

Natural Area Preservation News

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

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Park Focus: Miller Nature Area *by Dana Wright*

Miller is a swath of land running from Miller Road just west of Newport all the way south to Arborview. It is full of flowers, interesting terrain, and trails. Shortly after starting with NAP almost two years ago, I learned that NAP has not been able to work much at Miller in the past. I also found out that there are a great number of invasives, which makes restoration more difficult. I am very happy that in recent times Miller is getting well-deserved attention.

Miller Park's 22.5 acres and its surroundings were heavily logged in the 1800s and then farmed, probably with livestock. After 1950 the area was used as a gravel yard and has supplied many of the houses that were built around it with their foundations. While traversing the trails it is easy to see evidence of both farming and where gravel and large stones have been taken. On the east edge of the park there are awesome, knobby mature black cherry and box elder trees growing up through an old farm truck, the top of which is at the north end of the park. Although the area was designated parkland after it was mined for gravel, there has since been a problem with trash, yardwaste, and other dumping, which NAP is working to halt.

Miller Park's new Steward, Howard Krausse, has lived near the park for over 20 years and has continually been involved in taking care of it. He has now formalized his involvement and is working with NAP towards restoration

activities. When Howard first moved near the park in 1979 it had large open areas with many of the plants we

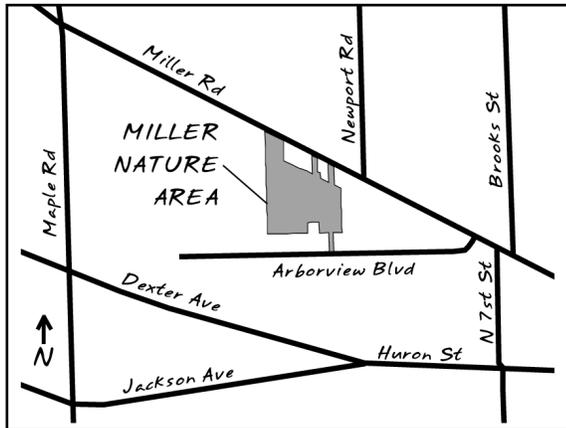
expect to see in grasslands: native asters and goldenrods, as well as European grasses. Since then the park has grown up having, among other species, mature oaks and hickory. Grassland species have been replaced by woodland species and, despite our aversion to invasives, the spring-time bloom of dame's rocket is beautiful. Howard has been working to get rid of the park's garbage and also control some of the invasive species that have come in. He has made great progress with the garlic mustard in areas that were once covered with that invasive. After intensive pulling in these spots, the native jewelweed has taken over.

In Miller Park we see an area with a great disturbance history, but recovery is occurring.

Thanks to park neighbors like

Howard we have kept the trails clear for years, we can access the solitude that Miller offers from our busy city life. Let's keep up the trend towards recovery. Help us out at future workdays to clear away debris, maintain trails, and remove invasive species.

Editor's note: there will be a Stewardship Workday at Miller on Sunday, October 5, from 10:00 am - 1:00 pm.



Helianthus sp., by Howard Krausse

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