

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



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TRAILBLAZER

Nov 2014 - Jan 2015

Supporting Oregon Ridge Park
and Nature Center for 32 years



DEPARTMENT OF
RECREATION AND PARKS

Honey Harvest Festival 2014



Snapshots

by Jim Curtis

UPCOMING SPEAKERS

November & January Speakers - See Page 2

March 16, 2015
Eastern Bluebirds:
Twenty Years of Stories and Observation
Katharine Patterson
Educator, Volunteer Naturalist, ORNCC Board

April 20, 2015
Want Butterflies? Don't forget the Caterpillars
Sheryl Pedrick
Education Director at Ladew Topiary Gardens

May 18, 2015
Wildflower Wanderings
Heather Helm
Nature Exhibits and Programs Consultant

Talks are free and begin at 7:30 at ORNC.
Please contact Program Chair Sue Leslie at ORNC if you have a suggestion for an interesting speaker. (No speakers in months not included.)

HONEY HARVEST 2014 WAS JUST GLORIOUS!

Honey Harvest 2014 set the pace for the rest of our seasonal events this year. It was one of our best — perfect fall temperatures, mostly blue skies, parking lot overflowing with **4000!** visitors, and many activities to enjoy - especially the vulture and owls, “make your own ice cream,” and the warm fire pit. A big round of applause goes to Erin McCleary, Pat Krasowski, Georgette Frederick, and the ORNC staff for making it come together so flawlessly. Volunteers are our not-so-secret ingredients for a successful Honey Harvest. We have dedicated page 6 of this *Trailblazer* to thanking everyone who helped this year.

This issue of the *Trailblazer* is packed with photos of Honey Harvest fun. We hope they will make you want to return, or join us for the first time, next year — October 3 and 4, 2015. Between now and then, mark your calendars and join us for the rest of our special events coming up in 2015.

MAPLE SUGAR DAYS
February 21, 22, 28 & March 1
10 AM to 4 PM

PANCAKE BREAKFAST
March 7 and 8
8 AM to Noon at the Lodge
\$7 adults, \$4 children

PRIMITIVE TECH WEEKEND
May 2 and 3
10 AM to 4 PM

MUSIC IN THE WOODS
May 6
10 AM to 4 PM

ORNCC SPEAKER SERIES

The Geology of Maryland

By Martin Schmidt

November 17, 2014, 7:30 PM

The State of Maryland has all five of the Physiographic Provinces of the Appalachians, making it a great place to understand geology throughout much of the eastern United States. Schmidt’s talk will give an overview of Maryland’s geologic story, which will leave listeners with a new perspective on their travels across the state. He will discuss the land-forms and the underlying rocks and their structure, and he will provide a broader view from a natural history perspective.

Martin Schmidt has been teaching physics, chemistry, and geosciences to children in grades 9-12 at the McDonogh School since 1978. He is the author of *Maryland’s Geology*. He enjoys spending the hot summers in cold places, including the Rockies, Andes, Alps and the Himalayas. Schmidt loves maps and can become absorbed for hours playing around with Google Earth and other digital maps. He also enjoys spending much of his time talking to naturalists, teachers, park rangers and citizens about Maryland geology.



The Cornish Influence in Maryland’s Copper and Chrome Mines

By Johnny Johnsson

January 19, 2015, 7:30 PM

Carroll County and nearby areas of Maryland were once significant producers of copper and chromite. Cornish mining influences have been studied in other mining regions, but have not been considered for this area. Using slides and displays of several historic mining artifacts, Johnny Johnsson will examine the role of Cornish miners, mining captains, technology, and terminology in these mid-19th century mines.

Johnny Johnsson is the Environmental Director for Vulcan Materials in Hanover, PA. Mineral collecting as a child led to Johnsson’s career and to an interest in mining history, particularly the mining and manufacture of chromium, copper, and iron related to Maryland’s Tyson family. He is a Volunteer Ranger at Soldier’s Delight Natural Environment Area, one of several locations where he conducts interpretive mining history hike programs. Johnsson has presented papers at mining history conferences as well as talks on local mining history.



