

TRAILBLAZER

Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council – Supporting Oregon Ridge Nature Center since 1982

SUMMER 2020



As I write this, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed our daily lives but, outside, spring is in full swing. Flowers are blooming, buds are bursting, birds are singing and frogs are chorusing.

By the time this article reaches you, spring will almost be giving way to summer - an exciting season for the natural world. A time when food is abundant and habitats are vibrant with life.

While we're waiting for things to get back to some level of normalcy, take a break from worries to observe and appreciate these signs of summer that you can find in the park or in your own neighborhood.

- By late May into early June, trees will have fully leafed out and forest canopies will be closed, creating a shady reprieve from the hot summer sun as you head outside to hike on a trail, explore wooded areas in your community, or simply relax in a natural outdoor setting.
- As many spring wildflowers on the shaded forest floor fade, other wildflowers in the sunny meadows, like milkweed and goldenrod, begin blooming and continue long into the summer. These will catch your eye as you wander through the meadows in the park.
- Migrating birds have made their long journeys north to breed and raise their young here in our area. Even when you can't see them, you can hear and enjoy their songs and calls. Early morning is the best time to listen to them as they sing their "dawn chorus." As spring turns to summer, the chorus grows quieter because many birds will have already courted, mated, and begun actively raising and protecting their young. You may happen upon fledglings on the ground this time of year. If you do, it is best to leave them be - their parents are likely nearby keeping a watchful eye on them as they learn to fly.
- Insects will be buzzing and fluttering around both day and night. Keep an eye out for the many species of colorful butterflies, like the Monarchs and Swallowtails, as well as their caterpillars feeding on host plants. Listen for the sounds of grasshoppers using stridulation (rubbing back legs against wings) to attract a mate.
- A summer evening is a great time to see the dynamic acrobatics of our native bat species, as they dart and swoop through the air in search of insects to feed their young.

These are just a few of the signs of the summer season. Get out and see (and hear) these and many other natural wonders for yourself. Whether in the park or in your own backyard, you won't be disappointed!

NATIVE AMERICAN GARDENING TRADITION LIVES ON AT OREGON RIDGE

by Bob Cooke

The Susquehannock people who thrived here on the Piedmont Plateau are gone, but a vital part of their culture was brought back to life in the spring of 2018. That's when three Master Naturalist (MN) interns - Joel Clements, Glen Schulze, and Cindy Snyder - created gardens that demonstrate Native American agricultural techniques and reliance on available plants for nutritional, medicinal, and cultural purposes.

The Three Sisters Garden



The "sisters" were the Susquehannocks' mainstay crops: corn, beans, and squash. These not only provided a healthy complete diet of carbohydrates, protein, and vitamins, but also helped each other. Cornstalks served as poles for beans to climb. The beans replenished soil nutrients. The canopy of squash leaves suppressed weeds. (A fourth "sister," sunflowers, were planted nearby to attract pollinators.)

Directions: From the Nature Center parking lot, take the path down to the right (at the Nature Classroom), past the play area and chicken coops. Enter the fenced garden area on the right and look for the small totem pole... borrowed from Pacific Northwest culture... which stands at the center of the Medicine Wheel.



The Medicine Wheel Garden

The Native Americans built sacred stone circles where they cultivated plants known for their healing properties. Divided into quadrants – which also represented seasons, spiritual qualities and more – the wheel features (1) laxative and detoxifying Culver’s Root to the north, (2) Black Eyed Susan, for treating snake bites, to the east, (3) Purple Coneflower, for respiratory issues and infections, to the south, and (4) Hyssop, for intestinal problems, to the west.

The Habitat Garden

This garden showcases other native plants that the Susquehannocks may have known and used. The MN interns planted a variety of perennials, shrubs, and grasses that would have been valued by Piedmont tribes for cultural purposes as well as for food and dyes.



IT'S ALL ABOUT COMMUNITY AT ORNC Maple Sugaring and Pancakes

Natural Habitat for the Green Family

by Bob Cooke

Thirty years ago, when Gail and Murray Green started raising their family in Owings Mills, they wanted their children to be able to connect with nature. The question was where? Oregon Ridge with its range of habitats, Nature Center, network of trails and unique activities and events was the natural place for them to do it.

