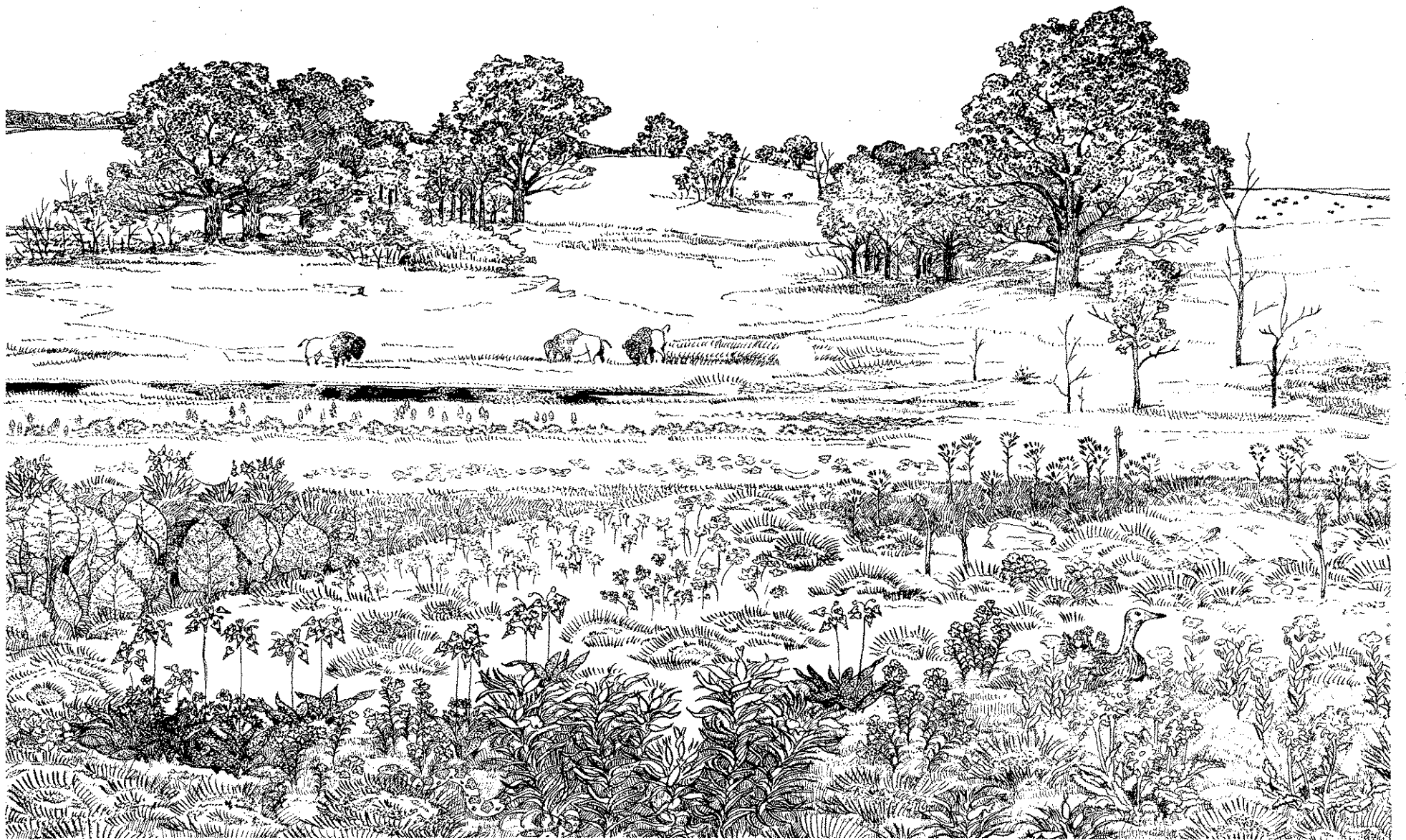


NACHUSA GRASSLANDS

A Nature Conservancy Preserve



C. Bronny 89

"An illimitable garden of forgotten blooms"

We could have lost it. Nachusa Grasslands might easily have succumbed to the forces of progress which have claimed so much of our native landscape. Had the rocky topography rolled a little less, or the mantle of soil been a bit thicker, this tract would probably be in row crops now. But its early proprietors regarded the land as fit only for pasture. Decades of grazing altered the face of the prairie. It became fragmented, with small islands of original flora scattered over the denuded range. The Grasslands looked dramatically different, but enough of it remained intact in 1965 to catch the attention of Doug and Dorothy Wade.

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

It might be reaching a little to say that the call of an upland plover led to the establishment of the largest upland prairie in Illinois, but that, in a roundabout way, is the story. The Wades, intrepid prairie-hunters, heard the call one day on a nature outing. Knowing the habitat requirements of this bird, Doug and Dot searched the surrounding pastures and found what they were looking for. This single event, a vagary of chance, was a turning point for Nachusa Grasslands. Through the Wades, the word got out. Others came to see the prairie. As they marveled at its remnants and imagined its potential, they did not realize that the Grasslands had yet to face the most serious threat to its existence since the retreat of the glaciers. That threat was development.

