

PRAIRIE SMOKE

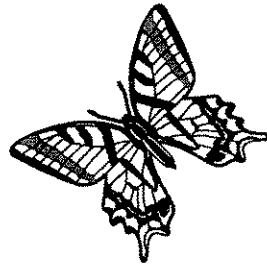
Nachusa Grasslands Newsletter

Issue 30

September 1997

Eighth Annual

Autumn on the Prairie



September 20
1 9 9 7
10 am to 5 pm

What Is Nachusa Grasslands About?

Steep sandstone outcrops descending into rocky meadows and streams made Nachusa Grasslands difficult to farm and saved large pieces of native prairie from the plow. Nachusa's rolling landscape is a mosaic of eleven different natural community types including dry prairie, tallgrass prairie, bur oak savanna, sand savanna, fen, sedge meadow, and stream side marsh. Scattered like a broken string of pearls among old fields, these high quality natural areas provide a unique opportunity to restore Illinois' original landscape on a large scale.

Stewardship: Much of the ecological restoration work at Nachusa is accomplished with the help of a group of volunteers who participate in many activities. We gather rare prairie and savanna seed and sow it into degraded areas, monitor breeding bird populations, and conduct prescribed burns.

Hiking the preserve: Nachusa Grasslands is open to the public for hiking and bird-watching. The grasslands are in bloom from April through October, but the ruddy color of little bluestem grass in winter makes Nachusa's rolling landscape

beautiful year round. Volunteers at Nachusa conduct periodic tours, bird walks, and other special events, like our Autumn on the Prairie festival, September 20.

Natural Quality: Upland sandpipers migrate all the way from the Pampas of Argentina to nest at Nachusa Grasslands. Grasshopper sparrows, dickcissels and Henslow's sparrows can be seen perched in the colorful prairie grasses. Badgers and other "Prairie State" wildlife that need a lot of space abound at Nachusa Grasslands. One of the world's largest populations of federally threatened prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) is here. Several federally rare species reside here: fameflower, kittentails, forked aster, Hill's thistle, Blanding's turtle. Many other plants and animals that are rare in Illinois survive at Nachusa such as downy yellow painted cup and the western hognose snake.

Nachusa Grasslands gives us the rare chance to protect a place where our grandchildren's children will be able to stand on a grassy knoll and look out into the distance across a living landscape that is their heritage.

Nachusa Happenings

by Bill Kleiman

This summer the crew and volunteer stewards were pulling together to manage against a few weed species that we want to keep from damaging our restoration work. Daily crews were out for three months searching for weeds and either spraying, mowing or pulling the plants. As of mid-August success seems good, but the weed work will continue for years.

Now we are well into our seed harvest season and on many days people are seen with seed bags strapped to their waist and a scissors in hand. So far we have harvested many sedges, June grass, blue-eyed grass, wild indigo, porcupine grass, hoary puccoon, shooting stars and others.

The seeds are either planted the same week or dried and saved for later planting. The loft of the barn slowly begins to fill again with paper bags marked with plant names like *Bouteloua curtipendula*, *Hypoxis hirsuta*, bastard toad-flax, bur oak, and rattlesnake master.

A three year study of grasslands birds has been completed by the Illinois Natural History Survey. A report will be out in the spring. Various preparations are occurring for the fall prescribed burn season. Nachusa will host the national TNC fire school in March. A new kiosk is in the works that will offer more space for bulletin boards and two small benches to sit on under a roof. A donor recognition rock is in place and a plaque will be mounted to it in time for Autumn on the Prairie, September 20. We are about to begin restoring a wetland in the Schafer unit. Field drainage tiles will be dug up and a drainage ditch disabled.

Wish list

- Sponsors for next year's summer technicians. \$4000 will hire an enthusiastic and smart person for three months.
- Seed monies for purchase of seed for restorations.
- Tables: for Autumn on the Prairie - eight foot long and about 30" wide.
- Foldable steel chairs.
- Used cars for trade in.

