

Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council  
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# TRAILBLAZER

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2011



Supporting Oregon Ridge Park  
 and Nature Center for 29 years

## 2010-2011: A YEAR IN REVIEW

By ORNCC President Jim Curtis



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## OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER COUNCIL

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 410 887-1815 info@oregonridge.org http://www.oregonridge.org/

First, I want to thank all of the Council members, volunteers and donors that make our activities at Oregon Ridge possible. This first year as Council President at Oregon Ridge has been an exciting and productive experience for me, and hopefully, for our Council members. Our annual events went on with no major hitches and several new projects began or were completed this year. Here is a summary:

In Fall 2010 we completed our adjustable/mobile animal room display that allows greater flexibility in the use of the room and greatly improves the appearance of our displays. While this was one of our more expensive displays, we feel that it was well worth the money. We are presently working on an electronic exhibit that will present and display the wonders of our native trees. This display, with an LCD screen, should be installed within the next year. Further, we hope to develop a series of new trail map displays during the next year.

The other major project this past year was the Natural Play Area and Garden. The ORNC staff developed and initiated this major project, which broke ground earlier this year. The garden area was completed in the spring, and a bench and bird feeder were donated by one of our Executive Board members. Later in the spring, the Board decided to

fund a sculpted wooden bench and several large carved animal figures. Hopefully, the project will be completed this fall.

Our established major events, from October's Honey Harvest Festival to the summer nature camps, were all successful. In fact, we had a record or near record attendance for the Honey Harvest and the Pancake Breakfast this year. As usual, our summer camp rosters filled quickly, and to assist the Nature Center staff the Board voted to fund an additional staff member for the summer.

The Nature Center participated in the newly created Master Naturalist program earlier this year. This program, created by the University of Maryland Extension Service, trains volunteers for service at nature centers and other environmental facilities. We hope that the Oregon Ridge Nature Center will acquire many of these knowledgeable volunteers from this program. I must also mention and thank the Master Gardeners, who have created and maintained a beautiful flower and herb garden near the new play area.

We have several other valuable volunteer groups to thank. The Ridge Runners, a group of teenage volunteers, put in

(Continued on page 11)

## ORNC COUNCIL SPEAKER SERIES

### IRISES - FOR THE LONG BLOOM with Carol Warner

Monday, September 19, 7:30 PM

The history of the hardy iris is steeped in symbolism. Its name is derived from the Greek word "rainbow." Meanings have been applied to its kaleidoscope of colors — purple for royalty or yellow for passion. In Ancient Greece it symbolized the essence and renewal of life. Its six petals, grouped in threes, are said to stand for faith, wisdom, and valor or hope.

Carol Warner, one of Maryland's leading iris experts, begins our 2011-2012 *Speaker Series* with an iris extravaganza. Carol will talk and answer questions about the different varieties and show slides of different types of bearded and beardless irises to produce a long season of bloom for the garden. She will also have handouts and talk about the culture and garden placement of hybrid and species irises.

Most of her slides are taken in her own garden and feature a large collection of companion plants. Listeners will have the opportunity to buy some of her irises after the presentation.



Carol is a Maryland native and graduate of the University of Maryland. Her 35-year relationship with irises began in 1976 when she joined the Francis Scott Key Iris Society after visiting the locally well-known Maynard and Retta Harp's garden with her garden club. She is an American Iris Society Emeritus judge and past president of the Society for Siberian Irises. In 1990 she received the Morgan-Wood Metal for her 'Shaker's Prayer' iris and later her tetraploid Siberian introductions, including 'Twelfth Knight,' became popular.

