



Prairie Smoke

Wls

NACHUSA GRASSLAND NEWSLETTER

JULY, 1989

MEET JENNIFER SUMMER INTERN

This summer The Nature Conservancy has a full-time intern at Nachusa Grasslands. Jennifer Delisle has moved out from Nederland, Colorado to help coordinate volunteer activities and to increase her own knowledge of the prairie. She will be living in Oregon and will be at the preserve most days.

Jennifer's academic background includes work in geography and world agriculture. She has studied the short-grass prairie biome of northeastern Colorado. As an intern at the Land Institute in Salina, Kansas she investigated potential agricultural uses for two prairie species, Illinois Bundleflower and Eastern Gamagrass. She is dedicated to preserving our valuable prairie resource.

Restoration plans for Nachusa include removal of brush which has encroached upon the grasslands, harvesting seeds of desirable species and planting species according to their original community structures. We also will begin keeping records of our observations and maintaining a planting schedule.

The Conservancy would like to invite students and all prairie enthusiasts to become involved in these and other projects at the preserve. Other studies which might be considered include, censuses of bird, mammal and invertebrate populations and cataloging rare and endangered species. We also would like to encourage individuals and groups to adopt certain areas of the preserve for which they would keep records and act as co-stewards.

The job of a co-steward may vary according to the interests and skills of the people involved. Projects could include overseeing species restoration, brush control, and rare plant monitoring.

Those interested in discussing these and other projects may contact The Nature Conservancy office in Chicago at: 312/346-8166 or Jennifer Delisle at: 815/732-6890.

THE NACHUSA GRASSLANDS NEWSLETTER IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, ILLINOIS FIELD OFFICE, 79 WEST MONROE, CHICAGO, IL 60603 -- PHONE 312/346-8166

Chris Bronny points out an interesting feature of Nachusa Grasslands to Jennifer Delisle. Plan on getting out to meet Jennifer this season.



WANTED - A NEST SITE

by Jennifer Delisle

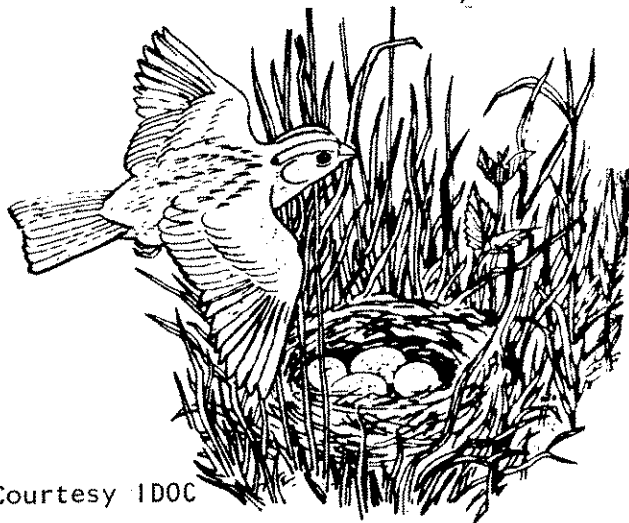
"What's that?" "Wow! That's *Lespedeza leptostachya*: it's on the endangered species list!" "No silly, I mean that eerie bird call. Hear it?"

Some folks get crazy over plants; with me it's birds. I can blindly trample a Hill's thistle in full bloom while in search of a distant songster. Take an early morning walk on the prairie: the air is full of sound!

The prairie supports a wonderful variety of birdlife. Some birds merely pass by on the way north, others come to rear their young, a few are lifetime residents. And while some species are rather widespread in their distributions and habitats others are specifically adapted to the few remaining patches of prairie left in the United States.

The dickcissel and song sparrow for example, are adapters. They will nest in the grass, a low shrub or an abandoned pasture. They will sing perched atop whatever affords the greatest view be that a post, shrub or dried flower stalk. Kingbirds and brown thrashers have also adapted to man-made changes in the landscape. They have taken advantage of the tree-lined fencerows which now divide what was once continuous prairie.

