

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



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TIMONIUM, MD
PERMIT NO. 120

TRAILBLAZER

March/April 2010



Supporting Oregon Ridge Nature
Center and Park for 28 Years

Is Your Membership
Current?



Return Service Requested



(Graphic: <http://etc.usf.edu/clipart>)

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP, NOW!

Don't let those March winds and April showers keep you home. There's always something to see and do at Oregon Ridge. While you are here, remember to renew your membership -- registration for summer camp is coming up! To see if your membership is current, please check your mailing label for your membership status. "C" means current, "E" for expired, and "X" means this is your last issue unless you renew now.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ State _____ Zip _____

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 50 Sustaining |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Corporate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$12 Senior Citizen/Student | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Patron |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Non-Profit | <input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Lifetime |



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

IN THIS ISSUE...

Upcoming Speakers:

Master Gardener Kim Barnes explains how native plants improve your landscape and the environment on March 15. (Page 3)

On April 19, Photographer David Simpson talks about the making of his new photo book *LOCH RAVEN*, showing many of the stunning shots taken while kayaking throughout this local nature treasure. (Page 3)

It's Maple Sugar Season:

Join us for tree tapping and syrup making on February 20, 21, 27 and 28, from 10 AM to 4 PM. (Page 2)

Start your morning off right on March 6 and 7 at a good old fashioned Pancake Breakfast with all the fixings. Breakfast is served from 8 AM to noon each day at the Oregon Ridge Lodge. This is our big yearly fundraiser. Join the fun! (Page 2)

What's Ahead?

Check out our website for the Spring Calendar – www.oregonridge.org.

Mark your May calendar for the Primitive Technology Weekend on May 1 and 2, and Music in the Woods on May 15.

The Summer Camp Schedule will appear in the May/June issue of the *Trailblazer*. Renew your memberships now so you don't miss out.



(Photo by Scott Campbell, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/randomucl>)

THE HIGHWAY SENTINEL

by Shannon Davis

On long car rides, or even short ones, the Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – or Highway Sentinel – can often be spotted perched on utility poles on the lookout for potential prey. It may even be possible to view the same hawk repeatedly, as these hawks typically choose the same sentinel perch day after day.

The beautiful Red-tailed Hawk is the most common hawk in North America. There are at least 14 subspecies of Red-tailed Hawks with various colorations, although not all of them sport their namesake red-tail. They can be found all over North America, Central America, and the West Indies.

On the east coast Red-tailed Hawks can be identified by mottled brown and white above, white below with dark streaks and speckling across the belly (belly band), and the rusty red tail that appears whitish from below. It is a stocky and broad bird with rounded wings and a

(Continued on Page 4)

FEBRUARY IS MAPLE SUGAR TIME!

Will it warm up enough for the sap to flow? Will we be able to make maple taffy on the snow? Only Mother Nature knows! Whatever the weather, Maple Sugar Days begin February 20 and continue on February 21, 27, and 28 from 10 AM to 4 PM. All is free, so gather up your family and drive on over to Oregon Ridge to welcome this special season. 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.



WOOLLY BEAR PRE-SCHOOL!

Are you looking for a new experience to share with your youngster? Oregon Ridge Nature Center is starting a preschool program for children ages 3 and up that will meet on the first Wednesday of each month, beginning in March, from 10 AM to noon. We will read stories, make crafts, meet animals, eat snacks, and more! Topics and activities will be dependent on the season and the weather. This is a wonderful way to introduce your young children to nature and learn about the environment together! Please call to reserve your space. The \$2 per child fee can be paid in advance or at the door.

TRAILBLAZER STAFF

Editor, Design & Layout: Mary Jane Shanks
Managing Editor: Joe Salvaggio

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Writers: Shannon Davis, Kevin O'Neill, Courtney Peed, and Mary Jane Shanks
Photographers: ORNC Staff, Jim Curtis

OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER
13555 Beaver Dam Road, Cockeysville, MD 21030
410-887-1816; Fax: 410-785-1020 or 410-887-1816
info@oregonridge.org; www.oregonridge.org

Articles for the May/June issue are due March 16.

