



# Oxley Nature Center Newsletter

Volume 143

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## Thoughts to Ponder by Donna Horton

Last month the Nature Center and volunteer staff enjoyed their twice yearly awards dinner. We recognized landmarks and achievements, and shared stories of the past season's more memorable moments. We also acknowledged the remarkable milestone of 25 years of interpretive programs and environmental education at the Nature Center. The first guided school tours went out in the spring of 1978, led for the most part by a newly trained volunteer staff.

Over the years, we estimate close to 100,000 students have passed through Oxley Nature Center's programs. More than 600 people have donated volunteer hours to develop and maintain trails, care for the habitat, build and repair structures, lead tours, and assist visitors. As autumn ended, the volunteer staff roster held 114 names. We hope they all come back to work again in the spring. It would be nice to add some new names to that roster. How about you? Ever wondered what it might be like to spend a few hours each week or month, helping make Oxley Nature Center work?

You hear comments behind you, on the trail.

"Oh, yeah. I've seen that before. That's milkdud-weed."

Or... "See those bubbles? That's a bubble-snake down there. They do that."

Or... "Do you think she knows where we are?"

They come up to you with exciting news.

"We saw a turtle! It was out of its shell!"

You get to witness the mental gears turning as young minds begin to work.

Upon finding scattered pieces of an armadillo skeleton: "Maybe its head fell off over here, and it didn't notice until it got over there."

Holding up a stag beetle jaw: "Y'all have really little deer around here!"

There are many good questions, but maybe we take some of the answers for granted.

"How are these leaves here on the ground going to get back up on those branches next spring?"

Or... "Is the butterfly inside the caterpillar?"

The letters arrive.

"Remember me? I yelled a lot."

And... "Thank you for wasting your time on us."

And... "When we went to Oxley Nature Center it was the best day of my life."

A visitor walks in, sniffing appreciatively: "What's cooking? It smells great!"

The visitor center host answers, "They've been doing taxidermy in the back, and they're boiling skulls to clean them."

Visitor center host to staff naturalist: "Do I count the snake that just came in the front door? Oh, it went right on out the back door."

On the way to a fallen tree that must be cut and moved out of the way, a squirrel plummets down through the branches from above and lands in front of you on the trail in a belly flop. All its air goes out in a shocked "wheeeze!" After a stunned moment for both you and the squirrel, it scrambles to its feet and dashes for a fallen log. Before you can start to laugh, the squirrel slips off the log into the water. Flailing frantically, it heaves itself back onto the log, too hard, and goes off into the water on the other side of the log. As the bedraggled squirrel crawls back up onto the log and totters carefully away, you realize your own day hasn't really been so bad.

Sure, we give out awards to the good folks who volunteer at Oxley Nature Center each spring and fall. But what token can we offer that could match moments like these? What certificate can capture the beauty of a season unfolding before your eyes? Can a lapel pin compare to sharing that delight of the outdoors with others, either by maintaining the diverse habitats and the trails that run through them, or by helping visitors on the trails or at the visitor center? Volunteer some of your time this year, and find out what a "real" paycheck is. Come earn your nametag.

## Fall 2002 Awards

- 20 year award:** Sharon Duncan  
Tommy Duncan  
**15 year award:** Kathy Huber  
Wally Whaling  
**10 year award:** Dot Schultze  
**5 year award:** Jo Loyd  
Bambi Murphy  
**3 year award:** Kim Bebee  
Loretta Bailly



# Nature Center Happenings

**CLOSED!**

**Wednesday,  
January 1  
and  
Monday,  
January 20,  
2003.**



## 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.

Visit our Website at "<http://www.oxleynaturecenter.org>"

## Kid's Saturday Programs

\$2 plus \$3 materials fee (non-members), \$3 for members

### Discovery Club (Ages 3-5 years)

Each child accompanied by an adult, please

January 18, 10:00-11:30 "Winter Weeds"

What happens to plants when winter comes? We will gather seed heads for a winter bouquet. Sign-up begins January 5.

February 15 10:00-11:30 "Bluebirds are Coming"

Migrating Bluebirds return.. We'll make them some bird boxes for nesting!

Sign-up begins February 2.

### Adventure Club (Grades K-2nd)

Kid's only, please

January 18, 10:00-11:30 "Natural Fibers Bracelet"

We'll learn to twist yucca fibers, add beads and shells, and create our own bracelet to wear.

Sign-up begins January 5.

February 15, 10:00-11:30 "Spring is Coming"

What signs will we find that Spring is "just around the corner"? Let's explore and find out.

Sign-up begins February 2.

