

North Mountain Park Nature Center

A DIVISION OF ASHLAND PARKS & RECREATION

**2016-2017
REPORT**

YEAR AT A GLANCE

2016



Community Programs & Events

Number of programs: 110

Total number of participants: 1006

Number of events: 2

School Programs

Number of K-5 field programs :80 (1936 Students)

Number of 6-8 programs: 6 (179 Students)

Total number of programs: 86

Total number of students served: 2115

Service & Service Learning Programs

Number of service learning programs: 16

Total number of students served: 371

Student Projects

Number of student projects: 11

Volunteers

Total number of volunteers: 431

Number of individual volunteer hours logged: 4075

Donations

Total donations and grants received: \$11,095

School Program scholarship grants and donations: \$2,500

Event sponsorships and donations: \$2,250

YEAR AT A GLANCE

2017

Community Programs & Events

Number of programs: 107

Total number of participants: 1066

Number of events: 2

School Programs

Number of K-5 field programs : 82

Total number of students served: 2119 Students

Service & Service Learning Programs

Number of service learning programs :7

Total number of students served: 222

Student Projects

Number of student projects: 5

Volunteers

Total number of volunteers: 282

Number of individual volunteer hours logged: 3849.50

Donations

Total donations and grants received: \$12,063

School Program scholarship grants and donations: \$5,750

Event sponsorships and donations: \$1,980

OVERVIEW

This report summarizes the 2016 and 2017 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.

North Mountain Park consists of approximately 14 acres of Natural Area and a Nature Center that is open to the public five days a week. The Center conducts activities for all ages in the areas of environmental education, recreation, stewardship, and sustainability.

Our staff continually strives to

“promote greater community awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the local natural environment, and to foster stewardship through educational programs and activities.”

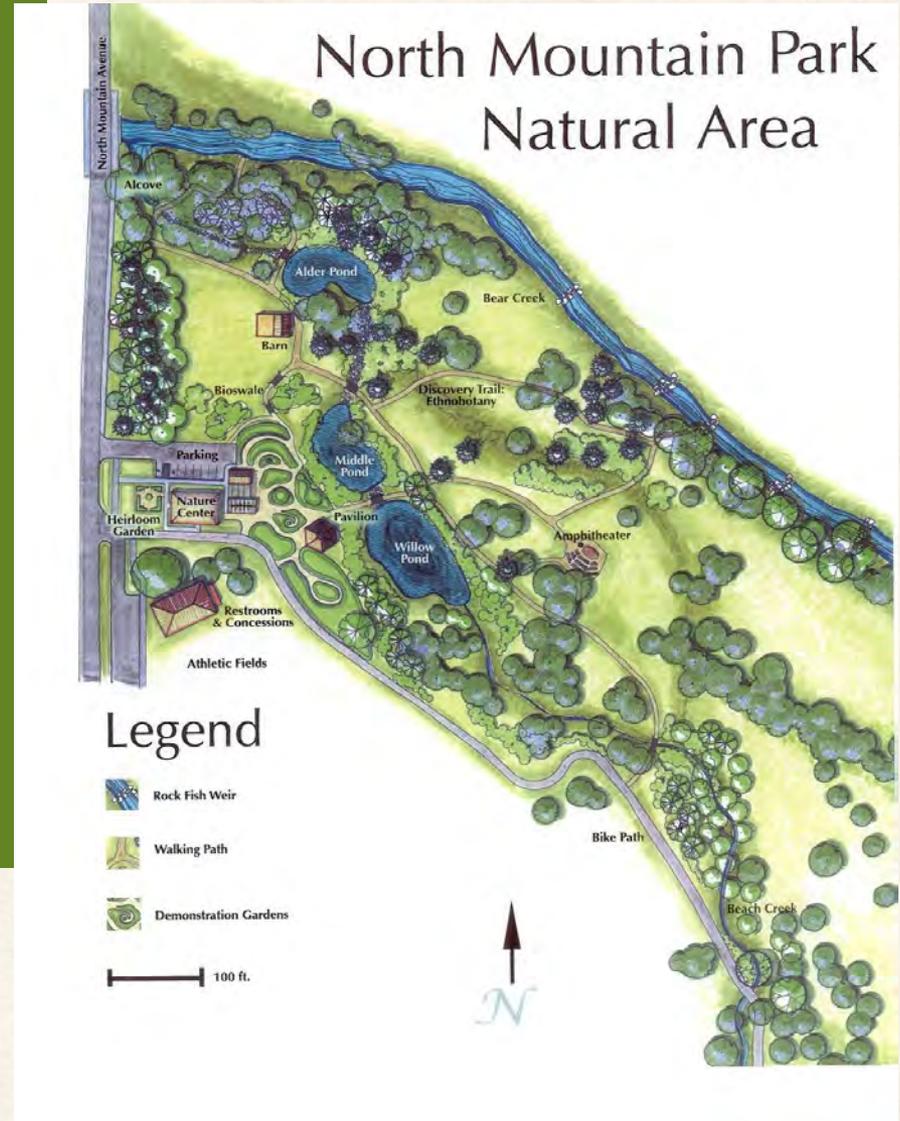


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- + *Demonstration Gardens*
- + *Community Gardens*

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Inviting visitors and wildlife

- + *Management*
- + *Wildlife*
- + *Monitoring*
- + *Engaging Visitors*

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Education

Opportunities for all ages

- + *Community Programs*
- + *Public Events*
- + *School Programs*
- + *Partnerships*

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Stewardship

Service for sustainability

- + *Outdoor Service*
- + *Sustainability*
- + *Bee City USA*
- + *Donations and Grants*



Nature Center

- ***Our Staff***
- ***Volunteers***
- ***Student Projects***
- ***Exhibits and Interpretation***

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New Developments

NATURE CENTER

Team and Center Operations

- + *Linda Chesney retired*
- + *Jen Aguayo hired as new Coordinator*
- + *Nature posters decorated front office*
- + *Community Program fliers redesigned to change seasonally*
- + *MS Excel training offered to City staff*
- + *NMP's website reorganized*
- + *Pine tree corner interpretive exhibit finished*
- + *New chiller installed salmon tank*
- + *Holiday wreath making party and quote booklets provided for staff.*

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” – Helen Keller

OUR STAFF



The Nature Center is operated by three full-time staff members. This dedicated team consists of the Nature Center Manager Libby VanWyhe, Coordinator Jennifer Aguayo and Office Assistant Brigette Cooke.

Seasonal staff educators support our school program field trips, through the development of lesson materials and oversight of the instructor team. The Nature Center also relies on support from Parks staff to assist with grounds and facility maintenance.

