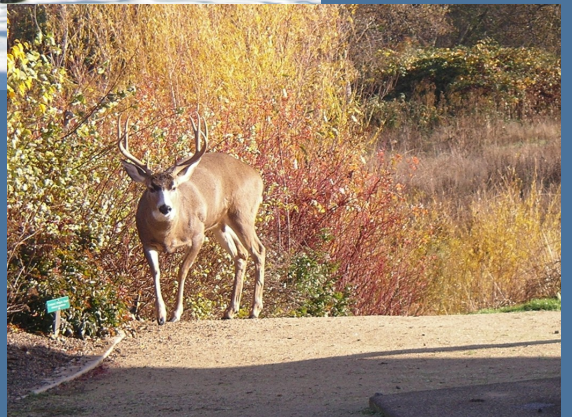


North Mountain Park Nature Center

2013 Annual Report



A DIVISION OF ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

YEAR AT A GLANCE	1
OVERVIEW	2
DONATIONS	3
STAFF	4
VOLUNTEERS	5
NATURE CENTER	6
GARDENS	8
HEIRLOOM GARDEN	8
DEMONSTRATION GARDENS	9
NATURAL AREA	10
MANAGEMENT	10
TRAILS & INTERPRETIVE FEATURES	11
WILDLIFE	12
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	13
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS	13
COMMUNITY EVENTS	18
Rogue Valley Bird Day	
Bear Creek Festival	
STUDENT PROJECTS	20
SCHOOL PROGRAMS	21
K to 5th grade	
Middle School	
Briscoe Geology Park	
SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAMS	26
STEWARDSHIP	28
OUTDOOR SERVICE	28
MONITORING	28
Bird Monitoring	
Turtle Monitoring	
Salmon Monitoring	
Bear Creek Cross Sectional Monitoring	
Weather Station	
SUSTAINABILITY	30
Ashland Green Team	
Green Living Project	
New Recycling Bin Station Completed	
Green Educational Programs	
COMMUNITY GARDENS	32

North Mountain Park Natural Area



2013 YEAR AT A GLANCE

Community Programs & Events

Number of programs: 95

Total number of participants: 785

Number of events: 2

School Programs

Number of K-5 field programs: 50

Number of 6-8 programs: 9

Number of Briscoe Geology Park programs: 3

Total number of programs: 62

Total number of students served: 1316

Service & Service Learning Programs

Number of service learning programs: 19

Total number served: 419

Student Projects

Number of student projects: 3

Volunteers

Total number of volunteers: 151

Number of new volunteers: 32

Number of individual volunteer hours logged: 2,933

Completed Projects

New "Garden Critters" discovery kit

New "Animals of the Rogue Valley" booklet

New Curiosity Cabinet display

Native American Signs installed

Recycling Station Arrangement and Mosaic

Nest Box Installation



OVERVIEW

This report summarizes the 2013 operation of the North Mountain Park Nature Center, a branch of the Ashland Parks & Recreation Department. The Nature Center oversees activities in the areas of environmental education, recreation, stewardship, and sustainability. School groups and community members take part in environmental education programs on the subjects of local natural and cultural history, as well as sustainability. Our recreation and stewardship activities provide indoor and outdoor education through visual, hands-on exhibits and demonstrations, demonstration gardens and interpretive trails. The Nature Center staff coordinates projects, work parties and education programs both at North Mountain Park and at many other locations in Ashland and are responsible for oversight of four community gardens.



Nature Center and Heirloom Gardens in Spring

DONATIONS

The North Mountain Park Nature Center is part of the Ashland Parks and Recreation Department, and as such, it is supported in part by the Ashland Parks Foundation, a certified non-profit organization. Over the course of 2013, several private donations were made to the Ashland Parks Foundation on behalf of the North Mountain Park Nature Center. These generous donations helped to fund numerous projects, including construction work, interpretation, and education.



Park Natural Area in Summer

The construction of the office extension on the Nature Center was made possible by \$10,000 in private donations which were made to the Ashland Parks Foundation on behalf of the Nature Center. An additional \$31,300 was paid for by Parks and Recreation's Capital Improvement Fund.

For the fourth consecutive year, school program field trips were supported by the Ashland Kiwanis Club and Ashland Lions Club. These organizations each contributed \$500 toward the School Program Scholarship Fund.

Our annual events were made possible by numerous donations, totaling over \$3,500, to support the Bear Creek Salmon Festival. Rogue Valley Audubon continued their traditional sponsorship of Project Feeder Watch, donating \$300 toward the purchase of bird seed.

The Sandra James Music Foundation gave \$2,037 in support of bird education and interpretation.



School Program Field Trip

Finally, late in 2013, the Gardner Grout Foundation unexpectedly donated \$5,000 to the North Mountain Park Nature Center. This donation will support the kinds of community programming and education detailed in this report.

STAFF



Current Nature Center Staff

The Nature Center is operated by three full-time staff members. At the start of 2013, this team consisted of Education Coordinator Kari Gies, Stewardship Coordinator Linda Chesney, and Receptionist Patty Commons.

This year, Kari announced her intention to retire and began organizing all school program, interpretation and collections records. After 17 years at North Mountain Park, Kari Gies retired in the summer of 2013. When she left, the management of the Nature Center was restructured, so that one individual would be responsible for guiding and managing park operations.



Libby VanWyhe - Nature Center Manager

We are pleased to welcome back Libby VanWyhe, as she steps into the newly created position of Nature Center Manager. Libby began volunteering with the park in 2008, and has worked here in many capacities, including Service Learning Coordinator and School Program Assistant. Libby feels right at home, and is honored to have this wonderful opportunity to serve the park she loves.



