

North Mountain Park Nature Center

2014 Annual Report



A DIVISION OF ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION

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North Mountain Park Natural Area



2014 YEAR AT A GLANCE

Community Programs & Events

Number of programs: 118

Total number of participants: 1,098

Number of events: 2

School Programs

Number of K-5 field programs: 54

Number of 6-8 programs: 9

Number of Briscoe Geology Park programs: 11

Total number of programs: 74

Total number of students served: 1,819

Service & Service Learning Programs

Number of service learning programs: 15

Total number of students served: 373

Student Projects

Number of student projects: 5

Volunteers

Total number of volunteers: 337

Number of new volunteers: 55

Number of individual volunteer hours logged: 3,491

Completed Projects

Discovery Lab Exhibits

- Water cycle mural/weather wall
- Riparian restoration exhibit
- Three aquarium tanks
- Bird corner, iPad listening station
- Flex-camera and Closer Look kits

Field Program Curriculum Development

- Measureable objectives
- Post and on-the-ground assessment
- Aligned to Next Generation Science Standards and Common Core
- New History and Geology lessons

Water Wise Demonstration Area

Solar Eco-Post

Replaced Invasive Buddleia in Gardens

Motion Sensing Lights in Center

Fairy Tree-house in Exhibit Room

Salmon Spiral

Reception Area Makeover

QUEST Box Retrofit



OVERVIEW

This report summarizes the 2014 activities of the North Mountain Park Nature Center, a branch of Ashland Parks & Recreation. Ashland Parks & Recreation is overseen by a five-member elected Parks Commission. The goal of the Parks Commission is to provide and promote recreational opportunities and to preserve and maintain public lands.

The Nature Center conducts activities for all ages in the areas of environmental education, recreation, stewardship, and sustainability. School groups and community members explore the local natural and cultural history and learn to apply conservation in their lives. Our recreation and stewardship activities provide indoor and outdoor education through visual, hands-on exhibits and demonstrations, demonstration gardens and interpretive trails. Permanent and temporary staff coordinate projects, work parties and education programs at North Mountain Park and other locations in Ashland. The Nature Center also oversees four community gardens within the parks system.



Garden Flowers
Photos Courtesy of Aleia Fletcher

DONATIONS

The North Mountain Park Nature Center is part of Ashland Parks and Recreation, and, as such, it is supported in part by the Ashland Parks Foundation, a certified non-profit organization. In 2014, over \$12,044 in donations and grants were given to the Foundation on behalf of the Center.

The School Program Scholarship fund supports K-5 classes in attending field trips at the park. In 2014, North Mountain Park was successful in securing \$5,500 in program grants from the Carrico Family Foundation, Ashland Parks Foundation, Ashland Kiwanis Club, and Ashland Lions Club. For the fifth consecutive year, the Kiwanis and Lions have continued their tradition of school program support. School Program scholarships make our outdoor environmental education field trips more accessible to elementary teachers and students by offsetting our program registration fees.



Ashland Lions and Kiwanis Clubs Support School Programs

This year, a new interpretive exhibit was supported by the family of Ashland resident, Barbara Massey, a well known ornithologist, and long-time park volunteer. Massey's daughters and extended family donated a total of \$1,830 to develop and install a solar powered bird-call sound box in honor of Barbara Massey's 90th birthday.

Our annual events were made possible by numerous donations, including \$2,625, to support the Bear Creek Salmon Festival. Rogue Valley Audubon continued its traditional sponsorship of Project Feeder Watch, donating \$300 toward the purchase of bird seed.

Private citizens also showed their support through substantial donations and purchases of memorial brick pavers, the proceeds of which support the center.

STAFF

The Nature Center is operated by three full-time staff members. This dedicated team consists of the Nature Center Manager Libby VanWyhe, our long-time Stewardship Coordinator Linda Chesney, and our newest team member Brigette Cooke as Office Assistant.

Brigette started working at the Nature Center in August, 2014. She brings experience as a Preschool Administrator and extensive Customer Service skills. When interacting with visitors, she shares her passion for hiking, exploring nature, and vegetable gardening. According to Brigette, supporting the mission at North Mountain Park Nature Center is greatly fulfilling and gives her a sense of purpose.



Linda Chesney, Brigette Cooke, Libby VanWyhe

Two temporary staff members supported school program field trips in 2014. Mike Stiles, an experienced classroom teacher and math tutor, taught with us for two consecutive field trip seasons. Mike's down-to-earth approach was effective with students and volunteers alike. Kelly Gaudin supported school programs as a Program Assistant and Lead Instructor. Her educational and professional background is in Education and Recreation, so she enjoys working with school programs, from planning and development to program implementation. Kelly is an avid outdoors-woman and has rafted the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon two times.



Kelly Gaudin - Lead Instructor, Program Assistant



Mike Stiles - Lead Instructor

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 the new Discovery Room exhibits.

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.



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.



School Program Instructors Lead Field Trips



Monitoring Volunteers Record Wildlife Sightings

In 2014, community members and students logged an amazing **3,491** hours of volunteer service at North Mountain Park. This network of 337 civic-minded volunteers assisted in 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



Drop In Gardeners Have Fun With Seeds



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. Visitors may view many interpretive displays on the exterior and inside the building. A reception area features interactive informational elements as well as a variety of brochures and booklets which inform visitors about local plants, wildlife, cultural history, hiking trails, parks and volunteer opportunities.

FRONT OFFICE & EXHIBIT ROOM

Brigette Cooke, our cheerful and informed receptionist, is available to assist local visitors in registering for community education programs and with accessing the many resources available at this and other Ashland parks.

At Brigette's suggestion, the receptionist desk has been moved to face the entrance of the Nature Center. This required rearranging the brochures and visitor guides as well as the receptionist computer and monitors. The new design allows for improved face-to-face customer service and makes the entire office more welcoming.



New Reception Desk Layout

Late in 2014, the Center Manger added a new play feature to the Exhibit Room. A whimsical fairy tree-house now delights young visitors. The tree-house is over four feet tall and is made from natural and recycled materials. This new feature encourages imaginative play with natural materials. Such play, and fairy-play in particular, can be a vital first step toward developing ecological awareness in elementary-aged children. Because fairies essentially anthropomorphize natural forces, they help us to empathize with the natural world and encourage a sense of wonder.



