

Nachusa at 20

By Bill Kleiman

Nachusa Grasslands turned 20 years old this last year! What started as a bold vision has become real. One day, sometime in the decade of the 1970s, a whistling call of the upland sandpiper made prairie enthusiasts Dot and Doug Wade pull their car over to have a look in those pastures we now call Nachusa Grasslands. They saw heavily grazed pasture but the plants being grazed were prairie. As they got to know the landscape they found seeps, springs, sedge meadows, a fen, and oak savannas. The Wades eventually met up with Tim Keller of Sterling and together they pitched the wonders of what is now Nachusa Grasslands. During the same decade, the ecologists of the Illinois Natural Area Inventory carefully described and mapped several of those same remnants.

The Conservancy's 1985 Board of Trustees, chaired by Charlie Haffner, wanted to attempt something big, somewhere. In 1985 Conservancy staff Steve Packard and Paul Dye attended a large meeting of Illinois conservationists. The question of the day was: Should conservation put some of its resources into larger landscapes that were grade C in quality but had areas big enough for animals to prosper and ecological processes to function. Or should we work only on the smaller high quality sites? There was heated debate since there were no large-scale restorations to suggest a bigger site could be restored.

One area circled on the map that day that the participants could agree on for a potential project, was right here at Nachusa. Why here? Because there remained extensive prairies, woodlands and wetlands. The Conservancy staff returned back to their office with a mission.

In 1985, 850-acres, broken up into small tracts in the heart of what is now Nachusa Grasslands, were up for sale with roads named after prairie plants. The Illinois Department of Conservation was interested in the mapped sites of the Natural Areas Inventory. The legendary George Fell of the Natural Land Institute was helpful in a number of ways to

make the deals move forward. On August 26, 1986 the Conservancy purchased 130 acres.

An auction was scheduled for October 2, 1986. Conservancy staff were hustling to line up the organization to make the auction. Money was needed. George Fell and John Santucci, a new Conservancy trustee, wrote checks to secure a place at the auction. The bidding started and the Conservancy's Ralph Burnett remembers buying all the tracts that were available, 267 acres. We closed on those auction tracts on Dec. 17. As 1986 ended the Conservancy owned 397 acres and Nachusa Grasslands was started.

Twenty years later the project is still thriving, growing, and learning. Volunteers still contribute the biggest part of work done. Donors continue to empower us to protect and restore land. The people involved with this project over the years are

proud of what they started. Those working here today show that same pride and love of this landscape. In the next twenty years we will also have to work hard to make our visions real, but at this moment we pause to give thanks to those early friends that made this Nachusa Grasslands. To those who we can remember, thank you. We are sorry if we missed someone. Some of the early friends of Nachusa Grasslands: Mary Adams, Mike Adolph, Sally and Max Baumgardner, Ellen Baker, Rob Baller, Bob Betz, Keith and Mary Blackmore, Chris Bronny, Deb Carey, Thelma Carpenter, Ed Collins, Mike Crowe, Jennifer Delisle, Peter Dillon, Boh Dziadyk, George B. Fell, Ned Garst, Charlie Haffner, Fran Harty, Ann Haverstock, Clarence Heinkel, Charity Hilchen, Judy Hill, Mel Hoff,

Jim & Nancy Hotchkiss, Bob Inger, Carol Jackley, Isabel Johnston, Kevin Kaltenbach, Tim Keller, Dick Lovett, Dennis Lubbs, Withrow Meeker, Jeff Meiners, Steve Meiners, Gill Moreland, Cathy Motto, Randy Nyboer, Steve Packard, Ron Panzer, Jerry Paulson, Wendy Paulson, Bob Parenteau, Seth Low Pierrepont, Mary Phelan, Ed Pleskovitch, Al Pyott, Hazel Reuter, Jill Riddell, Julie Rocco, Bill Rogers, Cassandra Rogers, Laurel Ross, John Santucci, John Schwegmann, Esther Schippers, Gene St. Louis, Judy Snyder, Jennifer Vogelsang, Doug and Dot Wade, Jack White, Nancy Hamill Winter, Ted Wood.



May 26, 1987 - Dot Wade, Tim Keller and Steve Packard looking over Nachusa.

Celebrating 50 Years of Conservation in Illinois

Since its formation in 1957, The Nature Conservancy in Illinois has protected nearly 80,000 acres at more than 125 sites around the state. From the first acquisition at Volo Bog to the most recent Great Rivers Partnership, TNC in Illinois has remained a strong leader in conservation. Don't miss the 50 th Anniversary Celebration Gala Saturday, May 12, 2007 at the John G. Shedd Aquarium in Chicago.



Birdsfoot violets are a favorite of the Regal Fritillary butterfly.

Managers Notebook

By Bill Kleiman, Project Manager
Nathan Hill, Restoration Ecologist

Seed Harvest: Total seed collection was about 3,000 pounds of hand collected seed from over 200 species of plants. The crew hand collected 950 lbs from 187 species and the volunteer stewards again out-picked the crew with over 2000 pounds harvested. Congratulations all! Added to these weights, the combine harvested about 400 lbs of chaffy seed from the preserve.



Bill Kleiman on Dot's Knob.

Remember these are all bulk weights. We Don't clean our seed. Would you like to help us collect seed? We have volunteers who would likely mentor a new volunteer.



Nathan Hill at LaRue Swamp in Southern Illinois.

year; we have found hand scything works well when the plants are in late flower, but we have so many acres to cover, thus the need for another tractor.

