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# TRAILBLAZER

APRIL/MAY/JUNE 2008



Supporting Oregon Ridge Park  
and Nature Center for 26 years

Is Your Membership  
Current?

## WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

### ORNC COUNCIL CONCERNED OVER OREGON GRILLE'S REZONING REQUEST

by Martin S. Schugam, Ph.D.  
Environmental Issues Chairman ORNCC

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Oregon Ridge Nature Center & Park Council  
13555 Beaver Dam Road  
Cockeysville, Maryland 21030

## THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS! IT WAS THE BEST PANCAKE BREAKFAST EVER!



Paul Waldman and Joe Salvaggio (left) work hard in the kitchen.



C. Kim Jones (left) serves breakfast to ORNC friends.

Erin McCleary (below center) cooks her upteenth pancake.



Dena Adle (right) serves juice.



Holly LaBarre (above) displays her pouring technique.



The Executive Board of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council is very concerned by an application of the Oregon Grille Restaurant (hereafter referred to as *the Grille*) to change its zoning from RC4 [watershed protection] and RC7 [resource preservation] to BL [business local--small scale commercial]. The Grille operates on *parkland property* that is leased from the County and is contiguous with the Oregon Ridge Nature Center and Park. Any change in the zoning, particularly a change that allows all the uses of BL zoning, will have a direct impact on the Nature Center and Park. Among the reasons for the rezoning request, is a desire to hold outdoor events on the restaurant's patio, such as parties and weddings. Because of the potential impact of changing the Grille's zoning classification to Small Business, we felt it important to inform ORNC members and other newsletter readers what was at stake.

We hope you will take some time to carefully review the following concerns and voice your position with the persons listed at the end of this article.

Our concerns are as follows:

1. **Increased noise pollution:** Noise from outdoor events at the Grille, especially amplified music, will easily carry over to the Nature Center and through other parts of the park. This can be disruptive to on-going Nature Center programs such as the annual Honey Harvest Festival, Maple Sugar Weekends, and guided nature walks, as well as to citizens bird watching or hiking trails and to

(Continued on Page 2)



(Continued from Front Page)

the numerous school groups that receive nature education at the park. Amplified noise also can be disruptive to the wildlife of the park (e.g., to nesting birds).

- 2. **Increased road traffic congestion:** The large events that would be held would increase traffic congestion in the area. This might interfere with major Nature Center special events, such as the Honey Harvest, Maple Sugar Weekends, annual Pancake Breakfast, Primitive Technology Weekend, and Music in the Woods. This is especially problematic because Baltimore County is developing an Agricultural Resource Center and Farm Park on property located on the corner of Shawan and Cuba Roads. While the County contracted for a traffic study to address expected increased traffic resulting from the AG Center, the study did not consider the compounding effect if the Grille zoning request is approved.

**. . . increased lighting, combined with traffic, parking congestion and noise, will make visiting the Nature Center and its surrounding lands less desirable. Fewer citizens and groups might opt to take advantage of the Park's resources and programs.**

The increased traffic might discourage some families and individuals from visiting and enjoying the park or Center. For more information on the AG Center, please see:

[www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/environment/landpreservation/agcentermain.html](http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/environment/landpreservation/agcentermain.html)

- 3. **Increased parking congestion:** Currently, patrons and staff of the Grille have run out of parking space on the Grille's parking area. As a result, they park increasingly further up the driveway to the Nature Center, beyond the Center's gates. If weddings and other large events were to be held at the Grille, a significantly larger number of cars are likely to park on the Center's driveway or perhaps the Center's parking area itself. Families, school groups, and individuals visiting the Park might find that they are unable to find a parking space. This could become especially problematic if a major event at the Grille were to occur at the same time the Nature Center has one of its major events.
- 4. **Disruptive lighting:** Lighting of the Grille's outside, evening events would be disruptive to night hikes and campfire programs, as would music amplified from these events. In general, increased lighting, combined with traffic, parking congestion and noise, will make visiting the Nature Center and its surrounding lands less desirable. Fewer citizens and groups might opt to take advantage of the Park's resources and programs.
- 5. **Increased water pollution of trout stream:** Increased car

parking and expansion of the blacktopped parking area to accommodate larger crowds can lead to runoffs of contaminants from cars into the nearby trout stream.

