



"The look of love" Hooded Mergansers | photograph Bryan Tapp

Mary K. Oxley Nature Center

March-April 2019 Newsletter

March is always a very special month here at Oxley Nature Center. Over the course of six 3-hour sessions our staff's goal will be to pass along basic knowledge that will enable our newest volunteers-in-training to help guide school tours throughout the park as well as enhance their understanding of the wild nature in and around Oxley. In April, we begin our outreach to area children, with scheduled hikes and tours of our trails.



Do you feel like a new adventure?

Oxley Volunteer Naturalist Training Begins in March - Come Join Us!

Do you enjoy being outdoors sharing the experience of nature with others? We are offering Volunteer Naturalist training throughout March. We are looking for weekend, evening and weekday volunteer staff.

During training you will become familiar with our trail system as you explore the prairie, wetland, and forested areas. We emphasize leadership skills and interpretive methods. Upon completion of training, you will join other naturalists, each guiding a small group of visitors on weekday, evening or weekend tours. Most tours are school field trips during April and May.

If you are 18 or older, please call for more details about the training schedules. 918-596-9054. No previous experience is necessary.

Weekday Training Sessions: March 5- March 28 two days a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays) from 9:00 a.m.-12 noon. If evenings and weekends are more convenient, you may attend training on evenings and weekend days until requirements are met. Please call for details about the schedules. Training schedules are flexible, and dependent on number of participants.

Certified Interpretive Host Training Workshop

When: March 1-2, 2019, 8:00 a.m. -5:00 p.m.

Where: Oxley Nature Center

Instructor: Donna Horton, CIT

The National Association of Interpretation's Certified Interpretive Host program offers a two-day professional certification designed for new hires, seasonals, volunteers, maintenance workers, receptionists, law enforcement or anyone who has public contact but does not present formal interpretive programs to the public. It covers the basics of interpretation, how to provide great customer service and hospitality, and how you can use informal interpretation to support your agency's mission as you interact with visitors. Must be 16 or older.

To register for this course please go to:

https://www.interpnet.com/nai/nai/_events/Event_Display.aspx?EventKey=CIH030119

For more information contact:

Donna Horton, Trainer: DonnaHortonCIT@att.net, 918-587-0522.



Photograph Greg Silva

Species Spotlight: North American River Otter

Just a few lucky early hikers have encountered this lovely mammal at Oxley. The North American River Otter (*Lontra canadensis*) is not a common sight in our park. A fish-loving carnivore, the otter's webbed toes and slim muscular build make it a zippy swimmer and successful hunter. Otter eyes have an extra layer - a transparent nictitating membrane - an adaptation to their semi-aquatic life which makes them near sighted when on land.

River otters do not dig or build their own dens, instead they make use of hollow logs, handy rock formations and ledges for their burrows, also called "holts". They will then line the den with their hair, leaves and moss.

While observing an otter in Tulsa may currently be a rare event because of population depletion due to water pollution and urbanization, the species was reintroduced in the Midwest in the 90's. With any luck, you just might come across an otter on an early morning walk!



photograph Karen Harris

Naturalist's Notebook

Ephemerals Spring 2019

By Karen Harris, Volunteer Naturalist

Ephem-er-al *n* a plant that grows, flowers, and dies back. *adj.* transient, lasting a very short time

March and April are exciting months at the nature center. Even as I write this in February, birds are starting courtship displays or have already laid eggs and begun to incubate them. Leaf buds are swelling on trees and twigs are beginning to change colors. The soil is warming and the spring wildflowers are starting to emerge. It won't be long before the whites of false rue anemone, bloodroot, and trout lilies appear followed by our cherished Dutchman's breeches. Then, before we know it, they will be gone.

As a high school science teacher introducing the unit on evolution, I used ephemeral woodland wildflowers as examples of populations undergoing natural selection. There is a short window for them to emerge, bloom and produce seed. If they bloom too early a hard freeze would damage the blossom and prevent reproduction. If they bloom too late, shade from new tree leaves could limit the plant's photosynthetic capacity, reducing its food stores and causing death or at least discouraging pollination and loss of reproduction. Timing is everything. Since the arrival of spring is variable, individual variation (some plants blooming earlier and some a bit later than average) insures survival for the population. Several years ago I read that researchers at the Leopold Center in Wisconsin had data showing that the average bloom time for many flowers found there had moved earlier. They had notes on bloom times that Aldo Leopold himself had recorded as early as 1935. Again, something in the environment, this time climate, had changed and selected for the best-fit individuals. With these examples students could see the difference between stabilizing selection (toward the average) and directional selection (away from the average in one direction).

I believe lessons from nature and ecological principles can inform our lives. Here are two applications:

1. Little in life remains constant so diversity is an asset. We can apply that to almost any aspect of our lives from economics (running a business or investing in the stock market) to more personal issues like activities we participate in and friends we make.
2. Nothing in life lasts long. That includes conditions we experience, good or bad as well as life itself. Our time is brief. WE are ephemeral.

With those two lessons in mind, I suggest we nurture and celebrate the variety in our lives. And if there is a friend or relative you haven't seen in awhile, invite them to join you at Oxley or Redbud Valley this spring to look for the ephemeral wildflowers while they are here, before they are gone.

Mary K. Oxley Nature Center - March Programs

2 March "Saturday Morning Birding"

Ages: All; Saturday, 8:00-9:45 a.m.; Free, Registration not required

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

9 March "Junior Naturalists"

Ages: 8-12 years, children only please; Saturday, 10:00-12:30 p.m.; Registration is required; Free for Members, Non-members \$5 per session; Meet at the Fawn Grove at Oxley.

Come join the Junior Naturalists at Oxley Nature Center for a morning of adventure and nature connection! Guided by the changing seasons and our own curiosity, we will hike, journal, tell stories, play games, craft, learn wilderness skills, and practice good park stewardship. Come to all our meetings or the one that fits your schedule.

11 & 25 March "Natural Babies: "Colors in Nature"

Ages: 1- 5 + caregiver; Monday, 10:30-11:30 a.m.; Registration is required; Free for Members, Non-members \$5 per session.

We will discuss colors in birds, insects, and flowers. We will do a science experiment called Walking Water. For our craft, we will make a colorful butterfly to take home. On our walk we will be looking for wild things that have different colors in them.

20 March "Spring Equinox Event"

Ages: All; Wednesday, 11:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.; Free with a donation of food, toys or blankets for the SPCA; Registration not required

The Vernal Equinox marks the beginning of Spring, a season that brings an increase in both daylight and temperature. We celebrate the 'rebirth' of our flora and fauna. The word equinox is derived from Latin words meaning "equal night." What will you do with your 12 hours of daylight? Why don't you plan to spend some time outdoors with us? Explore our native landscape at Oxley. We will have guided hikes, or you may hike on your own and complete a scavenger hunt. Come inside, enjoy our exhibits, make a wreath or crown from invasive vines, make an eco-print, create a leaf rubbing, make a mask, color, and more! This is a come and go event. Greet Spring by joining our festivities. We look forward to seeing you!

20 March "Full Worm Moon Walk"

Ages: All; Wednesday, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.; Registration is required; \$3 for members, \$5 for non-members

Temperatures warm and soils thaw. Worms make their way to the surface. Join us to search for signs of Spring.

23 March "Botany Walk"

Ages: All; Saturday, 10:30 - noon; Free, Registration not required

New spring flowers and buds on trees! This is a lovely time to explore the flora at Oxley Nature Center. Join us for our botany walk to find these treasures.

23 March "Biology and Identification of Lichens"

Saturday, 1:00-3:00 p.m.; Registration is required; Free for members and students, \$5 for non-members

Lichens are present in every ecosystem from wet rain forests to dry deserts. They are food and habitats for various organisms and perform essential services like regulating forest humidity. This lecture will open your eyes to these tiny organisms and cover everything you need to know to begin your own lichen collection and identify the species around you. A brief walk will follow the talk to put your new lichen skills to the test!

Zachary Muscavitch Herrboldt is a Master's candidate with the Department of Biological Science at The University of Tulsa.

25 March "Natural Babies: "Colors in Nature"

Ages: 1-5 + caregiver; Monday, 10:30-11:30 a.m.; Registration is required; Free for Members, Non-members \$5 per session.

This is the same class that was offered on March 11. We will discuss colors in birds, insects, and flowers. We will do a science experiment called Walking Water. For our craft, we will make a colorful butterfly to take home. On our walk we will be looking for wild things that

have different colors in them.

