

TRAILBLAZER

April/May/June 2015



*Supporting Oregon Ridge Park
and Nature Center for 32 years*

WANT BUTTERFLIES? DON'T FORGET THE CATERPILLARS!



**Presentation By
Naturalist Sheryl Pedrick
Monday, April 20, 2015, 7:30 PM**

Most people love butterflies in their garden and often provide flowering plants to attract them. However, many aren't certain or aware of how to attract the greatest diversity of butterfly species. One solution is to consider the caterpillars, and the plants on which they depend. Join Sheryl Pedrick, Ladew Gardens' Education Director, on a metamorphic journey to examine the full life cycle and needs of common butterflies of the central Maryland region. Examine recommended nectar plants for butterflies and the host plants for their caterpillars. Also, learn about Ladew's 1500 square foot, native butterfly house, which features all four life cycle stages of numerous butterflies (and moths), including monarchs, spicebush swallowtails, buckeyes, hummingbird moths and more.

Sheryl Pedrick began her environmental education/naturalist career almost 20 years ago at Oregon Ridge Nature Center as a weekend/seasonal naturalist. She received her Master's Degree in Environmental Studies from Montclair State University through a Graduate Fellowship with the New Jersey School of Conservation. Soon after, she acquired the position of Senior Naturalist at Irvine Nature Center. In 2004 Sheryl became the first Education Director at Ladew Topiary Gardens in Monkton, where she has developed most of the children's and family nature programs.

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Talk by Naturalist Heather Helm
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May 2 and 3, 10 AM to 4 PM

MUSIC IN THE WOODS

May 9, 10 AM to 4 PM

PICNIC UNDER THE STARS

June 19, 6 PM, Location in Park TBA

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WILDFLOWER WANDERINGS

**Presented By
Naturalist Heather Helm
Monday, May 18, 7:30 PM**



Photo by David McAdoo

Join wildflower enthusiast Heather Helm on a journey through time and space to discover the beauty and variety of native wildflowers in Maryland, as she shares her wanderings on numerous hikes in many places spanning a single year. She will present flowers as they bloom chronologically, gleaned from her personal nature journals and photographs. Hear interesting stories and lore about these beauties, and learn where, when, and what to look for when exploring on your own.

Heather Helm grew up in northern Carroll County, hiking, camping, canoeing, and enjoying the outdoors with family and friends. While in college, she worked as a seasonal/weekend naturalist at Oregon Ridge. Upon completing her Master's Degree in Geography and Environmental Planning, she became the first Naturalist at the new Bear Branch Nature Center in Carroll County. Later, she opened and developed Harford County's Anita C. Leight Estuary Center, serving as Park Manager. After having her first child, Heather retired from full-time work and began consulting on exhibits and programs. She designed the Havre de Grace Promenade signs and created the exhibit concept plan for their Light Keeper's House. She designed and piloted Benjamin Banneker Park's first summer camps. Heather is also the leader of a Howard County 4H group.

PRIMITIVE TECHNOLOGY WEEKEND

**Flintknapping, Bow Shoots, Atlatl Tosses and
a Glimpse into the Paleoamerican Past**

May 2 and 3, 10 AM – 4 PM, FREE



Photo by Jack Cresson

This unique event features various demonstrations, including flintknapping, and hands-on activities such as shooting bows and arrows, blowguns, tossing atlatls, and making clay coils and pinch pots.

This year Archaeologist Jack Cresson will share his expertise in a talk *An Unusual Paleoamerican Cache Find in Eastern Pennsylvania*. This 2013 discovery of twelve fluted biface (arrowhead) preforms (meaning unfinished) and two unfluted bifacial knives provides a rare glimpse into eastern fluted point manufacture. Jack Cresson is a highly respected expert in the field of Experimental Archaeology. He will discuss the various experimental approaches to replicate the processes used in this cache.

For more information, call Kirk Dreier at 410-887- 2503.

MUSIC IN THE WOODS

OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER'S
ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC

WHEN: SATURDAY, MAY 9, 2015
TIME: BETWEEN 10 AM AND 4 PM

IT'S FREE



FEATURED EVENTS

- Local Musicians & Bands Play Folk, Bluegrass, Rock and More
- Bring Your Instrument and Join a Jam Session
- Learn about the Dulcimer and other Instruments at a Workshop
- Vendors, Crafts, and Facepainting
- Bring a Picnic or Buy a Hotdog at our Stand

OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER APPLIES TO BECOME A MARYLAND GREEN CENTER!

