

Litzsinger Road Ecology Center

Community Newsletter

9711 Litzsinger Road • Ladue, MO 63124 • Phone (314) 540-4068 • www.litzsinger.org

Moving from Spaces to Places

By Bob Coulter

We're enjoying the discussions we are having with many of you about your plans for next year. Helping you to grow professionally and to provide even better experiences for your kids each year is the reason the Center exists. As you build your plans for next year, I'd like to encourage you to think about a subtle but profound change in terminology: moving from spaces to places.

What's the difference between a space and a place? Standard environmental education often focuses on helping students to better understand broad ecology concepts like adaptations and the interaction of the living and non-living, with a healthy dose of outdoor exploration. Some of this even gets quite local as you focus on native plant and animal species, and conduct investigations in your school yard. This is all good stuff, and an essential building block toward environmental literacy and stewardship.

The challenge I'm throwing out to you is to move from these "spaces" which are analyzed in some detail to "places" where you study no less deeply, but where your students also take ownership and invest some of themselves in care and upkeep. The affective difference between studying a prairie ecosystem, looking for adaptations and the like, and investing time and effort in maintaining a special place in your schoolyard is huge. Caring for this place builds an ethic of stewardship and a sense of agency where your kids can see that they make a difference in the world. That's a lesson they can take with them long after your class has ended.

What places are in your curriculum? ☞

Note:

The LREC Community Newsletter will be on summer vacation until September. In the meantime, check our website for news and updates (www.litzsinger.org).

Inside this issue:

Photo Report: Bee Calm	2
Sharing the Adventure.....	3
Glasshouse Quiz.....	3
The Fallen Giants.....	4
Photo Report: Wade in the Water..	5
National Volunteer Week.....	6
Farewell to LREC	7
This Summer, at the Garden.....	7

Upcoming LREC Events:

Ecological Monitoring Workshop

May 8, 2–4pm. At the Barn; led by Malinda Slagle. If you are interested in assisting with plant or pollinator surveys this summer, you should attend this workshop. RSVP: (314) 540-4068 or martha@litzsinger.org.

Upcoming Opportunities:

Ecological Monitoring Workshop

May 2, 9am–11am. At The Green Center. Led by Malinda Slagle. Call (314)725-8314 or email events@thegreencenter.org.

Spring Wildflower Sale

May 9, 9am–4pm. At Shaw Nature Reserve. Featuring the showiest and hardiest native plants for sun or shade. Questions? Call (636)451-3512.

Native Plant School

Common Garden Weeds: Control and ID: May 14, 1–4pm. At Shaw Nature Reserve. \$12 (\$8 for Garden Members). Reserve your place by calling (636)451-3512.

Science Café

May 21, 7–9pm. At Llywelyn's Pub. "Herbal Medicines and Botanical Dietary Supplements: Facts and Fiction." Free. For more information call (314)289-4424.

Photo Report: Bee Calm

By Danelle Haake and Eddie Jones

On Wednesday, April 24, 2009, a honey bee swarm was discovered on a Cottonwood tree. The next day, another swarm was discovered about 10 feet from the ground in a young Ohio buckeye. LREC volunteer and bee keeper, Lil Collins, "coaxed" this swarm into a bee hive box. At press time, she was still ascertaining the presence of a queen in the hive.



*Clockwise from top:
Lil Collins and Susan Keating, another horticulture
volunteer and bee keeper, work with hive box;
Lil Collins; bees are coaxed into hive box;
Swarm of bees on tree trunk.
Photos by Danelle Haake, Eddie Jones, and Sean Fears.*

View more photos on our blog:
www.litzsinger.org/weblog

Sharing the Adventure

By Deanna Lawlor

My journey into the woods and prairie at LREC in search of knowledge is based on my recent adventure to New Hampshire to complete a master's degree in Environmental Education at Antioch University. Coming back to St. Louis was wonderful, but I also found myself in unfamiliar territory.

You see, in New Hampshire I had discovered a passion for identifying the local flora of the New England forests. I had the luxury of time and assignments that took me into the woods regularly. I became familiar with, and reasonably competent at, identifying by common and Latin names most of what I discovered in the woods, no matter the season. Being able to name the plants made me feel like I was walking with family and friends. I began to develop a sort of sensitivity to the world that was very different from what I had when I left St. Louis.

My eyes had been opened and I could finally see the wonders of what was around me. Then this past November I came home to St. Louis where things weren't so familiar, even though I have lived here most of my life.

In late January, I started working at LREC and, although technically

an educator, I found my new desk located in "the glasshouse." You know, the house on the hill past the prairie. I was now considered an "uplander" by those down in the barn. This placed me with the LREC ecologists who soon discovered that this neophyte botanist might just drive them crazy.

