visits strengthened their connection to the landscape.

One evening, on a hike through the woods, Manfred noticed survey flags on some of the trees and shrubs. As he drew near, he was upset to find that a grid of survey lines cut through the heart of the woods. Small trees were severed at the base. Shrubs were trampled to the ground. The public schools owned the property at the time, so Manfred called school board member Cecil Warner and asked him what was going on. His reply: he didn't know. So Manfred invited him out to the site to see first hand what was going on. He

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Parks & Recreation
CITY OF ANN ARBOR

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NAP - penings

New Staff -

You may wonder who all those folks are listed on page one as NAP staff. We are growing! Two part-time staff have been added to the inventory team- David Pollock will help with the breeding bird survey and David Cappaert will help with the butterfly survey. (We are all thinking of changing our names to David just to make things easier). We also have a team, Sally and Trish, working on a grant-funded project to expand the "Your Landscape and Our Natural Areas" brochure. We said good-bye to Malin - her talents and enthusiasm will be missed. We are looking forward to working with her replacement Amie, and hope she is up to the challenge of keeping us organized!

Joint Grant -

NAP is teaming up with staff at the Leslie Science Center on a "students as stewards" adopt-a-park program. Science Center staff will introduce 4th and 7th graders to their local parks and NAP staff will work with the students to restore those sites. This project will take place this fall and during spring '98.

Black Pond Woods Report -

You may have heard that NAP received a DNR Community Grant several years ago to prepare and develop a management plan for Black Pond Woods. This site was selected for the plan because it is considered to be typical of many of our small urban woodlots, and the plan could then be used as a model for other sites. This spring ARCT, Inc. completed the study, data collection, and writing of the report. The findings and all the data are provided in a 118 page Final report, and summarized in a 20 page Executive Summary. Copies of either document are available at cost of printing. If you'd like to learn more about the study, or it's recommendations please contact the NAP office.

Coordinator's Corner:

The Ride of Your Life

Spring is like a roller coaster - not the classic roller coasters of yesterday with their alternating up and down ride, which is how the simile of "like a roller coaster" is usually used. No, spring for me is like the "Steel Phantom" in Pennsylvania, the tallest roller coaster in the world, with a 225-foot vertical drop and a design speed of 80 miles per hour. Spring is a "hold on for dear life" ride that starts in December with a long, slow, deliberate climb toward the top. Sites are visited and prioritized, management plans are written, burn prescriptions are developed, burn permits are obtained, letters are written to neighbors, staff positions are advertised and eventually filled. The work is tedious but important because it lays the foundation for the upcoming year.

Then slowly the days begin to lengthen. The snow melts and the first signs of spring begin appearing. The roller coaster is nearing the top of its long climb and the tension is building. About the middle of March, the descent begins: burn training is quickly followed by the first burn, then another, and another, sometimes three-a-week, each one taking a solid 7-hour block of the day. Fifty volunteers show up for the frog survey kickoff - more than twice as many as expected and we scramble to accommodate everyone. Weekend work days also draw record crowds. Suddenly I find myself in the middle of the plunge. Spring is exploding faster than expected: birds are returning, wildflowers are popping up, and butterflies are reappearing. The window of opportunity for our spring burns is beginning to close, so we quicken the pace. Our work day starts earlier and stretches later into the evening. Lunch breaks are shortened or skipped. Even weekends don't provide enough time to catch up and the office work begins piling up on our desks. As the days fly by, I find myself screaming down the roller coaster and holding on for dear life!

And just like the thrill seekers who are drawn to the *Steel Phantom*, I love this ride! The burns, the frogs, the wildflowers, the butterflies, and the migration are what *make* my spring. Despite what the calendar or the weatherman says, it's just not spring until I have logged my own rites of spring into my journal.

If you haven't yet finished your rites of spring or early summer, there's still time and NAP can help you do it. Join our butterfly or breeding bird survey. Help out at a work day and give the native wildflowers a hand. You'll rediscover that this truly is the season of renewal for Nature. And, if you really immerse yourself in the roller coaster of spring and early summer, you'll find that you too are being renewed. Instead of "holding on for dear life," you'll be "holding on *to* dear life." Let Nature renew you this spring and summer.

Dave Borneman, Natural Area Preservation Coordinator

Thanks -

A special thanks goes to Sindi Keesan and Jim Deigart for their gift of a working wood-cookie clock. Sindi and Jim had received the door prize of a buckthorn wood-cookie clock, at the last volunteer potluck. Sadly as is the way with buckthorn, it was a bit of a white elephant. Their gift shows us how a real wood-cookie clock can keep time!

