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RENEW NOW! **OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER COUNCIL**

ATTENTION MEMBERS: You can now manage your membership online. To pay by credit card, visit our Web site: oregonridgenaturecenter.org/membership. (For more info, please read the article on page 8.)



- NEW YEARLY DUES:**
- Individual \$15
 - Family \$30
 - Supporting \$75
 - Sustaining \$250
 - Lifetime \$500

- MEMBERS RECEIVE:**
- Bimonthly *Trailblazer* newsletter
 - Member discounts on all programs
 - Priority mailing of seasonal calendar
 - First option for camp registration
 - "Members Only" events

Full Name _____
Address _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Checks to ORNC Council, 13555 Beaver Dam Road, Cockeysville, Maryland 21030
410 887-1815 info@oregonridgenaturecenter.org www.oregonridgenaturecenter.org



TRAILBLAZER

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2014

Supporting Oregon Ridge Park
and Nature Center for 32 years

Oregon Ridge Nature Center's Annual HONEY HARVEST FESTIVAL



**It's
Free**



Please
come and
enjoy these
activities:

**Saturday 10/4
Sunday 10/5
11 to 4**

- Honey Extraction by Elena Hoffman, 2014 Honey Princess
Honey Ice Cream Making Demonstrations
Open Hive Demos
Apple Cider Pressing
Civil War Reenactments
Wool Spinning Demos
Blacksmithing Demos
Animal Encounters

- Puppet Shows
Canoeing
Music
Food

!!!
!!
!

ORNC COUNCIL SPEAKER SERIES

MARYLAND AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE ATLAS: Reptile and Amphibian Mania

Presenter Sue Muller
Monday, September 15, 7:30 PM

The Maryland Amphibian and Reptile Atlas (MARA) is a joint project of the Natural History Society of Maryland and Maryland Department of Natural Resources. It began on January 1, 2010, with the goal of mapping the distributions of all reptiles and amphibians across the State of Maryland. To accomplish this task, it solicited the help of volunteers all across Maryland.

Sue Muller is the Howard County Coordinator for MARA and will give a brief overview of the project and focus mainly on identification of these animals. She will show you photos of more than twenty non-native species that have been found as well. The project ends this year on December 31st, and Sue would like to recruit you to document species for this survey!



Sue Muller has worked with the Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks in the Natural Resources Division for 28 years. By far, MARA has been her favorite project. She's very active in the environmental community and works on the Maryland Biodiversity Project in her free time. She enjoys ecotourism around the world and sharing her experiences.



MESSING AROUND WITH BIRDS: For Fun and Science

Presenter Scott Weidensaul
Monday, October 20, 7:30 PM

Well-known naturalist/writer Scott Weidensaul will take us on a lighthearted exploration of his many avian research projects, from banding tiny saw-whet owls, to studying the migration of western hummingbirds (which aren't supposed to be in the east in December — but are), to using high-tech tracking devices to follow snowy owls. Best of all, Weidensaul will teach us how anyone with enthusiasm and time can make important contributions to the science and conservation of birds, and have a great time doing it.



Photo By Alan Sklar

Scott Weidensaul is the author of more than two dozen books on natural history, including the Pulitzer Prize finalist *Living on the Wind*, about bird migration, and *Of a Feather: A Brief History of American Birding*. His newest book is *The First Frontier: The Forgotten History of Struggle, Savagery and Endurance in Early America*. Weidensaul is a contributing editor for Audubon magazine and writes for a variety of other publications. He lives in the mountains of eastern Pennsylvania, where he studies the migration of hawks, owls, and hummingbirds.

(See Page 3 for the entire 2014-2015 Speaker Schedule)

SUMMER CAMPS WERE WILD AND WONDERFUL!

Rachel Tuchman (photo below, left) and Kim Erickson (photo below, right) led a fantastic season of eight summer camps. They had around 150 campers ranging from 3 to 12 years old. This was Rachel's second year, and she made the summer seamless with her experience and direction. Kim's organization and new ideas added fun and wonder to the camps. Rachel works at the Nature Center year-round,



while this is Kim's first experience at Oregon Ridge. She interned at Marshy Point Nature Center for a year while finishing her B.S. in Geography at Towson University, and we are so glad she joined our team. Kim will also continue year-round in our family programs and events. Thank you, Camp Counselors, for a great summer!