Weed Work: This year Nate started a Global Positioning System experiment that he will use to pinpoint patches of the invasive weed king devil on the preserve. The map and GPS coordinates will help us locate and eradicate this weed over the next few seasons. Sweet clover was another big battle this



2006 Stewardship Crew (L-R): Cody, Nathan B., Austin, Katie, Nathan H., Kelly, Stephanie, Megan and Bill.

Fire: Our volunteer crew burned about 530 acres in nine burn units. We also helped Rochelle Park District do their first prescribed burn at their 200 acre Skare Park, located along Kyte Creek, which has a nice oak hickory woodland and a tussock sedge meadow. In March, The Conservancy and The Rock River Turkey Chapter hosted a prescribed fire training for 25 people.



Prescribed fire training participants work to put out a spot fire.

Plantings: The crew and stewards planted a total of 55 acres this year. 4 acres of savanna, 9 acres of wetland, and 42 acres of prairie. Many stewards have been over-seeding existing areas. For instance, Becky and Hank Hartman over-seeded 417 pounds from 152 species throughout the oak savanna and wetlands of their large unit.



Steve Packard spent a day in the field with our stewards and emphasized the value of over-seeding existing plantings.

Stewards Journal

West Heinkel Savanna

By Jay Stacy

Mary Scott and I began collecting seed late in April for a 6 acre planting on the new property (Clear Creek Knolls). When we finished in late November we had amassed 265.35 pounds (processed) of 148 species of forbs, sedges, and non-dominant grasses; and 5 pounds per acre of little bluestem, equals 49.22 pounds per acre.

I planted the bulk seed Thanksgiving week with the tractor seeder; I was not overly dazzled with the resulting distribution. It was not the equipments fault (the seeder is a high-quality instrument); my inexperience



Jay Stacy



Leah Kleiman and Jay Stacy.

with using it was the culprit. I constantly fiddled with the aperture and the result was more uneven and patchy than I wanted; I will know better next time.

I planted an entire polybag of one-veined and three-veined pussytoes fluff; Leah Rose Kleiman assisted in the collection of these two species. I have long maintained that the two pussytoes species are our most under used components; every remnant we have, prairie and savanna, is heavily laced with them. We will see what happens!

34.35 pounds of our seed total qualified as "special treatment". This included hundreds of bur oak acorns which Mary Scott planted one by one, hundreds of porcupine grass quills which we stuck in by hand, seeds of endangered species like prairie bush clover which we hand planted as onesies and a 20-something pound conservative seed cocktail (leadplant, dropseed, coreopsis, cream baptisia, goats rue, and puccoons etc.) which I "foot-smear" into the wet soils one dollop at a time.

Total man hours for the planting effort, not including collecting, processing, blending, and mixing (which is six months work) including burning the corn stubble, bulk

seed distribution, dragging, and "special treatment" planting: 76 hours.

We will survey seedlings next May and June. Any glaring distribution problems can be corrected with a vigorous and strategic second year overseed. In any case we will face our two or three year battle with the exotics. I am confident that when all is-said-and-done, it will be beautiful.

Big Woods

By Hank & Becky Hartman



Hank & Becky Hartman

The boundary between the Big Woods and Dot and Doug Wade Units is a natural drainage area running North - South. One swale from the northeast joins another coming from the northwest about one third of the way down the east boundary of Big Woods. The east fork comes in from Shabbona Savanna at point 18, the northeast corner of Big Woods. The triangle of land between the swales is higher and was greatly improved when the forestry mower worked in the area a few years ago. Sometime long ago, the drainage was deepened and straightened with small but noticeable spoil piles of dirt left on the sides of the resulting ditch.

Last spring, Bill bartered for the use of a small bulldozer and a very accomplished bulldozer operator. He scraped off the spoil piles and reshaped the ditches into a much more natural looking and gentler contour. A good side effect was that lots of the undesirable plants and brush were also scraped off. There were



Todd Bittner and Nathan Bremer count prairie bush clover plants.

north-south two-tracks parallel to the ditch area on both the east and west sides. We closed the west two-track to further improve the natural prairie view.

In April 2006 we broadcast 80 pounds of bulk seed over the area. We over seeded with another 60 pounds in December. So next year should definitely look better than this year's really thick stand of foxtail. There is still a lot of work to be done to remove the remaining Honeysuckle and Multiflora Rose in the triangle and there were new birdsfoot trefoil in the disturbed soil area. But the area is looking much better than in the past.

We are continuing to pour lots of time and herbicide into the overall birdsfoot trefoil problem. Many hours have been spent walking Big Woods spraying the pesky little yellow bloomers. Finally, after hundreds of gallons of diluted herbicide, we feel that we might be getting the upper hand, and that if we keep the pressure up for about five more years, there may be none of the nasty little suckers left.

Dot and Doug Wade Prairie

By Al Meier

During 2006, I was privileged to plant a new prairie, and, in the process, I gained an immeasurable amount of knowledge and experience thanks to the contributions of fellow Nachusa Grasslands volunteers and staff members.

In the spring of 2004, just a few months before I became steward of the Dot and Doug Wade Prairie, approximately 25 acres of my unit were returned to farmland. This area had originally been planted in 1994 with an insufficient quantity of prairie seeds, and from the beginning, the prairie restoration was plagued by non-native, invasive species. After nearly a decade, the decision was made to return this planting to cropland and try again at a later date to restore the area to prairie.

