

Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council
 13555 Beaver Dam Road
 Cockeysville, MD 21030



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TRAILBLAZER

November/December 2008



Supporting Oregon Ridge Park
 and Nature Center for 26 years

Is Your Membership
 Current?



DRIVE CAREFULLY:
 USE YOUR SEAT BELTS

Scenes of Honey Harvest 2008



Top L to R, Joe Stevens and friend, Lonesome Valley Mountaineers band, Hannah Patterson.
 Bottom L to R, Richard Anderson of the 87th PA Union unit, 4th N.C. Confederates, Mary and
 Theresa Genovese with their mother Susan Genovese.



In the April/May/June 2008 issue of the *Trailblazer* Newsletter, the Board of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council (ORNCC) presented its concern that the Oregon Grille wanted to change its zoning from RC4 [watershed protection] and RC7 [resource preservation] to BL [business local - small scale commercial]. We believed that any change in the zoning, particularly a change that allows all the uses of BL zoning, would have a negative impact on the Nature Center and Park. As a result of our concerns and our commitment to maintain the pristine environment of the Park, we mounted a major effort to oppose the zoning change request.

The ORNCC Board sent County Councilman McIntire a letter outlining our concerns, to which he offered to meet with us. ORNC Council President Mike Burns, Director Sherry Lyons, and I met with Councilman McIntire. Councilman McIntire generously provided us ample time to fully explain our opposition, asked us pertinent questions, and explained his

dilemma that he was getting considerable pressure to approve the up-zoning request. He also noted that he had been proud of his environmental record to date.

While the meeting with Councilman McIntire went well, it became obvious that it would take the clout of intensive community pressure against the up-zoning for the County Council to oppose the Grille's request. However, at that time the surrounding community was focused on the traffic and other impacts of the Agricultural Resource Center (AG Center) being planned on a 149-acre property located at the corner of Shawan and Cuba Roads. Many residents were unaware of the Grille's request and the potential impact it would have on traffic. Also, the County Planning staff, when studying the potential traffic impact of the AG Center, was not including in their study the additional traffic congestion that would result from the Grille's requested change.

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We followed up with County Planning, pointing out that the AG Center, Nature Center, and Grille holding events at the same time would have a devastating traffic congestion impact on the area. Planning agreed to consider this in relation to the Grille's request. In addition, we informed the Planning staff of ORNCC's strong concerns regarding the zoning request.

Throughout this process, the ORNCC Board stayed in frequent communication with the Valleys Planning Council (VPC), in an effort to keep one another informed of the political pressures to approve the zoning and of one another's actions regarding the Grilles' zoning request. Working closely with VPC was considered critical to our success, given its influence on zoning issues and its opposition to the zoning.

In addition, the ORNCC Board urged several community members who were very distressed with the Grille's request to muster a major, concerted effort to voice their outrage and concern. Subsequently, community groups initiated a petition drive opposing the zoning request. Community members and Oregon Ridge Nature Center members tirelessly obtained signatures and

presented them to Councilman McIntire. The Sparks-Glencoe, Falls Road Community Association, Greencroft Community Association and Cuba Road Association, along with the VPC, met with Councilman McIntire on two occasions to discuss their concerns. Also, one community member placed copies of the *Trailblazer* "Grille" article in the mailboxes of neighbors to inform them of ORNCC's concerns.

The Valleys Planning Council worked closely with the community associations, advising them on strategy. In addition, VPC, the ORNC Council President, the community associations, and individual community representatives attended the various zoning hearings to voice their concerns. Through these combined efforts, we were successful in blocking the zoning change.

The object lesson here is that even in the face of major high-powered economic and political influence, concerted efforts from communities and organizations working together can effectively influence environmentally sensitive issues. Thanks to everyone for their efforts!

YOUR COUNCIL AT WORK

The defeat of Oregon Grille's up-zoning request was due in large part to the gargantuan efforts of your Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council. Spearheaded by Environmental Issues Chair Dr. Martin Schugam, a core group formed and led the way including Council President Michael Burns, Directors Sherry Lyons and James Curtis, and Scholarship Chair Dr. Polly Roberts.

