



Oxley Nature Center

September/October, 2011

Volume 205

A \$2 fee per car (for non-members) is charged on weekends April - October to enter Mohawk Park.

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, 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 Closing for Oxley Nature Center and Redbud Valley Nature Preserve:**

Monday, September 5.

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. A class minimum of 6 is required.
- 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.

Autumn's Promise by Amy Morris

It is a day that began with a gentle mist rising, carrying a fragrance redolent with green tones and thrumming with the music of bees. Dew follows the curve of the linear leaves and shimmers in the grass heads as they bow gently before the sun. The air feels heavy with promise.

Yesterday, and for countless days before, the air was sizzling and dry. The ground beneath my feet was packed hard and cracked. It appeared lifeless. But today, today I am proved wrong. The soil was not lifeless. It was waiting for the rain to begin again. Everything has its time.

July was a difficult month, with record days of drought and high temperatures. Everything suffered. Plants and animals were challenged to convert the sun's great energy into the food required to sustain life and promote growth. The missing ingredient was water. It was too dry, the heat too great.

Trees began to shed their leaves and fruit. Herbaceous plants withered. Grasses turned brown and crunchy. Many insect populations began to dwindle, even as others seemed to explode. Grasshoppers munched their way through every tender and tough piece of green vegetation they encountered. Birds panted constantly to cool themselves. Farmer's crops suffered dramatically due to drought and the insatiable appetite of blister beetles. All up and down the food chain times were tough.

Then it rained. We were fortunate, receiving many inches, which soaked into the soil and fed the thirsty roots of plants. The response was almost immediate in some cases, with areas greening up overnight. Cooler days and nights brought a measure of reprieve for all. Spirits were renewed.

It is August as I write this, and more hot days will come, but now we look ahead to the fall and what it will bring. Autumn is a time of harvest and preparation, a very busy time. It brings with it its own challenges and rewards.

What will you do to prepare? Will you 'put up' a summer's bounty of produce to enjoy later on a cold winter's night? Does a pile of wood stand ready to be cut and stacked to keep you warm and comfortable when a snow falls softly from the sky?

What about the neighbors you share your space with; the plants and animals everywhere around you? Most trees have long since stopped the process of growth and are preparing for winter. Some birds and insects will soon begin their journey of migration. Mammals are caching food and growing heavier coats. What other changes are your neighbors making?

Come visit us at Oxley or Redbud Valley Nature Preserve. Stretch your legs and your imaginations and breathe in the freshness of the air. Explore varied communities filled with a myriad of life forms. Follow the trails of summer through the prairie and into the woods towards autumn's promise. It will all be waiting here just for you.

Nature Center Happenings

Skipper Workshop: Part 1

Saturday, September 3 from 1:00-4:00 p.m

Using pictures and field guides indoors, we'll organize skippers into groups and categories. What should we focus on during the few seconds we have when encountering a skipper in the field? What kind of field marks and characteristics are important? How can we get the most out of a field guide? Following this overview we will go outside and practice our new skills.

\$8 for general public, \$4 for members, all ages. Please register in advance.

Skipper Workshop: Part 2

Saturday, September 10 from 1:00-4:00 p.m

We will try to see as many species as possible in their natural habitats, which means we may be carpooling from location to location in the Tulsa area (locations will be announced).

\$8 for general public, \$4 for members, all ages. Please register in advance.

*** The fee for the Skipper Workshops will be waived if you lead a team during our September 30, 2011 butterfly count, or during any of the 3 butterfly counts in 2012.

Become a Volunteer Naturalist

Children and nature, nature and children -- with your enthusiasm and guidance, it can be a win-win situation! Join us for our training program **September 6-29th**. Our training schedules are flexible.

Training is fun and will familiarize you with our trail system and its varied natural communities. Following training, you will guide a small group of children, for an hour or two one morning a week from October through November. If you choose, you may also lead Full Moon Walks, weekend guided tours, or become a roving naturalist guide.

If you are 18 or older, please call for more information or to receive an application packet. No previous experience necessary.

2nd Saturday Family Adventures at Oxley

Saturday, Sept. 10, 10:00-11:30 a.m. and 1:00-2:30 p.m.

"Where Did the Seeds Go"

Have you ever thought about how seeds are spread? Spring is not the only time plants produce seeds. Let's investigate some of the methods plants use to distribute their seeds. After our investigation we will plant some seeds of our own for a Thanksgiving harvest.

Saturday, October 8, 10:00-11:30 a.m. and 1:00-2:30 p.m.

"Spiders: Nature's Weavers"

Spiders are one of nature's most elegant builders. During our walk we will explore the different types of webs that spiders weave and discover some hidden places to find spiders. After our walk we will make our own webs to catch dreams.

*** **Free, all ages, registration not required. The same program will be offered morning and afternoon.** ***

Full Moon Walks at Oxley Nature Center

\$2 for general public, free for members, all ages. * Please register in advance *****

Full Harvest Moon

Sunday, September 11, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

This is the full moon occurring nearest the autumnal equinox. Join us as we gather a harvest of memories to treasure.



