Dragonfly

A newsletter of the Prairie Park Nature Center, Lawrence Parks and Recreation

October 2014

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Lawrence, KS 66046
(785) 832-7980

Staff:
Director: Marty Birrell
Naturalists: Andrea Woody, Joan Phelan, Dara Wilson, Pat Pisani, Jesse Morgan, & Martin Farrell

Hours:
Monday: Closed
Tues-Sat: 9am-5pm
Sunday: 1pm-4pm

Check us out on the Web!
www.lawrenceks.org/lprd/ppnc

City of Lawrence
PARKS AND RECREATION

Going Solar

Prairie Park Nature Center is going to put the sun to work this fall with a brand new solar array project! The nature center is leaping into the area of energy sustainability with a grant from Westar Energy. The grant, awarded to the center in July, will fund a 10,000 kilowatt solar photovoltaic array that will be mounted on the roof of the education building. Westar Energy invited applications earlier in the year for the 10 grants they planned to award around the state. Eileen Horn, the Douglas County/Lawrence Sustainability Coordinator, spearheaded writing this grant, with input from the nature center director, Marty Birrell.

Approximately 40 panels will be on the center's roof, but one will be placed at ground level for visitors to better see.

The nature center invited solar energy vendors to submit proposals that would meet the criteria outlined by Westar Energy. Locally based company, Good Energy, submitted the proposal which the nature center felt best fit its needs. The cost of the project is about $85,000 and is fully funded by the grant.

The Westar grant is intended to educate the public about the value of solar energy usage in both residential and commercial buildings. The nature center offers an excellent opportunity to reach a broad public audience from school children to homeowners and other educators with this fully functional solar panel array. The grant covers the cost of the solar array and all of the educational materials for a period of 20 years. Not only will this array help offset the costs of electricity for operating the center's education building, but it have a strong educational focus on clean, sustainable energy production.

An interactive education kiosk will allow the public to see how much energy can be generated by the solar array over a period of time, as well as, the amount of energy being generated in real time. The main solar array will be connected into the building's electrical system, and excess energy generated will be fed back into the grid.

A single solar panel will be mounted in close proximity in the upper display area to allow the public to see how much energy a single panel will generate as weather conditions change. This off-grid panel will be connected to storage batteries to demonstrate the ability of solar energy to power common household electrical appliances. Another panel will generate electricity to power the garden pond pump. A deconstructed solar cell model will help educate how solar energy is produced by a solar cell. The nature center is planning on adding energy curricula to the programs available to schools and will integrate energy education into other existing programs.

The project will take two years to fully develop all of its educational materials. The photovoltaic panels however are scheduled to be mounted this fall. So be looking for some new and very interesting changes in the near future as the nature center partners with Westar Energy to embrace the future of sun power!

Kid's Korner

All of these can be made from recycled materials.

carpet	picnic table
bag	floor mat
tile	book
shoes	park bench
toys	clothing
pencil	envelope
box	paper towels
ruler	binder

How many can you find hidden below?

T
Y O B
N S Y O P
Z H E S N S A
L O T A P Q F M R
M E N O R A N L E B K
R S C T G U P I O W N X B
V A N N C E M E K O Z C F G E
O T S P A E N V R D R H I A D S N
K R U L E R F V J T O M C L Y R W B C
Q E K R M N A Q E X O B A K J E T P J G H
C D D B E S C M I L N W Y T Z L Y X W E C K L
O N E G A B N I P K O A E U H I W A N M I T D R N
N I S C M N R M L O S P C L O T H I N G B H Q M E F O
T B L Q K O O B C A T B E K S V C P I C N I C T A B L E P

Weird Nature News

Thousands of walrus were spotted on a beach in northwest Alaska during a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) survey of arctic marine mammals. Photographed by plane, an estimated 35,000 walrus were gathered on the shore; about 5 miles from the Inupiat village of Point Lay. The photos were taken on September 27. It's normal for pods of walrus to rest on floating sea ice, but as sea ice continues to disappear, these mammals are forced to seek respite on land.

http://www.treehugger.com/climate-change/what-it-looks-when-35000-walrus-cant-find-enough-sea-ice.html

Did you know…

that it can take up to 700 years for plastic to decompose (break down and disappear) in our landfills or dumps. But PET plastic can be recycled into; clothing, fiberfill for sleeping bags, stuffed animals, toys, rulers, and more!

