

TRAILBLAZER



Supporting Oregon Ridge Nature Center since 1982

Fall 2025

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Cover Photo Credit: Karen Jackson

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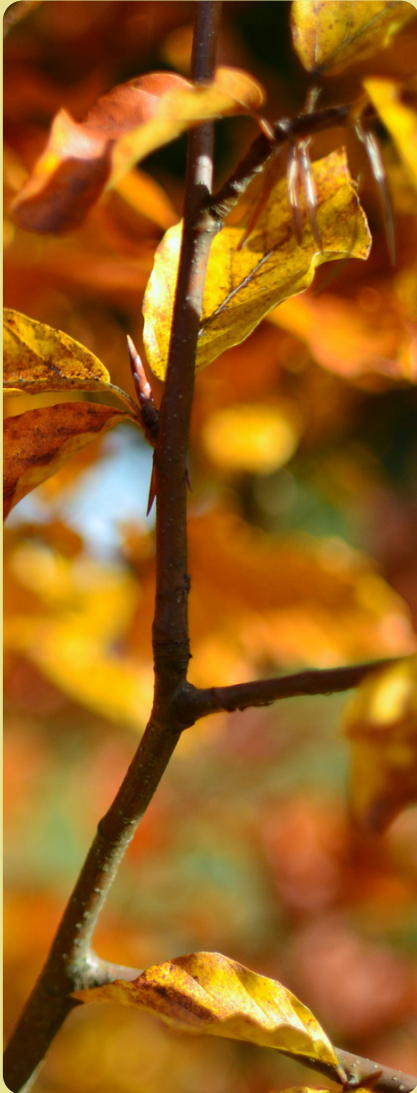
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FriendsofOregonRidge.org

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Winnie Wong Tan

Friends of Oregon Ridge
President



“

**One of the
top priorities
is safer trails.**

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It doesn't take much for me to fall back in love with Oregon Ridge. The trails are always a great place for me to walk off some extra treats I had and stress from the week. My dogs love the trails, too. If I am not spending my recreational time hiking and looking for cool wildflowers with friends and family, I am pulling invasive plants in the Woodland Garden and along the trails with other volunteers. It is so rewarding to do something for my park, my community and the environment. This passion is shared by so many who value this 1,100-acre sanctuary and the need to give back to a place that gives us joy and wonder any day of the year. The need to protect and improve the natural habitats for generations to enjoy has always been prominent in the Friends of Oregon Ridge's mission and that's why it is such a special place.

We have been the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council since 1982, establishing annual festivals like Honey Harvest and Maple Sugaring, promoting the nature center's programs with our website/social media/online registration platform, incorporating habitat/garden features, and providing many of the exhibits and outdoor projects around the park that educate people on wildlife and conservation practices. This past year, we worked with the Baltimore County Recreation and Parks (BCRP) to put in a fence to protect about 1.5 acre area off the red trail for the Woodland Restoration Garden. We are continuing to remove invasive non-native plant species. Eventually the plan is to restore this habitat by planting and maintaining native woodland plants. We met with Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects who were the contractor for the Oregon Ridge Park Trail Master Plan, and they gave us recommendations. We partnered with BCRP for a couple of the special events as well as coordinated our own independent events like the Pancake Breakfast. The Friends/Council Past Vice President, Ralph Brown also built custom animal enclosures that were needed to improve the living conditions of a couple of the nature center's animal ambassadors.

The Friends of Oregon Ridge met over the summer to come up with strategic goals for the next 5 years. We hope to continue our contributions by strengthening our organization, advancing key priorities set in the Oregon Ridge Master Plan, and deepening our advocacy for the park with the public through education and stewardship. Our board officers and committee chairs are striving to improve our governance structure, so that we can be better stewards of the money we raise and champion for the important causes and projects that benefit the park and its people. One of the top priorities is safer trails. As autumn sets in and the leaves are changing colors, look for the Friends as we work with ORNC staff to improve and enhance our favorite park. Better yet, join us on our work days and inquire about joining our committees!