Two Young Visitors Enjoying the Fairy House

DISCOVERY ROOM

Many new developments took place this year in the Discovery Room. The new room is designed to include more interactive natural science exhibits.



Discovery Room Stream Mural

Karin Onkka and Irene Brady both completed contract work for these new exhibits. Mural work was added to the water cycle/weather wall, and the riparian restoration installation was completed. Two 10-gallon aquarium tanks now house live aquatic species: mosquito fish in one and a female crayfish in the other. The Bird Corner has been nearly completed, including an iPad station for listening to local bird calls paired with visual aids.

The weather station display is complete and data collection and posting issues are still being fine-tuned with assistance from the Ashland IT department.

A “Look Closer” station, designed for close-up exploration, includes a flexible camera that can be focused to magnify small objects for viewing on a wall-mounted flat screen. Some nature sketching kits have been developed for use with the flex camera, and more kits are in the works. Currently, we are working with interpretive design contractor Karin Onkka to finish remaining exhibits in the Discovery Room.



Closer Look Kits and Flex-Cam

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

The Nature Center staff coordinates community education programs targeted to preschoolers through seniors in topics relating to natural science, cultural history, gardening, nature crafts and sustainability. Classes are taught by volunteers, public and private sector professionals, Parks and Recreation Department staff, and other passionate educators who wish to share their knowledge and skills.

Classes and workshops are offered at North Mountain Park, as well as at a wide range of locations in and beyond Ashland. This year, the Ashland Parks Foundation again funded need-based scholarships making any of these programs more affordable for all.

During this driest year ever recorded, many classes focused on water conservation including: Getting the Most Out of Your Water, Gardening When Water Is Scarce, Deer-Resistant & Drought-Tolerant Plants for the Rogue Valley, and Water Wisdom 101: Habits and Hardware.

Our Community Program attendees are asked to evaluate our programs based on customer service, class quality, and instructor expertise. Out of 419 survey respondents, our programs received a average approval rating of 96%.



Preschool Programs



Culinary Herbal Wreath Making.



*Guided Bird Walks
Photo Courtesy of Graham Lewis*



*Salmon Spiral Community Art Project
Photo Courtesy of Joey Howard*

Survey results also provided excellent suggestions for additional topics. The Nature Center staff worked to forge new partnerships with local organizations and agencies to expand the skilled instructor pool and the available program offerings.

The first annual Ashland Paint Out took place on a beautiful Saturday in September. The invitational plein air Paint Out held at North Mountain Park and Lithia Park attracted an excellent showing of local artists, both amateurs and professionals. Twenty paintings were chosen for exhibit at the Hanson Howard Gallery.



Ashland Paint Out - Photos Courtesy of Jim Chamberlain

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS
Winter/Spring 2014 thru Fall 2014

Instructor	Class	Date	Location
RV Audubon Society Volunteers	Project Feeder Watch	Jan 4 & 18, Feb 1 & 15, Mar 1 & 15	NMP
NMP Puppeteers	Preschool Puppet Theatre	Jan 10, Feb 14, Mar 14, Apr 11, May 9	NMP
Vince Zauskey	Winter Bird Walk	Jan 11	NMP
Tom Landis & Gail Saito	Milkweed for Monarchs & Seed Ball Making	Jan 22	NMP
Harry Fuller	Birding Klamath National Wildlife Refuge in Winter	Jan 23 & 25	NMP & Field Trip
Anna Edmondson	Recycled Paper Beads	Feb 1	NMP
Sarah Red-Laird	Urban Beekeeping	Feb 4	NMP
NMP Staff	Seed Swap	Feb 5	NMP
Anna Edmondson	Creating Recycled Paper Bead Stars	Feb 8	NMP
Kristie Reynolds	Science in the Cascade-Siskiyou Natl Monument	Feb 11	NMP
Kellie Barry	Edible Landscapes that Taste as Good as They Look	Feb 12	NMP
Shannon Rio	Learning Common Backyard Birds	Feb 19	NMP
Casey Roland	Dormant Pruning of Fruit Trees	Feb 22	NMP
Jennifer Ewing	Worm Composting	Mar 1	NMP
Jennifer Ewing	Building & Using Raised Beds	Mar 1	NMP
Malena Marvin	Learn to Install Your Own Greywater System	Mar 6 & 8	NMP
Sue Yamins	Pine Needle Basketry	Mar 8	NMP
Libby VanWyhe	Natural Spring Cleaning	Mar 12	NMP
Christie Mackison	Deer-Resistant & Drought-Tolerant Plants for the RV	Mar 15	NMP
Julie Gates	Prune Cane-Growing Shrubs	Mar 16	NMP
Mitra Sticklen	Growing Oyster Mushrooms	Apr 5	NMP
Jon Carlson	Weed Walk	Apr 12	NMP
Risa Buck	Recycling: Where Does It Go & Why?	Apr 16	NMP
Jon Carlson	Explorations With Buckbrush	Apr 19	Field Trip

