



NEWS FROM THE RIDGE



Baltimore Yearly Meeting Camps Visit Rolling Ridge

We rejoiced to hear the spirited laughter of kids and counselors again this summer in and around the outdoor education facilities that FLOC bequeathed to RRC when they departed!

Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM) has been running camps for kids at three locations for decades. We began a dialogue with BYM in 2021 to consider whether we might form a partnership with them for their Opequon Camp to move to Rolling Ridge. In the fall of 2021, we hosted four site visits that generated considerable excitement about possibilities on both sides. The next step as we decided to explore a way forward was to bring staff and campers from Opequon to Rolling Ridge for short visits and get to know the land and the facilities. Counselors and staff held one night of their initial overnight training for the summer 2022 camping season at Rolling Ridge. They then brought campers from three sessions and different age groups to experience overnight adventures at Rolling Ridge. Kids hiked the trails, camped at various sites on the land, visited Niles Cabin and the China Folk House, and generally had a great time.





Reflections on Frogs, Forests, and Flourishing Together

“--OP! --OP! --OG!” a three-year-old squealed delightedly as her small footsteps startled frogs and propelled them into the pond with a splash. Even more precious was the moment that one didn’t hop – the one that perched still as a Buddha while the child crouched down eye to eye - the one that patiently waited as a wee little finger reached out to touch it gently on the back. The memory of that feeling of wonder, of encounter with another being of the earth, will last a lifetime, inspiring a budding naturalist to protect and preserve all her kin - large and small.



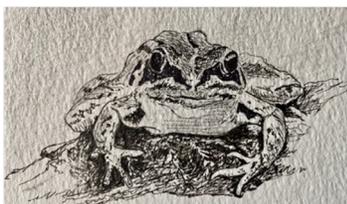
Kids of all ages come to Rolling Ridge for the joy of balancing on a fallen log, turning over stones in the stream to see what’s underneath, searching for invertebrates and salamanders, peering into the shell of a timid box turtle, and immersing themselves in a cool waterfall on a hot summer’s day. We explore rock walls and abandoned chimneys as we ponder who came here before us. We reframe our fear of ticks and rattlesnakes into an understanding that these beings are really teaching us how to pay attention and be mindful in nature. We take night hikes, joining hands in a serpentine line. As eyes adapt to darkness and ears attune to nocturnal sounds, we are magically enfolded into the embrace of the forest. Arriving in the field, we lie down and gaze up at the stars, humbled and awed in equal measure.

How much is a walk in the forest worth? What is the value of crystal-clear water bubbling up out of a mountain spring, flowing over rocks in the shade of redbud and pawpaw, meandering down to the river to merge into the wider watershed? With what gift of gratitude can we thank the beautiful carpet of bluebells, trillium, and mayapples that blanket the forested trail all the way to the river’s edge in springtime? What does the angle-winged Question Mark butterfly alighting on my finger ask of us?

I’ve walked amid the oaks and poplars and maples, reveling in their beauty and admiring their generosity as they convert light into food, sequester carbon, create oxygen, let pileated woodpeckers drill into their sides, and host countless insects and birds and squirrels and other kin. But I’ve also heard the lament of the trees: their struggle to regenerate, to resist the tightening grip of invasive bittersweet, and the precariousness of their living with the stress of climate change and habitat encroachment.

Here at the Rolling Ridge Conservancy, we celebrate, with wonder and gratitude, the abundance of earthly gifts on this land that has been so faithfully preserved and protected by all those who have come before us. We accept these gifts, not as a right but as a privilege, one that comes with a responsibility to commit to thoughtful stewardship and healing to carry them forward for generations to come.

Maybe we cannot heal the whole world, but we can strive to safeguard this sacred haven of forested land. We can nurture biodiversity, build resilience, teach, and learn about ecologically healthy niches, and provide a place where humans and wild kin can flourish together.



“Weep! Weep!” calls a toad from the water’s edge. And I do. If grief can be a doorway to love, then let us all weep for the world we are breaking apart so we can love it back to wholeness again.

~ Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass*