

Prairie Smoke

NACHUSA GRASSLANDS NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 5

APRIL, 1990

EARTH DAY - APRIL 22, 1990

"This we know. The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself".

- Chief Seattle

"Earth Day may be a turning point in American history. It may be the birth of a new American Ethic that rejects the new frontier philosophy that the continent was put here for our plunder and accepts the idea that even urbanized, affluent, mobile societies are interdependent with the fragile, life sustaining systems of the air, the water, the land."

- Senator Gaylord Nelson, the "Father" of Earth Day, 1970

Earth Day 1970 was the catalyst for the creation of the modern American environmental movement. On April 22, Earth Day 1990 is designed to catalyze a truly global environmental movement - and to make the 1990's a decade of striking environmental achievements. Our alternative - continued apathy and ignorance - risks precipitating a fast-spiralling decline on the overall quality of life on this planet.

In 1970, the focus was on air, water and noise pollution. Thousands of schools, universities, and communities staged teach-ins and demonstrations in support of Earth Day. In the past two decades, endangered species have been protected, once dead waterways have been cleaned up, and air quality in some areas has improved.

However, despite notable local improvements, the overall health of the planet has declined at an alarming rate. If one could take the pulse-rate of the

planet, it would be dangerously weak.

Today, we face discouraging and overwhelming problems that affect us not only locally, but globally as well. Holes in the ozone layer (which protects us from potentially lethal ultraviolet radiation); widespread destruction of tropical rainforests; ocean pollution; toxic wastes; a rise in environmentally-related illnesses; rising levels of heat-trapping gases (primarily industrial) which has unwittingly led us into the "Greenhouse Age"; loss of biodiversity through the destruction of our remaining natural areas; and growing landfill problems are just some of the problems that we currently are facing and must deal with if we expect to have any viable future as a species. What will our legacy be to the next generation of unborn? What kind of planet will they inherit? The choice is ours to make now. If we can't save the planet, we won't have anything else (crime, unemployment, the homeless, abortion, the national debt, education, etc.) to worry about.

In the spirit of Earth Day, 1990 - "Ask not what your planet can do for you - Ask what you can do for your planet."

...by CHRISTOPHER BRONNY

The
Nature 
Conservancy

BRINGS YOU PRAIRIE SMOKE,
THE NACHUSA GRASSLANDS NEWSLETTER.

ILLINOIS FIELD OFFICE, 79 WEST
MONROE, CHICAGO, IL 60603 -- PHONE
312/346-8166

OFF TO A GOOD START

A meeting was held Mar. 31, 1990 at the Lowell Park Nature Center, Dixon, Illinois. The meeting was called by the Illinois Chapter of the Nature Conservancy to help the Nachusa Grasslands volunteer corps get better organized and more focused on the important jobs they are doing.

Steve Packard chaired the meeting. Many agenda items were discussed in addition to concerns brought up by those present.

Issues addressed included the vital necessity of volunteers to carry on the work started at the Grasslands.

From those present a beginning organization is being formulated. Max Baumgardner and Jeff Meiners, "north and south neighbors" of the preserve agreed to assume the responsibility of organizing the volunteers and preparing a five year plan for our site.

Mike Crowe and Tim Keller will continue as our burn leaders. They are always in need of others to help in burning, one of the important tools of grassland management.

Dennis Lubbs will be responsible for planting this spring in the cropland areas. Approximately 30 acres will be seeded.

Sally Baumgardner accepted the challenge of successional restoration. This entails seeding and raking in new seeds in poor quality areas. The first and second wave of plants may be there but need to be enriched with more varieties. Sally already has two assistants, Ellen Baker and Isabel Johnston. One area in particular they will be concentrating on is the area immediately behind the sign.

Jeff Meiners will be responsible for the new 80 acre tract his family acquired as a memorial to his father. It will be restored as 30 acres of wetland and 50 acres of native habitat. Already some wood duck nest boxes have been installed.