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Jill Kane

Director, Oregon Ridge

Nature Center

Naturalist II, Department of
Recreation and Parks



Cryptid Conservation - Maryland's Folklore

As the leaves begin to turn and crisp autumn air settles over the Chesapeake, it's the perfect time to explore the rich folklore that makes Maryland so uniquely captivating. Though officially founded in 1788, Maryland's story stretches back thousands of years, long before European settlers arrived. Indigenous peoples thrived here, drawn to the abundant resources of the Chesapeake Bay and the diverse landscapes that earned our state the nickname "Little America." Did you know the streams at Oregon Ridge Park are part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed?

Among Maryland's many hidden gems are its cryptids: mysterious creatures whose existence remains unproven by science, much like Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster. And yes, we have our very own version of Nessie right here in the Bay!

Meet Chessie, the Chesapeake Bay's legendary sea monster. The first reported sighting of this long, serpentine creature dates back to 1936, when a military helicopter crew spotted something unusual in the Bush River. However, it wasn't until the 1980s that Chessie really made waves! That year alone, there were multiple sightings near the Bay Bridge, sparking curiosity and local lore that continues to this day!

True to Maryland's spirit, locals embraced the legend and gave it a purpose. Rather than fear the unknown, we turned Chessie into a symbol of environmental stewardship. Since the 1980s, this cryptid has become an unofficial mascot for clean water initiatives and pollution awareness, reminding us all to protect the natural beauty of our state.

So you could say - Chessie and the Friends of Oregon Ridge are both environmental stewards!

Next time you're crossing the Bay Bridge, take a glance over the edge, you never know what you might see swimming below. Whether it's folklore or fact, Chessie is a reminder of the magic, mystery, and meaning that make Maryland home to so many of us.

For more info:

Chesapeake Conservation Partnership. "Chessie the Chesapeake Bay Sea Monster." Chesapeake Conservation Partnership, 31 Oct. 2023, <https://www.chesapeakeconservation.org/lightning-update/chessie-the-chesapeake-bay-sea-monster>

Nature Center New Full-Time Staff



Meet Laura Beutler – Administrative Assistant

After a long career in marketing and finance, I left the corporate world to embrace a new chapter at Oregon Ridge Nature Center. Originally from New Jersey, I moved to Maryland after graduating from Loyola College and the University of Baltimore, and I've called Baltimore County home for 25 years.

Now I enjoy spending my days in our beautiful 1,100-acre park, helping visitors explore the trails, discover wildlife, and participate in nature programs. I especially love watching children connect with the outdoors and organizing events that bring the community together.

As an animal lover, I feel right at home here. Outside of work, I serve on the Brigance Brigade Foundation board and enjoy time with my two young adult daughters and our two dogs. I'm excited to welcome visitors and share my passion for nature.



Meet Audrey Azzam – Activity Coordinator

Hello! My name is Audrey Azzam, and I am one of the new activity coordinators at Oregon Ridge Nature Center. I started here at Oregon Ridge as an intern in 2019, then came back as a naturalist while I finished college! I graduated from the University of Maryland in 2024, and ran our summer camps the following summer.

Two of my favorite things to do in the park are looking for macroinvertebrates in the

stream and making crafts with Nature Buds! I'd love to say hi if you see me around Oregon Ridge!



Meet Izzy Berner – Activity Coordinator

Hello! My name is Izzy Berner and I am one of the new activity coordinators at Oregon Ridge Nature Center. After spending the past three years here as a part-time team member, I'm excited to take on this new role and bring fresh ideas to our programs. I am incredibly passionate about nature and the environment! I have a bachelor's degree in biology and a background in herpetology. I love creating hands-on, engaging activities and programs that help people connect with wildlife—especially the reptiles and amphibians that often get overlooked!

I'm all about making learning fun, interactive, and a little unexpected. Whether it's helping with events, leading animal encounters, or just sharing cool facts, I'm here to help create meaningful experiences for everyone.

Friends of Oregon Ridge

All programs require advanced registration unless otherwise noted.



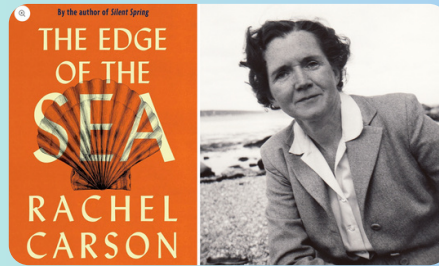
Me and My Pup on the Ridge The second Tuesday of the Month; 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.

