



PRAIRIE SMOKE

Nachusa Grasslands Newsletter

Issue 22

August 15, 1994

Autumn On The Prairie '94

By Gene St. Louis, Chairperson

Our premier event of the season, Autumn-on-the-Prairie, is just around the corner on September 17, from 10 am to 5 pm. The preparation committee is in full-swing preparing for this year's activities. A large number of volunteers have been working throughout the summer to prepare the site for our visitors. We have removed an entire fence row of trees and a lot of brush. Bill's new bride, Susan, is preparing the Welcome Tent and its associated sales area. She is planning to offer a full range of Nature Conservancy items this year to help deflect the cost of AOTP. We will also be having another raffle to raise funds. Snow White Bakery and Deli of Dixon, IL will again be serving their sumptuous food.

Many of our regular educational exhibits will be returning, along with several new ones. Dot Wade will be returning with her Winddrift Bookstore, so come prepared to stock up on a full range of nature books. Tours are being coordinated by Mike Adolf this year, and he is recruiting a full range of guides this year. Mike is planning on having over 20 tours, with some distinguished naturalists as guides, including our good friend Mel Hoff from West Chicago Prairie.

A new feature this year will be a tent dedicated exclusively to children's activities, being organized by Sally Baumgardner. She has had a children's tour and other educational events at past AOTPs, so this year we decided to give her a full tent of her own to promote a love for our natural world in the next generation.

There are still plenty of volunteer opportunities for participating in this year's AOTP. If you would like to volunteer, please call Gene St. Louis at (815) 756-8747 or Bill Kleiman at (815) 456-2340.

AOTP '94 Raffle Items Needed

Autumn-on-the-Prairie is something of an unusual event these days in that it is entirely free. Our many volunteers contribute a significant amount of time in preparing for this day on which we present the preserve to our guests. However, it is not an inexpensive undertaking. Many items, such as tents and Port-O-Lets must be rented. We try to make Autumn-on-the-Prairie a self-supporting event if possible. Sales of T-shirts and other Nature Conservancy items, and donations from Dot Wade's book sales and Snow White Bakery are major supporters of AOTP. Another source of revenue is our annual raffle, which has always been a popular event. We are again in need of items to raffle off to pay for AOTP. If you would like to support AOTP, and have an item to contribute, please contact Susan Kleiman at (815) 456-2340 or Gene St. Louis at (815) 756-8747. Your help is most appreciated, and any excess funds over our costs will stay at Nachusa to help purchase much needed equipment and supplies for our restoration efforts.

In Nature, there are neither rewards
nor punishments; there are only
consequences. *Fortune Cookie*

Subscription Survey

By The Editors

The editors of Prairie Smoke received 117 responses to our recent request for information required to update our mailing list. 112 asked to continue receiving our newsletter and 5 asked to be taken off the list. 59 generous donors sent checks ranging from \$5 to \$100 and totaling almost \$1100!

If you did not return or respond to the editor that you would like to continue receiving Prairie Smoke — you are reading your last issue, unless you return the last chance coupon enclosed!!!! We would like to believe that there are more interested readers out there than our survey turned up (maybe you were on vacation, faulty filing system, dog ate it, etc.) Whatever the reason **PLEASE** return the enclosed **LAST CHANCE COUPON** to keep your place on the mailing list. If you fail to respond this **LAST** time, you will be removed from the mailing list.

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From the Preserve

Manager Bill Kleiman



Prairie Schooners were the covered wagons bumping along expansive Illinois grasslands, sometimes in sparse oak savannas, sometimes with no trees in sight. An occasional squall whipped the big bluestem and Indian grass into a frenzy and made the wagons with their canvas covers look like schooners lost at sea. What is Native Illinois? With less than 1% of the natural areas left in this part of the state we often need to use our imagination to picture the vast wilderness that was Illinois.

Around 1834 public land survey teams were sent out to report to the US government what they saw as they walked the township and range lines that someday would end up our county roads. They hiked north along what is now Lowden Road. Coming by the entrance sign to the Grasslands they noted "sandy poor soil" and then eight hundred yards later "tolerable prairie". Tolerable to whom?

