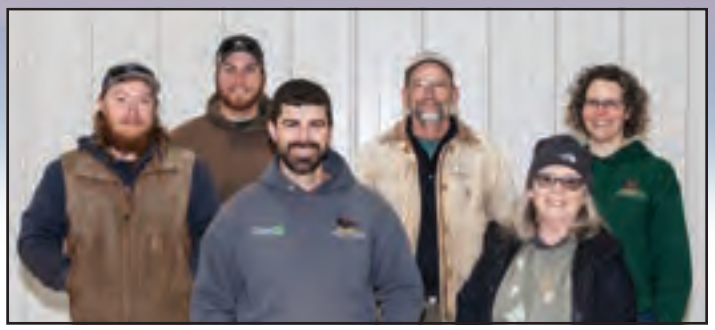
ISSUE 59, SPRING 2022

PRAIRIE SMOKE

NACHUSA GRASSLANDS *Annual Stewardship Report for 2021*



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The Nature Conservancy staff (left to right): Phil Nagorny, Matthew Nugent, Cody Considine, Bill Kleiman, Dee Hudson, and Elizabeth Bach

As the pandemic has quieted down this spring, we are thankful for being with each other. Nachusa was a busy and productive place last year. We set a record for acres burned and published 14 scientific papers. We walked many miles chasing weeds; we harvested an enormous amount of seed. We rebuilt our equipment shed. We kept going. Thank you for your support.

Bill Kleiman

© Dee Hudson/TNC

Jesse Sikora, graduate student at Northern Illinois University, mapped 149 intact beaver dams at Nachusa in 2021.

Thank You, Donors!

After a devastating fire in 2020 destroyed our pole barn and equipment, you rallied to our support and invested in Nachusa's future. With your generous donations, we were able to rebuild the shed we lost, with additional space for future growth. Your partnership allows this project to grow and continue its great work. The land protection and restoration work we do now will be a wonderful legacy for our future generations.

Thank you for your continued support!

—Your friends at The Nature Conservancy

To honor donor privacy, we no longer publish individual donors' names.

Violet wood sorrel

© Betty Higby

In this issue…

SOCIAL MEDIA

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Cover Photos

Front: Beaver © Dee Hudson
Back: Wild lupines © Dee Hudson

Prairie Smoke Editors

- Cody Considine
- Elizabeth Bach
- Dee Hudson, *designer*
- Tess Wilson, *copy editor*

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Autumn on the Prairie Celebration

September 17, 2022

Valued Partners

Volunteer Stewards

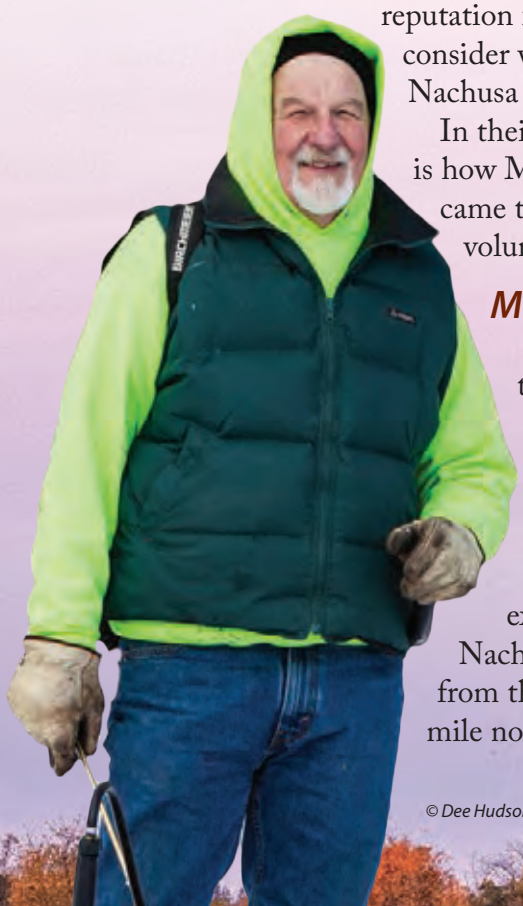
© Charles Larry

Nachusa benefits greatly from a core group of volunteers who step up to collaborate more closely with the preserve, working together to achieve Nachusa's goals. These incredible individuals provide staff with appreciated input and find meaningful experiences for themselves.