Karin Onkka - Contractor

This year, the Nature Center also relied on dedicated contractors and part-time seasonal employees, including Karin Onkka, who oversaw the design of numerous interpretive materials and exhibits at the park and Lee Finney, who assisted with school programs. The Nature Center also relies on an enthusiastic team of volunteers who come to the Nature Center via the Park's Volunteer Coordinator, Lori Ainsworth.



Lee Finney - School Program Assistant

VOLUNTEERS

Community volunteers are a vital part of the Nature Center family. They assist with almost every department, including gardening, education, site maintenance, events and monitoring.



Jimmy Billstine - School Program Instructor



Lyn Levin - Volunteer Gardener

In 2013, community members and students logged 2,933 hours of volunteer service at North Mountain Park. This network of civic-minded volunteers assisted in each the following areas:

- demonstration & heirloom gardens
- trail maintenance
- work parties
- wildlife monitoring
- field programs
- service-learning programs
- community programs
- community events
- exhibits
- interpretive materials
- discovery kits
- bulletin boards
- collection materials
- resource materials
- preschool puppet show
- reception



Gerry and Sandra - Bear Creek Salmon Festival Volunteers

NATURE CENTER

The Nature Center is open to the public five days a week, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Inside the building, there are many interpretive displays, interactive exhibits and information for curious visitors. Bulletin boards invite visitors to learn about new projects at the park and upcoming community programs. We also use the boards to thank our volunteers and advertise possible volunteer positions and upcoming student projects. A variety of brochures and booklets in the reception area give visitors a chance to learn more about local wildlife, cultural history, hiking trails, and parks.

A complete set of background booklets are available for purchase. These background booklets provide locally researched information about the natural history and human history of our bio-region. The six subjects covered in the booklets correspond to the Scope and Sequence of School Program topics: Geology, Water, Plants, Animals, Native American History and History of the Rogue Valley. Booklets, interpretive cards for local species, as well as Animal and Plant Checklists offer a wealth of place-specific knowledge. Students, educators and visitors are enthusiastic about the resources available in our reception area.



In the exhibit room, wall-to-wall murals depict the natural and cultural features of our bioregion. Detailed information is provided at adult reading levels while multiple interactive exhibits are available for children. Our littlest visitors enjoy the puppet theatre and a number of plush puppets representing local animal species. Enhancements are currently being planned for the riparian habitat wall, and conceptual designs have been developed to increase natural history interpretation in the exhibit room. The exhibit room is also used for numerous community programs, from seed swaps to lectures, all year long.

This year, work began to generate more interactive science exhibits in the Discovery Room. A detailed stream channel cross-section was painted along one wall, depicting in-stream habitat features and the species that use them. A bank of cupboards was redesigned into a “Curiosity Cabinet” that displays natural and found objects. Nests, skulls, lichens and fossils are beautifully arranged for visitors to view and identify. Currently, we are working with interpretive design contractor Karin Onkka and artist Irene Brady to finish exhibits for each wall of the Discovery Lab.

In the spring of this year, construction was completed on the much-anticipated office addition. The 272-square-foot addition provided much-needed office space, making room for two additional desks and a private meeting area.

The previous office, which was situated near the reception area, has now been turned into a printer and office-supply room with an additional computer for staff, volunteers or contractors. Since the new construction, efficiency has increased due to greater privacy for our coordinating staff as well as ground-level access to the copier and printer.



Constructing the Office Addition

The total cost of the project was \$41,503. \$10,000 of that cost was paid for through donations to the Nature Center through the Parks Foundation and the other \$31,503 was paid for out of the Capital Improvement Fund housed within the Parks and Recreation budget.



The New Office Addition

GARDENS

Surrounding the Nature Center, the Demonstration and Heirloom Gardens were enjoyed this year by park visitors from Florida to Alaska and from many other communities in Oregon, including the Rogue Valley. Participation in docent-led tours was up this year and a new volunteer docent began leading some of the tours. In addition to the tours, the gardens were the setting for a number of community education programs and also provided habitat for a variety of wildlife and a place for self-guided education and recreation. The garden seed is harvested and packaged by volunteers for sale in the Nature Center. Volunteers continue to maintain these beautiful gardens.



Culinary Herb Garden and Bird Bath

HEIRLOOM GARDENS

The Heirloom Garden, which provides the wonderful street appeal to the front of the Nature Center, continues to be maintained by members of the Ashland Garden Club. The group changed leadership this year when the “rock” of our volunteer group “retired” from her role in that garden. The group continues to provide updated information for interpretive booklets, which identify all of the plants growing in the gardens.



Heirloom Garden Volunteers

Heirloom Garden in Bloom

DEMONSTRATION GARDENS

The Demonstration Gardens are comprised of a native plant garden, two herb gardens, a butterfly garden, a reptile amphibian garden and a bird buffet.

Great improvements were implemented in the Native Plant Garden with the help of the OSU students on alternative spring break. There were successful mass planting plugs of two species of native grasses as well as some native shrubs and ground covers. More native wildflowers were sown to add color to the garden. The gardens attracted many park visitors while serving as a model for home gardeners who wish to create wildlife habitat and employ sustainable gardening practices. The gardens served as a resource for community education classes and school programs as well. All garden areas were again “adopted” by caring volunteers. As a reward and educational opportunity for these hard-working garden volunteers, the Nature Center staff coordinated a July visit to Le Mera Gardens, where owner Joan Thorndike cordially hosted a tour that included fresh strawberry samples and u-cut flower bouquets.



Native Plant Gardens



Butterfly Habitat Gardens



Susan Lander - Demonstration Garden Tour Volunteer



NATURAL AREA

MANAGEMENT

As spelled out in North Mountain Park's formally adopted mission statement, the natural area of the park (approximately 14 acres that lies within the Bear Creek floodplain) is being managed toward protecting and enhancing ecological values and for compatible educational and recreational use. A primary focus of the restoration and on-going management of the area is to maximize habitat diversity and healthy riparian function.