This spring ORNC is seeking to become certified by the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) as a Maryland Green Center. In addition to supporting community environmental learning and being a model for various sustainability practices, the key criterion to becoming a Maryland Green Center is helping local schools become MAEOE-certified Green Schools. ORNC is here to encourage and support schools to apply (or re-apply) for Green School Certification from MAEOE.

Green Schools provide high quality environmental education to their students. There are many reasons why environmental education is so critical for our youth, including:

- It helps children develop into adults who understand and care about environmental stewardship.
- It nurtures a sense of wonder, imagination & creativity.
- It provides a sense of beauty, calm, peace and refuge in an often stressful, fast-paced world.
- It expands intellectual development.
- It enhances physical development and overall health and well-being.



- It helps children understand the interrelationship between all life forms.

Maryland recognizes the benefits of this type of education. Since 2011 Maryland has required environmental literacy as a requirement for high school graduation. Schools from pre-K through grade 12 are required to provide a comprehensive program of environmental studies. MAEOE certified Green Schools are well prepared to provide this education to their students.

If you are involved with a school interested in becoming a certified Green School, please contact ORNC to see how we may assist you. We'd love to help! For additional information about the Green Center certification process and how to become a MAEOE Green School, please visit www.maeoe.org.

In the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught. ~ Baba Dioum

(Article by Christine Carpenter, MAEOE)

PICNIC UNDER THE STARS

Friday, June 19, 6 PM
In the Park, but not at the Lake

Our annual picnic will once again be held on a Friday evening to enable more people to come and welcome summer at Oregon Ridge Park. Since the lake is closed, we will announce the new location within the Park later, via e-mail and Facebook.

Join us and take an evening stroll through the woods, stretch out on your blanket and gaze at the stars, then gather round the campfire to sing songs and roast marshmallows for tasty s'mores over a toasty fire.

Unfortunately, this year there will be no grills available, so pack a picnic dinner of fried chicken, sandwiches, or whatever you enjoy eating.

Please bring your family and friends for a memorable evening in the park!



NATURE CENTER STAFF

Director	Winnie Tan
Naturalist/CS1	Jessica Jeannetta
Administrative Asst.	Betsy Kadow
Building Maintenance	Pat Bedgar
Part-Time Naturalists:	Andrea Barnett
	Rob Bonfante
	Karl Dotterweich
	Kimberly Erickson
	Betsy Kadow
	Eric Mazur
	Laura Soder
	Melissa Tillery
	Rachel Tuchman
	Pam Ward
Seasonal Naturalist	Jackie Devine
	Lauren Leffer
	Cole Snyder
Seasonal Attendant	Sara Barnett
Building Attendants	Noot Canoles
	Shea Sandifer

CHRISTINA PANOUSOS

A Positive, Energetic, Dependable Ridge Runner

Christina Panousos has always looked for things that are fun and new to do, so becoming a Ridge Runner in fall 2012 seemed a perfect way to express her love for nature and animals and learn more about what it takes to become a naturalist. Christina loves taking care of the animals, especially her favorites — the red-bellied turtles and the corn snakes. She has had some memorable experiences working with the animals, including one involving Jasmine the Opossum. While feeding Jasmine grapes, Christina became afraid that the opossum was choking because of the way it was chewing, so she ran to get the Director. As they watched Jasmine eat, Christina realized that the opossum was just chewing quickly in an odd way because she has so many teeth and she likes to chow down on her lunch, especially her favorite fruits. Ever since, Christina loves watching the opossum dine, especially when slurping yogurt from its dish or sneaking under blankets to eat an egg.

Christina is a sophomore at Dulaney High School, where her favorite subjects are government and creative writing, because "...they are very philosophical," she says. She enjoys participating in friendly debates with others and writing plays, poetry and stories. Last fall Christina broke into the stage world, playing a role in Dulaney High's musical production of "The Good Times Are Killing Me." At home Christina cares for her cat, two birds, ten fish and a rescue box turtle. In her spare time, she is also involved with Girl Scouts and enjoys reading all kinds of books and playing basketball.

