

Trailblazer

Friends of Oregon Ridge

Supporting Oregon Ridge Nature Center since 1982

Spring 2026

In this issue:

- 2 – Director's Corner
- 3 – President's Column
- 5 – Living History
- 6 – Program Calendar
- 8 – Pancake Breakfast



Contributors to this issue: Jill Kane, Winny Tan, Judy Breitenbach,
Roscoe Possidente, Cathy Litofsky, and Alan Penczek

Friends of Oregon Ridge, 13555 Beaver Dam Road, Cockeysville, MD 21030
www.FriendsofOregonRidge.org Email: info@FriendsofOregonRidge.org

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Jill Kane

Director

Oregon Ridge Nature Center

Roads to Nature

Field trips have the power to ignite curiosity, spark new perspectives, and connect students to the world beyond the classroom. Yet one of the greatest barriers to these transformative experiences is often the cost of transportation. For many Baltimore County schools, particularly Title I schools, bus fees totaling hundreds of dollars make nature-based learning feel out of reach. At Oregon Ridge Nature Center, we saw an opportunity to change that!



The Friends of Oregon Ridge and Baltimore County Recreation and Parks partnered to create a meaningful solution. The Transportation Grant is designed with a clear purpose: to eliminate financial barriers and ensure all students can access high-quality outdoor educational experiences. Thanks to the dedication of committed volunteers, the grant fully funds transportation for schools visiting the Nature Center. Combined with the already free environmental education programs offered by Baltimore County Recreation and Parks, these field trips become entirely cost-free for participating schools.

The results have been both immediate and inspiring!

Students from across Baltimore County are now exploring Oregon Ridge with enthusiasm while learning about Birding, Native Americans, Maple Sugaring, Animals in their Habitats, Reptiles and Amphibians, and much more. For many, it is their first time experiencing Maryland's forests, wildlife, and ecology firsthand in a way that classroom instruction alone cannot replicate. Teachers, staff, and volunteers witness moments of discovery every day, and it is those sparks of curiosity that stay with students long after the buses pull away.

Through the combined efforts of the Friends of Oregon Ridge and Baltimore County Recreation and Parks, the Transportation Grant has become a powerful demonstration of what community partnership can achieve. The program continues to expand access, promote educational equity, and ensure that every child in Baltimore County has the opportunity to explore, learn, and connect with the natural world!

ON THE COVER: Green Frogs (*Lithobates clamitans*) are active between March and November. They will often sit outside the Nature Center entrance pond and watch the humans come and go. This smiling frog image was captured by by Friends of Oregon Ridge Board Member, Mike Gillispie.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Winnie Wong Tan

President

Friends of Oregon Ridge



Eastern Bluebird
(*Sialia sialis*)

Photo by Mike Gillispie

Welcoming Spring at Oregon Ridge

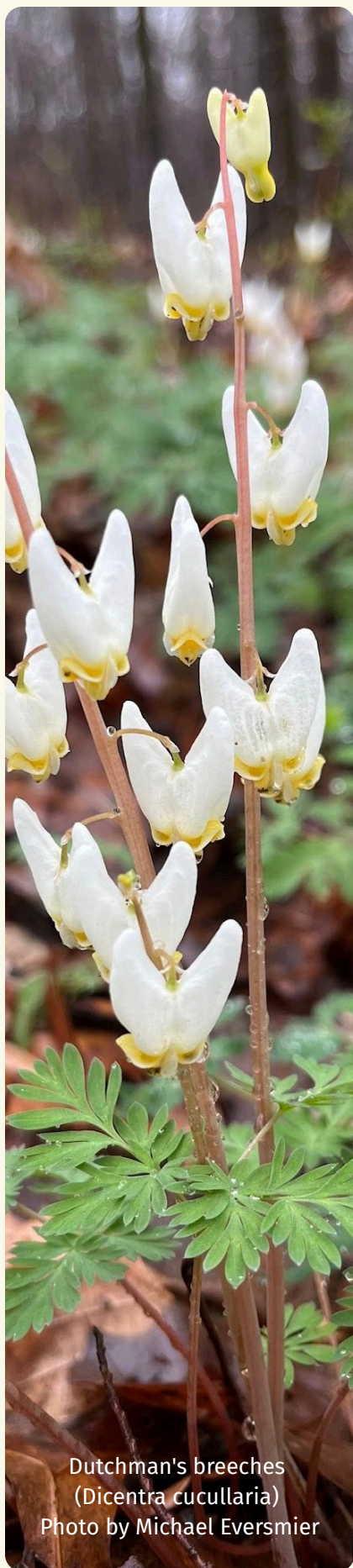
The coldest winter temperatures have passed, and the snow has melted, revealing signs of spring! As one season ends, another begins, renewing the cycles of life. I heard my first spring peepers the other day! Skunk cabbage is blooming near streams and wetlands. Ruby-throated hummingbirds are migrating north and are expected to arrive in Maryland by mid-April. Monarch butterflies have started their journey north. I'm making sure I have time to hike the trails to my favorite spots and find new ones to see ephemeral wildflowers blooming throughout spring. These seasonal activities bring renewed hope, and our work continues to improve our parks for wildlife and for people.

To this end, the Friends of Oregon Ridge committees have been busier than ever. The Exhibits committee has been working with Nature Center staff to complete a new Habitats exhibit and install a Chronolog post in the meadow. The indoor Habitats exhibit will feature panels of different habitats showcasing the wildlife that lives at Oregon Ridge. The Chronolog, a citizen-science program, will collect photos taken at the post by park visitors and catalog them, allowing us to record, observe and share changes in the meadow habitat over time... succession! We hope to have these projects completed this year.

The Stewardship committee continues to make progress in forming volunteer teams to care for the demonstration gardens and trails, as well as to assist with invasive species removal. The Woodland Restoration team has created a main trail in the 1+ acre habitat management area off the Red Trail, and volunteers installed a variety of native perennials and woody understory plants this past fall. We look forward to watching these plants flourish and provide food and shelter for wildlife in the months ahead.

Spring dates have been posted for our Woodland Restoration Stewardship Work Days. Visit <https://OregonRidgeNatureCenter.WildApricot.org> to register or contact us at info@FriendsofOregonRidge.org to learn more. To learn more about the April 18th Baltimore County Weed Warrior training program at Oregon Ridge, contact the Nature Center staff at: OregonRidgeNatureCenter@BaltimoreCountyMD.gov.

(Continued on page 4)



Dutchman's breeches
(*Dicentra cucullaria*)
Photo by Michael Eversmier

Our new Field Trip Transportation Grant program, which started this school year, has awarded approximately \$5,000 of our bus transportation funds to Baltimore County and Baltimore City Title I schools for ORNC field trips, with \$2,500 still available for qualifying schools this spring. Our Scholarship Committee is also busy reviewing the applications that were received. Winners will be announced at our June Volunteer Appreciation and Annual Meeting.

**"Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much."
Helen Keller**

As the rebranded Friends of Oregon Ridge continue to uphold their traditions, we are also exploring ways to support and advocate for the Nature Center and Park in line with our mission. We are currently revising our bylaws, recruiting diverse talent for the board, and working to formalize our internal processes. Over the past several months, we have collaborated with Maryland Nonprofits by attending their training workshops and meeting with a consultant. This year, we welcomed new board members and volunteers to our newsletter and membership committees. They are making a difference by sharing the workload and their knowledge.

Even as we redefine who we are and how we operate, we still uphold established traditions. We continue to participate in annual festivals. This past October, we organized craft activities and hosted the American Beekeeping Federation's 2025 Honey Princess at the Honey Harvest Festival. We also successfully hosted the Pancake Breakfast on February 28 and March 1 with an all-volunteer team. It was incredible to work with everyone to prepare for the Breakfast and to collaborate with many local businesses and individuals who donated services, goods, gift certificates, and box-affle prizes.

Time and resources are valuable, and we want to thank all the volunteers, especially **Jake's Grill** on Falls Road for their generous support of our event.

I love catching up with the familiar faces I've seen over decades in the park, but I also really enjoy meeting the new people who are joining us to protect, restore, enhance and educate now and in the future.

**"When you work together, there's a strength that no
obstacle can match." Lao Tzu**

Oregon Ridge Tenant House: Living History

19th Century Toys and Games

By Alan Penczek, Maryland Master Naturalist



Cup and Ball

The cup and ball toy goes back to ancient Greece and India. The object is to swing the ball so it lands in the cup. If you are right-handed and become skilled at doing it with your right hand, try doing it with your left hand. See how well you do next time you visit the Tenant House.



Jump Rope

Also known as a skipping rope, this one is made of hemp, with wooden handles. In this country, jumping rope arrived with Dutch settlers (think "Double Dutch") and was originally a boy's activity, but, by the 1800s, had become more popular with girls.



Playing Cards

While today the "pip cards," 2 thru 10, come with numbers on them, at one time, you had to count the pips! Pictured here are the King of Spades, the Queen of Diamonds, the 9 of Clubs, and the 5 of Hearts. The backs of cards, which today feature ornate designs or pictures, were kept blank. See the card on the far left.



Jacob's Ladder

According to legend, one of these was found in King Tut's tomb. Today, it is considered a "sensory" toy that creates an effective optical illusion. The name derives from the biblical passage describing a ladder that reaches from earth to heaven.



Dominoes

Dominoes derive from six-sided dice, with one or more pips on a side. There are many ways to play. Beyond their use as a game, dominoes may be placed to form chains that topple in a chain reaction when one on the end is pushed.

Trivia question:
What is the current world record for the longest domino chain to be "toppled"?
(see page 11 for the answer)

Program Calendar

Friends of Oregon Ridge

All programs require advanced registration unless otherwise noted.



Senior Stroll

April 8, 22; May 13, 27; and June 10, 24; 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.

Join us for a walk in the woods as we explore nature's seasonal highlights with a Naturalist.

Open to adults of all ages. Route and difficulty level will be adjusted to the ability level of the registered participants.

\$5 per person (FREE for Friends of Oregon Ridge members)



Me and My Pup on the Ridge
April 14; May 12; and June 9; 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.

[Adults, along with their pup]

\$5 per person (FREE for Friends of Oregon Ridge members)



Woodland Restoration Stewardship Work Days

Saturdays, April 25; May 23 and June 20; 10 a.m.- 12 p.m.

Please help us remove invasive plants and restore habitat spaces in the Woodland Restoration Garden. Tools will be available, but you are welcome to bring your favorite weeding tools along with work gloves. Meet in front of the Nature Center.

Native Plant Swap

Saturday, May 9; 10 a.m.-12p.m.

Split your native perennials and bring your extras to trade with others. We'll have identification resources and would love to talk about native plants with you as you trade with others.

Please have plants labeled and in pots, preferably potted a week or more prior to the event. **If you do not have plants to swap, please arrive at 11:30 or later** to choose from the plants that are left after the swapping participants have selected their plants.

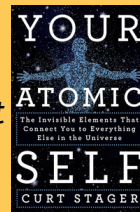
\$5 per person (FREE for Friends of Oregon Ridge members)

Friends of Oregon Ridge Natural Science Book Club

Your Atomic Self

Monday, April 13, 7 - 8 p.m.

The Invisible Elements that Connect You to Everything Else in the Universe
by Curt Stager



A Most Remarkable Creature

Monday, May 4, 7 - 8 p.m.

The Hidden Life and Epic Journey of the World's Smartest Birds of Prey
by Jonathan Meiburg



The Language of Butterflies

Monday, June 1; 7 - 8 p.m.

How Thieves, Hoarders, Scientists and Other Obsessives Unlocked the Secrets of the World's Favorite Insect by Wendy Williams



*The cost for each book club event is **\$5 per person (FREE for Friends of Oregon Ridge members)***

These programs are not an author meet-and-greet; it is a social gathering to discuss the book.

All Friends of Oregon Ridge programs require advance registration. Details of the programs and registration can be found at:
<https://OregonRidgeNatureCenter.WildApricot.org>

Program Calendar

Baltimore County Recreation and Parks

All programs require advanced registration unless otherwise noted.

Recurring Programs

Nature Buds

Thursdays, 10-11 a.m., Ages 2-5

April 9 - Frogs

April 16 - Eggs

April 23 - Hiking

May 7 - Soil

May 14 - Scavengers

May 21 - Forests

May 28 - Streams

June 4 - Meadows

June 11 - Ponds

June 18 - Archeology

June 25 - Pollinators



Homeschool Fridays

April 3 - April 24; Habitats

May 1 - May 22; Reptiles & Amphibians

Foraging 101

The fourth Sunday of the month; 1-3 p.m.

April 11 - Spring Ephemerals

May 16 - Flowers



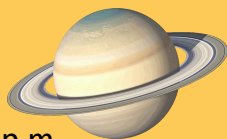
Archery Saturdays

April 18; May 16; and June 13; 10-11:30 a.m.

Astronomy in the Park

Once in a Blue Moon

Saturday, May 1; 7:45 - 9:15 p.m.



Public Programs

April 4 - Animal Fool's Day; 1 - 2 p.m.

April 5 - Natural Egg Dyeing; 10 a.m.- 12 p.m.

April 12 - Outdoor Watercolors; 1 - 3 p.m.

April 15 - Open Scout Program: Toad Abodes; 6:30-8 p.m.

April 17 - Nature's Love Songs Night Hike; 6:30-8:30 p.m.

April 18 - Nature Journaling; 1 - 3 p.m.

April 19 - Fossil Frenzy; 1 - 2 p.m.

April 24 - Birds on the Ridge; 8 - 10 a.m.

April 24 - Intro to City Nature Challenge; 6 - 7:30 p.m.

April 25 - Bio Blitz Hike; 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

April 26 - Spring Wildflower Hike; 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

May 2 - Wetland Scavenger Hunt; 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.

May 3 - Neotropical Songbirds of the Ridge; 10 - 11:30 a.m.

May 16 - Nature Journaling; 1 - 2:30p.m.

May 17 - Make Your Own Hiking Stick; 1 - 3p.m.

May 20 - Stream Exploration; 6:30 - 8 p.m.

May 22 - Paddle the Lake; 6 - 8 p.m.

May 23 - Cane Pole Fishing; 10 - 11:30 a.m.

May 23 - Wildflower Walk; 10 -11 a.m.

May 24 - World Turtle Day; 1 - 2 p.m.

May 29 - Start of Summer Campfire; 6 - 8 p.m.

May 30- Hummingbirds: Nature's Tiny Helicopters; 1-2 p.m.

May 31 - Explore Life in Our Ponds; 10 - 12 p.m.

June 7 - Pollinator Power; 1 - 2 p.m.

June 12 - Paddle the Lake; 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

June 14 - Make a Magic Wand!; 1 - 2:30 p.m.

June 20 - Summer Fairy Houses; 1 - 3 p.m.

June 21 - Cane Pole Fishing; 10 - 11:30 a.m.

June 26 - June Blooms; 6 - 7 p.m.

June 27 - Nature's Night Lights; 8 - 9:30 p.m.

June 28 - Nature Boats; 9:30 - 11 a.m.



All BCRP Sponsored Programs can be found on Baltimore County's CivicRec Registration Site!
<https://RecAndParks.BaltimoreCountyMD.gov/MD/Baltimore-Co-MD/Catalog>
(In the left column filter to Oregon Ridge Nature Center)

Please Pass the Maple Syrup!

Volunteering at the 2026 Friends of Oregon Ridge Pancake Breakfast

Judy Breitenbach, Maryland Master Naturalist, Friends of Oregon Ridge Volunteer Chairperson

Not long after the winter holidays end, the Friends of Oregon Ridge Board starts preparing for its annual fundraiser - The Pancake Breakfast. This is the culminating event of the Maple Sugaring festivities that occur at the Oregon Ridge Nature Center from February through early March.

