



## La Vista Ecological Learning Center

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate  
June, 2023

### E-News and Eco-spirituality Calendar

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

## June – Restoring the Forest and Ourselves

**RESTOR** is a global restoration movement with an inspiring mission: “*accelerating the conservation and restoration of nature for the benefit of people, biodiversity, and climate*”. RESTOR does this by “*connecting people and their projects to resources like scientific data, monitoring tools, funding, and each other to increase impact, scale, and sustainability of these efforts. We believe that anyone can be a restoration champion*”.



The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate have been restoration champions since 1993 when they were the first landowners in the area to dedicate sixteen acres, the “Missionary Oblates Woods Nature Preserve”, as part of the Illinois Nature Preserve System. In 2001 they added one hundred forty-three acres in the Forest Legacy Program. With this history, OMI has become a member of the RESTOR movement; consequently, it is possible to explore specifics about biodiversity on their land using RESTOR data. On Oblate land in Godfrey, IL, diversity includes 1,409 plant species, 31 amphibian species, 46 mammal species, and 174 bird species. That’s a lot of biodiversity on a little over 250 acres!!!

La Vista’s Monday study group just completed reading Robin Wall Kimmerer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass*, and one of Kimmerer’s insights we loved is appropriate here. She comments that when we think of ecological restoration we think about what we are doing to and for land like invasive species and trash removal, controlled burns, and planting native species which we do at La Vista. However, Kimmerer expands this thinking when she explains that, in the indigenous tradition, when we do ecological restoration *we are really restoring ourselves!* This must explain why, when volunteers head back to their cars after restoration work, they comment about feeling happy, fulfilled, nourished. It is true. Why else would volunteers drive a distance to get dirty, work hard, and brave tick bites? The principle of reciprocity as at work here! Once again, native people help us with an alternative reality.

Kimmerer also phrases it this way, “Land loves us back”. In the case of preserves, it does this in part by providing a peaceful and healthy environment for those who visit; by increasing wildlife, thus reducing species loneliness and countering biodiversity collapse; by cleaning the watershed, contributing to a healthier Mississippi River for humans and other species.

Truly, ecological restoration is a two-way street, and Pope Francis agrees. In the encyclical *Laudato Si'* he shows awareness of this deep connection: “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”. The opposite is also a reality - when we help heal damaged land, we are also healed. Healthy people and healthy planet go together.

## June 5 World Environment Day

[#BeatPlasticPollution](#) is the theme for this year, calling for global solutions to combat plastic pollution. The web site offers hope, "*showcasing how countries, businesses, and individuals are learning to use the material more sustainably, offering hope that one day, plastic pollution will be history.*" Not being naïve, the site also reminds us that this kind of pollution is a huge problem: more than 400 million tons is produced yearly, half of which is designed to be used only one time, and of that only 10% is recycled. Ouch!

It is likely that you are tired of hearing about plastic pollution. That's what makes this year's theme so important. May your exploration of this issue lead you to greater commitment to reduce your own use of single-use plastic as well as all plastic!

One small but accessible way to address this issue is to switch the kind of laundry detergent you use. Give up big plastic bottles of liquid detergent and replace with [laundry sheets or strips](#) which don't use any plastic, are a more sustainable alternative, and are safer for clothing and the environment.

## June 13 Workday in the Oblates Woods Nature Preserve 9:00 – 11:30 am

If you can join us, please let us know by responding to [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org) When you join our restoration efforts, you will also be restoring yourself!

## June 22 Earth Day Revisited



Recently someone sent me the article "[The Case for Making Earth Day a Religious Holiday](#)" by Carl Safina and Paul Greenberg which appeared on 4/21/23 in *Time Magazine*. Even though Earth Day is long gone, this piece is well worth sharing and pondering.

The article spins out of authors' question, "So, *what would an earth-reverent belief system look like with Earth Day as its center?*" Safina and Greenberg take traditional aspects of their Catholic and Judaic roots and add to them, musing on possibilities which are inspiring and meaningful to those seeking to connect spirituality with our suffering planet. Enjoy reading their

ideas by clicking on the title above. You may find your own eco-spiritual practices enhanced!

Photo by Elena Mozvilo on Unsplash.

## June 17: Summer Solstice, Celebrating a Sacred Moment 2:00 – 4:00 pm

This year's celebration is taking its cue from the above-mentioned article about Earth Day as a religious holiday; however, we will wake up to the awareness that the Summer Solstice is also a sacred moment to celebrate! Join us as we pause to give gratitude for another opportunity to live the season of summer and for one more year to travel around the sun.

Please park along the drive or on the parking lot across from the main house and walk down to the Lodge for



our celebration and ritual turning of the sun staff.  
Thanks for bringing a summer treat to share. Herbal  
drinks will be provided. RSVP: [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org)



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