Look for bottles with this symbol.

Make a RecyCool **Bubble Blower**

Items Needed

- Small plastic soda bottle (20 ounce) - empty and washed
- Or for larger bubbles you could use a 2-liter plastic soda bottle
- Scissors
- Masking tape

Instructions

1. Wrap a piece of masking tape around the bottle, about four inches from the top.
2. Ask an adult to help you cut along the bottom edge of the masking tape. Recycle the bottom of the bottle and discard the bottle cap.
3. Remove the masking tape from the bottle.
4. Dip the cut end of the bubble blower into the solution. Place the small end up to your mouth and blow your bubbles.

Take Back the Tap

When you want a drink, where do you go to get a drink of water? Do you drink from the tap? Or do you grab a bottle of water? And why is the answer to this question so important? As of 2010, people in the U.S. were buying more than half a billion bottles of water every week. Renee Sharp, Director of the California Office of Environmental Working Group offered the following calculation: "Assuming each bottle is 8 inches high,…1 billion bottles would circle the globe 5.4 times, or would span the distance between Los Angeles and Tokyo 23 times."[1] That's a lot of plastic.

Most plastic water bottles are made of PET plastic, or polyethylene terephthalate, which is made from crude oil. The invention of PET in the 1970's made the portable water bottle possible. While plastic is everywhere because it is probably the most convenient material ever made, it comes at a high price. The Glass Packaging Institute put out a report comparing glass and plastic, in which they noted that, "The number of chemicals used and released (in plastic production) that are known to cause cancer, birth defects and damage to reproductive systems has increased dramatically."[2]

ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP

An American environmental organization that specializes in research and advocacy in the areas of toxic chemicals, agricultural subsidies, public lands, and corporate accountability.

The Pacific Institute breaks down the cost of plastic production like this: "Because bottled water required approximately 1 million tons of PET in 2006, those bottles required roughly 100 billion MJ of energy. A barrel of oil contains around 6,000 MJ, so producing those bottles required the equivalent of around 17 million barrels of oil. This is enough energy to fuel one million American cars for one year."[3]

That is A LOT of energy and resources to produce a plastic bottle that is meant to be used exactly ONCE. So what happen to all those bottles after we are done with them? According to the Container Recycling Institute, 90 percent of PET bottles end up in landfills, where they take between 450 and 1000 years to break down.[4] In addition, a 2004 report from the Container Recycling Institute tells us that "Beverage containers make up 4.4 percent of the waste stream and 40 to 60 percent of roadside litter," and goes on to say that "An estimated 118 billion beverage bottles and cans were landfilled, littered, or incinerated in 2002 – 83 percent more than were wasted in 1992, and more than twice the amount wasted in 1982."[5]

PET bottles take between 450 and 1000 years to break down in landfills.

The movement to stop using bottled water and "take back the tap" has been gaining more and more popularity. You can join this cause, by making a personal commitment to not buy or drink bottled water unless the water in your community is truly unhealthy. If you want to do more, then join a campaign that's working for bigger solutions, such as demanding the ban of purchase of bottled water by your school, organization or entire city. In the U.S., Seattle, San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Salt Lake City have all banned bottled water at city functions as a way of reducing budgets while promoting their cities' highly drinkable tap water.[6]

Food & Water Watch works to ensure the food, water and fish we consume is safe, accessible and sustainable.

You can work with millions of people to protect our health as well as the planet. There is some good news: change has already started. Groups like the Story of Stuff Project, Environmental Working Group, Food and Water Watch and the Polaris Institute have worked to expose the truth behind the commercialization of this most essential resource. These groups have worked to change both the prevailing public sentiment and the bottled-water industry. There have already been some victories. The Think Outside the Bottle campaign, which promotes and ensures public funding for our public water systems, has reported that some encouraging numbers. They have found that 40 percent of people have switched from bottled to tap water, 27 colleges and university campuses have cut spending on bottled water, and 6 states have begun phasing-out purchases of bottled water with taxpayer dollars. Also, after years of rising sales, the bottled-water market has now stagnated.