Here's your chance to bring your pup on a Naturalist-led hike! Friendly, leashed pups (with a waste clean-up bag) and their owners are invited to join us for a hike on the trails at Oregon Ridge.



Senior Stroll The second and fourth Wednesday of the Month; 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.

Join us for a walk in the woods as we explore nature's seasonal highlights... route and difficulty level will be determined based on the needs of registered participants, with options for flat meadow, paved wooded, or natural surface wooded trails.



Natural Science Book Club – The Edge of the Sea

Monday, December 8; 7 - 8 p.m.

With all the hallmarks of Rachel Carson's luminous prose combined with a scientifically accurate exploration of the Atlantic seashore comes a hauntingly beautiful account of what one can find at the edge of the sea.



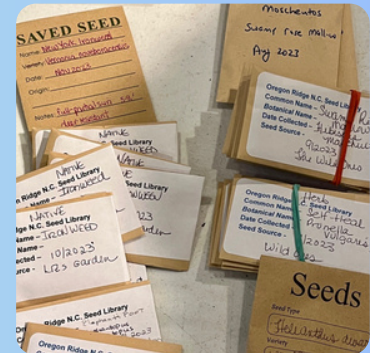
Oregon Ridge Dulcimers – Winter Session

Thursdays; 6:30 - 8 p.m.

December 4, 18; January 8, 15, 22, 29; February 5, 12, 19 and 26

An old-fashioned dulcimer meet-up and workshop. You only need an interest in this instrument to participate. Beginners welcome, no musical experience necessary. Loaner dulcimers are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Watch for more programs coming soon. Follow us on social media and check our monthly email blasts for updates. All **Friends of Oregon Ridge** programs can be found at: OregonRidgeNatureCenter/WildApricot.org



Annual Seed Swap Celebration Sunday, January 25; 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

This is a drop-in event, attend any time between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Join us for our Annual Seed Swap Celebration, sponsored by Friends of Oregon Ridge. Learn how to collect, prepare, store, plant and grow seeds from Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists.

Why Save and Share Seeds?

- Problems with the current supply of seeds
- Sustain biodiversity and biosecurity
- Preservation of heirloom varieties
- Promote native plant propagation
- Save money
- Share the love of gardening

We will have gardening magazines, seed catalogs and books to give away. Please bring seeds to share with others!

Calendar

Baltimore County Recreation and Parks

All programs require advanced registration unless otherwise noted.



Photo Credit: Michael Eversmier

Recurring Programs

Nature Buds

Thursdays, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

November 20 – Logs

December 4 – Squirrels

December 11 – Camouflage

December 18 – Songbirds

Foraging 101

The fourth Sunday of the month

1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

November 23 – berries, conifers, mushrooms

Astronomy in the Park - Orion's Belt

Friday, November 21; 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Geminid Meteor Shower

Saturday, December 13; 8-9:30 p.m.

Winter Constellations

Saturday, January 17; 7-8:30 p.m.

Public Programs

Squirrels!

Sunday, November 23 - 1:00 p.m.

Turkey Talks

Wednesday, November 26 - 1:00 p.m.

Black Friday Opt Outside Hike

Friday, November 28 - 10:00 a.m.

Create Your Own Terrarium

Saturday, November 29 - 1:00 p.m.

Oregon Ridge Mining & History Hike

Sunday, November 30 - 1:00 p.m.

Winter Tinctures & Teas

Saturday, December 6 - 1:00 p.m.



Bamboo Planters

Sunday, December 7 - 1:00 p.m.

Holiday Wreathmaking

Saturday, December 13 - 1:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 14 - 1:00 p.m.

Winter Solstice Celebration

Friday, December 19 - 5:30 p.m.

DIY Natural Garland

Saturday, December 20 - 12:00 p.m.

Trim a Tree for Wildlife

Sunday, December 21 - 1:00 p.m.

Snowflake Safari

Saturday, December 27 - 12:00 p.m.



Where Did the Animals Go

Tuesday, December 30 - 10:00 a.m.

New Year's Eve

Wednesday, December 31 - 11:00 a.m.

All BRCP sponsored programs can be found on Baltimore County's CivicRec Registration Site.

For more information, visit:

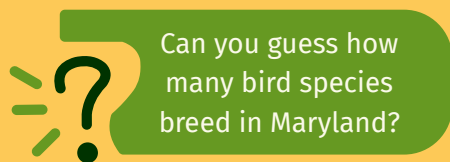
RecandParksBaltimoreCountyMD.

