

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



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TRAILBLAZER

Dec/Jan/Feb 2010



Supporting Oregon Ridge Park
and Nature Center for 27 years

Is Your Membership
Current?



**DRIVE CAREFULLY:
USE YOUR SEAT BELTS**

Scenes of Honey Harvest 2009



Photos by Bill Diegel

VOLUNTEERING The Gift That Keeps on Giving

By Council President Jack Kerns

Around the holidays, I always think of those who have made a difference in my life and for whom I am thankful. They motivate me to give back by volunteering. As a Trail Guide at Oregon Ridge, I feel *great* when I am sharing the wonder of outdoor walks with school children. There is such a sense of excitement and awe when they discover a snake or a toad or something they've never seen before along our trails.

Studies have shown that there are both health and social benefits to volunteering. Health benefits include reducing stress and risk of disease, living longer, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression and heart disease. Getting outside and exercising might also help with weight-loss.

The social benefits to volunteering include building confidence, meeting new friends, and creating more fun in life. Potential employers also look favorably on volunteer experiences, a bonus in this tight job market. Volunteering opens new areas for learning, experiencing and sharing information, as well as networking with those who enjoy similar interests. Volunteers expand these social benefits to the community by solving problems, strengthening neighborhoods, improving and connecting with the lives of others, and in doing so, transforming their own lives as well.

I have experienced many of these benefits during my time as a Trail Guide, both as a guide and a student. When guiding a group, I look forward to the changing



Volunteer Trail Guide Paul Waldman
talks with children about snakes

seasons and the varied focus of our walks with the children — maple syrup, insects, amphibians, habitats, or Native American life. Catching frogs takes me back to my childhood days in Western Maryland, and I enjoy chances to wade into the stream to find aquatic insects and to hike along woodland trails. On our monthly Trail Guide Brown Bag outings, when the Trail Guides become the students, I am reawakened to my own grade school field trips and that flush of childhood wonder and sheer joy at discovering one of the mysteries of the natural world. My doctors remark upon my physical abilities

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for a man of my age. I'm sure the physical activity of leading children through the woods has kept me sharper both physically and mentally than I would have been otherwise.

Serving as President of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council has introduced me to many new friends and allowed me to network with many other volunteer groups concerned with preserving our environment. For example, REI in Timonium recently invited the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council and other environmentally oriented associations to participate in the "Get Involved" event, an outgrowth of the Ken Burns' PBS special *National Parks, America's Best Idea*, to stimulate interest in volunteer participation in America's park system and environmental activities. Not only did we engage patrons in discussions of our activities and programs, but we also increased our own knowledge by talking with other concerned and dedicated environmentalists. I am always reassured when I meet selfless, dedicated men and women who are willing to give their time and talents to help secure the future of our world and the preservation of our natural environment.

Be more than a mere passive observer, be an active participant in the effort to restore and preserve our natural environment. Volunteer activities abound at Oregon Ridge Park. Depending on your abilities and time, you can be a Trail Guide, Council member, Ridge Runner, or a volunteer at the Pancake Breakfast, the Honey Harvest or Music in the Woods events. Assistance is also needed with gardening, tree planting, and trail maintenance. If you are like me, your gift of volunteering will bring you rewarding gifts in return. So please — VOLUNTEER!

TREE TRIMMINGS NEEDED!
For ORNC Holiday Programs

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

BY DECEMBER 1

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

YOU ARE INVITED TO A HOLIDAY PARTY

Come and help us decorate the Nature Center for the holidays and enjoy a party at the same time. We will have plenty of greens, pinecones, teasel, and other natural materials to make ornaments to decorate our trees and to take home for your own holiday decorations. The festivities are free. All we ask is that you bring your favorite holiday treat to share.

The merrymaking begins on Monday evening, December 14th at 7:30 PM. We will sing carols, roast chestnuts, string popcorn and cranberries, and feast on cookies and other delectables. It is a family affair, so bring your children, your neighbors and their children, and anyone else who needs some holiday cheer. Spread the word. Let's make it a real celebration.



