



MORE THAN PRAIRIE

2018 - 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Bernie Buchholz

Author Wendell Berry observed that Americans are split between “boomers” (those who are quick to move on to the excitement of the next big thing) and “stickers” (those who stay put through adversity to become a permanent part of a place).

At Nachusa Grasslands, we prairie people are the stickers.

Anyone who has witnessed our dedication—some say fanaticism—to habitat restoration knows that Nachusa is a model for a volunteer community. Our volunteers come from different backgrounds and have unique personalities. In some ways we are as diverse as the prairies we restore. Here there is space for each of us.



We praise the relentless volunteers that faithfully attack persistent invasive weeds. We honor the storytellers that entertain us, help us understand ourselves, and tell the tale of our struggle to others.

We appreciate the mentors that patiently share their rich knowledge and the mentees that fervently seek it. We encourage the scientists and students, and support many of them with science research grants.

We depend on the methodic and the detailed who keep the important records of our work. We

welcome the novice and admire the expert. We celebrate the generosity of our donors that both enable our work and endorse it with their funding.

We recognize the monastics that love the solitude of working alone. We're grateful for those who liven up our days with their joyful spirits. We welcome the shy and make room for their silence. We honor the resilient that withstand fate's adversities.

We stand together as quiet rebels that do this prairie work in the face of a culture that sometimes can't see its value: a culture that desperately needs what it can't always understand. We soldier ahead with a steady vision.

Nachusa Grasslands is much more than a beautiful, recovering landscape. It is also a community. It is stickers becoming a permanent part of this place.

COMPLEX LANDSCAPES,

By Richard King, PhD Researcher

One lesson clearly demonstrated at Nachusa Grasslands is that like prairie restoration, wetland restoration can be rapid and remarkable, often brought about by finding and disabling forgotten drainage tiles, allowing dormant seedbanks of wetland plants to reassert themselves. The result is a complex landscape that includes ponds and marshes ringed by cattails or buttonbush and sedge marshes and wet prairie that a naïve hiker might mistake for dry land until their true nature is revealed in the form of sodden shoes and socks.

Wetland animals play unique roles in this landscape. Many exhibit complex lifecycles, transitioning from an aquatic juvenile stage to a terrestrial adult stage, with corresponding changes in morphology and diet. This transition is epitomized among amphibians by the tiger salamander and among insects by the green darner dragonfly. Tiger salamanders spend their adult life mostly underground feeding on earthworms and other invertebrates, but return to shallow, preferably fishless, ponds on rainy nights in March or April to breed. Their eggs hatch into aquatic larvae that develop rapidly into voracious predators of aquatic insects and frog tadpoles before sprouting legs, absorbing their external gills, and leaving their aquatic habitat behind for life (perhaps 20 years or more) on land.

Like many dragonflies, male green darners are territorial and can be seen defending stretches of shoreline and courting females who then dip their abdomens beneath the water surface to deposit eggs. Their larvae (nymphs or naiads) use their extendible grasping mouthparts to catch prey, including small fish, as they grow, molt, and metamorphose into their more familiar adult form. Through their unusual life cycles, these animals accomplish an important ecosystem function by moving nutrients uphill against the flow of water and the force of gravity, serving to link wetlands with the surrounding prairie.



, COMPLEX LIFECYCLES



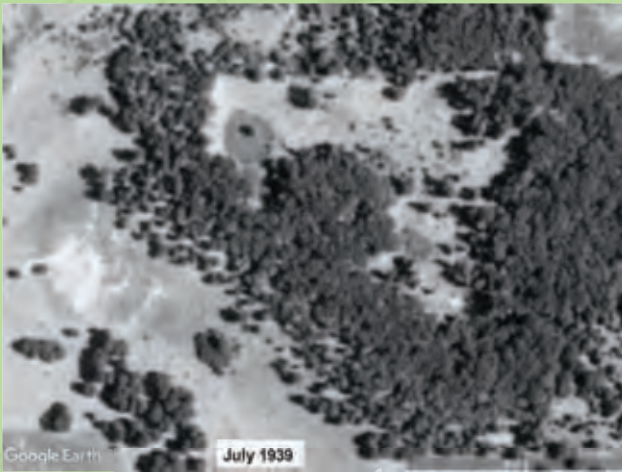
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OAK WOODLAND REVIVAL