The bobolink, meadowlark and upland sandpiper have not adapted quite so well. These grassland birds must have relatively



Courtesy IDOC

undisturbed prairies in which to nest. Given no choice, they will nest in alfalfa fields; their abundance in an area is dependent upon local haying dates. Walking out on a newly-mown field I have seen the disastrous effects of poor timing -- over-turned nests and broken eggs.


The remaining pockets of prairie are constantly in danger of being destroyed. Such habitat has been steadily diminishing since the first pioneers moved into the prairies. Land that was spared the plow was turned over to livestock grazing. Fires were extinguished and shrubby vegetation took over. Native woody species migrated onto the prairies and exotics were introduced as hedges. The most notorious of these is multiflora rose.

It is true that multiflora rose provides habitat for many birds including dickcissels, kingbirds, and thrashers. But there is plenty of it to satisfy their needs along roadsides, in fencerows and in pastures. Its spread has become such a problem that its planting is prohibited in Illinois. It threatens to take over what little remains of the prairie.

The grassland birds probably had a party when The Nature Conservancy acquired Nachusa Grasslands. Their land was saved from the developers' bulldozer. They could count on having beautiful grassy nesting sites for...how long? Not long if the multiflora rose has its way! Without management practices which control their spread this and other shrubby species will soon take over. The grassland birds will find their habitat shrinking even more.

When you see a volunteer cutting brush out at Nachusa Grasslands, think of the dickcissel, the kingbird, the brown thrasher. They have other nesting options. Then think of the meadowlark, the bobolink, and especially the upland sandpiper which is endangered in Illinois. What are their options?

Summer Schedule of Events Nachusa Grasslands 1989



SATURDAY, JULY 15
8:00 A.M.

INTRODUCTION TO NACHUSA GRASSLANDS! FOR ALL YOU FOLKS WHO ARE UNFAMILIAR WITH THE AREA, THIS IS A CHANCE TO LEARN ABOUT THE ILLINOIS CHAPTER OF THE NATURE CONSERVANCY'S LARGEST PRAIRIE PRESERVE. WE'LL TALK ABOUT THE HISTORY, FLORA AND FAUNA, AND RESTORATION PLANS FOR THE FUTURE. BRING ALONG LOPPERS AND WE'LL HELP THE PRAIRIE COME BACK AS WE WALK ALONG!

MONDAY, JULY 17
8:00 A.M.

THIS SHOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO ATTACK THE SUMAC ON SCHAFER KNOB. I THINK IF WE PUT SOME SERIOUS STRESS ON THE PLANTS NOW, WE'LL BE IN GOOD SHAPE TO SPEED UP THE RETURN OF THE PRAIRIE ON ONE OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY KNOBS OF THE PRESERVE.

SATURDAY, JULY 22
9:30 A.M. - BRUSH
4:00 P.M. - MUSIC

SPECIAL EVENT MUSIC DAY AT NACHUSA GRASSLANDS! GATHER FOR A DAY OF SONG AND CELEBRATION ON THE PRAIRIE. WE'LL MEET AT 9:30 A.M. FOR BRUSH CLEARING (BRING SAWS, LOPPERS, AND AXES), HAVE A SACK LUNCH UNDER THE OAKS, THEN AROUND 4:00 P.M. RELAX IN THE SHADE FOR MUSIC, POETRY AND STORIES OF THE PRAIRIE. BRING INSTRUMENTS, VOICES AND PERHAPS A FAVORITE STORY OR POEM TO SHARE. MEET AT STONE BARN ROAD ENTRANCE.*

MONDAY, JULY 24
8:00 A.M.

SAVANNA DAY. COME HELP AND RESTORE ONE OF ILLINOIS' RAREST ECOSYSTEMS. MEET AT STONE BARN ROAD ENTRANCE.*

SATURDAY, JULY 29
7:00 - 9:00 A.M.

KEITH BLACKMORE FROM THE NW ILLINOIS CHAPTER OF THE AUDUBON SOCIETY WILL LEAD A BIRD WALK FROM 7:00 - 9:00 A.M. MEET AT THE MAIN SIGN ON LOWDEN ROAD. BRUSH CLEARING AFTERWARD FOR ANYONE SO INSPIRED BY THE PRAIRIE BIRDS, THAT THEY WANT TO HELP SAVE THEIR HABITAT!

