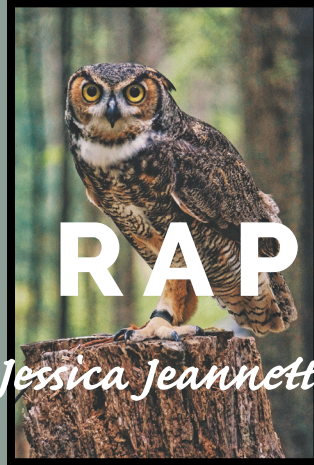


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Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council – Supporting Oregon Ridge Nature Center since 1982

FALL - 2021



RAPTORS

by Jessica Jeannetta, Director, Naturalist

Have you ever looked up at the sky and seen a large bird soaring way up high? These magnificent flyers are likely raptors, also called birds of prey. They are a group of birds that hunt and feed on other animals, such as insects, small mammals, reptiles, fish, amphibians, and even other birds. These types of birds include hawks, owls, eagles, falcons, and vultures. The word raptor comes from the Latin word, *rapeo*, which means to seize or capture - an appropriate way to describe how these birds hunt in flight.

Raptors are characterized for their keen eyesight, sharp talons, and hooked beaks. These animals play an important role in our ecosystem as apex predators that help to control prey populations in their habitat.

There are almost 500 species of raptors in the world and just over 20 species have been spotted in Maryland. These birds are divided into two main groups, diurnal birds that are active during the day (ex. eagles, hawks, vultures, falcons) and nocturnal birds that are active during the nighttime (owls).

While you are fairly likely to spot a wild raptor soaring in the sky while you visit Oregon Ridge, did you know that you can also experience these fascinating creatures up close by visiting our aviaries or stopping by during one of our Raptors on the Ridge programs?

Oregon Ridge is federally permitted to have non-releasable raptors placed at our site from licensed wildlife rehabilitators to use as part of our educational programming. We currently home four permanently injured, non-releasable birds of prey. They include a Barred Owl, Eastern Screech Owl, Broad-winged Hawk and Red-tailed Hawk. These birds play an integral part in helping us to further our mission and provide engaging educational experiences to visitors.

Each of the ORNC raptor ambassadors once lived in the wild and sustained an injury - often times, hit by a car - that required medical treatment from a licensed wildlife rehabber. While it is the goal for wildlife rehab centers to release injured animals back into the wild following their recovery, in some cases, their injuries are not able to heal to the extent that would allow the animal to survive on its own. When appropriate these animals are placed with permitted educational facilities like Oregon Ridge to serve as educational ambassadors for their species.

The next time you come by, keep an eye out for our Raptor on the Ridge Team and our Raptor Ambassadors in the Raptor Garden located across the bridge from the nature center.

"Raptors on the Ridge" Program

by Elizabeth Kadow, Naturalist



In the Fall of 2020, with the help of a former zoo handler, Adam Zurgable, the nature center introduced a brand new animal encounter program; "Raptors on the Ridge." This program, run exclusively by volunteers, takes place on Tuesday mornings, Thursday afternoons, and most Saturdays. Visitors get the chance to see our birds of prey up close and personal during an enrichment walk with their handler. Each volunteer brings a special passion for the birds and a wealth of animal handling techniques from previous volunteer positions held at various environmental settings and zoos.

Since we introduced "Raptors on the Ridge," we have added two more birds of prey to our animal ambassador team - Monroe, our gray eastern screech owl and Lewis, our broad-winged hawk.

Our "Raptors on the Ridge" team is excited to share stories about our resident raptors and tell you more about how you can help protect our native wildlife.

Peter Goff Tenant House Museum

by Bob Cooke

After years of limited use due to water damage, the Peter Goff Tenant House Museum will now be open to Oregon Ridge Park visitors on a weekly schedule.

As a recreation of an original tenant house - built on an original foundation - this one-room museum displays numerous artifacts that illustrate what life was like for the mining and iron workers and their families who lived here in the 1850s.

Step inside and you will see rudimentary furniture, a coal stove for heating and cooking, shelves of condiments and home remedies, utensils and tools, games and other diversions... and a hornet nest used in a way that may surprise you!

The museum's namesake, Peter Goff (also spelled Gough), was a slave who, once emancipated by his owner, "bought" the freedom of his family members and went on to help found a church on Cuba Road that still bears his name: Gough United Methodist Church.



