

# Oxley Nature Center Newsletter

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## What Will Come if You Put Out Birdseed? by Jay Meek

The brilliant red Northern Cardinals with their black facial masks and orange bills flutter in the ground like red tissue paper under the bare branches of the redleaf tree. There they forage through the dried brown leaves, tossing around bits and pieces of debris as they seek tasty morsels of seeds. The seeds contain life's fuel: calories, proteins, amino acids, and minerals, all the elements required for survival during winter's harsh stay.

The tiny Carolina Chickadees, with their black caps and throat patches, dart quickly to the ground, seize sunflower seeds and return immediately to the limbs of the redleaf. There they balance the individual seeds between their feet and the tree branch. With concentrated blows from their tiny sharp bills, they strike through the tough outer shell until the inner treasure is revealed, the nutritious nut meat. A pair of Tufted Titmice rapidly chase one another through the branches. Their heads are capped with gray crests and their sides beneath their wings are washed with a pale and subtle orange. With the chase over, they hammer at their sunflower seeds in much the same way as the chickadees.

An American Goldfinch is feeding on the ground beneath the redleaf. This male is already beginning to replace his dull winter coat with bright streaks of yellow along his breast and wings. Small tufts of white down float above the dark wing bands. His dining technique is unique. He takes a whole sunflower seed lengthwise in his bill, crushing and rolling it. He drops the seed to the ground, picks it up again in his bill, and works it around some more. Eventually the seed coat cracks and splinters to give up its prize.

The Dark-eyed Junco is also hopping around beneath the tree, picking here and there with his pale pink bill. His gray and brown upper body sharply contrasts with his stark white breast. He is dining on smaller seeds fallen between the grasses, millet, sunflower, and cracked corn. He hops a few steps, dips his head to the ground, lifts and lifts his head as he cracks and swallows his seed, and hops forward again, repeating the process.

The White-throated Sparrows also feed along the ground beneath the tree with their peculiar shuffle and kick gait. These brown sparrows, with their pale yellow eyebrows and white throat patches, kick their feet back in the soil to uncover hidden seed. Then they shuffle back, feet forward and back, forward and back, a dance before dining.

A Downy Woodpecker has also visited the redleaf today, climbing the vertical trunk with her peculiar arrangement of feet: two forward and two back. She clings easily upside down on the branches. Her white underside and white back contrast with her black and white barred wings and black tail. She is not in the tree seeking her usual fare of insects. Today she drops to the ground and scavenges for seed amongst the grass and leaves, picking up ground and sunflower pieces. She supplements her diet of dormant insects with the season's offerings under the redleaf.

With a soft and undulating flight, a White-breasted Nuthatch approaches and lands in the redleaf. This is a stock and streamlined bird with a short tail, a long sharp bill, a black cap, a white face and breast, and a beautiful rust color beneath its tail. It does not feed, but flies off to another perch several yards away. As the sun lowers in the sky and dusk descends, the birds take out and return to their winter roosts, satisfied for the night.

# Nature Center Happenings

**CLOSED:**

Thursday, January 1 and  
Monday, January 18  
Happy Holidays



## Gift / Event Hours

The gates of Deer Nature Center are open daily, with the exception of most City holidays. From 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. on City days, you may enter outside the gates from 7:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. to visit the trails even when the gates are closed.

Art and craft information sessions, the gates are open Wednesday through Sunday, from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. You may drop the items when the Nature Preserve is closed. on Wednesday-Sundays on City holidays, before 8:00 a.m. and after 5:00 p.m.

## POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION

Call 408-444-1111 to register or to receive information about programs. Unfortunately, due to the occupancy of our trail, some of our dates. Programs that are wheelchair accessible are designated with the ♣ symbol.

Visit our website at <http://www.deernaturecenter.org>

## Kid's Saturday Programs

\$5 for general public, \$5 for members, all ♣

### Exciting Old Maps 1-3 years!

Each child accompanied by an adult, please

#### January 17, 10:00-11:00 "Maps & Maps"

Let all kids use the forest and parks for markers to make a map.

Sign-up begins Saturday, January 4.

#### January 18, 10:00-11:00 "Forest Friends"

Join us as we create a beautiful version of forests, colors and sounds from the forest.

Sign-up begins February 1.

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

Kit only, please.

#### January 18, 10:00-11:00 "Swinger Hunt"

Let all hunt high and low to find the mysterious items of our kit.

Sign-up begins January 4.

#### January 19, 10:00-11:00 "Hug with a Walking Stick"

Let all make our own walking stick, and take a hug.

Sign-up begins February 1.

### "Seven At Its Best"

Saturday, January 24,

10:00-11:00 pm.

The stars are at their best on the seven days, along with a good view. Venus and the crescent moon should also be fine during tonight. Bring something to eat, spots, and binoculars if you like. Meet at Lake Road.

Sign-up begins January 1.

### Star Programs

♣ \$5 for general public.

Free to members

♣ \$5 night sessions

♣ with advance notice.

### "Bright Planets"

Wednesday, February 5,

7:45-9:00 pm.

We've been watching Mars, Jupiter, and Pluto since September, but it's still early. The month will add a star of Jupiter to the evening's agenda.

Saturn and Venus will also be targets for our telescopes. Bring something to eat, spots, and binoculars. Meet at Torrey Park. Sign-up begins February 1.



## Full Moon Walks

We are always looking for new programs to offer a variety of experiences. A new series being offered this year are walks with family and friends under a full moon.

Once each month we will walk the fields, woods, and shorelines of the Nature Center, or perhaps a similar area, on or near the night of the full moon. The natural world can be enchanting when you experience it by moonlight. We'll also learn some of the folklore associated with the full moon.

We begin on Tuesday night, January 14th at 6:00-8:00 p.m. with the full moon. Friday, February 6th, again at 6:00-8:00 p.m., a waxing moon will light our way.

As always, call the Nature Center to register. Fees are \$5 per person for the general public or free to members of our Friends organization.

## Project Learning Tree

Date: January 17, 2004  
Time: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Cost: \$10  
Place: Redwood Valley

Project Learning Tree is an award-winning environmental program designed for teachers and other educators working with students in kindergarten through grade 12. It uses the forest as a "window" into the natural world, helping young people gain an awareness and knowledge of the world around them as well as their place within it. This is an indoor/outdoor workshop. Wear comfortable clothes and bring a water bottle. Call 808-8044 to sign up.