As previously reported in the feature article, Marty Schugam, Sherry Lyons and Mike Burns were strong voices for opposition at a crucial meeting with Councilman McIntire. In addition, Marty Schugam met with the County Planning Office and worked hard to gather support by writing articles and letters, making phone calls, and continually coordinating with the Valleys Planning Council and County Planning. Sherry Lyons also stayed in contact with Councilman McIntire's office and Mike Burns testified at zoning hearings, providing his unique knowledge and verbal expertise in making our case.

Jim Curtis provided a picture of a trout from one of the park streams to prove to Councilman McIntire that

indeed there were trout inhabiting our streams that could be endangered as a result of environmental changes created by up-zoning.

Polly Roberts was an important voice in getting community support and was involved in the community group meetings with Councilman McIntire. She and her neighbor Kathleen House wrote an effective article opposing the zoning, which appeared in the "Having Your Say" column of *The Baltimore Sun*. Dr. Roberts' efforts were critical to the successful petition drive generated by community associations opposing the up-zoning.

Other ORNC Council members who gathered names for the petition were Jack and Ann Kerns, Jeannie Cole, Marty Schugam, Noot and Ann Canoles, Katharine Patterson, and Ashby and Mary Jane Shanks.



Catching environmentally sensitive trout to help build the case against Oregon Grille's up-zoning request.

Brown trout caught in Oregon Branch.



Partridge Berries

It is almost mid-season, November 11, 2007, The Veterans Day.
It's peaceful and sunny on the mountaintop, among the fiery colors of autumns sway -
Crisp red maple leaves with marbled lines of a country steak,
Enormous, pure-yellow foliage floating down like feathers from tulip trees and sassafras.
The dogwood at the edge of the shivering woods is scorched purple,
Its clustered bright red berries gone, snatched by migrating birds.

And I am dreaming of a poem, seeded in my heart by some unexpected event.
A poem that grows by itself like a stalactite from a drop of a cave ceiling's feldspar,
Or a breeze from the middle of nowhere in a great ocean, or a night embracing a shooting star.
And I hope that a grain of an unbreakable white seed from a late-ripened partridge berry,
So easy to swallow, begins to sprout into my new poem. I can hear it already.

And on this sacred day, while hiking in these old familiar hills of Oregon Ridge Park,
I discover and pick from the colorful floor a few crimson partridge berries.
The miniature, fresh-green plants with multiple small, round leaves
Hug Earth's cold body under the elegant cover of princess pines.

I am not robbing the deer, the red fox or, God forbid, the cardinals of their dinner!
I just swallow one seed and spit out the rest, so as not to
Deny a single lazy chipmunk or late foraging, winter oblivious squirrel nary
Next year's crop. Let me grow today a poem from a seed of a crimson partridge berry!

It is apprehensively quiet and only the sound of two woodpeckers chants
Spirals up the moth eaten trunks of damaged oak and hickory giants.
They peck out their woodpecker Morse Code, a distinctive wintry alliance song
Of the hungry woodpeckers and a non-combatant child survivor of WWII, hiking along.

And I am dreaming of a poem, seeded in my stented heart by some pristine event.
A poem that evolves from itself like a stalactite from a drop of a cave ceiling's feldspar,
Or a woman's glance, or a storm in the middle of some great ocean, or a shooting star.
And I hope that this grain of unbreakable white seed from the over-ripened partridge berry,
So easy to swallow, commences to grow into my poem. Can you hear it already?

It was almost mid-season, November 11, 2007, The Veterans Day.
It was sunny on the mountaintop and among the fiery autumn colors sway
Were crisp-red maple leaves with marbled lines of a campfire steak, and
Enormous, pure-yellow foliage floating down like feathers from tulip trees and sassafras.
The dogwood at the edge of the shivering woods was scorched-purple, beyond words.
Its clustered red berries gone, snatched by the now invisible winter birds.

Semion Kizhner
November 11, 2007



FROM THE PRESIDENT Jack Kerns

It is an honor to have the opportunity to serve as President of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council. My concern with nature and the environment began in 1969 when I became a member of the air pollution control agency within the Maryland Department of Health. Over the years, I worked chiefly on the budgets for the oil control, solid waste, used tire, hazardous waste, sewage sludge, and lead paint poison prevention programs in the Maryland Department of the Environment.



Retirement has given me time to pursue nature in a more personal way. Joining my wife as a trail guide at Oregon Ridge, I have delighted in acquainting elementary students with the wonders of nature. It reminds me of my childhood in Western Maryland, where finding the hidden creatures of streams, ponds and the Potomac River occupied my very early years.

