



# Oxley Nature Center

November/December, 2006

Volume 166

## Program information

918-669-6644

-Oxley@ci.tulsa.ok.us

-Website at "<http://www.oxleynaturecenter.org>".

-Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult unless otherwise stated.

-Wheelchair accessible programs designated by ♿  
-Please register 48 hours in advance unless otherwise stated.

## Holiday Closings:

Oxley Nature Center and Redbud Valley Nature Preserve will be closed:  
Friday, Nov. 10, Thursday, November 23, Friday, November 24, Sunday, December 24, Monday, December 25, and Monday, January 1- Happy Holidays!

## Oxley Nature Center:

-Open daily, except most City holidays (see above).  
-Oxley gate open from 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.  
-Interpretive building open from 10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday; 12 noon-4:30 p.m. Sunday.  
-Hiking trails are accessible during Mohawk Park hours 7:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.

## Redbud Valley Nature Preserve:

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

## There's Something Fishy Going On Here

Do you ever remember a time when you went fishing with your dad, your uncle, your cousins, or your best buddy? When morning had a touch of coolness, and the early light danced off the ripples in the water, shadows hinting of hidden fish, frogs, turtles, and crawfish.

Mohawk Park became, and continues to be, a haven for city dwellers searching for a bit of quiet and the occasional splash of a fish at the water's surface. A place to be alone or to take your grandchildren to experience the secret wonders of nature.

An August, 1930 article in *The Tulsa Spirit*, states "The State Game and Fish Commission has done considerable work to better the fishing in the park, having released several thousand bass, crappie, and perch in the clear waters of the lagoons. Here the lover of rod and fly may enjoy an afternoon of casting".

Federal, State, and City Governments collaborated in the building of a series of innovative fish hatcheries in Mohawk Park. In 1931, twelve ponds were built when N. R. Graham, on the State Game and Fish Commission, borrowed a tractor and fresno from the Tulsa Park and Street Departments.

The ponds were well situated, dug in deep, rich, fertile loam underlaid with hardpan, and impervious to seepage. A long growing season provided strong, well-developed fish ready to stock Spavinaw and Mohawk lakes each fall. Revenue to operate the hatchery came from a Hunting and Fishing License Fund supported by fees collected from citizens who paid 25 cents a day to fish at Spavinaw Lake.

During 1933, two federal projects, FERA (Federal Emergency Relief) and CWA (Civil Works Administration), built an additional 14 ponds in connection with the construction of a nearby highway. Salvaged pipe was provided by the Water Department, and the 60-inch concrete conduit from Spavinaw supplied untreated water to fish-rearing ponds.

During 1934 and 1935, 14 new ponds were added by RFC labor, increasing hatchery water area by 10 acres. Bob Aldrich, with the Tulsa City Water Department, managed the hatcheries. Concrete drain boxes, still visible today, reduced the labor of removing fish and prevented loss from muddied water. Stone walls were built around edges of some of the ponds to prevent muskrat and beaver from tunneling through.

By 1935, the system had grown to 33 acres of cultural water. Half a million bass, crappie, bream, and sunfish fingerlings were raised and distributed annually. Over the next few years, increasing productivity at the hatcheries drew national attention from the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries and the State Game and Fish Commission.

Using innovative aquaculture techniques, systematic fertilization, and artificial feeding, Aldrich improved production and conducted scientific research. He published two papers in *The American Fisheries Journal*.

Local area students used the facilities for field trips, and to collect supplies for use in aquatic studies. Many citizens visited the hatcheries to enjoy the flowering aquatic plants. People brought fish bowls to carry minnows home in.

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# Nature Center Happenings

## Volunteer Naturalists Graduate

Three new volunteer naturalists graduated from our fall training program just in time to help lead school groups in their exploration of our prairie, forests, and wetlands.

We are proud to welcome **Velma Mayfield, Kimberly Moniz, and Jan Renner** to our team of dedicated volunteers.

Our volunteer naturalists make it possible for us to reach out to many of the schools in Tulsa and surrounding areas; offering children the opportunity to explore the rich and vital world of nature at Oxley Nature Center. Thirty schools with over 1500 children will visit us this fall season. Without our volunteer naturalists this would not be possible, and so we say thank you!

\$2 for general public, free for members

### Kid's Saturday Programs

Please register in advance, all &

#### Discovery Club (Ages 3-5)

Each child accompanied by an adult, please



#### Adventure Club (Ages 6-8)

Kids only, please

##### November 18, 10:00-11:30 "Fall Leaf Journal"

What wonderful colors Autumn leaves have! Let's find some to create some rubbings we can color.

##### December 16, 10:00-11:30 "Feeding the Birds"

We will make our own natural bird feeders from pine cones, seeds, and peanut butter. We'll hang one here at Oxley and make one to take home.

##### November 18, 10:00-11:30 "They're Leafing—

Goodbye" Leaves are still falling from the trees. Let's find out why they drop off and what is left behind.

##### December 16, 10:00-11:30 "A Rottin' Place to

Live" We'll look for hibernating insects under bark and logs. Then we'll make some shelters critters can share this winter.

\$2 for general public, free for members

### Full Moon Walks

Registration required, all ages, &

#### "Beaver Moon"



Saturday, November 4, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Before winter sets in, beavers are actively preparing for winter. Join us to explore some trails in search of animals and their signs.

#### "Cold Moon"

Tuesday, December 5, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

It is cold and the nights are long and dark. During the Cold Moon, the moon is above the horizon for a long time. What will we find "out there"?