FUN, MUSIC, AND SO MUCH MORE AT HHF 2014



ALISON RAMIREZ: The Singing Ridge Runner

Alison Ramirez loves to sing and write songs. Maybe one day she will be famous, but for now she is doing a great job as a Ridge Runner. She became a Ridgie because she loves working with animals. Her favorite animal at ORNC is the “adorable” tree frog. She likes working with children, too, and working at summer camps is her favorite Ridge Runner job. She says,

The best thing about being a Ridge Runner is learning so many new and interesting facts about animals and plants that I didn't know before. I would encourage others to become a Ridge Runner because it's a great way to get service learning hours and it's a lot of fun.

Alison is in the 11th grade at Towson High. Her favorite subject is Geometry and she plans on going to college upon

graduation. Besides singing, she enjoys reading, writing, biking, hiking, swimming and blogging...more writing. At home, she takes care of two yellow labs named Mandy and Ginger.

We are happy that Alison is a member of the Ridge Runner team. Teens between the ages of 13 and 17, who are interested in animals and nature, can also join the team. If you are interested, visit our Web site to download an application:

<http://oregonridgenaturecenter.org/ridgies.html>



HELP US CELEBRATE AND DECORATE

You are invited to a Party! Friday evening, **DECEMBER 19**, at 7:30 PM. Bring something delicious to share (if you can), and enjoy crafts, singing holiday songs, decorating our live tree (to be planted later on), and meeting some other people who love Oregon Ridge Nature Center!

WHY WAS HONEY HARVEST 2014 THE BEST? VOLUNTEERS!

Upon arriving, festival visitors were politely helped with parking by a group of friendly teenagers. Walking to the Center, they may have stopped to buy a butterfly pin or wood sculpture before noticing the person holding the ominous black vulture or the tiny screech owl. Hot sparks from the Blacksmith's fire caught their eye, as did the maneuvers of the guys in Civil War garb. Eventually hunger led them to the hotdog stand and hot apple cider. They may have churned their own ice cream or watched someone else churn fresh apple cider. As they ate, they listened to a band play while sitting in front of the warm fire pit. Later they watched puppet shows,

had their faces painted, toured the Goff Museum, learned about mead, bought honey and a Honey Basket raffle ticket, and maybe tried canoeing. Some followed Honey Princess Elena Hoffman out for a beehive demo and witnessed a cold, grumpy honeybee sting her...a rare event. Before leaving, some joined the ORNCC Council because they had such a good time; others may have left giving little thought as to why they had such a good time. Mother Nature provided the lovely weather, but our dedicated staff and volunteers were responsible for everything else. **THANK YOU!**

BANDS, CRAFTS PEOPLE, DEMONSTRATORS AND VENDORS

Bands: Bally Bogs, Stringtown, Will Play for Fish, Oregon Ridge Dulcimers, Mirando Trio
Vendors: McDaniel's Honey Farm, Snyder's Apiary, Bees by the Bay, Greene Lamb Sales, Witchy Woods, Butterfly and Songbird Carvings

Demonstrators:
 Anita C. Leight - Deb Mosely
 Civil War Re-Enactors - 4th Carolina Regiment
 Tom Warner, Brian Brauer
 Blacksmiths Ted McNett and Joseph Staup
 Solar Observation - Jerry Feldman
 Smokey the Bear - US Forest Service
 Gunpowder Valley Conservancy - Pat Novak, Charlie Conklin
 Masonville Cove, Living Classroom - Isabel McClelland
 Phoenix Wildlife Center - Kathy Woods, Hugh Simmons, Walter Massey, Erin Schapiro
 Debria Trout

2014 Honey Princess: Elena Hoffman

Beekeeper Volunteers: Susan Warner, Don Burns, Stephanie Gold, Beth Drucker, Allen Evans, Amanda Evans, Chuck Huselton

DULANEY HIGH KEY CLUB (Parking and Crafts)

