

PRAIRIE SMOKE

Newsletter of Nachusa Grasslands

Issue 38



January 2001

A LOVE STORY



By Barb Baker, Volunteer Steward,
Coneflower Unit

City life, busy life, obligations and responsibilities...baby boomer, single mother of two with a bad case of empty nest syndrome...sound familiar?

I began visiting Nachusa Grasslands over two years ago, searching for an open, quiet place to rest and contemplate my life, where I've been, where I'm going, and where I'd like to go. As I explored the preserve binoculars in tow in those first summer months, I began to find my mind was more and more occupied with identifying the beautiful grasses and flowers and less and less with the stress that I was running from. As I stood on the outcroppings of St. Peter Sandstone, looking out on the landscape, I felt a sense of calm. I had a feeling that it makes sense for all of us to retreat from our hectic concrete world into our past, our native beginnings, to strive to become closer to the natural world for our own sake.

I soon met the wonderful people of Nachusa Grasslands; the managers, the volunteers, the teachers, the philosophers and the professionals. Varied and sundry are these lovers of nature who, unselfishly giving of their time and talent, took an eager amateur new volunteer on exciting, memorable field trips. Each one spouting scientific names of grasses, flowers and wildlife to my amazement and delight!

Much to my surprise, I began to recognize and name some of the grasses, flowers and wildlife. Now, two years later, I can name many more, perhaps even give the scientific name! I can even identify the "ch-chit" sound of the endangered Henslow's sparrow nesting just beyond my Coneflower Knob. Walking the small area of which I am steward I found to my utter joy; there are kitten tails (*Wulfenia bullii*) and delicate golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*).

I have planted native prairie seeds and seen their first delicate leaf sprouts. I have sat on my "coffee rock" watching the sunset as a northern harrier glides low over the waving grasses. I have sweated and itched

A Love Story *Cont'd on page 2*

STEWARDSHIP HAPPENINGS

By Bill Kleiman, January 4, 2001

This November we dedicated two new additions to the preserve. The 65-acre **Thelma Carpenter Prairie** is approximately half cultivated ground and half beautiful, high-quality, rolling prairie with St. Peter Sandstone outcrops, and plants from *Amorpha canescens* to *Zizia aptera* (a new species for the preserve's plant list). The prairie had not been plowed due to its steep rolling topography. It was isolated somewhat by ownership and had not been too heavily grazed. Over the past decades small trees have encroached on the sun loving prairie. Some large multiflora rose bushes make for careful hiking. Tom Mitchell will be Steward of this new unit, with Kevin Kaltenbach helping him out.



Dedication of the Thelma Carpenter Prairie

The second tract we named the **Harold Walkup Prairie**. This 36-acre tract was purchased from neighbor and friends Sally and Max Baumgardner. Several years ago, they donated a conservation easement to the preserve and this time sold adjacent land to the Conservancy. The tract contains former cultivated ground that is now planted to prairie, a small pine plantation, and a few sand prairie remnants on gently rolling ground. Dot Wade recalls the knob, along Stone Barn Road, had very nice prairie species that her husband Doug and his students would visit.

In November, forty friends gathered, on a cold but nice day, to dedicate these two new tracts. Dot Wade and

Stewardship Happenings *Cont'd on page 2*

A Love Story *Cont'd from page 1*

pulling Queen Anne's lace out of my tallgrass in the company of resident meadowlarks and bobwhites. I have had the awesome privilege of finding, and admiring, the rare *Talinum rugospermum* (fame flower) growing on a sandy blow-out near my newly named Singing Bird Knob. I have been privileged to walk on a piece of true remnant prairie of which there is less than 1% remaining in its natural state, in this country!

Over two years have passed...I continue to delight in Nachusa Grasslands and all it stands for, its people, its peace, its contribution and importance to everything living. Come to Nachusa, walk its lengths and go deliciously astray into its oaks and savannas, its fens and prairies. Enjoy its diverse beauty, its rarity, feel its peace. Come to volunteer and care for it, or just to appreciate it, but come!...fall in love!

