



## NACHUSA AUDIT WINS RAVE REVIEWS

By John Schmadeke

Measuring the success of a project like Nachusa Grasslands is not easy. Those doing stewardship are frequently frustrated that invasive species are showing little sign of retreat while efforts to restore a unit are less than perfect.

Last July, however, The Nature Conservancy sent a peer review conservation audit team to Nachusa to take a look. This team consisted of experts from around the country and from within and outside TNC. Their report should give everyone renewed confidence that Nachusa stewards are doing things well.

One item in particular in the executive summary gets directly to the point:

The restoration approach and techniques – which are based on excellent tangible results – are outstanding. According to one peer, “In terms of large-scale, high-diversity sites, no one is getting better results” and most importantly, the Project can demonstrate to some degree improved viability and abated threat on “protected” acres.

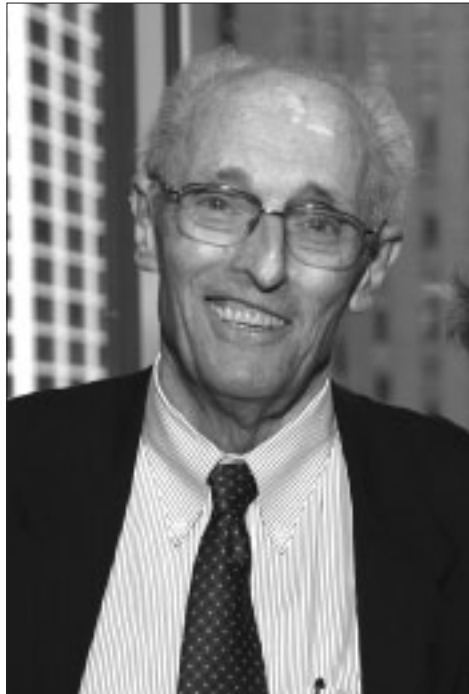
The full audit is available from Bill Kleiman. The major findings and recommendations from the executive summary are included here:

Overall the Project was viewed as being in good alignment with TNC’s Conservation Action Planning (CAP) process. Several CAP Steps have been carried out well, however more clear measures of success, for the Project as a whole, could be explicitly tracked. The Project has a number of specific strengths related to its application of CAP thinking, and comes close to the highest score possible on Steps 1 (Project Team) and 8 (Work-Planning). A sample of the key notable achievements and innovations include:

- An outstanding use and cultivation of volunteers (the best project seen in an audit). For example, the restoration plot “ownership” model results in true

stewardship. Volunteer stewards have a very good balance of autonomy and oversight (mostly in the form of nurturing and mentoring).

- An excellent seasonal staffing program, with many going on to be a big part of the restoration community in the area.
- A lot is done with only two full-time core employees.



Jim Hotchkiss

- Excellent networking and leadership within the Grasslands Restoration Network (GRN) community, with outside expertise brought in and exchanges of staff among programs occurring as necessary.

- The extended project team includes Operating Unit Science, Grasslands Restoration, Protection, and Philanthropy.

- The Project Director has continuity and serves as an enabler, is accessible, and has a clear vision – all of which are key leadership skills.

- The project has good maps and a description of the project area that show changes over time, differences between core and buffer zones, tracts of interest, and – very importantly – information on target locations and threat (e.g. weed) locations.

- There is good continuity in and evidence of evolving thinking of the targets list from year 2000 to 2006.

- The original CAP from 2000 was updated in 2006/2007.
- Did an excellent, by-the-book, first iteration of Key Ecological Attributes (KEA) for each target as part of a target viability assessment.
- The innovative development of a grant to facilitate a new company for natural area restoration, that can then serve as an ally.

- The Project has a strong focus on (potentially) measurable objectives for each plot and planting, including measures at the micro-scale (intuitive adaptive management for each restoration planting) that have been implemented repeatedly. The Project Team also has a very good intuitive sense of what is working and what is not (i.e. Strategy Effectiveness).
- The project is extremely organized (e.g. office whiteboard/schedule, labeling) and it is clear that the on-site team is very well coordinated.
- The Project is significant and tangible, with 21 years of restoration history.
- The restoration approach and techniques – which are based on excellent tangible results – are outstanding. According to one peer, “In terms of large-scale, high-diversity sites, no one is getting better results” and most importantly, the Project can demonstrate to some degree improved viability and abated threat on “protected” acres.
- The Project experiments through the division of sites into units within which different management techniques are attempted. This enhances the outstanding volunteering stewardship program which allows for individuality in approach for each plot.
- The Project is an excellent “leverage” site, serving as an educational vehicle, a demonstration site, and a fundraising tool, providing value well beyond the site-level restoration work alone.
- Create a more explicit graphical model of the “larger-scale” project showing the key factors affecting the broader Middle Rock River landscape.
- Document and strategize stakeholder linkages and relationships to ensure that TNC doesn’t lose its vast investment over the course of its “exit strategy”, which may be long-term.
- Refine Objectives to ensure that they are measurable, practical, and, where applicable, specific to acreage goals for the restoration.
- Develop a more explicit measures system that captures clear trends over time and ties directly to viability improvement and threat reduction as stated in the CAP. Create a project monitoring plan that ensures that only the critical elements are being pursued and that uses KEAs to demonstrate viability enhancement clearly.
- View Conservation Action Planning as a process rather than a product, noting that adaptive management is ongoing and that the workbook represents current status only

#### Technical Recommendations:

- Nachusa should be used as a model for other projects on how to involve and cultivate a volunteer workforce
- Continue to develop and act on plans to develop an endowment for the preserve.
- Find ways to be more experimental by systematically trying different restoration techniques at different sites.
- Take advantage of the opportunity to help to answer the question: “How much is enough, with regard to prairie systems?”.
- Focus implementation on high-priority land-protection. Given current development pressures, seek to be aggressive rather than passive, as the opportunity is now!

In summary, the Nachusa Grasslands Project is, in practice, a solid project that could serve as a good example to many other projects. There is still room to more faithfully, and accurately, reflect the Project’s work through more regular (though not necessarily time-consuming) documentation of priorities, measurable objectives, and measures of success; in essence to be more explicit about the adaptive management approach the Project takes.

