

Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council
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TRAILBLAZER

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2009



Supporting Oregon Ridge Park
and Nature Center for 27 years

2008-2009 WAS AN EVENTFUL YEAR

By ORNCC President Jack Kerns



(l to r, Jamming at Music in the Woods, Planting Trees, Ribbon Cutting for Iron Ore Exhibit)

Looking back over the last year, there have been significant and substantial changes and improvements at Oregon Ridge Park and Nature Center due to the efforts of many people:

New Staff

With the transfer of the former Director, Kirk Dreier, to Marshy Point Nature Center, Courtney Peed has been appointed as the new Director of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center. Shannon Davis has been selected as her assistant. Courtney has been with the Nature Center for the last nine years, and with this extensive background of experience, she brings many new ideas for Oregon Ridge. In addition, we welcome Beahta Davis as our new Baltimore County Nature and Recreation Resources Area Coordinator. Best wishes to all in their new positions.

efforts at Oregon Ridge. He and his committee continue to be busy developing exciting new displays. Congratulations and appreciation to them all.

To commemorate the significant role of mining in the early history of Oregon Ridge Park, an educational display was unveiled at the location of the iron ore-smelting furnace. This recognition of the Park's cultural and natural history is a product of the Council's Display Committee and was supported by a generous donation from REI. We thank REI for their support.

Furthermore, REI has provided continuing financial assistance to our educational and conservation programs. At present, REI has provided funding for signage for a deciduous forest and Gypsy Moth interpretation to be part of a gazebo display overlooking the devastated area near the Loggers Red Trail. Look for this display when you are hiking the trails this autumn to enjoy the fall foliage.

(Continued on page 10)

Facility Upgrades

Joe Warfield, our exhibit committee chair was awarded a Baltimore County "Shining Star Award" for his volunteer



LOOK WHAT'S BUZZING AT THE
HONEY HARVEST FESTIVAL!



OCT. 3 AND 4
10 AM - 4 PM

FREE ADMISSION!



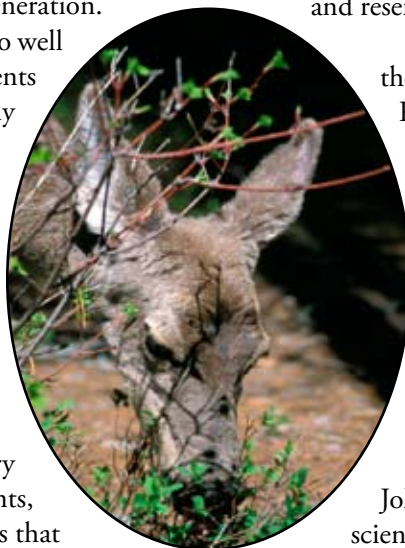
ORNC COUNCIL SPEAKER SERIES

WHAT'S EATING THE UNDERSTORY? The Little Deer Dilemma By Clark Howells

Monday, September 21, 7:30 PM

Deer are so graceful and beautiful to observe, and are especially dear to all of us of the Bambi generation. Therein lies the dilemma: Deer have adapted so well to development and other human encroachments to their natural habitat, that they are voraciously eating not only the daylilies and hostas in your yard, but also a damaging amount of forest understory that is crucial to protect reservoir watersheds from sediment and pollutants.

The State of Maryland DNR issued a report in 2003 titled *A Comprehensive Forest Conservation Plan for Long-term Watershed Protection on the City of Baltimore's Reservoirs*, which lists deer browse as the primary reason for the lack of multi-layered, understory vegetation, including seedlings, herbaceous plants, shrubs and understory trees. This report states that it is the lack of understory "...which is reducing the ability of the forests to intercept rainfall and protect soil from



erosion and to prevent sediment from moving into streams and reservoirs."

For sixteen years Clark Howells has been the Assistant Manager of the Reservoir Natural Resources Section for the City of Baltimore and is responsible for the environmental programs for the municipal drinking water reservoirs. He has important information to convey about the negative impact deer browse has on the forest understory and its effect on forest health. His talk will also focus on the management techniques used by the City to reduce the deer population on our reservoir watersheds.