- 6. **Increased thermal pollution of trout stream:** If the amount of blacktopped parking surface is increased, there is a greater risk that the temperature of the water run-off will increase during rain events, impacting the health of the trout who inhabit the streams. Trout are extremely sensitive to minute temperature fluctuation.
- 7. **Reduction of wildlife habitat:** Any further expansion of the parking lot and creating an area for large tents to accommodate parties would result in reducing the meadows area. Meadow areas are particularly important to certain types of animals (such as bluebirds) and sun-loving plant species. Also, part of the meadows area is used for research by Towson University and the Long Range Ecosystem studies.

The Bykota Senior Center uses part of the field for organic gardening. Too many habitat areas of the State have been taken over for commercial or residential use, causing birds and animals to disappear or move closer to where people live or work. It is important to retain as many natural areas as possible to reduce air pollution (given that plants and trees filter out pollutants) and to reduce the expansion of water pollution from runoffs from paved areas. It is vital to have places of natural beauty where students, adults, and families can enjoy the outdoors and learn about nature.

- 8. **Precedent set:** Granting the requested zoning change would set a dangerous precedent, making it easier for the Grille and other businesses to increasingly commercialize the area. Having business zoning *on parkland property* is not appropriate, given the special conditions that the Grille originally agreed to, not to mention the natural beauty of the site and its surroundings.
- 9. **Past Grille efforts:** This re-zoning request should be viewed in the context of the Grille's continued attempts to expand its use of the property. In 2004, through a zoning appeal and efforts to change its lease, the Grille *unsuccessfully* tried to get approval to expand its parking area and hold outdoor events. Subsequently, the Grille blacktopped its parking area, even though the restaurant is required to have a permeable parking area. Also, the Grille established more parking area/spaces than they were permitted and installed large permanent umbrellas, cemented into the ground, in its outside seating area. (Continued on Page 3)

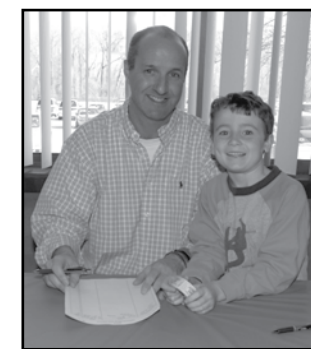


Pancake Crew Chief, Bill LaBarre (far left) closely monitors Cooks (left to right) Sue Leslie, Kathy McAllister, and Jaime Anthony.

Jeanne Cole (below) does a great job coordinating our pancake volunteers!

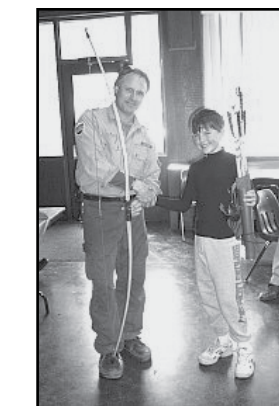


Diane Gleason mixes batter



John and Michaels Canoles sell Box Raffle Tickets

Tommy Cullen wins Kirk Dreier's bow and arrows (below)



