



Litzsinger Road Ecology Center

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

www.litzsinger.org

May 2016

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*Raccoon tracks at LREC. Signs of animals abound—if you know where and how to look for them! Learn about a resource you can use with your students on page 2.
Photo by Leslie Memula.*

Building Citizens

by Bob Coulter

I recently attended a talk by Joel Westheimer at UMSL, sponsored by their Center for Character and Citizenship. Westheimer's new book *What Kind of Citizen?: Educating Our Children for the Common Good* would be a great (and short!) addition to your summer reading list. In it, he challenges us to go beyond simple one-off projects like litter cleanups and move kids toward active citizenship. As they do this, the kids have opportunities to become full participants in the life of their community—at school and beyond. Throughout, Westheimer draws on his own experience in Canada and the U.S. as he wraps advice in a very well-grounded understanding of the challenges teachers face today in an era of standardization.

Along with that, we invite you to use us as a resource in planning how to take your schoolyard and community projects to the next level—not just in their scope and ambition, but also in how you are giving ownership of the work to your students. While different kids will have different capabilities, there's something for everyone to do, and a next level to grow toward. We're around this summer, ready to have that conversation with you. 🌿



THE LITZSINGER ROAD ECOLOGY
CENTER COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER
IS GOING ON SUMMER HIATUS.
LOOK FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE IN
SEPTEMBER 2016.



A University Child Development Center preschooler discovers where to look for animal signs during a visit to LREC. Photo by Leslie Memula.

Activity Spotlight: Looking for Signs of Animals

by Leslie Memula

Rare is the child who steps off the bus and excitedly exclaims “I can’t wait to see the plants.” Usually kids start looking around, peering into the woods a bit and then down to the creek. As I welcome them to Litzsinger Road Ecology Center their hands begin to go up and they eagerly ask about the animals: What kinds of animals live here? Will they see any animals during their visit? Are there bears here? Or tigers? What about snakes? I have to admit that while my appreciation for and knowledge of the native plant life has grown tremendously in the last eight years, just like the students I really get excited about the

prospect of seeing animals when I am out on the grounds.

Perhaps your students have been learning to differentiate between living and non-living things. Maybe your curriculum covers plants and animals—life cycles, interactions, or relationships. How about learning about vertebrates and invertebrates? Or animal classification and the five kingdoms? All of these topics can be addressed or enhanced by taking your students outside and exploring your schoolyard habitats!

One of my favorite tools for outdoor exploration is the [Who](#)

[Eats What](#) guide. There is a section focusing on animal signs that teaches students where and what to look for along with providing some excellent sketches as examples of what they might find: 1) animals eating plants, 2) homes, trails, and scratchings, 3) webs, eggs, and cocoons, and 4) tracks and scat. A second section provides detailed information on a wide variety of animals and their food sources, including where you might encounter these critters so you can be successful in your adventures.

This spring has already proved to be a very active time for the many different animals that call our ecology center home. I imagine that equally exciting things are happening in your very own schoolyards. Try laminating several copies of this guide and have them ready for your students to grab before you head outside to learn in your outdoor classroom! ✨



Turkey eggs. Photo by Eddie Jones.

End-of-the-School-Year Announcements for Teachers

by Eddie Jones

TEACHERS:

- By the end of this month, please complete a final [Seasonal Partnership Update](#) for this school year.
- If you are planning to take a [summer workshop](#) with us, please [register](#) as soon as possible. Our introductory workshop is almost full and the others are rapidly filling.
- Two-hour enrichment programs, for both teachers and Volunteer Educators, will be offered at LREC on June 8 and July 11. See LREC Announcements on page 7 for details.
- We will begin scheduling fall semester visits to LREC in mid-August. We will send out a notice, but feel free to check in with us at any time.
- We are available throughout the summer to meet with you and assist in your plans related to outdoor place-based education. 🦋



Two teachers from the Freedom School stand next to their schoolyard prairie. Photo by Eddie Jones.

MAY

by Martha M. Schermann

Molding
Awesome
Youth



Teachers and Volunteers:

Have you joined one of our Facebook groups yet? Join to learn about local events and site news, and share posts with your colleagues.



[Join LREC Volunteers](#)

[Join LREC Teachers](#)

ATTENTION VOLUNTEERS:

Don't miss our annual

**VOLUNTEER/STAFF
PICNIC!**

Thursday, August 11, 2016

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**at the Windegger Shelter
at Tilles Park**

Family members are welcome.

RSVP to Martha at
314-540-4068 or martha@lrec.net
and tell her what side dish you
will bring and how many are
coming. Burgers, brats, hot dogs
and drinks will be provided.