Reflections From The Field

by Kathy Sorensen

It is the kind of day in early April that wakens you from the cold winter blues you've been stuck in. A day that makes you feel (falsely) as though spring is finally here. The sky is cloudless and the temperature in the mid-sixties. I'm standing with the sun and a gentle breeze at my back. I can faintly smell the burned grass and leaves from a few days ago. As I look out over the barren landscape, I can see a few patches of burned areas intermingled with the unburned patches. The areas left unburned were able to elude the fire because of their sparse vegetation. This is one of our poorer and most disturbed sites. It will be difficult for anything to grow here.

Never the less, I reach into the brown paper bag I am holding and fill my hand with the bag's contents. I lift my clenched hand out in front of me and then slowly loosen my grip. The wind works its way through my fingers and eventually pushes out the seeds I am holding. Each seed is then carried off on a journey to the ground, hoping to hit a patch of soil fertile enough to will enable it to grow. I continue along the entire burned section of the park, lofting my seed into the air, gently waving my hand while letting the wind do most of the spreading for me.

It is very calm and quiet here. There is a sense of hope and renewal all about me. I close my eyes and try to imagine how this park would look if the seeds would all take hold and grow: the beautiful grasses bending in the breeze; the black-eyed Susans, goldenrods and coneflowers nodding about amongst the grasses. Unfortunately, reality says that it will be many years before my vision comes true. It will require more prescribed burning to push back the shrubs that are shading out the wildflowers. It might require individually pulling other plants that are out-competing native plants like those whose seeds I've just spread.

Regardless of all the work and the waiting, it must start somewhere. As I empty out the final contents of my bag I feel good knowing that I helped to put the seed there. I helped to bring about a chance for the restoration to begin. Now it's up to the seeds to take root and spread.



Musings from the (Kitchen) Range by David Mindell

The Nomex outfits have been laundered. The backpack sprayers have been emptied and lubricated, new hoses attached for next season. Lighters sit idly in desk drawers, thankful for a respite from such intense use. NAP burn crew members slouch in their kitchens, flicking on their stove top burners, idly reflecting on how much smaller these flames are than those of days gone by. There were so many parks, and so little time!

So goes the rambling mind of one who has perhaps inhaled a little too much smoke in the last months. With the season's close, I can only grin about the successes of the latest series of burns in a program still in its infancy. The total: 20 burns on 18 days in 18 parks covering 200 acres of parkland, or approximately 20% of the natural areas in the parks system. The burns varied considerably in size and habitat, ranging from a 2-acre burn in the Leslie Science Center Prairie, to a 6-acre wetland burn at Foxfire South, to a 46-acre burn across a variety of ecosystems comprising the Barton oxbow.

We conducted burns (in chronological order) at: Ruthven (old field), Black Pond Woods (savanna), Marshall (interior woods), Barton, Kuebler Langford (woods, some open area), Foxfire South (wetland), Huron Parkway (woods and old field), Dhu Varren (woods), Cedar Bend (oak woods), Gallup Wet Prairie, Marshall (southeast corner), Cedar Bend (another section of oak woods), Argo (dry woods), Bandemer (prairie, old field, and sedge meadow), South Pond (savanna), Foster (savanna, woods, RR right-of-way, fen), Leslie Science Center (prairie), Swift Run Drain (prairie openings), Scarlett-Mitchell (old field area), and Brown (former Verle property old field).

The longer our burn program operates, the more apparent are its benefits. In an afternoon, we are able to effectively manage an area that would otherwise take weeks of intensive work. South Pond Park offers an excellent illustration of this. Last year we burned this 9-acre savanna for the first time. The ground was covered with a mixture of dried oak leaves and Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*). The fire crept back into the wind, slowly

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Someone To Know.... continued from page 1

came out one evening and the sky was almost dark as they walked into the woods. Cecil couldn't believe what he saw. Manfred encouraged him to bring the matter to the attention of the school board. Then it came to light that the city planned to build a high school on the site. Apparently they thought the site was open field and didn't know of the 39 acres of woods and marsh. That is when the struggle to save the woods began.

