

TRAILBLAZER

Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council

Supporting Oregon Ridge Nature Center since 1982

Summer 2023

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Contributors to this issue: Michelle Boyle, Ralph Brown, Adele Clagett,
Jessica Jeannetta, Cole Snyder

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

Cover Photo by Adele Clagett



President's Column

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

The next time you are walking in the woods at Oregon Ridge, look up. You are in Nature's cathedral.

Like the sublime cathedrals of medieval Europe, these woods took generations to erect. And like those awe-inspiring environments, they do not take care of themselves. They need dedicated, skilled, well-trained people with the expert knowledge to nurture them.

This past year Baltimore County produced a Master Plan for the future of Oregon Ridge. The nature council is enthusiastically supportive of this proposal, because it recognizes the necessity for the protection and restoration of the forest, meadows, streams and wetlands of the park. The plan emphasizes that these are the park's greatest jewels. If the natural areas of the park are allowed to continue their slow degradation, many birds, insects, amphibians and reptiles will also disappear. Not only will this loss of biodiversity be tragic, the Master Plan acknowledges that the result will also be "a lower quality experience for park users."

Approximately 90% of the land at Oregon Ridge is wooded. A recently published study of the forests in east coast national parks listed over two-thirds of them as "imminent" or "probable" failures. The paper concluded that unless active interventions are begun immediately, the over population of deer, the extensive presence of non-native invasive plants, and the absence of native hardwood seedlings and saplings will lead to the eventual disappearance of these eastern hardwood forests. Their replacement would be thickets of shrubs. Unfortunately this paper also describes the present situation at

Oregon Ridge. We have too many deer, large areas densely covered with non-native barberry, wineberry, lesser celandine, Chinese silver grass, and Japanese knotweed, and very few young oak or hickory trees in the understory.

Without active intervention, Oregon Ridge is headed towards widespread forest loss. The cascading effects will be the disappearance of native flora and fauna, the deterioration of habitats and ecosystems and the diminishment of the visitor experience for all of us.

Natural resource management is extremely complex, made even more so by intensifying climate change. It is therefore imperative that expert stewardship be hired to direct these decisions about the long-term ecosystem health of all the natural areas at Oregon Ridge and the preservation of the park's resources for future generations.

Because of the involvement of many of you over the past year, an exciting future for the park has been proposed. This future sees the land at Oregon Ridge as more than just property, but as healer, teacher and home for native plants and animals.

Please stay involved, or get involved, as we start the implementation phase of the Master Plan. This is how we can reciprocate the gifts that nature has given us.

Brand New in the Nature Center: Visitors can preview what to look for in the Park



Photo courtesy of Pat Clagett

A large screen TV has recently been installed in the Nature Center that displays a monthly guide of what can be seen in the Park. The program explores the various flora and fauna and other natural events in the Park during the changing seasons. Visitors can learn more about the things they see during their time in the Park. Exhibits and other programming will be added in the months ahead.

Funds for the project were provided by the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council.

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

Music in The Woods

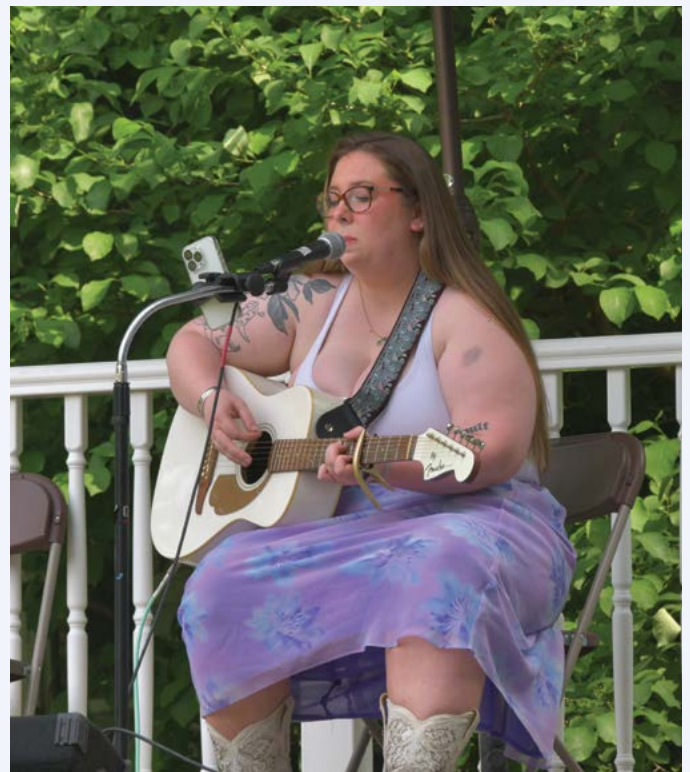
By Jessica Jeannetta, Director, Naturalist



Jack Farina Event Emcee

This year's Music in the Woods Festival (June 3-7) was a wonderful fun time for all. Although rain was predicted, the weather turned beautiful and families and friends alike set up their picnics in the meadow and by the pavilion. The Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council hosts this annual event of local musicians and bands. and from early afternoon into the evening, visitors enjoyed different types of music and activities for all ages.

