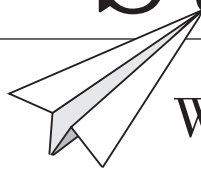


steppin' out



We Recommend: Culture, News + Reviews

Put Memphis on the Map By Kimberly Ham

Memphis has a chance to make some global noise — not with music this time, but with mushrooms, moths, and mulberries. The annual City Nature Challenge returns this year, inviting locals to document the plants and wildlife that call Shelby County home. It's part competition, part community science, and all about seeing your city a little differently.

Led locally by Overton Park Conservancy and programs manager Malle Carrasco-Harris, the weekend centers on a simple idea: take photos of any wild organism you find and upload them to iNaturalist. From there, a global network helps identify species, turning casual observations into real scientific data. More than 4,000 research papers have used iNaturalist data — not bad for a phone snapshot of a backyard beetle.

The main BioBlitz happens at Overton Park on Saturday, April 25th, starting at 10 a.m. at the golf clubhouse. Overton Park Conservancy director of communications Melissa McMasters says, "First-timers are welcome; our organizers provide a quick tutorial before heading into the Old Forest in small groups. And anything that catches our eye, we'll photograph and upload to the [iNaturalist] app." The goal isn't to specialize — it's to notice everything. Expect spring wildflowers like black snakeroot and jewelweed, plus pollinators, birds, and maybe a few surprises.

Memphis has quietly been a strong contender. Last year, participants logged 2,695 observations across 828 species, placing Memphis in the top third worldwide. This year's goal, according to McMasters, is to log "3,000 observations and 1,000 species." A slate of six events — including hikes at T.O. Fuller State Park and Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park, plus a moth-focused evening at River Garden — expands the habitats and species participants can encounter.

But you don't need to attend an official event to join in. Any observation logged anywhere in Shelby County during the challenge counts. Photograph a flower on your block, a bird in your backyard, or a butterfly at your local park. Upload it, and you're contributing to a global biodiversity snapshot.

Beyond the numbers, the weekend builds something harder to measure: connection. To nature, for sure — but also to neighbors who share a curiosity about the living world. In a city known for culture, the City Nature Challenge is a reminder that Memphis is also teeming with wildlife, waiting to be noticed. ■



PHOTO: COURTESY MELISSA MCMASTERS

Fields Falcone snaps a mourning cloak butterfly.

CITY NATURE CHALLENGE, OVERTON PARK, 1914 POPLAR AVE., SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 10 A.M.

VARIOUS DAYS & TIMES April 23rd - 29th

The Night Witches

*The University of Memphis,
Department of Theatre & Dance,
Thursday, April 23 to Saturday, April 26*

A gripping, movement-driven drama about the all-female Soviet 588th Night Bomber Regiment and their perilous WWII missions. As pilots Nina and Vera prepare for their first combat sortie, the piece explores courage, friendship, and resilience under fire. Directed by Kaylea Jo Egnor, the production blends movement, song, and poetic dialogue to evoke one fateful night of wartime heroism.

Poetry in the Park

*Mary Elizabeth Malone Park,
Saturday, April 25, 6 p.m.*
Pull up, catch a vibe, and share your voice at this open-air poetry night hosted by Memphis Parks in collaboration with Play Your Park

and Keeping It P! Bring a blanket or lawn chair and settle in for an evening of creativity and community connection.

Free and open to adults only. No preregistration required; open mic sign-ups will be available on-site, with spots filled on a first-come basis. For more information, contact whitney.wallace@memphistn.gov.

Peak of Spring: Floral Arranging Workshop with Bramble & Bloom

*Memphis Brooks Museum of Art,
Sunday, April 26, 2-4 p.m.*

Celebrate spring in full bloom with a hands-on floral arranging workshop. Participants will work with seasonal favorites like larkspur, irises, and peonies while learning the fundamentals of composition, texture, and color balance in floral design.

Whether you're new to arranging

or looking to refine your skills, this guided workshop offers practical techniques for creating lush, expressive arrangements inspired by spring at its peak. Each guest will leave with a finished bouquet ready to display at home.

Comedian Jesse James Best

*Flyway Brewing Company, Saturday,
April 25, 8-9:45 p.m.*

Flyway Brewing's monthly comedy showcase features nationally touring comedian Jesse James Best (Wise-guys Comedy Club, Zanies Nashville) headlining, with Chattanooga's Courtenay Cholovich (B4UDie Comedy Festival, Lookout Comedy Festival) in support. Hosted by co-producer Colton Ales, the night also includes drop-in sets from featured local comics.