Brush control will be in the capable hands of Ed Pleskovitch. With those "darn multi-floras", Ed has an on-going job!

Ann Haverstock will be setting up a breeding bird survey. (See article by Ann.) And last but by no means least, Ellen Baker will be tour coordinator.

Each of these people are to be commended for their willingness to assume these responsibilities. But that doesn't "let you off the hook"! Each of these

BUT WE NEED YOU!

individuals need many support volunteers to accomplish their job. Ed can't possibly cut all the brush. Mike and Tim need many hands, flappers, water pumps, and energetic people to help in the burns. Ellen needs tour guides, Dennis needs machinery and helpers. This is a call for volunteers! As Max Baumgardner put it, "If each person on our 450 name mailing list would volunteer one day, we could accomplish 450 days of work". Think about that, it's a fascinating challenge. We need YOU.

You can contact the leaders in the area of your interest at the following numbers:

Mike Crowe.....815/393-4572
Ed Pleskovitch.....815/626-8092
Baumgardners.....708/655-4295
Ellen Baker.....815/456-2283
Ann Haverstock.....708/232-9398
Jeff Meiners.....815/456-2201
Dennis Lubbs.....815/379-9060
Prairie Smoke.....815/376-5834

In addition to these jobs we need people to write articles for the newsletter, art work for the newsletter and brochures, and photos and slides for programs and displays. Someone who can set up a data base in the computer for the breeding bird survey is needed too. A great number of things could be computerized. Whatever your expertise we can probably use it!

We are always happy to hear your suggestions and dreams for Nachusa Grasslands. Our planners will try to get together each month to carry on the volunteer work in the most effective manner. They would be happy to hear from YOU!

NOTICE
YOU MAY NOW PARK ON THE FORMER
LUNDQUIST PROPERTY. WATCH FOR
A SIGN. THIS IS ANOTHER
ADDITION TO NACHUSA GRASSLANDS.

HII NEIGHBOR

by Sally Baumgardner

Max and I moved to Illinois in 1984. I arrived with prairie fever. Immediately I became involved as a volunteer with The Morton Arboretum's prairie restoration project. I took arboretum classes in prairie plant identification, and helped with the annual burns. All this did was fan the fire to learn more -- more -- more about our native plants.

By 1987, I knew I'd like to own some land in the country where I could encourage the prairie to come back. Max supported this, and urged me to put my wishes on paper and keep the paper! (What a good idea!) We scoured the available but very high-priced open lands on the counties just west of DuPage. Then we went west to Bureau, Lee, and Whiteside Counties. We did almost everything wrong! Sunday return-trips to DuPage were often times of frustration. We searched for almost a year. Most Realtors simply did not know what we were talking about. "Nobody" buys land to do nothing with!

A local Realtor showed us a 35 acre parcel. I thought it looked awful and didn't want to see it again. Yuck -- all that wet sand and corn stubble! But Max reminded me that it met every criteria I had set down on that piece of paper many months before. And, most importantly, it bordered on a protected area -- in fact, it bordered Nachusa Grasslands on TWO sides! The wind was blowing in the prairie seeds every day!

Soon after we bought the first parcel, we got 26 acres immediately adjacent on the north. All this was in Dec. '88 and Jan. '89. In Jan. '90, we bought the Lundquist land, with the barns. They are to be cleared off by the end of May.

In the low, wet sandy areas on the first 35 acres, we have wonderful sedges growing. I do not know how to identify them, so I remove whole plants and take them to Gerry Wilhelm at the Arboretum. Every single plant I have delivered to him has been a native.

We have one sandstone outcrop. We found Talinum rugospermum, fameflower, in abundance there. On Labor Day weekend, the local butterflies held a convention in our Liatrus aspera, blazingstar.

Why are we doing this? Remember that paper with my wishes on it? There's something about "giving back to Illinois (or Earth) that which is rightfully hers. It's that simple....

