

SPRING | 2014



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# Nature News



THE JEROME "BUDDIE" FORD NATURE CENTER'S  
SEASONAL NEWSLETTER



## "JOURNEY OF THE MONARCH"

With its beautiful, distinctly colored wings of orange, black, and white, the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) may be one of the most widely recognized species of all North American butterflies. It is found throughout North America and commonly visits Dora Kelley Nature Park during late summer and early fall. Each year, thousands of monarchs begin a seasonal journey that will take them from the U.S. and Canada to warmer latitudes where they will overwinter.

Animals typically migrate to areas with warmer temperatures to escape harsh winter weather, as is the case for the eastern North American monarch, which migrates south to Mexico. However, monarchs are the only insect species that migrates thousands of miles roundtrip to escape cold weather and hibernate. What makes the monarch's migration truly fascinating is that no single butterfly completes

the entire roundtrip journey. So how is this feat accomplished? To sum it up in one word... teamwork!



The monarch's migratory pattern is very similar to that of a relay race; it takes teamwork to complete it and no single runner, or butterfly, can accomplish the race on its own. Monarchs produce up to four generations of offspring. Each generation will complete a normal life cycle. The cycle starts off with an egg that is laid by an adult monarch. The egg hatches within three to six days, which begins the caterpillar stage. After two weeks of constant feeding on the leaves of the milkweed plant, the striped

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caterpillar will molt for a final time and develop into a bright green chrysalis, the third stage in the monarch's life cycle. The jewel-like chrysalis will hang motionless for about ten days, after which a monarch butterfly will emerge.

The monarch's wings are soft and crumpled when it first emerges, but soon straighten as the monarch pumps vital fluids into them. The first three generations of adult monarchs will mate and lay eggs soon thereafter. Generally, these generations have a lifespan of between two to six weeks. However, the fourth and final generation of summer enters into "diapause," a non-reproductive phase that lasts seven or more months. During this phase, the fourth generation of monarchs flies all the way to Mexico and generally does not reproduce until it leaves its overwintering site in February or March. The female monarch will then lay as many as four hundred eggs before it dies, allowing for the next generation of monarchs to complete the northward journey.

Monarch butterflies lay their eggs on milkweed and their caterpillars feed exclusively on this



**Monarch Butterfly**

**Viceroy Butterfly**

**CAN YOU SPOT THE DIFFERENCE?** Notice that the color and pattern of the Viceroy mimic the Monarch's pattern, except for the black stripe that crosses the bottom of its back wings.

plant. Although milkweed is harmless to the caterpillar, it does contain a poisonous toxin called glycoside that remains in their bodies as they turn into butterflies. So, while the monarch may appear beautiful in color, its colors are actually a warning to predators of its toxic and foul taste.

There is another butterfly that also benefits from the monarch's warning coloration; the viceroy. This species of butterfly is the monarch's look-alike. Since birds cannot tell them apart, they learn to avoid eating both of them, although the viceroy has recently been reported to possess an equally unpalatable taste to some birds.

Although the monarch is not yet endangered, its migratory phenomenon is. Recent studies show that the number of butterflies reaching Mexico has drastically declined over the last two decades. Last year the number of butterflies was the lowest it has been for the last sixty years.

Studies suggest that this decline is due to the application of herbicides and urban sprawl in their summer breeding grounds in the U.S., combined with illegal logging of their mountain forest homeland in Mexico where they overwinter. Although logging has largely been curtailed, the problem of herbicides remains unabated. Midwest farmers are increasingly relying on herbicides to protect ever