Linda Chesney	Biking the Greenway to Taste Wild Edibles	Apr 22	Bear Creek Greenway
Mitra Sticklen	Gardening With Edible Mushrooms	Apr 26	Sporulate Learning Farm
Anne Thayer & Casey Roland	Arbor Day Tree Walk	Apr 26	Walk starts at SOU
Marcia Wineteer	Spring Wildflower Walk in Oredson-Todd Woods	Apr 29	Oredson Todd Woods
Jesse Biesanz	Finding Balance: Rock Stacking & Dry Stone Arch Building	May 3	Lithia Park
SUMMER 2014			
Mitra Strcklen	Growing Shitake Mushrooms on Logs	May 10	NMP
Valya Boutenko	Espalier Tree	May 13	NMP
Cynthia Care	Gardening When Water Is Scarce	May 14	NMP
Shannon Rio	Beginning Bird Identification	May 17	NMP
Jeanine Moy	NW Nature Shop Birding for Kids	May 17	NMP
Mitra Stricklen	Plant & Fungi Summer Gardening	May 17	Sporulate Learning Farm
Jon Carlson	How to Eat Weeds	May 18	NMP
Jeff LaLande	Seeing & Recognizing Our Valley's Architectural History	May 20, & 27 Jun 3	NMP & Field Trip
NMP Volunteers & Staff	Demonstration Garden Tours	May 21, June 18, Jul 16, Aug 20	NMP
Patricia Marcus	The Care & Pruning of Wisteria	May 24	NMP
Mitra Stricklen	Fungi & Plant Permaculture	May 24	Sporulate Learning Center
Patrick Marcus	Pest Management for Home Organic Gardeners	May 28	NMP
Rachel Andras	Learn to Flycast	May 29, Jun 12, Jul 10, Aug 7	Garden Way Park
Patty Aulik	Sassy Shakeres	May 31, Jun 7	NMP
Julie Gates	Plant Architecture & Pruning Demonstration	Jun 1	NMP
Ashland Parks & Rec Staff & Volunteers	History of the Rogue Valley for Homeschoolers	Jun 3	NMP
NW Nature Shop Staff	Trails of Ashland for Hiking, Biking & Running	Jun 4	NMP
Rhianna Simes	Urban Composting	Jun 7, Jul 5	Recycling Center



Terence Philippe	Knot-Tying Basics	Jun 8	NMP
NMP Puppeteers	Preschool Puppet Theater	Jun 13, Jul 11, Aug 8	NMP
Local Birders	Summer Saturday Morning Bird Walks	Jun 14, Jul 12, Aug 9	NMP
Jackie Greer	Trail Food Dehydration	Jun 14	NMP
NMP Staff	Earth Camp for Kids	Jun 16—19	NMP
Jennifer Ewing	Herbs	Jun 17	NMP
Julie Smitherman	Water Wisdom 101: Habits and Hardware	Jun 18	NMP
Terence Philippe	NW Nature Shop's Introduction to Birding	Jun 22	NMP
NMP Staff & Volunteers	Summer Music Jam in the Park	June 25, Jul 30, Aug 27	NMP
Krista Hepford	Art Hike	Jun 28	NMP
Shannon Davis	Bumble Bee Monitoring for Citizen Scientists	Jul 12	NMP
Jon Carlson	Herbal First Aid	Jul 13	NMP
Harry Fuller	Baby Birds: The Next Generation	Jul 17, Jul 19	NMP & Field Trip
Liz Landreth	Culinary Herbal Wreath Making	Jul 24	NMP
Louisa Lenz-Porter	Hand-Weaving a Potato Basket	Jul 26	NMP
Jon Carlson	Stewarding Wild Medicinal Plants	Aug 2	Earth Teach Park
Jennifer Ewing	Perennial Plant Care	Aug 13	NMP
Dave Bloomsness	Star Party & Presentation of NASA's SOFIA Airborne Observatory	Aug 30	NMP
FALL SEASON			
Rhianna Simmes	Vermi Worm Composting	Sept 6	Recycle Center
NMP Puppeteers	Preschool Puppet Theatre	Sep 12, Nov 14, Dec 12	NMP
Local Birders	Summer Saturday Morning Bird Walks	Sep 13	NMP
Nils Nelson	Introduction to Mushroom Cultivation	Sep 13 & 14	Sporulate Learning Farm
Cynthia Care	Gardening When Water Is Scarce	Sep 16	NMP
NMP Staff	Demonstration Garden Tour	Sep 17	NMP
Laura Fleming	Attracting Clinging Birds: Acrobats of the Bird World	Sep 17	NMP
NMP	Ashland Paint Out	Sep 20	NMP & Lithia Park

Patty Aulik	Afro-Cuban Shakeres	Sep 21	NMP
Christie Mackison	Fall Planting for Drought	Sep 24	NMP
NMP Staff	Salmon Spiral & Water Wishes Art Project	Sep 28	NMP
Shannon Rio	Birds of the Rogue Valley	Oct 1	NMP
Dr. Alan Journet	A Rogue Climate for the Valley	Oct 2, 9,16,17	NMP
Lori Tella	Getting the Most Out of Your Water	Oct 8	NMP
Fred Grant	Green & Solar Tour	Oct 11	Field Trip
Nils Nelson	Mushroom in the Wild	Oct 11	NMP
Shannon Rio	Beautiful Birds, Beautiful Words	Oct 15	NMP
Patty Aulik	Eco Art Found Sound	Oct 19	NMP
Anna Edmondson	Recycled Collaging to Focus Your Life	Nov 2	NMP
Dick Ashford	Hawks!	Nov 4	NMP
RV Audubon Society	Project Feeder Watch	Nov 8,22, Dec 6,20	NMP
Anna Edmondson	Recycled Paper Beads	Nov 9	NMP
Anna Edmondson	Creating Recycled Paper Bead Stars	Nov 16	NMP
Christine Yee	Make Your Own Fire Cider	Nov 22	NMP
Nature Center Staff	Natural Holiday Wreaths	Dec 5 or 6	NMP
NMP Staff	Salmon Spiral Solstice	Dec 18	NMP
Linda Chesney	Natural Holiday Wreaths	Dec 19	Senior Center



Preschool Puppet Theater



*Milkweed for Monarchs
Seed Ball Making*

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Each year the Nature Center sponsors two public educational events free to community members of all ages: the Bear Creek Salmon Festival, which was held this year on Saturday, October 4, and Rogue Valley Migratory Bird Day on May 10. Nature Center Staff also participated in Rogue Valley Earth Day (at ScienceWorks Hands-on Museum) on April 19.

Rogue Valley Bird Day

In spite of the first rainy morning for this event, a strong promotional effort brought a great turnout to Rogue Valley Bird Day 2014. This annual event is held on the second Saturday of May and is a local celebration of International Migratory Bird Day. Visitors enjoy bird walks and educational programs which focus on the many important aspects of bird migration.