**OUR VOLUNTEERS ARE THE GREATEST!**

- |                   |                  |                  |                     |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Dena Adle         | Millie Dreier    | Jerry Kirkwood   | Sammi McDaniel      | Polly Roberts    |
| Andy Anders       | Winnie Dreier    | Laura Kojak      | Bob Meier           | Scott Roberts    |
| Jaime Anthony     | Kayla Elson      | Bobbie Kottler   | Gayl Meier          | Joe Salvaggio    |
| Griff Atkinson    | Gretchen Fisher  | Pat Krasowski    | Katie Merrey        | Eric Schachtner  |
| Becky Burger      | Hannah Fowler    | Kathy Kronner    | Dean Merritt        | Marty Schugam    |
| Kim Borofka       | Brigitta Geckle  | Donald Kronner   | Bradley Moore       | Paula Schugam    |
| Emily Buonsignore | Matthew Geckle   | April LaBarre    | Ruth Moore          | Mary Scott       |
| Mike Burns        | Mary Genovese    | Bill LaBarre     | Mary Morris         | Marie Servary    |
| Maryann Busse     | Susan Genovese   | Holly LaBarre    | Ginna Naylor        | Mary Jane Shanks |
| Anne Canoles      | Theresa Genovese | Melissa Lamborn  | Ellen Obenshain     | Rachel Sherman   |
| Noot Canoles      | Mark Gingerich   | Sue Leslie       | Christopher O'Brien | John Stetka      |
| John Canoles      | Diane Gleason    | Cassie Linardi   | Kevin O'Neill       | Carolyn Thim     |
| Krista Canoles    | Christine Hart   | Austin Luera     | Beth Peterson       | Dick Thim        |
| Michael Canoles   | Donald Hart      | Xanne Luera      | Ben Poscover        | Emily Wagner     |
| Sharon Casey      | Geraldine Hisle  | Chip Luera       | Ruth Poscover       | Paul Waldman     |
| Jim Clyburn       | Lisa Hopkins     | Bobbie Martin    | Jim Potter          | Irina Ward       |
| Nancy Clyburn     | Don Hughes       | Walter Massey    | David Power         | Cas Warfield     |
| Jeanne Cole       | Kim Jones        | Kathy McAllister | Karen Raidma        | Joe Warfield     |
| Jim Curtis        | Nancy Jones      | Erin McCleary    | Liivi Raidma        | Rachel White     |
| Joycelyn Curtis   | Tommy Jones      | Angie McDaniel   | Sue Reif            | Lou Witt, Jr.    |
| Bill Diegel       | Anne Kerns       | Steve McDaniel   | Ray Reinsfelder     | June Woodward    |
| Jackie Divine     | Jack Kerns       | Katie McDaniel   | John Rigley, Sr.    | ORNC Staff       |

**2008 ATTENDANCE WAS THE TOPS!**



**WE SET A RECORD!**

Record attendance – 1540 breakfasts served! Record profit – close to \$8000! And record fun – it’s true, the more the merrier! Thanks, David Power, for such good publicity.

**Thank You, Diners!  
Thank You, Volunteers!**

Jeanne Cole diligently lined up 109 faithful workers who handled everything from taking in admissions to the all-important jobs of cleaning tables and kitchen duty. Noot Canoles motored back and forth to Sam’s Club to buy all of the groceries, using an extensive list carefully prepared by Cas Warfield. Once again Ginna Naylor arranged with Cambridge Yacht Club for the sausage, which was grilled to juicy perfection by Kevin O’Neill, Joe Warfield, Dick Thim (see photo above right) and Bill Diegel, Lou Witt, and Bob Meier. And of course, Bill LaBarre captained the hearty cooking crew who flipped in excess of 8000 fluffy and delectable pancakes.

Master of Ceremonies Walter Massey (above center) did a masterfully hilarious job of making a very difficult job look fun, keeping the festivities hopping with all sorts of announcements and \$.25 raffles. The combined raffle intake made up a large percentage of the profits that will go to several ambitious projects, which hopefully includes revitalizing the Wildlife Management Pond. Artist Tim Donovan donated an original egg tempera painting of a chipmunk in a woodland setting, won by the O’Roarke family. A neat little chap named Tommy Cullen won Kirk Dreier’s handcrafted bow with a dozen arrows and leather quiver. John Canoles brought in \$2083 with the



box raffles, soliciting and receiving generous donations from Oregon Ridge Beach, Valley Motors, Butler Store & Liquors, Cranbrook Liquors, The Wild Bird Store, Turf Valley Hotel & Resort, the Oregon Grille Restaurant, Boordy Vineyards, the Phoenix Wildlife Rehab Center, and Ladew

Topiary Gardens. The thirteen different box raffles included a unique necklace beautifully designed by budding artist Courtney Peed, an ample wine basket put together by Ginna Naylor who also contributed to its contents as did Jeanne Cole, an Ipod donated by Polly and Scott Roberts, a Power Flier contributed by Henry Leskinen, and a Butterfly Tree house given by Michael and Krista Canoles.