Carol's unconstrained iris hobby turned into Draycott Gardens, a small web based mail-order business specializing in beardless irises. Her gardens have been featured in *Good Housekeeping*, *Chesapeake Home*, *Baltimore Magazine*, and also on HGTV's

*A Gardener's Diary*. Take a preview peek of her presentation by visiting <http://www.draycott-gardens.com/>. -- Shanks

### VANILLA: ORCHIDS TO FLAVOR with Sally Riley

Monday, October 17, 7:30 PM

If there was a contest for Spice of the World, vanilla would be a top contender, easily winning accolades for flavor, aroma, function and beauty. In its native habitat of Mexico, or in Madagascar, now the largest vanilla producing country, vanilla begins as a tree or pole climbing vine showcasing exquisitely delicate white to yellowish colored orchids that live only for a day. If a bee or hummingbird pollinates the flowers during their brief lifespan, or if the flowers are hand pollinated by cultivators, each flower will produce the vanilla bean pods from which the familiar aroma and flavoring are derived and processed for culinary, medicinal and cosmetic uses. It is a spice worthy of winning a crown.

During her presentation, Sally Riley will tell you why she



would cast her vote for vanilla. Sally, a retiree from McCormick & Company, Inc., will explain how those long, brown, shriveled bean pods become the extract you use in your cakes and cookies, and she will talk about other uses in perfumes and for medicinal purposes.

Sally Riley graduated from Mount Saint Agnes College with a B.A. in Biology and worked for 21 years in the Technical Information Center at McCormick, doing research on food chemistry and technology, flavor chemistry, sensory technology, product development, and competitive and general business intelligence. Now retired, Sally volunteers at the National Aquarium

in Baltimore, the Historical Society of Baltimore County, and with her college alumnae association. -- Shanks

(2010-11 - A Year in Review, continued)

many hours at the Nature Center and are particularly helpful with the care of our animals. The Servefest church group has been extremely energetic with trail maintenance, much of which was done in the far reaches of the Park. The Trail Guides have put in many hours enlightening and exciting children while guiding them through the Park on interpretive hikes. Last, but not least, I want to thank the Eagle Scouts whose projects have added to and improved the Park trails.

One of our most rewarding programs is our Scholarship Program. This year we awarded \$12,000 in scholarships to students pursuing environmental studies. My gratitude goes to our scholarship committee and to the generous donors to our scholarship fund.

For those linked to the Internet, I can announce that we have finally ventured into streaming video on our web site, [www.oregonridge.org](http://www.oregonridge.org). These new videos appear in our Music in the Woods page. Also, in an effort to attract younger volunteers and participants, we are now on Facebook.

Congratulations to the Oregon Ridge staff for their continual efforts to create and initiate new programs and activities. Some of the new activities include: weekend camping, woolly bear pre-school, spring break camp, bumble bee garden and mud day. I'm sure that many new programs will be developed in the coming year.

This year two of our valued, long-time Board members retired from their roles on the ORNC Council. Jeanne Cole, Chair of the Volunteer Committee, and Kevin O'Neill, the Programs chairman, have decided to pursue other activities. We will miss them both and wish them well. Fortunately, we have two new volunteers to fill these positions. Pat Krasowski will take on the Volunteer reins, and Sue Leslie will be our new Programs Chair.

This year the Council has encountered some legal issues. Recently, questions concerning the County's liability coverage for volunteers have arisen. The County has recommended that all recreation and nature center councils incorporate and purchase liability insurance. However, many feel that incorporation may provide a barrier to the County's liability coverage.

Since the County's liability coverage policy for volunteers has never been formalized, many of the councils have united to push for legislation that will define the County's insurance and liability policy. Unless a clearly defined policy or legislation provides the Council and its volunteers with appropriate liability coverage, the Council will have to take on the added expense to incorporate and purchase liability insurance.

Hopefully, this issue can be resolved in the coming months. Regardless of the situation, I wish to assure our members and the general public that the Council will continue to support the Nature Center and Park and strive to improve our services in the coming year.

## JACKIE DEVINE A DIVINE RIDGE RUNNER

It didn't take long to figure out that Jackie Devine is a character, in the best sense of the word, when she began volunteering as a Ridge Runner five years ago. From the beginning, she has been outgoing, a little eccentric, and willing to do anything asked of her. Over the years it has been a pleasure to watch Jackie grow into one of our top Ridge Runners and one the staff will always remember.