Mr. Howells holds a Masters degree from Johns Hopkins University in environmental science and policy, and is currently working to earn another Masters in public administration in 2010.

COMBATING NON-NATIVE INVASIVE PLANTS

By Carole F. Bergmann

Monday, October 19, 7:30 PM

Carole F. Bergmann serves as Forest Ecologist and Field Botanist for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Ms. Bergmann will describe non-native invasive plants, giving some of their characteristics and discussing where they come from and why, and just *why* they are a persistent ecological problem. She will identify some of the worst invasives in the MD/DC/VA area, such as multiflora rose (center photo), and explain what is being done region-wide to combat the problem. She will also explain what you can do to help in battling these invaders and talk about the value and importance of maintaining our native plant communities.



based *WEED WARRIOR* program in 1999. Over 700 citizens have become certified Weed Warriors, logging in well over 20,000 volunteer hours removing non-native invasive species from M-NCPPC park properties.

Ms. Bergmann is also an Instructor for the USDA Graduate School, teaching classes on Ferns and Fern Allies, Non-native Invasive Species, and Spring Wildflowers. She is a lecturer/field excursion leader for numerous groups including the Audubon Society, The Maryland and Virginia Native Plant Societies, and the Washington Botanical Society.

Ms. Bergman is a Founding Board Member of the Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council and the Maryland Invasive Species Council, a Board Member of the Montgomery County Forestry Board, and past President of the Maryland Native Plant Society.

As Forest Manager for the Commission's 34,000 acres of parkland in Montgomery County, Maryland, Ms. Bergman founded the citizen volunteer

MUSIC IN THE WOODS 2009: A Stomping Good Time



The ominous gray skies that welcomed the dawn on May 16th seemed to confirm the gloomy, rainy forecast gleefully predicted by all of the professional weather watchers. Fortunately, they were wrong and Music in the Woods started promptly at 10 AM. The day was filled with dynamic melodies and the stomping sounds of cloggers. Lively tunes played by musicians from around here and elsewhere set everyone's toes to tapping almost involuntarily. Local artist and flautist Bryan Burns donated

a beautiful flute for our raffle (photo above, won by 8-year-old Rebecca Allen who borrowed the dollar for the winning ticket from her brother) and also sold

his creations. And the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council opened their hotdog concession stand with a smile.

A big "Thank You!" goes to all who volunteered their time and shared their talents and love of music and dance. Here are the volunteers who assisted in festival preparations, performed, and exhibited their crafts this year:

- Andy Anders
- Griff Atkinson
- Laurie Ballentine
- Bryan Burns
- Anne and Noot Canoles
- Jeanne Cole
- Todd Crowley
- Kirk and Winny Dreier
- Bryan Gall
- Mary Genovese
- Frank Wolfchild Greene
- Christopher James
- Anne and Jack Kerns
- Charles Loubert
- John and Erin McCleary
- Bob and Gayl Meier
- Scott Morrison
- Chris O'Brien
- Courtney Peed
- Ben Poscover
- Dave Powers
- Joe Salvaggio
- Robert Willasch
- Jennifer Witt

- Bauld Mountain
- Beaumont Pottery
- Kollar Nursery
- Carroll County Cloggers (center photo above)
- Kristin, Rob and Susan Meyer (Painted Trillium)
- Carol and Dave Erhardt, Kim Shapiro (Back Porch Players)
- Sandy Hofferth, Howard Zane, Heidi Most, Fred Cherney (New Southern Cow Tippers)
- Tom Reedy, Jim Bienemann, Alice Rodman, Lisa Roberts (Loony Tunes)

The Oregon Ridge Staff



Scott Morrison (left) teaches how to play the Bodhrani in a "Meet the Instrument" session



The Back Porch Players set a lively pace

(2008-09 - An Eventful Year, continued)

Appreciation is extended to Eagle Scout candidate Keith Porter, who conducted a fund-raising spaghetti dinner, used the proceeds to purchase building materials, and then constructed a new, enlarged enclosure for our chickens and turkeys. Please be sure to visit it on your walk to the Nature Center immediately behind the maple syrup evaporator shed. A job well done, Keith!

Also adjacent to the Nature Center and near the bridge to the Loggers Red Trail, there is the new Possum house (center photo) where you may see Matilda, the female opossum, if she decides to come out during the daylight hours. A new enlarged home was also developed for our black snake to allow more movement and eye-level viewing for children.

Grounds Improvements

Appreciation goes to the volunteers who planted 100 Chestnut saplings and to the American Chestnut Society for providing the seedlings. This is part of an experiment to find a strain or inherited trait of this species that would be resistant to the chestnut blight. Over a century ago, the Chestnut, standing over 125 feet high, constituted 25% of all of the hardwoods in the Appalachian Mountains and was an important source of food for wildlife.

In May, the Maryland Department of Agriculture sprayed a microbial insecticide, BT (Bacillus thuringiensis), on approximately 300 acres of the Oregon Ridge forest to control a heavy infestation of Gypsy Moth egg masses. This control measure has prevented these insects from maturing and saved approximately one-third of the Park's mature forest. Thank you to all who wrote letters or made phone calls to achieve this result. Your reward can be found by walking the trails of Oregon Ridge and enjoying the lush, fully

developed green leaves of our mature forest and experiencing the cool shade of these huge giants on a hot afternoon.

Thanks to the Oregon Ridge volunteers who planted young saplings donated by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Approximately \$5,000 worth of various types of trees, seedlings and wildflowers were planted with the assistance of DNR staff to provide a riparian buffer near Shawan Road.



Many thanks are extended to the Maryland Master Gardeners for their efforts in replanting the herb garden in the meadow. This garden will feature native species and flowers. Watch this garden grow as their five-year plan blooms.

Programs

The Honey Harvest, Pancake Breakfast, and Music in the Woods events were all very successful thanks to the support of many volunteers and the community. The funds raised will allow us to continue to train trail guides, provide and maintain improved displays, and support the newsletter, speaker series and scholarships. Thank you to the many volunteers who donated their time and skills to these efforts and to Jeanne Cole, volunteer coordinator, Dave Power, publicity director, Anne and Noot Canoles, Gift Shop co-coordinators, and Bill La Barre, Pancake Breakfast chair.

This year the staff published ORNC's first calendar in color. Plans have also been initiated to improve the Council's *Trailblazer* newsletter through changes in layout and content. Newsletter Editors Mary Jane Shanks and Joe Salvaggio have done a great job in showcasing our activities and the speakers lined up by Kevin O'Neill. Thanks to all for your efforts. Please let us know of speakers you would like us to bring to the Ridge.

This year the Council's Scholarship Committee enjoyed an abundance of extremely well-qualified applicants. Thanks to your support, the committee, headed by Dr. Polly Roberts, was able to award five scholarships. The recipients are Baltimore County and City high school seniors entering into nature studies or environmental college programs. Read more about these awards on page 5 of this newsletter, and please continue to encourage environmental studies students to apply.

Jim Curtis, Council Vice President, assisted by naturalist Todd Thropp, has updated the Oregon Ridge web site to include pages for news, monthly speakers, and information regarding the Council and scholarships. Check out the updated site for the latest information on happenings, programs and volunteer activities at Oregon Ridge.

Our appreciation goes out to all the volunteers who continue to make Oregon Ridge a vibrant, healthy center to appreciate nature. With your continued assistance and support, Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council will be able to support the many and varied educational and nature programs that make Oregon Ridge a model among county parks.

THE STATE OF THE OREGON RIDGE FOREST

By Donald C. Outen

Monday, November 16, 7:30 PM

Oregon Ridge Park consists of nearly 900 acres of contiguous forest, and with an estimated 499 trees per acre, it is the County's second largest forest holding. Now imagine hiking in the park through this great woodland and seeing only a smattering of oak trees and even fewer birds and animals due to habitat loss.

