



FRIENDS OF
NACHUSA
GRASSLANDS

2012-2013 ANNUAL REPORT



A photograph of a field of purple flowers, likely purple loosestrife, in the foreground. The background shows a rolling landscape under a warm, golden sunset sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a soft glow over the scene. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

What Nachusa Teaches Me...

The lessons are simple, profound and personal;
taught to us by dedicated staff, mentors, researchers, and each other.
The land tutors us as well.



BERNIE & CINDY BUCHHOLZ 

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Message from the President

We volunteers have a passion for learning. Nachusa Grasslands rewards us with new knowledge and insights every day – whether in the field, in the tool shop, during a prescribed burn, or at home studying native plants. Working with others at Nachusa unites us in a common cause: to conserve a beautiful landscape. We love Nachusa because we are learning to understand it! And we reap the rewards.

For almost eight years, I've been enrolled in an immersion course, "Restoring Nachusa's Landscape 101." I've learned intimate lessons about the beauty of nature. I've wrestled with failure, as seven consecutive successful prairie plantings did not guarantee an eighth. Nachusa has taught me important lessons in acceptance, and sometimes, humility. I am learning to allow for human weakness, even as I admire our enduring strengths. And, as I've walked the prairie and wetlands and savannas, I've learned to be present in the moment.

You're learning from Nachusa, just as I am. This Annual Report features different views on the theme *What Nachusa Teaches Me*. The lessons are simple, profound and personal; taught to us by dedicated staff, mentors, researchers, and each other. The land tutors us as well. It challenges us to understand its mysteries that unfold over many years. We marvel that it has the perfect lesson plan for each student, a curricula that will never end. Nachusa will continue to provide teachable moments if we make ourselves available... if we pay attention.

Next fall's bison reintroduction will provide more learning opportunities. The presence of these great beasts will invite increased visitation and interest in our site. We'll be challenged to share Nachusa's lessons and opportunities with a much larger public with diverse interests. Will we be ready?

Your time and financial support reflect your great passion for this landscape. You are the flesh and bones of Nachusa's community! Our mission is advanced through your energy, creativity, and willingness to contribute in so many different ways. We are moving forward: membership, stewardship, gifts to our endowment, and support for science all increased this year.

The chances to learn from Nachusa as we move forward are limitless. Enjoy the lessons that Nachusa teaches. Stay open to new discoveries. Then, share what you've discovered with others, and invite them to understand and love Nachusa like you do. We'll all reap the rewards.

Bernie Buchholz

President, Friends of Nachusa Grasslands
November 2013

Thanks to Cindy Crosby for editing this message.




*"In the end,
we will
conserve only
what we love,
we will love
only what
we understand,
and we will
understand
only what
we are
taught."*

Baba Dioum
SENEGALÉSE
CONSERVATIONIST



GOBBLER RIDGE 

BLAZING STAR (*LIATRIS ASPERA*) 

Friends of Nachusa Grasslands



Nachusa Grasslands is a leader in restoring one of the world's most endangered ecosystems.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) owns and operates Nachusa Grasslands. The Friends of Nachusa Grasslands (Friends) is a 501(c)(3) not for profit registered organization founded in 2008 by volunteers dedicated to providing for the long-term care and management of the project.

Over the past twenty-seven years, hundreds of concerned people have invested thousands of hours protecting and restoring remnant prairie at Nachusa Grasslands. Although many more years of effort lie ahead, Nachusa is already one of the most successful restorations in the world. We have now begun to provide for its long-term survival.



Mission

At Nachusa Grasslands, rare and endangered remnant prairie, woodlands, and wetlands are being reconnected through habitat restoration to create one of the largest and most biologically diverse grasslands in Illinois, protecting the grasses, wildflowers, birds, insects, amphibians, reptiles and insects in this precious ecosystem.

The mission of the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands is to fund one or more endowments that will help defray the cost of natural areas management, staff and operating expenses; conduct and encourage stewardship; and support education and scientific activity at the preserve.