By Paul Say

It's a criticism to say "miss the forest for the trees," focusing on the details instead of the setting. Sometimes it feels easy to "miss the prairie for the forest," the eyes skipping over the field of wildflowers and waving grasses and settling on the shady treeline jutting up at the edge.

One of the biggest surprises as a steward is encountering the changing character of the unit. For the first few months becoming familiar with the unit, it seemed unmistakably to be forest. However, aerial photographs taken in 1939 reveal a much more widely spaced pattern of an oak-hickory woods.



It's noticeable on these historical landscapes how the prairies and forests blend together instead of there being sharp boundaries between tree cover and open field. What happened in these past 80 years? Non-native brush and shade-tolerant



trees outgrew the oak saplings, filling in the open spaces where young oaks could mature to full size.

Prescribed fire is one tool to restore the open oak-hickory savannas. Burning after the spring snowmelt, the fires are of low enough intensity for oaks to withstand, diminish brush, and benefit soil nutrient cycling. Restoration creates more space and light around the existing oaks for the next generation to develop from acorns. The open canopy structure supports a higher diversity of plant species on the ground and benefits wildlife such as wood thrushes and red-headed woodpeckers.

When I first started this restoration, it felt overwhelming to change a complex landscape, so I focus on the simple actions I can take. Where there are oaks now, I act to keep healthy oaks in the future, put pressure against non-native competitors, and spread native woodland seeds to promote plant diversity. Pollinators and wildlife will respond to desirable habitat spaces. All the work in the details will eventually lead to a diverse woodland environment.



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WATER RICHES

By Cindy Buchholz, Jan Grainger, Mary Meier, and Mary Viereg



Babbling Brook, Clear Creek, Johnny's Creek, and Wade Creek are four streams that flow through the heart of Nachusa Grasslands and the hearts of all who discover their special beauty. The sounds of rushing water and croaking frogs, the sights of great blue herons flying and beavers swimming, and the mysteries of flitting dragonflies and bubbling sand boils delight all the preserve visitors who spend time near them.

Eventually the water these streams carry flows into the Rock River, the Mississippi River, and the Gulf of Mexico. If the water quality in Nachusa's streams improves over time, the quality of all of the many downstream aquatic habitats incrementally improves as well.

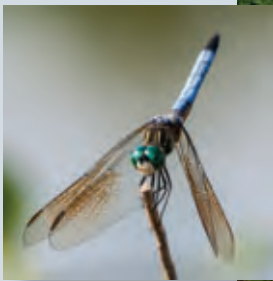
Friends of Nachusa Grasslands, along with staff and additional volunteers, work toward

improving the water quality of Nachusa's streams by restoring the land in their watersheds and monitoring stream quality. The scientific protocols for annual stream monitoring have been established by the Illinois RiverWatch Network which directs efforts to monitor and improve stream quality throughout the state.

Between May 1 and June 30 each year, trained citizen scientist volunteers enthusiastically wade into the waters of Nachusa's streams to gather data on each stream's health. With nets, buckets, thermometers, tweezers, water droppers, and measuring tapes, they evaluate eighteen components of habitat structure. They also sample the species diversity and abundance of each stream's macroinvertebrate population trying to learn how the stream has changed over the course of the year.

All of the collected data sets are compiled and verified by Illinois Natural History Survey scientists in coordination with the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center in Alton, Illinois. Over time, the collected data sets are used to detect trends in stream quality.

