

TRAILBLAZER



*Supporting Oregon Ridge Park
and Nature Center for 37 years*

SUMMER 2019

MUSIC IN THE WOODS

Saturday, June 1, between 2 to 8 PM
FREE Admission! Come Rain or Shine!

Bring your lawn chairs or a blanket to stretch out in the meadow and listen to LIVE MUSIC all day by our favorite local bands and musicians. Gather your family and friends and join the melodious festivities and fun . . .

- ♪ Craft Demonstrators and Vendors
- ♪ Light Snacks and Drinks
- ♪ Food Vendors, including Ice Cream
- ♪ Jam Sessions (BYO instrument)
- ♪ Children's Crafts and Activities
- ♪ Animal Encounters
- ♪ Face Painting
- ♪ S'mores & Campfire, 8 to 8:30 PM

For more information contact:

info@OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org

410-887-1815

TDD/Deaf 410-887-5319



LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS SUMMER AND FALL

NATURE QUEST IS FAMILY FUN!



Nature Quest (NQ) provides a great opportunity to experience the outdoors and be active with friends and family while discovering some of the best parks and trails in Baltimore County. You can bike, hike, or canoe on designated trails to complete NQ and earn fun prizes. Nature Quest is ongoing, but questers that complete at least 5 trails each year receive free admission to that year's *Nature Quest Fest* and are entered into raffles for great prizes. This year's *Quest Fest* takes place on October 20 at Lake Roland.

Complete Your Quest in Three Easy Steps!

1. *Pick up your Passport booklet* from your local Wegmans store, Lake Roland, Oregon Ridge Nature Center, Cromwell Valley Park, Marshy Point Nature Center, Maryland Agricultural Center, Benjamin Banneker Historical Park, or download one online, <http://www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org/NatQuest.html>
2. *Start hiking.* Take your booklet and a pencil or crayon and head out on the trails. Record your progress by making a rubbing of the trail marker located on each of the 16 trails in the booklet.
3. *Collect your prizes.* Prizes are awarded after accumulating rubbings from at least 5 of the 16 trails and can be picked up at any of the participating parks. In addition to the prizes, questers completing 5 trails or more also receive free admission to the Nature Quest Fest. Questers that complete 9 or more trails will be entered into drawings for great prizes!

Join in on summer Nature Quest programs at Oregon Ridge:

Nature Quest Hike, 7/20 and 7/21, 10 AM to 1 PM

Get a head start in completing your NQ passport by finding the trail markers while looking for clues along the way. We will lead the hike to the two NQ post locations at Oregon Ridge. Join the fun. JJ



WHAT'S COMING UP ...

HONEY HARVEST FESTIVAL!



October 5 and 6



11 AM to 4 PM

It's Fun & It's Free as a Bee



ORNC 2019-20 SPEAKER SERIES

Look for Updates on ORNC Website



LEARN TO BE A TRAIL GUIDE AT OREGON RIDGE PARK

September 3 to 6

from 10 AM to 1 PM

\$20 donation first time attendees

Trail Guides lead hikes for small groups of visiting students who come for a curriculum-related nature experience. If you enjoy nature, sharing, and learning, please join ORNC's Trail Guide Volunteers. No prior experience is needed. Fall topics to be announced in August.

LOOK WHO IS NEWSWORTHY AT ORNC

ELIZABETH KADOW RETURNS AS NEW COMMUNITY SUPERVISOR I

After nearly 8 months of vacant positions at the Nature Center, we are at last fully staffed again. The staff and Council are excited to have a familiar face on its team as Elizabeth Kadow returns to the park as the Community Supervisor. Elizabeth served as the Administrative Assistant at Oregon Ridge for just over 3 years before taking a promotion to be a Park Ranger at Lake Roland. She is excited to be back. Elizabeth jumped headfirst back into the fun on her first day, which was during the Maple Sugar Festival. During such a busy time, she was a great asset in providing the best experience for the festivalgoers. Elizabeth feels at home at Oregon Ridge and is excited to have the opportunity to share her passion for nature through programming and environmental education at the Center. During her short time back, she has worked hard to spruce up all of the animal exhibits and has coordinated organizing the staff room and storage areas. JJ



RIDGE RUNNER LAURA SLADE LOVES TURTLES

Laura Slade joined the Ridge Runner team a little over a year ago because she wanted to do something that involved working with animals. Ridge Runners are teens between the ages of 13 – 17 who assist the Oregon Ridge staff with care of the Nature Center’s animal ambassadors. Since Laura is home schooled, she can perform her “Ridgie” duties in the mornings, giving her the unique opportunity to care for the high-energy animals that require immediate care after opening the Nature Center.