Therefore, I knew when I accepted the role of steward that eventually I would have the opportunity to do a prairie planting of my own. 2006 was the third year that this area had been planted in corn, so it was time to begin restoring this area to prairie. The question was whether or not I had acquired sufficient knowledge in my four years of volunteering at Nachusa to carry out my own planting - could I collect seeds from enough different species to produce a biologically diverse planting?



Al Meier



Al Meier planting 6 acres of prairie at Doug and Dot Wade Unit.

This spring as I was questioning whether I was ready to do my own planting, fellow steward, Jay Stacy, stepped forward and offered his assistance. And for the next six

months, Jay helped me find and collect dozens of species that were previously unknown to me.

Frequently I would join Jay and Mary Scott on Friday mornings. Jay would make sure that we would pick species that were new for me. Mary would collect along with us and also made sure that we had plenty of great snacks and coffee. It was always a thoroughly enjoyable time, and my knowledge of prairie species and restoration techniques increased dramatically.

In December, I completed my first prairie planting - 6 acres with 314 pounds of seed and 128 different species.

In addition to Jay Stacy and Mary Scott, many other people deserve a word of thanks. My wife, Mary, joined me in stewardship on numerous occasions and performed many of our Autumn-on-the-Prairie Co-Chair tasks. Barb Regan, my co-steward, also helped out on several occasions. Hank and Becky Hartman donated seed and cleared brush. Cody Considine helped burn off the corn stubble, and Bernie Buchholz harrowed the field prior to planting. Chris and Jennifer Hauser contributed and planted nine wild plum plants and donated seed for the Shabbona Savanna. Mike Adolph and Josh Sage assisted in clearing brush. And, of course, thanks to Bill Kleiman and Nate Hill for providing constant support and for empowering volunteers to contribute to the mission of The Nature Conservancy at Nachusa Grasslands.

Rolling Thunder Prairie

By Sally Baumgardner



Sally Baumgardner

Some parts of Rolling Thunder Prairie were being overcome--and might sink--under the pressure of invasive alien exotic plants (AKA weeds). Might I be facing a failure of sorts? More help was needed on a regular basis!

In 2005, I was encouraged to apply for a C2000 grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for ways to reduce/eliminate these aliens.

My application was considered a cause worthy of support and I hired the Weed Control Patrol in the spring of 2006. I'm so proud of my team! Our willing workers, Jessica, Macy, and Noah, all neighborhood youngsters, and George, a retired science teacher from nearby Oregon, were strong and able to pull out or cut the bases of whatever weeds I chose for each day. Later, Jade, the little sister of Jessica and Macy, was hired. These friendly, part-time patrol members learned quickly to identify the weeds, their names, and how to treat them.

We did our very best. We used shovels called "Parsnip Predators" designed for stabbing parsnip as well as mullein. Long handled loppers were used to cut short the stems of the small woody plants. Squirts of herbicide met birds foot trefoil, a perennial, and we counted seventeen work sessions to the ridge where these persistent aliens continue to show up.

Western ragweed is very tall plant just before flower-

ing, and my crew simply severed the stems these annual plants. It became a pleasure to "weed them out" and enjoy the cleaned-up look of some fine wetland plants growing at our septic field!



Sally's helpers, Jessica and Macy Fair

Soon I heard comments like, "Is that mullein we see on the side of the road, on the way home?" And, "Does this nice vervain grow along the road, too?" Then, "Mom and Dad are seeing sweet clovers now!" (The education part of the grant was beginning.) Then seed collecting became mixed with the "weed work" in June.

Once those weeds reached the end of their summer potential for seed production, we could turn all our time to collecting seeds of the native plants. This is where my crew, my team, really blossomed!

I think they liked the "clunk" of huge seed heads falling into buckets. Jessica proudly turned in a filled-to-the-rim bucket of Echinacea seed heads and announced there were "350 of them" in there. She had counted as she cut! (Figure about 50 seeds per seed head!) All told, we harvested 93 pounds of seeds.

We traveled to other area of the grasslands for great volumes of seeds and took the time to see the preserve from other points of view.

At the end of every work session, these new friends stayed to spread seeds on drying beds, clean shovels, and put tools back.

My journal entry for Friday, July 7 reads "Another day of unsurpassed beauty of sky, prairie, wildflowers, friends, smiles, and gorgeous weather. I am so proud of my team!"

Thelma Carpenter Prairie

By Tom & Jenny Mitchell

Ten years ago a couple from the western suburbs, beginning birders, discovered a place an hour away where we saw meadowlarks and bobolinks and the upland sandpiper. We kept com-



Tom & Jenny Mitchell

ing back and were introduced to workdays with volunteer Jay Stacy. Soon preserve managers Bill and Susan Kleiman gave us trash grippers and made us the roadside stewards. We found out much of this restoration work involved weeds and seeds.

In 2000 funds from the estate of Thelma Carpenter, a librarian in Oregon, purchased a 60 acre unit on Carthage Rd. We were asked to steward the 30 acre degraded remnant hill prairie that still included Hill's thistle and other unusual native plants, plus 30 acres on two sides that were in corn and beans, which we have planted to prairie over the last few years. We selected only the native species we found on the unit or across the fence on a neighbor's property.