Meet Mike Heng and Stew Pagenstecher, who have recently taken on more active roles around the preserve. Mike has been very involved on the Stewardship Team and workdays, and recently used his carpentry skills to construct a needed set of stairs at the bison corral. Stew joined many workdays over the last few years, and last summer he expanded his role to steward a weedy remnant hill that needed extra care.

If you are interested in meeting a great community of people and supporting an organization with a stellar reputation for land restoration, consider volunteering with Nachusa Grasslands.

In their own words, here is how Mike and Stew came to love nature and volunteering.



© Dee Hudson/TNC

Mike Heng

I was fortunate to grow up with a father who was an outdoorsman and taught me to love nature. I began hiking and exploring around Nachusa practically from the start, living just a mile north of the barn. My volunteer involvement began two years, ago after my retirement. The staff has kept me busy participating in controlled burns, removing invasive species, collecting and planting seeds, clearing downed trees, and doing some building projects. Hopefully we can continue to develop effective procedures to eliminate invasive honeysuckle from the landscape, leading the way for others around the area to do the same.

Stew Pagenstecher

During my youth, our family vacations were spent in all corners of the state of Oregon visiting wild places and camping, fishing, hiking, and horseback riding. And along with my early career in forestry, I developed a deep-rooted appreciation for the outdoors and nature. After moving to the Chicago region three and a half years ago, I wanted to continue giving back by supporting conservation activities from our new home. I had volunteered with The Nature Conservancy in Missouri for many years and, thus, reached out to the Illinois chapter and discovered Nachusa Grasslands. My first volunteer workday was July 14, 2018, led by Bernie Buchholz. This was my first exposure to tallgrass prairie. Since then, have continued joining workdays, prescribed burns, and an Autumn-on-the-Prairie event. The people are great to work with, and I look forward to many more events in the future.

© Dee Hudson/TNC

A Year of Partnerships

Restoration Technician Crew

Planting the Samuel & Edna Hill Preservation site, owned by Middle Rock Conservation Partners

© Dee Hudson/TNC

BY MATTHEW NUGENT, *Nachusa Grasslands Resident Fellow*

The 2021 field season rebounded from the previous season's crew of four back to six. With our regained strength the crew was able to set out across the prairie picking seeds and fighting back against the weeds. The crew collected seed from 192 native species, weighing in at a total of 1,766 pounds! These precious seeds were mixed according to soil type and used for the fall plantings.

The crew can partially credit their success to the new Morton Building. They had the luxury of a brand-new workspace that they could organize to process seeds with ease. In the new building the crew and stewards shared the Seed Bay, where a seed-processing station, air-drying aisle, milling station, seed-storage area, and seed-mixing area all came together under the same roof, allowing for greater efficiency than in years prior.

© Elizabeth Bach/TNC

Fall Crew: Matthew Nugent, Anna Scheidel, Matthew Togger, and Veronica Silva. Not pictured: Alexis Ricket

The crew planted two separate plantings totaling 50 acres. They partnered up with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and planted 25 acres at the Franklin Creek Conservation Area just to the south of the Grist Mill. The site borders Franklin Creek and will add to previous prairie plantings surrounding it. We are very happy to see the land make a switch from agricultural production to outstanding prairie.

Another great partnership was the crew planting on Route 2 at the Middle Rock Conservation Partners' (MRCP) Hill Site. The crew planted their hard-earned seed into 18 acres of what was historically an agricultural field. The new prairie planting will beautifully complement the 92-acre preserve and hopefully attract and inspire the community as they watch the prairie mature. In addition to these plantings, the crew was able to overseed and seed some areas with our combine seed mixes at the Senger Pines area and at the Juanita-Williams tract.

One of my favorite aspects of Nachusa Grasslands and The Nature Conservancy is the partnership. It is truly inspiring to see all the hardworking people and organizations that surround this preserve. We have an amazing stewardship program full of volunteers, scientists, dedicated workdays, and partnerships with groups like IDNR and MRCP. It is due to these people and many more that we can continue to steward and grow our preserve.

Summer Crew: Connor Ross, Zach Storc, Matthew Nugent, Riley Miller, Molly Duncan, Anna Scheidel

© Bill Kleiman/TNC

WATCH A VIDEO!
Scan the QR code to see the crew mix seed.

Guest Space

Now Open During Nachusa's Bison Roundup

BY CODY CONSIDINE, *Nachusa Grasslands Deputy Director*

© Charles Larry

View of the guest room looking into data shed and squeeze chute. Bison roundup tour leaders Bernie Buchholz and Susan Kleiman discuss plans prior to guests arriving.