## Nachusa Endowment Started

By John Schmadeke

Imagine. The year is 2038 and the state and county are proposing to build a major new highway that will cut right through the middle of Nachusa Grasslands. Some people are upset that Nachusa might be destroyed as a prairie, but since restoration money for the project ran out years ago, there’s no easy way to stop the highway.

The above positives represent only a subset of many other positive findings of the Conservation Audit Team, as described in the main body of the report. Still, there are continuing opportunities for improvement. The Conservation Audit Team made a number of recommendations with the hope of driving the Project toward even stronger conservation work. Thirteen major or high-priority recommendations came out of this review, and all should be viewed as important. The Findings and Recommendations presented in this report reflect two categories: CAP process impure that they are measurable, practical, and, where applicable, specific to acreage goals for the restoration.

#### Process Recommendations:

- The Core Project Team should increase ownership of the “content” (not necessarily the process) of the CAP workbook in coordination with the Illinois Science Director .
- Continue to update and refine the target viability assessment to ensure that it truly reflects the current status of the Project targets and ultimately drives the Project’s efforts.
- Once the viability assessment is refined, update and refine the threats assessment to reflect the current situation of stresses and sources of stress affecting the focal biodiversity.

There are, of course, no plans for such a road and The Nature Conservancy continues to support Nachusa's management and restoration budget. But the future is, by nature, uncertain. No one can say that what everyone wants to protect vigorously today will be on the high priority list at some future date.

Work is underway that will reduce these potential risks. The first is a new endowment fund started by the Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy specifically for stewarding Nachusa.

The endowment fund was supported by James Hotchkiss, a member of the Illinois TNC board of trustees, who spoke to a group of stewards in November. He pointed out that there are no guarantees about funding for any projects in the future. "The one sure way of making sure Nachusa has a source of income for maintenance is to create an endowment specifically for that purpose."

As a way of getting the endowment off to a start, Hotchkiss said he was making a donation. Several other Nachusa supporters also pledged support.

Another possibility is that some of Nachusa eventually may be set aside as an Illinois Nature Preserve or Illinois Land and Water Reserve to make it extremely unlikely that any development, including roads, utility lines and other government activity could take place.

These possible plans were laid out in November at Nachusa's annual seed processing and potluck day, once known as Stone Soup. Bill Kleiman introduced Todd Bittner, Illinois Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage biologist, who outlined the protection options.

"How to protect the land," and "how to pay for management" beyond the immediate future are the questions facing Nachusa, according to Kleiman.

There are no plans for TNC to divest itself of Nachusa, but what might happen to ownership or funding 20 or 30 years from now is uncertain, he explained. And even if TNC retains ownership, there is always a possibility that development in the area could result in a government agency choosing to put a road through the preserve.

Bittner explained that Nature Preserve or Land and Water Preserve status "protects the land from external threats" such as highways and gas pipelines. "It is also a way to protect Nachusa from itself."

No one knows what some future owner of Nachusa Grasslands may want to do, but this sort of protection even ties the hands of the owner, Bittner said. It is the highest level of land protection possible in Illinois.

Kleiman explained that there are some possible "perils" of this protection. Some property rights actually become property of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, and this could result in some rules about management techniques such as prescribed burns or use of herbicide.

Kleiman also explained that Nachusa's annual operating budget is a fundraising challenge annually for the Conservancy. Also needs for the future as Nachusa

grows are likely to get bigger. A Nachusa endowment would be funds managed by the Conservancy that would be specifically designated for Nachusa. He estimated an endowment of about \$3 million could support the preserve's annual budget.

The plan, Kleiman said, is to create a contract with TNC that sets up several restrictions on the fund. For example, if TNC transfers Nachusa's land to another owner, the endowment would go with the land.

Hotchkiss, who has a career background in investing, said an endowment "will be managed well. The Conservancy has very good investment managers." Nationally, The Nature Conservancy has recently announced plans for a \$1.6 billion capital campaign. Donations towards the new Nachusa endowment would be counted as part of the capital campaign.

Although final details for the endowment fund are still being completed, contributions have already been made to it. The Illinois Chapter of TNC has created means by which interested donors can make a contribution that will be credited to the fund. If you would like to make a donation please contact Bill Kleiman.

## Around the Prairie Stewardship Reports

### Clear Creek Knolls

By Jay Stacy



Jay Stacy

Mary Scott and I continued our westward march from Gobbler Ridge, planting 5 new acres in tandem with Bernie and Cindy Bucholtz's 6-acre effort to our south. Mary once again proved herself to be an indefatigable and dogged seed collector, beginning with both species of pussytoes in early May – all the way through to wind-swept mornings on the hills of Carpenter Prairie the last week of October, when we bagged the tan puffs of aromatic aster, the last little bull in the round-up.

We planted our bulk seeds with the tractor-spreader, dug in individual burr oak acorns, stuck in hundreds of porcupine grass quills, and stepped in a pail full of 40 or so rare or conservative species – all in a timely manner in mid-November, followed by a blessed 1-inch rain which turned the field into a beautiful muddy ooze, securely tucking all species in the still soft soils before being blanketed with successive sheets of ice and snow put down by the series of storms in late November and early December. Perfecto! Bill Kleiman, as always, provided us with everything we needed by way of equipment and materials through the year, along with his irresistible brand of encouragement during the few stretches when the road got bumpy.

When we checked seedlings late this spring in last year's planting we were very pleased; so the 2007 plant-



ing was basically a re-do of 2006. The theory is this: The soil types in any of our tracts are rarely homogeneous. Even in a 5-acre planting one can quickly walk from one soil type to another: sand-loam to sand-gravel to soft-sand to sand-clay, etc. So, thoroughly mix and spin out 150 or so appropriate species. Hopefully, reasonable amounts of each species will fall in the soil type for which it has the most affinity. These seeds will germinate, attain maturity, reproduce, and in time out-do their less appropriate fellows.

