

TRAILBLAZER

Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council

Supporting Oregon Ridge Nature Center since 1982

Spring/Summer 2022

In This Issue:

- 2 — ORNC President's Column
- 2 — ORNC Speaker Series
- 3 — Bring Wings of Beauty to Your Backyard
- 4 — Restoring the Woodland Landscape
- 6 — Park Places: Turtle Island
- 8 — Ferns at Oregon Ridge Park
- 10 — Our Community Garden
- 12 — Zero Waste Pavilion Rental
- 12 — Maple Sugar Weekend-How Sweet It Is!
- 13 — Book Review: World of Wonders by Aimee Nezhukumatathil
- 13 — ORNC Book Club
- 14 — Kids' Corner -Build Your Own Bluebird Box

Contributors to this issue: Liz Briscoe, Ralph Brown, Pat Clagett, Molly Glassman, Jerry Jackson, Karen Jackson, Jessica Jeannetta, Kathy Kadow, Elaine Kasmer, Jeanne Pinto, Eszter Sapi, Glen Schulze, and Winny Tan

ORNC Council, Inc., 13555 Beaver Dam Road, Cockeysville, MD 21030 www.OregonRidgeNatureCenter.org
info@oregonridgenaturecenter.org; (410) 887-1815

Cover Photo by Patrice Bouchard on Unsplash

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Ralph Brown, MD, President, Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council

When Henry David Thoreau published his memoir, *Walden*, he wrote, "We can never have enough nature." We are about to find out if that remains true. The Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks has chosen a company, Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects, to produce a Master Plan that will spell out a vision for the future of the 1000 plus acres of Oregon Ridge Park. The Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council favors more preservation and improvement of what we already value.

The changes we will advocate for are: better hiking trails, a native woodland garden for education and enjoyment, conversion of some lawn areas to meadows, and a new nature center that can better fulfill its future mission. We want to ensure that all activities in the park remain financially equitable and accessible to every county resident. Over the coming months there will be ample opportunities for public input. If you treasure Oregon Ridge and are concerned about its future, please stay involved.

ORNC Speaker Series

By Jeanne Pinto, Coordinator

Thank you to the members and guests who joined us for our March virtual speakers series event with Dr. Sara Via, Professor and Climate Extension Specialist at the University of Maryland. Dr. Via shared thoughtful suggestions on how to make changes in our eating habits and food shopping/storage to lessen our impact on the environment.

In April, Maryland Master Naturalist Sara Yosua explains the reasons for replacing turf grass lawns, strategies for reducing the negative impact of lawn maintenance, and alternatives for the areas where turf grass has been removed. She joins us on April 25th for a virtual presentation of "Lawn Alternatives, A Mid-Atlantic Experience."

Our speakers give presentations on a wide range of nature-related subjects. We have been pleased over the years to bring in many experts in their fields. The support and suggestions from our attendees have been appreciated.

Please note that the speaker series takes a break in the summer months from June – August and will resume in September 2022.

The speaker series remains free of charge for all Oregon Ridge Nature Center members. There is a \$10 fee for each session for non-members.

Please consider becoming a member at \$30 per family or \$15/individual - there are so many wonderful reasons to join including the discounted programs and now the entire speaker series for free! We appreciate your support.

Please check our website for future updates to our Speaker Series topics and speakers: <https://www.oregonridgenaturecenter.org/programs-and-special-events/>

The Speakers Series takes place at 7:00 p.m. on the third Monday of the month in
·January ·March ·April ·May ·September
·October ·November

Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council is always looking for individuals interested in contributing an article related to ORNC's mission and goals. If interested, please contact us at info@oregonridgenaturecenter.org.

◆The newsletter staff reserves the right to edit all submissions.◆

Bring Wings of Beauty to Your Backyard

By Glen Schulze



Photo of bluebird by Joshua J. Cotten on Unsplash

With the emergence of spring comes the call of beautiful Eastern Bluebirds visiting our area. Spring is the time of year that they select their nesting sites and build their nests. When the male inspects the site and likes it, he will signal to the female by calling to her and waving a wing. After she inspects the site, if she accepts it then she is agreeing to be his mate. Other bluebird pairs may be nearby, and the males might compete for a nesting area. The winner of this battle claims the nesting site. From this point on, the bluebird pair will visit the site to assure that it is not overtaken by others. In April, once breeding season begins, the pair will frequent the chosen area and start nest building, then egg laying begins.