Back along the Wade Creek woods they noted "white oaks, black oak 20", burr oaks 20", thin soil, oak barrens [savannas]". Down by the north end of Franklin Creek State Park they wrote "Timber small and scattering, burr oaks and hickory. They measured a 2", 3" and 5" hickory. On the Heinkel tract nearby Franklin Creek they reported "burr oak barrens east of creek" and then further east in the middle of the Heinkel tract "scattering burr oak" and a few hundred yards further east "leave barrens..enter prairie."

Some medium wet sites had white and black oaks, hickory, black walnut (*Juglans nigra*), white walnut (*J. cinerea*), and sugar maple. Some white pines occurred along "clear creek," which was gin clear then, out of the path of fire.

Today, we use the Public Land Survey notes, historical writings, soil maps, remnant vegetation, and county plant lists to attempt to recover a sense of the natural landscape that was here before us. We are not attempting to return to 1830, we are attempting to return the processes that ran the landscape before this time. Prescribed burning is one dominant process that forced fire-intolerant species to occur along creek edges and on rocky outcrops (species like red cedars, black cherries, box elders, and white pines). Another process is the hydrology of the soils. Removing drain tiles returns the water to soils left drier for decades. Some of these de-tiled fields have wetland sedges coming up in droves that were not planted by us but were part of the seed bank, waiting decades for the right moisture to germinate.

When we cut down black cherries it is because they have had a reprieve from fire the last fifteen decades. Now that we have returned this process we know that the big cherries are beyond the fire's singe,

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so we girdle the trees or cut them down. When we harvest seed from Doug's knob and broadcast it on the new planting below we are simply speeding up the natural process of seed dispersal. We are impatient and want this piece of the landscape back.

The work we do is natural history. It is meaningful, difficult, sweaty, cold, fun, full of bugs and thorns and birds singing. Your support of this project and conservation in this state is appreciated.

Special Thanks To:

- Ann Meyers of Ender's Greenhouse for propagating numerous *Nachusa* plants
- Dennis Lubbs of Gensis Nursey for donating honorariums earned from speaking engagements
- Matt Sawyer for donation of new Bachtold mower (heavy duty walk behind type)

Work projects that need you:

If you're interested in participating in the work at *Nachusa* and want a special project to call your own, then you need to see page 5.

Challenge Pledge

A supporter of *Nachusa* Grasslands has offered to pay half the cost of a 4-wheel-drive 60 hp tractor. If we can meet the challenge and find the other half we will have an important stewardship tool for the upcoming decades. If you would like to help us with a donation we would be most appreciative. Call Bill Kleiman at 815-456-2340 or write *Nachusa* Grasslands, 2055 Lowden Road, Franklin Grove, IL 61031.

If your tour group is visiting the Grasslands, please contact Ellen Baker, 1742 Reynolds Road, Franklin Grove, IL 61031 (815)456-2283, with an estimate of the number of people in your group. Thank you!

Franklin Creek State Park picnic area (shelter, water & restrooms) is three miles south. Bring lunch to enjoy at the park or the Grasslands if desired-nearest restaurant is in Franklin Grove (approx. 6 miles).

Biodiversity Sighted at *Nachusa*:

- *Lespedeza leptostachya* - wild flower on federal endangered species list - another population found
- Upland Sandpiper on fence post
- 2 Upland Sandpiper chicks in nest!
- Regal fritillary butterfly feeding on a Hill's thistle
- Hen turkey with 2 chicks

BIODIVERSITY DISCUSSION GROUP

By Max Baumgardner

Have you ever wanted to discuss some important current topic and couldn't find anyone to listen? Are there times when you find yourself in front of the TV and you wonder "why am I sitting here when there are so many other more productive things I could be doing?" Have you ever considered the minimum area requirements for long term conservation of.... the Karner Blue Butterfly (well, have you, Mike?)? Have you ever been exposed to the theory of island biogeography..... and even enjoyed reading about it? Do you have any idea what Rapoport's rule is? What is the ecological importance of insects? Did you know that the sea otter is a keystone species (eh, Kevin)? Have I ever told you my story of the Brooklyn Bridge? Do you know how some scientists measure genetic diversity? Can we encourage you to read Pulitzer Prize winning author E.O.Wilson's book The Diversity of Life and then join us for a lively discussion of it's many fascinating aspects including the human impact on our planet?

