

Nature Notes

September 5, 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:

What's up with the cicadas?



Photo by Dr. Hubbard

Answer:

Last week, both Dr. Hubbard and Mr. O'Connor's classes witnessed molting cicadas in Mary's courtyard. Here are some fun cicada facts for your next courtyard outing.

Cicadas spend most of their lives underground. Female cicadas lay eggs on trees in late summer. When they hatch, the baby cicadas drop to the ground and burrow down, where they spend the winter feeding on tree sap and molting as they grow. In late summer, they crawl out of the ground and molt one last time, changing from a nymph to an adult. This molt is the one you often see on trees and walls.

Male cicadas make the loud noises that characterize the species, mostly to attract mates. Some scientists believe cicadas are the loudest insects on the planet.

The adults only live a couple of weeks.

You may have also seen Cicada Killers, which are huge black and yellow wasps that prey on cicadas. A female cicada killer will sting and paralyze a cicada, drag it back to her nest (a hole in the ground), and lay an egg under the cicada's leg. The baby cicada killer will feed on the (still-living) cicada all winter. If you've been reading *The Insect World of J. Henri Fabre*, this may sound very familiar. Cicadas and cicada killers are the subject of his essays, *The Hunting Wasp*, *The Wisdom of Instinct*, and *The Ignorance of Instinct*.

While Cicada Killers may look intimidating, only the females are capable of stinging, and they are not aggressive. If you don't want them in your yard, simply remove their ability to burrow by mulching



sandy areas or covering with groundcloth.

Photo from

<https://citybugs.tamu.edu/2012/08/02/the-texas-size-d-cicada-killer/>

Activity Suggestion

An idea from the [Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics](#)

Have students bring a pencil and paper outside. Instruct them to divide the paper into 3 columns, labeled “thing in nature”, “what they have in common with me” and “how they help me”

Example: A tree- we both have outer layers to protect ourselves-a tree gives me oxygen

Remind students to look for less obvious elements of nature, like air, wind and soil.

Have students share some of their connections. Can they take the connections further- and answer the question “how can I help them?”

To sense each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in God’s love and hope.

-Catholic Bishops Conference of Japan, from “Reverence for Life: A message for the 21st Century”, January 1, 2000.

Courtyard Adventures

Our activity courtyard is starting to develop! Special thanks to the EcoVikes for planting in the raised beds. Keep an eye out for corn, oats, marigolds, succulents, lettuce, and more in the next couple of weeks. Also a huge thank-you to Mrs. Corbett, who shared a statue of St. Fiacre. He was an Irish/French hermit with a gift for understanding healing properties of plants. He's the patron saint of gardeners (especially vegetable and herb gardeners) and taxi cab drivers.

During Back to School night, I had a chance to get some twilight photos of the courtyards. They look so beautiful all lit up.



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.

Where to find Emily next week

On campus:
Monday-8:30-2
Tuesday 8:30-2
Wednesday 9:30-1:30
Thursday 8:30-4:30

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!

ebreclaw@nchstx.org

Personal cell: 682-438-2393