End-of-the-School-Year Announcements for Volunteer Educators

by Eddie Jones

VOLUNTEER EDUCATORS:

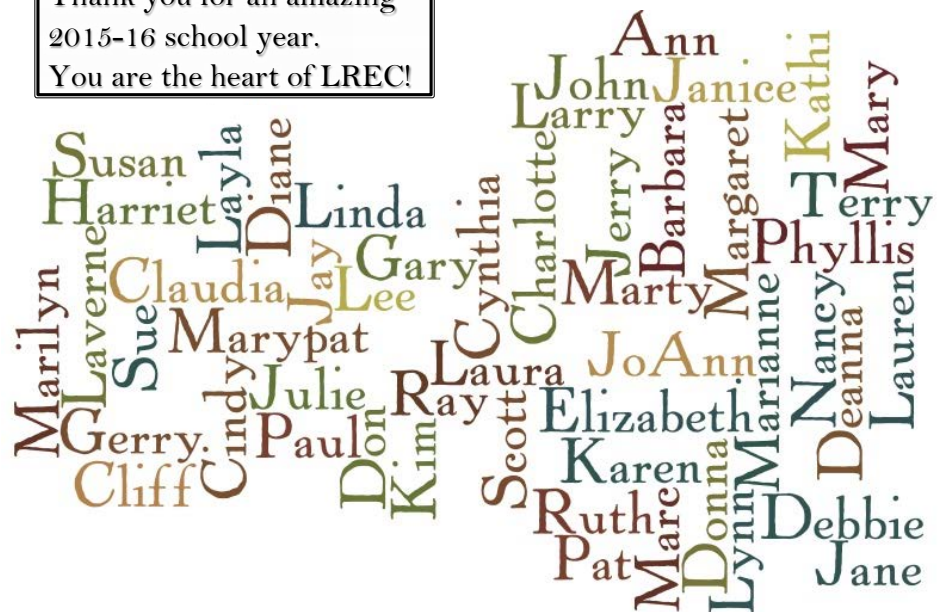
- Please plan to attend our May Volunteer Enrichment program on May 19 from noon–2:30 p.m. We will introduce you to changes in our Teacher Partnership Program, receive feedback from you regarding this school year, and explore the LREC habitats. Lunch is provided at noon.
- Enrichment programs, for both teachers and Volunteer Educators will be offered at LREC on June 8 and July 11. See LREC Announcements on page 7 for details.
- While our school year calendar ends the week before Memorial Day, there are several opportunities to interact with children and youth this summer! These include summer programs associated with our school year teacher partners, a local community group, and three teen programs. The first group will visit us June 9. Please check our [program calendar](#) for times and dates. If you have questions, contact a LREC staff member.

- We are currently recruiting volunteers—horticulture and education—throughout the year, including during summer. As our primary ambassadors, we look to you to direct us to future LREC volunteers.
- LREC staff are available throughout the summer to meet with you. Thank you for being a critical part of the LREC community, supporting real-world education throughout the St. Louis region. 🌿



Our new Volunteer Educators (plus Eddie). Photo by Leslie Memula.

Volunteer Educators...
 Thank you for an amazing
 2015-16 school year.
 You are the heart of LREC!



Glass House Quiz: Snakes

by Danelle Haake and Deanna English

Spring is a great time to catch sight of snakes around Litzsinger Road Ecology Center, in your yard, and on your hikes. In the spring, snakes are emerging from their winter quarters and are busy looking for food and mates. Because snakes are cold blooded, you can also often see them on cooler spring days sunning on a warm surface to regulate their body temperature. Here at LREC, we have been enjoying the return of our reptilian friends. We hope you enjoy learning more about snakes in our last quiz of the season.

1. **Some people are afraid of snakes and wonder what they are good for. What are some of the important roles snakes play in our ecosystems?**

- a) they dig snake holes that aerate the soil
- b) they eat rodents
- c) they are food for hawks and owls
- d) all of the above
- e) both b and c

2. **Are native snakes protected in Missouri?**

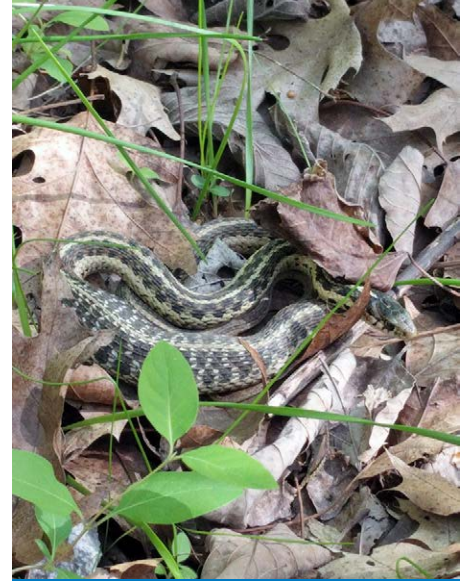
- a) yes, except when a venomous snake is in a space where there is a risk of a person being bitten
- b) only if they are endangered
- c) only native non-venomous snakes are protected
- d) no snakes are protected in Missouri

3. **Do snakes lay eggs or give birth to live young?**

- a) all snakes lay eggs
- b) all snakes give birth to live young
- c) venomous snakes lay eggs
- d) some snakes lay eggs and other snakes give birth to live young

4. **What do snakes eat?**

- a) snakes eat animals and plants—they are omnivorous
- b) snakes only eat small mammals like mice and voles
- c) snakes are predators and eat a variety of creatures
- d) both a and c, depending on the species



Eastern garter snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*).
Photo by Danelle Haake.

