

Litzsinger Road Ecology Center

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

www.litzsinger.org

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November 2011

Beyond the Bean Seed

by Bob Coulter

A few weeks ago I was fortunate enough to attend the North American Association for Environmental Education conference. During the shuttle ride from the airport to my hotel, the driver asked the usual questions about why I was in town and what I did for a living. I always answer hesitantly, never knowing if the driver is a tree hugger or a charter member of the “Drill, baby, drill” movement.

That night the driver was appreciative of environmental education, but in a sense his story was quite sad. He enthused about his nature studies as a boy, saying how much he enjoyed watching his bean seed grow, every time they did it. While on the surface, it was good that he had a plant to nurture, it's also just a bit sad that the most memorable environmental experience he had as a child was to grow a bean seed. The most haunting part of his story for me, though, was the comment about how much he enjoyed it every time. This suggests that his teachers over the years were hardly pushing the envelope in providing innovative learning experiences.

Fortunately, in the years ahead when we encounter your students they will have so much more to talk about. Just this week volunteers and I will be working with second graders doing bird research to learn what they need to know to create a bird sanctuary on their school grounds, while older students will be planting native plants as they learn about ecosystems and ways to control erosion. So much more than the annual bean seed project, growing out of your ambition and enthusiasm for taking kids to new levels of learning. Please know how much the planet silently appreciates what you do. 🌱

The University Child Development Center (UCDC) staff and students created, and presented us with, a book titled “Look What I See! Our trip to the Litzsinger Ecology Center,” illustrating their exploration at LREC. See the book the next time you are at LREC. Read more about our partnership with UCDC on page 2. Photo by Leslie Memula.



Continuing to Grow New Partnerships

by Leslie Memula

The University Child Development Center (UCDC) is a campus-based child-care center located on the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) campus. The Center's teachers and students are fortunate to have an outdoor classroom nestled in their playground area. They have a pond, some raised beds, and a bird viewing area.

When we first began talking with Lynn Navin (Director) and Karen Taylor (Program Coordinator), we were excited to learn that they were interested in adding a garden filled with native Missouri plants to their outdoor space.

The accompanying photos and captions depict some of our work with the UCDC. Photos by UCDC staff.

Visit the UCDC web site at <http://www.umsl.edu/~kids/>. 🌿



Above: To keep track of the different types of plants, the students worked (with the help of their teachers) to make signs to label the plants they planted. They continued to water throughout the hot and dry summer and their garden kept on growing.



Above: In early June, Eddie and I took about 30 plants (grown at LREC) out to the students at the UCDC. Each classroom took a turn coming out to the garden. Students helped put the plants in the ground and gave them a good drink of water.



Below: Four teachers from the center took a summer workshop at LREC. The Explorers—a class of 2 and 3 year old students—came out to visit us at LREC on September 30, accompanied by their teachers (Tiffany Bain and Pam Daniel) and many of their parents. We all had a wonderful time!

Glass House Quiz: White-tailed Deer

by Danelle Haake and Deanna Lawlor

We have been seeing an increase in the activity of our hoofed, ungulate residents over the past few weeks. Several sightings of white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) are reported each week, sometimes several in a day. This can be the highlight of a class visit to LREC.

This time of year also finds the ecologists monitoring and even fencing off many of our tree and shrub saplings to avoid damage from our resident whitetails. Deer often enjoy browsing the tender branches or working to remove the layer of velvet from their antlers by rubbing against the young trees and shrubs.

There are many other interesting things about the life history of white-tailed deer. See how much you know in our quiz:

1. **The peak of whitetail deer mating season is which month?**

- a) September
- b) October
- c) November
- d) December

2. **Most young are born between late May and June. In general, how many fawns will each doe have?**

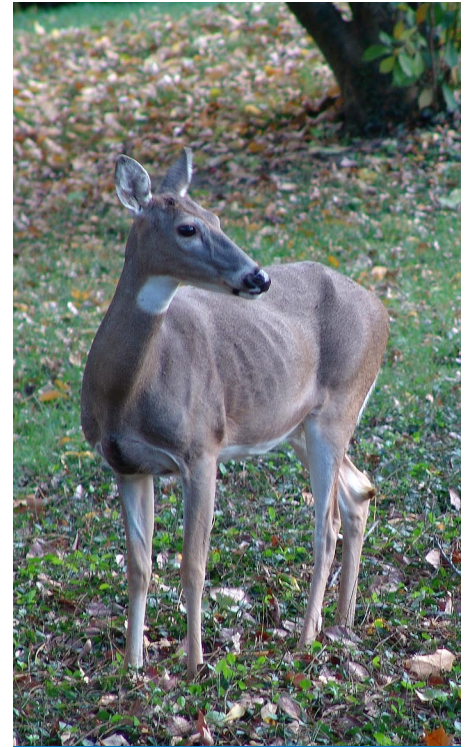
- a) 1
- b) 2
- c) 3
- d) 4

3. **What are the velvety bumps on top of a male deer's head prior to antler development called?**

- a) snaps
- b) buttons
- c) siphons
- d) velvets

4. **What is the difference between antlers and horns?**

- a) antlers are lost and regrown yearly; horns are permanent
- b) antlers grow from the base, while horns grow from the tips
- c) horns are composed of keratin like hooves, while antlers are composed of bone
- d) both a and c



This deer was photographed at LREC this October. Photo by Danelle Haake.

