

Litzsinger Road Ecology Center

Community Newsletter

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

Looking Ahead to Next Year

By Bob Coulter

Spring is the time when we start accepting applications for the next school year. We'll be sending out directions toward the end of March, but I'd like to "seed" your thoughts now so you can be thinking ahead. As most of you know, every year we get more school applications than we can accommodate, both because of limited staff time and the site use limits Ladue imposes on us. As a result, we have to be selective in which partnerships we enter into.

Aside from the usual project descriptions we'll be asking for, we will be giving particular emphasis to two aspects of the application as we make selections for next year: (1) The extent to which what your kids are learning with us promotes their engagement with your schoolyard or community; and (2) the extent to which we can support incremental growth in your professional practice. The first criteria is consistent with our emphasis on place-based education, which encourages building a stewardship ethic toward the community. The second criteria is meant to make sure we are making the best use of the partnership slots. Since we try to provide more intensive support for your efforts than a standard field trip, we want to be sure that a renewed partnership will promote your continuing growth as a professional.

It is gratifying to see each of you advance your teaching skills through your work with us, and we appreciate the ways in which you help us to grow. Looking to next year, what is the next step you want to take professionally? How can we help you get there? We're looking forward to discussing your plans with you. ☞

Registration is open for summer teacher professional development at LREC. Our summer 2010 offerings include *Take Your Ecology Curriculum Outdoors*, *Mapping Your Community*, and *Sustainable Schoolyards*.
Learn more at <http://www.litzsinger.org/profdev.html>.

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Upcoming LREC Events:

Volunteer Enrichment: Spring Walk-about

March 23, 12:00–2:30pm. Bring your lunch to the cabin at noon; walk-about begins at 12:30pm. We will look for signs of spring among the flora and fauna of the woods, creek, and prairie. Call (314) 540-4068 or email martha@litzsinger.org to RSVP.

Deer Creek Water Testing

March 18. Water chemistry: 9am–12pm (meet at Glass House); macroinvertebrate sampling: starts at 1pm (meet at Barn). Contact Danelle with any questions or to RSVP: (314) 961-4410 or danelle@litzsinger.org.

Upcoming Opportunities:

March Morpho Mania

March 2–31. At the Butterfly House. More than 3,000 big, bright, blue morpho butterflies will be fluttering about our tropical conservatory. See this dramatic sight while it lasts! Learn more at <http://www.butterflyhouse.org>.



Native Plant School: Native Plant Propagation from Seed

March 11, 1–4pm. At Shaw Nature Reserve. \$12 (\$8 for Garden Members). Call (636)451-3512 or visit <http://www.shawnature.org> to find out more information or to reserve your place.

Sustainable Schoolyards: Creating and Sustaining Habitats for Nature and Neighbors

By Eddie Jones

Covenant Christian School is more than a building. The school, which shares facilities with Covenant Presbyterian Church, includes substantial outdoor space that is in the process of becoming part of the formal learning environment. Plans include a garden for every classroom, a prairie, a woodland, and an arts center housed in a historic home—a wonderful example of a sustainable schoolyard! The students are not waiting idly for these spaces to be “completed.” They are actively involved in their development. Just a few weeks ago, the first graders sowed a native plant seed mix in the area set aside for a prairie habitat on the school grounds. LREC staff helped plan and prepare the seed mix. Then the students...well...see for yourself:

John Roberts, school principal, can be seen in the photograph at lower right giving a pep talk to the students as they initiate their prairie. Seed sowing (and dancing!) occurred on a day with ideal conditions: sunshine and a few inches of snow on the ground.

Along with two other teachers, John participated in the 2009 Sustainable Schoolyards workshop. At the workshop, they were introduced to a habitat restoration curriculum that includes the seed sowing activity. Applications are currently being accepted for the 2010 Sustainable Schoolyards workshop, June 14–18, 2010, at Litzsinger Road Ecology Center. Learn more at <http://www.litzsinger.org/profdev.html>. QR

Covenant Christian School

Location: 2145 N. Ballas Road,
St. Louis, MO 63131

Grade Levels: pre-K through 6

Number of Students: about 130

Total Number of Classrooms: 7

Classrooms Working with LREC: 1

Web site:

<http://www.cpcstl.org/school/>



All photos on this page by Rachel Banks.