Eagle Scout Projects

by Elizabeth Kadow, Naturalist

Each year, thousands of people visit Oregon Ridge Park to hike, participate in programs, picnic, or enjoy the solitude of nature. We're here for the community... and members of the community are here for us, too. All that is special about Oregon Ridge wouldn't be possible without volunteers.

Over the past year and a half, Eagle Scouts and their volunteer crews have been hard at work renovating and creating features for all to enjoy. To become an Eagle Scout, one must develop, plan, fund raise, lead, and complete a community service project. The Oregon Ridge Nature Center staff would like to thank the following Eagle Scouts who chose our park as their project site. Each project took many hours of dedication to complete. We are so **thankful** for the Eagle Scouts' hard work.

Fire Ring, Wood Storage, and Table Renovation - Timothy Carr

Trail Head Steps - Anthony Garcia

Trail Markers - Ethan Holler

Picnic Area Renovation - Brian Anderson

Floating Dock at the Pond - Elliott Morton

Hawk Enclosure - Connor McClellan

Perennial Garden - Cooper Beeson

Possum Enclosure and Stone Walkway -
Dominic Yap



Next time you're in the park, be sure to stop by and check out what they accomplished here. And if you know a Scout interested in pursuing a project at Oregon Ridge, encourage them to contact us at: info@OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org.

ORNC COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

by Mark Gingerich, President, Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council

Like many of you the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council carried on the Council's business via monthly ZOOM meetings from September 1st, 2020 through June 1st, 2021. While it was an adjustment, it did not inhibit the Council's purpose to "advise, recommend, promote, conduct and develop, in cooperation with the Department of Recreation and Parks and its Board, nature interpretation and conservation programs and projects primarily at Oregon Ridge Nature Center."

Council priorities over the past year included:

- Focusing on trail improvement throughout the park
- Obtaining grant monies to support ORNC projects
- Maintaining an interactive web page that provides current information regarding the Nature Center and its programs
- Providing scholarship opportunity for graduating high-school seniors planning to study environmental science and/or nature education
- Providing quality programming through monthly "Speaker's Series" that is geared toward the adult learner
- Maintaining an awareness of activities occurring outside/around the park that would support or infringe on ORNCC's stewardship
- Engaging the community in membership and fundraising support
- Maintaining a quarterly newsletter to educate and inform the ORNC community

As a final responsibility, the ORNCC held the Annual Meeting in June where election of new Board members was held. The Council approved the following: President - Ralph Brown, Vice-President - Winny Tan, Treasurer - Ann Canoles, Secretary - Erin McCleary, and Director - Carol Mantegna.

I wish to offer the new Board members much success and thank all for the opportunity to serve as Board President over the last several years. I plan to remain an active member of the Council.

Respectfully,

Mark Gingerich, Outgoing President, Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council

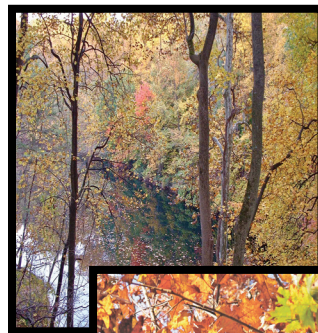
The Chemistry of Fall Colors

by Bob Cooke

You don't have to be a leaf peeper to be familiar with the dramatic beauty of autumn leaves. As days shorten and temperatures drop, the green leaves of deciduous trees shift to warmer hues, splashing the landscape with a mix of yellows, oranges, reds and purples. Why does this happen?

The cells of healthy green leaves contain chloroplasts, in which the chemical chlorophyll uses light energy from the sun to transform carbon dioxide and water into carbohydrates. Light waves that represent green in the visual spectrum are reflected rather than absorbed...hence the green appearance. When chlorophyll's vital job is done and it breaks down, pigments like carotenes and xanthophyll that have been there in the leaf all along are revealed. Green gives way to the warm colors of fall. Another pigment, anthocyanin, also forms in some cases, amplifying the color shift at the end of the growing season.

Flowers may use bright colors to attract pollinators, but, for tree leaves, these brilliant displays are merely a happy side effect of the trees' food production shutdown.