Armit Biswan
 Morganna Brimucci
 Emily Campton
 Matilde Cascella
 Alexis Cooper
 Arthur Daniels
 Lucy Du
 Madison Emarde
 Justin Fitzgerald
 Helena Hahn
 Rachel Hall
 Finn Hassen
 Meher Hans
 Melissa Israni
 Joel Lee
 Kristy Lee
 Agya Rai
 Seungwoo
 Daniel Shin
 Evan Song
 Daniel Sun
 Helena Sun
 Sophie Sun
 Clara White
 Kaley Wilson
 Megan Zhing

FRIENDS OF ORNC:

Gary Anderson
 Charles Anonye
 Carole Armor
 Susan Bassett
 Nancy Berger
 Elysa Braverman
 Mike Burns
 Chris Carpenter
 Wilson Chan
 Jeanne Cole
 Katie Coolahan
 Jim Curtis
 Joey Devine
 Liam Devine
 Lucilla Facchin
 Lynn Faulkner
 Georgette Frederick
 Mary Genovese
 Susan Genovese
 Jay Ghingher
 Pat Ghingher
 Mark Gingerich
 Sybil Hebb
 Chloe Herman
 Maria Hult
 Ann Kerns
 Pat Kraswoski
 Bill LaBarre
 Karen Jackson
 Sue Leslie
 Erin McCleary
 Gayle Meier
 Bob Meier
 Grace Meredith
 Ellen Mering
 Joe Mowery
 Nan Neely
 Kevin O'Neill
 Christina Panousos
 Cheryl Parrish
 Ava Possidente
 Bella Possidente
 Kristi Possidente
 Lucia Possidente
 Maggie Possidente
 Dave Power
 Alison Ramirez
 Rutuja Rothe
 Maddie Rozics
 Joe Salvaggio
 Jeff Shue
 Jess Shue
 Scott Stein
 Amanda Steinitz
 Michele Steinitz
 Paul Waldman
 Bella Wanis
 Chris Wanis
 Alex Waugh
 Willy Wong

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE WILLIAMSON FAMILY!
 Gene and Linda once again hosted the Honey Princess, as they have for many years.



BLUE RIBBON BLUEBIRD VOLUNTEERS

By Winny Tan

Have you ever noticed the white wooden nest boxes on metal poles throughout the meadow around the Nature Center, or at the ball fields across Shawan Road and off both sides of Beaver Dam Road as you go towards the Lodge? For bluebirds, as well as for tree swallows and house wrens, these white boxes are alternative nesting spots verses a natural tree cavity. I am always excited when I catch a glimpse of blue in the sun or in a tree. Bluebirds have come to symbolize happiness, love and renewed hope.

These beautiful birds have a better chance of sticking around and raising their young in our Park due to diligent and caring bluebird monitoring during nesting season. The bluebird trail was started in the mid-1980s or before and has been managed and monitored by a number of volunteers. Around 1995, management responsibility fell to Paul Kilduff and Mary Scholl, who initiated some innovative changes to improve the safety of the bluebirds, including putting up new, improved bluebird boxes with guards to prevent snakes from preying on the bird eggs. They decided to make it a project to share with their daughter when she was young, and they have placed about 50 nesting boxes here ever since. They also posted three boxes at city-run Lake Montebello and recently helped install a box at Lillian Holt Park in the Overlea-Fullerton area.

Putting up nest boxes is great, but the real effort is the continued weekly monitoring to thwart danger, as well as keep accurate records for population trends. Paul credits Mary for turning him on to birding, and for keeping good records. Initially, they came every week and made sure the boxes were checked, which included keeping them in good condition, counting eggs and baby birds, keeping predators and non-native birds out, and making repairs. Paul experimented with different nest box designs and predator guards, and has constructed many of the boxes, sometimes with the help of a local school. He keeps himself informed on new information from other bluebird groups and passes the information along to everyone else. He and Mary now train and coordinate the current group of Bluebird Trail Monitors, who share parts of the trails in the weekly monitoring from April to September.