Build an Endowment

The goal of the Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment, invested and managed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in accordance with its policies and procedures, is to support the conservation and preservation of native plants, animals and natural communities by providing funds for long-term stewardship at Nachusa Grasslands.



REGAL FRITILLARY
(*SPEYERIA IDALIA*)

Accomplishment: During the 2012-2013 fiscal year, the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands donated \$80,000 to the Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment. The Endowment balance as of June 30, 2013, was \$187,515, an increase of \$93,585 from the previous year.

Need: Our goal is to raise \$3 million for the Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment so that TNC can then direct the annual earnings toward Nachusa Grasslands operations.

Friends has also set an interim goal of raising \$250,000 from August 2012 to August 2015 for the Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment to support the TNC Bison Initiative to reintroduce this majestic animal to the preserve. By year-end, we had accrued about \$120,000 toward this goal.

ROUGH BLAZING STAR (*LIATRIS ASPERA*) ♥

Conduct & Encourage Stewardship

Stewards and other volunteers are the heart and soul of prairie restoration at Nachusa. Whether it's planting, harvesting, educating, monitoring, photographing, repairing, or advocating, we have a role that fits your passion and schedule.

Accomplishments: As of June 30, 2013, Friends had 40 Voting Members, as well as 156 additional donors committed to conserving the 3,000+ acres of Nachusa Grasslands. Annual Nachusa volunteer hours exceeded 15,000 hours last year.

Need: Friends provide warm and welcoming opportunities throughout the year, inside or out, working with both flora and fauna. There is much to be done. Your stewardship will make an important difference.

Encourage Education & Science

In 2012-2013, Friends awarded \$5,500 in Scientific Research Project Grants to:

Tom Anton and Phillip Willink

Survey of Fishes, Amphibians and Reptiles at Nachusa Grasslands – \$1,600

Clinton R. Bailey

Determining the Source Water of the Nachusa Grasslands' Sand Boil Flow Network via Geochemical and Stable Isotope Techniques – \$950

Kimberly Schmidt

*The Presence, Population, Characteristics, and Habitat Use of the Ornate Box Turtles (*Terrapene ornata ornata*) in Nachusa's Restored Tallgrass Prairie, Remnant Prairie, and Oak Savanna* – \$2,125

The Conservation Research Institute *Flora of the Chicago Region: An Ecological Synthesis Project* – \$825

In 2014, Friends may award grants of up to \$10,000 to qualified candidates conducting scientific research significant to Nachusa Grasslands. Details on the application process can be found at http://www.nachusagrasslands.org/Science/Science_TOC.html.

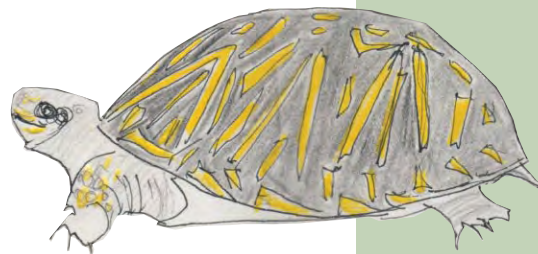
Support Friends



SEED COLLECTING ★

- Donate to Friends:
 - Restoration Benefactor – \$5,000 or more
 - Conservation Champion – \$1,500 to \$4,999
 - Supporter – \$1 to \$1,499
- Giving options include checks, one-time credit card charges or recurring online sustainer donations. See the Friends' web site for details at <http://www.nachusagrasslands.org/Donate/donate.html>.
- Become a Voting Member of Friends by volunteering 40 hours annually and making a financial gift of your choosing.
- Be a "Prairie Perennial" by continuing your gifts at a consistent or higher level each year.
- Contribute to Friends through your employer's corporate giving or matching gift program.
- Donate stocks or mutual funds to Friends.
- Include Friends in your estate planning.
 - To designate Friends in your will, we should be named as Friends of Nachusa Grasslands, a nonprofit corporation, organized and existing under laws of the State of Illinois, with the name and address of:
Name: Friends of Nachusa Grasslands
Address: 8772 S. Lowden Road,
Franklin Grove, IL 61031
Tax identification number: 26-3303031

To name Friends as a beneficiary of your life insurance or retirement account, use the name, address, and tax identification number listed above.