Stewardship Happenings *Cont'd from page 1*

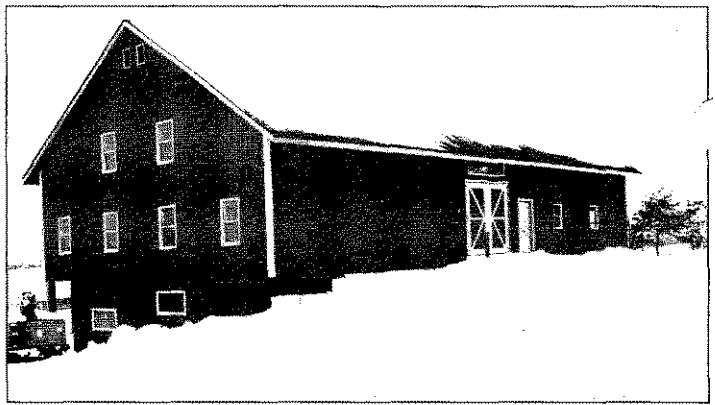
Keith Blackmore reminisced about Thelma Carpenter, a librarian in nearby Oregon who loved native plants. She would wander the countryside with friends looking for remaining prairies. She left one of the largest donations to the preserve. Not too long before Thelma passed away, she was walking on the then new "Clear Creek Unit" when she noticed the prairie hills to the south. She remarked how that would be a good piece of land to include in the preserve; that land now bears her name and is a protected home for more of our native plants and animals. (See previous article on Ms. Carpenter in issue 26.)

Clarence Mitchell spoke of his life long friendship with Harold Walkup. Harold, an Ogle County resident of 98 years, donated a generous part of his estate to Nachusa Grasslands. He worked for Kable Printing for five decades. He built and lived in his own cabin in Rockvale Township until very late in his life. Harold was most comfortable living simply, surrounded by nature. (See previous articles about Mr. Walkup in issues 31 & 34.)

Seed Harvest:

Jay Stacy, fellow Stewards, and friends finished off an amazing seed harvest. From the early bird's foot violets that bloomed after a spring burn at Hook Larson Prairie to the frost laden aromatic aster at Thelma Carpenter Prairie - they harvested an Ark of seed. I don't think we can get Jay to catalog the weights of all this harvest but, I think they may have a Guinness record for diversity and abundance. Thanks Jay for the harvest and for inspiring and mentoring others.

Shannon Neuendorf worked for the Prairie Preservation Society of Ogle County and harvested a bundle of seed this summer for the Clear Creek Unit.



Headquarters Barn:

**GRAND OPENING, Saturday, May 19, 2001;
10:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Tours, Potluck and Barn Dance.**

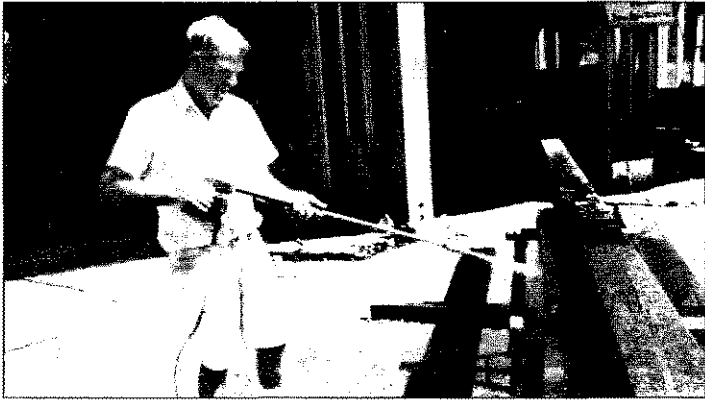
We have the building enclosed, the siding and roof on, windows and doors installed. The lower level shop is up and running with lights and wiring done, the donated Raynor garage doors on, and heat keeping the area above freezing. Woopee. We built lots of work benches, and shelves and have the equipment organized and accessible - no more rummaging around. On the second level we have installed the original flooring in the main bay and laid a rough grade pine flooring on the remainder of the deck. The partition walls are just about finished for the gathering area, office and bathroom. We are on track for finishing this spring; the entire building taking twelve months to do. Come on out and help us finish.