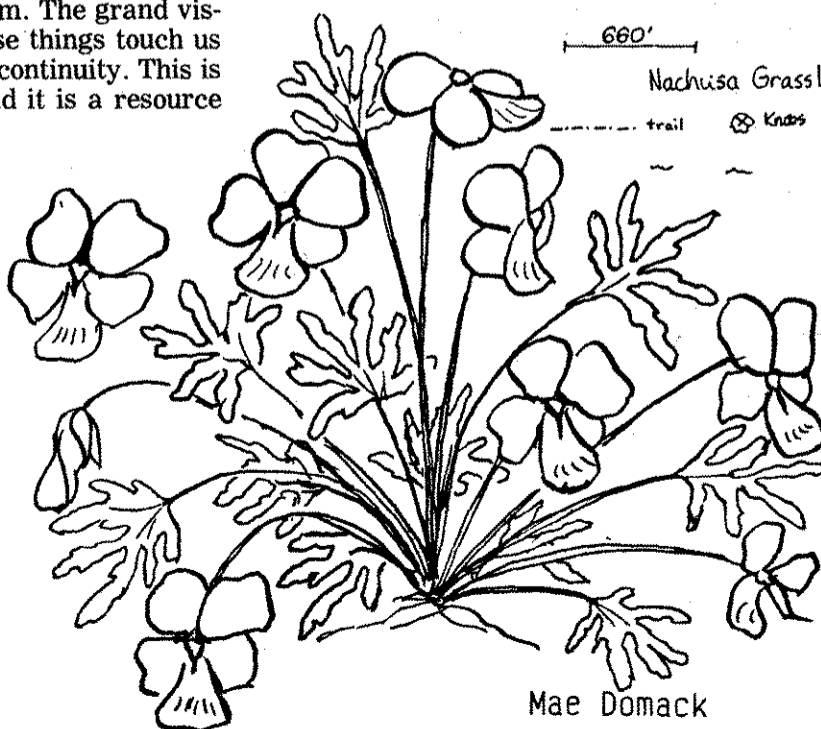
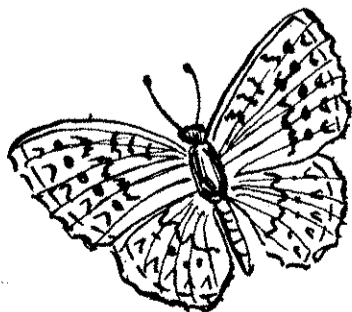
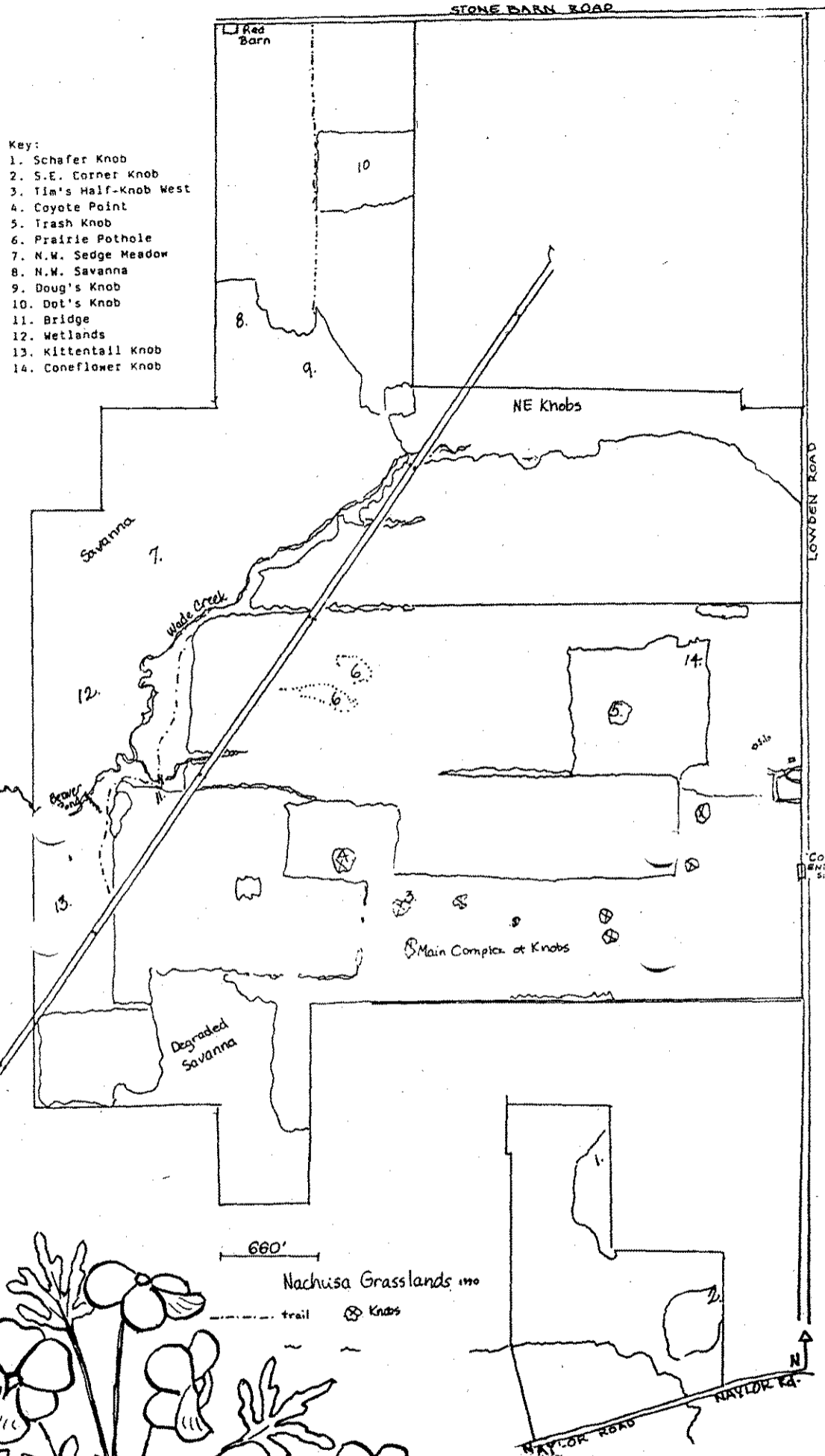
In 1985, the owner decided to parcel the property out as building lots. Enter the Nature Conservancy. This organization specializes in the acquisition of natural lands, and it is very good at what it does. However, the sale was to take the form of an auction and time was very short. Normal funding processes could not be completed before the sale was to begin. Just as the fate of Nachusa Grasslands seemed sealed, a flurry of eleventh hour negotiations and a little luck combined to make the money available, and the 125 acre nucleus of the preserve was virtually snatched off the auction block with minutes to spare.

Work commenced immediately to restore the prairie to its former vitality. Under the guidance of Conservancy officials and competent volunteers like Tim Keller and Chris Bronny, a small army of care-givers converged on the scene to cut brush, remove fences and conduct burns. Subsequent acquisitions over the next five years increased the size of Nachusa Grasslands by over 400 acres. Through the generosity of the Jay Meiners family, Max and Sally Baumgardner, and Dorothy Wade, 195 acres were added.

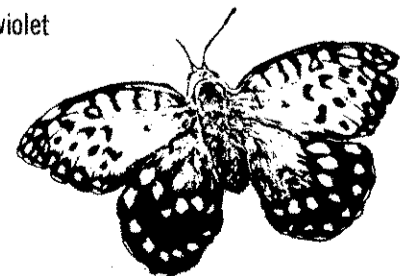
Now the prairie's scars healed and its bruises faded. Now the veil of neglect has been lifted, and the transformation is wonderful to behold.

