

North Mountain Park Nature Center

2015 Annual Report

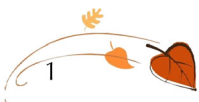


A DIVISION OF ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION

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North Mountain Park Natural Area



2015 YEAR AT A GLANCE

Community Programs & Events

Number of programs: 113

Total number of participants: 1,039

Number of events: 2

School Programs

Number of K-5 field programs: 69 (1,694 Students)

Number of 6-8 programs: 6 (175 Students)

Number of Briscoe Geology Park programs: 14 (506 students)

Total number of programs: 89

Total number of students served: 2,375

Service & Service Learning Programs

Number of service learning programs: 18

Total number of students served: 457

Student Projects

Number of student projects: 5

Volunteers

Total number of volunteers: 576

Number of individual volunteer hours logged: 3,605

Completed Projects

Nature Center Exterior Painting

Birding Resources Poster & Birding Wall

Electrical Box Mural

Exhibit Room Mural Completed

“Who Lives Here” Exhibit Room Activity

Stream Channel Carpet

Discovery Room Wall & Ceiling Designs

Aquarium Tank Question Cards

Chinook Salmon Egg Incubation

iBird Corner

Weather Station Display Complete

Naturally Curious Summer Camp

Little Gnomes Preschool Program

Little Gnomes Summer Camp

Salmon Festival Banners and Festival

Friendship Bracelets

School Programs Increased Attendance

Greater Diversity of Districts Served

Activities Alignment with New Standards

Hummingbird Garden

Mosaic Stepping Stones in Bird Buffet

Water Wise Landscaping Interpretive sign

Bee City USA Facilitation

ACP Rain/Pollinator Garden



OVERVIEW

This report summarizes the 2015 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. Nature Center 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.



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 2015, over \$11,095 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 2015, North Mountain Park was successful in securing \$2,500 in program grants from the Soroptimists of Ashland, the Ashland Parks Foundation, Ashland Kiwanis Club, and Ashland Lions Club. For the sixth 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.



Soroptimists Support School Programs



Brains on Beer Donate Spotting Scope



Turbidimeter for Service Learning

This year, an informal group of science-minded citizens made two donations. The organization, calling themselves “Brains On Beer” used their weekly kitty to purchase high-quality research equipment for the Nature Center. A turbidimeter will improve water-quality assessment for Service Learning programs, and a high-quality spotting scope will be useful for bird monitoring and Rogue Valley Bird Day.

Our annual events were made possible by numerous donations, including \$2,250 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.



Linda, Brigette, and Libby

Two temporary staff members supported school program field trips in 2015. Shakina Drew, an experienced outdoor educator, taught with us for two consecutive field trip seasons. Kelly Gaudin supported school programs as a Program Assistant and Lead Instructor. Kelly's educational and professional background is in Education and Recreation, so she enjoys working with school programs, from planning and development to program implementation.

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.



Kelly Gaudin



Shakina Drew

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. In 2014, community members and students logged an amazing **3,605** hours of volunteer service at North Mountain Park. This network of 576 civic-minded volunteers assisted in the following areas:



Volunteer Instructor Shares Pond Life with 1st Graders

- 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



Adopt-A-Garden Volunteer at work in Butterfly Garden

VOLUNTEERS



Community Program Leaders



Heirloom Gardeners



Event Volunteers



Volunteer Instructors



Stewardship Volunteers



Drop-In Gardeners

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.



OUTSIDE THE CENTER

New Exterior Paint and Trim



In 2015, several enhancements were made outside of the Nature Center. A new paint job freshened up the exterior of the old farm house. In addition, the Wildlife Sightings board on the porch was expanded to include resources to encourage the public to “Go Birding!” A new sign explains the resources and information available for birders. Volunteer Vince Zauskey also provides research and seasonal bird updates on a neighboring board. Thanks to the efforts of Karin Onkka, the much-loved bird poster on the deck has been refurbished.

Go Birding! Resources

Working with the Public Art Commission, NMP contracted for an artistic mural on the utility boxes outside the center. Ann DiSalvo, artist and friend of the Nature Center, was selected to paint a landscape and wildlife-themed mandala design. The colorful patterns are a delightful touch near the existing recycling mosaic.



Ann DiSalvo Painting Utility Boxes

EXHIBIT ROOM

In 2015, the Exhibit Room was modified to include a greater amount of natural history, and a sprinkling of whimsy. The pioneer wagon and associated artifacts, along with a little-used puzzle were removed. Five years ago, graduate student Jenna Kesgen beautified the Nature Center with an ecologically accurate, floor-to-ceiling mural depicting our region's ecosystems, landforms and cultural history. In July of 2015, Jenna returned to finish the job, and fill the remaining wall space left by changes in our exhibits. Visitors can now immerse themselves in plant communities of our region, and meet hidden animals and the occasional fairy.



Jenna Kesgen Finishing Exhibit Room Mural



In addition, a beautiful carpet was added to draw visitors into the room. The carpet, created by Angela Adams Designs, is made from 100% New Zealand wool arranged artistically in a variety of pile heights.

This welcoming spread creates a flow through the landscape of the room, leading visitors directly toward the riparian habitat mural element. On the stream mural, at children's height, a number of silk scarves hang on natural hooks, inviting imaginative water play.