Laura’s favorite task is feeding the turtles, which she thinks are cute. She especially likes the box turtles because she “really loves turtles,” and thinks, “It’s really cool to watch them eat more worms.” For those who have never witnessed a turtle eating a worm, it’s quite a comical experience. Once a turtle spots the worm, it very slowly moves in its beak for the catch. Once the worm is caught, it usually squirms all over the turtle’s face as the turtle tries to eat it.

Laura provides our animals with the very best care and is one of our most confident Ridge Runners. She recommends becoming a Ridge Runner to other teens because she thinks it’s a really good experience to interact with the animals. She says it’s fun, too! Laura’s funniest moment being a Ridgie was when she accidentally locked herself in the rabbit cage.

Thankfully, she was able to stick her arm through the wire mesh to unlatch the door.

Outside of being a Ridge Runner, Laura enjoys sports, reading, listening to music and podcasts, and making friends with the worms and slugs in her front yard! She is in the 11th grade, but also takes college level courses at CCBC. After she graduates, she plans to attend a college pursuing a degree in wildlife studies or forestry. EK



COYOTE FACTS AND MYTHS

by Director Jessica Jeannetta

Some people may not realize that coyotes inhabit Oregon Ridge, as well as every county across Maryland. In fact, they are present in every state in the continental United States. We usually hear about them when a car strikes them, or when we experience a rare unfortunate incident with a beloved pet. At those times, a posting or news report may go viral and spread fear about the animal.

Originally found west of the Mississippi River, coyotes have gradually expanded their range east as an indirect result of human action. Scientists have identified two travel routes used by coyotes as they moved east: A northern route as they traveled north into Canada around the Great Lakes and then migrated south through New England, and a southern route across the Mississippi into the southeast US and then north. These routes met in the mid-Atlantic, making Maryland and Delaware the last states in the country to be colonized by coyotes. Coyotes were first reported in Maryland in 1972.

Current trends suggest coyote populations are highest in western Maryland and decrease as they move eastward across the state. The lowest observed numbers are on the eastern shore. Historically, larger predators such as wolves and mountain lions were present in this area until the mid-1800s to early 1900s. As humans began to significantly change the landscape by developing along the east coast and clearing forests for agriculture, these large predator species were eliminated in the area, reducing competition and creating ideal habitat for coyotes.

Every now and again, we hear from people about *coywolves* in the area, a cross between a wolf and a coyote. Genetic testing of the eastern coyote has shown that *coywolves* are a myth, as no genetic testing has shown an animal that is purely coyote and wolf. Science suggests the likelihood that western coyotes migrating from the west occasionally interbred with wolves, as well as domestic dogs, resulting in the larger subspecies that

were we refer to as the eastern coyotes. In fact, many eastern coyotes have almost no shared wolf genes. The shared genetic material percentages of each animal species varies and seems to follow a geographic trend; coyotes in the mid-Atlantic tend to be 85% Coyote, 2% wolf and 13% domestic dog. All eastern coyotes show some evidence of being hybridized, but there is no sign that the wolf, coyote, and dog are interbreeding today.

Coyotes are members of the canine family. They are similar in appearance to a small German shepherd. They have a long and slender snout, erect pointed ears, and a long, bushy, black-tipped tail. Their fur is usually brown or beige with gray or black mottling, and their undersides lighter in color. The coat can be light to very dark in color gradient and the thick fur often gives them the appearance of being larger than they actually are. On average, this medium sized canine weighs between 30 - 40 pounds, is 60 inches long, and has a shoulder height varying from 1½ - to 2 feet. Males are usually 20% larger than females, and eastern coyotes (ones found east of the Mississippi) tend to be significantly larger (more than 10 pounds heavier) than their western relatives. This size difference is believed to be the result of the interbreeding with wolves that took place close to 100 years ago.