The result will be a patchwork of varied community types which will eventually begin to resemble similar soil-type remnants. And, in fact, we have seen evidence that this theory is valid. Eleven years ago two small

trations of small, delicate plants (blue-eyed grass, field and purple milkwort, 3 pinweed species, frostweed, wood-sorrel) and the colonizers (both pussytoes species, western sunflower, lance-leaved loosestrife) act in a similar fashion. Bastard toadflax, a serious bluestem parasitizer, is abundant. Aside from certain legumes (white baptisia, Illinois tick trefoil, round-headed bush clover), robust plants (pale purple coneflower, wild quinine, all *Silphium* species, etc.) are noticeably absent. The only conservative aster present is *ericoides*. Except for the eastern end, even such conservative mainstays as purple prairie clover, northern prairie dropseed, and leadplant are few and far between. And yet it is in this matrix of seemingly reduced competition that 4 of our target species thrive (*Polygala incarnata*, Hill's thistle, prairie bush clover, Regal Fritillary); the population of arrow-leaved violet, a larval host of the fritillary, is so dense that these slopes are the epicenter of the annual "hilltopping" courtship display of this gorgeous endangered butterfly. If we could match a strip of cornfield to this section of Pussytoes Lane (i.e., soil types, drainage, sun exposure, etc.), would it be a worthwhile experiment to do a meticulous floristic inventory, collect, and then re-plant all of these, and only these, species? I think "yes." This is the type of challenge that awaits us in the months and years ahead as we trudge on toward the golden horizon.

Last fall, as Bernie and I stood on Gobbler Ridge and looked westward, Lowden Road seemed like a dream in the distance. This fall, as we stood on the western edge of our newly completed adjacent plantings, Lowden Road, while not yet within range of a good spit, suddenly was in easy hearing distance. Thirty acres of cornfield separate us from it. Then, at some point, Mary Scott and I need to head northwest, dealing with the large rectangular wedge of corn south of Flagg Road. Bernie intends eventually to turn south and then back east, encircling and protecting Fame Flower Knob with a series of plantings in the corn and alfalfa fields which surround it. The end result? Hopefully, an 80 or so acre, highly viable, showcase quality prairie-savanna restoration, accomplished by a handful of volunteers, a new home for many of the pressured and threatened life forms which once flourished in these districts. We'll say our prayers and keep our fingers crossed as we go.

### Cody Considine Appointed

Cody Considine has been appointed the new restoration ecologist at Nachusa. Most Nachusa regulars know Cody from when he was a summer seasonal crew.

A native of Dixon, Cody has recently been working on his master's degree in ecology from Southern Illinois University. He will start at Nachusa in May.



upland knobs 100 feet apart were cleared of corn and hand planted with equal amounts of the same 50 or so conservative species. At the time, the planter made little of the fact that one of the knobs was somewhat more gravelly than the other. Today, after emerging from years of early and middle successional species, the two knobs are starkly different. Purple prairie clover, fringed puccoon, porcupine grass, small-flowered skullcap, and downy yellow painted cup cover the more gravelly knob; leadplant, cream baptisia, bluets, northern prairie dropseed, silky and azure aster dominate the other. Mother Nature is ready, willing, and eager to re-work the wonders of the native prairie; but she needs a full palette of species to get the job done.

Several questions now come to mind. Given our recent re-focus on endangered species, do different restoration models need to be explored? I suspect the answer is "yes." I'm thinking of the upland slopes north of Pussytoes Lane. The dominant grass along this once degraded remnant is little bluestem; but the thousands of individual non-dominant grasses and sedges (Scribner's and white-haired panic grass, three-awn grass, Bicknell's sedge, etc.) laced in throughout this stretch appear to act as spacers, mitigating the bluestem dominance of the root space; perhaps the heavy concen-

### Gobbler Ridge

By Bernie Buckholtz

Quizzed on how to judge the progress of a restoration, a prairie wise man said, "The critters will let you know how you're doing." If that's true, the eagerness of critters of all kinds to inhabit the Gobbler Ridge plantings offers hope that our efforts to spur this community's reconstruction are on target.

Only a year has passed since the clattering of dry corn



Bernie Bucholz

stalks yielded to the silent Gobbler Ridge natives. Already the critters are offering encouraging signs. An open-eyed ramble yields hints to the shifting patterns of life on these ancient prairie soils. The rumble of tractor and cleaving of the chisel plow have given way to hushed routines of animals and plants reestablishing their interwoven cycles of birth, growth and decline.

Most dramatic in the tottering rebirth of the Gobbler Ridge community – if, indeed, a bird weighing less than an ounce can do anything dramatic - was the pioneer nesting of two song sparrows. Their low-rimmed bowl of grass and leaves was optimistically woven among the scruffy first year's growth of native seedlings. Four pale green, brown spotted eggs hatched. But some other critter – a fox or coyote, perhaps - interrupted the chicks'



Leslee Spraggins was named the new Illinois State Director of The Nature Conservancy in September succeeding Bruce Boyd. She had previously been state director in Iowa and head of the Big Woods project in Arkansas.

silent rush to fledge. Still, the sparrows' willingness to nest in these new environs sounds a hopeful note. And predators, too, are playing their part.

Badger, however short their stay, appear to be trying new digs on the remnant escarpment's top edge. Stewards removed trees and brush that had over grown the remnant savanna and adjacent Clear Creek flood plain. Groundhogs wisely surrender their own earthworks to their tougher new neighbor in this suddenly desirable habitat. Perhaps the secretive badger is taking comfort that it can now spot threats across the flood plain. These fierce mammals left behind piles of freshly churned sandy diggings at their elliptical, steeply inclined entries. Spring will reveal which mammals actually spent the winter inside these impressive excavations.

Badger and groundhog are not the only mammals moving soil in the newly available territory. Tractor, plow and chemical spray are history but shrews are taking on earth moving chores. They single mindedly excavated tunnels throughout the planting, creating that wonderful under-foot feel of collapsing, squishy soil - churned soil that will welcome probing roots and the seed of natives rushing to capture territory. Already one shrew – probably a shorttail - lays bloodied and lifeless adjacent its network of underground runways. One sus-

pect is the juvenile red-tailed hawk, often observed stotically overseeing this rapidly improving hunting ground. Did he kill but not consume this tiny earthmover? Or did our lifeless critter lose internecine combat over territorial matters.