COME AND GET IT!

OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER COUNCIL'S

ANNUAL PANCAKE BREAKFAST

**Oregon Ridge Lodge
March 6 and 7, 2010
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
(Seconds on all, except sausage)

And Nifty Raffles, Too

Tickets at the Door

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

ONE FREE BREAKFAST IF YOU JOIN THE COUNCIL!



JOHN SMOTHERS: A Ridgie for All Ages

John Smothers became a Ridge Runner about six months ago. He learned about the program from a friend at camp and decided it might be something he would enjoy. He had proven himself to be a reliable caretaker of his own animals at home: He feeds, bathes, and regularly walks his dog Katy, and even brushes her teeth; his corn snake Hercules (or maybe Herculette) always has a clean tank, water and food, thanks to John's faithful care.

So it is not surprising that John has quickly become a very capable Ridge Runner who enjoys working with the animals, especially his pal Jack the starling. (Jack seems to be many a Ridgie's favorite, we suppose because of his ability to chat for hours.) John loves handling the animals. He is so good with them that he feels he is ready to handle the copperhead. But we want his parents to allow him to stick around for a while, so the copperhead will remain off limits until he becomes a full-time naturalist here one day.



Unfortunately, that day may never arrive. When asked what he would like to do when he gets older, he said, "I don't really know, maybe become a dentist." In the meantime, we hope John will remain here for several years and hone his avocational skills as a naturalist.

John is an intriguing chap, his interests bridging several generations. At age 13, his favorite band is U2 -- Bono would be pleased. He plays classical and electric guitar and loves to let off steam playing paint ball. He is in the 8th grade, is home schooled, and his favorite subject is history. He likes reading all types of books and he has an unusual hobby — he rows for a crew team. So if John does become a dentist, he will have a repertoire of interesting topics to talk about to his muted patients.

We asked John what he tells his friends about being a Ridge Runner and if he has tried to recruit any of them. Johns was honest. "There are pros and cons," he said. "I tell them if they don't like animals, don't bother becoming a Ridge Runner. If you do, sign up!" That's good advice, John, and we hope your friends will take it.

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 provides 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.

If you choose this option, just enter the amount you wish 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 \$4,000 each!**

We hope you will help by giving generously to the 2010 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 26, 2010.

Thank You for Helping Us Educate Future Environmentalists!

ORNC COUNCIL SPEAKER SERIES

NATIVE PLANTS IN YOUR LANDSCAPE By Kim Barnes

Monday, March 15, 2010, at 7:30 PM

Imagine landscaping your yard with trees, plants and flowers that have rare use for a hose, shrug off devouring insects, cost little to plant, require minimal maintenance, attract oodles of goldfinches, orioles, hummingbirds, Monarchs, and other migratory birds and butterflies, and are as green as green can be when it comes to cleaning the environment. Does it all sound too good to be true? Find out at Kim Barnes' *Native Plants in Your Landscape* presentation at Oregon Ridge Nature Center on March 15th at 7:30 PM.

Kim Barnes, a Baltimore County Master Gardener, will share some of what she has learned in her 15 years of working with native plants in Maryland. Find out what plants are native

and why they are beneficial to wildlife and local ecosystems. Kim will give listeners a basic introduction to gardening with natives, including information about selecting and purchasing

Maryland native plants and how to can incorporate them into your own landscape.

Kim is a member of the Maryland Native Plant Society and the Wiltondale Garden Club. Her Towson garden is certified by the Maryland Master Gardeners as a Baywise Demonstration Garden. She is also a member of the two project teams that designed and installed a new garden here at Oregon Ridge

Nature Center, as well as the plantings around the steps to the Oregon Ridge Lodge.



(Photo: Martin van der Grinton/NYPMC)

LOCH RAVEN RESERVOIR: Photographic Reflections By David Simpson

Monday, April 19, 2010, at 7:30 PM

Loch Raven Reservoir is a gem of nature separating the hubbub of Towson from the more rural northern Baltimore County. Created in the early 20th century as an essential part of the water system for Baltimore, this scenic lake and the surrounding forest attracts city dwellers and suburbanites who enjoy boating, fishing, birding, hiking and picnicking.

