

## Ranger Report 2010

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This summer consisted of the same basic activities as past summers: general upkeep, which includes trail maintenance and trash cleanup, combating invasive species, and public relations, which includes rule enforcement and communicating park users' concerns to the city. Instead of organizing the report in this way, I will organize it chronologically in hopes to communicate to future rangers the importance of the timing of different ranger duties in the park. I will also include an (incomplete) timeline of noteworthy events in the park flora.

### late **MAY, JUNE**

The end of May and all of June consisted mainly of pulling garlic mustard, dames rocket, and Japanese hedge parsley. I started on the eastern end of the park near Hoyt School above the bluff and worked westward, pulling all three weeds from the park. Even very early in June, some of the garlic mustard in sunny patches was starting to open up. By around mid-June, I had finished the area above the bluff, and began pulling garlic mustard, hedge parsley, and some select areas of dame's rocket below the bluff, starting on the eastern side of the park and again working westward. By the end of June, just as I was reaching the western end of the park below the bluff, the garlic mustard seeds were all opening up.

A few things were different than last summer: this summer I pulled garlic mustard from the entire park, while last summer I did not have time to pull below the bluff before seeds opened. Also, there was significantly more first year garlic mustard below the bluff than last year, which makes sense because I did not pull adult plants last summer from that area. Also, there were fewer adult plants in the wooded areas west of the parking lot towards the overlook, so that area took significantly less time than last year, but again, there was a lot more first year garlic mustard than in 2009. Also, in the wooded areas immediately west of the parking lot, after pulling what I thought to be all the invasives, I walked through the area again a few days to a week later, and found that more dame's rocket had bloomed, and so I pulled a second batch of dames rocket, and also garlic mustard that I had missed the first time through. I think this second run-through will really help with the amount of garlic mustard and dame's rocket that seeds in those areas, and hopefully an improvement will be noticed in 2012 if the ranger next summer keeps these areas up. And actually, I feel like there was a noticeable improvement in most areas this year regarding the amount of mature invasive plants that needed to be pulled.

In addition to pulling these invasives, I also de-headed the reed canary grass in the prairie, also doing a second run-through on this a week after the first to get the plants blooming later. I also killed some mulberrys and Norway maples in the area that I had (mostly) cleared of invasives last summer (west of the parking lot). I treated two asian bittersweet vines with herbicide, one near the main shelter and one near the lower shelter. I also pulled a large one from behind the prairie, and one from the woods towards the overlook. At the time that yellow clover was in bloom and easy to spot, I pulled all of it that I could find from the prairie, which luckily for me, had received a recent rain so it was actually quite easy to pull the root up. Later when white sweet clover bloomed, I tried to pull all of that from the prairie too, but the soil was slightly harder than it had been before,

so the roots didn't come up very easily. I also pulled some giant ragweed from the prairie, as well as dame's rocket, and queen anne's lace. I cut and treated a rose bush in the area west of the parking lot, and treated the stumps from the June workday pulling buckthorn by the lower shelter. I also treated many woodies in the prairie, and even though there was a lot of rain shortly after treatment, the treatment was effective.

I also spent May and June removing graffiti off trail signs. Every single trail sign was graffitied at one point, and some were tagged multiple times. I also painted over graffiti on the shed door twice. I trimmed trails weekly, fixed rain bars as needed (which turned out to be pretty often in June because of all the rain), and cleaned off the staircases. I cleaned the roots and soil off of the paved trail from Hoyt school down to the prairie, which in some areas had taken over half the width of the paved area. Trash pick-up from the parking lot and shelter was a daily activity, and the lower shelter and overlook were done at least once a week.

As far as rule enforcement, I told a surprising number of people to not park in the grass up by the main shelter, but it seemed I had to tell fewer people about the no biking rule (although this rule is always hard to enforce because usually people speed by too quickly and I am not close enough to them to tell them).

## JULY

July I treated more woodies in the prairie, using up the supply of Garlon, and in all, killing about 1/3 to 1/2 of the woodies in the prairie. I removed more graffiti from trail signs. I also transplanted a few plants from areas they were very common into the area of bare ground where I pulled dense buckthorn stands last summer (just west of the parking lot). I moved in some wild geranium, wild ginger, panicked aster (the really common one), and some mayapple. I also removed some of the non-native campanula from the same area.

From the garden I weeded lily of the valley, campanula, some woodies, and some crown vetch. I also did some transplanting of *Rudbeckia triloba* in the garden in order to form a cohesive area of it, and also transplanted woodland sunflower and purple coneflower to match up to the master garden plan. I pulled some poison ivy from along the small path up to the men's bathroom. I pulled more sweet clover and queen anne's lace from the prairie, and non-native campanula from along the path along Regent Street.

I began pulling buckthorn from below the overlook, starting on the west end and re-pulling where I had pulled the previous summers. This was necessary because of all the re-sprouts and new sprouts. It is impossible to pull the whole area though because of the brush piles (roughly three or four large ones) where buckthorn and honeysuckle grow up through, and can't be removed.

To maintain the trails, I spread half a load of gravel in the area below the playground where the paved path curves to the right and the gravel washes out to the left where the pavement deposits the water from rains. This area is a constant problem, and spreading the gravel load was not enough to deal with it, as it does not address the source of the problem. I was not able to figure out a good solution to this water drainage problem. There are some rain bars, but the velocity of the water is too great for these to completely deal with the water. Another problem area where I spread gravel is at the top of the y-shaped staircase that leads down to the lower path. Again, this problem needs to be addressed from its source, because the new gravel that I spread continued to wash out

after each heavy rain, and I had to keep moving it back up to where it needed to be. These two areas are still a problem and should be addressed early next summer.