*Bird Day Bird Walk
Courtesy of Graham Lewis*



Birders in Wet Weather

This year's theme focused on the many ways in which birds matter to the earth, to ecosystems, and, of course, to us. Hosted by the Rogue Valley Audubon Society and the Klamath Bird Observatory, as well as North Mountain Park staff and volunteers, the event drew all ages and all levels of birdwatchers, from beginners to more experienced birders. The enthusiasm of the birders, young and old was not dampened by the rainy weather.

Bear Creek Salmon Festival

This year, the Bear Creek Salmon Festival, which celebrates the return of the Chinook Salmon to Bear Creek, actually coincided with their arrival at North Mountain Park. Due in part to early fall rains and removal of fish barriers in local streams, the salmon returned home to Bear Creek weeks earlier than in recent years. Recent sightings added to the atmosphere of festivity and hope at 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 theme for this year's event was "Water: Make Every Drop Count For Salmon".

In addition to enjoying the interactive educational exhibits, approximately 700-800 visitors explored the park and engaged in the new Salmon Spiral and Water Wishes installation. Participants of all ages walked the stone-lined spiral, holding good intentions for the salmon's journey. As a craft activity, children decoupaged stones to add to the spiral. Others wrote their good wishes for salmon and water on brightly colored cloth streamers and tied them to ash trees near the spiral. Later in the winter, community members helped to disassemble the spiral, placing the cobbles in Bear Creek to improve salmon habitat.



Visitors Walking the Salmon Spiral



Water Wishes

The Zero Waste effort led by the Jackson County Master Recyclers helped reduce waste even more than in past years by serving on durable eat-ware and assisting with clean-up, composting, and recycling. Using flatware loaned by Figgy's Food Truck, cloth napkins made available by Sesame restaurant, and dish loans from Darex and Nature Center staff, no durable rentals were needed. Numerous Ashland High student volunteers turned out to support the Zero Waste effort this year.

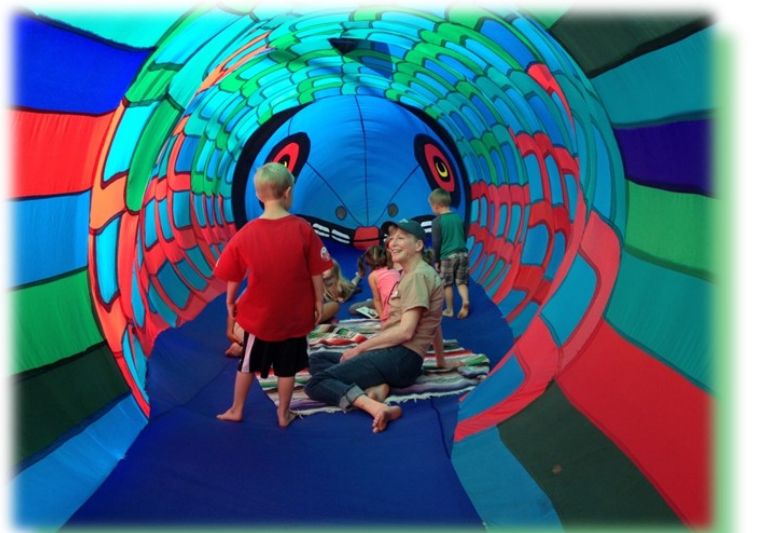
For the second time this year, a schedule of outdoor mini-workshops were taught by local experts on the following topics:

Water Wise Gardening: Lori Tella is the Urban Planner with Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District

Wildlife Tracking: Coyote Trails School of Nature

Water Wisdom 101: Habits and Hardware – Julie Smitherman, Ashland's Water Conservation Specialist & Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor
Bear Creek Habitat Restoration Tour – The Freshwater Trust

The workshops were again a welcome and educational addition to the festival.



Volunteers Read to Children in the Salmon Story Tent

STUDENT PROJECTS

This year, the Nature Center partnered with SOU on senior practicum, capstone and graduate internship projects.

Jillian Tally - Practicum: Field Instructor and Closer Look Kit Development

Although new to teaching, Jillian gained confidence through teaching School Program field trips and Compass and Survival programs. She also developed a Closer Look Kit for our Flex-cam station, selecting and researching natural objects for closer study.

“Through this internship, I gained knowledge of native plants, history, geology, and Microsoft Publisher. Looking through the eyes of a child was a fun and educational part of this project, that brought creativity and organized thought together... The employees at North Mountain Park made it a great work environment.”



Jillian Tally

Cathy Shepherd - Capstone: Field Instructor and Activity Development

Cathy Shepherd was interested in designing outdoor education, so in order to understand our programs, she taught field trips throughout the spring season. She then developed a new Carbon and Energy lesson plan for use in future History Programs.



Cathy Shepherd

“I feel that I am well suited for this type of activity and look forward to more opportunities like the one the Center has provided. I hope to do much more to improve my skills... Mostly my love and joy of children and the outdoors come together here in a most remarkable and wonderful way.”

Kelci MacDicken - Practicum: Field Instructor and Curriculum Materials Development

Kelci began her practicum by teaching Geology field programs, and then extended her work into off-season School Program support. Applying new skills in Microsoft Publisher, Kelci helped bring our school program activity cards into a new and improved format.



"Volunteering at NMP has been a great way to get involved with my community! I've enjoyed working with and meeting new people! The things I have learned here are also helping me get acquainted with things I want to do when I graduate. I'm so glad I've had the opportunity to volunteer here!"

Kelci MacDicken.

Valeri Jokkel - Capstone: Exhibit Room Animal Track Development

For her Capstone project, Valeri tackled a project on the Nature Center wish list. Valeri researched and developed animal tracks that can be affixed to the floor of the Exhibit Room. This activity encourages exploration and investigation of animal habitats.

"The animal tracks activity will be a fun way for visitors to learn about the local wildlife. I'm thoroughly enjoying this project because I have always had a love for animals and this is a first step towards combining that love of wildlife and my interest in education into something beneficial for other people."



Valeri Jokkel

Vanessa Carey - Graduate Internship: Activity Development

Vanessa, a Master's Student in Environmental Education, developed a new activity for our History of the Rogue Valley Field Program. She also collaborated with volunteers to develop all the materials needed to implement the activity on-the-ground in Spring 2014.