**Did you know?**

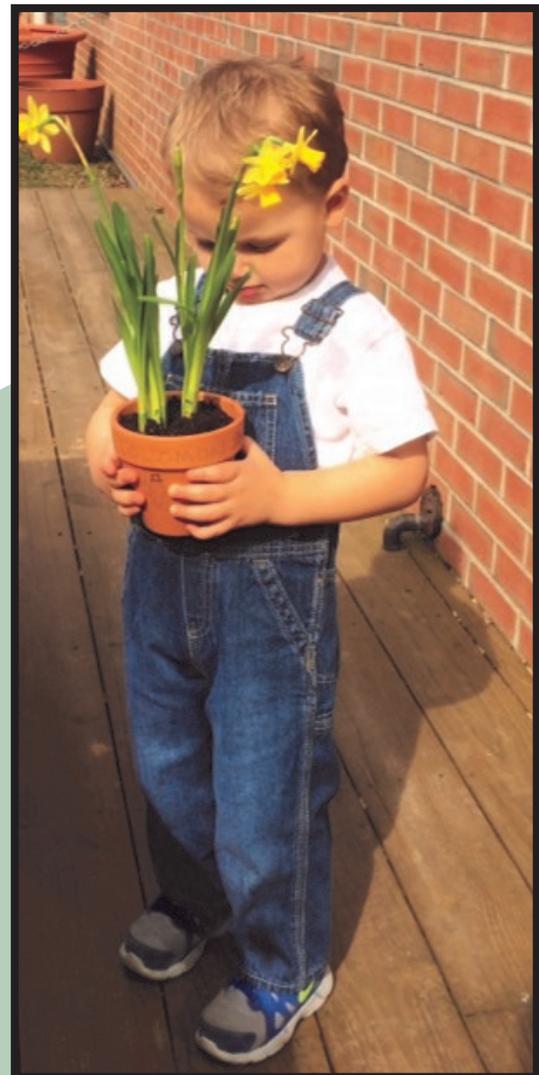
Monarch butterflies cannot fly if their body temperature is below 86 degrees. In order to move, they will sit and warm up in the sun by flapping their wings.



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expanding croplands. Unfortunately, these chemicals are killing the milkweed plants that the monarchs depend on. Extreme drought throughout the United States is also contributing to a loss of habitat. Drought means less flowers, which means less nectar for the adult monarch butterflies.

Naturalist Jane Yeingst led a group of children on a spring wildflower hike during our recent “Wonderful Wildflowers” program. The children planted flowers in our butterfly garden in Dora Kelley Nature Park. We encourage everyone to visit Dora Kelley Nature Park this spring and see if you can spot any butterflies around our garden!



# WANTED: INVASIVE PLANTS



Join the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust  
at our monthly invasive removal at  
Dora Kelley Nature Park!



## When:

Saturday, March 8th, 10am to 12pm

Saturday, April 5th, 10am to 12pm

Saturday, May 24th, 10am to 12pm

**Where:** Dora Kelley Nature Park,  
5750 Sanger Ave., Alexandria, VA

**What:** Remove invasive plants  
from the park.

**Why:** To improve wildlife habitats  
in the park.

**Details:** Wear sturdy shoes you don't mind  
getting dirty, long pants, long sleeves, gloves (if  
you have them), a hat, sunscreen, and bug spray.  
Bring a water bottle and any interested family or  
friends! Meet us at the Buddie Ford Nature Center  
and we will walk to the worksite  
together.



To get the latest event updates, join NVCT's Meetup group at [Meetup.com!](https://www.meetup.com/nvct/)

For more information, contact Shannon O'Neil at:  
[soneil@nvct.org](mailto:soneil@nvct.org) or 703-354-5093



# Smartphone users, you can now scan this QR code to begin Dora Kelley Nature Park's Active Nature Trail Map!



Scan the code or go to <http://goo.gl/yy1lg2>

Join Oncell's Quest mobile trail map to learn more about Dora Kelley Nature Park while touring the nature trail!



# Nature Programs

## Spring Break Camp: Prehistoric Alexandria

Ages 7-10. A fun-packed, week-long, full-day adventure camp where children learn about Alexandria's geology, natural history, and prehistoric peoples. Activities include woodland hikes, stone tool-making, geologic expeditions, live animal exhibitions, games, crafts, and much more! Camp features two field trips!