The largest and longest-lived force on our landscape expired without human meddling. A disgruntled but able witness to the settlers' first turning of the prairie sod in the 1840's, this matriarchal burr oak finally succumbed to age. It had survived wild fires, farming disturbance and the decade earlier separation of an equally grand twin trunk. Falling prophetically at the base of a 35-year-old burr recruit, this majestic carcass continues to offer the shelter of its now horizontal hollow innards and the windbreak of its massive, humbled frame.

Overlooking all this quiet commotion sits Fame Flower Knob. In a case of less is more, its prominence grows with each wild cherry or honey locust toppled by determined stewards. Dominated for decades by a suffocating mat of Eurasian brome grass, prescribed burns are slowly freeing long hidden native plants. Already sixty surviving species, albeit in sometime lonely cohorts, have revealed themselves after three life-resuscitating burns.

This brome has been both boring bully and soil hog for decades. It probably does not yet sense that its hegemony is threatened, but emerging natives conspire to challenge. With their own root tips atwitter, the Fame Flower Knob natives witness the burgeoning competition and cooperation of plants and animals that churns in the plantings below.

The "critters" say that our work is going well. They say yes to our efforts with wings, paws, and claws....with roots, rhizomes, flowers and seeds. They encourage their two legged partners to push ahead. The "critters" tell us to hold hope... that in this one small corner of Illinois their Prairie community might one day resume its 10,000 year reign.

## Rolling Thunder Prairie

By Sally Baumgardner

Why do we call our Saturday morning "work days" by that name? Judging from the planning, preparation, and expectant looks on our faces, one can easily realize that they are more like "fun days." O.K., I often think of us as a bunch of big kids who still like to play outdoors.

If we took a poll, we'd surely find that 100% of our volunteers consider our Saturday morning outings to be fun, good exercise, always educational and very, very rewarding. That's because 100% of us believe the restoration of these prairie fields, savannas, wetlands, fens, potholes, etc., to be acts of very high value.

Instead of suffering from habitat loss, Nachusa



Sally Baumgardner

Grasslands is experiencing habitat gain. No longer will our acres of native Illinois plants be robbed of their place by introduced Old World vegetation. We hope the people of the future will recognize this and continue our efforts. We plan carefully for the hosting of a work day (oops, there's that word). We anticipate the efforts that need to be done in order to get more sunlight into an area where non-native brush is crowding out the sun-loving prairie plants. For areas partly shaded by majestic oaks (natives of our savannas) we may go to a similar habitat and collect large paper bags of seed heads, so they will dry out on our screens and be milled for eventually planting near the trees.

Many of us, if we wish, provide hot coffee for cool days and fresh water for warm days. Last summer, ice cold watermelon was a most welcome treat. Some of us bake cookies, bring fruit and other snack-style goodies. Even a simple box of ordinary cookies or crackers provides more energy for us to continue with our play.

There is no drudgery, no loneliness in our efforts. If we are alone, it is by choice, and a bit of solitude is relaxing. That is when we hear the soft calls of bluebirds in March, April, and May. The spring migratory birds seem almost interested in what we fools are doing.

Someone always has a field guide in a pocket. Someone else finds a critter (a turtle, a crayfish, an insect that is not familiar to us, a new plant, maybe a bird using a sound we didn't recognize right away). At that point, we all dive in and try to identify the subject. The real joy comes when we succeed, and these are called "Teachable Moments" by the late May T. Watts.

In the August 2007 issue of Nature Conservancy Magazine, preserve manager Bill Kleiman explains, "People take care of the things they feel belong to them. They take care of what they love."

## Dropseed Hills

By Mary Vieregg

We have worked on the Dropseed Hills unit at Nachusa for nearly three years. When it was first acquired, this ~4 acre area of five sandy knolls and swales came with a long list of stewardship issues. Each knoll and every swale between them had its own character because of its different history. Each one has challenged us with multiple stewardship choices. Our goal has been to make choices that change the area to a more truly native presettlement ecosystem.

The first and most basic decision that had to be made was whether to treat the area as a degraded remnant that could be salvaged or start from scratch after killing all of the vegetation. The luxury of being able to work exclusively on a small unit like this gave us the additional option of being selective. One knoll was scarred with a huge bite out of it where someone had hauled out sand and gravel. Surrounding that scar was a healthy

population of non-native brome with a few scattered natives in the driest areas. It was decided to fill the scar with sandy loam and try to construct an entirely new plant community in and around it. The second knoll had a beautiful little plant community including dropseed, puccoon, and prairie smoke. It also had its share of white sweet clover and non-native brome. Fire, hand-weeding, carefully done spot-herbicide, and tree removal have allowed the natives to expand their domain. There is hope on the prairie. One of the swales was filled with *Rubus* sp., multiflora rose, and small honeylocust trees which we ruthlessly removed. One of the other knolls had a remnant community including coneflower, lead-plant, and hoary puccoon which we have chosen to patiently nurture. Each of about twelve subunits continues to require ongoing decision-making and follow-through to effect meaningful change.

Then there was the decision about trees. Aerial photograph comparisons indicated that hundreds of trees of various sizes have grown over these five knolls during the last seventy years. Pre-settlement public land survey notes indicated that the area was open prairie with very few scattered trees. The birds were active in the canopy, though, including the harriers in the winter which used them to rest, and the nearby creek down slope from the knolls has a native complement of oaks and other species. Should we leave any trees at all? We decided again to be ruthless. The geoboy removed most of the smallest trees, and we decided to cut and burn all of the remaining larger ones except for a healthy, well-formed hackberry, a medium-sized black oak, and a few small black and bur oaks we came across. We decided to remove even the numerous native wafer ash hoping that as the community defines itself with sunlight, time, and fire, there is enough of a seed bank for it to assume a more modest role.