Manfred and Judy turned to the community for support. They found that a lot of people shared their concerns. To strengthen their efforts to preserve the area, students and teachers from nearby Scarlett and Mitchell schools and area neighbors joined forces to form *Operation Mitchell-Scarlett Woods*. Shortly thereafter, it was discovered that a private developer intended to destroy 107 acres of woods, field and marsh, adjoining the school site, to make way for modular housing units. The group began circulating petitions and sought help and advice from other organizations, such as The Nature Conservancy and U of M. Through communication and organization, the group built a broad base of support. Group members wrote letters to the newspapers, city council and school board. On the group's behalf, Manfred spoke publicly and showed slides to the planning commission, Sierra Club, League of Women Voters, city council and other interested organizations. Guided tours of the marsh and woodland were arranged to more effectively express their concerns. Invitations were sent to city officials and neighbors. That weekend more than 100 people came out to visit the site.

The determination and persistence of one couple who cared was the spark that motivated the community to speak out for what they believed in. Through telling their story and expressing their concerns, they showed that they cared. When the wheels of progress rolled into their neighborhood, they jumped up and yelled "STOP." In 1973 the City of Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Department bought the privately-owned land for preservation as a natural area, and the school-owned woods was dedicated as a nature study area. When all this happened, I was just a little boy. Because of the Schmidt's efforts we can enjoy Scarlett-Mitchell Park today. We can stand in the woods and see the pond. We look around and see a beautiful oak-hickory forest, the ground carpeted with wildflowers as far as the eye can see. There is no high school here; no sprawling subdivision. But Manfred's efforts didn't stop there.

Manfred has continued to care for the woods and involve the community in stewardship activities. Together with volunteers he has put up signs, spread



wood chips on the main path, installed bird houses, raised funds for and supervised the dredging of the western part of the marsh to form a pond, and removed trash. He even now continues to keep an eye on the woods and marsh. Earlier this year, I met Manfred at our spring burn training. He has helped with several of our burns including an old field burn at Scarlett-Mitchell Park. Long before the Natural Area Preservation division was conceived, the spirit was alive in Manfred Schmidt and it remains to this day.

This is the story of how one person can make a difference. We need to take the time to care and be aware of our local environment, both natural and social; our voices need to be heard. What Manfred did was not all that difficult. He had no special training or education in community activism. He merely articulated his concerns, shared his story and was passionate about his ideas. He certainly did not act alone. He was a catalyst that motivated others to take action. In the community, he works with a lot of reciprocal good will. He helps out his neighbors and they help him. Through his actions, Manfred illustrates the ideal that it is our responsibility as citizens, to inform those in power of our interests, ideas and concerns. Reminding us all that the people in the community know their area best. They need to be heard. In the case of Manfred and Judy Schmidt, they've put so much time and effort into caring for the woods, that you can't really talk about Scarlett-Mitchell Park without speaking of them, and of the dozens of others that have committed themselves to caring for the area.

By the way, that cool spring morning after the ice storm, as we stood by the pond watching chunks of ice drop into the water, Manfred said, "There's no way man could create something as beautiful as nature." But man *can* care for the beauty and health of the natural world around him.

Twelve "Most-Wanted"

Forget alien life forms from outer space. These twelve exotic species of a more terrestrial origin are carrying out their own environmental invasion, out-competing native plants for available resources and altering the fragile balance within unique ecological communities. Of the four thousand naturalized plants in the United States, about 15% are considered to be harmful species. Not only did most of these noxious pests get a free ride here (having been transported to the U.S. as food, medicine, or ornamentals), but they found a welcoming new environment free of their hometown predators and pathogens. Coupled with a landscape disturbed by human activities, it was all the easier for a non-native plant to establish itself. Look for the following invasive plants in your backyard. They are considered to be the most problematic to the natural areas in the Ann Arbor area. For botanical descriptions, *Invasive Plants*, published by the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, is an excellent source for identifying weedy flora.

1) Autumn olive - *Elaeagnus umbellata* (shrub)

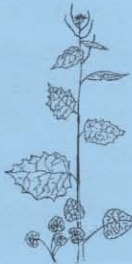
Popular for its wildlife-attracting fruits, this plant was introduced to North America in 1917 from Asia, where its range extends from Afghanistan to Japan, mainly in thicket areas. A single shrub can produce 200,000 seeds, creating incredibly dense thickets.

2) Barberry - *Berberis spp.* (shrub)

This shrub's pectin-rich berries made it a valuable plant when it was first introduced to the U.S. in the late 1800's from Japan. Its ability to adapt to nearly any soil type is particularly evident in second-growth forests, where it quickly out-competes understory plants.