ORNATE BOX TURTLE ★

Bring Me A Prairie Flower



Hank Hartman

Bring me a prairie flower, She said.

I have brought you a coreopsis.

What do you see? She asked.

I see the purest refined gold not matched in any regal crown.

Well said. Treat it with reverence.

Bring me a prairie flower, She said.

I have brought you a fringed gentian.

What do you see? She asked.

I see the purest blue not matched by any royal robe.

Well said. Treat it with reverence.

Bring me a seed from the prairie, She said.

I have brought you a seed.

What do you see? She asked.

I see all the plants of the prairie and all the butterflies
that get sustenance from them.

Well said. Treat it with reverence.

Take me into the middle of the prairie, She said.

We are in the heart of the prairie.

What do you see? She queried.

I see the frost on the stem and the sparkle of new fallen snow
unmatched by the diamonds in a thousand diadems.

Well said. Treat it with reverence,

for the prairie is the edge of Heaven.

PALE PURPLE CONEFLOWER (*ECHINACEA PALLIDA*)

Be a Part of This Diverse Ecosystem

Volunteer for “Stewardship Saturdays”: Every Saturday morning from 9 a.m. to noon, a workday is hosted by Stewards of units across the preserve. Meet fellow prairie enthusiasts who will guide and mentor you. Spring and fall also afford special training and opportunities to serve on a prescribed fire crew.

Share YOUR knowledge and talents: Volunteer to lead a youth or community group tour. Whether it’s with elementary, high school, college or various environmental organizations, people of all ages come from far and wide to visit Nachusa and enjoy and learn from the prairie.

Capture the Essence of Nachusa Grasslands: Volunteer for the Nachusa Photography Corps.

Be a Citizen Scientist: Monitor birds, dragonflies, butterflies, frogs or other native flora and fauna.

Transform a Cornfield into a Native Landscape: Volunteer to be a Steward of your very own unit and participate in this leading-edge experiment in the new science of restoration ecology.



SIERRA CLUB VISIT TO NACHUSA

Several of the activities described above, including workdays, prescribed burns, and youth education are offered and overseen by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Except for specific Friends-sponsored events such as the Prairie Potluck, all Nachusa volunteers are under the auspices of TNC. Friends provides this information about programs and opportunities to help fulfill our goals of encouraging stewardship, science and education, but Friends is not responsible for these activities.

FUTURE STEWARDS ENJOY THE TALL GRASS +



DICKCISSSEL
(SPIZA AMERICANA) ⚓

HIKE TO THE FEN ★



DUNG
BEEBLE ⚓



Chris Hauser

I first visited Nachusa Grasslands with my wife, Jennifer, in the summer of 1999. During the summers of 2000 and 2001, while I was at Nachusa working on my prairie research, Jennifer and I explored the preserve extensively. In 2003, Jennifer and I moved up to northern Illinois, and we began to volunteer at Nachusa on a weekly basis, becoming intimately familiar with the land + and the people at Nachusa, until 2007, when we moved to California. This is written in the past tense, because

the time I spent at Nachusa was in the past, but what I have learned from Nachusa will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Learning New Skills:

Nachusa was a place of learning new skills. This was where I first learned to drive a tractor, operate a chainsaw, monitor rare plants, and survey vegetation. Also, I gained valuable experience harvesting seed, conducting prescribed burns, seeding new prairie plantings, managing weeds, and applying herbicides. I do many of these things on a daily basis in my current job as a land steward, and every time I use one of these skills, I am thankful to Bill Kleiman, and the other people at Nachusa, who played such an important role in teaching me.