But Nachusa is more than just a charming relic of Illinois' ancient past. It is a modern jewel nestled in a mosaic of farm fields. It hosts an impressive diversity of ecological zones. Here, one can walk from cattails to cactus in just a few minutes. There is a plethora of prairie grasses and wildflowers for every season, all tantalizingly close to the timbered sandstone bluffs of Franklin Creek State Park. These tangible treasures aside, the real value of Nachusa Grasslands is more abstract. This preserve is one manifestation of a new environmental ethic which recognizes the natural, intrinsic value of wild places, and the right of such places to exist simply because they do exist. These acres yield no cash crop, yet visitors to Nachusa reap a bountiful harvest. It is wading through lush prairie to a sandstone knob, vultures wheeling in a sunny sky, or a coyote pup nosing through little bluestem. The grand vistas, the small, hidden wonders, all these things touch us and evoke feelings of timelessness and continuity. This is the harvest of Nachusa Grasslands, and it is a resource that is infinitely renewable.

by Bill Rogers



Birdsfoot violet



Royal fritillary on goldenrod
Jennifer Vogtgesang

Celebrate The Prairie State, Illinois!

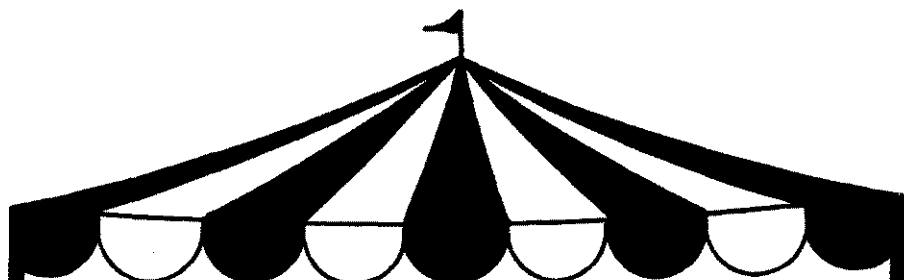
October 13, 1990

Autumn on the Prairie

at Nachusa Grasslands

Join us for an afternoon of entertainment and education, 1 p.m. through 5 p.m. Displays open for visitors. These will include history, scientific studies in progress, artwork and a food tent.

- 1-5 p.m. Displays open.
- 1:15-2 p.m. Storyteller
- 1:30 p.m. Walking tour with Tim Keller
- 2:30 p.m. Walking tour with Dennis Lubbs
- 3-4 p.m. Storyteller
- 4 p.m. A special event...Dr. Robert Betz, reknowned prairie enthusiast who has created a lush prairie at the Fermi Lab near Chicago, will share his thoughts on Nachusa Grasslands.
- 4:30 p.m. Walking tour with Chris Bronny
- 5 p.m. Birdwatching walk with Ann Haverstock



Tent Displays

Host: Dick Lovett

Ron Panzer of Northeastern Illinois University will present detailed information on his ongoing rare butterfly and insect survey of Nachusa Grasslands. John Spangler will bring the early history of the area to life. Dr. Bo Dzian's (Augustana University) native plant studies will be explained in his display. Thelma Dahlberg will fascinate you with native Indian lore.

Host: Larry Hill & Cassandra Rodgers

Area artists will show sketches, paintings and photography of our prairie flora and fauna. Included will be Fran Swarbrick, Dixon; the Dixon Camera Club; the Collins Gallery, Oregon; and Sheila Holbo, Oregon.

Join us for one or all events. *There is no admission fee; we extend a special welcome to all Lee, Ogle and Whiteside County residents.*

Videos of early Nachusa Grasslands
Indian Lore of the Area
and much, much more!!!!!!

Signs will direct you to the parking areas.

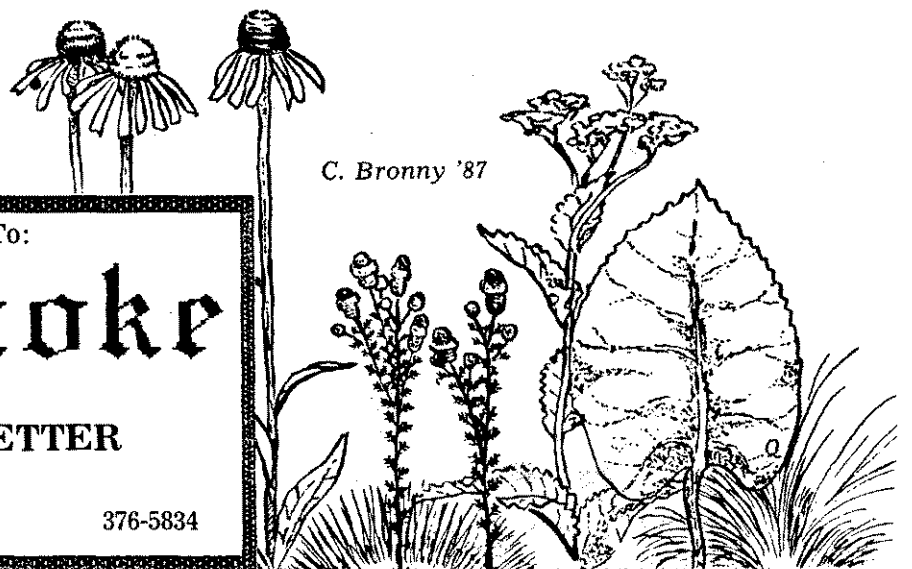
CELEBRATE THE PRAIRIE STATE!!!!!!

For more information call
Debra Osmer (815) 288-2170
or
Hazel Reuter (815) 857-3623

Our welcome tent will introduce you to the Illinois Nature Conservancy and Nachusa Grasslands.

Fresh cider and muffins will be available in our food tent. A shuttle bus will carry you from the parking area to the display area.

We are privileged to have a storyteller from the National Storytellers Guild, Nashville, Tennessee to entertain us plus a storyteller from the Chicago area that specializes in prairie tales.




To Receive Your Free Newsletter Write To:

Prairie Smoke

NACHUSA GRASSLANDS NEWSLETTER

Hazel Reuter — Editor

897 Union Rd., Amboy 376-5834



Geological History

by Tim Keller

Turn the clock back some 400 million years. The area that is now Nachusa Grasslands was covered by ocean (inland seas). Sand washed in from higher landforms and created beaches and dunes. Over time the sand grains cemented together and formed sandstone. Geologists call this formation St. Peter. It is very pure silica and widely used for glass. In fact, the sand from this formation was used to make the lens for the 200-inch Hale telescope at the Mt. Palomar Observatory near San Diego, California.