David Simpson, our April 19th speaker, has published a photo book featuring 100 stunning photographs taken on and around the lake. The highly artistic photographs displayed in *Loch Raven* expose David's utter love affair with his subject and entice others to explore this Maryland treasure. Sometimes looking like impressionistic paintings, his photographs capture ethereal views of rocky shorelines shrouded in mist, dazzling colors

of autumn trees mirrored on the water, and native birds and animals that inhabit the reservoir area.

David studied photography at the Maryland Institute College of Art. He is a film director, shooting mostly TV commercials, as well as a professional photographer.

David's fascination with Loch Raven spans over 20 years of driving across the reservoir to and from his Monkton home. The photo book idea emerged when he decided to combine hobby and exercise via a Native 12 kayak. David will present his photographs and tell

about the making of his book, including the humorous story about his kayak and its evolutionary role in this fascinating photographic journey. Book sales and signings will follow.



(Continued from front page)

short tail. Females are larger than males. In flight a good identification marker is the belly band and the dark forewing lining contrasting with the generally light underwing. Immature hawks are mottled brown and white above like the adults, but have streaks of brown and white below and a brown tail that is finely barred with grayish white.

Red-tailed Hawks are monogamous, mating for life. Right now is a good time to spot their magnificent acrobatic aerial mating dance. Migrants begin their courtship displays in late winter and early spring. Our resident birds also engage in aerial displays in early spring, but may continue throughout



(Photo: www.Komar.org)

the year. So keep your eyes to the skies for pairs soaring together in wide circles at great heights and males performing steep dives and ascents. Mating pairs may also chase or swoop after each other. If you are lucky, you may witness two hawks with interlocked talons spiraling toward the ground. It is quite a sight and well worth the time spent observing.

After mating, both male and female begin or continue construction of their nest. The nests are made of twigs and small branches and can get quite large (up to 6.5 feet high and 3 feet across) due to the fact that the nests are reused and expanded every year. The inner part of the nest is lined with grass, bark, pine needles, or dry vegetation. The female lays one to five eggs each year. Both parents incubate the eggs for four to five weeks, and feed the young from the time they hatch until they leave the nest after approximately six weeks. Great Horned Owls often take over Red-tailed nests for their own use. If this happens the hawks build a new nest or move to an alternate nest. Predation by Great Horned Owls is not significant.

The diet of the adult Red-tailed Hawk consists of small and medium size mammals, primarily mice, squirrels, rabbits, birds, reptiles, and carrion. Young hawks may eat worms, beetles, frogs, mice and snakes.

Red-tailed Hawks have keen eyes and are efficient hunters. They hunt by swooping down from an elevated perch to seize their prey with their strong taloned feet. While diving in the air they can reach speeds of up to 120 mph. Because hawks

are unable to move their large eyes in their sockets, they must rotate their entire heads to look in different directions. This type of vision is excellent for focusing on prey. For example, they can spot a mouse from a height of one mile. Unfortunately, this extended range of vision can cause problems for hawks in the human world. When Red-tailed Hawks focus on their prey they often cannot see oncoming vehicles or people at closer range or to the side. An interesting story: Once, while I was gardening, a hawk nearly collided with me and took a tumble through the air as it tried to secure its prey. I was a little too focused as well and did not see the hawk until the last moment.

The greatest threat to Red-tailed Hawks is shootings (although they are protected under the U.S. Migratory Bird Act), collisions with automobiles, human interference with nesting activities, and lead poisoning from eating food that contains lead shot. In addition, pesticides and habitat destruction threaten the long-term survival of the hawks.

If by rare chance you have not seen a Red-tailed Hawk in nature, you have surely heard their famous cry on television or in a movie. Hollywood likes their distinctive “keaaaaaah” call to such a great extent that they frequently use the noise for wilderness scenes, and even inappropriately substitute the cry for the cry of other predator birds such as eagles.

