

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

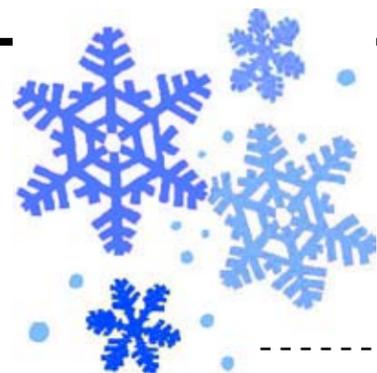


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Is Your Membership
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DRIVE CAREFULLY:
USE YOUR SEAT BELTS



**RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP
AND SIGN UP A FRIEND, TOO!**

Share the enclosed Spring Calendar of Events with your friends and encourage them to join. Remember, camp registration is coming up! To see if your membership is current, please 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



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

TRAILBLAZER

Feb/March/April 2009



Supporting Oregon Ridge Nature
Center and Park for 27 Years

2009 BRINGS CHANGE TO COUNTY NATURE CENTERS

KIRK DREIER BECOMES NEW DIRECTOR AT MARSHY POINT

Current events have made us all acutely aware of the old saying, "Nothing is certain in life except change itself." Baltimore County's Department of Recreation and Parks recently jumped on the "change" bandwagon and shuffled the cards — the Nature Center cards, that is. The reorganization affects all of the nature facilities, but none more profoundly than Oregon Ridge and Marshy Point Nature Centers.

The New Year began with the transfer of ORNC Director Kirk Dreier to Marshy Point to fill the Community Supervisor II (Director) position vacated by Bob Stanhope who retired in December. Procedures are now underway to find a new Director for Oregon Ridge. The Community Supervisors of all four County nature facilities — Oregon Ridge Nature Center, Cromwell Valley Park, Marshy Point Nature Center, and Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum — now report to Behta Davis, the Area Coordinator for a newly created division entitled Nature and Recreation Resources. This is a major organizational shift from preceding years when the centers were managed separately, each under different Area Coordinators.

Behta Davis was an Area Coordinator for the Pal Centers for five years. She is excited about her new role and actively sought out the position. She explains that uniting the centers under the umbrella of Nature and Recreation Resources promotes closer teamwork and a more equitable distribution

of resources. When asked about her goals, she responded, "I have no specific goal or mission. I have asked Courtney and the other Community Supervisors to work with their councils to develop their own goals. My job is to help them accomplish their goals." Ms. Davis believes that "The council is always first."

This Thomas Hardy quote best describes the reaction of many ORNC supporters: "Time changes everything except something within us which is always surprised by change." We will miss Kirk, but we're happy that he will continue to be involved with some programming here at ORNC. It is also comforting to know that full-time Naturalist Courtney Peed is serving as Acting Director and will carry on with all of the programs we have enjoyed over

the years, as well as initiating some new ideas of her own. The Council extends warm wishes and steadfast support to Courtney and the entire staff at ORNC during this transition.

KIRK LEAVES A BIG FOOTPRINT

Whether hiking the trails of Oregon Ridge Park or strolling through the Nature Center, Director Kirk Dreier's influence can be seen everywhere. His solid knowledge of the human and natural history of the area is reflected in every exhibit. His



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TRAIL GUIDE TRAINING: Hiking, Learning, Helping Kids

Trail Guides are a cheerful, happy crew of volunteers at Oregon Ridge who love hiking, learning about the natural world, and sharing their love of nature with children. And they have lots of fun in the doing! With all this going for it, you would think we would be inundated with volunteers. But we need more!

Training occurs twice a year, the first session taking place February 3 – 6, from 10 AM to 1 PM. The \$25 fee is totally refundable after you lead your first solo hike. Part of the training is to observe experienced Trail Guides as often as necessary for one to feel comfortable taking a group out alone. It isn't rocket science — the children just love tramping through the woods, sweeping insects from the meadow, and sloshing in the stream in search of crayfish and other critters. All you really need is enthusiasm and a willingness to share.

During February's training you will learn how to lead a maple sugar hike, follow Teacher/Naturalist Andi Musser in search of frogs, salamanders and other reptiles and amphibians, and learn about *Forestry at Oregon Ridge* from guest speaker Len Wrabel and about *Cocoons, Chrysalis, and Other Insect Thingies* from ORNC Naturalist Courtney Peed.