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:

Skills, Snacks and Yack, Yack, Yack: December 10, 7 to 9 PM. Learn to make hand dipped candles. Bring your old candles to recycle if you wish. \$3/person. Must be 16+.

Crafts from the Past and Holiday Movies: December 12 & 13, 11 AM to 3 PM. We will be making holiday pomanders and punched tin ornaments. *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* will be shown in auditorium. Donations accepted.

Natural Ornaments: December 19 & 20, 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.

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By Artist Mike Short

control the deer population. While they are not big enough to prey on full-grown deer, they can take fawns or sickly adults. Fox are too small to take a deer, but will feed on the remains of a coyote kill.

These two canids are vital predators in our area, helping to control population explosions of rabbits, chipmunks, squirrels and other small mammals. Coyotes are large enough to prey on opossums, raccoons and even their cousins, the fox. While this may seem gruesome, it is necessary. Since cougars, wolves, bears and bobcats have been driven close extinction in our area, the introduction of coyotes is good for the ecosystem.

If you think these canids roam in your area and fear they may come into your yard, keep your garbage secure, put lids on compost bins and only compost the correct food items, and pick up dog feces from your yard. Feces are an attractive winter food source for coyotes since dogs eat foods containing meat. When food is scarce, canids become opportunistic and smell for anything that might be edible. Domestic dog poo is food not only to coyotes and foxes, but also opossums, raccoons and rats. So dispose of it in plastic bags and secure garbage bins just as you would with kitchen garbage.

If you want to photograph these animals, set up your camera at night when the fox and coyote are most active. You might be lucky enough to observe them hunting or scavenging. At this time of year you may also catch the courtship of these beautiful hunters. We wish you luck and good shooting – with your camera, that is.

Photographer Joel Sartore, who generously permitted the use his red fox photo, has a new book coming out in March entitled *Rare Portraits of America's Endangered Species*. If you would like to pre-order for a signed copy now, please contact: www.joelsartore.com.



COME GAZE FROM OUR GAZEBO

Through the efforts of the Council's Exhibit Committee, and with funding from REI Timonium, a gazebo has been acquired and installed along the Tan Trail, about a hundred yards north of the intersection of that trail with the Red Trail. This location was picked because it overlooks the hillside where in 2006 gypsy moths destroyed 18 acres of predominantly oak forest. The dead timber was subsequently removed and the area was planted with hardwood saplings to reforest the hillside.

As the years pass, it will be fun to stop at the gazebo and observe the progress of the newly planted saplings as they emerge from their plastic, protective tubes and reach towards the sky. Also, in a few weeks an exhibit will be in place within the gazebo, giving the origin and life history of the alien Gypsy Moth.

The gazebo provides some other added benefits: You can enjoy a very nice vista looking eastward to the residential and business communities of Hunt Valley, the Hayfields golf complex, and the structures rising at the County's new agricultural resource center off Shawan Road. And with a little luck, you may even glimpse some feathered or furred critters scurrying about or spot a raptor soaring overhead.



Jim Curtis

PLEASE NOTE:

The Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council monthly speaker for January will be announced at a later date. There is no speaker in December or February.

We are wishing for several stainless steel bowls for animals and a dish drying rack. Can you donate these items?

WILY AND CLEVER: THE TALE OF TWO CANIDS

By Courtney Peed, Naturalist

Now that winter is in full force, you might wonder how animals survive in harsh, cold conditions. Birds have a good food source from our feeders and from plants that have gone to seed. Chipmunks have been stashing food away for months in their burrows. And reptiles have reduced their metabolism to the point where they barely need food. But what about the carnivores? With small mammals hiding or hibernating, food is scarce for these hunters of the woods.

As I think about carnivores in our area, two spring to mind immediately: the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and the coyote (*Canis latrans*). Both are important to the ecology of our area and both are often misunderstood because of century old myths surrounding their predatory natures.

