

# PRAIRIE SMOKE

## Nachusa Grasslands Newsletter

Issue 17

May 15, 1993

### Scattered to the Wind

By Carol Merbach

Quite literally, on Saturday April 24th, we scattered millions of seeds to the wind and over the uplands of Meiners' Wetlands. It was quite a site.

During the week as members of the steering committee made final preparations for the workday a careful watch of the weather maps was kept. In a quick break of the weather on Thursday the new Nachusa farmer, Ron Metzen, was able to disk half of the field. The rest of us continued to hold our breaths hoping for good weather on Saturday.

As the day dawned promising warm weather, we gathered and discussed the one mitigating weather factor, the wind. With winds between 20-30 mph and higher gusts, it was obvious that seed scattering would be aided by Mother Nature. However, there was a problem.

One of the purposes of the 1993 spring planting at Nachusa was to observe the differences between planting in a disked field and a burned field in an experiment of cultivated planting vs. successional restoration. Half of the 28 acre site had been disked, yet due to an abnormally wet spring, the other half had not yet been burned. After a great deal of discussion it was decided that with experienced burn volunteers and a 14 acre plowed fire break that we would burn the other half of the experimental tract.

At 10 a.m. nearly 150 people gathered at the top of the Autumn-on-the-Prairie site. After a introduction, the group split with about 40 Cub Scouts being lead cross country to some of the Heinkel tract where they would scatter red top and Kentucky blue seeds as a cover crop. These areas will be planted with native prairie seeds as they become available.

See *Scattered* ....., page 3



### Full-Time Help on the Way

By Carol Merbach

Hopefully by this summer Nachusa will have a full-time site manager to help oversee the restoration work at the grasslands. Nearly fifty resumes were reviewed and the selection process is taking place as this issue goes to press. The addition of a site manager will be a big benefit to many volunteers who want to help, but on a given day do not know where the help is most needed.

In addition to the site manager, Nachusa will also have several summer interns this year. Because the Grasslands continues to expand its' acreage at a rate faster than the volunteers can pull fences, cut brush, or pick seeds in order to keep up, the interns will be invaluable in the restoration efforts. Additionally, when any of the volunteers has some time off during the week, yet doesn't want to work alone, they can join the interns and site manager in whatever they might be doing that day.

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## Good bye and good luck, Hazel! Welcome, Earl!

Our faithful and able Editor of Prairie Smoke, Hazel Reuter, steps down with this issue. Hazel took the responsibility for editing, publishing and mailing out this newsletter approximately four years ago. Sixteen issues of this, our main vehicle of correspondence with interested friends throughout Illinois, are to her admirable credit.

Earl Thomas of Franklin Grove has volunteered to take the reins as editor. Adjacent landowners, Earl, wife Pat, and sons Eric and Jason are avid outdoors people. They hope to build soon and move from their present home to 'the country'.

Hazel left some "pretty big shoes" for Earl to fill, and we think he's very capable. Welcome to the volunteers, Earl Thomas!

## Why Nachusa Grasslands

*An interview*

*with Dorothy (Mrs. Douglas) Wade*

*given to Betsi McKay April 1993*

When knowledge, love, and will combine, expect great results to follow. And when two lives unite their efforts and dedicate themselves toward one goal, they can start a movement. Doug and Dot Wade did that, right here at Nachusa Grasslands.

Sit down and cock your ears to the sky and soon you may hear it — the song of the upland plover, just now back from the Argentine.

You may see him, wings a quiver, circling among the woolly clouds. Soon a flash of silver will tell you on which post he has alighted and folded his long tapered wings. Until the young plovers are a-wing, none may trespass without his protest.

An upland plover/sandpiper led Doug and Dot Wade to the broad horizon that was to be Nachusa Grasslands. They were excited when they saw him, that day in the mid-'60's, not only for his distinctive whistling cry — “whooleeee, whoooooo” — but because his presence signaled that undisturbed grasslands were nearby. Upland sandpipers nest only in the grasses of prairies and meadows. Overgrazed or plowed up fields will not protect this large (11-12”) active bird and his fast growing family.