Our youngest campers met the animals in *Woodland Wonders*. *Little Discoverers* learned the secrets of the forest. Our oldest campers learned about wildlife and the Piedmont



habitat as *Piedmont Explorers*. In our most popular camp, *Wild Things* campers got firsthand experience in how Americans lived before electricity.

Children in our *Junior Naturalist* camp (photo above), explored the forest, field, and streams. Junior Naturalists Brady and Jack Lamoureux enjoyed camp at ORNC for the first time. Brady said, "I learned salamanders were poisonous." He thought the best thing about camp was archery, and when asked to give one word to describe camp, he said "FUN!" In one word, Jack described camp as "Awesome!" He said, "We learned about a bunch of birds, and we learned about deer. I learned what deer tracks look like." Both Brady and Jack made new friends and said they will definitely return next year. We hear that a lot from our campers!

KATYA GAVIN Our Welcoming Ridge Runner

Katya Gavin is one of our more experienced Ridge Runners. She loves fun and she is fun . . . and full of humor. When asked what is her favorite thing in the whole world to do, she quipped, "EAT!"

Katya is one of our friendliest and most welcoming Ridge Runners. She says, "I love taking the animals out to teach the public." She is knowledgeable and very relaxed when showing off the snakes or other critters to people wanting an upclose encounter.

Katya wanted to be a Ridge Runner for the usual reasons. She loves animals, nature, and again...FUN. The starlings are her favorites. She explains, "I like the European Starlings the most; they are so cute and funny!" Katya thinks being a Ridge Runner is "...a great way to make both animal and human friends." She adds, "It is also very fun!" One of the funniest things to happen to her in the line of duty is when the rooster jumped on her head!

Katya enjoys skate boarding and BMX biking. She is looking forward to becoming a 12th grader. She says, "Science is my favorite subject...and lunch!" She maintains a good grade point average and hopes to study criminal psychology,



forensic science, or marine biology in college.

At home, Katya takes care of her gecko Germaine, a guinea pig named Cutie, her dogs Tony and Buddy, and two fish — Shrimp and Lettuce. She enjoys reading the *Hunger Games* series.

Katya thinks any teen interested in animals should join the Ridge Runner team. She says, "Being with the animals is the best!"

MUSIC IN THE WOODS 2014

SUN, RAIN, AND CRAZY CRITTERS

It all started out beautifully, with plenty of sunshine and people enjoying the music and the great outdoors while stretched out on picnic blankets. Then, at 1 PM, the storm rolled in. The staff and volunteers quickly moved activities inside before the drenching rains began. The musicians joined in to move the sound equipment and set it up again in the auditorium. As soon as all the wires were plugged in, the music resumed indoors, with sounds from a washtub bass to an accordion. The music really varied this year, from folk to rock, with new groups

and soloists joining our annual performers. Some unexpected critter shenanigans livened things up — the staff had to retrieve a black rat snake that twice slipped into the building, and then rescue a young raccoon whose paw got stuck in someone's trap! Anything can happen at *Music in the Woods*!

It took a seasoned team to create all this music and fun. We can thank the following volunteers and performers for a good time at *Music in the Woods* 2014:

Gary Anderson
Ann & Noot Canoles
Jim Curtis
Marcia Dysart
Georgette Frederick
Mary Genovese
Pat Ghingher
Leila Hadj-Chikh
Pat Hundley
Pat Krasowski
Bill LaBarre
Walter Massey
Carol Mantegna
Erin McCleary
Grace Meredith
Rommel Miranda
Andi Musser
Kathy Obbagy
Christina Panousos
Cheryl Parrish
Dave Power
Joe Salvaggio
Zi Smith

Xanthia Strohl
Derrick Tan
Zane Walsh
Bob Willasch
Nora Zeitz

Dulaney Key Club (parking/crafts)
Yasmine Abdelkader
Sarah H.
Swati Guin
Regina Ledesma
Anna Vuong
Austin Vuong
Whitney Vuong