What species of seed do we collect and plant? Do we use the existing remnant species as our guide and confine ourselves to their associates? Do we use other remnant communities growing on the same soils in the preserve as our model? How much variation in mixes should we choose for the different knolls and each swale in between them? Again, we relished our opportunity to micromanage, and we carefully decided where we think each species of seed we collect fits best and will contribute the most. It is recklessly bold to think we know nearly enough about prairie ecosystems to make these decisions, but we observe and we ponder and we do our best.

As the seasons have passed by, more choices have been made, and change is happening. In areas where trees were cleared during the winter and the sunlight has flooded the newly exposed soil surface, positive change has occurred rapidly. Native plants are aggressively competing with the insulted non-natives, and we are finding previously unnoticed native species growing either from the existing seed bank or our seeding efforts. In mixed areas of non-native brome and challenged native species, change has occurred much more slowly even though selective herbicides, fire, and light have



Mary Vieregg



allied themselves with the natives. We wonder if we are fighting a losing battle and should make a different management choice. The positive changes, though, are exhilarating and comforting. They keep us working toward our goal of a native, biologically diverse set of communities. They justify the sometimes tedious and physically demanding work that the stewardship choices we make demand.

## Dot and Doug Knobs

By Mary & Alan Meier

The 2007 changes on the Dot and Doug Wade Prairie actually began late last year when Al planted about 315 pounds

of seed collected in 2005 and 2006 on six acres of former cornfield. During the spring and summer of 2007, numerous grassland species began to emerge, including pale purple coneflowers, prairie tall cinquefoil, silky asters, old field goldenrod, and sky-blue asters which bloomed prolifically. Also plentiful were the weeds typical of a first-year planting. We look forward to seeing the prairie species displace these unwelcome varieties in the upcoming growing seasons.

Seed harvesting was our main focus throughout the spring, summer, and early fall – altogether, we collected about 275 pounds of seed. In mid-November, Al and his brother, Paul, sowed the seeds on nearly five acres of cleared cornfield adjacent to the 2006 planting. Prior to being planted, the area was burned and harrowed and then harrowed again afterward, so we are grateful for the crew and volunteers who assisted in these tasks.

Preparing for a restoration planting presents several challenges, mainly in regard to determining the type, number, and quantity of species to include. Thanks to the expertise and experience of Jay Stacy, Bill Kleiman, Hank Hartman, Becky Hartman, Bernie Buchholz, and others, we assembled a seed mix which we hope will yield a diverse prairie not dominated by just a few species. Sharing through discussion and demonstration has been very beneficial. Recently, several stewards have also been collaborating on record-keeping by combining seed harvest databases which will enable us to produce even better restorations in the future.

We are in the process of creating a planting history detailing the location, terrain, soil types, field preparation, sowing methods, species, and quantities for both the 2006 and 2007 Dot and Doug Wade Prairie restorations. Tracking what grows well, what grows poorly, and what grows too well will help us adjust our future seed mixes and methodology.

Weed and brush management also required quite a bit of attention this year, and, as a result, poison parsnip and honeysuckle seem to be decreasing in several areas.



Al Meier



Mary Meier

Al focused on removing honeysuckle and multiflora rose from along the preserve boundaries, and the crew worked diligently on eradicating birdsfoot trefoil from Leopold Knob. In February, we had a very successful work day in which a number of volunteers cleared a section of Dot's Knob that had been overgrown with non-prairie species. We plan to restore the area to grassland sometime in the future.

A highlight of our year was serving as chairs for Autumn on the Prairie, the annual Nachusa Grasslands festival held in late September. We enjoyed working with the organizing committee members, Cassie Krueger, Bill Kleiman, Susan Kleiman, Becky Hartman, Tonya Bittner, Jan Grainger, Mike Adolph, Carol Brown, Ron Ingraham, and Bob Shone, and we also appreciated the efforts of the many individuals who volunteered on the day of the event. Thanks to their dedicated efforts, the approximately 600 people who attended AOTP were treated to a remarkable variety of tours, exhibits, demonstrations, musical performances, and refreshments.



Longtime Nachusa volunteer Jay Stacy and the work he has done for the project were the subject of the cover article in the autumn 2007 issue of The Nature Conservancy's national magazine. A framed copy was presented to Jay.

During our many trips to Nachusa and numerous hours working on various projects in 2007, we have both experienced many rewards. Throwing a branch on a raging bonfire, marveling at a delicate prairie smoke, stripping the fluff from a thimbleweed, introducing our daughter, son-in-law, and grandson to the beauty of Doug's Knob during coneflower season, hauling a soggy log from Wade Creek, spreading seeds on the new planting, sitting on a rock and watching the little bluestem sway in the breeze, and sharing lunches and dinners with other stewards – all of these moments have added up to a great year at Nachusa Grasslands.



## Hamill-Winter Prairie

By Mike Adolph

Bob Shone moved to Indiana into his dream house this year. Whatever the future, the transformation of Hamill-Winter is credited at least in half to Bob. He's been a dedicated, hard worker for more than 12 years. He was traveling nearly four hours of travel time for each trip. Now

it's more than six.

Hamill-Winter is roughly bounded by Pusytoes Lane on the south, Lowden Road, and a line going west from the Yellow House past the power tower almost to Wade Creek.

It was created as the "Main Unit" in the early 90s. It included the '86 original purchase—the knobs and the High Oaks.

Two prairie plantings have transformed the Unit. In '87 prairie was planted in 40+ acres west and south of Coyote Point and Tim's Knob. In '91 prairie planting converted a cropfield just west of No-name Knob and the eastern remnant prairie pasture. This second planting was more successful, and helped attract grassland birds. Sedge Wrens and Henslow's Sparrows have since resumed nesting at Nachusa. Grasshopper Sparrow numbers are down, but TNC is doing what it can here to help birds, both migratory and resident.

Ann Haverstock, who did a bird census in the Unit for 12 years, took time to hunt among the soybeans in that field for adolescent Upland Sandpipers in the summer of '91. They stopped nesting at Nachusa a few years later.)