This is not an imaginary scenario, but one that could actually occur according to a 630-page study by MARLEN Environmental on the state of the Oregon Ridge forest titled *Oregon Ridge Park Forest Health Assessment and Forest Management Plan*. Don Outen, Natural Resource Manager of the Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management (DEPRM), will discuss its findings, the most surprising being the projected loss of oak dominance in the absence of proper management, which would result in the ascendancy of shade loving trees such as the red maple,

black gum, and beech. This change could radically transform the character of the forest, affecting the forest's ability to protect water quality and sustain adequate habitats for birds and animals that depend on the oak-dominated system. Mr. Outen will also talk about the lack of regeneration due to deer browsing, Gypsy moths, and invasives, and he will outline the management plan to perpetuate oak dominance.

Don Outen, a Maryland native, has worked since 1973 in land use planning and environmental management at the State, regional, and county levels, currently as the coordinator of the County's Forest Sustainability Program. He earned his B.S. in Geography/Environmental Planning from Towson University and an M.S. degree in Urban Planning from The Johns Hopkins University. He is a long-time member of the Association of American Geographers and a charter member of the American Institute of Certified planners. He is also a Master Gardener and a Coverts Cooperator, managing for 28 years a private reforestation project.



Gypsy moths devastate oaks at Oregon Ridge

TRAIL GUIDING IS FUN AT ORNC

Trail Guide Training at Oregon Ridge Nature Center begins September 1, running four consecutive days from 10 AM to 1 PM. If you hike and find joy in nature, and are willing to share that joy with children, please join this spirited group of Trail Guides for fun and education. The nominal \$25 fee is refunded when you lead your first solo field trip.

No experience is required. Each day highlights a different topic, which includes Native Americans of MD, insects, reptiles and amphibians, and habitats. Following this week of training, you are encouraged to accompany and observe an experienced guide until you feel confident enough to lead your own group. Each month trail guides are treated to a special field trip of their own, like May's trip to Shenk's Ferry Wildflower Preserve shown in the photo.

Please call 410-887-1815 to register. Payment is due on the first day of training (checks are preferred). Make this your year to do something different!



AN HERBAL MAKEOVER

Our herb garden received an overdue makeover this summer. The Master Gardeners of Baltimore stepped in to help the Council with the revitalization of the garden, and it looks great. Native shrubs were placed around the outside edge of the garden to give it a border and distinguish where the garden



begins. Flagstone paths will be re-laid and the pond will be expanded. Five new plots for plants were edged and given themes. Each plot will receive signage on the history and usage of the plants it contains. We thank the Master Gardeners for all of their hard work and help in maintaining this landmark in Oregon Ridge Park.



THE HONEY HARVEST FESTIVAL BUZZES

October 3 and 4, 10 AM to 4 PM

Upon driving up to ORNC for the Honey Harvest Festival, a helpful teen directs you to an available parking space, an obvious tip-off that this event is **POP-U-LAR**. Don't worry! Parking is very accessible and our parking volunteers do a good job.

On the walk up the drive towards the Nature Center, flying sparks and the clang of a hammer striking metal turns heads towards the muscular blacksmith, bending over his anvil, forging a pothook or maybe a decorative trivet. Next to the smithy sits a lovely lady, dressed in a 1800's cotton, stripped day dress, weaving wool on a spinning wheel. Union and Confederate soldiers peek over her shoulder and mill around close by, resting after shooting off their noisy muskets during a skirmish out in the meadow. Woolly sheep, scruffy goats and skittish chickens roam the area, eating hay or grass, pecking at the ground, and waiting for a friendly pat from a friendly kid. There is also a neat museum to tour, containing artifacts of a miner's life at Oregon Ridge in the 1800's.

Across the driveway, a naturalist holds out his tired arm to show off a raptor that has a firm claw-hold on his gloved hand, which is tightly gripping a tether attached to the bird's leg. Pesky bees buzz around to his right, bothering the volunteers who are crushing fresh, local apples into sweet tasting cider

using an old-fashioned cider press.

The driveway ends at the Nature Center where there is FOOD — hotdogs topped with honey mustard, chips, sodas, water, hot cider, and perhaps something sweet. The best place to eat lunch is down the steps to the meadow at the picnic tables across from the stage where a foot-stomping, live bluegrass band is playing "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" or some other bluegrass favorite.

Across from the food stand, Jack the Starling, the Nature Center's mascot, might call out "How you doin'?" if you are lucky, or whistle a bit of *Green Acres*, the theme song to the old TV show of the same name. Jack is luring you over to buy a raffle ticket for the big basket filled with honey goods — honey wine, jars of honey, home-made beeswax candles, and so much more. He knows the money from this raffle helps pay for his room and board. At the table next to Jack, children sit while a teen volunteer decorates their chubby cheeks with a painted bee, flower, or other image of their choosing.

Things are really buzzing inside the Center. Beekeepers are selling their wares in every room, the ORNC Council Gift Shop is open and full of affordable gift items, and of course, there are numerous exhibits to enjoy. A group of teen volunteers run comical, nature puppet shows for children in the auditorium on an hourly schedule.

The day would not be complete without a trek down to the meadow to take a scratchy hayride on a tractor-pulled wagon. Just watch out for those noisy soldiers battling nearby.

Admission is **FREE!** So please join the festivities — and bring along the whole family and lots of friends.



HONEY HARVEST FESTIVAL COMING IN OCTOBER

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

The 2009 Annual Honey Harvest Festival is on October 3 and 4. If you have made this a family tradition, we look forward to seeing you again. If you've never attended, please check it out. It is great fun.

Volunteers are needed to help the festival run smoothly, including cooking hotdogs, making apple cider, and selling raffle tickets. If you can volunteer, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator Jeanne Cole via the Nature Center (410-887-1815).

WE HELPED THE BAY!

Volunteers and staff helped plant a riparian buffer zone this summer with a grant from the DNR. Riparian buffer zones gather debris and filter out pollutants from water before



Brina Doyle rests after planting trees

they can enter a stream or river. The zone usually consists of trees, grasses and other plants that grow close to a water supply. You can see this zone from Shawan Road across from Shawan Downs.

A huge area was replanted with over 200 trees, both seedling and sapling. All of the species were natives and most will produce fruits or nuts. The trees were staked,

tubed and weed-matted. Bird netting was placed on top of the tubes to keep out animals.

A section of grass was also cleared and wildflower seeds were spread in its place. The seeds were a special Maryland mixture, which were native species to the state. We hope this project will help our streams and the Bay in the long run. There may be another planting project next year. If you would like to help with planting, we are always looking for more hands! Watch our website for opportunities to help.

TRAILBLAZER STAFF

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 Managing Editor: Joe Salvaggio

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Writers: Jim Curtis, Jack Kerns, Kevin O'Neill, Courtney Peed, Polly Roberts, Mary Jane Shanks, Todd Thropp

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 Articles for the Dec/Jan/Feb issue are due October 27.

WATCH FOR NEW EXHIBITS IN THE FALL

The Exhibit Committee (Chair Joe Warfield, Noot Canoles, Courtney Peed, and Shannon Davis) is currently designing several exhibits to be placed along the park trails to enlighten visitors about various aspects of the forest environment. Planned are exhibits that will acquaint the viewer with some of the intricacies of the Eastern Deciduous Forest — things to look for as you walk the trails. Also planned are exhibits covering two recent changes in the forest along the Red Trail.

One exhibit will cover the origin and natural history of the non-native gypsy moth that destroyed about 18 acres of trees along the ridge. Another will point out the area where this past spring volunteers planted a block of native American Chestnut seedlings with the grand hope that some or all may thrive, not succumbing to the Chestnut blight that destroyed these great trees many years ago.

In addition, the committee has received approval from Baltimore County for the installation of a gazebo along the trail at the moth devastation area. Some exhibits would be incorporated into the gazebo giving a neat spot to stop and sit for a moment, check out displays, take in the vista, and contemplate this forest gem at Oregon Ridge.

The Exhibit Committee hopes that park visitors have seen the excellent series of interpretive signs installed adjacent to the remains of the Oregon Iron Furnace (photo below). These exhibits incorporate wonderful graphics detailing the cultural history of the Oregon mining town.



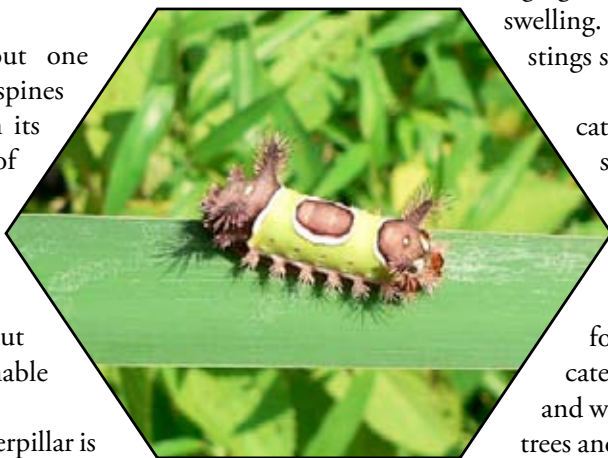
BEWARE OF THE SADDLEBACK

By Jim Curtis

Have you ever seen a poisonous caterpillar? Well guess what? We have a poisonous caterpillar residing here at Oregon Ridge Park. Its name is *Acharia stimulea*, or more commonly known as the Saddleback caterpillar. On a fall trail guide outing two of these colorful creatures were spotted.

The Saddleback caterpillar is found all along the East Coast of North America. While not rare it usually does not exist in large enough numbers to be considered a serious pest.

The adult Saddleback is about one inch long with stinging hairs and spines protruding from horn-like lobes on its front and rear, and with clusters of spines lining each side. Its name is derived from the appearance of a brown, saddle-like patch, bordered in white, which sits atop a distinctive green "saddle pad" that covers all but the caterpillar's almost indistinguishable head and tail.



The design of the Saddleback caterpillar is quite amazing. Since the Saddleback is usually active during the daytime, predators can spot it easily. Insects normally prevent predatory capture through camouflage, but in this case the caterpillar's bright green saddle pad is a bold, colorful warning to predators of its poisonous sting. It's double-ended appearance often confuses predators by causing them to wonder which end to attack. Regardless, any predator foolishly attacking this caterpillar is likely to be stung. The nasty sting is a painful lesson to any predator and undoubtedly leaves a lasting memory that discourages any future attacks on this colorful caterpillar.

Unfortunately, unwary humans can also suffer painful stings from these spiny caterpillars. The poisonous hairs or spines are hollow and are connected to underlying poison glands. Contact with them causes a burning sensation and an inflammation that can be as painful as a bee sting. The irritation can last for a day or two and is sometimes accompanied by nausea during the first few hours. Usually the site of contact reddens and swells much like a bee sting.

If stung by this caterpillar one should immediately wash the affected area to remove any insect hairs and poison that remain. Placement of tape on the wound may assist in removing the stinging hairs, and an ice pack will help reduce swelling. People known to be sensitive to insect stings should consult a physician.

The best bet is to avoid Saddleback caterpillars or any other brightly colored, spiny caterpillar. If Saddlebacks are found in your area, use caution when pulling weeds or handling brush or branches. Fortunately, these caterpillars are not often found in gardens or backyards. These caterpillars are usually solitary feeders and will feed on the leaves of many different trees and shrubs. They often lurk in the shade under leaves.

As with all caterpillars the Saddleback progresses through the typical moth life stages of egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis), and adult. The pupa undergoes a metamorphosis into the adult stage as a small moth. The adult Saddleback Caterpillar Moth (shown below) is dark brown, with wings shaded in charcoal and black and containing several white spots, and a two-inch wingspan – quite a subtle result considering it's bold beginnings.