Something for Everyone

From an early age, their children – Ryan, Jenny and Gabi – benefited from the park's many opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. As Ryan recalls, "my earliest memories are split between epic sledding afternoons and maple syrup demonstrations." Everyone had their own favorite things to do at Oregon Ridge and, of course, this changed as the children grew older. But there were always trails to be hiked. Creatures to be encountered in woods, streams and meadows. Nature walks to immerse family members in habitats through the seasons. Fascinating exhibitions... including live animals... in the Nature Center. And special events to connect people with nature.

From Maple Trees to Pancakes and Candy

One event that has become a Green family tradition is the annual Pancake Breakfast. Held shortly after the Maple Sugaring Weekends, these hearty breakfast feasts draw hundreds of hungry people. The Greens have attended every year, sometimes just the immediate family, sometimes with friends, schoolmates and others. The children also remember another product of the park's maple harvest: maple candy, sold along with maple syrup and local honey at the Nature Center. "It was always a special treat to go there and get the candy," Ryan says.

A Changing Resource to Meet Changing Needs

The Greens have seen many changes at Oregon Ridge over the past 30 years, and they themselves have changed, too. Now that the children are grown, going to the park may include such things as catching a Baltimore Symphony Orchestra concert or celebrating Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) under the stars. Based on personal experience, Ryan has this advice for young families: "Each of us liked different things in the park, so try different things and see how your kids respond."



WHAT'S NEW AT ORNC

The Giving Tree

by Jessica Jeannetta

Without the support of donors the park would not be what it is today. As a small token of our appreciation, the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council is excited to announce its newest way to recognize those who have made large donations since 2015. The Giving Tree has been adorned with leaves and acorns that represent the different levels of gifts the Nature Center has received.

Acorn \$5,000+

Hummingbird Leaves \$3,000- \$4,999

Honeybee Leaves \$1,000-\$2,999

Butterfly Leaves \$500 - \$999

Each leaf/acorn identifies the donor's name(s), year of donation, and specific project or funds that the donor(s) wished to support like the trails initiative, scholarship fund, etc. The Council respects the request of donors to remain anonymous. They are anonymously acknowledged with a leaf on the tree.

Each year the council will continue to add to the tree to recognize new donations. A big thank you to those who have given to support the park in the past, now, and in the future. We could not do it without you!

The Giving Tree can be found in the hallway leading to the auditorium.



FUN FACTS

Did You Know?

by Judy Breitenbach



Hummingbirds are the only birds that can fly backwards. They do not have the sense of smell, but have good color vision. The average weight of a hummingbird is less than a nickel.

Butterflies like to feed off fresh fruit left in a dish. Their wings are transparent and they taste with their feet. They live on an all-liquid diet including water from mud puddles. Butterflies are cold-blooded so they can't regulate their body temperatures. When cold, they can't fly.



Frogs and toads are amphibians. There are 20 native species in Maryland. They absorb water through their skin. Their eyes and nose are located on the top of their head. They feed on insects and other invertebrates. Their long legs and webbed feet help them to evade any predators.

Bats are mammals and can fly at speeds up to 60 mph. They can find their food in total darkness and can eat up to 1,200 mosquitoes an hour. Their babies are called pups and they usually only have one per year.



kids CORNER

by Ging Shamberger

Pressed Flower Bookmark Craft

As trees and bushes lose their flowering buds and get their summer leaves, find some fallen flowers to press into your very own bookmark.

Directions

1. Collect fallen flowers and leaves from your surroundings.
2. Use a heavy book to press the flowers flat between the pages. Use two small pieces of wax paper on either side of the flower to help protect your book from any moisture.
3. Add other heavy books on top to help the flowers stay flat.
4. Arrange your flowers and leaves in the pattern of your choice inside a piece of laminating film. It helps to arrange the flowers in a long rectangle for a traditional bookmark, but it's also fine to be creative.
5. Place your laminating sheet on a heat safe surface or on top of a piece of cardboard.
6. Place a piece of thin cardboard (a cut cereal box works great!) over top of your laminating sheet.
7. Have an adult use an iron on top of the cardboard to seal your laminating sheet together.

Once sealed you can cut out your bookmark to any shape or size you'd like!
It's also fun to punch a hole in the top for a ribbon or tassel.

Happy Making!

Word Search

- Flowering
- Puddles
- Season
- Robin
- Butterfly
- Weather
- Tulip
- Rainstorm
- Rainbow
- Buds
- Sunshine
- Spring
- Worm

Y	F	Z	Q	J	K	W	J	W	D	W	J	R	W	G	G	E	Q	P	D
R	N	V	Y	A	V	X	B	F	G	W	I	A	O	C	C	R	B	H	C
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stay in touch!

