



PRAIRIE SMOKE

Nachusa Grasslands Newsletter

Issue 18

August 15, 1993

Autumn-on-the-Prairie '93 at Nachusa

Gene St. Louis

Autumn-on-the-Prairie for 1993 is only a few weeks away on September 18th. As this year's chairperson, I have been making calls and writing letters to get everything ready. Much of the foot-work has already been done by my predecessors, Deb Carey in '90, Amy Prosser in '91, and Bob Parenteau last year. I have particularly good notes from the past two years to use as a guide, and Bob is only a phone call away. A steering committee meeting for AOTP was held at the Yellow House on June 27th, which resulted in many good suggestions for this year's event.

Nachusa Grasslands will host the annual meeting of The Nature Conservancy's Illinois Chapter at 10:30. Conservancy officers for the next year will be elected during these proceedings, which should last about half an hour.

Our special guest speaker this year will be Professor James Gillihan. It would take this entire issue of Prairie Smoke to do justice to his wide-ranging accomplishments. Since receiving his degree in Sociology and Anthropology in 1957, he has been an archaeologist, college instructor, author of many anthropological and artistic publications, the chief administrator for six museums and community cultural centers, host of educational radio and television programs, and has worked as a fund-raiser for many public institutions. He currently heads his own consulting firm which provides appraisals for collections of antiquities and fine arts, as well as fund raising and the development of exhibits and public programs.

He is best known for his close relationship with Native Americans. In 1970 he took over several

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at Nachusa, page 2*



News from Nachusa Grasslands

By Sally Baumgardner

Sometimes a story doesn't end with the death of a creature. In the case of the Nachusa Grasslands Long-eared owl, the dead body found in mid-May by Rob Sickler provided an exciting beginning! Mr. Sickler knew "It was some kind of owl", and went about having a proper identification made. We realized immediately that this particular dead owl had developed a brood patch, an area of skin on the bird's belly that has no feathers during the nesting period. It enables the adult bird to transfer body heat to the incubating egg, and later to nestling chicks. The presence of a bird with a brood patch is a sure sign of a nesting species!

Long-eared owls, now listed as endangered in Illinois, were common in the northern half of the state 80 years ago. They are known to roost in our wooded areas in winter, but are very rarely seen in the spring, the breeding season. In fact, there have been only two known Illinois broods between 1980 and now. Digging into research shows their egg dates in Illinois were March 9 to May 7.

On the evening of May 29, Max and I did some "passive research", just sitting on the Blazer's tailgate and watching and listening. We felt, then saw, a medium-sized owl in silent flight not far over our left shoulders. This bird was smaller than a Great horned owl and larger than a Screech owl. The only sound



[-1-] *See News from Nachusa Grasslands, page 3*

Autumn-on-the-Prairie '93 at Nachusa.....

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museum directorships and an academic position at the University of South Dakota. He became acquainted with several leaders of the Lakota nation, and was eventually invited to participate in their ceremonies. He undertook the learning of their language, and was adopted into the tribe in 1972. He was given the name Tatonka Ska, or White Buffalo. He worked as a negotiator between whites and the Lakota during the Wounded Knee uprising of 1973. By 1977, he was rapidly losing his life to cancer. Two Lakota friends visited him in the hospital, and performed a native prayer ritual with their medicine pipe. Four days later, the cancer had vanished.

After his recovery, Frank Fool's Crow, chief of the Oglala, made him a keeper of Sitting Bull's pipe. He is the only white person ever allowed to be a pipekeeper. When Gillihan asked why he should be so honored, Fool's Crow replied "You've been to our ceremonies. When you were in the hospital, we all prayed for you. Our spirits know you, and they are very close to you. They wouldn't choose wrong." Gillihan returns with the pipe to South Dakota each year for annual prayer ceremonies. His presentation is entitled "A Look at the Environment, The Native American View" and will be given at 1:00 PM. No visitor to AOTP will want to miss hearing this very special speaker.

New at AOTP this year will be the reenactment of a voyagers camp of the 1830's by the Wapiti Trading Company. This group from McHenry County will be lead by our own restoration specialist Ed Collins. They plan on setting up a camp depicting life during the period of first settlement of the prairie. They will demonstrate such skills as making fire with a flint and steel, open fire cooking, and the use of flint-lock rifles. Visitors will be able to discuss the early exploration and settlement of the prairie with these historical enthusiasts.