### ★★★★★★ Astronomy Programs ★★★★★★

\$2 for general public, free to members, registration required, open to all ages, & with advance notice.

Bring binoculars if you have them, and something to sit on.

Wednesday, November 8, "Transit of Mercury" 1:00 p.m. until sunset. Although the innermost planet Mercury passes between the Earth and Sun several times each year, there are only about 13 times each century where the orbits of the two planets line up precisely enough to allow earth observers to watch the tiny black disk of Mercury move across the bright sun. If clouds permit, we will watch an event that won't happen again until May 9, 2016. \*\* Looking at the sun without proper filters can permanently damage your eyes or cause blindness. Do not bring binoculars unless you have secure solar filters for each objective. Meet on the east side of Lake Yahola, above the circle drive.

Sunday, December 10, "A Pile of Planets Before Sunrise" 6:15-7:00 a.m. We'll look at the waning moon and fading stars as we wait for the dramatic cluster of Mercury, Mars, and Jupiter to rise. Meet at Terrace Park, just west of 26th and Memorial Drive.

# Programs and Special Events

## November

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

The winter sparrows have returned. Test your powers of observation on these visitors to our prairie and feeders. Join us at Oxley and bring binoculars if you have them.

**11 "Leaves of Autumn"**      **Ages: All, &**  
**Saturday**      **1:30-2:30 p.m.**  
**\$2 for general public**      **free for members**

We will take a walk in the woods and look at the many colorful leaves that have fallen. After collecting some we'll discuss some art projects you can make with them. Meet at Oxley.

**19 "Unnatural Trail"**      **Ages: All, &**  
**Sunday**      **1:30-3:00 p.m.**  
**\$2 for general public**      **free for members**

What's wrong with this picture? Let's see if we can discover some things that don't belong along the trail we explore at Oxley. We'll use our senses to find what is out of place.

**25 "Holiday Hike"**      **Ages: All, &**  
**Saturday**      **10:00-12:00 p.m.**  
**\$2 for general public**      **free for members**

Bring your friends and relatives out to Oxley after a day of Thanksgiving feasting. Get some fresh air, exercise, and enjoy nature at the same time.



## December

**2 "Saturday Morning Birding"**      **Ages: All, &**  
**Saturday**      **8:00-9:45 a.m.**  
**Free**      **registration not required**

What will we find today? We may find some Gadwalls and Common Goldeneyes on the lake, or kinglets in the forest. Meet at Oxley and bring binoculars if you have them.

**3 "Animal Highways"**      **Ages: All**  
**Sunday**      **2:00-3:30 p.m.**  
**\$2 for general public**      **free for members**

Let's go where the wild things go. We'll follow some animal paths in search of deer beds, fox dens, and mouse tunnels. What will we find off the beaten trails at Oxley?

**9 "Fall Into Winter"**      **Ages: All, &**  
**Saturday**      **12:00-2:00 p.m.**  
**\$2 for general public**      **free for members**

By the calendar it is still autumn. Let's make our way, swishing grasses and scuffing leaves, through prairie, woodland, and wetland. How do plants and animals prepare for winter at Oxley?

**23 "Last Minute Bird Treats"**      **Ages: All, &**  
**Saturday**      **1:00-2:00 p.m.**  
**\$3 for general public**      **\$1 for members**

Help the birds by making bird treats to hang in your yard or to give as a last minute gift. Meet at Oxley.

**30 "Geocaching for Beginners"**      **Ages: 12 & up, &**  
**Saturday**      **1:00-4:00 p.m.**  
**\$20 for general public**      **\$15 for members**

Borrow one of our GPS receivers, or bring your own (with fresh batteries and the owner's manual.) We'll punch in coordinates and go hunting hidden "treasure" in this worldwide scavenger hunt. Meet at Oxley.

Please register two days in advance of classes  
\*      unless stated otherwise.      \*

At one point the system was under private contract to two Tulsans who operated a minnow concession, selling *gambusia* (mosquito fish) to the public.

The hatcheries were not only scenic. The public were amazed to see fish spawning. Some species hollowed out shallow depressions or nests, where the female would lay eggs. The male would defend and guard the eggs until they hatched. The young fingerlings stayed together in groups until they were big enough to be eaten by their parents, at which time hatchery personnel would move them to another pond.



The fish hatchery was operated until the late 1950's. Occasional serious flooding of Bird Creek and other problems led to the demise of the system. Rubble from concrete drainage boxes, culture pools, and their series of associated walkways remain near the present day Teaching Shelter.

People new to the trails at Oxley, or unaware of the previous history, wonder about those raised dikes and

rectangular shaped depressions lined in stone. What about those concrete boxes filled with old leaves, spider webs, and what looks like a drain? What was its purpose? Was it really once a thriving and innovative enterprise for hatching fish? Indeed, for almost 30 years.

The old hatchery ponds still occasionally hold water, attracting birds such as the Yellow-crowned Night Heron. Frogs and turtles can be found nearby. Over the years the depressions have been invaded by willow, cottonwood, sycamore, and shrubby understory vegetation. This offers a great opportunity to study vegetative succession in action.

The hatcheries are no longer functional. Don't let that stop you from visiting. When you come out to Oxley in the spring, take a walk along Coal Creek and watch the shimmering scales and flashing tails as huge fish come up into the shallow water to spawn. First the carp, and then the gar, raise their great backs out of the water like some primitive water creatures, thrashing and scattering their eggs into the safety of the vegetation below. They may or may not be good eating, people differ on those issues, but I guarantee they're a lot of fun to watch!

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