Jackie has made herself an indispensable Ridgie. Her favorite event is Maple Surgaring. She is an expert at leading maple sugar hikes and she excels at running all the stations. She's also great at painting faces and as a puppeteer. Jackie says she loves being a Ridge Runner, "...because I get to meet a lot of different people and help with the summer camps." She especially loves seeing past campers who still remember the fun times they had at camp.



Of all the animals she has worked with over the years, her favorites are the turtles and snakes. However, she also enjoys holding the birds of prey. So far she has only handled the screech owl, but she is looking forward to graduating to the red-tailed hawk, hopefully before she graduates. Now a senior at Dulaney High, Jackie plans to pursue an environmental engineering degree with a minor in energy.

Energy is something she already has in spades. In addition to her Ridge Runner duties, Jackie is currently interning at ORNC as an animal care coordinator. The critters appreciate her knowledge, experience and attention to detail. In her spare time she sews, embroiders, and likes to build things.

Even though this is Jackie's last year as a Ridge Runner, we think we'll be seeing her around in the future. We wouldn't be surprised if she became a paid staff member in years to come, maybe a camp counselor. So we won't say farewell when she leaves, we will just wish her well until she returns. -- Shanks

## HUG A BEAR AT THE NATURAL PLAY AREA

If you have been to Oregon Ridge Nature Center recently, you have probably noticed all the activity at the developing *Natural Play Area* across from the chicken pen. Certainly you would have noticed the two very large, 12 foot long sycamore logs lying there. Well, stay tuned on future visits and you may witness the chainsaw magic performed by Jacquin Smolens of Woodesign in Chestertown, MD, as he converts those monstrous logs into rustic, nature playground gems.

One log will become a bench where you may hug a bear or pet an opossum (wooden varieties, of course) as you sit and watch kids exploring the different play area stations. The other log will be transformed into a salamander, which can be another bench or a low balance beam.

Over the years, Jacquin Smolens has skillfully utilized his chainsaw to create artistic pieces of woodcraft for the nature center. His log benches, strategically located throughout the park, have provided quiet resting places for hikers to observe nature and enjoy the beauty of the forest and fields. He hand-carved the title boards for all the cultural history stations (Timber, Water, Ore Pit, Marble Quarry and Farming) and the animal figures above the entrance to the nature center. Just recently he produced the welcoming portal sign at the end of the nature center bridge. So look for Mr. Smolens' newest unique woodcraft creations, which are sure to be a big hit at the play area.

As a final note, the development of the *Natural Play Area* up to this point has brought forth a real community effort through donations of materials and labor. Most of the work done so far has been by Girl Scout Gold Award and Boy Scout Eagle candidates, their parents and troops, as well as several other individuals. Projects completed to date include: the

sandbox by Danielle Neumeister; garden fence and containers for natural art materials by Stephanie Neumeister; garden boxes by Nick Jircitano; stone pathway by Conor Pachino; and clearing away rocks, weeds, invasive trees and trash from the natural play area by Sean Brower. Other contributors



Jacquin Smolens and Naturalist Shannon Davis talk shop

include Connor Henderson, Robbie Schuetz, and Wendy Friedlander.

We are partway there but more donations of money (tax deductible), materials, and labor are needed. If you can help in any way to bring this special project to completion, please contact the nature center and talk to Shannon Davis who has done such a wonderful job in getting this project underway and supervising the improvements to this point. -- Warfield



### TRAILBLAZER STAFF

Editor/Design/Layout: Mary Jane Shanks  
Managing Editor: Joe Salvaggio

### CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

**Writers:** Jim Curtis, Shannon Davis, Dr. Polly Roberts, Mary Jane Shanks, Joe Warfield

**Photographers:** Jim Curtis, Stephen McDaniel and ORNC Staff

### OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER

13555 Beaver Dam Road, Cockeysville, MD 21030  
410 887-1815; Fax: 410 785-1020 or 410 887-1816  
[info@oregonridge.org](mailto:info@oregonridge.org); [www.oregonridge.org](http://www.oregonridge.org)

Articles for the Nov/Dec/Jan issue are due Sept. 21.