Coyotes are omnivores and have extremely broad diets. They are also opportunistic, taking food when and where it is available. Their diet primarily consists of small

Identifying the elusive Eastern coyote

Order: Carnivora **Family:** Canidae **Species:** *L. latrans*

Larger, more wily and much more varied in color than its Western counterpart, the Eastern coyote is a product of migration and adaptation, establishing itself in New Jersey and other urbanized Eastern areas more than 50 years ago.

Coyotes are indigenous to the Plains and Rocky Mountains. Scientists believe the Eastern coyote migrated across Canada and the U.S., crossbreeding with wolves and feral dogs along the way.

The coyote may look like a dog, but can be distinguished by a pointed nose and bushier tail. Although it resembles the larger wolf, it differs by keeping its tail between its legs when running. Foxes, which are smaller than both, also hold their tails straight out when running.

Fox	Eastern coyote	German shepherd
Weight: 6.5-24 lbs. Height: 10-12 inches	Weight: 30-65 lbs. Height: 24 inches	Weight: 85-95 lbs. Height: 26 inches

Coyote characteristics

Average life span: 4 years

Diet: Small rodents, birds, deer fawns, chickens, sheep, vegetation (berries) and garbage.

Habitat: Social animals, coyotes often hunt in packs. They frequently have lifelong mates and are very vocal during mating season (January through March). They typically have a litter of seven.

Range: Found in wooded and grassy areas.

Source: N.J. Division of Fish and Wildlife, National Geographic

ILLUSTRATION BY ANDRE MALOK, THE STAR-LEDGER

Have You Seen A Coyote in Your Neighborhood?



mammals, birds, insects, reptiles, fruit, and carrion. When it is accessible, coyotes will also consume garbage, compost, pet food left outdoors, birdseed, young or injured deer and unprotected small livestock and pets. Coyotes are also highly adaptive and can thrive in a variety of habitats. In Maryland, higher populations are found in areas with mixes of farmland and forests. However, with a projected population growth rate of 29% a year, biologists believe that populations across all habitats in Maryland will increase.

Coyotes reach sexual maturity at one year of age. They breed from late January to March. On average, the gestation period is 60-63 days with litters of 5-6 pups that are born in April or May. They prefer to den in steep banks, rock crevices, and underbrush. Coyotes typically mate for life, and at times will form packs that consist of a breeding pair and their 1 and 2-year-old offspring. Coyotes are very elusive and their yips and yowls are heard more often than the animals are physically seen. They use a number of calls to communicate with one another, define territories, attract mates, and avoid conflicts.

The establishment of the eastern coyote to Maryland has had both ecological and social impacts on our communities. Their role as a top predator has negatively impacted the red fox population as they share a similar habitat and ecological niche. The larger coyote will out compete the fox for resources, causing area fox populations to drop as they drive the red fox into smaller areas where coyotes are not present. It was originally thought that the presence of coyote would help limit the overpopulation of white tailed deer; however, this trend has not been shown.

Across the country, the growing population of coyotes has also created a growing number of complaints and concerns. The public often meets coyotes with fear and disdain when they are spotted in their communities. Both livestock and pet losses have been experienced here in Maryland, with increased reports as the coyote population grows. It has been found that these issues often occur when coyotes become too comfortable around humans. With coyotes now established and here to stay, there are some simple human adaptations and actions we can take to minimize any danger they may present. Taking these simple actions can help humans and coyotes live together with less fear and fewer conflicts.