MONDAY, JULY 31
4:00 P.M. - BRUSH
6:00 P.M. - WALK

EVENING WALK ON THE PRAIRIE WITH CHRIS BRONNY! CHRIS WILL WALK AROUND THE PRESERVE WITH US, IDENTIFYING PLANTS, POTENTIAL SEED SOURCES AND DISCUSS THE PROGRESS WE'VE MADE SO FAR. MEET ON LOWDEN ROAD AT 6:00 P.M. FOR THE WALK, OR 4:00 P.M. FOR BRUSH CLEARING.



SATURDAY, AUGUST 5
8:00 A.M.

FENCEROWS! TIM KELLER HAS DONE A WONDERFUL JOB OF REMOVING OLD FENCE FROM THE PRESERVE - NOW LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT THE TREES! BRING BOW SAWS AND AXES IF YOU HAVE THEM.

MONDAY, AUGUST 7
8:00 A.M.

TRAIL BLAZING DAY. HELP US CLEAR TRAILS THROUGH ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL, BUT SELDOM SEEN PORTIONS OF THE PRESERVE - THE WETLAND COMPLEX OF FENS, SEDGE MEADOWS, AND SPRINGS. MEET AT STONE BARN ROAD ENTRANCE* AT 8:00 A.M. PREPARE TO GET YOUR FEET WET!

SATURDAY, AUGUST 12
8:00 A.M.

THE SAVANNA AREA IS BEING THREATENED! WE'LL GIRDLE THE INVADING TREES TO SAVE THE OAKS. BRING SAWS AND AXES. MEET AT STONE BARN ROAD ENTRANCE* AT 8:00 A.M.

MONDAY, AUGUST 14
5:00 P.M.

FALL SEEDING PLANNING GROUP. WE'LL SCATTER SOME EARLY-GATHERED SEED, HAVE A PICNIC SUPPER AND ORGANIZE SEED GATHERING EXPEDITIONS FOR THE FALL. MEET AT 5:00 P.M. ON LOWDEN ROAD.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 19
8:00 A.M.

KITTENTAIL RESCUE! THE KITTENTAILS LOOK GREAT THIS YEAR, BUT THEIR HABITAT IS BEING LOST TO SHRUBBY INVADERS. LET'S PAMPER THOSE KITTENTAILS BY CUTTING BACK THE BRUSH!.

MONDAY, AUGUST 21
8:00 A.M.

MULTIFLORA ROSE APPRECIATION DAY! BRING LOPPERS AND GLOVES.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 26
8:00 A.M.

SUMAC CHECK-UP AND TREE GIRDLING ON SCHAFER KNOB.

MONDAY, AUGUST 28
6:00 P.M.

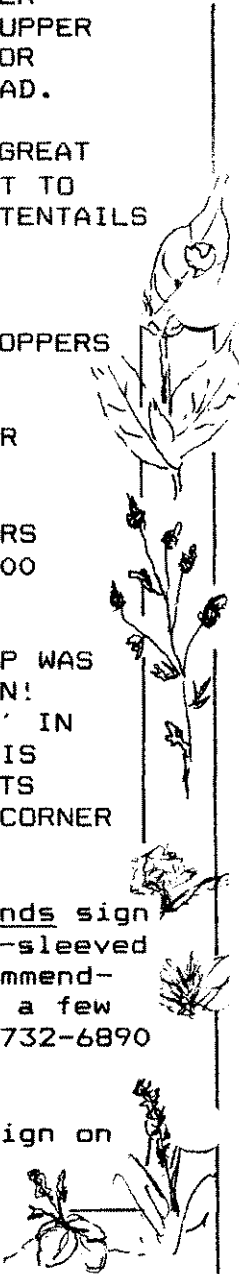
EVENING STROLL ON THE PRAIRIE - BLAZINGSTARS SHOULD BE IN THEIR FULL GLORY! MEET AT 6:00 P.M. ON LOWDEN ROAD.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2
2:00 P.M.