The goal of a Trail Guide is to engage children so they will want to learn more about nature and the environment on their own or with their families. It is all about fun, not scientific facts. So please join the ranks. An extra perk is a monthly adventure just for the Trail Guides, like a trip to Longwood or Ladew Gardens, hikes to find the rare Yellow Lady Slippers in our park, or a canoe trip on the Gunpowder.

MAPLE SUGAR DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN!

*Sugaring Days are here again,
The nights are crisp and cold again,
Let us cheer for warmer days and then,
Sweet maple sap will flow again.*

This could be the perfect sap year...cold, cold nights followed by warm days above freezing. Snow? Maybe. If it does snow, we'll make maple taffy. It's been a long time since we've been able to pour freshly made syrup, hot from the evaporator, onto new fallen snow to make taffy.

Whatever the weather, Maple Sugar Days begin February 21 and continue on February 22, 28, and March 1, from 10 AM to 4 PM. All is free, so gather up your family and boogie on over to Oregon Ridge to escape the winter blahs. Hikes to the Sugar Bush will take off on the half hour and the evaporator will be boiling sap all day, providing you with a taste of the real thing and warm steam to ease the chill.



COME AND GET IT!

OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER COUNCIL'S

ANNUAL PANCAKE BREAKFAST

**Oregon Ridge Lodge
March 7 and 8, 2009
8 AM to Noon**

MENU

Pancakes hot off the griddle
Hot sausage grilled to perfection
Maple Syrup, pure and sweet
Cold Milk
Fresh OJ
Hot Coffee
Fun and Friends Galore
(Seconds on all, except sausage)

And Nifty Raffles, Too

Tickets at the Door

Adults - \$6
Children 2 to 8 - \$3

**SUPPORT ORNC!
JOIN US!**

SAYING GOODBYE TO A WINTER VISITOR

by Courtney Peed

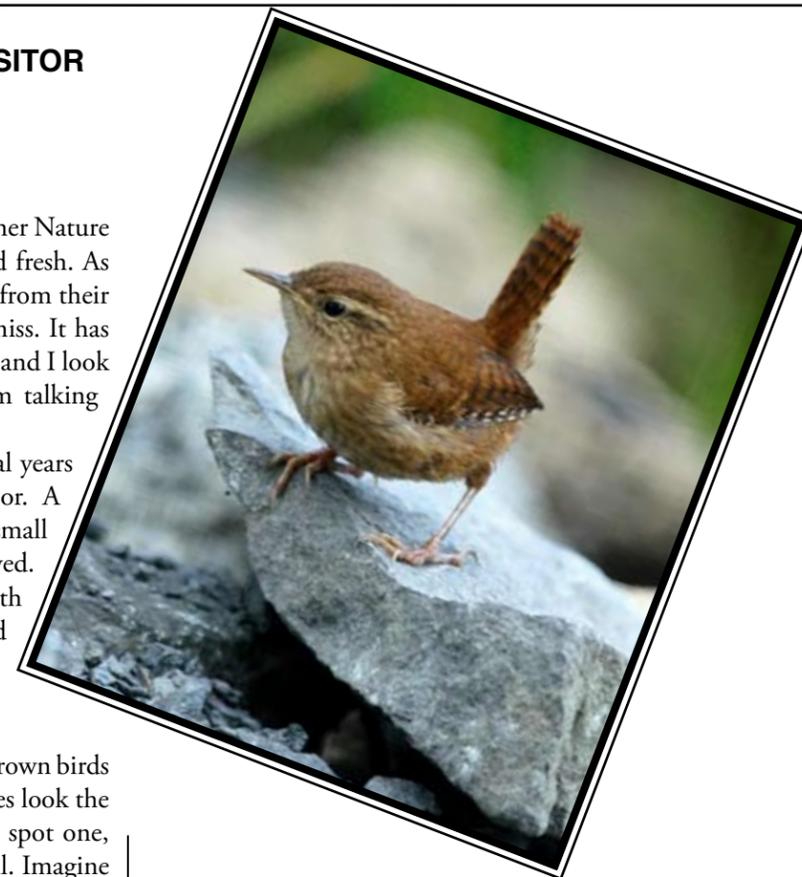
Ahh, spring is on its way back. Once again Mother Nature will work her magic and make the world green and fresh. As the plants begin to bloom and the songbirds return from their winter homes, there is one song that I will sorely miss. It has become my favorite part of winter at Oregon Ridge, and I look forward to seeing this vocal critter each year. I am talking about the winter wren.

