



Knobs and Knolls

April 2015

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Annual Meeting

Our annual membership meeting is scheduled for **Monday evening, May 11th** at the Steele Creek Park Lodge. We encourage everyone to attend this important and informative meeting.

Following a reception with light refreshments at 6:00 pm, the meeting will begin at 6:30 pm with presentations by Caleb Corona and Dr. Han Ong (from King University) describing their recently conducted study of algae populations in Steele Creek Lake, and Dr. Laura Ong (also of King University) describing her arboreal disease monitoring study (soon to begin at the Park). Both of these projects have received support from our organization's research small grant program.

Terry Napier will also be on hand to provide us with an update on current and anticipated activities at the Park and Nature Center.

During our business meeting we will be electing Board members for the coming year, and will be considering a number of important bylaws changes. An agenda with further details of these items will be sent to all current members in a separate e-mail.

We hope to see you on May 11th!

Looking for New Board Members!

We are always looking for individuals who might be interested in serving on our Board of Directors. The only qualifications are an interest in Steele Creek Park as an amazing natural history resource and the desire to make a difference in preserving, enhancing and promoting the Park and Nature Center. Our Board meetings are held every other month, generally on the third Monday of the month.

If you think you might like to serve as a Board member, or would like to learn more about this opportunity, contact us by e-mail at mail@friendsofstelecreek.org.

Monarchs in need!



Twenty years ago there were a billion Monarch butterflies in North America; today there are about 35 million. Population numbers have dropped an estimated 90% from the numbers in the 1990's. Disappearance of milkweed plants in agricultural areas makes their presence in other habitats crucial, like our own yards and gardens.

Monarchs are the only butterflies that migrate 2000 miles, as far north as Canada and south to Mexico where they have never been before. They are at least 4 generations removed from their great-great grandparents that flew north the previous spring. No single butterfly makes the round trip. Most Monarchs live only about five weeks. The migratory generation lives eight to nine months.

Milkweed plants are crucial for Monarchs to live. Females lay their eggs on the underside of ONLY milkweed leaves. Caterpillars hatch and proceed to eat ONLY milkweed leaves. Monarchs are poisonous butterflies. Milkweed plants produce a toxin and the caterpillars ingest it and it becomes a defense against predators for both the caterpillar and the butterfly. Predators recognize the insect and avoid it. The adult Monarch will sip nectar from the milkweed plant but it also feeds off of other flowers and helps to pollinate them.

SIMPLE CONCLUSION: NO MILKWEED PLANTS = NO MONARCH BUTTERFLIES!

The dramatic loss of milkweed plants has been catastrophic to the Monarchs. Loss has occurred through floods, drought and wildfires, along with humans contributing to loss of habitat and not providing enough natural areas. The leading culprit is genetically modified foods and certain herbicides and pesticides such as malathion, Sevin and diazinon which kill the plants and the butterflies too. Global warming and forest fragmentation are also threats to the Monarchs.

Farming practices have changed and destroyed road side habitats.

We can help by providing stops along the migration route by planting native milkweed plants in sunny locations in our yards and our community.



Continued on next page

Monarchs in need!

HERE'S WHAT WE CAN DO!



Milkweed plants thrive in full sun and well drained soil, and are drought-tolerant and unappealing to deer. Once established they need little attention.

Choose locally native species when purchasing plants or seeds. Look for organic or “Monarch safe” labels. Fall is the best time to plant directly from seeds. Wear gloves when handling milkweeds. It produces a milky latex which is poisonous to many creatures and can be a skin irritant for humans.

Finding Plants and Seeds

To determine the right species for our region go to [Monarch Watch](#). To learn more about growing native plants go to [Onegreenplanet.org](#). To find a list of plants to attract butterflies to your garden check out [this National Wildlife Federation website](#). To attract a variety of Butterflies and birds try planting milkweed, coneflowers, butterfly bushes, butterfly weed, sunflowers and asters.

Look for seeds online under [Project Milkweed](#) or from [Butterfly Encounters](#). If you are aware of milkweed plants growing near you and wait until the fall when the plant sets the seed pods, you can gather them and plant them for the following year. Once you establish the plants in your yard you may want to harvest the seeds for yourself or for family or friends, or donate them to the Steele Creek Park Nature Center and Friends will plant them in the community.

What is Puddling?