Christina encourages others to become a Ridge Runner because there is something new to learn each day, whether it is about the animals that live in the Center, the plants growing around the park, or even the tips and tricks on how to remove calcium residue off of the animals' tanks! When asked what was her favorite thing about being a Ridge Runner, Christina excitedly reported, "All the people and animals that you meet and what you can learn from them!"



TRAILBLAZER STAFF

Editor/Design/Layout: Mary Jane Shanks

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Writers: Christine Carpenter, Pat Ghingher,
Jessica Jeannetta, Erin McCleary,
MJ Shanks, Winny Tan

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Articles/graphics for Sept/Oct issue due July 7.

**Color versions of the *Trailblazer*
can be seen on our Web site.**

OOPS! We Made an Error!

There is an error in the last newsletter. The Wildlife Blind, photo below, is the Eagle Scout project for Matthew Seidenman. We apologize for our error, Matthew.



A BREAK IN THE SNOW AND MAPLE SYRUP POURED AT PANCAKE BREAKFAST 2015

Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow... and it did! Snow and ice wreaked havoc on Maple Sugar Season this year, allowing only one Saturday for visitors to learn about maple sugaring. On that day, 600 hardy souls turned out for hikes to the sugar bush. Previous daytime temperatures rarely rose above freezing, so very little sap was flowing, but it was warm enough on that Saturday to see the sap at the hole. The steamy evaporator was in high gear boiling water to simulate the sap to syrup process, but since we had leftover syrup from last year, visitors were able to take a taste. The snow on the ground enabled us to make taffy or "snow sugar," a special treat for the crowd.

Old Man Winter and Jack Frost did not daunt nearly 1300 supporters from dining at our 29th Annual Pancake Breakfast, providing us with a tidy profit of \$6300. This year we had many newcomers who heard about our delicious menu of steaming stacks of pancakes, smothered in maple syrup and accompanied by tasty grilled sausage. A couple of our County officials also showed up to lend their support: Barry Williams, Baltimore County Director of Recreation and Parks, and Beahta Davis, Chief of Recreation Services.

Diners enjoyed stirring music by the Oregon Ridge Dulcimers, Ballybogs,

Stringtown, and Mayo on the Hotcakes. Everyone had fun with Walter Massey's \$.25 raffles, flower and syrup sales, face painting, and the gift shop. Free bottles of syrup went home with 85 people who joined the ORNC Council or renewed their membership.



Jean Worthley (of Hodge Podge Lodge) visits with Bob Stanhope, who started the breakfast 29 years ago.

John Canoles's hard work to line up appealing box raffles paid off big once again, thanks to donations from these generous benefactors: Aruba Sun and Spa, Auto Spa Hand Wash, Boordy Vineyards, Brooks Huff Tire and Auto Center, Colours Salon, Earth Treks Climbing Center of Timonium, Greenbuilders, Inc., The Greene Turtle of Towson, Law Offices of Jack Sturgill, Jr., Ladew Topiary Gardens, Millstone Cellars, Mt. Washington Tavern, Oregon

Ridge Gift Shop, REI, Valley Motors, Wild Bird Center of Timonium, and individuals Noot and Anne Canoles, Jack and Ann Kerns, Brody McAllister, Ginna Naylor, Cheryl Parrish, and Winny Tan.

The success of our Maple Sugar Season can be attributed to our wonderful volunteers working alongside Winny Tan and other Nature Center staff, and the Lodge staff. The Pancake Breakfast Committee consists of Co-Chairs Ginna Naylor and Bill LaBarre, Treasurer Anne Canoles, Special Events Chair Georgette Frederick, Publicity Chair Mike Burns, Gift Shop Coordinator Noot Canoles, Polly Roberts on flower sales, Membership Chair Marcia Dysart, and Volunteer Chair Pat Krasowski, who begins months in advance lining up over 100 workers who prep, cook, clean, wash, mix, flip, sell and serve. This year Erin and John McCleary were in training to chair this event in 2016.

We want to thank our sausage cooks, who must stand outside over hot, steaming grills in all kinds of weather: Bob Meier, Lou Witt, Jack Kerns, Kevin O'Neill, Mark Gingerich, and Mark Kander.

Everyone worked as a team to give our visitors an experience to remember until next year's Pancake Breakfast. *Volunteers and diners, please mark your 2016 calendars now for March 5 and 6!*





THANK YOU ONE AND ALL! YOU ARE GRADE-A VOLUNTEERS!