Marcia Dysart and Leila Hadj-Chikh

Performers and Bands:

Gary Kenneth Bass
Wayne Bien
Deborah "Spice" Kleinmann
Pat Hundley
Mark Vidor
Jenny & Emily Witt
Dave Thomas & Dick Ochs
Marlin Ballard & Leah Ulansey
Giuliano Folk Duo - Mark & Jonah
The Mirandas - Rommel, Luna, Lance
Painted Trillium - Kristin, Rob & Susan Myer
Three If By Sea
Will Play for Fish - Amy Hopkins, Lisa Roberts, Tom Reedy, Dave Dilworth
Oregon Ridge Nature Center Dulcimer Gathering - Griff and Cindy Atkinson, Shawn Dipple, Ellise Brahm, Bob Willasch, Carol and David Erhardt, Marlin Ballard, Sylvia Sackleh, Donna Tracey
New Southern Cowtippers - Sandy & Howard Hofferth
Heidi, Howard, Fred Cherney, and Al
Webley Webster and the Wobbly Warblers



Jenny and Emily Witt

(All photos by Jim Curtis)



Spice Kleinmann



The Mirandas



Pat Hundley

TRAIL GUIDES LEAD THE WAY Trail Guide Training September 2 - 5, 10 AM - 1 PM

Do you enjoy hiking and sharing your love of nature with youngsters? The Nature Center needs volunteers to help lead field trips for visiting school children on Tuesdays through Fridays, from 10 AM to 12 PM, year-round. Trail Guides lead small groups of public and private school students around the park for a hands-on nature adventure, searching for frogs, insects, birds, flowers, and other things that inhabit the Park! No prior experience is needed.

A different topic is covered on each day of training. This fall's topics include habitats, insects, geology, and Native Americans. Special speakers include Mike Raupp, professor and entomology specialist with the University of Maryland, and Martin Schmidt, author of *Maryland's Geology*.

After training, accompany an experienced trail guide until you feel ready to lead a hike. Your \$20 training donation will be totally refunded after you lead your first solo hike. Please RSVP to the Nature Center, 410-887-1815.



Trail Guides take their own field trip to Ladew Topiary Gardens

OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER COUNCIL SPEAKER SERIES 2014-2015

*Unless otherwise noted,
all talks are free and begin at 7:30 PM
at the Oregon Ridge Nature Center,
13555 Beaver Dam Road,
Cockeysville, Maryland*

September 15, 2014
Maryland Amphibian and Reptile Atlas:
Reptile and Amphibian Mania
Sue Muller
Howard County Coordinator MARA

October 20, 2014
Messing Around with Birds: For Fun and Science
Scott Weidensaul
Author and Naturalist

November 17, 2014
Geology of Maryland
Martin Schmidt
Science Teacher at McDonogh School and Author

Speakers are not scheduled in December, February, and June through August. Please contact Sue Leslie, Program Chairperson, if you would like to speak or have a suggestion for an interesting speaker: 410-887-1815.

January 19, 2015
*The Cornish Influence in Maryland's
Copper and Chrome Mines*
Johnny Johnsson
Environmental Manager for Vulcan Materials

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

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

ORNCC ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14

Pat Ghingher, Council President

Our fiscal year drew to a close at the end of August, and I wish to pass on some of the year's highlights and provide a glimpse into the future for the Oregon Ridge Nature Center and Council.

Our membership numbers increased to 560 as of July 2014, and donations also increased from the previous year. A cadre of about 55 volunteers helped the ORNC staff plan and organize our highly popular special events: Honey Harvest, Maple Sugar Weekends, Pancake Breakfast, Primitive Technology Weekend, Music in the Woods Festival, Holiday Party, Monthly Speakers Series, and Members Summer Picnic. Over 250 other volunteers worked at these events, making each a success. In addition, another group of hardy volunteers worked on projects to improve our grounds and gardens, including repairing trails, building fences, and removing invasive plants.

This year, the Oregon Ridge Nature Council purchased a new computer and printer for the front desk. Additionally, we purchased a database program for managing membership, donations, and in the future, program and camp registration. A digital camera and two new gas grills were also purchased.

