

TREE TIME

THE NEWSLETTER OF MOUNT PISGAH ARBORETUM



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Madrones and Flickers: Community Ties

by Susan Holmes (Lane Community College), with input from Gail Baker
(Native Plant Society of Oregon, Emerald Chapter & LCC, retired)

Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*), the featured flowering plant in the artwork for the 2023 Mount Pisgah Arboretum Wildflower Festival, is one of the most striking trees in our region with its majestic orange to greenish smooth bark and broad, evergreen leaves. Accompanying the madrone is the red-shafted variety of the Northern Flicker, (*Colaptes auratus*). These two species overlap in their distributions and are often found together in the same habitat, including woodlands of the Willamette Valley.

Madrones are native to the western coastal areas of North America, from British Columbia to California, and occur along forest margins and open slopes. The waxy evergreen foliage, contorted growth habit, and distinctive flaky bark make it a spectacular sight in the coastal cliffs and hills where it is abundant. This species belongs to the heath family, or Ericaceae, which comprises about 4250 species in 124 genera with diverse habits, including rhododendrons, wintergreen, manzanitas, blueberries, and cranberries. Many of the species in this family can be easily recognized by their small, clustered, urn-shaped flowers.

Like all flowering plants, the madrone participates in many types of symbioses. One of the most notable interactions is with a type of beneficial fungus associated with its roots. These root-inhabiting fungi function similarly to ectomycorrhizae where they help the plant roots acquire resources, but they have

a morphology that separates them into a unique category called arbutoid mycorrhizae, which is restricted to only a few genera in the family. However, as most of us know, not all fungi are so beneficial. The madrone is susceptible to several pathogenic fungi and locally one of the most common is a leaf blight. Here in the Willamette Valley ecoregion, our climate is on the wet side for madrone's preferred moisture

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Artwork by Emily Poole

tolerance, making it more susceptible to the blight, especially during years with higher precipitation. Another commonly visible pathogen is the fall webworm whose caterpillars build unsightly webbed tents on mature leaves late in the growing season. This pest rarely causes significant long term damage to the tree because the evergreen leaves of the madrone last 2-3 years before they drop, and the timing of the infection happens on older leaves and falls after the peak season for photosynthesis in the leaves.

Pathogens can sometimes lead to tissue or organ damage and result in the death of an entire limb or trunk. This loss for the tree can be a gain for other species in the community like decaying fungi, insects and cavity nesting birds. Hardwood trees such as madrones create important nest cavity habitat by providing standing dead wood in a forest community. Madrone's wood tends to have a slower decay rate than other trees, making standing dead trunks and limbs last longer for nest cavities to persist, supporting multiple years of repeated use.

Red-shafted Northern Flickers might be found nesting in the cavity of a madrone, along with many other tree species. While flickers usually excavate their own nest cavities, they are also known to reuse and repair others' nests, preferring heights from 6-15 feet above ground level. If you are lucky enough to see a nesting pair of flickers, you will enjoy watching these beautiful, showy birds. Males have a broad black band below the neck meeting a chest full of brown spots against a creamy breast. Red stripes of cheek feathers subtend the beak and the underwings and tail feathers are a bright orange, visible only during flight or from below.

It is unusual for woodpeckers to be migratory, but some populations of Northern Flickers are known to travel south for the winter, and return to their breeding grounds for the annual nesting cycle that begins in late winter or early spring. Flickers typically lay 5-8 eggs over a month and chicks typically fledge by mid June. Here in the Willamette Valley, we commonly have resident populations of year-round birds that overlap with birds that are wintering here from northern latitudes. While flickers can scale tree trunks and peck wood for insects like other woodpeckers, it is very common to find the birds foraging on the ground for insects such as ants and beetles. Spring is an excellent time to take a walk through the Arboretum to find flickers foraging and nesting. 🐦



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Mount Pisgah Arboretum is a nonprofit organization with a mission to engage people with nature through interactive learning and stewardship.