5. **How many different species or subspecies (geographic race) of snakes are in Missouri?**

- a) around 10
- b) around 25
- c) around 50
- d) nobody really knows

6. **How many venomous snakes are native to Missouri? (And try to name as many as you can.)**

- a) one
- b) two
- c) three
- d) four
- e) five

See **Quiz**, page 6



From **Quiz**, page 5

Answers:

1. **e) both b and c.** There are many good things about snakes, but they definitely control rodents and are a food source for some birds along with mink, skunks and other mammals. Many people believe that snakes dig holes. Snakes are not able to dig holes but they will take up residence in holes that other animals have dug, primarily rodents.
2. **a) yes, except when a venomous snake is in a space where there is a risk of a person being bitten.** The Wildlife Code of Missouri treats snakes, lizards, and most turtles as nongame, which means there is no open season on these animals. It is technically unlawful to kill snakes unless they are in a space, like around a home, where there is a direct threat to people.
3. **d) some snakes lay eggs and other snakes give birth to live young.** Copperheads, rattlesnakes, cottonmouths, garter snakes, and water snakes all give birth to live young. In Missouri, no venomous snakes lay eggs, so if you find snake eggs, the snakes are harmless to humans.



The Glass House's resident western rat snake (Pantherophis obsoletus). Photo by Danelle Haake.

4. **c) snakes are predators and eat a variety of creatures.** All snakes are carnivorous predators (eat other animals) and many are particular about what they eat. Our Glass House resident rat snake eats rats, mice, voles, and bird eggs, while a water snake that you might see at the stream would primarily eat dead, diseased, and injured fish.
5. **c) around 50.** There are around 50 species or subspecies of snakes in Missouri. Most of these species are harmless to humans and most species that you encounter in an urban environment are harmless.
6. **e) five.** Five venomous snakes are native to Missouri. They are the copperhead, cottonmouth,

western pygmy rattlesnake, massasauga rattlesnake, and timber rattlesnake. The most common venomous snake in Missouri is the copperhead. Parts of the St. Louis region are located in the geographic range of copperheads, massasauga rattlesnakes, and timber rattlesnakes. ✎

Sources:

Snake Facts | MDC Discover Nature

<http://nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/general-species-information/amphibian-and-reptile-facts/snake-facts>

University of Missouri Extension
<http://extension.missouri.edu/pg9450>

Litzsinger Road Ecology Center

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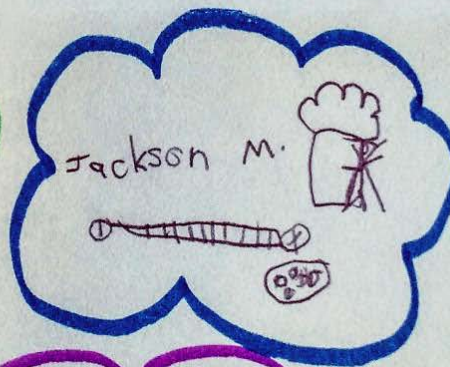
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Find us on Facebook:

[LREC Teachers](#) • [LREC Volunteers](#)

Thank you for teaching us to
be Nature Detectives. We
learned a lot!

First Graders at HCA-OLP



LREC Announcements

May 19

Volunteer Enrichment: Lunch, Teacher Partnership Update, Feedback Session

Noon to 2:30pm, meet at the cabin. Get updates on changes to our Teacher Partnership Program and participate in a feedback session regarding this school year. Lunch is provided at noon. RSVP to Martha at 314-540-4068 or martha@lrec.net.

June 1

New Volunteer Educator Training Session: Living Things

9–11:30am, meet at the cabin. Direct questions to Leslie or Eddie.

June 8

New Volunteer Educator Training Session: Earth Processes

9–11:30am, meet at the cabin. Direct questions to Leslie or Eddie.

June 8

Volunteer/Teacher Enrichment: Field Guide Training

12:30 to 2:30pm, meet at the cabin. Bring your brown bag lunch at noon or meet us at 12:30pm for the program. RSVP to Martha at 314-540-4068 or martha@lrec.net.

July 11

Volunteer/Teacher Enrichment: Explore LREC in the Summertime

10am–noon, meet at the cabin. Explore the habitats of LREC with a highly knowledgeable and/or highly entertaining staff person. RSVP to Martha at 314-540-4068 or martha@lrec.net.

August 11

Volunteer/Staff Picnic

11am to 2pm, at the Windegger Shelter at Tillis Park. See page 3 for details.