### AUGUST

August was filled with pulling buckthorn from the overlook. In addition to this, I added three new rain bars to help with gravel washouts along Regent St, on the path down to the lower shelter, and on the path down to the corner staircase from the fireplace west of the parking lot. They appear to be mostly successful, but additional rain bars are still needed, which I have requested from parks and hope to put in this year still. I also painted many picnic tables and parts of tables, probably almost every picnic table has a new coat of paint from this summer. It almost seems like these kids take a newly painted table as an invitation to write on them more. Throughout the whole summer I painted picnic tables (whole or part) over 20 times.

I continued to weed lily of the valley out of the garden, and I also pulled out the Canada goldenrod when it was in bloom. I didn't get all the roots, so more will undoubtedly come back, but at least it is not spreading unchecked. Trail maintenance continued; I continued to fix gravel washouts, trim trails, clean staircases, clean out rain bars, and pick up trash. I also cleared about five downed trees off the trails after a particularly windy storm.

### SEPTEMBER

At the overlook, I continued to pull buckthorn, working westward, and reaching about the point I was at two years ago. Although this sounds like I have made no progress then from the past summers, I am encouraged by the native forbs and some grasses which have started to grow in the previously cleared areas. So even though I pretty much cleared the same area twice, this has allowed the native plants that have been seeded to start to come in. Notably, *Rudbeckia triloba* and *Gaura* (spelling?) are doing very well, and there are some other natives present also. I also treated the stumps from the September workday at the overlook.

I have also spent more time in the garden, transplanting species to form more cohesive groups according to the master plan. In particular, I moved elm-leaved goldenrod, and also weeded more Canada goldenrod. The garden is definitely showing improvement and looking nice, but there is still much work to be done! I also moved a couple extra elm-leaved goldenrod into the area of bare ground west of the parking lot.

As always, trash clean up and trail maintenance continued, with more clearing out of rain bars. Also, I dragged the giant mystery pile of brush down near the Bluff Street entrance down to Bluff Street so that the city could pick it up. We are not sure where or who this pile came from, but the brush was left all over the paved path up to the prairie from Bluff Street. (The mystery volunteers appeared to know what they were doing though, because they left the native species). However, this work was pretty much pointless, because none of the stumps were sprayed, and the area they chose to work in is completely surrounded by buckthorn and honeysuckle so it will just grow back in a year or so.

Acquired knowledge for passing onto future rangers:

- Garlon can be applied to the base of buckthorn *without* cutting the buckthorn off at the base. Apply garlon to base of trunk on trees up to about 3 inches in diameter (easiest on smaller ones) using a tool created from a grabber with sponges attached to the grabbing end. This works best in areas that are only buckthorn, and where there are many small trees growing densely together with nothing but bare ground (or sparse herbs) between them. This would not work in the prairie for example. Dip the sponge in the garlon, and squeeze the handle of the grabber to apply the garlon to the base of the stem. The next summer, when the buckthorn is dead, it can be easily cut down and removed, or just cut up and left on site.
  - o grabbers are 10 dollars at walgreens
  - o cut a regular size sponge in half, remove the screws that attach the suction cups to the grabbing handle, and replace them with sponges, and put the screws back in.
- PLEASE DON'T leave any more brush piles at the overlook. It seems that the city will not allow burning them, and all they do is protect new buckthorn and honeysuckle sprouts and allow them to grow without us being able to remove them. Brush must be taken up to Regent Street so the city can pick it up. Note: Last time I talked to Russ he made it sound like we could work out getting a permit to burn the brush at the overlook. He said that we may be able to persuade the fire marshal to let us burn, so we should definitely talk to Russ about this more.
- Reed canary grass in the prairie is slowly spreading further into the prairie, coming from the edges. It is important not to girdle or otherwise kill the trees which shade the reed canary grass, because reed canary thrives in full sun, so this shade acts to inhibit the spread of this extremely invasive grass. This can be observed in the prairie, because the grass that has spread further into the prairie into the full sun blooms much sooner than the shaded grass, therefore spreading even faster. It is very important to continue to de-head ALL of the reed canary grass, especially the ones on the leading edge of the invasion (the ones deepest into the prairie). This grass is great at lowering diversity and creating a monoculture, so we have to keep up the fight against it.
- The main point of the following timeline is to **START PULLING GARLIC MUSTARD RIGHT AWAY**. Even in the three years I have been ranger, I have noticed that it starts releasing seeds earlier and earlier, meaning you have less and less time to pull it each season. I have spent a significant amount of time on my best effort at pulling the second year garlic mustard from the *entire park area*, and I feel that I have made a real dent in the amount in the park. This **NEEDS** to be continued in order for it not to be a waste of time. Start by picking a section of woods on the east or west end of the park, and go section by section, transversing through the woods trying to find all the 2<sup>nd</sup> year garlic mustard and pull it out (of course putting it in trash bags and into the garbage). The majority of the time spent in the park in June should be spent doing this, as once it opens up, there is no point to pulling it any more. Dames rocket, hedge parsley, and other invasives, are much less time sensitive. Dames rocket is the next to release seeds, but this is not until at least a month after garlic mustard.

### Timeline

June 2- Reed canary grass is in bloom- dehead! (check back in a week to de-head the rest)

June 9- yellow sweet clover in bloom- pull from prairie (or dehead if soil is too dry)

June 18- some garlic mustard seeds are close to opening, especially in sunny areas

June 23- white sweet clover and queen anne's lace starting to bloom in prairie

June 26- garlic mustard seed pods starting to release seeds. not much point in pulling after this.

Mid july- campanula (non-native) in bloom- easy to spot/ dig out

- white sweet clover and queen anne's lace still in bloom