<http://www.baltcorec.info/ridge>

(In the left column, filter for Oregon Ridge Nature Center).

Speaker Series Presents: Breeding Bird Atlas Findings

By Martha Johnston, Speaker Series Chair



On October 22, the Friends of Oregon Ridge Speaker Series hosted Gabriel Foley, executive director of the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership, who shared preliminary results from the 3rd Maryland-DC Breeding Bird Atlas (MD-DC BBA3).

The MD-DC BBA3 was a community science project that documented the distribution of the region's breeding birds from 2020-2025, surveying 1,302 three-by-three mile blocks that covered Maryland and DC. More than 2,400 volunteers contributed 136,000 hours, collecting observations about bird breeding behavior, including singing, displaying, nest building and the presence of chicks. Gabriel directed the MD-DC BBA3 effort.

Because this is the region's third atlas – conducted at 20-year intervals - it provides an

unprecedented longitudinal look at breeding trends, highlighting species and habitats of concern and prompting further research.

Gabriel shared results for numerous species that illustrate changes in distribution, e.g., the Common Raven expanding its breeding range into populated areas and the Common Nighthawk dramatically reducing its nesting locations to a few on opposite sides of the state. Data analysis is ongoing and the completed Atlas will be published in 2027.

Answer:
209

2025 Report from the Bluebird Nest Box Trail

By Martha Johnston, Maryland Master Naturalist

In 2025, a total of **188 baby birds fledged** from the 50+ nest boxes located in the meadows and fields at Oregon Ridge.



Species	# of Fledglings	# of Successful Nests
Eastern Bluebirds	76	19
Tree Swallows	101	29
House Wrens	11	2
TOTAL	188	50

Oregon Ridge Tenant House: Living History

By Alan Penczek, Maryland Master Naturalist

19 Century Currency: Coins found during excavation of the original Tenant House site, all featuring Lady Liberty



This is a Liberty Head, Braided Hair Large Cent from 1848. Large cents were just that - larger even than the quarters of today. They were made entirely of copper. Because their size and the rising cost of copper made them expensive to produce, a smaller cent was introduced in 1857 made of copper and nickel. The coin is worn, but if you look closely you can just make out some of the letters of LIBERTY on her tiara.



This is a Liberty Seated Half Dime from 1848, Variety 2, with stars on the obverse (the obverse is the "front" of a coin). Half dimes were very small, partly because they were made mostly of silver. The name LIBERTY would have appeared on a shield at her side, but that has long since worn away, as have some of the letters on the reverse.



The "Indian Head" cent actually represents Liberty wearing an Indian headdress, not an actual Native American. The reverse features an oak wreath and shield. Originally this 1860 coin would have been referred to as a nickel. What we call nickels or five-cent pieces today were not introduced until 1866.



1. At the start of 1853, ore miners at Oregon Ridge earned how much per day?

- A. 25 cents
- B. 47 1/2 cents
- C. 87 1/2 cents
- D. 95 cents

2. How much did a pair of Levi jeans cost in 1853?

- A. 15 cents
- B. 22 cents
- C. 55 cents
- D. 78 cents



Can you guess the price of things?

You can find the answers on page 11!

Please contact the Oregon Ridge Nature Center at 410-887-1815 during regular business hours — Monday through 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@FriendsofOregonRidge.org

Scholarship Winner Kayla Casey

Molly Dunham Glassman

Scholarship Committee



Kayla Casey remembers the moment well. As an intern park ranger at Gunpowder Falls State Park this summer, she had helped organize a program to introduce a bunch of kids to fishing at Dundee Creek Marina. Suddenly one of the boys, who had never held a fishing rod before that morning, reeled in a fish.

“To see the excitement in his eyes... that’s what I like so much,” Kayla said. “I grew up obsessed with animals, fossils, everything in nature. I like bringing that wonder to people.”

Kayla, a graduate of the Sparrows Point High School’s environmental sciences magnet program, was awarded Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council (now Friends of Oregon Ridge) scholarship in 2022.

She’s on track to graduate this winter - a semester early - from Frostburg State University with a degree in Recreation and Parks Management, and her career goal is to work as a park ranger or nature educator, preferably in Maryland.