Stream Mural & Play Scarves

Stream Carpet

EXHIBIT ROOM

The animal track activity, developed through a student project last year, took on new life as an interactive activity which teaches about animals' habitat needs.

A bank of wooden cupboards below the watershed map was transformed into "animal homes", depicting habitats for the stuffed animal puppets contained within. Children are invited to guess "Who lives here". Opening the door, they find puppets and baskets of their associated track prints.

Coyote, Canada goose and ground squirrel tracks can be arranged on the exhibit room floor. Children use the Velcro-backed prints to make "track stories" over the whole room. Children's nature awareness is developed through the process of studying tracks as evidence of animal movements.



Visiting Child Playing with Track Activity

The natural fairy tree house continues to delight visiting families. The structure now contains artistically carved wooden faeries. The fairy figures personify many of the plants that can be found at North Mountain Park including lavender, oak, mushroom, elderberry and hazel.



Faery Toys



Visiting Family Playing in Exhibit Room

DISCOVERY ROOM

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

The bird corner was completed to include 3D hanging birds, BirdWingspan Decals and an iBird listening station. Visitors can use a mounted iPad to study local bird species and a headset to access high-quality audio recordings of bird calls and songs.

The iBird application was provided to us by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.



3D Hanging Birds and Wingspan Decals



iBird Listening Station

In 2015, the IT department helped Nature Center staff to resolve several the technical difficulties with the NMP weather station. Two new monitors display current weather conditions and an interpretive slide-show explaining the weather station components and readings. All weather station data is also available on the North Mountain Park website.



Weather Station Monitors

DISCOVERY ROOM



Finished Aquarium Tanks and Inquiry Cards

The Nature Center added live creatures to the Discovery Room this year. As planned, the far wall now displays three aquarium tanks. To the visitor's right, we display non-native *Gambusia* known as mosquito fish. The left tank is home to "Jaunita" the Ringed Cray Fish. Both of these species are fun to watch, but they also prompt education about invasive species. Each of these tanks is accompanied by a key-ring of inquiry cards that allow the visitor to learn more about each species.

In the spring, the middle tank contains Pacific Tree Frog tadpoles. Visitors enjoyed watching the tadpoles develop and metamorphose. Eventually, the adult Pacific Tree Frogs were released to the Reptilian and Amphibian Garden water feature.

In the fall and winter months, the staff carefully raised Chinook Salmon Fry from eggs provided by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. By lifting the Velcro fastened insulation, visitors have a unique opportunity to witness the salmon development. Nature Center staff took every opportunity to discuss the natural history of salmon in our watershed.



Juanita the Cray Fish



Spring Chinook Salmon Eggs and Alevins

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

The Nature Center staff coordinates community education programs targeted to all ages 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.

For the second year, local artists celebrated the beauties of North Mountain Park in the Ashland Paint Out. Art was submitted in a number of two-dimensional media, and paintings were then displayed at a local art gallery.

In 2015, the Nature Center increased the offerings for preschool-aged children and their families. In addition to the Preschool Puppet Theatre run by theatre-performer Anna Edmondson, we added an outdoor preschool program called Little Gnomes. Little Gnomes monthly programs and Little Gnomes summer camp were both facilitated by contract educator Shannon Clery. These programs have been very popular and are meeting a demand for early-childhood nature education.



Ashland Paint Out

North Mountain Park also offered a summer camp for elementary-aged students. The newly imagined Naturally Curious camp was met with great enthusiasm as kids explored everything from plants to bugs to water quality, and learned stewardship and conservation practices.



Little Gnomes Mascot



Preschool Puppet Theater



Naturally Curious Summer Camp

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.

Our Community Program attendees are asked to evaluate our programs based on customer service, class quality, and instructor expertise. Out of 271 survey respondents, our programs received an average approval rating of 97.4%

Survey results also provided excellent suggestions for additional topics. As evidenced from the following class tables, the Nature Center staff worked to forge new partnerships with local organizations to expand the skilled instructor pool as well as the available program offerings.



Recycled Paper Beads



Ashland Paint Out

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS January Through December 2015