Our first planting the southeast 7.5 acres planted into soybean stubble, had its fourth summer in 2006; our second planting, the southwest 7.5 acres, saw its third summer; last fall we planted the northwest quadrant. We are pleased to say that we have had some early success with the asters and goldenrods, both abundant on the remnant, particularly sky blue aster, aromatic aster, showy goldenrod, grass leaved goldenrod, and heath aster. Leadplant and dropseed have flowered also. This summer we saw shooting stars and heart-leaved golden alexanders, but still not violets or gentians.

Jenny, Tom and Mary next to a bur oak transplanted at the Thelma Carpenter Prairie Unit.



An issue much discussed with Dr. Stacy was the proportion of tall grass to short grasses in a planting. We put sideoats, junegrass, porcupine grass, the sedges and panic grass in all our fall plantings; we put little blue (but none of the tall grasses) into our first planting at a ratio of five pounds per acre and are very satisfied with the results. Go look at the sweep of little bluestem across the planted and original prairie. Last fall we did include some big bluestem, Indian grass, and switch grass in our mix, which is all hand planted

This season we collected 80 species, over 200 pounds after processing through the hammermill. The amount may be one-half or less pure seed, but it is the Nachusa Grasslands standard of seed measurement for all those who commit to a small (under 10 acre) planting, a group this fall that included Jay, Bernie, Chris, Al, and Damian. We planted the last of our 7.5 acres, the north-

east quadrant nearest the road, with 163 pounds of seed on December 27. We continue to plant in early January. A special year-end thanks to Mary Scott, a treasure shared, who oversaw a project in 2006 to transplant three small bur oaks to Thelma Carpenter Prairie.

Clear Creek Prairie

By Mary Blackmore

Busy, busy, busy. Lots of workdays, mystery machines and fire in action, seed collecting and a promising new planting were the highlights of 2006 at Clear Creek Unit. The eggrolls were outstanding, too!



Fish sampling crew working in Clear Creek.

At fall and winter workdays we focused on cutting dead trees that had been previously girdled on the north fencerow of the pasture. With great food and even better company, chainsaws buzzed and wood was stacked. The culinary highlight was eggrolls heated over a campfire! Summer workdays found us cutting brush, marking dead trees for winter removal and enjoying the increasing diversity from previous plantings.

The Prairie Preservation Society of Ogle County once again contracted with Chris Hauser and Becky Hartman to collect seed for completing the north field planting. The first half of that planting, sown in December 2005, appeared to be doing very well in its first year. Over 100 species were in those seed mixes. Part of the 2006 seed collection will be planted in the southwest field in an effort to increase diversity in what is predominantly an Indian grass and big bluestem area.

Mystery men (Bill, Nathan Hill, Cody, Nathan Bremer, and Austin) operated mystery machines that chewed up brush and small trees in the fall along the Clear Creek tributary in the north end of the pasture. Their work made our fall tree cutting day much easier! Perhaps those same mystery men also conducted the fall burn that took place in preparation for winter overseeding.

Thanks go out to our 2006 volunteers - Keith and Mary Blackmore, Chris and Ron Ware, Bob and Sheri Piros, Kim and Evan Shockey, Terri Clark, Kevin Kaltenbach and Tim Keller- along with Chris Hauser, Becky Hartman, and those wonderful mystery men.

Tellabs Savanna

By Jan Grainger



Jan Grainger

Ferns are not as glamorous as the flowering plants since they do not produce the showy blooms of their cousins. Their beauty is in their delicate leaves which are called fronds. At Tellabs Savanna some notable ferns are found nestled in the shade.

A small patch of maidenhair fern, *Adiantum pedatum*, grows in a rich shady spot. The black wiry leaf stalks fork in two and the pinnules of the pinnae (leaf divisions) are distinctively shaped and arranged. The fronds are held parallel to the ground and have a circular or horseshoe shape. The name for the genus, *Adiantum*, comes from the Greek meaning "not wetting" referring to the fronds ability to shed water.

Also in the shade, in a ravine near a vernal pond, are some clumps of interrupted fern, *Osmunda claytoniana*. On these ferns the fertile (spore bearing) pinnae "interrupt" the green pinnae along the frond. This fern is related to the wetland loving royal fern and the very similar cinnamon fern.

These ferns bring to my mind a touch of ancient wilderness. They are primitive and advanced-- holding on to primitive reproduction while developing advanced adaptations in their vegetative form. They are ideally suited to their soils and suited to their neighbors.

Preservation of shady fern habitat will be a conservation challenge as savanna restoration proceeds at Nachusa.

Clear Creek Knolls - Gobbler Ridge

By Bernie Bucholz



Bernie Bucholz

Nachusa's newest unit, adjacent to its namesake sand hill prairie, began taking shape with the harvest of the last row crop, a bumper crop of Number 2 corn. Situated on the west edge of the north branch of Clear Creek, the planting site was selected to provide the important Gobblers' Ridge remnant with an urgently needed buffer from agricultural herbicide. Several hundred pounds of forbs and non-dominant grasses were collected for the first 8 acres of the much larger corn and alfalfa fields.

Efforts to prepare the site for planting began immediately after the corn crop was combined. First, the field was mowed to chop the corn bio mass and pull out root balls; then, the perimeter of the field was raked to create a fire break before the burn which not only cleared much of the field but also generated rich potash; the field was then harrowed to remove still more of the residual corn stalk and to create an inviting seed bed for precious seeds of over 140 native species from across Nachusa.