JOIN the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council!

If you are already a member, check your mailing label for your membership status. "C" means current, "E" means expired, and "X" means this is your last issue unless you renew now.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ State _____ Zip _____

- \$15 Individual
- \$20 Family
- \$12 Senior Citizen/Student
- \$25 Non-Profit
- \$ 50 Sustaining
- \$100 Corporate
- \$100 Patron
- \$150 Lifetime



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Checks payable to ORNC Council, 13555 Beaver Dam Rd., Cockeysville, MD 21030

A BANNER YEAR FOR SCHOLARSHIPS!

By Dr. Polly Roberts, Scholarship Chair

For the 15th consecutive year, the ORNC Council has awarded scholarships to deserving Baltimore City/County high school seniors who have demonstrated a commitment to the environment and plan to pursue environmental studies in college. This year we received almost three times the usual

number of applications and were heartened to learn that so many of the best and brightest students now plan to pursue environmental careers.

A total of \$12,000 has been divided among the five successful candidates:



Victoria Stott, a graduate of Eastern Tech pursuing environmental studies at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, was awarded \$4000. She is interested in environmental education, particularly for disadvantaged youth, and plans to use her multimedia skills in developing educational materials.



Maxwell Lehner graduated first in his class at Sparrows Point High School and has received \$2000 toward his studies in environmental science at Ursinus College. His plans include a law degree in order to influence environmental public policy at the state/local level.



Andrew Reighart, who graduated from Towson High, was awarded \$2000 for his studies at St. Mary's College in public policy and environmental science. He plans to study environmental law after college, with a career goal of policy analysis at the international level.



Jennifer Grauer graduated first in her class at Western Tech and has received \$2000 to study environmental science and evolutionary biology at the University of Vermont. Jennifer envisions a career in environmental research.



Kimberley Maier, a Catonsville High graduate, has been awarded \$2000 to study environmental science at the University of North Carolina. She is interested in environmental education and believes that it can be taught in a "fun" way.

Additionally, two college students will receive funding as part of continuing, dedicated scholarships:

- Halshka Graczyk will receive \$1000 from the Eleanor Cunliff Lindsay Scholarship for her final year at the Johns Hopkins University, where she is pursuing a double major in environmental science and public health.
- Megan Milliken, who is studying environmental science at Washington College, has been awarded \$1000 from the Getty Dutrow Mullan Scholarship for her sophomore year.



Once again, the Council extends sincere gratitude to all who have contributed so generously to our scholarship fund. With your help, we are enabling the next generation to become effective stewards of the environment.

2009 SUMMER CAMPS CREATE ADVENTURE

As summer draws to a close and fall crispness creeps into the air, it is gratifying to know that our summer camps went so well this year. There was such strong interest in 2008 that we decided to add another week of camp this year, allowing more children to experience nature at its finest. Brina Doyle was our Camp Director, capably aided by Camp Counselor Nate Lipinski. Both Brina and Nate are Weekend Naturalists at Oregon Ridge and have also worked with our field trip programs during the week. They had a lot of knowledge to share and many eager young minds willing to learn. Their days were filled with adventure and surprises, and everyone had a good time.



There were camps for all ages. *Mom, Me and Nature* was our first session of the summer, designed for the youngest campers. Pre-schoolers age 4 and 5 and their parent/guardian shared in the experience, learning about nature by playing outdoor games and taking woodland hikes. We hope the small steps taken in this camp instill a love of nature that will grow and flourish in the future.

Many children attended the *Junior Naturalist* camps this year, all going away with a better understanding of the outdoors and a deep respect for Mother Nature. *Junior Naturalist* camps

feature a different nature theme each day, all designed to discover the outdoors in our forest, fields and streams. These camps are structured for 6-8 year olds and 9-10 year olds. They are always a huge hit with the kids and the counselors.

Finally, we had our *Survivor Camp* for 11-12 year olds. Pre-teens who attended learned how to make it in the wild in a survival situation.