The Council sent the ORNC staff to the conferences for the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Educators and the Association for Nature Center Administrators, and sponsored canoe training for them through the American Canoe Association. In addition, the Council supported many new projects that took place inside the Nature Center and outside on the grounds, such as the beautiful seasonal wildflower pictures on display in the lobby, the sensory garden, the 3D still life tank, and the bird exhibit. A woodland garden, conservation kiosk, trail sign maps, a *Whose Lunch Is This?* interactive exhibit, and a bird wingspan exhibit are planned for the upcoming year.

Throughout the year, the ORNC staff added many new programs for all ages to the already outstanding selection. In addition, two new summer camps were created to accommodate the increase in registration: *Woodland Wonders* for children ages 3-4 and *Little Discoverers* for children ages 4-5.

Important updates to the ORNCC Web site included the posting of new calendars and newsletters, monthly speakers, weekly information, and a link to the blog written by one of our volunteer Master Naturalists. Within the next couple of months, the Web site will also integrate a new electronic membership and credit card payment system. This will allow members to make donations, register for programs and camps, and pay online.

For the 20th consecutive year, the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council awarded scholarships to graduating seniors who demonstrated academic excellence and a commitment to the

environment. Four graduates from Baltimore County were awarded \$4,000 each for their freshman year of college, and a fifth has been awarded \$1,000 per year for four years (the Getty Dutrow Mullan Scholarship). The Council extends its gratitude to all who donate so generously to our scholarship fund.

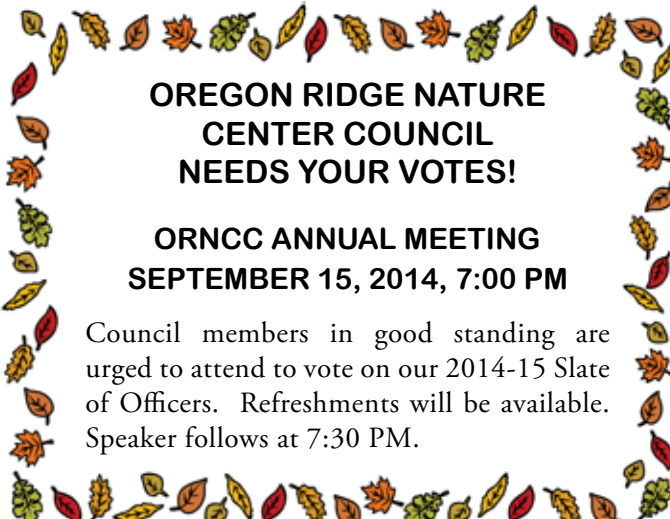
Once again this year, the monthly Speaker Series was very well attended and presented diverse and interesting speakers. This series will be offered again in the fall, starting 9/15/14.

The year was not without a few challenges and disappointments. During heavy rain events, the roof and many areas of the Nature Center continue to leak. Also, the Center's entrance road floods as the nearby stream swells and spills its banks during heavy rains, making the road dangerous to cross and undermining the roadbed. We continue to report these issues to the Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks and hope that solutions will be forthcoming. On the positive side, the slate walkways around the Nature Center were finally repaired in July.

In looking towards the future, the Council held a planning session this past year to determine the long-term projects that would be addressed over the next three years. One of the main decisions was to redesign the library to make it a multi-purpose room. It will continue as a library, but will be better designed to use for programs and small group presentations. Another long-term project will be the building of a large pavilion to be used for programming, summer camps, and events.

As always, a great deal of work is required to maintain the wonderful newsletter that keeps us informed of the ORNC upcoming events, speakers, and current topics, as well as the Web site, exhibits, library, special projects, and the annual special events. I want to thank the Executive Board members for their dedication towards making all of this possible.

Lastly, I want to thank all of the Council members, staff, volunteers, and donors that make our activities at Oregon Ridge possible. It is your interest and commitment to the events and programs that ensures the continued level of quality that is demonstrated at Oregon Ridge Nature Center.



**OREGON RIDGE NATURE
CENTER COUNCIL
NEEDS YOUR VOTES!**

**ORNCC ANNUAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 15, 2014, 7:00 PM**

Council members in good standing are urged to attend to vote on our 2014-15 Slate of Officers. Refreshments will be available. Speaker follows at 7:30 PM.