“The huge, rolling topography was captivating,” reminisces Dot, an oft-transplanted New Jersey native. Doug’s intense interest in conservation and ecology, begun as a student in wildlife management with Aldo Leopold, had earned him key positions throughout the East and in Canada; but it was time to come back closer to his home state of Wisconsin. The panoramic prairie near Oregon, Illinois convinced them that their recent move had been a good one. Soon they were teamed up with other Midwestern “plant people” — Ray Schulenberg of Morton Arboretum, Bob Betz from Northeastern University, and David Krop, landscape architect, to name a few. Dot recalls that the buzz of Latin botanical names was “positively intoxicating!” They were in the field several times a week, searching, discovering, mapping their finds.

In previous decades botany had been more of a science of classification than of field study. Before Aldo Leopold’s excursions and vision, botany had been an indoor science. Leopold was inspired by direct experience, often of nearby Dane and “Sand” Counties, Wisconsin. When he took botany and ecology indoors, it was often in Washington D.C. and the East, and he took Doug Wade with him. They thrived in both human habitats and those of native species as they, and Leopold’s other students, spread the new approach to natural science.

The Wades brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to Del Schafer’s open fields that day they followed the sandpiper. Stretching before them was an ecological whole — an entire ecosystem that promised a multitude of interdependent species. Since then many individuals have united their ideals to increase the Grasslands to 900 acres, and the slogan “2000 in 2000” has been unfurled. “Savanna, marsh, fen, and sandstone outcroppings — the wildest and most interesting prairie flora and fauna in the region!” After 60 years of study and preservation, Dot is still enthusiastic. Thanks to landowners such as Del Schafer, ecologists like the Wades, and amateurs who man the weekend forces, Nachusa Grasslands is still an ageless resource supporting a broad and intricate web of life.

Pp37-38, SAND COUNTY ALMANAC, Aldo Leopold. 1960 Oxford University Press/Ballantine.

### Hurrah

*By James B. Long*

Lee County has many old pastures but in none of them can you find the Turk’s Cap Lily (*Lilium Michiganense*). We know they don’t grow on plowed ground. I saw one growing and blooming on a sunny roadside this summer but it was mowed down long before it could mature seed.

In the fertile, unpastured roads of Lee, Bureau, and Ogle counties, I have found the Turk’s Cap Lily hiding in a form that is barely recognizable. In the deep shade it does not produce flowers or a normal stem, only abbreviated stems with a few whails of leaves.

Isn’t it nice to know that the Turk’s Cap lily can grow and bloom in the sunshine of “Nachusa Grasslands” and never fear mower, hoof, or plow.

## Recent Workshops at Nachusa

By Gene St. Louis

Two educational workshops were held at the Yellow House on the Prairie on March 20th. The first was on woody plant identification. The second was on techniques for plant monitoring.

The woody plant identification seminar was presented by Dennis Lubbs, our restoration ecologist, and Kathy Motto, his partner in their own restoration business, Genesis Nursery. This seminar was aimed primarily at those volunteers engaged in brush cutting. There has been a tendency to view most woody growth as "brush", to be cut off and eliminated. However, Dennis pointed out that we have had a skewed view of prairie as being composed almost solely of grasses and herbaceous plants. Many woody plants were also components of the original prairie, and brush cutters must become knowledgeable about the native species in order to preserve those plants that truly belong here. He emphasized that the first rule of restoration is "Do no harm", and that brush cutters should not cut anything until it has been positively identified as being an invasive species we want to eliminate.

Among some of the native woody plants and trees which should be preserved in prairie and savanna areas are: Black Chokeberry, Sand Bar Willow, Prairie Willow, Oaks, including the White, Burr, Pin and Red Oaks, Walnut, Hickory, Butternut, Red Elms, Red Mulberry, the Carolina and Prairie Basswood, and Aromatic Sumac.

The second workshop, presented by Dr. Bohdan Dziadyk of Augustana College, was on techniques for plant monitoring. Dr. Dziadyk, has been carrying out detailed ecological studies at four sites within Nachusa for several years now. Plant monitoring is an integral part of what ecologists refer to as Long Term Ecological Research, or LTER for short. We want to know what organisms are present, what their population numbers are, and how these populations vary over time. This allows scientists to study ecological succession over long periods. It can also serve as a warning signal when some species begin to disappear altogether.

First, Boh demonstrated how to lay out a 1 square meter sampling quadrant using 4 thin steel bars and surveying pins. If a large number of separate areas are to be sampled, this square meter may be sub-divided into quarters for easier sampling. The selected area is then used to count actual numbers of individual plants, or the associated ground area covered by each plant.