The Story of Stuff is a short animated documentary about the lifecycle of material goods.

[1] (The Story of Bottle Water, by The Story of Stuff Project, 2010).
[2] (Advantage Glass! Switching to Plastic is an Environmental Mistake, by Henry S. Cole, Ph.D. and Kenneth A. Brown, 1993, 60.)
[3] (http://www.pacinst.org/topics/integrity_of_science/case_studies/bottled_water_factsheet.pd)
[4] (http://www.container-recycling.org/)
[5] (The 10¢ Incentive to Recycle, by Jenny Gitlitz and Pat Franklin, CRI, 2004).
[6] (The Story of Bottled Water, by The Story of Stuff Project, 2010).

Celebrating Our 15th Anniversary

The Prairie Park Nature Center has reached another milestone! Fifteen years ago, the Lawrence Parks and Recreation department celebrated the opening of this educational building with a mass release of tagged Monarch butterflies. In the years since, we have shared the wonders of our natural world and local community with thousands of people of all ages. It has been a privilege to be able to share these experiences with all our visitors.

The Prairie Park Nature Center has enjoyed many changes and milestones as the years have flown by. We've add many new members to our education animal family, including eagles, several colorful parrots and one endangered black-footed ferret. Our educational programs have also greatly expanded. We have added canoeing, archery and other recreational programs; created a distinguished science and nature summer camp program; and developed an extensive variety of school and group field trip programs. We look forward to new and exciting changes that the future may hold. Even now, we are preparing for our new solar array project for the educational building.

The list of wonderful people who have supported and contributed to the nature center over the years is too long to detail here. Each organization and individual has left their special mark here. We have been very fortunate to have had so many friends and committed staff over the years. We thank you all. Some notable mentions are:

- Lawrence Parks & Recreation maintenance crews; who built the educational buildings displays.
- Westar Energy and Jayhawk Audubon; who helped fund our eagle cages and other projects.
- Stan Roth; who contributed his vast teaching collection, as well as his wisdom.
- Joe and Suzanne Collins; who collected and donated many of the snakes in our education collection.
- The many wildlife rehabilitators who made our beautiful education animals available.
- The teachers and parents who bring their students to our programs, and many others.
- Prairie Park Partners; for raising funds and recruiting volunteers.
- Our dedicated naturalists and volunteers that have each added their own special contributions to building; improving our displays and programs.

When we celebrated our 15th Anniversary party this September, we celebrated our past and future achievements. We want to thank all of our visitors and friend who supported us by joining in the fun; tagging monarchs and enjoying cake. The last 15 years have been filled with wonderful memories of the thousands of visitors who have shared the park, the animals and the programs.

Upcoming Events

Children/Teens

Wild Adventures for Preschoolers and Parents: Ages 2-5. Meets Tuesday at 10-11am, 11/4-12/16, 1/5-3/5 and 4/5-5/21.

Nature Storytime: Ages 2-4. Meets Thursday at 10-10:30am, 11/6-12/18, 1/13-3/3 and 3/31-5/19.

Grossology: Ages 7-12. Meets at 1-3pm on 2/6 and 3/28.

After School Programs

Hiking Adventures: Ages 7-12. Meets at 3-4:30pm on 10/15 and 11/5.

Homeschool-Exploring Nature: Ages 6-13. Meets at 10am-12pm on 10/8, 11/5, 1/14, 1/28, 2/11, 2/25, 4/8, 4/22, 5/6, 5/20.

Nature Nuts: Ages 7-12. Meets at 3-4:30pm on 1/7, 1/21, 2/4, 2/18, 4/1, 4/15, 4/29, and 5/13.

Beginners' Archery: Ages 7-16. Meets at 3-4:30pm on 4/8 and 4/22.

Archery Club: Ages 7-16. Meets at 3-4pm on 4/15 and 4/29.

