

ELGIN PUBLIC MUSEUM

Of Natural History & Anthropology

COLLECTIONS

Learning Through Adventure



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Elgin Public Museum is to enhance understanding of the Natural Sciences and Anthropology through exhibits and interactive experiences.

EPM Hours

Labor Day to Memorial Day
Saturday & Sunday 12 - 4 p.m.

Memorial Day to Labor Day
Tuesday - Sunday 12 - 4 p.m.
Closed Mondays

847-741-6655

www.elginpublicmuseum.org



New Exhibit! Butterflies are coming . . .

Coming mid-April, our new temporary exhibit looks at local spring and summer favorites.

Discover butterfly life cycles, ranges, and the perfect plants to attract this insect to your garden.

From the desk of the Director

Peggie Stromberg, Executive Director

We are once again back into the swing of things since the Museum re-opened February 1st. We were really hammered with cold weather, however, now it is Spring! It can't come soon enough this year. It seems as if the winter was interminable. Or maybe I am just old!

We welcomed Francesca Zomkowski in January. She took the place of Sara Russell who moved up to Museum Coordinator. Mike McGrath retired. He bought an attachment for his pick-up and has plenty of camping trips planned. Mike spent some time in New Mexico and he is looking forward to going back there, as well as a list of other things to do and places to go. Good luck to Mike, Sara and Francesca.

We are having a fund-raiser each month with Oberweis Dairy. The third Wednesday of each month you simply take in a coupon and a percentage of what you buy goes to the Museum. You can pick up a coupon at the Museum or you can go to our website at www.elginpublicmuseum.org and download it.

Do you want to be a board member? We're looking for some board members and would like to have them come from the membership. If interested please let me know.

*To contact Peggie,
call the Museum or email her at
peggie_epm@cityofelgin.org.*



Awakening

By Marge Fox, Educator

I hear a robin calling! A red-winged blackbird guarding!
A butterfly just flew past my window!
The skunk cabbage is poking up through the snow and leaves!
Spring has finally arrived, and a new season has begun!

The forest floor along the Willow Creek Trail in Lords Park is awakening. Woodland flowers are taking advantage of the warm sun, shining down upon them through the leafless branches of the trees. The time is right for their quick bloom, soon to cover the ground with their patch-work of color and renewed life. They are joined by fur and

feather and ground crawlers and sweet smelling earth – and mud.

In your walk on the Willow Creek Trail, you may see both established and newly appearing varieties of the wild flowers that have colonized the area. Soon there will be fruits of the forest for resident eaters, nesting and perching places for birds, hiding places for squirrels and chipmunks, flitting area for insects, and thawed water for turtles, frogs, crayfish, ducks and geese.

You will also see the invasive garlic mustard and perhaps spot a rare find: Dutchman's Breeches. And Poison Ivy is to be avoided.

As the seasons progress in Lords Park, you will be able to

observe the flowers and the plants of the prairie, savanna, the Three Sisters Garden and the Medicinal Garden. The Elgin Public Museum's programs help visitors to identify plants and to explain their significance to Native Americans, pioneers, and peoples of today. In the Lords Park Zoo, herds of elk, white tailed deer and American bison will join the story. Farm animals will also live in the Zoo during the summer.

Awaken your senses and extend your appreciation of the world around you by taking advantage of the local forest preserves and parks in your area. Experience sights and surprises during all seasons and at all times, day or night. Take a walk! And visit us in Lords Park!

Look for these many species of blooms as you walk in Lords Park along Willow Creek Trail



wild ginger



Crane's bill*



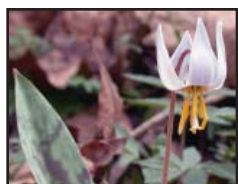
May apple



violet



Solomon's seal



trout lily**



Jacob's ladder



red trillium



bellwort



Jack-in-the-pulpit



skunk cabbage



false Solomon's seal



wild onion



columbine



shooting star



blood root

Learn more about these native plants, and the exotic invasive species, on a nature hike with the experts!

Wildflower Walk

Saturday,
May 16

12-1 p.m.

Fee: \$5,
Members free!