Thanks to supporters

- Mike Adolph was recognized by the Volunteer Stewardship Network for his many significant contributions Nachusa over the years: Unit Steward, Butterfly Monitor, Plant Database Creator, Prescribed Burn Crew, Autumn on the Prairie chairman...
- Crest Foods of Ashton for funding our new Nachusa Youth Stewardship program.
- Gene St. Louis - various tools and hardware
- Mike Adolph - refrigerator for intern housing
- Mayo "Hook" Larson - full size pickup in very good shape. We love it and Hook!

New book out

The Tallgrass Restoration Handbook, edited by our own Steve Packard and Cornelia Mutel. Available from Island Press. ISBN 1-55963-320-4. \$25.00 Call 1-800-828-1302. On sale at Autumn on the Prairie.

Youth Stewardship Program

by Susan Kleiman

This Autumn, Nachusa Grasslands is piloting an educational program to connect local 4th, 5th, or 6th grade students with stewardship and restoration of our natural communities. The program will start with two to four classes in the '97-'98 school year. This Youth Stewardship Program is being developed by volunteers and staff of Nachusa Grasslands and will be supported by a generous grant from Crest Foods of Ashton, IL.

The program will have students participating in stewardship and learning activities at Nachusa Grasslands on two seasonal visits (Autumn and Spring) as well as doing several learning activities in the classroom before and after the visits. On the visits the students will be lead by volunteer leaders in small groups of 5-6. They will harvest seed, take measurements and make sketches to compare various habitats at Nachusa (prairie, wetland, and woodland). They will also explore and search for the plants they have "interviewed" in the classroom, adding first-hand knowledge to what they've

researched. During winter the students will sort the seeds from the seed heads and store the seeds appropriately some dry and some moist and cool. In the Spring they will plant the seeds in the habitat to which they are suited. Also they will see in the field some of the birds they will learn about in the classroom and visit the earliest flowers. Other classroom activities will include reading from pioneer journals and reading about other children and people working to steward the land in other parts of the state and country. Finally, we will invite students and their families to Nachusa Grasslands for a Summer celebration to see the land in its rich abundance.

This program will allow local young people to explore and get to know this part of their natural heritage and to feel that they've contributed meaningful service to their community through stewardship.

If you would like to be a volunteer leader (5-12 mornings per year commitment) call Susan Kleiman at Nachusa Grasslands (815) 456-2340.

👉 WE WANT YOU! 👈

Volunteer Stewardship is needed. The majority of the stewardship at Nachusa is done by volunteers. Join us for a workday. Contact the preserve at 815-456-2340.

- **Unit Stewardship:** Join one of our stewardship teams that are working on specific areas of the preserve, or come to any of the workdays on the calendar. During the fall we are hand harvesting many different seeds to use in our habitat restorations.
- **Nachusa Youth Leadership Aids:** Lead small groups of middle school students on hands on stewardship education at the preserve. Training and materials provided.
- **Roadside Steward:** Care for the four miles of roadsides

we have. Includes some litter pick up, weed management, wildflower seeding, care of bluebird boxes, and updating information in the new kiosk.

- **Rare Plant Stewards:** Locate, count and propagate occurrences of rare plants on the preserve and follow their progress over time.
- **We also need people** for helping with our newsletter, producing a video, producing a slide show, and creating various artworks.
- **Weekday Stewardship:** Join our weekday stewards as we perform all sorts of tasks around the preserve. You can come out once or twice a week, or once or twice a month.