Our Main Complex of knobs contains many American Plum thickets. These are home in the nesting season to Bell's Vireos and Least Flycatchers, both rare species. They're holding on.

Bob and I have battled for years to keep these thickets from being overtaken and ruined by Honeysuckles and Black Cherry. In one four-hour period more than 400 Honeysuckles were destroyed in one thicket—without getting them all.

When work began on the invasives in the remnant pastures, our chief targets were Multiflora Rose, Black Cherry and Honeysuckle. It's no exaggeration to state that more than 10,000 roses have been removed from the unit, and nearly as many of the other two. Other major threats that have appeared here are King Devil (*Hieracium pretense*) and Red Clover (*Trifolium partense*.)

We've found that most of our time has to be used to fight invasives. In an acre-sized area Bob calls the "demonstration plot" we've battled the "big 3" and have done a minimum of seed planting. We're seeing the area improving nicely with what's in the seed bank and what has come in on its own. It's far from the best that can be done, but it's the best we could do.

We've also spent a lot of time on the units adjacent to ours, since invasives don't respect unit boundaries.

Mike Adolph

## Eight Oaks Savanna

By Jan Grainger



Jan Grainger

Many of the stewards at Nachusa have been successful in the restoration of our heritage communities by taking on planting projects. I have seen the transformation of fields from soybeans or corn to diverse and abundant growth of native species under the care of Mary Vieregg, Jay Stacy and Tom and Jenny Mitchell. Recently, Al and Mary Meier, Bernie and Cindy Buchholtz and John and Cindy Schmadeke have joined the fun of turning ag fields into prairies. So I guess it is my turn to give it a try. I have been inspired by Tom Mitchell to try planting prairie and savanna seeds in a field within Tellabs Savanna.

The site is nestled nicely in a heavily wooded area. Fabulous Sandstone Bluffs surround it to the east and north. Presently, it is a very small (2 acres?) corn field. The corn has been harvested and I have been assessing the area surrounding the field. Along the edge of the field, there is quite a bit of our nemesis, the dreaded honeysuckle. Bill Kleiman mowed much of it down and I applied herbicide to all the stumps I could find. I am taking it out by hand where it is growing close to young oaks or near native plants that I have been discovering along this edge. I have been happy to uncover a few survivors such as grape fern and starry campion.

I will begin seed collecting as soon as possible in the spring of 2008. Tom Mitchell and Jay Stacy are masters of prairie planting and they have offered to help me with choosing and harvesting seed for this project. The seed will be planted after the corn is harvested next fall.

Undertaking a planting is a challenge. It will take a couple of years to see the fruits of my labor, but I am sure it will seem worth the wait when I spy tiny familiar seedlings poking up through the sandy soil, ready to face the competition.

## Big Woods

By Hank & Becky Hartman



Hank & Becky Hartman

The woodpeckers are here. There have always been abundant flickers. In 2007 we started seeing red headed woodpeckers all the time. Often there were six or eight visible. On December weekends we were still seeing one or two pair each time we visited the savanna areas. Nice rectangular holes from pileated woodpeckers have appeared.

Big Woods grew in size. Al and Mary Meier of the Dot/Doug Wade Unit graciously donated the 5.5-acre Wade Bottoms to the Big Woods empire. It is predominately grass as it has been boomed sprayed for the last ten years in order to kill the birds foot trefoil plants. We



Preparing a mix of seed for planting.



over seeded the area with 140 pounds of bulk seed. At the eastern end of Wade Bottoms, Lake Aldo appeared after all the spring rain and persisted for most of the summer. As more of the brush and trees have been removed, it is interesting to watch the changing hydrology of the unit.

The most striking visual change is that the North Knob is now a true oak barrens. Oak wilt is killing the small diameter black oak trees. At least half have been dead long enough to fall over and we removed them. Most if not all the remaining small oaks will soon be gone. The scrub oak bushes are still looking great. It is amazing how much better the area looks without the trees. And you can see all the way across the Potholes bowl to the Hamill-Winter Knob

At the northeast corner of the unit near point 18, two distinct drainages enter from the north and eventually merge giving a triangle of higher land formed between them. We cleared about one third of the area of honeysuckle and multiflora rose resprouts early this year. Gene St. Louis and friends did the first massive clearing effort here at least 10 years ago. The forestry mower cleared the area again in 2004. This is the first blooming season that we have been able to see the spectacular bloom from the seeds we planted in 2004.

Finally, we cleared brush from a corridor in the South Woods which lie between our Sedge Meadow and the Fen. You can stand by Which Way Oak and actually see the Fen in the distance. There is a nice grassy rise right at the edge of the woods next to the Fen. Both Hank and Kevin Kaltenbach have been dumping seed on it for several years. Watching that transformation will be fascinating.



Propagating prairie violets.

## THANK YOU DONORS

### *\$1,000 and above*

Genesis Nursery Inc. Bauer Foundation	Dorothy Lundahl Charitable Trust
In memory of Harold Heinkel by Peter Heinkel	Alan & Mary Rhodes Meier Dale Birkenholtz
Honoring Nachusa Stewards by Mary Lee Stacy & John Calihan	Dillon Foundation Exelon
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Heinkel	ILDNR C2000 Fund for fire equipment
Mr. & Mrs. Ronald D. Ingraham	

### *\$100 and above*

Mr. & Mrs. Tom Lawson in memory of Russ & James Lawson, Jim & Mary Viereg, In memory of Jack Kleiman by John & Roxana Huck, Dwight & Tess Heckert, Tom & Jenny Mitchell, Mary & Al Meier, Hank & Becky Hartman. In honor of Jenny & Tom Mitchell by Marilyn J. Workman, Mary Scott, For 60 year birthday honors to Becky Hartman, Jay Stacy, & Tom Mitchell by John & Cindy Schmadeke, Justine & Bill Kusner, Patricia Hayden, James Hoyt, Justine Kusner, Mr. & Mrs. John J. McCormick, Tom Mitchell, Janice Grainger, Jay Stacy, Joanne Kiley & Ken Modzelewski, Mr. & Mrs. Charles A. Westcott in honor of Dr. Robert F. Betz, Mr. & Mrs. Mike Adolph, Bernie & Cindy Buchholz, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Ridener, State Farm Companies Foundation.

