



# La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

May, 2021

## E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

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Monthly reflections are archived in the Blog on the web site.

### May, Wildness, and Profound Mystery



May is abundant in breathtaking wildlife at La Vista. For example, visitors may spot a deer fawn hidden by her mother in the grass – or under a bench as in the picture here. I've heard folks exclaim with joy upon an encounter like this that stops them in their tracks and causes them to cry out with pleasure.

May is also awash in a diversity of wildflowers like the mayapple, harbinger of spring, trillium, Virginia bluebells and wild sweet William. I have seen visitors do a double-take, go back, and bend low in awe and wonder over a flower as small as a fingernail and as delicate as a wing. They are brought to their knees in gratitude.

What is wilder than the sound of yipping and howling coyotes in the night? Recently our study group was peacefully gathered in the barn when a band of coyotes let loose with their vocalizations. We hushed ourselves, enjoying the thrill of such wildness so close by.

May, like every month, is replete in wildness above us in the sky. I have experienced a magical moment when those gathered in the night were drawn as if by invisible ties to move toward the east during the appearing of a full super moon above the trees on the horizon. How long we stood and gazed in peaceful silence no one recalls.

What is the deep draw of the wild that evokes wonder, awe, joy, happy cries, and deep connection? In the chapter *The Wild and the Sacred* in his book *The Great Work*, Thomas Berry answers that question when he tells us he considers the *wild* to be “the most profound mystery”, a mystery that is also in you and me.

He goes on to consider the past 65 million years *a period of wildness beyond*

compare, and he muses: *The human, perhaps, could only have appeared in such a period of grandeur; for the inner life of the human depends immediately on the outer world of nature.* He believes that only if our imaginations are activated by stunning natural events and beings – like hidden deer fawn, native wildflowers, and rising moons: ...*only then will the deep inner experiences be evoked in the human soul....*

How will you honor inner wildness, the most profound Mystery that is in the depths of yourself and creation, during this stunningly beautiful and wild month?

(Photo by Brother Pat McGee, OMI)

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## **May 7 *Story of Electronics* Video and Discussion via Zoom** **6:00 – 7:30 pm**

Do you have a closet full of obsolete electronics, cords and chargers? Most of us probably do, or at least a drawerful! Find motivation to change your electronics habit and learn ways to go forward in our 7 minute video *The Story of Electronics*. Local recycling experts will join us for discussion, too. “Designed for the dump” needs to be changed to “Designed to last” says our educational video. To join us, please email [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org) and request the Zoom link. This event is sponsored by the Confluence Climate Collaborative.

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## **May 9 Eco-Mother’s Day Story**

I recently met a young woman who is an example of what it means to be an eco-mother. She buys her small children books like Usborne’s *Lift-the-Flap Question and Answers About Food* by Katie Daynes. Reading this one, her youngsters learned where sugar comes from and how little we should have daily. They are not afraid to share this information with their father when he is drinking a soda! Another favorite in the series is *Lift-the-Flap Question and Answers About Plastics* which motivates her children to avoid using straws and other single-use plastic. These are cleverly designed, informative books children are drawn to read again and again. This young mother gives me hope for the future!

Happy Mother’s Day and THANKS to all who are sharing eco-wisdom with young people. (The *Lift-the-Flap Question and Answer Series* would be a great gift from an eco-grandmother, too!)

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## **May 11 Workday in the Oblate Preserve** **9:00 - 11:30 am**

In April, volunteers experienced the payoff for hours of removing invasive oriental bittersweet.

Arriving in an area where we had worked earlier in the year, we encountered tiny redbud trees - so many that we had to watch our step! The picture at right shows more natives volunteers identified last month: a pawpaw tree in bloom with a ninebark bush, a mature redbud, and a dogwood in the background. What diversity! How rich we all felt as we made these discoveries. Maybe this is the month you will become a volunteer. Call 618-466-5004 and let me know if you want to join this group.



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## May 22 International Biodiversity Day

The United Nations has proclaimed May 22 the International Day for Biological Diversity, and this year's theme is: *We're part of the solution*. Aware that biodiversity annihilation is a threat equal to or greater than climate change, we at La Vista have, for a long time, taken the challenge *to be part of the solution* by increasing efforts to preserve, protect and restore biodiversity.



Our most recent efforts include adding houses: 12 bluebird, 3 Indigo bunting, 2 bat, 3 owl, 2 wren, 2 chickadee or tit mouse, and for 2 native bees. Our plans for the near future include:

- extending the pollinator garden to spread throughout the bowl
- planting 40 new native trees and bushes to improve habitat for wildlife

- removing dusk to dawn lighting which deters migratory birds and other wildlife
- introducing a wetland for insects and waterfowl
- ending the harvesting of hay and allowing grass fields to develop into native prairie naturally
- reducing the amount of manicured lawn area and allowing native plants to re-establish
- identifying and remove invasive plants, focusing on Johnson grass
- creating more brush piles for wildlife

Are there any of these efforts you could initiate where you live or work? Our faithful volunteers are invaluable in our efforts. If you would like to join this group, please email me, [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org).

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## End of May and More Mystery

At the end of May and into June people in fifteen states, including Illinois, will be

able to enjoy one of nature's special mysteries: the emergence from underground of the seventeen-year periodical cicada. It is no mystery that they begin to emerge when the soil temperature reaches 64 degrees. Scientists figured that out. What remains a mystery is what invisible force tells them to emerge after exactly seventeen years have passed.

In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer shares a Native American word for this mystery: *Puhpowee*. She says that it *translates as the force which causes mushrooms to push up from the earth overnight*. She goes on to admit that, as a biologist, she was stunned that such a word existed. Reflecting on the animacy of Native American language, she says that the makers of this word *understood a world of being, full of unseen energies that animate everything*.

How I envy a culture whose language recognizes the reality of unseen energies that animate everything! May all of us enter into each day watching for the emergence of these energies in our lives and the lives of the whole Earth community.

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