Mike Adolph chiseling a mortise joint.

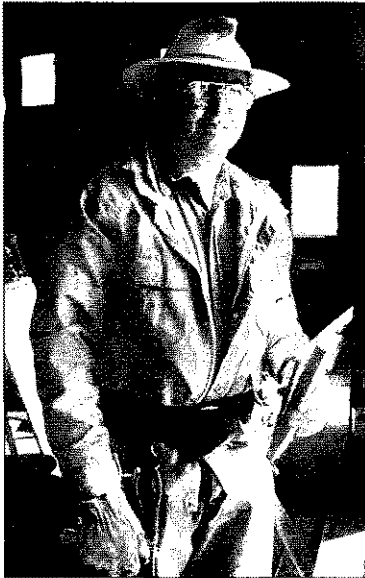
There has been quite an effort and we have many people to thank. Ted Filzen, a retired Air Force Major who is very handy, volunteered full time with us for three months and really gave us a boost. Ted helped insulate the exterior walls, built work benches, hung shelves, sheathed walls, and built the second level main-bay doors. Eric Brubaker, an engineer who loves to build, has added his wit and gusto to the barn, from assembling the huge deck beams, when the building was just a skeleton, to installing the windows, doors and flooring. We have kept summer hire, Mike Hansen, on

Stewardship Happenings *Cont'd on page 3*



Ron Ingraham power washing timbers.

through the fall and winter. Mike has been carefully taking our barn to completion with his energetic, yet easy going manner. Howard Fox, geriatric superman, pulled everyone along, kept the building plum and level and had many a young man commenting that they want to be like Howard in their 80's. Mike Adolph has been out a lot adding his labors and character to the building. We have a new verb, to "Adolph it," is to save resources by using small scraps of materials to fill in large spaces.



Ted Filzen



Shannon Neuendorf

Mike Hansen



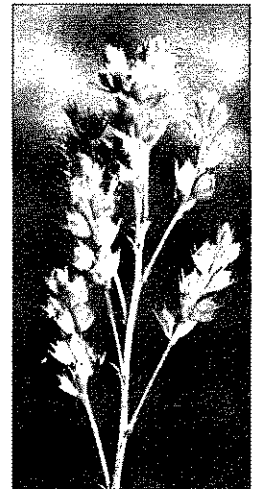
DONATIONS TO THE BARN

Frank & Jarosana Ptacek
Drs. Frank & Phyllis Orland
Bob & Sherry Piros
Jim & Anne Grove
Barbara & John Rutherford
Barbara & David Holke
Betty J. Leeson
Anne & Norman Meyer
Biology Department, Kishwaukee College
Vicke & Paul Schranz in honor of Don Homer

THANK YOU!!

Science:

Grazing Study: Prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) is a Federally threatened plant species that occurs in high-quality remnant dry prairie sites scattered throughout the preserve. There is a concern about the pattern of population numbers. After the release from heavy grazing following land purchases at the preserve, numbers of individual plants soared and then steadily declined for 10 years. Others watching this Mid-Western endemic plant believe that light to moderate grazing may benefit this species. We have established plots in which we will study the role that light grazing may play in promoting optimal conditions for the growth of this species. We will be using a few cattle provided by neighboring farmers. Todd Bittner, our local Heritage Biologist, and staff from the Chicago Botanic Gardens are establishing the plots and collecting the data.



Vegetation Study: Monitoring was begun this summer by U of I graduate student, Chris Hauser.

Science *Cont'd on page 4*

Science *Cont'd from page 3*

Many years of restoration at Nachusa Grasslands have produced changes in vegetation. The study is funded by The Nature Conservancy's Rodney Johnson & Katherine Ordway Stewardship Endowment. The purpose of the study is to develop both standard techniques and a rapid assessment protocol for evaluating the quality of restored plant communities over time.