Dr. Dziadyk then spent considerable time explaining how to combine the number of quadrants sampled with the counts of plants found to arrive at statistically meaningful frequencies which can be used to interpret the relative importance of the various plant species.

The attending volunteers were fortunate that these knowledgeable ecologists were willing to give these presentations to help us improve our restoration efforts at Nachusa. Hopefully, we will be able to present additional restoration workshops at Nachusa in the future.

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### Scattered ....., continued from page 1

The other half of the volunteers climbed aboard two hay racks and rode the two miles to Meiners' Wetlands behind a large tractor driven by Don Hillison of Franklin Grove. Once there Dennis Lubbs and Kathy Motto of Genesis Nursery directed the seed scattering operation. Combinations of dry, mesic, and wet prairie mixes were spread by hand and a cover crop of agrostis alba and poa pratense was also scattered to the wind. This field will turn green within 2 to 3 weeks and within 3 to 4 years will become a new prairie in the making.

Around noon, fourteen experienced people set the other fourteen acres afire. An hour later the field was ashes and after a quick lunch break was planted in the same seeds as the neighboring field, minus the cover crop. It will be interesting to watch these two fields side-by-side over the next year or two.

A great many people were involved in the success of this work day, most importantly the members of the steering committee. We want to thank the Lee County Red Cross for being on hand "just in case", farmers Don Hillison and Ron Metzen for taking valuable spring planting time out to help us, Cub Scout Pack 81 from Oregon and Boy Scout Troop 32 of Loves Park, and the many people who traveled from as far away as Zion, Illinois, to participate in our seed scattering day.

#### **PUSSYTOES LANE** By Sally Baumgardner

The road leading to Kittentail Knob, formerly called "Benson's Lane", will now be known as "Pussytoes Lane". This was taken from the land map used when the property was purchased at auction.

Pussytoes Lane is unmarked. It is south of the entrance sign on Lowden Road. The lane is to be used on a very limited basis by work crews who must carry in heavy equipment. It will also be used, if necessary, when the controlled burns take place.

## Leptocoris Trivittatus

By Sally Baumgardner

When winter meetings are held at the Yellow House, we turn on the heat and reawaken the overwintering Boxelder bugs. Though some of us do not hold these critters in low regard, others do. In defense of these North American true bugs, I offered to do a little research.

True bugs have several features that set them apart from other insects commonly called bugs, such as beetles. One good example is their sucking mouth parts. They gain nourishment by sucking juices from plant parts. They don't bite, so they can't injure you.

Living East of the Rockies, *Leptocoris trivittatus* is the name scientists gave to our Eastern Boxelder Bugs. They live in deciduous woods, forests, and gardens. Their food is the foliar juice in boxelder, other maples, and deciduous fruit trees. According to The Audubon Society's Field Guide to North American Insects & Spiders, "Although this insect does little damage to trees, it causes deformities and blemishes in fruit." Since most of us do not grow maple trees for their fruit, we should have no financial reason to hate boxelder bugs. Nor do we have reason to chop down the boxelder tree and leave the maples — boxelders ARE maples! A more appropriate common name might have been "Maplebugs". If you truly must eradicate these animals, you might consider removing their source of food: Go out and pick up all those twirly seeds of maples, those "helicopters" of your youth!

Boxelder bugs over winter by having the adult females swarm near and in buildings (and, presumably, historically, in large tree cavities). Although I could not find direct reference to this in Audubon or in my Peterson Field Guide to Insects, I assume the females are carrying eggs that hatch in spring.

*Leptocoris* refers to the thin main portion of the insect's wing, and *trivittatus* means it has three stripes of color. The orange color usually signals an "I-don't-taste-good" message to predators. Does the rest of the boxelder's color signal something to you?

*Rise up little ones hypnotize me with your light.  
The silent show of fireworks in the night.  
Dancing the dance of both lover and killer alike.  
Will it be love or death for my fire-fly tonight?  
For me, it is only to watch in delight.*

Amy Prosser

## Raffle Items Needed

### For Autumn-On-The-Prairie

This year's celebration of Autumn-On-The-Prairie will be Saturday, September 18. In order to make this a self-supporting event, we are seeking donations of items to be raffled off during the festival. If you can provide an original work of art, nature photograph, handicraft, or other quality item to be raffled off, please contact Gene St. Louis at 815/756-8748. Your support will be very much appreciated.

## For Beginners Only

By James B. Long

I believe we would all agree sepals that are colored like petals serve the same purpose as petals.

They attract the attention of the pollinators (bee's, flies, butterfly's, and moth's). They also attract the attention of wildflower hunters like you and me. For reasons of this sketch, we will regard them as the same thing - "petals".

When you go to the woods this Spring, cultivate the habit of looking just beneath the "petals" of each kind of flower. If you gently roll over the flower of *Hepatica* you will find a three-lobed involucre that is found on no other Spring flower here. Just beneath the eight petals of *Bloodroot*, you will find a two-lobed green envelope. The *Spring Beauty* also has only a two-lobed envelope beneath the five petals. Once you know these three plants then you can look for the *Toothwort* which has only four petals like all of the mustard family.

The *Anemone*, *Rue-Anemone* and *False Rue-Anemone* are different from the other Spring flowers because they have only a bare stem beneath the "petals". Remember that the *Rue-Anemone* has the flower of an *Anemone* and the leaves of a *Rue*. Once you know what a *Rue* leaf looks like you can identify all the *Rue*'s and soon learn the other plants that have similar leaves.

One discovery leads to another and soon you will know all the wildflowers. Look at a wildflower in the woods the same way you would look at it in your garden. We all know the difference between a tomato plant and a cabbage or an onion or radish. We know all the garden plants simply because we have taken a good look at them; we must do the same with the wildflower. We know more than we realize when we just go to the woods.

## One Less Meadow

By James B. Long

It used to be that in the evening I could walk a mile from my door and visit two of the rarest orchids in America. To quote "Gray's Manual of Botany", published in 1950, we find:

(*Cypripedium candidum*) The small-white Lady's Slipper was found in "Calcareous meadows, prairie, mossy glades, becoming very rare."

(*Habenaria Leucophaea*) The Prairie White Fringed Orchid was found on "Wet prairie or open swamps, or bogs and shores, now rare, local and sporadically appearing."

These are the two species that I annually visited every June. They grew in a small meadow west of Amboy along the railroad tracks.

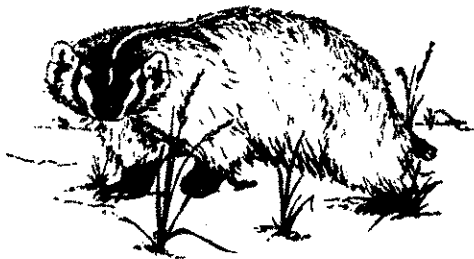
The meadow was characterized by an abundance of Saxifrage (*Saxifraga Pensylvanica*) and "alum Root" (*Heuchera Richardsonii*). I remember also the "Golden-Alexanders" (*Zizia Aurea*) and the "Pussy Willow" (*Salix Discolor*).

In 1957 I made the following notes: "In this meadow I found today eleven colonies with numerous leafy stems and flowers of the Lady's-Slipper. There are several new plants with single stems scattered about. Growing with them off to one side, are seven plants of the tall *Habenaria*."

"One colony of Lady's Slipper consisted of 66 leafy stems and was about three feet in diameter. It had 26 blossoms. Another colony had 23 leafy stems."

I should also mention that a rare Aster (*Aster Dumosus*) grew in this meadow. According to Almut Jones of the University of Illinois this Aster does not grow west of this location.

In 1977 the springs that watered the meadow were cut off by the opening of a new quarry. The orchids rapidly disappeared and the meadow became a weed patch. The area was plowed in 1991; it is growing corn today.



*Paint-brushed skies at night  
refracted red rays  
set the prairie grass on fire.*

*Two of our mother's siblings align in the  
western sky  
shyly illuminating the darkening horizon  
our world a distant star to them.*

*Creatures of the night  
heading the call of darkness  
begin the evening's hunt.*

*Solitary human  
seeks unity  
wanting only a part to play in the  
summer's eve night.*

Amy Prosser

## Volunteer Help Needed

Mailing Crew - Help is needed on a quarterly basis to assemble, label, & prepare the bulk mailing for the Prairie Smoke. A crew of 3 or 4 people could get this done in 2 or 3 hours. If you are interested in sharing the camaraderie of other nature lovers, please volunteer. The work will be done somewhere in the Franklin Grove area.

