

TRAILBLAZER



*Supporting Oregon Ridge Park
and Nature Center for 35 years*

SUMMER 2017

MUSIC IN THE WOODS

Saturday, June 3, between 2 to 8 PM
FREE Admission! Come Rain or Shine!

Bring your lawn chairs or a blanket to stretch out in the meadow and listen to **LIVE MUSIC** all day by our favorite local bands and musicians. Gather your family and friends and join the melodious festivities and fun . . .

- ♪ Craft Vendors
- ♪ Hotdogs, Light Snacks, Ice Cream for Sale
- ♪ Crafts and Children's Activities
- ♪ Jam Sessions (BYO instrument)
- ♪ Learning about the Dulcimer
- ♪ Animal Encounters
- ♪ Face Painting
- ♪ S'mores & Campfire, 8 to 8:30 PM

For more information contact:

info@OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org

410-887-1815

TDD/Deaf 410-887-5319





A NIGHT UNDER THE STARS

FRIDAY, JUNE 16

6:30 to 9:30 PM

**New Lake Pavilion
Oregon Ridge Nature Center**

**Bring a Picnic and a Blanket
Stargaze with Astronomers**

Live Music

Amazing Race Teams

Canoeing

Animal Encounters

Face Painting

Family Time

Crafts

S'mores around a campfire

Beer and Wine

Lite Fare



ADVANCED SALE TICKET PRICES

Beer and Wine Package
\$25 person

Includes 2 beer/wine tickets
Additional tickets \$5 each

Non-Alcoholic Package
\$15 person (soft drinks only)

Children 12 and under
\$10 per child (2 and under FREE)

Tickets at the Door
Additional \$5 per person/child

Tickets available Online:
www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org



WINNY TAN TRANSFERS TO BENJAMIN BANNEKER HISTORICAL PARK & MUSEUM

In our September 2013 issue of the *Trailblazer*, we happily announced that Winny Tan would be the Director of Oregon Ridge Nature Center. In this, our first summer issue of the *Trailblazer*, we sadly announce that Winny has been transferred to Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum. How does that famous quote by Heraclitus go? *The Only Thing That Is Constant Is Change*.

In the relatively short time that Winny has been Director at Oregon Ridge, she has accomplished more than we could have ever imagined. Winny has a tenacious drive to accomplish her goals. We have benefited from her broad vision to insure that Oregon Ridge Nature Center and Park remains current and relevant in addressing the important environmental issues of our day. We have also benefited from her artistic creativity in developing innovative and educational exhibits and programming. Through the Master Naturalist program, Winny has helped attract and train talented volunteers who have become essential to achieving many of her goals, and who have become active members on our Council board.

Working with the Nature Center's staff, Council, and volunteers, Winny has brought to or close to fruition major additions and improvements, including the new Kidd's Nature Pavilion, the long overdue library renovation (which we have been assured will be completed very soon), and a number of

exhibits that include the interactive Conservation Kiosk, the renovated Woodpecker Exhibit, the beautiful mural in the animal room, and the "Lift and Learn" Bird Exhibit. Over the past 4 years, visitors have been treated to a butterfly garden that includes a monarch waystation, a garden to help propagate the endangered Baltimore Checkerspot Butterfly, and a woodland garden now in the works. Under Winny, the Nature Center has become a Green Center and programming has expanded, including the comeback of nature birthday parties.

Many people who have worked with Winny throughout the years are taking this opportunity to express their admiration. Courtney Peed, the ORNC Director who preceded Winny, is a longtime friend since the late 1990s when they worked together running our summer camps. Courtney loves Winny's passion for the outdoors and her compassion for the animals in her care. "She is a great communicator of natural facts and pours her whole heart into her work," Courtney says. Jessica Jeannetta is grateful that Winny chose her as ORNC's Community Supervisor because she has had the opportunity to learn so much from Winny's vision-driven style that will help Jess along her own career path, including park and personnel management and natural history. Winny even gave her invaluable tips on how to be a new Mom. Jessica says, "She is one of the most genuine, optimistic, and caring people that I have ever had the pleasure of being around."



Those on the ORNC Council Board have enjoyed working with Winny. President Pat Ghingher's words speak for us all:

Winny has been extremely dedicated to the Oregon Ridge Nature Center and its many components. She gives unselfishly of her time and energy to every task she takes on, whether it be interacting with visitors, staff and volunteers, teaching, setting up programs and special events, updating the building, clearing trails, or taking care of animals — she does it all and with gusto. I think she is an amazing and strong woman, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with her.

