

TRAILBLAZER

Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council

Supporting Oregon Ridge Nature Center since 1982

Winter 2023

In This Issue:

- 2 — President's Column
- 3 — Seed Library at the Nature Center
- 4 — The Many Ecosystems within Oregon Ridge Park
- 6 — Winter World
- 7 — Scholarship Essay
- 8 — 2023 Maple Sugaring Celebration
- 10 — ORNC Council Speaker Series
- 12 — Winter Programs at Oregon Ridge Nature Center
- 14 — Kids' Corner – Ice Ornaments

Contributors to this issue: Judy Breitenbach, Liz and Phil Briscoe, Ralph Brown, Kathy Kadow, Eszter Sápi, Macy Simons, Cole Snyder

ORNC Council, Inc., 13555 Beaver Dam Road, Cockeysville, MD 21030 www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org
info@OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org; (410) 887-1815

Cover Photo by Michael Eversmier

President's Column

By Ralph Brown, M.D., President, Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council

Over 50 years ago the people of Baltimore County were given a great gift. In 1969 the County purchased a large portion of land that was to become our treasured Oregon Ridge Park. In the late 1980's, four women, led by Dr. Polly Walker, a pediatrician, raised \$3 million dollars to buy close to 200 additional acres of the Merryman Property that had already been sold to a developer. Twenty-eight houses were already on the drawing board. This land is now a sizable portion of our forested Yellow Trail by Ivy Hill Road.

As Dr. Walker wrote to me, "The massive outpouring of support...showed how much the citizens and business community of Baltimore County cared about natural woodland. It is also an indication of how hard they were willing to work to increase the size of that natural woodland where both young and old continue to this day to be renewed by the peace and quiet of nature."

Currently a Master Plan is being developed by Baltimore County that will recommend the future direction of the park. What a coincidence that over 30 years later another pediatrician (me) is involved at a critical time for Oregon Ridge Park. With this great gift of park land comes a large responsibility.

Despite our best efforts over the years, however, 200 acres of mature oak trees have been harvested, an expansion of a gas pipeline removed many acres of forest and meadows, our trees have been painted, our trails have eroded, and our forest understory has been overrun by invasive species.

But recently we have been able to show that if we meet our responsibility and raise our collective voices — our leaders will listen: There will be no

commercial zip line and ropes course taking over another portion of our mature forest.

In 1968, a biologist by the name of Garrett Hardin published a seminal article in Science magazine titled "Tragedy of the Commons." He postulated that because of the selfishness of individuals, each thinking only of their own interest, any resource held in common would be exploited and eventually ruined.

This became economic dogma until the economist Elinor Ostrom showed this to be false. From Dr. Ostrom's research, she concluded that the "commons" is best managed when the people closest to those resources and who benefit most from them band together. A concerned, dedicated community can preserve and enhance the "commons." As a result of her work, in 2009 Elinor Ostrom became the first woman to be awarded a Nobel Prize in Economics.

If you visit Oregon Ridge Park, if you value its forests, meadows, and streams, if you treasure its beauty and serenity, if you want to safeguard its primary function as a nature park, please consider volunteering. The park has a small, dedicated staff who depend on volunteers for all our programs to function and for help maintaining the park.

If you have any skills in fundraising, in public relations, in working with non-profit organizations, in organizing volunteers, in environmental education, in trail maintenance, in gardening, or just want to prove Elinor Ostrom correct, please consider joining with us in protecting this magnificent resource.

The real "Tragedy" occurs when the community of park users abandons this responsibility to others.

Coming Soon to Oregon Ridge Nature Center A Seed Library — the first in Baltimore County!

By Liz and Phil Briscoe

What is a seed library?

Much like “Little Free (book) Libraries,” seed libraries are tiny places throughout a community where people can find free items. In simple terms, a seed library is just how it sounds – it allows gardeners to “borrow” and share seeds with others and inspires new gardeners.

Exactly how does a seed lending library work?

A seed library works much like a traditional library. Gardeners share seeds either purchased in excess or gathered from seeds in their own garden. Interested visitors can “borrow” seeds from the library at planting time. At the end of the growing season, they save seeds from their plants and return a portion of the seeds to the library.