## IS NATURE PART OF YOUR NATURE?

### Trail Guide Training September 6 - 9, 10 AM - 1 PM

Trail Guides at Oregon Ridge Nature Center share one very essential trait — nature is part of their nature. They can't get enough of it. That is why they love leading children on hikes through the Park's forest, fields and streams, sharing their time, knowledge and enthusiasm. It's also why they look forward to their own monthly field trips to places like the serpentine barrens at Soldiers Delight to learn about rare rocks and minerals, Carroll County to explore Bear Branch Nature Center, or Marshy Point Nature Center where this year they were lucky enough to

witness a mass of spawning carp while paddling canoes in the waters of Dundee and Saltpeter Creeks, which were literally black with fish eggs.



Is nature part of your nature? If so, fall Trail Guide Training at Oregon Ridge begins September 6<sup>th</sup> from 10 AM to 1 PM and continues on the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>. Each day covers a different theme — insects, reptiles and their habitats, and Native American culture/history — so missing a day isn't crucial. You can tag along on a hike with a veteran to learn what you missed or until you feel comfortable leading a hike on your own. The \$25 fee (payable via check, please, on the first day) is refunded when you finally lead your first solo hike.

Veteran trail guides will be there to greet you. They always enjoy meeting new recruits. It gives them an opportunity to gather and talk about the nature of things. After all, it's part of their nature. --Shanks

## MASTER NATURALIST CLASS OFFERED AGAIN

If you enjoy learning about the natural world and sharing that knowledge with others or using it to care for the earth, this class is for you. Modeled after the Master Gardener program, the Master Naturalist program offers 48 hours of classroom and hands-on learning with expert instructors.

Final certification comes with the completion of 40 hours of volunteer service.

Last spring Oregon Ridge Nature Center was the first to offer the Maryland Master Naturalist class in Baltimore County and one of the first in the state. At the end of the class, one participant said, "It has opened my eyes and gotten me charged up to spread the word about stewardship of our land." Another graduate summed it up concisely: "Complicated subjects made very simple — great!"

Due to the success of the last training and the demand, Oregon Ridge is offering another class this fall. Training will take place each Thursday evening from 6 to 9 PM and every Saturday from 9 AM to 4 PM, beginning October 6<sup>th</sup> through November 17<sup>th</sup>. The \$200 fee includes all materials. Space is very limited; a special extended application deadline of August 30<sup>th</sup> is being offered to members only. Please call Shannon Davis at 410 887-1815 to apply. -- Davis



## IT'S A HONEY OF A FESTIVAL

**Honey Harvest Festival 2011  
October 1 and 2, 10 AM to 4 PM**

Bumblebees, carpenter bees, sweat bees, mason bees, polyester bees, squash bees, dwarf bees, leafcutter bees, alkali bees, and digger bees — these are the big ten, the upper echelon of native pollen bees in North America. Some of us may have never even heard of some of these bees. Polyester bees? Sounds like a John Water's movie. Alkali bees? How base!

Wait! Isn't this list missing the top honcho of all native pollinators: the honeybee? Surprise! Honeybees are not native to North America. They were introduced to our shores by the colonists in the early 1600's. For those who are not biologists, apiologists, entomologists, beekeepers, naturalists, or too smart for their own good, this fact is a revelation. So, why do we celebrate this non-native pollinator when there are so many other native bees around to get the job done? We can all answer that question — HONEY!

Oregon Ridge invites you to our Honey Harvest Festival to celebrate the honeybee and the ancient practice of honey



harvesting, as well as some other old crafts and practices such as blacksmithing, wool spinning, and cider pressing. While here you can also pet a woolly sheep or goat at the petting zoo, get nose to nose with a hawk or buzzard, watch a musket clashing skirmish between Confederate and Union re-enactors, or snack on tasty hotdogs topped with honey mustard while listening to a live bluegrass band. You can have your face painted, buy a jar of honey and some hand-dipped candles, laugh at a puppet show, watch a movie about beekeeping, chat with our resident starling Jack, and maybe win the raffle for the big Honey Basket filled with honey goods, including bottles of sweet mead or honey wine. -- Shanks



**IT'S FUN AND IT'S FREE!**



**Bring the whole family and the neighbors, too!**



**HONEY HARVEST FESTIVAL  
NEEDS VOLUNTEERS!**

**CAN YOU HELP?**

The 2011 Annual Honey Harvest Festival, an annual tradition for many families, takes place on October 1 and 2. Start a new tradition for your family by attending this year.