Foxes are regarded as clever and sly. They are immortalized in fairy tales and legends for either finding trouble or searching for ways out of it. But around Oregon Ridge Park, fox are so busy prowling their home territory in search of food, there's no time for trouble seeking. While these animals are thought to be solitary and shy, in fact they often travel in small family groups. In addition to being cozy nose warmers on cold nights, their white-tipped tails are used to signal or warn one another while hunting. Although it's rare to see a group of fox hunting, they can often be heard. Their yipping and calling is similar to a banshee howling at the door. Some compare their night calls to that of a crying baby. When a fox makes a kill, what isn't eaten at once is saved as a cache for later. Since they can live on about one pound of food per day, a cache can last a group of foxes for a fairly long time.

Males (dogs) seek out females (vixens) through a winter courtship of howling, yipping and scenting. Fox urine is quite potent, akin to skunk musk. You've probably smelled it while hiking at Oregon Ridge and wondered if Pepe la Peu was lurking nearby! Vixens will usually birth about five pups in March or April in a shallow den (usually an old woodchuck burrow). Dad and Mom bring

food the pups for the first month and then the pups (now called kits) join them on hunting forays. Within three or four months, they are hunting unaided, and by autumn they leave their parents to begin life on their own.

Another canid has recently inhabited our area — the wily coyote. Its name comes from the Aztec word, *coyotl*, but was anglicized into the name we use today. A highly adaptable animal, the coyote became more present in the west when pioneers and plain's settlers killed off wolves and cougars. Despite several theories, scientists are still unsure exactly how the coyote spread east. We have yet to actually see a coyote at the Ridge, but we have seen signs of this predator passing through. Since coyotes are nomads, it is hard to spot them without camping out in their territory.

Eastern coyotes are larger than their western cousins due to interbreeding with wolves in Canada that occurred when they were migrating cross-country. A solitary animal by nature, they may also travel in pairs or family groups of up to eight members. The coyote is also one of the only animals that may form a life long monogamous relationship. After a winter snowstorm you may see its tracks,

which are similar to a dog's but are kept in a single line. This is also true with the fox. These canids walk in single lines to cover their numbers and keep odors low. By walking straight and avoiding contact with plants, they conceal their presence much better than their domesticated cousins!

Coyotes mate in mid-winter and pups are born in the spring. Like foxes, they seek out an old woodchuck den to burrow into or enlarge. Pups are fed regurgitated food from their parents or other pack members. They leave the den in the summer and are independent at six months. Coyotes teach their pups to hunt like fox — through observation. They are currently the only large predator in our area that may help



Joel Sartore/www.joelsartore.com



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ANN AND JACK KERNS ORNC'S SHINING STARS 2009

Baltimore County's *Shining Star* volunteer recognition program has been a colossal success in recognizing the many outstanding volunteers who are crucial to the efficient organization and operation of a myriad of activities and programs sponsored by Recreation and Parks.

Jack and Ann Kerns were chosen as Oregon Ridge's Shining Stars for 2009. Jack and Ann began volunteering at Oregon Ridge just five years ago, but they have logged in enough hours to make it seem as if they have been around much longer. Both began as Trail Guides and continue to lead hikes for visiting children at least once a week. They enjoy nature, hiking, and children, a winning blend of interests for successfully acquainting children with the inhabitants and habitats of Oregon Ridge Park. What's their secret to a safe, productive hike? Jack puts it this way: "The one rule we have on the trail is: I am the leader and you stay behind me."

It wasn't long before the ORNC Council recognized the Kerns' dedication to ORNC and asked them to serve on the Council. In 2006 Jack was appointed as a Council Director

and Ann was elected as Council Secretary, a position she still holds. Jack has gone on to become President of the Council, beginning his second term in year 2009-2010. As President, Jack has faced some tough issues — a campaign to ensure that invasive gypsy moths were sprayed to avoid another devastating attack on our largely oak forest, diligent oversight in protecting the Park from expansion efforts by The Oregon Grille Restaurant, and the continuing efforts to find funding to refurbish our Wildlife Management Pond.

In addition to these important jobs, Jack and Ann find time to volunteer at the Honey Harvest Festival, Maple Sugar Weekends, the Pancake Breakfast, and other special events. They both enjoy photography and travel, most recently taking their camera on a trip to the Galapagos Islands. They also support their daughter's interests in showing Pembroke Welsh Corgis and participating in equestrian events for Goucher College.