When I first met Paul, I was still in college and working on weekends at Oregon Ridge. That was at least 15 years ago and I was just starting as a naturalist. Paul was always happy to answer my questions about the bluebirds. I returned to Oregon Ridge a few years ago and was curious about how the bluebird trails were doing. They were maintained so well that the Nature Center didn't have to do a thing. I caught up with Paul on a weekend, and he walked me through a trail. As we monitored each box and counted eggs and babies, he shared

his insight and some of the experiences that he has garnered through the years. I am still learning from this expert.

The behind the scenes support in the Park may go unnoticed by most, but often the results of that support do not. In the case of bluebird box monitoring, the result is frequent bluebird sightings by people who visit the Park. The Nature Center recently recognized Paul at the June Council Picnic for his contributions, but we would also like to thank all the other volunteers who participate in the bluebird trail monitoring program: Mary Scholl, Robert Bonfante, Martha Johnston, and Alexandra (Alex) Krempasanka.

"Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow" best describes this volunteer run program, as they take lessons from the past to improve nest boxes and habitats for bluebird babies to fledge so that we can continue to enjoy them, always.



TRAIL GUIDE TRAINING

FEBRUARY 3 -5 10 AM - 1 PM \$20
 (donation refunded if you become a trail guide)

For people who enjoy nature, hiking and kids!

TRAILBLAZER STAFF

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

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Articles for the Feb/March issue are due December 15.

A TRUE STORY ABOUT FERAL HONEYBEES

By Mary Jane Shanks

Most of the honeybees that buzz around visitors at the Honey Harvest Festival are domesticated honeybees from our indoor beehive or our managed hives in the meadow. However, flying among them may be a few who buzz on the wild side--feral honeybees. Feral honeybees set up *hivekeeping* in tree cavities, abandoned buildings, or perhaps in the roof of a barn or shed. They sustain alone, without human assistance. In the honeybee world, *feral* is a positive term, indicating strong genetics and diversity, perhaps allowing them to better survive disease and colony collapse. Some view them as the super bees. This is a true story about a hive of feral honeybees.

For ten or more years, an active colony of feral honeybees inhabited a portion of the roof of the Parish Hall of my church, near a main entrance. The bees went peacefully about their business, never stinging anyone, and only bothered those who were afraid of being stung. This past spring, that fear bubbled to the surface in the form of a question — *What if someone allergic is stung and sues the church?* The bees' fate fell into the hands of our church leaders, setting us (the parishioners) on a path that is unfortunately traveled far too frequently these days. Lawyers were consulted, and you can guess the result. We were told to immediately relocate the hive out of fear that the worst would occur. The process taught us as much about life today as it did about honeybees. We learned that the honeybees' somewhat utilitarian society is no match for man's increasingly litigious one, which sometimes obscures common sense and the right course of action.

Every beekeeper consulted about the hive gave this advice: **LEAVE IT ALONE!** In their opinion, the high location of the hive presented no threat to humans, no one had ever been stung, the hive was not damaging the building, and if the colony was truly feral, it was rare and should be preserved. Some experts believe that feral hives no longer exist, so finding one is significant. As it turned out, the hive was much bigger than expected, and the large store of old, but still delicious, honey and pollen strongly suggested that this was indeed a feral hive of long standing.

This story has no happy ending for the honeybees. During the relocation process, the queen — the genetic heart of the hive — perished, probably from stress. There was hope that the relocated honeybee workers would produce a new

queen through a process known as *supercedure* or by creating emergency queen cells. Sadly, we later learned that did not occur, and a foreign, domesticated queen had to be put in place. At that moment in time, the feral genetics of the hive vanished, and nature lost something wonderful.

One lesson to this story is about perception. The feral honeybees at my church were *perceived* to be a threat, even though honeybees rarely sting humans and only 3.3% of those stung are allergic. Hope lies in how we all, you and I, choose to perceive the natural world, including honeybees and other threatened species.