STONE SOUP II LAST YEAR'S STONE SOUP WAS SUCH A SUCCESS WE'D LIKE TO DO IT AGAIN! BRING PEAS, CARROTS, ETC. FOR SIMMERIN' IN THE CAULDRON. THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO IS HELPING NACHUSA GRASSLANDS RETURN TO ITS PRESETTLEMENT QUALITY! GATHER IN NW CORNER OFF STONE BARN ROAD AT 2:00 P.M.

For all events we'll meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Nachusa Grasslands sign on Lowden Road unless noted otherwise. Wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, hat, and good walking shoes (tick repellent is also recommended). Bring gloves, tools (loppers, bow saws, axes - we'll have a few tools on hand), water and lunch. Call Jennifer Delisle at 815/732-6890 if you have any questions, suggestions, or need directions.

* From Lowden Road, turn west onto Stone Barn Road. Look for sign on south side of Stone Barn Road.



PRAIRIE'S PROGRESS

By Chris Bronny



Despite last year's drought, the prairie is becoming established in the fall 87 and 88 seeded portions of the preserve.

Although it is still too early to tell which grasses are there, a number of forbs are coming in strong including pale purple coneflower, rough blazingstar, and stiff goldenrod. A few silphium and lespedeza seedlings were also noticed.

Not surprisingly, the best prairie in the seeded areas was found at the top of the dry gravel-sandy knobs due to little competition from the non-native weeds. It is into these areas that we recently scattered needlegrass and Junegrass.

In the wetter swales of the preserve, wild hyacinth and prairie betony seed was scattered.

Dennis Lubbs and I are doing some limited wetlands restoration in the prairie potholes found in the center portion of the preserve. Spores of royal fern and seeds of high-quality wetland species are being introduced.

In the savanna areas in the NW corner of the preserve, first year blooms of bottlebrush grass and Virginia wild-rye have been seen, and a limited amount of Jacob's ladder, wild columbine, and wild blue phlox was broadcast.

Good news for the regal fritillaries! It looks as if the bird's foot violet is beginning to disperse itself from its main location (Tim's knob) and is establishing itself on the north-facing lower slopes of adjacent knobs.

It was a nice surprise to find a beautiful clump of wild quinine at the top rim of a swale where it hadn't been noticed before.

Violet wood-sorrel, false dandelion, spiderwort, little bluestem, kittentails, and pink sandwort all looked healthy this year. Areas that were burned April 22 responded dramatically to the fire, top-killing the multiflora rose and setting back the islands of weedy brush found in the swales between the knobs. And of course, pale purple coneflower on the high quality knobs of the preserve was phenomenal.

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## VISITOR'S GUIDE

Nature Conservancy volunteer Jennifer Vogelgesang is creating a visitors' guide to a part of Nachusa Grasslands. The guide will outline a walk through a large area of prairie and rock outcropping west of the main entrance on Lowden Road. It will describe many interesting features and explain the ecological significance of the area. A map will be included.

Jennifer hopes to eventually make several guides, each high-lighting a specific portion of the preserve. These guides will be extremely helpful in acquainting visitors with the beauty and importance of Nachusa. Thanks to Jennifer for giving her time and talents to this much-needed project!



BADGER (*Taxidea taxus*)

What to look for: flattened body, short legs; shaggy fur; black facial pattern; white stripes on top of head.

# HOUSEWIVES HAVE MORE FUN!



by Carol Jackley

I was just a housewife. Then my children grew up and left to find their roles in life. I wondered what to do with all my spare time that I never knew I had. A friend of mine, Isabel Johnston, introduced me to the wonderful world of butterflies and I was completely hooked. For three years I spent the summers collecting, studying or just enjoying them fly around me.

My children, husband and neighbors looked at me with raised eyebrows as I chased around my yard with my faithful net and book, studying as many varieties as dared to come into my path. It wasn't long after that the children were bringing me specimens from their workplaces and the neighbors would call my attention to a butterfly in their yard.