Basically, it's a spa for your Monarchs and their friends. Monarchs love puddling in areas that are sandy and wet, where they can refresh themselves and pick up vital minerals and water. You can fill a shallow dish or pan with sand and a bit of water and place it in a sunny spot in your yard and watch the locals sunbathe.

In our next issue we will explore native plantings and flowers that attract butterflies and birds to our yards. If you have further questions or ideas please contact me at sonie@btes.tv or contact Jeremy, Larry or Don at the Nature Center, and don't forget to grab your camera and catch the Monarchs and other butterflies in your own yard or at the Park.

Sonie Schermer, March 2015

Park Entry Fee



As you are probably aware, last summer the City Council reestablished an entry fee for all vehicles entering the Park. A bond sale has been approved to provide the funding for the long-awaited expansion and improvement of the Nature Center. It is planned that the \$2 per car entry fee will generate funds that will cover the bond payment. An automated entry gate has been installed and will be fully functional in the very near future. In the meantime, attendants are still present at the entrance to collect fees and to sell annual passes.

The annual passes cost \$50 and are good for a full year from the date of purchase. They are available for purchase at the Park gatehouse, the golf pro shop, the Slater Center and the City Finance office at the downtown courthouse on Anderson Street.

Free Trees!

Beginning April 25th, the City will be offering free trees to anyone who would like them for planting on their own property. There will be several species available on a first come first served basis including American hazelnut, native sweet pecan, and eastern ninebark. If you think you might be interested or would like to learn more about this opportunity, contact Jeremy at the Nature Center by phone: (423) 989-5616 or by e-mail: jstout@bristoltn.org.

Park and Lake Clean Up Day



Plan to join us on Saturday morning, April 25th (9:00 am until noon) for our annual “spring cleaning”. Steele Creek Park staff and Friends are once again sponsoring a Park and Lake Clean Up Event in conjunction with the Great American Cleanup, sponsored locally by Keep Bristol Beautiful. We will provide volunteers, logistical support, supplies and healthy snacks for all who come out to participate.

Plan to come out to the Park and help us to get it looking better than ever for the upcoming spring and summer seasons!

Summer Nature Camps



Summer is just around the corner, and with it comes the opportunity for kids to participate in the Summer Nature Camps at Steele Creek Park. These camps are conducted by the Nature Center Staff. Separate sessions are conducted for campers of different ages, and each focuses on a different aspect of the wonderful world of nature.

Week-long sessions begin June 1st and will continue through mid July. Specific camp sessions include:

Woodslore, Ages 7 - 9 (June 1 – June 5)

Nature Photography, Ages 10 - 13 (June 8 – June 12)

Paleontology, Ages 7 - 9) (June 15 – 19)

Botany, Ages 10 - 13 (June 22 – June 26)

Animal Tracking and Orienteering, Ages 10 - 13 (July 6 – July 10)

Insects and Creepy Crawlers, Ages 7 - 9 (July 13 – July 17)

All camps are limited to 15 participants. The registration fee is \$60.00 (\$50.00 if paid before May 16th), and includes a t-shirt and all camp materials. Partial camp scholarships may be available for those in need of assistance. Camps begin at 8:30 am and last until 12:00 noon. For more information please contact the Nature Center at 423-989-5616 or the Department of Parks and Recreation at 423-764-4023, or you can email jstout@bristoltn.org.



Spring Nature Center Activities

Don't miss these upcoming Nature Center activities:

Saturday, May 2nd 9:30 am

Spring Migration Bird Walk: Hearing is believing, and oh yeah, so is seeing! Meet Larry at the Nature Center for a moderate walk looking for migrating songbirds, waterfowl, hawks and more!

Friday, May 8th 4:00 pm

Spring Butterfly Foray: Meet Don at the Nature center for an easy hike looking for these warm-weather gems of the skies. Bring a camera if you have one!

Did You Know?

Steele Creek Lake is roughly 54 acres in size, and is home to some 22 species of fish!



The dam was completed in 1964.

You can keep up with what's going on at the Park and with Friends by following our webpage at <http://www.friendsofsteelecreek.org>.

We appreciate feedback about our communication. Let us know if you find these newsletters interesting and/or useful. If you have suggestions for topics to be covered, or other formats that we could use, let us know by e-mail at mail@friendsofsteelecreek.org.

If you prefer to not receive these newsletters, simply let us know at mail@friendsofsteelecreek.org.