



Oxley Nature Center

January/February, 2008

Volume 173

Oxley Nature Center:

*** The Oxley Nature Center Interpretive Center will be closed for renovations until further notice. ***

-Gate and parking lot 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:

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

Program information:

918-669-6644

-Oxley@ci.tulsa.ok.us

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

-Please register 48 hours in advance unless otherwise stated. Some classes require special supplies and allow limited enrollment.

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

-Wheelchair accessible programs designated by ♿

Holiday Closings:

Tuesday, January 1, and Monday, January 14.

We have a lot of changes happening in the next several months, and we ask for your patience. If you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact us by e-mail, phone or mail! Thank you and remember, the trails await your footfalls!

Storm of Ice by Amy Morris

My first impression was of sound. It was disconcerting, out of place, alien. A loud popping, snapping sound resounded through the woods. My first thought was of gunfire. The sound echoed around me, intermittently, a great crashing to the north, followed by one deeper in the forest, farther away. I was surrounded on all sides by a baffling cacophony of noise.

It was noon on Sunday, December 10, and I was leaving the Interpretive Building at Oxley, heading home to avoid the predicted danger of hazardous roads. The crashing sounds were disorienting. It was cold, and there was a fine, icy sleet coming down, but the roads were passable, just barely.

Earlier, coming in to work, a willow still clothed in narrow leaves had bowed down gently onto the road, as if bending in reverence, or was it submission, laden with ice. I had stopped and gazed at the beauty of the branches and leaves, shimmering with luminescence in the early light. I was so awed by the eyelevel display, I was not conscious of the foreshadowing, the portent.

Leaving four hours later, many more trees along the roadside were bent over onto the road, making passage more difficult. My mind was not on the earlier perceived beauty, but on avoiding overhanging branches, slipping through small spaces with a minimum of damage to my car roof, sides, and tires. I felt the constant threat of a branch breaking away far above and smashing a windshield.

By Sunday evening, thousands of people were without power to homes and businesses as trees and branches fell on power lines, phone lines, cars, homes, businesses and streets. Being anywhere in the vicinity of a tree became dangerous. Sunday was just the beginning. Monday's ice storm hit with the wrath of a hurricane. Mohawk Park, Oxley Nature Center, and Redbud Valley Nature Preserve were only a few of thousands hit hard by this ice storm.

The trees! The trees were snapping like toothpicks. The popping sounds were the branches and limbs surrendering to the weight of a thick layer of frozen water wrapping around already stressed trees and shrubs. Those that

were not broken were clothed in a clear sheath of crystal ice, up to half an inch in places. Branches, twigs, leaves, buds, berries and seeds glittered with an uncanny beauty. It was amazing to see seed heads, leaf buds, and wood sorrel flower buds encased in ice.

It was deadly too. Tree limbs heavy with ice bent to the ground beneath the weight. Many of these bent and finally snapped or popped near the top, or at a bend, leaving a stand of trees looking like a line of toothpick soldiers. Some trees were toppled completely out of the ground, roots and all. In places, large, sturdy limbs broke away from their central trunks, tearing open large wounds. Others were split or torn in odd configurations.

Although no species seemed immune, native species appeared to do somewhat better, and certainly some species did better than others. Age, health, and location were critical factors.

The forest appears damaged, harmed, torn asunder. But it is still home to many woodland creatures. There are still trees sheltering the plant life that grows closer to the forest floor. Some trees will die, each providing fodder for a host of decomposers. Some large trees, old friends, may also die, creating hollow cavities for a variety of woodpeckers and mammals.

In places, more sunlight may be allowed to reach through what was once a thick canopy of leaves, allowing a succession of new plant life to take root. Following that may be an alteration in the animal species inhabiting the area, a new neighborhood of sorts; different bacteria, beetles, or spiders perhaps?

The forest will heal, change, and evolve. It will become something new again. Something a little different than before. Nature is never stagnant, it is always becoming, and always beautiful. We hope you can visit soon and see what new things you can find; something perhaps you hadn't seen when you walked these trails before.

Meanwhile, as you are cleaning up your own yards, consider leaving a brush pile or two. We find the winter sparrows, juncos, towhees and other birds are especially fond of the protection they provide. Shelter them from the storm!

Nature Center Happenings

Volunteers Recognized at Awards Dinner

Many of our volunteers, staff, and guests gathered at the Tulsa Garden Center January 3 to honor our volunteers and present awards.