Full Hunter's Moon

Saturday, October 8, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Come on a hunt for signs of the changing season. What will we find as day winds down and the moon rises on the horizon.

Programs and Special Events

September

3 “Saturday Morning Birding” **Ages: All**
Saturday **8:00-9:45 a.m.**
Free **registration not required**

Join us at Oxley and bring binoculars if you have them. We will see what birds we can find out and about this morning. People with all levels of birding experience are welcome!

17 “Butterfly Walk” **Ages: All**
Saturday **10:30-12:00 noon**
Free **registration not required**

This month will be the peak of Monarch migration. Fall blooming flowers will attract other species as well. Plan to spend a pleasant morning at Oxley watching butterflies ‘dance’ across the prairie.



24 “Botany Walk” **Ages: All**
Saturday **10:30-12:00 noon**
Free **registration not required**

How has heat and drought affected our plant life? Did we get enough rain to encourage some blooms? Meet at Oxley to learn about some plant survival strategies.

****Please register 48 hours in advance of classes unless stated otherwise. A minimum of 6 registrants is required.**

October

1 “Saturday Morning Birding” **Ages: All**
Saturday **8:00-9:45 a.m.**
Free **registration not required**

Some birds are beginning their migration south. That means some will be leaving here and some will be arriving! Meet at Oxley and bring binoculars if you have them.

15 “Butterfly Walk” **Ages: All**
Saturday **10:30-12:00 noon**
Free **registration not required**

Join us for our last butterfly walk of the year! Meet at Oxley and bring binoculars if you have them.

22 “Botany Walk” **Ages: All**
Saturday **10:30-12:00 noon**
Free **registration not required**

This is the time of year when trees are changing their colors. Will we see any reds, oranges and golds this autumn? Join us at Oxley to explore some trails.

29 “Going Batty ” **Ages: All**
Saturday **6:00-7:30 p.m.**
\$5 for general public **\$2 for members**

Come learn about the wonderful creatures called bats and discover the important roles they play in your life.



During the hike we’ll observe bats and use a ‘bat detector’ to listen to bat clicks as they echolocate and hunt for food. After our hike we will make a bat cape and mask to take home. Meet at Oxley.

6th annual Autumn Butterfly Count

You Can Be a Citizen Scientist!

Join us at Oxley on Friday, September 30 to spot, count, tally and identify butterflies. Information gathered is used to supplement the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) Summer Butterfly Count held annually in June and July.

Citizen scientists participate in local counts, increase their own knowledge, raise public awareness and contribute 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. Bring lunch, water, hat, sunscreen and binoculars if you have them. Meet at Oxley Nature Center.

No experience is necessary. You will work in teams with experienced naturalists counting on different teams in different areas.



Please call and register in advance so teams can be assembled! The \$3 fee (which goes to NABA) will be waived if you register by September 26.

The Forest Speaks

by Amy Morris

It is a cool morning for June 22, 69 degrees. The sun is still low in the eastern sky as it climbs over the hills across Redbud Drive, throwing its light through the leaves of the locust, pecan, hickory and oak trees. I am mostly in shadow, but the sun peaks through and catches some leaves and webs and signs of life in her bold rays. The birds are singing today. We have had rain and the temperatures have cooled down. Many birds have finished raising their first clutches. Their voices ring through the forest with joy. There are conversations and declarations going on.

I am examining leaves as I always do. I look for caterpillars, galls, spiders and other insect life. These are the little things that power the world. Those singing birds have their eyes out too, as do many other life forms; spiders, insects, amphibians, reptiles and mammals. As my eyes scan folded redbud leaves, I hear a sound. I refocus my attention. I close my eyes. I tune out the birds. There is a knocking sound, faint but persistent. I listen.

I am mesmerized, transported. The workings of a little world is underway before me. I pull a branch down, bringing a folded redbud leaf to my ear. Someone, something, is knocking, or chewing, or something! All around me, the sounds echo — miniature world! This 'miniature' world makes up a huge mass in the scheme of things. At this moment it has opened up a whole new world for me, full of sound and movement and life.

Now I am looking again and I see a tiny (1/4 inch) caterpillar pull itself up off a leaf into the air on a silk line. It wriggles and circles and appears to dance freely in the air as it rises on its silk safety line. Behind it is trailing another silk line. My eye is drawn to a second caterpillar, slightly larger and more dramatic, a shimmering white with thin black bands around its body. It too takes to the air on its silken line. They both travel about two feet straight up where they disappear behind or onto another redbud leaf.

What a world this is. What things play out around us every second of every day that we may never have an awareness of. What magic we have access to if we wish to seek it out. Take yourself and some children outside. Anywhere with some plant life will suffice. Watch, wait and listen. Learn to observe patiently and things will return around you and go about their business of living. What is the story that you hear?