Soil Study: A three-year grant from ComEd is funding a study (being conducted by NIU professor Mike Konen) to evaluate the effects of prairie restoration on soil carbon sequestration. We are using the Hook Larson Prairie Unit in this study.

Air Pollution Study: Ed Jepsen of the Wisconsin DNR is investigating the impacts of changes in ozone levels on milkweed populations. Nachusa Grasslands was chosen as one of the sites for this study and the common milkweed was chosen as a focal species because it develops characteristic spots on its leaves when exposed to ozone. This study has just begun this year and is expected to span several years to detect changes in the plants correlated with changes in ozone levels.

Various science studies will continue, including the excellent grassland breeding bird monitoring by Ann Haverstock, going on 11 years now. We need volunteers who would like to use a special time-lapse video camera to study grassland bird nesting success. We also need other monitoring volunteers.

Upcoming Stewardship:

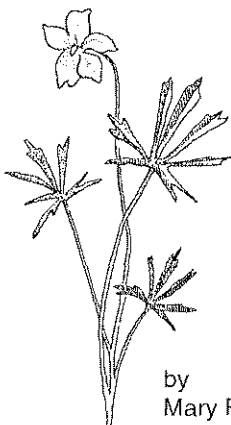
We have obtained a C2000 habitat grant (Illinois DNR) to create prairie pothole wetlands in the degraded areas at Meiners Wetlands and Bluestem Bottoms. This work will be done in late summer 2001.

We have obtained funding from Commonwealth Edison's new foundation that will purchase local seed for planting more prairie at various units on the preserve.

Many volunteers will be thinning brush this winter at the Eight Oaks Savanna, Picnic Hill on the Harold Walkup Prairie and other areas. We have stewardship occurring every weekday. Join us if you like to work outside.

We will be bringing in a large harvest of seed this growing season to plant many acres next winter and we need volunteer seed harvesters.

Bird's
Foot
Violet



by
Mary Phelan

THANK YOU

Gerald McDermott for guiding the design and coordinating the order of the 2000 Nachusa Grasslands mug and t-shirt.

Denis Kania for artwork (We have featured three of Denis' bird drawings on our mugs.)

Howard Fox for making two beautiful wood signs for the new Thelma Carpenter Prairie and Harold Walkup Prairie.

Dwight Heckert for creating the herbarium (337 species so far!) and for picking up and installing the new printer.

Mike Crowe for donation of a metal storage cabinet.

Katie & Rich Beilfuss for donation of a special shelf to hold our training videos.

Jenny Mitchell for procuring a laminator.

Dean Weidman for getting a matching donation from his employer for his volunteer hours here.

"The valley of the Rock river, if indeed the high rolling prairie on either side can be called a valley, in fertility and beauty of prairie land, is perhaps unequalled in the West. The river itself—swift flowing, broad, clear as crystal—affords one of the most magnificent water powers in the world."

A portion of a tribute written by James Shaw for Volume V of the Geological Survey of Illinois (1873).

Wish List

- Help with the new Preserve Headquarters Barn. Looking for anyone who can hammer, drill, paint or do electrical.
- Volunteers needed for Saturday and Sunday stewardship workdays. We have ambitious stewards who need help. See calendar.
- Propagation Garden Steward needed - for our new gardens starting this spring.
- Volunteer needed to help maintain equipment - once a week for a few hours.
- Research Projects (graduate research opportunities!)
- Donate your old vehicle for trade-in (1990 or newer) towards a 4-wheel drive truck.



ANNUAL SKUNK CABBAGE TOUR

By Tim Keller

As winter is gradually loosening its grip upon the land, the state's earliest blooming plant, skunk cabbage *Symplocarpus foetidus*, is emerging. The skunk cabbage flower holds the unique distinction of being the first to bloom, sometimes under a blanket of snow. It blooms a week or two before its drier upland neighbor, the pasque flower *Anemone patens*. Upon seeing either of these hardy plants blooming one can be reassured that nature's cycle of life is intact.

