

ISSUE 52, SPRING 2015

PRAIRIE SMOKE

NACHUSA GRASSLANDS *Annual Stewardship Report for 2014*



Hello Friends,

This issue of *Prairie Smoke* tells the story of our bison introduction to the preserve last fall. It was a feat that took a lot of people, time, and money, and we are amazed that we completed it.

Fire season was a banner year with our fire crew involved in 3,800 acres of fires. 2,000 acres of those fires were done at Nachusa. The Nachusa fire crew has earned a reputation for burning a lot of acres safely with a crew comprised of volunteers. Other good fire work in the area was done by Byron Forest Preserve, IL DNR, and the Rock River Prescribed Fire Crew.

This winter, we worked to prepare another thousand acres for bison enclosure. We removed old fence and cleared brush off the fence line in order to start building new bison fence this spring.

Our stewardship continues with invasive weed work this summer, harvesting seed all summer and fall, and supporting conservation science.



Photo: Kirk Hallowell

Enjoy our *Prairie Smoke* and thank you for your support.

Bill Kleiman, *Project Director*
Cody Considine, *Ecologist and Editor*



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SEPTEMBER 19, 2015

26th Annual Autumn on the Prairie Celebration

- o Background photo: "Tall Gayfeather (*Liatris pycnostachya*) blooming in a 4-year prairie planting in Tellabs." By Dee Hudson
- o Front and back cover photos: Charles Larry / Dee Hudson
- o Magazine layout design: Dee Hudson

THE HISTORIC NIGHT

By Cody Considine

There is nothing easy about repairing a damaged ecosystem. The return of bison to Nachusa was no exception.

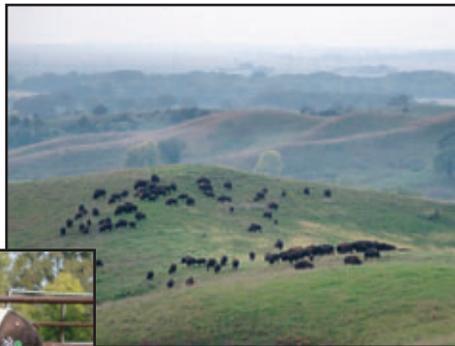


Photo: The Nature Conservancy

We left Nachusa on a warm sunny day in September after a royal send-off by friends, family, and well-wishers. Our spirits soared. This was it! We were off to bring bison back to Nachusa. Three days later, beaten up by the rain and cold of northwest Iowa, by animals not cooperating,

and by three nights in a bunkhouse, we finally began to sort our animals out of the Broken Kettle herd. I will never forget the excitement of seeing a bison come through the squeeze chute and hearing Emily Hohman (IA TNC) call out “Nachusa bison.”

The first glimpse of Nachusa's herd at the Broken Kettle Grasslands Preserve in northwest Iowa.



Photos: The Nature Conservancy



Jeff Walk & Dave Crites assist at the round-up.

Friday October 3 was THE DAY! Loading the cows and yearling bulls onto the semi went moderately well. Then we backed up our brand new aluminum livestock trailer to the load-out chute where our two 1700 lb bulls were waiting impatiently. One of them, “Chain Breaker,” earned his nickname during the roundup when he crashed into the one-ton squeeze chute so hard that he broke the 5/16” logging chain holding it in place! We opened our trailer doors and in he charged like a freight train, snorting and thrashing, punching holes with his horns in our brand new trailer as if it were a tin can. The trailer looked like an out-of-control carnival ride as



Photo: The Nature Conservancy
“Chain Breaker”

he pounded it back and forth. Bang! Bang! Bang! 1700 lbs of power on display. Scott Moats (IA TNC) laughingly said “good luck with that one.”

Our two-truck bison convoy headed east. Twenty head of wild American Bison were on their way to a landscape they had not seen in 175 years. “Chain Breaker” and the rest of the herd settled down for the eight hour journey. It was surreal and I thought: here we are driving through a sea of corn and beans that was once prairie, towing an iconic American animal that almost went extinct, heading for a new beginning where bison and prairie may once again thrive together.

The historic moment came at 11:30 PM on October 3rd, 2014, when our little bison convoy pulled up to the newly constructed corral at Nachusa. We were greeted by a hero's welcome of cheers from family, friends, and loyal stewards. The semi-truck driver backed into position at the corral,



Photo: Dee Hudson

lowered the unloading ramps and opened the doors, news media cameras flashed.....and nothing happened! The bison did not want to come out. Maybe they were camera shy. Further encouragement with large rattles and broomsticks did not help much either. We turned off the semi-truck and diverted our attention to the bulls in our trailer. We opened the door and “Chain Breaker” came trotting out nicely onto Illinois soil.

By morning, all of the animals were out of the semi and in the corral, relaxed and eating prairie hay. We could finally take a deep breath, exhale, and let the tension of the past week melt away. We did it!