Finally, the long anticipated planting days arrived. We reveled in broadcasting the seeds - some by hand and a larger portion by the efficient pendulum spreader pulled by the small Kubota tractor. Over several days we sought to get the best possible distribution of seeds, targeting the mesic species for the wetter southern portion of the site. Then came the final harrowing which further distributed the seeds and provided a thin covering of the fine sandy soil. The last planting chore was stepping in the "one by ones," those seeds unique or demanding enough in location that they warranted hand planting and a "foot smear."



Cassie Kruger using a flapper on a backfire.

Then we begin our long wait to see what seedlings spring forth in April and several years beyond. No doubt there will be many weeds. We hope for foxtail and mares tail- both so-called agricultural weeds -which will provide ground cover and fuel for the first prescribed burn and then quickly give way to the prairie natives over the next few seasons. White and yellow sweet clover, wild parsnip, Queens Anne's lace and Canada thistle are a different matter. Left unattended they would quickly crowd out the natives. We will battle them by pulling when it won't disturb nearby native seedlings or by carefully dabbing herbicide on cut stems.

During the winter months we'll remove wild cherry, honey locust and osage orange trees from the adjacent remnant savanna. We hope that many grub oaks will emerge once the under story is again exposed to sufficient sunlight. Ultimately, the savanna may again extend its reach across our planting - but that will take many seasons.

If we are diligent and lucky, with each passing season this first planting will look more and more like it belongs adjacent to Nachusa's best prairie. It may take decades for nature to reassemble the historic association of species, especially the mesic (moist) areas for which we have few existing models, but we take satisfaction today in knowing the process is underway.

Our labors on this first 8 acre planting are a down payment on the beautiful landscape that will be revealed as it and the remaining corn and alfalfa fields

begin their long but steady recovery to their pre-settlement beauty.

It is a thrill to be part of this mighty work that opens the door to nature healing itself by drawing on its ingrained memory of thousands of seasons past.

May Celebration at Nachusa

Join us for a weekend of fellowship at Nachusa Grasslands this May. Hosted in conjunction with the 2007 Illinois Native Plant Society Annual Meeting.

Event includes tours of the preserve, guest speakers, and a banquet.

Friday, May 18, to Sunday, May 20, 2007

This event is open to the public and registration is required. Visit www.ill-inps.org for registration form.

Goodbye to a Conservation Legend

Carl Becker, who led our conservation staff for the Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, unexpectedly passed away this past year. Conservation lost a fine leader with a long history of successes. He will be greatly missed.

Photo courtesy of the Becker Family



Carl fishing for smallmouth bass.

18th Annual Autumn on the Prairie

Saturday,
September 15, 2007
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

A free event with fun for the entire family: guided walking tours of the preserve, paintings by local artists, children's activities, gift raffle, horse drawn wagon rides, live music, and good food.



Shannon Bittner having fun at Autumn on the Prairie.

Moving Forward at Clear Creek Knolls Unit

By Bill Kleiman and Nathan Hill

Last year, we told you about the new 1,000 acre addition to Nachusa. The two tracts, now called Clear Creek Knolls and DeWitt Holland Memorial Prairie were purchased with donations from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and an anonymous friend of DeWitt Holland. This past summer we purchased an adjacent 90 acre tract. These new units are now a major focus of our stewardship activities. Together they provide a great opportunity to restore habitat for grassland birds, Blanding's turtle, regal fritillary and other species in need of room to roam.

In the Clear Creek Knolls Unit (CCK) the western ridge of the Creek, we are calling Gobbler Ridge. It is a perfect roost for wild turkey. Nearby Fame Flower Knob, just to the southwest, is named for the *Talinum rugospermum* that grows on the sandy outcrops along with sand club moss, lead plant and other dry prairie plants. At the Clear Creek ford, great angelica, hairy fruited lake sedge, and blue vervain are gaining ground in areas that were being invaded by reed canary grass. Upstream on Clear Creek is a 4 acre beaver pond that saw sandhill cranes

this past summer. This pond is frequented by a variety of water loving birds like wood duck, teal, numerous belted kingfisher, and great blue heron.



Kelly Nichols and Stepanie Ma get ready to cut brush at Clear Creek Knolls.

M e a s u r i n g Success: We will be restoring nearly a thousand acres of habitat on these new tracts. This is

an exciting challenge for us all. To measure our expected success we are establishing a set of monitoring areas where we will collect data on birds, plants, fish, aquatic insects and watershed hydrology. Last summer we set up some bird monitoring points in corn fields that will someday be prairie plantings. You might expect that a corn field in May has no birds using it, and you would be right, but we now have that baseline data. Each year we also conduct planting inventories on established plantings to determine plant diversity compared to what seed we planted.

To collect baseline fish data we had Karen Rivera and fellow staff of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources sample Clear Creek. They found 10 native

minnow species, 2 species of darters, brook stickleback and white suckers. The Index of Biotic Integrity scored pretty low at 35. The IBI scores go up to 60 with scores over 50 rated as a unique aquatic resource.

Aquatic insect diversity can also be used to measure stream quality. To get that baseline data we had Conservancy aquatic ecologist, Maria Lemke, and Ed DeWalt from the Illinois Natural History Survey wading through the creek this past summer sampling for aquatic insects. They will return every few years to sample from the same area.

To measure stream flow we had USGS Hydrologist, Jim Dunker, install a stream gauge on the creek at Lowden Rd so we can monitor the stream flow as we restore the watershed. We are hoping to create more partnerships with universities to help us study the changes that occur as we slowly restore a landscape.