NACHUSA GRASSLANDS STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR FOR 1997

September

- 13 Sat: 9:30 - Volunteer potluck gathering and AOTP last minute work
- 20 Sat: AUTUMN ON THE PRAIRIE
- 27 Sat: Main unit with Mike Adolph
- 28 Sun: Doug & Dot unit with Gene St. Louis

October

- 4 Sat: West Heinkel unit with Jay Stacy
- 11 Sat: Shafer unit with David Edelbach
- 18 Sat: Main unit with Mike Adolph and East Heinkel unit with Mike Crowe
- 19 Sun: Doug & Dot unit with Gene St. Louis
- 25 Sat: Rolling thunder unit, seed collecting on Make A Difference Day with Sally Baumgardner. Or Kittentail unit with West Chicago Prairie Stewards, all welcome.
- 26 Sun: 11:00 - Prescribed Burning workshop with Bill Kleiman

November

- 8 Sat: 9:30 - Volunteer potluck gathering
- 9 Sun: Shafer unit with David Edelbach
- 15 Sat: Doug & Dot unit with Gene St. Louis
- 22 Sat: Stone Soup seed processing party. All are welcome.

December

- Prairie Smoke mailed this week.
- 6 Sat: Doug & Dot unit with Gene St. Louis
 - 13 Sat: Schafer unit with David Edelbach

We have an ongoing volunteer crew on Monday and Wednesday mornings. Call Bill Kleiman for details.

All workdays and events start at 9:30 and end at 1:30 unless stated otherwise. Feel free to bring a lunch or snack.

Workgroups meet at the Steward's Barn at 2055 Lowden, and field trips leave from the main entrance on Lowden. Extreme weather conditions will sometimes cause a steward to cancel a workday. We have on-going stewardship crews all week long during the summer and Monday and Wednesday mornings throughout the year. Call Bill Kleiman for details.

NACHUSA GRASSLANDS UNIT STEWARDS

STEWARDS

COSTEWARDS

Jay Meiners Wetland Unit

Jeff Meiners

Steve Meiners

Fen Unit

Kevin Kaltenbach

Todd Bittner

Big Woods Unit

Earl Thomas

Jim Lahman

Dot & Doug Unit

Gene St. Louis

Rolling Thunder Unit

Sally Baumgardner

Max Baumgardner

Main Unit

Mike Adolph

Bob Shone

East Heinkel Unit

Mike Crowe

West Heinkel Unit

Jay Stacy

Gene Miller, Ron Ingram

Clearcreek Unit

Prairie Preservation Society
of Ogle County

Mary Blackmore
Terri Clark

Kittentail Unit

West Chicago
Prairie Stewards

Mel Hoff

Schafer Unit

David Edelbach

Gerald McDermott

Science Stewards:

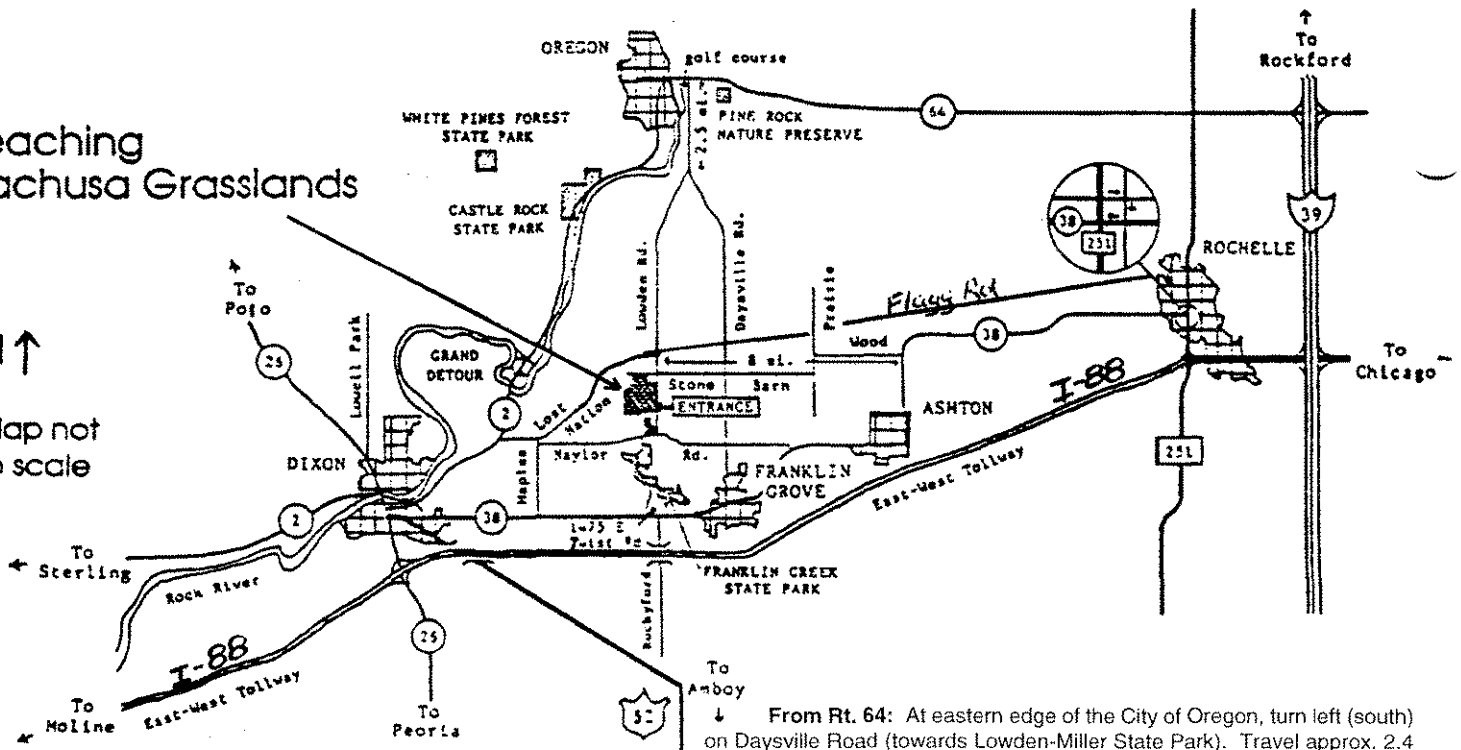
Butterfly Monitoring
Bird Monitoring
Project Ecologist

Mike Adolph
Ann Haverstock
Dennis Lubbs

Editor-Publisher Laura Busch
Associate Editor Dot Wade
Associate Editor Bill Kleiman
Associate Editor Thelma Dahlberg
Manager of Mailing Ellen Baker

Reaching Nachusa Grasslands

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Map not to scale



From I-88 (East-West Tollway): Option 1: Exit at Rt. 251 North (Rochelle), to Rt. 38 West. Travel through Ashton and into Franklin Grove, (approx. 16.5 miles), turn right (north) at Daysville Road (sign: "Franklin Creek State Park"). Travel 1.5 miles north to Naylor Road, turn left (west). Then follow the signs leading to the Grasslands. Option 2: Exit at Rt. 251 North (Rochelle), past Rt. 38 to Flagg Road, (sign: "Flagg Center 3 miles"). Travel approx. 14.8 miles to 4-way stop sign at Lowden Road, turn left (south). Approx. 2 miles down the road on the west side of the road will be the Grasslands.

From Rt. 64: At eastern edge of the City of Oregon, turn left (south) on Daysville Road (towards Lowden-Miller State Park). Travel approx. 2.4 miles to Lowden Road, turn right, (still following State Park sign). Travel south approx. 5.3 miles (past the State Park) to a 4-way stop at Flagg Road. Continue south another 2 miles, the Grasslands will be on the righthand (west) side of the road.

From Dixon: Option 1: Take Rt. 38 eastbound into Franklin Grove, turn left (north) on Daysville Road (sign: Franklin Creek State Park). Travel 1.5 miles north to Naylor Road, turn left (west). Then follow the signs leading to the Grasslands. Option 2: Take Rt. 2 north out of Dixon, approx. 2 miles, turn right on Lost Nation Road. Go one mile to Maples Road, turn right, then left almost immediately and follow the signs to the Grasslands.



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

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