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OUR STAFF

Fond farewells ~ and a new team member for a new Coordinator position



Linda Chesney retires

Linda had been the Stewardship Coordinator of North Mountain Park ever since its inception in the late 1990s.

For over 20 years, Linda guided the restoration of the park's Natural Area and the development of our beautiful habitat gardens. Her contributions to the park and its volunteer team cannot be overstated. In many ways, she had been Libby VanWyhe's mentor ever since Libby's first internship at NMP.

Linda will be missed.



Welcome, Jen!

Jennifer Aguayo has a Bachelor's Degree from Southern Oregon University, with a major in Environmental Studies, Biology. She most recently comes to us from Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District, working as an Education and Outreach Coordinator.

Jen's natural history knowledge and her extensive professional experience are already benefiting the Nature Center.

During Jen's first year, a high-energy, like-minded team has been coalescing.

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OUR STAFF

Seasonal Staff at North Mountain Park



Shakina Drew

Lead Instructor 4/3/15 to 6/10/16



Stephanie Danyi

Lead Instructor 4/4/16 to 7/18/16



Jamie Neil

Lead Instructor 6/10/16 to 6/9/17



Chrissy Dawson

Lead Instructor 9/1/16 to 6/7/17



Mary Ann Perry

Lead Instructor 8/3/17 to current



Connor Reinecke

Lead Instructor 9/1/17 to 3/1/18

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“Volunteers don’t get paid, not because they’re worthless, but because they’re priceless.” – Sherry Anderson

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.

People of all ages come together to support Nature Center programming. Student interns work side-by-side with retired citizens, all sharing the joys of nature.

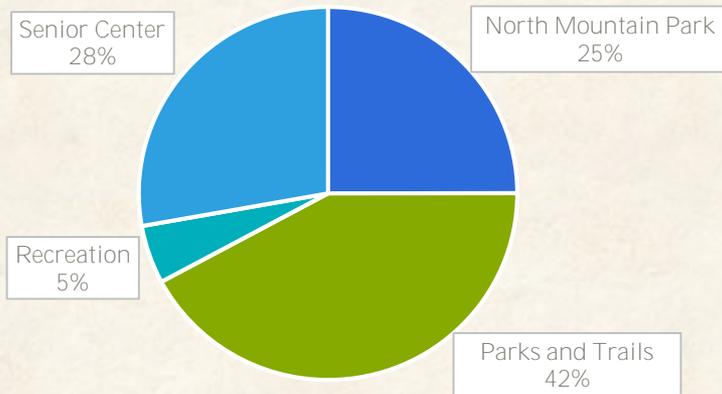
Our demonstration gardens and heirloom gardens, the pride of North Mountain Park, would simply not exist without the dedication of numerous, tireless volunteers.



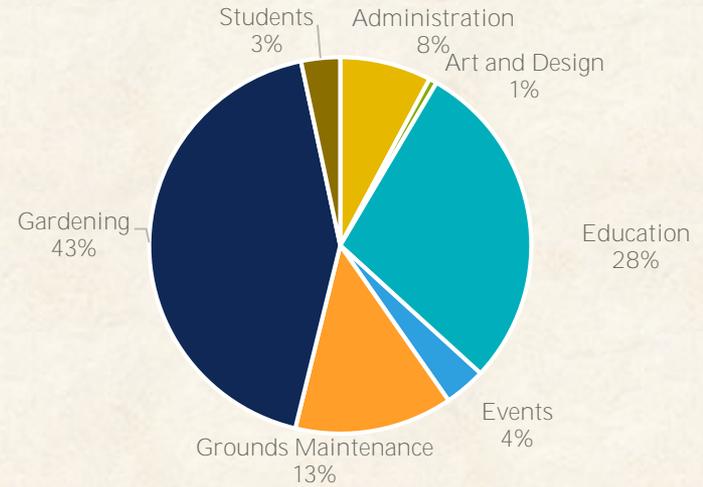
VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Supporting every aspect of our operations

Volunteer Contributions to APRC Divisions



NMP Volunteer Contributions by Categories



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VOLUNTEER PROFILE – LYN LEVIN

We would like to extend a big THANK YOU to the 2017 Ragland Volunteer Spirit Award winner, Lyn Levin.

Lyn came to the Rogue Valley 16 years ago from Monterey California, where she shared her gardening skills at the Monterey City grounds. Lyn has cared for the Demonstration Gardens at North Mountain Park Nature Center for the past 15 years! She was also active for years in the development and care of the Park's Heirloom Garden.

Lyn comes to the Park early in the morning, in every season and every type of weather. She can be found weeding, planting, pruning, and directing a dedicated team of other volunteers. Lyn has a wealth of horticultural knowledge and natural leadership skills. The NMP gardens wouldn't radiate as brightly without her.



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“Learning is not the product of teaching. Learning is the product of the activity of learners.” – John Holt

STUDENT PROJECTS



The Nature Center partners with SOU to help students connect with their community. Every year, our staff supervise and evaluate numerous senior practicum, capstone and graduate internship projects, giving those students first-hand experience with service and education.

These arrangements are exciting and mutually beneficial for everyone involved. The students are able to meet their requirements and receive internship credits, while the Nature Center benefits from their enthusiasm, creativity and generosity.

Claire Harkola



**Field instructor for
Animals (K-2),
undergraduate
experience 2016**

"I loved working with a new batch of kids each week because it proved a fresh challenge, as well as a snapshot of the elementary school communities in the area. This experience further solidified my enthusiasm and commitment to pursuing teaching as a career."

Hope Braithwaite



**Field instructor for
History (K-2),
graduate intern 2016**

"I really enjoyed how much students would latch on to different activities... Seeing students actively engaged and asking great questions was definitely the most exciting and fulfilling part of my time at North Mountain Park."

Becky Sussman



**Pine Tree Corner
exhibit, program
development,
graduate intern 2016**

"The atmosphere is very positive and supportive. Libby was great about sharing what skills are needed for working at similar organizations, and she provided me with explanations on how to offer contracted nature programs through North Mountain Park Nature Center."

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Emily Burke

Karelia VerEecke

Colleen MacGilvray



**Field instructor for
Animals, graduate
intern 2016**

“While working with and learning from all the fantastic educators at NMP (both staff and volunteer), I now...have a new arsenal of strategies for how to tailor lessons to every audience and situation from unusually precocious groups to groups with behavioral issues to a sudden rainstorm.”



**Field instructor for
Animals (3-5), and
grant writing,
graduate intern 2016**

“The Bird Behavior lesson was so fun! It was a welcome time to make bird biology and ecology exciting for third graders. It was particularly fun to get the more shy students into creating a unique courtship dance or song.”



**Program standards
alignment, field
instructor for
Animals (K-2),
graduate intern 2016**

“One of my favorite components of Discovering Nests was allowing students to use binoculars to ... identify nests and birds. Application of this hands-on experience allowed students to connect more closely with the lesson, while developing good naturalist skills.”

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Alexandria Trujillo



Materials development and field instructor for Animals (3-5), non-profit internship 2016

During our K-2 activity, Wild Animal Needs, the students role play being an animal parent and act out the experience of carrying for their young. Alexandra and her partner Mathew shared the task of cutting out over 700 animal masks for the activity! Alexandra also had a few to opportunities teach the program.

Emma Bloomquist



Exhibit development, Plant Communities Wall, undergraduate experience, 2016

Emma developed educational signs for the Nature Center's Exhibit room. Using her graphic design skills and careful choice of language, she created several signs that introduce visitors to the Plant Communities of the Rogue Valley. The finished display will feature both plants and animals and will even contain plant samples.

Luke Rimbault



Field Instructor for Native Americans (K-2), Capstone project 2016

Luke completed 100 internship hours as a field instructor for his SOU Capstone requirements for his major in Psychology. He instructed K-2 students in the Native Americans of the Rogue Valley, Shelter Building activity.

Shauna Sorce

Erin Holmes

Rachel Hopt



**Field instructor for
Animals (K-2),
undergraduate
experience 2016**

"I enjoyed every moment I spent with the students. My faith in my ability to engage and connect with students quickly was reaffirmed, as were my core qualities of patience, flexibility, and love. I only wished the season were longer."



**Field instructor for
History (K-2),
Graduate Intern 2017**

"It was wonderful to see how each age group functions both intellectually and physically. Additionally, the repetitiveness of the program allowed me to try different methods throughout the term and see what worked or didn't. I feel much more confident...overall."



**Program
development, field
instructor for History
(K-2) Capstone project
2016-2017**

"I really enjoyed working with the children. Each and every one of them was so hungry to learn that it made it a joy to teach them. I am grateful that Libby was there to guide me every step of the way. "

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Kelsey DeChavez

Becky Yaeger

Lianne Bailey



Program development, field instructor for Animals (3-5), Capstone project 2016

“This program was great experience for me as a future teacher, and I am inspired to teach in the environmental education setting. I have witnessed just how beneficial it is for students to get outdoors and experience nature education first-hand.”



Field instructor for History and grant writing for School Program Scholarships 2017

“I enjoyed teachable moments with students where we could observe a bird flying near our lesson area, or mushrooms growing in a hidden spot. By the end of the season, I was adept at redirecting students to more closely observe natural phenomena and ask questions about what was occurring.”



Field instructor for Native Americans and History (3-5) 2016-2017

“I liked how I got to work as part of a team but also was the leader of my own activity... it was good for me to get comfortable letting students try something edible because I think it is a great way to engage students using all their senses.”

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"The best thing for being sad," replied Merlin, "is to learn something." - T.H. White

EXHIBITS

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.

The Exhibit Room contains a wall-to-wall mural and educational displays about local natural and cultural history. Children love to play with the Exhibit Room's puppet theatre, fairy tree house, animal tracks, farmer's market and natural blocks.

Next door in the Discovery Lab, visitors can explore a magnifying closer-look station, i-pad listening station and curiosity cabinet. Three fish tanks contain a ringed cray fish, mosquito fish, and a seasonal exhibit of either Chinook salmon eggs or Pacific tree frogs.



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Gardens

- ***Heirloom Gardens***
- ***Demonstration Gardens***
- ***Community Gardens***

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New Developments

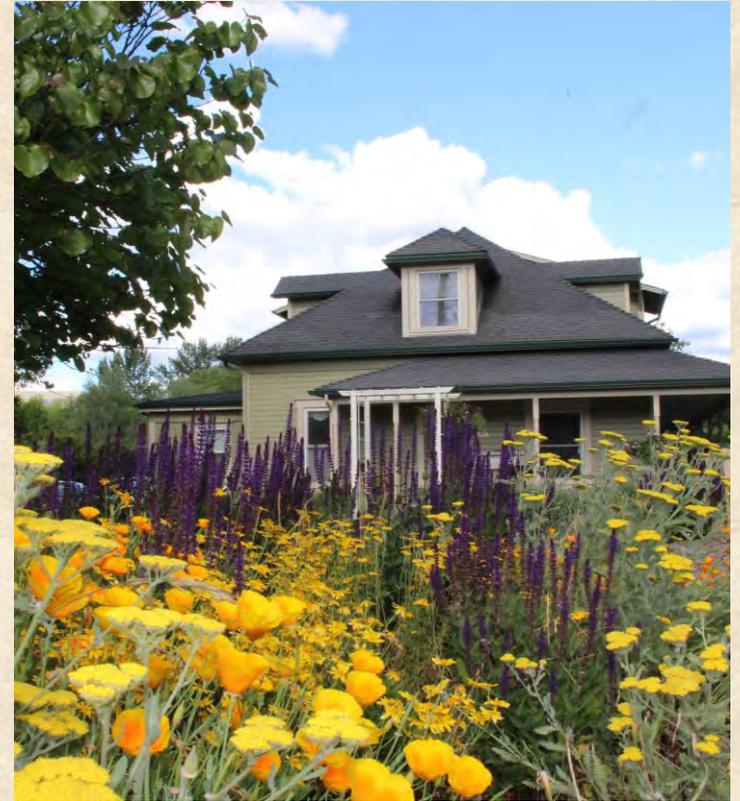
GARDENS

Throughout our community

- + *New memorial bench and octagonal picnic tables added*
- + *“Corner Garden” established by heirloom gardeners*
- + *Sheet mulching completed in heirloom gardens*
- + *Signage posted asking visitors to “Respect our Garden Habitat”*
- + *Garden Calendar gift created for volunteer appreciation*
- + *Ashland Creek Park Community Garden reconstructed after flooding*
- + *Local irrigation control box acquired and programed for NMP Demonstration Gardens*
- + *Humming bird habitat garden established*

“Seeds have the power to preserve species, to enhance cultural as well as genetic diversity... and to check the advance of conformity on many fronts.” - Michael Pollan

HEIRLOOM GARDENS



Surrounding the Nature Center, the Heirloom Gardens showcase rare varieties of garden plants that were popular during Southern Oregon’s pioneer history. These gardens are working examples of sustainable garden design and gardening practices.