Mount Pisgah Arboretum is located on the traditional homelands of the Kalapuya people. The Kalapuya people were forcibly dispossessed of their homeland and moved to reservations in western Oregon by the United States government following treaties in the 1850's. Today the Kalapuya people are largely citizens of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. We acknowledge that the Arboretum is on occupied lands, and express our respect for the Kalapuya. We humbly honor their past, present, and future, and are committed to finding meaningful ways to recognize their enduring legacy in the region.

Uncommon Nest of Common Ravens

by August Jackson, Interpretation Coordinator

For the third year, a pair of Common Ravens is nesting in the Arboretum. These extraordinary birds are central to the mythologies of many indigenous cultures in the Pacific Northwest, and for nesting they've fittingly chosen an esteemed location in the outstretched boughs of one of the largest trees on the mountain. Ravens are common across much of Oregon, but nesting birds have been nearly absent on the floor of the Willamette Valley for many decades. Ravens have been slowly increasing in numbers in our area and our nesting pair may represent a real shift towards recolonization.

Regular visitors to the Arboretum have likely seen or heard the raven pair. Perhaps you've been surprised by their sudden wingbeats overhead. They maintain a year-round territory centered on their nest tree, but territories can be extensive, and in one study were found to cover more than ten miles. I live in downtown Springfield (just a few miles as the raven flies) and wonder if the ravens I see on occasion are the same I know from here. While on the nest, they seem to make relatively quick foraging trips and can be often seen coming from our neighbor's agricultural fields on Seavey Loop with rodents in beak.



Photo by Bryan Ribelin

Nesting generally begins in March, and nest initiation is a notably visible process, with rejected and fallen twigs quickly accumulating on the trail beneath the tree during construction. Even when nests are reused, as they often are, some additional construction and repair is undertaken. The young fledge around the start of June and spend a couple weeks with their parents in a small family group before leaving the area. This short period is when Common Ravens are at their most social, and their most vocal, and they spend much of their time engaged in activities that look like play.

Common Ravens are well-known for their playful antics and aerial acrobatics—one was recorded flying upside-down for a long distance—but they are also known for being a bit mischievous. While carrion may make up a large part of their diet, they also raid the nests of other birds, and in certain instances can cause a high rate of mortality. Given declining populations in some sea birds, wading birds, and the Greater Sage-grouse, ravens around nesting grounds are sometimes controlled. In our area Common Ravens are only now rebounding, and their numbers are still too few for them to cause much trouble. We're thrilled to be sharing space with them. Set aside a little time in June to visit and watch them teach their young. 🐾

Wildflower Show Florablitz!



Photo by August Jackson

Upload your photo observations of plants in Lane County to iNaturalist from May 16th-20th. Your photos will be identified by experts, and these observations will augment the floral display for this year's Wildflower Festival!

Check out the project here:
bit.ly/3H3BcCC



Photo by August Jackson

Education Report

by Sara Spoden, Education Manager

Although it has been a relatively cold start, spring is officially here at the Arboretum and our Discovery Tours season is underway! The Education Department is excited for a full schedule of trips nearly every day from May into June, expecting to serve over 1,075 students this Spring!

These guided school trips are made possible by our expert Nature Guides, and April was busy with training each of our incoming volunteer Nature Guides and interns. Volunteer Nature Guides keep our Discovery Tours going and reach students from all over Lane County. This Spring each grade will be led on trips that correlate to a specific topic tied to the Scientific Standards.

Topics range from Life Cycles, Animal and Plant Adaptations, The Water Cycle, Ethnobotany, and more!

We are forever grateful to individuals who find the natural world inspiring and want to share that passion with others, and take interest in becoming trained Nature Guides. Additionally we welcomed three new paid interns from the University of Oregon this spring (included Avery and Sam pictured at right) who will also be leading our beloved Discovery Tours. They bring their knowledge and enthusiasm to the role and are even helping us in some much needed spring cleaning! We are able to offer these paid internships thanks to a generous grant from the Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District which is helping us to relaunch our Discovery Tours program.