At present, 6 people have indicated they plan to meet on September 8 at 7PM in "The Big Red Barn on Lowden Road" to participate in the FIRST EVER Nachusa Grasslands book discussion group. We'd love to have you join us and add your thoughts/insights/concerns. You'll need to let us know of your interest soon so that Dot Wade can order the books and you can read several exciting chapters. Take a chance that this TV season will be as bad as last years was and plan to come on out to the prairie.... you'll be glad you did! Call Max Baumgardner at 815-456-2083 to reserve your space!

This is where we would have placed your photo if you'd sent us one!

No photographs were turned in for this issue!

Bthistle

Max & Sally Baumgardner

On July 23rd, the North East Unit celebrated its first All-Volunteer Work Day. The weather was dry, bright and warm. The tools were gathered and the weeds were there... Fresh, eager people began to meet at Baumgardners barn. These families came: the Dan Bakers and the Jim Taulbees from Franklin Grove, and siblings Liz and Tim Anderson from Mt. Morris. The men headed for the woody mess where Lowden Road and Wade Creek intersect. With bow saws they began work that will re-open this former prairie's intermittent stream. Jim, Dan and Max plan to return

Some of Unit Work Accomplished

Main - Mike Adolph and crew have cleared small cherries off of a remnant area, herbicided multiflora rose and reed canary grass. Scythed sweetclover, mullein, created maps. Several butterfly monitoring trips made.

Northeast - Sally Baumgardner orchestrated a successful recruitment of volunteers to scythe weeds and beginning selective thinning along Wade creek. Numerous mullein, bull thistle and sweetclover plants scythed or mowed. June grass, spidorwort and sedges harvested and planted in needed areas.

Fen - Kevin Kaltenabach and crew cleared more buckthorn, red cedars, and cherries. Numerous flowers blooming where they cleared this winter.

Dot & Doug's - Gene St. Louis and crew cut and burned hemp plants, standing up wind, and mowed and shovelled at the root crown of the weed burdock. Numerous seed collected from Doug's Knob and planted below in the new planting.

Bird Monitoring - Ann Haverstock continues her quality surveying of the grasslands birds.

East Heinkel - Mike Crowe and crew cleared off part of a seldom seen remnant prairie. Numerous cherries girdled around some meadows full of yellow cone-flower and bergamot. Fire lane being created along boundary for prescribed burns. First burn of this unit in many decades will be this fall.

Kittentail - West Chicago Prairie Stewards scattered and raked in a seed mixture prepared last winter. They will be out brushclearing again this Fall.

Big Woods - Earl Thomas and crew rescued a burr oak hill from cherries and brush. Numerous trees girdled. Seed will be broadcast this Fall.

Schafer Knob - Matt Sawyer cleared numerous trees. The piles will later be burned, the good fire wood removed, stumps cut to ground level, and seed from the remnant area planted in the cleared area.

Meiners Wetland - Simple erosion control structures built at drainage of potholes. Reed canary grass sprayed twice. We will be back later for this weed. Sedge and forb seed scattered around potholes. Uplands seeded to prairie. Sign fixed by Bill Mays.

Coneflower - Sweetclover mowed, but we mowed it too early and we needed a sickle bar mower. Next time. Planning late spring burn to cook sweetclover.

soon with chain saws. The ladies and some of the children used loppers to chop down Bull Thistle, the hated and despised. (Oh well, not all critters hate this plant. There were Goldfinch nests in some, so we left those 3 or 4 standing.) Just before the little kids lost interest, they were given a sack of fluffy, dry milkweed seeds to scatter. Such giggling! Cindy Taulbee filled an important niche by babysitting and "being there" when the children's short attention spans did give out. Ever-cheerful Chris Baker is ready to return, just in case those thistles resprout and threaten to laugh at her. Thanks, Volunteers! We truly appreciate your help and enthusiasm.