How can you bring this beauty and excitement to your backyard? Bluebirds will stay around all year if they have their basic needs. Here are some practices to help you invite bluebirds to your landscape.

Food: Provide food by landscaping with native plants to provide season-long blooms which attract beneficial insects for food.

Shelter: Add a bluebird nest box and protect it with a predator guard and baffle. (See p.14 for instructions on building a nest box.)

Space: Provide enough space for habitat, such as open grassy field or lawn area.

Water: A water source will help sustain them in a dry season. A heated water source will help them during the cold winter.

Monitoring: Protect the bluebird family by monitoring the nest box for predators and observing the young offspring.

Cleaning: Clean out the nest box once the young hatch and the nest box will be ready for the next family.

See these additional resources for more information:
https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/2021-03/FS799_WMgtEBluebird.pdf

<https://extension.psu.edu/managing-habitat-for-eastern-bluebirds>



Photo of bluebird hatchling by Martha Jonston

Restoring the Woodland Landscape

By Winny Tan, Naturalist, Vice President, Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council



Flowering serviceberry, a native alternative to Callery Pear. Photo by lqlqlq75 on Pixabay.

I remember driving down the Jones Falls Expressway with a friend from Chicago. Looking at all the leafy vegetation on the side of the highway she remarked how green Baltimore is compared to her city. I was dismayed to tell her that the greenery were things from other places, other continents, not native to our lands. We saw English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) climbing up trees, their roots penetrating the trees' bark; porcelain berry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*) and Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) vines taking over plants and vegetation. These are all what we call invasive plants which eventually stifle and outnumber native trees and ground cover as they compete for sunlight and space.

The native plants eventually do not survive this invasion, which endangers our landscapes and depletes the source of food and/or shelter that animals may need for their habitat. Careless planting of invasive species over the decades has caused them to spread across our ecosystems, which then destroys vital habitat and silences certain wildlife. According to the US Forestry Service invasive species have contributed to the decline of 42% of U.S. endangered and

threatened species.¹

Many invasive species become a selective food source for permanent and migratory animals. Once invasive species take over and destroy a food source, native species must be able to move on or perish.

If we start prevention and removal of invasive plants in our landscapes, this can start to restore the diversity of wildlife and bring back more sounds and colors of the seasons.

As a park naturalist, I began to learn more about identifying the trees and wildflowers in the park and how they correspond with certain animals at certain times of the year. I am now more aware of the different things that make up the forest in my own backyard. As I take walks or drive around, I can identify a tree just by its bloom or tree bark and not just by its leaf. I can hear a bird or a frog sound and identify the caller and if it's the start of spring, summer or fall. I can track the progression of spring by the sounds of the frogs and the different bloom times of ephemeral wildflowers.

I now recognize the vast white flowers of the Callery Pear tree (*Pyrus calleryana*), aka "Bradford Pear cultivar," that bloom in springtime. These trees line many of our roads, and can be seen planted throughout developed areas as far as the eye can see.

Unfortunately, the blooming Callery tree (cultivar) is an invasive species that has spread far and wide, from our landscaped roads and yards into our forest lands. This invasive tree has very little value for wildlife and is a threat to conservation.

Why did we start planting a tree with very little value? The Callery Pear became a go-to landscaping tree because of its compact and

¹ <https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/invasives/>

uniform size, shape, lovely blooms in spring and red leaves in the fall. It's also a landscaping favorite because very few North American insects will munch on its leaves. This creates a problem for birds — fewer caterpillars to find and feed to their nestful of babies. Birds especially need a wide variety of insects at the beginning of a bird's life cycle. Birds do eat the autumn fruits of the Callery Pear, but this spreads the seeds into new habitats, displacing native trees that could provide more nutritional fruits, seeds or nuts.

There are many more plants that have escaped our cultivated lands and now flourish unchecked in many wild places.

The land within Oregon Ridge Park has changed many times over the centuries. In the mid-1800's, the land was quarried for iron ore and marble. The trees back then were widely harvested for lumber and for firing up the iron furnace.