Not one of them has been able to escape the experience of a special delivery of a leaf carefully plucked or an amateur description of a shrub or tree. These interruptions are often accompanied by a request to come to the window so I can point out the general area in which this plant can be found.

I also have been known to tag along for a "walk" with them at which time they are constantly barraged with questions as we make halting progress to our destination. I cannot begin to express how much being an "uplander" means to me. My life in the glasshouse is a joy, each day bringing another gift.

Danelle, the new Restoration Ecologist on the team, has also been going through a similar learning process. She and I have decided to include short little quizzes now and again in the newsletter to share some of what we know or are learning about our new home. We hope you enjoy! ☺

Glasshouse Quiz

By Danelle Haake and Deanna Lawlor

(answers on page 5)

1. There are two native species of buckeye found at LREC: the white buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*) and the red buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*). Which of these is also called the Ohio Buckeye?
2. If you miss your breakfast in the morning and want a Fruit Loop fix, you can scratch this tree's branches or crumple a leaf and take a whiff. It smells just like Fruit Loops. What's this tree?
3. Aquatic invertebrates are used by scientists as an indicator of water quality. Some types are very tolerant of pollution (for example, leeches) while others are more sensitive to changes in their environment (for example, mayflies). Place the following three invertebrates in order from most sensitive to most tolerant: damselflies, aquatic worms, water pennies.

BONUS: Which of the invertebrates named above have been found in Deer Creek at LREC?

The Fallen Giants

By Malinda Slagle

We have some beautiful giants here at LREC for which we are very thankful. Their names are box elder, Ohio buckeye, hackberry, ash, sycamore, walnut, cottonwood, slippery elm, and silver maple. Our trees are one of the most beloved and ecologically-important natural features at LREC. Some of the largest trees here are over 1 meter (3 feet) in diameter, and over 3 meters (9 feet) around and about 33 meters (100 feet) tall. Those are some large trees!

Unfortunately, in the past year we have lost many large trees and limbs in our woodland. Some of these trees have fallen during wind storms or thunderstorms, some fell due to water-logged roots, some fell due to fungal problems, and others were taken down whole or in part to prevent accidents. For safety reasons, taking down some hazard trees is necessary.

The reason that so many trees seem to be dying recently is because most of our woods is of similar age, about 60 years old. Our woodland is a collection of dying pioneer species within an area that has had little fire and has been frequently inundated by water. Some of the most common trees in the woods are

species that are fast-growing, short-lived trees. These species are frequently some of the earliest colonizers of a new area, and often have weak roots and branches. Another unfortunate reason for the death of some trees is the continued erosion caused by increased stormwater levels and channelization of Deer Creek upstream of us.

Our strategy is to replace removed trees with slower-growing, longer-lived trees that are appropriate for this habitat such as river birch, bitternut hickory, shellbark hickory, burr oak, Shumard oak, butternut, walnut, and swamp white oak. These species are more adapted to the floodplain environment and will have stronger limbs. Danelle and I recently planted seven river birches grown in the nursery in gaps left by mature trees dying. We also will plant five Shumard oaks, five persimmons, and two walnuts in the gaps. There are 18 swamp white oaks that are growing in the nursery that will be planted into other gaps in the fall. We plan to continue to plant new trees for every tree that is lost in the woodland.

We have also reintroduced fire to the woodland, a natural part of the ecosystem in Missouri, which will result in an open

Trees

*I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.*

*A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing
breast;*

*A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;*

*A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;*

*Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.*

*Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.*

—JOYCE KILMER

woodland with more widely-spaced, larger trees.

James Trager, the restoration biologist at the Shaw Nature Reserve, is seeing a version of the same thing. Their population of mature individuals of another short-lived floodplain species, shingle oak, is particularly suffering. Trager cites last summer's high rainfall and humidity and wind in this region as a cause of limb loss of many dead or dying limbs that might have stuck to the trees in a drier, calmer summer. The constant wetness also favored fungal infections in trees at SNR which took out many of their less vigorous trees. 🐿

Photo Report: Wade in the Water

By Danelle Haake and Eddie Jones

On Friday, April 17, 2009, Danelle Haake led a volunteer enrichment activity to introduce us to the benthic macroinvertebrate (BMI) community in Deer Creek. Benthic macroinvertebrates are bugs and worms that live on the bottom of the creek. Danelle showed us how to collect a BMI sample with a kick net and identify the organisms. She also explained how the quality of the creek water could be determined from the BMI sample.



Clockwise from top: Volunteers prepare to use kick net; Danelle demonstrates a kick net; Participants try to identify macroinvertebrates they caught.
Photos by Danelle Haake and Eddie Jones.