"The History of Agriculture activity allows children to travel through time, changing the landscape by adding and subtracting animals, plants and architecture to a mural of the Rogue Valley... students also observe how far people traveled for food at different points in history from the Native American seasonal round to today."



SCHOOL PROGRAMS

K to 5th Grade

School Programs offer numerous opportunities for students to connect with and explore the natural world. 2014 was the eighteenth year that elementary students have visited North Mountain Park for School Program field trips. The overarching goal of our School Programs is to teach appreciation for, and stewardship of, the natural systems that support us. All our lessons are conducted outdoors in small groups and are tailored to Oregon State Content Standards.

In 2014, 26 classes participated in spring field programs on the subject of History of the Rogue Valley. We welcomed K-5 students from five local schools: Bellview, Helman, Walker, John Muir, Children's World, and Willow Wind. The youngers (K-2) field trips used guided play to experience the exciting challenges of exploring, settling and finding gold in our valley. Older students modeled how farming, ranching and logging lifestyles utilized natural resources. The activities allowed us to put a historical perspective on sustainability.



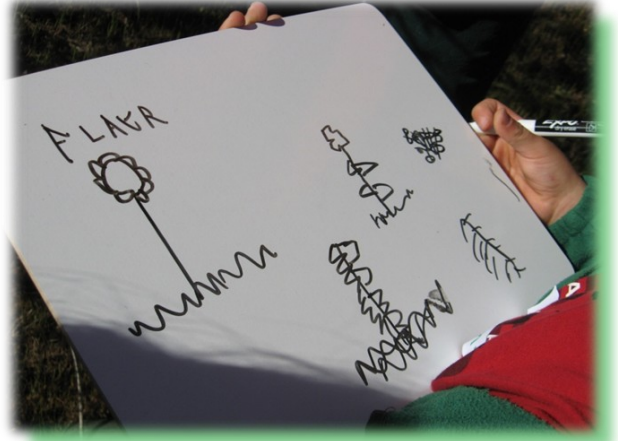
Pioneer Life Activities



Volunteer Instructors Inspire Students

During the fall, 27 classes participated in field programs about the Geology of the Rogue Valley. Thanks to wider marketing strategies, classes attended from eight different schools. The curriculum included a diversity of subjects, including rock identification, rocks as habitat, uses of rocks, local topography, and the rock cycle. A new activity demonstrated plate-tectonics as students subducted (crawled) under a tarp painted like the coast of Oregon.

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



Students Learn to Be Explorers - Look Closely and Record Their Findings

Curriculum Development

This year, our Manager implemented major improvements to the school-program curriculum. In an effort to apply best modern educational practices, all the lessons were re-formatted to include a number of new elements.

First and foremost, every activity is now based on assessable objectives. Care has been taken to employ objectives from various orders of thinking, spanning the majority of Blooms Taxonomy. The objectives are student-centered, in that students can demonstrate comprehension through specific tasks, answering questions, or modeling the subject in a kinesthetic way. Instructors are aware of these objectives and can use them to informally assess the student's understanding before moving on.

With objectives in hand, on-the-ground and post-assessment could be initiated for the first time in our programs. During fall Geology programs, on-the-ground assessment was run by seasonal Lead Instructors who observed the activities, noting students' overall success and comprehension. Formal assessment occurred through post-quizzes administered by teachers when they got back to the classroom. The return rate for these quizzes was 85%; the scores are still being tabulated and analyzed.

Each activity is now aligned to the curriculum standards facing today's teachers. In addition to the Oregon State Content Standards, teachers can now see how each field trip lesson supports the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards. Each unit and each individual activity fit into a larger thematic picture defined by Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions. The new activities explicitly define strategies being employed for diverse learners. As the lessons themselves are revamped, effort has been made to include a "hook", or anticipatory set, and an assessment-based closure in each.



Kelly Gaudin - Instrumental in Curriculum Development

SCHOOL PROGRAMS - SPRING 2014

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

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Helman	Tia McLean	K	History of the Rogue Valley
	Mia Driscoll	K	History of the Rogue Valley
	Toni DiMaggio	1 st	History of the Rogue Valley
	Mary Snowden	2 nd	History of the Rogue Valley
	Andy Strange	4th	History of the Rogue Valley
	Mark Sherbow	5th	History of the Rogue Valley
	Kelly Martin	3rd	History of the Rogue Valley
	Joe Dunbrasky	4th	History of the Rogue Valley

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

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
John Muir	Shannon Wolff	1st	History of the Rogue Valley
Children's World	Wendy	K	History of the Rogue Valley
Willow Wind	Sue Pendell	4th & 5th	History of the Rogue Valley
	Lacy Kleespie	4th	History of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL PROGRAMS - FALL 2014

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

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Helman	Mark Sherbow	4th	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Kari Smith	1st	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Valerie McCoy	1st	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Mia Driscoll	K	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Tia McClean	K	Geology of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Walker	Kouba Sayre	K	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Kathy Mateas	1st	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Jennifer Parks	4th	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Tyler Claycomb	2nd & 3rd	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Inge Kendrick	2nd	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Ryan Jackson	1st	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Marla Dentino	K	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Dylana Garfas-Knowles	4th	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Amanda Dallas	2nd & 3rd	Geology of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Talent	Kathleen Lemcke	1st	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Molly Walker	1st	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Pam D'Haem	1st	Geology of the Rogue Valley
Orchard Hill	Jordon Saturen	2nd	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Lara Liden	5th	Geology of the Rogue Valley
Madrone Trail	Diane Bracamontes	5th	Geology of the Rogue Valley
	Hillary Lowenberg	1st	Geology of the Rogue Valley
Abraham Lincoln	Teresa McGrath	3rd	Geology of the Rogue Valley
John Muir	Shannon Wolff	K & 1st	Geology of the Rogue Valley

Ashland Middle School

North Mountain Park continued its association with Ashland Middle School by offering two programs for sixth-grade classes. In the spring, two sixth-grade classes joined our instructors at Oredson Todd Woods for Compass and Survival Programs. Students learned to use a compass and then practiced orienteering and shelter building in the woods. Approximately 60 sixth-graders took part in these programs, gaining important survival skills.