Public Relations Coordinator - If you are willing to write press releases, contact radio stations, and write the occasional story for The Conservator, we need you. Experience is not necessary, just a willingness to learn what goes on at the Nachusa Grasslands.

If you are interested in either of these positions, please contact Carol Merbach at 815/284-1505 for more information.

## Prairie University

The new Prairie University catalogs are here! As you may recall from the last Prairie Smoke, this is a mythical "university" that is actually a catalog of ecology oriented course offerings from throughout northern Illinois. While most are offered in the Chicago and suburban areas, many of them promise to be quite interesting and could be worth the drive. If you have not received your copy directly from The Nature Conservancy and would like to receive one, please contact TNC at 312/346-8166 or Carol Merbach at 815/284-1505.

# “WE HAVE A DREAM.....”

By Max Baumgardner

Socrates said “The beginning of Wisdom is the definition of terms.” At Nachusa Grasslands, the beginning and/or continuation of the modification process — whether that process be deemed restoration, conservation, recreation, or preservation — likewise requires the defining of terms. This effort, this “defining of terms”, this VISION — when sufficiently clear — will be used to prepare the stage for an orderly set of management objectives to be formulated and applied for the effective achievement of desired results. Although Socrates is not credited with saying it, the axiom that goes, “If you don’t know where you’re going you’ll end up somewhere else” certainly seems consistent his many illuminating observations.



It is from this perspective that a VISION for Nachusa Grasslands is described. This “defining of terms” is intended to paint a word picture of how we believe the Grasslands should appear at some future time period.

The above Preamble defines why, for the past four months several volunteers have been busily exchanging thoughts and perspectives on just what it is that they would like to see happen at the Grasslands. Those discussions, letters, and (naturally) meetings have resulted in the Vision Statement that you will find as an insert in this issue of Prairie Smoke

As chairman of the work group, I wish to thank Sally Baumgardner, Carol Merbach, Bob Parenteau, John Yunger, and Ed Collins for their excellent contributions in the construction of this statement. It is our hope that all who share our feelings about the future at Nachusa Grasslands will help in fulfilling the vision for this magnificent Nature Conservancy preserve.

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## A GREAT VISION STATEMENT FOR NACHUSA GRASSLANDS

We envision a living **Landscape** that is representative in appearance and conditions to that which was observed by the first non-native Americans who explored and settled here between 1683 and 1830. Every effort will be made to remove the vegetation and animal life that is non-native. Efforts will also be made to lessen the aesthetic impact of such land management elements as interior roads, signs, machinery, fences, posts, bridges, and buildings.

The large size of the preserve is representative of the pre-settlement mid-western ecosystems and is an interconnection of appropriate natural communities including wetlands, savannas, and significant areas of tallgrass and sand prairies. As a result of its size, it can now recapture the power of its original setting.

*This euphoric wilderness speaks out to all who will listen and presents itself as a place where the natural rhythms of fire, wind and other climatic influences function to shape the land. It provides its arms to surround the "wilderness within the human spirit" which -- if too crowded -- becomes frustrated, fades, and dies. This landscape is not destined to become "just another museum", but a place where people may travel within the limits of the preserve yet, if desired, not be bound by time or space.*

We envision **Plant Life** within the boundaries of Nachusa Grasslands to consist only of species that inhabited the preserve between 1683 and 1830. The determination of exactly what vegetation is native would be made through extensive scientific investigations sanctioned by The Nature Conservancy. Some plant life should return naturally because of habitat restoration and others by appropriate reintroduction processes.

Management techniques, such as the selective use of fire, allows us to maintain and encourage growth of communities that are typical of Northern Illinois: particularly prairie, wetlands, and savannas.

We envision **Animal Life** (with the noted exception of humans and their introduced species) that existed within the preserve's boundaries during the time period of 1683-1830. Efforts will be made to include the many mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates, some of which should return naturally because of habitat restoration and others by appropriate reintroduction processes. We will endeavor to eliminate or control all animal life that was not present or is known to have been introduced into the preserve.

*The flora and fauna of Nachusa Grasslands should truly represent our best efforts "to preserve and protect that which we cannot create."*

We envision **Activities** within this protected landscape that strive to fulfill the mission of The Nature Conservancy "to preserve plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive". As such, scientific studies of the flora and fauna will be conducted in order to ensure environmentally sound management of the land.

