



PRAIRIE SMOKE

Nachusa Grasslands Newsletter

Issue 25

August 15, 1995

Badgers! by Sally Baumgardner

In the last issue we explored the lives of badgers. I found a broad range of information available today. Also, I contacted a local trapper from Sublette who uses the phrase, "Teeth, claws and a blur of fur". We ended with a description of badgers' claws and their success at digging:

Running away to avoid trouble isn't very effective for such a short-legged animal. The ability to dig provides the badger's main defense: a burrowing escape. What better habitat can it find but a tree-rootless grassland, a prairie? No woody obstacles in the way!

If cornered or trapped, of course, any animal, including me, may snarl, growl, hiss, bare the teeth and become defensive. And who among us can truly say, "It isn't trapped", when an animal growls or snarls? Perhaps the snarler has been pushed to the edge of its territory and is reluctant to cross the invisible fence onto its adversarial neighbor's property? The badger and its neighbor may have established those "property lines" long ago.

It is an exaggeration to say badgers can turn around in their skin. But the oversized hide greatly enhances the badger's ability to defend itself. The first move of hunting canines or felines, for example, is to seize the intended victim by the neck or throat. Encased in what amounts to flexible body armor, a badger held in this manner will swivel around and begin tearing at the forequarters of its attacker.

This behavior may have led to the belief in the badness and ferocity of badgers, but, again, all of us will fight for our freedom. In describing the inner qualities of badgers, some writers used heavily anthropomorphic words such as "courage", "character", "spirit". The use of such obviously human attributes hardly places the badger in bad light.

Still, myths are persistent. The more sensational, the more they are believed. Take "Badgering":



The so-called sport of Badger-Baiting in Great Britain was described by Bill Gilbert in *Smithsonian*: "... the Brits for centuries have been throwing him into small pits with dogs to display and test his pluck.

"Since badgers and dogs are about the same there as here, certain arbitrary rules have been devised to make these matches more competitive than they naturally would be. Lon and Killingsley, whose *Badgers of the World* is a definitive zoological text, described a traditional British badger baiting. The captive badger is held within the confines of a restricted space and is then subjected to repeated attacks of specially bred dogs, one at a time... To give advantage to the dog, the badger is handicapped in the first instance by being secured by a chain... Should this prove ineffectual in preventing the dogs from getting mauled... the leg, or legs of the badger may be broken... The lower jaw of the badger may also be shattered... or sawed off.'

"Since 1973, the badger in Britain has been a fully protected species. Badger baiting never caught on in the U.S." Who was badgering whom?

Trapper Kevin Kellen of Sublette describes the badger as a "neat animal", not any more aggressive than a trapped raccoon or skunk. Under Illinois law, he releases trapped badgers using his own invention, a plywood shield. Each one he has met has snarled, growled and backed away.

Let's let the old myths die. Here at Nachusa Grasslands, we are confident in the "Build It and They Will Come" theory. Restoring the community of the badger is our joy. Do Illinois wildlife a favor and say something nice about a badger.

**Autumn on the Prairie,
Saturday,
September 16**

**Numerous guided tours,
displays, food, music, children's
tent.**

**Raffle items needed - call Mike Adolph
708-897-4792**

From the Preserve Manager

A few of us discussed the idea of having a group of volunteers that will return missing animals to Nachusa Grasslands. The Rare Animal Recovery Effort, or RARE.

The mission of Nachusa Grasslands is to restore a mosaic of native Illinois grassland, woodland, and wetland by returning the missing ecological processes and native species. Some of those missing native species are animals.

The gorgone checkerspot butterfly was one animal missing from Nachusa Grasslands. This checkerspot strongly prefers the flower prairie coreopsis (Coreopsis palmata) which blooms in early summer on a few of the knobs here. Ron Panzer brought a few individuals over from a nearby population and released them. Ron is a biologist who has released several uncommon and rare native insects to this preserve. From Ron's notes: "We translocated 24 females and 20 males to Doug's Knob on July 3, 1989. Each inductee was removed and placed on vegetation at approximately 4:00 PM that evening. These butterflies seemed to travel well and appeared to be in good condition when released. Two flew to Coreopsis flowers and fed; one exhibited territorial behavior and drove off an Aphrodite immediately after being released!" More of this species were brought in 1990 and in 1991 ten freshly emerged individuals were atop the release sites showing that they were breeding successfully.