Volunteers are needed to help cook and serve hotdogs, make apple cider, sell raffle tickets, and direct cars for parking. If you can volunteer, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator Pat Krasowski via the Nature Center (410 887-1815).

## WITCHES IN THE WOODS

By Naturalist Shannon Davis

If you are hiking through the woods at Oregon Ridge Park and you hear strange sounds nearby, but see no signs of anyone, don't worry — it's just the witches in the woods. The witches are actually common witch hazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*. The capsule-like fruit of these small shrubs (or sometimes trees) explode and send their shiny, hard, black seeds up to ten yards away. The sound of the seeds hitting the dry leaves of the forest floor can be a little unnerving to unsuspecting hikers, and in days past was sometimes attributed to witchcraft, thus the name witch hazel.

Other theories exist as to origins of the plant's name. Some believe the name witch hazel has little to do with witches, but is derived from the old English word for pliable branches — wych. Perhaps the most popular theory, because of its supernatural mystique, comes from the use of witch hazel branches as divining rods. Water dowzers, often referred to as water witches, use the branches to locate underground sources of water or precious metals. Though this practice seems far-fetched and has been disavowed by many scientific organizations, the *Journal of Scientific Exploration* reported about one German project to find water sources in Third World countries that showed 96 percent of the 691 dowsed wells dug in Sri Lanka produced water.

When the Nature Center's well was dysfunctional a while back, we witnessed an interesting demonstration of water witching. The repairman walked around with copper rods, causing us to bombard him with questions. He explained that he was looking for the pipes running to the well. He even let us use the copper rods. Then I remembered hearing that witch hazel was used for dowsing, so we cut a few branches and tried our luck. The stick moved a little, more than likely due to unsteady hands than to witchcraft. The well specialist's copper "witching stick" worked far better than the witch hazel. It may be beyond scientific explanation, but the copper really moved.

Whatever the reason for its name, witch hazel has many redeeming qualities. It is a common understory shrub or small tree found in the eastern and mid-western United States and southern Canada. Although it is not a true hazel (*Corylus*), the

leaves are similar. The leaves, which turn a beautiful golden yellow in the fall, are 3" to 6" long and 2" to 2-1/2" wide, with scalloped edges and unequal bases. Witch Hazel is unusual in that it is one of the last bloomers of the year. In late autumn or early winter, after the leaves have fallen and at the same time the plant is dispersing seeds, it blooms. The twisted, crinkled yellow flowers look like spiders or fireworks and add a bit of color to the forest's drab canvas this time of year. Birds, beaver, white-tailed deer, chipmunks, squirrels, and eastern cottontails eat its seeds. Even the bees and flies enjoy this unusual plant. Witch hazel's late-blooming strategy takes advantage of the fact that there is little else for pollinators to eat this time of year. From all of these qualities you can see



why this little tree or shrub is well liked. In fact, our little witches are also a favorite of European botanical gardens. You can't beat the interest its late flowers and exploding fruits bring to the garden.

My first memory of witch hazel is of the bottle I always saw sitting in my great-grandmother's medicine cabinet. Although I don't recall ever using it, I do remember that it smelled funny, and it looked like one of those odd medicines that my grandmother used in those days (like mercuricome,

another commonly used "cure-all" remedy). Witch hazel has been widely used for over 200 years as an astringent, tonic, mild pain reliever, a hemorrhoids treatment, and for itching and irritations. Native Americans also used it internally as a tea for sore throats, colds and a number of other medical conditions. Although the research on its use is not very supportive, people still use it today. Even if people do not believe in its healing qualities, many actually appreciate that smell that I so disliked as a child.