We would like to have more frequent tours this year, with fewer participants per tour. If enough guides will come forth, we plan on scheduling tours every 15 or 20 minutes. Sally Baumgardner is preparing a special tour for children and their parents. There will again be a brush cutting demonstration by Ed Pleskovitch at 11:30. A controlled burn is also being planned for 2:00, but with our cool spring and torrential rains the prairie may still be too green for a fire in mid September. Dennis Lubbs and Kathy Motto will also

give a demonstration of seed scattering for prairie restoration at 3:00. After attending some of our restoration demonstrations, you may want to consider becoming a volunteer at Nachusa yourself, or at another preserve near you.

Snow White Bakery will again be providing delicious food and beverage prepared on site as they did last year. This year, they hope to provide Bison meat for more adventurous diners. Rod's Golf Carts of Mendota will also be returning with a golf cart to assist the elderly from the parking area up to the top of the hill. There will be several tents with displays by local artists and photographers, a display of prairie mammals, prairie plants, and a large collection of Native American artifacts. Dot Wade, our god-mother of Nachusa, will again be presenting an extensive selection of nature books for sale. Prairie plant seeds will be available for purchase from Genesis Nursery, along with sweet grass braids and sage bundles. Several handicrafters will be offering ceramic mugs, baskets, and twig furniture. The Nature Conservancy will have lots of T-shirts with TNC logos for sale. If you are not already a member of The Nature Conservancy, AOTP would be a great time to join. Membership will be available at the Welcome Tent. Visitors will also have the opportunity of winning valuable items through our raffle. The raffle and part of the proceeds from other sales goes toward offsetting the costs of Autumn-on-the-Prairie.

Plan now on attending this year's AOTP. You will be rewarded with a splendid autumn day in the country, enjoying one of the best remnants of the original prairie left in Illinois. In addition to recreational activities, there will be many education opportunities throughout the day from our tour leaders, demonstrators, and exhibits. Parents should consider taking this opportunity to introduce your children to some of the wonders of nature. Hopefully, you will leave with a renewed dedication to preserving our natural heritage for our succeeding generations.

(Some material for Jim Gillihan's biography taken from an article by Henry Cassens in a July, 1993 issue of "The Midweek" newspaper.)



News from Nachusa Grasslands.....

continued from page 1

over the still prairie sunset was the squeaking of the little mouse in the talons of our owl....

There's only one reason why a bird will carry food around: To feed its young.

The proper documents have been filed with the Illinois Department of Conservation, the Endangered Species Board and the landowners, The Nature Conservancy. It seems the Long-eared owl has responded to our work of preservation. The decline of a species is almost always due to habitat loss. At the grasslands, we are turning that around and into "habitat gain".

This is a good example of local environmental activism at the highest level. Successful stewardship of the land can be achieved with planning, education and the dedication of loyal volunteers and interns. There was no need for picketing to protect the Long-eared owl. This native animal came back to its former range without a captive release program and without any more publicity than this column. The reason for its return seems to be that the habitat is, once again, supportive of the animal. And a family of them at that! Nice work, grasslands volunteers and interns!



Amy Prosser Returns for Visit

By Gene St. Louis

Amy Prosser, our summer intern for 1991, returned for a visit over the weekend of June 26. Amy has been working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska recently through a program of the Student Conservation Association. She will be attending graduate school at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks this Fall, where she will pursue a masters degree in conservation management. While here, she helped collect seeds and removed weeds around the Yellow House. She also donated an original work of art to be raffled off during the upcoming Autumn-On-The-Prairie festival.

Multiflora Rose, 1993

Bernie Sexton from Dixon continues his battle against the despised and wicked multiflora rose. You'll see his red flags in the swale west of the entrance on Lowden Road. Double red flags indicate second offenders that have already been cut, and bright pink flags indicate plants of evil tenacity and the need for another cut. Lucky for Bernie, Red Turner and friends, roses in this last grouping are sometimes so weakened by all that stress they can be finished off by cutting under the crowns. The resulting disturbance in the soil's surface is counteracted by a nice sprinkling of Indian Grass seeds.

Please leave the flags in place! And wave, honk, and/or stop and help Bernie and the friends who are sweating it out with him.

Help Wanted

Student of biology and/or environmental sciences or related fields: Are you concerned about what you can do to protect or improve our land? Is the South American rain forest too far away for you to "get involved"? Do you need a good subject to study for your classes in environmentalism? Do you need references on your resume? If you answered "Yes", to ANY of the above, why not get involved in a local issue? Nachusa Grasslands has areas that may be of interest for you! If you are willing to learn and like to experiment, and eventually work on your own, we are willing to help you begin.

For starters, Bernie Sexton of Dixon needs high school or college age students to help monitor the multiflora rose challenge. Call him at 288-3522 or The Nature Conservancy interns at 456-2340. This is a long term project that can lend itself well to writing a paper on control of an introduced and unwanted plant species.

Report by Interns

By Jennifer Henry, Eric Hart, and Danny Patterson

Our first two months at Nachusa Grassland have been very busy. The major effort in restoring the prairie has been removing the non-prairie features such as brush, weeds, and drainage tile. Brush cutting has been our biggest job so far. We have cut and stacked large piles of black cherry, plum, multiflora rose, and other woody species. The cherry, rose, and other invasives were treated with herbicide to prevent resprouting, while the plum and other prairie shrubs were untreated. The majority of this work has been on Doug's and Dot's Knobs, with additional brush cutting on Schafer's Knob and east of Trash Knob. Firewood resulting from the brush clearing has been stacked at the Yellow House. We have already burned most of the brush piles on Doug's and Dot's Knobs, with the hope of getting the rest burned before we leave.

Another highly visible change at Nachusa is the cleanup of Trash Knob. Five semi-truck loads of debris were scraped up by bulldozer and hauled away. We seeded the resulting scar with little bluestem and some of the forbs and grasses we had collected. We also filled another dumpster of scrap metal for recycling from the pile in front of the barn. At least two more dumpster loads are in need of removal.

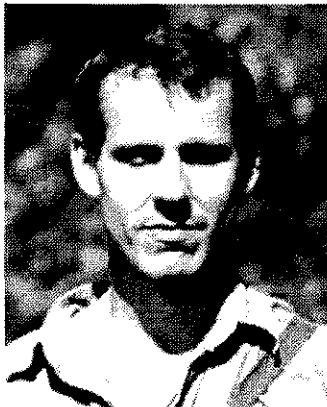
We have also been actively fighting weeds at Nachusa. The focus of our efforts has been white sweet-clover. We have cut dense patches of sweet-clover from behind the yellow house, around Trash and Coneflower Knobs, and in the '87 planting north of these Knobs. Smaller patches have been cut on the main complex. Since most of these plants have already formed seeds, we are staking and burning them as quickly as possible. We are trying to eradicate

as much sweet-clover as possible before the plants drop their seeds. We also cut and removed two patches of wild parsnip on Doug's Knob. Vast numbers of first-year plants of both these biennial species can still be found in these areas, so there will be plenty more we control needed next summer.

The peak seed collection season has not arrived yet, but we have been collecting many early flowering species as they ripen. We have collected seed of shooting star, June grass, porcupine grass, golden aster, Venus's looking glass, mesic sedges, Panicum, purple coneflower, black-eyed Susan, bergamort, prairie smoke, and Alumroot. We planted the shooting star on the main complex and No-Name Knob, and the June grass at Meiner's uplands. Most of the other seed was planted at Trash Knob, though we still have lots of porcupine grass and black-eyed Susan left for future planting.

Another restoration effort underway at Nachusa is the reestablishment of a wetland area in the lowlands west of the yellow house, near the powerlines. We have broken and plugged several subsurface drainage tiles in the hope of restoring the area's natural hydrology. The results were immediate, with water rising to the surface and spreading over the ground upstream of many of the breaks. With a little more work and some patience, we will see native wetland flora replace the horseweed and ragweed which now covers most of the area.

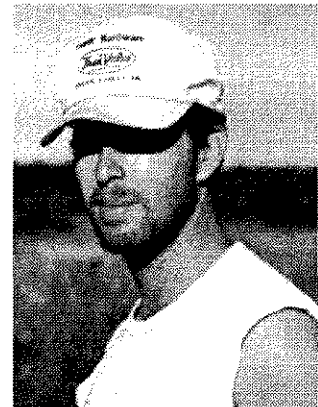
Our work this summer has shown us the great amount of work required to restore a damaged ecosystem. We hope that the results of our work will be a healthier prairie in the years to come. We appreciate the opportunity to work at your Nachusa Grasslands and know our experiences here will help us in our future endeavors.