The skunk cabbage prefers to grow in marshy, high-organic soils near slow moving streams like Wade Creek. In pastured bottomlands I've noticed livestock graze right up to the plant, but do not eat the plant itself. Apparently animals don't care for the smell of the appropriately-named skunk cabbage! The plant develops a fleshy hood (spathe) that pushes up through its frosty surroundings. Inside the hood is a flower part called the spadix. Flies are attracted to the smelly pollen as it sheds.

Officially skunk cabbage is known in 24 counties, mostly in Northwest Illinois. Whiteside County can now be added to the list. A chance conversation with a neighbor led me to discover a new location. This passing comment spiked my curiosity: "Something smells dead down by the creek." Upon investigation of the site I found several skunk cabbages, as well as a colony of marsh marigolds, in full bloom. These plants have been growing, discreetly, within two miles of where I grew up north of Sterling!

For more than ten years I have had the privilege of leading a field trip to witness this early arrival at Nachusa Grasslands. The preserve is fortunate to have healthy populations that can be seen by those hardy souls who wish to venture out in the late winter/early spring. In the past, when Nachusa Grasslands was under the firm grip of the dreadful multiflora rose, the skunk cabbage site was difficult to reach without ripping one's clothing. Thanks to dedicated volunteers using loppers, mowers and controlled burns, this invasive non-native brush has retreated. Today the skunk cabbage area is a friendlier place to visit.

The field trip takes place this year on Sat., April 7, from 2-5. Over the years the weather has cooperated. So, come join us!

Thank You

The following people and businesses have donated to the new Nachusa Grasslands Preserve Headquarters Barn:

RAYNOR GARAGE DOORS - For 4 overhead doors. Raynor supports community projects and this donation has helped us stay on budget.

Tom Yater for loan of his power scaffold for several months, coming by every week to maintain it.

Macklin Brothers for gravel for parking lot and building skirt.

Jeff Meiners and Illinois Material Handling for heavy-duty, hand pallet cart.

Crest Foods for supporting Garret Meiners for two months of internship at the preserve last summer.

Ray Voss for excavation services.

Bob Neuendorf for lots of insulation.

Nancy Winter for antique oak floor boards.

Mike & Connie Adolph for microwave oven and coffee maker.

Mark & Marilyn Ruby for kitchen cabinets.

John Nicholson for paint and obtaining paving bricks.

The Natural Land Institute for paving bricks.

Paul Harmon, and the bow hunters for loading, hauling, stacking and laying said bricks.

Todd Tucker for transplanting oaks to landscape around the new barn.

Robert Hardesty for crane services.

Willard Simpson for antique lumber and lightening rods and tractor work.

Todd Tucker and the Maintenance and Restoration Crews from the Byron Forest Preserve District for installing loft floor joists.

Prairie Smoke, Issue 38, January 2001

EditorSusan Kleiman
Associate EditorGerald McDermott
Additional editingThelma Dahlberg,
Bill Kleiman, Dot Wade, Jay Stacy
Mailing ManagerEllen Baker
Mailing List ManagerChris Pfoutz
(Crest Foods, Inc.)

Melvern C. Hoff

1921 - 2001

Natural area stewardship has lost one of its finest. January 23, Mel died suddenly of heart failure, on a beautiful sunny day, just after he began to ski a cross-country trail with a friend. Mel was 79 years old. He was a retired chemist holding 25 patents for chemical processes. Mel dedicated himself to the efforts of the West Chicago Prairie Stewards during the past 20 years. For ten of those years, he and his fellow Prairie Stewards have managed Nachusa's Kittentail Unit. Mel was organized, thorough, efficient, and a steward who could identify nearly every plant and animal in his path. Mel invented numerous tools and techniques for restoration work. He generously shared his knowledge and experience at conferences and during tours. He was a frequent advisor and a good friend to all at Nachusa Grasslands. His good cheer and enthusiasm will be sorely missed. Mel is survived by his wife Jean and three children.

THANK YOU!