Today, the Oregon Ridge Park forest is preserved and valued as a natural environment that offers recreational and educational experiences to the public. Its resources also provide opportunities for ecological study, with nearly 900 acres of contiguous forest and 90 different plant species. Since the days when the trees were harvested for lumber, the forest has been left to grow back on its own to an oak-dominated community. The oak tree is considered a keystone of deciduous species. They attract and support a large variety of insects and animals. According to Douglas Tallamy (Entomology professor at the University of Delaware and author of *Bringing Nature Home*), oak trees (*Quercus genus*) support 897 species of caterpillars. Birds can forage in oaks for this high-value food throughout their breeding season.

For many who visit and hike through the woods at Oregon Ridge, the park is full of tall trees and plenty of animals and different plants. It seems like the perfect woods, but increased activities and invasive species are making an impact on the largest Baltimore County Park. In 2006, a gypsy moth infestation devastated 18 acres of oak trees and then a selective timber harvest in 2013

opened the canopy to allow more sunlight for oak regeneration but instead encouraged Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*), Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergia*) and wineberry (*Rubus phoenicolasius*) to creep in and take over in these sunnier habitats.

Over time, the forest canopy will grow over again and shade the forest floor, and the invasive, non-native plants could die out ... or not. These effects cannot be ignored. The establishment of invasive plants have already pushed out native plants and the wildlife that depends on them. Invasive plants are also known to alter soil chemistry and pH and change the hydrology in the area. The lasting effects will carry over for many more years, until native plants can adapt and re-establish or be lost. Time will tell if the oaks might grow again in the park.

The Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council (ORNCC) along with Baltimore County Recreation and Parks staff have plans to set aside a parcel of the park forest land as a woodland restoration project. The plan is to fence in the area to eliminate deer browsing, and then remove all non-native, invasive plants. Appropriate woodland perennials, shrubs, and trees will then be planted which are representative of a healthy Piedmont forest. These native species will go a long way towards creating the diversity our ecosystems need. This restoration area will be accessible to park visitors and serve as an educational resource for environmental programming.



Flowering Blackhaw Viburnum, another native plant. Photo by CyndyBlomquist from Pixabay

Story continues on p.11.

Park Places – Turtle Island

By Molly Glassman, Maryland Master Naturalist



Turtle Island from above. Photo by Jerry Jackson

Of the many spaces at Oregon Ridge that invite observations of nature's pace, few are as accessible as Turtle Island. Visitors can park in the gravel lot by the lake, stroll down the hill and head to the right, where the new boardwalk beckons. The restoration of this dome-shaped retreat is almost complete, thanks to the hard work of volunteers, Nature Council board members and Nature Center staff.

It began in late 2018, when the council competed for and won a \$5,000 grant from the Martin Marietta Texas (Md.) Quarry. "It was an early Christmas present," said Gary Anderson, chairman of the grants committee. "They [Martin Marietta] found it interesting that the project was at the lake, which used to be a quarry."

Before-and-after photos of the restoration tell the story. In 2018, orange plastic fencing blocked access to the broken, decaying boardwalk. Fenceposts collapsed down the eroded, weed-choked banks. To clear the perimeter so that county crews could start work, volunteer master naturalist Jamie Murdock spent hours yanking invasive vines like poison ivy and Japanese honeysuckle. Then heavy rains raised the lake's water level, further delaying construction of the new boardwalk.



Photo by Jim Curtis

By April 2020, however, the wait was over, and the boardwalk and fencing were finished. Eagle Scout Cooper Werner constructed new steps leading up from the boardwalk to the crest of the island. Two benches built by board member Ralph Brown, now the Nature Council president, bear plaques crediting Martin Marietta's donation. Only a few finishing touches, such as signage, remain on the to-do list.

From the new benches, visitors can view green herons and catch glimpses of kingfishers. Get closer to the fence, and in April you'll see American Toad eggs suspended in the shallows like strings of frosted glass beads. Look a bit deeper, especially around the fallen trees to the west of the island. That's where largemouth

bass lurk, Naturalist Michael Eversmier said, along with the lake’s sunfish – bluegills and pumpkinseeds.

“In late summer when we do the canoeing trips,” Eversmier said, “it’s pretty cool to see the magnificent bryozoan – a colony of organisms that can be as big as 12 inches around, like a big, translucent ball. In late summer you’ll also see freshwater jellyfish, about the size of your thumbnail. They don’t sting, but you can see them pulsating in the water.”

The banks of Turtle Island are also home to freshwater mussels. “When the water level drops, the raccoons will come down, find the mussels and crack the shells open,” said Eversmier, who has found the shells under picnic benches after the raccoons discard them.