There are other animals we would like to see returned to the Grasslands. These include several insects, Franklin's ground squirrel, the prairie chicken, native fish, amphibians, and reptiles. Each species reintroduction will require some effort. Journal searches, phone calls to experts, surveys to see if the animal is here already, finding a healthy donor population, getting permission to collect, releasing the animal, monitoring its success. If you might be interested in participating in RARE, a meeting will be held Saturday, October 21 at noon at the Steward's Barn. We will brainstorm on how such an effort might take shape and create a timeline for action.

Sampling of preserve work accomplished:

A fantastic summer crew of Eric Thomas, Rodd Schick, Susan Kleiman and volunteers Jay Stacy and Gerald McDermott gave a great boost to our summer stewardship. We sprayed, mowed, scythed countless numbers of sweetclover to attempt to control this biennial weed which forms waist high monocultures that shade out our new plantings. First week of May burning worked very well at controlling this plant with relatively few plants surviving. Also spraying multiflora rose, reed canary grass, occasionally mullein and burdock.

Surveyed and mapped occurrence of garlic mustard in all the wooded areas. The maps show huge occurrences of garlic mustard in some units, too many to pull or spray. Fire will be the management tool of choice. Garlic mustard forms clusters that shade out

beauties like columbine, jack in the pulpit, prairie trillium, spring beauty, dutchmans breeches....

Wetland restoration. Nearing completion of the removing over 3000 feet of agricultural field tiles from the Prairie Potholes Unit. We will create well over 50 acres of wet habitat. More on this in the next issue.

Dot & Doug Unit - Gene St. Louis coordinated an internal fence line removal day by burning off the grass to expose the old fence and loading up a hay rack with wire that later was hauled off by Mark Forrester. About 1,500 pounds of wire and a pile of posts. Participants: Tom Cartwright, Bill & Susan Kleiman, Dean Weidman, Ray Derksen, David Edelbach, the Rocheleaus, John Holbo, Jim Grove.

Sprayed the weeds burdock and reed canary grass. Dennis Lubbs brought savanna seedlings to plant under oaks. Mowed new plantings.

Big Woods Unit - Earl Thomas and Jim Lahman burned an area of grass, weed, and brush and sowed a variety of seed on the northeast corner of the unit. Brush was cut and a 300 ft section of fence was removed.

Fen Unit - Kevin Kaltenbach, Chris Matson, Nancy Winter, and others cut stumps and thinned a little farther into the brush thicket. Sprayed Canada thistle along creek.

Kittentail Unit - West Chicago Prairie Stewards with Mel Hoff raked in bags of seed after unit burned in April.

East Heinkel Unit - Mike Crowe. Planted various seed after unit burned in April for first time since Blackhawk.

Jay Meiners Wetland Unit - Jeff Meiners planted a barrel of seed and cleared some cedars from under the power lines. During fires the cedars could torch into the wires. Summer crew sprayed reed canary grass but there was too much for them. Next year.

Main Unit - Mike Adolph and summer crew sprayed hundreds of multiflora rose that resprouted after fire. The resprouts are small and easy to spray and take just a short squirt.

Schafer Unit - Cedars removed from edge of high quality prairie.

NorthEast Unit - A team of stewards is forming in support of our unit. Jay Stacy, Oregon, is available weekdays for alien plant removal and is a very knowledgeable, cheerful and able worker. He is helping the summer staff with restoration as well as helping all of us learn prairie birds by their sounds. Welcome, Jay! Jay, David Edelbach, Reed Nelson, and Kishwaukee Biology students Megan and Tom began removal of Wild Parsnip. An Eagle Scout candidate, Jared Stumpenhorst, Ashton, is considering how large an area of parsnip he can "adopt" for removal as part of his project. We anticipate a "work" day with The Wild Ones, a group of people interested in growing native plants at home. They'll get a crash course in "Knoxious Weeds" when we try to exterminate Spotted Knapweed.

Nachusa Grasslands

Calendar

Wish list for Nachusa Grasslands:

- old photos of the grasslands (can be returned)
- hay rack

Donations are tax deductible & greatly appreciated.

Thanks to donors for:

- √-Dirt leveling work at the Yellow House - Norm Gittleson
- √-Nuts and bolts and printer loan and setup - Gene St. Louis
- √-New John Deere 60 hp tractor with loader - Matt Sawyer was the main contributor towards the purchase of this useful machine that will be used for years for mowing weeds, discing, dragging, planting and moving materials. We are very appreciative of Matt's support of stewardship.