Photo: Dee Hudson

BISON JOURNAL – SOUTH DAKOTA

By Bill Kleiman

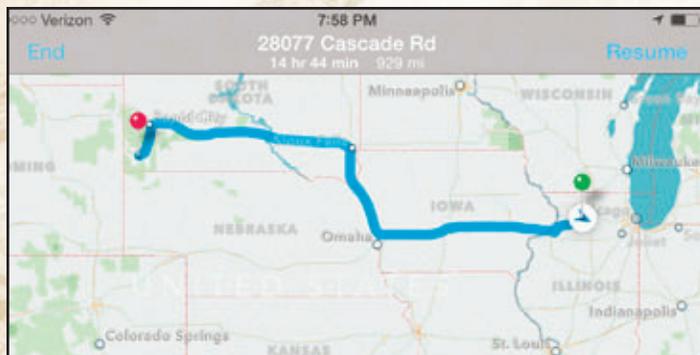
The assembly of Nachusa's bison herd involved three trips, 3500 highway miles, and the time and effort of a band of great people. You've just read about one of those trips. This is another.

OCTOBER 23, 2014, THURSDAY 10 AM

Cody and I left before dawn on Friday, October 17, 2014, to pick up bison at Wind Cave National Park and the adjacent Lame Johnny Creek ranch. It was 15 hours of driving with just a few quick stops for fuel and as little junk food as possible. We arrived in the dark about 7 pm at Bev's Bunkhouse, a new Conservancy stewardship headquarters, which is located at their Whitney Preserve.



Modern cowgirls. My parents' generation missed seeing so many women in these jobs. These gals are rock stars making all sorts of things happen: running track loaders, squeeze chutes, fixing broken stuff, towing trailers, chasing bison, vaccinating, and organizing everyone.



Our trip map

OCTOBER 24, 2014, FRIDAY 8 AM

Next morning we went to Lame Johnny corral and worked on improving some old fences in their catch pasture. Why are we at Lame Johnny's corral? Because it has been holding Wind Cave bison for various TNC projects over the last several years, starting herds at Broken Kettle Grasslands (Iowa), Dunn Ranch (Missouri), El Uno (Mexico), and Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve (Kansas). Lame Johnny had several cows and their calves that they were willing to sell to Nachusa.

The landscape in this part of western South Dakota is handsome, rolling open grasslands with lots of bison, elk and pronghorn antelope. So we fixed fence and soaked in lots of sunshine and views.

OCTOBER 26, 2014, SUNDAY 8 AM

Sunday we ran bison from the trap pasture into the corral using three ATVs. One late born cinnamon calf escaped and a few crew roped it; it was carried back by Corissa and Kelly on an ATV like it was a gentle lamb (with its legs roped).



The roundup was the usual moving of animals from square pens holding ten to twenty head to a narrow single-file alley, then finally into the squeeze chute, where the veterinarian (Sheila) administered vaccines and the crew inserted subcutaneous pit tags



Nachusa's bison at the Lame Johnny Creek ranch.

(holds digital identification of animal). Five of these cows and three calves were put in a holding pen for Nachusa!

OCTOBER 27, 2014, MONDAY 8 AM

Monday we went over to Wind Cave National Park to help with their roundup as needed. What a gorgeous park! By the end of the day, 103 animals were sorted for the various TNC herds, including 12 for Nachusa that our TNC friends at Broken Kettle will hold for a year while we build our south unit fence this winter and summer.

OCTOBER 28, 2014, TUESDAY 9 AM

We spent most of the day transporting bison allocated to Nachusa and Broken Kettle from Wind Cave to Lame Johnny.



Corissa Krueger and Kelli Turner helping with veterinary care at the Wind Cave roundup.

OCTOBER 29, 2014, WEDNESDAY 6 AM

Wednesday was the day to get the animals on the road to their perspective preserves. We were all up, packed and headed out before dawn. We had the animals loaded by noon. As Cody and I warmed up the truck, we quickly thanked all our roundup friends who just shared a week of challenges, meals, and laughs, and off we went for a fifteen-hour drive all through the night. John Heneghan



Corissa paintball marks the cow that belongs with the cinnamon calf to keep them from being separated.



Cody and I wait for our animals with our new livestock trailer and truck. and Damian Considine did a generous act and drove to the western side of Iowa to give our exhausted bodies a break from driving. They drove us and the bison through several rain storms the last eight hours back to Nachusa. We released our animals into our corral before dawn.

OCTOBER 30, 2014, 10 AM

This morning the animals are in the Nachusa corral looking content, tails swishing, grass in their mouths. The End

BISON AND SCIENCE

By Jeffery W. Walk, P.H.D., DIRECTOR OF SCIENCE, IL TNC

The arrival of bison at Nachusa Grasslands in October 2014 was the culmination of 25 years of land protection and countless hours of diligent restoration to create a



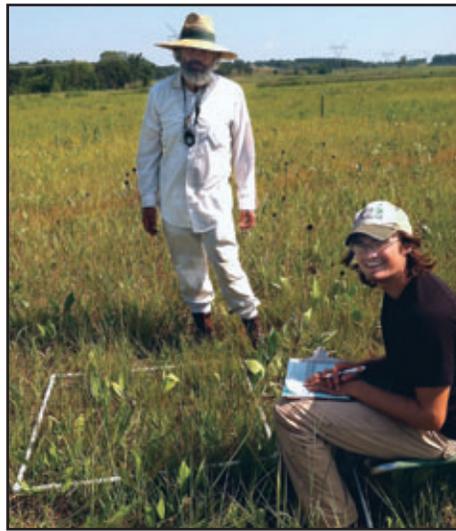
Jeff Walk

landscape capable of supporting bison. Ultimately, the goal was not to introduce bison, but rather to restore the fire-grazing interactions that shape prairie ecology — using bison as a tool to manage the prairie. As a side benefit, these iconic animals have brought a tremendous amount of attention to the prairie, with a surge of media attention and sharp uptick in site visitors. The arrival of bison has similarly caught the attention of researchers, and brought The Nature Conservancy the opportunity (and need) to scale up our science program at Nachusa Grasslands.