Glass House Quiz: Feeder Birds

By Danelle Haake and Deanna Lawlor

If you are a regular visitor at LREC you probably have been drawn to the birdfeeders behind the cabin. These feeders, filled regularly by Martha, serve to educate, entertain, and delight staff and visitors.

Bird watching and bird feeding are popular pastimes for many. According to the Audubon Society, "Nearly one-third of the adult population of North America dispenses about a billion pounds of birdseed each year as well as tons of suet and gourmet 'seed cakes.'" That's a lot of seed! While research shows that feeding birds does not necessarily increase survival rate, it does increase people's knowledge and awareness of some of our most beautiful local fauna.

Enjoy this month's wild bird quiz and, most importantly, enjoy the variety of birds that our feeders attract in the St. Louis area. 🐦



Hairy woodpecker. Photo by Danelle Haake.

- Which are the State birds for Missouri and Illinois?
A) bluebird and chickadee B) cardinal and blue jay C) cardinal and chickadee D) bluebird and cardinal
- Which song bird species are most common at LREC?
A) goldfinches and robins B) roadrunners and dodos C) titmice and blue jays D) bluebirds and orioles
- Which birds are most commonly seen **at this time of year** at LREC?
A) goldfinches and turkeys B) eagles and hawks C) cardinals and woodpeckers D) bluebirds and orioles
- If you are interested in attracting certain kinds of birds, it is important to know the type of food that will attract them. Buying cheap mixed seed is probably a waste of your money; most inexpensive seed mixes contain milo, wheat, and oats as filler. Generally, birds dislike these seeds and will discard the filler on the ground where it will rot or attract unwanted rodents. Instead, invest in the following kinds of seed to attract a variety of birds. Match the birds with their favorite foods:

Doves	Black-oil sunflower seed
Chickadees	White millet
Bluebirds	Cracked corn
Sparrows	Niger or thistle seed
Hummingbirds	Sugar water
Woodpeckers	Fruits (raisins, bananas, currants, sliced apples)
Cardinals	Suet
Robins	
Goldfinches	

See **Quiz Answers**, page 4

Quiz Answers, from page 3

1. D) Missouri: eastern bluebird;
Illinois: northern cardinal.
2. A) Goldfinches and robins.
3. C) Cardinals and woodpeckers.
4. Doves (cracked corn),
chickadees (sunflower seed, suet), bluebirds (fruit),
sparrows (white millet), hummingbirds (sugar water),
woodpeckers (suet), cardinals (sunflower seed), robins (fruit),
goldfinches (niger/thistle).



Eastern bluebird. Photo by Lee R. DeHaan.

References:

Source for food preference:

<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/learning/bird-feeding-tips/what-kind-of-bird-food-should-i-use/>

Source of general bird feeding information:

<http://www.audubon.org/>



Top: pair of northern cardinals. Bottom: pair of goldfinches. Photos by Ken Thomas.



Photo by Eddie Jones.

Calendar Commentary

This is the photo for March 2010 from the LREC Calendar.

Wild Plum or American Plum
(*Prunus Americana*)

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Bloom time: March

Bloom color: **White (5 petals, in clusters) with yellow anthers**

The wild plum is a Missouri native. It can occur as a multi-stemmed shrub, often forming thickets, or a small, single trunk tree. Its leaves are simple and alternate with sharply toothed margins. The upper surface is dark green while the underside is slightly paler. Round, red fruit with yellow pulp ripen in the summer. Although it is usually grown as an ornamental plant, the fruit can be used in preserves and jellies. The wild plum can be found in the north woods across from the big box elder tree at LREC.

References:

Kemper Center for Home Gardening web site,
<http://www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp/plantinfo.shtml>

Kurz, D. 2009. *Shrubs and Woody Vines of Missouri Field Guide*. Missouri Department of Conservation; Jefferson City, MO.