From the outdoor stage musicians filled the air with their sweet sounds, while kids enjoyed a variety of games and crafts. The Oregon Ridge Dulcimers showed off all of their hard work from the spring workshop by performing in the Amphitheater. Our Raptors on the Ridge volunteers showed off our Birds of Prey animal ambassadors. New this year was our emcee Jack Farina. In between the band sets, Jack provided entertainment for kids and adults with magic, dancing, and more.



Charm City Cowgirl



Ribbon dancers

In addition to enjoying the live music, guests could share s'mores around the campfire, visit the tenant house, and explore the products from all of our artists, demonstrators, and vendors.

Thank you to all of our event volunteers who gave their time to help make the event a very fun time for all. And a special thank you to council board members Judy Breitenbach, Winny Tan & Karen Jackson who helped plan and organize the event.

Band Line Up:

Will Play for Fish
Slow Children at Play
Charm City Cowgirl
Artie & the Vipers
In the Clear
Proper Sporks
Ridge Runners



The Oregon Ridge Dulcimers

All photos by Karen Jackson

More images on page 11.

What Kind of Birder Are You?

By Adele Clagett

A birder is defined as “a person who observes or identifies wild birds in their habitats”. Birding is defined as “the identification and observation of wild birds in their natural habitat as a recreation”. Not typically defined is the birding style of the birder, and there are many. So here’s my take on birding styles:

Traditional Birder - This is what comes to mind when someone says bird watcher (or birder). They have a pair of binoculars (and maybe a scope), possibly a pocket-sized notepad and pencil to keep track of the species they see and other pertinent information. They may also be wearing a birding vest with pockets to hold their notepad, field guide, and perhaps a sandwich for lunch.

Backyard Birder - This is someone who puts out bird feeders in their yard. They may experiment with different types of feeders, trying to attract their desired species and discourage others (this is an ongoing experiment). The feeders are strategically placed near windows so one can get a good view of the visitors. A field guide and notepad may be close by to record the number/variety of species.

Stationary Birder - This is a birder who instead of taking a walk to look for birds, finds a spot and stays there waiting for the birds to come to them (and they usually do).

Patient Birder - This birder walks slowly, often stopping to look and listen for bird activity. If a particular spot is active (borrowing a birding friend’s description-“the place is bump’in), they may stay there for a long time, even hours. This birder wants to not only see the bird, but observe its behavior.

Camera Birder - This is someone who may or may not own a pair of binoculars. They view the bird through the camera lens. Their main objective is to get a “good photo” of the bird. There are particular birds that are a challenge to the camera birder - warblers fall into this category - they are typically feeding high up in the tree canopy. Kinglets are also difficult, as they rarely stay in one spot long enough to get a picture.

List Birder - All styles usually include keeping a list, but in this case I am referring to an impatient list birder. This is someone who seems to be on a mission. They walk quickly, see the bird, list the bird, maybe photograph the bird, and move on to the next.

Big Year Birder - This is the List Birder on steroids. They are trying to break the record for the highest number of species seen in North American (or other major region) in a calendar year. This of course requires a lot of planning and travel. There are mini versions of this - one who is trying to break their own record for a given area and period of time.

Life List Birder - This birder is also keeping a list, but the objective is to see as many new (to them) bird species as they can over the course of their life. It can also be a life list for a particular area - a county, state, region or perhaps the world.

Jerk Birder - I am trying to politely name this style, but I’m struggling, so jerk it is. This is someone who does not recognize any form of birding etiquette. In their quest to see and/or photograph a bird they may do any or all of the following - trespass on private property, disturb a nest, even jeopardize the safety of the bird, and be particularly rude to other birders.

Rare Bird Chaser - This person monitors rare bird sightings. Once a sighting has been reported they will go to the location in an attempt to see it. It may require traveling some distance. Occasionally a birder may get a rare bird in their own backyard. How lucky is that.

Journal Birder - This is a birder who keeps a detailed journal of observations. This is more than a list. It may include the date of when a particular species has first been seen in the area for the season. It may contain the number of times the Downy Woodpecker parents fed the nestlings over the course of an hour.

High Tech Birder - This birder uses technology in all aspects of birding, except “seeing the bird (in person) in the field”. They use mobile apps to reference field guides and input/review list data. They even have apps that will record bird sounds and display a list of nearby species or identify birds by processing information such as location, behavior and appearance. They use technology to network with other birders, checking to see what birds are seen where and when.

Pelagic Birder - This style involves boarding a boat to see birds that can only be seen far out in the ocean. This is not for everyone. There is a chance you may spend most of the trip leaning over the side of the boat hurling your breakfast rather than birding.

Tour Birder - This is a birder who goes birding with tour groups. It often involves traveling to far off lands, seeing birds one would never see close to home.

Group Birder - This person mostly birds with a group of other birders. It may be with birding buddies or with a bird club. It's an excellent way to learn from others.