COMPASS AND SURVIVAL - SPRING 2014

Teacher	Grade	Students	Date	Program
Beth Oehler	6th	30	May 29	Compass, Shelter Building, Searching
Karl Pryor	6th	30	May 30	Compass, Shelter Building, Searching



AMS Students Learn Orienteering



In the fall of 2014, we offered “Water of Ashland Middle School” to six 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.

WATER OF AMS FALL - 2014

Teacher	Grade	Students	Date	Program
Beth Oehler	6th	28	Nov. 10 Nov. 12	Water of AMS and Wetland Service
		29		
		28		
Hillary Harper	6th	28	Nov. 5 Nov. 6	Water of AMS and Wetland Service
		28		
		28		



*AMS Students Explore and Restore a Local Wetland
Photos Courtesy of Sean Bagshaw*

SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAMS

School groups and service organizations from throughout the Rogue Valley and beyond participated in Service Learning programs in 2014. Programs were offered to students in grades 3 through college as well as adults. These programs engaged participants in meaningful stewardship activities, while teaching related environmental education subjects.



Linda Chesney Birding with Service Learning Students

Classes are offered free of charge since The Ashland Parks & Recreation Department benefits from the service provided. Participants gained a greater understanding of local ecology and a sense of civic pride and empowerment. Fifteen classes and service groups (433 individuals) participated in service learning programs. Service learning projects resulted in 428 person hours of outdoor service conducted at North Mountain Park and other parks in Ashland.

North Mountain Park staff also facilitated Service Learning for four sessions of a Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) summer camp run by APR volunteer coordinator Lori Ainsworth. Other participating groups included school classes from 3rd through 12th grade and service organizations such as scouts and church groups. Service was also incorporated into two summer camps: church-sponsored Peacemakers Camp, and Konoway Nika Tillicum, a national summer academy for Native American youth run by the SOU Native American Studies Program. Service learning programs were offered primarily two days of the week during the high-demand (spring) season. Volunteers assisted North Mountain Park staff in facilitating programs.



Removing Invasive Blackberries



Water Quality Sampling

SERVICE LEARNING 2014

Group	Teacher/Leader	Date	# of People	Hours (of entire activity)	Service Hours (total man hrs)	Work Completed & Location
Girl Scout Troop	Margaret Machala	Mar 18	16	1.5	.5	Invasive Species Removal
Riverdale High	Laurie LePore	Mar 19	41	3.5	1	Invasive Species Removal
John Muir School	Jim Bowers	Mar 21	26	3	1.5	Invasive Species Removal
Howard Elementary-Medford	Jessica Hayes	May 29	25	2.25	1	Trail Chipping
Howard Elementary-Medford	Cheryl Lashley	June 2	22	1.5	.75	Trail Chipping
Howard Elementary-Medford	Miles Barnes	June 2	22	1.5	.75	Trail Chipping
John Muir School	Jim Bowers	Apr. 21	26	2	1	Willow Pruning
Oak Grove Elementary	Ashley Anderson	June 5	30	2	1	Trail Chipping
Oak Grove Elementary	Ginny Kriz	June 9	30	2	1	Trail Chipping
OSU	Jessica Haywood	Mar 25	8	8	7	Invasive Removal, Nest Box Clean Out, Grass Plantings
RCC	Heidi Wacker	May 17	25	3.5	1.75	Invasive Species Removal

SERVICE LEARNING 2014 cont.

Group	Teacher/Leader	Date	# of People	Hours <i>(of entire activity)</i>	Service Hours <i>(total person-hrs)</i>	Work Completed & Location
John Muir School	James Bowers	Nov. 24	20	2	1	Blackberry Removal, Invasive Species Program
Konoway/SOU	Brent & Carol Jensen	July 17	40	2	1	Willow Area Maintenance & Irrigation
Peacemakers Camp	Andrea Shupack	Aug. 21	12	2	.5	Invasive Species Removal
Armadillo Technical Institute	Jenelle Van Rooyen	Oct. 13	30	2	1	Willow Coppice Area Management

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. This year 186 students received these programs.

BRISCOE GEOLOGY PARK PROGRAMS 2014

School	Teacher	Students	Program	Date
Hoover Elementary	Patti DeSimone	30	Earth History Classroom Program	Mar 13
	Sharon Walsh	30		
	Sue Truly	30		
Helman Elementary	Joe Dunbrasky	28	Earth History Classroom Program	Apr. 15
Southern Oregon Land Conservancy	N/A	10	Geology Tour	May 4
Jefferson Center	N/A	12	Geology Tour	May 11
Hoover Elementary	Sue Truly	25	Earth History Field Trip	May 12
Hoover Elementary	Patti DeSimone	27	Earth History Field Trip	May 13
Hoover Elementary	Sharon Walsh	26	Earth History Field Trip	May 14
Lone Pine Elementary	Heidi Grantz	32	Earth History Classroom Program	Oct. 14
Lone Pine Elementary	Heidi Grantz	26	Earth History Field Trip	Oct. 17

GARDENS

Surrounding the Nature Center, the Demonstration and Heirloom Gardens delight park visitors from throughout our region and beyond. The gardens are working examples of local sustainable garden design and gardening practices.



North Mountain Park Gardens in Summer

The gardens serve as a rich community resource by providing a setting for docent-led tours and community educational programs. They also provide habitat for a variety of wildlife and a place for self-guided education and recreation. Volunteers continue to maintain these beautiful gardens. This year, drought played a big role in the management and educational messaging in the gardens. Due to Ashland's drought declaration in early spring, several annual beds were left unplanted and un-irrigated for the season. Temporary signs were posted about official drought measures and sources of additional information.

HEIRLOOM GARDENS

The Heirloom Garden managed to thrive in 2014 in spite of multiple challenges. In addition to drought conditions, the group experienced a change in leadership after the "retirement" of a key volunteer. The fact that many of the heirloom species tend to be drought tolerant meant that even while conserving water, the garden flourished. The "Grandma's Garden" annual bed was the only area impacted. The dedicated group of Ashland Garden Club volunteers continues to provide updated information for interpretive booklets, in addition to continued maintenance of the Heirloom Garden.