We brought bison to Nachusa Grasslands to do a job, to help manage the prairie, but they've done so much more. Professionally, I'm grateful for the opportunity bison have provided

to engage new researchers and grow the science program. Personally, getting to become part of the Nachusa family with my small role in the program has been the greatest reward.

To learn more about Nachusa's full science program regarding bison, please visit www.nachusagrasslands.org. The feature article, *Bison and Science*, is located in the 2014 IL TNC Science Report.



Restoration Technician Austen Slone assists the renowned prairie botanist Mike Jones as they collect data along a transect at Nachusa last summer.

Photos: The Nature Conservancy

Nachusa's Research Partners

Studying the effects of bison reintroduction



Northern Illinois University

SIU Southern Illinois University
CARBONDALE



ILLINOIS NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY
PRAIRIE RESEARCH INSTITUTE



WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

GENETICS

By Cody Considine

Our animals were genetically tested by the leading bison geneticist in the country, Jim Derr, and his team at Texas A&M University. The test results indicated all the samples contained bison mitochondrial DNA; no domestic cattle alleles were identified among the 14 nuclear markers used to evaluate introgression in bison. Our herd was found to contain a moderately high level of heterozygosity, the third highest heterozygosity value compared to the

eight other federal herds (Badlands National Park, Fort Niobrara NWR, National Bison Range, Theodore Roosevelt NP, Wind Cave National Park, Wichita Mountains NWR and Yellowstone NP). The average number of alleles for Nachusa was estimated at 4.65 alleles per locus, which is a relatively high amount of genetic diversity. The average number of alleles is a reflection of genetic diversity and is influenced by past population size. High

levels of genetic diversity are desirable for long herd survival.



Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife

SIU BEGINS BISON RESEARCH AT NACHUSA

By Julie Brockman



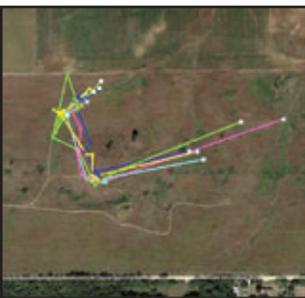
Photo: Kirk Hallowell

Julie Brockman uses an antenna & receiver to locate collared bison.

Bison have historically played an integral role in prairie ecosystems. By grazing, wallowing, trampling, and urinating, bison shape the prairie. Their activities increase forb diversity, alter nutrient cycling, and ultimately increase the heterogeneity of prairies at both the patch and landscape scales. Because of the complexity of effects bison have on ecosystem processes, an understanding of their movement and activities is imperative for managing the landscape.

“... seven female bison were fitted with GPS collars to take hourly location data ...”

In order to investigate bison–ecosystem interactions, graduate student Julie Brockman and Dr. Clay Nielsen of the Department of Forestry at Southern Illinois University and The Nature Conservancy have partnered to research habitat use by the newly-introduced bison herd at Nachusa Grasslands. The study has two major foci: to determine whether bison preferentially select for certain habitat types and to assess the effects of human presence on the herd. There are myriad factors, including burn regime, restoration planting date and vegetation composition, weather, season, and human disturbance which can influence where the herd moves on the preserve.



Every day the movement of the collared bison can be viewed online.

By looking at the herd’s movements throughout time and space, we can determine which of these factors has the greatest influence on bison movements and activities.

Several different types of data are being collected to assess bison habitat selection and human avoidance. Prior to their reintroduction at Nachusa Grasslands, seven female bison were fitted with GPS collars to take hourly location data for the individuals. These locations will be mapped with management data provided by The Nature Conservancy and with other landscape features in order to determine if the herd preferentially selects certain areas. In addition to identifying which habitats bison select, we are also conducting behavioral surveys on the herd in order to determine if different habitat types affect bison activity such as grazing, resting, and vigilance. A more detailed analysis of the effects of human disturbance on habitat selection will also include information on vehicular traffic. Information is being collected both by computerized traffic counters and game cameras as well as by volunteers. By comparing vehicular use of roads bordering the bison unit to bison locations, we can determine if the traffic has an effect on bison movement.