Eric Hart



Jennifer Henry



Danny Patterson

The
Nature
Conservancy



Fourth Annual Autumn-on-the-Prairie at Nachusa Grasslands

September 18, 1993 10 am to 5 pm

The Nature Conservancy
Illinois Chapter Annual Meeting 10:30

Special Guest Speaker 1:00
Professor Jim Gillihan
"A Look at the Environment
The Native American View"

Tours Throughout the day

Displays:
Native American Artifacts
Prairie Plants
Prairie Wildlife
Art, Photography, Crafts

Demonstrations:
Brush Control 11:30
Controlled Burn 2:00
(Conditions Permitting)
Restoration Planting 3:00

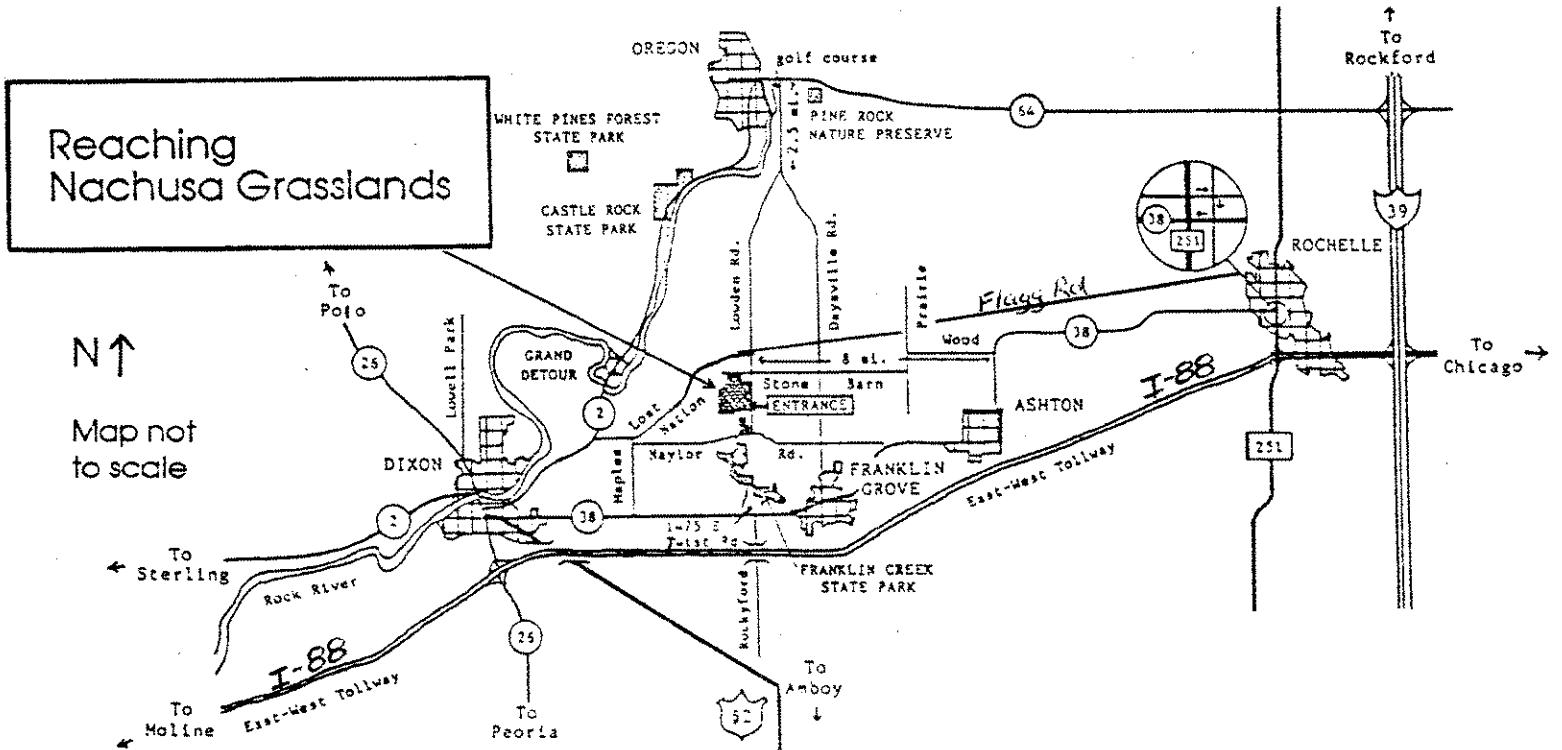
Pioneer Encampment by
Wapiti Trading Company