September 1995

- 2 Sat., 9:00 am: Workday on Kittentail Unit with West Chicago Prairie Stewards - brush thinning.
- 3 Sun., Seed harvesting workday
- 4 Monday: Labor Day
- 9 Sat: Workday to prepare for Autumn on the Prairie FOLLOWED BY FRIENDS AND STEWARDS POTLUCK at Bill & Susan Kleiman's house at 1:30.
- 10 Sun: Seed harvesting workday
- 16 Sat: AUTUMN ON THE PRAIRIE!
- 17 Sun: Seed harvesting workday
- 23 Sat: Workday at Coneflower Unit with Mary Ann Hoeffliger
- 24 Sat: Workday at E. Heinkel Unit with Mike Crowe
- 30 Sat: Workday at Main Unit with Mike Adolph

October

- 1 Sun: Seed harvesting workday
- 8 Sun: Seed harvesting workday
- 15 Sun: Seed harvesting with David Edelbach
- 21 Sat: Seed harvesting

November

- 11 Sat: Workday at Main Unit with Mike Adolph
- 12 Sun: NEW DATE FOR STONE SOUP SEED PROCESSING AND SCATTERING DAY. WITH VOLUNTEER RECOGNITIONS AND MEETING TO CREATE THE ANNUAL CALENDAR.
- 18 Sat: Workday at NE Unit with Sally Baumgardner
- 26 Sun: Winter Prairie Smoke submission deadline

December

Prairie Smoke Editors meet first week of December

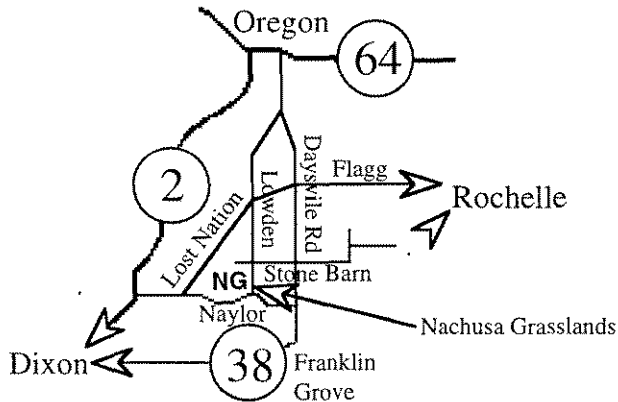
- 2 Sat: Workday at Shafer Unit with David Edelbach.
- 10 Sun: Workday at East Heinkel Unit with Mike Crowe
- 16 Sat: Workday at Shafer Unit with David Edelbach. Winter Prairie Smoke Mailed.

Nachusa Grasslands is protecting and restoring a mosaic of native Illinois grassland, woodland, and wetland by returning the missing ecological processes and species.

All workdays and events start at 9:30 and end at 1:30 unless stated otherwise. Bring a bag lunch. Workdays meet at the Steward's Barn at 2055 Lowden, field trips leave from the main entrance on Lowden.

Restoring and protecting native Illinois is fun and meaningful work, join us for a few workdays. Meet at the Stewards Barn at 2055 Lowden Road.

Editor-Publisher _____	Earl Thomas
Associate Editor _____	Dot Wade
Associate Editor _____	Bill Kleiman
Associate Editor _____	Sally Baumgardner
Associate Editor _____	Thelma Dahlberg
Manager of Mailing _____	Ellen Baker



NACHUSA GRASSLANDS UNIT STEWARDS
STEWARDS **COSTEWARD**

Jay Meiners Wetland Unit	Steve Meiners
Fen Unit	Chris Matson
Kevin Kaltenbach	
Big Woods Unit	Jim Lahman
Earl Thomas	
Dot & Doug Unit	
Gene St. Louis	
Northeast Unit	Max Baumgardner
Sally Baumgardner	
Coneflower Unit	Hazel Reuter
Mary Ann Hoeffliger	
Main Unit	Andy Jackson
Mike Adolph	Bob Schone
East Heinkel Unit	
Mike Crowe	
Clear Creek Unit	
Ogle County Prairie Preservation Society	Mary Blackmore
	Terry Clark
Kittentail Unit	
West Chicago Prairie Stewards	Mel Hoff
Science Stewards:	
Bird Monitoring	Ann Haverstock
Butterfly Monitoring	Mike Adolph
Project Ecologist	Dennis Lubbs

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 us articles, photos, drawings, poems, cartoons, calendar dates (items of interest to the friends of Nachusa Grasslands). Articles on computer disk encouraged!

Schafer Unit



Nachusa Grasslands is owned and operated by The Nature Conservancy, a private non-profit group whose mission is to protect plants and animals by protecting the land and water they need to survive.

The Nature Conservancy
 Nachusa Grasslands
 2055 Lowden Road
 Franklin Grove, IL 61031
 815-456-2340

U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
 PERMIT No. 6632