Instructor	Class	Date	Location
RV Audubon Society Volunteers	Project Feeder Watch	Jan 3, 17, 31 Feb 14, 28, Mar 14	North Mountain Park
Anna Edmondson & Volunteer Puppeteers	Preschool Puppet Theater	Jan 9, Feb 13, Mar 13, Apr 10, May 8, Jun 12, Jul 10, Aug 14, Sep 11, Nov 13, Dec 11	NMP Nature Center
Vince Zauskey	Winter Birds Walk	Jan 10, 2015	North Mountain Park
Shannon Cleary	Little Gnomes	Jan 12, Feb 9, Apr 13 May 11, Jun 8, Sep 14, Oct 12, Nov 9, Dec 14	North Mountain Park
Kimberly Brown	Beginning Wet Felting from Raw Sheep's Wool to Fabric	Jan 21, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Kimberly Brown	Lawn Gone! Transform Your Thirsty Lawn	Jan 24, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Kimberly Brown	Homegrown Food Year-Round	Jan 28, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Tom Landis & Tiffany Wyatt	Monarch Butterflies: Creating Habitat	Jan 31, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Community Participants	Seed Swap	Feb 4, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Harry Fuller	Winter Birds & Spring Arrivals	Feb 26 & 28	NMP Nature Center
Jennifer Ewing	Pruning Basics	Feb 28, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Jennifer Ewing	Successful Seed Starting	Feb 28, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Sue Yamins	Pine Needle Basketry	Mar 7, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Dan Elster	Intro to Wildlife & Bird Photography for Teens	Mar 7 & 14	North Mountain Park
Christie Mackison	Plant Your Drought-Tolerant Garden NOW!	Mar 11, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Shannon Rio	Birds	Mar 18, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Libby VanWyhe	Nice & Easy Natural Spring Cleaning	Mar 21, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Risa Buck	Recycling: Where Does it Go & Why?	Apr 14, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Jeff LaLande, PhD	Seeing & Recognizing Our Valley's Architectural History	Apr 15, 22, 29, May 6, 13	NMP Nature Center
Kate McKenzie	Mindful Birding	Apr 16 & 18	NMP Nature Center
Linda Chesney	Biking the Greenway to Taste Wild Edibles	Apr 21, 2015	Bear Creek Greenway
Linda Chesney	Wildflower Walk in Hald-Strawberry Park	Apr 28, 2015	Hald-Strawberry Park
Kimberly Brown	Home Grown Food Year-Round	May 13, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Karen Taylor	Planting for Pollinators	May 16, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Valya Boutenko	Learn Espalier Pruning	May 18, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Master Gardeners & Volunteers	Demonstration Garden Tours	May 20, Jun 17, Jul 15, Aug 19, Sep 16	North Mountain Park
Rachel Andras'	Learn to Fly Cast	May 21, Jun 11, Jul 16	Garden Way Park
Corbin Brashear	Needlefelted Owls	May 30, 2015	NMP Nature Center

Instructor	Class	Date	Location
Dan Van Dyke	Native Fish of Bear Creek	Jun 9 & 11	NMP Nature Center
Dr Peter Schroeder	Critical Pollinators: Understanding & Protecting Native Bees	Jun 12, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Kimberly Brown	Painting a Garden Stepping Stone	Jun 13, 2015	North Mountain Park
Local Volunteer Birders	Summer Saturday Morning Bird Walks	Jun 13, Jul 11, Aug 8. Sep 12	North Mountain Park
NMP Staff & Volunteers	Naturally Curious Summer Camp	Jun 15—18	North Mountain Park
Sharon Schmidt	Tasting Honey Varietals	Jun 16, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Jim Flaherty	Urban Composting	Jun 20, Jul 18, Aug 15	Ashland Recycle Center
Shannon Davis	Bumble Bee ID & Monitoring	Jun 20, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Community Participants	Summer Music Jam in the Park	Jun 24, Jul 15, Aug 5	North Mountain Park
Lybby VanWyhe	Nice & Easy Spring Cleaning	Jun 25, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Andijane Silvey	Up-Cycled Plastic Bag Workshop	Jun 27, 2015	NMP Nature Center
John Rinaldi Jr.	The Lowdown on Lavender	Jul 18, 2015	Lavender Fields Forever
Julie Smitherman	Water Wisdom 101: Habits & Hardware	Jul 18, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Jennifer Ewing	Bountiful Harvest Methods & Planting a Winter Garden	Aug 8, 2015	Ashland Creek Park
Jennifer Ewing	Worm (Vermi) Composting	Aug 8, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Kimberly Brown	Lawn Gone!	Aug 12, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Shannon Cleary	Little Gnomes Nature Camp	Aug 24-27	NMP Nature Center
Cynthia Care	Gardening When Water Is Scarce	Sep 3, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Sharon Schmidt, PhD	Setting Up Your First Bee Hive -Practical Concerns	Sep 12, 2015	NMP Nature Center
John Flaherty	Bokashi Method & Vermi (Worm) Compositng	Sep 12, 2015	Ashland Recycle Center
Kate McKenzie & Shannon Rio	Exploring Mindful Birding	Sep 16 & 19	NMP Nature Center
Volunteers	Ashland PaintOut	Sep 19, 2015	North Mountain Park
Dave Bloomness	Star Party & Presentation: NASA's SOFIA Update	Sep 19, 2015	North Mountain Park
Christie Mackison	Plant Your Drought Tolerant Garden This Fall	Sep 23, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Chelsea Gilmore	Art With a Re-Purpose	Sep 23, 2015	NMP Nature Center
NC Staff	Salmon Spiral & Water Wishes Community Art Project	Sep 28, 2015	North Mountain Park
Joel Heller	Growing Citrus in Containers	Sep 29, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Dr Alan Journet	Climate Pollution & the Rogue Valley	Oct 1, 8 & 15	NMP Nature Center
Sherri Morgan	Gardening in Deer Country	Oct 7, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Shannon Rio	Learning About Birds	Oct 14, 2015	NMP Nature Center

Instructor	Class	Date	Location
Corbin Brashear	Wild & Wooly Needlefelted Masks	Oct 18, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Dick Ashford	Hawks!	Oct 6, 13 & 20	NMP Nature Center
Christine Yee	Hands-On Herbal Study Group	Nov 7, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Corbin Brashear	Needlefelted Bird Ornaments	Nov 8, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Vince Zauskey	Attracting & Feeding Birds in Your Yard	Nov 10, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Patrick Marcus	Going Organic: Late Season Prep for Early Season Success	Nov 11, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Sarah Red-Laird	Healing with the Honey Bee Hive	Nov 12, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Volunteer Birders	Project Feeder Watch	Nov 14, 28 , Dec 12, 26	North Mountain Park
Tresa & Richard Jarel	Urban Self-Sustainability	Nov 17, 2015	NMP Nature Center
Nature Center Staff	Natural Holiday Wreaths	Dec 4 & 5	NMP Nature Center