My first official duty as President was participating in the ribbon cutting ceremony for the iron ore smelting furnace exhibit at Oregon Ridge. It was a pleasure to assist Joe Hohn from REI, Councilman Bryan McIntire, and Recreation and Parks Director Bob Barrett in the commemoration of the important role of mining in the early history of the Park.

Looking forward to the Park's future needs, one of the primary areas of concern for the ORNC Council is the restoration of the nature pond situated in the meadow near the parking area. It was originally the resting place of wild ducks enjoying the serenity of a quiet retreat, the site of the early spring mating of wood frogs by the thousands, and the habitat of several species of fish swimming lazily in the summer sun. The pond's restoration is possible only if the friends of Oregon Ridge and its Council members raise this issue with the County Executive, the County Council members, and the County Department of Recreation and Parks. Without your persistent support through letters, emails and phone calls to these principals, the County's efforts to pursue this pond rejuvenation will languish.

Other exciting new activities at Oregon Ridge are the development of exhibits for the snakes and an opossum, Matilda. As you may know, the Park had suffered a severe infestation of gypsy moths and had lost approximately 20 acres of heavily forested old oak trees. This devastated area is now being re-planted with protected oak saplings and, hopefully, American Chestnut. REI of Timonium has again provided Oregon Ridge with a grant to prepare an exhibit to explain to visitors the stages in the re-development of the area. Look for these signs along the hiking trails of Oregon Ridge.

I am pleased to be a member of the following, newly elected 2008-2009 ORNC Council Board:

President: Jack Kerns
Vice President: Jim Curtis
Secretary: Ann Kerns
Treasurer: Anne Canoles
Directors: Michael Burns
Sherry Lyons
Mary Jane Shanks
Paul Waldeman

We look forward to working with you to further enhance our enjoyment of the beauty and wonder of Oregon Ridge Nature Center and Park.

HERB GARDEN RECEIVES FACELIFT

While shopping with my wife at Trader Joes this summer, I bumped into Sue Randal who lives nearby on Cuba road. I've known Sue for years and introduced her to my wife. After exchanging pleasantries, our chat somehow got around to her love of gardening. The conversation brought to mind the sad condition of our herb garden and after describing its major problems such as the overgrown mint and the buried walkway, Sue surprisingly said she would love to help us clean it up. Sue remained undaunted even after seeing it with her own eyes. In a nutshell, Sue transformed the garden! She uncovered the flagstone walkways, cut back weeds, and pulled out the mint.

Sue has some big plans for the garden in the spring. We can't wait. Way to go Sue!!!

KIRK DREIER

SPEAKER SERIES

The Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council sponsors informative speakers every 3rd Monday of most months. Please watch your mail for a postcard announcing the speakers for November and January. Our Holiday Decorating Party replaces the December speaker.

DECORATE AND BE MERRY! ORNC HOLIDAY PARTY

Monday, December 15, 7:30 PM

Everyone's invited to gather at Oregon Ridge Nature Center's Holiday Celebration to decorate the Center with wreaths and garnish our live trees with edible strings of popcorn and colorful cranberries for the birds to enjoy. Bring family and friends and your favorite holiday treat to share for an evening filled with live music, a warm fire, delicious food, and fellowship.

Join the good cheer and escape the current economic doldrums for a while.



HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

We are busy collecting greens and other natural materials for you to use to create your own holiday decorations. Please call 410-887-1815 for reservations:

Holiday Wreath Making: December 7th, 2 to 4 PM. Instructor Jenny Witt will help you make a decorative wreath for your home. \$7 per wreath is due in advance. Please bring clippers and gloves. Children can watch holiday movies in the auditorium.

Free Holiday Movies: December 13 & 14, 11 AM to 3 PM. Children can watch *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.

Natural Ornaments: December 20 & 21, 2 to 4 PM. Bring the kids and make your own unique ornaments with pine cones, nuts, teasel, and other natural materials. \$2 per person is due in advance.