Speaker's Series

Jeanne Pinto, Coordinator



Our Mysterious Orchids: Hidden Connections Below and Above Ground
Dr. Melissa McCormick, Ecologist - Smithsonian Environmental Research Center
September 20th, 2021, 7 pm via ZOOM

Dr. McCormick is an Ecologist at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, where she has studied orchids and other plants since arriving there as a Postdoctoral Fellow in 1999. She received a BS in Biology from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas and a PhD in Ecology, Evolutionary Biology and Behavior from Michigan State University. She uses a combination of field and DNA-based techniques to study plant-fungus interactions, plant conservation, and plant invasions. Her main research focus is on orchid associations with mycorrhizal fungi and how they affect orchid rarity and distribution. She is also one of the founding members of the North American Orchid Conservation Center (NAOCC), which is a pioneering initiative to link botanic gardens, land managers, and researchers to conserve all the native orchids of North America. She has published over 25 papers focused on understanding native orchids and their mycorrhizal fungi and how they are affected by land use history, drought, and non-native earthworms. Dr. McCormick will talk about how current research is working to identify critical points in orchid life cycles to help safeguard orchid populations.

National Park Service, It's History and Role in Conservation
William Blair Curtis, Park Ranger
October 18th, 2021, 7 pm @ the Lakeside Pavillion

Bill Curtis is a National Park Ranger currently stationed at Hampton National Historic Site and Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine. While a history major at Gettysburg College, he began his career as a Licensed Battlefield Guide. His NPS career has included full time duty as an interpreter, law enforcement officer. Curtis now serves as the Compliance Officer and Structural Fire Management Coordinator in the Planning Division. He is a Maryland Master Naturalist. Curtis is happily married and the proud father of two wonderful children. Bill's presentation will focus on the National Parks known as "America's best idea." His talk will focus on the thinkers and the ideas that created and shaped the National Park Service. He will also engage attendees about how the Service shapes us today. We will end with a fun quiz - start studying now.



Endangered Turtles
Richard A. Seigel, Professor Emeritus, Towson University
November 15th, 2021, 7 pm via ZOOM

Richard A. Seigel is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Biological Sciences at Towson University. He received his B.S. from Rutgers University, his M.S. from the University of Central Florida, and his Ph.D. in Systematics and Ecology from the University of Kansas. His major research interests are in the population ecology and conservation biology of amphibians and reptiles, especially snakes, turtles, and frogs. He has published over 90 scientific papers and five books on the wildlife management and conservation ecology of amphibians and reptiles and was named the winner of the 2013 Paul Moler Herpetological Conservation Award from the Florida Chapter of the Wildlife Society. He has been the lead researcher on the wildlife studies of the Northern Map Turtle from 2008-2021. He will be speaking on the current population status, management, and behavior of the endangered Northern Map Turtle in Maryland.



Wild, Wacky, and Wonderful Wasps
Kerry Wixted, Amphibian & Reptile and Invasive Species Program Manager
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
January 17th, 2022, 7 pm via ZOOM

Learn about the wonderful world of wasps from the pollinators to the predators. This talk will focus on the biology of wasps and fascinating wasp species found in Maryland including the giant ichneumon with her drill-tipped ovipositor, the industrious potter wasps, clepto-parasitic cuckoo wasps, the gall-forming wasps, the gentle giant cicada killer, and more.



Announcing Our 2021 Scholarship Winners!

by Polly Roberts, M.D., Chair, Scholarship Committee

For the 27th consecutive year, the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council has awarded scholarships to graduating seniors who have demonstrated academic excellence and a commitment to the environment. Three graduates from Baltimore County have each been awarded \$8500.

Ellen Kraii, a graduate of Loch Raven High School, will pursue studies in sustainable development/environmental science at Appalachian State University. She envisions a career involving forestry or the Park Service. Ellen has volunteered at the Cromwell Valley Park and as a Ridge Runner at the Oregon Ridge Nature Center, where she especially enjoyed animal care.



Alicia Poling, who graduated from Franklin High School, has chosen a combined major in biology, environmental science, and marine science at Smith College. Her goal is to become a laboratory or field researcher in order to provide scientific findings to policy makers. She has served as a volunteer at the National Aquarium as a Student Leader. As an Exhibit Guide, she has participated with International Coastal Cleanups, and has served as a Ridge Runner.



Meghan Ward is a graduate of Towson High School and will major in environmental engineering at Juniata College. She hopes to design systems to address stream restoration or carbon capture. Megan has volunteered as a Ridge Runner for 5 years! Also, she have volunteered at Ladew Gardens and has been a member of her school's Environmental Club.