Food and Beverages Available



Admission and Parking are Free

NACHUSA GRASSLANDS



From I-88 (East-West Tollway):

Option 1: Exit at Rt. 251 North, (Rochelle) to Rt. 38 West. Travel through Ashton and into Franklin Grove, (approx. 16.5 miles), turn right (north) at Daysville Road (sign: "Franklin Creek State Park"). Travel 1.5 miles north to Naylor Road, turn left (west). Then follow the signs leading to the Grasslands.

Option 2: Exit at Rt. 251 North, (Rochelle) past Rt. 38 to Flagg Road, (sign: "Flagg Center 3 miles"). Travel approx. 14.8 miles to 4-way stop sign at Lowden Road, turn left (south). Approx. 2 miles down the road on the west side of the road will be the Grasslands.

From Rt. 64:

At eastern edge of the City of Oregon, turn left (south) on Daysville Road (towards Lowden-Miller State Park). Travel approx. 2.4 miles to Lowden Road, turn right, (still following State Park sign). Travel south approx. 5.3 miles (past the State Park) to a 4 way stop at Flagg Road. Continue south another 2 miles, the Grasslands will be on the righthand (west) side of the road.

From Dixon:

Option 1: Take Rt. 38 eastbound into Franklin Grove, turn left (north) on Daysville Road (sign: Franklin Creek State Park). Travel 1.5 miles north to Naylor Road, turn left (west). The follow the signs leading to the Grasslands.

Option 2: Take Rt. 2 north out of Dixon, approx. 2 miles, turn right on Lost Nation Road. Go one mile to Maples Road, turn right, then left almost immediately and follow the signs to the Grasslands.

Trash Knob Cleanup - Mission Accomplished -

By Gene St. Louis

Two more cleanup days have completed the removal of the old farm dump at Trash Knob. The first involved a lot of hands, and the second a lot of horsepower.

On June 6th, Nachusa was twice blessed with the return of the Franklin Grove chapter of FFA under the direction of Rich Pettit. Steve Wilcox, David Atkinson, Bill Pitzer, Ray Grady, Nate Smith, Matt Smith, Joe Warrenfeltz, and Corey Harmon turned out to once



again attack our mountain of trash. Our own Nachusa volunteers included Ed Collins, Ed Pleskovitch, Bob Parenteau, Mike Adolf, Gary Tollaksen, Mark Ruby, Carol and Carl Murbach, Gene St. Louis, and our summer intern Jennifer Henry. Using a tractor provided by the FFA, Rich Pettit, Ed Collins, and Ed Pleskovitch pulled many larger pieces of junk from the pit. The other volunteers, frequently working in pairs, cleared out items up to the size of an old refrigerator. By noon, two huge farm wagon loads and several pick-up loads had been moved down to the farm yard. By this point, almost all of the material it was practical to collect for recycling had been removed from the knob. Ed Pleskovitch and Bob Parenteau stayed on through the afternoon to cut up the old combine with Ed's acetylene torch.

Determining that as much human effort as was practical had been expended on this project, Ed Collins brought in a Caterpillar bulldozer on July 29th to complete the cleanup. Beginning at 6:30 in the morning, Ed and our summer interns

Jennifer Henry, Eric Hart, and Dan Patterson, with dozer operator Bob Gould, sorted out some



Ed Collins estimates that at least 60 percent of the total metal at the site was collected for reuse. Everyone associated with this project over the last year can take pride in helping preserve our natural resources through the recycling of these materials. As a restoration project, this tremendous human effort will transform this ugly and hazardous area back into natural tall grass prairie, flowing gently on the winds of Nachusa Grasslands.