3) Garlic mustard - *Alliaria petiolata* (biennial)

A European native, this herb is thought to have been brought to North America by pioneers who used it for food and medicine. Its range today is extensive, probably a result of its very aggressive nature. Once established in a woodland, it tends to exclude all other ground layer plants.



4) Crown vetch - *Coronilla varia* (perennial)

It is possible to find this plant in many mail-order catalogs, advertised as a ground-cover. In fact, it was originally brought to this country for erosion control in the 1950s from Japan. However, it quickly escaped cultivation, out-competing native shrubs and small trees in sunny, upland areas.

5) Common buckthorn - *Rhamnus cathartica* (small tree or shrub)
Common, or European, buckthorn spread quickly after its introduction in the 1800s due to its cathartic effect on the migrating birds that ingested its fruit. At home in woodlands, savannas, prairies, and in our backyards, it becomes so aggressive that few native plants can become established.

by Cara Rockwell

Help catch these invaders of the natural world!

- Know what you are buying - leave out those not native to our area.
- Spread the word - about non-native aggressive plants.
- Help out on a workday - learn more about natives and non-natives, then tackle your own backyard.

6) Glossy buckthorn - *Rhamnus frangula* (small tree or shrub)
This Eurasian shrub was a popular ornamental in the 1800s. Today, it is one of our most invasive exotics, preferring the moist habitat of bottomland areas.

7) Spotted knapweed - *Centaurea maculosa* (short lived perennial)

This highly aggressive plant was introduced to the Pacific Northwest from Eurasia around 1900. Since then, it has invaded many of our open grasslands and prairies. Hand pulling has been found to be a successful method of removal.



8) Honeysuckle - *Lonicera spp.* (shrub)

These Asian natives, which produce bright red berries that are sought after by native birds, can quickly change an open prairie into impenetrable scrub. Bush honeysuckles have been most damaging in the Midwest, where they are able to colonize a variety of habitats.

9) Multiflora rose - *Rosa multiflora* (shrub)

Although this Asian plant has been in the U.S. since the 1860s, it wasn't until the 1930s that conservation agencies started to promote this shrub as a desirable source of wildlife food. It is now considered to be a noxious weed by several states.

10) Periwinkle - *Vinca minor* (perennial)

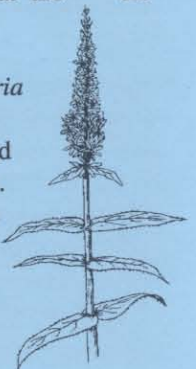
In its native Europe, *Vinca* was once considered to be a valuable aphrodisiac. Here in the U.S. it is little more than a noxious weed. Although it cannot reproduce by seed, it can persist for decades by spreading vegetatively.

11) Privet - *Ligustrum vulgare* (shrub)

This invasive from Europe is familiar to many, since it is a popular shrub for hedges. Once established, it is very difficult to control, since it can produce many seeds that are dispersed primarily by birds.

12) Purple loosestrife - *Lythrum salicaria* (perennial)

Known as the Purple Plague, this showy wetland plant is one of our most aggressive invaders. Introduced in the early 1800s, it has now become established in every state except Florida. Attempts to dig out its roots are futile, making this prolific plant very difficult to control. Beware of 'sterile' cultivars--they produce viable seed despite claims that state otherwise.



Natural Area Preservation Volunteer Stewardship Calendar Summer 1997

JUNE

June 3 Butterfly Walk - M-14 Schools Property (Tuesday at 4:00) - meet at Maple Road near Turnip Green Gardens.

June 7 Folkstone Park - Volunteer Stewardship Workday (Saturday 10:00 am to 1:00 pm) Invasive species removal in this small northeast area park - meet at the Folkstone St. park entrance.

June 7 Frog Field Session - (Saturday at 9:30 pm) - meet at the Leslie Science Center parking lot.

June 14 Butterfly Walk - Brown Park (Saturday at 4:00 pm) - meet at the parking lot on Packard Rd.

June 15 - Breeding Bird Walk - Marshall Park (Sunday 8:00 am) - meet in the parking lot off Dixboro Rd.

June 19 Butterfly Walk - Kuebler-Langford Park (Thursday at 4:00 pm) - meet at the west entrance on Beechwood Street.

June 21 Dolph Park - Volunteer Stewardship Workday (Saturday 10:00 am to 1:00 pm)
Removal of invasives and some trail work. - meet at the park entrance on Parklake at Lakewood.