Autumn Colors on Native Vegetation

Ashland Parks and Recreation staff worked with community volunteers and community service workers last year in an effort to control invasive species. Since this was the second full year in which herbicide use was prohibited, invasive species management was an ever more daunting task. Himalayan blackberries required the most overall effort. At the end of 2012, the Nature Center staff and steering committee established as a goal the creation of a management and maintenance plan for the Natural Area. After its proposal Ashland Parks & Recreation staff met to discuss some first steps in the process. One of the challenges of developing a plan will be to strike a balance between maintenance activities that are required for safety and/or city ordinances, and the habitat needs of wildlife. Last spring volunteer bird monitors attributed the park's highly productive breeding season in part to a lighter, later vegetation management approach.

In January 2013, Anne Thayer developed a 5-year maintenance plan for the riparian area. The steering committee will be meeting in January 2014, with one of the primary goals being to move forward in developing a management plan for North Mountain Park.



Park Horticulturalist, Anne Thayer

TRAILS AND INTERPRETIVE FEATURES

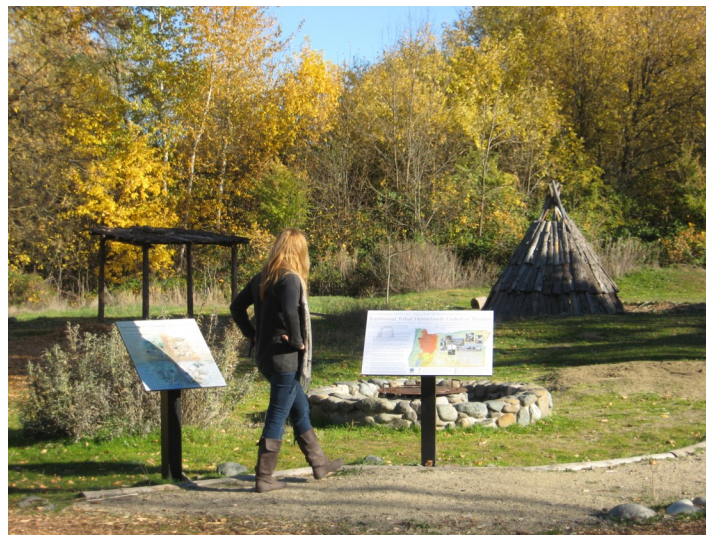
Wood chip trails provide easy access to about one-half of the Natural Area of the park. These trails, which are maintained by Parks Staff and volunteers, facilitate recreation, wildlife observation, and a chance to learn more about the local natural and cultural history of our area.

Throughout the gardens and along the ethnobotanical trail, native and ornamental plants are identified on placards so that visitors can learn their common and scientific names. Three trail areas are used to interpret the area's cultural roots: the "Indian Village," the ethnobotanical plant trail, and the pioneer-era barn.



Easy Access Paths, Labeled Plants and Wildlife

This year, two interpretive signs were installed at the trail junction near the Native American Village. One of these signs depicts the seasonal activities of Native American tribes in full-color art. The other shows the distribution of Native American tribal areas and tells the story of their forced relocation to the Grande Ronde Reservation.



Native American Interpretive Signs

WILDLIFE

A great diversity of wildlife utilizes resources designed into the park's habitat restoration plan. The riparian area also serves as part of an important migratory corridor through the valley for many species. This spring, volunteers documented large numbers of nesting birds and fledglings.

Extremely low flows in Bear Creek in October were not conducive to spawning salmon accessing upper Bear Creek, but a few Chinook salmon were again seen in Bear Creek within the areas of in-stream habitat enhancement in the park. Many park visitors share with Nature Center staff their excitement and satisfaction at viewing abundant wildlife in a natural setting.



Canada Geese

For over 10 years, staff and volunteers have been installing and maintaining nest boxes for cavity nesting bird species. Recently, we observed a disturbing trend of non-native Norway Rats occupying the bird boxes. We concluded that unless the boxes could be rat-proofed, they would have to be removed. This spring there was a great opportunity to upgrade our boxes, thanks to a grant from Sandra James Music Foundation and Oregon State University, whose students assisted with a nest box overhaul.

The new nest boxes are made of untreated wood with overhanging roofs and recessed floors. They are installed on 12-foot-high freestanding metal poles with conical sheet metal guards to prevent rats from scrambling up. When volunteers cleaned out the six new boxes this fall, it was discovered that every single box had been occupied by native birds, not rats.



Tree Swallow and Nest Box



*OSU Extension Volunteers
Install Rodent-proof Nest Boxes*

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

The Nature Center coordinates community education programs for youth and adults in topics relating to natural and cultural history, science, gardening, nature crafts and sustainability.



Preschool Puppet Theatre - Craft

In 2013, classes and workshops were offered at North Mountain Park, Lithia Park, Briscoe Geology Park, Ashland Creek Park Community Garden, Hald-Strawberry Park, Oredson-Todd Woods, the Bear Creek Greenway, Mt. Ashland, the Klamath Siskiyou National Monument, the Klamath National Wildlife Refuge and locations beyond. The programs were taught by Nature Center staff, both paid and volunteer instructors and partner agency personnel. This year the Ashland Parks Foundation again funded need-based scholarships. Some of the more popular new program offerings this year included: Herbal First Aid, The Rose, Birding I-5, Growing Gourmet Mushrooms and "Galaxies, Nebulae and Clusters".

Participant surveys showed a high degree of satisfaction with the programs and provided helpful suggestions for additional topics. Nature Center staff are always looking for new partnerships and instructors in order to expand the possible program offerings.