I was first introduced to the winter wren several years ago when one flew kamikaze-style into our front door. A member of the staff who was an avid birder laid the small creature in my hand and asked if it could be saved. Luckily it was only stunned, but I was enamored with the cute, blunt-tailed bird from the moment I laid eyes on its tiny brown head. After it spent an hour in a shoebox placed in a dark, quiet room, I freed the bird from the box, but not my heart!

Winter wrens (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) are small brown birds with vibrant white markings. Both males and females look the same in color and size. If you are lucky enough to spot one, you will know it instantly from its short, stumpy tail. Imagine a mini house wren with half a tail and you get the picture. This small bird makes up for its size with its mighty, highly complex song, consisting of many trills, high-pitched notes and warbles. The song can last for 5-10 seconds and, pound-for-pound, is many times more powerful than a full-grown rooster! Visit www.winterwrenguides.com/WINTERWREN.html and listen for yourself.

Winter wrens are also special because they are one of the only wrens that maintain a habitat in Europe as well as North America. Since wrens originated in the New World, it is unclear how the winter wren got to the Old World. There are hypothesis that the bird crossed over on the land bridge that used to exist in the Bering Strait, but only the wrens know for sure. Since wrens are highly adaptable birds, it is easy for them to exist in many types of habitats. The winter wren has feeding habits that mimic mice, scratching in the dirt and leaves trying to find small invertebrates. This probably allowed them to cope with different temperatures and environments once they reached Europe.

Winter wrens can become communal in cold weather for warmth and protection from the elements. Compared to areas in Canada where they typically reside, winter wrens consider Maryland winters to be warm and usually visit here during the holidays. So next winter, when you are filling up those feeders and checking out hungry visitors, keep your eyes peeled for a tiny brown speck. If you catch a glimpse of the winter wren, I am sure your heart will be captivated along with mine.



HELP RESTORE THE CHESAPEAKE BAY WITH YOUR TAX RETURN!

With the stroke of a pen and a giving spirit, Maryland taxpayers can help restore the Chesapeake Bay and conserve endangered species by donating to the Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund using line 37 of Form 502 or line 13 of Form 503, and if applicable, line 33 of Form 504 and line 39 of Form 505 of the Maryland Income Tax Forms. Your donation will provide Chesapeake Bay education and restoration projects for students, stream cleanups and tree plantings by community volunteers, habitat research, protection and enhancement for threatened plants and animals, and so much more. Donations are divided evenly between the Bay restoration grants program of the Chesapeake Bay Trust and the nongame and endangered species programs of the Wildlife Heritage Service of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

All you have to do is enter the amount you choose to donate on Line 37 of your Maryland State Income Tax Return (or one of the other lines on the tax forms listed above). That amount will be deducted from your refund and added to your tax payment. The donation is tax-deductible in the following year.

Remember the Bay! Remember Line 37!



OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER COUNCIL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Each year the ORNC Council awards scholarships to college-bound high school seniors from Baltimore County and City. Recipients should show a high level of commitment to the health of the environment and plan to continue their studies in environmental science and nature education.

**This year our goal is to support at least two scholarships
up to \$3,000 each!**

We hope you will help by giving generously to the 2009 Scholarship Fund.

To make a tax-deductible donation, checks should be made payable to the *ORNC Council*, specifying on the note line "*Scholarship Fund*" and sent to:

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

The names of all donors will be published, so if you would like to make a gift in another's name, please specify the donor's name as it should appear on the list.

If you know a high school senior who may be eligible for the scholarship, please have the student call the Nature Center for an application form (410 887-1815). Applications should be postmarked no later than March 27, 2009.

Thank You for Helping Us Educate Future Environmentalists!

ORNC COUNCIL SPEAKER SERIES

MARYLAND'S TROUBLED TURTLES By Dr. Charles Stine

Monday, March 16, 2009, at 7:30 PM

Visitors to Oregon Ridge Nature Center are always fascinated with our turtle exhibits. Children gaze through the glass at the aquatic turtles, smiling back at the adorable, clown face of Tippy the Diamondback Terrapin. They delight in being able to identify the box turtles, since many of them have seen a box turtle in their own backyards or crossing the road. And they peer into the dark aquarium of the solitary snapping turtle, unaware of the tales of his powerful bite and his sometimes disputed aggressive nature.