Other uses that are encouraged will be the non-invasive enjoyment of the surroundings by hikers, bird watchers, and photographers. Visitors are allowed within the preserve and are cautioned about adversely disturbing the flora and fauna. Group educational opportunities are also encouraged.

Uses that are detrimental to the continued evolvement of a sound ecological restoration process will not be permitted. These specifically include recreational activities that require use of motorized vehicles and domestic animals. In addition, unsanctioned hunting or removal of any native plant, animal, or mineral deposit is not allowed.

Policies for activities within the boundaries of Nachusa Grasslands will be established and appropriately communicated. These policies should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they represent the best interests for achieving the mission of The Nature Conservancy for protecting these lands and these waters so that our natural communities can flourish in perpetuity.

We see Nachusa Grasslands as a loving, forgiving, intertwined landscape of plants, animals, and minerals that -- to fulfill its destiny here in the vast expanses of Northern Illinois -- allows us and our progeny the opportunity to participate in its on-going evolution toward a  
biodiversified ecosystem that connects

Some with nostalgic **Reflections of the Past;**  
Some with the **Wonders of the Present;** and,  
Some with **Hope for the Future.**

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## The White Oaks

By James B. Long

The oaks are conveniently and naturally divided into two groups - the White Oaks and the Red Oaks.

The White Oaks leaves do not have bristle tips; the Red Oaks leaves do. The inner surface of the acorn shell in White Oaks is smooth; in the Red Oaks the inner surface of the acorn shell is minutely felted. It requires many hours of field study before anyone can accurately identify the oaks.

We have four species of White Oaks in Lee County. The Bur Oak (*Quercus Macrocarpa*) is the most common of the White Oaks. It is usually found on fertile soil and once covered large areas in the neighborhood of Amboy. The leaves have two deep sinuses near the center and the trees are easily identified by their leaves. The acorns are deeply set in the long-fringed cup. Bur Oaks can often be identified in the winter by their long, dark and crooked branches. The young plants and sprouts are usually clothed with corky ridges on their stems.

The Swamp-White Oak (*Quercus Bicolor*) I have found only in a small bottomland west of Rockyford Road. The leaves are only shallowly lobed and have the lower surface clothed with felt. Even old leaves on the ground will retain the felted lower surface. The acorns are born on long stalks (an inch or more) and this characteristic will separate them from the other oaks. The Swamp-White Oak is probably found along the bottoms of Rock River but I haven't had the opportunity to examine that area.

The Chestnut Oak (*Quercus Muehlenbergii*) has leaves that resemble Chestnut leaves. They are straight-veined with a prominent tooth at the terminus of each vein. There are about ten teeth on each side of the leaf. They appear to be confined to rock cliffs along Franklin Creek and Rock River. It is strange that such a large and beautiful oak should be confined only to rock cliffs.

The White Oak (*Quercus Alba*) is widely scattered throughout the county. In some areas it is the dominant tree but in the sand hills that are wooded it usually forms fringes around ponds and meadows. The trunk and branches are decidedly light colored. The leaves are deeply lobed but they have no unusual characteristics. The acorn cup has warty scales and no fringe. The White Oaks can produce an acorn in a single season but it requires two years for a Red Oak to produce an acorn.

One hundred years ago deer and turkey's were extinct in Lee County. Along with the extinct Passenger Pigeon they no longer harvested the abundant acorns. Today, White Oak acorns are a popular food of deer and once again the turkey has returned to our woods to share in the harvest.

## Log Entry of West Chicago Prairie Stewardship Group

By Melvern C. Hoff

May 1 - Nachusa (9:00-12:00)

Raked-in 10 pounds of "Dry Prairie Mix - Spring, First Wave" on the lower 75 % of all of the cleared area on the south and east sides of Kitten-Tail Knobs. Raked-in on three pace (9') centers using the "Flag and Pace" method. The seed from the four 5 oz. bags remaining was broadcast. Raked-in six 35mm film containers of Prairie Gentian on the upper areas (not the tops), three on each knob. Raked-in and hand planted about 5 oz. of Porcupine Grass on the tops and upper levels of both knobs.