When not filling their bellies with pancakes and sausage, diners spent their time chatting with friends and listening to traditional and cultural music performed by The Dulcimer Band (above right) with Winnie Dreier, Griff Atkinson, and Ben Poscover on mountain dulcimer accompanied by Kirk Dreier on guitar and clawhammer banjo, and The Oregon Ridge Band with Kirk Dreier on clawhammer banjo, Winnie Dreier on mountain dulcimer, Courtney

Peed on mandolin, Andy Anders on guitar, and special guest star Christopher James on Mandolin. In between, visitors bought maple syrup and maple candy, yearly memberships to the ORNC Council, pansies and primroses obtained by Polly Roberts from Radebaughs, and nifty nature items from the Gift Shop, manned by Anne Canoles and family. Anne is also the Council treasurer and works especially hard during the breakfast keeping the money straight and preparing the final tallies.

It was a great Pancake Breakfast and a great Maple Sugar Season! Thank you, all! **MJS**

(Continued from Page 2)

Because of our concerns, we have sent letters to the following, outlining our opposition to the re-zoning request: Baltimore County Councilman T. Bryan McIntire; the Baltimore County Planning Office; Chairman of the Baltimore County Planning Board; and Mr. Robert Barrett, Director of Recreation and Parks for the County. We are fortunate that Councilman McIntire offered to meet with us and a meeting has been scheduled for early April.

**SEND YOUR LETTERS NOW AND HELP PROTECT THE PARK!**

If you are interested in voicing your position on this important rezoning issue, please send letters as soon as possible to:

The Honorable T. Bryan McIntire Baltimore County Council Old Court House 400 Washington Ave. Towson, Maryland 21204	Mr. Edward J. Gilliss, Chairman Baltimore County Planning Board 401 Bosley Avenue Room 406 Towson, Maryland 21204
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You can have your voice heard in person by attending and/or testifying at the 7:00 PM., June 24, 2008 County Council public hearing on District 3 zoning issues (which includes the Oregon Grille issue). The hearing is being held at the Loch Raven Senior High School. Persons testifying should sign in at 6:00 p.m.

**ORNC COUNCIL SPEAKER SERIES**

**HEALTH OF THE FOREST  
AT OREGON RIDGE  
Leonard Wrabel, Forester**

**Monday, April 21, 7:30 PM**

Professional Forester Leonard Wrabel has recently conducted a survey of the forest at Oregon Ridge, including an inventory of the trees. Among other things, he found that there are twenty-two separate stands of trees in the forest. Wrabel will present his findings at the April 21 meeting of the Nature Center Council. He will discuss: How the forest developed after the area was cleared 140 years ago; the current health of the forest; how well the forest is regenerating; and the effect of the deer population, invasive plants, and gypsy moths on the park.

Len Wrabel is a member of the Maryland Forest Association and Society of American Foresters, with thirty years of experience in the field. He worked for the U.S. Forest Service in Pennsylvania and spent ten years with the Maryland D.N.R. Forest Parks and Wildlife Service. For two years he worked for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed as a forester, specializing in Watershed Protection, Land Use Planning, Forest Stewardship and Forest Buffer Management.

In 1986 Len Wrabel started working for Mar-Len Environmental, a family-owned forestry and environmental business in Westminster, Maryland. **KO**

**PHOTOGRAPHING THE NIGHT SKY  
Timothy Kent, Astrophotographer**

**Monday, May 19, 7:30 PM**

Did you know that you could take beautiful celestial images with a simple “point and shoot” digital camera? Timothy Kent has written a book on digital astrophotography for beginners. Kent will show some of the photographs he has taken and he’ll demonstrate how amateur stargazers of any age can enhance their enjoyment of this hobby by taking pictures of the night sky with or without a telescope. Kent challenges the concept that astrophotography has to be an expensive hobby. This talk will appeal to all who enjoy the experience of looking up at night and want to take that enjoyment to the next step by photographing the moon, planets and stars on a shoestring budget.