Seed libraries have a host of benefits. They are an opportunity to share skills and knowledge with neighbors, bring greater food security, and provide environmental benefits. Seed libraries are wonderful places for beginner gardeners to start exploring their green thumb and introduce them to the joys of growing plants.

Sharing seeds that have come from one’s own garden may be best, as the plant has had success growing in the Piedmont area that surrounds Oregon Ridge, which is its own local microclimate. A native seed library can also share heirloom seeds that may otherwise be difficult to come by. These are such special seeds and it is a treat to share them with the community.

Oregon Ridge’s New Seed Library

The Oregon Ridge seed library was created as a Master Naturalist project and is being installed at the Oregon Ridge Nature Center. It provides a space and a place for seed saving and propagation. Our new seed library also offers

educational materials and books that focus on gardening and nature. We are building it in the hope it will become a true seed “lending library” and gardening hub year-round. The Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council is planning to host a plant/seed swap and workshop event in the Spring.

Why do we need to save and share seeds?

Starting plants from seed can be more economical. Gardeners at all levels can start more plants from seed rather than having to purchase the plants. And gardeners can keep saving them, like an investment, year after year. One of the main reasons many gardeners save seeds is just so they can share them with others. Sharing seeds is an easy way to spread the love of gardening, or a particular favorite flower, vegetable, or plant.

Saving seeds is also an important activity to preserve and protect genetic diversity of seeds and conserve plant varieties for the future. The reason there are some awesome heirloom varieties today is because someone selectively saved the genetics or traits of a plant that they thought should be carried forward. Think about all those wonderful heirloom tomato varieties. Saving seeds today ensures the enjoyment of these plants for generations to come.

“Historically, one of the first steps in the process of establishing a community [seed library] is by sharing seeds and growing gardens together. People that needed to survive together learned to share seeds, grow gardens, and learn from each other to strengthen and build their group, society, or civilization.”

(Excerpt from Master Gardeners Association of the Central
Rappahannock Area, plantsmap.com/tracy-blevins)

The Many Ecosystems within Oregon Ridge Park

By Judy Breitenbach, Maryland Master Naturalist



Oregon Ridge Park is a well-established outdoor environment. Its natural beauty is spread over 1,000 acres. How often do we think about the many ecosystems that are both terrestrial and aquatic within the park that contribute to sustainable habitats?

Ecosystems include plants, animals, and other organisms (biotic) that are dependent on each other and live together within a system of nonliving parts (abiotic) such as soil, weather, atmosphere, and sun.

The park's forest is a canopy made up of large trees that cover and protect the growth beneath it. The leaves from the canopy soak up carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Through the process of photosynthesis, they produce oxygen and sugar which provide food substance for many creatures including insects (Insecta). Smaller trees make up the understory layer which provides food and shelter for a variety of low flying birds and mammals.

The floor of the forest contains an abundant supply of decomposers that break down organic material into water, carbon dioxide, nitrogen, phosphorus, and calcium. They include microscopic organisms such as protozoa and bacteria, fungi, and invertebrate organisms like earthworms (Scalia), termites (Isoptera), and millipedes (Diplopoda) all known as detritivores.

The meadow provides habitat and food sources for many forms of wildlife and insects found in the park. This flat piece of land is usually covered by tall grasses, wildflowers, and non-woody plants. Bluebird (Sialia) nesting boxes can be found on the outskirts of the park's meadow...a perfect location for their diet of caterpillars and small insects. By storing flood water and slowly releasing it, a meadow is beneficial for flood control. It also enhances water quality by trapping sediment and uses the process of percolation to recharge ground water. If located near a stream bank or lake shore, it plays an important role in erosion control.

The Oregon Branch and Baisman Run streams are other important park ecosystems. The riparian vegetation along the stream banks helps to control erosion and prevent sediment pollution. Their shading effect keeps the water temperature cool which is important for aquatic life. Macroinvertebrates are one form of life that survive in the streams. They live on the bottom of the streams (Clams and Mussels/Bivalvia), in stream riffles (Stoneflies/Plecoptera), or clinging to rocks (Water Pennies/Coleoptera). They go through 3 or 4 stages of metamorphosis before becoming an adult. For many the adult life span is very short. They feed upon algae, dissolved organics, bacteria, feces, plants, leaves, and other live organisms.