Later, shallow seas covered the area. As a result, layers of limestone were deposited over the St. Peter sandstone. Again and again the seas advanced and withdrew. Finally, the land was uplifted. Erosion of the limestone then took place. At the time, Lee County probably resembled Jo Daviess in topography.

About 2 million years ago, sudden cooling occurred; the climate changed. The land was locked in the grips of a continental ice sheet extending over most of Illinois, except at extreme Southern Illinois and Northwest Illinois (Jo Daviess and northern Carroll). Like the seas before, the ice sheets advanced and retreated many times. Ancient river channels filled with glacial debris, disrupting stream patterns. About 22,000 years ago, a major ice advance forced the Rock River to change its course to the present one. Prior to that time, the Rock River flowed from Rockford to Rochelle on a southward course, joining the ancient Mississippi north of Princeton. As a result, the thickest glacial drift in the state is found in southeast Lee County where the Bloomington end moraine crosses the old channel of the Rock River. Later, another ice advance, the Green Bay Lobe, plugged the new Rock River channel with sand and gravel. Oregon, Byron and Grand Detour are sitting on those gravel deposits. In Dixon, where the Illinois Central Railroad Bridge stood, the gravel is 105 feet thick. Bulletin #49 - Geology and Mineral Resources of the Dixon Quadrangle, published in 1926, states that when the last glacial meltwater flowed through Dixon, the water level was 45 feet above its present level. This happened about 11,000 years ago. At the same time, streams like the Franklin and Chamberlain became plugged with sediment and built up to the level of the Rock River. Huge ice jams occurred causing a back-up of water that eroded the uplands above the streams. Glacial deposits were stripped away leaving sandstone and limestone exposed on the higher positions. For this reason, one finds granite boulders sitting atop sandstone outcroppings. On the sideslopes, the sand and silts were carried away to lower positions, leaving boulders at or near the surface. Today, along field fences, adjoining pastures, are rock piles accumulated from years of picking up glacial debris. Every year, freezing and thawing bring a new crop of rocks to the sub-surface, waiting to extract their toll on farm equipment.



coneflower

The Nachusa Grasslands' Rare Plant Species

by Dr. Cassandra S. Rodgers

Nachusa Grasslands is home to a great many rare plants, including the state's largest population of the federally endangered Prairie Bush Clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) and the state's largest population of the proposed federally endangered Kittentails (*Besseyia bullii*).

Two other species, which are proposed to be on the federally endangered list, are the Prairie Fameflower (*Talinum rugospermum*) and Hill's Thistle (*Cirsium pumilum*).

Prairie Fameflower is listed as a Federal Candidate Species to be considered for the Endangered and Threatened Species List. This plant grows in shallow soil over sandstone and in sand prairies. The range of Prairie Fameflower is restricted to the upper midwest and it occurs sparingly in about 13 counties in the northern half of Illinois.

Fameflower is a member of the portulacaceae (Purslane) family. This plant is from four to twelve inches in height and has small (1/2-inch) rosecolored flowers. Fameflower has succulent (fleshy), grass-shaped leaves that come from the base of the plant. The flower has five petals, two sepals and numerous stamens (10-25).

The flowers bloom between late June and late August. Flowers open for a short period of time in the late afternoon and are closed by 4 p.m., hence its other common name, "Flower of an Hour."

Hill's Thistle is listed as rare in Illinois and occurs occasionally in the northern three-fifths of the state. Hill's Thistle is associated with dry prairies.



fame flower,
or nade box turtle
Jennifer Vogelgesang

With flower heads measuring two to three inches in diameter, this plant bears the largest flowers of our native thistles. These flowers are very fragrant and light magenta in color. On occasion, plants may produce white flowers. Flowering time for this species is from the middle of June until the middle of August. Hill's Thistle reaches one to three feet in height. It has very hairy stems and long spines. Hill's Thistle is a member of the Asteraceae (Aster) family. Another common name for this plant is Small Prairie Thistle.

Nachusa Birds

by Ann Haverstock

When I first saw the Nachusa Grasslands, I realized this was the home of the upland sandpiper, grasshopper sparrow, and possibly the elusive Henslow's sparrow. It was October and the little bluestem was a wave of silver and burgundy. I was hooked and I knew I needed an excuse to visit more often. Providence intervened, when Steve Packard mentioned a need to monitor the grassland birds at Nachusa.

This spring we began the breeding bird survey. Some objectives of the survey are: to document all species breeding on the preserve; to recognize their habitat requirements; to provide a baseline data, against which future changes can be measured; and to estimate population densities of certain species.

All the procedures have not been established — for maps and codes of

the plant communities must be created. The codes for the breeding status of birds will be the same as those being used by the Illinois Breeding Bird Atlas Project. One of the provisions I hope to have ready for each volunteer is a sound tape of calls and songs of certain grassland species to aid in their identification.

Because Nachusa is large and growing, three routes will be established. A central route will be ready immediately. If you feel you can commit to at least 8 visits during the breeding bird season, usually May through July, give me a call.

Imprinted in my mind is my first image of Nachusa, and I will be taking that image to the "home." (That is the proverbial home to which they send all naturalists when they can't hike but in their minds.) Come join me and imprint some images of your own.

Exploring A Prairie Eden

As a young couple Doug and Dot Wade moved to Oregon, Illinois so Doug could become Director of Outdoor Education at Taft Campus, part of Northern Illinois University. With that move the prairie that now makes up the Nachusa Grasslands Preserve became a central part of their lives. They spent their free time hiking, birding, and having picnics on the prairie. They also operated two businesses: a prairie plant nursery and a bookstore. Dot continues to run their bookstore, The Windrift Prairie Shop, out of her living room.

"We never knew what was work and what was play, everything was always intermixed," Dot says about their life together. In an interview, Dot describes the couple's love affair with Nachusa Grasslands.

We came here in 1964 and we bought a jeep the next year.

We had a neighbor and she just hated it here. She thought it was a God-forsaken place. She would say, "What on earth do the two of you do? You pack your lunch and you go off in that jeep and you're gone for hours."

But we just had a ball. We were exploring.

We had met in a botany class at the University of Wisconsin. So we had this common interest of plants and birds, although Doug was a much better birder than I was.