Water Testing

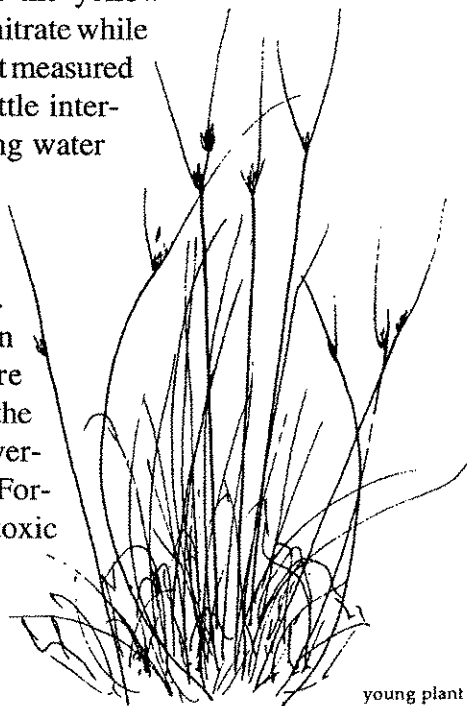
By Danny Patterson

Thomas Glendinning of Stillman Valley, Karl Murbach of Dixon, and Danny Patterson, an intern at Nachusa, conducted Nitrate, Phosphate, pH, and temperature tests on the waters of Franklin and Wade Creeks, the Wetland, and the well at the yellow house. Two water samples were taken from Franklin Creek on Naylor Road at Meiner's Wetland. One was collected in the deeper water above the bridge, the other came from about fifty yards downstream at the shoal. The pH at both sites was 8.2. The temperature at the upstream site was 17° C while at the lower end 16° C which is 62 and 61° F respectively. Nitrate at the upper site measured 7.8 mg/L, it measured 9.6 mg/L below the bridge at the shoal. Phosphorous measured 0.13 mg/L at the upper site and 0.06 mg/L downstream.

The water of Wade Creek was slightly more acidic with a pH of 7.9. It was also cooler 14.5° (57°F) to be exact. Nitrate concentration measured 7.6 parts per million while phosphorous was 0.12 parts per million. Iron content was only 0.26 parts per million.

The water leaving the wetland had a pH of 7.8 and a temperature of 60°F. Total nitrate concentration was 9.9 mg/L. Ten mg/L is considered unhealthy for small children and pregnant women but adults can handle up to thirty parts per million if they drink it only once in a while. Total phosphorous measured 0.29 mg/L. Iron made up a total of 0.07 mg/L.

The well at the yellow house, 4.8 mg/L nitrate while phosphate was not measured because it's of little interest where drinking water is concerned. pH was lower here than at other test sites at 6.7. Iron concentration was higher here than at any of the other sites. It averaged 3.24 mg/L. Fortunately, it's not toxic to most people.



young plant

Work Day at West Chicago Prairie

By Gene St. Louis

For several years, volunteers from the West Chicago Prairie Stewardship Group have been lending a hand at Nachusa. Under the leadership of Mel Hoff, they have adopted Kittentail Knob in the Southwest corner of the main complex of knobs. This area was totally overrun with brush and multi-floral rose. Through their efforts, large tracts of brush have been cleared to allow the prairie to reestablish itself in this area. Mel Hoff was awarded a Volunteer Stewardship Network Outstanding Volunteer award for his efforts at Nachusa.

A group of Nachusa volunteers are planning our own reciprocal work day at West Chicago Prairie on October 16th this fall, beginning at 9 am. Mel Hoff has put our name on a grove of Gray Dogwood trees, one of their invasive species. We invite anyone else who is interested to come join us in helping show our appreciation for the help received from the West Chicago volunteers. If you live in the metropolitan area and cannot easily get to Nachusa for work days, please join us for the day at West Chicago Prairie. There will be a tour through the preserve after our work has been completed.

West Chicago Prairie is owned by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County. This 250 acre site is a gently rolling mixture of mesic and wet prairies with woods and Oak savanna. Although located entirely within the city of West Chicago, its large size and thriving flora mask the outside world to give a sense of being in a much more rural setting. It has one of the most magnificent stands of Oak trees left in Illinois. From a biased point of view, it is almost as nice as Nachusa. Their volunteers however, are second to none.

If you would like further information, please contact Gene St. Louis at (815) 756-8747.



west
chicago
prairie



stewardship group

Calendar

SEPTEMBER

- 4 Brush Cutting-Corner Pussy Toe Lane (formerly Benson Road) & last knob of main complex-9:30 a.m.
- 11 AOTP Workday-Yellow House-9:30 a.m.
- 18 4TH ANNUAL AUTUMN-ON-THE-PRAIRIE
- 25 Seed Collecting-10:00 a.m.