Photo by Sara Spoden

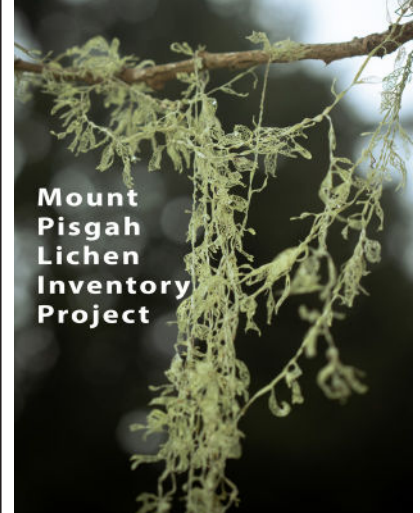


Photo by Sara Spoden

Looking towards Summer, we are happy to announce that our Summer Club program will be returning again this year! For youth 5-11 years of age, each week has its own nature-based theme and can be signed up for individually. Arboretum Summer Club runs from June 27th - August 23rd and participants attend either Tuesdays or Wednesdays from 10am-1pm. Registration is now open. You can find out more on our website at bit.ly/3JzsWsB. We look forward to seeing you and yours out here! 🐛



Lichen Project Final Report



This past winter, 30 volunteers contributed more than 400 hours of their time, amassing more than 1,270 research grade observations and successfully identified locations of high value lichen habitat, as well as more than 70 species. The Mount Pisgah Lichen Inventory Project contributed significant data, offering one of the most thorough biogeographical accounts of lichen species at a single site in the Willamette Valley.

Read the full report here:
bit.ly/3HbPIOd



Photos by August Jackson

Site Report

By Connor Reinecke, Facilities Manager

Arboretum Summer Club

Play, learn and explore! Enjoy everything Mount Pisgah has to offer in the summer every Tuesday or Wednesday (June 27th - August 23rd) from 10am-1pm. Each week has its own theme and can be signed up for individually.



For more info and registration, visit: bit.ly/3JzsWsB



Photos by Sara Spoden

As Mary Oliver put it, “Things take the time they take. Don’t worry.” I found comfort in these words when steady rains halted work on the Visitor Center foundation. Through the winter we made significant progress excavating footings, pouring concrete, and setting up a structure of posts and beams. Eventually, heavy spring rains gave us time to reflect.

Why not tear the Visitor Center down and start again? In many ways this would have been easier, but here at the Arboretum we are committed to preserving our rich history. This means caring for what we already have and making smart choices to ensure the Arboretum will be here for generations to come. In addition to the buildings' human inhabitants, I came across a few examples of how animals use this space too. A garter snake was found hibernating deep within the soil and a pair of Steller's Jays decided



that the back corner was a perfect place for a nest. Tearing the building down and starting again would undoubtedly have disturbed both of these creatures and many more.

In addition to preserving our buildings, site staff have been hard at work keeping our trails in top shape. A grant from the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund provided resources to increase trail accessibility. With the help of volunteers, an Americorp team, and donations from Lane County, we now have universally accessible loop trails through the Riverbank Trail and Water Garden areas. Improvements include new trail surfaces, additional drainage, and a new viewing and



Photos by August Jackson

rest area. These loop trails are now more approachable for folks who might have mobility issues. Look for the universally accessible loops on our updated trail maps and stay tuned for our grand unveiling and public tours in the coming months.

Finally, nature has burst to life with the warmth of spring. Violet-green Swallows swoop and dive as Brown Creepers carry nest material into their hidden cavities. The Turkey Vultures are mating atop the old Doug-fir snag in the Patricia Baker Wildflower Garden and the newts are defending territories in the seeps. We humans may have tired of the rains, but the flowers do not seem to mind and instead present a dazzling show of light refracting through the droplets. In April fawn lilies began blooming in abundance and camas filled the meadows. We hope to see you soon!

Mount Pisgah Arboretum

The Native Plant Society of
Oregon-Emerald Chapter &
Lane Community College Present:

Wildflower Festival 2023

Sunday, May 21st
10am-5pm



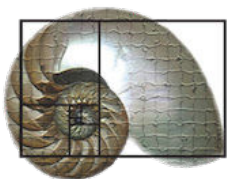
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bit.ly/3xkogUN

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