The first year we were here we were driving down Lowden Road and we heard the upland sandpiper. I remember Doug saying, "Gee, if that bird is here and all these fields are just pastures, then there's got to be some good prairie over there."

We found out that the land belonged to Delbert Schafer. While we were exploring one day, we found this beautiful knoll, separate from the others, just south of the big group of pine trees. It's called Schafer's Knob on the map.

I remember I had heard of silky aster but I never had seen it. Then one Fourth of July we took everybody who was left at Taft and invited them for breakfast at 6 o'clock — you'd never do that today — and we all went hiking on what we called the upland plover prairie. Plover was the old name for the sandpiper.

On Schafer's Knob, I found some silky aster leaves. I was so excited I'd finally found something I'd read about in the books.

Mr. Schafer gave us permission to

drive anywhere we wanted to. You know what they call Doug's Knob and my knob? We could drive all the way in there. It was our favorite place to go when we had a free afternoon. The prairie on Doug's Knob is absolutely spectacular.

We met Tim Keller. He was very good at getting people excited about the prairie. He and Doug worked together to make it a preserve.

When we went there on a hike, Doug would say, "Just look at this. There's nowhere in Illinois you can see this far."

Except for the power lines, there are no buildings in sight. It's just a big, huge prairie.

You can stand there on Lowden Road and just think that you're way out west somewhere. It gives you that open prairie feeling.

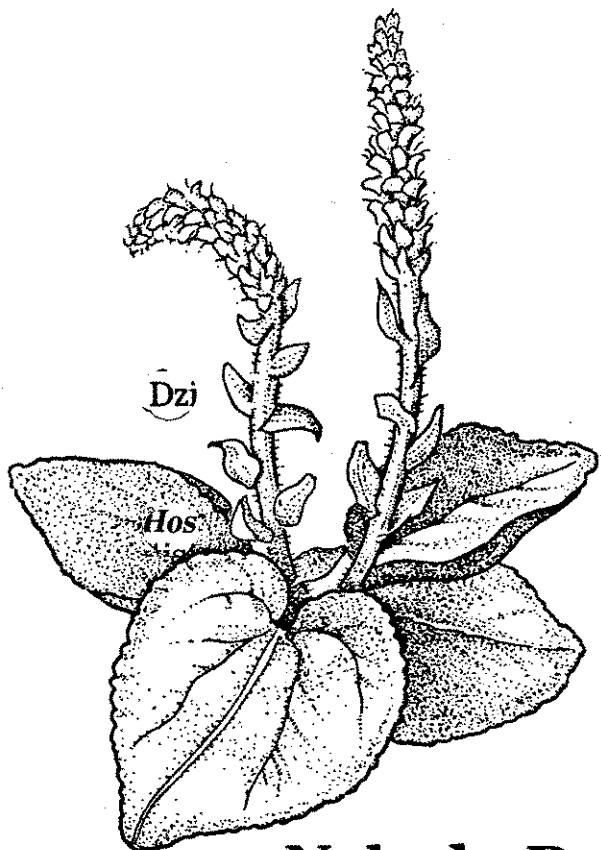
The Nature Conservancy bought the Colwell property just two days before my husband passed away. We'd gone to hear Ray Schulenberg deliver his farewell speech at the Morton Arboretum, and Jill P'ndell told us they'd signed the paper. It wasn't very long before my husband passed away but he did know that they'd bought it.

That was September of 1987 and they had bought the big area probably a year or two years before that.

I wanted to give some money or donation in memory of Doug, so that's what I've done.

I think it's the nicest part of the area, of anything around here. And Doug was the first one to find prairie bush clover on that site.

Besides, it had always been our favorite place.



Kittentails
Mary Phelan

Nobody Buys Land To Do Nothing With!

by Sally Baumgardner

By 1987, I knew I'd like to own some land in the country where I could encourage the prairie to come back. Max supported this, and urged me to put my wishes on paper and keep the paper! (What a good idea!) We scoured the available but very high-priced open lands of the counties just west of DuPage. Then we went west to Bureau, Lee and Whiteside counties. We did almost everything wrong! Sunday return trips to DuPage were often times of frustration. But it was an education in the geography of Illinois. We searched for almost a year. Most realtors simply did not know what we were talking about. "Nobody" buys land to do nothing with!

We found Deb Osmer of the Natural Areas Guardians and Bill Blackorby of Coldwell Banker Realtors in Dixon at about the same time. They showed us the 35-acre parcel mentioned above. I thought it looked awful and didn't want to see it again. Yuck — all that wet sand and corn stubble! But Max reminded me that it met every criteria I had set down on that piece of paper many months before. And, most importantly, it bordered on a protected area — in fact, it bordered Nachusa on TWO sides! The wind was blowing in the prairie seeds every day!

Soon after we bought the first parcel, we got 26 acres immediately adjacent on the north. (Pine woods, planted by humans, many are non-native species. Ooh yuck.) All this was in Dec. '88 and Jan. '89. In Jan. '90, we bought the Lundquist land, with the barns but not the trailers and the dead green Jeep. They are to be cleared off by the end of May.

In the low, wet sandy areas on the first 35 acres, we have wonderful sedges

growing. I do not know how to identify them, so I remove whole plants and take them to Gerry Wilhelm at the Arboretum. Every single plant I have delivered to him has been a native. Very few have common names.

We have one sandstone outcrop. We found *Talinum rugospermum*, farnflower, in abundance there. On Labor Day weekend, the local butterflies held a convention in our *Liatris aspera*, shooting star.

On the former Lundquist property, there's a knob that is half "Trash Hill" and half wonderful prairie. At least two species of grama grass are there. One good late winter fire is all that area needs to explode into bloom — THIS SUMMER!

Why are we doing this? Remember that paper with my wishes on it? There's something about "giving back to Illinois (or earth) that which is rightfully hers." It's that simple....

There is not another place on the planet exactly like my sedge meadows! The dickcissels sing so persistently they'll drive you crazy. The Harrier flies very close to us — he is not shy. The bees that pollinate the cacti could be leashed and made into soft furry housepets. And then there's the quiet. In winter, we can and do stand in the snow-covered grass and listen for the mice. They make enough noise in the daytime for us to know where they are. If they make that much noise at night, our Great Horned Owl will get them. It is my hope that nature is in better balance on the sand prairie. And that balance, that quiet, that peace, is probably the thing that pulls us, draws us back, almost every weekend.