Care for the Land:

In Illinois, I learned how the patterns on the land were shaped by the first people, but Nachusa was where I first saw how people today can lovingly carry on the same care and stewardship for the land, and become an integral part of the land. I always enjoyed looking carefully through newly seeded areas with Jay Stacy, Bernie Buchholz, and Hank and Becky Hartman to carefully search for tiny precious prairie and woodland seedlings, the first reward for months of loving care for the land. The careful stewardship of the land, an integral part of the Nachusa culture, will always stay with me.

Hope for the Future:

Nachusa was always a place of hope for me. Every prescribed burn, every new growing season, and every new restoration project provided a sense of hope and possibility for what new things would come. As the years have passed, the sense of possibility grows every year. I remember feeling the excitement of the new land purchases like Sand Farm and Tellabs Savanna... now those parcels are dwarfed by more recent land purchases. I remember feeling the excitement of finding the first few eastern prairie fringed orchid plants... now that population exceeds one-hundred plants. Now, as I hear about the plans for returning bison to Nachusa, my sense of hope for the future is stronger than ever, and then I wonder what will be possible in the decades ahead.



FEMALE WIDOW SKIMMER ⚓
(LIBELLULA LUCTUOSA)

Sense of Hope

Nachusa

Sandy Phillips



Wandering into Nachusa from the road of the world,
Finding rest for myself, quiet purpose in the scene
Of expanse covered here, something whole made from parts –
A rich, quilted prairie, native ground meant for life.

Begun with some remnants, frayed, forgotten, discounted,
Found by chance, felt as promise. Few are left who'd have seen it.
Should we try to recover the place that was here?
Could we add long-lost pieces, measure how it could work?
Would some others bring skills, hearts and hands to contribute,
And set forth to the task till it settled into sense?

Nature's place, rich and ready!
Joining hands as her partners,
Hope's alive, guidance sought,
Patterns studied, details noted,
Work's begun, pressing on.
Piece by piece, stitch it strong!

Add a square, add a row,
Gather seeds, open ground,
Smooth down edges, fill a season,
Watch, imagine, find a way.
With hands and knees, backs and minds,
Honor details, strengthen faith,
Use the light, stretching hours,
Find a steward, spot the weeds,
Pray for rain, stitch the acres,
Sow the seeds, trace the growth,
Take more care, hunt for treasures,
Bring the fire, make some notes,
Welcome snow, giving cover,
Plan the year, wait for spring.
Work is done. Now...repeat.
Try again with more courage.



SANDY PHILLIPS
HARVESTING SEEDS

Creatures find what is needed, food and shelter, as they come.
Blossoms inch into fullness, grasses settle into place,
Here repeating, there surprising.
Drive for life, texture, color, weaves a cloth all its own,
Layered life fills the distance with the help that we offer.
Bounty's found, all embroidered,
Thriving here with a fervor born before we began.
Shunning loss, degradation, knowing all that's at stake,
We've tied science to work, dedication, contribution,
And together with nature, threaded care through this ground.

Something's mended, we can see it,
What was space is now filled,
What was gone has returned,
Telling tales we thought lost.
Just step back, see the quilt,
Stitched from effort and hope,
Binding past to our present,
Pieces missed, here restored.

We are joined as we labor,
Souls sustained, eyes enriched.
There is more. Can we do it?
Can we not, stitch by stitch,
Make this ever more vibrant?
With protection, affection,
Strength enlarged in the giving,
We are stitching an heirloom,
On this land, in this place –
Nachusa



LEAST SKIPPER
(ANCYLOXYPHA NUMITOR)

Prairie Art



Heather Baker

I am an artist who works in many different mediums, but I mainly do photography and collages made with plant materials. Since becoming involved with restoration work at Nachusa Grasslands, much of my art has been inspired by the prairie. There is a wealth of beauty and tranquility here. I love photographing both the landscape scale of the preserve as well as the macro world of individual plants, insects and animals. I also enjoy documenting the wonderful work that is in progress here. The prairie is in my heart and I will continue to work for it and be inspired by it.