In 2018, Wade Creek had the best overall stream quality values of any of the monitored sites in the state of Illinois. According to the 2018 Illinois RiverWatch Annual Report, "The Nature Conservancy and Friends of Nachusa Grasslands are successfully protecting some high quality stream habitat."





and Ponds

BUT SHE IS SILENT

Anonymous

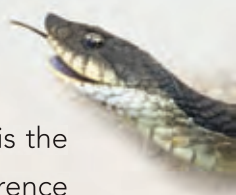
Take a walk with me through my savanna. The trees here are mostly white oaks or bur oaks or hickories, with a few other species here and there. They are spaced widely enough so that the canopy is never closed and the ground level vegetation gets between 10 and 70 percent sunlight. This means that my savanna has a set of plants that is slightly different from that of the adjacent prairie.

Up ahead we can see white indigo and Culver's root. Most people think of these as prairie plants, but as you can see, they are perfectly happy in my savanna. You would rarely find prairie gentian in a savanna, and you would rarely find Solomon's seal in a prairie. There are many plants which can thrive in both prairie and savanna and others which can survive only in their preferred habitat.



Up ahead is a very large bur oak. She is the matriarch of the savanna and has a circumference of at least fifteen feet. I would guess that she is more than 250 years old. Did she get her start when a blue jay accidentally dropped an acorn in the prairie? Are she and my savanna a remnant of a forest which is transitioning to prairie because of changes in fire frequency or average annual rainfall?

Do I have the correct mix of trees and plants in my savanna? Is it what we would have seen before the settlers arrived and changed everything? We can make an educated guess, but we may never know. The matriarch could tell us, but she is silent.



Savanna

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SCIENCE GRANTS

Laura Adamovicz, DVM, PhD, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. **“Continued Health Assessment of Nachusa’s Ornate Box Turtles.”**

Dr. Adamovicz is going to continue her last three years’ work assessing the health of the ornate box turtles (*Terrapene ornata*) at Nachusa. This



work will help direct conservation strategies for the species at the preserve. It will also provide baseline data for use with other populations of this species in other

- preserves. This grant will specifically pay for the hormone and venous blood gas data collection used to assess the response to acute and chronic stress in box turtles. (\$2,613)

Kaleb Baker, MS graduate student, Northern Illinois University. **“Basal Bark Triclopyr and Fire Efficacy on *Lonicera maackii* and Their Off-Target Impacts After One Year.”**

This project seeks to understand the effects of basal bark treatments and prescribed fire on *L. maackii* as well as the off-target impacts of such treatment.

This grant supports surveys of surrounding vegetation for one year after treatment by the investigator and an assistant. (\$1,067)



Nicholas Barber, PhD, assistant professor of biology, San Diego State University.

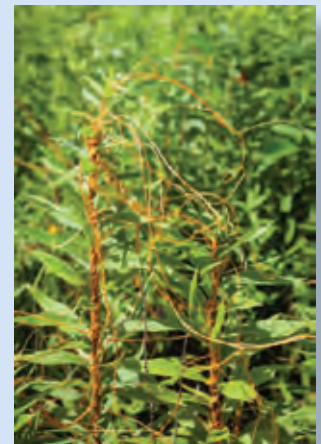
“Continuation of Long-Term Monitoring of Ground Beetles and Dung Beetles at Nachusa.”

This work will continue to strengthen a unique data set addressing the questions of 1) the effect of prescribed fire on beetles with specific traits, 2) the comparison of beetle communities in remnant and restored prairies over time, and 3) the stability of beetle populations in restorations of different ages. (\$2,520)

Victoria Borowicz, PhD, assistant professor of biology, and Anna Scheidel, MS graduate student, Illinois

State University. **“Do Hemiparasitic Plants Increase Diversity, and, if So, How?”**

An important question for Nachusa stewards will be addressed by this study; how do the nine species of annual and perennial hemiparasitic



plants at Nachusa impact the biodiversity in their local plant communities? Vegetative surveys and nutrient analyses of both leaf litter and soil samples should begin to tell the story of the hemiparasites’ ecological roles and perhaps direct future management decisions. (\$3,126)





listing the species as threatened. Additionally, she will be looking for evidence that there will be an early emergence of periodical cicadas in 2020 (Brood XII). (\$4,271)

