



# La Vista Ecological Learning Center May *E-News and Eco-Spiritual Calendar*

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A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

## Communing with the Universal Soul



*Birdsong brings relief  
to my longing.  
I'm just as ecstatic as they are,  
but with nothing to say!  
Please, universal soul,  
practice some song or something through me!  
-Rumi*

This lovely mystical poem is a wonderful one for the month of May, so full of LIFE. It is in tune with a living universe, an insight which is in harmony with the world's major spiritual traditions. For so long we regarded the universe as inert matter and empty space. This is what we learned and why we felt free to exploit what was only "dead" matter. But now some scientists and others are aligning with the wisdom of spiritual traditions and becoming aware that we need to open ourselves to the mystical and feel our communion with the living universe if we are to address our planetary crises.

How does the idea that you are alive in a living universe change your concept of yourself, your place in the cosmos and in the human family? How does a living universe challenge your behavior? Go outdoors, let your ears hear birdsong, sense your priceless communion with a living universe, and sing your own song.

## May - National Salad Month

Those of us who are shareholders in La Vista's CSA are enjoying our spring greens share. What a great way to celebrate National Salad Month! This designation encourages all of us to include more salads in our daily menus. There are a multitude of web sites offering "out of the box" ways to make salads interesting and even more healthful. And if you haven't yet become a shareholder, it is not too late to join: [www.lavistacsa.org](http://www.lavistacsa.org). Download a membership form and enjoy being part of a great community seeking to support the local food movement.

## Sunday, May 12: Mother Universe Day

Traditionally on this day, we express gratitude to our mothers and grandmothers, those who mothered us into being and supported our lives with theirs. This is an honorable practice.

Can we extend our gratitude out further to a Mother Universe whose "body" extends into infinity and lives in eternity? In his book, *The Living Universe* author Duane Elgin develops this idea of a Mother Universe which is very close, except for gender, to the biblical description of God mentioned in Acts 17:28, "In him we live and move and have our being." Elgin tells us that this image of Mother Universe describes the "unspeakable ground out of which the visible world emerges at each moment". As we strive to expand human self-perception outward to embrace ever wider contexts, celebrating Mother Universe Day is an idea to incorporate into your spirituality.

Today, let's offer a prayer of gratitude for a universe that mothered us into being and supports our lives and the lives of all beings every moment of every day!

## **Tuesday, May 14: Work Day in the Oblates' Woods Nature Preserve 9:30 - Noon**

In April our work day was perfection. It was warm, breezy, and sunny. Since it had just rained the honeysuckle pulled easily out of the ground, and so we covered a lot of territory. One of the volunteers said that he knew it was time to quit when he pulled a honeysuckle and it pulled back! Please join us for fun in the Preserve as we continue to care for our common home and ensure biodiversity at La Vista.

**Registration:**  
Call 618-466-5004



## **Saturday, May 18: Sketching and Nature Journaling Backyard Birds 10:00am - Noon**

If you have ever observed a bird in the process of making a nest, you know how entertaining birds can be. Join us and investigate the world of backyard birds in a special way. Drawing lessons, hints, tips, and nature journaling suggestions will get you will on your way to the enriching experience of sketching birds and recording your observations. Beginners and those who wish to broaden their drawing skills are welcome. Artistic skills are not required.

**Cost:** \$20

**Presenter:** Angie Jungbluth is a veteran science and nature journaling teacher whose enthusiasm is contagious.

**Supplies:** unlined drawing paper (in a binder or journal with space to sketch and write), pencil, and eraser.

**Registration:** Send payment to La Vista, 4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035

*Save the Dates . . .*

## **Saturday, June 22, 2:00 - 4:00 pm Solstice Celebration: Make Your Garden Toad and Frog-Friendly\* 2:00 - 4:00 pm**

Frogs and toads might call your backyard home if you make it welcome to them. Why bother? Amphibians are the most endangered group of vertebrate wildlife on the planet, with nearly one-third of species at risk of extinction. Learn how to maintain frog habitats in your backyard. You'll

not only help them by providing a pocket of habitat, but you will also be rewarded with a frog symphony in the spring, summer and autumn months. And you will be caring for creation!



**Presenter:** Vernon DePauw

**Cost:** This is a donation-based event. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

**Registration:** Email [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org) or call 618-466- 5004.

**\*Motivating Facts:** Toads are strictly carnivorous, feeding on beetles, slugs, flies, crickets, and ants. Larger toad species even eat small rodents and snakes - anything they can pull into their mouths and swallow! So, when it comes to natural pest control, toads in your garden are a boon!

Like all amphibians, toads are highly sensitive to environmental toxins. They easily absorb pesticides, fertilizers, and other chemical pollutants through their skin. When exposed to high levels of these, toads won't survive. So, if you have toads in your yard, there's a good possibility that you have created a sustainable environment for all kinds of life. Give yourself a pat on the back!

## **Saturday, June 29: Sketching and Nature Journaling Flowers 10:00 am - Noon**

Do you enjoy exploring the world of flowers and wish you could creatively record your discoveries somehow on paper? Please join us as we begin our investigation of flowers by covering a variety of techniques to creatively capture your observations on paper. Our indoor study will include taking a flower apart and observing all of the components of its make-up, as well as their functions. We will then go outside to observe wildflowers in nature and record our discoveries from the techniques presented inside. Both beginners and those that want to broaden their sketching and recording skills are welcome. Artistic skills are not required.

**Supplies:** unlined drawing paper (in a binder or journal with space to sketch and write), pencil, eraser, coloring tools (colored pencils or watercolors), camp chair

**Cost:** \$20

**Registration:** Send payment to La Vista

**Presenter:** Angie Jungbluth, expert nature journaler and teacher.

