

TRAILBLAZER

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

Winter 2024

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Contributors to this issue: Nancy Berger, Ralph Brown,
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Cover Photo by Karen Jackson

President's Column

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

If you have been as fortunate as I to have taken a hike at Oregon Ridge on a recent beautiful Fall day, you probably noticed the thousands of acorns on the ground. Our chestnut, white and red oaks have blessed us with what is called a “mast year”.

Every two to five years, the park's oaks sacrifice some of their own growth to put energy into the production of acorns. This increases the possibility that this abundance of food for our squirrels, birds, and deer will exceed even their voracious appetites, and some of the acorns will be able to become the next generation of trees in our forest. These oaks are trying to be the “good ancestors” that my last President's Column wanted us to be.

I am now entering my third year of presidency of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council. I recently looked back at my past columns as a way of gauging the council's progress. Just a few of our accomplishments have been the modernization of our website, the expansion of our newsletter into a quarterly, 16-page edition, a rethinking of our Speaker Series (our last presentation filled the auditorium), the establishment of a zero waste policy so that nearly all waste generated at Oregon Ridge is either recycled or composted, the addition of over 2 miles of sustainable hiking trails, and an increase in the amount of scholarship money we award to high school seniors heading for careers in the environmental sciences.

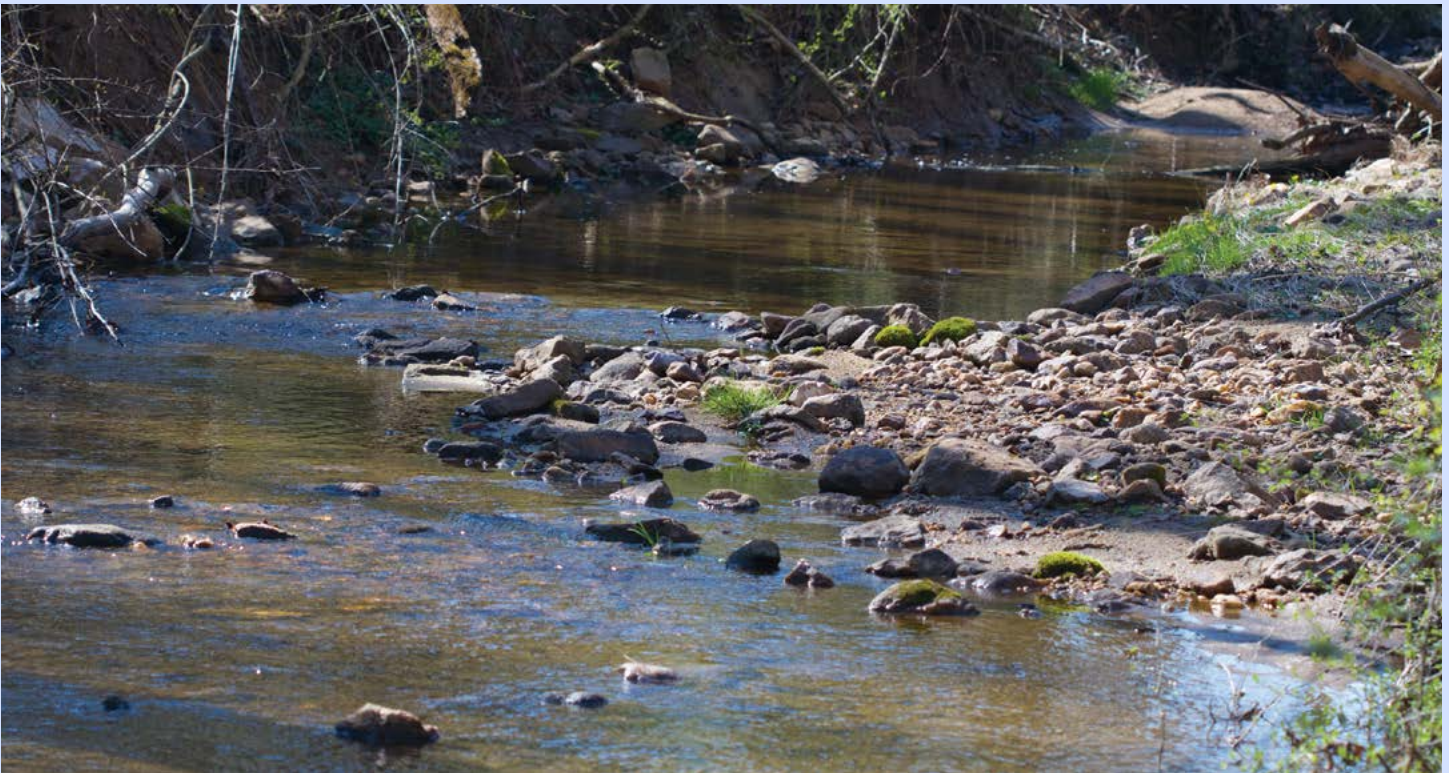
However, I believe our most vital role has been and continues to be guardians of the natural environment of Oregon Ridge. In the recent book, *The Immense World*, the author, Ed Yong, describes how different animals sense the world. A snake, a bird, and a human see, hear, feel, and taste their surroundings in totally unique ways. At the start of my presidency, it seemed like the nature council and the County's Department of Recreation and Parks were like two different animals.