TREE TRIMMINGS NEEDED! For ORNC Holiday Programs

Pine, Spruce, Hemlock, Holly, Magnolia,
Pine Cones, Teasel, Milkweed Pods,
Nuts and Bittersweet

BY DECEMBER 4

ORNC staff will pick up if necessary
Call 410-887-1815

NEW LIFE FOR AN OLD FIXTURE

In October the ORNC Council celebrated the grand opening of the new Iron Furnace Exhibit. The boardwalk-style display highlights one of the features that made Oregon Ridge Park famous before it was a park. Attending the ribbon-cutting ceremony were Joe Hohn of REI, the honorable Councilman Bryan McIntire, Recreation and Parks Director Bob Barrett, Northern Area Baltimore County Recreation & Parks staff, and ORNC council members, friends and staff. A reception followed, catered by local barbecue guru Andy Nelson. Attendees mingled with friends, chatted with Baltimore County officials, and left with very full bellies.



The Oregon Town Blast Furnace was a 36-foot tall brick structure that could be seen for miles around when fired. Tireless workers fed the beast day and night to produce what Baltimore and surrounding communities hungered for — Iron. When all the ore had been mined and all the trees clear-cut for Baltimore's fireplaces and other uses, Oregon Town residents dropped everything and left for new quarries. Today we find artifacts of this era everywhere in the Park. If you look hard enough on your next hike, you too might find something.

The ORNC Council is indebted to REI who generously donated \$10,000 to the Council in order to finish this important project. Without their support, this exhibit would not be standing today.

GREAT WEATHER, GREAT FUN AT HONEY HARVEST 2008

Over 2500 people converged at the Oregon Ridge Nature Center in October to experience another Honey Harvest Festival, ORNC's annual, two-day tribute to bees, beekeeping, and old time fun. This year a record \$3900 was raised, including \$245 for animal care from the raffle of the Honey Basket won by Vicki Howard.

American Honey Princess Rachel Bryson greeted visitors as they immersed themselves into the day's activities -- taking hayrides, trekking with the Honey Hunter, watching blacksmiths Ted McNett and "Reb" and wool spinner Katharine Patterson, and startling at the loud musket volleys between the 87th Pennsylvania Bluecoats and the 4th North Carolina Confederates. Children especially delighted in face painting, strolling through Hannah and Grace Patterson's petting zoo, and looking eye to eye at a hawk and a black vulture as they sat on the arms of handlers Joe Stevens, Loren

and Louise Lustig, Walter Massey, and Kathy Woods. John Leatherman, Matt Geiger and Kerry Witner of the Lonesome Valley Mountaineers entertained, providing a live sound track to the goings-on. Central Maryland Beekeepers Chuck and Carole Huselton, Steve and Angie McDaniel, Lloyd and Ruth Snyder (Snyder Apiaries), and Jim and Pat Roberts (Bees by the Bay) peddled jars of delicious honey, beautiful hand-dipped beeswax candles, and other bee by-products. Beaumont Pottery from Jacksonville was a welcome addition to our craft tables this year and we hope they return next year.

The smooth execution of this event hinges on the cooperative efforts of the ORNC Staff, Honey Harvest Committee members Jeanne Cole, Anne and Noot Canoles, Ginna Naylor, and Dave Power, and the following essential volunteers who work so hard throughout the weekend. Thank you, one and all.

Faces at the Honey Harvest

L to R, Jeanne Cole, MJ Shanks & Cas Warfield, Haywagon Master Joe Warfield, petting zoo star, Kirk Dreier and Jon Christiana making cider.



THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!

- | | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Richard Anderson | Gretchen Fisher | Bill LaBarre | Hannah Patterson | Cas Warfield |
| Cindy Barretta | Hannah Fowler | Melissa Lamborn | Dave Power | Rachel White |
| Danielle Barretta | Sue Genovese | Sue Leslie | Katrina Restivo | Linda/Gene Williamson |
| Mike Burns | Theresa Genovese | Austin Luera | Joe Salvaggio | Kathy Woods |
| George Brauer | Mary Genovese | Loren/Louise Lustig | Eric Schachtner | Parking Volunteers from |
| Ted Brauer | Brigitta Geckle | Tony Markert | Marty Schugam | Dulaney High School: |
| CT Bruchman | Matthew Geckle | Jeanne Markert | Paula Schugam | Youssef Amghar |
| Anne Canoles | Mark Gingerich | Walter Massey | Mary Jane Shanks | John Ann |
| Noot Canoles | Andrew Gingerich | Sandy McCann | Rachel Sherman | Jason Bishai |
| Jon Christiana | Sara Gingerich | Erin McCleary | Becky Stein | Misty Cambell |
| Jeanne Cole | Carol Goorevitz | Scothia Morenane | James Stein | Taara Fardanish |
| Jim Curtis | Mike Goorevitz | Ginna Naylor | P. D. Stein | Veer Gariwala |
| Bill Diegel | Don Hart | Ellen Obenshain | Scout Stein | Ben Gelman |
| Jackie Divine | Lisa Hopkins | Christopher O'Brien | John Stetka | Sam Gelman |
| Millie Dreier | Ann/Jack Kerns | Kevin O'Neill | Joe Stevens | Brian Gibson |
| Winnie Dreier | Bobbie Kottler | Katherine Patterson | Vlad Ward | Dan Haverson |
| Kayla Elson | Robert Krause | Grace Patterson | Joe Warfield | Min Hwang |
| | | | | Brooke Kelbaugh |
| | | | | Liz Laubach |
| | | | | Ethan Levy |
| | | | | Vel Lian |
| | | | | Brian Phipps |
| | | | | Sumeon Stoyanov |
| | | | | Nicky Woods |
| | | | | Mike Xi |

JON MARC CHRISTIANA: THE BUG MAN

Jon Marc Christiana is our new 13-year-old Ridge Runner. His nickname "The Bug Man" reflects his interests and pets! When applying for the Ridge Runner position, he and his mother arrived with an Orchid Mantid, so named for its resemblance to a tropical orchid. It was white, had a convoluted body shape, typical mantis front legs and was only about 1/2 inch high. Jon had just purchased it online for



\$35.00! Sadly on their way home, it jumped off his hand and disappeared into "a lot of white rocks" and was gone.

Jon has that sort of scientist's "air of distraction" about him. He looks at the natural world with infinite curiosity. Since becoming a Ridge Runner, he has used our library to research beetles and other insects and often questions the naturalists about one bug

or another. He is on his way to being an expert entomologist.

When asked why he likes to work here he says, "I love animals and I like to take care of insects, and it's fun to be here." In his photo, you may be able to see his first ORNC war wound, earned when the back of an exhibit slipped off its mount and clobbered him on the cheek. When asked about it, he said, "Doesn't hurt."



The Bug Man works on Fridays and we are glad to have him on staff.

BYE, BYE, BULLY BIRDS!

by Naturalist Courtney Peed

It's that time of year when you may notice that certain animals have left your feeder or backyard. Migrations have begun and while many of us look to the fascinating flights of hawks and orioles, the absence of one typical summer singer may go unnoticed. The Blue Jay, sentinel of the forest, also migrates this time of year, flying on the winds in flocks of 5-10 birds along with other migrants. Migrating jays tend to be yearlings, while those staying behind are usually older, more mature birds. Those who remain in the fall form large flocks of several families that forage on seeds, berries or acorns, their favorite food. In the winter these groups disperse into smaller flocks to conserve food in their home areas.



I call Blue Jays "bully birds" since they always scare the little songbirds away from our feeders with their loud call "Jaaaay-Jaaaay," and then dive in to greedily stuff seeds in their throat. Sometimes they eat at the feeder; sometimes they take the seeds back to a nest. As mentioned before, Jays adore acorns, scarfing them up in the fall or burying them for future ingestion. They are nearly as good at finding them as squirrels.

Jays have had quite a history with humans. They were first mentioned in Europe by Norman invaders who called the birds by the French word "jai". Our Blue Jay is considered unique to America. Farther north, birders delight in the Canadian Jay (or Grey Jay), nicknamed "Whiskeyjack" by the early settlers, an aboriginal name for a mischievous prankster prominent in Algonquian mythology. Pesky Whiskeyjacks would steal and hoard shiny objects, candles, food and other commodities that the settlers relied upon.

Today jays are still considered quite intelligent birds. Recently, animal behavior studies have been done with Scrub Jays. It is thought that Scrub Jays are able to recognize themselves in mirrors, a trait that many animals below primates on the food chain do not possess.

Jays have impressed naturalists for centuries and are one of our loveliest inhabitants of the forest. Next time you hike the Oregon Ridge trails, listen for the warning screams of the Blue Jay in our trees. The bright blue flash will remind you how special our woods are for all visitors, feathered or otherwise.

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