5. **How long does it take for a fawn to lose its spots?**

- a) 1–2 months
- b) 3–5 months
- c) 6–8 months
- d) 1 year

See **Quiz**, page 5

Prescribed Burn Season Approaches

by Danelle Haake

With winter on its way, the ecology staff are preparing for one of the most widely anticipated events of the year: our prescribed burn! Last year, we were unable to burn due to the uncooperative weather. This year, we are hopeful that we will be able to burn three of our habitats: North Prairie, Pasture Prairie, and North Woods. Staff members and volunteers have been spending significant time planning the burn, checking the condition of equipment, and preparing the burn units by removing potential hazards.

Because the weather is relatively unpredictable, we are generally



LREC prairie burn. Photo by LREC Staff.



Many volunteers aided staff during this controlled burn. Photo by Sean Fears.

unable to schedule the burn more than a day in advance. We will need crews of volunteers to watch the weather, carry water packs and fire rakes to help with containment, and monitor the edges to ensure that no one wanders into the burn unit without realizing what is going on. If you are interested in volunteering to help during the burn, please contact Danelle (danelle@litzsinger.org or 314-961-4410) so that we can put you on the notification list. You will receive a confirmation e-mail and notification when conditions are favorable for a burn. ✍

Volunteer Enrichment: Prescribed Burns November 9, 2011

If you would like to know more about prescribed burning in general or our LREC burns, please come to our Volunteer Enrichment on November 9. Join us with a sack lunch at 11:30am, or just come for the program beginning at noon. Meet at the barn. RSVP to Martha if you plan to attend (martha@litzsinger.org or 314-540-4068).

From **Quiz**, page 3

Answers:

1. **c) November.**
2. **b) Does usually have twins.**
Each fawn weighs 4–7 pounds.
Approximately 70% of does have twins with 15% having triplets and 15% having single fawns.
3. **b) Buttons, also called pedicels, are the site for antler growth.**
Antler growth begins in mid March or April, and the growth is triggered by increasing daylight and the hormones testosterone and prolactin.
4. **d) Antlers are composed of bone and are lost and regrown yearly.**
White-tailed deer have antlers, not horns. Antler growth starts in April or May. B is false; antlers grow from the tips and horns grow from the base.
5. **b) Typically fawns lose their spots around 5 months of age.** The spots, which help the fawn blend into the landscape, fade in the fall as they grow their winter coat.



Twins fawns in Montana.

Sources:

Missouri Department of Conservation [as viewed October 21, 2011]—<http://mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/deer>

DePerno, Christopher. "Antlered Does." Minnesota Conservation Volunteer Magazine. May–June 2004. Available for download at http://webapps8.dnr.state.mn.us/volunteer_index/past_issues/article_pdf?id=2134 ↗

LREC Announcements

November 9

Volunteer Enrichment

Noon, meet at the barn. Brown-bag lunch at 11:30am; program begins at noon. Learn about prescribed burns in general and at LREC. RSVP to Martha at martha@litzsinger.org or 314-540-4068.

November 17

Monthly Water Quality Sampling

9am–noon, meet at the Glass House. Questions? Contact Danelle Haake at 314-961-4410 or danelle@litzsinger.org.

December 6

Volunteer Holiday Party

11am–2pm at the Glass House. RSVP to Martha at martha@litzsinger.org or 314-540-4068.

Local Events

November 4, 12, & 18

Owl Prowls

7pm at the World Bird Sanctuary in Valley Park. Learn about owls and their unique calls, then take an easy night hike to try to call in a wild owl. \$9 adults; \$7 children. Reservations required; call (636) 225-4390 ext. 0.

November 5 & 6

Nature Journaling

10:30am–noon and 2–3:30pm at the Old Courthouse. Learn how to visualize information and create your own nature journal using objects from nature and paintings of natural parks. Free. Open to adults and kids over 10. To reserve a spot, call 314-655-1615.

November 17

Science Café: "Honoring Who Came Before: American Indian Ethnobotany"

7–9pm at Herbie's Restaurant, 405 N. Euclid Ave. Learn about the ways Lakota and Dakota (Sioux) have used the prairie for generations. Free. Learn more at <http://www.slsc.org/AdultProgrammings/ScienceCafe.aspx>.



VOLUNTEER HOLIDAY PARTY

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2011

11 AM TO 2 PM AT THE GLASS HOUSE

RSVP to Martha at martha@litzsinger.org or 314-540-4068.