The County saw this park as a place that would take care of itself. The County saw our trees as the perfect scaffolding for a commercial ropes and zip line course. Recently perceptions are starting to line up. We have a Master Plan that sees protecting and restoring the natural environments of the park as the highest priority going forward. We have new leadership in the Department of Recreation and Parks that is in agreement with these principles.

Like those oak trees that are willing to give of themselves so that the next generation has a better chance of prospering, my fellow council members and volunteers have given countless hours of effort to protect and preserve this park for future generations. Unless the County fulfills its obligation to responsibly manage the forests, the efforts of our council and the community of nature lovers will be in vain. Please continue to advocate for our shared vision of Oregon Ridge.

Stream Monitoring at Oregon Ridge

By ORNC Naturalist, Michael Eversmier



All photos for this article courtesy of Michael Eversmier

How healthy are the streams flowing through the park? And how will we know if they are degrading? Two questions that should have answers. So, in August of 2022, twenty-one volunteers attended a Save Our Streams program offered at Oregon Ridge by the Izaak Walton League of America.

The SOS training included water quality testing for salt and nitrate and collecting macroinvertebrate data to assess stream health. Macroinvertebrates are simply aquatic bugs that we can see with our naked eye like mayflies, stoneflies, and midges. Different types of aquatic bugs tolerate different stream conditions and levels of pollution so their presence or absence can indicate clean or polluted water.

By the Spring of 2023, thanks to the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council, the group had

the necessary monitoring equipment in hand and started monitoring both Oregon Branch at the northern end of the park and Baisman Run at the southern boundary. Both streams are part of the Gunpowder River watershed that feeds Loch Raven Reservoir which provides drinking water for Baltimore County and City. Additionally, Oregon Branch is used extensively for educational programs by the nature center and Baisman Run is a class III cold water stream with a native brook trout population. Three good reasons to maintain clean and healthy streams in the park. Both streams are being monitored by volunteers in the Spring and Fall with data being uploaded for public access to [CleanWaterHub.org](https://www.CleanWaterHub.org).

Article continues on page 7.

Explore Your World with the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council – Enrichment Fund

Are you an Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council (ORNC) staff member or volunteer leader with a passion for the great outdoors? Do you dream of embarking on life-changing experiences that deepen your connection to nature and enrich your time with Oregon Ridge?

The ORNC Council – Enrichment Fund is designed to ignite your sense of adventure and curiosity. We believe that by fostering creativity and offering opportunities for exploration, we will empower our dedicated staff and volunteers to make an even greater impact on the environment and the community we serve.