There is not another place on the planet exactly like my sedge meadow. The dickissels sing so persistently they'll drive you crazy. The Harrier flies very close to us -- he is not shy. The bees that pollinate the cacti could be leashed and made into soft furry housepets. And then there's the quiet. In winter, we can and do stand in the snow-covered grass and listen for the mice. They make enough noise in the daytime for us to know where they are. If they make that much noise at night, our Great horned owl will get them. It is my hope that nature is in better balance on the sand prairie. And that balance, that quiet, that peace, is probably the thing that pulls us, draws us back, almost every weekend.

Why do I think Nachusa Grasslands is important? It's B-I-G! There's space for lotsa species.



One of our recent visitors sighted three wild turkeys on Doug's Knob. The species is being reintroduced into the area by DOC.

JAY MEINERS MEMORIAL

LANDMARKS

Nachusa Grasslands has grown! Thanks to the Meiners Family, 80 acres has been added to the preserve. It was given in memory of Jay Meiners, a life-long resident of the area. He was an avid lover of the outdoors.

The 80 acre tract lies to the west and south of the present holdings. It boasts Franklin Creek meandering through the wet former pasture land.

All natural area lovers express their gratitude to this thoughtful family. This living memorial adds another dimension to Nachusa Grasslands.

The area was burned on April 7 along with most of the main complex. It is an interesting experience to take a look at the preserve now, after a burn, it looks so black and dead. Return in a few weeks and you see all sort of plants bursting forth with renewed vigor.

Be watching for the spring blooms. Prairie smoke, sometimes called Grandpa's whiskers, because of its fascinating growth and flowering habit, can be found on Dot's Knob. You are too late to see blooming Skunk Cabbage in the wetlands. They are giants! It's worth a visit, however, to see the huge leaves after flowering. Bluebirds are nesting. One visitor reported sighting 22 deer and 3 wild turkeys on a sunny evening recently. Pay a visit to the Grasslands, -- don't forget to sign the guest book and put in a few comments.

The reader's help is being solicited in identifying landmarks. We need a means to communicate with each other so stewards (individuals or crews) will know where work needs to be done.

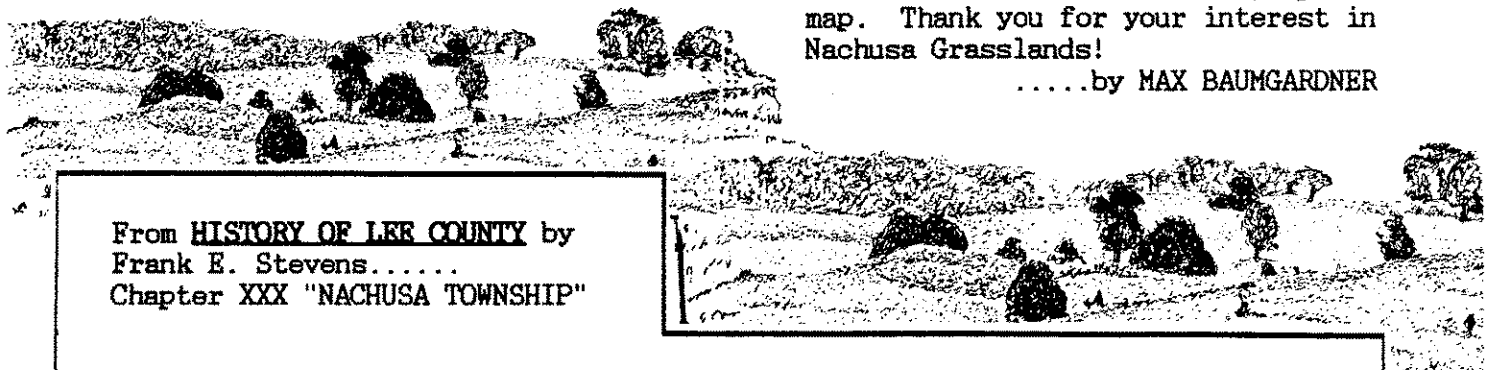
See the two "maps" (pg. 5 & 6) of Nachusa Grasslands. The first is the one provided by Steve Packard at our meeting on March 31st and is REFERENCE MAP #1. The second, REFERENCE MAP #2, has been sectioned into 46 grids and will provide you an opportunity to help identify many of the natural areas of Nachusa. As time goes by we should also be able to use the grids and the areas we identify (or name) as a way to plan our actions for the next few years.