Catherine Dana, PhD graduate student, Illinois Natural History Survey, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. **“Song Analysis of Dog-Day Cicadas to Identify Potential Hybrids.”** This study is a follow up to Ms. Dana’s 2018 work surveying cicada species at Nachusa. In addition to using audio recording and molt collecting to look for rare cicada species that may have been missed in 2018, Ms. Dana will be searching for hybrids of the three dog-day cicada species found at Nachusa. This information is important for potentially

Devin Edmonds, MS graduate student, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. **“When Do Ornate Box Turtles Emerge from Hibernation?”** Knowing when it’s safe to carry out prescribed burns in the state-threatened ornate box turtles’ habitat at Nachusa is an important question for managers. Using radio telemetry and temperature data loggers, Mr. Edmonds will attempt to provide specific data on emergence dates and correlated soil temperature for spring emergence of the turtles. (\$1,860)



SCIENCE GRANTS

Richard King, PhD., Northern Illinois University, Thomas B. Anton and David Mauger, independent researchers. **“Refinement and Implementation of Blanding’s Turtle Management Strategies.”** Using inventory methods to determine population status, radio-telemetry to monitor habitat use, and nest protection to promote juvenile recruitment of Blanding’s turtles at Nachusa and adjacent properties within the Franklin Creek corridor, this ongoing multi-year effort is designed to develop and implement on-the-ground

management strategies to promote the persistence of the state-endangered Blanding’s turtles. (\$6,500)

Michele Rehbein, PhD graduate student, Western Illinois University. **“Identification of Culex and Aedes Mosquito Microbiomes from Wetland and Lower Order Stream Habitats.”** Analyzing DNA from the midguts of trapped female mosquitoes, this research will identify the microbiome (fungi and bacteria populations) living in the mosquitoes of the





wetland and stream habitats of Nachusa. There is very little generally known about this topic. This second year of the study will continue to document the physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of these aquatic habitats, adding to our knowledge of Nachusa’s aquatic environments, and it will expand our knowledge of Nachusa’s insect inventory by identifying mosquito species that live on site. (\$3,170)

Wayne E. Schennum, PhD, independent researcher. **“Survey of the Remnant-Dependent Macromoths and Orthopterans at Nachusa Grasslands.”** This study will identify the number and relative abundance of macromoths and orthopterans (grasshoppers & katydids) restricted to tracts of remnant and restored prairie, savanna, and wetland communities at Nachusa Grasslands and compare those survey results with a survey done thirty years ago. It will also determine vegetation types associated with each species and suggest potential impacts of prescribed burning, bison grazing, vegetation quality, and brush management on these taxa. (\$3,000)

Pallavi Singh, PhD, assistant professor of biology, Northern Illinois University. **“Characterizing Intestinal Microbial Ecology of Bison Introduced to Restored Tallgrass Prairie.”** Learning as much as possible about the bison inhabiting Nachusa and their ecological impact on its prairie communities is a high priority for the preserve. This study will use DNA analyses to identify the intestinal microbial population of the bison and determine if it varies with age, gender, season, diet, and/or habitat. (\$7,700)



OUR MISSION

Our mission is to preserve, protect, and advocate for the restoration of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem—grasslands, savannas, woodlands, and wetlands. We care for the birds, bison, wildflowers, grasses, insects, and reptiles that are irreplaceable parts of the whole.

Encourage Stewardship

Volunteers are the heart and soul of Nachusa. Our volunteers harvest seed, manage invasive species, clear brush, plant new prairie, and conduct prescribed burns. They monitor species from blooms to insects to birds. Some volunteers lead hikes. Others share their photography, art, or writing. E-mail us at nachusagrasslands@gmail.com for a volunteer opportunity that will both fit your passion and have an immediate impact.