The Heirloom Garden thrives under the care of volunteers from the Ashland Garden Club. These volunteers continue to provide updated information for interpretive booklets, and continued maintenance of the Heirloom Garden, including several re-design and re-planting projects.

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HEIRLOOM GARDENS

Sheet Mulching



In 2016 and 2017, the Ashland Garden Club's Heirloom Gardeners implemented major improvements to the Nature Center's showcase garden beds. Extensive sheet mulching was applied throughout the area. Yards of recycled cardboard and newspaper were placed and covered with mulch. All this mulch will decompose in-place, helping to reduce weeds without the use of synthetic pesticides.

Corner Garden Development



Heirloom garden volunteers also made major changes to an area previously called the "Grandmother's Garden." The spot has been transformed to include many pollinator-friendly plant varieties, drought-resistant natives and ornamental grasses. The new "Corner Garden" is a lovely addition to the center and helps to create habitat for many beneficial insects.

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"No two gardens are the same. No two days are the same in one garden." -Hugh Johnson

DEMONSTRATION GARDENS

The Demonstration Gardens provide habitat for a variety of wildlife and a place for self-guided education and recreation.

The beautiful flowers of the Butterfly Gardens support a diversity of pollinators. The Traditional and Culinary Herb Gardens highlight a variety of plants with important uses in human cultures. The Bird Buffet offers seed-producing sunflowers and amaranth throughout the growing season and bird feeders in the winter. A Native Plant Garden showcases a variety of native and drought-resistant landscaping plants.

The Demonstration Gardens serve as a rich community resource by providing a setting for docent-led tours and community educational programs. Volunteers continue to maintain these beautiful gardens for our community.



PLANT PROFILE – NARROW LEAF MILKWEED

Narrow leaf milkweed, *Asclepias fascicularis*, is a native plant found throughout the gardens at NMP. This species has slimmer leaves than the showy milkweed, but both have white and pink blooms. In the fall, their seed pods burst open, sending thousands of fluffy seeds to the wind.

The most delightful thing about this plant, is what you can sometimes find hiding under the leaves. Each year, we discover several monarch caterpillars and a few chrysalides on the narrow leaf milkweed. At NMP, we treasure these sightings, as a sign that our park is functioning as a habitat sanctuary.

Local milkweed species are crucial host plants for monarch butterflies. Although toxic to grazing animals, these plants are vital to the survival of monarchs.

Visitors can purchase our locally-collected narrow leaf milkweed seeds at the Nature Center. We encourage you to cultivate a “monarch way-station” on your property.



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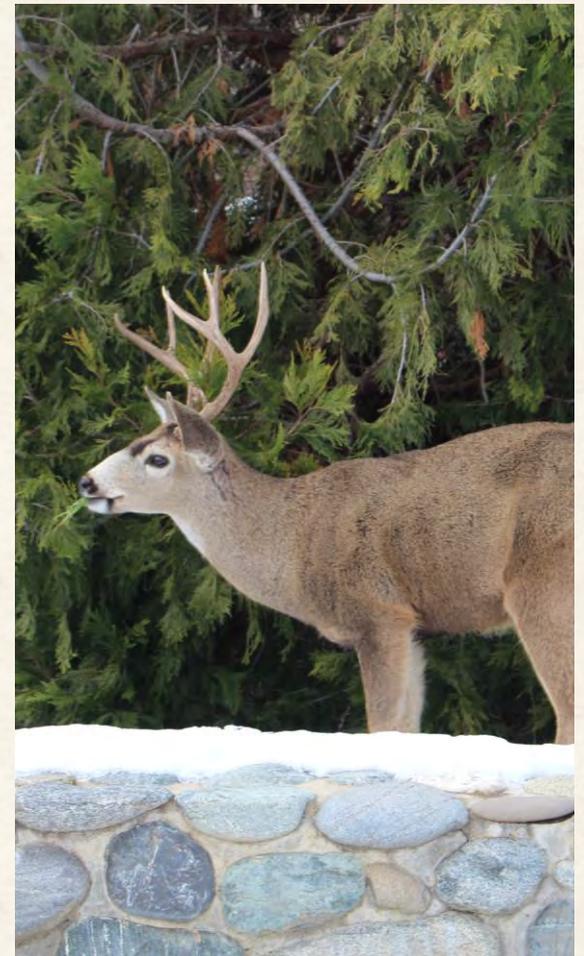
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DEMONSTRATION GARDENS

Habitat for humans and wildlife



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Our vegetable garden is coming along well, with radishes and beans up, and we are less worried about revolution than we used to be.- E. B. White

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 staff is maintaining waiting lists for all the community gardens .

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COMMUNITY GARDENS

Nature Center staff manage five community gardens in Ashland

Clay Street Park

491 Clay St.

Clay Street Park garden has 12 plots of various sizes, and a new picnic space has been added.

Scenic Park

603 Scenic Dr.

Scenic Park is the smallest of APRC's community gardens, and has 10 plots available.

Garden Way

1620 Clark St.

Garden Way community garden has 10 equally sized plots.

Ashland Creek Park

27 E Hersey St.

Ashland Creek Park is the largest garden in our system, with 45 plots, two ADA accessible beds, raspberry plots and a greenhouse.

All of the available plots are being actively rented, and we maintain waiting lists for each of the gardens.



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Natural Area

- ***Management***
- ***Wildlife***
- ***Monitoring***
- ***Engaging Visitors and Interpretation***

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New Developments

NATURAL AREA

Inviting visitors and wildlife

- + *Rocky Top outfall reconstruction*
- + *Pollinator planting at Rocky Top*
- + *Five new nest boxes installed at Riverwalk Park*
- + *Linda Chesney completes a draft Natural Area Management Plan*
- + *Living willow structure thriving after damage*
- + *Relocation of debris pile to reduce habitat impacts*
- + *Development of Nature Play Area project, and receipt of JSWCD grant for the design*
- + *Community meeting to present Nature Play*
- + *Three new conifers planted for Arbor Day 2017*

"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land." – Aldo Leopold

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 invasive weeds, such as Himalayan blackberry and poison hemlock, requires ongoing effort.

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.