“She’s one of our star students,” said Dr. Natalia Buta, the coordinator of the Recreation and Parks Management program at Frostburg. “It’ll be hard not to have her here after she graduates. From the beginning, she was very invested in her education and wanted to take advantage of every opportunity she could.”

Kayla has done just that. This semester she’ll continue leading hikes, paddling trips, bird-watching expeditions and other adventure activities as part of her work with FSU CANOE – the acronym for Frostburg’s Center for Advancement of Natural and Outdoor Experiences. Dr. Buta started the program with grants that enable her to pay Kayla and two other students to lead the free activities and field trips designed to let all

FSU students explore and take advantage of the abundant natural resources, including several state parks, surrounding the Western Maryland campus.



“I love the hands-on activities, and planning fun things that I’ve enjoyed since I was little,” Kayla said. “We advertise to everyone on campus... then we ask for feedback and whatever people really like, we try to do more of those types of trips.” Dr. Buta said Kayla has played a major role in promoting the trips and activities on social media, creating flyers and keeping the FSU CANOE Instagram and Facebook pages updated with timely information about recreational opportunities like field trips.



“And it’s not just about the trips. She’ll post things like, ‘Do you know this native plant?’ and other educational information... She’s got so much initiative, and really works well with others.”

This fall, Dr. Buta has invited Kayla as the only student to attend the Outdoor Recreation Summit organized by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. “She’s a top student and we want her to meet recreation and parks professionals in the state, and see if they have any employment opportunities,” Dr. Buta said.

Kayla’s resume is already impressive. Frostburg is the only university in the state that offers a Recreation and Parks Management degree, with 70 undergraduates and 45 graduate students in the program this year, and she’s graduating ahead of schedule with strong grades. That’s in addition to her Frostburg

experiences as an Outdoor Adventures Guide, social media organizer and rock-climbing instructor, as well as three summers as an intern at Gunpowder Falls State Park. She credits her Friends of Oregon Ridge scholarship. “It helped me go to college without putting a burden on my family, and it opened doors for me,” said Kayla, who received \$5,000 for her freshman year. She was also awarded an additional \$2,000 for each of her four years as the recipient of the dedicated Getty Dutrow Mullen Scholarship.

She remains focused on her goal to become a park ranger or nature educator. “I like reaching people who haven’t had the opportunity to be out in nature like I have, maybe because nature is underappreciated or has been inaccessible for them. I like being able to help them see how much fun it is,” she said.



Scholarship Applications Coming Soon

It’s not too early for college-bound high school seniors in Baltimore City and Baltimore County to begin to think about applying for the Friends of Oregon Ridge Scholarship (formerly Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council Scholarship) for the 2026-2027 school year. The scholarship application will be available in December on our website. Requirements are a 3.0 grade-point average, a demonstrated commitment to the health of the environment and a plan to major in environmental studies or nature education.

In 2025 – the 31st year of the scholarships – the Friends awarded a total of \$44,000. Four seniors from Baltimore County and four seniors from Baltimore City received grants toward their freshman year expenses.

We are accepting donations to the Scholarship Fund.

For more information, email: Scholarship@FriendsofOregonRidge.org

Answers From Page 9:

1. C. In April of 1853, one group of miners went on strike to have their pay increased from 87 1/2 cents to 1 dollar per day.
2. B. The original Levi jeans were made of canvas. Starting in 1873, the jeans were made of denim and strengthened with rivets. The price increased to \$1.13 a pair.



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Renew Now! Prices will increase on January 1, 2026.

(Renewing now will add one year to your current renewal date.)

With the Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Reimagine Initiative changes we need your support more than ever!

Many branches make a strong organization. Many members make a strong Council. Use this membership form to renew or donate and invite a friend to join or donate as well. You can also join, renew or donate online at: OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org/join-donate-volunteer

Make checks payable to: **ORNC Council Inc.**

MEMBERSHIP



Name	Phone		
Address	City	State	Zip
Email			

☐ \$15 Individual	☐ \$30 Family (Parents & Children or Grandparents & Children)		
☐ \$75 Supporting	☐ \$250 Sustaining	☐ \$500 Lifetime	☐ Donation \$

I would like to receive communication from Friends of Oregon Ridge by: { ☐ Email only
☐ Paper copy via US Mail as well



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