KIRK HALLOWELL HARVESTING SEEDS



What Nachusa Teaches Me

Kirk Hallowell

Deep within my soul there seems to be voice that speaks of scarcity. It drives me to have more and want more. From birth to present, my life tends to be an expression of desire, acquisition and achievement.

This was all a natural and healthy passage when I was younger. As I pass through age beyond which my biological clock was programmed to terminate of natural causes, I have the opportunity to understand that abundance surrounds me completely and without exception.

As I look at the percentage of Illinois farmland devoted exclusively to agriculture, I have the sense that I am not alone in my journey.

People want food

Farmers want to supply the food

Farmers want more land

More land is converted and dominated by agricultural needs

The cycle continues to the destruction of the very core of nature's architecture.

I believe that there is far more abundance in food and resources in North America than the rest of the world combined could ever really need.

Nachusa teaches me that:

I have the capacity to understand the natural order and to be drawn into it.

That being a steward of the land is high calling in a partnership, second only in complexity and commitment to the role of husband and father.

That I can learn profound richness of experience and commitment in my colleagues.

That my soul is restored and replenished every moment that I walk upon the incredible land.

That our leadership is wise and generous beyond their years.

That there is no thing in nature that is more powerful in physical or metaphysical manifestation than the seed.

Within the seed there is abundance that is everlasting.

SHOOTING STAR ★
(DODECATHEON MEADIA)



Thank You!

Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Donors

July 1, 2012, to June 30, 2013



RESTORATION BENEFACTORS (\$5,000+)

The Bobolink Foundation*
c/o Wendy Paulson
John Santucci*

CONSERVATION CHAMPIONS (\$1,500 TO \$4,999)

Bernie and Cindy Buchholz*
Alan Carpenter*
Mary Walsh and Dave Crossett*
DeWayne and Donna Fellows*
Jan Grainger*
Jeff and Joan Meiners*
Paul and Carol Soderholm*
Vanderpoel Foundation
c/o Tom Vanderpoel
Jim and Mary Vieregg*
Anonymous

SUPPORTERS (\$1 TO \$1,499)

3M DeKalb
Science Research Grant
Cindy and Fred Acker*
In memory of Richard Acker
Paul Adlaf
Mike Adolph*
Michael Annin
James Armstrong*
Ellen Baker*
Heather Baker
Jane Balaban*
Sally and Max Baumgardner*
David Bendlin
Ed and Tina Bettner
Todd and Tonya Bittner*
Ralph and Leslie Bishop
In memory of the mother of Aki Knezevic

Carol Boynton
Jill Brennan*
In memory of Richard S. Brennan
Bob Brown
In memory of Henry Brown
Gretchen Buchen*
In honor of Becky and Hank Hartman
and all the work they do for Nachusa
Grasslands
Brad Buchholz*
Ralph Burnett*
Alice Buyers
In memory of Charles Buyers
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c/o Larry Dunphy, in memory of
Jim Dunphy
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Hank and Becky Hartman*
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Nancy Hotchkiss*
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In memory of Roxana Huck
Louise Husar
In memory of John Husar
Tan Fui Lian and Robert Inger*
Ron and Pat Ingraham*

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Connie and Dennis Keller
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Mickey Collins and Aki Knezevic*
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and James Lawson
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Clark and Pamela Lumsden
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Joel Gentes and Alison Meier
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Richard Walls

In honor of and in memory of Marj Walls

Mary Waterson*

Wild Ones Rock River Valley Chapter*

Evelyn Young*

In honor of Mary and Al Meier

Anonymous

Anonymous

In memory of Al and Thelma Dahlberg

Anonymous

In honor of Alan Meier's retirement

Anonymous

In honor of Francis M. Hartz

IN-KIND DONORS

Betsy Bowron-Komerska

Illinois Math and Science Academy (IMSA)

Student Volunteers

* **Prairie Perennials** – Donors who have given to the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands in consecutive years at the same or a higher level.