Nick Foster, Dee Hudson, and Elizabeth Bach in deep conversation within the data shed while guests share conversation and observation of operations from the guest room behind the large window.

© Charles Larry

Have you ever wondered how we safely bring the herd into the corral to receive health care? We now have a place for stewards, supporters, and other guests to safely experience the bison roundup.

In almost everything we do at Nachusa, we strive to share our learnings with others—to engage, inspire, and educate. Although the best place to see bison is on the prairie, we also recognize the learning opportunity the annual bison roundup offers. For instance, the state-of-the-art bison corral, which was designed for the well-being of both bison and humans, allows the roundup team to move animals using low-stress techniques.

© Charles Larry

Susan Kleiman, one of the bison roundup tour leaders, interacts with volunteer steward Joe Richardson and IL TNC donor relations manager Jacob Smutz about operations.

The corral's designated guest viewing space was constructed in the former pump room within the data shed. The room gives guests an up-close view as the bison enter the squeeze chute. It features a large window overlooking the area as team members collect and record the bison data. When there is a pause in the activity, the data team can open the window between the two rooms to answer guest questions. When the roundup resumes, it's easy to slide the window closed, and the data team can work uninterrupted.

Visitors enjoy the experience, and our cadre of bison handlers also enjoys the opportunity to engage with folks. We hope to slightly expand this experience in the coming year.

2021 Roundup

Top: **Dave Lawson operates the corral gates.**

Bottom left: **Bill Kleiman operates the bison squeeze chute.**

Bottom right: **Dr. Baker attaches an ear tag.**

© Charles Larry

© Dee Hudson/TNC

Fire Breaks

Preparing Land for Controlled Burns

BY BILL KLEIMAN, *Nachusa Grasslands Project Director*

We use controlled burns in all of our habitats: prairies, wetlands and woodlands. In our woodlands, the repeated use of fire favors sun-loving oaks and hickories over other trees—oaks in particular need abundant sunlight. Thanks to fire, acorns fall onto soils with more sunlight, better able to grow to be shrubs and then small trees, with some becoming behomoths that support a diverse set of animals. The fires tamp down the brush layer, which allows wildflowers to flourish. A diversity of plants supports a cornucopia of animals, from the little insects that make the world go, to the songbirds, turkeys, deer, and other wildlife that fill our hearts.

This is not 1822, so we need fire breaks to keep fires where we need them to be. We have tens of miles of fire breaks that we mow in autumn, and we burn some areas and not others. For example, we burn our best remnants every few years. Our stewardship lane system is also used for fire breaks, and we create fire breaks through open prairies.

© Bill Kleiman/TNC

***Brush Mulcher*. In the photo to the right there is no existing fire break, so we have to create one. The landscape is degraded and choked with non-native brush and trees, and therefore we use a forestry mulcher to help us carve out the fire break.**

© Bill Kleiman/TNC

***Stump Removal*. Grinding stumps flush on the fire break keeps our equipment from breaking.**

© Bill Kleiman/TNC

Mowing. **We use a batwing mower to create a fire break through an open prairie.**

© Bill Kleiman/TNC

Raking. **The hay rake moves the recently mowed prairie grasses off to the side of the fire break. This ensures that the fire break is only able to support, at most, a small creeping fire. The windrow of vegetation is later blown off the edge of the break with a powerful leaf blower.**

© Dee Hudson/TNC

Fire Breaks in Action. **Susan Kleiman sprays water along the edge to keep the fire from creeping past the fire break, while Elizabeth Bach walks back to check whether the break is holding the fire.**

© Bill Kleiman/TNC

A flail mower cuts low and shreds what it cuts. The left side is the result of our batwing rotary mower at its lowest setting. On the right is the result from the flail mower. The fresh snow shows how the flail mower cuts extra short and shreds the plant material.

© Bill Kleiman/TNC

Woodland Fire Break Prep. **We burn our oak woods too. After mowing, this blower will easily remove the leaves and cut material from the break.**

WATCH A VIDEO!
Scan the QR code to view the leaf blower.

Stewardship Shed

New Morton Building

BY DEE HUDSON,
Nachusa Grasslands Administrative Assistant

Restroom and Boiler Room

© Dee Hudson/TNC

The new restroom and boiler room are on the south side of the seed room.