Female Snapping Turtle. Photo by Kathy Kadow

And then there are the turtles: Eastern painted turtles, red-eared sliders and snapping turtles. As soon as the weather warms, the turtles line up on half-submerged logs to bask in the sun. One particularly large female snapper has become a favorite of Nature Center staff. Every year in late April she lumbers down from the lake, crosses the driveway and doesn’t stop until she reaches the wetlands of the Management Pond to the north of the nature center. There she lays her eggs before making the trek back to the water surrounding Turtle Island. Administrative Assistant Kathy Kadow has taken photos of the mama snapper each of the past five or six years.



Turtle Island in the 1970s.

No one knows when folks started referring to the bump of land in the lake as Turtle Island. Neither Bob Stanhope, the first ORNC director in 1980, nor his successor, Kirk Dreier, knew it as Turtle Island. Winny Tan, another former director, said volunteers likely named it informally. “As trail guides,” she wrote in an email, “it was always a delight to bring the school field trips to the island to see the turtles basking on logs.” Thanks to the restoration, it’s a delight once again.



Turtle Island, new boardwalk. Photo by Karen Jackson

Ferns at Oregon Ridge Park

By Elaine Kasmer, Maryland Master Naturalist and Master Gardener



Ferns. Photo by Mable Amber on Pixabay

Our park has many unique habitats -- from wet stream valleys, to sloping hillsides and rock outcroppings, to grassy meadows and 800+ acres of upland forest. (Upland forests occur where drainage is sufficient so that soils do not become overly saturated under the canopy of trees.) Ferns are often thought of as plants for damp and shady areas; however, they can be found growing in all of the Park's environments.

Ferns are an ancient form of non-flowering plant which reproduce through a complex "alteration of generations." The fern life cycle requires two generations of plants to complete itself. This is called alternation of generations. The released spores from a mature fern grow into a tiny green heart-shaped form called a prothallus. Fertilization takes place on the prothallus, which eventually results in the large leafy plants we typically see.

An easy fern to recognize in the park is the Christmas Fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) seen along the south side of the parking lot, and hanging from the slopes as you drive out of the Park. Its common name may be derived from the shape of the leaflets, called pinnules, which look like tiny Christmas stockings. Or possibly it is because they stay green well into the winter, and were once used extensively for Christmas arrangements.

You may see colonies of Christmas Ferns growing on a slope of ground which allows them to more easily shed snowfall and continue to photosynthesize all winter. Christmas Ferns are an easy fern to grow at home. They prefer well-drained soil and can often be found at native plant nurseries.

Other ferns in the park spread by underground runners which extend out from the plant and eventually grow roots. These ferns can blanket a large area as groundcover. Two common ferns found in the Park are the New York Fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*) in drier areas, and Hay-scented Fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*) which prefers a little more moisture, and looks lacier. (The “hay” scent is subtle.)

Look for these large colonies along the trails. Ferns are identified by many factors, such as the tapering of the frond (blade), and the divisions of the leaflets (pinna and pinnule), which helps to distinguish these two particular ferns.

Another way to identify ferns is by their spore-bearing parts. Sometimes the sporangia, arranged as small brown spots (sori) on the underside of the leaflets, are in rows or on edges or in herringbone patterns. Other times there is a separate modified leaf structure bearing the

spores, such as the reddish-brown clusters of the cinnamon fern, appearing early in spring. Or look for a frond with a gap in the middle, with small spore clusters, called the Interrupted Fern (*Osmunda claytonia*). More of our interesting ferns may be found near the streams, such as the Silvery Glade Fern (*Deparia acrostichoides*) or in soil-collecting crevices on the rock faces, such as Rock Polypody, (*Polypodium virginianum*).

Take a field guide with you (an excellent small and packable one is *Fern Finder* by Ann and Barbara Hallowell). Learn the vocabulary of fern parts, and their preferred habitats. Look for the spore bearing structures appearing in different seasons, and take a hand lens to examine them in beautiful detail. You will soon discover many more fascinating ferns at Oregon Ridge!



Fiddleheads. Photo by Jacques Gaimard from Pixabay

Our Community Garden: The Community Shares, the Earth Gives Back

By Pat Clagett



Photo of the Community Garden by Mary Baxter

The Oregon Ridge Nature Center Community Garden is located at the entrance into the Park, just off Beaver Dam Road.

Our Community Garden has been at the Center for over 25 years and offers space for seasoned gardeners as well as the novice, for growing vegetables, herbs and much more. The garden is divided into a total of 86 10-by-10-ft plots. Plots are available for rental by the season (see information below). The community garden is managed by the Oregon Ridge Nature Center.

The garden has become a great place to bring the community together. Winny Tan, Vice President of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council, notes some of the many rewards the garden provides beyond just food. "People talk to each other, learn different techniques, even share crops sometimes." Gardener Katie Vogel found during the pandemic that the Community Garden became indispensable for many. "It provides a peaceful outdoor space where people can safely gather, enjoy some healthy exercise and create a garden with their own hands."

Nurturing a garden plot means monitoring it and taking care of it all season long, sometimes even past the growing season. It can be "hard work" Katie says, but fellow gardeners "also look out for each other when they can't be here for a period of time." Planting, growing, and harvesting food is a hobby for some, a way for families to supplement their food sources, and an opportunity for neighbors to share their bounty with friends and family.

Some gardeners purposely grow specific food plants for donation to the less fortunate. Gardener Gerry Galuardi currently takes care of 7 separate plots and has been an active grower in the Garden for many years. Gerry donates a majority of his harvest to the Community Crisis Center. "It's a way to give back to the community. Feeding the body also feeds the soul – it shows a person, 'there is someone out there thinking of me.'" Other gardeners also donate to food banks and other charities.

The Garden's diversity has grown over the years – the variety of foods planted: from tomatoes, eggplants, zucchini, and pepper beans; to

strawberries, blackberries, huckleberries and fennel. The diversity of gardeners has also bloomed – volunteers of all ages, ethnicities, and experience.

The Community Garden is 100% organic – no chemicals allowed. Compost bins have been constructed at the garden where gardeners "contribute" leaves, grass clippings and other materials, while learning about compost from some of the "veteran" gardeners. A water hydrant and hoses are also provided.

Composting is the natural process of recycling organic matter. Compost becomes a valuable fertilizer that enriches the soil which in turn enriches growing things. For details about what materials are acceptable as compost, please visit <https://extension.umd.edu/locations/charles-county/master-gardener/composting>

Community gardens are a great option for people whose yards may be too shady for gardens and for those who live in apartments with no ground space available.

The garden is open from March 1 through mid-November. Plots are available to anyone; the cost is \$20 for ORNC Council members for the season, and \$25 for non-members. To help maintain the community face of the garden, gardeners are also required to complete 4 hours of volunteer work during scheduled work days. This may include weeding and wood chipping the pathways, weeding the fence line, working on compost, or other projects.

As of publication date, no plots are presently available for the 2022 season. However, if you wish to be added to the waitlist, please contact the Oregon Ridge Nature Center office for further information and to make an application.

Restoring the Woodland Landscape, continued from p.5

We are pleased to announce, as of March 31st, a state bond for \$100,000 to Oregon Ridge has been officially approved. Co-sponsored by Maryland State Delegate Michele Guyton and Maryland State Senator Chris West, the funds will be used for renovating and repairing the park trail system, as well as for the design of a woodland garden that will honor individuals who have helped preserve the park.

We also need to do our part as citizens to challenge habitat and species loss. Removing invasive plants from our properties is a priority. We can also preserve natural areas and replace common turfgrass with wildlife-friendly gardens. As they mature, many native plants need less attention – less fertilizer and less watering. Native plants add aesthetic appeal, help support birds and insects, prevent soil erosion and are great for water retention.

Instead of the Callery Pear, think Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*) and Blackhaw Viburnum (*Viburnum prunifolium*). There are so many

more native options to find at Maryland garden centers, plant nurseries, plant sales and swaps! Then enjoy your efforts, listening to the different birds welcomed into your new habitat and watching your colorful garden grow.