Special Programs for School Days Off

Fall Break Camp: Ages 6-12. Meets at 8:30am-4pm on 11/13 and 11/14.

Wild Things Camp: Ages 6-10. Meets at 8am-4pm on 2/26 and 2/27.

Adult Programs

Create Your Own Nature Journal: Ages 18 and up. Meets at 7-8:30pm on 3/24.

Nature Journal: Ages 18 and up. Meets at 7-8pm on Tuesdays, 3/31-4/21.

Nature Photography: Ages 18 and up. Meets at 1-2:30pm on 3/5.

Adult Lecture Series: Ages 50+. Meets at 11:30-1pm on 10/15, 11/12, 1/21, 2/18, and 3/11.

Nature Creations: Ages 50+. Meets at 1pm on 2/12 and 4/2.

Geocaching: Ages 50+. Meets at 2-3:30pm on 4/7.

Intro to Archery: Ages 50+. Meets at 3-4:30pm on Thursdays, 4/9-4/30 .

Enrollment may be required. Call 785-832-7980 or go to www.lprd.org/ppnc for more information.

Special Events

Club Scout Merit Badge Day

Saturday, January 10th, from 1-4pm.

Tiger Badge Program at 1pm. Wolf Badge Program at 2pm. Bear Badge Program at 3pm.

Lawrence Eagle Days

Saturday, January 24th, from 9am to 4pm.

Join us at Free State High School to learn all about wintering bald eagles in Kansas at this community event.

Weekend Programs

Saturday Morning Free Programs: 10-10:30pm.

Sunday Afternoon Free Programs: 1:30-2pm.

Let's Feed the Birds: Ages 5 and up. Meets at 9-10:30am on 1/10.

Natural Symbols of Kansas: Ages 5 and up. Meets at 1:30-2pm on 1/25. Free.

Nature Photography: Ages 18 and up. Meets at 2:30-4pm an 2/15.

Natures Creations: Ages 6 and up. Meets at 2pm on 3/1 and 4/26.

Venom Adventures: Ages 5 and up. Meets at 1:30-2:30pm on 4/12. Free.

The Bug Gourmet: Ages 12 and up. Meets at 2-3:30pm on 4/5.

Come Fly a Kite: Ages 5 and up. Meets at 2-4pm on 4/19.

Gardening for Butterflies: Ages 8 and up. Meets at 2-3:30pm on 5/3.

Hikes and Trips

Watching Winter Eagles: Ages 18 and up. Meets at 9-12pm 1/8.

The Call of Frogs and Toads Hike: Ages 10 and up. Meets at 7-9pm on 4/17.

Have Your Next Birthday at The Nature Center!

$95 classroom rental for two hours with a 40 minute live animal program and a craft, game or hike. Maximum of 15 children, 10 adults.

Call for more information.

Be sure to search the web with Yahoo-powered GoodSearch.com and they'll donate a penny to Prairie Park Partners each time you search!

Prairie Park Nature Center
2730 Harper St.
Lawrence, KS 66046

Partner Up With the Prairie Park Partners

Prairie Park Partners is a "Friends" organization whose purpose is to support the Prairie Park Nature Center with active participation in its programs, events and development.

Mission:

- Increase the awareness and appreciation for the natural world through education.
- Educate the public about biodiversity in the state of Kansas.
- Promote wildlife conservation projects relating to woodlands, prairies, and wetlands.
- Promote the responsible use of natural areas for recreation.
- Encourage public participation in the preservation of the environment.

Membership Benefits:

- Opportunity to participate in special "partners only" programs
- Contribute help for special events
- Receive our newsletter by mail
- Volunteer
- Receive a 15% discount at the gift shop

Prairie Park Partners Membership Form (cut out and mail in with payment, cash or check)

Prairie Park Partners Membership Form

Kind of Membership: ☐ $10/yr Individual ☐ $15/yr Family

Make check payable to Prairie Park Partners

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I would/would not like to be notified of volunteer opportunities.

Mail payment and membership form to Prairie Park Partners, 2730 Harper St., Lawrence, KS 66046