



Oxley Nature Center

March/April, 2009

Volume 180

Mohawk Park charges a \$2 fee per car on weekends April through October for non-members.

Oxley Nature Center:

-The Interpretive Building will be open Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and Sunday 12 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.

Redbud Valley Nature Preserve is closed:

all Mondays and Tuesdays.
-Open Wednesday through Sunday, from 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. only. Hiking after these hours is not allowed.
-Interpretive building is open Wednesday through Sunday 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
-Closed most City holidays,

Holiday Closings for Oxley Nature Center and Redbud Valley Nature Preserve:

Friday, April 10.

Program information 918-669-6644

-Oxley@cityoftulsa.org
-Website at "<http://www.oxleynaturecenter.org>".
** Please register for classes 48 hours in advance unless otherwise stated.
-Some classes require supplies and allow limited enrollment.
-Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult unless otherwise stated.
-Most programs are stroller/wheelchair accessible.

Sky Dance

by Amy Morris

It was mid-February, right at dusk, as the sun slipped below the horizon, backlighting the trees in a golden-orange glow. That's when I heard it.

"Peent, peent, peent," repeated right outside the door. I had never heard it before, yet I knew what it was. I stepped outside.

"Peent, peent," he repeated, and then I saw a dark form just yards from me, the size of a small quail, rising skyward in the clearing. In the quickening darkness he rose in a wide spiral, his wings resonant with a musical twitter. The sound (was it really only the wind through his wing feathers?) became louder the higher he flew, almost serene after the harsh, throaty peents.

As he reached the apex of his aerial dance, he twirled earthward, the sound an orchestration of soft whistles, chirps, and liquid warbles, long and drawn out, enticing in its simplicity. Leveling off near the ground, fluttering his short rounded wings, he landed silently. Waiting — and then, beginning once again, his raspy peenting.

I was smitten.

I was, however, not the target of his amour. This somewhat odd, plump shorebird with virtually no neck and large dark eyes, decked out in full brown and black camouflage and sporting a long bill, was performing for someone else entirely — a female American Woodcock.

This upland game bird, a member of the wading bird family, goes by the scientific name of *Scolopax minor*, which translates to "little lover of the swamps or bogs". I prefer the monikers, "Bog-sucker (check out the bill) or Timberdoodle (which may come from the way they rock gently back and forth on their short legs when they're feeding).

Was *she* waiting there, in the forest clearing, entranced as he performed his elaborate display; this "Timberdoodle" on her short little legs? Or was she perhaps more interested in probing the damp, fragrant soil with the flexible tip (just the upper mandible) of her amazing bill, seeking an early spring worm, a tasty delicacy providing up to 90% of her diet?

The darkness of the forest floor would hide her from my sight. Was she even there? Was she watching him from a nice mossy area where a slight depression might eventually hold four creamy buff eggs spotted with brown or purple — future generations?

I waited patiently by the singing ground, hoping for another spectacular performance. It was quiet. Where had he gone, disappearing like a ghost amongst the leaves?

There are many birders out there who walk country lanes at dusk and dawn in early spring hoping to experience the spectacular aerial courtship flight of the male woodcock. They listen for that curious "peent". I was lucky; right place, right time.

You could be too. The trails at Oxley can be accessed even if the gate is closed, from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. The *Sky Dancer* requires an open area surrounded by thickets and damp young woodlands. The show runs for a limited time in early spring. I've heard they perform at dawn, dusk, and sometimes on a cloudy day or on the night of a full moon.

Perhaps the ice storm damage of 2007, which opened up some forested areas, and even the disc golfers, who cleared a lot of trail through the woods in Mohawk Park, increased habitat for these shy woodland shorebirds. Time will tell if more of these migrants stop here to nest. We are just on the western edge of their range.

Spring has begun spreading its charm. Come enjoy the awakening of the natural world. Maybe you'll see the woodcock dance. Or maybe this year it will be the Red-tailed Hawks dancing overhead. Or the buds bursting forth from the branches. Taste the wild green onions, listen to the love songs of the frogs, feel the freshness of the breeze., smell the plum blossoms.