Seed Swap



Pine Needle Basketry



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS
Winter/Spring 2013 thru Fall 2013

Instructor	Class	Date	Location
RV Audubon Society Volunteers	Project Feeder Watch	Jan 6 & 19, Feb 2 & 16, Mar 2, & 16	NMP
NMP Puppeteers	Preschool Puppet Theatre	Jan 11, Feb 8, Mar 8, Apr 12, May 10	NMP
Vince Zausky	Winter Bird Walk	Jan 13	NMP
Jeff Lalande	Identifying & Dating Common Everyday Artifacts	Jan 16	NMP
Jon Carlson	Herbal First Aid: Topical Care	Jan 26	NMP
Louisa Lenz-Porter	Weaving a Twin-Bottom Egg Basket	Jan 26	The Grove
Bonnie Bayard	No Lawn, Then What?	Jan 29	NMP
Northwest Nature Shop	Attracting Birds to Your Backyard	Feb 2	NMP
NMP Staff	Seed Swap	Feb 5	NMP
Padme Blackwolf	The Rose	Feb 9	The Grove
John Jackson	Mammals of So. Oregon	Feb 9	NMP
Cynthia Care	Happy Eggs	Feb 13	NMP
Padme Blackwolf	Seasonal Care for the Home Garden	Feb 23	The Grove
Bonnie Bayard	Experiment in Drought Tolerant Landscape Techniques	Feb 26	NMP
Julie Gates	Espalier Pruning	Feb 27	NMP
Sue Yamins	Pine Needle Basketry	Mar 2	
John Jackson	Worms and Composting for a Greener Planet	Mar 9	NMP
Jennifer Ewing	Seed Starting & Plant Propagation	Mar 9	NMP
Jennifer Ewing	Building Raised Garden Beds	Mar 16	NMP
Kari Gies	Natural Spring Cleaning	Mar 16	Pioneer Hall
Harry Fuller	Birding I-5	Mar 21, 23	NMP
Jeff McFarland	Exploring Ashland Parks' Trails	Apr 2	NMP
OSU & JCS&W	Streamside Gardening	Apr 4	NMP
Linda Chesney	Wildflower Walk in Strawberry-Hald Park	Apr 10	Strawberry-Hald Park
Sasha Joachims	Lithia Park Wildflower Walk	Apr 13	Lithia Park
Jackie Greer	Preserve the Bounty	Apr 13	NMP

Risa Buck	Recycling: Where Does it Go & Why	Apr 17	NMP
Shannon Rio	Birding for Beginners	Apr 20	NMP
Anne Thayer & Rachel Wherling	Arbor Day Tree Walk	Apr 25	NMP
Jon Carlson	Edible & Medicinal Plant Walk in Lithia Park	Apr 27	Lithia Park
John Jackson	Birds & Bird Nests	Apr 27	NMP
Pam Lott	Graywater-Laundry to Landscape	Apr 30	NMP
Jeanne Moy	Plein Air Landscape Painting	May 4	NMP
SUMMER 2013			
Harry Fuller	Ashland Spring Birds	May 16 & 18	NMP & Field Trip
Meg Fraser	Geocaching 101	May 19	NMP
Lori Tella	Creating Backyard Wildlife Habitat	May 21	NMP
Julie Gates	Summer Pruning of Japanese Laceleaf Maples	Jun 1	Lithia Park
Nature Center Staff	Animals of the RV for Homeschoolers	Jun 5	NMP
Rachel Andras	Introduction to Fly Fishing	Jun 6, Jul 11, Aug 1	Garden Way Park
Nature Center Staff	Summer Sat Morning Bird Walk	Jun 8, Jul 13, Aug 10 th	NMP
Rhianna Simes	Urban Composting	Jun 8, Jul 13, Aug 17 th	NMP
Susan Lander	Demonstration Garden Tour	Jun 12, Jul 10, Aug 14 th	NMP
Jo Jenner	Alternatives to Toxic Body Care Products	June 12	NMP
Puppeteers	Preschool Puppet Theatre	Jun 14, Jul 12, Aug 9 th	NMP
Harry Fuller	Mountain Birds	Jun 13, 15 & 16	NMP & Field Trip
Jon Carlson	Edible & Medicinal Plant Walk at NMP	Jun 15	NMP
Nature Center Staff	Earth Camp	Jun 17-20 th	NMP
Nature Center Staff	Summer Jam	Jun 19 & Jul 17	NMP
Andra Hollenbeck	Nature Writing Camp	Jun 24-28 th	NMP
Jon Carlson	Herbal Medicine Making at NMP	Jun 29	NMP
Karen Tassinari	Medicinal Plant Walk	Jul 2	NMP
Karen Tassinari	Herbal First Aid	Jul 10	NMP



Harry Fuller	Birding the Siskiyou	Jul 11 & 13	NMP & Field Trip
Jon Carlson	Edible Medicinal Plant Walk at Pilot Rock	Jul 13	Pilot Rock
Len Eisenberg	RV Geology in Earth's History	Jul 18	Briscoe Geology Pk.
NMP Staff	Intro to Paper Making	Jul 23	NMP
John Jackson	Reptiles & Amphibians	Jul 27	NMP
Jennifer Ewing	Best Veggie Harvesting Methods & Planting a Winter Garden (Now!)	Jul 31	Ashland Crk Comm Garden
Jessica Vineyard	Galaxies! Nebulae! Clusters!	Aug 3	NMP
Michelle Pavilonis	Garden Art & Nature Play Camp	Aug 12-16 th	NMP
Jim Duncan	Collecting Native Seed for your Garden	Aug 24	Field Trip from NMP
Coyote Trails School	Little Fox Cubs Day Camp	Aug 26-30 th	NMP
NMP Staff	Evening Nature Walk	Aug 28	NMP
FALL SEASON			
Jeannie Moy	Plein Air Landscape Oil Painting	Sept 7	NMP
Susan Lander & Liz Landreth	Demon Garden Tour	Sep 11	NMP
Puppeteers	Preschool Puppet Theatre	Sep 13, Nov 8 & Dec 13	NMP
Rhianna Simes	Advanced Urban Composting	Sep 14	Recycle Center, Ashland
Jackie Greer	Preserving Your Bounty	Sep 14	NMP
Jon Carlson	Root Walk	Sep 15	NMP
Lori Tella	Catching Rain	Sep 19	NMP
Mitra Sticklen	Growing Gourmet Mushrooms on a Budget	Sep 21	NMP
Mitra Sticklen	Gardening with Mushrooms	Sep 28	Ashland Crk. Comm. Garden
Jon Carlson	Making Your Own Elderberry Syrup	Sep 29	NMP
Dr Alan Journet	A Rogue Climate for the Rogue Valley-3 sessions	Oct 1, 8 & 15	NMP
Ian Reid	Exploring World of Pacific Salmon	Oct 6	Field Trip
Patrick Marcus	Care & Pruning of Wisteria	Oct 9	NMP
City of Ashland	Green & Solar Tour	Oct 12	Ashland