Photo: Dee Hudson

Previous studies west of the Mississippi River have also investigated the interactions of bison and prairie ecosystems; however, few studies have focused specifically on bison in tallgrass prairies undergoing active restoration. While we expect burn regime to be a key factor affecting bison habitat selection, the effects of restoration planting date are harder to predict. However, because of bison’s highly selective graminoid diet, we expect them to graze in older plantings, which generally have a higher concentration of grasses. Although human disturbance and infrastructure may have some impact on bison movement, we do not expect it to have as strong of an impact on habitat selection as other factors. By testing these predictions, we can gain a better understanding of bison preferences and activities. With this information, The Nature Conservancy staff can more effectively plan burn schedules, restoration plantings, and other management activities to promote plant diversity and quality and to create a low stress environment for the herd.

STEWARDS AND BISON

By Kirk Hallowell

If you have visited Nachusa Grasslands to view the bison since their arrival last October, you may have noticed this compelling sign posted at intervals along the fence of the

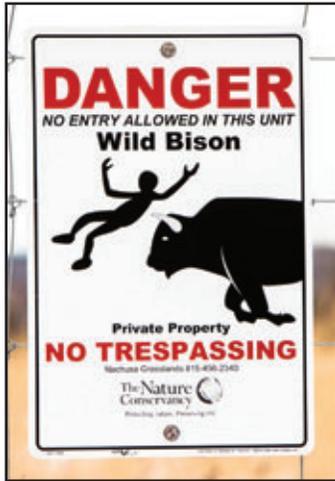


Photo: Dee Hudson

North Bison Unit. The image reinforces my natural survival instinct and has raised the hair on my neck on the few opportunities I have had to greet these impressive animals face to face. Those experiences have shaped that primal fear into some well-reasoned caution and respect.

Volunteer stewards and Nachusa staff will continue to work in both the North and South Bison Units.

Stewardship activities within these units are bound to create interactions between people and the bison. This prompts the obvious question, “How safe is it to be with bison?”



Photo: Kirk Hallowell

Brandon Semel, a graduate student from NIU, volunteers.

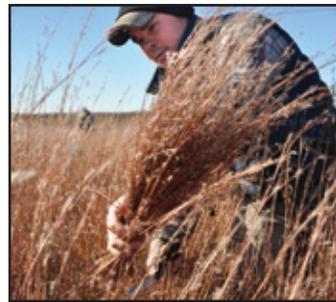


Photo: Heather Baker

Restoration Tech, Paul Bane, harvests little bluestem grass.



Photo: Dee Hudson

Ron Deters helps restore an oak savanna.



Photo: Charles Larry

The answer to this question lies in a balance of reasonable thinking. On one side of the equation, bison are not inherently aggressive toward people. On the other side of the equation, bison are huge animals capable of running up to 35 miles an hour, and both males and females are adorned with a set of stout horns. A logical conclusion is that people should not approach bison in a way that incites a reaction. With this equation in mind, four simple guidelines lead to safe stewardship outings within the bison units:

Safe Stewardship Guidelines

- **Stay at a safe distance.** Bison are naturally aware of their surroundings and extremely sensitive to the approach of any creature outside of their herd. When approaching bison, if the animals begin to get up from a lying position or to move, it is your signal to stop your approach.
- **Never corner a wild animal.** When approaching a herd of bison, make sure the animals are free to move away from you in every direction. Approaching bison that are hemmed in by a fence line can be dangerous.
- **Beware of the season.** Two times of the year require increased vigilance. The first is calving season (May-June) when cows may be particularly protective of newborn calves. The second is the rut (August) when bulls are competing to breed.
- **Be flexible.** If the herd is in your unit or in the area you plan to work, go somewhere different.

MILES OF FENCING

By Mike Saxton

Cut saddles. Weld braces. Repeat. Dig holes. Set posts. Stretch fence. Repeat. With 1,000 line posts, 3,000 t-posts, 6-miles of wire, 30,000 fence ties and a lot of blood, sweat and tears, the initial fencing project was completed in time for the bison's arrival in October 2014. Comprised of the perimeter fence and the trap and release pastures, our animals now freely roam on 500 acres of the north bison unit.

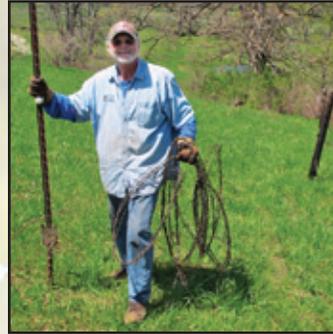
Like so many facets of the work we do at Nachusa, the fence installation was a process of trial and error. We learned as we went, figured out ways to streamline progress, improve efficiency and best utilize available resources. The combined efforts of staff, volunteers, contractors and seasonal crewmembers contributed to make this ambitious project a success.

While this effort was truly a collaboration by many dedicated and involved partners, there are key players

Damian Considine in his portable "welding buggy".

who deserve special notice. Cody Considine served as the crew foreman, directing and orchestrating efforts on a day-to-day basis. Damian Considine, jack-of-all-trades, was our primary welder and played a critical role in fabricating braces and hanging gates. David Crites helped with everything from

Welding, gate construction, post hole digging and cementing . . . these five guys have mastered the tasks: Dave Crites, Mike Carr, Mike Saxton, Damian Considine and Cody Considine.