Restoration at Clear Creek Knolls: Since spring of 2005 we have cleared 25



Clear Creek in Spring

acres of brush and planted 54 acres of prairie on former corn fields. Also, we thinned brush and over seeded 8 acres of wetland and 10 acres of savanna. We have enlisted the talents of our "rookie of the year" steward Bernie Buchholz and veteran Jay Stacy in our restoration efforts at CCK. Jay planted 6 acres and Bernie 2 acres of prairie just west of Gobbler Ridge giving the remnant a much deserved buffer. At nearby Dropseed Hills, Mary and Jim Vieregge have continued to clear trees and brush from the remnant hills and they over seeded nearly 100 lbs of prairie seed this past summer and winter. The new plantings will connect to the Sand Farm Unit to the south and buffer the remnants at Clear Creek Knolls. We will also continue to plant 20-30 acres a year of corn fields and manage the remnants with fire. We will continue to spray, mow and pull weeds and remove invasive brush.

Most of the area West of Lowden Rd. is in row crop production with about 100 acres of cattle pasture. In the oak dotted pasture we found remnant kittentail plants and set up a livestock enclosure fence to protect them. To figure out how to best plant a pasture that looks like a weedy suburban lawn Bill set up a research plot with four different treatments. All the plots will get the same seed but on one plot we will herbicide the grass, another we will herbicide the grass and broad leaved plants, on another plot we will herbicide and then disc the soil, and one we will add the seed with no other preparation. On the control we will add no seed. Which will grow the best prairie?

On to Greener Pastures

Bruce Boyd, our Chapter Director for twelve years, is leaving the Conservancy to run a business that will help people with lots of money donate to charities. Yes, we hope he sends them our way, but we send to him our highest regards for his steady hand on the wheel during his tenure with TNC.

Jennifer and Chris Hauser, volunteer stewards with us for several years, will be moving to Monterey California. Chris accepted a position with the Santa Lucia Conservancy. They have been great friends, fine stewards and an inspiration for us. Fare thee well.

THANK YOU DONORS

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David and Kim Powell
Anonymous
Joanne and Doyle Olson
Patricia and David Dibblee
Adelia Muir
J. David and Lois Klingensmith
Jon J. Duerr
Susan Robbins
John Suter
Jane and John Cyr
Kim and David Powell
Beth and Cliff DeSanto
William and Marilyn Schoettle
Jody and Robert Snyder
Christine and Eugene Schmidt
Katherine and Karl Coyner
Mrs. Weins
Patricia O'Neil
Ryan Depauw
Sharon Bergland
Interior Alterations
Linda and Reagan Bell
Linda and Richard Jones
Margaret and Kevin Brewner
Linda May
Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Ladowski
Judith Peterson
St. Charles East High School
William and Jane Muir
Julia and Robert Sanks
Janet and Jon Craychee
Nancy and Anthony Bennett
Thuy and Long Tran
Mary Ann Tilton
Judith Tilton

The Nature
Conservancy 

SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH

Take a Walk with a Volunteer at Nachusa Grasslands:

Each month there is a regularly scheduled hike led by one or more of the Nachusa volunteers. The hikes for 2007 are listed along with the workday schedule at the end of the Prairie Smoke. At Mary Scott's suggestion, we hand out 3 x 5 cards with the hike schedule each year at Autumn on the Prairie. The local newspapers have become very helpful by printing the hike information in their weekly schedule of events calendars. In the last six months, we have talked to several people who learned about the grasslands from a friend who had attended a hike. The Sierra Club of Chicago now often has an organized hike at Nachusa. We are glad to hear people are seeing parts of the 2500 acres that they never visited before. See you on the prairie!



Visitors take a summer hike at Nachusa

Wish List

- **MORE VOLUNTEERS!** Each unit on the preserve and every aspect of our operation would welcome additional stewards. Volunteers are empowered to do as much stewardship as they wish. We work seven days a week. Check the stewardship calendar for a Saturday workday or just come out to the preserve and learn more. No prior experience necessary, just a passion for nature. Local 3rd grade classes visit Nachusa twice a year for our Youth Stewards Education Program. Leaders are needed to guide small groups of students through the prairie viewing wildlife, collecting seeds and having fun.
- **MORE DONORS!** Want to create an enduring legacy here at Nachusa? the Nature Conservancy currently has two tracts of land at the preserve that are in need of donated protection funds. Looking for green acres? TNC also has a 195 acre farm for sale.
- **ANOTHER HARDWORKING SEASONAL CREW!** Each year Nachusa Grasslands provides an excellent opportunity for recent graduates and passionate conservationists to work at the preserve. Assistant Stewards are needed for prairie and savanna management and restoration including weed removal, seed harvest, and general maintenance. Keep an eye on TNC's career webpage for the formal job announcement <http://nature.org/careers/index.html> or forward a resume to nathan_hill@tnc.org

Equipment Needs:

- Used 3/4 ton truck with snow plow
- Used 75-100hp tractor for mowing (we are half way to our goal of \$12,000. Donors who give over \$500 get their name on the tractor.)
- 3 point hitch post hole digger
- Disc mower
- PTO leaf blower

STEWARDS OF NACHUSA GRASSLANDS

Bruce Boyd State Director
 Bill Kleiman Project Director
 Nathan Hill Restoration Ecologist