Harry Fuller	Winter Birding	Oct 17, 19 & 24, 26	NMP & Field Trips
Jon Carlson	Fall Medicine Making in NMP	Oct 20	NMP
NMP Staff & Volunteers	Native Americans of the RV for Homeschoolers Ages 5-11	Oct 22	NMP
Julie Gates	A Passion for Japanese Maples	Oct 30	NMP
Patty Aulik	Recycled Rhythm	Nov 2	NMP
RV Audubon Society Volunteers	Project Feeder Watch	Nov 9 & 23, Dec 7 & 21st	NMP
Harry Fuller	Christmas Bird Count	Nov 14 & 17	NMP & Field Trip
Patty Aulik	Sassy Shakeres	Nov 16	NMP
NMP Staff	Natural Holiday Wreath	Dec 6	NMP
NMP Staff	Natural Holiday Wreath	Dec 7	NMP
NMP Staff	Holiday Wreath Making	Dec 10	Senior Center



Preserving the Bounty



Winter Birding with Harry Fuller



COMMUNITY EVENTS

In 2013, the Nature Center sponsored two annual public events that are enjoyed by community members of all ages: the Bear Creek Salmon Festival, which was held on Saturday, October 5, and Rogue Valley Migratory Bird day on May 11. Nature Center Staff also participated in Rogue Valley Earth Day (at ScienceWorks Hands-on Museum) on April 20.

Rogue Valley Bird Day



Guided Bird Walk

A fine spring morning and a better-than-ever promotional effort brought an excellent turnout to Rogue Valley Bird Day 2013. Held on the second Saturday of May, this annual event is a local celebration of International Migratory Bird Day, highlighting many important aspects of bird migration. This year's theme focused on bird life cycles and what birds are doing at various times of the year (nesting, migrating, overwintering) and the importance of conservation efforts along every step of their journey. Hosted by the Rogue Valley Audubon Society and the Klamath Bird Observatory, along with North Mountain Park staff and volunteers, the event drew all ages and all levels of birdwatchers, from beginners to more experienced birders.

Bear Creek Salmon Festival

Once again, we welcomed the Salmon home to the Bear Creek watershed and celebrated their return with this fun community event. This admission-free festival featured interactive workshops for all ages and 23 exhibitors teaching about salmon habitat and watershed stewardship.



The Cultural and Ecological Enhancement Network Teaches About Acorn Processing

Approximately 700 visitors explored the park and enjoyed fun outdoor activities such as fly and spin-casting, exploring aquatic organisms in Bear Creek, making crafts and masks, and learning traditional Native American techniques for cooking salmon. Families enjoyed live musical performances, Native American drumming, and children's story-times. A tasty food concession was offered by Fulcrum Dining. The Jackson County Master Recyclers helped reduce waste by serving on durable eat-ware and assisting with clean-up, composting, and recycling.

For the first time this year, we also offered a full day of outdoor mini-workshops taught by local experts on the following topics:



Composting Workshop with Liz Landreth



Water Wisdom Workshop with Julie Smitherman

North Mountain Park Birds – Harry Fuller, Birding Field Trip Guide

Composting Demonstration for Backyard Gardeners – Liz Landreth, Master Gardener

Bear Creek Habitat Restoration Tour – Eugene Weir, The Freshwater Trust, Restoration Project Manager

Water Wisdom 101: Habits and Hardware – Julie Smitherman, City of Ashland Water Conservation Specialist & Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor

Riparian Plant Walk (and using plants to manage stormwater) Rachel Werling, OSU Extension Service

Safe Car Wash Kit Demonstration – Tom Beam, Ashland Conservation Commission

How, When and Where to View Spawning Salmon in Bear Creek – Frances Oyung, Bear Creek Watershed Council Coordinator

These workshops were a welcome and educational addition to the festival.

STUDENT PROJECTS

This year, the Nature Center partnered with SOU on senior, capstone and thesis-level projects. Four undergraduate students and one graduate student completed projects with the Nature Center.

Three undergraduate students, Mitchell Boyd, Eric Smith and Mandy Twitchell, conducted Bear Creek monitoring for their Capstone project, "Reestablishing Calibration Monuments for Rosgen Stream Classification at North Mountain Nature Center Ashland, Oregon". These students collected cross section profiles of the stream channel. This monitoring data will be added to the wealth of Bear Creek stream data obtained by Charles Lane's Hydrology classes each year.

Nicole Robinson conducted a Capstone project titled: "Evaluation of the Western Pond Turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) Population at the North Mountain Park Nature Center, Ashland, Oregon". Nicole used live-trapping, mark and recapture and visual observations to conclude that at least 10 turtles use the upper pond, and that they have a nearby nesting site. She also concluded that basking structures are an important and possibly limiting resource.