Fence builders: Mark Jordan, Jocelyn Frazelle, Jeff Masters and Ruth Bowers Sword

big-picture planning to seeing through the most mundane of details and also spent months cutting saddles and co-leading fabrication.

Now we are poised to begin construction of the south bison unit fencing. David Crites, Mike Saxton and Jocelyn

Frazelle, again aided by numerous volunteers, have spent months felling trees, removing old wire and clearing fence rows, making room for the new fence in the south bison unit. With over 7 miles of fence to construct and a tentative completion date of July 2015, they have their work cut out for them.

All their hard work will pay off in the end when our conservation herd will have roughly 1,400 acres to freely roam.

All Photos: The Nature Conservancy



A RECORD FIRE SEASON

By John Heneghan



Our hats off to our IDNR partners Brad Semel and John Nelson. They burned large tracts at Castle Rock State Park and Lowden Miller State Forest, which have not seen fire in several decades.

Nachusa Grasslands has a solid history when it comes to prescribed fire. Led by Burn Boss Bill Kleiman, Restoration Ecologist Cody Considine and a highly experienced core group of volunteers, each spring the Nachusa Fire Crew puts fire on the ground. The 2014 spring fire season would go down in the record books for the most acres burned in a season.

April 11, 2014, was a particularly impressive day. The plan was to burn several Nachusa units along with two adjacent neighboring properties together, totaling over 300 acres. IL Department of Natural Resources also had planned for a 700-acre fire the same day and needed our help. Bill and Cody assembled a



The crew at Lowden Miller State Forest.



Dave Crites ignites the fire.

crew for the Nachusa fire and sent Dave Crites, Damian Considine, Bill Bowes and myself to help with the Castle Rock State Park burn. The Byron Forest Preserve and Dixon Park District were also on scene to help burn Castle Rock. To prepare for the large acre burn in the morning, Bill and Cody worked until dark, cutting firebreaks that did not previously exist.

That morning, Dave and I were in the field by 6:30 AM mowing fire breaks for the Nachusa burn. We were meeting at Castle Rock at 9:00 AM to burn the George Fell Nature Preserve, which had not been burned for at least 30 years. This was a large fire, by far the biggest burn we had been part of. I was the Crew Boss for our crew. After scouting the line, we began burning in a clockwise direction from the park office. We had a rough time as we were using an animal trail to light off. Dave and an IDNR crew member had blowers and crawled their way up and down the trail blowing the path clear for us. Damian and I switched off igniting. We had to carry Indian Packs for suppression. The seven hours of burning, walking up and down the rugged landscape, wore us out.



Tony Merisko, Stuart Goldman, and John Heneghan at the LMSF fire.

It was a long day, but we felt great satisfaction in a large job done well without incident. We met up with the crew from Nachusa for a victory dinner and exchanged stories of the day's events. Between the Nachusa and Castle Rock burns, we had burned over 1000 acres that day, bringing our total for the year to 3800 acres. It was a good season to say the least.