## "Saturn Meets the Crab"

**Saturday, January 4**

**7:00-8:30 p.m.**

**Meet at Lake Yahola**

The Crab Nebula, Messier object #1, is the remnant of a supernova that was observed in 1054. Saturn and its moons will pass in front of this faint, wispy starless bit of gas and dust. Sunset: 5:31 p.m. and Moonset: 7:20 p.m. Meet on the east side of Lake Yahola above the circle drive.

Sign-up begins December 22.

## Star Programs

**\$2 general public  
free to members**

**All ages welcome**

■ **with advance notice**

## "Sky Patterns"

**Wednesday, February 5,**

**7:00-8:30 p.m.**

**Meet at Oxley Nature Center**

Stars marching in constellations, pairs of stars eclipsing each other, planets circling our sky, and a vast galaxy turning on its hub. We could get dizzy! Dress warmly and bring binoculars if you wish. Sunset: 5:54 p.m. and Moonset: 10:09 p.m. Sign-up begins January 26.

# Programs and special events

## January

### 4 "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.

### 4 "Nature Journals"

Saturday

\$2 plus \$1 materials



Ages: All ■

9:30 - 11:00 a.m.

members pay \$1

Bring a notebook or your own journal to work on. Be ready to share your own ideas. Meet at Oxley.  
Sign-up begins December 22.

### 11 "Gourd With Pine Needle Baskets II"

Saturday

\$2 plus \$10 for materials

Ages: 18 to adult ■

12:30 - 4:00 p.m.  
members pay \$10

Do you have an unfinished project from the previous class or do you want to learn to make a gourd with pine needle basket? Beginner or experienced basket makers are welcome.  
Meet at Oxley. Sign-up begins December 29.

### 25 "Splash into Ink-Wash: Turtle Drawings"

Saturday

\$25 for non-members



Ages: 15 to adult ■

10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

members pay \$20

\$5 discount for reservations paid by January 15.

Working with diluted ink in layer we will draw turtles. See back page for details.

### 25 Double-walled Western Cherokee Basket

Saturday

\$50 for non-members

Ages: 18 to adult ■

9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

members pay \$45

Join us to learn how to weave a traditional Cherokee basket using reeds. See back page for details.

## February

### 1 "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.

### 1 "Woodchuck Lore"

Saturday

\$2 for non-members



Ages: All ■

1:00-2:30 p.m.

free to members

Is a woodchuck the same thing as a groundhog? If he doesn't come out to see his shadow, where is he? Come find out more about our resident "weather predictor."  
Meet at Oxley. Sign-up begins January 19.

### 1 "Silver Shells: Drawing in Silver Pointe"

Saturday

\$30 for non-members



Ages: 15 to adult ■

10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

members pay \$25

\$5 discount for reservations paid by January 22.

Join us to use this classic art form to draw shells in sterling silver. See back page for details.

### 22 "Drawing & Detailing Fossils in Graphite Pencil"

Saturday

\$25 for non-members



Ages: 15 to adult ■

1:00- 4:00 p.m.

members pay \$20

\$5 discount for reservations paid by February 12.

We will learn to draw fossils using a graphite pencil. See back page for more details.

### 22 "Father-Son Cowboy Cookout"

Saturday

\$2 plus \$5 for materials

10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

members pay \$5

Father-son teams will cook a complete meal, the cowboy way, on a campfire using a cast-iron oven or skillet.  
Meet at Oxley. Sign-up begins February 9.

\$2 for non-members, members free

### "Long Nights"

Ages: All ■



Are animals sleeping on these long winter nights or are they roaming the prairie, marsh or forest? Let's find out. Join us for a stroll on the trails at Oxley on a chilly January evening. Walks will begin at 6:30 p.m. and end at 8:00 p.m. Groups (of 6 or more) may join us Tuesday, January 14. Groups may register beginning December 29. Families and individuals may join us Thursday, January 30, with registration beginning January 19.



## **Natural Art Workshop Series**

**Fee must be paid at time of registration, register early!  
Please call in advance for a materials list. Bring a sack lunch.**

### **Double-walled Western Cherokee Basket**

**January 25**

Linda Lou Alexander has been weaving baskets for 12 years. Join her to learn how to create this traditional basket of the Western Cherokee tribe. Reed will be provided for weaving this project.

### **Splash into Ink-Wash: Turtle Drawings**

**January 25**

Brenda Knapp will teach participants how to capture the likeness of turtles in ink-wash (working in diluted ink in layers-allowing the artist to achieve the depth of rich India ink in subtle variations of grey).

### **Silver Shells: Drawing in Silverpoint**

**February 1**

Brenda Knapp will be teaching this classic art form of drawing in sterling silver, a precious metal that creates delicate, fine lines that invite close-up study of a drawing.

### **Drawing and Detailing Fossils**

**February 22**

Brenda Knapp will teach you how to study the details and textures of a fossil. Pre-sketching and measurement, graphite application, and dusting and erasure drawing techniques will be used.