### *Other Generous Donors*

In memory of Clyde James by Adelaide James, Carol & Wilbert Boynton, In memory of Jananne Vargo from Jim & Ann Grove, In memory of Miss Ruth Ravenel from Marjorie Asplund, Mr. & Mrs. Randy Rice, Gary Tollaksen, Marilyn Anderson, Howard Fenton, Nancy J.Gray, Jo Durkes, Illinois Native Plant Society, Greg & Kay McKeen, Bruce & Beth Boyd, Mr. & Mrs. George Dilling, Dwight Heckert, J. T. Herman, Dr. Robert F. Inger & Ms. Fui Lian Tan, Mario Quatrini, Michal Strutini & Michael Sinensky, Carol Taggart, Gretchen Buchen, Ralph Pifer.

## NACHUSA ENDOWMENT FUND

James Hotchkiss, John R. Santucci, David Crossett, Robin & Steven Read, Hank & Becky Hartman, Todd & Tonya Bittner, Ann-Maria & Jon Vigano, David Crossett, Steven Read.

## STEWARDS OF NACHUSA GRASSLANDS

Leslee Spraggins State Director  
Bill Kleiman Project Director  
Cody Considine Restoration Ecologist

### STEWARDS

#### **Big Woods**

Hank & Becky Hartman

#### **Clear Creek Prairie**

Prairie Preservation Society  
of Ogle County-Katie Schoenfeldt

#### **Dot & Doug Wade Prairie**

Al & Mary Meier

#### **Dropseed Hills**

Mary & Jim Vieregg

#### **Eight Oaks Savanna**

Jan Grainger

#### **Fen Unit**

Kevin Kaltenbach

Josh Sage

#### **Gobbler Ridge at CCK**

Bernie & Cindy Buchholz

#### **Hamill-Winter Prairie**

Mike Adolph

Bob Shone

#### **Edith & Anna Heinkel Savanna**

#### **East Unit**

Mike Crowe & Cassie Krueger

#### **West Unit**

Jay Stacy

Mary Scott

#### **Kittentail Savanna**

West Chicago Prairie

Stewardship Group-Steve Sentoff

#### **Hook Larson Unit**

John & Cindy Schmadeke

#### **Roadsides & Jay Meiners Wetlands**

Tom & Jenny Mitchell

#### **Rolling Thunder & Harold Walkup Prairies**

Sally Baumgardner

George Bouska, Lorraine  
Gawlik, Max Baumgardner,  
Earl Thomas

#### **Sand Farm**

Russ Brunner

#### **Tellabs Savanna**

Ron Ingraham

Jan Grainger, Amber Address

#### **Thelma Carpenter Prairie**

Tom & Jenny Mitchell

#### **Open Units**

Bennett Woods, Prairie Potholes, Schafer Prairie, Coneflower

#### **Once a month Stewards**

John Heneghan, Dave Crites, David Edelbach, Ray Derksen,  
Joshua Clarke

#### **Barn Steward**

Jenny Mitchell

#### **Autumn On The Prairie 2008 Chair and Co-Chair:**

Cassie Krueger, Chairwoman; Joshua Clarke, Co-chair

#### **Science Stewards:**

Bird Monitoring

Ann Haverstock

Butterfly Monitoring

Jan Grainger

Herbarium Steward

Dwight Heckert

Insect Collector

Open

Lespedeza leptostachya monitor

Open

Photo Monitor

Charles Larry

#### **Outreach Volunteers:**

Publicist/Educator/Presenters: Hank & Becky Hartman, Sally  
Baumgardner, Gene Miller,  
Dwight Heckert

## STEWARDS continued

Youth Stewards Leaders

Mike Adolph, Susan Kleiman,  
Sally Baumgardner, Ron  
Ingraham, Bob Shone, Barb  
Rutherford, George Bouska,  
Bernie Buchholz

#### **2007 Seasonal Assistant Stewards:**

Austin Webb, Janet Guffy, Mike Saxton, Joshua Clarke, Matt  
Fagan, Will Overbeck, David Jacobs, Andre Romero, Tyler  
Boyd

## Hike Nachusa

Take a hike around Nachusa Grasslands led by veteran Nachusa volunteer stewards Hank and Becky Hartman. During 2008, hikes are scheduled on Saturdays at 2 p.m. See the Calendar for dates. Meet at the barn a few minutes before that. A special sunset hike is set for 7:30 p.m. July 26. Beginning in 2009, the regular hikes move to Sunday afternoons at 2 p.m.



# Calendar of Events, Workdays and Hikes 2008

## **February** - Brush Season

- 2 Fen
- 9 Sand Farm
- 16 Gobbler Ridge
- 23 West Heinkel Savanna
- Hike 2 P.M. Tellabs Savanna

## **March** - Brush, Planting and Fire Season

- 1 Dot Doug
- 8 Big Woods
- 13 Thurs. Slide show at Nash Center at 7 P.M.
- 15 Annual fire refresher training for Nachusa Crew
- 22 Tellabs Savanna
- Hike 2 P.M. Johnny's Creek to E. Heinkel
- 29 East Heinkel Savanna

## **April** - Brush, Planting and Fire Season

- 5 Gobbler Ridge – Bernie
- 12 Dot & Doug Wade Prairie
- 19 Hamill-Winter Prairie
- 26 Rolling Thunder Prairie
- Autumn On The Prairie (AOTP)
- Committee Meeting at noon
- Hike 2 P.M. Savanna restorations

## **May** - Weed Season

- 3 Tellabs Savanna
- 10 Sand Farm
- 17 Rolling Thunder Prairie
- 24 Thelma Carpenter Prairie
- Hike 2 P.M. Gobbler Ridge prairie reconstructions
- 31 Clear Creek Prairie
- Potluck lunch at 12:30
- 1:00 - 3:00 Guest expert with Stewards tba