Volunteer Heirloom Gardeners at Work

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. A new area featuring hummingbird plants was started this fall, and can be found directly behind the Nature Center back/east door. The new hummingbird garden has already been adopted by an eager new volunteer.



Demonstration Gardens in Bloom

As in the Heirloom Garden, the annual bed next to the greenhouse was not planted this year due to the drought. "Volunteer" poppies and other drought tolerant self-seeding annuals did persist in that area, aided by some unusual, well-timed summer rains. Annuals which had been started in the green house prior to the drought declaration were planted in irrigated perennial beds. This created exceptionally showy butterfly gardens.

This year, the Butterfly Gardens were officially designated as a Monarch Waystation. A colorful interpretive sign was donated by Tom Landis, who is spearheading the Monarch Waystation efforts in the Rogue Valley. Because habitat conservation and restoration are absolutely necessary for the survival of monarch butterflies, the mission of this program is to foster stewardship that supports monarch recovery.



Butterfly Gardens Beautiful and Educational



Waystation Sign Celebrates NMP Monarch Habitat

With strong local interest in supporting bees and other pollinators, the Butterfly Demonstration Garden has been causing quite a buzz this year.

A few years ago, butterfly bushes were placed on the invasive species list, so we have removed some aging butterfly bushes from the gardens. They are being replaced with sterile hybrid varieties which benefit pollinators without creating any invasive threat.



Monarch Caterpillar and Showy Milkweed, Host Plant

The gardens continue to serve as a model for home gardeners who wish to create wildlife habitat and employ sustainable gardening practices. They are also a resource for community education classes and school programs. All garden areas were again “adopted” by caring volunteers, including several new recruits.



Visitors Enjoy Demonstration Garden Tours

NATURAL AREA

MANAGEMENT



Bridge Leading to Natural Area

In accordance with North Mountain Park's mission, the natural area (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.

Ashland Parks and Recreation staff worked with community volunteers and service learning groups in an effort to control invasive species. As herbicide use is not permitted at North Mountain Park, the control of Himalayan blackberries continues to require the most effort in manual removal. However, in order to protect the park's highly productive bird nesting season, staff continued to apply lighter, later-season vegetation management.

Management Plan Development

The Nature Center staff and steering committee have begun work on a Natural Area Management Plan. To achieve the goal of protecting and enhancing the natural area, the plan establishes management objectives for habitat quality, as well as ongoing monitoring, stewardship and education.

After careful study of plan templates from Portland Metro, the committee decided upon an ambitious plan including: restoration opportunities, schedules for vegetation maintenance, infrastructure and habitat structure maintenance, monitoring protocols, human uses and impacts, volunteer stewardship, and plans for infrequent emergency situations such as flood, fire and drought. Appendices are already compiled, including relevant laws, regulations, and species lists.



Service is Crucial to Maintaining Habitat Values

Stewardship Coordinator Linda Chesney has led the development of a number of sections, including establishing the plan overview, objectives, site history, and current site conditions. The steering committee provides edits and recommendations. Linda will soon be finalizing the vegetation management section.

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 interpretation of natural and cultural history.



Salmon Spiral Invites Contemplation

The Salmon Spiral was a favorite outdoor feature this fall. Constructed as a community program for the Bear Creek Salmon Festival, the stone spiral intrigued and delighted visitors and students alike. Many walked meditatively through the spiral, contemplating the salmon's journey and holding positive intentions for rain. In December, this temporary feature was disassembled and the stones were returned to Bear Creek to improve salmon habitat.

Staff and volunteers teamed up to install a new piece of technology which helps teach visitors to recognize bird calls. Our Solar Eco-post plays four audio messages depicting the calls and songs of four local birds. Since solar panels power the messages, the Eco-Post is ideal for trail-side interpretation.



Barbara Massey with the Solar Eco-post.

This new feature was paid for by donations from the family of Barbara Massey, a well-known ornithologist and long-time park volunteer. The audio messages were developed by Barbara Massey and Jim Chamberlain.

In early 2014, upgrades were made to Creature QUEST boxes which are scattered throughout the park's trail system. Each box features a different local animal and originally contained an animal stamp and pad which could be used to mark a visitor's QUEST passport. Because of maintenance challenges, this system was changed out in favor of metal hole-punchers. The interactive outdoor game continues to be treat for visitors, who can now "punch" their passports throughout the park.

WILDLIFE

A great variety of wildlife utilizes the park's diverse habitat areas. The riparian zone along Bear Creek serves as part of an important migratory corridor for many species.



Deer Crossing Bear Creek



Baby Tree Swallow Utilizing Nest Box

The abundance and variety of birds and other wildlife at North Mountain Park attracts more recreational birders and wildlife watchers every year. Vegetation management in the park is tailored to accommodate wildlife needs, especially during the spring and summer breeding and nesting season.

Severe drought conditions in spring and summer created great stress for local wildlife. Fewer fledgling birds were observed and nest box clean-out results showed that mortality occurred between hatching and fledging in some boxes.

Extremely low flows in Bear Creek in September and October allowed for spectacular viewing of spawning Chinook salmon in Bear Creek within the habitat enhancement areas. Many park visitors shared their excitement and satisfaction at viewing salmon so close to home.



*Swallowtail - Photo
Courtesy of Jeff McFarland*



Cabbage White
Courtesy of Jeff McFarland



Mallard Ducks
Courtesy of Jeff McFarland



Young Blacktailed Deer
Photo Courtesy of Jeff McFarland



Northern Saw-Whet Owl,
A Species Never Before Documented at the Park



Visitors Glimpse Northern Saw-Whet Owl Roosting in Daytime
Photos Courtesy of Jill Turner



Western Pond Turtles

STEWARDSHIP

OUTDOOR SERVICE

Lori Ainsworth is the main facilitator of Ashland Parks & Recreation volunteer outdoor service projects that are not service learning programs. In 2014 those individuals who elected to engage in outdoor service at North Mountain Park were primarily involved in managing invasive species and worked under the supervision of, or alongside, park staff other than Nature Center staff.