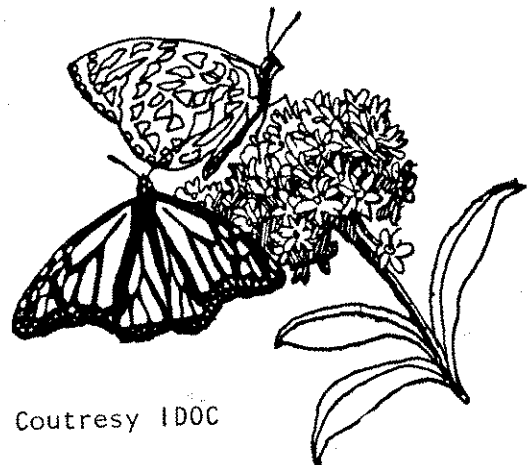
I ended up after three years with a 4x5 foot board of specimens that I had collected of both butterflies and moths from the Sterling area and many vacations. I donated this to the Nature Center at Sinnissippi Park in Sterling.

Three years ago I was asked to help with a butterfly count at Nachusa Grasslands. This is a wonderful place to go not only for butterflies but also to see beautiful prairie flowers, grasses and birds. As I was counting the different species of butterflies I was rewarded with seeing my first Regal Fritillaries which abound in the milkweed that grows there. I was surprised at how low they fly for such a large butterfly. Sometimes they were so low in the plants that I had to walk through the milkweeds to get to them so I could count them.

Early in the summer the American Copper can be found in large numbers feeding on a small yellow flower. They are very cooperative and sit still for awhile so you can study their sexes and pretty copper color. The European and Cloudy Wing Skippers flit up and down the road in the Grasslands. The Tiger and Black Swallowtails can be seen as well as the Monarch, Painted Lady, Cabbage, Spring Azure, Eastern Tailed Blue and sometimes an early Red Spotted Purple. Later in the summer the Great Spangled and Variegated Fritillary appear as well as the Pearl Crescent, Satyr, Viceroy, Questionmark and the very colorful Red Admiral, to name a few.

On June 10th I went for the first time this summer and was surprised not to see any Alfalfa butterflies but then I remembered that the alfalfa fields are being eaten by the Alfalfa Beetle so now with the lack of food these butterflies will probably be fewer this year.

As I was winding my way back I sat on a rocky knoll and was treated to a pair of Mockingbirds eating berries and to an Upland Sandpiper which flew over giving his wolf whistle to his mate. As I sat there I knew that being just a housewife sure had its rewards.