Build Endowed Funds

We are approaching two-thirds of our goal of three million dollars in principal for our two endowments, which will permanently help defray the costs of stewardship. We can't do it without you! In recognition for your support, we will send you our Annual Report detailing the progress you make possible. Friends of Nachusa Grasslands is a 501(c)3 organization.

Support Education and Scientific Research

We support critical scientific research that expands our understanding of grasslands, savannas, and wetlands, and improves our management and restoration practices. Since 2011 we have awarded \$162,000 in grants to researchers, and we will award \$44,000 more this year. We believe that research is crucial to the long-term protection of the tallgrass prairie.



HERITAGE HERO

Meet Heritage Hero Harriet Choice

HOME: Chicago, Illinois

WORK LIFE: beginning as a self-described “copy girl” in the late 1960s, Harriet became editor of Chicago Tribune’s prestigious “Sunday Arts and Books” section and wrote her own jazz column called “Jazz by Choice”. In the 1980s she became a Tribune feature writer and later started her own service providing travel stories to Universal Press Syndicate, attracting such luminaries as Charles Kuralt, Jon Krakauer and former President Jimmy Carter.

PIVOTAL EVENT: looking for a strong Midwest outdoor writer, Ms. Choice was introduced to John Madson, author of the iconic *Where the Sky Began: Land of the Tallgrass Prairie*. She became friends of Madson and his wife and caught “prairie fever” when they led her through her first tallgrass prairie.



LEGACY COMMITMENT: determined to protect Nachusa Grasslands.

INTERESTS: Harriet goes to jazz clubs at least once a week. She also urges anyone interested in prairie to read *Where the Sky Began*. With great jazz, gorgeous prairie, and good friends, Harriet has filled her life with beauty.

Our Heritage Heroes initiative offers the opportunity for you to make a lasting contribution to prairie protection by naming Friends of Nachusa Grasslands in your will or estate plan. Sixteen individuals or families have enthusiastically embraced this legacy program.

OUR DONORS

July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019

*PRAIRIE PERENNIALS

Donors who have given to the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands in consecutive years at the same or a higher level

+HERITAGE HEROES

Donors who have committed to including the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands in their estate plans

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HERITAGE HEROES Not Listed Above

Anonymous (2)

Harriet Choice

Robert J. Miller, Jr.

FINANCIAL RESULTS

	2018-2019		2017-2018	
Beginning Balance	\$132,977		\$ 21,630	
Revenue				
Cash Donations	278,746	69%	206,111	71%
CRP Annual Payment	50,000	12%	56,990	20%
CFNIL Endowment Income	26,183	6%	15,079	5%
Grant Income	52,750	13%	10,000	3%
Amazon Smile Income	140	<1%	91	<1%
T-Shirt Revenue	2,748	1%	3,625	1%
Total Revenue	410,567	100%	291,896	100%
Disbursements				
In Direct Support of Our Mission				
CFNIL Nachusa Endowment*	341,025	65%	104,000	58%
TNC Nachusa Endowment**	22,000	4%		
Science Grants	37,151	7%	40,000	22%
Nachusa Operations via TNC	52,655	10%	15,079	8%
Stewardship	27,155	5%	2,932	2%
Grants to other Organizations	4,200	<1%	2,500	1%
T-Shirt Expense	4,657	<1%	4,154	2%
Money Market	20,059	4%		
Subtotal	508,902	97%	168,665	93%
Expenses				
Banking Fees	82	<1%	526	<1%
Government Fees	78	<1%	50	<1%
Insurance	2,156	<1%	3,474	2%
Development	11,742	2%	7,834	4%
Subtotal	14,058	3%	11,884	7%
Total Disbursements	522,960	100%	180,549	100%
Ending Balance	\$ 20,584		\$ 132,977	

ENDOWMENT FUND BALANCE June 30, 2019

Friends Endowment for Nachusa Grasslands (CFNIL*)	\$1,188,521
Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment (TNC**)	\$ 715,659
Total Endowment Funds	\$ 1,904,180

ENDOWMENT DISTRIBUTIONS (net of fees) June 30, 2019

	Current Year	Since Inception
CFNIL*	\$ 37,718	\$ 87,133
TNC**	\$ 20,136	\$ 56,892

Total Distributions \$ 57,854 \$144,025

Distributions primarily fund operations at Nachusa.