Service Groups Work Throughout the Park

MONITORING

Trained volunteers, students, natural resource professionals, and Ashland Parks & Recreation staff participate in monitoring efforts at North Mountain Park. Information gathered through 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

The bird monitoring programs involve more expert volunteers, staff and public participants than any of the other monitoring programs coordinated through the Nature Center. Monthly area search surveys are being conducted by the same team of expert volunteers for the 15th consecutive year. Barbara Massey, who initiated the monthly survey program, released a 15-year report at the end of 2014. Like her 10 year report, this report will be posted on the Nature Center website. Her reports point to some trends in species occurring at the park throughout that period. They provide the public with her expert analysis of monitoring results.



Project FeederWatch Bird Count

During the spring and summer breeding season, volunteers helped to monitor the use of numbered nest boxes at North Mountain Park. A group of OSU students on spring break assisted APR staff in checking and cleaning rat-proof nest boxes that were installed the previous year to thwart a rat infestation. From the contents of the boxes and breeding season observations, it was determined the new boxes were utilized by native bird species. Some nestling mortality was also observed during the fall nest box clean-out, probably due to the severe drought conditions last spring and summer.



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 continue 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 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.

Salmon Monitoring

Chinook Salmon were observed spawning early and in good numbers both in and near North Mountain Park in fall of 2014 in spite of extremely low flows in Bear Creek during late September and into October. A minimum 10 cubic feet per second was maintained in the creek during that post-TID irrigation season to provide enough water for spawning.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Rogue District Fish Biologist Dan Van Dyke is coordinating a monitoring program for Bear Creek from N MT Park to Willow Wind School and for Ashland Creek. The monitoring field work got a late start in 2014 and was thwarted by high flows and turbidity in Bear Creek. Monitoring will get an earlier start next season.



Chinook Salmon in Bear Creek

Pollinators

A bumble bee monitoring class was offered as a summer community education program in July but cancelled due to low enrollment.



Bees Visit our Habitat Gardens

The Xerces Society, a non-profit organization that promotes pollinator conservation and education, held a regional meeting at North Mountain Park during the summer and shared a list of their observations in the demonstration gardens. This was the first verified pollinator data yet collected for the Nature Center. Due to the recent buzz in Ashland over bees, the bee monitoring class will be offered again in summer 2015 and is expected to draw many potential monitoring volunteers.

SUSTAINABILITY

Ashland Green Team

In 2009 North Mountain Park was certified through the City of Ashland's Green Business program. Although the program is not active at this time, the Parks and Recreation Department continues to promote sustainability goals in order to conserve resources, reduce waste and pollution, and educate employees and the public .

Solid Waste: 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. This year, Zero Waste practices were improved through the use of loaned cloth napkins.



Dish Washing Station at Bear Creek Salmon Festival

Energy: In 2014, the Parks and Recreation Department replaced light fixtures in the Lithia Park Shop. Ten T-12 fluorescent tubes were replaced with more-efficient T-8 lamps and ballasts. Also, late in the year, Nature Center staff initiated work to replace all the downstairs light switches with motion-sensing models. The new switches prevent energy waste by shutting the lights off automatically when a room is unoccupied.

Resource Reduction: Parks and Recreation is piloting a new marketing strategy for reduced mailing of the hard-copy Recreation Guide. Instead of city-wide direct mail, only established customers and interested citizens will still receive the hard copy mailing. An experimental targeted double mailing will be evaluated next year.

Water Conservation: Throughout the drought, Julie Smitherman of the Conservation Division facilitated hardware change outs in private households. Ashland's water conservation measures last year resulted in saving 19 thousand gallons per day.



A Variety of Synthetic Turf Options Can Help Conserve Water

Water Wise Landscaping Demonstration Area

At North Mountain Park, we encourage citizens to convert thirsty lawns to water-wise landscapes. Now, a new installation demonstrates two water-saving alternatives: artificial turf and pervious pavers.

Synthetic lawn has come a long way since the Astro-turf of the 1970s. This new installation helps demonstrate significant improvements and advantages of synthetic lawn, including reducing water, fertilizer and other inputs and maintenance. The SynLawn product is 100% recyclable and engineered using renewable and recycled materials; an eco-friendly infill helps to deodorize and prevent the growth of bacteria



Water Wise Landscaping Demonstration Area Exhibits Artificial Turf and Pervious Pavers

The demonstration area is surrounded by pervious pavers, another popular landscaping alternative. Pervious pavers allow rain to filter back into the ground water. By reducing run-off, they also keep pollution out of storm drains and creeks. Pervious pavers can accept the weight of a car, and they make great driveways, paths, and patios. With water shortages continuing across the country, many people are embracing the advantages of alternatives like these. The new North Mountain Park demonstration area will help citizens decide whether these lawn-substitutes would work for their own properties.

Green Educational Programs

The Nature Center promoted sustainability practices by offering a wide range of programs on sustainability topics. The public was increasingly concerned about drought conditions and water conservation. Community program topics on the subject included: Lawn Gone, Drought-Tolerant Gardening, Fall Planting for Drought, Getting the Most Out of Your Water, Edible Landscapes, and Water Wisdom 101. 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.



Garden Way Park Community Garden

The Ashland Community Gardens are located at:

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

Garden lease fees were increased by 15% this year. Because of the construction of Phase I of Ashland Creek Park beginning July 1, fees for that Community Garden were pro-rated for a shortened season and discounted.



Ashland Creek Park and Gardens Under Construction

Ashland Creek Park Community Garden is scheduled to open on March 1, 2015 and will contain 45 plots for lease, a children's garden, and a pollinator garden. Community garden members will benefit from gopher protection, improved trails and plot borders, water spigots at each plot and proximity to restrooms, play structures and other park amenities.

All plots were leased during the growing season, with the exception of a few plots in the Ashland Creek Garden due to the shortened season. At the end of 2014, there were wait lists for all gardens except for Clay St. Park garden.