Actions like:

- **Where to burn or not burn
- **Where to plant
- **Where to reestablish potholes
- **Where to remove brush, trees or multiflora rose
- **Where crops will be planted
- **Etc.

To get started, please consider these maps for your personal planning. I'm sure we'll want to retain some very important landmarks such as those shown on REF MAP #1. The purpose in providing these maps now is to get your suggestions on additional landmarks that we can add to an updated map. I encourage each of you to make your suggestions on the attached Planning Grid (REF MAP #2) and return it to me at 409 Falcon Ct., Darien, IL 80559 for inclusion in an accurate, updated map. Thank you for your interest in Nachusa Grasslands!

.....by MAX BAUMGARDNER

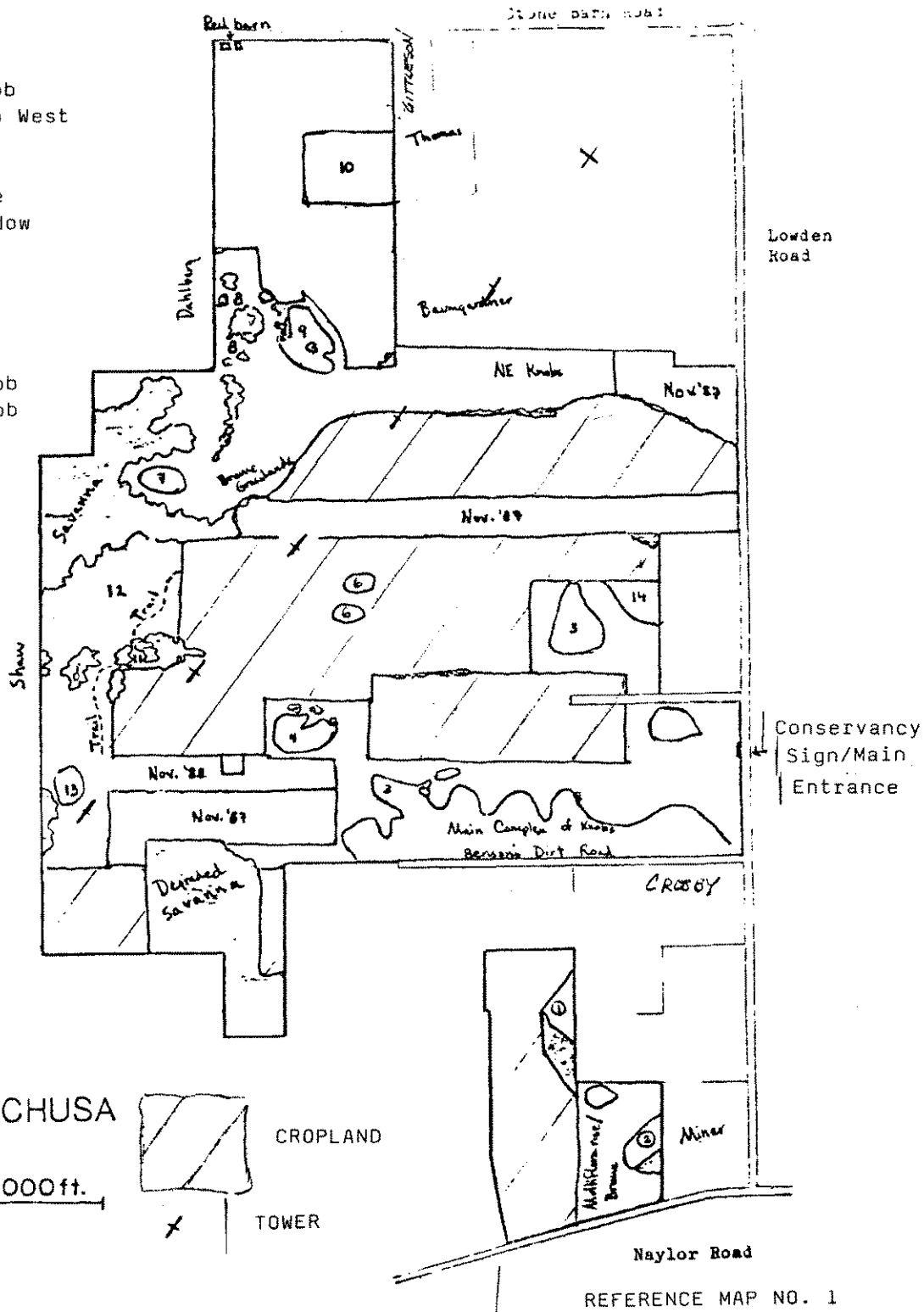


From HISTORY OF LEE COUNTY by Frank E. Stevens.....
