



# La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

March, 2021

## E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

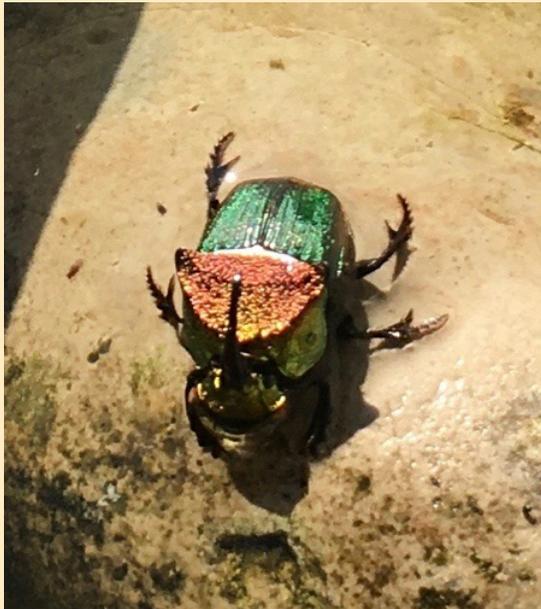
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Monthly reflections are archived in the Blog on the web site.

### March and Irretrievable Beauty



As I was reading through the notes on the Missouri Natural Events calendar for March and wondering what I have to look forward to, I let out a moan when I got to the ninth and read, "Time for ticks to appear". How I dread the re-emergence of ticks, not to mention those miserable biting buffalo gnats that emerge in May here along the river! I felt like Alice in Wonderland in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* where a Gnat asks Alice, "What sort of insects do you rejoice in where you come from?" Puzzled by the question, Alice replies, "I don't rejoice in insects at all!"

On the other hand, there are many insects I do rejoice in, like the rainbow scarab beetle pictured above that appeared last July in the bird bath in my back yard. It caught my attention and admiration. After taking pictures of this beetle beauty, I learned Ancient Egyptians were so taken with it that they made jewelry that looked like this scarab. Most interestingly, it was an object of worship in Ancient Egypt!

Unlike these Egyptians, our civilization is better known for its relationship of enmity with the insect world. Consider the many ads for pesticides (a telling word in itself) you've come across, like "Ortho Insect Killer for Lawns". In ecological circles I constantly read about reducing our use of pesticides. While that is essential, I believe the solution also involves nurturing a spirituality that includes all species. Thomas Berry has wisdom to share in this regard: *For the intimate relations of the human with other modes of being has been perhaps the most neglected aspect of our spiritual teaching. A neglect that has been an enormous detriment to ourselves and to the entire community of living and non-living beings on the earth...We seem unable to recognize that there is a single sacred community of the entire universe. Not only is the human sacred. The entire universe is sacred! How wonderful! We could not ourselves be sacred except in a sacred universe.* (From "The Intimate Universe: A Challenge to Religious Communities")

Pope Francis's rich insights from the section on biodiversity in *Laudato Si* are also

worth pondering: *But a sober look at our world shows that the degree of human intervention, often in the service of business interests and consumerism, is actually making our earth less rich and beautiful, ever more limited and grey, even as technological advances and consumer goods continue to abound limitlessly. We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and irretrievable beauty with something which we have created ourselves. (34)*

Which insects are beautiful to you? Which do you rejoice in where you come from?

To learn ways to provide for insects and bring more to your yard, read the entry for March 22.

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### **March 5 *The Story of Stuff* – Viewing, Presentation, Discussion 6:00 – 7:30 pm**

The Confluence Climate Collaborative invites you to participate in a Zoom viewing of the short film *The Story of Stuff*, an informative video that traces stuff from its extraction through sale, use and disposal. In an entertaining fashion it shows how the stuff in our lives affects communities at home and abroad yet is mostly hidden from view. The video will be followed by a conversation with local business owners who are committed to sustainability. Join us!

**Registration:** please let me know of your interest so I can send you the zoom link: [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org)

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### **March 9 Elephants and the Workday in the Oblates' Nature Preserve 9:00 - 11:30 am**

What do elephants and volunteers have in common? Recently I learned that as forest elephants forage for food, they thin out young trees competing for space, water, and light by stepping on some and consuming others; thus,



they reduce the density of the vegetation wherever they go. The trees that are left behind have much better access to water and light, promoting the growth of larger, taller trees. These trees store more carbon in their biomass than the trees that would have grown in their place. So, forest elephants counter climate change by increasing the amount of carbon stored by favoring certain types of trees.

This elephant service reminds me of the work of our dedicated volunteers who remove big and small honeysuckle as well as invasive trees like golden rain tree and tree of heaven, favoring native trees like oaks and hickories. They, too, fight climate change and promote biodiversity every time they serve in the Oblate Preserve! Now, doesn't that motivate you to participate?

**Registration:** Let me know if you can join us by emailing [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org).

Thanks to Unsplash for the photo by Hans Veth.

**2:00 – 4:00 pm**

It is time to get outdoors and rejoice in the warm weather of Spring and the many insects the sun is awakening! This outdoor celebration will be held near the barn at La Vista, and we'll continue the practice of wearing masks and social distancing.

We'll spend some time sharing information about our favorite insects. This could be factual, a poem, or a positive story of your (or someone else's) encounter with an insect. A bug hunt will be one of our activities, so if you choose to participate, wear appropriate clothing. Bring a snack and drink for yourself if you desire. Let's cast off our separation from nature and enjoy an outdoor celebration with these often-ignored members of our Earth community.

**Registration:** Email [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org) and leave your name and number participating. Thanks.

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## **March 22 World Water Day and Wildlife**

Last summer I decided to put rocks in the birdbath, and immediately it became a hub of bird activity. To my delight, wasps, bees, and even a scarab beetle came to drink! What an easy way to provide something so vital to the insect world.

This summer I am going to introduce moving water to the birdbath by poking a hole in a milk carton and hanging it on a hook above the birdbath. I have read that this will be even more inviting to wildlife.

How do you plan on commemorating the UN's World Water Day?



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## **Looking Ahead. . .**

### **Friday, April 2 *Braiding Sweetgrass* Book Discussion via Zoom 6:00 – 7:30 pm**

The Confluence Climate Collaborative invites you to join us for a discussion of Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. In an interview, Kimmerer sparks motivation for reading her book, "I don't have the power to dismantle Monsanto. But what I *do* have is the capacity to change how I live on a daily basis and how I think about the world. I just have to have faith that when we change how we think, we suddenly change how we act and how those around us act, and that's how the world changes. It's by changing hearts and changing minds. And it's contagious". Join us and catch her spirit!

Registration: email [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org) and request the Zoom link.