If you would like to see a Red-tailed Hawk for yourself, the Nature Center will acquire soon a Red-tailed Hawk that was injured by a vehicle collision.



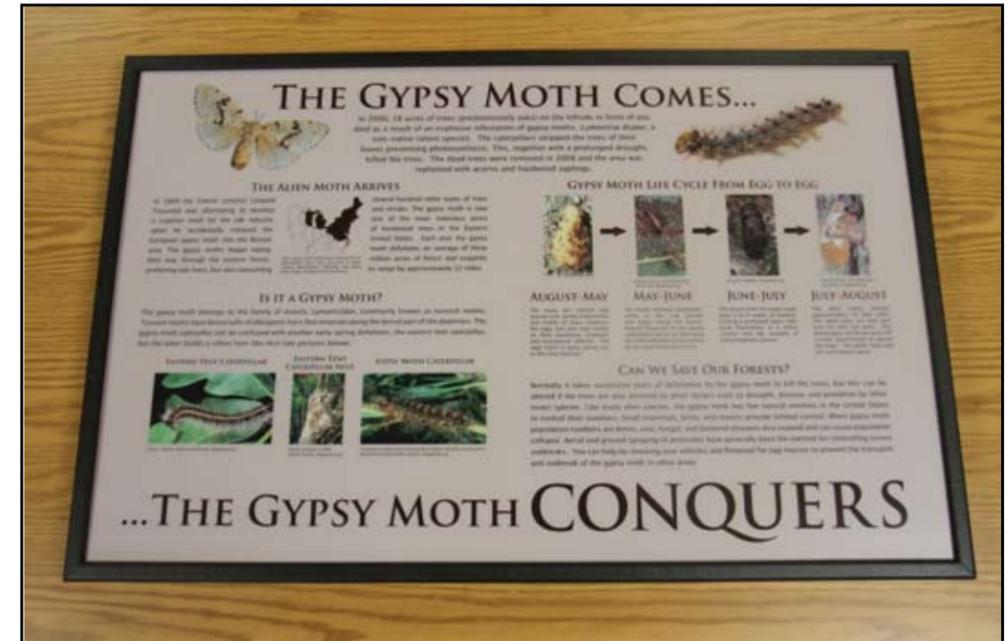
(Photo by Jim Curtis)

WHAT'S NEW AT OREGON RIDGE?

A Northern water snake is a newcomer to the Center and is already enhancing the watery environment in the greenhouse, affectionately referred to as the “Turtle Room.” Northern water snakes inhabit the same areas as aquatic turtles and terrapins, consuming mainly fish, frogs and other amphibians, crayfish, arthropods, and smaller water snakes. At this time of year, water snakes are coming out of hibernation and will be active and hungry. If you come upon a water snake, it may react to your presence in an agitated way. While water snakes can be aggressive, they are not venomous and usually choose to run if approached. A very athletic snake, they are lightning quick on land and even faster in the water.



Our newest outdoor display panel featuring the gypsy moth is now permanently in place in the gazebo that overlooks the area devastated by these invaders in 2006. The panel describes the life cycle of the gypsy moth and explains how to prevent another devastating infestation in our park. The panel faces out towards an acreage where a massive stand of chestnuts, oaks, and pines once grew.



MARK YOUR 2010 CALENDARS FOR THESE FREE EVENTS

May 1 and 2, 2010
10 AM to 4 PM

PRIMITIVE TECHNOLOGY WEEKEND

May 15, 2010
10 AM to 4 PM

MUSIC IN THE WOODS

Are you a talented musician? Or an amateur, but love being in the limelight? Would you like to show off your talents in a beautiful setting? If you answered “Yes!” to any of these questions, please sign up to perform at Music in the Woods! Musicians who play acoustic instruments are encouraged to volunteer their talent for this yearly event. You can even teach a short course for visitors or set up your own demonstration table. Just call the Nature Center at 410 887-1815 to reserve your time slot. We welcome newcomers as well as repeat performers.