Mary K. Oxley Nature Center - Programs in April

6 April "Saturday Morning Birding"

Ages: All; Saturday, 8:00-9:45 a.m. Free, Registration not required

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

8 & 22 April "Natural Babies: "Today is Earth Day!"

Ages: 1-5 + caregiver; Monday, 10:30-11:30 a.m. Registration is required; Free for Members, Non-members \$5 per child.

We will be celebrating Earth Day this month, so we will discuss ways that we can help our Earth (recycle, reuse, reduce). We will make an Earth to take home to remind us to use what we know to help Earth. On our walk, we will take a bag and see if we can pick up trash to keep this planet beautiful and healthy!

13 April "Junior Naturalists"

Ages: 8-12 years; Saturday, 10:00-12:30 p.m. Registration is required; Free for Members, Non-members \$5 per child; Meet at the Fawn Grove at Oxley.

Come join the Junior Naturalists at Oxley Nature Center for a morning of adventure and nature connection! Guided by the changing seasons and our own curiosity, we will hike, journal, tell stories, play games, craft, learn wilderness skills, and practice good park stewardship. Come to all our meetings or the one that fits your schedule.

20 April "Butterfly Walk"

Ages: All; Saturday, 10:30-noon; Free, Registration not required

Join us for our first butterfly walk of the season! What early spring butterflies will we find? All skill levels are welcome. Bring binoculars if you have them.

20 April "Full Pink Moon Walk"

Ages: All; Tuesday, 7:00-8:30 p.m.; Registration is required; \$3 for members, \$5 for non-members

The full moon in April is named for the pink flowers – phlox – that bloom in the early spring. Will it be light enough to see any blossoms? It promises to be a magical evening. Join us at Oxley for a sensory experience.

22 April "Natural Babies: "Today is Earth Day!"

Ages: 1-5 + caregiver; Monday, 10:30-11:30 a.m.; Registration is required; Free for Members, Non-members \$5 per child.

This is the same class that was offered on April 8. We will be celebrating Earth Day this month, so we will discuss ways that we can help our Earth (recycle, reuse, reduce). We will make an Earth to take home to remind us to use what we know to help Earth. On our walk, we will take a bag and see if we can pick up trash to keep this planet beautiful and healthy!

27 April "Botany Walk"

Ages: All; Saturday, 10:30-noon; Free, Registration not required

So many wonderful things are happening right now. Join us on our walk at Oxley to discover the changes!

Spring 2019 Lecture Series

Sponsored by Oxley Nature Center Association (ONCA)

Oxley Nature Center offers a rich resource for nature related studies by researchers from area schools. Three students currently studying at The University of Tulsa will be presenting lectures at Oxley this spring.

Free for Members, volunteers and students, \$5 for non-members

Please call 918-596-9054 to register

UPDATE

On January 19th and February 16th Madison Herrboldt (The Impact of Life Cycle Shifts on

Reproduction) and Nick Ledbetter (Exploring evolution and diversity across the salamander tree of life) each gave great presentations that were enjoyed by many. Join us for our final presenter, Zachary Mscabitch Herrboldt, on Saturday, March 23rd. It's going to be informative and we'll even get a chance for an exploratory walk!

Date: Saturday, March 23, 1-3 p.m.

Title: Biology and Identification of Lichens.

Synopsis: Lichens are present in every ecosystem from wet rain forests to dry deserts, yet many of them are invisible to most casual observers. They are food and habitats for various organisms and perform essential services like regulating forest humidity. Come learn about lichens and understand the strange terms that lichenologists use to describe them. This lecture will open your eyes to these tiny organisms and cover everything you need to know to begin your own lichen collection and identify the species around you. A brief walk will follow the talk to put your new lichen skills to the test!

Zachary Muscavitch Herrboldt is a Master's candidate with the Department of Biological Science at the University of Tulsa studying the evolution of sexual and asexual algae. He previously worked at The New York Botanical Garden where he works with the lichen collection and described species new to science.

Lectures will be held at the Oxley Nature Center located at 6700 Mohawk Blvd. approximately one mile north of the Tulsa Zoo. To register, call Oxley Nature Center at 918-596-9054.

Mary K. Oxley Nature Center Hours

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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