Charles Anonye	Jack Kerns
Carole Armor	Jerry Kirkwood
Gary Anderson	Dorothy Kirkwood
Susan Bassett	Bill LaBarre
Anna Beard	Holly LaBarre
Nancy Berger	Sue Leslie
Kim Berk	Carol Mantagna
Konrad Berk	Ted Martello
John Bichell	Walter Massey
Elysa Braverman	Nancy Mattingly
Edward Bull	Bill Mayo
Mike Burns	Talbot Mayo
Ann Canoles	Erin McCleary
John Canoles	John McCleary
Noot Canoles	Philip McNight
Mike Columbus	Bob Meier
Jim Curtis	Gayle Meier
Rob Deford	April Melato
Joey Devine	Dan Melato
Mike Duty	Grace Meredith
Marcia Dysart	Ellen Mering
Lucilla Facchon	Dean Merritt
Georgette Frederick	Bradley Moore
Susan Genovese	Ruth Moore
Kat Georgantas	Teresa Moore
Jay Ghingher	Andi Musser
Pat Ghingher	GINNA NAYLOR
Mark Gingerich	Colleen Neely
Jared Hall	Nan Neely
Sybil Hebb	Kathy Obbagy
Gerry Hemming	Ava Oelke
Amy Hopkins	Kevin O'Neill
Martha Johnston	Christina Panousos
Mark Kander	Cheryl Parris
Monica Kander	Beth Petterson
Ann Kerns	Ava Possidente

Bella Possidente
Kristi Possidente
Lucia Possidente
Maggie Possidente
Sophia Possidente
Jim Potter
David Power
John Rigley
Michael Romiga
Rutuja Rothe
Maddie Rozics
Joe Salvaggio
Mary Scott
Ashby Shanks
MJ Shanks
Jeff Shue
Daniel Sievers
Griffin Sievers
Zi Smith
Michele Steinitz
Linda Tice
Tom Thompson
Paul Waldman
Zane Walsh
Mike Waltz
Dave Ward
Josh Ward
Katie Ward
Meghan Ward
Pam Ward
Alison Warfield
Lou Witt
Willy Wong
Suet Ying Wong
Yue Tung Wong

THANK YOU FOR EXCELLENT LEADERSHIP, BILL LABARRE AND GINNA NAYLOR

As planning, execution, and clean-up for the Pancake Breakfast comes to a close, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank two very special people. Ginna Naylor and Bill LaBarre have been vital members of the Breakfast Planning Committee for almost 15 years. Bill has chaired the event since 2001 and served as Captain of the Pancake Flipping Crew. Ginna has served as the Kitchen Coordinator. They have co-chaired the event for the last four years. Their hard work and dedication have made the Pancake Breakfast a successful fundraising event each year. Sadly, this year they both have decided to "retire" from the chair positions. It's time to pass the torch!

My husband John McCleary and I have agreed to take on this daunting task. This year we had the opportunity to shadow Bill and Ginna throughout the process and learn just what it takes to make the Pancake Breakfast the wonderful community event looked forward to by many.

Because of their organizational skills and commitment to this event, we will be able to step right in and hopefully enjoy many more successes. We know Bill and Ginna will be back next year as volunteers holding our hands!

On behalf of Oregon Ridge, the staff, the volunteers and the community, we thank you both for your many years of service.

Erin and John McCleary
Pancake Breakfast Chairs for 2016



NEW PROJECTS BEGIN THIS SPRING

by ORNCC President Pat Ghinger

As we make our way into spring, I can't help but be thankful that the winter is finally behind us. Even though people enjoy visiting the Nature Center and taking part in the Maple Sugaring Event and the yummy Pancake Breakfasts during the winter, spring tends to bring out a sudden burst of rejuvenation and a unique feeling of excitement. We can't wait to get out on the trails to look for and hear the first signs of spring and to feel the sun on our faces.