New Acquisitions at Nachusa Grasslands

When the history of Nachusa Grasslands is written, it will read like a joint creation of Laura Ingalls Wilder and John Le Carre. On one hand the Nachusa Grasslands story is a hymn to the beauty of the wild prairie; on the other it's a thriller as, against great obstacles, The Nature Conservancy manages to acquire that precious, disappearing commodity, natural land.

Three significant acquisitions — the Meiners Tract, the Baumgardner Easement and the Lundquist Purchase — have added 135 acres to the Nachusa Grasslands Preserve over the past six months, increasing its size to 726 acres.

Each acquisition enables the Conservancy to fulfill its mandate: to preserve and to restore quality natural areas throughout the world. On Earth Day, April 22, the Conservancy closed on 70,000 acres of natural areas nationwide.

Recently, additions to the project

have increased. In spring 1989 a large tract was purchased at the preserves as a memorial to a Franklin Grove outdoorsman, Jay Meiners.

A long time duck hunter, Meiners passed away in 1988. During his lifetime the wetlands area he particularly had loved all but disappeared from the state. To date 90 percent of Illinois wetlands have been drained for agriculture.

Meiners' family realized that the best memorial to their father would be to purchase a wetland area for restoration and expansion.

"It's unfortunate that the wetland habitat in our area has been lost to corn and soybean fields," says Jay's son, Jeff Meiners. "We were thrilled to see The Nature Conservancy in our area and we thought this would be a real good extension of what had been started at Nachusa Grasslands."

The Meiners approached Burnett with the assignment: if he

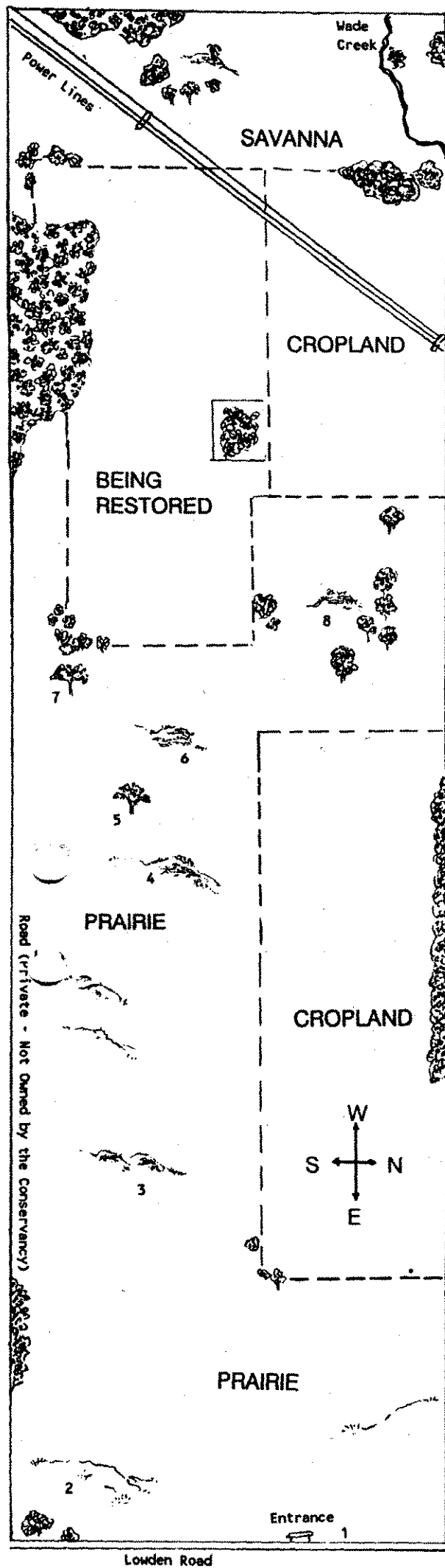
could find a suitable wetlands restoration area to add to Nachusa Grasslands, they would raise funds to help pay for it.

Burnett found it. The property now known as the Meiners' Tract encompasses 80 acres of cornfield, pasture, prairie and wetland. Meiners' family raised \$55,000 to purchase the tract. The deal closed last spring.

The Baumgardner Easement and the Lundquist Purchase are other examples of how the mutual interests of private parties and the Conservancy have resulted in the extension of the Nachusa Grasslands Preserves.

The Conservancy accepted a conservation easement on the Baumgardner's original 35-acre site.

This agreement, finalized on Earth Day, guarantees that the Baumgardners' 35-acre plot will never be used for anything other than prairie restoration, which was the Baumgardners' intention in the first place.



Badger

2. Head for the hill located at the southeast corner of the map. As you walk, you will find yourself surrounded by little bluestem grass, which dominates this type of prairie. Patches of white false indigo dot the scene, and bright blue prairie gentians nestle in the grass here in early fall. These plants are characteristic of original prairie.

3. Walk west across several gentle slopes toward the twin sandstone outcrop marked on the map. You may see the upland sandpiper, a bird endangered in Illinois, nesting along the way. A long-legged bird of the prairie, its mellow call is very distinct. Please don't approach these birds in June — they should be allowed to nest in peace.

4. Head for the next sandstone outcrop west. In the low land between the outcrops, you may see clumps of big bluestem and Indian grass growing where more moisture and deeper soils are available to support these tall grasses. In late August purple spikes called blazing stars bloom along the outcrop.

5. A lone bur oak tucked between two rises marks the next point on the map. As you make your way toward it, look for the plants spiderwort and leadplant. Rough blazing star and cream false indigo

are also found here. You may notice a pleasant fragrance in the air as you walk through mountain mint in this area.

6. The outcrop you see beyond the bur oak is known for its concentration of birdsfoot violets. These flowers, which grow on the north-facing slope, are an important food source for the regal fritillary, a rare and beautiful butterfly. A peculiar looking plant called goat's rue also grows here.

7. Walk in a southwest direction over a low rise and toward another lone oak. This area has a good assemblage of higher-quality prairie plants. In May, you can see shooting stars and violets. In June, look for pale purple coneflowers and violet wood sorrel. The dark round heads of the coneflowers remain on the stalks and are distinctive year round. In late summer, blazing stars and showy goldenrod dominate.

8. A small stand of oaks just north of this outcrop represents a tiny sample of savanna. You can see a characteristic combination of trees which originally had a grassy, flowery understory. A bit more savanna and the edge of a large, privately owned oak grove are visible directly west.