All Photos: The Nature Conservancy

A STUNNING ACCOMPLISHMENT

By Cody Considine

Photo: Hank Hartman

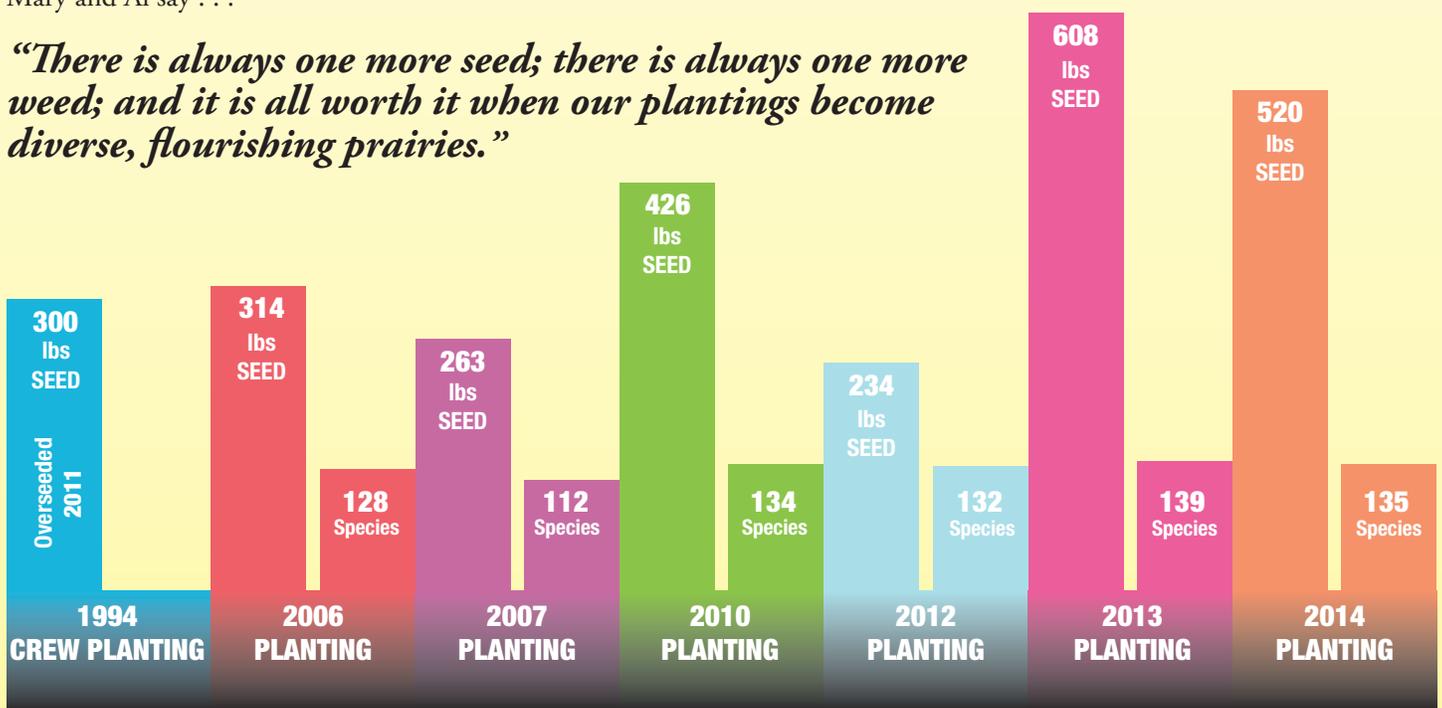
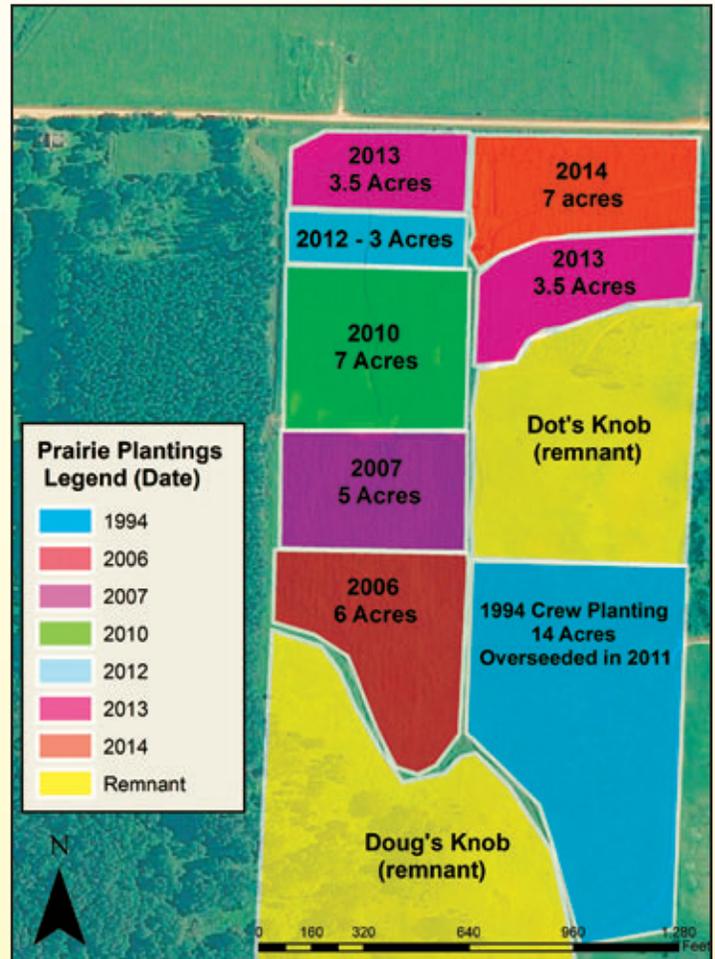


This sequence of plantings by Al and Mary Meier is an example of the dedication which defines Nachusa Grasslands. Al and Mary accomplished the first four plantings of this sequence while both were working full-time, making the two-hour drive from Bloomington, Illinois, almost every weekend and sometimes during the week (Al is usually in the prairie working before 7 am!). Between 2006 and 2014, they have spent about 7,500 hours on the ground at Nachusa, collecting seed as well as managing weeds and brush on the Dot and Doug Wade Prairie remnants and restorations.

The Meiers have also helped with prescribed fire, served as Friends of Nachusa Grasslands officers, and coordinated our Autumn on the Prairie celebrations. Truly inspiring!

Mary and Al say . . .

“There is always one more seed; there is always one more weed; and it is all worth it when our plantings become diverse, flourishing prairies.”



FRIENDS OF NACHUSA GRASSLANDS



Volunteerism, Endowments and Science Grants Grow

Last year several new volunteers joined our restoration efforts at Nachusa. Our unofficial but very effective mentoring program shares what stewards have learned over the years and helps new stewards find their niche. Their energy and com-

mitment inspire even the longest-serving volunteers.

Donors may give to two Endowments to support the conservation and preservation of the native plants, animals,

and natural communities at Nachusa Grasslands by providing funds for long-term stewardship. The Nature Conservancy manages the Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment. The Community Foundation of Northern Illinois manages the Friends Endowment for Nachusa Grasslands. Distributions from both Endowments fund restoration efforts at the preserve. Endowed funds now exceed an amazing \$600,000; our goal is \$3 million.