In addition, Harry William Holt (not pictured), who is the recipient of the four-year Getty Dutrow Mullan Scholarship, has successfully completed his junior year at the University of Baltimore in the Environmental Sustainability Program. He will receive \$1000.00 for his senior year.

The Council extends its best wishes to the 2021 scholarship winners and sincerely thanks all who donate so generously to our scholarship program.

FUN FACTS - DID YOU KNOW?

by Bob Cooke

Frogs drink water through their skin!

Unlike many other animals that drink through their mouths, frogs absorb water through a "drinking patch" on their abdomen and the underside of their upper legs. These amphibians are known for their jumping abilities, bulging eyes, slimy skin, and croaking sounds. The diet for frogs includes bugs, spiders, worms, slugs, larvae and small fish. They are social creatures and live in groups.



Toads have nothing to do with warts!

Toads don't have warts, and touching them won't give you warts. Those bumps on their skin are actually glands that secrete toxin, so if you touch a toad, wash your hands right after! In addition, toads eat insects and other arthropods - invertebrate animals. True toads are nocturnal and have short legs that limit their mobility to walking or hopping.

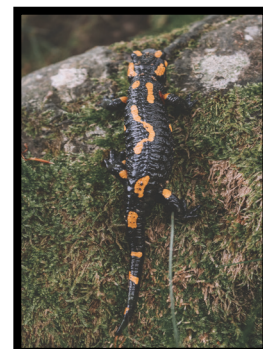


Snakes are missing more than just legs!

Snakes lack eyelids (there are scales instead), lips, and external ears. Rather than using a nose to pick up scents, they "taste air" with their forked tongue! You can identify the type of snake by looking at the shape of its head and eyes, their tail, and scales/skin color and pattern. Snakes shed their skin when they outgrow it or when it becomes old or worn out. Some common snakes found in Maryland include the: Eastern Ratsnake, Red Cornsnake, Eastern Milksnake, and Dekay's Brownsnake.

Salamanders can regrow some missing parts!

If one of these secretive amphibians has the misfortune of losing a part of a limb or tail, no problem... slowly but surely, it can regenerate what's missing! Like toads, they also secrete a toxic substance from their skin glands that can be irritating to human skin. Salamanders also come in many different sizes and colors. They are known carnivores - preferring slow-moving prey such as worms, slugs, and snails.



♦ ♦ ♦ KID'S CORNER ♦ ♦ ♦

Leaf Lanterns

by Judy Breitenbach, Master Naturalist

Fall is a wonderful time to venture outdoors and enjoy the cooler temperatures, inhale the fresh autumn air, and witness the changing colors of the deciduous trees as noted by Bob Cooke in the preceding article. This project was adapted from Monica Wiedel-Lubinski and Karen Madigan's book *Nature Play Workshop for Families* (2020).

Needed Materials

Clean jars
Tacky craft glue
Shallow dish for glue (like a clean lid or yogurt container)
Flat brush to spread glue
Assorted fall leaves - natural or craft silk
Scraps of white or light-colored gift tissue paper -
(I found tissue paper cut into squares that worked well)
Raffia, yarn, string
Battery-operated tea lights



Directions

1. Gather an assortment of colorful leaves that have fallen to the ground (if not available, silk fall leaves from your local craft shop can be used; however, you will need to use a hot-glue gun to secure them).
2. Press the colorful leaves between heavy book pages for at least one week.
3. After your jars are clean and dried, squeeze some tacky glue into a shallow dish and use a brush to cover the jar with the glue. A sponge brush works well here. Be sure to only brush the area where you want the tissue paper to stick. Paste your leaves on top of the tissue paper and cover them with a layer of paste to dry in place. Set it aside to dry.
4. Add the raffia, string, or yarn to embellish the top of the lantern jar.
5. Turn on the tea light and place it in the jar. Set your jars outside at dusk and enjoy their glow as the night darkness sets in.



Newsletter Committee: Judy Breitenbach and Bob Cooke

Contributors to this issue: Michael Eversmier, Bob Cooke, Kathy Kadow, Elizabeth Kadow, Jessica Jeannetta, Jeanne Pinto, Polly Roberts, Jim Curtis, Mark Gingerich, and Judy Breitenbach.

The Newsletter Committee is always looking for additional members to join the team and individuals interested in contributing an article related to ORNC's mission and goals. If interested, please contact Judy at jembreiten@gmail.com. The newsletter committee reserves the right to edit all submissions.



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