Get outside to **your** nature center, reconnect and be refreshed. There's a lot of drama here!

Oh yes, and prepare to be smitten.

Nature Center Happenings

\$2 for general public, free for members

Kid's Saturday Programs

Meet at Oxley Nature Center

March 14, 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Please register in advance

April 11, 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Discovery Club (Ages 3-5)

Each child must be accompanied by an adult.



“Home Improvement” Learn how birds actively build shelter to keep their young safe from predators and bad weather.

Adventure Club (Ages 6-8)

“Shower Power” How and where does rain come and go? We'll explore the water cycle with a story, game and hike.

Discovery Club (Ages 3-5)

Each child must be accompanied by an adult.

“Rooty-Toot Toot” Learn the importance of two different root systems to the life of plants.

Adventure Club (Ages 6-8)

“Where's Your Baby?” What do the youngest birds, toads, insects, and other baby animals look like? Let's look at their nurseries.

Junior Naturalists

We are looking for **kids ages 9-11** who can meet together one Saturday a month, September to May, from 10:00-11:00 a.m.



Cultivate your curiosity, explore special interests, discover what you can do for “nature” and what it can do for you!

March 14 10:00-11:00 a.m. “What's That Cloud?”

We will look at the different kinds of clouds and learn what they can tell us about the weather. Meet at Oxley.

April 11, 10:00-11:00 a.m. “Native Garden” We will revisit the garden where we planted seeds in the fall, checking on their progress. What maintenance will be required to ensure their survival?

Astronomy Programs

\$2 for general public, free to members, **registration required**, open to all ages. Dress warmly and bring binoculars if you have them.

Monday, March 2, **“Saturn”** 7:00-8:30 p.m. Sunset: 6:15 p.m. Moonrise: 9:24 a.m. Will the rings of Saturn be visible? What else can we find in the sky? Meet at the circle drive on the East side of Lake Yahola.

Saturday, April 4, **“Mega Star Party”** 7:00-10:00 p.m. This is the International Year of Astronomy. Join the Tulsa Astronomy Club and Oxley Nature Center to explore the wonders of deep space. Several telescopes will be set up for viewing the night sky. Call for more information about this event to be held in Mohawk Park.

\$2 for general public, free for members

Full and New Moon Walks

Registration required, all ages

“Full Worm Moon”

Tuesday, March 10, 7:00-8:30 p.m.



If we have no snow on the ground (that is a possibility!) and the soil has softened, we may see worm castings on the ground -- sure signs of spring. Join us at Oxley.

“New Moon Walk”

Saturday, March 28, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Explore a trail using all the senses we have at our disposal. Experience nature in the evening at Oxley!

“Full Pink Moon”

Wednesday, April 8, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Spring arrives with the blink of an eye. Early wildflowers add their fragrance as we follow the full moon and listen as frog song fills the air. Meet at Oxley.

“New Moon Walk”

Saturday, April 25, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

The change of season feels richly unique after dusk, when many critters become active. Join us at Oxley.

Programs and Special Events

March

1 "Nature in Your Backyard" Ages: All
Sunday 1:30-3:00 p.m.
\$2 for general public, free for members, registration required

Learn how to attract, observe and enjoy nature in your own backyard. Spring is a great time to add some wildlife friendly plants. We will discuss shelter, food and water options. Meet at Oxley.

7 "Rain, Rain, Go Away" Ages: All
Saturday 1:30-2:30 p.m.
\$2 for general public, free for members, registration required

What if you were a raindrop? Where would you go? Let's discover the many possibilities. Meet at Redbud Valley. This program is handicap and stroller accessible.

7 "Saturday Morning Birding" Ages: All
Saturday 8:00-9:45 a.m.
Free registration not required

Soon the Eastern Phoebe will return, as will many of our summer birds that nest and raise their young here. Join us at Oxley and bring binoculars if you have them.

21 "Butterflies" Ages: All
Saturday 10:30-12:00 noon
Free registration not required

They're back! Join us for an indoor presentation on butterfly gardening. How can you attract these insects to your own yard? We'll then take a walk outdoors and look for some early spring fliers. Bring binoculars if you have them and meet us at Oxley.

