



Mary K. Oxley Nature Center

April 2018 Newsletter

Welcome to our new email newsletter! As a Mary K. Oxley Nature Center Association Member or Volunteer you will be receiving information of programs, lectures, classes, and events that we offer.

Welcome back, Spring!



Cedar Waxwing and Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, Greg Silva, 2018

Cedar waxwings will be leaving by late April and early May to journey North to nest. Blue-

gray gnatcatchers generally arrive in the Tulsa area in late March and early April and nest here. Gnatcatchers are hunting insects and small spiders to refuel after their journey and waxwings are gorging on soap berries before they leave. Oxley provides not only food sources for these migrants but also the opportunity for us to see them.

A dark sky
April rains?
A tree with branches
Still barren of leaves
But festooned with the brilliant light
Of seven Great Egrets
Scattered gracefully
Amongst the limbs
Like glowing lanterns.
Welcome back.

Welcome Back, Amy Morris, 2018

In my backyard: living with urban predators

by Karen Harris, volunteer naturalist

April 6, 2018, 700 hours

My dog began giving his "there's a dog bark" which is louder and more urgent than his "there's a cat bark." When I looked out the back window, there she was, the light cinnamon-colored red fox, near the shed where the rabbits hide. By the time I got my camera and went outside, she was gone, but I let my dog out just to make sure. She may be the same one that, last spring while probably hunting to feed her kits, caught and killed my pet Araucana hen. Living with urban predators can be both breathtaking and heartbreaking. Besides the fox, my neighborhood has sharp shinned, Cooper's, and red tailed hawks all of which I have seen hunting songbirds and my backyard chickens. This winter my neighbor was sure a snowy owl killed two of her little flock. For the chance to see a snowy owl a backyard chicken seems to be a small price to pay, but then it was her chicken, not mine. Of course, these same predators naturally go after pesky squirrels and rabbits that snip off baby trees, dig out vegetables and eat apples and pears so there is that bit of a trade-off too.

Growing up in a rural area, I learned from dad that predators were to be trapped or shot to keep them from killing livestock. But times are different. Back then there still seemed to be ample habitat for wild things, but now so much land has been bulldozed and paved and built on that we have destroyed too much of the natural world and weakened our own life support system. Places like Oxley and Redbud Valley have become small islands of wildlife habitat in a sea of human development. Some of us are trying to reverse course by landscaping our yards FOR wildlife and that will inherently include the predators like foxes, coyotes, and raptors who have learned to survive in urban areas.

My neighbor and I can no longer have truly free-range chickens. What are my options for protecting them and yet allowing them room to roam? Predator traps, shooting and poisons are obviously out of the question. I could call the wildlife department and ask them to live trap and relocate the fox to Oxley or some other good fox habitat. But if the

relocation habitat is good, there are most likely foxes already living there. How would I like it if another Tulsa family whose house was lost to highway construction was transported to my home and asked to live with me? Besides, if my backyard and neighborhood are good fox habitat, the chances are high that foxes will move in from somewhere.

I know that, unless conditioned otherwise (habituated), wild animals avoid humans so here is what I have been doing. An hour or so before dusk I let Frieda, my Buff Orpington, out of her pen and I watch her while I'm doing a few garden chores. If I hear blue jay warning cries and see the Cooper's hawk nearby, I wave my arms, clap, and make sure my dog is alert and on guard. When Frieda goes to roost, I shut her in her coop and can go back into the house. I'm also planning to construct a longer wire-covered chicken run, sort of a moat around the garden so my new chicks and Frieda can be more free-range and yet protected when I'm not out there.

I have a large dog so I don't worry about him getting hurt. While predators do not normally prey on small dogs, if I had a small dog, I'd probably construct a safe pen or be outside with it. I don't let my cat out and never leave pet food outside at night and certainly would NEVER INTENTIONALLY FEED A PREDATOR. Whenever I see the fox or hawk or if I ever see a coyote in the yard, I will grab my camera and go outside. While I love to get pictures, I am also going to run and yell to let these predators know they need to remain wary of humans. Objects like small sticks thrown in their general direction are also deterrents.