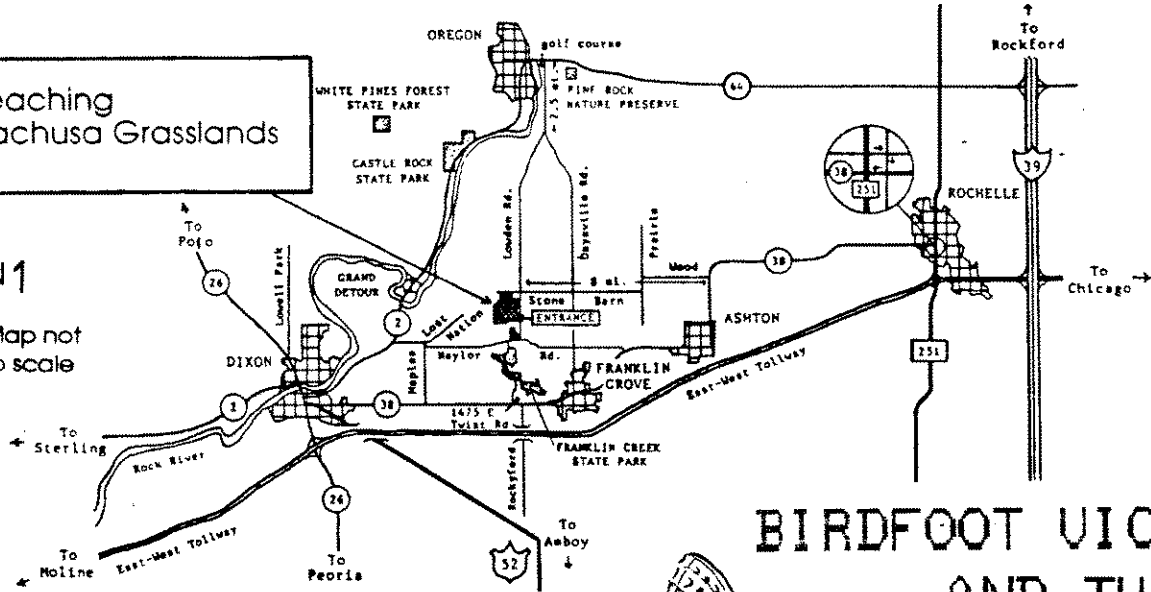


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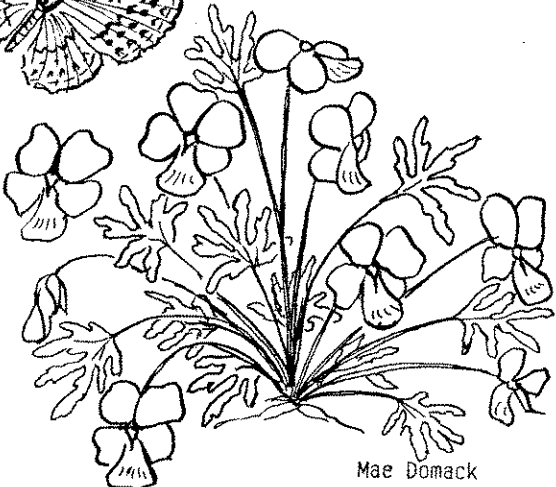
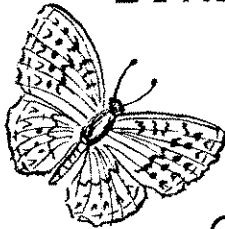
Reaching  
Nachusa Grasslands

N1

Map not  
to scale



BIRDFOOT VIOLETS  
AND THINGS



Mae Domack

by Isabel Johnston

"We believe a good neighbor policy is a valuable one, especially when we consider that "our" wildlife does not understand property lines and depends on many areas outside the preserve. Nachusa's many conservation-minded neighbors are one of the reasons so many rare species have survived in this area."  
-STEVE PACKARD

If you are interested in receiving more information about NACHUSA GRASSLANDS please check any of the following items and return to: THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, ILLINOIS FIELD OFFICE, 79 WEST MONROE, CHICAGO, IL 60603.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Put me on the Nachusa Grasslands mailing list.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I'd like to sign up for a burn crew.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Send information on volunteer possibilities at Nachusa Grasslands.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(city) (state) (zip)

In Wisconsin in her youth Mae Domack, Morrison artist, remembers the bird foot violets along the railroad tracks on her way to and from school. Why do some have 2 deep purple petals? We have them in Lee and Ogle County, too.

The Great Spangled and Regal Fritillary larvae feed on bird foot violet leaves which seem to be numerous on one hill at Nachusa. This is a hill with many of the nicer fall flowers, too. I call it Tim's Limestone Outcrop west.

How do sleepy catchflies and other catchflies use the bugs and ants they kill? On a small part of their stem is a black tar like ring. Here I find caught ants and bugs.



Mary Phelan

**DOWNY YELLOW PAINTED CUP**  
**(Catilleja sessiliflora)**

This species is found on knobs and ridges of dry, usually gravelly and sandy prairies. Their habitat has been severely reduced by agriculture and development. Endangered in Illinois, they survive at Nachusa Grasslands.

**READER'S CORNER**

Have you enjoyed the second issue of the Nachusa Grassland newsletter? As you can see we changed our name and format! Hope you like it. We will continue to save this space for comments and suggestions from our readers. Maybe you have a question you would like answered. Send it in we'll try to find the answer! See you next time. Be sure to save the "Summer Schedule of Events" and contact Jennifer with questions, suggestions, and for directions to the Grasslands.

**\*\*\*\*\* IN THIS ISSUE \*\*\*\*\***

- Pg. 1 - Meet Jennifer - Summer Intern
- Pg. 2 - Wanted - A Nest Site  
by Jennifer Delisle
- Pg. 3 & 4 - Summer Schedule of Events
- Pg. 5 - Prairie's Progress by Chris Bronny and Visitor's Guide

- Pg. 6 - Housewives Have More Fun  
by Carol Jackley
- Pg. 7 - Map - Reaching Nachusa Grasslands and Birdfoot Violets and Things by Isabel Johnston
- Pg. 8 - Reader's Corner

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