*also called wild geranium

**also called dog-tooth violet & Adders tongue

Time to Shed Those Coats

By Dwight Armistead

The snow has gone. And come back. And gone again. It may yet be back this spring, but it won't last long. Winter is over. Soon temperatures will consistently reach spring and summer levels. We adapt to the change for comfort and health by shedding some of our winter gear. We are not so different from the animals of Lords Park Zoo. The bison, white-tailed deer and elk shed their winter coats as the new spring issue grows in beneath. A seasonal adaptation, this renewal is one of the strategies that makes surviving the change of seasons possible.

The animals look a little ragged now. A little ruffed up and worn out. Patches of fur are missing here and there. A day will come when standing in a shaft of sunlight



Ragged deer coat in Lords Park Zoo

a doe will shake, like a wet dog, and a cloud of loose hair will explode from her coat. The elk will lose small chunks of fur here and there as they graze. One or two may end up wearing a sheath of fur until some tall plant reaches up to pull it off. By mid-summer only a few remnants of winter coat will hang like thick brown rags on the bison.

American elk, also called wapiti, are members of the deer family. The Lords Park Zoo herd grazes in an enclosure of several acres. The herd is small and the habitat is large but, it is not large enough to sustain the animals without supplemental food. The wapiti are given free choice hay and a daily ration of livestock feed. Zoo practice requires this supplemental feeding to ensure animals that cannot move to new pastures have adequate food and complete nutrition. Wapiti are herd animals. Being part of the group is essential to their health. Herd life is usually peaceful. The herd grazes with everyone moving slowly in the same general direction as a loose group with ten to thirty feet between individuals. In contrast, the morning feeding is somewhat frenetic and although the keepers use several feeding stations to make sure all the animals have access to feed and hay there is usually some jockeying for best position. Dominant animals will defend their personal space and their



A little tuft of elk pelage

food, herd etiquette notwithstanding, by nipping at those who are lower in the hierarchy. A nip that connects is likely to pull out a little tuft of fur. This may or may not hurt, but is always enough to send the interloper away. Occasionally you might see a wapiti cow with a little tuft of fur hanging from the corner of her mouth. These little bites never seem to do any damage, except to the appearance of the offending wapiti's coat. Some years, by the end of winter, it is easy to tell who's at the top of the herd hierarchy by the condition of the old pelage. Younger, smaller animals are more likely to get nipped at and more likely to end up looking used. More dominant individuals come through in good shape.

pel-age
/'pelij/
noun. The fur, hair, or wool of a mammal.

The calves also seem to escape this treatment. Perhaps because they are a smaller target. Or perhaps they are just more agile than the adults and can jump out of the way of correcting nips. Born in June of the preceding year, they are only about two thirds the size of an adult. by April. Perhaps they sense their limits and are less likely to put

themselves in a position where they are within striking distance. Whatever the reasons the calves are likely to make it through the winter with their coats intact. Lords Park Zoo keeps one adult male wapiti. The current resident bull will be three years old this spring and should achieve his full stature soon. He may, however, prove to be small for his gender as he is still outweighed by at least two of the cows of his harem. Despite his healthy looking rack of antlers he is in the running this year, judging by condition of winter coat, for low man in the herd.

The normal activity of outdoor life wears on the fur coat as well. The Lords Park Zoo wapiti live in a more or less natural habitat.

They rub on tree trunks and sometimes into branches. They lie on the ground, sometimes on rough dry plant stems. They live in the sun and wind and in the snow

and rain. The fur that protects them is made of two types of hair: coarse stiff guard hairs interwoven with soft fine fuzz close to the skin. It sheds some water, shades from the sun and in cold weather insulates them. The insulating capacity of the fur is so effective that they rise in the morning covered by snow or frost that would be melted by body heat. Effective as it is in protecting them from the environment, it does wear out. When it wears out it needs to be replaced. This is convenient as a different weight is required for hot summer days anyway. In wapiti, watch for the thick fur that protects the ears to disappear first. They may even lick or tug on each other's ears in a mutual grooming behavior. That fur will be replaced by a fine

velvety covering. Just perfect for lounging in the creek on a hot summer day.