**M-F April 14<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> 9am - 3pm**

Activity # 121234-01

\$285



## Family Fishing

Ages 6-10. Catch the big one while learning about some of our native fish species in Holmes Run! Fishing poles and tackle provided. Registration fee required for each child, and all children must be accompanied by at least one adult. Catch and release only.

**Sat, May 3<sup>rd</sup> 10:00 -11:30am**

Activity #: 131232-01

\$4

**Sat, June 14<sup>th</sup> 10:00 -11:30am**

Activity #: 141233-01

\$4



# Nature Programs

## April - July

### Frogs and Toads

Ages 6-10. Explore the wonderful world of amphibians. See live frogs, toads, and salamanders close up. Then, we'll make a hopping, fun craft together. **\$4**

*Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup> 2:00pm - 3:30pm*

Activity #: 131230-01

### EGG-cellent

Ages 5-8. The eggs are hatching. Children will learn about baby animals that hatch from eggs. They will explore the signs of Spring in Dora Kelley Nature Park. **\$4**

*Saturday, April 12<sup>th</sup> 2:00pm - 3:30pm*

Activity #: 131231-01

### Animal Homes

Ages 5-8. Where do the animals in Dora Kelley Park live? What materials do they use to build their homes? Discover where the wildlife in our park make their homes. **\$4**

*Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup> 10:00am - 11:30am*

Activity #: 131233-01

### Decomposers

Ages 4-8. Learn about the fascinating world of creatures who live under logs and make their homes just under the soil. See these tiny creatures up close! Then, take home a fun craft. **\$4**

*Saturday, May 31<sup>st</sup> 10:00am - 11:30am*

Activity #: 131234-01

### Stream Safari

Ages 6-10. Participate in some fun scientific research with a member of the Naturalist staff! Investigate the animal species, both big and small, that make the Holmes Run Stream their home. **\$4**

*Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup> 10:00am - 11:30am*

Activity #: 141232-01

### Snakes

Ages 5-8. Learn all about these fascinating reptiles. Meet the Nature Center's collection of snakes. We will go on a hike with the Naturalist staff to see if we can find any of these elusive creatures. **\$4**

*Saturday, July 12<sup>th</sup> 10:00am - 11:30am*

Activity #: 141234-01



# Nature Programs

## Little Adventures (ages 3-5 years)

Ages 3-5. Children and their parents are invited to explore the world of nature through a series of programs developed just for them. We'll play games, do crafts, hike through the forest, and much more! Siblings welcome. Fee covers cost of all three sessions. \$15

*Fridays 10:30am - 11:30am*  
*April 11<sup>th</sup>, May 9<sup>th</sup>, June 13<sup>th</sup>*

Activity #: 131235- 01



## Summer Nature Camps

### Full Day Nature Camp

Ages 6-10. Full-day nature themed camp activities will be offered this summer by the Jerome "Buddie" Ford Nature Center. Parents may drop off their children as early as 8:30 a.m. and pick-up by 3:30 p.m. Snacks and field trips are included in the registration fee.

Ages 6 - 7 (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)

July 21<sup>st</sup> - July 25<sup>th</sup>, 9am - 3pm

Activity #: 140463-03

\$265

Ages 8 - 10 (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade)

August 4<sup>th</sup> - August 8<sup>th</sup>, 9am - 3pm

Activity #:140464-03

\$265

### Tadpole Camp

Ages 3-4. Children will explore the fascinating world of "Animal Friends." Guided by a Naturalist, they will be gently introduced to local wildlife and use natural items for observation and learning. This camp features age appropriate arts and craft sessions, puppet visitors, storytelling, live animals and more!

June 23<sup>rd</sup> - June 27<sup>th</sup>, 10am - 11am

Activity #: 140460-03

\$65

### Budding Naturalist Camp

Ages 5-6. (Children entering K to 1<sup>st</sup> Grade) Through up-close observations, investigations and explorations, children participating in this camp will discover the fascinating "World of Insects." Insect safaris, theme-related arts and crafts, and exciting activities are featured. Surprise guests will also make an appearance!