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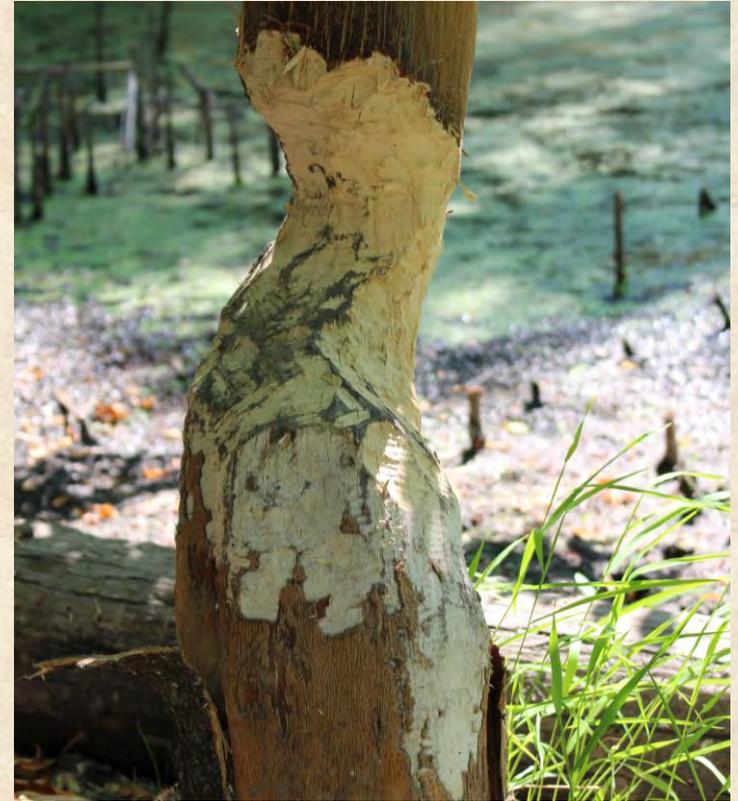
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"The love for all living creatures is the most noble attribute of man." - Charles Darwin

WILDLIFE



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

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. 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.

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WILDLIFE PROFILE – CHINOOK SALMON

Each fall at North Mountain Park, we celebrate the Chinook salmon, *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*, as they return to Bear Creek to spawn.

Tourists, scientists, field trip students, and local families are thrilled to get a look at this iconic Pacific Northwest species. Chinook salmon spawn in deep creeks that exhibit clean, cold, clear water and a substrate of large, rocky cobble.

Thanks to extensive restoration throughout the Bear Creek watershed, the habitat conditions have improved for spawning. Beginning in 2011, stream monitoring efforts have found live salmon spawning in active redds at North Mountain Park.

Visit North Mountain Park in October for our Salmon Festival, and return throughout the fall to watch the water. You may catch a glimpse of the mighty “King” salmon splashing their way home from the ocean.



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"The scientist does not study nature because it is useful to do so. He studies it because he takes pleasure in it, and he takes pleasure in it because it is beautiful." - Henri Poincaré

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 on-going management of the park's natural area.

Bird-monitoring programs include monthly bird surveys, nest box monitoring, and Project Feederwatch.



MONITORING

17 years of bird monitoring summarized

In 2017, we collaborated with the Rogue Valley Audubon Society to summarize bird monitoring at North Mountain Park.

Since the park's creation, volunteer ornithologists Barbara Massey, Vince Zauskey and Bob Quaccia have been conducting monthly bird surveys. The data set spans 17 years, contains over 5,000 entries and represents a valuable source of biological information over time.

Wildlife biologist Brandon Breen summarized the data, describing trends in individual species as well as overall species richness.

“As a testament to the wise stewardship of the park since 1999, the bird species richness has held steady in an era of increasing human population and footprint.”



"All my life through, the new sights of Nature made me rejoice like a child." - Marie Curie

ENGAGING VISITORS



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. Interpretive signs help to educate visitors, and children enjoy finding the Creature Quest boxes dotted throughout the park.

The Salmon Spiral, constructed as a community program for the Bear Creek Salmon Festival, is a favorite outdoor feature for visitors and students alike.

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ENGAGING VISITORS

Proposed Nature Play Area takes shape



As the park has become increasingly popular, we have observed a need for a play-space where children can explore nature in an environment that is comfortable to parents and minimally disturbing to wildlife habitat.

Since 2015, the Nature Center staff have been considering a substantial park improvement. We propose to construct a Nature Playground in an underutilized area of land between the ball field batting cage and the Beach Creek riparian area.

In October 2017, we held a “Planning for Nature Play Community Meeting”, which was well attended. We received input, questions, concerns, illustrated comments from kids, and attendees of all ages ranked their favorite play features including wood structures for large motor play, a willow nook for contemplative play, a hand-pump for water play, and loose building materials for collaborative play.

The Parks and Recreation Commission has adopted the Nature Play Area as a CIP priority for the current biennium. They allocated \$15,000 to the project, with the recommendation that Nature Center staff acquire donations and grants for the remaining project cost.

The project has generated lots of interest, and we are hopeful that it will also generate funding support.



E_ducation

- ***Community Programs***
- ***Public Events***
- ***School Programs***
- ***Partnerships***

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New Developments

EDUCATION

Opportunities for all ages

- + *Increased attendance and diversity in School Programs*
- + *Improved, standardized Community Program evaluation forms*
- + *Creation of educational posters for Project FeederWatch*
- + *Nature Center Manager served as SOREEL Chairperson in 2016.*
- + *Collaborative partnership with Little Gnomes Nature School, running an outdoor preschool on-site*
- + *Improved Salmon Festival exhibitor check-in*
- + *Improved event signage*

“Experience is a master teacher, even when it’s not our own.” — Gina Greenlee

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS



Throughout the year, The Nature Center coordinates community education programs for all ages in topics relating to natural science, cultural history, gardening, nature crafts, sustainability. We also appreciate creative proposals which engage the community in general outdoor recreation and nature emersion.

Instructors who have something to share are invited to submit their proposals three times a year for our Summer, Fall, and Winter/Spring Guide cycles. We support the programs through the use of our facilities and gardens, as well as general marketing and program registration.

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COMMUNITY PROGRAMS 2016

Our Community Programs are as diverse as the community instructors who offer to teach them.

Some of our repeating, seasonal offerings are much-loved and consistently well-attended. These include: Demonstration Garden Tours, Summer Saturday Morning Bird Walks, Project Feederwatch, Natural Holiday Wreaths and our monthly Preschool Puppet Theatre.

Listed are some of our favorite, well-attended, and new programs. For a complete list of programs, check out APRC Play Guide, or call the Nature Center to receive our Newsletter each season.

