



Mary K. Oxley Nature Center

May 2018 Newsletter

Our Spring weather is causing an explosion of new growth to our trees and flowers as well as to our animals. Little green buds, tiny flowers and youth of all kinds abound. Come and visit and revel in the Spring! Here's what is happening in May and June!

Species in Focus: Honey Bees (*Apis mellifera*)



Helen, Mack and Keith Hickey have been taking care of our bee hives for several years. Lately there has been lots of activity in our bee hive.

The bees you will see in our hives are *Apis* (bee) *mellifera* (honey bearing), and are not native to Oklahoma but originate in Europe. *Apis mellifera* are one of the first domesticated species of bee. Our bees are *eusocial*: they have formed a colony with a single fertile female (the queen), sterile female workers and fertile male drones. Visit the Mary K Oxley Nature Center to learn more about their fascinating social structure and behavior. Peek into our observation hive and see if you can locate the queen and the drones or spot a forager performing the waggle dance. Listen to their buzzing, look for the colors of pollen they are carrying, and try to detect any scents they carry as the girls enter the hive through the clear plastic tunnel. You can even take a walk on our trails and see if you can find them working on the flowers in our fields, gardens and forests.

Hedy Lamar, Elephant Poo, and Cockleburs

by Karen Harris, volunteer naturalist

May, 2018

As I watched the biopic "Bombshell, the Hedy Lamar Story," I was once again struck by the wisdom of looking to nature for answers to environmental and technological problems. Ms. Lamar, a glamorous movie star and brilliant innovator of the 1930's, told Howard Hughes how to make his blunt-winged planes fly faster. She got the idea from observing the fastest fish and birds and subsequently suggested to Mr. Hughes that he change the shape of the airplane wings to mimic pointy fish fins and pointy avian wings. Voila! Faster airplanes.

One of today's serious environmental problems is the worldwide buildup of microplastics. That particular human garbage does not decompose and is being found in water, soils, and even the air. We know it kills ocean species but still do not know the impact on soils or in the air we breath. We may find a solution to this plastics problem in how dung beetles and termites utilize elephant poo. Naturalist Bernd Heinrich observed the dung beetles digging through the elephant dung, forming balls of it for nuptial presents (the dung beetles version of a diamond ring), eating some, and burying some. Then the termites move in and use what's left for their food. After digestion, the termites excrete a mixture that includes a tough material called lignin. To me, the coolest find is that, as in other natural systems, nothing goes to waste because the termites use their excrement to build their nests. No landfill or trash to energy plant needed and no toxic wastes produced. Heinrich noticed that a piece of nest he collected had the consistency of plastic and was insoluble in water. The material must break down somehow or we would be buried in termite nests, yet it may be tough and resilient enough to substitute for plastic.

As a kid, I would hike in the woods surrounding our house and in the autumn would frequently end my afternoons by pulling cockleburs out of my wool socks. How I wish I had been as astute as Lamar and Heinrich and seen the potential use for this design (many tiny hooks connecting to dense fibers) to make a fastener!

Here is where nature centers like Oxley come in. What's out here that a kid and adult can discover? Spending time in the natural world has multiple benefits, one of which is inspiring wonder. Another can be inspiring creativity and innovation. So come take a walk, bring your children, grandchildren, or a friend's kid and explore together. Who knows? They (or you) might have one of those "aha! moments" like Lamar and Heinrich did and I wish...oh well. For sure you will enjoy a day together experiencing the natural world.

Mary K. Oxley Nature Center - Programs in May

5 May "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.

12 May "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.

14 or 21 May "Natural Babies: Let's Make a Journey Stick"

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.

A journey stick is essentially a memento of a nature walk, featuring items collected whilst on the walk. These might be things like leaves, twigs, flowers or anything else natural that you find along the way. The journey stick will go home with the child.

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

DETAILS: Please note times will vary with the month. Ages: All; 10:30-Noon; Free to all; Registration not required

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

26 May "Botany Walk" (Rekurs every 4th Saturday of the month, March through October.)

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

Come with us to see how spring becomes summer, with all its fullness.

29 May "Full Flower Moon Walk"

DETAILS: Ages: All; 7-8:30PM; Registration is required; Call 918.596.9054 to register. Members free, Non-members \$3 donation suggested.

April showers and sunshine have brought a flush of wildflowers to the land. Join us for an evening walk along the trails. We will explore with all our senses!

Programs in June

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

DETAILS: Ages: 18 and older; 10:00-11:30AM; Registration required; 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.

16 June “Butterfly Walk” (Rekurs every 3rd Saturday of the month, March through October.)

DETAILS: Please note times will vary with the month. June-August: 9:30-11; September-October: 10:30-noon. Ages: All; 9:30-11:00AM; Free to all; Registration not required

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

23 June “Botany Walk” (Rekurs every 4th Saturday of the month, March through October.)

DETAILS: Ages: All; 9:30-11:00AM; Free to all; Registration not required

Come with us to see how spring becomes summer, with all its fullness. Please note earlier start time. During the warmer months of June through August, we will meet 9:30-11:00 a.m.

27 June “Full Strawberry Moon Walk”

DETAILS: Ages: All; 7-8:30PM; Registration is required; Call 918.596.9054 to register. Members free, Non-members \$3 donation suggested.

We will engage all our senses as we explore the trails this evening. Will we find wild strawberries?

7 July “4th of July” North American Butterfly Count”

DETAILS: Ages: All; 8:30AM and count until dusk; Registration is required; Call 918.596.9054 to register. Free to all.

Join us Saturday, July 7th to spot, count and identify butterflies. Information gathered will supplement the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) 4th of July Butterfly Count. Citizen scientists participate in local counts, increase personal knowledge, and raise public awareness. You will be contributing to valuable data about butterfly populations. We will meet at 8:30 a.m. and count until dusk, weather permitting. You are welcome to participate in all or part of the count. Please 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.

New Volunteer Staff Joins Oxley Nature Center Team

Our volunteer training during March was great fun this season! We had six volunteer naturalists graduate. Please give a big welcome to:

MATT BAXTER, ERICA GADDIS, CLAIRE HARKNESS, ANNA LOMBARDI, GEORGE RATLIFF, and MARILYNN SCHELLER.

In addition to our volunteer naturalists and visitor center hosts we have had other volunteer staff join our team to assist as rovers, trail work volunteers, marketing committee members and ONCA members. Our volunteer staff is our greatest resource. They enable us to maintain trails, fight invasive species, greet our guests, lead interpretive tours, and provide outreach and so much more. We thank them for their dedication and enthusiasm



Mary K. Oxley Nature Center Hours

We are closed for [Memorial Day](#), Monday, May 28th, 2018.

It costs \$2 per car from April through October to enter Mohawk Park on weekends unless you are a member of Oxley Nature Center or the Tulsa Zoo.

The [Interpretive Building](#) will be open Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. and Sunday, noon - 4:30 p.m.

[Gate and parking lot](#) is open daily, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. except most City holidays.

[Hiking trails](#) are accessible during Mohawk Park hours, 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.



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