



## La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

January 2021

### E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

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(Monthly reflections are archived in the Blog on our web site.)

## January On the Brink



View from La Vista's "crows nest"

When I remove the previous year's Natural Events Calendar and hang a new one on New Year's Eve, I have the experience of being *on the brink*. While performing this annual ritual, I intentionally inhale the future and exhale the past in a grounding way that keeps me in the present moment. This year being on the brink has a much deeper feel from the past, and I am moved to head out to the bluffs at La Vista where I can spend some time peering over the edge.

"We are about to go off a cliff and running out of time to avoid it." These haunting words were spoken by the moderator of a

webinar I participated in during late fall of 2020, and they have remained with me. During four informative sessions of the *Species in Peril Webinar* my understanding of the biodiversity crisis deepened. (Webinars are archived on the UNM Species in Peril web site and are well worth viewing.)

For quite a while I have been thinking of climate breakdown as **the** major threat to our planet, and now I realize that biodiversity annihilation is an equally significant planetary crisis and part of the climate crisis. I see that each contributes to the escalation of the other. While public acknowledgement of the climate crisis is increasing, there seems to be little public understanding and awareness of the escalating biodiversity crisis.

Some alarming facts became common knowledge during 2020, such as the shocking one that 3 billion birds have disappeared since 1970! Scientists are

now estimating that nearly 1,000,000 species are nearing extinction in the coming decade. The numbers are so staggering as to be unimaginable, as are the ramifications for every being on Earth.

During the webinar I was moved by the speaker who encouraged us to find our special area of concern for biodiversity and act on it with passion 10,000 times. He said if your specialty is making donations, give \$10,000 to an organization that furthers your cause; if it is to write a blog about your interest, write 10,000 times because now is not the time for small efforts. I appreciate his use of hyperbole!

He encouraged us not to be ashamed of leading with our values, and it is apparent he does this in his own life. He founded the Center for Carnivore Coexistence and spoke passionately about extending social justice to the non-human world. He said, "Right now animals have no standing in court, and so the animal will always end up losing. Animals need equal protection under the law and due process". His comments called to mind Thomas Berry's insistence that until now we've only had human jurisprudence, but at this time we need Earth jurisprudence, and nothing less will get us into the future.

On World Environment Day, 2020, Pope Francis put it this way: "The protection of the environment and respect for the biodiversity of the planet are issues that affect us all. We cannot pretend to be healthy in a world that is sick. The wounds inflicted on our mother earth are wounds that also bleed in us".

Truly we are on the brink, and not just for a night until the sun rises on a new calendar year. (For some hope, be sure to read on to January 20!)

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### **January 12 Workday in the Oblates Nature Preserve**

**9:30 am - Noon**

Please join us for our continued efforts to restore biodiversity to these 16 acres. Our wonderful group of volunteers spend themselves lavishly working in the Preserve month after month to remove invasive species, allowing a diversity of native trees and plants to grow. Let us know you're coming so we can tell you where to meet. Call 618 466 5004. We wear masks and remain far apart.

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**January 19 (or Any Other Day!)**

*Stay close  
to any sound  
that makes you glad  
you are alive.*

- Hafiz



Photo by Christie Greene on Unsplash

## **January 20 Inauguration Day - On the Brink of a New Era**

On this day especially, I will be breathing in the future and exhaling the past while being grounded in the present moment of celebration. One of the many reasons I will be celebrating today is because Congresswoman Deb Haaland has been nominated by Joe Biden to be Secretary of the Interior!

According to Subhankar Banarjee, moderator of the *Species in Peril* Webinar: *Since its founding in 1849, the US Department of the Interior more than any other federal agency, advanced actions to erase and exterminate indigenous peoples and to destroy indigenous homeland, traditional food sources, languages, and cultural practices. Congresswoman Haaland is a member of the Laguna pueblo in New Mexico. Her nomination to lead Interior is historic and a page-turner in US history.*

In her acceptance speech Haaland said, *I will be fierce for all of us, for our planet, and all of our protected land, and I am honored and ready to serve.*

To repeat Pope Francis' words: *The wounds inflicted on mother Earth are wounds that also bleed in us.*

## **January 30 Virtual Winterfires Coffeehouse**

**7:00 - 8:30 pm**

This year's coffeehouse will have a special theme:

### **Celebrating Our Non-human Relatives**

Please join us virtually as we share poetry, story, and music honoring the many species who enrich our lives all year long. For your topic, I encourage you to choose a favorite bird, pet, insect,



geographic feature - any part of nature that makes you glad you are alive. This sharing will be our small way of giving back.

You might want to bring a hot drink and snack as you settle in before your device. This evening promises to be enriching, as always! I will send out a Zoom link closer to the date. Please let me know if you want to receive the invitation: [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org).

### LOOKING AHEAD....

**February 5 Climate Fiction Book Club**  
**6:00 - 8:00 pm**

Our group has decided to take a deep dive into the work of Barbara Kingsolver, so on Friday, February 5<sup>th</sup> we'll be discussing her novel *Unsheltered*. If you would like to join us, let me know so I can send you the Zoom invitation. You can reach me at [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org)