Our volunteers form an indispensable team that share their time and talents to bring the wonders of nature, in its many forms, to as many citizens as possible. By helping to establish a personal connection to the natural world with visitors of all ages, increased opportunities for memorable moments encourage and foster a growing curiosity and interest.

The following volunteers have reached milestones in their service to Oxley Nature Center:

*Thank
You!*

Pam Robinson, 3 years service

Carol Eames, 5 years service

Rusty Grimpe, 5 years service

Jo Loyd, 10 years service



Bambi Murphy, 10 years service

Dot Schultze, 15 years service

Wally Whaling, 20 years service

Tommy Duncan, 25 years service

*You make
our
mission
possible!*

\$2 for public, free for members, register in advance, & **Kid's Saturday** Meet at Helmerich Discovery Center, Tulsa Zoo

January 12, 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Discovery Club (Ages 3-5) Each child accompanied by an adult, please.

"Squirrels in Winter" What do they eat? Where do they live? We'll talk about the different nuts and berries available in winter and make a shelter for a paper squirrel.



Adventure Club (Ages 6-8) Kid's only, please

"Let's Rock" Bring along your favorite rock to learn about and even play some music!

Junior Naturalist (Ages 9-11) Kid's only, please

"Earth's Foundation" What's that under your feet? Grass, branches, and dirt; yes. But if you look down even farther you will eventually find rocks. We'll take a closer look at rocks that form the foundation of our earth.

February 9, 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Discovery Club (Ages 3-5) Each child accompanied by an adult, please.

"Whose Coat is This?" We will look at study skins from mammals that live in Mohawk Park. Then we'll discuss mammals, play a game, and make a mask to take home.

Adventure Club (Ages 6-8) Kid's only, please

"Deer Valentine" What shape is a deer hoof print? Do deer live here in Mohawk Park? What can we learn about them?

Junior Naturalist (Ages 9-11) Kid's only, please

"Keeping a Nature Journal" We'll visit a nearby wetland still under the grip of winter, absorbing details with our senses. Then we'll use our creativity to record our special observations in a journal. We'll use the journal for the rest of the season to tell our stories of the natural world around us.



Astronomy Programs

\$2 for general public, free to members, registration required, open to all ages, & Bring binoculars if you have them, dress warmly,

Wednesday, January 9, "Planets at Dusk" 6:00-7:30 p.m. Sunset: 5:29 p.m. Moonset: 6:32 p.m.

The days are beginning to get a little bit longer now. Some of the first bright objects to appear in the clear winter night sky will not be stars. They will be our neighbors, bolder Mars and pale Mercury. We'll also have a crescent moon to look at with the telescope. Meet at the circle drive on the East side of Lake Yahola

Wednesday, February 20, "Total Eclipse of the Moon!" 7:00-10:00 p.m. Sunset: 6:11 p.m. Moonrise: 5:44 p.m. Umbral phase (when you will see a "bite" out of the moon): 7:43 p.m.-11:09 p.m. Totality (when the moon is entirely within the earth's shadow): 9:01 p.m.-9:52 p.m. Location details still to be arranged.

Programs and Special Events

January

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

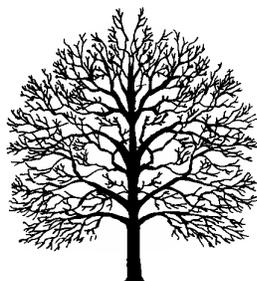
Could this be the time to start a new, healthy and stimulating tradition? Birding is a growing pastime among people of all ages. This fun hobby can be done alone, with family, or with a new group of friends. Join us at the Oxley parking lot and bring binoculars if you have them.

19 "Gourd Containers" Ages: 14 to adult, &
Saturday 1:00-3:00 p.m.
\$5 for general public \$3 for members

Gourds can be made into decorative and useful containers. Use one of our gourds or bring your own. Please clean your gourds before you come. Meet at Redbud Valley.
Please register two days in advance of class.

20 "Full Ice Moon" Ages: All, &
Sunday 6:30-8:00 p.m.
\$2 for general public Free for members

Join us in the early evening for a brisk walk under a full moon. If the sky is clear of clouds, the night sky will be bright with stars and the glow of the Ice Moon. Be prepared to see your breath and listen to night sounds carry long distances in the cold air. Meet in Oxley parking lot.
Please register two days in advance of class.