Ashland Green & Solar Tour	Wintering Birds of the Rogue Valley
Deer Resistant and Drought -Tolerant Plants	Vermi Composting
Demonstration Garden Tours	Growing Pollinator Gardens
Intro to Bird Language	Secrets to Growing Fruit
Tree Walk for Beginners	Recycling: Where Does it Go, and Why?
Exploring Ashland's Parks & Trails	Medicinal & Edible Plant Walks
Baby Birds	Dormant Fruit Tree Pruning
The Joy of Berries	Recycled Paper Beads
Seed Swap	Monarchs and Milkweeds
Little Gnomes Nature School Summer Camp	Attracting & Feeding Birds in Your Yard
Nature-scaping	Growing Citrus in Containers
Climate Change 101	Spicing Up Your Winter Garden
Salmon Spiral: A Community Art Project	Natural Holiday Wreaths

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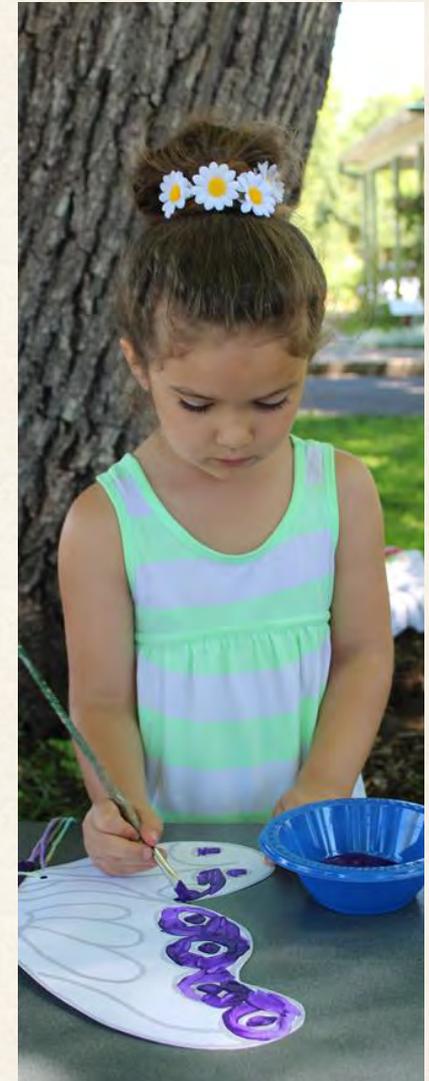
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COMMUNITY PROGRAMS 2017

Botanical Drawing	Rainwater Catchment Systems
Summer Saturday Morning Bird Walks	Ashland Pollinator Garden Tour
Kitchen Wreath Making	Oregon Native American Basketry
Going Nuts for Oaks: Ethnobotany & Cuisine	Top 10 Beneficial Insects for Your Garden
Wildlife Rehab: Keeping Wild Birds Wild	Planning for Nature Play-Community Meeting
Birds You Love to Hate	Growing Fruit in the Rogue Valley
Winter Bird Walk	Birds of North Mountain Park
Forest Photography	Stretch Your Water
Star Party-Discover the Moon	Star Party-Discover the Universe
The Lowdown on Lavender	Calling All Owls!
Building Sustainable Homes with Straw Bales	Journey Through Sacred Space: Birding A-Z
Growing Citrus in the Rogue Valley	The Joy of Berries
Sustainable Solutions to Managing Weeds	Exploring Fire Ecology & Fire History
Arbor Day Tree Planting	Baby Birds & Nests



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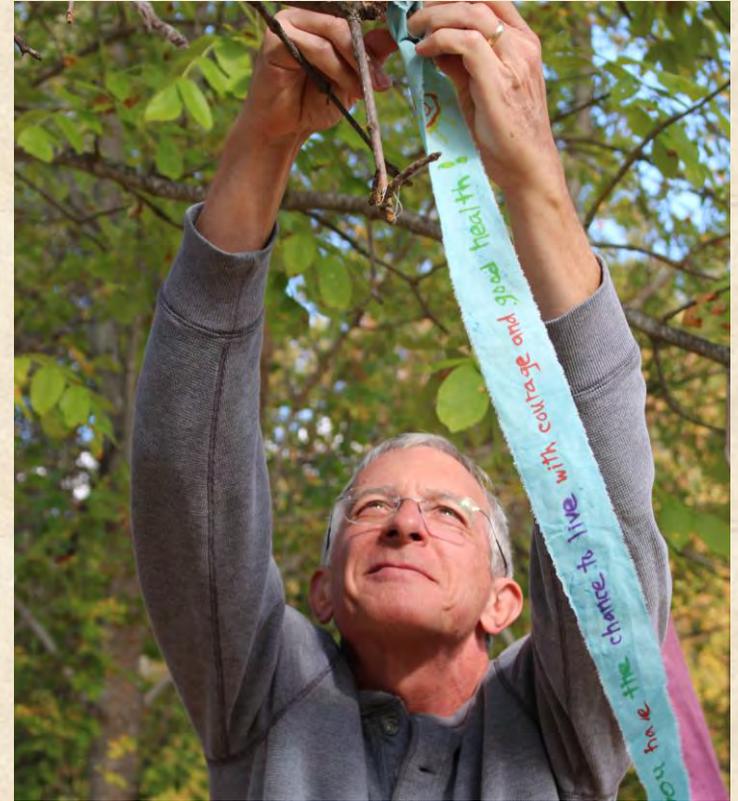
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“The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle of those who are.” - C.S. Lewis

PUBLIC EVENTS



Each year, the Nature Center sponsors two public educational events that are free to community members of all ages. Rogue Valley Migratory Bird Day, held on the second Saturday of May, is a local celebration of International Migratory Bird Day. Visitors enjoy bird walks and educational programs celebrating the life cycles and journeys of migrating birds.

The Bear Creek Salmon Festival is held on the first Saturday in October, and is the largest and most well-attended event of the Nature Center calendar. Visitors of all ages explore the park and celebrate local art and music while learning about local watershed conservation.

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BEAR CREEK SALMON FESTIVAL

A watershed celebration for the whole family!

In 2017 we hosted the 14th annual Bear Creek Salmon Festival, planned and run by our new Coordinator, Jen Aguayo.

Many of the most beloved aspects of the event remained the same, including the Salmon Story Tent, the salmon spiral art installation, and another successful Zero Waste effort.

Once again, several great local musicians performed throughout the day, and the musical acts were supplied with amplification.

This year we standardized the process for exhibitor check-in, resulting in much smoother set-up, on the morning of the event. Improved signage throughout the festival helped to direct traffic to outlying areas. Native plant seedlings were given as prizes to kids who completed their festival friendship bracelet.



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ROGUE VALLEY BIRD DAY

Naturalists young and old celebrate bird migration

Rogue Valley Bird Day had increased in popularity in recent years, and under Jen's coordination, the 2017 event was very well attended.