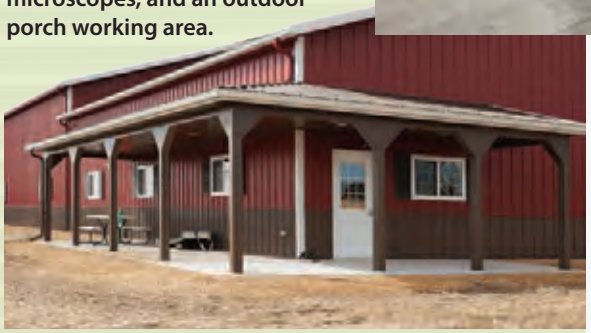
© Dee Hudson/TNC

Science Space

© Dee Hudson/TNC

The science space is located on the southeast corner adjacent to the new seed-processing space. The area includes a refrigerator, chest freezer, drying ovens, -80 °C freezer, sink, counter space, microscopes, and an outdoor porch working area.

Elizabeth Bach and Kathryn Bloodworth collaborate together in the science room.
© Dee Hudson/TNC

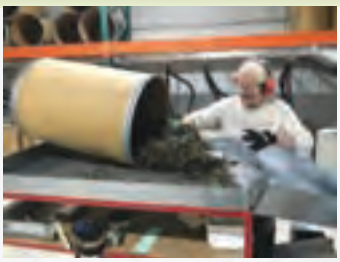


© Dee Hudson/TNC

Seed Room

Located in the northeast corner, this new seed room reunites volunteers and crew in the same space to dry, process, store and mix seed. Gone are the days when the seed had to be transported to a different location to mix.

From spring to fall, the seed room is bus



© Bill Kleiman/TNC

Cindy Buchholz mills seed.

Matthew Nugent fills a barrel with milled seed, which is dusty. The wall-mounted exhaust fan is huge and moves the dust outside.

© Bill Kleiman/TNC

Equipment Space

© Dee Hudson/TNC

The west side has enough space to store large equipment all in one place.

© Dee Hudson/TNC

There is a roomy and well-lit bay for the Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTVs). Now it's easy for staff, volunteers, and researchers to access or park the vehicles.

© Dee Hudson/TNC

Industrial pallet shelves line the south wall, holding wood, chemicals, and the pumper units used for controlled burns. Above shows the bulk containers that store and dispense the basal bark herbicide.

© Dee Hudson/TNC

© Dee Hudson/TNC

A safety cabinet holds the drip torches and flammable liquids.

© Bill Kleiman/TNC

ng with activity.

© Bill Kleiman/TNC

Matthew Togger separates seed for different mixes.

© Elizabeth Bach/TNC

Barrels of harvested seeds are mixed right on the floor. Volunteer steward Bernie Buchholz stands alongside some of the seed he mixed, which he later planted in the Clear Creek Knolls Unit.

© Bill Kleiman/TNC

This is a dryer Nachusa designed that prevents seeds from molding during storage. Room-temperature air blows gently through these dangling tubes. They hook to PVC tubes with holes drilled throughout. Once the tubes are inserted into a wet barrel of seed, the circulating air quickly dries them.

Saturday workday volunteers remove wild parsnip.
© Dee Hudson/TNC

Friends of Nachusa Grasslands

BY BERNIE BUCHHOLZ, *President, Friends of Nachusa Grasslands*

This year, Friends is focused on welcoming new volunteers. We're building an even stronger team to pursue our mission: stewarding the land, funding endowments for long-term management, supporting research, and, now, funding seed money for land protection.

Securing the Future

We are funding endowments that will permanently provide for Nachusa's long-term care. We are pleased to report that we have reached 70% of our new goal of $5 million.

Land Protection

We plan to provide seed money for land acquisitions up to $50,000 per year.

Stewardship

Volunteers are the heart and soul of prairie restoration at Nachusa. Our veterans warmly welcome new volunteers to workdays, provide orientation, and share their passion. Some volunteers go on to participate in workdays year round and even take responsibility for their own restoration unit. Volunteers annually contribute more than 8,000 hours of stewardship.

Betty Higby pollinates the state-endangered Eastern prairie fringed orchid.
© Dee Hudson /TNC

Scientific Research

We award grants to skilled candidates who are conducting research significant to habitat restoration and management practices. In February 2022, we awarded 12 researchers a total of $66,000. Topics include native bees, soil microbes, and an inventory of our mosses and lichen. This program has granted $340,000 to scientists and has made Nachusa a center for grassland research.

