



Oxley Nature Center Newsletter

Volume 137

January/February, 2002



**From the
Stump
by
Bob
Jennings**

I had to get away for a while today. Things in the office were just too much to handle. The budget is tight once again, and we've been told to look at areas where we can reduce spending. That gets hard, as almost all of our budget is in staff salary, and cutting too much means cutting people, which we really don't want to do. Those of you who know much about the folks that work here know how dedicated they are to what they do, and they hate to think about having to turn people away from programs, or close the Nature Center a day or two a week.

So it seemed like a good idea to get out for a while and walk in the woods. It was a gray day, overcast and threatening rain, so I wasn't sure if this was going to help my mood any, but I went out anyway.

As usual, the first things I noticed were the things that need fixing. There's always a piece of fence down, or a branch fallen across the trail, or something that needs attention. Maybe this excursion wasn't going to be that much help, after all.

But then there was a big flight of Snow Geese passing over Bird Creek. You can't help but stop and watch, and you begin to think about how magnificent and wondrous that spectacle is.

A little further along, back in the deep woods, there were two Brown Creepers working up the trunk of a tree, looking for a nice bug or an ant egg for lunch. These tiny specks come to see us in

the winter, leaving their northern homes to the ice and wind of winter. It's not a life I would choose.

I find raccoon tracks by the creek, and a startled deer snorts in alarm as I encroach on its sanctuary. There are still scarlet Snailseed berries in the tangles of vines, and a few Moonseed berries that the critters haven't found yet. A good crop of Bur Oak acorns says that the squirrels and mice will have enough to eat this winter, so we won't have to worry about them.

The clouds above seem lower, and occasionally I feel a drift of drizzle across my forehead. The world seems quiet and subdued, as if waiting for some news it really doesn't want to hear. I know how that feels.

As I make the loop back toward the prairie, a faint chorus of sound catches my ear. I know that sound. Soon I spot them, a flock of Cedar Waxwings is working its way toward me, gleaning every berry from every tree as they pass. Waxwings are such beautiful things, the tawny body feathers merging into a smooth, unbroken cloak, accented by black and yellow and red. As they pass, I hear the familiar calls of bluebirds along the fence line. They are such a deep, glowing blue, even on a dreary day, that I have to stand and watch, and envy them in their perfection.

The drizzle thickens, and my glasses fog with the dampness. I turn back for the shelter of the building, and as I do, I realize that I do feel better. As important to us as the budget is, there are more important things. Our job means protecting and caring for two beautiful and important natural areas, providing habitat for these birds and butterflies and bobcats and all the other plants and animals that need these places. What I've seen on this morning's walk tells me that we've been successful in doing that.

So I head back to where the telephones and e-mails wait, feeling better about this gray day, and thinking about what we can do to insure that we can meet our responsibilities. Waiting for me is a message from the Friends of the Nature Center, telling me that they will see to it that we have what we need to get us through this tough patch. It's nice to have friends you can count on, even on a gray day.

Nature Center Happenings

Oxley Nature Center will be **CLOSED:** Tuesday, January 1 and Monday, January 21, 2002.



OXLEY AND REDBUD HOURS:

The gates at Oxley Nature Center are open daily, with the exception of most City holidays, from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. At Oxley, you may park outside the gates from 6:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. to walk the trails even when the gates are closed.

At Redbud Valley Nature Preserve, the gates are open Wednesdays through Sundays, from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. You may **not** hop the fence when the Nature Preserve is closed: on Mondays or Tuesdays, on City holidays, before 8:00 a.m., or after 5:00 p.m.

PROGRAM INFORMATION:

Call: 669-6644 to register or for more information about programs. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult, unless otherwise stated. Programs that are wheelchair accessible are designated with the ♿ symbol.



Kid's Saturday Programs

\$2 general public, free to members, all ♿



Discovery Club (Ages 3-5 years)

Each child accompanied by an adult, please

January 19, 10:00-11:30 "Sticks, Stones & Bones". Let's explore the wonderful world of fossils! Sign-up begins January 6.

February 16, 10:00-11:30 "What Color Is Dirt?" What makes soil and gives it different smells and textures? Come help us find out. Sign-up begins February 3.

Adventure Club (Grades K-2nd)

Kid's only, please

January 19, 10:00-11:30 "Our Winter Wonderland" Together we'll create a winter mural to be hung here at the Nature Center. Come join the fun! Sign-up begins January 6.

February 16, 10:00-11:30 "Everybody Needs A Rock" What is special about rocks? Let's find out! Sign-up begins February 3.

★ "Winter Stars" ★

Dress warmly and bring a thermos if you like. Clear nights can be cold, but the brilliant stars of winter are worth it. We'll also aim the telescope at several planets. Meet at Oxley. Sunset is 5:36 p.m. and Moonset is 7:28 p.m. Sign-up begins January 6.

Tuesday, January 15,
6:30-8:00 p.m.

★ Star Programs ★

\$2 general public,
free to members
All Ages All ♿



"In The Neighborhood" ★

Limited by the view from Earth we see stars as though they were stuck on a bowl overhead. Some really are close to each other, in groups and clusters, others just look that way. Meet one of our flashiest neighbors. Meet at Oxley. Sunset is 5:55 p.m. and Moonset is 2:35 p.m. Sign-up begins January 27.