* Community Foundation of Northern Illinois endowment established June 2014; July distribution based on average year end balance over prior 3 years

** The Nature Conservancy endowment established September 2009; June distribution based on average year end balance over prior 5 years

BALANCE SHEET June 30, 2019

Assets		Liabilities	
Cash	\$ 20,584	Liabilities	\$ 0
Money Market	\$ 20,004	Funds Balance	\$ 40,588
Total Assets	\$ 40,588	Total Liabilities	\$ 40,588

LEARN MORE



SAVE THE DATES

Friends Science Grants Announcements:
February 1, 2020

Friends Prairie Potluck: June 13, 2020

Friends Annual Meeting: July 25, 2020

Autumn on the Prairie: September 19, 2020

CONTACT US

Friends of Nachusa Grasslands
8772 South Lowden Road,
Franklin Grove, IL 61031
708-406-9894
nachusagrasslands@gmail.com

DIRECTORS

Mike Carr
(2018-2020)

Betty Higby
(2018-2020)

Jeff Cologna
(2019-2021)

OFFICERS (2019-2021)

Bernie Buchholz, president
Mike Saxton, vice president
Mary Vieregg, vice president
Mark Jordan, treasurer
Mary Meier, secretary

With grateful thanks to our writers, photographers, and illustrator who contributed to this annual report.

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Each copyrighted photo is marked with a symbol indicating the photographer's name.

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| ☆ Betty Higby | * Jess Fliginger |
| ❖ Dee Hudson | ◆ Greg Baker |
| ♣ Charles Larry | ● Laura Adamovicz |
| ▲ Tim Ngo | ✕ Kaleb Baker |
| ★ Joe Richardson | |

Front and back cover photos: Dee Hudson
Editor-in-Chief: Bernie Buchholz
Managing Editor: Dee Hudson
General Editor: James Higby
Graphic Designer: Cindy Kiple

Printing: Georgene Meyers and RGM Graphics

ILLUSTRATOR: Betty Higby

PRAIRIES YOU MUST SEE — RECOMMENDED BY YOUR FRIENDS

Dee Hudson: Schulenberg Prairie at the Morton Arboretum, Lisle IL.

One of the oldest prairie restorations in the country; my go-to for photography when I am not at Nachusa.

Bill & Susan Kleiman: Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie State Natural Area, near Black Earth WI.

Lovely dry-mesic prairie with white camas lily and other showy and some super-rare plants.

Mark Jordan: Meadows Trails off the Lowell Park Trail, Dixon IL.

Restored prairie, meadows, riparian habitat, woodlands and agricultural fields. Some non-native species, but a nice place to be; usually a lot of birds.

Elizabeth Bach: Konza Prairie, near Manhattan, KS and Tallgrass Prairie National Park, Strong City KS.

Nowhere else can one experience such a landscape of tallgrass prairie.

Joyce Gibbons: Searls Park Prairie, Rockford IL.

One of the highest quality wet prairie remnants in Illinois, where I was introduced to the concept of natural areas preservation.

Rich King: Afton Preserve and nearby Merritt Prairie, DeKalb IL.

Successful restorations with great vistas.

Cody Considine: Beach Cemetery Nature Preserve, near Stillman Valley IL.

A defining example of the famed cemetery prairies. This little gem will blow your socks off with its incredible richness and diversity.

Mike Saxton: Somme Preserves, Northbrook IL.

Shaded woodland to sun-dappled savanna and finally to wide-open remnant prairie. Pioneering habitat restoration since 1970s.

Bernie Buchholz: Illinois Beach State Park, near Zion IL.

Ancient dune and swale topography, sprawling marshes, and forests of oak along Lake Michigan.