I think this is the perfect time to look ahead and see what is in the works for the upcoming months at the Oregon Ridge Nature Center. The ORNC Council Board has been hard at work with the usual events: Honey Harvest, Holiday Party, Maple Sugaring, Pancake Breakfast, Music in the Woods, Primitive Technology Weekend, and the Council Picnic. But this spring brings new ideas and new plans such as renovation of the library so that it can be better used as a

multipurpose room for presentations and programs. We will be taking out some of the bookcases, installing a counter with a sink and cabinets, replacing the carpet with more practical flooring, installing a projection



New Woodland Garden will feature bloodroot and more

screen and LCD projector, and replacing the table and chairs to provide additional space.

Also in the works is a long-range plan for a pavilion to be built behind the chicken coop near the wetland area. The pavilion will be an area for events and additional programming,

providing shelter during inclement weather, a space where students can work and eat lunch, and a place for staff led birthday parties. The pavilion will have rain barrels and solar powered lights and fans. Additionally, plans are being made to begin the creation of a large enclosed woodland garden that will give us a chance to see what a natural area would look like without deer browsing.

The ORNC board is very excited about these new plans and is reaching out to you as members of the ORNC Council to join in with your many talents as we move forward with the planning, implementation, and funding for the projects. This is your Nature Center and we welcome any time and assistance that you can contribute.

Most importantly, please make sure to visit the Nature Center as soon as possible — you don't want to miss those early signs of spring. Enjoy!

WHAT'S COMING UP IN SUMMER AND FALL!

SUMMER PROGRAMS FOR ALL AGES!

Check online for the Summer Calendar

TRAIL GUIDE TRAINING

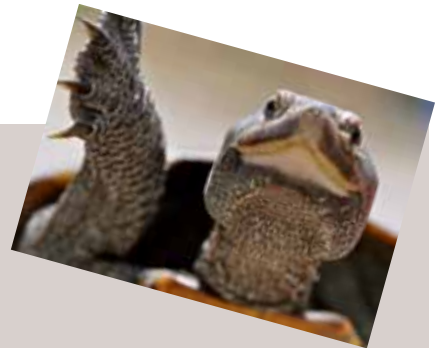
September 1 to 4, from 10 AM to 1 PM
\$20 fee refundable after leading 1st hike!
Learn about honeybees and other insects,
primitive technology and much more!

HONEY HARVEST FESTIVAL!

Mark your Calendars NOW for
October 3 and 4, 11 AM to 4 PM
IT'S FREE AND TONS OF FUN!

MEMBERS!

Tippy Terrapin
says,



THANK YOU VERY MUCH

To the 34 who became new members
and the 51 members who renewed at
the Pancake Breakfast!

If you weren't able to make it to the breakfast,
PLEASE RENEW TODAY! There is a membership
form on the back page and a link to renew online.

An Adventure In Your Own Backyard

Nature Quest is a great opportunity to experience the outdoors and be active with friends and family while discovering some of the best parks and trails in Baltimore County. Travel the trails — some on foot and some in a canoe or kayak — to find trail markers at Oregon Ridge Park, Benjamin Banneker Park, Cromwell Valley Park, Marshy Point Park, Robert E. Lee Park, and other park locations. There are special rewards for those completing five or more trails! To get started, you need a Nature Quest Passport, which can be obtained at one the participating parks, at Wegmans, or online:

www.oregonridgenaturecenter.org

Those who complete at least five trails are eligible to attend Baltimore County's celebratory **Nature Quest FEST** at Robert E. Lee Park on 10/17/2015, time TBA. One must register to attend the Fest, so once you have completed five trails, call 410-887-4156 to register or do so at one of the participating parks. Hang on to your Passport! It is your ticket for free admission to the Fest.

Get your Nature Quest Passport now to learn all about this unique outdoor adventure!

Ed Bull has been coming to Oregon Ridge since he was a kid and always hoped to be a Ridge Runner like those he admired on his visits. Ed likes being a Ridge Runner because "It makes me feel good to work with children and teach them about nature and all the responsibilities that go into working and caring for the animals at the Nature Center." His favorite duty is feeding and caring for the animals, especially Jasmine the Opossum, but he also really enjoys helping out at the festivals. Ed likes people about as much as animals.

Ed is a 10th grader at Calvert Hall. His favorite subject is U.S. History, and he loves visiting Civil War battlefields like Antietam and Gettysburg. He is interested in other countries and in understanding why wars occur. He wants to be a teacher and thinks the best thing about being a Ridgie is the chance to teach natural history to kids at our summer camps. "I get to work with people, especially young children and teach them about animals and the environment. The children learn to love and respect the animals and the environment because they love being at Oregon Ridge." (See photo of Ed leading a stream search below.) Past camper Avery Tan, daughter of Director Winny

Tan, describes Mr. Edward as nice and funny. She says, "I loved having Mr. Edward in camp with us."

