

TRAILBLAZER

Friends of Oregon Ridge
Supporting Oregon Ridge Nature Center Since 1982

Autumn 2026

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GOING GREEN: *In an effort to be more eco-friendly, the Trailblazer will be going digital-only beginning with the Winter edition. For current and past editions, CHECK OUT <https://www.friendsoforegonridge.org/news-views/>*



Contributors to this issue: Jill Kane, Roscoe Possidente, Winny Tan, Laura Beutler, Alan Penczek, Michelle Boyle, and Don Callihan.

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Director's Corner

Jill Kane, Director, Oregon Ridge Nature Center

Fungi of Fall

As the leaves begin to drift to the forest floor and the summer heat finally gives way to cool autumn breezes, the woods start to reveal why fall is such a cherished season in Maryland. Added rainfall and layers of fallen leaves enrich the soil, creating the perfect conditions for some truly unusual things to appear – fungi. Whether mushroom, mold, or mildew, fungi play an essential role in an Eastern

deciduous forest by breaking down organic matter and helping the cycle of growth continue.

While many people imagine bright red mushrooms dotted with

white spots, our local ecosystem is home to fungi that are far stranger and delightfully spooky! One of these is Black Witches Butter, a gelatinous fungus that thrives after heavy rain and prefers fallen oak logs. As a type of jelly fungus, it can endure long dry spells due to its hydrophilic nature. This fungus gets its name from the small, warty globes across its surface that look as though something magical might be bubbling up from a witch's cauldron. Despite the word “butter” in its name, it is inedible and reportedly has an unpleasant taste. After your next rainy hike, keep an eye out for these small, shiny blobs!

Another unusual fungus you might find at Oregon Ridge is the Beefsteak mushroom. This flat, red mushroom earns its name from its resemblance to a slice of ripe beefsteak tomato. It grows on oak trees from late summer into late fall and enjoys cool, rainy

weather. Fascinatingly, this fungus releases a red liquid that is often mistaken for blood, leading to confusion with the Bleeding Tooth mushroom, which produces a similar fluid! The Beefsteak mushroom is edible and is sometimes used as a meat substitute in recipes.

Dead Man's Fingers is another fungus with a memorable appearance. As its fruiting bodies emerge from the ground, they look remarkably like the fingers of a mummy reaching up through the soil! Hikers are often startled until the fungus is properly identified. The grayish cones even have white tips that resemble fingernails. This species makes its home in decaying beech, maple, or elm wood and is not edible due to its tough, leathery texture.



Beefsteak mushroom
(photo: Jill Kane)



Black Witches Butter (Photo: Jill Kane)



Dead Man's Fingers
(Photo: botanygirl via iNaturalist)

As you wander through Oregon Ridge this fall, take a moment to look down and appreciate the remarkable life that rises from decay. There is a whole world of autumn magic waiting at your feet!

President's Column

Roscoe Possidente, President, Friends of Oregon Ridge

Our Oregon Ridge remains a place of beauty and tranquility where anyone can refresh themselves from the busiest day. It is a sanctuary from a hectic world. When you choose to enter it, listen to it, and watch it without distraction, it becomes the distraction. The park will play with all your senses and shift your mood. Bring your child, your parents, your pet into the park and watch their reaction as it invigorates them.

This restorative world the Park brings you into exists because we all continue to preserve and protect it. We all improve the park by acting in ways that allow this environment to thrive. By entering it responsibly, by leaving it as pristine as when we entered, and by keeping invasive plants from taking root.

Though this work continues, we have now come to a moment of change—specifically, a changing of the guard. The new fiscal year for the Friends of Oregon Ridge begins September 1, and a new Board is taking over. See our [About Us](#) page for a list of our Board Members.

We have many board and committee members stepping away this year. Quite a few have been active in roles for decades. Those who can have agreed to receive the board's requests for advice and to share knowledge drawn from their many years of experience and dedication to the council's mission.

To all the people stepping away, please know how grateful all of us are for the effort, work, and time from other responsibilities that you gave to make the Park, the events, and the Nature Center such a welcoming, wonderful

place for generations to come. The park's future is based on the foundation that you have provided.