A fact not disputed is that most species of Maryland's turtles are being challenged by adverse changes to their habitats. Currently



over eight turtle species are considered endangered, threatened or in need of conservation in Maryland. Dr. Charles Stine will talk about the anatomy, physiology, distribution and reproduction of Maryland's fascinating array of turtles, and he will answer questions about the efforts to conserve Maryland's dwindling turtle populations.

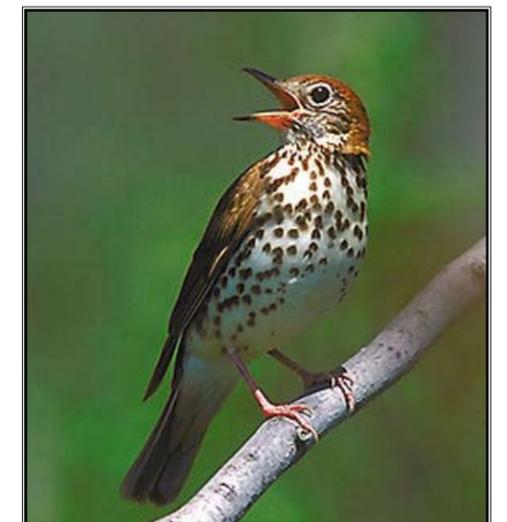
Dr. Stine has been teaching Environmental Studies at Johns Hopkins University for 35 years. He is a nature writer, radio commentator, former cinematographer for the National Audubon Society, and a well-known speaker about the natural world.

THE INTIMATE LIVES OF WOOD THRUSHES AT OREGON RIDGE By Dr. Kim C. Derrickson

Monday, April 20, 2009, at 7:30 PM

It may be hard to believe just now, but spring is only six weeks away and migrant birds will be returning from Mexico and other neotropical areas to breed in local forests. One of our most beautiful songsters, the Wood Thrush, will be among them and will likely be building its first nest around the time of Dr. Derrickson's April talk about the travails they have encountered in the woods of Oregon Ridge. Over the last decade, Dr. Derrickson and his Loyola College biology students have conducted a study on this melodic bird, and during this presentation he will describe its findings, focusing mostly on the singing and parental behaviors of the Wood Thrush and answering your questions about this amazing species.

Dr. Derrickson earned his BS degree from the University of Wisconsin, his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, and was a Research Associate at the Smithsonian before teaching courses on animal behavior, avian biology, conservation and evolution at Loyola College. He is the leading expert on another local migrant, the Northern Mockingbird, and has also conducted field research on the singing behavior and mating system of a Panamanian songbird, the Dusky Antbird.



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own handiwork is on display in the bows, arrows, and spears displayed in the indoor "Hunters Throughout the World" exhibit and the outdoor Native American site where students hike a mile in the moccasins, so to speak, of the Algonquians who once inhabited Maryland. Those of us who work closely with Kirk as volunteers or staff realize just how sweeping his personal touch has been, impacting every nook and cranny of our favored Nature Center and Park.

We are thankful for this realization now that Kirk has taken on the Director's position at Marshy Point, replacing Bob Stanhope who served as ORNC's first Director from 1980 to 1992. Kirk and Bob's combined influences will immeasurably and perpetually define Oregon Ridge Nature Center and Park, and now Marshy Point Nature Center as well.

Kirk Dreier earned a B.S. in Recreation and Park Management at the University of West Virginia and in 1983 became a naturalist for Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF). During his four years with CBF, he also worked as the sole weekend naturalist for Oregon Ridge. In 1987 he was hired full-time at ORNC, expanding his naturalist and managerial responsibilities. His night hikes became famous, attracting a core of devoted regulars. When Bob Stanhope was promoted to Chief Naturalist in 1992, Kirk served as Acting Director until he completed the County requirements needed to be promoted to Director.

Kirk incorporated his special talents into a variety of natural history programming, including edible and medicinal plants



and wildlife management. He initiated a wide range of Native American programs utilizing his rare skills in flintknapping, and bow and arrow making. He was pivotal in the development of the Native American program for visiting school children, a program unique to Oregon Ridge with teachers clamoring to register their classes. It became so popular that other nature centers sought Kirk's training to begin their own Native American programs. However, Kirk's honed skills, knowledge and fascination with the Algonquian lifestyle set him apart and teachers still persist in specifically requesting him for this program.