June 21 Breeding Bird Walk - Bird Hills Park (Saturday at 8:00 am) - meet in the Newport Rd. parking lot.

June 28 Butterfly Walk - Parker Mill Park (Saturday at 11:00 am) - meet at the main parking lot on Geddes.

June 29 Breeding Bird Walk - Thurston Nature Center (Sunday at 8:00 am) - meet at the school parking lot.

Note that Butterfly Walks are weather dependent and will be canceled on rainy, heavily overcast and very windy days. Breeding Bird Walks will not take place in heavy rains, but will in a drizzle. Work-days are almost never canceled!

JULY

July 1 Butterfly Walk - Furstenberg Park (Tuesday at 11:00 am) - meet at the kiosk at the west end of the parking lot.

July 2 Breeding Bird Walk - Hansen Park (Wednesday at 6:30 pm) - meet at the parking lot in front of the woods.

July 7 Butterfly Walk - Miller Park (Monday at 4:00 pm) - meet at the Arborview entrance.

July 13 Huron River Day - All Day at Gallup Park - Join the Breeding Bird Walk at 10:00 am, a general nature walk at 12:30, and a Butterfly Walk at 2:00 - (meet near the Gallup/Furstenberg bridge.) Visit us at the environmental organizations exhibit tent from 12:00 to 4:00 pm.

July 19 Butterfly Walk - Leslie Science Center (Saturday at 11:00 am) - meet at the parking lot.

July 19 Breeding Bird Walk - Cedar Bend Park (Saturday at 8:00 am) - meet at the stairs on Cedar Bend Dr.

July 23 Bird Hills Park - Volunteer Stewardship Workday (Wednesday 6:30 to 8:30 pm)
Seed collection of woodland plants - meet at the Newport Rd. entrance.

July 25 Butterfly Walk - Bandemer Park (Friday at 4:00) - meet at the parking lot on the west side of the river.

July 27 - Breeding Bird Walk - Sugarbush/Oakwoods Parks (Sunday at 10:00 am) - meet at Sugarbush park entrance on Georgetown.

July 28 Furstenberg Park - Volunteer Stewardship Workday (Tuesday 6:30 to 8:30 pm)
Second annual "Knapweed Pull" in the prairie. **DATE CHANGE!** Meet at the kiosk at the west end of the parking lot.

July 31 Butterfly Walk - Barton Park (Thursday at 11:00 am) meet at the Dam parking lot.

AUGUST

August 6 Foxfire South Park - Volunteer Stewardship Workday (Wednesday 6:30 to 8:30 pm) Help control the purple loosestrife invasion - we'll snap off flowering heads before seed is set - meet near the Placid Way park sign on Omlsaad St.

August 9 Butterfly Walk - M-14 Schools Property (Saturday 11:00 am) - meet at Maple Road near Turnip Green Gardens.

August 14 Butterfly Walk - Parker Mill (Saturday at 4:00 am) - meet at the main parking lot on Geddes Rd.

August 20 Fritz Park - Volunteer Stewardship Workday (Wednesday 6:30 - 8:30 pm)
Invasive species removal - meet at the park entrance on Pauline Blvd.

August 23 Argo Park - Volunteer Stewardship Workday (Saturday 10:00 am to 1:00 pm)
Invasive species removal and erosion control - meet at the small boat launch & parking lot on the north side of the livery.

SEPTEMBER

September 6 Sugarbush Park - Volunteer Stewardship Workday (Saturday 10:00 am to 1:00 pm)
Invasive species removal - meet at the Georgetown park entrance.



The Invasion of the Weeds

by Barry Stiefel

Barry is an Eagle Scout with the local Scout council. He's been working with us for the past year on a project in Marshall Park. It's been a pleasure working with him, and his efforts have made a positive impact at the park.

Any gardener knows that there's a constant war with weeds. Such is the case in preservation of our native plant species. I myself have participated in some of these battles, on the behalf of our native species, against the invasive honeysuckle, buckthorn and garlic mustard.

I am currently working on a Scout conservation project, with the aide of my troop, Troop #1 from Tappan Middle School. I am working on the Hornaday Award, which is a prestigious environmental award in scouting. Over an 18 month period, my project has been to remove the above-mentioned invasive species from a certain area of Marshall Park, and to monitor the impact that my project has had. During this time I have also been maintaining some of the trails at the park, picking up trash along the road-side, and from the trash, recycling what I can.

