

Nature Notes

September 19, 2019

A weekly round-up of useful information as you and your students explore the natural wonders around Nolan Catholic High School.

Question of the Week:

Why are we seeing so many hummingbirds in Mary's courtyard?



<https://www.treehugger.com/animals/16-dazzling-facts-about-hummingbirds.html>

<https://www.discoverwildlife.com/animal-facts/birds/facts-about-hummingbirds/>

<https://www.perkypet.com/articles/hummingbird-facts-you-never-knew>

Answer:

Hummingbirds migrate south for the winter, so our tiny visitors are probably using the courtyard as a rest stop on their way to Mexico. They are enjoying sugar water from feeders maintained by the EcoVikes, and nectar from our salvia plants. We will be updating reports of hummingbird sightings on the [Journey North](#) website to help them track migration patterns. That site is chock-full of fascinating information about hummingbirds and monarch butterflies, I recommend you check it out!

Amazing facts about hummingbirds:

*Migrating hummingbirds travel about 25 miles per day

*Hummingbirds cannot walk. They need perches that give them enough room to land and take off again.

*Hummingbirds are the ONLY bird species that can fly backwards

*When you compare brain to body size, hummingbirds have the largest brain of any bird. They can remember what flowers they have already visited, and accurately calculate how long it will take that flower to refill.

*A group of hummingbirds is called a "charm" (like a gaggle of geese or flock of seagulls)

*Ruby-Throated hummingbirds fly across the entire Gulf of Mexico in 18-20 hours. They store all the food they need in their tiny bodies before the journey. Any other time, they have to eat every 4-5 hours to avoid starvation.

We have several examples of this iconic Southern tree on campus, most notably the large one between the arena and staff parking lot, with some new transplants near the commons. I encourage you to “stop and smell the magnolia”, the large one on campus is flowering and smells amazing.

The Southern Magnolia is both the state flower and state tree of Mississippi. It’s also the state flower of Louisiana.

We often think of bees as pollinators, but the magnolia, with its protein-rich pollen, actually attracts beetles as pollinators.

If you’re establishing one of these majestic trees at home, make sure it gets plenty of sunlight. Check out this site for more gardening tips for Southern magnolias:

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/trees/magnolia/southern-magnolia-trees.htm>

References:

<https://www.theflowerexpert.com/content/about/flowers/stateflowers/mississippi-state-flowers>

<http://justfunfacts.com/interesting-facts-about-magnolia/>

Southern Magnolia



“I want creation to penetrate you with so much admiration that wherever you go, the least plant may bring you clear remembrance of the Creator. A single plant, a blade of grass, or one speck of dust is sufficient to occupy all your intelligence in beholding the art with which it has been made.”

-St. Basil (329-379)

Courtyard Adventures

Wow, the courtyards have been busy this week! Our outdoor chalkboard is installed and ready for use. I have additional chalk markers in my office, and will be happy to bring some during your class times as needed, just let me know. I plan to keep nature quotes on the board in between class uses, but feel free to erase those when your students are working. Here's a great use of the chalkboard, from Mrs. Gallegos' class:



Please remind your students that they can use the courtyards during passing periods.

Remember, I'm available to help with activities and lesson plans if you want to get your students outside but don't know where to start. Email or come by my office anytime.

Milkweed update: We found native milkweed! I will be purchasing it from a local native plant sale in Arlington this weekend, and the EcoVikes will be busy planting it next week.

Where to find Emily next week

On campus:

Monday 9:30-2

Tuesday 8:30-2

Wednesday 8:30-2

Thursday 8:30-4

ebreclaw@nchstx.org

Outdoor Learning Headquarters

In the office immediately to the left of the teacher boxes in room D22.

Please come by anytime! Let's chat about how we can work outdoor learning into your lesson plans!

Personal cell: 682-438-2393