22 "Birding by Ear at Redbud Valley" Ages: All
Sunday 3:00-4:30 p.m.
\$2 for general public, free for members, registration required

Sounds are a tremendous clue to what's going on around us. We'll sort out the sounds of spring as we hike the trail. Birds, frogs and insects may all be singing. This hike is not handicap or stroller accessible.

28 "Botany Walk" Ages: All
Saturday 10:30-12:00 noon
Free registration not required

Join us at Redbud Valley to see the Dutchman's breeches, trout lilies, ragwort, redbuds, spice bush, and violets welcome spring with their splashes of color. Meet at Redbud Valley. This hike is not handicap or stroller accessible.

April

4 "Saturday Morning Birding" Ages: All
Saturday 8:00-9:45 a.m.
Free registration not required

Warblers, flycatchers, gnatcatchers and more! Spring is here. Meet at Oxley and bring binoculars if you have them.

5 "Eggxactly! Eggs Dyed Naturally"
Ages: 12 to Adult
Sunday 2:00-4:00 p.m.
\$3 for general public, \$1 for members, registration required, please call for a supplies list

We will use colors from nature to design and create eggs any mother bird would be proud of! Meet at Oxley.

15 "4th Annual Early Spring Butterfly Count"
Ages: All Wednesday 8:30 a.m.-dusk
\$3 administrative fee after April 13
registration required in advance

We need your help to spot, count, tally, and identify butterflies in a specific count area. No experience is necessary and you will be placed in a group with an experienced guide. You may participate in all or part of the count. Bring lunch, water, and binoculars if you have them. Meet at Oxley.

18 "Butterfly Walk" Ages: All
Saturday 10:30-12:00 noon
Free registration not required

Welcome harbingers of spring are the delicate, fluttering, floating and flying butterflies that greet us along the trails. Join us at Oxley and bring binoculars if you have them.

19 "Earth Day T-shirts" Ages: All
Sunday 1:30-3:00 p.m.
\$2 for general public, free for members, registration required

Join us at Redbud Valley to create an Earth Day t-shirt you can proudly wear on Earth Day (April 22). Bring a light colored plain cotton t-shirt to be painted.

25 "Botany Walk" Ages: All
Saturday 10:30-12:00 noon
Free registration not required

Wildflowers spread their blooms across the woodland floor. Violets in yellow and purple, yellow ragwort and blue woodland phlox light up the shadows. Join us at Oxley to see what changes are occurring.

Volunteer Awards Dinner

Volunteer staff, family and friends joined Oxley staff at our Appreciation Dinner where they got a sneak preview of the newly renovated Interpretive Building on January 8.

How do we begin to estimate the value, the worth, of our volunteer staff to our organization? The reasons for their commitment may vary, but all are tied to our mission statement "**Inspire the Wonder!**" That they do!

Volunteers honored at this time include:

Dick Sherry: Outstanding Volunteer!

Len Eames: 40 seasons of service

Jacques LaFrance: 40 seasons of service

Tom Clark: 15 years of service

Phyllis Stroud: 15 years of service

Elisabeth Ham: 10 years of service

Chloe Oney: 10 years of service

John Fisher: 6 seasons of service

Robert Horton: 6 seasons of service

John, Paula, and Michael Schumann: 6 seasons of service

Velma Mayfield: 6 seasons of service



You inspire us all, thank you for all you do!

We are Looking for a Few Good Naturalists!

Spring will soon be in the air! We Need YOU!

What better time to try something new? The trees are bursting with buds. Forest violets are peeking up above the leaf litter. Birds and frogs are singing their courtship songs. Share this awakening with others.

If you enjoy being outdoors sharing nature with children, join us for our training program. Our 4 week session begins March 2 and ends March 25. Training sessions are two days a week from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon.

Training is fun, and will familiarize you with our trail system and its varied natural communities: forests, wetlands, and prairies.

Following training, you will join other naturalists, each guiding a small group of children, for an hour or two one morning a week from April through May.

If you are 18 or older, please call us for more information. No previous experience is necessary. [918-669-6644](tel:918-669-6644)

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