At home Ed cares for his yellow Lab Opie and three rescue cats — Angel, Squishy, and Magic — who were feral until Ed socialized them. Ed has always helped his Mom capture and socialize stray cats in the community, so that they will be good candidates for adoption in local animal shelters and organizations such as Defenders of Animal Rights. Without the efforts of people like Ed and his Mom, these cats would remain feral and pose a serious danger to songbirds and other wildlife.

Ed's favorite pastime is fishing, and he loves to travel. He likes books and enjoys reading John Steinbeck. He especially enjoyed Elie Wiesel's novel *Night*, a true story about Wiesel's experience with his father in Nazi concentration camps during WWII.

If you are thinking of becoming a Ridge Runner, visit one day and talk to Ed or another Ridgie who is on duty that day. Ed thinks that teens that enjoy animals and the outdoors will love volunteering at ORNC. He says, "It's an amazing opportunity to learn about nature, and it teaches you that responsibility and hard work will help you in your future."



SECRETS AND MYSTERIES OF SPRING WILDFLOWERS

by Winny Tan
Director of ORNC

As winter passes and I start seeing signs of spring, I anticipate the oncoming events that happen almost like clockwork. Even before the snow melts, little spathes of the skunk cabbage are visible and the great horned owls are nesting. The red maple tree buds begin to swell and the wood frogs begin their journey back to the ponds. Mother Nature is signaling the start of the growing season again, and everything starts waking up right on schedule. Soon, I will be wandering through the woods once more, looking for the fleeting, ephemeral wildflowers, delighted in knowing the little secrets that they are hiding.

Sometimes people overlook the unordinary flowers because they are unique in appearance, like the skunk cabbage. It is known as the first flower of the year since it starts busting out of the cold ground in January and sometimes December. The skunk cabbage emits heat through a process called *thermogenesis*. This process causes the plant to remain about 70° around the tiny flowers, which are actually located on a thick round spadix hidden well inside the purply green spathe (sheath). (See photo below, left.) Bees, beetles and flies are attracted to the heat of these small, early blossoms. The name

of this flower derives from its “stinky” smell when the flower or leaves have been torn or stepped on. The scent producing chemicals are *skatole* and *caderine*, the same chemicals found in decaying animals and plant matter. The smell helps deter grazing animals (like deer), but helps lure in pollinators. If a grazer does decide to take a bite, the calcium oxalate crystals will feel like glass breaking all over its tongue. The smell, however, is delightful to flies. Hundreds of flies can be seen swarming around the stream banks where these plants love to grow.

Another gem of the woods is the delicate hepatica (see photo below, right). It is a survivalist like the skunk cabbage, often popping out in the earliest part of spring when snow may still be on the ground. These small pinkish bloomers bear little hairs along the stem to retain heat during cool spring days and nights, and to prevent ants from climbing its stalk to steal nectar. The leaves are also furry and can be *evergreen*, lasting a year. The older leaves take on a rusty, liver-like color, thus the name that is derived from the Greek word for liver. The flowers can be varied from white, pink, lavender to even a pastel blue, but what we think are petals are actually sepals. Though pollinators do visit the flowers, hepatica

is able to self-fertilize since colder springs can minimize the number of visitors. It is in the buttercup family and favors the rich soils of woodlands with maples, beeches, and oaks.

The spring beauty (see upper photo page 11) is aptly named for its simple, yet delightful pink bloom, which enlivens the rather bland woods of April. The pods of these flowers explode and fire seeds up to two feet away, allowing these small flowers to thoroughly cover an area, colonizing a large woodland expanse. The five petals on this flower radiate pink lines, a.k.a. *bee guides*, to direct the insect pollinator to the core of the flower where the nectar can be found and thus be pollinated. When it gets too cold or the weather threatens rain, the spring beauty will close its petals to protect its valuable resources, nectar and pollen, while conserving heat. The spring beauty is also known as a *pink potato* because the *corms* (the bulb part of the tuber) are tasty. Though this flower does cover expansive sections of the forest, removing corms will threaten the population of these fleeting flowers. Picking the flowers can rob the corm of energy, since in the picking leaves are often removed as well. Once picked, the flower will quickly wilt anyway, so it is best to enjoy the spring beauty by feasting with the eyes!