26 "Winter Tree Identification" Ages: All, &
Saturday 2:00-4:00 p.m.
\$2 for general public Free for members

What signs do you look for on a tree to identify it, if it doesn't have a single leaf on it? Come find out what clues to look for. A tree's form, bark, limb arrangement, and habitat tells all kinds of secrets about it. Meet in Oxley parking lot.
Please register two days in advance of class.

February

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

Wrap up in your warmest clothes (don't forget those gloves) and join us to see what winged creatures we can find among the trees, brush piles, and grasses. Meet at Oxley parking lot and bring binoculars if you have them.



16 "Redbud Valley Ramble" Ages: All
Saturday 1:00-2:30 p.m.
\$2 for general public Free for members

Let's explore the rugged trail and see what surprises the ice storm left behind. Will the first hints of spring be putting in an appearance? Will green shoots of new growth be sprouting forth, attracting the early birds? Meet at Redbud Valley prepared to hike in the cold.
Please register two days in advance of class.

20 "Full Hunger Moon" Ages: All, &
Wednesday 6:30-8:00 p.m.
\$2 for general public Free for members

For many, the month of February can be the most difficult of all. Spring and its promise of plenty may seem far away. Stores of gathered food are quickly dwindling. Join us at Oxley to see if the hungry are out beneath the full moon, seeking the sustenance of a simple evening meal.
Please register two days in advance of class.

24 "Watching Bird Behavior" Ages: All, &
Sunday 2:00-4:00 p.m.
\$2 for general public Free for members

If you fill the feeders, they will come. You can use a variety of seeds and feeder types, but don't forget the black oil sunflower. We will observe the variety of birds that visit the feeders outside the large windows at Redbud Valley. Do they all eat the same way? Let's find out by watching their behaviors. Meet at Redbud Valley.
Please register two days in advance of class.

On the Move

Staff at Oxley will be spending the next couple of weeks making their move, packing up boxes full of a plethora of unique and unusual items. It's an "accumulation of objects" of over 25 years worth of the sort of things people called "naturalists" like to acquire. Let me tell you. That can be some strange stuff!

First, there are all those books. I mean everything from "A Field Guide to Flattened Fauna" (watch where you're driving now) to "Skyguide, a Field Guide to the Heavens". It might be useful here to mention that they offer Dutch Oven Cooking Classes and have a really nice telescope, if you catch my meaning. These people are expert generalists. What they do takes a lot of book learning.

They also get to spend some time in the lab identifying all those collections of insects, plants, and fossils they collect whenever they get the chance to be in the Great Outdoors. Not to mention those other assorted squiggly things they fish out of stagnant water full of that green stuff. Those critters go in small vials filled with some sort of chemical. Be sure and pack those vials real careful now, don't want any epidemics breaking loose.

Then there is all that combined field knowledge among all those folks. Being in the field, now that's really what it's all about. Ask any one of them. That's where dip nets, bird nets, butterfly nets, insect "castles", rubber boots, boats, and tools for all that trail work

But Not Gone Too Far! By Amy

come in. They net tadpoles with those little folks from around these parts. You've never heard such squeals of delight. Why I don't believe some of those little ones have ever seen a frog, much less a crawdad. Crying shame. Yep.

But I digress, we were packing stuff up, fun stuff too. Not your everyday normal kinda things. There are the skulls and bones and skins and nests and feathers. Some of these very things were brought in by families enjoying the trails: mussel shells, oak tree galls, an occasional owl pellet or bone.

Staff may pack up some of these "treasures", although truth be told, most "revisit" the outdoors to be recycled by nature. Those little mice and squirrels are partial to their deer antlers, old bones, and turtle shells for balancing the portion of minerals in their diets. At least that's what I've been told. I've seen the gnaw marks. I know!

So much stuff. Is the bison skull still on the roof? Did someone pack up the tray with the beaver scat, raptor beaks, owl talons, cicadas, mud dauber nest, and lichens? Are those in the Outreach Box? Where's the deer brain tanning stuff and soap making tub? It's a blur, like rediscovering things all over again. Look at this! I can't get rid of this. Where is it all going to go? Get more boxes.

Whoa! It's ok, get outside a spell and let it fall away, you're home.

The U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap in its federally-assisted programs and activities. If anyone believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, he or she may file a complaint alleging discrimination with our department or the Office for Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.
