



Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes
June 2018

It's nearly (officially) summer, and the air is full of the buzzing of creatures of the insect kind. It seems that there are plenty - more than enough for comfort, even – but **are there as many bugs as there used to be?** David Redhage looks at some recent studies that have tackled that question.

Two of the **highlights of our summer events** program are coming up **even sooner** than the start of summer. **Today is the final day to [register for our June 9 grazing workshop!](#)** There's only a week left to sign up for our **[beekeeping workshop on June 12.](#)** Don't miss out on these opportunities!

Speaking of opportunities, there's one for learning more about the **history and ideas behind organic farming**, free for the reading in our online library.

Both the grazing and beekeeping workshops are free of charge, because people like you have already paid for them with **[donations.](#)** **[Thank you!](#)**

In this issue:

President's Note: The Silence of the Bugs

Beekeeping Workshop June 12

Last Chance to Register for Grazing Workshop

Organic Farming Philosophy

Late Spring Events: Produce Safety, Weed Management, Elderberries, Minority Landowners, Pecans

President's Note: The Silence of the Bugs

During my daily checking of the online news, I came across an opinion piece in the *New York Times* entitled "[The Silence of the Bugs](#)". I have included links to the article, and to the other articles cited by the author. (By the way, the *New York Times* only allows you to look up articles for free a few times before you need to subscribe, so I used up one of my free reads.)



The article was written by Dr. Curt Stager, a professor of natural sciences at Paul Smith's College in New York. The article cites several studies pointing to a dramatic decline in flying insect biomass. I know "insect biomass" sounds kind of weird, but it does point out how we can determine changes in ecosystems.

The [main study](#) cited, from Germany, indicated a 75% decline in flying insect biomass over 27 years. The study was conducted by the volunteer-run Entomological Society Krefeld with the help of amateur naturalists.

The purpose of Dr. Stager's opinion piece was not only to highlight the issue of declining insect levels, but also to point out the importance of amateur naturalists and citizen scientists, with the help of career scientists, in tracking such ecosystem-wide changes. He stated, "Most scientists today live in cities and have little direct experience with wild plants and animals, and most biology textbooks now focus more on molecules, cells and internal anatomy than on the diversity and habits of species."

The article also cites several other papers and studies which point to a worldwide decline in flying insect biomass. One points to a [decline in hawk moths](#) in the northeastern United States. Another looks at a study conducted in Britain documenting a [decline in windshield impacts from insects](#). One study in Canada extrapolated the [number of flying insects killed by traffic alone](#).

Many of you are already aware of the plight of the monarch butterfly and its dramatic population drop. Some individuals have pointed out the lack of fireflies seen at night compared with what they saw as a child. I have noticed this myself.

What is happening? The German study attempted to take into account numerous factors, including weather, land use, and habitat data. None seemed to account for the overall drop. Agricultural intensification was mentioned as a possible cause, but the study was unable to verify such a conclusion.

Studying ecosystem changes dovetails nicely with sustainable agriculture. Sustainable agriculture looks at agriculture holistically, as opposed to reductionist science. It makes studying the effects harder, but it does factor in as many possible influences as is feasible.

[Continue reading...](#)

Beekeeping Workshop June 12

Jeff Asbury will lead this [free 90-minute evening workshop on beekeeping](#), sharing the knowledge gained in his half-century of experience with commercial apiculture.

Mr. Asbury, who resides in Le Flore, ran 4,000 hives in California for a number of years before working in the queen industry for a couple of years. After moving to Oklahoma about 11 years ago, he ran 700 hives, working them from here to North Dakota. He has worked with several bee clubs, has extensive knowledge of pollination, and has worked with U.C. Davis entomologist Eric Mussen.



The workshop is **free and open to the public**, but [advance registration](#) (by 5:00 P.M. on June 11) is required to reserve one of the limited spaces available. To register, contact Lena Moore by [email](#) or phone (918-647-9123).

Last Chance to Register for Grazing Workshop

TODAY IS THE LAST DAY to [register](#) for the **free grazing workshop on June 9**.

The **instructors** for this workshop are the same people who **run the Kerr Center's livestock program day in, day out**. Together, they bring close to a **century of experience** both **managing livestock and teaching others** to do the same.

The **classroom** for Kerr Center workshops **extends right out onto the ranch, offering participants the chance to get their own eyes and hands on** the actual systems the program has developed and refined over years of practice.