Allow me to leave you with one more thing to look for while hiking. Before the sounds of the "witches" arrive and before the flowers bloom, look at the leaves of the witch hazel for little "witches' hats." These are actually small, pointed galls (plant tissue growths) on the leaves caused by aphids. At this point in time (no pun intended), you may have to wait until next year to see the "witches' hats." It will surely bewitch you and put you in an early Halloween mood!



# MUSIC IN THE WOODS

## Just Singin' and Dancin' in the Rain

Rain, rain go away...but it didn't go away. While it dampened the grounds, it did not dampen the spirits of those who performed, listened and otherwise thoroughly enjoyed the revelry surrounding the music that filled the air at Music in the Woods 2011.

The staff was well prepared for the watery deluge. Set-up was a little dicey, and rather comical, since it involved lassoing lots of trees and plenty of trial and error getting the rainflies high enough to provide shelter without obstructing the way for visitors. One naturalist climbed on the tip of the chicken pen and was beamed by an errantly thrown rope weighted with a rather hard object — a real Curly, Larry and Moe scenario.

Once things got going, however, it was fun for all and all for fun. The Master Gardeners exceeded their projected sales,

despite the rainfall. Jamming sessions seemed cozier under a tented shelter. The bands and performers appeared oblivious to the wet conditions and the cloggers tapped away on a dry floor thanks to the staff who stayed busy mopping and drying the stage. And what better conditions for new vendor Barbara Stratton to sell her homemade soaps? She was joined by vendors Bryan Burns (handcrafted Native American flutes), Ann McConaughy (handmade baskets/crafts), and Lauren Stibeile (handmade jewelry).

We want to thank the volunteers, performers, vendors and staff who turned a dreary, rainy day into a happy, fun-filled festival of music.

If you missed Music in the Woods this year, make sure to mark next year's calendar: **Saturday, May 12, 2012.** -- Shanks

### Thank You to the Volunteers who made Music in the Woods a Festival!

Laurie Ballentine	Dileab Phriseil
Bryan Burns	Dave Powers
Jeanne Cole	Katrina Restivo
Jim Curtis	Summer Riddle
Seth Dawson	Joe Salvaggio
Joey Devine	Rashid Taleb
Bobbie Isaccs	The Witt Family
Christopher James	Cheyenne Wright
Ann and Jack Kerns	Vendors - Please read article
Bob and Gail Meier	
Noelle Mirza	Carroll County Cloggers
Scott Morrison	Charm City Rapper Dancers

Kristin, Rob and Susan Meyer (Painted Trillium)
John Meredith and members of the High Strung Bluegrass Band
Tom Reedy, Jim Bienemann, Alice Rodman, and Lisa Roberts (Loony Tunes)
Griff Atkinson, Shawn Dipple, Ellise Brahm, Bob Willasch, and Merlin Williams (Oregon Ridge Nature Center Dulcimer Gathering)
Andy Anders, Kirk and Winnie Dreier, Courtney Peed, and guest mandolinist Christopher James (Oregon Ridge Nature Center Band)



High Strung Bluegrass Band members play the crowd's favorite tunes



A jam session with strings attached



Christopher James plays the Blues

# 2011 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS ANNOUNCED!

By Dr. Polly Roberts, Scholarship Chair

The Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council has awarded scholarships to three graduating seniors from Baltimore County schools. All of these students have demonstrated an excellent academic record and a commitment to the environment, as well as plans to major in environmental studies in college. This is the 17th consecutive year that the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council has awarded scholarships to deserving seniors from Baltimore City and the County.

Each of the successful candidates has received a \$4000.00 award. An additional student will receive funding as the result of a continuing, dedicated scholarship. Megan Milliken has

been awarded \$1000.00 from the Getty Dutrow Mullan Scholarship for her senior year at Washington College, where she is majoring in environmental science with a concentration in Chesapeake Regional Studies. Megan's primary interest is in achieving environmental conservation through policies and legislation.

Congratulations to our committed and accomplished scholarship recipients! The Council extends its heartfelt gratitude to all who contribute so generously to our scholarship fund. Because of you, we are able to help these deserving young people realize their dreams.



Nneamaka Odum, a graduate of Randallstown High School, will major in environmental studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. She envisions a career involving environmental policy development. Nneamaka was captain of her school's Envirothon

team and sponsored a petition which was successful in bringing the AP environmental science course to her school.