Oregon Ridge Nature Center participates in a national program for water quality monitoring called “Save Our Streams.” This program monitors the overall health of our streams by the type of macroinvertebrates that inhabit it. The higher number of macroinvertebrates found in the stream that are sensitive to pollution, the better the overall health of the stream. Caddisflies (Trichoptera), Mayflies (Ephemeroptera), Stoneflies (Plecoptera), Watersnipe Flies (Diptera), Gilled Snails (Gastropoda), Water Pennies (Coleoptera), and the Riffle Beetle (Coleoptera) are examples of pollution-sensitive macroinvertebrates. This monitoring is very important as the water from the streams at Oregon Ridge Park support Loch Raven Reservoir and eventually make their way to the Chesapeake Bay.



As you visit the park and enjoy its many beautiful gifts of landscapes, trails, and nature, discover all the diverse ecosystems that help sustain it and contribute to its overall stability.

Photo on page 4:
Undergrowth by Judy Breitenbach

Photos on Page 5 by Karen Jackson:

Top right — Oregon Branch
Center left — Golden Pholiota
Bottom right — Moss covering rocks



Winter World

By Cole Snyder



Photo by Michael Eversmier

I have enjoyed reading several books about nature over the past few months, which have been both fun and enriching. *Entangled Life* by Merlin Sheldrake taught me about the magic of fungi. Trees can speak to one another underneath the earth and exchange resources using fungi. *The Bird Way* by Jennifer Ackerman taught me all about how odd and intelligent birds are.

But my favorite was *Winter World: The Ingenuity of Animal Survival* by Bernd Heinrich. It taught me all about how animals in our backyard survive the brutality of winter. It made me really believe in the magic of our world.

My favorite chapter was about turtles. Aquatic turtles cannot breathe underwater and must come up to the surface to take breaths. Of course, during the winter, lakes and ponds freeze over. Before ice covers the top of the water the turtles take one last breath, swim to the bottom of the pond, and bury themselves in the mud until the end of winter. The turtle that could not survive without taking breaths survives an entire winter

without taking a breath. And how do they survive? They must be absorbing oxygen through their skin, but an animal like the painted turtle is completely covered by the mud. So, they cannot absorb oxygen at all.

The idea that a creature can survive that experience is wild to me. I live in Baltimore City and enjoy biking to Patterson Park to look at the painted turtles in the pond. I now see them as little bits of magic, creatures that look so silly and behave simply, but survive through an experience that a human cannot even fathom. I now realize there are little pieces of magic living in our own backyards. As we approach winter, I will happily think about those turtles buried deep in our ponds and lakes.

I highly recommend reading *Winter World*. In addition to turtles, the book goes in depth about birds, bears, frogs and more. It is fun to think of the vitality of animals as we are curled up safe and comfy in our homes.

Scholarship Essay

By Macy Simons

Our scholarship applicants are required to submit a brief essay addressing the following: how they became interested in nature, their most rewarding environmental achievement, and plans for a future career. Here is the essay by one of this year's winners, Macy Simons, which demonstrates the passion and commitment of today's youth.

I am Macy Simons, a senior at Western School of Technology and Environmental Science in Catonsville, Maryland, and I have a passion for the environment.

For as long as I can remember, I have been exposed to and enamored of the beauty of nature. As a child, my parents would frequently take our family on camping trips, hikes, and bike rides. And, I had the pleasure of spending vacations in forests and national parks. As I grew up, there were not so many opportunities for me as a girl to participate in outdoor recreation, but my love of nature never faded.

Inspired by my enjoyment of science and the outdoors, I applied to a magnet high school that emphasized environmental studies. In the environmental science program at Western Tech, I got to learn about topics such as the ecology of the Chesapeake Bay, zoology, and natural resource management, which I had never had the chance to learn about before. The program at Western Tech gave me the chance to conduct independent research projects, monitor stream health, and perform experiments on live specimens. It was the first time I felt like I was participating in science rather than just learning about it. This is what inspired me to pursue a career in STEM.