Photo: Kirk Hallowell

Volunteer John Ayres collects seeds.

Science Grants for 2015

To encourage science and education at Nachusa Grasslands, the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands awards monetary grants to qualified candidates conducting scientific research significant to restoration and management practices at Nachusa Grasslands.

Congratulations to the 2015 recipients:

JULIA BROCKMAN
\$2000

Bison habitat selection study.

MARK WETZEL
\$1800

Earthworm inventory.

BETHANNE BRUNINGA-SOCOLAR
\$2000

Continuing study of effects of restoration on bee communities.

HEATHER HERAKOVICH
\$1500

Continuation of work on grassland birds pre- and post-bison.



Photo: Kirk Hallowell

Volunteer of the Year

The volunteers of Nachusa were collectively named the 2014 Volunteer of the Year by The Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. Mary and Jim Vieregg accepted the award for the group.

Celebrating Restoration Success

Friends celebrated at the 6th Annual Prairie Potluck last June. About 90 folks enjoyed food, music and prairie tours in what has become a favorite event of our friends, families and neighbors.

Join the Friends

We welcome new volunteers and supporters throughout the year. Let us share what we have learned with you.

THE ANNUAL PRAIRIE POTLUCK
Future prairie stewards, Landon Dempsey, Deacon Clark and Rowan Considine, enjoy the antics of a very tiny toad.

Photo: Dee Hudson



TOM ANTON, ET AL
\$1000

Survey of Blanding's turtles and other reptiles.

NICHOLAS BARBER
\$750

Dung beetle community formation in bison areas.

SARAH SMITH
\$950

Soil studies.

PATI VITT
\$1600

Continuation of prairie bush clover study.



Photo: Ted Burgess

Nick Barber, assistant professor of biology at NIU, teaches students in his ecology class about plants and the tallgrass prairie ecosystem during a field trip to Nachusa Grasslands.

ANGELA BURKE
\$1200

Effect of bison and fire on small mammal populations.

ELIZABETH BACH
\$2200

Seasonal shifts in prairie fungal communities and carbon and nitrogen cycling.

Sign up for Prairie-Updates

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Save these 2015 Dates

Friends Prairie Potluck: June 20
Friends Annual Meeting: July 25

NEW STEWARDS AT NACHUSA

Frank Sprude

I grew up on the Mississippi River in Hancock County, Illinois, and currently live in Warrenville, Illinois. For the past few years, I have worked to restore a native tallgrass savannah on approximately one acre of my property. I have collected and interseeded native seeds, transplanted some natives, cleared foreign trees, and had small burns on my property. Nachusa is incredible in its size and quality, so it is a real treat to come out and participate!



Photo: Kirk Hallowell

Laurie Faller

I grew up on a small dairy farm in Kewaunee, Wisconsin. I currently live in Polo, Illinois. During the time I have spent at The Nachusa Grasslands, I have helped to collect native prairie plant seeds, mix seeds, plant seeds and clear honeysuckle and fallen trees. I was looking for a way to volunteer and have an impact on my community. I believe I have found it here. Nachusa Grasslands is beautiful, and I'm thankful I can contribute to its preservation, a part of Illinois history. The bison are awesome too!

Dave Lawson

I have always enjoyed volunteering at the grasslands because working outdoors on a variety of projects keeps things interesting. I enjoy watching the way the landscape changes as invasive species are removed and native species take hold. I really enjoy working with the staff and hardworking volunteers. I adopted a unit on the Orland tract as a challenge to learn more about the tree and plant species at Nachusa. It is great to see the progress from the work I have put in there.



Photo: Kirk Hallowell



Photo: Dee Hudson

I came out to Nachusa from Elgin last February with my skis. After a few hours meandering through an amazing landscape, I went to the barn to see what was there. I was welcomed inside to a space I immediately felt at home in. I am an RN. However, my passion is being outdoors.

Susan Stillinger

I came out to Nachusa from Elgin last February with my skis. After a few hours meandering through an amazing landscape, I went to the barn to see what was there. I was welcomed inside to a space I immediately felt at home in. I am an RN. However, my passion is being outdoors.



Photo: Kirk Hallowell

Sarah Rigdon, John McDonald, Becky Hartman, Hank Hartman, John Schmadeke and Kendall Winter

Sarah Rigdon, John McDonald and Kendall Winter

Our awareness of Nachusa Grasslands was initially sparked by Bob Shone over ten years ago. Upon my retirement, Sarah and I decided to pay a visit to Nachusa. We met Hank and Becky Hartman on the prairie and they were nice enough to give us a tour. We began doing volunteer work with the Hartmans days after that initial contact and we invited Kendall Winter to join us. We all appreciate the diverse flora and habitats of Nachusa's sand prairie, and all of the other fine people we have met, conversed and worked with right up through this winter.

RIVERWATCH

By Mary Vieregg



Photo: Mary Vieregg

are identified and quantified. From this data, the stream quality can be determined.

The 2014 baseline data indicate that both Wade Creek and Clear Creek have "good" water quality. How will it change

over the years with the introduction of bison and changes in land management both in the preserve and upstream? Can we also establish a baseline for Johnny's Creek before bison are introduced in that area and upstream watershed areas hopefully become part of the preserve?