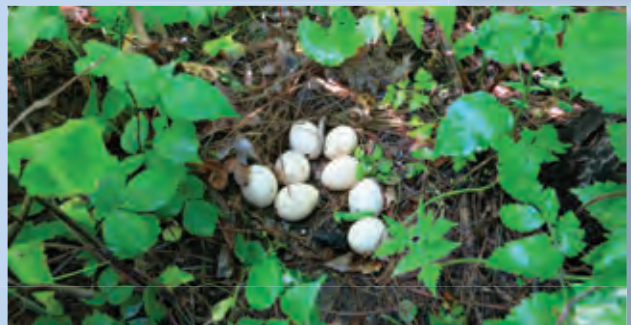
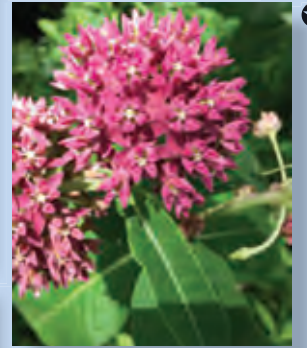
Mark Jordan: Highway and Thoroughfare Pass, Denali National Park and Preserve, AK.

Beautiful alpine tundra, glacial rivers, mountains, and wildlife. Spring, summer, and fall condensed into three or four months.

WELCOME

By Tim Ngo

At first glance Nachusa seems like a contradiction. We are resolute against invasive plants, yet we welcome strangers into our midst all the time. Strangers might be the casual visitors who come to see the bison's rugged beauty, to meditate on a wind-swept hill, to seek solitude in a field of sawtooth sunflowers, or to wade in a babbling brook. Strangers might be those who first come for a Saturday workday, but then decide to stay, put down their roots, and become perennials. Strangers might be the seasonal crew who choose to come back year after year. Strangers might bring new and creative ideas on how to manage the prairie. But on a deeper level, there's no contradiction. Removing aggressive foreign plants gives native plants a fighting chance to regain their footing and to ensure more biodiversity for the next generation. After all, it takes a diversity of people, perspectives, and personalities to ensure a diverse ecosystem.



FRIENDS OF
NACHUSA
GRASSLANDS
nachusagrasslands.org



"When we see land as a community to which we belong,
we may begin to use it with love and respect."

— ALDO LEOPOLD

Yes, I wish to support FRIENDS OF NACHUSA GRASSLANDS.

- Restoration Benefactor \$5,000 & Up \$ _____
 Conservation Champion \$1,500 to \$4,999 \$ _____
 Supporter \$1 to \$1,499 \$ _____

Please check and complete whatever applies to your donation:

In Honor / Memory (circle one) of: _____

For an honor/memorial acknowledgment or employer match, please include information on a separate note.

Undesignated, to be used as most needed.

Designated for: Nachusa Grasslands Stewardship Endowment (held by TNC*)
 Friends Endowment for Nachusa Grasslands (held by CFNIL**) 
 Friends Scientific Research Grants at Nachusa Grasslands

Please contact me about how I can become a Heritage Hero by including the Friends in my estate plan.

Please contact me about other giving options, such as stock, bonds, and mutual funds.

Please contact me about volunteering.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name(s) (as you wish it printed in the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Annual Report) Anonymous

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE & ZIP CODE

DAYTIME PHONE

EVENING PHONE

EMAIL

Please add me to the Friends Prairi-E Updates list.

Enclosed is my check to FRIENDS OF NACHUSA GRASSLANDS for:

\$ _____

You can also make a one-time or recurring

credit card gifts online at:

www.nachusagrasslands.org

FRIENDS OF NACHUSA GRASSLANDS is a non-profit registered 501(c)(3) organization. Your gift is tax-deductible to the full extent permitted by law.

*The Nature Conservancy

**Community Foundation of Northern Illinois



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NACHUSA
GRASSLANDS

Please send your gift to:
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FRANKLIN GROVE, IL 61031

Thank you for your support!