While the success of harvesting the sap from the maple trees in the Park depends upon people learning the history and steps of the process, the success of the Breakfast comes from tapping into its patrons' desire for a taste of the process' sweet reward: maple syrup.

Started 38 years ago, the Breakfast brings together families, friends, volunteers, Friends of Oregon Ridge members, and Baltimore County community leaders in celebrating the successful harvest of sap from the sugar maple trees growing in the park. And the key to the success of this celebration is its volunteers. If Friends of Oregon Ridge volunteers did not show up to mix the batter, flip the pancakes, grill the sausage, clear the tables, and much more, the two-day event would probably slowly dwindle to a one-day event and eventually a non-event. What a loss that would be for the community!

It takes about 60 volunteers to run the breakfast both Saturday and Sunday, and their work starts with set-up the day before (about 12 needed) and continues until final clean-up on Sunday.

Here are some insights from volunteers about why they serve:



Michele Z. has been volunteering for three years working in the kitchen. She says, "I love the camaraderie in the scullery with the pancake batter crew, the sausage grillers, and myself. We all work together well and keep the kitchen clean and orderly. The breakfast is a great way to enjoy our supporters. They get fed, play the raffle, and hear cheerful music. A great boost during sometimes gloomy circumstances. I wish all fundraisers worked as well."

Jim P. has been volunteering for three years as well. This year he graciously moved from the merchandise sales to flower sales "and loved it." For him, it's not the specific task that is the appeal but the quality of his interactions and their purpose: "Everyone is very friendly, provides a great opportunity to fundraise for a great cause, and free breakfast!" He adds, "It coincides with my birthday weekend, so my wife and I have made it our annual birthday tradition."

[continued next page]

Stella W. has volunteered at the breakfast four times. She had been a pancake flipper but sold merchandise this year. She likes that “it is fun interacting with people, but most importantly, it was about paying it forward. My family has enjoyed the park for many years, and I wanted to give something back. I finally have time to volunteer and contribute. It was a great experience. I always learn new things while volunteering and enjoy helping people by providing information.

Simone C. is a Hereford High Junior. This is her first year volunteering at the breakfast. She is in the National Honor Society, which requires service hours. She said, “When I saw the opportunity to work in the kitchen, I was super open to that. The volunteer opportunity was very popular at school.” She is very familiar with Oregon Ridge from her childhood experiences and had even volunteered working in the gardens when a Girl Scout.

Tom F. is an eight-year veteran for the pancake breakfast, working the sausage grill most of this time. He says that volunteering is a “great way to help the Friends of Oregon Ridge, and it is enjoyable company and a free breakfast. What’s not to like? It’s a great way to give back to our community and help people appreciate nature, so they’ll protect it.”

Lynn F. has been volunteering since 2012. This year she covered the tea and coffee station and helped with clearing tables. Her appeal - “I love the event, such a chance to see all old friends; volunteers from way back.”

Betsy M. and Dayle D. met at a Master Naturalist class 15 years ago and have been friends and volunteers ever since. They like manning the merchandise sales table. Dayle says Betsy “is the master of the tablet and she is her assistant.” They like meeting visitors and representing Oregon Ridge.

These testimonies support the research that has been published by such agencies as the Mayo Clinic. Volunteering offers many physical and mental health benefits, provides a sense of purpose, teaches valuable skills, and nurtures new and existing relationships.
<https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/3-health-benefits-of-volunteering>.

The Friends of Oregon Ridge Board is grateful to all the volunteers that helped to make this year a very successful event! Special thanks go to the Oregon Ridge Dulcimers, Ranger Kirk and the Nature Center Band, Will Play for Fish, and Amy and the Hotcakes (The Mayo Family Band) for sharing their outstanding music and talents this year and for so many years.