Chapter XXX "NACHUSA TOWNSHIP"

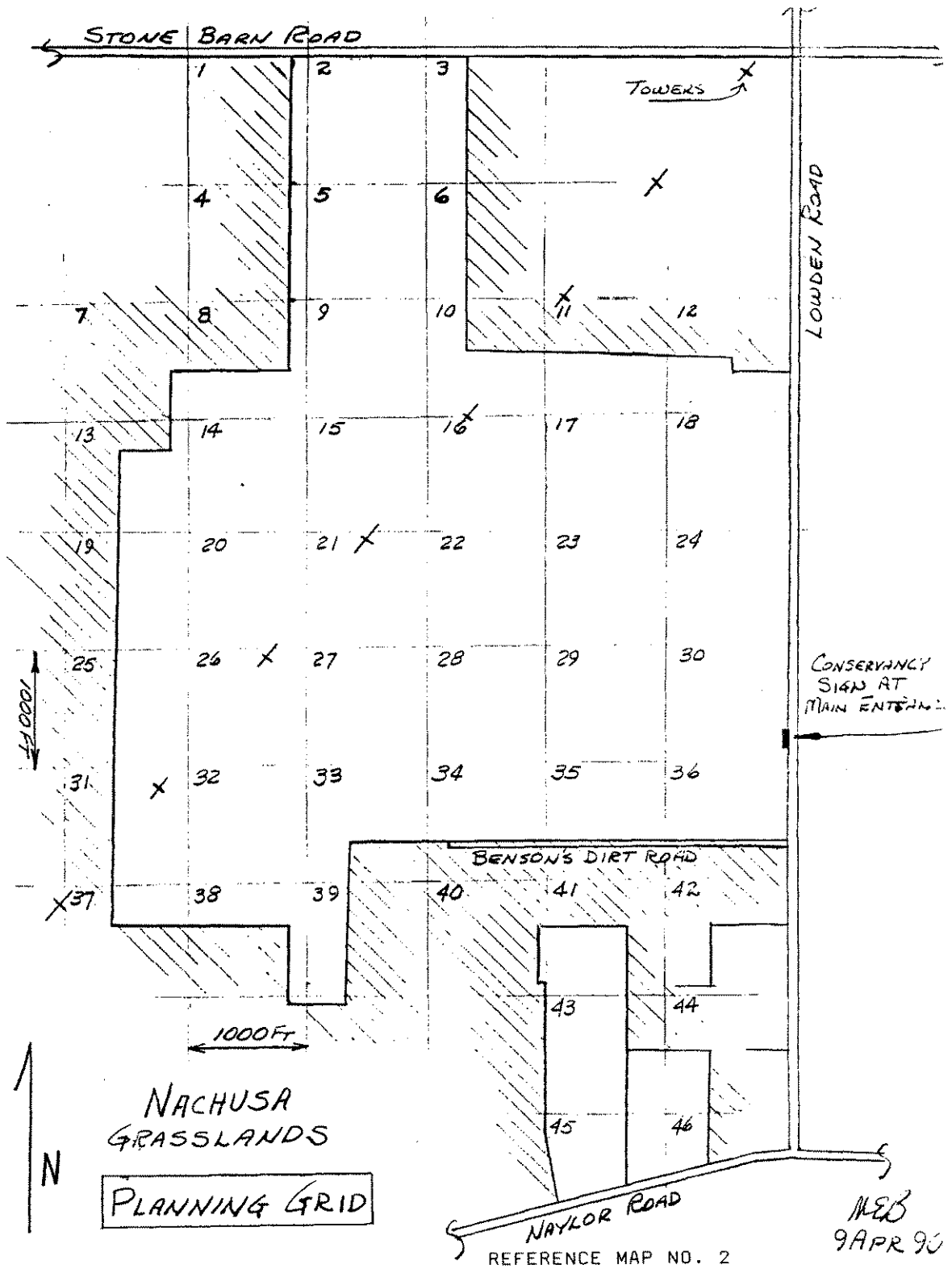
"On the northwest quarter of section 19 and over into the south half of section 18, the old trading house of LaSallier and the big Indian burying grounds were located and there in 1822 as will be found in another chapter, a large business was done with the Indians in furs. Only a little distance from there was the big Indian village in which Andrew Mack dwelt in the very early days and there too was built the fur press used in pressing furs for the Indians and the traders indiscriminately. So far as is known Nachusa township contained the first settlements or at least the first white settlers that ever set foot in Lee county. Traces of the LaSallier cabin, the fur press and of the Indian village are to be found easily at the present day."