Tim Kent is a Starlab portable planetarium resource teacher for Baltimore County Schools, teaching astronomy concepts to children at grade levels K through fifth grade. He has combined his interests in astronomy and photography by writing “StarQuest - A Beginner’s Guide to Digital Astrophotography.” **KO**





**MUSIC IN THE WOODS**

**May 10, 2008  
10 AM – 4 PM**

**IT'S FREE!**

The Nature Center staff is looking forward to the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual traditional music festival to be held on May 10<sup>th</sup> (*rain date 5/11*) here in the woods! We have already received many applications from new groups who want to play, as well as from many of the groups who performed last year, including The Oregon Ridge Nature Center Band. Remember that we are still looking for individual performers. You don't need to be a professional, just possess a love of traditional music and a willingness to share with others.

This year we will have English Country dancers from historic Jerusalem Mill performing and teaching the rudiments of this classic dance form. The Carroll County Cloggers are returning and we may even be treated to some traditional African dance forms.

We will be repeating our Dulcimer Building Workshop behind the Archaeology Lab, so **call NOW to make your reservation!** Don't miss this opportunity to build your own instrument!

The ORNC staff have crafted ten fancy didgeridoos for sale, so come early to get yours before they sell out. And don't forget to take a chance on the raffle for a ukulele.

Bring your family and enjoy a unique afternoon of community fellowship and music. If you have your own instrument, bring it along and join in on a jam session. It is going to be a great day of music and fun, so please come on out to. . .

**MUSIC IN THE WOODS!**

**JOIN OUR ANNUAL PICNIC  
June 16, 6:00 PM**

Swim and canoe in the lake. Relax on the beach. Take a woodland stroll. Grill hamburgers, chicken, or whatever else you bring from home. Sing songs around the campfire to guitar and banjo music played by Director Kirk Dreier and his strumming buddy, Andy Anders. Roast marshmallows and make s'mores over hot coals.

Where can you go to have so much fun? Right here at Oregon Ridge Lake on June 16<sup>th</sup> at the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council's Annual Picnic, beginning at 6:00 PM. Come with your family and bring along some friends, too. It's free! Just bring your own burgers and hotdogs to grill and other picnic fare. We provide the grills and charcoal.

We hope to see you there!



**TRAIL BLAZER STAFF**

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Managing Editor: Joe Salvaggio

Writers: Mike Burns, Kirk Dreier, Kevin O'Neill, Courtney Peed, Marty Schugam, Mary Jane Shanks

Photographs by Jim Curtis, Bill Diegel, ORNC Staff

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[ornc@bcpl.net](mailto:ornc@bcpl.net); [www.oregonridge.org](http://www.oregonridge.org)

We encourage members to submit articles of interest. Please note that the deadline for articles for the September/October issue will be July 8, 2008.

Oregon Ridge Nature Center and Park are facilities of the Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks, supported by the all-volunteer Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council.

**XANNE AND CHIP LUERA, IRINA WARD  
SAVE MAPLE SUGAR DAYS**



How did Chip, Xanne and Irina save the day? Xanne planned and put together a fabulous lunch for all of the Ridge Runners and all of the adult volunteers as well! Chip cooked he beans and kept the franks hot and ready to eat! Irina brought fruit, drinks, and chips. Just look at the wonderful spread in the photograph below.

The Luera's and Irina are the first to provide such a luncheon for all the staff and volunteers in the nearly 25 years we have been running Maple Sugar Days. We thank them so much for feeding everyone. **FKD**



**VLAD WARD:  
Ridge Runner on the Road to Medicine**

Vlad Ward learned about ORNC's Ridge Runner program from his close friend, Austin Luera. When Vlad and Austin were in elementary school, they used to visit Oregon Ridge with Austin's grandmother. Later when Austin became a Ridge Runner, Vlad decided that he would like to join the team.

