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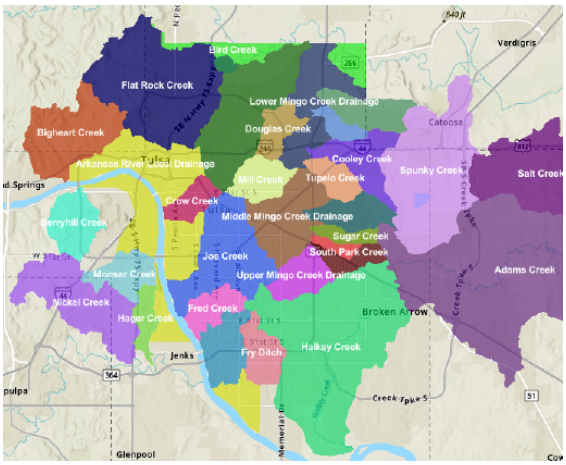
We've got something special for you this Saturday, May 3rd! Join Tulsa Opera on a guided hike at Oxley Nature Center! This isn't your average hike: along the trail, enjoy the unique combination of opera and the outdoors as Filstrup Resident Artists Maddie Breedlove, Lydia Gray, and Karlena Riggs perform before, during, and after the hike. This is a non-strenuous hike suitable for most. Do bring good shoes, water, sunscreen, bug spray, and eyes and ears to enjoy all the beauty around you. See you on the trail!

Signs of Spring



City of Tulsa "My Watershed" map showing the watersheds which make up our area

Naturalist's Notebook

What's in Our/Your Watershed?

by Karen Harris

April's theme for the Junior Naturalist program was "watersheds." A watershed is the area of land where all the precipitation that falls on it flows into a particular stream. While helping Mary design the program, I researched the watershed of Coal Creek, the creek that runs through Mohawk Park and enters Oxley, eventually emptying into Lake Sherry. Trails on both sides of the creek and two bridges over it are popular with Oxley visitors. I found out that the Coal Creek watershed is one of the largest in Tulsa, extending south clear down to the fairgrounds, west to the corner of Zunis and Archer streets and a northern patch of it extends past Mingo Rd to the east. The watershed includes the airport, industrial, commercial, and residential areas.

One tool ecologists use to measure the health of a stream is an assessment of the macroinvertebrates living in the stream bed or in the vegetation along the edges. An extremely healthy stream contains a great diversity of species that are designated "somewhat to highly sensitive to disturbance." Makes sense, right? If they were sensitive to disturbance, they wouldn't be in a disturbed or polluted stream. In contrast, a disturbed and polluted stream will only contain one or two very tolerant species and they will be in high numbers because of lack of competition. We have seen a lot of wildlife, from small minnows and frogs to large turtles, beavers and river otters, swimming in Coal Creek. That indicated to me that the creek is relatively healthy. Coal Creek runs through highly developed areas of Tulsa and sometimes is littered with trash from upstream. Those observations indicate that the steam might not be as healthy as I thought. Which hypothesis would be correct? The evidence would be found in the bugs.

Using D Frame nets provided by ONCA (thank you friends), the Junior Naturalists swept the water and vegetation near the shore. In less than an hour, they found what looked like a water penney beetle, a stone fly and a crane fly. They also found several snails, crayfish and small frogs and the usual water snakes. I remembered also that a young visitor had brought a dobsonfly to us last year.

Water pennies are somewhat tolerant, craneflies are somewhat tolerant to somewhat sensitive, stone flies are pretty sensitive and dobsonflies tolerate a relatively wide range of conditions. These results are inconclusive mainly due to the small amount of data. However, the diversity was better than just one or two highly tolerant species. That gives me hope that, with a little more care upstream, Coal Creek has potential to become a much healthier stream. Looking at the topographical map, we can see that many of the smaller streams that feed into Coal Creek are lined with trees and that may account for its relative health. According to David Wise, Watershed Restoration Manager at the Stroud Water Research Center, trees in riparian areas (areas along the banks) not only filter water before it enters the stream, but they also provide leaves and other nutrients for aquatic macroinvertebrates and microbes (bacteria, fungi and diatoms) that clean the water. In fact, he says trees along the banks provide more energy to stream communities than do the aquatic plants in the stream. Trees also shade the water, cooling it to temperatures preferred by the cleaning crew. Grassy edges are much less capable of keeping streams healthy. It may seem like clearing brush and trees from the banks would be a good idea, but it's not. Tulsa citizens can and should protect the little ditches and wet weather creeks that wind through their neighborhoods. These seemingly insignificant waterways are where we need to keep pesticides, fertilizers, motor oil and dog poo out and let shrubs and trees grow up along the banks. Higher order, streams like Coal Creek, Bird Creek, and rivers like the Verdigris and the Arkansas can't be healthy if the first order streams are delivering pollutants to them. Neighborhood creeks can also be a place for children and adults to explore nature and enjoy her beauty. While our scientific results might be inconclusive, we can say for certain that exploring a creek is fun because that's exactly what our Junior Naturalists and their adult leaders experienced.