STEWARDS

Big Woods

Hank & Becky Hartman

CO-STEWARDS

Committee for the Preservation of Wildlife

Clear Creek Prairie

Prairie Preservation Society of Ogle County

Katie Schoenfeldt

Clear Creek Knolls

Dropseed Hills at CCK

Mary Viereggs

Jim Viereggs

Gobble Ridge at CCK

Bernie Buchholz

Dot & Doug Wade Prairie

Al Meier

Mary Meier, Barb Regan

Edith & Anna Heinkel Savanna

East Unit

Mike Crowe

Cassie Krueger

West Unit

Jay Stacy

Don Homer, Gene Miller
 Mary Scott

Eight Oaks Savanna

Jan Grainger

Fen Unit

Kevin Kaltenbach

Josh Sage

Kittentail Savanna

West Chicago Prairie

Steve Sentoff

Stewardship Group

Hamill Winter Prairie

Mike Adolph

Bob Shone

Roadsides & Jay Meiners Wetlands

Tom Mitchell

Jenny Mitchell

Rolling Thunder & Harold Walkup Prairies

Sally Baumgardner

Max Baumgardner

Earl Thomas

Sand Farm

Russ Brunner

Schafer Prairie

David Edelbach

Ray Derksen

Tellabs Savanna

Ron Ingraham

Jan Grainger, Bob Shone

Thelma Carpenter Prairie

Tom Mitchell

Jenny Mitchell

Barn Steward

Jenny Mitchell

Autumn On The Prairie 2007 Chair and Co-Chair:

Al Meier, Mary Meier and Cassie Krueger

Science Stewards:

Bird Monitoring

Ann Haverstock

Butterfly Monitoring

Jan Grainger

Herbarium Steward

Dwight Heckert

Insect Collector

Open

Lespedeza leptostachya monitor

Todd Bittner

Photo Monitor

Open

Outreach Volunteers:

Publicist/Educator/Presenters: Sally Baumgardner, Gene Miller, Dwight Heckert

Youth Stewards Leaders

Mike Adolph, Bob Shone, Sally Baumgardner, George Busca,

Susan Kleiman, Ron Ingraham, Barb Rutherford

2006 Seasonal Assistant Stewards:

Cody Considine, Nathan Bremer, Megan Grey, Kelly Nichols, Austin Webb, Stephanie Ma, Katie Schoenfeldt.

CALENDAR FOR STEWARDSHIP WORKDAYS 2007

Volunteer Stewards and Co-stewards lead workdays. New volunteers are always welcome to come learn and work with us. Start time is 9:00 A.M. Meet at the Preserve Headquarters (red barn) at 8772 S. Lowden Road. Volunteers break for lunch at the Barn and then sometimes continue stewardship or go for a hike in the afternoon. We also have stewardship during the week; give us a call at 815 456-2340).

March - Brush, Planting and Fire Season

- 10 Big Woods
- 17 Rolling Thunder Prairie - Walk 2 P.M. Clear Creek
- 24 Tellabs Savanna
Nachusa Crew Fire Training
- 31 East Heinkel Savanna

April - Brush, Planting and Fire Season

- 7 Gobbler Ridge
- 14 Dot & Doug Wade Prairie - Walk 2 P.M. Marsh Marigolds
Autumn On The Prairie (AOTP) Committee Meeting at noon
- 21 Hamill Winter Prairie
- 28 Rolling Thunder Prairie

May - Weed Season

- 5 Tellabs Savanna
- 12 Schafer Prairie
- 18-20 May Celebration at Nachusa (*see page 7*)
- 19 Sand Farm
Potluck Gathering (meal at 12:30)
Walk 2 P.M. Shooting Star and Knobs Tour
- 26 Big Woods

June - Weed and Seed Collecting Season

- 2 Schafer Prairie
- 9 Eight Oaks Savanna
- 16 Fen
(AOTP Committee Meeting at noon)
- 23 West Heinkel Savanna, Thelma Carpenter Prairie
Walk 2 P.M. Meiners Wetlands
- 30 Clear Creek Prairie & Kittentail Savanna

July - Weeds and Seeds

- 7 Pine Rock Nature Preserve
Walk 6 P.M. Isabel's Knob
- 9-11 Grassland Restoration Network Workshop at Nachusa
- 14 Big Woods
- 21 Schafer Prairie
(AOTP Committee Meeting at noon)
- 28 East Heinkel Savanna

August - Seeds

- 4 Big Woods
- 11 West Heinkel Savanna
- 18 Dot & Doug Wade Prairie
Walk 2 P.M. Early Blazing Star
- 25 Clear Creek Prairie
(AOTP Committee Meeting at noon)

September - Seeds

- 1 Schafer Prairie
- 8 Fen
- 15 **Autumn On The Prairie Celebration**
Walks and other activities - 10 A.M. to 5 P.M.
- 22 Tellabs Savanna and Rolling Thunder Prairie
- 29 Hamill Winter Prairie

October - Seeds

- 6 Eight Oaks Savanna
- 13 Kittentail Savanna
Walk 2 P.M. Seed Picking
- 20 Rolling Thunder Prairie and Thelma Carpenter Prairie
- 27 Clear Creek Knolls

November - Brush, Planting and Fire Season

- 3 Rolling Thunder Prairie
- 10 **Seed Mixing Celebration & Potluck Gathering**
Walk 2 P.M. Seed Celebration Tour
- 17 Big Woods
- 24 Schafer Prairie