Kelly Campbell

Kelly Campbell, a graduate student in Environmental Education also completed an internship project at the park. As part of our overall design for science interpretation in the Discovery Lab, Kelly converted a bank of cupboards into a natural history display case. She created the display using found objects and items from our collections. The new Curiosity Cabinet contains a variety of natural objects from fossils to nests, lichen samples to skulls. These items are artistically arranged and identified with a sketch as a key. Soon, new activities will be developed to encourage visitors to compare and identify these objects.



Discovery Room - Curiosity Cabinet

In addition, several students from SOU came to the park on their own time to volunteer with the field programs and to help teach service learning activities.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

K to 5th Grade

In 2013, 25 classes participated in spring field programs at the park. We welcomed K-5 students from five local schools: Bellview, Helman, Walker, John Muir, and Lincoln. The topic for the spring programs, *Animals of the Rogue Valley*, included several activities focusing on wild animals and their relationships and habitat needs. For the younger students, the *Animals* program included animal adaptations, comparing birds' nests, and how animals care for their young. Older students were given the opportunity to explore the riparian habitat zone, find animal tracks and signs, and act out the five stages of bird nesting. All these hands-on activities were presented outdoors at North Mountain Park, and they gave students a new perspective on the park from the point of view of the animals that use the habitat.



Animals of the Rogue Valley - Animal Homes



*Native Americans of the Rogue Valley -
Hunting Practice*

During the fall, 25 classes participated in field programs about the Native Americans of the Rogue Valley. Younger students focused on salmon fishing, processing acorns for meal, and building shelters out of natural materials. Older students experienced the hunter gatherer lifestyle of local tribes, learning about hunting practices and the ethnobotanical uses of native plants. Students also enjoyed experiencing life in the Native American village, as they explored the decorated Umma, fish drying, hide tanning and acorn cracking stations. Students left the program with a deeper understanding of how native people utilized and cared for this bioregion.

All in all, 1,316 students visited the park through school programs this year. Once again, a committed team of volunteer and student instructors were instrumental in helping teach these programs.



Native Americans - Salmon Fishing

SCHOOL PROGRAMS - SPRING 2013

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Bellview	Julie Anderson	1 st	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Alison Blakeslee	2 nd	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Pam Eddington	1 st	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Renee Gardener	2 nd	Animals of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Helman	Tia McLean	K	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Mia Driscoll	K	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Valerie McCoy	1 st	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Berit Larson	2 nd	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Mary Snowden	2 nd	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Kelly Martin	3 rd	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Mark Sherbow	4 th	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Trish Dorr	4 th	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Matt Damon	3 rd	Animals of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Walker	Kathleen Mateas	1 st	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Kacy Cuddy	K	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Ryan Jackson	1 st	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Lynn Fain	2 nd	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Christine Stokes	K	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Inge Kendrick	2 nd	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Jennifer Parks	4 th	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Tyler Claycomb	3 rd	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Dylana Gargas-Knowles	4 th	Animals of the Rogue Valley
	Debi Blair	3 rd	Animals of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Muir	Shannon Wolff	1 st & 2 nd	Animals of the Rogue Valley
Lincoln	Teresa McGrath	4 th & 5 th	Animals of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL PROGRAMS FALL 2013

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Bellview	Pam Eddington	1 st	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Alison Hutchins	2 nd	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Renee Gardener	2 nd	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Julie Anderson	1 st	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Robin Davis	4 th	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Helman	Mark Sherbow	5 th	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Kari Smith	1 st	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Valeria McCoy	1 st & 2 nd	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Mia Driscoll	K	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Tia McClean	K	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Matt Damon	3 rd	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Kelly Martin	3 rd	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Walker	Kouba Sayre	K	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Debi Blair	4 th	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Kathy Mateas	1 st	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Jennifer Parks	4 th & 5 th	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Kacy Cuddy	K	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Chris Stokes	K	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Tyler Claycomb	3 rd	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Inge Kendrick	2 nd	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Lynn Fain	3 rd	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
	Ryan Jackson	1 st	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Willow-Wind	Sue Pindell	K	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
Talent	Diane Bracamonte	4 th & 5 th	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley
John Muir	Shannon Wolff	1 st & 2 nd	Native Americans of the Rogue Valley



Ashland Middle School

In 2013, North Mountain Park continued its association with Ashland Middle School by offering two programs for sixth-grade classes. In the spring, three sixth-grade classes joined our instructors at Ordeson Todd Woods for Compass and Survival Programs. Students learned to use a compass and then practiced orienteering and shelter building in the woods. Approximately 90 sixth-graders took part in these programs, gaining important survival skills. In the fall of 2013, we offered “Water of Ashland Middle School” to six new sixth-grade classes. These programs included an in-class presentation followed by an outdoor/field experience. After being introduced to the types of water used at their school, students explored the wetland on school property and the Rain Garden that was constructed by students in 2012. As part of the program, North Mountain Park Staff also led the students in a service activity controlling invasive blackberry in the school’s delineated wetland.

COMPASS AND SURVIVAL SPRING 2013

Teacher	Grade	Students	Date	Program
Gary McNeal	6 th	33	May 8	Compass, Shelter Building, Searching
Beth Oehler	6th	33	May 13	Compass, Shelter Building, Searching
Karl Pryor	6th	33	May 21	Compass, Shelter Building, Searching



Compass and Survival - Orienteering and Teddy Bear Rescue

Briscoe Geology Park

Geology field trips continue to be offered at the Briscoe Geology Park. Students and visitors are able to “Walk Through Time” as they progress along the park’s path. Formal field trips were led by park designer and local geologist Len Eisenberg, who helps students comprehend the geological history of the earth. Len also visits classrooms to present a series of activities related to the Earth’s ancient history. Len is working with Nature Center staff to increase awareness of these programs, which are available for classes at the elementary to high school level.