The City of Tulsa website has a page called "my watershed map." Down near the bottom of that page you can click on the "My Watershed" tool, then using the search icon, type in your address and it will tell you the name of your watershed. You can then use the map provided to explore the whole area. Take a walk through your neighborhood and see where those first order creeks are located. And as always, I invite you to visit Oxley and, next time, spend some time exploring Coal Creek.

Mary K. Oxley Nature Center - May Programs

Call 918-596-9054 to register for any program that requires pre-registration.

Tulsa Opera at Oxley!
May 3, 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Join Tulsa Opera on a guided hike at Oxley Nature Center. This isn't your average hike: along the trail, enjoy the unique combination of opera and the outdoors as Filstrup Resident Artists Maddie Breedlove, Lydia Gray, and Karlena Riggs perform before, during, and after the hike. This is a non-strenuous hike suitable for most. Do bring good shoes, water, sunscreen, bug spray, and eyes and ears to enjoy all the beauty around you. See you on the trail!

Saturday Morning Birding
May 3, 8:00 – 9:45 a.m.
All ages and skill levels are welcome for this free drop-in Birding Walk, guided by Oxley Natural Resources Coordinator, Josh Smith. Bring binoculars if you have them!

Spring Discovery Walks
Fridays at 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., and Sunday at 2:00 p.m.
These informal walks will be facilitated by Oxley staff naturalists. Meet by the message board in the parking lot and we'll walk together to see what the trails have to show us.

These are free, drop-in events for all ages and abilities.

***Full Flower Moon Walk**
May 12, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
Small, guided groups explore the trails by night. All ages welcome!

***Little Seedlings; May's theme: "Puddles and Water"**
May 13 and 16, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
This program for curious little nature-lovers (ages 1-5) and their caregivers includes a craft and a guided trail walk to explore the theme of the month; (The Tuesday and Friday sessions are the same).

***Cyanotype Workshop with Matt Moffett**
May 17, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Cyanotypes are a blue-colored print made by exposing a UV sensitive paper to light. This method has been in use for almost 200 years as an alternative to photography. Participants, (ages 16 and up) will learn from Oxley's resident artist, Matt Moffett, to create and print their own designs to take home. There are just a few spots left - join us!

***Nature Journaling Group**
Meets on Thursdays from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Nature Journaling is a powerful method for connecting with the more-than-human world. As a practice, it provides an opportunity to dive in deep with your observations. Each session will include time out on the trails to make observations, time to reflect on what we're noticing, time to write and sketch, and time for optional sharing and group discussion. You can join the group any time!

Saturday Morning Botany Walk
May 17, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Oxley Naturalists guide this free drop-in event, where we explore the lives of plants in the forest, prairie, and wetlands, and how they are responding to the seasonal changes.

All About Nature Book club
May 23, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Join us for a discussion of books related to nature, conservation, and the environment. May's selection: "Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life" by Barbara Kingsolver

Butterfly Walk
May 24, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Stroll the grounds in search of butterflies on this walk guided by Oxley Volunteer Naturalists. This is a free, drop-in, family-friendly event.

Please Note: Summer program registration opens May 1! We will be adding sessions of Outdoor Archery, Nature Story Times, and more! And save the date for Moth Night on Saturday, July 12. Look for Oxley around town! We will be offering activities at the Mayfest Kid's Zone (May 9 and 10), participating in the Audubon Habitat Tour (May 17 and 18), and will be at several of the Tulsa Farmers Market Saturday markets this summer.

*indicates that pre-registration is required. Call 918-596-9054 to receive your member discount.

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Eastern bluebird | Glen Smith

OXLEY NATURE CENTER HOURS

Interpretive Center hours are 10-4:30PM Tuesday through Saturday, and Noon - 4:30PM on Sunday.

After Interpretive Center hours, trails are open for hiking until 9:00 PM.

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