Friday February 8,
7:00-8:30 p.m.

Thank You Volunteers!

Oxley volunteers were recognized at an awards pot-luck dinner held at the Knights Of Columbus Hall on the evening of December 4. Volunteers, staff and Board Members celebrated a successful year of serving the public with quality nature experiences.



We Appreciate you!

10-year Award: Bennie Wood (weekdays)

3-Year Awards: Mary Cameris (weekdays)
Elisabeth Ham
(weekdays & visitor center)
Ken Hiebert (trail work)

Programs and special events

January

5 "Saturday Morning Birding"

Saturday
Free



Ages: All ■

8:00-9:45 a.m.

registration not required

Meet in the Oxley parking lot promptly at 8:00 a.m.
Bring binoculars if you have them.

5 "Winter Scavenger Hunt"

Saturday

\$2 for non-members



Ages: All ■

1:00-2:00 p.m.

free to members

Winter has its own characteristics. Some are easily found, others are more difficult. We'll scavenge the woods and fields in search of answers. Meet at Oxley. Sign-up begins December 23.

12 "Winter Shrub and Tree Identification"

Saturday

\$2 for non-members



Ages: All ■

1:00-2:30 p.m.

free to members

Learn to identify some of the native and naturalized trees and shrubs of N.E. Oklahoma—including poison ivy. We'll make "cheat sheets" and go out to match them with plants in the woods. Meet at Oxley. Sign-up begins December 30.

February

2 "Saturday Morning Birding"

Saturday
Free



Ages: All ■

8:00-9:45 a.m.

registration not required

Meet in the Oxley parking lot promptly at 8:00 a.m.
Bring binoculars if you have them.

2 "Groundhog's Search"

Saturday

\$2 for non-members



Ages: All ■

2:00-3:30 p.m.

free to members

What does it mean if a groundhog sees his shadow today? Spring will not officially arrive until March 20, but we can start searching now for hints of winter's end. Meet at Oxley. Sign-up begins January 20.

23 "What's That Awful Smell?"

Saturday

\$2 for non-members



Ages: All ■

1:00-2:30 p.m.

free to members

Chemical signals are important for imparting all kinds of information to an animal through its sense of smell. Consider the skunk. His use of special scent glands at the base of his tail is a well known defense. Come sniff out some more uses for this very important sense. Meet at Oxley. Sign-up begins February 10.



Nature Sketching : Beautiful Birds in Colored Pencil

taught by Brenda Knapp



Come explore the variety of colors found in the avian world of feathers, eggs, nests & birds.

Date: Saturday, January 26, 2002

Time: 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (bring a lunch and drink)

Where: Oxley Nature Center

Ages: 14 & up ■

Fee: \$35.00 for non-members (plus materials),

\$30.00 for members (plus materials)

Fee must accompany registration.

Please call for materials list.

"New Moon Silhouettes"

Winter's silhouettes reveal the trees' true profile. We'll explore the trails during the New Moon.

Families & Individuals

Tuesday, January 8, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Sign-up begins December 30.

Groups (6 or more)

Monday, January 14, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Sign-up begins December 30.

Night Walks

\$2 general public, members free



"Moon Myths"

The moon has been a crucial part of how people experienced the mystery of the night for centuries. Join us to discover some of these ancient myths.



Families & Individuals

Tuesday, February 12, 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Sign-up begins February 3.

Groups (6 or more)

Wednesday, February 27, 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Sign-up begins December 30.

City Faces Budget Cuts

You probably have seen on the news that the City of Tulsa is facing significant budget cutbacks due to the slowing economy, and you may be curious how this will affect Oxley Nature Center and Redbud Valley Preserve.

Initially, it looked as if we would lose most or all of our four seasonal staff, a chunk of our materials budget, and have to cut one full-time position. This would have meant a significant reduction in our programming capabilities, and entail closing the Centers one or even two days each week.

However, we're happy to report that it looks as if our seasonal positions and maintenance budget will not be greatly impacted at this point. It looked as if we would still have to reduce one staff position but a generous offer by the Friends of the Nature Center has insured that that position will be funded, at least for the next six months. This means that we will be able to continue to offer all of our programs for the time being.

This story will take a while to resolve, and we are not in the clear by any means. We encourage our members and friends to continue to follow this story, and we hope to find ways to continue to offer as many of our programs as possible.

We appreciate the words of support and offers of help that we have received. Please keep them coming.

Bob Jennings Receives National Award

At the 2001 National Interpreters Workshop, held in Des Moines, Iowa, Nature Center Director Bob Jennings was presented with an award naming him as Outstanding NAI Volunteer. The award reads "for serving and supporting the Association above and beyond the call of duty."

NAI (The National Association for Interpretation) is the professional organization for interpreters working in natural history, cultural or historical interpretation. It has 4,500 members in the US and other countries.

The award presented to Bob in Des Moines is the only time this award has been presented.

Bob has served on the national NAI board of directors twice; as Director of Region Six, and as National Secretary. He is currently national elections chair, and has served as national awards chair, on fund-raising and workshop committees, as newsletter editor for both Region Six and the Nature Center Directors/Administrators Section, and in numerous other capacities.

Currently, he is involved in starting an interest section for Interpretive Naturalists, although he's trying hard not to get elected to another office.