Briscoe Geology Park - Walk Through Time



School Programs at Briscoe Geology Park

BRISCOE GEOLOGY PARK - SCHOOL PROGRAMS 2013

School	Teacher	Students	Program	Date
Lone Pine Elem	Heidi Gantz	30	1-Classroom Geology Program	Oct 18
Lone Pine Elem	Heidi Gantz	30	1-Classroom Geology Program	Oct 30
Coyote Trails Nature Center		10	Work Party	Nov 17

SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAMS

Service learning programs were offered to students in grades 3 through college in 2013 as well as to service groups and summer camps. These no-cost programs engaged participants in meaningful stewardship activities, while teaching related environmental education activities.

The Ashland Parks & Recreation Department benefitted from these programs through the service provided. Participants gained both greater understanding of local ecology and a sense of civic pride and empowerment. Classes are offered free of charge. During 2013, nineteen classes and service groups (421 individuals), 3rd grade to adult, participated in service learning programs. Service learning projects resulted in 352 hours of outdoor service conducted at North Mountain Park and other parks in Ashland.



Service Learning Students Remove Blackberries

In addition, North Mountain Park staff facilitated a Service Learning educational component for Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) summer camp participants. Other participating groups included school classes from 3rd through 12th grade and service organizations such as scouts and church groups and summer camps such as Konoway Nika Tillicum, a national summer academy for Native American youth run by the SOU Native American Studies Program. Service learning programs were again offered on limited days of the week during the high-demand (spring) season. Volunteers assisted North Mountain Park staff in facilitating programs and an SOU student was paid to update and facilitate the bird-themed programs.



OSU Extension Students Install Nest Boxes



?

SERVICE LEARNING 2013

Group	Teacher/ Leader	Date	# of Peo- ple	Hours (of entire activity)	Service Hours (total man hrs)	Work Completed & Loca- tion
Home School	Lisa Bock	3/1/13	8	2	8	People & Plants - weeding and cutting back fiber plants
Helman	Mark Sherbow	3/5/13	24	2	24	People & Plants - willow coppicing
Riverdale High	Laurie LePore	3/20/13	40	2	40	Bird Nerds - planting in native garden and weeding
Oregon State University	Karen Ast	3/26/13	10	7	50	Bird Box install/removal and bird buffet garden planting
Ashland High School	Devon Ward-Thommes	4/29/13	24	1		Bird Nerds -
Ashland High School	Devon Ward-Thommes	5/2/13	14	1		Bird Nerds -
Job Council	Christie Lawson	5/3/13	5	5	15	Bird Nerds & Water Quality-trail work
Howard Elem.- Medford	Cheryl Lashley	5/6/13	32	2	32	Bird Nerds - trail work
Ashland Cub Scots 112	David Wilkerson	5/10/13	4	2.5	6	CreatureQuest- trail work
Howard Elem.- Medford	Jessic Lealos	5/13/13	32	2	32	Bird Nerds - trail work
Ashland High School	Devon Ward-Thommes	5/20/13	25	0.75		Bird Nerds -
Ashland High School	Devon Ward-Thommes	5/23/13	25	0.75		Bird Nerds -
Orchard Hill Elementary	Bonnie Swanberg	6/6/13	27	2	27	What's in the Creek - trail work
Orchard Hill Elementary		6/6/13	27	2	27	What's in the Creek - digging hemlock
Job Council	Shannon Wells	6/27/13	10	4.5	25	Water Quality - trail work
Peacemakers Day Camp	Ayala Zonnenschein	7/17/13	20	2	20	People & Plants - willow weeding and watering
SOU Konoway Nika Tillicum	Brent Florendo, Carol Jensen	7/18/13	40	1.5	20	People & Plants - willow weeding and watering
John Muir School	Jim Bowers	10/18/13	26	2	13	Water Quality - invasive species removal
John Muir School	Jim Bowers	11/22/13	26	2	13	People & Plants - willow weeding



STEWARDSHIP

OUTDOOR SERVICE

Outside of garden volunteers whose efforts are coordinated by Nature Center staff, Ashland Parks & Recreation Volunteer Coordinator Lori Ainsworth now facilitates the majority of Ashland Parks & Recreation volunteer outdoor service projects. In 2013 those individuals who elected to engage in outdoor service at North Mountain Park were primarily involved in managing invasive species and worked with seasonal park staff. We noted a significant drop in community service volunteers when the community service coordinator retired from the Ashland Police diversion program.

MONITORING

Students, natural resource professionals, and Ashland Parks & Recreation staff participate in monitoring efforts at North Mountain Park. The North Mountain Park monitoring efforts contribute valuable scientific data to regional and global monitoring programs, help to teach about monitoring methods and strategies, and engage volunteers in exciting, authentic environmental stewardship. The data collected also helps to guide the on-going management of the park's natural area.



Bird Monitoring Volunteers

Bird Monitoring

Several exciting bird monitoring programs involving, volunteers, staff and the general public are coordinated through the Nature Center. Monthly area search surveys are now being conducted for the 14th consecutive year by the same team of expert volunteers. During the spring and summer breeding season volunteers help to maintain and monitor the use of numbered nest boxes at North Mountain Park. A group of OSU students on spring break assisted APR staff in installing rat-proof nest boxes to thwart a rat infestation that has been a problem in recent years. Project FeederWatch, a citizen science program developed and coordinated through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is now in its eleventh year at North Mountain Park and takes place from November to March on alternate Saturday mornings. Park visitors continued



Acorn Wood Pecker

to record their wildlife sightings on a dry-erase board outside the Nature Center. This information is compiled on a monthly basis and reviewed by staff for updates to the North Mountain Park database. A volunteer also records Project FeederWatch and sightings board data in “eBird,” a Cornell Lab of Ornithology database. The public can access both current and historical North Mountain Park bird monitoring data through eBird and by visiting the park website to view monthly survey and Project FeederWatch cumulative reports.