We wish Winny Tan well as her journey now takes her to Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum. We can assure Banneker's council that they, too, will be amazed at what Winny Tan will accomplish at their facility.

OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER WELCOMES NEW DIRECTOR, JUSTINE SCHAEFFER

Justine Schaeffer is the new Director of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center. Justine was previously the Director at Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum, but is no stranger to Oregon Ridge. She worked as a Naturalist here from 2006 to 2009. Justine says, "I am looking forward to rediscovering Oregon Ridge and all that it has to offer."

Justine has a long career as a naturalist and scientist. She graduated from Notre Dame of Maryland University with a BA in Biological Sciences. She also has her Masters in Wildlife Biology from the University of Maryland College Park. She began her career in 1976 as a Biological Section Chief/Senior Scientist for the US EPA.

After taking a break to homeschool her four children, Justine became a consulting Naturalist at Piney Run Nature Center in Carroll County, and later a Nature Program Specialist for Howard County. From there she came to Oregon Ridge, but later returned to Howard County Recreation and Parks to become their Environmental Education Program Coordinator.

In 2009, Justine accepted the position of Activity Coordinator/Naturalist at Baltimore County's Cromwell Valley Park, and from there she was promoted into the Director's position at Banneker. While at Banneker, Justine embraced the history behind the Banneker Museum and loved telling the story of Benjamin Banneker to visitors. During her 4 years at Banneker, Justine is most proud of her role in developing and creating amenities like the Pollinator Garden and the Nature Play Space.



Justine begins her tenure as Director of Oregon Ridge Nature Center at an exciting time when the Council and ORNC staff have ambitious goals for renovating the Exhibit Hall. The Council looks forward to working with Justine to continue our efforts to educate our visitors and supporters with modern, innovative exhibits and programs in the future.



NATURE QUEST is a GO!

Start your quest **TODAY!** Hike, Bike, Kayak and Canoe to search for 16 trail markers in participating parks to win prizes and rewards.

Pick up a Nature Quest Passport at Oregon Ridge or other participating parks, Wegmans, or online: www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org.

Complete five trails to earn **FREE** entry to the **NATURE QUEST FEST** in the fall! Register at your local park or call 410-887-4156. Hang on to your Passport! It's your ticket for free admission to the Fest.

DONATIONS HELP TO IMPROVE OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER AND PARK

KEYSERS DONATE NEW KIOSK INFORMATION BOARD

If you have visited the Park recently, you must have noticed our beautiful new kiosk information board that stands proudly in the Nature Center's parking lot. It has magnetic doors, and the board is magnetic as well. We are happy to say "goodbye" to the staples and pushpins that were necessary to post items on the old kiosk — it will not be missed.

We have Beth and Michael Keyser to thank for this wonderful addition to the Park. The kiosk was designed and installed by Xibitiz. If you haven't done so yet, take a minute on your next visit to check it out.



TRAILBLAZER STAFF

Editor/Design/Layout: Mary Jane Shanks

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Writers: Ralph Brown, Jessica Jeannetta, Mary Jane Shanks, Bob Stanhope

Photographers: Karen Jackson, ORNC staff

Graphics: Front page MITW graphic by artist Sandy Glover, colorized by Kathy Kadow. Wonderful!

Articles/graphics for Fall issue due July 5

A THANK YOU TO DONORS

We want to acknowledge and thank those who have made donations this year to improve Oregon Ridge Nature Center and Park.

Betty Hurse Scholarship Foundation	\$ 5,000
Joan Hoblitzell Memorial Gift	\$ 5,000
Nancy Berger	\$ 1,000
Lisa and Bill Kidd	\$50,000
Anonymous	\$ 2,000
Anonymous	\$ 3,100

DO YOU WISH TO MAKE A DONATION?

Oregon Ridge Nature Center is planning a renovation of the Exhibit Hall, which will include a large exhibit about the Piedmont region and its importance to the ecosystem. Donations are critical to supporting this and other exhibits, as well as many services and projects for the Nature Center and Park.

If you would like to make a donation, please visit our website and go to Join/Donate for more information:

www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org



COMING UP THIS FALL!

SAVING THE BEES



Speaker Steve McDaniel



September 18, 7:30 PM

Oregon Ridge Auditorium

Admission Free



HONEY HARVEST FESTIVAL!



October 7 and 8



11 AM to 4 PM



IT'S FUN & IT'S FREE AS A BEE!



FIREFLIES: THE FIRST FLASH OF SUMMER

by Naturalist Jessica Jeannetta

As kids, one of the most mystical of summer pleasures is the evening flickering of fireflies, or as some call them, lightning bugs. Legends abound around the firefly, from Japan where they are believed to be the ghosts of slain warriors, to the Mediterranean where it's believed that firefly light rises from the grave, to an American superstition that a firefly hovering over the ground in your path foretells success. For most kids, they appear like magical fairies, little Tinker Bells, lighting up yards and delighting youngsters who chase and catch them in jars. Fireflies are one of the early signs of the official start of summer, appearing even before the Summer Solstice on June 21st, and peaking here in Baltimore County in June and July.



As the summer sun fades below the horizon, *fireflyworks* begin to burst on and off against the darkening landscape, tantalizing the child in us all.

Fireflies are not really flies at all; they are categorized in the beetle family of insects. In fact, they are a part of the most diverse family of insects. These winged beetles of the order Coleoptera and family Lampyridae are widely known and widespread. Worldwide, there are over 2,000 species of fireflies that scientists have named, and new species are still being identified. While many species of fireflies exist throughout the world, less than a half dozen species are commonly seen in our area. Of these, the most common is the eastern firefly (*Photinus pyralis*). The eastern firefly usually flies close to the ground and emits a yellow-green light. The males can be observed flying in a j-shaped pattern, flashing on the upward part of the “j”. Males will typically flash on six-second intervals and females following on two-second delay. Eastern firefly females typically remain on the ground and will elevate the glowing part of the abdomen upwards towards the flying male firefly.

In general, the entire life cycle of a firefly takes about two years to complete. Fireflies spend the majority of their life as larvae, and once an adult, they have a very short lifespan that ranges only 7-14 days. The female firefly lays

eggs underground, where the larvae hatch in approximately four weeks and feed underground for the remainder of the summer. For some species, fireflies remain in a larval stage for over a year and will overwinter underground or under tree bark. Firefly larvae are often referred to as glowworms, because they emit the same bioluminescence as adult fireflies. In the spring, metamorphosis occurs, and following a pupa stage, the adult fireflies emerge from the ground, completing the firefly life cycle.

The light show that is observed on warm, summer evenings is actually chatter between males and females as they look for a mate or seek out food. Fireflies are carnivorous in all stages of their life. Firefly larvae often feed on other larvae, terrestrial snails, and slugs. The adult firefly diet is more variable and can include pollen and nectar. While delightful and innocent in appearance, some species of fireflies are known to prey on other fireflies by mimicking the flashes of an unsuspecting firefly beetle until it is close enough to catch and eat. Most surprising is that some adults, like those in the genus *Photinus* found in Baltimore County, do not feed at all.

Many may wonder how something so bright and flashy can escape the numerous insect-eating predators. Well, the answer is really simple — they taste bad (or so I've heard, as I have never



tasted one)! Having an offensive taste to ward off predators is not an uncommon phenomenon for beetle species. In addition, scientists compare a firefly's light emissions to the warning coloration of animals like a skunk or monarch butterfly. This defense mechanism, or survival adaptation, is designed to deter potential predators from feeding on poisonous or unpalatable organisms.

Only about 3/4" in length, both male and female fireflies produce bright flash patterns. Amazingly, each species of firefly has its own unique flashing pattern that distinguishes it from other species. The light emitted from a firefly's abdomen is highly energy efficient and creates little to no heat. Their lights are powered by a chemical reaction that occurs as oxygen enters their bodies through the abdomen trachea to create a bioluminescent light. Fireflies, as with other bioluminescent animals, produce a chemical called luciferin. A little known fact is the very first researchers to identify and isolate the luciferin chemical found in fireflies were scientists from Johns Hopkins in 1949.

Even with the large number of different species across the world, scientists are becoming increasingly concerned about a dramatic decrease in firefly populations. The scary thing is that scientists don't know exactly why firefly populations are declining. Fireflies are homebodies by nature, spending their life span in the area where they were born. Since ideal habitat for firefly larvae is rotting wood and leaf litter near bodies of water, such as ponds and streams, it is not surprising

that paving over their habitat for shopping centers, houses, parking lots and roads may be causing populations to dwindle. Activities such as logging, pollution and increased use of pesticides could also have negative impacts on suitable habitat.

Some studies indicate light pollution as the major factor in the disappearance of fireflies all over the world. Since both male and female fireflies use their flashing lights to communicate, light pollution is believed to interrupt firefly flash patterns. Scientists have observed that synchronous fireflies get out of synch for a few minutes from the headlights of a passing car. Light creeping into their habitat from developments and streetlights may be making it difficult for fireflies to find and communicate with one another for mating purposes, which will ultimately result in fewer firefly larvae the next season.