Vlad's favorite animal here at ORNC is Jimmy the Opossum. He is also looking forward to working with Mr. Hootie, our new Screech Owl, when it arrives. When asked to name his favorite Ridge Runner duty, Vlad answered, "I like showing off animals to the kids." He also feels that one of the neatest things about being a Ridgie is "...being with animals and caring for them."



Vlad is an eighth grader at Ridgely Middle. His favorite subject is science, primarily biology. He enjoys anatomy and would like to become a doctor one day. Vlad spends a good part of his spare time longboarding (a form of skateboarding) and hanging out with his friends, socializing. He has always enjoyed animals and has cared for a leopard gecko, chameleons, a box tortoise, frog, ferrets, and dogs. He also likes insects a lot and has a nice collection of mounted, rare butterflies that were collected by his father some years ago.

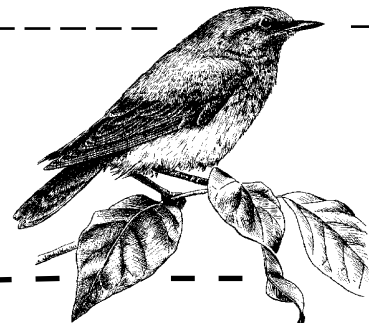
Vlad is a welcome addition to the Ridge Runner team. His love of nature and desire to teach children makes him a "keeper" in our opinion. It will be fun working with him during the next four years. **MJS**

WHAT'S HAPPENIN' AT THE LODGE

There is always something fun happening at the Lodge -- Festivals, fund-raisers, concerts...and of course, FIREWORKS. Here is the schedule of activities for May through August.

MAY			
18	Towson Rotary Club Car Show	9 AM - 4 PM	www.wheelsattheridge.com
JUNE			
1	Greyhound Pets of Maryland Picnic	10 AM - 4 PM	Call 410-785-3120
21 & 22	Great Grapes, Wine, Food & Arts Festival	12 PM - 6 PM	Call 410-769-8223 www.uncorkthefun.com
JULY			
(The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Summer Series includes fireworks at all concerts. Free shuttle bus service is available July 3, 4, & 5. Group rates available.)			
3, 4, 5	BSO Star Spangled Banner	8 PM	Call 410-783-8000 or
19	BSO	8 PM	www.baltimoresymphony.org
26	BSO (Rain date 7/29)	8 PM	
27	BSO Rain date for 7/26	8 PM	
AUGUST			
16	Annual Hot August Blues	Noon - 10 PM	Call 877-321-FEST www.hotaugustblues.com

Lodge office hours are Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 3 PM. To rent one of the rooms for a wedding, party, or other occasion, please call Sandy or Pam at (410) 887-1818. This is also the number to call for information concerning the summer beach area. The e-mail address is oridge@baltimorecountymd.gov and the Web address is www.baltimorecountymd.gov/go/oregonridge.



NEED TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

Your mailing label will tell you: "C" means your membership is current; "E" means it's expired; and "X" means this will be your last mailing. The date is your expiration date. **WE HOPE YOU WILL RENEW NOW!**

Membership Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Individual               | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Sustaining member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Family                   | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Corporate member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$12 Senior Citizens/Students | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Patron member    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Non-profit organization  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Lifetime member  |

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



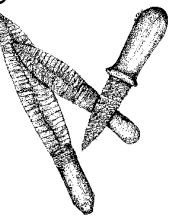
WHAT'S GOING ON?



**PRIMITIVE TECHNOLOGY WEEKEND**  
May 3 and 4, 2008  
10 AM to 4 PM  
**IT'S FREE**

If you are looking for an adventure, **THIS IS IT!**  
(Call 410-887-1815 for an Agenda)

- \* Knappers chipping points for arrows
- \* Hide Tanning demonstrations
- \* Fire Making
- \* Pottery making and displays
- \* A display by the Central Chapter of the Archaeology Society of Maryland
- \* Hands-on kids activities, including shooting a bow and arrow, blowguns, and throwing an atlatl, blowguns
- \* Saturday Guest Speaker: Steven M. Watts, Director of Aboriginal Studies at the Schielle Museum in Gastonia, N.C. Talk: *Our Ancestors, Ourselves*



ORNC COUNCIL AT WORK

by Michael Burns, President

Over the past few months, the Nature Center has added two new features that demonstrate the Council's commitment to preserving the natural environment and the historical heritage of our landscape.