The event offers educational activities including a live raptor exhibit and bird banding station. Visitors check out binoculars and attend bird walks throughout the morning. Kids and adults can win prizes in the Bird Calling, and Name that Bird Contests. Numerous sponsorships and volunteer support contribute to the event's success.

Recent developments include a migration game for children, in which they must overcome obstacles to reach their spring breeding grounds.



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“We have such a brief opportunity to pass on to our children our love for this Earth, and to tell our stories. These are the moments when the world is made whole.” – Richard Louv

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

School Program field trips offer numerous opportunities for students to connect with and explore the natural world. 2016 was the twentieth 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. Every activity is now based on assessable objectives and is aligned to the current curriculum standards facing elementary teachers.

Ongoing program development has received positive feedback from teachers. Field trip attendance continues to increase, and new schools and districts are seeking out these field trips for the first time.



SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Engaging K-5 students in nature



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SCHOOL PROGRAMS

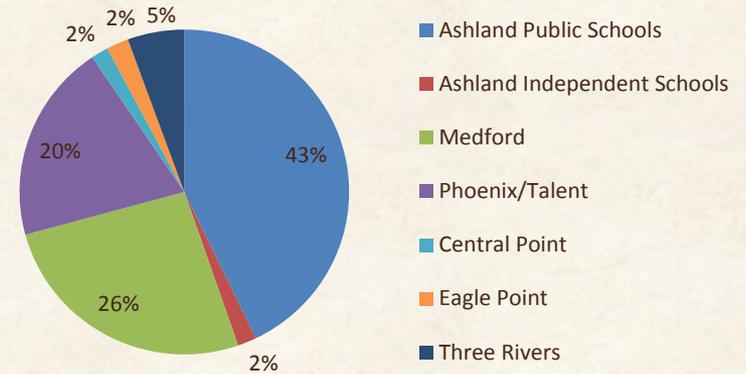
Attendance

Total Students Per Season



Diversity

Students Served Per District Fall 2017



"No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it." - H.E. Luccock

PARTNERSHIPS

Much of North Mountain Park's educational programming is made possible through our community partnerships.

Our public events are successful through collaboration with Southern Oregon's natural resource professionals, scientists, educators and other engaged citizens. Through our collaborative network we are able to serve a wider audience and advance our common goal of developing an ecologically literate community.



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PARTNERSHIPS

Little Gnomes Nature School

Shannon Clery and Anouschka Andersen had successfully run preschool activities and camps as community programs at North Mountain Park. In the 2015-2016 school year, they developed Little Gnomes Nature School, a fully outdoor nature preschool. They now partner with us as an independent business and use the park as their school site.

Little children can now be found exploring nature at North Mountain Park, four days a week, throughout the school year.



Southern Oregon University

Our ongoing partnership with SOU allows us to oversee numerous student projects in the course of every year. Internships and Capstone students help accomplish projects even in our busiest times. In return, we provide applied learning and professional guidance to enrich their college experience.

Libby maintains her connection with the Masters Program in Environmental Education by presenting as a guest speaker in their classes and giving tours of the Park to each cohort.



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PARTNERSHIPS

SOREEL

Southern Oregon Regional Environmental Education Leaders is a collaborative network of Southern Oregon environmental educators. Nature Center Staff have been involved since SOREEL's inception 10 years ago. Our member-organizations meet quarterly to advance the goals of environmental literacy in Southern Oregon and to plan an annual teacher professional development workshop known as August Institute. In 2016, Libby served as SOREEL Chairperson.



Salmon Festival Planning Committee

Coordination and planning of the Bear Creek Salmon Festival requires help from many partnering organizations. Jen Aguayo leads the Festival Planning Committee with representatives from: The Freshwater Trust, Bureau of Land Management, Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District, Recology, Mount Ashland, and the Ashland Forest Resiliency Project.

These partners assist with marketing, event set up, and our zero-waste efforts.





Stewardship

- ***Outdoor Service***
- ***Sustainability***
- ***Bee City USA - Ashland***
- ***Donations and Grants***

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New Developments

STEWARDSHIP

Service for sustainability

- + *New water-saving toilet installed in Nature Center*
- + *Longer-lasting LED lights installed in Exhibit room*
- + *Completion of Pollinator Rain Garden interpretive sign at Ashland Creek Park.*
- + *Continued oversight and support of Bee City USA - Ashland Subcommittee*
- + *Bee City USA Approved Pollinator Garden Program and garden tour*
- + *Receipt of Carpenter Foundation grant to sustain School Programs*

"Everyone should get dirt on his hands each day." - Barbara Kingsolver

OUTDOOR SERVICE



Service organizations of school groups participated in Service Learning programs throughout the entire 2016 and 2017 season. Groups of all ages engaged in meaningful stewardship, supporting the park while learning about related environmental education subjects.

Programs are offered two days of the week during the spring season as well as other times when staff and volunteer availability permits. Volunteers and seasonal hires assist North Mountain Park staff in facilitating these programs.

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OUTDOOR SERVICE

Service Learning



North Mountain Park Nature Center offers free service learning programs for the 3rd grade and up. Programs last 90 minutes to 2 hours. Classes experience a hands-on learning station, and a related community service activity in the park. By engaging in service learning, participants gain a better understanding of their environment while helping to make positive changes through service.

Following Linda Chesney's retirement, Service Learning was suspended until her replacement could be hired and trained. After this hiatus in the spring of 2017, it was clear to us just how much we depend on Service Learning groups to accomplish the work of the park. Jen anticipates booking a full season of Service Learning next spring.



“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” – Albert Einstein

SUSTAINABILITY

North Mountain Park Nature Center upholds an ethic of sustainability in our programming as well as our day-to-day operations.

We work closely with our facilities managers to improve the efficiency of our lighting, heating and cooling. With the help of our irrigation crew and the City Water Conservation Department we work to reduce our water consumption. Improved control over our local irrigation system allows us to apply water resources where they are most needed.

We also partner with Recology and the Master Recyclers to teach our staff and members of the public how to reduce waste. Thanks to these ongoing partnerships, our Bear Creek Salmon Festival is a successful model of a Zero Waste event.

Finally, through interpretation, we strive to educate the public about our sustainability efforts.



“Effectively, change is almost impossible without wide collaboration, cooperation, and consensus.” – Simon Mainwaring

BEE CITY USA

ASHLAND

On December 16, 2014, Ashland, Oregon, took its place as the fifth Bee City USA community with a unanimous vote of the City Council.

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. Since its inception, this group has worked tirelessly to create pollinator-friendly landscapes and educate the public about pollinator conservation.

The Bee City USA subcommittee uses social media, City Council proclamations, classes, letters to the editor, and public events to increase visibility for this important cause.