### Participants

West Chicago Prairie Stewardship Group (9):

Bob Flesvig, Mark Fondrk, Jerry Friedberg, Scott Hensey, Mel Hoff, Margo Owano, Monica & Steve Sentoff, and Vicki Shinn

DuPage Volunteer Stewardship Group (3):

Kate Cunningham, Dave Jagodzinski, and Bill Sheppard

Palos Hills Volunteers (4):

John Marlin, Liz Meyer, Joe Neuman, and Jim O'Connor

Kane Co. Natural Areas Volunteers (8):

Mitch Adamus, Liz Barker, Debby Hall, Bill Marlow, Jane McMillan, Larry Nelson, John Springer, and Mary Zaander

After a field lunch the total group visited the area along Wade Creek on the Shaw property, the Sand Spring Fen, several knobs in the main complex, Doug's Knob, and the Northwest Savannah. Headed home about 3:30 pm.





## What's Your Interest Today?

By Ellen Baker

Ever decide to try something new? It's a dilemma, venturing into new areas of living before completing the last. The calendar said "Sort through and organize scrapbooks for Nachusa Grassland, Franklin Creek Preservation Area, camp and family". The clippings remain in the boxes and envelopes, while one's hands try at writing for publication. Topic, "Interest Today," why its "Prairie Smoke".

Just last night spent hours putting in order all 15 newsletters. I only wanted to look up who had done plant monitoring. But the "light upstairs" took me back a few years, and there went the time.

In the 1940's Naylor Road was one of my favorite roads to the cabin at Castle Rock. Unmowed roadsides left many interesting flowers and bushes along the dusty road, rarely seen along our trimmed fence rows. Slowing down by bumps and washouts allowed more time to see those plants, birds, bugs and animals. A rare treat it was to turn off on Lowden Road. Memory recalls a narrow sandy pathlike road just like being in the woods. Then in the late '50's, winter bouquets flowers were gathered from those roadside prairie plants.

Change is the popular word heard today. Lowden Road surely has changed. Those purple coneflowers and indigo are mowed; the road wider; and more tax dollars used to take away what grows naturally. But it's nice to see some returning native roadside in 'front' of the Nature Conservancy sign.

You can park safely across the gravel road and go between the posts into the grasslands of today. What a place to just feel and look and hear! The wonder is you can't predict what's going to be a first when you visit Nachusa Grassland. The first flock of turkeys, the first purple larkspur, prairie gentian, downy Indian paintbrush, on and on. First times to know that kittentails, redtail hawks, Hill's thistle, bottle brush grass plus many more are rare species. To me, 'twas man who just keeps getting rid of those so-called weeds. The weed philosophy is a puzzle to me. Like Emerson's phrase, "What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered." Even in preserving and restoring Nachusa Grassland there is this quest - what gets cut out and what's left to live for so much of life is similar in choices, fates and change.

So with change, people come to the Grassland. What wonderful friends who share the names in my

understanding yet use Latin for my growth. Who shared a background or make me feel so very fortunate to have had all this at my life's backdoor. For truly observing the interdependence of each web of life on the next as seen in a native environment is awe.

What is it that should remain?? The sandstone edges hold delicate life and endangered species, yet some play and jump and toss this fragile rock, vanishing that part of our history and area forever. We can't build edges of rock in our lifetimes. Nor grow the oaks, and hickory that are on their way to maturity when sharp tools cut them down. I feel for the sparrows who flew to the Bahamas to escape the winter, only to come back to a romping dog's nose, disturbing the nest and young tucked in the little bluestem. Can our interest preserve, protect and find virtues in all creation? Yet leave this earth with all its possible virtues?

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### VSN Workshop

Building an Effective Slide Presentation - Designed for stewards and others who may find giving slide presentations a "necessary evil," this two-part workshop will cover both content and delivery. Participants will gain the tools needed to create an interesting presentation (or refine an existing one) as well as learn practical tips for improving performance.

Instructor: Sandi Stein

Date: July 7 and 14th

Two Wednesday Evenings  
(both required)

Time: 7:00 - 9:00 P.M.