Near the ruins of the 19<sup>th</sup> century iron smelter furnace, a series of illustrated signs explain how man worked the natural resources of this area and transformed them into pig iron, the raw stuff of railroads, tools, machinery, and weaponry. This informative display helps us to understand the origins of Oregon Ridge as a mining community, for both iron ore and marble (used to purify the molten ore). A wooden boardwalk eases access around the furnace site, and directional signs at both ends point the way for visitors toward a point of interest that they may have overlooked. This exhibit was made possible in large part by a grant from REI, the outdoors equipment cooperative, and we are grateful for their generous contribution.

It's probably safe to say that most visitors will have learned of Oregon Ridge's mining roots from the Peter Gough Archaeological Museum, which was rebuilt as a former miner family tenant house and located on its original foundation along the walkway from the parking lot to the Nature Center. Or perhaps they learned from the history exhibit located along the wall of the center that is illustrated with excavated materials. Some may have noticed the shambles of the mining town's buildings as

they drove into the center or took a nature hike. Those wooden structures were torn down late last year as safety hazards, leaving only their stone foundations.

And that led us to erect the latest exhibit, a roofed tree-house structure to attract the black vultures that have long made Oregon Ridge their home. The birds could be seen nesting or roosting in the lofty rafters of the decrepit wooden boarding house (for single miners). But with the demolition of this building, the creatures faced the prospect this spring of finding new nesting quarters. The quick work by Baltimore County Recreation & Parks employees and your Nature Center Council has kept the vultures in their habitual haunt in the new structure, at least for the time being, and they have been seen peering out of the windows of the new house just as they did from their former roost. As wild creatures, they may later choose to go elsewhere, but they seem to be back at home for now.

As for the old buildings' foundations, the Council is moving to place placards on them to let visitors know what formerly stood there and to promote the human history of this area. Some mining town sites, such as the preserved spring house and the now-leveled manager's house, have information cards that were prepared by the Baltimore County Public Schools Archaeology Program and Oregon Ridge resident archaeologist Dr. George Brauer, Ph.D., a member of our executive board.

### A VULTURE HOUSEWARMING

By Courtney Peed

Last year the county deemed dangerous several houses on our property. They were old, in disrepair, and collapsing on themselves. So the houses were razed to ensure the safety of the many adults and children who use and enjoy our trails. For the staff, it meant losing a piece of history and a familiar landmark. We used the buildings for programs in historical interpretation. They helped the public see how miners used to live in the 1800's when a massive furnace stood on these grounds. The buildings were also good backdrops for our haunted hikes, their decrepit condition and broken windows making them spooky at night.

Unfortunately, the razing of these buildings meant much more to some of the animals that inhabit the park. For years we have had the pleasure of watching a pair of Black Vultures (*Coragyps atratus*) raise their baby in the house closest to the meadow and Wildlife Management Pond. They would lay their egg on the floor of the top room, fledge the baby in the surrounding trees during the summer, and finally take their leave of us in the fall. The vultures became part of our summer routine when we walked the fields looking for animals and plants. They would always greet us with a friendly growl or hiss.



It has been a unique treat for us to watch the fluffy grey/brown hatchling turn into a glossy, indigo vulture. So when the house came down, I was greatly concerned. Where would the vultures go to raise their family? Would they find a place as good as Oregon Ridge? Since we considered them a part of our Nature Center family, I decided there must be a way to encourage them to stay right here. I wondered if the vultures would nest in a birdhouse. They aren't your typical songbird, but like starlings, they are adaptable.

I asked several fellow naturalists what they thought about a vulture house. The most frequent response was, "Hmmm... that sounds interesting. You tell me how it goes." I even called a DNR bird expert to see if anything like this had ever been attempted before. "Well, I have never heard of an idea like this," he responded, "and if it works, you will be the first person I know of to be successful with it in the U.S. Good luck, and let me know if it works."