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BEE CITY USA - ASHLAND

Activities of the Bee City subcommittee

At their January 2017 goal-setting meeting, the Bee City subcommittee decided to concentrate on two broad goals, with objectives within each goal.

To meet the first goal, “create pollinator friendly landscapes”, they chose to collaborate with Parks and Rec to create a pollinator garden at The Grove. The Grove houses the Parks and Recreation office and is located on a main thoroughfare through town.

Over the summer the team used their expertise to develop a preferred plant list, and create a planting plan for the area. Then in late summer, with the help of a grant from the Ashland Parks Foundation, they ordered plants from a few local nurseries. On a cold and wet morning in November, the team established the BCU-A Pollinator Garden.



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BEE CITY USA - ASHLAND

Ashland's 1st annual Pollinator Garden Tour



The Committee's second goal for 2017 was to “educate the public about pollinators and their conservation”.

In 2016 we launched the BCU-A Approved Pollinator Garden Program, which encourages homeowners and businesses to create pollinator habitats. Local gardens can be recognized with a Bee City USA-Ashland garden sign and inclusion on our Pollinator Garden tour map.

In 2017, we offered a public pollinator garden tour of 17 of the approved gardens. Participating gardeners submitted a description and picture of their garden for the tour booklet, which was then designed by NMP staff. Thanks to extensive publicity and marketing, we were thrilled to have 120 attendees purchase tickets and explore local gardens on this self-guided tour.



“Give what you have. To someone, it may be better than you dare to think.” Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

DONATIONS AND GRANTS

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.

Nature Center staff continually seek donations and grants to support the School Program Scholarship fund. School Program scholarships make our outdoor environmental education field trips more accessible to elementary teachers and students by offsetting our program registration fees.

Our annual events, the Bear Creek Salmon Festival and Rogue Valley Bird Day, were made possible by numerous donations and sponsorships.

Private citizens can show their support through donations and purchases of memorial brick pavers, the proceeds of which support the Center.



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DONATIONS AND GRANTS

These Contributors Supported Our Work



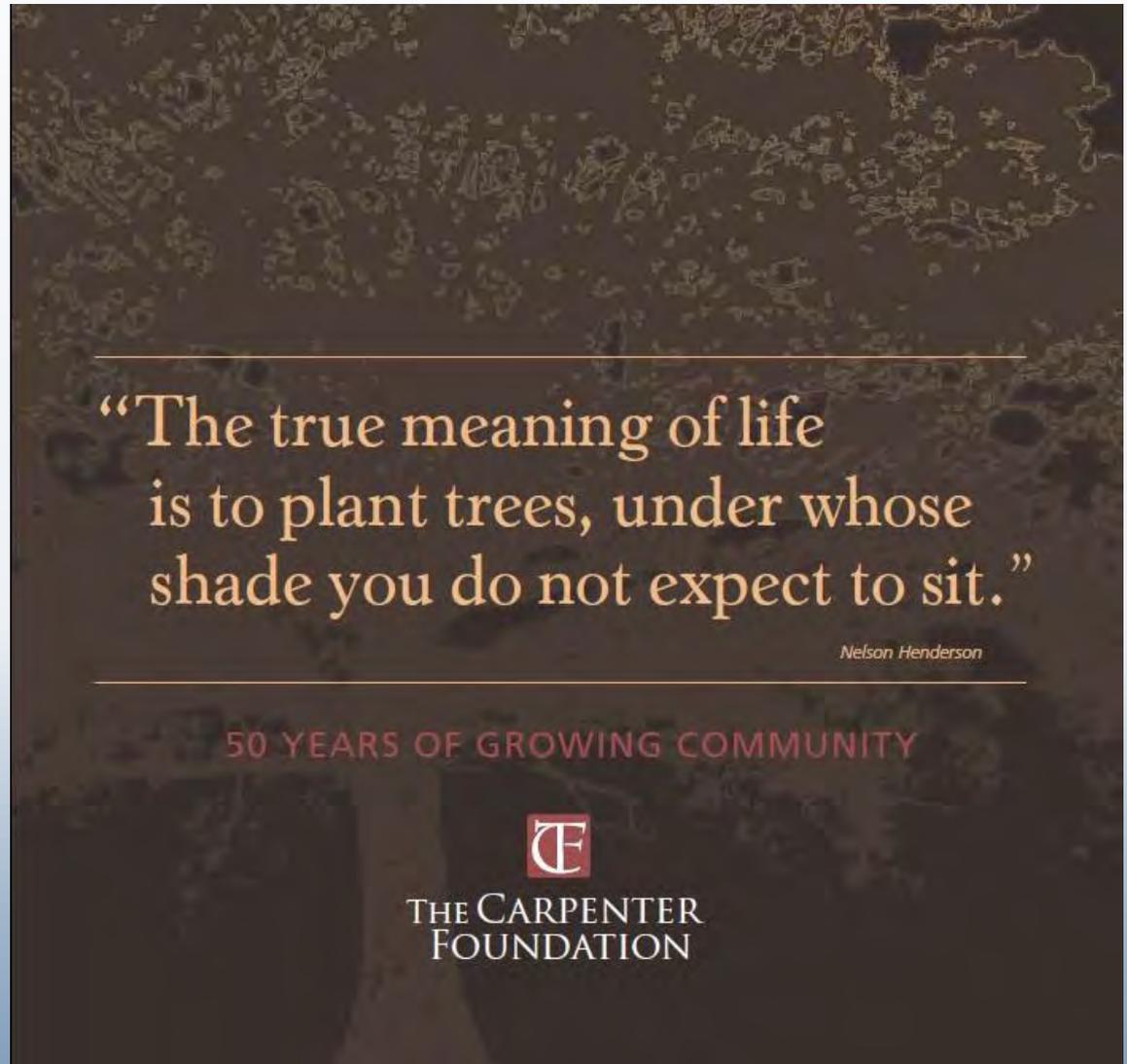
DONOR PROFILE –CARPENTER FOUNDATION

We would like to thank the Carpenter Foundation for their generous support of our School Program Scholarship Fund.

Their grant of \$4,500 allowed us to offer a total of 65 scholarships to classes attending our K-5 School Programs. Each scholarship that we administer represents up to a 50% cost reduction for a hands-on, outdoor field trip to North Mountain Park.

Over the last school year, we provided hands-on, outdoor education to 2,062 kindergarten through fifth-grade students. Our activities introduced those students to local Geology and Water resources with a focus on ecosystems, cyclical natural processes and conservation.

These grant funds made our field trip program more accessible to the teachers and students of Southern Oregon.



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