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS



Little Gnomes Preschool Program



Making Paper Beads



Star Party and Presentation



Setting Up Your First Bee Hive



Bird Walks and Birding Programs

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Each year the Nature Center sponsors two public educational events which are free to community members of all ages: the Bear Creek Salmon Festival, which was held this year on Saturday, October 3, and Rogue Valley Migratory Bird Day on May 9.

Nature Center Staff also participated in Rogue Valley Earth Day (at ScienceWorks Hands-on Museum) on April 25.



The Public Delights in Spring Bird Watching



Bird Walk Leader, Harry Fuller

Rogue Valley Bird Day

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. Rogue Valley Bird Day celebrates the life cycles and journeys of migrating birds.

The 2015 theme “Restore Habitat, Restore Birds,” focused on the importance of preserving and restoring habitats, the various threats to existing habitats, and the elements of habitats on which birds depend. Sunshine and warm weather favored the event this year and a nice crowd of appreciative birders of all levels attended. While they explored the park led by expert volunteer birders, they enjoyed learning more about the science and magic of local wild birds.



Klamath Bird Observatory, Banding Station - Photos Courtesy of Graham Lewis

Bear Creek Salmon Festival

The 12th annual Bear Creek Salmon Festival was successful as always. Approximately 700-800 visitors explored the park, and celebrated local art and music while learning about local watershed conservation.

The festival included several great modifications this year. Six festival areas across the site were identified with brightly colored flags. Visitors were encouraged to visit exhibitors in each of the six areas to collect colored beads for a “festival friendship bracelet”. After visiting every area and collecting a bead of every color, visitors were entitled to pick up a complementary Frisbee from Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District. This incentive program greatly increased circulation throughout the entire event.

Paul Gerardi acted as an MC, engaging audiences, announcing musical acts and thanking festival sponsors.

Also, new this year, representatives from the Mount Ashland Ski Area participated in the event, and even joined the festival planning committee.

Visitors enjoyed the second year of the Salmon Spiral and Water Wishes installation. Participants of all ages walked the stone-lined spiral, holding good intentions for the salmon’s journey.



Banners, Bracelets and Prizes Encouraged Engagement



Montana Soul Performs

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.

Because of 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.

Bear Creek Salmon Festival



Southern Oregon Fly Fishers Teach Fly-tying



*Jackson County Fuel Committee
Chopping Wood Safely*



Walking the Salmon Spiral



Volunteers at the Information Booth



Costumes



Wildlife Images



Banners Mark Festival Areas



Water Wishes



Julie Smitherman Teaches Water Conservation Techniques



Phoenix Sigalove Performs



MC Paul Gerardi Connects with Ashland Fire and Rescue

STUDENT PROJECTS

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

Elena Bianchi - Internship: Curriculum Development.

Elena helped to reformat the activity cards for NMP's fall K-5 fall field program, "Plants of the Rogue Valley." She helped align the lessons to the current educational standards including NGSS Performance Expectations, Disciplinary Core Ideas, and Science and Engineering Practices to the appropriate lessons. She did the same with current Common Core Standards.

"I learned a lot during this internship... I had never used Microsoft Publisher before, now I feel fairly proficient... I am much more familiar with the overall process of creating lesson plans. The staff was wonderful to work with."



Elena Bianchi



Caitlin Hosken - Internship: Field Instructor

Caitlin taught an activity about plant and animal relationships in NMP's fall field program. Caitlin quickly gained confidence working with the children and even helped to implement a successful change in the curriculum by incorporating animal puppets, so students would be more physically engaged and focused on the lesson. She plans to instruct again in the spring!

"What a fun experience! I had a great time with this lesson. While a bit apprehensive at the beginning, and not knowing what to expect from the different age ranges in terms of grasping the lesson, I quickly found my groove. The whole experience definitely gave me some confidence as an educator, and I look forward to furthering my skills!"

Caitlin Hosken



Colleen MacGilvray

Colleen MacGilvray - Internship: Field Instructor

Colleen was able to build on her experience as an outdoor educator, instructing with NMP's fall field programs. She was responsible for teaching two lesson plans within the Plants of the Rogue Valley curriculum. With the "Blooms & Seeds" activity, she taught young students basic plant anatomy and lifecycles. In "Forest for the Trees" she focused on tree age and height and health of forest communities for 3-5 grade students. Throughout the season, Colleen developed techniques to balance one-on-one engagement, while keeping the activities moving.

"The skills I gained through this internship will help me as I continue in the Masters of Science of Environmental Education program at SOU... Additionally, these new skills will be beneficial in achieving my future career goal as an education coordinator for a nature center or aquarium."

Karelia VerEecke - Internship: Field Instructor

Karelia instructed a Plant Communities lesson for older elementary students during our school field trip programs. She helped students understand ecosystem functions, and the species associated with riparian and chaparral communities. Having spent considerable time collecting field data for various agencies, she appreciated the importance of exposing children to science.

"[Students] loved being soil scientists, using the tools, reading scientific instruments, working together to interpret data and recording the data. I hope I planted some seeds for future natural resource professionals... This program helps to ensure that we engage the next generation of caring, educated individuals."



Karelia Ver Eecke

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

K to 5th Grade

School Programs offer numerous opportunities for students to connect with and explore the natural world. 2015 was the nineteenth 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 the Next Generation Science Standards and the Common Core.

In 2015, 34 classes participated in spring field programs on the subject of Water of the Rogue Valley. We welcomed K-5 students from nine schools in the Ashland, Phoenix-Talent, and Medford districts. Two new activities stressed the importance of water conservation and challenged students to devise their own solutions to water shortage situations.



Student Explores Pond Life, Catches Tadpole



Volunteer Instructor Leads a Student Back From Activity

During the fall, 35 classes participated in field programs about the Plants of the Rogue Valley. Thanks to wider marketing strategies, 12 different schools brought their students to the park. New plants activities included nature journaling and creative writing, as well as a study of plant/animal mutualisms.

All in all, 1,694 students visited the park through school programs this year. Once again, a committed team of volunteer instructors was instrumental in helping teach these programs.

Development

Every activity is now based on assessable objectives and is aligned to the current curriculum standards facing elementary teachers. On-the-ground assessment was conducted by seasonal Lead Instructors. Formal assessment occurred through post-quizzes which were administered by teachers when they got back to the classroom. The results of assessment will be used to improve activities in the future.

As evidenced by the following tables, the response to all this School Program development has been overwhelmingly positive. Field trip attendance is higher than ever before, and many new schools and teachers from neighboring districts are seeking out NMP field trips for the first time.



*Kelly Gaudin, Curriculum Development Assistant
Instructor for K-5 and AMS Programs*



AMS Wetland Service

Ashland Middle School

North Mountain Park continued its association with Ashland Middle School by offering programs for sixth-grade classes.

In the fall of 2015, 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.



AMS Wetland Service

WATER OF AMS FALL - 2015

Teacher	Grade	Students	Date	Program
Beth Oehler	6th	30	Nov 23 & 24	Water of AMS and Wetland Service
		30		
		30		
Hillary Harper	6th	28	Nov 16 & 17	Water of AMS and Wetland Service
		28		
		29		

SCHOOL PROGRAMS - K to 5th



Creative Writing in Nature



Student "Listens" to Plants



Using Naturalist Skills



Close Examination of Riparian Plants



Learning to Read the Garden Map



Sensory Exploration



Baby Binoculars



Sharing Nature Observations



Animals and Plants Learn to Share



3D Watershed Map



Garden Exploration



Counting Tree Rings

SCHOOL PROGRAMS - SPRING 2015

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

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Children's World	Wendy Hale	K	Water of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Helman	Joe Dunbrasky	5	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Mia Driscoll	K	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Tia McLean	K	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Mark Serbow	4	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Michelle Cuddeback	5	Water of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
John Muir School	Shannon Wolf	1-2	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Camille Siders	3	Water of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Willow Wind	Robin Hawley	3	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Kim Freeman	2	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Lacy Kleeske	1	Water of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Kennedy Elementary	Rashanna Edwards	1	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Sarah Mould	1	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Amy Wolfer	1	Water of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Talent Elementary	John Maulsby	5	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Kathleen Lemcke	1	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Molly Walker	1	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Pamela D'Haem	1	Water of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL PROGRAMS - SPRING 2015

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
The Siskiyou School	Molly McKissick	5	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Javier Alvarez	4	Water of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Walker	Tyler Claycomb	3	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Amanda Dallas	3	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Marla Dentino	K	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Kouba Sayre	K	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Kathleen Mateas	1	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Inge Kendrick	2	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Teresa Yurchis	K	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Ryan Jackson	1	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Morgan Cottle	5	Water of the Rogue Valley
	Andy Strange	5	Water of the Rogue Valley



The Water Cycle with Wally Water Drop



Building a Wetland Filtration System

SCHOOL PROGRAMS - FALL 2015

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Bellview	Pam Eddington	1	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Renee Gardener	2	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Ingrid Hansen	2	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Bekkah McAlvage	1	Plants of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Griffin Creek	Katrina Douglas	2	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Linnea Fox	2	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Adam Cortell	2	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Cathy Murphy	2	Plants of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Helman Elementary	Toni DiMaggio	2	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Mia Driscoll	K	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Tia McLean	K	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Ellen Werner	4	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Mary Snowden	2	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Mark Sherbow	4	Plants of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Jacksonville	Shelly Inman	2	Plants of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Roosevelt	Barbara Culver	3-4	Plants of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
SO Home Schoolers	Stacey Faight	3-4-5	Plants of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Talent Elementary	Jason Lynch	4	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Kathleen Lemcke	1	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Leslie Rice	3	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Kari Donham	3	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Pamela D'Haem	1	Plants of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Talent Outdoor	Erin Manahay	1	Plants of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL PROGRAMS - FALL 2015

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Walker Elementary	Ryan Jackson	1	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Teresa Yurchis	K	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Kim Krykew	1	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Alexi McCullough	2	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Leilani Alvord	K	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Amanda Dallas	3	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Kathleen Mateas	1	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	David Schirner	2	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Tyler Claycomb	3	Plants of the Rogue Valley
	Kouba Sayre	K	Plants of the Rogue Valley

SCHOOL	TEACHER	GRADE	PROGRAM/S
Madrone Trail,	Jane Higgins	5	Plants of the Rogue Valley



Studying Ponderosa Pine Trees

Personification of Plants

SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAMS

Service organizations school groups participated in Service Learning programs throughout the entire 2015 season. Groups of all ages engaged in meaningful stewardship , while learning about related environmental education subjects.



Linda Chesney Runs Spring Service Learning Programs

Participating groups included school classes and service organizations such as scouts and church groups from throughout Southern Oregon and occasionally from the Portland area, and even out of state. Classes are offered free-of-charge, and in exchange the Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission benefits from the service provided. Participants learn about local ecology and achieve a sense of civic pride and empowerment through engagement in authentic stewardship activities related to the educational topics. Nineteen classes and service groups (468 individuals) participated in service learning programs. Service learning projects resulted in 462 person hours of outdoor service conducted at North Mountain Park and other parks in Ashland.

Programs are offered two days of the week during the high-demand (spring) season as well as during the other seasons as staff and volunteer availability permits. Volunteers and seasonal hires assisted North Mountain Park staff in facilitating programs.

North Mountain Park staff also facilitated Service Learning educational programs for 6 sessions of a Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) summer camp run by APR volunteer coordinator Lori Ainsworth.



Students Work Collaboratively to Test Water Quality



Birding Service Learning Program

SERVICE LEARNING 2015

Group	Teacher/Leader	Date	# of People	Hours (of entire activity)	Service Hours (total man hrs)	Work Completed & Location
John Muir	Jim Bowers	2/12/15	26	3	26	Willow Planting Near Beach Creek
Girl Scouts	Margaret Machala	3/3/15	12	1	6	Trail Chipping near L. Pond
Riverdale High	Laurie Lepore	3/18/15	40	2	40	Digging Poison Hemlock
OSU Spring Break	Madison	3/25/15	10	3	10	Cleaning Near Nest Boxes
John Muir	Jim Bowers	4/2/15	22	3	16	Removing Hemlock & Berries Near Mint
SOU	Alissa Arp	4/23/15	20	2.5	25	Poison Hemlock Removal
SOU	Alissa Arp	4/24/15	20	2.5	25	Poison Hemlock Removal
Helman Elementary	Trish Dorr	4/30/15	29	2	29	Trail Chipping
Ashland Middle School	Beau Lehnerz	5/7/15	28	2.5	35	Remove Poison Hemlock
Southern Oregon Homeschoolers	Stacey Faught	5/11/15	20	2.5	25	Trail Chipping
Rogue Community College	Heidi Wacker	5/16/15	22	3.5	38.5	Weeding Grasses in Native Plant Garden
Oak Grove Elementary	Ashley Anderson	5/18/15	30	2	30	Trail Chipping
Oak Grove Elementary	Ginny Kriz	5/21/15	30	2	30	Trail Chipping
Howard Elementary	Deborah Weeks	5/28/15	22	2	22	Remove Poison Hemlock
Howard Elementary	Cheryl, Lashly, Miles Barnes	6/1/15	50	2	32	Remove Poison Hemlock
Isaac Newton Middle School	Katie Sard	6/9/15	32	2	32	Remove Poison Hemlock
John Muir	Jim Bowers	10/12/15	26	2.5	20	Blackberry Removal Near Willows
Rogue River Elementary	Jon Buckley	12/2/15	29	2	20	Blackberry Removal, Beach Creek

SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAMS



A Sense of Pride in Their Stewardship



Removing Blackberries



Testing for Stream pH



Learning to use Binoculars



Removing Poison Hemlock



Kids Triumph Over Weeds

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 506 students received these programs.

BRISCOE GEOLOGY PARK PROGRAMS 2015

School	Teacher	Students	Program	Date
August Institute	Kristi Reynolds	12	Teacher Training Earth History & Local Geology	5/6/15
Talent Middle School	Kathy McNichol	92	Earth History Program 7th Grade	5/8/15
Talent Middle School	Emily Rupp	91	Earth History Program 7th Grade	5/8/15
John Muir School	Nassan Rihan	25	Earth History Program 4th Grade	9/14/15
John Muir School	Jim Bowers	22	Earth History Program 5 & 6th Grade	9/14/15
John Muir School	Marcia Oseske	23	Earth History Program 7 & 8th Grade	9/15/15
John Muir School	Nassan Rihan	23	Earth History Program	9/17/15
John Muir School	Jim Bowers	23	Earth History Program	9/17/15
John Muir School	Marcia Oseske	24	Earth History Program	9/17/15
John Muir School	Arti Boyd	54	Earth History Program	9/25/15
SOU Skeptic House	Jamie Watkins	13	Earth History & Evolution	10/2/15
The Valley School	Stephanie Fleck	48	Earth History Program	10/5/15
Lone Pine Elementary	Heidi Gantz	28	Earth History Program	10/6/15
Lone Pine Elementary	Heidi Gantz	28	Earth History Program	10/16/15

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.