Turtle Monitoring

Nicole Robinson, an SOU student working with Dr. Michael Parker during the 2012-13 school year, used baited floating live traps to monitor Western Pond Turtles in the ponds located in the park’s natural area. Use of existing natural basking structures was evaluated, and additional structures were created to determine if basking sites are a limiting resource.



Western Pond Turtle



Turtle Measurements

The number of turtles observed basking increased after more basking structures were added to the pond, which indicates that they are an important and possibly limiting resource for this particular population. Increasing the number of basking structures at the pond also helped estimate the population size. Nature Center staff have requested Dr. Parker’s assistance in establishing a “Turtle Watch” volunteer monitoring program at the North Mountain Park ponds. It is hoped that he will find time available in his busy schedule to help make this happen in the near future.

Salmon Monitoring

Chinook Salmon were only occasionally observed spawning at the park this fall due to extremely low flows in Bear Creek during October. Following the recommendation made by Eugene Weir of the Fresh Water Trust, (“resurvey this reach for fall Chinook on an annual or bi-annual basis so that we can continue to document the presence of this species and continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the boulder weirs and future habitat improvement projects”) a spawning survey will be requested in 2014.



Salmon in Bear Creek

Bear Creek Cross Sectional Monitoring

When Bear Creek in-channel restoration took place in 1999, project plans called for post-construction monitoring in order to document changes in channel morphology. In 2013, two groups of SOU students participated in stream channel monitoring activities.

Weather Station

The Nature Center's Weather Station was disconnected early in 2013 when construction began on the office addition. In May, a new Davis weather station was installed on top of the shade structure behind the Nature Center. The new location was selected by Ashland Parks irrigation staff in order to get more accurate humidity readings. The Nature Center has purchased a duplicate of the Davis software and ordered a new computer for downloading weather data and pushing it to the website. The educational "slideshow" will also be displayed on the computer monitor inside the Nature Center.



SOU Student - Bear Creek Monitoring

SUSTAINABILITY

Ashland Green Team

North Mountain Park received certification through the City of Ashland's Green Business program in 2009. Although the program is not active at this time, Ashland Parks and Recreation Department continues to promote the goals of the program which include resource conservation, waste and pollution reduction, and education for employees and the public. Rachel Dials and Linda Chesney have been serving on that committee, as well as Brenda Hammers who retired in 2013. Julie Smitherman from the Ashland Conservation Division has now joined the team. Listed below are some 2013 Green Team projects.



*Jackson County Master Recyclers
Zero Waste at Salmon Festival*

Solid Waste: Ashland Parks & Recreation participated in the hazardous waste event in May and the plastic round-up in October. This year the plastics round-up was held only at Jackson County Expo, and APR staff teamed up on delivering plastics for the whole department. Once again the Bear Creek Salmon Festival was implemented with a strong Zero Waste effort led by the Jackson County Master Recyclers, who ran the scraping and rinsing station next to the concession cart. The planning committee was assisted with the use of borrowed durable dishware from Darex. The Ashland Conservation Commission provided funding assistance for additional rental dishware.

Energy: Light switch timers are being installed at each shop location to prevent energy waste from lights being left on. T-12 fluorescent tubes are being replaced by more efficient T-8 tubes.

Green Living Project

This project, designed to highlight and promote green living practices modeled at North Mountain Park is now complete. The “Green Living Home”, a diorama featuring green building design and materials, was wrapped up this year, including hands-on activities for kids and an insert/addendum to the brochure.

New Recycling Bin Station Completed

Recycling Mosaic was celebrated with an unveiling at North Mtn. Park on April 17, 2013. Ashland’s first 100% recycled content mosaic was created using glass, metal and plastics that were all sourced locally and recovered from local businesses, homes and the Valley View transfer station. This mosaic project was a collaboration by Recology and Nature Center staff, who recognized the need to upgrade and revitalize the trash and recycling collection station, while at the same time finding a unique way to reinforce the importance of reusing items once destined for the landfill. Local artist Sue Springer was commissioned by Ashland Recology to create this beautiful rendering.



Finished Recycling Bin Station



The Recycling Station Mosaic

Green Educational Programs

The Nature Center promoted sustainability practices by offering a wide range of programs on sustainability topics. In addition to popular programs that are repeated periodically, new topics this year included A Rogue Climate for the Rogue Valley, Laundry to Landscape—Grey Water Systems, and Preserving Summer’s Bounty. Sustainability practices are also incorporated into school field trips and service learning programs through the green lunch buckets and stewardship themed activities.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Ashland Parks & Recreation Department offered recreational community garden spaces for non-commercial organic gardening in four community gardens with coordination by Nature Center staff. Volunteer garden managers assisted with management of each of the community gardens, with all garden members being required to volunteer a minimum of four hours to help maintain common areas and contribute to other garden endeavors.

Although there were no changes in the fee structure for garden leases this year, a 15% increase was passed for the upcoming season to cover increases in water costs. As the 2013 growing season ended, the wait lists for all the gardens were longer than ever before. With construction of Phase I Ashland Creek Park now scheduled to take place beginning June 1, 2014, that Community Garden will only be available to current members for a shortened season from January 1-May 30. Their fees will be prorated and discounted.



Community Garden Work Party



Families Tending Their Garden Plots

The Ashland Community Gardens are located at:

- Ashland Creek Property at 27 E Hersey St
- Scenic Park at 603 Scenic Dr
- Clay Street Park at 491 Clay St
- Garden Way Park at 1620 Clark St



Ashland Creek Park Garden



Scenic Park Gardens



Clay Street Park Gardens



Garden Way Park Gardens