Nachusa Teaches Me . . .

Patience

Mary Meier

- When I see a first-year planting teeming with agricultural weeds and remind myself that the seeds we sowed last fall are busily rooting themselves in the rich soil below
- While I wait for the leadplant seed heads to have just the right amount of "crispiness," so that we can harvest them
- If snow covers our plantings long after prescribed burn season should have begun
- As I gently pluck hairy hawkweed puffs from their stems
- When thunder and lightening interfere with our plans for the day
- In those magical moments just before a butterfly lands on a nectar-filled monarda bloom and I attempt to snap a photo
- As I strike matches over and over again, trying to light up a pile of wet, green wood in the early winter
- While I search for prairie gentian pods that had been bright purple a few weeks ago and now hide in the tall autumn grass
- After I sow handfuls of shooting star seeds, realizing that it might be six or seven years before their lovely blossoms appear in our plantings
- When the summer sun is so intense that an afternoon of working in the prairie seems like an eternity
- Every day I spend at Nachusa, no matter the season, the weather, or the task at hand, I am learning to be patient . . . well, most of the time.



AL AND MARY MEIER ◆

PALE PURPLE CONEFLOWER (ECHINACEA PALLIDA) ◆



DAVID CRITES, MIKE SAXTON, ★
AND JOHN HENEGHAN

Mike Saxton

We all have our own coming-of-age story, the time in our lives when we first struck out from home, where we discovered new worlds, where we fell in love, where we found our calling. For me, that story begins at Nachusa. On a lark I took work on the prairie in 2007, not knowing what I was in for, whom I might meet, or what lay ahead. I learned quickly that restoration is neither for the faint of heart nor for those seeking quick returns. Prairie time is slow time and what

took millennia to evolve and a single plow-pass to destroy cannot be restored in a day, a week or a field season. It takes years of blood, sweat, and tears, with a little bit of luck along the way.

Sometimes we tend to look back at the formative years of our lives through rose-colored glasses, romanticizing the higher points while glossing over the day-to-day challenges that truly defined the experience. For me, however, the trials of the prairie...the bug bites and parsnip burns, the hot sun and the hotter fires, the late nights and early mornings, the weeds and the seeds, the aches and the pains...I don't gloss over those challenges, I highlight them.

These details are integral to understanding the Nachusa experience and they define what we do. Our work is that of trial-and-error and we learn by doing, with our boots on the ground and our hands covered in soil. With our fingers on its pulse, we diagnose ills, prescribe cures, and doctor the land. We share in our successes and failures and as the prairie heals, we learn and grow together. Sore shoulders and calloused hands indicate that you're doing it right. Friendship, smiles and laughter show that you're one of us, part of Nachusa.

In the six years since I first stumbled onto the prairie, I have been mentored by staff, inspired by volunteers, and challenged by the land. I have made lasting memories and forged lifelong friendships. I've learned the definition of community and I've come to know my passion. I take a little bit of Nachusa with me, wherever I go, and the world is a better place for it.

Prairie time...