Kirk achieved recognition for introducing exceptional special events including Primitive Technology Weekend, Fort Garrison Feast and, more recently, Music in the Woods. Kirk is a gifted musician and once again used his talent to create a totally unique and lively event whereby musicians gather in the woods around the Nature Center on a May weekend and voluntarily perform instrumentally, vocally, and through dance, entertaining visitors of all ages. It is one of those events that makes toes tap and hearts sing and leaves listeners clapping for more.

Kirk Dreier has mentored an unknowable number of professional and avocational naturalists of all ages, including hundreds of budding junior naturalists who, as teenagers, have been members of a privileged volunteer group known as the Ridge Runners. Since the program's inception in the 80's, Kirk has helped train and manage these teens, sharing his knowledge

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and his infectious, child-like enthusiasm for all aspects of nature. His firm hand has provided the structure needed to help quite a few troubled teens survive these turbulent years. Many Ridge Runners have gone on to pursue careers in the environmental sciences and often return to seek out their first mentor. Some have even returned to work as naturalists at Oregon Ridge.

Kirk Dreier is one of Maryland's most respected naturalists and will surely expand on his reputable skills and talents at Marshy Point, earning the admiration of their staff and Council. The ORNC Council and staff want to thank Kirk for the inimitable footprint he has left on the Oregon Ridge Nature Center and wish him the best in his new endeavor.

**MARK YOUR 2009 CALENDARS
FOR THESE FREE EVENTS**

**May 2 and 3, 2009
10 AM to 4 PM
PRIMITIVE TECHNOLOGY WEEKEND**

**May 16, 2009
10 AM to 4 PM
MUSIC IN THE WOODS**

**JOE WARFIELD:
OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER'S
SHINING STAR 2008**

On December 15, 2008, Joe Warfield was presented with Baltimore County Recreation & Park's "Shining Star" award for his outstanding service to Oregon Ridge Nature Center. Joe was one of 44 exceptional volunteers from local recreation councils recognized for their excellent service to the county and their local communities.

Joe has been involved with the Nature Center for more than fourteen years as one of our truest, bluest Trail Guides and as the Chairman of the Display Committee. During his tenure as Display Committee Chair, exhibit development has escalated. Joe was a primary force behind the design of the Natural Resource Loop Trail, a self-guided trail containing exhibit stations with illustrated panels and written information about the natural and cultural history of the park. Overall, Joe has been closely involved in the development of over ten freestanding exhibits within Oregon Ridge, and his commitment to research and accuracy is evident in every one.

Joe is an excellent naturalist, botany being his special interest. He has led many walks for the Nature Conservancy and for ORNC, and he is an active member of the Worthley Botany Class. He shares his knowledge and enjoyment of nature as one of ORNC's diligent Trail Guides, a group of

hardy volunteers who we rely on to help lead hundreds of visiting school children on hikes through the forest, fields and streams of the Park. The staff can always count on Joe to come in on short notice to fill in for an absent Trail Guide. As one of our most experienced and knowledgeable guides, novice Trail Guides often seek him out to help identify a tree or wildflower.

Joe worked for thirty years in various capacities within Baltimore County's Department of Public Works. After leaving the County, he worked for MacKenzie and Associates and Patton Engineering before retiring. He has been married to his wife Catherine (Cas) for 37 years. Joe and Cas together have six children and are grandparents to twelve. Joe now spends much of his time working on the farm he and Cas bought in Reisterstown thirteen years ago. He enjoys playing golf and pursuing his interest in history as well as botany and natural history.

The staff here at Oregon Ridge wishes to thank Joe and all of our other volunteers for everything they do. Without them we wouldn't be able to continue our mission.



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Articles for the May/June issue are due March 20.

ATTENTION MEMBERS! EMAIL OR SNAIL MAIL?

In order to become more GREEN by saving paper and postage, the Council is considering sending the *Trailblazer* newsletter, the seasonal calendar and other mailings via email. We need to know your preference. Please send an email to info@oregonridge.org with your email address if you wish to receive your mailings in this paperless manner. Please include your full name and mailing address so we can correctly identify you on our database. If we do not hear from you, we will assume you prefer to continue receiving your mailings via U.S. Postal Services.



Your opinion counts, so don't delay!