Amanda Phillips, a graduate from Western School of Technology and Environmental Science, will major in environmental science at the State University of New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry. She plans to be an environmental sciences

teacher in middle school or high school and hopes she will inspire students in the same way that her teachers inspired her.



Thomas Jones, a graduate from Sparrows Point High School, will study natural resources management at Shepherd University. His career goal is to become either a naturalist or a park ranger. Tom has worked as a Ridge Runner volunteer for four years at the Oregon Ridge Nature

Center, as well as recently at the Marshy Point Nature Center.



## CAMPERS BEAT THE HEAT!

The nature center held eight adventurous weeks of environmental camps for children ages 4 to 12 this summer. Each week campers hiked and played games while learning about the native birds, insects, trees, plants, reptiles, and amphibians that dwell in the forest, fields and streams of Oregon Ridge Park. Returning for their third summer as camp counselors, Naturalists Nate Lipinski and Brina Doyle capably organized all camp activities.

At age 4 and 5, the youngest nature enthusiasts joined a parent in *Mom, Me and Nature* for multiple crafts, a refreshing stream search (perhaps their first), and a get-your-hands-dirty search for salamanders. The week wrapped up with a Carnival theme when the children were treated to a day filled with nature games and cotton candy "spider webs."

The staff was pleased to see many familiar faces amongst our Junior Naturalist campers this year and just as excited to greet new campers to the center. *Junior Naturalist Camp* sessions were split into three different age groups ranging from age 6 to 10. Junior Naturalists explored the Ridge to learn about the ecology of this Baltimore County environmental oasis, and they also learned about the history of Maryland Native Americans and Oregon Ridge's 1850s Furnace Towne. Campers had the opportunity to tour the Tenant House Museum and peer down the old well that was used long ago to draw water for the miners and their families.



Pre-teens ages 11 and 12 spent a week learning how to survive in nature during the *Outdoor Living*

*Skills Camp*. Fire making, shelter building, and wild edible plant identification were just a few topics explored during the week. A favorite moment, however, had to be when Mr. Nate announced that he had a survivor treat for everyone and produced baked crickets and fried mealworms. To Miss Brina's surprise, almost every camper joined her for a taste of these crunchy "snacks."

If your children missed camp this year, we hope that you will register them next year. ORNC council members receive a discount and are allowed to register early. So if you have a child who enjoys nature, consider joining! But don't wait until next summer! Members have "one week priority registration" for all programming in each calendar season. -- Davis

## AROUND THE NATURE CENTER

If you have been to the Nature Center lately, you may have seen some strange things going on. Last month you would have seen a bunch of children and even some adults flinging mud, painting with mud and making mud pies on Mud Day. A very scientific poll taken before the fun began revealed that only a few of about 60 children had experienced the joy of making mud pies. We quickly remedied that! Everyone got good and muddy and afterwards rinsed away all the evidence in the sprinkler. Maybe next year we can get the local fire department to hose us down!

Many people have been startled by someone watching them from the new childrens' gardening area. That would be the fairy scarecrow (or very scary fairy as the children like to call her) made by the new Children's Gardening Club. She was put there to scare the critters away from the garden, but she has also scared quite a few humans! Besides creating the fairy scarecrow and growing veggies, the children have also enjoyed making stepping stones, garden markers, salads, mint and strawberry ice cream, and a wonderfully tasty berry dump cake over an open fire. The next session of the Club begins in August. Please call soon if you would like to join.



Now here is something you don't expect to see at a nature center—people chopping down trees! Don't worry they were just invasive ailanthus trees (tree of heaven). The lumberjacks were part of our newly formed Habitat Team. They not only remove invasive trees, but also invasive vines and herbaceous plants like garlic mustard. In addition to the removal of plants they also do trail maintenance and have planted over 30 native trees. If you want to join us, the group meets on the third Saturday of each month at 9:30 AM, and the fourth Thursday each month at 5:00 PM.

