



La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

October 1, 2019

E-News

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October, 2019 Eco-spirituality Calendar

October, Timber Rattlesnakes, and Ecological Impoverishment



Here in the Midwest, October marks the time when timber rattlesnakes enter hibernation until the weather warms. I usually include a relevant photo with this post, so why isn't there a timber rattlesnake in this picture of the Oblates Woods Nature Preserve? After all, it is a perfect habitat for rattlesnakes and dens - rocky outcroppings and forested bluffs - but in the many years of pulling honeysuckle all over the Preserve, we have never encountered one.

Recently a biologist friend shared her history with this threatened species. Twenty years ago when she moved to southern Illinois she observed several timber rattlesnake dens on her many acres, and yearly she counted several young in various dens; but now she rarely sees adults and no dens. Habitat loss, over-exploitation in the pet trade, and irrational fears have contributed to their decline. (People tend to kill them rather than learn how to live alongside them.)

These experiences of decline bring to mind Michael McCarthy's book *The Moth Snowstorm* in which he laments the disappearance of a natural phenomenon he experienced as a youth when moths "would pack a car's headlight beams like snowflakes in a blizzard". He asks the reader: Who notices this kind of absence? What difference does it make?

Bill McKibben has a pertinent comment in his 2019 book *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?* : "In fact, there are half as many wild animals on the planet as there were in 1970, an awesome and mostly unnoticed silencing".

I invite you to dredge your memory: is there a natural phenomenon you miss? Does it impoverish your humanity? What does it do to a finely-balanced ecosystem? To help your reflection consider this quote from *Laudato Si'*: *God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement.*

October 5: Cultural Cooking II Time change: 2:00 - 5:30 pm (not 2:30)

Dr. Sasi returns to delight us with a second cultural cooking class! Join us and have your traditional ideas of how to cook turned on their heads. Participants will engage in the prep work as we create a meal sure to satisfy your senses in every way. Learn to make

authentic Sri Lankan dishes (not overly spicy) you can repeat at home.

Dr. Sasi Balasundaram, anthropologist, farmer, food and environmental justice advocate, teaches anthropology at SIUE. This program is a La Vista and SIUE Anthropology Collaboration.



Cost: \$15

Registration: Send your payment to La Vista at 7300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035. We expect this class to fill up, so your payment reserves your place.

October 8: Work Day in the Oblates Preserve

9:00 - Noon Let us know if you care to join the fun: 618-466-5004

October 14: Columbus Day or Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples Day?

It's all about perspective. Columbus Day was created from the worldview of the victor; whereas, Indigenous Peoples Day celebrates the people and cultures that were victimized. Many cities across the country are making the shift, adopting resolutions to replace the customary Columbus Day celebration.

What can we do? We cannot become indigenous, for that is a birthright, and we are a nation of immigrants. In addition to raising awareness and resisting the status quo, we can become "naturalized to place" in the words of Robin Wall Kimmerer, an enrolled member of the Potawatomi Tribe:

Being naturalized to place means to live as if this is the land that feeds you, as if these are the streams from which you drink, that build your body and fill your spirit. To become naturalized is to know that your ancestors lie in this ground. Here you will give your gifts and meet your responsibilities. To become naturalized is to live as if your children's future matters, to take care of the land as if our lives and the lives of all our relatives depend on it. Because they do.

This year, why not make the shift and celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day?

October 25: Fourth Friday Night Film Festival: Film TBD

Watch our Facebook page for details closer to the date. Our documentaries are chosen to challenge the status quo and to open our minds to alternative ideas. Lively discussion follows the film.

Registration: Call 618-466-5004 or email info@lavistaelc.org.

Herbal drinks and popcorn will be provided.

Cost: Your donation to support La Vista's programming will be accepted with gratitude.

October 31: Halloween and the Horror of Consumerism

Let these estimated amounts from 2014 scare the daylights out of you:

\$2.8 billion -on costumes for adults and children (Talk about fast fashion!)

\$350 million -on costumes for pets

\$2.2 billion -on candy (aka empty calories)

\$2 billion -on decorations

A reflection from Laudato Si': *Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature. Otherwise, the paradigm of consumerism will continue to advance, with the help of the media and the highly effective workings of the market. (Par. 215)*



Elias Castillo on Unsplash