Places like San Francisco and Chicago have had large populations of predators like coyotes for years. Their human and wildlife citizens have successfully coexisted by keeping their distance. Here in Tulsa, we can all be better stewards of the natural world, invite wildlife into our backyards by providing water, food, and shelter, and deal with urban predators by keeping them wary and at a safe distance.

Mary K. Oxley Nature Center - Programs in April

7 April "Saturday Morning Birding" (Rekurs every 1st Saturday of the month)

DETAILS: Ages: All; 8:00-9:45AM; Registration not required; Saturday; Free to all.

Join us for birding at Oxley. All skill levels are welcome. Bring binoculars if you have them.

9 or 23 April "Natural Babies: What's for Supper?"(this is a recurring activity)

DETAILS: Ages: 1-5 years with caregiver, 10:30-11:30AM, Registration required, call 918.596.9054 to register. Members free, Non-members \$3 donation suggested. Both dates are same class subject.

The food web travels from the sun to the plants, plant eaters to meat eaters and then to decomposers. Children will participate in a web as they eat while acting out the links in a food chain. Come see what's for supper!

13 April "Spring Butterfly Count"

DETAILS: Ages: All, 8:30PM-Dusk; Advanced registration required; Call 918.596.9054 to register; Free to all.

Join us to spot, count and identify butterflies at Oxley. Citizen scientists participate in local counts, increase personal knowledge, and raise public awareness. You will be contributing to valuable data about butterfly populations. You are welcome to participate in all or part of the day's counting. Bring a lunch, water, hat and binoculars if you have them. No experience is necessary. You'll work in teams with

experienced naturalists counting in different areas.

14 April "Plants of Redbud Valley" Special Lecture

DETAILS: 1-2:00 PM; Oxley Center Classroom; Free to Oxley members and volunteers. Call 918.596.9054 to register

Constance Murray, Botanist and Redbud Valley Plant Expert will be discussing the great diversity of plants at Redbud Valley and the diverse ecosystems they inhabit in Oklahoma. Come learn more about what makes Redbud Valley such a special place.

14 April "Second Saturday Sketchers" (Rekurs every 2nd Saturday of the month)

DETAILS: Ages: 18 and older; 10:00-11:30AM; call 918.596.9054 to register in advance; Members free, Non-members \$5.00 per session.

Join our new monthly nature sketching group, meeting each second Saturday of the month. We will draw and paint on location in the preserve and in the classroom. All levels of familiarity with drawing and painting are encouraged to join. Follow this [link](#) to course description and materials list.

21 April "Butterfly Walk" (Rekurs every 3rd Saturday of the month, March through October.)

DETAILS: Please note times will vary with the month. March-April: 10:30-Noon; May-August: 9:30-11; September-October: 10:30-noon.

We'll be searching for butterflies! All ages and skill levels are welcome. Bring binoculars if you have them.

28 April "Botany Walk"

DETAILS: Ages: All; 10:30-Noon; Free to all; Registration not required

Spring wildflowers are reaching up to catch the sun in the forest before the canopy casts too much shade. Join us to discover what is in bloom!

29 April "Full Pink Moon"

DETAILS: Ages: All; 7-8:30PM; Free to all; Registration is required; Call 918.596.9054 to register.

Some of our earliest wildflowers are pink. This is a time for new beginnings. We call this the Full Pink Moon because it comes at a time when phlox, some of which is pink, is in bloom. Come explore the trails with us.



Mary K. Oxley Nature Center Hours

Interpretive Center is open Monday through Saturday 10AM - 4:30PM, Sunday hours are Noon - 4:30. Trails are open prior to the building being open. Call 918.596.9054

Redbud Valley Hours

Gates open 8AM - 5PM Wednesday - Sunday; Visitor Center open 11AM - 3PM. No access before or after hours. Call 918.596.9054



Copyright © 2018 Mary K. Oxley Nature Center Association, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