Along with this project, I have also done some research on invasive species. What I have discovered is that the majority of our invasive plants are indigenous to Europe and Asia. They were transported here by Europeans for agricultural or ornamental purposes. What I find so silly about this invasion of European and Asian plants, is that it could have been avoided. Even the wrath of common dandelion could have avoided. If the people who brought over these plants had been aware of the problems that their horticulture would create, precautions could have been taken, preventing this invasion of weeds that is costing us so much time and effort to combat. The lesson to be learned is that the next time you decide to build a garden, think twice about what you are going to put in it. The plants you grow may have a more lasting impact than a pretty picture or a tasty treat.

Musings ... continued from page 3

consuming this fuel. By late last summer, it was apparent that almost 95% of the invasive shrubs under three inches in diameter were "top killed" (where the above-ground portion dies but new shoots sprout from the roots) in the sections that burned.

By this spring, virtually all of these plants had new sprouts emerging, often two to three feet tall. As with last year, the ground was littered with highly combustible fuel, and the creeping back burn effectively killed all of these new sprouts. Since there is so much less shade with the reduced shrub growth, the ground is spotted with more and more native plants such as round-lobed hepatica (*Hepatica americana*), early buttercup (*Ranunculus fascicularis*), and prairie willow (*Salix humilis*). It is also exciting to see that the native fire-adapted savanna shrubs are not adversely effected as were the invasives. Witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) showed no adverse effects from last year's burn.

South Pond is also a wonderful illustration of how important it is to begin management in sites before they are too degraded. While 85-90% of this moderately open site burned, densely thicketed sites with less fuel and deeper shade (and therefore moister ground) often didn't burn at all. Last summer in the forest west of Foster savanna (the western branch of Barton Park), the conservation crew cleared buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) and honeysuckle (*Lonicera sp.*) from 25' diameter circles. When we laid a fire line along the edge of the forest this spring, the only places that burned were those clearings and the narrow corridors that connected them to the woods' edge. Our hope is that the fire will expand these circles each year.

As with seasons past, the burn season also proved to be an excellent opportunity to build partnerships with other individuals and organizations. Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor Township, and Pittsfield Township fire departments were all extremely helpful in offering their thoughts and support for our burns in their respective jurisdictions. After ironing out complicated liability issues, we again burned several Conrail and Ann Arbor Railroad right-of-ways adjacent to our parks. The Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner encouraged us to continue burn management on the Swift Run Drain property. For the first time, we worked with the U of M and burned across the property line onto their land northeast of Cedar Bend Park. We also had great support from several individual land owners who allowed us to burn onto their property where it made sense ecologically, most notably next to Foxfire South Park.

Finally, as always, one of our finest partnerships was with the volunteers who participated in the program. In all, 17 people worked as burn crew members: Barbara Powell (16 burns on 15 days!--We sure love that flexible schedule, Barb), Jan Wolter, David Cappaert, Suzan Campbell, Steve Weaver, Manfred Schmidt, Lisa Brush, Mary Maliarik, Faye Stoner, Sheila Robertson, Nick Deakins, Nick Reo, Adam Weinrich, Rita Berberian, Jack McGowan-Stinski, Chris Lehr, and Mary Gilbert. Thank you all!

So as you wander through the parks this summer, be sure to look for evidence of fire: shrubs with many dead branches, Cajun-style stumps or logs, and pockets of native wildflowers where they didn't appear before. Follow the progress of your favorite spot over the season. Let us know what you see. And if you see a member of the burn crew, go easy on them--the end of the season is always a difficult transition time.

Exploring Natural Areas by Catriona Mortell

Natural Area Preservation has created a guide-book to help you explore the park natural areas. Discover the plants and animals that make up the natural communities in the Ann Arbor area. Learn where you can encounter these communities along the Huron River corridor. Soon you'll be able to spend days, weeks or seasons exploring with this one-of-a-kind guide book. In it you'll find information about the site, trails and trail heads, seasonal highlights, and natural features that can be found there.