## **June** - Weed and Seed Collecting Season

- 7 Eight Oaks Savanna
- 13 Friday Open House for Resource Managers
- 14 Fen
- AOTP Committee Meeting at 1 P.M.
- 21 West Heinkel Savanna & Thelma Carpenter Prairie
- Hike 2 P.M. Coneflowers
- 28 Hook Larson Prairie

## **July** - Weeds and Seeds

- 7 Pine Rock Nature Preserve - Bill
- 12 Big Woods
- AOTP Committee Meeting at 1 P.M.
- 19 Hamill-Winter Prairie
- 26 East Heinkel Savanna
- Hike 7:30 P.M. Stars and lightning bugs

## **August** - Seeds

- 2 Big Woods
- 9 Gobbler Ridge w Bernie
- 16 Dot & Doug Wade Prairie
- 23 Clear Creek Prairie
- AOTP Committee Meeting at noon 1 P.M.
- 30 Dot Doug
- Hike 2 P.M. Gentians

## **September** - Seeds

- 6 Fen

- 13 Rolling Thunder Prairie
- 20 **Autumn On The Prairie Celebration**
- Walks and other activities - 10 A.M. to 5 P.M.
- 27 Hamill-Winter Prairie

## **October** - Seeds

- 4 Eight Oaks Savanna
- 11 Tellabs
- 18 Rolling Thunder Prairie & Thelma Carpenter Prairie
- Hike 2 P.M. Introduction to seed picking
- Prescribed Fire training course 130/190 Saturday and Sunday
- 9 to 4. Registration required. Contact bkleiman@tnc.org or 815-456-2340
- 25 Gobbler Ridge w Bernie

## **November** - Brush, Planting and Fire Season

- 1 Rolling Thunder Prairie
- 8 Seed Mixing Celebration & Potluck Gathering
- 15 Big Woods
- 22 Dot & Doug Wade Prairie (Shotgun weekend)
- 29 Fen

## **December** - Brush and Planting Season

- 1 Hamill-Winter Prairie (Shotgun weekend)
- Hike 2 P.M. High views of Carpenter Prairie
- (Shotgun weekend at TCP)
- 13 Bennett Woods
- 20 East Heinkel Savanna
- 27 Tellabs Savanna

## **January 2009** - Brush Season

- 3 Dot & Doug Wade Prairie
- 4 Sunday Hike 2 P.M. Woodpeckers in the Big Woods
- 10 Tellabs Savanna
- 17 East Heinkel Woods
- 24 Bennett Woods
- 31 Big Woods

## **February 2009** - Brush Season

- 7 Fen
- 14 Hook Larson Prairie
- 21 Gobbler Ridge
- 22 Sunday hike 2 P.M. Franklin Creek
- 28 West Heinkel Savanna

## **AUTUMN ON THE PRAIRIE**

19th Annual Celebration at Nachusa Grasslands  
Saturday, September 20, 2008, 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 45, March 2008

Editor . . . . . John Schmadeke, 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.

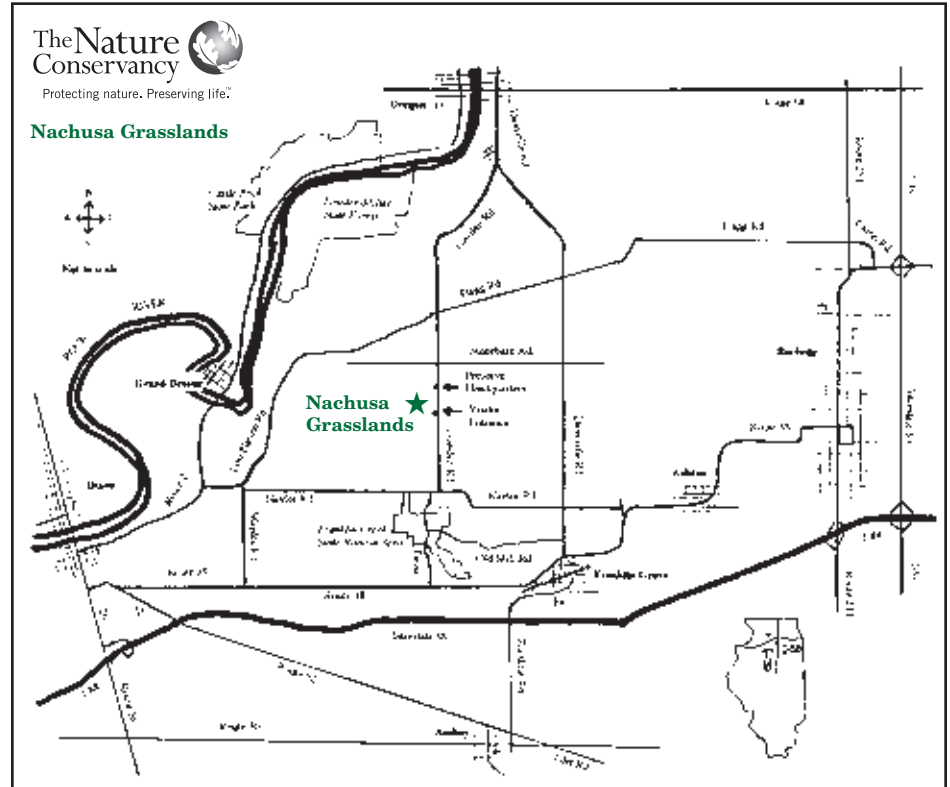
**From I-88: (East-West Tollway):** Exit at Rt. 251 North (Rochelle), to Rt. 38 West. Travel through Ashton and into Franklin Grove (approx. 16 miles), turn right (north) on Daysville Rd./1700E. Travel 1.5 miles north to Naylor Rd./1950N, turn left (west) and go 2.2 miles to Lowden Rd./1500E, turn right (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   
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

## The Nature Conservancy

Nachusa Grasslands Preserve  
8772 S. Lowden Road  
Franklin Grove, IL 61031  
(815) 456-2340  
[www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org)