What Does the Fund Offer?

With the ORNC Council – Enrichment Fund, the possibilities are endless:

- Attend inspiring classes and conferences to enhance your knowledge.
- Engage in research and public service projects that contribute to our mission.
- Embark on extended hiking journeys, bird migration adventures, and more.
- Immerse yourself in native arts and music festivals.
- Explore nature center exhibitions on a road trip tour.

How Does It Work?

- Eligible applicants with a minimum of five years of service and a commitment of over 100 hours per year can apply annually.
- Successful applicants can receive funding of up to \$5,000 to cover travel, lodging, entrance fees, food, and other justified expenses.

- Share your newfound knowledge with the ORNC Council community by creating a presentation or knowledge-sharing session within three months of your return.

Join the Journey!

The ORNC Council – Enrichment Fund is your passport to adventure, knowledge, and personal growth. Whether you're a dedicated volunteer or a passionate staff member, this fund is your opportunity to explore the world while staying true to ORNC's mission.

Apply between January 1 and February 15 to unlock a world of possibilities and embark on experiences that will forever change your perspective. Join us in making a difference in our natural world and the communities we serve.

For more information about the ORNC Council – Enrichment Fund or to access the grant application, please visit our website or contact us at info@OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org with any questions.



Oregon Ridge Tenant House: Living History

By Alan Penczek, Tenant House Volunteer Docent



What is this?

Don't try to eat this cast-iron pear-shaped object.

Hint:

This is not a doorstop.

You can find the answer on page 7!

Please contact the Nature Center at 410-887-1815 during regular business hours — Tuesday thru Friday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. to inquire about when the docent-staffed Tenant House will be open. Outside of regular business hours inquire via email to info@OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org.

All photos for this article courtesy of Alan Penczek

Upcoming Special Events at Oregon Ridge

That's Wild!

Join us every Saturday and Sunday in January, 1 - 2 p.m. as our Naturalists present a new Wild Program featuring live animals, explorations, crafts and more!

Visit www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.WildApricot.org to see details or to register for any of these programs.

TRAILBLAZER STAFF

Council President: Ralph Brown
Council Vice President: Winny Tan
Nature Center Director: Jessica Jeannetta

Nature Center Administrative Assistant: Kathy Kadow
Graphic Designer: Eszter Spi

Upcoming Special Events at Oregon Ridge continued:

Maple Sugaring Weekends
Saturdays, February 17 & 24 and
Sundays, February 18 & 25;
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.



Join us at the Sugar Shack anytime between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. to learn the magic behind the fascinating process of making maple syrup! Take a guided hike (offered every hour on the hour) to the sugar bush to tap a tree for sap. Then stop by the Sugar Shack area to see other demonstrations, learn how the syrup is made and taste real maple syrup and sugar.

Pure Maple Candy, Syrup and Cotton Candy will be sold in the Nature Center Building.

In the event of inclement weather, we will post updates on our website and Facebook page.

Individuals and families can find details or RSVP online at the following link –

<https://oregonridgenaturecenter.wildapricot.org/event-5486945>

Groups of 10 to 20 must register for their hike time via our website.

www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org

We are not able to accommodate groups larger than 20 people.

All ages

FREE (donations appreciated)

Annual Pancake Breakfast
Fundraiser

Saturday, March 2 and Sunday March 3:
8 a.m. - 12 p.m.



Celebrate the end of the Sugar Season at the Oregon Ridge Lodge by attending our Annual Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser. Enjoy a stack of hotcakes drizzled with maple syrup and served with grilled sausage, orange juice, milk or coffee. There will be raffles and live music, along with flower, honey, maple syrup/candy and Nature Book Sales. Come out and support the Oregon Ridge Nature Center at our biggest fundraiser of the year!

Individuals and families can find details or RSVP online at the following link –

<https://oregonridgenaturecenter.wildapricot.org/event-5487225>

All ages

\$10 per adult and children 9+ ; \$5 for children ages 2 - 8; Free for children under the age of 2.

Stream Monitoring at Oregon Ridge continued:



Salt levels are monitored because road salting in the winter can wash off into streams, where it degrades the quality of our drinking water and hurts critters that cannot adapt to salty environments. Excess nitrate is monitored because it can lead to harmful algal blooms. Stream health based on macroinvertebrates is monitored and given a Multi-Metric index score from 0 to 12. (0 to 7 is unacceptable, 8 is gray zone, 9 to 12 is acceptable ecological conditions.)

Tracking a stream's scores seasonally and yearly provides long term data on its stability and health. In addition, it alerts if conditions upstream of the survey sites have changed. So far, the data is showing both streams in the acceptable range. You can view recent scores and learn more about Oregon Ridge's stream monitoring by visiting <https://www.cleanwaterhub.org/organization/171>

As our group of volunteers grows, we hope to monitor other smaller streams in the park and in the watershed. If you would like to volunteer to help with future monitoring, check the Nature Center's website in the spring for an SOS training program in 2024.



Oregon Ridge Tenant House: A Living History continued from page 8.



Answer: This is a Garden Gate Weight.

It might look like a doorstop except for the eyelet. It is a type of gate closer, common in the 1800s. When used with a chain or cord, the weight pulls the gate shut without the use of springs. This one weighs 5 lbs. Some were made in the shape of a cannonball but came in a variety of shapes and sizes. Such weights can still be found in use today.

2023 Oregon Ridge Honey Harvest Festival From A Bee's Perspective

By Nancy Berger



The 2023 American Honey Queen: Selena Rampolla

The 2023 Oregon Ridge Honey Harvest Festival took place at the Park October 7-8. This annual Festival is about all things honey, and educating the folks around this old mining town.

Selena Rampolla is this year's American Honey Queen. It is quite an honor to have Selena represent us. Isn't she bee-utiful! She knows how to waggle dance and speak English too. Selena just graduated from college and now she flies all over the United States visiting over 17 states to help people learn the importance of what we do. We're fortunate to have a report on the 2-day event straight from the Queen Bee herself.

It's raining. I had to fly 2 miles away from my hive to enjoy the Honey Harvest at the Oregon Ridge Nature Center. This festival is all about honey bees and educating the folks around this old mining town. We make more than just honey, "food for the gods". We increase crop production by 20%. That's food for everyone, people and animals.

Imagine us little girls just the size of your little fingernail holding down an Eighteen-Billion-Dollar business. Our life span is under two months so our Queen is very: busy laying eggs. She can live up to five years. God save the Queen.

The sun is coming out and the festival is in full swing. We have music by the Oregon Ridge Dulcimers musicians. Where else can you enjoy that! Then there's Will Play for Fish, Sirens on the Rocks, and In the Clear. All kinds of country sounds, very unique to this festival.



The Kidd's Nature Pavilion is full of activity learning all about us Bees. There are over one hundred human volunteers helping with this education. The Pheonix Wildlife Center is here too, bringing hawks that are riding on their arms. There are games in straw bales, press your own apple cider, tasting different kinds of honey, finding the best flowers so we can collect pollen, and a festival favorite – paint your own pumpkin. Selena and Bernie Kadow, a beekeeper at Oregon Ridge, demonstrated how to extract honey from a frame from one of our hives.



This festival was a grand success both financially and in attendance. People came from all around to buy honey for their year's supply. I deeply appreciate all the time that everyone gave of themselves for Oregon Ridge. We are indeed the main teaching facilitator in Baltimore County.

Bernie was able to hold the frame with his bare hands without being stung. McDaniel Honey Farm is here too. Steve and Angie are giving out samples of their blue-ribbon award honey from The Maryland State Fair. There are all kinds of flavors depending on what flowers we choose to find nectar and pollen. Bees by the Bay also has a large honey display. Their bees have different locations and bring even more taste choices to this festival.