Our Vanishing Prairie

By Jim Long

It is possible to say every acre in Lee County has undergone vast changes in its vegetational cover since the arrival of the pioneers. The original flora required thousands of years to develop. The prairie was periodically grazed by buffalo as they passed through on migratory routes. These great beasts were in an area only a short time and the prairie quickly returned to normal. The frequent prairie fires kept the woody plants from invading. Trees and shrubs were forced to grow in sheltered locations along streams where the fires would run out of fuel. Early settlers/farmers put a stop to prairie fires. Soon the buffalo were gone. Before long every acre not too dry or too wet was ploughed. In Lee County large areas of swamp and sandhills became ranch land and large herds of cattle and horses grazed the area. As time passed the low ground was tiled and drainage ditches were dug, but not all of the area was ploughed. The least disturbed places today are the gullied and hilly areas along streams. The best prairie remnants could be found along the ungrazed railroads built over a hundred years ago. These are now being rapidly invaded by trees. Happily, several sections are being preserved. The sandhills became places of permanent (not migratory) pasture. When cattle are removed, woody plants move in. Much of Lee County has changed from prairie to pasture to open woodlands to a jungle of briars and fast-growing young trees. In my many years of tramping the sandhills, I never saw a Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Bloodroot, or the small handsome fern, Ebony spleenwort. I had to go to mature wooded riverbottoms to see these plants. Today, I can find Jack-in-the-Pulpit; their seeds are scattered by birds into wooded habitats new to our area. Eventually, this plant will be common on the sandhills. Along the borders of roads and trails I often used, I now find Ebony spleenwort growing in great abundance where it was never seen before. Last year I saw five plants of Bloodroot in a small patch where they never grew before. A tree will grow almost anywhere in the county today. Every village has become a woods with houses. Many of the sandhills have been planted with pines, sometimes with thousands of trees and they are producing new trees from their seeds. The vegetation is changing and one wonders if the prairie could have resisted the invasion of forest if the pioneers had never come. I see no indication anywhere today of prairie recovering on its own. Without Man's and Ladies' help the prairie will completely disappear. Only in locations such as Nachusa Grasslands and preserved natural areas can the Illinois prairie hope to survive.
long

This is where we would have placed your
photo if you'd sent us one!

No photographs were turned
in for this issue!

Our First Skipper

by Mike Adolph and Gary Tollaksen

When we were inducted into the butterfly monitoring program we were given a route on the east side which had us only concerned with the little bluestem knobs along Lowden. This conflicted with instructions which told us to create a route which had a number of different habitats. So we made a second route on the northwest side of the preserve from Stone Barn Road to Dot's Knob, to the NW Savanna, south to the sedge meadow, over to Wade Creek, and looping around to Doug's knob.

Whether this route gives us as clear a picture of the presence of species dependent on habitat remnants is not yet known, but we certainly got a lot of pleasure and some success from traversing savanna, pasture and sedge meadow.

Before we got into this program we had no idea that there is another whole superfamily of butterflies called Hesperiiidae, the skippers. Our first contact with a member of this group was at the seep at the NW Savanna last year. This was a large black skipper, which we netted and examined and guessed to be a Horace's duskywing. Other skippers sighted were the mulberry wing and the black dash, both B grade in rarity.

Skippers come in two "poses": open-winged and closed-winged. At a glance, perching open-winged skippers might be mistaken for moths (however, moths often fly as if drunk). Most skippers are closed-winged; that is, when perched their forewings are close together and their hindwings are at about 45 degrees. Sometimes their wings are completely folded together. You can find skippers at Nachusa Grasslands easily. A good place for finding skippers is Dot's Knob and the sedge meadows.

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photo if you'd sent us one!

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in for this issue!

Calendar

August

27 Saturday, 10:30 am: Workday

September

3 Saturday, 10:30-Workday at Kittentail Knob

10 Saturday, 10:30 am: Workday

17 Saturday, 10:00 - 5:00: **Annual Autumn on the Prairie celebration**

*24 Saturday, 11:00 am Walk/Workday,

25 Sunday, 10:30 am: Workday

October

1 Saturday, 10:30 am: Workday

2 Sunday, 10:30 am: Workday

8 Saturday, 10:30 am: Workday

9 Sunday, 10:30 am: Workday

15 Savanna Conference at ISU

*22-23 TNC Friends of IL, overnight outing at Nachusa

29 Saturday, 10:30 am: Workday

30 Sunday, 10:30 am: Workday

November

5 - 6 Sat & Sun, Ecological Prescribed Burning Workshop - Registration Req. 456-2340

12 Saturday, 10:30 am: Workday

13 Sunday, 10:30 am: Workday

26 Saturday, 10:30 am: Workday

27 Sunday, 10:30 am: Workday

December

3 Saturday, 10:30 am: Workday

4 Sunday, 10:30 am: Workday

10 Saturday, 10:30 am: Workday

11 Sunday, 10:30 am: Workday

17 Saturday, 10:30 am: Workday

18 Sunday, 10:30 am: Workday

***Reservation required** - 312-346-8166

Restoring and protecting native Illinois is fun and meaningful work, join us for a few workdays this summer. Meet at the barn behind the Yellow House, 2055 Lowden Road.