FIVE SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED IN 2014

By Polly Roberts, M.D., Scholarship Chair

For the 20th consecutive year, the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council awarded scholarships to graduating seniors who demonstrated academic excellence and a commitment to the environment. Four graduates from Baltimore County were awarded \$4,000 each for their freshman year of college, and a fifth was awarded \$1,000 per year for four years (the Getty Dutrow Mullan Scholarship). The Council extends its heartfelt gratitude to all who donate so generously to our scholarship fund to help these young people realize their dreams.

Jalen Chichester, a graduate of the Western School of Technology and Environmental Science, will study international relations with a technical emphasis on sustainability in the environment at American University. He envisions a career in law, developing policy to protect the environment. He was an active member of his school's Green Club, 4-H Club, and Envirothon team, specializing in "soils."



Sidney Mason is a graduate of the Western School of Technology and Environmental Science and will be attending the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He intends to major in biological science with a minor in environmental studies. His ultimate goal is to conduct research into environmental causes of medical conditions, particularly those involving the endocrine system. Sidney was a member of his school's Green Club and Envirothon team, specializing in aquatics and forestry.



Jonathan Hamed graduated from the St. Paul's School for Boys and plans to major in environmental studies or biology at Middlebury College (a carbon-neutral campus!). He is especially interested in marine science, and his plans for the future include teaching or research. He has volunteered at the Delaware Center for Inland Bays, conducting surveys of fish and crab populations. Of note, Jonathan designed and carried out a research project to study the extent to which a harmful, invasive crab (Asian Shore Crab) might impact our indigenous crab species with regard to competition for shelter.



Rebecca Sparks graduated from Hereford High School and plans to major in either biology or environmental science at Boston University. She is committed to helping others experience nature and envisions a future either teaching about wildlife or conducting research on sustainability. Rebecca was a member of her school's Environthon team all four years (co-captain the last two years) and specialized in aquatics and forestry. She received the Girl Scout Gold Award for her rain garden project.



Samantha Cassell has been awarded the Getty Dutrow Mullan Scholarship. She is a graduate of the Western School of Technology and Environmental Science and plans to major in environmental studies at Towson University. Her career goal involves educating/inspiring others about conservation and agricultural best practices. A member of her school's Green Club, she has volunteered at the Irvine Nature Center.



Congratulations NICE GOING!
 GREAT! Way to Go!
 Yea! FELICITATIONS
 CHEERS Take A BEST
 BOW! WISHES!

NATURE QUEST

The Adventure begins...

Baltimore County's Nature Quest and the *Passport to Family Wellness* provide an opportunity to experience the outdoors and be active with your friends and family while discovering some of the best parks and trails in Baltimore County. The passport gives a description of trails and indicates which is best to enjoy by biking, hiking, canoeing or kayaking. Take your *Passport to Family Wellness* with you and record your progress, using a pencil or crayon to make a rubbing of the trail marker located on each trail. Trail markers are mounted on 4 X 4 posts and are similar to the one illustrated on the outside back cover of the Passport. See how many rubbings you can collect and look below for the prizes that await you!

- The first 250 *questers* to complete 5 trails receive a water bottle or Frisbee.
- All *questers* that complete 5 or more trails will receive a Wegmans coupon redeemable for a free Wegmans product and free admission to the Nature Quest Fest at Robert E. Lee Park on Oct. 18.
- *Questers* that complete 7-9 trails will be entered in raffles for a \$100 Wegmans Gift Card, a free pavilion rental at Robert E. Lee Park, a boat trip to Hart Miller Island for up to eight people, and gift baskets from Oregon Ridge Nature Center and Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum.

Prizes can be picked up at any of the parks in this Passport or at the main office located at 1114 Shawan Road, Cockeysville, MD 21030. Please call (410) 887-4156 if you have any questions.

Hold onto your Passport. Once you have completed at least 5 trails, your Passport is your free admission ticket to the Nature Quest Fest on October 18, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM. This exciting celebration includes multiple activities such as canoeing, archery, live animals, fishing, and more. Be sure to RSVP at one of the parks when you collect your prizes!