Nancy Berger, the Festival Coordinator, would like to thank Jessica Jeannetta, the director of the Nature Center at Oregon Ridge, for overseeing every detail of this event. Kathy Kadow was second in charge working overtime with the many volunteers. We could not have this educational event and important fundraiser without all these volunteers. Judy Breitenbach took on the mammoth job of organizing these volunteers and Ann and Noot Canoles along with Gary Anderson kept track of the various cash registers.



2023 Scholarship Awards

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

This is the 29th consecutive year that the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council has awarded scholarships to deserving high school seniors from Baltimore City and County. To be eligible, an applicant must have a GPA of 3.0 or better, have demonstrated a commitment to the environment, and be planning a college major in environmental science or nature education. For this year a total of \$30,000 has been awarded, divided among 5 extremely deserving graduating seniors:

1) Chloe Montville (\$8000)

Chloe is a graduate of Baltimore County's Western School of Technology and Environmental Science, where she was a member of her school's Green Club. She will be attending St. Mary's College of Maryland where she will major in environmental science. Her career goal is to use her knowledge and skills in a research capacity to conserve and protect the Chesapeake Bay and its wetland ecosystems.

2) Danielle Weeks (\$7000)

Danielle is also a graduate of the Western School of Technology and Environmental Science. She has been a volunteer at Banneker Park and the Patapsco Heritage Greenway and has taught ecological concepts to students from other schools. Danielle will attend Drexel University with a major in environmental science and has a special interest in water sources, their sustainability, and their impact on surrounding communities.

3) Jacqueline Sibila (\$7000)

A Dulaney High School graduate, Jackie is a Youth Exhibit Guide at the National Aquarium in Baltimore and has written op-ed articles on environmental issues for her school newspaper. Additionally, she has created and maintains an Instagram account dedicated to education about marine ecosystems (with a focus on sharks). Jackie will major in marine biology at the University of Tampa and envisions an eventual career in environmental law.

4) Nicholas Ford (\$5000)

Nick is a graduate of Sparrows Point High School's environmental magnet program. He has been a member of his school's Green Clubs for a remarkable 7 years – throughout middle and high school! During that time he helped both schools to become green-school certified. Nick will attend Frostburg University's Wildlife and Fisheries Program. In the future, he envisions a career in the field of wildlife management and restoration, possibly becoming certified as a park ranger.

5) Holly Greenberg (\$4000)

Holly is a graduate of the Notre Dame Preparatory School. She is a proud 4th-year beekeeper and a member of the Carroll County Beekeepers Assn. Holly has volunteered at Cromwell Valley Park and as an ORNC Ridge Runner since 2020. She will be attending Trinity College, majoring in zoology. Her career goal is to become an entomologist in order to carry out our research aimed at improving the resilience of beneficial insects and mitigating the impact of insects carrying harmful diseases.

6) Additionally, Kayla Casey has been awarded \$2000 from the dedicated Getty Dutrow Mullan scholarship fund for her second year at Frostburg University, where she is majoring in parks and recreation. Her career goal is to become a park ranger.

1)



2)



3)



4)



5)



6)



ORNCC Speaker Series

By Martha Johnston

The ORNC Council Speaker Series presents informative and engaging talks on a wide variety of nature-related topics by some of the area's leading specialists in the environmental sciences, natural history and related fields. Register at www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.WildApricot.org.

Wildlife Rehabilitation: What we do, why we do it, and how you can help us succeed

Date: Tuesday, March 19, 2024; 7 pm – 8:30 pm

Speaker: Kathleen Woods, Founder and Director, Phoenix Wildlife Center, Inc.