1. As you walk in past the Nachusa Grasslands sign on Lowden Road you are facing due west. While you survey the preserve from the entrance, you may notice that some areas look more like ordinary farmland than prairie grassland. These areas (marked as cropland on the map) were all in fact cultivated when the Conservancy bought the land.

Hopes and Plans

by Steve Packard

I've heard it said that Nachusa Grasslands is the most important project the Conservancy has ever done in Illinois. It is certainly the largest of our preserves as well as our most ambitious management challenge. Yet its future, and how important it will become, are not as easy to predict. Let me start by outlining what we know or expect in the near term.

Of the 726 acres in the existing preserve, about 50 acres are woodland (former savanna), 80 acres are marsh or fen, 20 acres are high quality prairie, 150 acres are degraded prairie which are gradually recovering from intensive grazing, and 350 acres are croplands in wheat, corn, soybeans, or set-aside programs. Of the 350 acres of cropland, about 50 acres have been replanted to prairie species.



Nachusa's woodlands once had a grassy and flowery prairie-like understory. They too have been degraded by heavy grazing and need some replanting and many years of controlled burning to regain their natural richness. Very limited savanna restoration planting was begun in 1988.

The long term security of this preserve would be very much improved by some additional acquisitions. The best quality savanna, the best quality marsh, and a piece of high quality prairie with the endangered woolly milkweed — all these are still on private land adjacent to the preserve. Adding a few hundred additional acres to the core preserve habitat would be a great benefit to many of the key wildlife species. And acquiring a "corridor" of land to link this preserve to Franklin Creek State Park would also be a big plus.

We have approached some adjoining landowners and told them that we

would be interested in buying nearby land at a fair price from owners who want to sell. That leaves two issues left to discuss. The first one is: how will we get the money to pay the bills? The second is: how will we restore and manage this preserve over the long haul?

The answer to both questions is a shock to some people. The Conservancy depends on voluntary contributions from individuals for the bulk of its funding. And we also depend on the work of volunteers to accomplish the bulk of our preserve management. We believe this large project was so important that we could find a way to pay the bills. If you can make a small contribution, or if you can afford to make a substantial one, please do. If you know of anyone we should approach for a major contribution, please let us know that too.

Hundreds of people are Illinois Conservancy volunteers on dozens of preserves. We could never hope to hire staff to do all the work they do. And, because so much restoration is necessary, Nachusa Grasslands needs more management work than any other of our preserves. We wouldn't even attempt to assemble a preserve like this if it weren't for the dedication and personal generosity of people like Chris Bronny, Isabel Johnston, Jim Keller, Dennis Lubbs, Ellen Baker, Robert Betz and Hazel Reuter and many others.

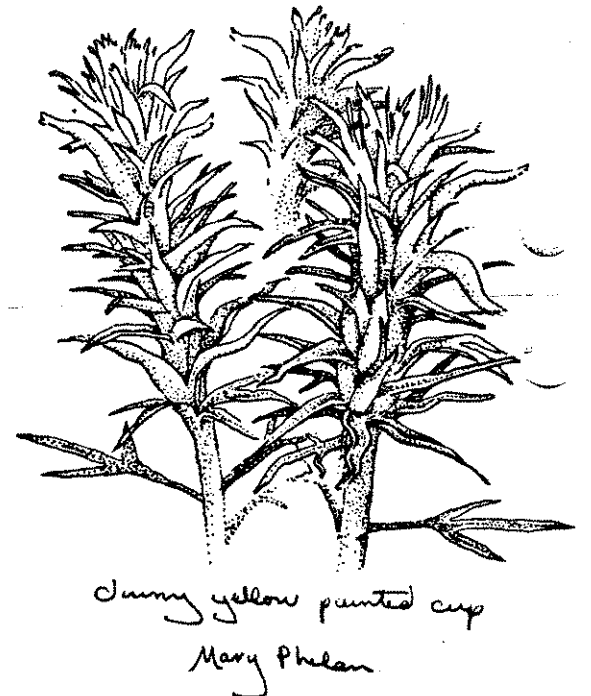
Even so we need stewardship funds. Fencing has cost us a few hundred dollars so far. We hired Rich Welch to combine prairie seed for the restoration. We hired Ron Panzer to study our rare small animals and make professional management recommendations. A \$10,000 donation earmarked for stewardship paid for these and similar important things.

And the future? If contributions and volunteer work can sustain it, we hope to do the following: 1. Buy more land. Connect the preserve with Franklin Creek State Park so the animals of both places can benefit from the increased habitat. 2. Restore 50 to 100 acres of cropland each year, weather permitting. 3. Publish a newsletter. 4. Prepare a map and trail guide for visitors. 5. Remove all existing fences within the preserve. 6. Plug or dismantle the tile system to restore the water table and wetlands within the preserve. 7. Restore all the plant species that were likely to have been here prior to plowing and grazing. 8. Reintroduce a small herd of buffalo and possibly elk, to major parts of the preserve. 9. Reintroduce certain small animals as determined by appropriate

research (for example: Franklin's ground squirrel, hog-nosed snake, broadwinged skipper).

The restoration of missing species is probably what we are asked about the most. It is one of the most important features of the long term vision of what Nachusa Grasslands is all about.

There are more than 100 prairie preserves in Illinois. Most are so small that ecologists believe they will gradually lose many species over the decades and centuries. Few preserves are large enough to support even a single breeding pair of prairie birds. Prairies of less than 100 acres are expected to lose many of their butterflies and other invertebrate species. No Illinois prairie has felt the tread of buffalo for over 100 years. Prairie chickens do not survive on any Illinois prairie. Yet many of the rare plants at Nachusa are thought to depend on disturbance such as the wandering buffalo herds caused. I say "thought to depend" because no one really knows. The eastern tall-



grass prairie was gone as a functioning ecosystem before the science of ecology was born. No one has ever studied it. How much the long-term survival of some species depend on others, no one can say for sure. But we know enough to be confident that it makes a lot of sense for conservationists to try to rebuild at least one eastern tallgrass prairie as complete and intact as possible.