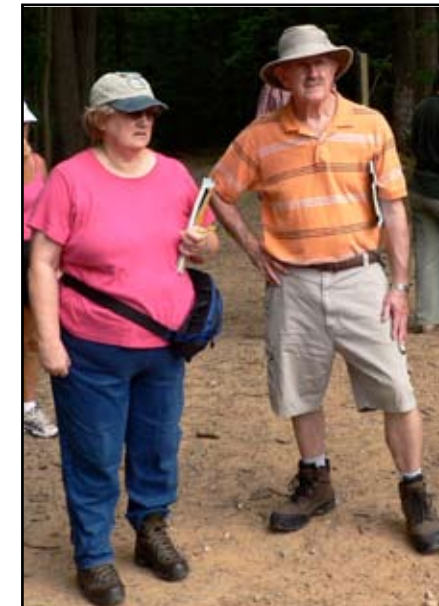


Photo by Jim Curtis

THE KEY TO BEING A TRAIL GUIDE

If you ask any of our Trail Guides why they enjoy trail guiding, they will say something like — I enjoy nature, hiking and children. That's it. That's the code, the password to joining the happy crowd behind the Green Door, the not-so-secret ingredients to becoming a good Trail Guide. If you would like to try trail guiding, just give us the password and come on in for Trail Guide Training on February 2, 3, 4, and 5. Training is from 10 AM to 1 PM each day and costs \$25 a person, which is refunded after you lead your first solo field trip.

Training occurs twice a year. During the February session you will learn about reptiles and amphibians and how to tap trees and collect sap on a maple sugar hike. Guest speakers will talk about the forest and its inhabitants, or insects, or stream life. The next training session

will occur in early September. In between sessions, you will be encouraged to follow along with a few of our experienced Trail Guides until you feel comfortable in taking out a group on your own.

Extra fun and learning occurs on the second Tuesday of most months, when trail guides are treated to special field trips to places like Ladew or Longwood Gardens, the Gunpowder for a canoe adventure, or Shenk's Ferry for a wildflower hike.

No prior experience or expertise is necessary, just a willingness to share your love of nature with youngsters. So please call today for more information.

Advance registration is not mandatory, but preferred. We hope to see you behind the Green Door.



Jim Curtis

HONEY HARVEST 2009



**Great Weather! Lots of People! Bees and Beekeepers!
Fun Activities! Bluegrass Music! Food!**



This year's Honey Harvest Festival was like many in the past, but there were some fresh twists. New this year was a children's book fair inside the Archaeology Lab, hands-on ice cream making lessons, and the "Starman" who brought a special telescope for viewing the sun.

The new enhanced the old, making this year's event a memorable triumph. Diane Jurchen, American Honey Queen for 2009, hosted this year's event. Visitors enjoyed hayrides, hive demonstrations, bluegrass tunes by the Lonesome Valley Mountaineers, face painting, demonstrations by



Friends of ORNC:

Mary Ann Bosse	Pat Krasowski
George Brauer	Bill LaBarre
Karen Brauer	Sue Leslie
Abby Cahalan	Alaina McCleary
Lauren Cahalan	Erin McCleary
Anne Canoles	Bob Meier
Noot Canoles	Gayl Meier
Jon Christiana	GINNA NAYLOR
Jeanne Cole	Chris O'Brien
Jackie Devine	Kevin O'Neill
Bill Diegel	Jim Potter
Millie Dreier	Dave Power
Jim Doyle	Katrina Restivo
Kayla Elson	Leslie Retti
Hannah Fowler	Nick Retti
Mary Genovese	Joe Salvaaggio
Susan Genovese	Marty Schugam
Theresa Genovese	Paula Schugam
Andrew Gingerich	Rashid Taleb
Mark Gingerich	Cas Warfield
Sara Gingerich	Joe Warfield
Carol Goorevitz	Megan Weeren
Mike Goorevitz	Linda/Gene Williamson
Tom Jones	June Woodward
Ann Kerns	Cheyenne Wright
Jack Kerns	

potters, blacksmiths and spinners, puppet shows, live raptors, a petting zoo, and learning about bees. Members of the Central Maryland Beekeeping Association displayed and sold beeswax candles, ornaments, jars of honey, honey cream, honeycomb, and other bee by-products. And you may have noticed that a few favorite activities were missing this year. They may reappear in 2010.