The guide I refer to is one that NAP staff have spent months writing, editing, rewriting and sketching - "*The Natural Communities of the Huron River Corridor in Ann Arbor, Michigan.*" It truly is a wonderful product, and really a 'must have' for nature enthusiasts throughout the area. Natural communities featured are along the Huron, from Foster Road - and Barton Park to Dixboro Road and Parker Mill & Forest Parks. The guide includes colored maps of each site featuring natural community delineations, trails, access, and parking. It has beautiful original artwork, done mostly by our staff. The cover and community sketches, (like the one below) were done by Greg Vaclavek. Mike Kielb has contributed beautiful sketches of animals and plants. There is also a section on natural history for the Huron River corridor in Ann Arbor. There is a special fold-out map providing an overview of the entire corridor. Plus, there are natural community descriptions detailing plants and animals found in these areas. All the information in this book has been collected here in Ann Arbor by our staff and volunteers and relates directly to this area.

If it sounds like a sales pitch, it is just that we are so darn proud of this guide. The project started with a grant from the non-game wildlife fund from the DNR. As we (NAP staff) got into the project, we found we had gone well beyond the DNR project expectations and we kept going! We believe it is finished (until the revised edition needs to be done). The delay now is to get up-front funding for the initial printing. We will have to charge for the book, to help fund further reprints and help to cover the initial printing costs.

Now exactly when this "wonder reference" of our natural world will be available is not known. However, if you are on our mailing list you will receive an announcement once the book is available.



Timber! by Matt Huey

Matt is a student at Greenhills High School, and was part of a team of students that worked in Cedar Bend Park in January, February and March this year. We had a great time despite the cold weather and look forward to working with them again!

Who knew being a lumberjack could be so much fun. This past winter, along with the rest of the members of the Greenhills Outdoor Leadership Program, I worked with Natural Area Preservation to clear the Cedar Bend Park of invasive species. Once every two weeks we donned our flannel, grabbed our favorite adze, and headed over to Cedar Bend to hack away at buckthorn and honeysuckle - a pair of plants that were restricting the growth of the plant species native to the area.

The Greenhills Outdoor Leadership Program (OLP) is made up of 20 Greenhills students who learn camping and leadership skills during the winter sports season and go on 2-3 weekend trips during that time. This year a community service aspect of the program was added. We chose to work with the Cedar Bend project for a number of reasons. First, it was something where we could see tangible impact. We usually had more than a dozen people chopping away and after a few hours you could definitely see the results. Second, and this was the critical factor, the NAP program provided Nutter Butter cookies to eat after each session.

I don't know if I can explain how critical Nutter Butters were to the project. Plainly, they made the long hours, stubborn trees, and amputated legs (just joking) well worth it. After we were done for the day, we all gathered around the gear truck and chowed down on the bag of cookies so generously provided after the work-session. It was a time for reflection, a time to discuss the philosophical impact of removing buckthorn, and a time to boast about who had the sharpest adze. And mostly, it was just a time to enjoy the delicious combination of peanut butter and cookie that makes the Nutter Butters so great.

I can safely say that a good time was had by all members of the OLP and apparently we did some good. By removing the invasive species from the park we're making it a lot easier for the native plants to grow. Of course, Cedar Bend Park is a big area and there's a lot of honeysuckle and buckthorn still out there. Who knows, maybe you'll see us again next year. Just be sure to remember the Nutter Butters.

Photo Monitoring in the Parks

by Malin Ely

During the burn season this spring, NAP staff have been busy setting up a photo monitoring system to help keep track of ecological changes in the parks. Photo monitoring at Furstenberg Park over the past few years has helped us track the effects of shrub removal from the forest understory. We hope that by setting up formal photo monitoring points at our burn sites this year we can create a similarly useful record of the effects of prescribed burns on our natural areas.

But what is photo monitoring, and what can it tell us? Photo monitoring involves taking a series of photographs over time, from the same point and showing the same scene in each shot. For our burn monitoring, a series of photographs taken before, during, and after the burn is a very helpful tool in determining how sites are affected by the burns. Looking at a series of monitoring photos over time, we can track the progress of our restoration efforts: how invasive plants were affected, which portions of the burn unit actually burned, or what kinds of wildflowers return in the months and years following a burn. We can go back to our monitoring points many times to compare changes in the landscape: before the burn, the day after, two weeks after, two months after, and even two years after the burn.

NAP is also hoping to extend the photo monitoring system to include volunteer photo monitoring in the parks around Ann Arbor. In the near future, we hope to find volunteers to take monitoring photographs over time in their neighborhood parks. NAP would establish the photo points, and provide film and developing costs, maps, and record-keeping materials. Volunteers would be responsible for photographing and recording changes to the landscape through time, especially changes brought about through the burns, invasive species removal, or other management tools of the NAP stewardship program.