December - Brush and Planting Season

- 1 Dot & Doug Wade Prairie
- 8 Hamill Winter Prairie
Walk 2 P.M. Stonebarn Rd. to Naylor Rd.
- 15 East Heinkel Savanna
- 22 Clear Creek Knolls
- 29 Sand Farm

January 2008 - Brush Season

- 5 Dot & Doug Wade Prairie
- 12 Tellabs Savanna
- 19 Dropseed Hills
Walk 2 P.M. Heinkel Hollows
- 26 Clear Creek Prairie

February 2008 - Brush Season

- 2 Fen
- 9 Sand Farm
- 16 Gobbler Ridge
- 23 West Heinkel Savanna

AUTUMN ON THE PRAIRIE

18th Annual Celebration at Nachusa Grasslands
Saturday, September 15, 2007, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

A free event with fun for the entire family: guided walking tours of the preserve, paintings by local artists, children's activities, gift raffle, horse drawn wagon rides, live music, and good food.

Issue 44, March 2007

Editors Nathan Hill and Bill Kleiman

REACHING NACHUSA GRASSLANDS

The preserve is open to the public. The main trail head to the preserve is at the Visitor Entrance with the kiosk on Lowden Road. All volunteer workdays meet at the Preserve Headquarters red barn (located 1/2 mile north of Visitor Entrance) at 8772 S. Lowden Road up a long driveway.

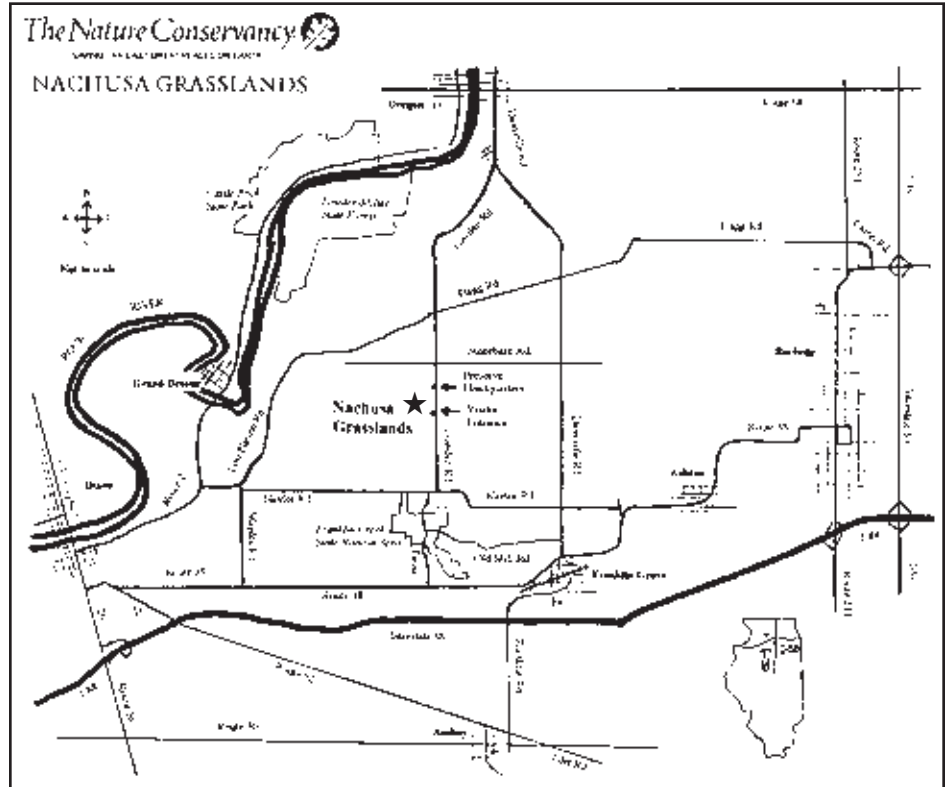
From I-88: (East-West Tollway): Exit at Rt. 251 North (Rochelle), to Rt. 38 West. Travel through Ashton and into Franklin Grove (approx. 16 miles), turn right (north) on Daysville Rd./1700E. Travel 1.5 miles north to Naylor Rd./1950N, turn left (west) and go 2.2 miles to Lowden Rd./1500E, turn right (north) and go 1 mile to Visitor Entrance (on the left with kiosk).

From Route 64: Just east of the Rock River in Oregon, turn south on Daysville Rd./1700E. Travel approx. 2.5 miles and turn right (45 angle) on Lowden Rd./1500E (Lowden-Miller State Forest). Travel south 5 miles to a 4-way stop at Flagg Rd. Continue south another 2 miles to the Visitor Entrance (on the right with kiosk).

From Dixon:

Option 1: Take Rt. 38 East into Franklin Grove then turn left (north) on Daysville Rd./1700E. Travel 1.5 miles north to Naylor Rd./1950N, turn left (west) and go 2.2 miles to Lowden Rd./1500E, turn right (north) and go 1 mile to Visitor Entrance (on the left with kiosk).

Option 2: From downtown (Rt. 26/Galena Ave.) take Rt. 2 North two miles, then turn right (east) on Lost Nation Rd. Go one mile to Maples Rd./1150E, turn right, then left immediately onto Naylor Rd./1950N. Go east for 3.5 miles to Lowden Rd./1500E. Turn left (north) and go one mile to Visitor Entrance (on the left with kiosk).



Nachusa Grasslands is owned and operated by The Nature Conservancy, a private, non-profit group whose mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

The Nature Conservancy 
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The Nature Conservancy

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www.nature.org

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