Just as fall's changing leaf colors, winter's first frost, and spring's singing wood frogs are indicators of new seasons, so it is with summer's firefly light show. You can help keep firefly magic alive by creating habitat for them in your own backyard. When it comes time to clean up leaf litter and debris in your yard, don't just bag it and throw it away. Find a place in your yard where you can spread it out to use as compost, perhaps around trees and shrubs. It is also helpful to grow medium to tall length grass or low trees to provide habitat for adults. Limit your use of lawn chemicals, and finally, turn off your outside lights whenever you can! You will be glad you did!



THE SUMMER NIGHT CHORUS



Fireflies are not the only insects that entertain us at night. Their light show is accompanied by a chorus of buzzing, chirping, whirring, zitting, and other sounds that make your backyards a noisy place. What is making these night sounds?

Many insects make up the mostly all male choir that delights, or teases, the ear each evening. Just as fireflies use their light to communicate, so do noisy insects use sound to signal to one another directions to food, danger lurking nearby, or to locate a mate.

This cacophonous choir is primarily made up of male cicadas, katydids, and crickets. Their sounds are made by rubbing body parts together. Cicadas sound off first, in late afternoon or early evening, with the ascending zing-zing-zing sound coming from trees. Crickets rub their wings together to make their sound, dragging a small peg on one wing across a row of ridges on the other. What you hear is their individual clicks, made so rapidly that it sounds more like a trill or a chirp. The katydids are the last to chime in, with a rhythmic song that is loudest in late summer. Their sound comes in bursts, two to four notes that sound like *Kay-tee-did-did*. Their sound is distinct and loud and can often be heard indoors as one quietly rests in bed. When katydids really get going, their chirps create a synchronized call-and-response medley that pulsates back and forth in the treetops.

This summer, gather the family and spread out on blankets in your backyard to watch the *fireflyworks* and enjoy the insect chorus. It's quite a show.

ORNC COUNCIL NEWS AND EVENTS

JEAN WORTHLEY: One of Oregon Ridge Park's Original Trailblazers

Jean Worthley, who many know as Miss Jean on MPT's *Hodge Podge Lodge*, passed away this past April. When Baltimore County built its first nature center in Oregon Ridge Park in 1981, Jean was one of its original trailblazers. "It was her warm telephone conversation," says Bob Stanhope, "that encouraged me to leave Boston's Blue Hills Trailside Museum to interview for the first Naturalist position in Baltimore County's Parks. (See photo)

Jean was the first President of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council when the center opened in 1983. She was instrumental in the fundraising efforts for the exhibits housed in the Nature Center. She provided the training for the first crew of trail guide volunteers, which has grown to provide outdoor field trips for an increasing number of school visitors.

In 1990, Jean Worthley played a pivotal role in the massive fundraising effort to aid Baltimore County in the purchase of the Merryman Tract that adjoined the Park, saving this land from development and increasing the acreage of the Park to 1,043 acres. Her accomplishments at Oregon Ridge led to her being invited to serve on the board of the Department of Recreation and Parks. The timing was perfect as the board was considering adding a second Naturalist to the Nature Center staff. Her strong support led to the hiring of Kirk Dreier, who has been instrumental in developing three nature centers in Baltimore County.

Jean and her husband, Elmer, were frequent presenters for the Council's Speaker Series, kicking-off the year as the September speaker for many years. They also ran the Worthley Botany Club, an adult education program that often met at the Nature Center in the 1990s. Jean and Elmer were first and foremost environmentalists and educators. Together they hosted another MPT program "On Nature's Trail," and made lasting contributions over the years to benefit the citizens of Maryland at Soldiers Delight Park, Irvine Natural Science Center, Cylburn Arboretum, Maryland Ornithological Society, and so many other environment organizations.

We are especially thankful for the indelible footprint that Jean Worthley, Maryland's own Mother Nature, left here at Oregon Ridge Nature Center and Park.



JOIN THE GROUNDS COMMITTEE

As summer begins, the first priorities set by the newly reconstituted grounds committee should be completed. Eight new benches will be in place, stream and ravine crossing will be improved, and 4x4" posts with signage will be situated to clearly mark trail directions. A new program is in the planning stage, and hopefully, it will begin soon — *ADOPT A TRAIL*.