*Dwight Armistead worked with the Lords Park Zoo animals for over a decade in the Parks Department. He lead a few Zoo feeding tours on behalf of the City, after which he joined up with the Elgin Public Museum in 2008 to co-lead the Museum's Bison Feeding in Lords Park program. That program continues to this day with Armistead's help and support. He is on the board of the Friends of the Lords Park Zoo. **If you are interested in helping Dwight feed the animals, sign up for the Bison Feeding program, held the last Saturday of each month.***



Lend a hand to the Zoo

Do you love the Lords Park Zoo as much as we do? Then help the Friends of the Lords Park Zoo keep the gates open this summer!

The Zoo is going to be open June 6 - August 14. The deer, elk, and bison will be welcoming the farm animals including favorites from last year like the cows and pigs.

FLPZ needs people who are willing to greet visitors and count of the number of people entering. The group needs a minimum of one person per four hour shift, from

11:00-3:00 every day of the week. Volunteers are welcome to bring a friend or reading materials to fill up the time. FLPZ provides an umbrella, one chair and a small table.

You can contact Terry Gabel, president of FLPZ, for more information at 847-888-2348 or at

terrygabel@hotmail.com. Check out their Facebook page for updates: Lords Park Zoo-Elgin, Illinois.

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The Elgin Public Museum is a public institution whose purpose is to enrich the lives of the people within our community. Your membership and donations are vital ingredients in the success of our mission. Because of your support and generosity we are able to present programming either free or at reasonable rates for all, in the hopes all our citizens can greater understand and appreciate the complexity of the world around them.

THANK YOU!

Mark Your Calender with These Upcoming Events

Natural Egg Dyeing

Saturday, April 4 · 12-2 p.m.
\$2 for 2 hardboiled eggs

We provide the eggs and the natural dyes, made from berries, spices, and plants. Recipes of the dyes are provided so you can try at home. No registration required.

Arbor Day Science Night

Friday, April 10 · 6-8 p.m.
\$2 per person; members FREE

Different stations will be set up around the museum for kids and their parents to experience hands-on demonstrations devoted to tremendous trees in honor of Earth Day and Arbor Day. *No registration needed for this drop-in program.*

Bison Feeding in Lords Park

Sponsored by Friends of the Lords Park Zoo

Join us for an up close look at the bison, deer, and elk at the Lords Park Zoo. Meet at the Museum for a short introduction then head to the Zoo to assist the zookeeper in feeding these magnificent creatures. *Limited to 12 people. Advance registration is required.*

Saturday, April 25 · 7-8:30 a.m.
\$2/adult, \$1/child, members FREE

Saturday, May 30 · 7-8:30 a.m.
\$2/adult, \$1/child, members FREE

Saturday, June 27 · 7-8:30 a.m.
\$2/adult, \$1/child, members FREE

Grossology Science Night

Friday, May 8 · 6-8 p.m.
\$2 per person; members FREE

The science of all things weird, gross, and disgusting! Its slimy,

gooy, stinky, smelly stuff explained in different stations set up around the Museum during this drop-in program. Adults and kids can conduct experiments in this gag-rageous science. *This is the last Science Night until September. No registration required.*

Continuing the Heritage Celebration: A Super Saturday in the Park

Sponsored by Friends of the Lords Park Zoo

Saturday, May 9 · 1-4 p.m.
FREE

Help celebrate 120 years of animals being a part of Lords Park. This past year baby elk were born and the farm animal zoo reopened. Join hosts Friends of the Lords Park Zoo for family fun in Zoo. Enjoy live music, popcorn, refreshments, washable animal tattoos for children, souvenirs and more. *No registration required.*



Bubblefest

Saturday, June 6 · 12-2 p.m.
\$5, \$2 members

Make a bubble blower, shake hands in a bubble, stand in a bubble and make your own bubble art. *This event will take place outdoors, so please dress for the weather. No registration required.*

Adventures in the Zoo Series

Sponsored by Friends of the Lords Park Zoo

Have fun learning about natural history from EPM staff at the Lords Park Zoo. These programs are drop-in and **FREE!** *May be canceled due to extreme heat or weather.*

Birds of Prey

Saturday, June 20 · 12-2 p.m.