When the Boy Scouts of America opened enrollment to girls in 2018, I helped found a female-inclusive unit in my community. Getting the chance to spend weekends surrounded by

nature reinvigorated the sense of wonder I had for the outdoors as a child and enabled me to explore my connection to the environment. Through my scout troop I also made my most rewarding environmental contribution.

There were plans in my community for a real estate development that would require clearing forest habitat and would also impact drainage into the local watershed. My scout troop and I attended community meetings and lobbied against the construction project. This is my proudest environmental accomplishment, because it felt empowering to use my voice to advocate for the environment and prevent destruction of habitat in my own community.

Next year I will begin my studies in environmental science and sustainability at an accredited university. I hope to participate in hands-on research, which will allow me to make valuable connections and cultivate career experience in my field of study. Following graduation, I plan to pursue a career as an environmental scientist and educator. It is a dream of mine to work at a federal park or nature center and focus on the development of educational programs that will inform people of pressing environmental issues.

Article continues on page 11.

2023 Maple Sugaring Celebration

By Judy Breitenbach, Maryland Master Naturalist



The mission of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center is to engage community members in educational and recreational opportunities that instill a sense of wonder and promote environmental stewardship (<https://www.oregonridgenaturecenter.org/about-us/>).

During winter the Nature Center and the Council host the annual Maple Sugaring celebration. It is a big event held during the weekends at the end of February into early March. School tours take place during the week from mid-February thru mid-March.

The festivities start just as the winter weather begins to break and we start to see warming days but the nights are still cold. During your visit you will learn about the history of maple sugaring, the different processes for tapping sap from maple and walnut trees, and the many methods used to boil down the sap into syrup.

This valuable food source was first discovered by the Indigenous peoples of North America.

Learning about the tree tapping process does require a short hike into the wooded area of the park (not suitable for baby strollers), and proper footwear is recommended — as the days get warmer the ground may get muddy as the frozen winter landscape starts to thaw.

After experiencing first-hand how sap is collected for maple sugaring, you can visit the maple sugar tasting station. If there's snow on the ground you can also watch how to turn maple sugar into snow candy, the way the Indigenous peoples did a long time ago.

During your visit to the park be sure to see all the animals that are taken care of by the Nature Center's staff and volunteers. Spend some time at the Nature Play Space, check out the hiking

trails (trail maps can be found in the Nature Center), and be sure to visit the Tenant House and Nature Center where pure maple sugar candy and syrup are available for sale.

To cap the annual Maple Sugaring festivities, the Nature Center Council hosts the annual Pancake Breakfast at the Oregon Ridge Park Lodge during the first weekend in March.

Please join us on Saturday or Sunday to share and enjoy pancakes and all the fixings. The proceeds from the breakfast help support other activities throughout the year that are sponsored by the Council. We are especially looking forward to this year's Pancake Breakfast since it has been on hold the past few years due to the pandemic.

The Maple Sugaring event is a wonderful way to get outdoors after many winter days inside. This event will be held on the weekends of **February 18-19 and 25-26, 2023.**

Please check the Nature Center's website <https://www.oregonridgenaturecenter.org> for more information. Groups of 10 - 15 people must register in advance. We are not able to accommodate groups larger than 15 people at this event.

Come join us, to experience firsthand how tree tapping for sap is turned into delicious maple sugar, a tradition that started back before the Pilgrims arrived in North America.



Photo on page 8 by G.Johansen

Photo on top of page 9 by Judy Breitenbach

Photo on bottom of page 9 by Karen Jackson

ORNCC Speaker Series

Taming The Anxious Brain with Nature in Mind: The Power of Nature Informed Mental Health January 16, 2023

Are you interested in the new frontier of nature informed therapy? Nature-informed (psycho) therapy explores nature-based methods of psychological healing, grounded in the belief that nature has profound mental health effects specifically for anxiety and stress related mental health challenges.

This workshop will present nature-based strategies and exercises designed to successfully manage emotional de-regulation such as stress and anxiety. This topic is particularly relevant as many individuals struggle with an uptick in anxiety in the aftermath of the Covid-19 epidemic.