Resources:

<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/introduction-invasive-plants>

<https://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/callery-pear-bradford-pear>

<https://resources.baltimorecountymd.gov/Documents/Environment/bayscape.pdf> "Homeowner's Guide to Designing Your Property"

<https://cblpro.org> Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional (nonprofit resource)

<https://mdflora.org/bhwg/loss.html> - "The Rapid Loss of Maryland's Native Plants and the Wildlife that Depends on Them"

<https://resources.baltimorecountymd.gov/Documents/Environment/forestandtrees/orplanmain130308.pdf>

<https://www.allianceforthebay.org/2021/11/reforestation-opportunity-available-for-maryland-landowners/>

Zero Waste Pavilion Rentals

By Jessica Jeannetta, Director/Naturalist



One of the pavilions available to rent. Photo by Karen Jackson

Did you know that in Maryland, on average every person generates over 7lbs of trash each day? Starting in 2022, rentals at the nature center will now have less impact, help the environment and conserve our natural resources by participating in zero waste initiatives in the park.

This waste reduction effort better aligns our rental program with the mission of the nature center by educating renters on the importance of waste reduction and significantly reduces the amount of trash being sent to the landfill from rentals in the park.

To help ensure the program's success, the program is being provided to renters free of

charge by the Nature Center Council. Each rental will be provided with compostable products such as plates, utensils and napkins for their event. At the start of each event, park staff will set up a waste station that includes trash, recycling and compost receptacles. Staff will also be onsite to help answer questions and post signage above each bin to help attendees know what goes into each compost bin.

The Council will also be providing the compostable service in the park through Veteran Compost, a veteran owned and operated facility that collects food waste and turns it into compost and other products for you garden.

ORNC Maple Sugar Weekend '22 — How Sweet It Is!

By Jessica Jeannetta, Director/Naturalist

As the days start to get warmer and the winter's snow melts, the maple sugar season begins at Oregon Ridge. For the next few weeks, sap will flow through the trees, making it the perfect time to collect sap to make syrup. Sap collected will then be boiled to evaporate the water off, leaving behind the amber-colored, delicious treat we all know and love!

Nearly 600 visitors of all ages came out on a very cold weekend this past February to experience the process of Maple Sugaring first-hand. They had the opportunity to take a hike to learn to identify the perfect tree and tap a tree the old fashioned way! Then, they discovered the history of maple sugaring, made a spile, visited the sugar shack to see the evaporator in action and got a chance to taste sweet samples of maple syrup and sugar to complete their day!

World of Wonders by Aimee Nezhukumatathil

Book review by Liz Briscoe

World of Wonders is a compilation of brilliant, gorgeous essays exalting nature with curiosity and truth. Winner of the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters and Professor of English and Creative Writing at the University of Mississippi, poet/author Aimee Nezhukumatathil uses her observations of nature to illustrate her personal and family memories. The author is of mixed heritage, Asian Indian father and Filipina mother. Ms. Nezhukumatathil experienced challenges during childhood adjusting to many different homes as a result of her parents' job relocations. Her fondness for and keen observations of nature helped overcome the loneliness of ethnic isolation in being a brown child in a dominantly white world.

Each essay poetically describes domestic and exotic plants and animals, weaving together

the parallels of their behavior with her memories of her family, childhood, motherhood, and distant travels. Ms. Nezhukumatathil finds beauty and kinship expressed in each essay. Looking back to the many moves her family made, she understands the red-spotted newt spending years wandering the forest before it decides which pond to finally call home. The potoo (family Nyctibiidae), with their camouflaging skills, mimics her desire to blend in; and the axolotl teaching her to smile even when faced with unkindness. The firefly makes her think of their abundance in years past and the fact that her students have never seen them, even doubt their existence. She calls these essays "love songs to the planet," and invites us to embrace nature's wonders and joy.

ORNC Book Club

By Ralph Brown, MD, President, Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council

World of Wonders is just one of the books the Oregon Ridge Nature Book Club is reading this year. The book club meets eight times a year at the Park —roughly every six weeks. It's a place where people who share an avid interest in the natural world can discuss their thoughts and feelings about nature in a friendly and accepting environment. Following is a list of the eight books selected for 2022:

Book Club Meeting Dates and titles:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 12/6/21 | <i>Eager: The Surprising Life of Beavers</i> by Ben Goldfarb |
| 1/24/22 | <i>Pilgrim at Tinker Creek</i> by Annie Dillard |
| 3/7/22 | <i>World of Wonders</i> by Aimee Nezhukumatathil |
| 4/11/22 | <i>Lab Girl</i> by Hope Jahren |

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 5/23/22 | <i>I Contain Multitudes</i> by Ed Yong |
| 7/11/22 | <i>Owls of the Eastern Ice</i> by Jonathan Slaght |
| 8/22/22 | <i>The Story of the Earth in 25 Rocks</i> by Donald Prothero |
| 10/3/22 | <i>The Wild Places</i> by Robert Macfarlane |

The greatest challenge for the book club each year is selecting just eight books out of the wide body of literature — both fiction and non-fiction, both past and present — that can deepen our understanding of the sublime and miraculous world that we inhabit.