Bison or Buffalo?

Saturday, June 27 · 12-2 p.m.

Camouflage

Saturday July 18 · 12-2 p.m.

Moths vs. Butterflies

Saturday, July 25 · 12-2 p.m.

Tremendous Trees

Saturday, August 1 · 12-2 p.m.

Skulls & All

Saturday, August 15 · 12-2 p.m.

Summer Solstice

Sunday, June 21 · 12-1 p.m.
FREE

It's the longest day of the year! Come and learn scientific and cultural facts about the solstice. Engage in festive activities while getting some fresh air on the first day of summer. *Advanced registration is required.*

Members/Donors/Volunteers Picnic and Board Meeting

Wednesday, June 24 · 6-8 p.m.
Free

This is our thanks to you for supporting the Museum. Enjoy a picnic of hotdogs and campfire s'mores while getting to know other members and hobnobbing with the staff.

Meet Francesca

Francesca Zomkowski began working as the Education Coordinator in January. To get in touch with her call the museum or email Francesca_epm@cityofelgin.org.

I'm Francesca, the new educator at Elgin Public Museum. I recently graduated from NIU with a bachelor's degree in Anthropology- my passion. I used to work at NIU's museum, where I was first exposed to museum life, and what it takes to care for objects that are hundreds, if not thousands of years old. Being a caretaker of history is inspiring, and so important to me.

After college, I took an internship overseas, in Krakow, Poland. There, I was trained in archaeology at the Muzeum Archeologiczne w Krakowie. Not only did I learn more about Polish culture (my own culture), but I was taught a variety of archeological practices, such as pottery conservation, flint sketching, and excavation- this was very exciting to me! Digging into the floor of a cave high up in the rocky hills, I was lucky enough to discover the jaw of a prehistoric cave-hyena. After that it was all over- I was totally in love with archeology as well as the other anthropological fields. I just needed a job that would allow me to focus on these amazing topics.

A few months of searching

lead me here! I feel very fortunate to work in the field that I chose, especially in such a lovely and historic location. The Elgin Public Museum is a hidden gem in an ancient park; there's so much to see and learn in this homey atmosphere and it suits me well. I spend some days working in our cozy office, planning programs for scouts and school groups. Other days, I get to teach kids all



about historical topics; usually we discuss the subject and then see it in action through hands-on activities, scavenger hunts and hikes around the museum. Every time I do a program, I learn a lot myself- it's a job that doesn't

get boring, and the excitement of the students that come in is infectious. I wouldn't be able to do this without the guidance and support of the Director, Peggie Stromberg, and the Museum Coordinator (the most patient mentor anyone could ask for) Sara Russell.

Now that Spring is here, I've been preparing new, "green" programs (for adults and kids alike) that will focus on our Earth, the way we affect it, and all the wonderful things that are a part of it. From plants and the ocean, to animals and humans, it's very important to learn how we are all connected and how we can be the best we can be- for now and for the future.



Earth Day project for home!

Did you know you can make a bird feeder out of almost any bottle you've used? Instead of recycling a

bottle (or worse, throwing it away), why not make it into a bird feeder?

Materials: 2 liter soda bottle, twine/wire, bird seed, chopsticks and a knife.

1. Wash the bottle and remove the labels.
2. Cut two small holes in the bottom of the bottle, and thread your wire/twine through one hole and out the other. Loosely tie the ends into a loop you can use to hang it. The bottom of the bottle is now the top of the feeder.
3. About 3 inches from the bottle cap, poke 2 holes on opposite sides of the bottle. Make the holes just big enough for the chopstick. Place a chopstick through the holes- this will serve as a perch for the birds.
4. About 2 inches above the perches, cut two more holes (they should be about 1/3 of an inch). Here, the birds can get the seed.
5. Turn the bottle right side up, and fill it half-way with bird seed. Screw the cap back on and hang your feeder from a tree or by a window.
6. Once they have discovered it, observe the types of birds that come! What can you learn about them? Find out their names, their songs, and their migratory patterns. There's a lot to discover about the birds of spring!