July 7<sup>th</sup> - July 9<sup>th</sup> 10am - 12pm

Activity #: 140461-03

\$85

Please note that there are three ways to register for a nature program:



**Web**

- Visit [alexandriava.gov/Recreation](http://alexandriava.gov/Recreation)  
 - For log in information, call 703.746.5414 or e-mail register ARPCA@alexandriava.gov



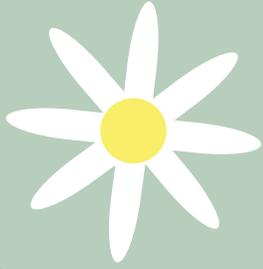
**Mail-in**

- Mail completed Registration Form to the Lee Center at 1108 Jefferson Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Make checks payable to "City of Alexandria."



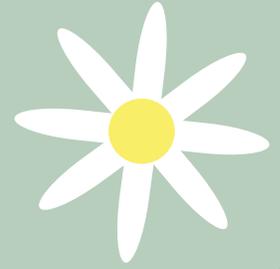
**Drop-off**

- Drop off completed Registration Form at the Lee Center with a check made payable to "City of Alexandria." (cash not accepted).



# Nature Challenge

## Crossword Puzzle

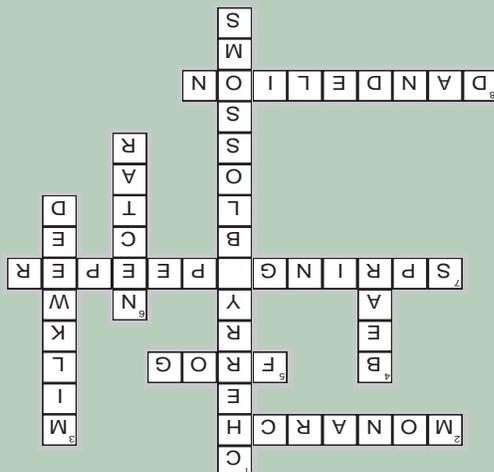
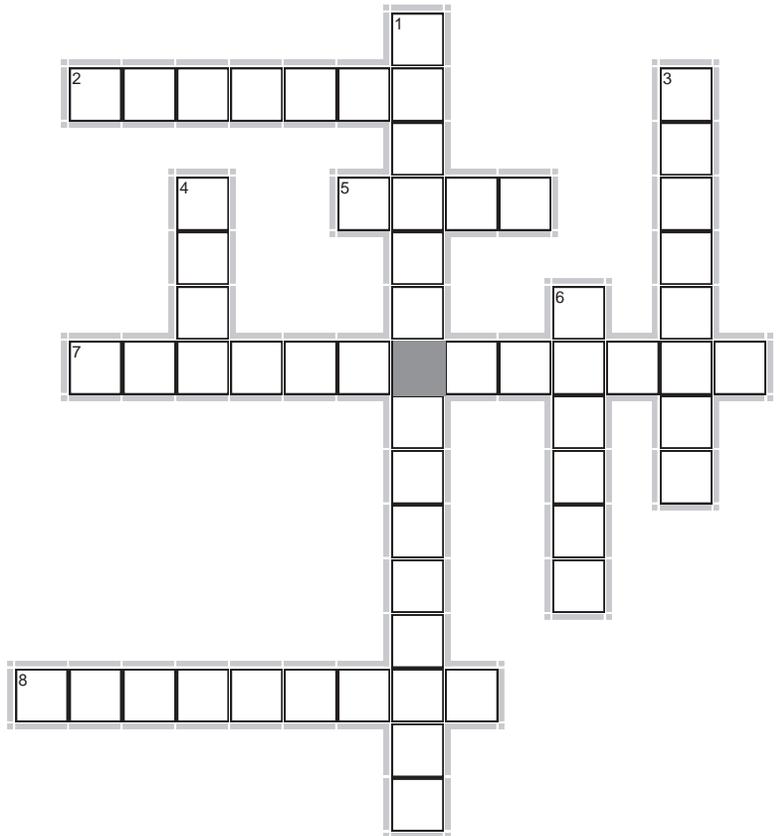