Solo Birder - Being the opposite of the group birder, this birder prefers to bird alone. Of course a birder may, and usually does incorporate a combination of styles or segments of these

styles. I didn't realize there were so many until I began to list them, and yet still, you may have thought of others I have missed. What kind of birder am I? I consider myself a patient camera birder who adds to a life list, enjoys both group, solo and backyard birding, chases rare birds, and uses technology. I'm sorry, I have to go now, I just received a report of a rare bird located about an hour from here....



Oh no, another birder!

Photo by Adele Clagett

A Celebration of Our Success: Re-Establishing Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council's Annual Meeting



Tom Hall, Event Emcee

Thank you to everyone who was able to join us for the 2023 Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council's Annual Meeting.

On June 6, 2023, the Council Board welcomed almost 90 guests for a beautiful evening at the Lake Pavilion. Guests included members, donors, partners, volunteers, staff, and elected officials. This event was an important celebration of what is possible when the community unites in pursuit of a common goal.

After a brief reception, local reporter, Tom Hall from WYPR's "Midday," kicked off the evening's celebration by encouraging members to actively participate in advocating for successful implementation of the Oregon Ridge Master Plan.

Ralph Brown, M.D., President, Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council began the program by expressing his sincere gratitude to the many partners who have played a role in the Oregon Ridge Nature Center's recent and historical success.



Polly Roberts, M.D., Scholarship Chair presents Chloe Montville with scholarship award

Scholarship Committee Chair, Polly Roberts, distributed \$30,000 in scholarships that provide high school seniors with the opportunity to pursue higher education and careers in environmental science and conservation. The Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council created the scholarship program in 1995, as an investment in the next generation of environmental stewards.

Other highlights of the evening included Nature Center and Lodge staff appreciations, acknowledgement of individual and group volunteers, and recognition of the Nature Center's 40th Anniversary celebration. The event concluded with the official business meeting of the Council including Board elections, budget presentation and committee reports.



Carmen Christiana from County Executive Johnny Olszweski's office presents special volunteer recognition to Ann Canoles



Bench Dedication to S. James Campbell. Campbell's daughter Carol Campbell Haislip and her husband, with Board President, Ralph Brown, M.D. (The bench is the handiwork of Ralph Brown)



Winnie Tan, Vice President recognizes the special contributions of former staff member, Pam Ward



Sen. Shelly Hettelman presents a citation celebrating the Park's 40th Anniversary

The Council Board hopes to make this an annual tradition to engage members and provide updates on Council progress.

Together, we can continue to make a meaningful difference to – Protect, Restore, Enhance and Educate.



Photos on pages 8 and 9 courtesy of Karen Jackson and Michelle Boyle

–By Michelle Boyle

The Overstory: Book Review

By Cole Snyder



The Overstory is a 2018 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Richard Powers. The book reads as an ode to trees. There are nine main characters, each of whom has been impacted by trees in different ways. There is the daughter of

a Chinese immigrant, a paralyzed video game designer, a dendrologist with new theories, an unhappy married couple, and more. The book is broken up into four sections: the roots, the trunk, the crown, and the seeds. In the roots each of the stories is told individually, and in the trunk the stories begin weaving into and mirroring one another.

Each character has a different viewpoint about trees and nature, and it reads as various reflections of the author upon the beauty and mysticism of trees. Some characters I connected with deeply.

A benefit of a diverse group of characters is that the reader is bound to love and remember at least one of them. I ended up loving the story of the unhappy married couple, Ray and Dorothy Brinkman. I found their unconventional love story to be quite moving, and their reflections on nature I hope to keep with me in the years to come.

Richard Powers has an obvious love and appreciation for nature and trees. His writing is beautiful and reads as poetry, but at times he can overdo the wording and push the metaphors to

be almost a mockery of themselves. *The Overstory* is over five hundred pages long, and is an easy read (I wisely chose it as my beach read during a trip to Rehoboth).

I think over a hundred pages could have been removed. The highlights of the book were the author's ponderings and philosophical reflections and seeing people's perception of trees over the course of their lifetimes and through generations. Halfway through the book a truly wild event happens, which in my mind is nonsensical and unnecessary. I wish the book expressed more confidence in its characters rather than forcing the plot to propel them.

Trees are awesome and beautiful. There is still so much we do not understand about them, and their mystery is part of their charm. *The Overstory* helped me along this path of really appreciating them, and I want to continue my readings to further understand them (along with accepting how much I can never understand).

Beautiful yet flawed, I would recommend to anyone interested in trees or environmental activism to check out *The Overstory* from their local library (a way to save trees). Great summer reading on the beach, on the porch, in the backyard.

If you're interested in reading and discussing nature-related books, check online in the Fall for details about [The Nature Book Club](#) at Oregon Ridge.

For upcoming programs at Oregon Ridge please visit www.oregonridgenaturecenter.wildapricot.org.

Photo courtesy of Pat Clagett

More images of Music in The Woods, 2023 courtesy of Karen Jackson



Wall of pans



S'mores!



Ridge Runners



Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council
13555 Beaver Dam Road
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