And those contributions are considerable. Outgoing president Winny Tan's thank-you to the board mentioned too many updates to list. Work to repair trails and the development of a 5-year strategic plan were central to last year's efforts to sustain the park. The people doing this work were all volunteers and were grateful for the encouragement and support they were given. See our [About Us](#) page to view our plan and updated bylaws.

Now the task of protecting and preserving the Park has passed to a new group. We welcome our incoming board members and their commitment to the Park. They are shouldering a considerable load. And they

too need your encouragement and support. We hope that you will join us and actively take part in the projects necessary to sustain the integrity of Oregon Ridge Park. To join our community of amazing volunteers, see page 4 for open board positions, or respond to any of the requests for help with projects.

Or join us in our community's celebration of the Park. There are many events planned for this year: The Honey Harvest, Luminary event for winter solstice, Dulcimers, Maple Sugaring, Pancake Breakfast, a native plant swap celebrating Earth Day, Music in the Woods, compost sale, and our annual meeting. We have a full calendar.

Or visit and let this beneficial place continue to contribute to your well-being.



Help Shape the Future of Oregon Ridge Park

Michelle Boyle, Committee Chair, Scholarship and Awards



Do you love Oregon Ridge? Are you passionate about nature, community, and creating meaningful experiences for the next generation?

Friends of Oregon Ridge is looking for new volunteer leaders and committee members to help us build on the legacy of this special place.

As a nonprofit partner to Baltimore County Recreation and Parks, Friends of Oregon Ridge works to preserve, restore, and celebrate the natural beauty, history, and educational opportunities of Oregon Ridge. We are looking for people who bring new energy, fresh ideas, curiosity, and a willingness to explore new possibilities for the park and our community.

Why Get Involved?

Serving with Friends of Oregon Ridge is an opportunity to:

- Help protect and enhance one of Baltimore County's treasured natural spaces
- Share your talents and ideas with a welcoming, mission-driven community
- Support environmental education and inspire the next generation of environmental stewards
- Build connections with people who care deeply about Oregon Ridge
- Help shape what is possible for the future of the park

Leadership Opportunities

We are especially interested in volunteers who would like to take on a leadership role with one of our committees:

Programming - Help inspire curiosity and connection through meaningful nature-based programs and community offerings.

Governance - Help strengthen board practices, processes, and continuity so Friends of Oregon Ridge can remain a strong and effective organization.

Development - Help develop creative strategies to sustain and expand our work through grants, donor engagement, campaigns, and events.

Volunteers - Help grow and strengthen our volunteer community through recruitment, stewardship, appreciation events, and enrichment opportunities.



Other Ways to Get Involved

You don't have to join the Board to make a difference. We are also seeking committee members to support:

Environmental Stewardship - Care for trails, gardens, habitats, and other conservation efforts.

Events - Help create inspiring community programs, gatherings, and fundraisers.

Grants - Support research, writing, and stewardship of funding opportunities.

Membership - Welcome, connect with, and engage community members and supporters.

Social Media & Website - Help tell the Oregon Ridge story and expand our reach through engaging digital content.

What We Ask of Our Volunteer Leaders

Board and committee leaders are thoughtful stewards of the Friends of Oregon Ridge mission. Board members participate in monthly meetings, with a summer break, maintain active membership, meet Baltimore County volunteer requirements, and contribute to committee work aligned with our strategic goals.

Most importantly, we are looking for people who are willing to **show up, share ideas, work collaboratively, and help us imagine what comes next for Oregon Ridge.**

Come Meet the Board!

Interested in learning more before taking the next step? **Friends of Oregon Ridge will host a Meet the Board Hike and Happy Hour at BC Brewery this fall.** It will be a casual opportunity to explore Oregon Ridge, meet current board members, learn more about our work, and get to know others who share a love for the park.

Want to be invited? Send us your name at Nominating@friendsoforegonridge.org, and we'll be in touch with details.

Come bring your energy, ideas, and love of Oregon Ridge. We'd love to meet you!



A Senior Stroll hike to Tulip Tree Spring



Seventeen Oregon Ridge Dulcimer members played at Emory Grove Church on August 26th

Program Calendar

Friends of Oregon Ridge

All programs require advanced registration unless otherwise noted.

Check out our website or social media for more programs as they're added! Here are some that are ready for registration:

Senior Stroll (Adults)

Join us for a walk in the woods as we explore nature's seasonal highlights with a Naturalist. This program is open to adults of all ages.

Route and difficulty level will be adjusted to the ability level of the registered participants.

\$5 per person

per program date

(FREE for Friends of Oregon Ridge*)

Wednesday, September 9; 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday, September 23; 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.



Oregon Ridge Dulcimers (Adults)

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.

\$35 per person per session

(\$25 for Friends of Oregon Ridge Members*)

Price includes all 10-weeks in a session.



Fall Session: Thursdays; September 17, 24;

October 1, 8, 15, 22, 29; November 5, 12, and 19;
6:30 - 8 p.m.

Winter Session: Thursdays; 6:30 - 8 p.m.;

December 3, 10, 17; January 7, 14, 21, 28;

February 4, 11, 18, 25; and March 4

(Schedule allows for 2 snow days and may be adjusted)

Woodland Restoration Stewardship Work Day (Adults)

We need your help to remove invasive plants and restore habitat spaces in the Woodland

Restoration Garden off the Red Trail. We may branch out into other nearby areas, hoping to encourage the return of beneficial native plants. Other

maintenance projects

may occur. Be prepared to work outside. Tools will be available, but you are welcome to bring your favorite weeding tools along with work gloves. This is a volunteer opportunity; no fee is associated with the program. Donations are appreciated.



Saturday, September 19; 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Saturday, October 3; 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Saturday, November 7; 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

*Members may only register guests who are included in their membership.

All fees paid are considered donations and are not refundable unless Friends of Oregon Ridge cancels the program. If we need to cancel the program due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances, your payment will be credited to your account for use toward a future program.

Program Calendar

Baltimore County Recreation and Parks Sponsored Programs

All programs require advanced registration unless otherwise noted.



HONEY HARVEST FESTIVAL

October 4, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Winter Solstice Celebration & Luminary Hike

December 18, 5:30-8 p.m.

Recurring Programs

Nature Buds

Thursdays, 10-11am, Ages 2-5

October 1	Fall Leaves
October 8	Aquatic Insects
October 15	Bats
October 22	Spiders
October 29	Pumpkins
November 5	Opossums
November 12	Logs
November 19	Turkeys
December 3	Tracks
December 10	Camouflage
December 17	Squirrels
December 31	Stars & Planets



Homeschool Fridays

September:	Fruits & Seeds of the Forest
October:	Raptors
November:	Hibernation, Brumation, & Torpor

Pictures in the Park 1 p.m.- 3 p.m

Starts December 13

Nature Book Club (FREE) 7 p.m.-8 p.m

October 26

December 7



Mahjong on the Ridge (FREE) 2-4 pm

October 11
November 8
December 13
January 10
February 7



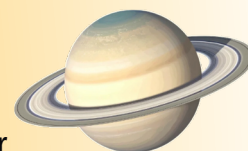
Archery Saturdays

October 10 (101)
October 17 (102)
Nov 7 (101)



Astronomy in the Park

November 6: Saturn & Its Rings
November 21: The Super Beaver Moon
December 13: The Geminid Meteor Shower
January 22: Wolf Moon Hike



General Programs

October 10	There's a Wasp for that	1-2:30 pm
October 11	Make Your Own Hiking Stick	10-12noon
October 16	S'moregon Ridge (FREE)	1-3 pm
October 18	Meet an Animal, Paint an Animal	1-3pm
October 24	Spooky Night Hike	6:30-8:30pm
October 25	Fall Watercolors	1-3pm
October 30	Tricks & Treats on the Ridge	5pm-9pm
November 1	Mid-Atlantic Shorebirds	1-2:30pm
November 13	Oh Deer Night Hike	6-8pm
November 14	Toad Abodes	1-2:30pm
November 15	Science of Skipping a Stone	10:30-12noon
November 21	Fire Making and Story Telling	4-6pm
November 22	Oregon Ridge Mining History Hike	1-2:30pm
November 28	Lashing a Shelter	1-3pm
November 29	Native American Heritage Hike	1-3pm
December 5	Holiday Wreathmaking	1-3pm
December 6	Holiday Wreathmaking	1-3pm
December 12	Natural Ornaments	1-2:30pm
December 19	Make Your Own Hiking Stick	1-3pm
December 20	Trim a Tree for Wildlife	1-2pm
December 26	Critter Story Time	1-3pm
December 27	Winter Bird Hike	1-2:30pm
December 31	Noon Year's Eve	11am-12:15pm

All BCRP sponsored programs can be found on Baltimore County's CivicRec Registration Site:
RecAndParks.BaltimoreCountyMD.gov/MD/baltimore-co-md/catalog (In the left column, filter for Oregon Ridge Nature Center)

Archaeology at Oregon Ridge: Items on Display

By Alan Penczek, Maryland Master Naturalist

Artifacts found during excavations at Oregon Ridge can be found in the Tenant House, as well as the Nature Center. Some artifacts may date back to the 1840s. Tools used for excavating are also on display.



An **Archaeology Lab** has been reconstructed in the back room of the Tenant House by Anthony Snyder, Naturalist at Oregon Ridge, and his wife, Lindsay Waugh. Beginning in the 1980s, students from Baltimore County schools have come on field trips to excavate sites within the park. Note the early Apple computer on the left, which was used to store data and catalog items.



Instruments used for excavating include tools for digging and cleaning, measuring devices, a compass, magnifying glasses, and a magnet for detecting metal artifacts in the ground.



A **theodolite** is a surveying tool that can measure angles and distances with great precision and is used in map making. The tube at the top is a small telescope. A "plumb bob" would have hung from a hook underneath. More recent theodolites come with digital displays.

This **display cabinet** in the Nature Center contains glass bottles, ceramics, a clothes iron, eyeglasses, and a pocket watch.



This **archaeology exhibit** in the hallway outside the animal room features maps, photos, record books, tools, artifacts, and even ceramic doll pieces.

Trivia question: What are the three types of metal that will attract a magnet?
(see page 9 for the answer)

Summer Highlights at Oregon Ridge

Jill Kane, Director, Oregon Ridge Nature Center

This summer at Oregon Ridge Nature Center was full of immersive outdoor experiences, hands-on learning, and creative programming that encouraged visitors of all ages to explore and appreciate the natural world!



We began the season with nine weeks of summer camp, offering campers opportunities to explore forests, streams, and meadows while building confidence and curiosity in nature. Each themed week invited children to investigate local

ecosystems, practice naturalist skills, participate in stewardship activities, and enjoy classic outdoor fun!

Our **Adult Summer Camp** continued that same spirit for grown-ups, giving participants a chance to learn natural history, sharpen outdoor skills, and reconnect with nature in a relaxed, camp atmosphere!

In July, we launched our first-ever **Moth Fest**



Zebra Conchylodes
Photo by Clare Craig

in celebration of National Moth Week. This new nighttime program introduced participants to the fascinating world of moths

through guided observations, specialized blacklight hikes, and discussions about moths and their ecological importance.

The evening was such a success, with over 150 participants, that we are excited to bring Moth Fest back next year!



Flat-backed millipede
Photo by Jill Kane

Families also enjoyed our innovative **Adult Date Night / Kid's Campfire Program**. Designed to give parents a chance to head out for a date, this program let them drop off their children for an evening of supervised campfire fun. While kids enjoyed stories, games, campfire traditions, and outdoor exploration, parents were free to enjoy a night out, making it a unique and well-loved addition to our summer offerings!

We wrapped up the season with **Astronomy in the Park: Perseids Meteor Shower**, a nighttime program focused on sky science and seasonal astronomy. Participants got to enjoy Oregon Ridge after dark and learned night sky viewing techniques while enjoying one of the most impressive meteor showers of the year.

Together, these programs created a vibrant and enriching summer, full of discovery, learning, and community connection, continuing our mission to inspire curiosity and deepen appreciation for nature!

Answer to the archaeology trivia question:

The three magnetic metals are Iron, Nickel, and Cobalt. Alloys of these metals may also be magnetic, depending on their composition.

A Sweet Fall Tradition... Honey Harvest at Oregon Ridge

Laura Beutler, Admin Aide at Oregon Ridge Nature Center

There's no better way to welcome fall at Oregon Ridge than with a day celebrating one of nature's sweetest gifts! The annual Honey Harvest Festival returns to **Oregon Ridge Nature Center on Sunday, October 4, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.**, bringing together beekeepers, community organizations, local vendors, musicians, and families for an afternoon of fun and discovery.

Honey and beekeeping take center stage as the Central Maryland Beekeepers demonstrate the honey extraction process in the Nature Center auditorium. Visitors can learn more about the fascinating world of bees and meet local beekeepers selling their own honey. Banneker Park will also be joining us to explore the history of honey and beekeeping in our area.

There will be plenty happening beyond the bees! Families can enjoy craft vendors, food trucks, and animal encounters throughout the day, including hawks, turtles, and snakes. The baby goats from the Agricultural Center will also be back for a special visit, giving children the chance to get up close and say hello.



Our youngest visitors can step into the “1,000 Acre Woods” tent for story time, games and crafts. Music will fill the afternoon, with Ray Steelman leading a sing-along near the pavilion and the Oregon Ridge Dulcimers performing twice during the festival. The Friends of Oregon Ridge will have a large tent featuring crafts and items for sale, and the historic Tenant House will be open for tours.

Honey Harvest is more than a festival - it's a wonderful example of what can happen when our local community comes together to celebrate

nature, history, and the place we all love. Whether you come for the honey, the animals, the music, the crafts or simply a beautiful fall afternoon at Oregon Ridge, there will be something to make your visit memorable.

Honey Harvest Festival | Sunday, October 4 | 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

Admission is \$5 per person. Register in advance through CivicRec for quicker entry. General parking is at the Lodge, with a shuttle running to the Nature Center lot.

Please note that no pets are permitted during the festival due to the large number of visitors and animals on site.

For questions, please email:

OregonRidgeNatureCenter@baltimorecountymd.gov.



Be on the Lookout for this Invasive Plant: **Wavy Basketgrass**

By Don Callihan, PhD, Committee Chair, Stewardship

A dangerous nonnative invasive (NNI) grass is threatening the forest at Oregon Ridge Park: wavyleaf basketgrass (WL).



Figure 1. Wavyleaf basketgrass cluster

According to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources website and the Penn State Extension website, this plant, native to Southeast

Asia, Australia, and southern Africa, was first found growing in Patapsco Valley State Park in 1996 but, since then, has spread widely through Maryland and Virginia and is now encroaching into southern Pennsylvania.

In 2016, I took Howard County's Weed Warrior training presented by Kerry Kyde who, as an Invasive Plant Ecologist for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Program, was leading a program called "Statewide Eyes." I was introduced to wavyleaf basketgrass when Kerry taught us about **Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR)**, the term for a coordinated set of actions to find and eradicate new and emerging invasive species in a specific location before



Figure 3. Wavyleaf basketgrass. Bloom stalk, flowers with stigmas exerted.

they can spread and cause harm.

We need to practice EDRR at Oregon Ridge Park where small patches of WL have already been found and carefully removed. As stewards of the Park, we must learn to identify this plant. By doing so, we can help protect the forest from this highly invasive NNI grass. The following pages from the websites of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Penn State Extension offer descriptions and photos that should help you to recognize wavyleaf basketgrass:

https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants_wildlife/Invasives/inv_WavyleafBasketgrass.aspx

<https://extension.psu.edu/wavyleaf-basketgrass>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-dAbT3mfv4&fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR0yssfXk3qnm8I7jyCUM85F4qGCumliH0gGvWXrsxvn4l4rc9VA3qxbU_aem_RQ0ZvXjILKxl4sFMJkzyuQ

If you notice this plant during your visit to the park, please note the location and notify park staff, so they can follow up and remove it to prevent further spread.

The most important everyday measures that each of us can take to prevent the spread of WL are to stay on trails, keep dogs leashed, and remove any seeds (awns) from our clothing and shoes before leaving the park.



Figure 6. Wavyleaf basketgrass. Woodland infestation.



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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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☐ \$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

Stay in Touch!



Register for Programs



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