OCTOBER-Seed Collecting Month

Seed collecting will take place every Saturday (10 a.m.) and Sunday (11 a.m.) throughout the month

- 2 MFR Cut & Treat-Beaver Dam-Ed Pleskovitch-9:30 a.m.
- 9 Steering Committee meeting at Yellow House-9:30 a.m.
- *16 Tour-Autumn Splendor-Ellen Baker
Nachusa Volunteers work day at West Chicago Prairie-Contact Gene St. Louis, 815/756-8747
- 23 Brush Cutting-Degraded Savanna-9:30 a.m.

NOVEMBER

- Brush Cutting to be announced in a later calendar
- 1 Deadline for Prairie Smoke submissions-articles, photos, etc. to Earl Thomas
- 15 Prairie Smoke published

DECEMBER

Brush Cutting to be announced in a later calendar

- 4 3rd Annual Stone Soup Party & Seed Blending Workday-9:30 a.m.
- * **Tours**-All tours start at the Nachusa Grasslands sign on Lowden Road at 10:00 a.m., unless otherwise noted. Update information will be attached to the post at the entrance sign.
- Brush Cutting Crews**-Please meet at the Yellow House on Lowden Road at 9:30 a.m. Bring along a pair of heavy gloves to protect your hands.
- Please register** whenever visiting Nachusa Grasslands. Leave a note or use book at box at entrance. Your findings, information, and number in your group keeps us informed. If your tour group is visiting the Grasslands, please contact Ellen Baker, 742 Reynolds Road, Franklin Grove, IL 61031 (815)4546-2283, with an estimate of the number of people in your group so we may know how many visitors we have in a year. Thank you!

Sally's Tour Report

June 27th saw three different tours at the grasslands. Early in the morning, representatives from The Nature Conservancy met for a quick, get-acquainted tour to prepare them for a fund raiser to be held later.

At 10 AM, members of the Illinois Native Plant Society came and learned about our research projects. These people know their plants and the botanical family names. This was a real challenge—to try and find new discoveries for them. One man said he had learned ten (10!) new plants that day. All were thrilled to see lead plant at the peak of its full glorious bloom.

We invited all the neighbors who live (or own property) very close to the preserve to come over at 2 PM and learn who we are and what we are all about. We didn't have a traffic jam, but we surely attracted four nice neighbors. Clete and Karen Fair came with Mr. Kircher, the landowner east of us. Bill Shaw, who owns the land west of us and certainly shares similar interests, also came. We climbed up Doug's Knob and enjoyed the incredible diversity of the Illinois native grasses and flowers.



Illinois Native Plant Society Tour

Summer Seed Collecting

On July 10th, Shane Coers and Kent Gillespie of Dixon, Dick Gehman of Freeport, intern Eric Hart and I got together to collect seeds. We decided to harvest seeds of path rush that grows in a field directly adjacent to the next restoration site. Rosalind Nesbitt, Dixon, came also to get photographs.

The rushes are neither grasses nor sedges, but they are a family of their own, Juncus or Juncaceae. Path rush, as the name implies, can grow in areas where the soil has been compacted, but certainly isn't limited to paths. We gathered a full grocery sack of path rush on its stems. Since the seeds are tiny, we feel pretty triumphant that the day was a success!

Thanks, volunteers! You did good! See the [-9-] calendar for our next seed collecting days.

In Memoriam - Our good friend and neighbor, Dr. Albert Dahlberg, passed away on July 30. He had a long, fruitful association with the University of Chicago Dental Clinic and enjoyed his own successful dental practice. He studied human genetics and physical anthropology, so he could satisfy his curiosity as to how teeth came to have the size and shape they do. This led Al and Thelma, his wife of almost 60 years, to visit and study the people of Iran, Iraq, Japan, the Alaskan Eskimos and Indians of the Southwest. Dr. Dahlberg was the recipient of the Order of the Rising Sun, Third Degree, one of the highest honors given by the Japanese government. He was listed in Who's Who in American and the World.

His friends and neighbors will miss him.

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From the Editor:

If you know something about Nachusa Grasslands, but no one else knows because you didn't share the information, then you are *GUILTY* of keeping secrets! Send me articles, photos, drawings, poems, cartoons, calendar dates (items of interest to the friends of Nachusa Grasslands) to the return address below.



brings you **Prairie Smoke**, the Nachusa Grasslands Newsletter.
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