2012 - 2013 FINANCIAL RESULTS

	7/1/12 - 6/30/13 2013 RESULTS		7/1/11 - 6/30/12 2012 RESULTS	
		%		%
BEGINNING BALANCE	\$ 20,872.26		\$ 5,712.15	
Redeemed CD	\$ 10,000.00			
REVENUES				
Cash Donations	\$ 61,212.00	82%	\$ 66,931.90	83%
CRP Income	\$ 13,791.00	18%	\$ 13,633.00	17%
Interest Income	\$ 69.12	0%		
Total Revenues	\$ 75,072.12	100%	\$ 80,564.90	100%
DISBURSEMENTS				
In Direct Support of Our Mission Statement				
Gifts to TNC Endowment	\$ 80,000.00	85%	\$ 57,000.00	90%
Science Grants	\$ 5,500.00	6%	\$ 2,000.00	3%
Stewardship	\$ 136.70	0%		
Subtotal	\$ 85,636.70	91%	\$ 59,000.00	93%
Expenses				
Banking Fees	\$ 61.50	0%	\$ 26.34	0%
Government Fees	\$ 25.00	0%	\$ 25.00	0%
Insurance	\$ 2,432.00	2%	\$ 1,143.00	2%
Development	\$ 6,100.00	7%	\$ 2,445.36	4%
Miscellaneous			\$ 506.45	1%
Subtotal	\$ 8,618.50	9%	\$ 4,146.15	7%
Total Disbursements	\$ 94,255.20	100%	\$ 63,146.15	100%
ENDING CASH BALANCE	\$ 11,689.18		\$ 20,872.26	

BALANCE SHEET AS OF JUNE 30, 2013

ASSETS

Cash	\$ 11,689.18
Total Assets	\$ 11,689.18

LIABILITIES

Liabilities	\$ 0.00
Funds Balance	\$ 11,689.18
Total Assets	\$ 11,689.18



MARY VIEREKG

Restoration

Mary Vieregg

Obse**R**ving

Pond **E**ring

Scorching

Eradica**T**ing

Collecting

Dive **R**sifying

PL**A**nting

Wai**T**ing

PerseverIng

H**O**ping

Con**N**ecting

To Learn More

Save the Dates

SCIENCE GRANT applications due November 30, 2013
Science grant recipients announced February 1, 2014

PRAIRIE POTLUCK June 21, 2014

FRIENDS ANNUAL MEETING July 19, 2014

TNC's AUTUMN ON THE PRAIRIE CELEBRATION
September 20, 2014

Recommended Reading

A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold

Buffalo for the Broken Heart by Dan O'Brien

Lincoln's Ladder to the Presidency: The Eighth Judicial Court by Guy C. Fraker

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(*HYSTRIX PATULA*)



PASQUE FLOWER ✧
(*ANEMONE PATENS*)

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PHOTOGRAPHERS AND ILLUSTRATORS

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Front cover photo by: ★ Kirk Hallowell
Inside front cover photo by: ✧ Heather Baker
Back cover photo by: ✧ Mary Vieregg

Friends annual report creation by
Betsy Bowron-Komerska, graphic designer
and Lisa Marie Lanz, volunteer.

Editing provided by Bernie Buchholz,
Mary Meier and David Crites.

Reflection

Sally Baumgardner

This is the story about the little girl and the turtle. It happened at AOTP around 1991 or 1992. We had a Children's tent; busy as usual. There were displays of local small wildlife such as butterflies, their caterpillars or pupae, and any other critters we could find. An Ornate Box Turtle, in a clean glass terrarium, was popular, fairly still and blinking a few times.

People of all ages moved around in the tent, learning from the live animal displays. It was a beautiful day, with people smiling and talking.

A very little girl with short shiny red hair and her mother stopped and spent several long moments with the turtle. They left, and then came back, the child tugging her mother's sleeve, but not asking or whining. Mother urged her to go to several other tables in the tent, and even visit other tents, but the silent child quietly indicated she wanted to watch the turtle. "She keeps wanting to come back," apologized the mother. They saw the turtle move a bit, and they saw it blink, provoking giggles, but no words.

With that much interest, it seemed appropriate to start a conversation. So I asked the little girl if she could say that word – turtle. As I inched around to praise and face her, she struggled with how to do it, breathing in deeply and finally exhaling softly, "Turtle." Mother gasped loudly in great surprise. "That's her first word! Turtle!"

It then became evident that our curious little turtle lover had experienced several medical procedures to repair a cleft palate and maybe more. Those may have been frightful and painful, causing her to be very reluctant to even try to talk.

All she needed was a quiet little turtle to get her started.



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ORNATE BOX TURTLE ★



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