

MANAGING TO MAINTAIN BIODIVERSITY

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“Let nature take its course,” is a popular refrain among many park users. And for many years even professionals charged with maintaining and preserving park natural resources and facilities have used it as a basis for their management plans. It has become apparent, however, that in many urban park settings nature is so out of balance, that it can’t repair itself without some help. Because much of this imbalance has been caused by man and because this imbalance sometimes reduces the enjoyment of certain park uses, it is only right that we, as stewards of the land, step in to help as best we can to maintain the natural biodiversity.

This session will take a look at several species of plants and animals that have become so prevalent in some areas of the Huron-Clinton Metroparks that they are threatening to destroy park resources and/or adversely affect other park uses. This session will examine some of the techniques that have been employed to more actively control nuisance species and techniques that have been used to attract desirable species. We will also examine the process of shifting the management paradigm from letting nature take its course to helping nature take its course, as well as ways to help educate the general public about these issues.

Much of the discussion will focus on the Metroparks’ attempt to control white-tailed deer in several of the parks. We will cover the process of developing a management plan and all the issues involved in implementing the first stages of the plan. While it is still too early to determine whether the first phase of the management plan will be successful, the discussion will provide much information about how the Metroparks and other park agencies got the process started.

Other nuisance species that will be considered include Canada geese and gulls, along with plant species autumn olive, purple loosestrife, garlic mustard and Eurasian milfoil. Plant management techniques that will be discussed include biological controls, mechanical removal, using volunteers and commercial chemicals. Animal control techniques include trap and transfer, dogs, noisemakers and controlled hunting.

Several species of animals that the Huron-Clinton Metroparks are trying to attract to the parks include bluebirds, osprey and pheasants.