Key:

1. Schafer Knob
2. S.E. Corner Knob
3. Tim's Half-Knob West
4. Coyote Point
5. Trash Knob
6. Prairie Pothole
7. N.W. Sedge Meadow
8. N.W. Savanna
9. Doug's Knob
10. Dot's Knob
11. Bridge
12. Wetlands
13. Kittentail Knob
14. Coneflower Knob



REFERENCE MAP NO. 1
 NOTES:



REFERENCE MAP NO. 2 - PLANNING GRIDS

NOTES:



SRPING HAS SPRUNG!

In late March pasqueflowers, Anemone patens, on the dry prairies have bloomed and are now seeding. Nachusa may have had pasqueflowers years ago. Oregon, Illinois' Stronghold has lovely ones and Byron also.

The woods at The Pines had a show when the snow trilliums, Trillium nivale, were out in March. Nachusa has oak savannas that are limestone and could possibly grow snow trilliums.

Kittentails, Besseyia bullii, at Nachusa Grasslands are pushing their tails up and should show yellow flowers in April.

Fully out are Skunk cabbages, Symplocarpus foetidus. Carrion flies have been attracted by a carrion smell and if they have pollinated the pink flowers, red seeds may follow and the leaves will get huge. These are near the high tension lines but on hills, whereas Skunk cabbages are low with their roots in water. Franklin Creek State Park has easy to see Skunk cabbages just south of the cement walk near the big spring. To see...park south of Sunday's bridge and walk to the spring.

Discovering what is out of the ground is one of the joys of spring. Spring has sprung!

.....ISABEL JOHNSTON

Last fall Howard Fox and I tried to find a young shadblow tree, Amelanchier arborea, for Nachusa Grasslands oak savanna. The only ones found at two different places were full grown.

Then when told of our desire for both shadblow and a witch hazel, Hamamelis virginiana, for Nachusa, Randy Nyboer said, "Nachusa Grasslands has them".