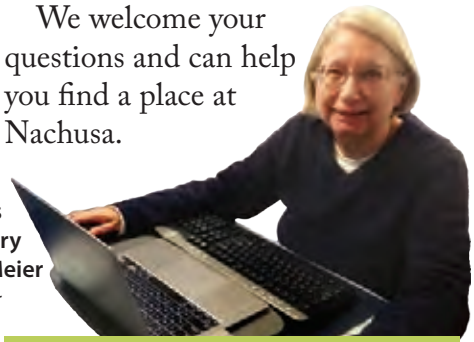
To ensure a permanent source of grant funding, we've created a science endowment with a goal of $1 million which, when fully funded, will provide $40,000 annually toward grants.

Support the Friends

Please help keep Nachusa Grasslands flourishing. Consider volunteering or supporting us financially. Leave your legacy as a Heritage Hero by including Friends in your estate plan or will.

Let's Talk

We welcome your questions and can help you find a place at Nachusa.



Friends secretary Mary Meier
© Al Meier

SAVE THE DATES

April 23 . . . . . Virtual Science Symposium

June 11. . . . . Prairie Potluck

July 30. . . . . Annual Meeting

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Email: nachusagrasslands@gmail.com
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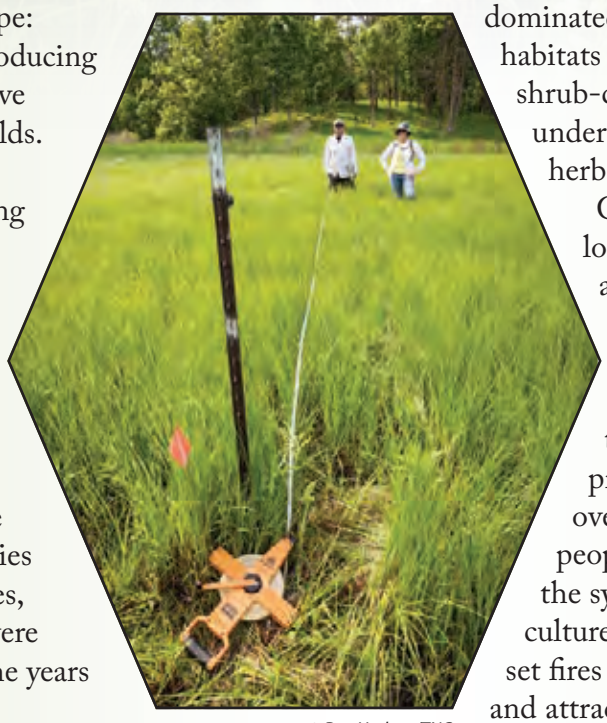
Plant Community Restoration

A Twenty-year Study

BY ELIZABETH BACH, *Research Scientist, The Nature Conservancy*

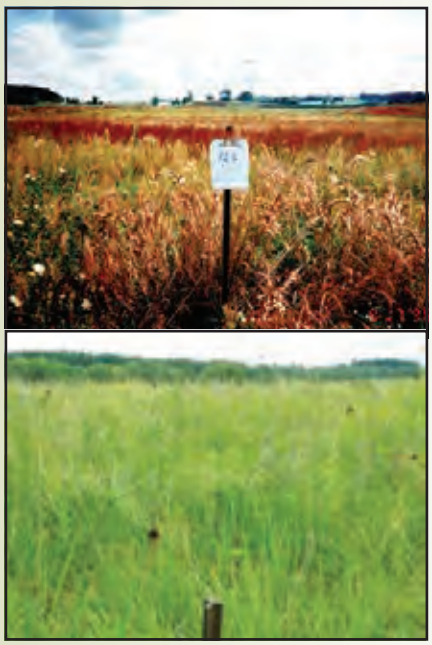
The Nature Conservancy purchased the core of what is now Nachusa Grasslands in 1986. Right away, volunteers and staff dove into action restoring the landscape: removing invasive species, reintroducing prescribed fire, and planting native seeds into former agricultural fields. As the project vision grew, folks began to recognize that measuring restoration outcomes would be vital to honing our approaches and building support for large-scale restoration. In the mid-1990s, Bill Kleiman established several permanent transects—marked areas where we set out measuring tape to walk the same line—recording plant communities on native prairies, planted prairies, and savanna habitat. Transects were resampled several times across the years as the preserve expanded.