ALL WORKDAYS ARE FROM 10:30 - 1:30.....Bring a bag lunch.

Wish list for Nachusa Grasslands:

- seed drill or broadcaster
- Mower-pull behind a tractor-bigger the better
- 60 horse power tractor with three point hitch
- ATV or golf cart
- security alarm for barn
- fax machine
- Large toaster oven
- 1-2 cu.yd. dumpster
- small plow 2'-6'
- four row disk
- hay rack
- Flatbed trailer
- Truck ladder rack
- heavy or light duty utility trailer
- full size pickup truck cap and/or too box
- agricultural combine
- agricultural field gates
- Picnic bench
- Tractor mounted sickle bar mower
- Snowblower (thinking ahead)
- VCR/small TV for presentations
- Riding lawn mower-to mow weeds & fire breaks
- Large portfolio case - transporting aerial photos

Donations are tax deductible & greatly appreciated.

Thanks to donors for:

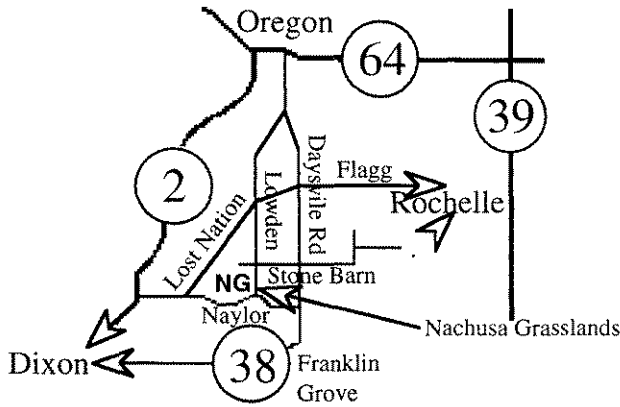
- ✓ Hand scythe - John Holbo
- ✓ Dolly (hand truck), shop vacuum, steel ramps, vented propane office heater - John Nicholson
- ✓ Shop vise - Gene St. Louis
- ✓ Old kitchen cabinets for the shop
- ✓ 2 cameras, lenses, filters, & bag - Chuck Boegel

Work projects that need you:

- Create portable "Smoke Hazard" road signs
- Someone to loan us a trencher to dig up some tile and put in a water line, two days work.
- Field trip leaders that we can call occasionally to give tours
- help maintain the mechanical equipment (tractor, skidster, pickup,...) Greatly Needed!
- build four simple easels to hold aerial photos
- Members of a "speakers bureau" to give talks or slide shows
- Road side steward to collect litter, battle a few weeds, check fences and gates for damage, and maintain the bulletin boards
- Electrician to run a few outlet lines.
- Excavator to loan a drot for two days work.
- Prescribed burn host - someone to greet visitors/new crew members - help keep the crew hydrated and full of cookies
- More monitors recording occurrences of birds, butterflies, herps, plants.
- Someone to start a plant collection Nachusa species.
- Volunteer Surveyor

Editor-Publisher _____ Earl Thomas
 Associate Editor _____ Dot Wade
 Associate Editor _____ Bill Kleiman
 Associate Editor _____ Sally Baumgardner

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From the Editor(s):

If you know something about Nachusa Grasslands, but no one else knows because you didn't share the information, then you are *GUILTY* of keeping secrets! Send me articles, photos, drawings, poems, cartoons, calendar dates (items of interest to the friends of Nachusa Grasslands). Articles on computer disk encouraged!



brings you **Prairie Smoke**, the Nachusa Grasslands Newsletter.
 Illinios Field Office, 79 West Monroe,
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