Glasshouse Quiz Answers, from page 3

1. white buckeye; 2. sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*); 3. water pennies, damselflies, aquatic worms; BONUS: damselflies and aquatic worms

National Volunteer Week

By Mary Voges

April 19–25, 2009 was National Volunteer Week, recognizing the work and commitment of volunteers nationwide. This year's theme is "Celebrating People in Action," capturing the meaning behind this special week.

Established in 1974 by President Nixon, National Volunteer Week has grown exponentially in scope each year, drawing the support and endorsement of all subsequent U.S. presidents, governors, mayors, and other respected elected officials, as well as corporate and community groups across the country.

We, at the Litzsinger Road Ecology Center, are fortunate to have over 40 volunteers, from every walk of life, without whose dedication and love of nature we would not exist. The impact and power of volunteerism and service is an integral aspect of our mission here at LREC. We entrust our students to our volunteers, each student in need of an adult mentor to teach, guide, and inspire.

We are also privileged to have our horticulture volunteers—the people behind the scenes. These generous, devoted volunteers come to LREC never knowing if that morning will bring planting, painting, weed pulling, construction of a new

bridge, fixing of an old bridge, or replacing one of our many mailboxes on Litzsinger Road. We attribute the compliments we receive regarding the property to our many loyal volunteers.

This year two of our volunteers, Sharon Buchanan and Faye Roth, were honored at the Volunteer Appreciation Evening on April 21.

Faye Roth was honored for ten years of volunteer service at LREC. These past ten years have seen Faye on site once, maybe twice, but probably three times per week, always with a smile on her face and ready to reach out to each and every student, as well as staff. Two years ago, Faye received the *Extra Service Hours* award for her consistency and dedication to LREC.

Sharon Buchanan was nominated in the special achievement category for her tremendous effort to bring the Spoede Elementary School community on board at LREC. The write-up in the program says it all:



Sharon Buchanan and Faye Roth investigate the prairie with students.
Photo by Mary Voges.

"She has facilitated the development of a substantial working relationship between the Spoede Elementary School community and LREC. Thanks to her efforts, students now experience outdoor learning spaces at their schoolyard that provide the students with native plant habitats similar to those at LREC."

Sharon has worked with the faculty, parents, and students at Spoede to develop their woods into an exceptional native outdoor classroom.

To Faye and Sharon ...
CONGRATULATIONS!

And to all our Volunteers ...
THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU
DO! ☘

This Summer, at the Garden

“Power of Plants” Student Art Display

Daily, May 12–June 30, 2009
Ridgway Visitor Center. Each 2- or 3- dimensional work of art was created by K–12 students, and tells the tale of an amazing plant “superhero” and its special powers.

Garden Party Nights

Thursdays, Memorial Day through Labor Day
Enjoy family entertainment, adult wine tastings, and the beauty of the Garden after-hours. 5 to 9 p.m. \$7 adults, \$3 children (3–12), \$5 Garden members. Children’s Garden open until 8pm and free with event admission.

Whitaker Music Festival

Wednesdays, June 3–August 5
Free admission after 5pm; Music begins 7:30pm. Bring a picnic or refreshments are available for purchase. Children’s Garden open until 7pm, with free admission after 5pm.

Plastic Pot Recycling

Daily, through September 30
Recycle plastic garden pots, cell packs, and trays. 9am to 5pm daily. West parking lot of the Garden’s Monsanto Center, 4500 Shaw Blvd. at Vandeventer.

For more information about all these Garden events visit www.mobot.org.

Farewell to LREC

By Malinda Slagle



After five wonderful years, this is a bittersweet announcement to make. My family will be moving to Dallas, Texas in August. I am from Stephenville, Texas originally, which is a two hour drive from Dallas, so we will be much closer to my parents and extended family.

That will be a real blessing for us. However, it has been such an honor and pleasure to work with all of you.

I will never forget the dew on the prairie early in the morning, the crazy turkey antics, the beauty of the prairie burns, the blue of the bluebells, or the buzz of the bees in the prairie in the summer. This place is so special. You are all very lucky, and I have been lucky to work here. ☺

2009–10 School Partnership Applications

Attention teachers:

Have you submitted your 2009 LREC Field Lab Application? The online application for returning teachers at <http://www.litzsinger.org/forms/09application/application.html>.

Please remember that LREC class visit dates will not be assigned until your application has been submitted and accepted. Your LREC staff contact can assist you with the process. Teachers who have not visited LREC with their students are requested to contact Eddie Jones at eddie@litzsinger.org.



VOLUNTEER EDUCATOR TRAINING

Spread the word—LREC is looking for additional **Volunteer Educators!**

Volunteer Educator training is scheduled for Mondays this fall:

September 14–November 16, 9 am to 3 pm.

For more information, email Eddie at eddie@litzsinger.org.