© Dee Hudson/TNC

Nick Foster and Elizabeth Bach at the sedge meadow transect

This past fall, Elizabeth Bach and Bill published a scientific paper synthesizing this long-term dataset. It was published in *Ecological Solutions and Evidence* as part of a global cross-society special feature on the UN Decade on Restoration.



Dot and Doug Wade Prairie 1996 and 2020 surveys.

© The Nature Conservancy

The paper synthesizes data collected between 1994 and 2016. Plant communities on native prairies maintained their unique structure, including most of the rare plants that initially attracted the attention of conservationists. Planted prairies contained 75–80% native plant species, achieving restoration goals of establishing plant communities dominated with native species. Savanna habitats have transitioned from shrub-dense communities to open understories dominated by native herbaceous plants.

Generally, these data show that long-term restoration efforts at Nachusa Grasslands have successfully reached floristic goals. Active management is central to our approach to restoration. The tallgrass prairie ecosystem developed over millennia with Indigenous people actively dwelling with the system. Numerous Indigenous cultures cultivated fields; planted trees; set fires to select plant communities and attract large game like bison; and harvested food, fiber, and shelter from the landscape. Their actions have been essential to shaping and sustaining this ecosystem.

It is hardly surprising that the plant communities at Nachusa have responded neutrally or positively to regular prescribed fire, aggressive invasive species removal, and active planting into former crop fields and degraded areas.

Today, Nachusa is 10 times the size of the original land purchase. Plants and animals are thriving on the landscape. Ongoing scientific work will continue to explore and share our successes and challenges.

Bach, E. M., & Kleiman, B. P. (2021). Twenty years of tallgrass prairie restoration in northern Illinois, USA. Ecological Solutions and Evidence, 2(4), 1–11. doi: 10.1002/2688-8319.12101

LEARN MORE!
Scan the QR code to watch a video.

Nachusa Science in Review—2021

Published Data

BY ELIZABETH BACH, *Research Scientist, The Nature Conservancy*

© Charles Larry

Science at Nachusa flourished in 2021. We continued managing COVID-19 challenges, and 40 scientists were able to conduct research at the preserve. Researchers published 14 peer-reviewed papers in 2021. Publications included analysis of restoration management on plant and animal communities, impacts of bison reintroduction, native bee communities, rare and threatened plant and animal species, and use of drones for plant community monitoring. You can read more about two of these papers on pages 11 and 14.

Protecting Rare and Threatened Species

Bell, T. J., Bowles, M. L., Zettler, L. W., Pollack, C. A. & Ibberson, J. E. Environmental and management effects on demographic processes in the U.S. threatened *Platanthera leucophaea* (Nutt.) Lindl. (Orchidaceae). *Plants* 10, 1308 (2021).

© Dee Hudson/TNC

Kastle, M. et al. Blanding's turtle hatchling survival and movements following natural vs. Artificial incubation. *J. Herpetol.* 55, 167–173 (2021).

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King, R. B., Golba, C. K., Glowacki, G. A. & Kuhns, A. R. Blanding's turtle demography and population viability. *J. Fish Wildl. Manag.* 12, (2021).

Wenzell, K. E., McDonnell, A. J., Wickett, N. J., Fant, J. B. & Skogen, K. A. Incomplete reproductive isolation and low genetic differentiation despite floral divergence across varying geographic scales in Castilleja. *Am. J. Bot.* 108, 1270–1288 (2021).

Long-Term Restoration Outcomes

Bach, E. M. & Kleiman, B. P. Twenty years of tallgrass prairie restoration in northern Illinois, USA. *Ecol. Solut. Evid.* 2, 1–11 (2021). (**read more on pg 11**)

© Dee Hudson/TNC

Plant and Animal Responses to Bison, Fire, and Time

Bruninga-Socolar, B., Griffin, S. R., Portman, Z. M. & Gibbs, J. Variation in prescribed fire and bison grazing supports multiple bee nesting groups in tallgrass prairie. *Restor. Ecol.* 1–10 (2021). doi:10.1111/rec.13507

Griffin, S. R., Bruninga-Socolar, B. & Gibbs, J. Bee communities in restored prairies are structured by landscape and management, not local floral resources. *Basic Appl. Ecol.* 50, 144–154 (2021).

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Guiden, P. W. et al. Effects of management outweigh effects of plant diversity on restored animal communities in tallgrass prairies. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci.* 118, e2015421118 (2021). (**read more on pg 14**)

© Dee Hudson/TNC

Herakovich, H., Barber, N. A. & Jones, H. P. Assessing the impacts of prescribed fire and bison disturbance on birds using bioacoustic recorders. *Am. Midl. Nat.* 186, 245–262 (2021).