So, the shadblow is in bud at Castle Rock and we have hopes to see them at Nachusa Grasslands this year.

This is an understory tree. Its trunk isn't big and it gets about 20 to 50 feet tall. Its white clustered blooms are out before the leaves. The small apple like fruit is very tasty. People and birds like the fruit.

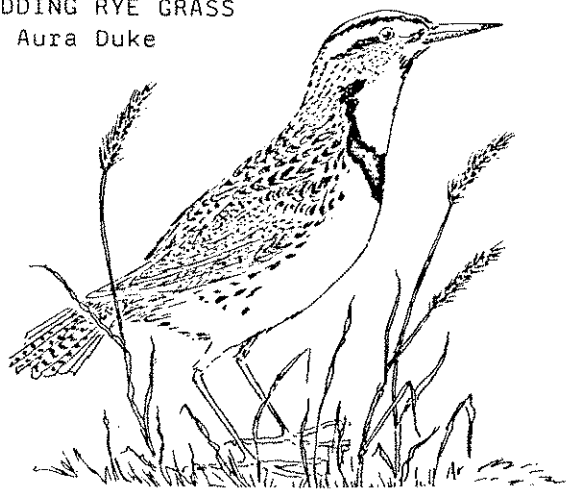
Rockford College has planted many shadblow trees around its dormitories. Shadblow is also called Serviceberry and June berry. The shad fish go up stream when shadblow blossoms. Bark of shadblow is smooth and light gray. Winter buds are long and slender.

In late fall the witch hazel have stringy yellow flowers and later hard seeds. These are also understory trees. Not many trees bloom in fall.

Do watch for these two trees at Nachusa Grasslands.

....ISABEL JOHNSTON

EASTERN MEADOWLARK
AND
NODDING RYE GRASS
Aura Duke



EASTERN MEADOWLARK...

To many farmers the sweet, plaintive whistle of the meadowlark sounds like "Spring is here." Females arrive about two weeks after the first males. Construction of the concealed grassland nest is the females job. She uses her beak to hollow out a depression in the ground.

PRAIRIE SMOKE
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AMBOY, IL 61310

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NACHUSA BIRDS

When I first saw the Nachusa Grasslands, I realized this was the home of the upland sandpiper, grasshopper sparrow, and possibly the elusive Henslow's sparrow. It was October and the little bluestem was a wave of silver and burgundy. I was hooked and I knew I needed an excuse to visit more often. Providence intervened, when Steve Packard mentioned a need to monitor the grassland birds at Nachusa.

This spring we will begin the breeding bird survey. Some objectives of the survey are: - to document all species breeding on the preserve; - to recognize their habitat requirements; - to provide a baseline data, against which future changes can be measured; and - to estimate population densities of certain species.

All the procedures have not been established, -- for maps and codes of the plant communities must be created. The codes for the breeding status of birds will be the same as those being used by the Illinois Breeding Bird Atlas Project. One of the provisions I hope to have ready for each volunteer is a sound tape of calls and songs of certain grassland species to aid in their identification.

Because Nachusa is large and growing, three routes will be established. A central route will be ready immediately. If you feel you can commit to at least 8 visits during the breeding bird season, usually May through July, give me a call.

Imprinted in my mind is my first image of Nachusa, and I will be taking that image to the "home". (That is the proverbial home to which they send all naturalists when they can't hike but in their minds.) Come join me and imprint some images of your own.

.... by ANN HAVERSTOCK
724 HAWTHORNE LANE
GENEVA, IL 60134
708/232-9398



DUSK AT NACHUSA

Hurry - Hassle - Headache.
People to greet -
Deadlines to meet.
The workday's toll
Upon my soul.

Five pm
Steal away.
Unwind my day
At Nachusa.

3-90 D.

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Don't let the zeal and commitment of EARTH DAY 1990 wane as the month of April slips into May, June, July, Keep that commitment!