### Across

2. I am one of the most widely recognized North American butterflies, with my distinct orange, black, and white wings.
5. The wood \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the first amphibians to emerge from hibernation each spring in Dora Kelley Nature Park.
7. I am tan or brown with a dark cross that roughly forms an X on my back. You can often hear me near Dora Kelley's Nature Park's fresh water marsh in early spring.
8. This is a plant that many herbivores like to eat. It has bright yellow flowers that some people think are just "dandy"!

### Down

1. One species of these beautiful trees comes from Japan, and people celebrate its blossoms each spring with a festival. Another native species with less showy flowers can be found growing in Dora Kelley Nature Park.
3. The Monarch caterpillar feeds exclusively on this plant.
4. I can weigh 400 pounds and after winter's hibernation emerge from my den in the spring!
6. Like bees, the Monarch butterfly relies on this source of food, which is found in flowers.



# Nature Center Services

## ***Nature Outreach Programs***

Jerome "Buddie" Ford Nature Center offers a variety of outreach programs for schools, community groups, clubs, and other organizations. This includes programs on the natural and cultural history of Alexandria, featuring live animals from the Nature Center.

## ***Scout Programs***

Bring your troop to earn a badge! The fee is \$30 per program for up to 15 children (\$2 for each additional child).

## ***Field Trips***

Our interpretive programs are designed to assist teachers in meeting Virginia's SOL requirements. For more information, please call the Nature Center.

## ***Facility Rentals***

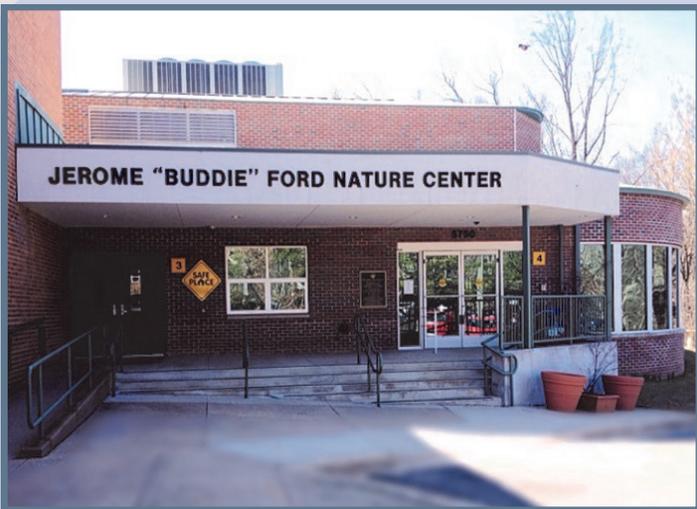
The Nature Center's activity room is available for use and rental by community groups and organizations. Please call **703.746.5525** for more information.

## ***Community Service Events***

Have your class, group, or club volunteer to help protect Dora Kelley Nature Park.

## ***Birthday Parties***

The Nature Center offers birthday parties for children ages 4 to 12. Each 90 minute birthday party features live animals, a nature-oriented activity, and use of a private room. Fee is \$165 for a party of up to 12 children. Prior registration and payment required.



## **Jerome "Buddie" Ford Nature Center**

**5750 Sanger Ave**

**Alexandria, VA 22311**

Phone : 703.746.5525

**Hours:** Wednesday-Saturday 10am-5pm

Sunday 1pm-5pm (April 1-Nov 30)

**Center Director:** Mark S. Kelly

**Naturalist:** Jane Yeingst

**'Buddies' ASP Supervisor & Newsletter Editor:** Majd Jarrar

**Custodian:** Juan Aguilar

**The City of Alexandria complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act.  
To request reasonable accommodation, or an alternative format, please call:**

**703.746.5525**

**or email**

**[mark.kelly@alexandriava.gov](mailto:mark.kelly@alexandriava.gov)**