Place: Oregon Ridge Nature Center Auditorium



Wildlife rehabilitation has been around for many years – first as "kitchen-table" operations, then turning into a true science-based veterinary field. Over the past few years, wildlife rehabbers have been challenged with many emerging diseases, along with oil spills, lead poisoning, rodenticide poisoning, and more due to human-wildlife conflicts. Fortunately, the field can now track many successes and can make people aware of ways in which rehabilitation organizations and the public can work together to help our

local wildlife. Hear about the trends and day-to-day operations, challenges and successes of Phoenix Wildlife Center, Inc., a busy, volunteer-based wildlife rehabilitation facility serving central Maryland and beyond, dedicated to the rehabilitation and return to the wild of native birds, mammals, and reptiles and to the education of the public on wildlife issues. Learn what you and your neighbors can do to help prevent conditions that lead to wildlife requiring rehabilitation care and what to do when you think such care is needed.



Kathleen Woods is the Founder and Director of Phoenix Wildlife Center, Inc. Her journey begins in the 1990s with the care and successful release of two baby robins that had fallen from their nest. Their names were Orville and Wilbur. That sparked an interest in wildlife. Meeting other like-minded individuals, she started a group and proceeded to get permits. Fast forward to today... following an internship at Patuxent Research Refuge raising endangered whooping crane chicks, volunteering at Tri-State Bird Rescue, many other experiences and much research, all leading to the formation of Phoenix Wildlife Center. Now in its 23rd year, the all-volunteer organization holds permits from the State of Maryland and the US Fish and Wildlife Service and treats 1,800 animals each year. Kathleen is the current president of the Maryland Wildlife Rehabilitators Association.

Building Forest Resiliency at Catoctin Mountain Park

Date: Sunday, April 14, 2024; 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm

Speaker: Lindsey Donaldson, Chief of Resource Management, Catoctin Mountain Park

Place: Oregon Ridge Nature Center Auditorium



Oregon Ridge, like many of our beloved eastern forests, is facing stressors that threaten its long-term health and viability. What makes a forest resilient or non-resilient? What are the signs of forest health or potential failure and what are the drivers? Most importantly, what can be done? Learn how Catoctin Mountain Park, an iconic 5,700-acre forest in Frederick County managed by the National Park Service since 1936, is working to build forest resiliency as part of a 39-park NPS initiative. Hear about the large-scale strategies and best practices Catoctin is employing that Oregon Ridge can learn from to address pressures such as invasive non-native plant species and deer overpopulation and the results of

these management efforts. Learn about Catoctin's new program to restore native species diversity in the park. Tree species expected to be resilient to a changing climate will be discussed. Catoctin's Chief Resource Manager Lindsey Donaldson will share results and lessons learned to date and discuss her role in steering this effort.

Lindsey Donaldson began her career with the National Park Service 25 years ago at the Antietam National Battlefield, serving as a member of the Youth Conservation Corps and then as a biological science technician. She was hired as a biologist at Catoctin Mountain Park in 2009 to begin the park's deer management program and now serves as the Chief of Resource Management. She has a bachelor's degree in environmental studies from Shepherd University and a master's degree in forest resource management and watershed stewardship from Penn State.



Images above of species one can find in a resilient forest.
Top: Dogwood (*Cornus florida*),
Bottom: Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)

Winter Programs at Oregon Ridge Nature Center

SERIES AND RECURRING PROGRAMS

Bookworm Story Time

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

Nature Buds

Thursdays; 10 - 11 a.m.

Upcoming Themes:

January 4 – Animals in Winter
January 11 – Owls
January 18 – Mice
January 25 – Tracks
February 1 – Groundhogs
February 8 – Rocks and Minerals
February 15 – Fossils
February 22 – Maple Sugaring
February 29 – Hiking
March 7 – Squirrels
March 14 – Sticks
March 21 – Signs of Spring
March 28 – Frogs

Oregon Ridge Dulcimers – Winter Session

Thursdays; 6:30 - 8 p.m.