We hope Nature Quest and the *Passport to Family Wellness* provide you, your family, and friends an easy way to enjoy nature and fitness, and to have fun!

Barry Williams
Baltimore County

Marcie Bartolotta, M.S.
Mgr. "Eat Well, Live Well"
Community Initiatives
Wegmans Food Markets



CHANGES TO ORNCC'S MEMBERSHIP MANAGEMENT

Marcia Dysart, Membership Chair

The Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council has gone digital to help connect with our members. Since the end of July, members have had the option to renew their memberships online. This new software allows current and new members the ease of managing their membership from the comfort of home. All members for whom ORNCC has an e-mail address will receive a message from OregonRidgeMembership@gmail.com with a subject line of **Oregon Ridge Membership Update**. From a link, members will be prompted to create a user name and password. Once done, they will be able to update their contact information if needed and renew their membership.

The membership categories are:

- Individual \$15
- Family \$30
- Supporter \$75
- Sustaining \$250
- Lifetime \$500

Since most of our events are free, membership fees help ORNC provide the following for members and the public:

- Events and festivals that many members enjoy:
 - Honey Harvest Festival (October)
 - Holiday party (December)
 - Maple Syrup weekends (February)
 - Pancake Breakfast (March)
 - Primitive Technology weekend (May)
 - Music in the Woods (May)
 - Annual picnic (June)
- Nature programs year-round and the Speaker Series, which are often free or discounted for members.
- Camps, workshops, and clubs
- Maintenance of the trails and grounds for hiker safety
- Animal care
- Exhibits and the *Trailblazer* newsletter, which are supported by membership dues
- Camping, canoeing and tubing on special dates
- School groups and scout troops visit ORNC, free of charge, to participate in a variety of nature programs.

As we implement this system, we will be working to improve it. Members will continue receiving newsletters and calendars. We anticipate offering these communications via e-mail and/or snail mail, depending upon your preference. In the future, members should be able to sign up for programs online.

Participation in the new system is optional, so members are welcome to renew as they always have. Please contact us if you have any questions: 410-887-1815 or e-mail info@oregonridgenaturecenter.org.

MEET OUR INTERNS

Ben Garinther (photo left) is a sophomore at Colorado College, studying Organismal Biology & Ecology. He enjoys backpacking, rock climbing, skiing and fishing. Ben visits the park between semesters and spends a lot of time exploring the woods. While interning, Ben has enjoyed hiking throughout the Park, learning more about its history, and getting to know all of the animals that live at the Nature Center.

Chloe Herman (photo center) is studying Veterinary Technology at the Community College of Baltimore County. Chloe started interning this past spring to gain experience in animal care. Her favorite animals at ORNC are the duck and the wood turtle. She has enjoyed her experience here so



much that she has decided to stay for another semester. She appreciates the care and enthusiasm of the staff and visitors, and she is grateful for the opportunity to educate others about caring for our local wildlife.

In 2012, Jenn Macala (photo right) graduated from Towson University with a Bachelor of Science in Animal Behavior and a minor in Biology. She applied to be an intern at Oregon Ridge to gain valuable experience as a Naturalist. Ultimately, Jenn's goal is to work in the field of Forest Restoration and Preservation, and to pursue a Master's in Environmental Resource Management. Jenn is interested in marine biology and environmental science. In her free time, she likes to scuba dive and participates in reef surveys. Her favorite experience at Oregon Ridge was participating in a canoe trip on the Gunpowder River.

RECORD ATTENDANCE AT COUNCIL PICNIC!

The annual Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council Picnic was a great night out. Over 250 picnickers helped polish off 15 bags of marshmallows and a full-size sheet cake. It was a great kick-off to summer!

The new Friday evening allowed more families to join us in this annual event. The canoes were popular and hardly came back to shore until it was almost too dark to see. Special thanks go to Cheryl Parrish and Mike Waltz for assisting people in and out of canoes. *Will Play for Fish* provided music again for the picnic and the *Miranda Trio* performed some music at the campfire.