Our volunteers ran the show and helped everyone enjoy their day, insuring easy parking, friendly service, and on the spot guidance. We depend on our volunteers and they never let us down. So we want to thank the following individuals who gave up at least one day to help with our kick-off special event for 2009-2010.



Photos by
Bill Diegel

THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!

Dulaney High School Parking Volunteers:

Sophia Ansar
Jenny Bai
Patricia Bai
Courtney Cooper
Stacey Donadio
Allison Glasco
Andrew Heo
Jessica Kim
Daniel Kirby
David Song
Alexis Walls

Demonstrators and Participants:

Linda Allman (Three Bees Skin Care)
Richard Anderson & 87th PA Corp.
Janet/Jerry Beaumont (Beaumont Pottery)
Brian Brauer & 4th NC Corp.
Sue Duling (Three Bees Skin Care)
Jerry Feldman (Starman)
Nancy Green (Free Range Lamb Products)
Sharon Kollar (Kollar Nurseries)
Lonesome Valley Mountaineers Band
Walter Massey (Raptors)
Katherine Patterson (Spinning)
Grace Patterson (Petting Zoo)
Reb Staup (Blacksmith)
Kathy Woods (Phoenix Wildlife Center)
Carole Veihmeyer (Usborne Books)

MARY GENOVESE AN APPLE WHO FELL CLOSE TO THE TREE

Ridge Runner Mary Genovese is a leaf off the old oak tree, a stone off the rocky trail, a gurgle from the babbling brook — well, you get the idea. Her mom, Susan Genovese, has been a Trail Guide here at Oregon Ridge since Mary was just a child. Now at the age of 13, Mary has come into her own and has followed her mother's tracks right here to Oregon Ridge.

Mary became a Ridge Runner teen volunteer in 2008 because of her love of animals and her curiosity about what it would be like to work closely with native critters. Her only prior experience taking care of animals was feeding and walking her dog Mandy. Now she cares for a host of animals at ORNC, saying she especially enjoys working with the turtles. Tippy the Terrapin is pleased about that endorsement.



Bill Diegel

MAPLE SUGAR DAYS ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER

It's hard to believe, but the cold weather will be marching out of here in about three months. The nights may be below freezing, but the days will be warmer. That means the sap will be flowing from the maples and another maple sugar season will begin.

On February 20, 21, 27 and 28, Oregon Ridge will lead visitors through the park to tap trees and collect sap. Inside the warm, steamy sugar shack, you can watch as the sap boils away until it reaches just the right sweet consistency of syrup for tasting. An instructive video will be playing in the auditorium to watch either prior to or after your hike.

Mark your calendars now and come any time between 10 AM and 4 PM, but remember to allow about two hours to take it all in. And while you're at it, please also mark you calendar for our Annual Pancake Breakfast at the Oregon Ridge Lodge on March 6 and 7, beginning at 8 AM. Look for more details in the March-May 2010 newsletter.

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Articles for the March - May issue are due January 5.



Mary is good at recruiting, too. When friends inquire about being a Ridgie, she says, "I tell my friends that it is a fun job if you love animals. I would recommend the Ridge Runner program to all my friends." Hopefully some of her friends will join her and the rest of this unique group of teens.

Mary loves to be active and partakes in all kinds of sports. She especially loves swimming, surfing, and playing basketball. She also enjoys listening to country music.

Biology is Mary's most interesting class, and unbelievably, her easiest. That is a good thing since she wants to be a zoologist and learn more about animals and their habitats. Working here as a Ridge Runner is a productive first step towards accomplishing that goal.

Welcome to the team, Mary. We hope you will be here until you go off to college to earn that Zoology degree.