All are welcome to join any of the 8 sessions, whether you have read the book or not. If interested, please register online www.oregonridgenaturecenter.wildapricot.org.

Please join us!

Spring/Summer 2022 13



Kids' Corner

Build Your Own Bluebird Box

By Eszter Sápi, Graphic Designer

Building your own bluebird box is a great weekend project! This project might be more appropriate for older kids and teenagers. Have an adult around to supervise and help with handling sharp tools!

There are many plans available online with slightly different designs and details. Some of the important things they all agree on are:

Entrance hole: Eastern bluebirds need a 1.5" entrance hole.

Wood: Use locally available, weather-resistant, untreated wood.

Placement: Bluebirds prefer open places, away from houses and trees.

Mounting: Mount the birdhouse on a pole rather than a tree; this will help keep predators such as snakes, squirrels, or raccoons at bay.

Materials:

About 7' of 1"x 8" (actually measures 0.75" x 7.5") pine lumber, #8 (1-5/8") screws, wood filler/caulk

Tools: Handsaw, drill, driver, ruler, pencil

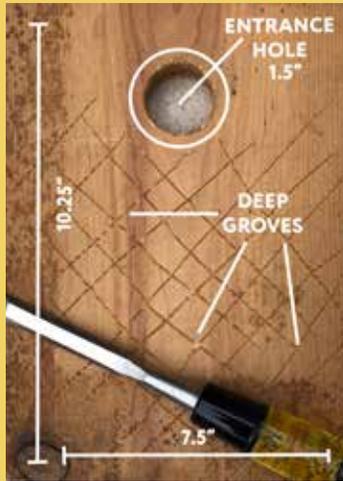
Directions:

1. Cut 1 Front panel: 7.5" wide and 10.25" tall. This will leave a ½" vent strip at the top on the front panel when the birdhouse is assembled. Cut a 1.5" entrance hole about 2" down from the top. Make some deep grooves on the inside of the panel; this will help the chicks to climb.
2. Cut 2 Side panels: 7.5" wide and 10.75" tall in the front, 12.25" in the back. This allows for the roof to slightly slope forward, providing better protection from the elements. Cut 1 Back panel: 7.5" wide and 12.25" tall. Will need some sanding for the roof to properly attach.
3. Use a 5/8" drill bit to make vent holes in the back and the side panels, about 1" down from the top and 1.5" in from each side.
4. Cut 1 Bottom panel: 7.5" wide and 5.75" tall, with the corners cut off and a 5/8" vent hole in the center.
5. Cut 2 Roof panels: The roof should have a large overhang (at least 2" or 3") on all sides. This will shield the birdhouse entrance from rain, and discourages predators from reaching inside from the top.
I used 2 panels of 7.5"x 13". I also used some woodfiller to fill the slight gap between the two panels to keep the rain out.
6. Pre-drill holes and assemble panels with screws.

Attach your finished bluebird box to a pole about 6 feet off the ground in an open area that gets lots of sunshine. Enjoy the bluebirds!

Images:

1.



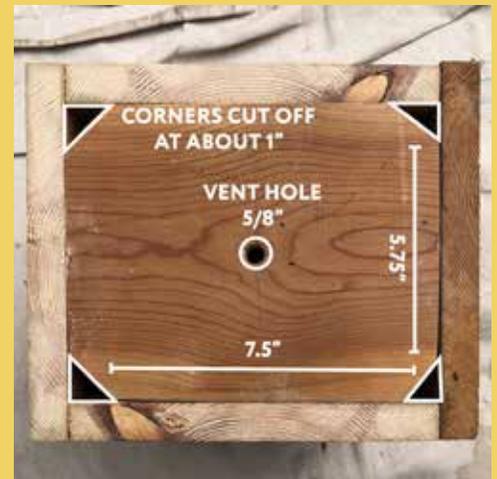
2.



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4.



5.



6.



Photos on this page by Eszter Sápi.

Resources:

I created a simplified version of the plan provided by Audobon at <https://www.audubon.org/news/diy-build-bluebird-box>



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