To the following people who have put in volunteer hours on the Preserve Headquarters Barn since the last newsletter:

Ted Filzen
Mike Adolph
Eric and Sandy Brubaker
Ron Ingraham
Shannon Neuendorf
Howard Fox
David Edelbach
Jason Johnson
Ray Derksen
John Schmadeke
Jay Stacy
Bob Shone
Chris Hauser
Don Homer
Terry Day
Bill Web
Wes Herwig
Gerald McDermott
David Breen
Jim Grove
Bob and Sherry Piros

NACHUSA GRASSLANDS UNIT STEWARDS

STEWARDS

Clear Creek Unit

Prairie Preservation Society
of Ogle County

Coneflower Unit East

Barbara Baker

Dot & Doug Unit

Gene St. Louis

Eight Oak Savanna

Jan Grainger

East Heinkel Unit

Mike Crowe

Fen Unit

Kevin Kaltenbach

Hook Larson Prairie Unit

Dave Breen

Kittentail Unit

West Chicago
Prairie Stewards

Main Unit

Mike Adolph

Roadsides & West Meiners

Uplands & Thelma Carpenter Prairie

Tom Mitchell

Rolling Thunder Unit

Sally Baumgardner

Schafer Unit

David Edelbach

West Heinkel Unit

Jay Stacy

Science Stewards:

Bird Monitoring
Butterfly Monitoring
Herbarium Steward

Outreach Volunteers:

Publicist/Educator
Youth Stewards Leaders

CO-STEWARDS

Mary Blackmore
Terri Clarke

Barb Regan

Todd Bittner

Jay Friberg

Bob Shone

Jenny Mitchell

Max Baumgardner
Sally Bowers

Gerald McDermott

Gene Miller,
Ron Ingraham
Don Homer

Ann Haverstock
Jan Grainger
Dwight Heckert

Sally Baumgardner
Howard Fox
Hazel Reuter
Ron Ingraham
Mike Adolph
Sally Baumgardner
Sally Bowers
Barb Rutherford

CALENDAR FOR STEWARDSHIP WORKDAYS 2001

February

- 17 Sat. Dot & Doug Unit Brush Bash and Dinner
- 24 Sat. Hook Larson Prairie Unit
- 25 Sun. Schafer Unit

March

- 3 Sat. Dot & Doug Wade Unit
- 4 Fen Unit
- 7 Volunteer Recruitment Hike (9:00 a.m.)
- 10 Sat. **Northern Illinois Prairie Workshop** (7am-5pm)
College of DuPage-Register by March 2 (630/942-3948)
Cost \$40 - Car pools forming - call the Preserve
- 17 Sat. East Heinkel Unit
- 18 Sun. Schafer Unit
- 24 Sat. Coneflower Unit (8:00 am to Noon)
POTLUCK GATHERING - Hike with Ed Collins in p.m.
- 31 Sat. Rolling Thunder Unit

April

- 7 Sat. Eight Oaks Savanna Unit and **ANNUAL SPRING SKUNK CABBAGE TOUR** with Tim Keller at 2 pm.
This is a moderate hike to search for spring wildflowers.
- 14 Sat. Rolling Thunder Prairie Unit
- 21 Sat. Roadsides
- 28 Sat. Schafer Unit
- 29 Sun. Hook Larson Prairie Unit

May

- 5 Sat. West Heinkel Unit (Annual Garlic Mustard Pull!)
- 6 Sun. Dot & Doug Wade Unit
- 12 Sat. East Heinkel
- 19 Sat. **GRAND OPENING FOR THE PRESERVE HEADQUARTERS BARN - 10:30 am - 4:00 pm**
- 26 Sat. Schafer Unit

June

- 2 Sat. Thelma Carpenter Prairie Unit
- 9 Sat. Eight Oaks Savanna Unit
- 16 Sat. Coneflower Unit (8:00 AM - Noon)
- 23 Sat. Dot & Doug Wade Unit
- 24 Sun. Schafer Unit
- 30 Sat. East Heinkel Unit

July

- 7 Sat. Dot & Doug Wade Unit
- 8 Sun. Clear Creek Unit (starting at 8:30 am)
- 14 Sat. **ANNUAL ICE CREAM SOCIAL & POTLUCK (5:30 PM to Dark)**
- 15 Sun. East Heinkel Unit
- 21 Sat. Rolling Thunder Unit
- 28 Sat. Schafer Unit and
Clear Creek Unit (starting at 8:30 am)