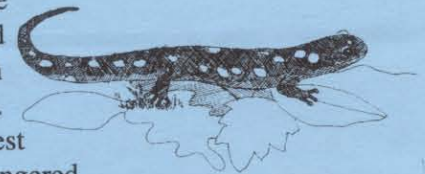
If you can make a long-term but modest time commitment, and would be interested in helping with volunteer photo monitoring, please contact Catriona Mortell at 996-3266. We could use your help!

Amphibian and Reptile Survey 1997 Update

by Alan Wolf

What are those whistles and quacking sounds you have been hearing in and around the city? On and off, from the end of February, frogs have begun their annual spring rituals. They are moving to the ponds, trying to find mates and perpetuating the species. The first frogs heard this year were wood frogs. These medium sized frogs produce a chuckling call that some people think sounds like the quacking of a duck. The real push began a couple of weeks later when the chorus frogs began calling in force all around the city. This small member of the tree frog family produces an ascending trill likened to running your fingernail over the teeth of a fine toothed comb. In the last week of March, the spring peeper began to take over from the chorus frog as the most commonly heard species in the Ann Arbor area. Spring peepers are closely related to the chorus frogs and there is some similarity between the calls. Spring peepers also produce an ascending call, but it is not trilled. The first week in April marked the appearance of two additional species. The leopard frog's call is a long, slow snore. The other, the American toad, produces a long (30 seconds or longer) high-pitched trill. It not too late to hear many of these species as this highly variable spring is extending the breeding season.

Along with the frogs, the salamanders have made a strong start. The most exciting find has been the rediscovery of a small-mouthed salamander at a site from which they were historically known. This species is of particular interest because it is a Michigan endangered species. In the city and the surrounding area, all of the salamander species are threatened by development. The woodlands surrounding their breeding ponds, where the salamanders spend most of the year, are being destroyed in the course of development. Protecting the wetlands does nothing if these important surrounding areas are not maintained.



There have been two reptile species seen in the city so far this year. The harmless eastern garter snake has been reported throughout the city. It is a medium sized dark snake with white or yellow stripes running the length of the body. In some of the smaller ponds where the water warms up more quickly painted turtles have been seen basking.

We have over 50 volunteers participating in the census of calling frogs in the Ann Arbor area! This overwhelming support has allowed us to expand the number of sites we survey while allowing us to increase the number of times each site is surveyed. Most volunteers are now out and about, so if you see people at the water's edge with their hands cupped behind their ears intently listening, you know what they are doing. If you are interested in participating in this study, it is a little too late for this year, but please keep us in mind for next year.

Volunteer Stewardship Notes

Green Thumbs Needed! -

Do you like to garden and get your hands dirty? Frustrated with the amount of garden space you have at home? - We have an opportunity for you! We are in need of volunteers to help in the NAP garden at the Leslie Science Center - Project Grow site, or at the Memorial Planting at Furstenberg Park. Either would take a couple of hours each week, (less with more volunteers), and weeding, watering, and tending either of these garden spots. You'll set your own time and work alone or with another garden volunteer. Call Catriona to sign-on!

Help Us! -

The next time you're in the parks, look around for the white flowers of garlic mustard (see page 5.) Note the exact location and call David Mindell (996-3266) with the info. Together we'll keep it from taking over our parks!

Inventories -

With the frog survey going at full force this spring, we've turned our attention to things with wings for the summer. The inventories for Breeding Birds and Butterflies have just gotten started. These are important components in the Natural Area Preservation program. We are still seeking volunteers to assist with the data collection for both the bird and butterfly surveys. To help with these surveys, we ask that you adopt a park and visit it at least twice per month. During these visits you'll write down what you observe (on a form provided), then return the completed form at the end of the month. If you have trouble identifying a species, we'll assist you or you can join one of the field walks to brush up on your skills.

Volunteer Events -

Please take note of the summer volunteer stewardship calendar on page 6. There are two adjustments from the previously published schedule. The Maryfield-Wildwood Park workday will be rescheduled for a later date. The fun filled knapweed pulling event at Furstenberg Park is rescheduled for Monday evening July 28 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. The changes have been made in order to clear the schedule so the staff can have the opportunity to attend the Midwest Oak Savanna and Woodland conference in Madison, Wisconsin.

**See Page 6 for the
Volunteer Stewardship
Calendar including
Breeding Bird and
Butterfly Walks!**



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