



## La Vista Ecological Learning Center

4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035  
info@lavistaelc.org

A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

## E News and Ecospirituality Calendar

June, 2024

Maxine Pohlman, SSND

Reflections are archived in the [blog](#) on our web site [lavistaelc.org](#)

### Sheer Availability



Rose breasted grosbeaks were stars at the feeder in late April. I was charmed by their special presence since they were just passing through on their migration route. True to what I had learned, males arrive first followed a few days later by females. Checking my journal, I noticed that they arrive at the same time every year, give or take a few days. It seems a small thing, but having a source of food waiting for them on their journey pleased me.

I was also delighted in early May when I heard that hummingbirds were spotted in our area. I quickly prepared the feeder and hung it in the yard. In a few hours they were back, two hummingbirds enjoying the nectar, hopefully throughout the summer months. That feeder didn't have to wait long to become useful and once more intimately involved in the lives of these migrators!



A few days earlier I had prepared the bird bath for the season, and it wasn't long until Smokey, the backyard opossum, took advantage of it after foraging under the bird feeder for dinner. I've also seen squirrels,



wasps, snails, and of course birds, drinking the available water.

Simply providing sources of food and water speak to me of the importance of the spiritual practice of waiting in silent readiness, of being an awake and welcoming presence to whatever manifests in my little corner of our rare and precious planet, even climate change.

In her book [A Fire Runs Through All Things: Zen Koans for Facing the Climate Crisis](#), Susan Murphy writes, “At every point, reality is exactly as awake as we are. When we’re dead to the world, reality is exactly as dead to us. We can’t fall out of its aliveness, but we can spend a lifetime with our backs turned toward it.”

Murphy’s book about facing the climate crisis is a “response to the acute alarm in human hearts that are dismayed by the world’s relative failure to mount a sane response. It sets out to find how we can face this distress with a strong charge of equanimity and a skillful response.” She invites readers to be available to whatever happens, aligned with our suffering Earth. She encourages a quiet and receptive mind because “The inability to quiet the mind mutes the Earth”.



What can we really do as we face our ecological crises? We can wait in readiness, willing to be awake to whatever needs to be done. We can become like a bird feeder, a bird bath, and a native flower, a presence of sheer availability.

### Reflection on May's *Laudato Si* Field Trip

Advocacy was our theme in May, and so we traveled to our local Sierra Club Office where we met with Virginia Woulfe Beile, Co-director of the Three Rivers Project. Virginia shared a guide for members called the [Jemez Principles](#). It occurred to us that any faith leader could also take these to heart:



- Be inclusive
- Emphasis on bottom-up organizing
- Let people speak for themselves
- Work together in solidarity and mutuality
- Build just relationships among ourselves
- Commitment to self-transformation

Next, we enjoyed a Zoom session back at the Novitiate with Father Daniel LeBlanc, OMI, another advocacy hero! Father Dan has been a non-governmental (NGO) representative at the United Nations in New York for OMI and VIVAT International for twenty years.



When asked what was challenging about his work with the UN, Father Dan offered this sage advice: you need patience to do this work because it takes many years to accomplish change at the UN. In response to a question about how to prepare for a ministry like his, he encouraged the novices to learn all they could! He is an example of this, for he speaks 6 languages and studied law while pastor of a parish of 130,000 in Peru.

To say we were inspired by his life and advocacy work as an OMI is an understatement. We all felt gratitude for our conversation with this remarkable Oblate!

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## June 5 World Environment Day

From the [World Environment Day Web site](#): “We cannot turn back time, but we can grow forests, revive water sources, and bring back soils. We are the generation that can make peace with land”. Visit the web site for a worldwide environmental view and learn how others are to taking action.

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June 4, 18, 25 Workdays in the Pollinator Garden

June 11 Workday in the Oblates' Preserve  
9:00 – 11:30 am

In her challenging book [The Light Eaters: How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth](#), Zoe Schlanger offers motivation for joining in our weekly efforts. She writes, "A single plant is a marvel. A community of plants is life itself. It is the evolutionary past and future entangled into a riotous present in which we are ourselves also entangled. This stretches the mind. Plants give us the chance to see the system in which we live". Please join our community of volunteers who truly enjoy working within "the system in which we live". It is a pleasure.

If you plan on helping our efforts, please let me know:  
[info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org) or 618-466-5004.



June 22  
The Great Turning:  
Summer Solstice Celebration  
and Pollinator Garden Tour  
2:00 – 4:00 pm

Please join us as we align ourselves with the sun's turning and celebrate the beginning of Summer. We will ponder what human behaviors need to turn in another direction at this time so we may care for our declining Earth.

We'll also enjoy a guided tour of our renewed Pollinator Garden led by Master Naturalist Susan Murray. In its second year, the garden has turned a corner, coming to life in a new form. Susan will share our native shrub project and much more.

Parking is available in the small lot across from the main entrance of the house as well as along the driveway. We'll meet on the patio above the Pollinator Garden alongside the drive.

What to bring: a lawn chair and a snack to share. Drinks will be provided. Wearing a hat during the tour is recommended, since the garden is in full sun.

Registration: Thanks for letting me know you are

coming: [info@lavistaelc.org](mailto:info@lavistaelc.org) or 618-466-5004



Oblate Ecological Initiative | 4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035

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