Herakovich, H., Whelan, C. J., Barber, N. A. & Jones, H. P. Impacts of a recent bison reintroduction on grassland bird nests and potential mechanisms for these effects. *Nat. Areas J.* 41, 93–103 (2021).

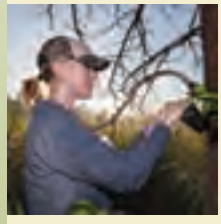
Rahman, A. U. et al. Disturbance-induced trophic niche shiftsi in ground beetles (Coleoptera: Carabidae) in restored grasslands. *Environ. Entomol.* 1–13 (2021).

New Insights and Tools

Blackburn, R. C., Barber, N. A., Farrell, A. K., Buscaglia, R. & Jones, H. P. Monitoring ecological characteristics of a tallgrass prairie using an unmanned aerial vehicle. *Restor. Ecol.* 29, 1–9 (2021).

© Holly Jones

Garfinkel, M., Minor, E. & Whelan, C. J. Using faecal metabarcoding to examine consumption of crop pests and beneficial arthropods in communities of generalist avian insectivores. *Ibis* (Lond. 1859). 0–2 (2021). doi:10.1111/ibi.12994



Rehbein, M. & Viagero, R. A new record of *Uranotaenia sapphirina* and *Aedes japonicus* in Lee and Ogle counties, Illinois. *J. Am. Mosq. Control Assoc.* 37, 280–282 (2021).

© Dee Hudson/TNC

2021 Science Extern

© Dee Hudson/TNC

BY NICK FOSTER, *MS candidate, Northern Illinois University*

This summer, as the Science Extern, I spent much of my time identifying plants and using radio telemetry to track the endangered Blanding's turtles that call Nachusa their home. My main task this summer was assisting Dr. Bach with conducting plant surveys through several of the sites at Nachusa, including the remnant fens and several restorations. While this task did include trekking through the prairies and wetlands during some of the hottest days of summer, a lot of the work that went into locating the established transect took place in front of a computer. The transect data collected on the wetlands portions of the property will be used in my master's thesis to determine how wetland plant communities are changing with restoration activities.

© Dee Hudson/TNC

My second main major task for the summer was to locate, via radio telemetry, the Blanding's turtles around Nachusa. This mainly involved wading into ponds and blindly feeling around in the mud to find a turtle, hoping it wasn't a snapping turtle. Conservation of this species is important as it is a state-listed endangered species. Tracking the turtles allows us to record data on their movement patterns around the property, and how quickly they are growing.

My time at Nachusa was incredibly rewarding, and I am extremely grateful to have been given the opportunity to perform my research here. I am on schedule to finish my master's degree this spring.

READ A BLOG!
Scan the QR code for a broad overview of all Nachusa's science.

Wayne Schennum

1949–2021

© Dee Hudson/TNC

In August 2021, naturalist Dr. Wayne Schennum passed away. Wayne has been a friendly face at Nachusa for many years. He was knowledgeable about many natural history topics, including plants, insects, birds, and more. Over the years, he surveyed remnant-dependent butterflies, moths, and orthopterans at Nachusa. He was actively studying Nachusa's chrysomelid beetles and their host plants at the time of his death. Wayne was a revered ecologist in Illinois, spending much of his career with McHenry County Conservation District. He will be deeply missed at Nachusa and throughout the conservation community.

© Dee Hudson/TNC
Lead plant flower moth

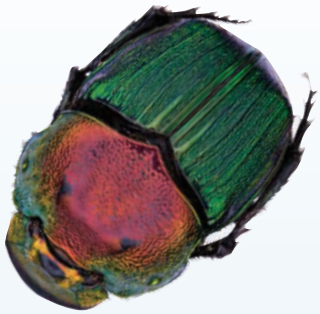
Restoring Animal Biodiversity

BY PETE GUIDEN, *Assistant Professor of Biology, Hamilton College*

If we build it, will they come? This is a common question for land managers and ecologists, who invest time, money, and effort to restore degraded habitats, hoping to support native wildlife. A good starting point in many restoration projects is to bring back native plant species, and support plant biodiversity using prescribed fire and bison reintroduction. More plant species means more animal species . . . right?