The pink lady's slipper (*see photo below*) is hard to find, but so special when you do. It is really an orchid and is very rare, the flower shaped like a lady's shoe. When I first went looking for it, using the directions from a fellow naturalist, I was disappointed to find that it had finished blooming. The next year, I went up again around the same month, and weekly thereafter, monitoring the growth of the flower stalk and the bud and enjoying the anticipation of knowing that it would finally bloom. When I got there for what I thought would be the blooming period, the whole flower stalk was picked. The next year, the plant had been dug up! It was devastating to wait and watch, and wait and watch, yet never have that opportunity again...at least in that particular spot at Oregon Ridge.

I finally got to see other pink lady's slippers bloom, and I enjoy the anticipation

and hunt through the woods to find them each year. However, I am very careful about sharing their locations. Location usually dictates where a plant may grow, but it's not the location that ensures the growth of the lady's slipper — it is a fungus, specifically the *Rhizoctonia* fungi. The flower and the fungus share a vital symbiotic relationship. The flower produces the tiniest seed without any reserves to set up the plant for growth. If the fungus is present in the soil, it will attach itself to the seed covering and start digesting the outer cells. Then, the inner cells of the seed begin to absorb the nutrients from the fungus and finally germinate. Without the fungus, the seed would stay dormant. The *Rhizoctonia* fungus continues to aid the corm by making minerals and other soil nutrients available for the next 2-3 years. The fungi will get help later when the lady's slipper is finally able to photo-synthetically manufacture energy. This complex relationship is crucial for this particular orchid to begin growing. In the wild, it takes the lady slipper 10-17 years to become a mature plant capable of blooming. Most lady's slippers last about 20 years, so it is important to leave them where they are and just enjoy the hunt to find them.

There are so many more wildflowers that I look forward to in spring and want to share in this article, but there are too many. There are the shy violets that I find to make into jelly, the wild ginger that hides underneath heart-shaped leaves, and the may apples with their umbrella-like leaf stalks and elegant white blossoms. As the spring flowers disappear, the summer ones emerge and there are more mysteries to solve and secrets to uncover. For more fun facts and lore about our native wildflowers, check out *The Secrets of Wildflowers* and *Hedgemaids and Fairy Candles* by Jack Sanders or *The History and Folklore of North American Wildflowers* by Timothy Coffey.

(Above photo of Spring Beauty by Jeremy Sell)

(See page 2 for another photo of the Pink Lady's Slipper)



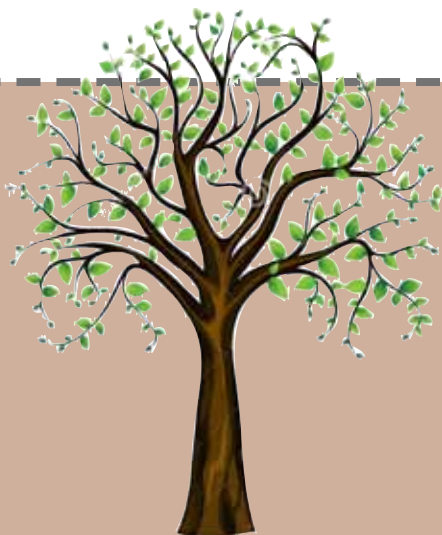


**Oregon Ridge Nature
Center Council**
13555 Beaver Dam Road
Cockeysville, MD 21030

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DEPARTMENT OF
RECREATION AND PARKS



RENEW NOW AND SIGN UP A FRIEND, TOO!

Many branches make a strong tree. Many members make a strong Council. Use this membership form to renew and give a copy to a friend. **You can now join or renew online. Please visit: <http://oregonridgenaturecenter.org/membership.html>**

Name _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Address _____ State _____ Zip _____

_____ \$ 15 Individual
_____ \$ 30 Family
_____ \$ 75 Supporting

_____ \$ 250 Sustaining
_____ \$ 500 Lifetime
_____ \$ Extra Donation



Checks payable to ORNC Council, Inc., 13555 Beaver Dam Rd., Cockeysville, MD 21030