Flight of the Monarch



Monarchs are instantly recognizable by even the most clueless nature watcher with their bright orange and black coloring. But while monarch butterflies are beautiful animals, it is their incredible migration that makes them so fascinating. They are the only butterfly that can make a two way migration, like that of birds. This migration does take time – 4 generations to complete the cycle.

We see the monarch butterfly in northern Illinois during the summer months. Illinois is part of its summer breeding range that

stretches up to Canada. Once the days begin to get colder and autumn approaches, monarchs begin to make their way south. They stop reproducing to store their energy resources for the long journey. Using thermals and air currents, these tiny insects that weigh about as much as a paperclip travel up to 60 miles a day. Monarchs from all over the eastern United States convene in Texas where they make their way in huge flocks to Mexico, some-

times 3,000 miles from their start.

Most of the eastern population of North American monarch butterflies overwinter in an eleven or twelve mile area of the Sierra Madre Mountains in the Mexican state of Michoacán. The butterflies roost in the oyamel fir trees. This forest helps create the perfect microclimate: temperatures that range from 32° F – 59° F with humidity. Temperatures below freezing would force the insects to deplete fat reserves. Humidity helps to conserve energy keeping them from drying out.

Monarchs usually reach their overwinter site around the beginning of November, coinciding with the Mexican holiday of Day of the Dead on November 1 and 2. It's no wonder that local lore claims monarchs are the souls of dead relatives returning to visit.

Covering the boughs, the butterflies roost on the oyamel firs by the tens of thousands. Even though these are hardy trees, sometimes a branch will break with the weight of



Monarchs overwintering on the oyamel firs of Mexico



Day of the Dead Skull
Mexican lore claims monarchs are the souls of dead relatives returning during Day of the Dead.

the seasonal visitors. Monarchs huddle together to keep warm through winter storms in a semi-dormant state, sometimes waking in warmer bursts to search for water.

Around this time of year monarchs begin to get more active, starting their flight north over the Mexican mountain ranges up into the plains of Texas. If you were keeping track, this generation that traveled from as far north as Canada down to Mexico can live as long as nine months!

This year monarchs have been facing late spring winter storms – just like we have! This has damaged the monarchs’ numbers, which means they will have a later start up north. Northern Illinois will be seeing them a little later this year than normal.

Once in Texas, the over-wintering generation begin to mate, creating what scientist call the first generation. These butterflies will live between 2 to 4 weeks continuing the spread northward across the eastern United States, traveling from milkweed plant to milkweed plant. This pattern will continue until some monarchs

reach the northern parts of their range.

Scientists aren’t sure exactly how monarchs are able to complete this amazing feat of navigation. Top theories include Earth’s magnetic pull and the position of the sun.

North America’s greatest insect migration is in danger of being interrupted. Monarchs face challenges caused by climate changes and destruction of habitat. Just a few degrees difference in temperature can chase the oyamel fir up the mountain. The firs also face over-logging and recently a bark beetle invasion.

Monarchs need milkweeds to feed on in their larval stage. In our part of the world, there are

fewer milkweed plants perhaps in part because of the inclusion of “weed” in its name. People generally don’t see it as a plant



Common Milkweed can be seen in the Savannah Garden by the Museum and in the deer & elk pens of the Zoo in Lords Park.

for their gardens. In the meantime more farmers are mowing the strips of land between crops and roads creating manicured mini-lawns where native plants used to flourish. The same is often done on highway medians.

One thing we can do to help the monarch is to protect their food source. There are programs to increase the milkweed population and encourage

people to plant milkweeds in their home gardens, parks, and other green spaces. So this spring, consider adding milkweed to your garden as we wait for the monarchs to return.

Follow the Monarch

‘Monarch Butterflies Migration Google Earth Tour’ by Encyclopedia of Life
www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqDwvuleRYc

Monarch Watch - organization that observes health of monarch population by tagging & tracking
www.monarchwatch.org

Monarch Butterfly Journey North - keep up to date with the latest news in the 2015 migration
www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/

If you prefer your natural history bookended by a novel, try Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behavior*. What would happen if the monarch’s migration got blown off course?