Location: The Nature Conservancy  
79 West Monroe, Room 619  
Chicago, Illinois

Phone: (312) 346-8166 to register

*The fire-flies rise in staggered unison,  
to dance their summer's eve dance once again.*

*Bursting up with a flash...pause...flash...  
mate to mate, predator to prey,*

*Across the fields and in between the hills,  
shining out their signals, speaking in light.*

*An ancient flight of timeless words,  
a tradition of mystery, music seen not heard.*

*Amy Prosser*

# Picture Page

Photo Credit to Gene St. Louis



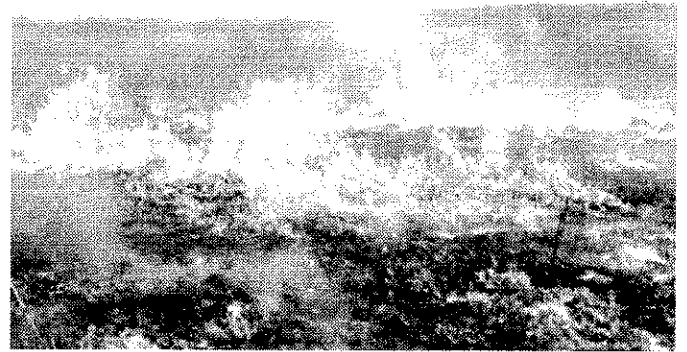
Before you can plant the seed, it has to be mixed.  
Bob Parenteau shows how it's done.



Ed Pleskovitch and Shane Cours  
attack the brush.



Seed mixtures are precisely planted  
by throwing them into the wind!



Raging flames prepare a blackened seed bed.



Try saying "Sally's Scouts Sow Seeds South of the  
Sunny Savanna Saturday Slowly" seven times fast!



Some walk and ....



... some ride!

## MAY

- 29 Cut & Trest MFR-Beaver Pond-9:30 a.m.

## JUNE

- 12 Steering Committee meeting at Yellow House-9:30 a.m.  
Seed Collecting-Yellow House-12 noon -  
Dennis Lubbs & Kathy Motto  
Trail Trim-West Boundary-Ed Pleskovitch-  
9:30 a.m.
- \*19 Tour-Coneflowers & Warm Season Grass-  
Ellen Baker-10:00 a.m.
- 26 Weed Control Workday-Lowden Road  
entrance-9:30 a.m.-Sally Baumgardner  
Fence & Tree Removal-Beaver Dam-Ed  
Pleskovitch -9:30 a.m.

## JULY

- 10 Weed Control & Seed Collecting Workday-  
9:30 a.m.-Meet at Lowden Road entrance-  
Sally Baumgardner  
Cut & Treat MFR-Ed Pleskovitch-9:30 a.m.
- \*16 Tour-Come listen to the whip-poor-wills-  
Ann Haverstock-7:00 p.m.
- 17 Seed Collecting-9:30 to Noon-Meet at  
Lowden Road entrance-Lubbs & Motto
- 24 Cut Brush & MFR-Ed Pleskovitch-9:30 a.m.

## AUGUST

- 1 Deadline for Prairie Smoke submissions-  
articles, photos, etc. to Earl Thomas
- 7 Seed Collecting-9:30 a.m.-Meet at Lowden  
Road entrance-Sally Baumgardner  
Cut & Treat Trees & Sumac-Schafere's  
Knob-Ed Pleskovitch-9:30 a.m.
- 14 Steering Committee meeting at Yellow  
House-9:30 a.m.
- 15 Prairie Smoke published
- \*21 Tour-Enjoy the flora, learn seed picking first  
hand, view the blazingstars in bloom,  
Meiners Wetland-Hazel Reuter & Ellen  
Baker-10 a.m.  
Tree Cutting-Benson Road-Ed Pleskovitch-  
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.

## 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.

**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, 1742 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!

Franklin Creek State Park picnic area (shelter, water & restrooms) is three miles south. Bring lunch to enjoy at the park or the Grasslands if desired. The nearest restaurant is in Franklin Grove (approx. 6 miles).

**From the editor** -- Hazel, your shoes were bigger than I thought! Putting this issue to print was a bigger job than I imagined and complicated by the premature delivery of a new member to the Thomas family. I brought home a 6 wk. chocolate labrador puppy 2 yrs. before my wife expected it! This issue is dedicated Hazel whose efforts I now respect even more, my wife Pat who helped with much of the typing, and the new puppy named Nachusa's Cocoa Princess (Cocoa for short) who helped burn the midnight oil this past week. Constructive comments that will improve this newsletter are always welcome and appreciated.

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