Don't miss out - [register today!](#)

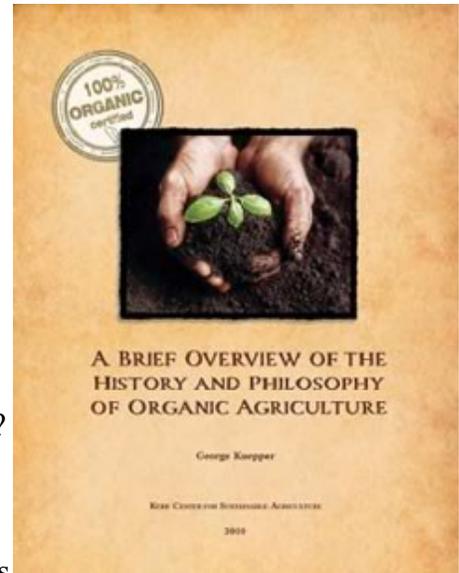
Organic Farming Philosophy

Navigating the USDA organic standards can be tricky. When you consider the number of similar standards with labels on grocery-store shelves, the task becomes even more daunting.

The Kerr Center's online library offers [resources to help make sense of the standards](#), whether you're growing food or buying it.

To get a better understanding of why the standards are the way they are, though, it helps to **step back from the fine details** of a particular production standard and **take in the big picture**. Where are the **roots of organic farming**, and what are the **ideas behind it**? We also offer [a publication](#) that does exactly that.

The history of organic farming goes much farther back than the USDA organic standard. It stems from a number of sources, and has followed more than one path down through the years. [*A Brief Overview of the History and Philosophy of Organic Agriculture*](#) traces those threads from their earliest beginnings down through the present day. It offers a wealth of insight that you just can't get by reading the standards themselves, and may spark fresh ideas about your own choices of how to grow and choose your food.



Late Spring Events: Produce Safety, Weed Management, Elderberries, Minority Landowners, Pecans

In addition to the **Kerr Center's [grazing](#) and [beekeeping](#) workshops**, the front end of June is stacked with other happenings: **produce safety training** (Pawnee, June 8), a **weed management webinar** (June 13), an in-depth **elderberry workshop** (Jefferson City, MO, June 14-16), a **minority farmers/landowners conference** (El Paso, TX, June 14-16), and the **Oklahoma Pecan Growers Association annual meeting** (Quapaw, June 14-16).

The Kerr Center's online [events calendar](#) provides full details on these and many other upcoming sustainable agriculture events around the state and

region. It also serves as a reminder for the dates of **monthly Kerr Center [tours](#)**, which run all year round, every second Tuesday by appointment.

Don't forget that you can also use our online calendar to **keep yourself and your friends up to date** on these and other upcoming events, including our tours:

- **Subscribe to our feed** and receive **updates to your personal calendar** (Outlook, Google+, etc.) as they are made.
- **Share events on the calendar** via a number of **different social media sites**, including Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest.

Date	Event Title	Location	Time	Details
JUN 8 Fri	Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training Course	Pawnee (Pawnee Nation College)	8:30 am - 5:00 pm	Tickets
JUN 9 Sat	Grazing Workshop	Poteau (Kerr Center)	10:00 am - 3:00 pm	
JUN 12 Tue	Tour the Kerr Center	Kerr Center	9:00 am	
JUN 12 Tue	Workshop: Beekeeping	Poteau (Kerr Center)	7:00 pm - 8:30 pm	
JUN 13 Wed	Webinar: Weed Management: An Ecological Approach		1:00 pm - 2:30 pm	Tickets
JUN 14 Thu	Comprehensive Elderberry Workshop	Jefferson City, MO (The Carver Center)	all-day	Tickets
JUN 14 Thu	Minority Landowner Farmers & Landowners Conference	El Paso, TX (Radisson Airport)	all-day	Tickets
JUN 14 Thu	Oklahoma Pecan Growers Association Annual Meeting	Quapaw	all-day	

Donate Now

Your donation helps
support the Kerr Center!



Join Friends of the Kerr Center

Support the Kerr Center

Since 1965 the Kerr Center has been reaching out to folks in Oklahoma and beyond. Today, the Friends of the Kerr Center help us continue this vital work! If you enjoy reading this newsletter or visiting our website, please consider [making a gift to the Kerr Center](#) today!

Quick Links...

[Kerr Center website](#)

Find us on Facebook 

Contact Information

The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture
24456 Kerr Road
Poteau, OK 74953
Phone: 918.647.9123
Fax: 918.647.8712
mailbox@kerrcenter.com