1. NEVER feed coyotes or wildlife (other than birds).
2. Don't leave bowls of pet food or water outside at night.

3. Keep garbage in sturdy containers with tight fitting lids, and keep compost in enclosed bins instead of exposed piles.
4. Keep bird feeders out of reach and don't let seeds accumulate on the ground.
5. Keep pets inside at night and watch small dogs while outside, even during daylight hours.
6. Keep cats indoors.
7. Always walk your dogs on a leash. (This is required on parkland and in other local areas.)
8. Spay or neuter your dogs.
9. Supervise small children (under 5 years old) at all times.
10. Close off crawl spaces under porches and sheds where coyotes could rest and den.
11. Don't tolerate coyotes around your yard.
12. If you see a coyote on the trail, observe from a distance. Coyotes are naturally shy around humans and should run away if they see you. In the event they appear unafraid or threatened, wave your hands and yell in a deep voice. Walk (don't run) towards an area with other people, while keeping sight of the animal.

If you are having a problem with coyotes, you can contact the Maryland Department of Natural Resources by calling (877) 463-6497 for more information.

TRAILBLAZER STAFF

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Please submit information for the Fall issue no later than July 22, 2019.

BEAUTIFUL WEATHER BECKONED CROWDS TO THE 2019 ANNUAL PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council's 2019 Pancake Breakfast was simply a *smoooth* operation. The perfect weather probably accounts for the 1267 breakfasts served between Saturday and Sunday. The Council netted \$13,000 to go towards exhibits and other ORNC needs. Music filled the hall each day with Irish tunes by Balle Morre, traditional folk by Kirk Dreier and his band, bluegrass by The Mayo Family, and ole time music by Will Play for Fish.

Several special guests attended: County Councilmen Julian Jones and David Marks, President of the Board of

Recreation and Parks Eric van den Beemt, and Kathy Woods from Phoenix Wildlife. The Master Gardeners distributed information and answered questions at their table.

Once again the talented team of Erin and John McCleary chaired the event. Close to 90 volunteers handled every job from flipping pancakes to grilling sausage to selling Box Raffles tickets (one of the most popular events each year).

We appreciate those who came for breakfast, and we are grateful for all of our wonderful volunteers. MJS

THANK YOU ONE AND ALL! YOU ARE GRADE-A VOLUNTEERS!

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Alisa Anania | Andrea Evelius | Jes Maaswinkel | Cora Potter |
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| Cary Euwer | Beth Keyser | Piper Perez | |
| | | Roscoe, Kristi, Maggie, Ava & Lucia Possidente | |



PANCAKE BREAKFAST PHOTO GALLERY 2019



Breakfast Photos by Jim Curtis



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 McFaul's Ironhorse Tavern
 Natural History Society
 Oregon Grill Restaurant
 Oregon Ridge Nature Center
 Sky Zone
 Texas Roadhouse Hunt Valley
 The Yeager & Hammann
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 Sara Yosua and Beth Keyser



**We are Grateful to these
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 to 2019's BOX RAFFLES!**



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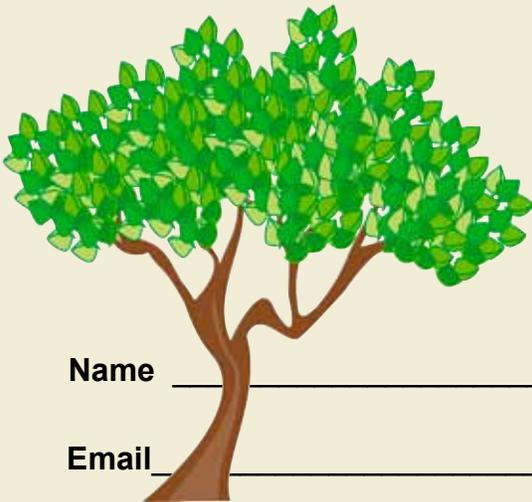
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**TRAILBLAZER SUMMER 2019
COME TO MUSIC IN THE WOODS 6/1**



**DEPARTMENT OF
RECREATION AND PARKS**



RENEW NOW AND SIGN UP A FRIEND, TOO!

Many branches make a strong tree. Many members make a strong Council. Use this membership form to renew and give a copy to a friend. **You can join or renew online. Please visit: <http://OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org/JoinDonate.html>**

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\$ 250 Sustaining

\$ 30 Family

\$ 500 Lifetime

\$ 75 Supporting

\$ Extra Donation

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