I recently read a poem by Mary Oliver, which contained the line, "Attention is the beginning of devotion." I believe that one of the main goals of the grounds committee should be to help focus the mind of the Oregon Ridge Park visitor on the beauty, serenity and uniqueness of the environment that surrounds them. If you are one of the many park visitors who already feels a devotion to Oregon Ridge, think about joining the grounds committee.

Ralph Brown



The first of 8 benches to replace damaged ones.
The bench was built by Ralph Brown, installed by Susan Schepers.

VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE AT ORNC

MADISON PLUNKERT: A Seasoned Ridge Runner

Madison Plunkert will be graduating soon, and ORNC is going to miss her as part of our Ridge Runner team. Madison wanted to become a Ridge Runner because she wanted to learn about animals through personal experience, not just from reading about them in books. Even though her favorite job is feeding the starling, her favorite critters in the Nature Center are the gray tree frogs. "I find them charmingly sticky, and I like the flash of yellow on their hind legs," she explains.

Madison has had a rewarding Ridge Runner experience and encourages other teens to join the team and take an active role in raising awareness of environmental issues. She thinks the best thing about being a Ridge Runner is interacting with visitors. She says, "I really enjoy the contagious excitement that the visitors bring." Madison especially loves to see the awe and wonder on children's faces as they watch her care for the animals.

After graduation from Hereford High School, where she carries a 4.0 GPA, Madison will attend the University of Maryland, College Park, majoring in Biological Science: Ecology and Evolution. Madison is a well-rounded young woman, with many interests and talents. She plays violin and loves hiking and birding in the woods. Her favorite subject this year is computer science. She speaks fluent Spanish and is currently a student intern for a Spanish class at her school, where she helps plan lessons, grade papers, and teach.

In Madison's spare time, she enjoys reading an eclectic array of books, including *The Secret Life of Henrietta Lacks*, *Cajas de carton*, *Jane Eyre*, and *The Cure for Dreaming*. At home, Madison takes care of an array of pets. She has two cats, Reggie



and Ringo, and she has 8 chickens named Hazel, Helen, Carol, Frankie, Milly, Stellar, Chloe, and Duck.

We wish Madison all the best as she continues her journey to college. Perhaps we will see her in the future as a college intern here at Oregon Ridge Nature Center, or maybe as a summer camp counselor.

VOLUNTEER TO BE A TRAIL GUIDE AT OREGON RIDGE PARK

Fall Training: September 5 to 8, from 10 AM to 1 PM
\$20 Donation first time attendees

Trail Guides share three common traits: Love of nature and the outdoors, love of children, love of sharing and learning. If these are things you love, please join the corps of Trail Guide Volunteers at the Oregon Ridge Nature Center. No prior experience is needed. After 40 hours of service, you will receive a ORNC T-shirt and an official name tag.

Trail Guides are also treated to a monthly nature field trip. Training takes place twice a year, fall and spring. Each day of training covers a different nature topic. Fall topics include habitats, insects, Native Americans of Maryland, and the Chesapeake Bay. Call to register today!

MARCH WAS A LAMB FOR THE ANNUAL PANCAKE BREAKFAST

March felt like late spring, which helped bring big crowds to our 31st Pancake Breakfast — 1277 pancake enthusiasts supported the Nature Center this year, including some old friends like Jean Worthley. Even the sausage cookers were in a good mood, since they didn't have to brave frigid weather while standing over steamy, outdoor grills.

Under the capable supervision of Erin and John McCleary (*photo right*), we enjoyed yet another successful breakfast, bringing in a profit of over \$8,000 to go towards improved and new exhibits and programming at the Nature Center.

Balle More, the Oregon Ridge Dulcimer Band, Will Play for Fish, and the Mayo Family provided a rousing backdrop to the festivities. John Canoles and his Box Raffles were a big attraction as always this year, with the birding scope once more being the hot raffle item. The membership table was busy, with 77 people renewing or becoming new members. And, many left not only with full bellies, but with flowers and bottles of maple syrup.

Thank you to everyone who came to breakfast with us. We appreciate your support. Please join us again next year on March 3 or 4, 2018.

Erin and John coordinated a great team of volunteers, recruited by Georgette Frederick. Our volunteers are the BEST, making their hard work look effortless. With their help, this event always strums along like a well-tuned guitar.



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

Alisa Anania
Gary Anderson
Irene Baker
Ken Bartholomew
Marsha Bartholomew
Sophia Bennett
Nancy Berger
Lindsay Bull
Elysa Braverman
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John Canoles
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**We are Grateful to these
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TRAILBLAZER SUMMER 2017 ISSUE

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>**



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___ \$ 30 Family	___ \$ 500 Lifetime
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