

[View this email in your browser](#)



*Flow Line Trail | Bryan Tapp*

Spring has come to Oxley and the birdsong is rich and varied! We offer birding the first Saturday of the month from 8:00 - 9:45AM. Walk the woods and meadows of Oxley with our birding specialist naturalist Josh Smith. Bring your binoculars if you have them.



*Saturday Morning Birding!*

## Naturalist's Notebook

By Karen Harris

### DAWN CHORUS

April brings us glorious mornings full of bird song. Aldo Leopold wrote how he would arise at 3:30 bearing a coffee pot in one hand and a notebook in the other, cup tucked in his shirt, to sit outside his cabin and record the sequence of bird song. I sometimes awake around 4:00 and, coffee in hand, go out on the back porch to listen for myself. A few mornings ago the Robins were already singing when I got out the door, next came the Cardinals, then the Carolina Wrens and Phoebe's, and finally, the Crows and Blue Jays added to the din. This is not the large and complex chorus that Leopold heard in the woods of Wisconsin. These are urban birds, fewer in numbers and diversity but used to outcompeting road noise and airplanes thus sounding particularly loud.

Leopold wrote that the birds were advertising their ownership of various territories. Scientific experiments indicate the songs are timed to the level and intensity of sunlight. Because the chorus seems to reach a crescendo as the sun peaks over the horizon and then dissipates, I have often thought the birds might be singing to make the sun come up. During a solar eclipse birds quit singing completely and go back to roost, evidence that scientists have the inside scoop and light intensity is the cause. On the other hand, Robin Wall Kimmerer in *BRAIDING SWEETGRASS* mentions the morning birds "singing the sun up." Beside promoting gratitude and reciprocity in our dealings with the natural world, she contends that we should treat plants and animals as people, as our elders, and our teachers. It is not so far-fetched then to think that birds may join together in song, delighting in being alive for another morning, and reciprocating by answering others'

I encourage you to get outside just before sunrise on any morning this month, grab a cup of coffee or tea and a notebook and record your own dawn chorus. If you are not confident in your ability to identify bird songs, you can load the Merlin App from Cornell University onto your phone. It is accurate and easy to use. Let bird song inspire the wonder and enjoy!



Spring Sights at Oxley!



**Book Review Corner**  
from the *All About Nature Oxley Book Club*

BRAIDING SWEETGRASS by Robin Wall Kimmerer  
Review of March's Nature Book Club Book

In Braiding Sweetgrass, Kimmerer—a Potawatomi woman, professor of environmental biology, mother, and plant ecologist—weaves together traditional Indigenous teachings, science, and the power of personal story to inform readers of our responsibility to and relationship with the natural world. Throughout the book, she illustrates how this relationship is “a web of reciprocity, of giving and taking.” In “The Three Sisters,” she explains how plants teach us without words but rather through movement and the gifts they provide. She recalls when a Cherokee writer gave her three seeds—corn, bean, and squash—the “genius of Indigenous agriculture,” that together, “feed the people, feed the land, and feed our imaginations, telling us how we might live.” She describes the scientific processes of how each plant grows in its own way, “The corn is firstborn and grows straight and stiff...the bean twines around the corn stalk, weaving itself between the leaves of corn but never interfering with their work...and the squash, the late bloomer of the family, is steadily extending herself over the ground, [sheltering] the soil at the base of the corn and beans, keeping moisture in and other plants out.” Ultimately, what we learn is that the Three Sisters flourish together better than they might have apart. Beautifully, though, Kimmerer closes this chapter with the reminder that the planter—the gardener—is also an essential partner in the flourishing. She writes, “We are the planters, the ones who clear the land, pull the weeds, and pick the bugs...we are the midwives to their gifts.”

The whole of Braiding Sweetgrass unfolds much like this chapter on the Three Sisters. Every section focuses on a plant—strawberries, pecans, water lilies to name a few—and uses both its scientific story and its gifts to remind us that we are all connected and that we all depend on each other to thrive. In the order of things, humans have always been described or placed at the top of the pyramid of life, giving us agency over all other organisms and almost entirely defined by our consumption. Kimmerer challenges this paradigm and instead encourages us to reimagine ourselves as braided together with everything—or rightly—everyone else. She asserts that when we learn to identify ourselves as part of a democracy of species rather than outside of or above the ecosystem, we not only restore our relationship to the natural world, we gain a better understanding of how our actions as humans have reciprocal consequences for us all.





Ragwort | Bryan Tapp



### Mary K. Oxley Nature Center - April Programs

- April 1 - Saturday Morning Birding, 8:00 – 9:45 a.m.**  
Free! Registration not required. All ages welcome. Join us for birding at Oxley. All skill levels are welcome. Bring binoculars if you have them.
- April 6 - Full Pink Moon Walk, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.**  
\$3 for members/\$5 for nonmembers. Registration required. All ages welcome.  
*The full moon in April is named for the pink phlox flowers that bloom in early spring. Will it be light enough to see any blossoms? It promises to be a magical evening. Join us for a sensory experience along the trails. Wear sturdy shoes and dress for the weather.*
- April 11 or April 25 - Oxley Seedlings, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.**  
Free for ONCA members/\$5 for nonmembers. Registration required. Ages 1-5 + caregiver.  
*As more flowers bloom in the month of April, pollinators will arrive to find their sweet rewards. In return, they help the plants spread their pollen and sure that they survive another year. Join us for a beautiful spring hike looking for pollinators followed by a fun craft to help pollinators in your yard or favorite green space.*
- April 15 - Wildflower Walk, 10:30 – Noon.**  
Free! Registration not required. All ages welcome.  
*We will join the Oklahoma Native Plant Society for a walk on Thrush Trail to look for yellow violets and other early spring blooms.*
- April 22 - Butterfly Exploration, 10:30 – Noon**  
Free! Registration not required. All ages welcome.  
*Join us for the first butterfly walk of the season! Have you ever seen a Question Mark, a Spring Azure, a Clouded Sulphur or other various swallowtails? Bring binoculars if you have them. All skill levels are welcome.*
- April 27 - Evening Herpetology Walk, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.**  
Free! Registration not required. All ages welcome.  
*Join local herpetology experts and naturalist staff for an evening walk to learn more about some of the reptiles and amphibians who call Oxley home.*
- April 28 - All About Nature Book Club, 11:00 - 12:30 p.m.**  
Free! Adult program. Registration not required.  
*Join us for a discussion of books related to nature, conservation, and the environment. April's selection: The Secret Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben. Please bring your own book (book club titles are available for purchase in the nature center gift store).*



### OXLEY NATURE CENTER HOURS

This month the Interpretive Center will be closed Friday the 7th and Sunday the 9th.

The trails will be open.

Please note: Beginning March 20th, Oxley Nature Center will be closed on Mondays.

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)

10-4:30PM Tuesday through Saturday

[Translate](#) ▼[RSS](#) **Noon - 4:30PM on Sunday**

Copyright © 2023 Mary K. Oxley Nature Center Association. All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?  
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