January 11, 18, 25; February 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29

Oregon Ridge Dulcimers – Spring Session

Thursdays; 6:30 - 8 p.m.

March 28; April 4, 11, 18, 25 and May 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30

Pictures in the Park

Sundays, January 14, February 11 and March 10;
1 - 3 p.m.; Tuesday, April 9; 6 - 8 p.m.

Nurture with Nature

The third Wednesday of the Month; 11 - 11:30 a.m.

Upcoming Themes:

January 17 – Popcorn Senses
February 21 – Musical Sounds
March 20 – Makin' Waves

Winter Trail Guide Training Maple Sugaring and Rocks Rock

Tuesday, February 6 and Wednesday, February 7;
10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Spring Trail Guide Training Creek to Stream to Bay and Reptiles and Amphibians

Tuesday, March 19 and Wednesday, March 20; 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Homeschool Nature Days – Winter in the Woods

Fridays, January 5, 12, 19 and 26
Morning Session 10 - 11:30 a.m.
Afternoon Session 1 - 2:30 p.m.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

(In chronological order)

Nature Book Club – Heaven's Breath: A Natural History of the Wind

Monday, January 22; 7 - 8 p.m.

Night Owls

Friday, January 26; 6 - 8 p.m.

Twilight Maple Sugaring Stroll

Saturday, February 3; 4:30 - 6 p.m.

Wildlife in Winter

Sunday, February 4; 1 - 2:30 p.m.

Astronomy in the Park: Winter's Constellations

Friday, February 9; 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Evergreens at Oregon Ridge

Saturday, February 10; 1 - 3 p.m.

Superb Owl Sunday

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

Nature Book Club – A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds

Monday, March 4; 7 - 8 p.m.

Morning Bird Walk

Friday; March 8; 8 - 9:30 a.m.

Weather Watching

Saturday, March 9; 10 - 11:30 a.m.

The Secrets of Spotted Salamanders

Sunday, March 10; 10 - 11:30 a.m.

Make Your Own Leprechaun Garden

Saturday March 16; 1 - 3 p.m.

St. Patrick's Day Snakes

Sunday, March 17; 10 - 11 a.m. or 1 - 2 p.m.

Spring Night Hike

Saturday, March 22; 6 - 8 p.m.

Make Your Own Hiking Stick

Saturday, March 23; 1 - 3 p.m.

CSI: Critter Scene Investigation

Sunday, March 24; 1 - 3 p.m.

Natural Egg Dyeing

Saturday, March 30; 10 - 11 a.m. or 1 - 2 p.m.

All Programs Require Advance Registration unless otherwise noted.

Members may only register those included in their membership, additional friends and family must register on their own. Everyone in attendance must be registered and on the roster. We are not able to accommodate anyone who is not on the roster this includes siblings outside the posted age range of the program. The posted age range for programs is firm. Exceptions will not be made. Please note – there is a closing date for registration listed in the online program description. In most cases this date is 2 - 3 days prior to the program. If you choose not to make your payment online while registering, payment must be made within one week of registration and prior to the close of registration for the program. Unpaid spots will be yielded to the wait list. Checks should be made payable to: ORNCC and mailed to the Nature Center at 13555 Beaver Dam Road, Cockeysville, MD 21030. All payments are considered donations and are non-refundable unless Oregon Ridge Nature Center cancels the program. All programs and events are rain or shine unless a rain date is specified. Children under 16 years of age must be accompanied by an adult. Programs are for individuals and their immediate families and are not intended for groups. Groups may schedule programs via our website... www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org Navigate to the "Programs and Events" page.

Should you require special accommodations (American Sign Language interpreter, large print, etc.) please give as much notice as possible by calling the Nature Center at 410-887-1815. TTY users call via Maryland Relay 711.



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

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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:

www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org/Join-Donate-Volunteer/

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

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

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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:
www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.WildApricot.org/



Or scan the QR Code above

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



Or scan the QR Code above