Heidi Schreiber-Pan, Ph.D., LCPC, NCC

is a licensed professional clinical counselor and clinical director of the Chesapeake Mental Health Collaborative (CMHC) in Towson, Maryland and founder of the newly launched Center for Nature Informed Therapy.

Dr. Schreiber-Pan specializes in the treatment of anxiety disorders, PTSD, OCD, stress reduction and occupational burnout. Dr. Schreiber-Pan has worked with various organizations, schools and corporations to reduce stress on a communal level and to increase organizational well-being through training in positive psychology as well as integration of nature into mental health.

Dr. Schreiber-Pan is the author of the successful self-help book: *Taming the Anxious Mind*.

Scholarship Essay, Continued from page 7.

One day I hope to publish works relating to environmental science, which will help destigmatize high-level scientific concepts and make them more accessible to the general public.

For as long as I can remember, I have been inspired by the abundant wonders of the outdoors, and I am deeply saddened when people take actions that will prevent future generations from experiencing these wonders. If given the opportunity to study environmental science and sustainability in college, made possible by the monetary support of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center, I can work towards positive and lasting environmental change.

TRAILBLAZER STAFF

Editor: Pat Clagett

Graphic Designer: Eszter Sápi

Council President: Ralph Brown

Council Vice President: Winny Tan

Nature Center Director: Jessica Jeannetta

Nature Center Administrative Assistant:

Kathy Kadow



You can view our upcoming programs and events by opening your camera app and pointing it at the QR code above. Click on the link that pops up to browse and register at OregonRidgeNatureCenter.WildApricot.org.

Winter Programs at Oregon Ridge Nature Center

Clubs and Ongoing Programs

Nature Buds

Thursdays; 10 - 11 a.m.

December 1 — Color

December 8 — Counting

December 15 — Patterns

December 22 — Symmetry

December 29 — Texture

January 5 — Under the Microscope

January 12 — Through a Set of Binoculars

January 19 — Through a Telescope

January 26 — Behind a Lens

February 2 — Animal Spies

February 9 — Animal Keepers

February 16 — Animal Helpers

February 23 — Animal Pretenders

Bookworm Story Time

First Friday of the Month; 11 - 11:45 a.m.

Senior Stroll

Second Saturday of the Month; 10 - 11 a.m.

Pictures in the Park

Second Sunday of the Month; 1 - 3 p.m.

Nurture with Nature

Third Wednesday of the Month; 11 - 11:45 a.m.

December 21 — Clay

January 18 — Snow

February 15 — Sticks

Home School Nature Days — Reptiles Rule!

Fridays, January 6, 13, 20 and 27

Morning Session 10 - 11:30 a.m.

Afternoon Session 1 - 2:30 p.m.

Oregon Ridge Dulcimers

Thursdays; 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Winter Session — January 12, 19, 26;

February 2, 9, 16, 23 and March 2

Trail Guide Training

Tuesday, February 7 and Wednesday, February 8; 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Events and Festivals

Maple Sugaring Weekends

Saturdays, February 18 and 25;

Sundays, February 19 and 26;

11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Evening Programs

Astronomy in the Park; Catch a Falling Star — Geminids Meteor Shower

Tuesday, December 13; 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Winter Solstice Luminary Hike and Campfire

Saturday, December 17; 6 - 8 p.m.

Night Owls

Saturday, January 21; 6 - 8 p.m.

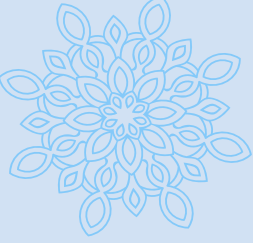
Under the Maple Moon

Saturday, February 4; 5 - 6:30 p.m.

Public Programs

Holiday Wreath Making

Saturday, December 3 and Sunday, December 4;
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.



Natural Ornaments

Saturday, December 10 and Sunday, Dec. 11

That's Wild! The Broad-winged Hawk: A Master of Migration

Sunday, January 8; 1 - 2 p.m.