If you were at the Towson July 4<sup>th</sup> parade you may have been surprised to see the ORNC staff and Ridge Runners marching in the parade. The volunteers had great fun decorating themselves and the director's Volkswagen bug. They also waved, cheered, and passed out Oregon Ridge Nature Center bookmarks and stickers to the crowd. The hardest part besides the heat was keeping their enthusiasm in check so they did not run over the parade participants in front of us. Thanks to all of our great volunteers! -- Davis

## THE CLYBURNS A PAIR OF NATURE BUFFS

Jim and Nancy Clyburn have been volunteering at Oregon Ridge Nature Center for as long as I can remember, probably dating back to 1987 when I began my time there as the Office Assistant. Over the years, they have been one of the rare trail guiding "couples" that usually show up together to lead a hike, as a team or solo. Through the glass window located over my desk, I could watch them stroll up the walk, hats and vests adorned with nature buttons and nature surprises secreted in their pockets to amaze the visiting children. They never failed to come around to the desk to give me a warm hello and talk a while. They have been like that with everyone in the center, always sporting contagious smiles and aglow with anticipation of taking a group of children on an adventure through the woods, fields and streams of Oregon Ridge Park.

Jim and Nancy also have enjoyed taking novice trail guides under their wing and showing them all the tricks and nuances of trail guiding until they are ready to go it alone. During the summers they have shared their love of nature with many children attending Bible camp and New Song Academy at Grace Fellowship Church, where Jim and Nancy have been



long-time members. Jim and Nancy have helped at all of our special events, too. Jim especially enjoyed working the evaporator in the Sugar Shack during Maple Sugar Weekends.

This past July, we lost Jim Clyburn to cancer. Those associated with Oregon Ridge Nature Center who attended his memorial service came away conveying very similar observations and one wish. After listening to so many people share their thoughts about Jim (so many that the minister finally had to ask those remaining to please put their thoughts in writing), they wished they had gotten to know Jim better. While they knew Jim to be a teacher, mentor and friend, they did not realize how many lives he had touched, nor that he had talents never shared at ORNC. They were surprised to learn that Jim was an artist and enjoyed seeing some of his paintings that were on view at the service.

The Oregon Ridge staff, past and present, will miss Jim. The trail guides will miss Jim. And though they do not

know it, the school children will miss Jim. Everyone at Oregon Ridge looks forward to seeing Nancy back at the Nature Center to swap remembrances and keep the Clyburn tradition going for as long as she is willing to volunteer.

Mary Jane Shanks  
Newsletter Editor  
Retired ORNC AA



## INTRODUCING A FEW OF OUR NATURALISTS

We would like to introduce several naturalists, some who have been around a while and others who are new.

Pam Ward has been working with us since November, teaching our preschool and home school programs and working on weekends. Pam has her Masters of Arts in Teaching from Towson University and taught full-time for six years. Pam has also managed a science club, is a leader of Pioneer Girls, and she trail guides at ORNC. She is a recent graduate of the Master Naturalist program.

Laura Soder is a graduate of Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, PA, where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Conservation and Wildlife Management. She has interned at a number of places including Nixon County Park in York, PA, Squam Lakes Natural Science Center in Holderness, NH, and the Philadelphia Zoo. Upon graduating in May 2011, she began working at ORNC as a Weekend Naturalist as well as at Irvine Natural Science Center as their Animal Care and Exhibit Coordinator. She has been an outdoorsy gal since childhood and loves hiking, kayaking, fishing, and also photography and art.

Part-time Naturalist Melissa Tillery earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Studio Art and Theatre minor from Goucher College. She volunteered for several years at Second Chance Wildlife Center in Gaithersburg and at the Smithsonian National Zoo. She loves drawing and painting wildlife, especially birds. This summer the camp kids enjoyed having their photos taken while sticking their heads through a photo prop that Melissa painted to look like deer. Her firefly illustrations on a dry erase board, in prep for a night hike, are good enough to make permanent. Melissa loves musical theatre and continues to hone her acting skills by performing as part of the pirate crew on the ship *The Fearless* with the Urban Pirates in the Baltimore Inner Harbor. -- Shanks