Spurred on by the notion of being famous, I presented the idea to our Director, Kirk Dreier. After some initial reservations, he warmed up to the idea. This set the plan in motion. Kirk drew up plans for the house with dimensions and heights and faxed them off to Baltimore County's Department of Special

Forces. Brad McCaslin was intrigued by the project and came over to visit the site and talk money with us. He also made some great suggestions about the plans and dimensions of the house. When all of the plans were finished, the price was drawn up. Materials cost about \$781.00, with a separate expenditure for labor and rentals. Our generous Council provided all of the funds for the project. Since several members are avid birders, and all of them love the park and its inhabitants, they were happy to provide the money we needed for this trailblazing project.

The house was built in stages due to weather. We tried to make the house look like the original by keeping it clapboard style with a tin roof. Large windows were constructed on each side for entering and exiting, and the floor is flat. Four telephone poles support the house and keep it from swaying in high winds. The floor extends over the edges of the poles to prevent predators from having easy access to the eggs. We watched in complete awe as the Special Forces crew raised the poles and house to its final position. They did a wonderful job, and we appreciate their help with our project.

So far we have been playing the waiting game with the vultures. The project was completed on February 19<sup>th</sup>, leaving plenty of time before they would lay an egg. The birds watched the construction for weeks and inspected the site of their missing house daily. For a while, we thought they would nest in the old foundation where the chimney stood! Luckily, they found this area unsuitable and started investigating other nesting sites. One of these new sites is our new vulture house. On March 7<sup>th</sup> they were seen on the roof, and on March 9<sup>th</sup>, they were sitting in the window. I don't know if this means that they have been inside, but I am keeping my eyes peeled to observe an entrance or exit.

If you are in the park and see a small house on stilts, stop for a few minutes and see if one of our vultures makes an appearance. Hopefully, we'll have good news to report later this year.



### OREGON RIDGE NATURE CENTER BALTIMORE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS



### DAY CAMPS AND NATURE PROGRAMS

SUMMER, 2008

<u>NAME OF CAMP</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>PRICE</u>
MOM, ME, AND NATURE (Age 4 to 5)	June 23 - 27	9:30 to 11:30 AM	Age 4 - 5	\$25

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A nature program for 4 and 5 year old children and a parent or grandparent, featuring nature crafts, hikes, games, and animal talks. Class size limited to 20 children. Naturalist/Instructors: To Be Announced

JUNIOR NATURALIST CAMP (Age 6 to 8)	July 7 - 11	9:30 AM - 2 PM	Age 6 - 8	\$50
	August 4 - 8	9:30 AM - 2 PM	Age 6 - 8	\$50
	August 18 - 22	9:30 AM - 2 PM	Age 6 - 8	\$50

(Children may participant in only one week of camp)

JUNIOR NATURALIST CAMP (Age 9 to 10)	July 28 - August 1	9:30 AM - 2 PM	Age 9 - 10	\$50
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Children age 6 - 8 will be allowed to register for one week only of the camp. Children will explore the forest, fields, and streams of Oregon Ridge Park while hiking, playing environmental games, learning crafts, and participating in other nature activities. Each day of camp will conclude with swimming at the lake, weather permitting. Class size is limited to 20 children. Naturalists/Instructors: To Be Announced. (Members of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council receive a 10% discount on the Junior Naturalist Camps.)

OUTDOOR LIVING SKILLS CAMP (Age 11 to 12)	July 14 - 18	9:30 AM - 2 PM	Age 11 - 12	\$50
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Children age 11 to 12 will learn basic skills to survive out in the elements, including basic camping needs such as erecting a tent, fire making, building an emergency shelter, and identifying edible plants. Focus will be on the skills necessary for forest navigation, potable drinking water, and proper sanitation skills. Each day of camp will conclude with swimming at the lake, weather permitting. Class size is limited to 10 children. Naturalist/Instructors: To Be Announced. (Members of the Oregon Ridge Nature Center Council receive a 10% discount on the Outdoor Living Skills Camp.)