August

- 4 Sat. Main Unit
- 11 Sat. Roadsides
- 18 Sat. Thelma Carpenter Prairie Unit
- 25 Sat. Coneflower Unit (8:00 am - Noon)
- 26 Sun. Schafer Unit

September

- 1 Sat. Dot & Doug Wade Unit
- 2 Sun. Main Unit
- 8 Sat. **POTLUCK GATHERING** and AOTP prep.
- 15 Sat. **AUTUMN ON THE PRAIRIE (10 AM - 5 PM)**
- 22 Sat. West Heinkel Unit
- 23 Sun. Hook Larson Prairie Unit
- 29 Sat. Schafer Unit

October

- 6 Sat. Coneflower Unit (8:00 am - Noon)
- 7 Sun. East Heinkel Unit
- 13 Sat. Main Unit
- 14 Sun. West Heinkel Unit
- 20 Sat. Kittentail Unit
- 27 Sat. Rolling Thunder Prairie Unit
(National Make A Difference Day)
- 28 Sat. Schafer Unit

November

- 3 Sat. Dot & Doug Wade Unit
- 10 Sat. **ANNUAL "STONE SOUP" SEED PROCESSING PARTY and POTLUCK GATHERING (9:00 am - 3 pm)**
- 11 Sun. Hook Larson Prairie Unit
- 17 Sat. Roadsides
- 18 Sun. East Heinkel Unit
- 24 Sat. Schafer Unit

December

- 1 Sat. Fen Unit
- 8 Sat. Main Unit
- 15 Sat. Eight Oaks Savanna Unit
- 16 Sun. Schafer Unit

January 2002

- 5 Sat. Thelma Carpenter Prairie Unit
- 12 Sat. **POTLUCK GATHERING**
- 19 Sat. Hook Larson Prairie Unit
- 20 Sun. Dot & Doug Wade Unit
- 26 Sat. Schafer Unit

STEWARDSHIP WEEKEND WORKDAYS mainly involve brush clearing in the winter, weed removal in the spring and summer, and seed collecting in the summer and autumn. Often there is a hike afterwards. All workdays and events start at 9:00 and end about 1:00 unless otherwise noted. Bring a lunch and work gloves. Meet at the NEW Preserve Headquarters Barn at 8774 Lowden Rd. Extreme weather conditions will sometimes cause a steward to cancel a workday.

POTLUCK GATHERINGS also start at 9:00 with a time for learning or hiking together. Food is then shared at noon.

We also have on-going **STEWARDSHIP DURING THE WEEK** throughout the year. Call Bill or Susan Kleiman at the preserve (815) 456-2340.

GRAND OPENING FOR THE NEW PRESERVE HEADQUARTERS BARN

Saturday, May 19, 2001 • 10:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

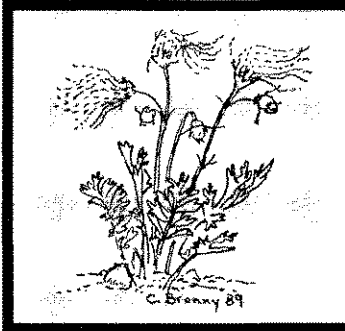
Everybody Welcome

10:30 - 12:30 — Tours of the Barn and the Preserve

11:00 — Ribbon Cutting and Unveiling of
Recognition Wall

12:30 - 2:00 — Potluck Dinner

2:00 - 4:00 — Barn Dance



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By Barb Baker, Volunteer Steward,
Coneflower Unit

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I soon met the wonderful people of Nachusa Grasslands; the managers, the volunteers, the teachers, the philosophers and the professionals. Varied and sundry are these lovers of nature who, unselfishly giving of their time and talent, took an eager amateur new volunteer on exciting, memorable field trips. Each one spouting scientific names of grasses, flowers and wildlife to my amazement and delight!

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