OREGON RIDGE HAS A NEW MISSION STATEMENT

The ORNC Staff and Council developed a new mission statement to guide us on our journey in the coming years:

Provide engaging educational and recreational opportunities in nature that instill a sense of wonder, promote environmental stewardship, and create a lasting legacy of positive choices in our own backyards, Maryland, and the Chesapeake Bay.

TRAILBLAZER STAFF

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Writers: Marcia Dysart, Pat Ghingher, Jessica Jeannetta, Polly Roberts,

Mary Jane Shanks, Winny Tan

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Articles for the Nov/Dec/Jan issue are due Sept. 2.

WINGS ON HIGH

by Naturalist Jessica Jeannetta

By far, autumn is my favorite time of year for many reasons. One of my favorite things to do each fall is go somewhere to watch the annual raptor migration. Autumn in Maryland is a special time when the long, hot summer days give way to cooler temperatures, and the foliage dramatically changes to hues of red, yellow, orange and brown. While delightful for humans to experience, these changes indicate much more to the local wildlife species. The change in the amount of daylight and the drop in temperature sets off internal biological signals that tell wildlife to begin their preparations for the upcoming winter, including the migration of countless numbers of our feathered friends. Each fall, millions of birds — from the tiniest Ruby-Throated Hummingbird to my favorite raptor, the not-so-tiny Osprey — begin their long journey south to places where warmer temperatures mean a bountiful supply of food.

Most songbirds and other small birds migrate under darkness, using the stars to guide them on their journey south and stopping to rest during the day to fuel up on insects or seeds. Flying at night may help smaller birds evade many predators, but it makes it exceedingly difficult for bird enthusiasts like me to witness their migrations. Migrating raptors, on the other hand, are considered diurnal migrants and travel during the day, making them much easier for birdwatchers to observe during the clear, cool days of fall. Fall raptor migration begins in late August and ends in early December, with the highest number of migrants passing through our area in September and October. The chance to see hundreds of birds of prey in one location attracts thousands of birders to places like Maryland's Elk Neck State Park, Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania, or Cape May, New Jersey, to witness the impressive journey of these magnificent creatures.

As these migrants leave their breeding grounds behind to travel to warmer locations in the Gulf Coast states, Mexico, Central America and South America, it is not uncommon to see 15 or more species of raptors at a time during peak migration season. In September you are likely to see species such as Broad-winged Hawks, American Kestrels, Bald Eagles,

and Ospreys. October often brings the largest numbers of Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, Northern Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks, Red-shouldered Hawks, Merlins, Peregrine Falcons, and Turkey Vultures moving along the flyway. November is the time to watch for Golden Eagles, Goshawks and Rough-legged Hawks. It's important to note that not all raptors in a particular species migrate. Some species, such as the Cooper's Hawk, do not migrate at all, but remain in their breeding habitat and stake out backyard bird feeders in hopes of making a meal out of an unwary bird.

Using their keen eyesight as a guide, hundreds of thousands of migrating hawks, falcons, eagles, and ospreys follow landmarks to steer their course south. Falcons such as Kestrels, Merlins and Peregrines follow the shoreline along

the Atlantic Coast. Bald Eagles and Ospreys tend to migrate along river systems to their final destinations. All birds of prey will utilize mountain ranges, like the Appalachians, to help ease their journey. These routes are known as flyways and are determined by land topography such as mountains. Flyways are the main reason why birders must go to specific locations to see the large number of hawks and other raptors traveling south.

Normally, traveling such long distances means expending a lot of energy, which is why songbirds must stop and rest in wetlands during the day. Raptors, however, depend on thermals that occur along their flyway to assist them on their long trip. A thermal is a mass of rising hot air produced by the heating of the earth's surface.

I often think of them as bird elevators, allowing birds to rise high up in the sky without flapping their wings, until they are so high that they are barely visible with the naked eye. When the thermal cools, the raptor can then soar out of the thermal and gain distance as it drops in altitude to access another thermal. Since thermals only occur over land, raptors will take longer routes to their winter grounds to avoid having to travel over large bodies of water. On a good day, raptors can travel over 250 miles riding on thermals without flapping their wings, thus conserving the energy needed to migrate long distances.