Throughout the week they practiced skills such as fire making, shelter building, and orienteering. The campers had fun learning unique skills with our counselors, and we are hopeful that they remember enough to pass onto others.

If your kids would like to attend our camps next year, why not become a member and get first dibs on the best camp deal in the County! Members receive a quarterly newsletter and are eligible to register for camp two weeks prior to non-members. That's why

our camps fill up so fast. A family membership is only \$20 a year, so give us a call to join! Members receive a 10% camp discount.

We hope to see some of our 2009 campers and parents at the Nature Center during the school year so that we can say, "Hi!"



NEW CHICKEN PEN A HIT WITH FOWL!

Keith Porter and his fellow scouts did a magnificent job building our new chicken pen.

Not only does it provide enough room for our chickens and turkeys to cohabitate comfortably, it also protects our precious birds from predators that would love to have them for dinner!

Keith raised money for his supplies by hosting a spaghetti dinner at his church and by collecting donations at our Pancake Breakfast. The dinner was a great success, so we also thank those of you who attended the dinner and breakfast to help the cause!

Next time you visit the Center, stop over to see the chickens and the amazing job the scouts did with the coop. Thanks Keith!



NEW STAFF ARRIVE OVER SUMMER

You may have seen some new faces working around Oregon Ridge Nature Center over the summer. Two new part-time staffers and one not so new full-timer have become part of the ORNC family.

Laura Steber, our new Building Attendant, has been busy learning how to handle the questions and requests of many phone callers and visitors at the front desk. Hers is the first face you see as you enter the Center, so say hello to Laura on your next visit.

Greg Schaefer is our new Weekend Naturalist. Greg graduated from Frostburg State University. He worked for Nature Camps, Inc., in Monkton for many years, so he is well acquainted with our forest ecosystem and its inhabitants and is an excellent addition to our nature center staff.



Finally, we're pleased to announce that Shannon Davis is now the full-time Naturalist, taking over the position vacated by Courtney Peed when she was promoted to Director. Some of you may already know Shannon from her many years working as a Weekend Naturalist here at Oregon Ridge and Cromwell Valley Park. Maybe you met her during one her ORNC treasure hunt hikes or in the garden at Cromwell Valley Park. If you have yet to cross paths with Shannon, you're in for a treat. Her bright and engaging personality, sharp

skills as a naturalist, and her expansive knowledge about the great outdoors assure that she will provide wonderful programming for everyone in the coming months.

We are happy to have Shannon, Greg, and Laura as new members on our staff.

**Welcome
Aboard!**



ABBY CAHALAN Is a Ridge Runner Natural

Every Wednesday afternoon Abby Cahalan shows up to volunteer her time with a BIG smile. In early February Abby joined our other Wednesday Ridgies, Jackie and Kayla. She makes our topnotch mid-week team even better! When asked why she wanted to be a Ridge Runner, Abby quickly replied, "It was something new and different that I hadn't experienced."



Abby has a twin sister, Lauren, who hopes to become a Ridge Runner in the future, and an older brother Joey. Abby is an 8th grade student at Ridgely Middle School where she is involved in soccer and lacrosse. She likes to explore the great outdoors with her family by hiking and kayaking. She has been fortunate enough to travel to beautiful natural areas like Crescent Beach and Acadia, Maine. Abby and her family joined in on both of the Nature Center's canoe trips down the Upper Gunpowder this summer, and they can even be found walking Mia, their Border Collie/Burmese Mountain Dog mix, on the beautiful trails of Oregon Ridge. Abby likes to draw and doodle in her free time.

So far at Oregon Ridge Nature Center Abby has enjoyed learning the proper handling techniques for holding animals and how to care for them. Her favorite part of being a Ridge Runner is that she "...gets to interact with the different animals." When asked which is her favorite critter, she couldn't decide on just one, explaining "...either the corn snake or Jack, but I like them all." Jack, of course, is our European starling.

We are very glad to have enthusiastic, excited Ridge Runners like Abby join us here. We hope she will stay for years to come.