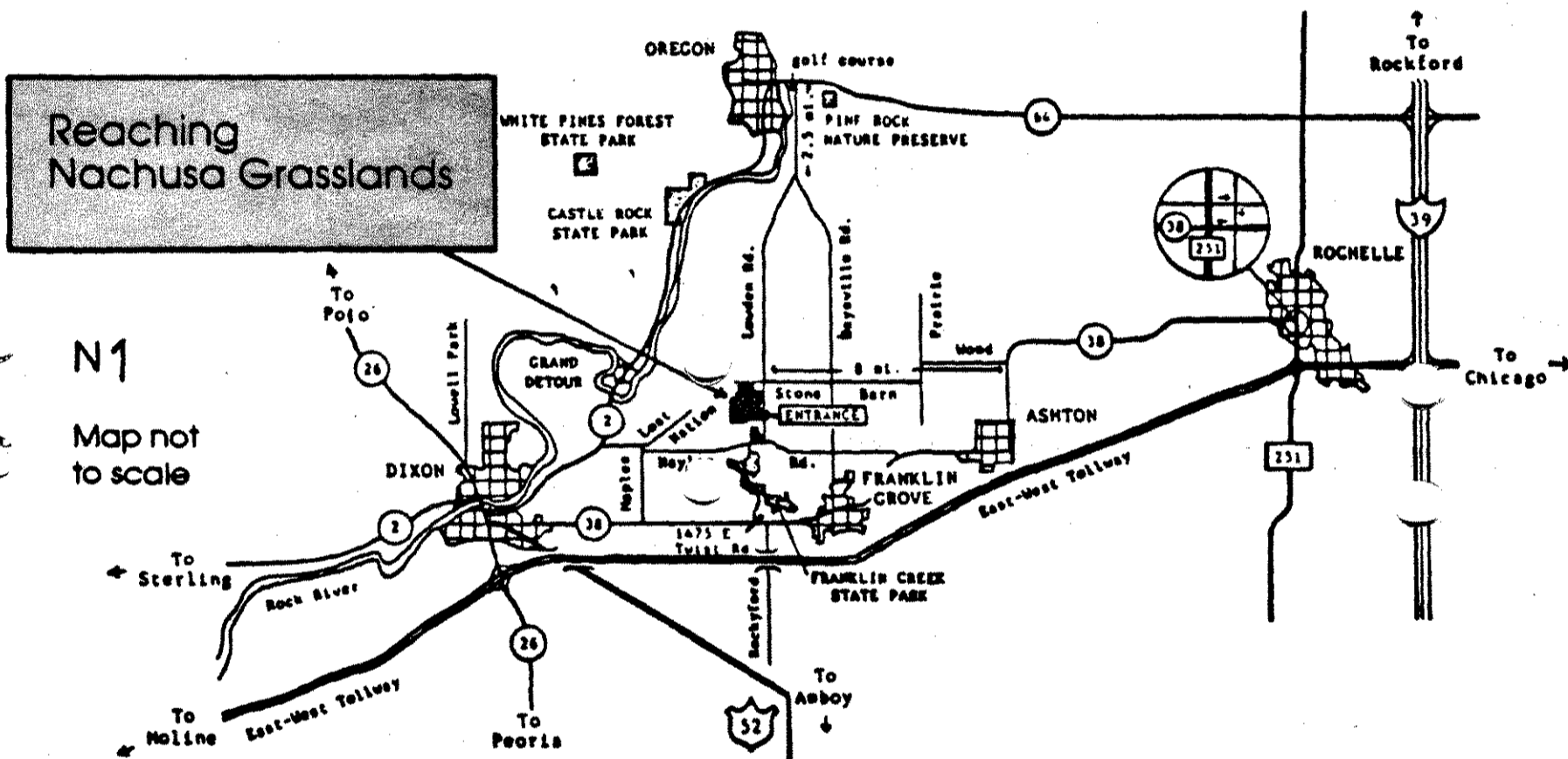
None of us alive today will ever see a fully restored Nachusa Grasslands in the robust glory of ecological health. Many of its lessons will only be learned by our descendants. But we who have the opportunity to work on it have an extraordinary privilege. We can witness and participate in the beginning of something awesome and wonderful, the rebirth of a massive, complex grassland landscape.

Getting To Know Nachusa Grasslands

Nachusa Grasslands is truly a wondrous place for nature lovers. Found on its menu of delights are rare and endangered plants and animals. You may have the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the upland sandpiper and see the flash of the bluebird. And listen, hear the bob-o-link? If your visit is in the fall you see the lovely pink, red, russet and mauve grasses. Here and there are Indian grass and dropseed and the dominant little bluestem. And if you are alert you may spy some porcupine grass. All season long it is a treasure box of gems! Birdsfoot violets, the lovely spring wildflower the butterflies love, prairie smoke, and indigo are just the start of a parade of beauty throughout the flowering season. Wildflowers include the whole spectrum of color from spring to fall. Low sandstone knobs with thin gravelly soil, bed-

rock outcrops, savannas, fens, marshes, sedge meadows, and prairie can all be found at the site. You will see Nachusa's rarest residents, prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) and kittentail (*Besseyia bullii*), along with cone-flowers, prairie gentians, blazing stars, and the largest skunk cabbage I've ever seen, and this is just the start of what you experience. There are deer, beaver, coyote, and wonderful open space and vastness.

This wondrous area can be visited any time. You may call one of our contact people (see page 3), or take a self-guided tour. Please remember, however, this is a precious jewel, treat it with care. We ask that no plants are picked or dug up and no animals are disturbed.



The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy is an international not-for-profit organization that uses its resources to find, acquire, and manage unique and significant natural areas and the wildlife that depends upon them. To date the Conservancy and its 520,000 members have been responsible for protecting nearly 3.8 million acres in 50 states, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean. While some areas are transferred for management to other conservation groups, both public and private, the Conservancy owns and maintains nearly 1,000 preserves — the largest privately owned nature preserve system in the world.

The Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy is a statewide organization of 20,000 members and donors who have protected more than 20,000 acres of valuable habitat in Illinois.

A starting membership is \$15. If you wish to join, or give a gift membership, send your tax-deductible donation, along with your name and address, to the Illinois Nature Conservancy, 79 West Monroe Street, Suite 708, Chicago, IL 60603. Membership categories are: \$15 — Introductory; \$25 — Family; \$50 — Supporting; \$100 and more — Acorns of Illinois; \$1,000 — Life Member.

Getting Your Nest In Order?

Find out how your gift of appreciated real estate can help the Conservancy provide shelter for wildlife...and for your income. We can put your surplus property to work for conservation, while bringing you:

- federal and state tax savings
- fast disposition
- elimination of ownership costs
- honorary life membership

For more information, write or call:
 Ralph Burnett
 The Nature Conservancy
 79 W. Monroe, Suite 708
 Chicago, IL 60603
 (312) 346-8166