Today, honeybee survival depends primarily on the actions of those who produce and use pesticides and GMOs in large quantities. However, it also depends on the actions of regular people. We all can help by avoiding pesticides and genetically modified plants in our yards and gardens. Furthermore, should a swarm of feral honeybees settle somewhere

on our property that is 10+ feet above human activity — we can choose to put our fears aside and leave it alone.

“There are things that are known and there are things that are unknown, and in between are the doors of perception.”
Aldous Huxley

(Photos by photographer/beekeeper Steve McDaniel. Photo on page 5 is of a queen surrounded by attendants. In observation hives like the one at ORNC, the queen can sometimes be located by looking for this pattern.)

THANK YOU, CENTRAL MARYLAND BEEKEEPERS

Members of Central Maryland Beekeepers Association contributed much information to my church during this process. Dan and Jeri Hemerlein, Jerry Fisher, Bill Castro, and Steve McDaniel were especially helpful in educating interested parishioners. If you are interested in beekeeping, take one of CMBA's beekeeping courses. For more information, go to this Web site:

www.centralmarylandbees.org/education/courses/



THE HONEYBEES

A honeybee's life is nothing short of miraculous! Referred to as the “Angels of Agriculture,” honeybees are the only insect that produce food (honey), and without them as pollinators, agriculture as we know it would change drastically. Learning about honeybees might help people view them as something more than merely an insect that may sting. Inside a honeybee hive, there is order and propriety, murder and sometimes mayhem. A honeybee colony is a thriving caste community inhabited by one Queen, thousands of workers, and drones.

Females rule in the honeybee society, under the reign of the Queen. As larvae, potential queens develop in special queen cells and are fed nothing but the best — royal jelly secreted from glands located in the heads of worker nurses. The first queen to emerge kills all other potential queens, because there can be only one queen bee. She is the largest honeybee in the hive and has two primary roles: to lay eggs and to produce special pheromones vital to hive survival. A couple of days after emerging, the virgin queen leaves the hive to be fertilized by multiple drones from other hives. Once fertilized, she never leaves the hive again. For the rest of her life, she will lay 1200 – 2000 eggs a day. Queens from a feral hive can live as long as 5 years and are the subject of intense interest among beekeepers and scientists. There is hope that by learning how to replicate feral genes, domesticated honeybees may be bred to overcome disease.

Serving the queen are masses of worker honeybees — all female. They are half sisters, sharing the genetics of the queen, but having different drone genes, thus ensuring

healthy biological diversity within the hive. Worker bees live from 30 to 100 days, depending on the season. As larvae, they are first fed royal jelly, then honey and pollen. Each worker is born to fulfill a specific role within the hive. Scientists now believe that chemical tags, which attach to the workers' DNA, determine careers and influence behavior. There are workers that seal honey, feed drones, attend the queen, nurse the brood, and build honeycomb. Other workers pack pollen, apply propolis, fan bees, carry water, and remove dead bees; and of course, there are workers that forage. An interesting fact about foragers: When foragers return to the hive after a successful day of collecting pollen, they perform a waggle dance, sort of a figure eight pattern, to share with other foragers information about the direction and distance to good sources of nectar, pollen, and water, or to potential new hive locations.

All male honeybees are drones. As larvae they are fed like the female workers, but unlike workers, drones are hatched from unfertilized eggs. Drones can live as long as 90 days. It would appear that theirs is a carefree life of being fed and pampered by female workers so they can accomplish their solitary goal

in life — to fertilize virgin queens from hives other than their own. However, appearances are indeed deceiving in the case of the poor drone. Like a few other insect species, drones mate only once. They literally lose their reproductive parts to the queen during the mating act, and die shortly thereafter. The drones that have not mated successfully by the fall are driven out of the hive as part of the hive's winter preparations. They are no longer needed, so they are sent off to die. Such is a drone's life. In spring, new drones are hatched and the cycle begins anew.



TIPPY TERRAPIN SAYS,

MEMBERS! You can now manage your membership online. To pay by credit card, visit our Web site:

<http://oregonridgenaturecenter.org/membership.html>