The field work itself is fun (as long as you do not mind getting a bit wet); the identification and analysis require more time, patience, and training. We need more volunteers to do both. If you are interested in becoming a part of this "Citizen Scientist" group, please contact Mary Vieregg, Bill Kleiman, or Cody Considine. 2015 Training workshops are taking place statewide through May 30th at various locations around the state, but if you would just like to join the group for a morning of field work to see what it's like, know that you are also welcome.

2014 DONORS

To The Nature Conservancy's Nachusa Grasslands

\$100,000+

Anonymous (2)
Sally Mead Hands Foundation
Illinois Clean Energy
Community Foundation
Tellabs Foundation

\$25,000 - \$99,999

Lynn Donaldson and Cameron Avery
Friends of Nachusa Grasslands
Oberweiler Foundation
Pam and David Waud

\$10,000 - \$24,999

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Full Circle Foundation
Marjorie Lundy and James Godshalk
Toni M. and Charles G. Mueller
Jay Stacy

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Sawicki Motor Company, Inc.
Carol and Paul Soderholm

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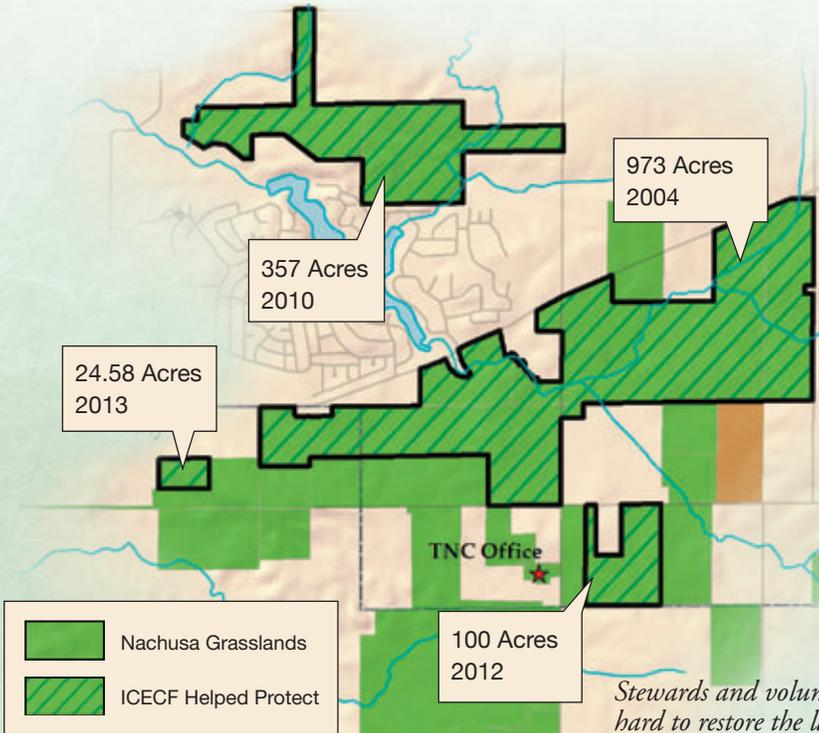
Mrs. Sheila M. Ary
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Michael Becker
Ms. Sally Bowers and
Mr. Howard Fenton
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Mr. and Mrs. Leon R. Zar

Photo by Charles Larry shows mayapples blooming in a recently burned oak & hickory woodland.

ILLINOIS CLEAN ENERGY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

By Mary Alice Rice
DIRECTOR OF MAJOR GIFTS, TNC

Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF) has announced they will triple every dollar donated to Nachusa Grasslands, up to \$21,000. "The passion and dedication of Nachusa's volunteer stewards inspired ICECF to help out by matching new dollars collected from the community. This matching grant acknowledges the work of volunteers, with an additional donation towards stewardship," said Jolie Krasinski, Program Officer. As TNC partners since 2002, ICECF has helped protect more than 1,597 acres at Nachusa Grasslands, and their generosity continues. All contributions will support the essential stewardship activities that keep the prairie we love thriving and beautiful. Please show ICECF how much Nachusa means to you by making a gift today. **Your gift will make a triple difference.**



Stewards and volunteers work hard to restore the land.

Pale purple coneflowers flourish in prairie planted by volunteer stewards.

Photo: Kirk Hollowell



Bison now roam across acres of restored prairie that ICECF helped protect.

Photo: Mark Jordan



Photo: The Nature Conservancy

Triple Your Impact!

A 3:1 match for every gift to Nachusa Grasslands

Mail your contribution to:
The Nature Conservancy in Illinois
Gift Processing Center
PO Box 6015
Albert Lea, MN 56007-6615

Please accept my gift of:

\$1000 \$500 \$100 \$75 Other _____ AILDA150201600

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Please contact me about how I can leave a legacy for conservation in Illinois through my estate.



Protecting nature. Preserving life.®

The Nature Conservancy

Nachusa Grasslands Preserve

8772 S. Lowden Road

Franklin Grove, IL 61031

815.456.2340

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