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The cold snows of February are thawing as we head into March. At the Nature Center we are seeing signs of Spring with some birds showing their deepening colors. We're seeing eagles in pairs instead of solo, small green shoots daring to emerge and tiny branching in the bare trees. At Oxley and at Redbud the first weeks of March are a time for training volunteers, repairing fencing, building steps, and placing signs, all so that Tulsans and other welcome visitors can enjoy our nature preserve.



And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all"

Emily Dickinson



A Thing with Feathers

By Karen Harris, Volunteer Naturalist

Ah, finally March! Remember last March? We were just beginning to worry about the new virus. Here we are a year later knowing a lot more about the darkness and chill of COVID. Then winter came and things got even bleaker. Cold gray days intensified the depression caused by the pandemic. Many of us took solace from walking the trails at Oxley and Redbud, keeping our distance, looking to nature for signs of hope. One of our visitors told me, "These walks in the woods are keeping me upright and sane."

The most positive signs for me came from our winter birds. I saw sparrows and cardinals harvesting seeds in the prairie, woodpeckers prying bark off of dead snags, robins scuffling through the leaves in the woods, and eagles and hawks soaring and diving in the sky. Fall migrants head for warmer climes, but our winter birds tough it out as long as there is food. How can you lose hope when watching a Carolina wren with an attitude, flitting and calling and singing loudly, tail cocked jauntily in the air?

Then came the snow and ice-covered stretch with the sub-zero wind chill and long frigid nights. Friends fell on the ice. There were broken bones. Stuck at home by impassible streets, Amy emptied her pantry of everything a bird might eat to sustain the ones in her garden. For some birds, that cold snap was too much. I found a poor little junco lying near the water's edge.

Yet many did survive. How did they do it? In 1768 the great English essayist Samuel Johnson postulated that in winter "A number conglobulate together by flying round and round and all in a heap throw themselves under the water and lie in the bed of the river." Sam was wrong, of course, and may have said that just to get people to buy his dictionary so they could look up "conglobulate." However, what the birds actually do may be just as fantastic. They huddle together, some in mixed flocks, in tree cavities. They perch on the leeward side of tree trunks and jam themselves into crevices in rocks, fluffing their feathers to increase insulation and retain more heat. Some may even lower their body temperature a few degrees (we know doves do), attaining a state called torpor, slowing metabolism and conserving enough energy to survive.

This month the survivors will be singing territorial and mating songs. Woodcocks will

for repairing and building boxes this month). Mockingbirds and robins will be collecting twigs and grasses to weave together and fasten to just the right horizontal branch or set of forking twigs. Later, buntings, tanagers, and warblers will have made the treacherous journey across the Gulf of Mexico to join them and the morning cacophony will begin in earnest. The resident birds we observe and the migrants we spot should serve as models for us. Birds carry on with their lives in spite of the hardships. If they can, we can. That gives us hope.

Some of the Birds of Winter (can you ID them?)



1. Bluebirds 2. Ruby-crowned Kinglet 3. Pileated Woodpecker 4. Winter Wren 5. Golden-crowned Kinglet 6. Carolina Wren 7. Thrasher 8. Belted Kingfisher 9. Tufted Titmouse

6 March "Saturday Morning Birding" Ages: All

Saturday, 8:00-9:45 a.m. Free, registration not required

Join us for birding at Oxley. All skill levels are welcome.

Bring binoculars if you have them.

13 March "Junior Naturalists, Springtime Stewardship" Ages: 8-12 years

Saturday, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Free for Members, Non-members \$5 per session.

Please bring exact change (cash).

Registration is required by Thursday, March 11 at 4:30 p.m. Call 918-596-9054 to pre-register.

This month we will be learning about Eastern Bluebirds, one of Oklahoma's sweetest songbirds, while growing our conservation skills! We will clean out and build new nesting boxes to support their reproduction as well as that of other cavity-nesting birds. There will also be plenty of time to revel in the sweet news of spring! Please pack a journal, a sack lunch and bring some gloves. Meet at the Fawn Grove at Oxley.

27 March "Explore the Flora" Ages: All

Saturday, 10:30-noon Free, registration not required

What will we find on the trail today? Many plants are absorbing those longer rays of sunshine and racing to greet early pollinators. Join us discover who some of these early bloomers are.

28 March "Full Worm Moon" Ages: All

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

\$3 members, \$5 non-members Please bring exact change (cash).

Registration required by Thursday, March 25 at 4:30 p.m.

Call 918-596-9054 to pre-register.

The ground has softened with the rains and worms have made their way upwards, leaving their telltale castings on the surface. Let's see if we can find any other animals that have come out of hiding.





Red Shouldered Hawk

Mary K. Oxley Nature Center Hours

The Interpretive Building will be open Monday through Thursday, and Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. and Sunday, noon - 4:30 p.m. We are closed on Fridays.

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 Hours

Redbud Valley Nature Preserve is open Saturday and Sunday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

The visitor center is open from 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



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