Outlook

Greenspace Newsletter

From Jennifer Erena <steward@bobolink-greenspace.com>
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The Neighborhood Chronicle #15

BOB O LINK GREENSPACE

Ecoregion 8.3.3; USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 7a, Ohio Valley, US Forestry Providence 222 (Eastern Broadleaf Forest), F (Interior Low Plateau, Bluegrass)

Hello, Jennifer, do you feel well rested, or have you been up for hours?!

I do hope it rains today, but we've had so many perfect fall days lately.

As we fall back into our cool weather routines, if you haven't been in the greenspace lately, you need to see the changes.

The "meeting space" is clearer and the mulch is spread more evenly. We have a new play area with deep chips for padding, large tree logs, and engaging activities. There are also more than 30 new trees and shrubs!

The transformations are getting the attention of the many people who walk across and, along the greenspace - hopefully leading to more volunteerism and support.

Please enjoy!

Stay green, stay kind, stay connected - Jennifer Erena, Key Steward

STEWARDSHIP SUPPORT

CELEBRATING 2027!

We have not received the "go" for 2027, but it is making its's way through the council and to the Mayor for signature.

FIELD NOTES

White-throated sparrow at Floracliff Nature Sanctuary, Fayette County, Kentucky. One of the thousands of nightly migrators overhead.

Photo by Ward Ransdell



Anyone who knows me well won't be surprised to know that, after being introduced to Birdcast, a migration forecasting website, I was up very late tracking and imagining the bird highway above me. While I finally slept, 743,500 birds migrated overnight in darkness 1,900 feet above Fayette County. Tiny kinglets and white-throated sparrows, brown creepers, gnatcatchers and warblers, all only a few ounces, flew great distances at speeds of nearly 40 mph to get to their breeding grounds. It's mind-blowing. All this activity is happening around us, and at the time, I was unaware.

Something dawned on me; I was experiencing the same clarity and amazement I did as a kid when it hit me that other folks were living their lives at the same time I was living mine. People didn't disappear from the world when they left my sight. That was the instant I became aware I wasn't the whole world. I remember my eight-year-old self sitting straighter and sending out my senses to imagine what was going on in the houses around me. It really was a profound moment.

Now, 60-plus years later, I find myself in the exact same position – newly attentive to lives around me to which I had been oblivious. Ed Yong, in his book "An Immense World," talks about how every animal is enclosed in its own "sensory bubble" where they perceive only "a tiny sliver of our immense world." That night my bubble expanded a bit, just like it did when I was 8. I still can't see or hear or feel the rush of three-quarters of a million birds flying overhead, but I can imagine them. I can feel in my soul their presence and their determination. And when I look at them foraging in my yard, I marvel and appreciate their lives even more.

— Carol Lea Spence

Kentucky Master Naturalist and neighbor

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STEWARDSHIP STEPS



Nature Play Comes to Life

Workshop participants explored how thoughtfully designed outdoor spaces can support children's growth, creativity, and connection to nature. On a crisp, clear autumn day, the sun rose over Bob-O-Link Greenspace and shone on new features created for nature play. Led by Human-Nature Systems, the hands-on workshop invited participants to explore how ordinary outdoor spaces can become dynamic environments for play, discovery, imagination, and connection with nature. The workshop began with participants sharing memories of their own childhood experiences in greenspaces, including favorite outdoor play areas and the qualities that made those places memorable. From there, the group examined how unstructured play in nature can contribute to five areas of holistic childhood development: *cognitive, creative, physical, social and emotional, and spiritual growth.*

Participants also considered how children's play needs change as they grow. Natural play areas can provide comfortable outdoor experiences for infants andcaregivers, opportunities for toddlers to explore independently, places for preschoolers to build and engage in dramatic play, and settings where school-age children can create forts, play

games, observe nature, and deepen their understanding of plants, animals, weather, and seasonal change.

Several design principles were addressed during the workshop. Effective natural play spaces should offer the right kind of place, play, and re-play, with children returning frequently to discover new possibilities. Enhanced nature play areas offer include a diversity of activity zones, a variety of age- and ability-appropriate challenges, as well as loose materials that children can move, combine, manipulate, and rebuild. These principles allow children to select and create their own play, rather than limiting them to a predetermined use.

Safety and maintenance were also important parts of the conversation. Participants discussed impact-absorbing surfaces, hazardous plants and environmental conditions, routine inspections, and the need to match the size and complexity of features to the intended age groups. The group examined the difference between risks and hazards, recognizing that opportunities to experience the outcomes of managed and developmentally appropriate risks are building blocks for life lessons and choosing actions or behaviors



Learning by Building

After exploring the concepts, participants applied them to seven nature play features at thegreenspace:

- Hopscotch pavers supporting physical, social, and cognitive development
- A sumac grove trail offering quiet space for rest, observation, and connection
- A woven tapestry combining found materials, sensory play, construction, and art
- Construction play using loose parts to create fairy houses and other imaginative structures
- A brush fort providing opportunities for building, gathering, and relaxation
- Seating areas and balancing logs encouraging movement, sensory play, and social interaction
- A climbing and balance rope area offering physical challenges for middle-childhood through youth ages

Participants helped construct and add finishing touches to several of these features, putting workshop principles into practice while demonstrating how natural materials such as logs, rocks, plants, brush, sticks, and found objects can support many forms of play.



Continuing the Conversation

The workshop generated ideas for strengthening nature play at Bob-O-Link Greenspace. Questions for continued discussion

include how to clearly identify the area as a place for intentional nature play, communicate an open invitation for families to use it, and provide cues that encourage visitors to care for the space and nearby plantings.

Participants also considered whether the area might include storage for journaling supplies or a small lending library, as well as ways to communicate with families throughout the neighborhood. The workshop showed that nature play does not require expensive equipment. With thoughtful design, suitable natural materials, regular care, and permission to explore, a greenspace can become a place where children move, imagine, build, discover, reflect, and connect. The new features at Bob-O-Link Greenspace offer a starting point for those experiences and inspiration for creating or enhancing natural play areas throughout the community.

SEASONAL SNAPSHOT

- 📷 Planting Trees
- 📷 Natural Play









Past Newsletters - Chronicle of Activities

🎓 **Learn more** about our beautiful planet and greenspace from our talented neighbors at https://bobolink-greenspace.com/

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