Serving up Pancakes and Community

By Roscoe Possidente, Cathy Litofsky, and Winny Tan

On Feb 28 and March 1, the Friends of Oregon Ridge held its biggest fundraiser, the annual Pancake Breakfast. It has been a community tradition since 1986! The Breakfast is a fun way to wrap up the two consecutive weekends of tree-tapping demos and syrup making at the Nature Center and has been organized fully by volunteers these last 2 years.

There were months of work getting permits, prepping inventory, ordering supplies, and checking off the task list. Then the Friday morning prior to the Pancake Breakfast weekend, one crew of volunteers was up early unpacking a shed at the Oregon Ridge Nature Center side of the park and then hauling everything in pickups and cars to the Oregon Ridge Lodge for setup. Another was at the Lodge receiving the items from the shed, taking the flower and food deliveries, and organizing the setup. All the committee meetings, task lists, and volunteer efforts were paying off and keeping the annual Pancake Breakfast setup running like a well-oiled machine.

Maple syrup flowed off pancakes onto grilled sausage, making the Friends of Oregon Ridge Pancake Breakfast an event that park

lovers and pancake lovers look forward to every year. We saw families who have been attending for decades and new families who will hopefully make it their annual tradition.

Four bands generously volunteered their time and talent to entertain the crowd both Saturday and Sunday mornings. They have been entertaining the breakfast go-ers for years now and only get paid in all-you-can-eat pancakes. Thanks to the Oregon Ridge Dulcimers, Ranger Kirk and the Nature Center Band, Will Play for Fish, and Amy and the Hotcakes (The Mayo Family Band) for sharing their outstanding music and talents this year and for so many years.



We are very grateful to the community for its support. To Emcee Brian Nelson (who is also a Friends of Oregon Ridge's Director at Large) for calling out raffle winners each hour as fine prizes were handed out past a line of those in search of coffee and tea. To local businesses, Friends of Oregon Ridge members, and Girl Scout Troops for donating box

raffle items. And a special thank you goes to Jake's Grill on Falls Road, who was an important sponsor of the 2026 Friends of Oregon Ridge Pancake Breakfast. Without these generous donations and the diners who came out by the hundreds each day to support us, we would not be able to raise funds to do what we do to help with projects at Oregon Ridge.

Friends of Oregon Ridge Board members also welcomed local politicians and Baltimore County Department Recreation and Parks leadership staff to the Breakfast. They took the time to meet with volunteers and with constituents who were having pancakes and to see what we are doing for the community. We were able to share our concerns and discuss the need for continued support so we can fix, maintain, and preserve the beauty of the park that so many enjoy.

Again, a heartfelt thank-you to everyone who attended, volunteered, and supported our work to promote nature-based events, programs, and projects, and to champion stewardship of Oregon Ridge Nature Center and Park! Every stack served helps fuel the work we do for our community. We look forward to seeing you all next year at our 41st annual Pancake Breakfast.

Annual Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser



Answer to Trivia Question on page 5: 4,491,863 dominoes were toppled in a single chain reaction in 2009 in the Netherlands. 89 people worked on the chain, which took weeks to build.



Friends of
Oregon
Ridge
13555 Beaver Dam Road,
Cockeysville, MD 21030
info@OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org
OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org

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Join, Renew or Donate Now!

Many branches make a strong tree. Many friends make a strong organization. Help us achieve our mission to Protect, Restore, Enhance and Educate. Become a friend today! Use this membership form to join, renew or donate and invite your friends to join or donate as well.

You can join, renew or donate online at:

OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org/join-donate-volunteer/



Make checks payable to:

Friends of Oregon Ridge; 13555 Beaver Dam Road, Cockeysville, MD 21030

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Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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☐ \$25 Individual ☐ \$40 Family (Parents and children OR grandparents and grandchildren-not more than 2 generations)

☐ \$100 Supporting ☐ \$500 Sustaining ☐ \$1,000 Lifetime ☐ Donation \$ _____

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☐ Email only ☐ Paper copy via US Mail as well

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