For me, the excitement of the fall raptor migration began about eight years ago, when I took a group of middle school students on a hike to Turkey Point Lighthouse in Elk



Neck State Park. As we hiked along the trail, absorbing the breathtaking views of the Chesapeake Bay, we had no idea what was happening high above our heads. It wasn't until we came upon a small group of hawk watchers, staring up into the sky, that we began to learn what was going on. They explained that they were collecting data to report to scientists, who monitor the annual raptor migration. By comparing data collected from year to year, scientists have been able to obtain insight into the health of both the raptors' breeding and wintering habitats.

Before I knew it, my class and I became enthralled with the dozens of raptors traveling overhead. Some raptors were even flying low enough to identify without binoculars. The hawk-watch volunteers were kind enough to share their telescopes, binoculars and identification guides, allowing us to get a closer look and a better understanding of the birds soaring above. As our excitement escalated with each passing raptor, the birders' excitement seemed to grow, too, as they shared what they knew about native raptors migrating through the Atlantic flyway. When we left, the group of birders invited us to come back again, and that is exactly what I did! It was so inspiring to go back with a new group of students and watch in amazement as these relatively elusive creatures made their long journey south to their wintering grounds, only to return again in a few months to breed.

A few years after my first raptor migration experience, I felt compelled to take a trip to Hawk Mountain, a well-known

bird sanctuary and hawk-watch location in Pennsylvania (*photo on page 6*). Traveling a few hours north to hike along the ridge of Hawk Mountain is well worth the trip even without raptor sightings. However, visiting in the fall on the chance of seeing hundreds of raptors riding the thermal air currents across the Appalachian flyway is enough to make your jaw drop. On a clear fall day, you are almost guaranteed to see a wide array of raptor species soaring overhead. You will also encounter more people that you can imagine -- from veteran birders who return to Hawk Mountain each year, to people experiencing it for the first time. All are there to share their enthusiasm for birds, and without a doubt, everyone is awed by the experience.

Watching birds of prey migrate is a spectacular sight. Standing on top of a ridge on a crisp fall day, as hundreds of hawks circle and soar above, is an unforgettable experience. It's easy to understand why so many birdwatchers flock to places like Hawk Mountain, Elk Neck State Park, or Cape May during the migrating season. It's something that I will continue to do every year to experience the beauty of fall and share in the energy generated by the raptor migration. To learn more about raptor migrations or participate in the migrating raptor population survey at local hawk watching locations, visit www.hmana.org. For more information on our migrating feathered friends, check out the "Raptorpedia" link on Hawk Mountain's Web site: www.hawkmountain.org.

INTRODUCING A FEW OF OUR STAFF

Oregon Ridge is a busy place, with visitors and groups enjoying new programs all the time. The staff is an important link to connecting our park visitors with our programs. Andrea Barnett has been working with us for almost a year now. She has used her gardening skills and her educational background to show kids in the Kinder Garden Club how to have fun planting veggies



Rachael Lipman and Andrea Barnett

and learning about science. She recently co-led the *Music, Art and Nature* workshop this summer with Cole Snyder.

Cole was featured in the Sept/Oct 2013 Trailblazer issue as *Intern Cole Snyder Inspired by ORNC*. He returned this

summer from his first year at the University of Vermont to lead some of our camp-outs and tubing trips, as well manage the building and animals on the weekends.

Sometimes being an intern is the stepping-stone to becoming a staff naturalist. That has been the case for Rachael Lipman, who went from being a spring intern to our summer outreach leader. She led 26 summer programs, on-site and off, totaling over 700 kids. Rachael will be moving on to pursue a full-time job related to her recent B.S. in Environmental Sustainability and Science from the Notre Dame of Maryland University.

As some of our seasonal staff return back to school, Oregon Ridge welcomes Karl Dotterweich, a seasoned naturalist from Marshy Point Nature Center. Karl is a full-time history teacher at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Essex, Maryland, leading nature programs on occasional weekends at Marshy Point. He has three children, who love nature and participate in many Baltimore County Parks programs. Karl resides in Pennsylvania, so Oregon Ridge is closer to home and provides a new venue to showcase his knowledge and skills.