Nature Book Club — An Immense World

Monday, January 9; 7 - 8 p.m.

That's Wild! Meet Hunny Bunny, our Newest Animal Ambassador

Saturday, January 14; 1 - 2 p.m.

That's Wild! Froggin'

Sunday, January 15; 1 - 2 p.m.

That's Wild! Ruby the Corn Snake and Friends!

Saturday, January 21; 1 - 2 p.m.

That's Wild! Diamondback Terrapins — A Gem in Brackish Waters

Sunday, January 22; 1 - 2 p.m.

That's Wild! Honk, Honk! It's Elvis the Canada Goose!

Saturday, January 28; 1 - 2 p.m.

That's Wild! Something Fishy!

Sunday, January 29; 1 - 2 p.m.

Wildlife in Winter

Sunday, February 5; 1 - 2:30 p.m.

Evergreens in Oregon Ridge

Saturday, February 11; 1 - 3 p.m.

Superb Owl Sunday

Sunday, February 12; 1 - 2:30 p.m.

Nature Book Club — Soul of an Octopus

Monday, February 27; 7 - 8 p.m.

Advance Registration is required for all programs
unless noted otherwise.

Visit

www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.WildApricot.org

for a detailed description and the link to register
for any of our Winter programs.

WINTER HOURS

November 1 thru February 28

The Park Grounds

Open daily 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

The Nature Center Building

Open Tuesday thru Sunday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Business hours: Tuesday thru Friday

9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Closed Mondays and Baltimore County
holidays.

COUNTY HOLIDAYS

**Nature Center Building is CLOSED
Park is Open**

Sunday, December 25, 2022

Monday, December 26, 2022

Sunday, January 1, 2023

Monday, January 2, 2023

Monday, January 16, 2023

Monday, February 20, 2023

Kids' Corner: Let's Make Ice Ornaments!

By Eszter Sápi, Graphic Designer

With the days getting shorter and the colorful deciduous leaves of autumn gone, winter can appear stark and gloomy. It seems that all you can see are muted browns, cold grays, and muddy greens. However, if you look carefully, you can find pops of color on winterberry and inkberry bushes, sumac trees, and evergreens. And even bare sticks that look initially bland can reveal subtle and intricate patterns.

Materials you'll need:

- Berries, sticks, leaves, pine needles, and anything else you find interesting on your nature walk.

Consider adding some bird feed, so when the ornaments melt, the seeds will provide food.



- Small containers to hold water.

I found that small jars, muffin tins, and lids from jars all work well.

- Twine.

Use natural fibers if possible, so if you forget to take them off the trees, they'll decompose.

Photos on pages 14 and 15 by Eszter Sápi

Instructions:

- Fill your containers with water, and add your nature finds.

You can arrange them however you'd like, but be open to surprises: some items might float, others will absorb water and sink, and things will generally shift around.



- Cut some twine, and place the ends into the water, so you'll have a loop to hang your ornaments.

- Leave your ornaments outside overnight if the temperature is below freezing.

If the weather is mild, you can pop them in the freezer for a few hours.

- Remove your frozen ornaments (they might need some coaxing, perhaps running them under lukewarm water).



- Hang your ice ornaments outside and enjoy!



Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council
13555 Beaver Dam Road
Cockeysville, MD 21030
www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Timonium, MD
Permit 296



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.

Make checks payable to: ORNC Council, Inc., 13555 Beaver Dam Road, Cockeysville, MD 21030.

You can also join or renew online. Please visit:

<https://www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org/Join-Donate-Volunteer/>

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

☐ \$15 Individual/Senior ☐ \$30 Family ☐ \$75 Supporting ☐ \$250 Sustaining ☐ \$500 Lifetime

☐ Extra Donation \$ _____

I would like to receive communications from Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council by:

☐ Email only ☐ Paper copy via US Mail as well

Stay in touch!

info@OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org
(410) 887-1815



For upcoming programs at ORNC, visit:
<https://OregonRidgeNatureCenter.WildApricot.org/>



Or scan the QR Code above

To make a donation to ORNC, visit:
<https://www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org/join-donate-volunteer/>



Or scan the QR Code above