Heirloom Garden in Front of Nature Center

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 2015 in spite of the continuing drought. Ashland Garden Club volunteers continue to provide updated information for interpretive booklets, in addition to continued maintenance of the Heirloom Garden including several re-design and re-planting projects. Savvy garden volunteers utilized sheet mulching methods for controlling invasive species and conserving water in the two reconstructed areas.



Heirloom Garden Along Mountain Ave.



Rose Bower



Black Eyed Susans



Heirloom Roses in Front of the Porch Swing



Love In the Mist



Sunflowers in the Bird Buffet Garden



Visiting Children Enjoy the Gardens

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. An enthusiastic volunteer gardener adopted a new hummingbird garden behind the Nature Center back/east door. This garden, which was started in fall of 2014, was a bountiful and attractive success in 2015.

Due to continued drought conditions, the Heriloom Garden and the annual bed next to the greenhouse were not planted this year. However, “volunteer” poppies and other drought-tolerant, self-seeding annuals did persist in that area into early summer.

Annuals were planted only in irrigated perennial beds so as not to create any additional water demands. Once again this resulted in exceptionally showy and nectar-rich butterfly gardens.



Demonstration Gardens in Summer



Mosaic Stepping Stones for Bird Buffet Garden

The gardens were further beautified when the organizers of the Contemporary Mosaic Art Summit offered to donate stepping stones for the Bird Buffet Garden. In the winter, the Bird Buffet features bird feeders rather than plants, and stepping stones are necessary to provide access over the bare soil. Artisans from the Mosaic Art Summit donated ten beautiful and functional mosaic stepping stones.



Cubs at Play Sculpture

Several new recruits joined the ranks of North Mountain Park's gardener team. Almost all garden areas were again "adopted" by caring volunteers. Volunteer efforts were once again led by Lyn Levin, an inspirational and knowledgeable long-time volunteer.

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.

Pollinators utilizing the Butterfly Demonstration Garden caused quite a buzz this year.

In 2015, monarch caterpillars and butterflies were much more numerous than in recent years. The Ashland community exhibits a growing interest in monarch butterfly life cycle and conservation. This interest resulted in an upswing of garden visitors and an increase in milkweed seeds sales. The Nature Center provided milkweed seeds to many visitors seeking to create better habitat in their own backyards.



Culinary Herb Garden in Bloom



Monarch Caterpillar on Milkweed



*Milkweed and Other Pollinator Plants
In the Butterfly Garden*



NATURAL AREA



View of Grizzly Peak Over the Natural Area

MANAGEMENT

In accordance with North Mountain Park's commission-approved 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 and Poison hemlock continues to require the most effort in manual removal. In addition a wary eye is needed for other uninvited invasive species such as the recent puncture vine infestation that is still being monitored. In order to protect the park's highly productive bird nesting habitats, staff continues to apply lighter, later-season vegetation management treatments to minimize disturbance during the nesting season.

Management Plan Development

The Nature Center staff and steering committee continued their 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.

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.



Bear Creek In Winter Mists

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.

The Salmon Spiral was again 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 by service-minded Cub Scouts and the stones were returned to Bear Creek to improve salmon habitat.



Fall Colors in the Natural Area



Flood Waters Rise in February 2015

WILDLIFE

A great abundance and 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.



Merganser and Chicks Swimming in Bear Creek

The plethora 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. Long-time local birders noticed a greater abundance of birds in the less-managed areas during the migration nesting seasons.

Continued severe drought conditions in spring and summer created great stress for local wildlife. Fewer fledgling birds were observed during the nesting season and fall's severe low flows in Bear Creek did not favor salmonid spawning and reproduction. Few salmon spawning sightings were recorded on the wildlife sightings dry erase board.



Tree Swallow in Nest Box



Swallowtail in the Butterfly Garden



Fawns in the Natural Area



Screech Owl in Nest Box



Dragonfly in Demonstration Gardens



Northern Flicker
Photo Courtesy of Graham Lewis



Western Pond Turtle



Mallard Duckling in the Pond

STEWARDSHIP

OUTDOOR SERVICE

Beyond staff-coordinated service learning programs, volunteer coordinator Lori Ainsworth facilitates most of Ashland Parks & Recreation volunteer outdoor service. Those who engaged in outdoor service at North Mountain Park were primarily involved in managing invasive species and worked under the supervision of, or alongside, APRC staff.

One outstanding exception involved a willow staking restoration effort along Beach Creek, coordinated by Linda Chesney and volunteer Malcom Howard.



Willow Stake Planting, Restoration Along Beach Creek

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 contributes valuable scientific data to regional and global monitoring programs, helps to teach about monitoring methods and strategies, and engages volunteers in exciting, authentic environmental stewardship. The data collected also helps to guide the ongoing management of the park's natural area.

Bird Monitoring

Bird monitoring programs involve expert volunteers, staff and public participants and are coordinated through the Nature Center, some in partnership with the Rogue Valley Audubon Society chapter. Monthly area search surveys were conducted by the same team of expert volunteers for the 16th consecutive year.

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 twelfth year at North Mountain Park. The project takes place from November to March on alternate Saturday mornings.



*Winter
Bird Feeders*



Project Feeder Watch

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 records monthly survey and Project FeederWatch data as well as 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. Several monitoring reports can be accessed on the at the North Mountain Park Nature Center website.

Reptile and Amphibian Monitoring

Under the supervision of SOU professor Dr. Parker, two biology students undertook monitoring projects in the North Mountain Park Natural Area in 2015. One investigated the differences in distribution and size of bullfrog tadpoles among the three ponds relative to shade cover. The other investigated the basking behavior of native Western Pond turtles. Her study results indicated the need for more basking structures, which APR staff implemented.

Salmon Monitoring

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife staff and volunteers conducted spawning and carcass surveys in Bear Creek from N MT Park upstream to Willow Wind in January and February and counted 13 salmon redds and one live salmon.



Bullfrog Monitoring

Pollinators

One Monarch was tagged and released in the gardens by Robert Coffan, a member of Southern Oregon Monarch Advocates. A local tagging program is underway in order to learn more about migration and overwintering timing and locations



Tagged Monarch Butterfly

SUSTAINABILITY

Ashland Green Team

The Ashland Green Team is a committee comprised of APR staff, Ashland Conservation Division staff and Recology Ashland's Waste Zero Specialist. In 2009, North Mountain Park was certified through the City of Ashland's Green Business program. Although that program is not active at this time, the Green Team collaborates with other partners in pursuing the following sustainability goals: water and energy conservation, waste and pollution reduction, and education targeted at employees and the public.



Daniel Meyer Pool Cover

The Green Team is responsible for recommending and implementing sustainability projects in the realms of Solid Waste and Resource Reduction, as well as Energy and Water Conservation. For example, in 2015 the Green Team's tour of the Daniel Meyer Pool included discussion of plans to purchase a new pool cover that will improve heating efficiency and reduce evaporation. The old pool cover will be recycled in sections. Also discussed was an opportunity for future installation of passive solar tubes on the roof for heating the pool water.

New Thermostat Controls

Energy: In 2015, the Parks and Recreation Department replaced the thermostats that control heating and cooling in the Nature Center. The thermostats come equipped with a motion sensor, so that the heating and cooling system will not run if the building is empty. In addition, when instructors teach classes outside of business hours, the thermostats will detect occupancy and automatically maintain hospitable temperatures. The new thermostats are easier to program, giving our staff greater control of the Center's energy consumption.



Recycling - Where Does It Go and Why?

tors teach classes outside of business hours, the thermostats will detect occupancy and automatically maintain hospitable temperatures. The new thermostats are easier to program, giving our staff greater control of the Center's energy consumption.

Green Educational Programs

One of the ways that the Nature Center promoted sustainability practices in 2015 was by offering a wide range of programs on sustainability topics. Sustainability practices are also incorporated into school field trips and service learning programs through the green lunch buckets and stewardship-themed activities.

Water Wise Landscaping Interpretive Sign



Water Wise Landscaping Sign

At North Mountain Park, the Water Wise Demonstration area encourages citizens to convert thirsty lawns to water-wise landscapes. This year, the project came to a satisfying conclusion with the installation of a new interpretive sign.

The new sign, "Instead of Irrigation" explores the benefits of artificial turf and pervious pavers.



Bee City USA

On December 16, 2014, Ashland, Oregon, took its place as the fifth Bee City USA community with a unanimous vote of the City Council. Mayor Stromberg said, "Ashland's City Council let it be known that they understand the importance of pollinators, and therefore want to make this city even more pollinator-friendly."

Libby VanWyhe, Nature Center Manager, was established as Staff Liaison to the Bee City USA Subcommittee. The Subcommittee holds quarterly public meetings at North Mountain Park Nature Center. Members of the public are invited to attend and/or bring suggestions on ways to make Ashland more pollinator friendly.



Bee City USA

Ashland Creek Pollinator Rain Garden

Nature Center staff collaborated with Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District and Pollinator Project Rogue Valley in designing and planting a pollinator/rain garden in a prominent area in the front of Ashland Creek Park. The garden collects runoff from the surrounding paved surface and the plants help to filter pollutants from the water before it reaches the creek. Pollinators benefit from a lush palate of plants which were selected to meet their habitat needs. An interpretive sign will inform park visitors about the garden.



Installing Pollinator Plants at Ashland Creek Park

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission offers recreational community garden spaces for non-commercial organic gardening in four community gardens, with coordination by Nature Center staff. Volunteer garden managers assist 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.

All plots were leased during the growing season, and at the end of 2015, there were wait lists for all the community gardens .



Clap St. 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

ASHLAND CREEK PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN



Clay Street Park Community Garden

The new Ashland Creek Park Community Garden opened in March of 2015 and it contains 45 plots for lease, a children's garden, and a pollinator garden. Community garden members benefit from gopher protection, improved trails and plot borders, water spigots at each plot and proximity to restrooms, play structures and other park amenities.

The public exposure and aesthetic appeal of the new garden have stirred much interest and the wait list has been growing. Garden members often invite interested park visitors to enter the garden for informal tours.

GENEROSITY OF GARDENERS

Garden members are provided with locations and contact information for local food banks with whom they share some of their bounty. A produce donation effort organized by an Ashland Creek Park volunteer, was successful in delivering several hundred pounds of donated produce to a local food bank from that community garden alone.



Scenic Park Community Garden



Ashland Creek Park Gardens



Ashland Creek Park



Scenic Park Community Garden



Ashland Creek Park Community Garden