© Pete Guiden

It turns out that this question isn't often asked. Scientists tend to specialize in one group of organisms and individually lack the tools to capture the entire ecosystem's response to management. Nachusa's research community (with scientists studying plants, insects, mammals, reptiles, and birds at the same place and time) provided a unique opportunity to explore the connections between plants and animals in restored prairies. If plant and animal biodiversity are linked, restoring diverse plant communities may lead to recovery across the ecosystem. However, if the link between plant and animal biodiversity isn't strong, other management strategies may be needed to boost native animal species.

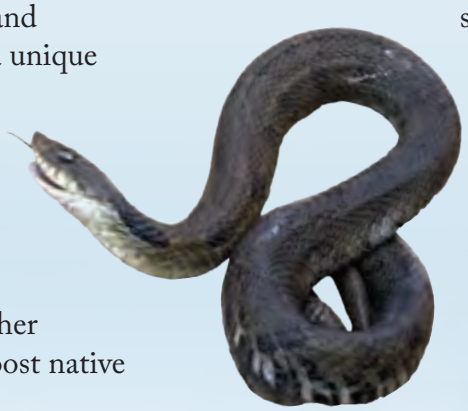


© Dee Hudson

Rainbow scarab beetle

We found that the best explanation of animal biodiversity had surprisingly little to do with plant biodiversity. For example, snake communities were most diverse in older restorations, because some species take a relatively long time to colonize new habitats. This doesn't mean that plant biodiversity is unimportant for animals. There were many cases where plant and animal biodiversity were linked, such as small-mammal communities that were more diverse in habitats with a rich mixture of forbs and grasses. But on average, the effects of management on animal biodiversity were six times stronger than the effects of plant biodiversity.

One key take-home message of our study is that restoration works. Through the hard work of land managers, volunteers, and scientists, it is possible to recreate diverse plant and animal communities in a very agricultural landscape. While we always have more to learn about how plants, animals, and people interact in restored ecosystems, there is no doubt that restoration is a critical tool in the fight to sustain biodiversity.



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The Eastern hognose snake

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Building on Strong Foundations

Nachusa's Next Chapter

BY ALICE COYNE, *Development Communication Specialist, The Nature Conservancy*

With the new barn complete, we're now shifting gears to renovate Nachusa's headquarters barn. This is the second phase of construction and will round out our efforts to create facilities that reflect Nachusa's values of collaboration, volunteerism, stewardship, and science. Renovations should be complete by next winter.

Renovating this iconic 1868 timber-frame barn is a testament to the strong foundations we're building upon at the preserve.

Construction updates

We've moved the seed-storage and -processing operation to our new building. We'll now have more working spaces in the headquarters for visiting scientists and partners, along with education spaces to convene and share knowledge. For example, we aim to increase our mentoring and teaching of prescribed fire, prairie restoration, and best science practices. The renovation will help our headquarters be a hub for these efforts. We look forward to hosting open houses, collaborating with partners, and elevating the conservation we're able to do together.

What's next

Rebuilding and renovating is helping us lay the groundwork for the next decade of conservation priorities at Nachusa, including the following:

- **Inspiring more conservation** by engaging with partners, scientists, and volunteers and training the next generation of conservation leaders.
- **Supporting biological diversity** through best-in-class stewardship, monitoring, and science. This includes our partnership programs to nurture the Blanding's turtle, the Eastern prairie fringed orchid, and scores of pollinator species. These species depend on the long-term success of Nachusa Grasslands and the conservation practices we teach.
- **Engaging diverse communities,** perspectives, and backgrounds in conservation work at Nachusa and beyond. Nachusa's Deputy Director, Cody Considine, is working with Indigenous communities to restore bison to their ancestral lands, the first step in what we hope will be a healing partnership with Indigenous partners across North America.
- **Protecting and restoring more land** through acquisition in order to extend our bison habitat and ensure connections across the preserve. Protecting land and water continues to remain central to our efforts.

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How you can help

We remain inspired by the resilience of nature, the generosity of supporters, and the difference we can make together.

- **Contact:**
  Jacob Smutz, *Donor Relations Manager*
  765-532-9460
  jacob.smutz@tnc.org
- **Online:** You can follow this link and designate your gift to the Illinois chapter: **nature.org**. In the search bar type "Illinois."
- **Via Check:** If you would like to mail a check, please use this address:
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  Chicago, IL 60611
  Please make the following note on the memo line of your check: Nachusa Grasslands
- **Wire transfer:** Contact Jacob Smutz at jacob.smutz@tnc.org for instructions."

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