



COLUMBIA GORGE DISCOVERY CENTER & MUSEUM



be present... in the past

Winter Newsletter

January 2025



The Winter Newsletter is dedicated to our AMAZING volunteers!

The time, wisdom and all around good vibes that our volunteers so generously donate is central to the Museum's ability to fulfill our mission. It is also an important way the Discovery Center forges a strong connection with our community. In this newsletter we will highlight some of our volunteers and invite you to consider lending your wisdom and time as a volunteer too! **If you are interested in volunteering please contact our Program Director and volunteer coordinator, Britney Gitch. britney@gorgediscovery.org.**

Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum
Mission Statement: to inspire stewardship of the Columbia River Gorge and Wasco County and to encourage active, life-long learning about our shared environment and the preservation, collection and interpretation of cultural and natural history of the region.

gorgediscovery.org/541-296-8600

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Letter from the Director



Dr. Cheryl Ragar

Dear Friends,

As I write, it is one of our cold but sunny days in the Columbia River Gorge. I am struck by the beauty of the brilliant blue sky framing the bright white peak of Mount Adams as I drive toward work. I am awed by the view of the bluffs of Washington towering up from The Columbia looking out the windows from the Museum's River Gallery.

Unfortunately, not only is it cold outside, but it is also chilly inside. We have tried to keep our 30-year-old heating and cooling system going, but it has simply reached the end of its life. Everyday the team works to keep our guests comfortable as they enjoy the exhibits.

Someone mentioned to me the other day that they "hoped the city would come up with the money to fix it." I had to explain that we receive no regular financial support from any government agency – not the city, the county, nor the state.

We do not receive financial support from the US Forest Service whom visitors have often engaged with in our educational programs and special events. Many express surprise to hear this.

In fact, the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum relies on income from visitors, member contributions, fundraising efforts from our dedicated staff, and the generosity of our Board of Directors, good friends, and beloved volunteers.

As we focus this issue of the newsletter on the remarkable volunteers here, I ask you to become an advocate for the Museum, in the ways that you are able, in order to ensure the vitality of CGDCM for the decades to come!

See you at the Museum!

With gratitude,

Cheryl

To talk with me regarding a donation or endowment, please reach out by email at cheryl@gorgediscovery.org or by phone at 541-296-8600 ext. 245.



In Case You Missed It Looking Back at 2024



In November, the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum was awarded a **2024 Gold Medal for Best Museum in the Gorge** and a **2024 Silver Medal for Best Place to Get Married in the Gorge!** Thank you to all who voted for us! We are deeply moved and will aspire to live up to these awards in the year to come. The Awards event was hosted in the beautiful River Gallery at the Museum. We were so honored to be included as an awardee.

The past year was a whirlwind of enlightening and delightfully **FREE** events at the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum. The year began with an opening celebration for the new exhibition, **A Century of Wonder: 100 Years of Oregon State Parks** with the stunning photography of **Peter Marbach**. We were dazzled by the opening of the annual **GORGEous Art Quilts** exhibition. We celebrated Spring during **Happy Hatch Week** and hosted a pop-up **Sense of Place** lecture about foxes, wolverines and other rare carnivores of the High Cascades. In July, we celebrated **Smokey Bear's 80th Birthday Party** and reckoned with the consequences of forest fire with the art exhibition **Wildfire In The PNW**, featuring paintings by **Ann Rutan**. We learned about searching for Big Foot with Sasquatch Chronicler, **Cliff Barackman** during his lecture for the visiting exhibition **"We Believe In Sasquatch."** Guests welcomed fall with the **Harvest Moon Walk**, made corn husk-dolls and fresh-pressed cider, gazed at the stars and moon and learned about the change of seasons with Forest Service Rangers. We got messy during **Gossology Stem Night**, making fake scat, gooey slime and homemade flashlights. We celebrated the Native American regional community during **Indian Autumn** with The Little Swan Dancers, award-winning flautist James Edmund Greeley and storyteller Ed Edmo while sharing a fresh salmon bake by King Salmon Fisheries. Local artists offered their crafts for sale. In collaboration with **Friends of the Gorge**, we honored long-time museum friend and partner **Barbara Robinson** with a showing of the short film **Wildflower Woman** celebrating her life of dedication to restoring and preserving native plants and wild flowers throughout the Gorge. We are forever grateful to Barbara for spearheading and maintaining the native plantings on the Museum grounds! We played raucous indoor games during the **Backcountry Film Festival** night to support the Snow School program. We practiced atlatl spear throwing, tasted camas root and learned about ancient foodways during The **Archeology Roadshow's - Archeology of Food**. We danced to the magnificent Native American drumming and singing of **Charles Wood III** in collaboration with **The Dalles Overground**. Finally, we made **Native Botanical Wreaths** in an aromatic, indoor evergreen forest. And to top it all off, **11 magical, romantic weddings** flowered in the River Gallery. **What a beautiful and wondrous year!**

Educational Programs

Volunteers Sharing Their Passion for Learning

By Danny Cosgrove, Director of Education

This fall and early winter, the Education Department experienced an incredible season of growth, engagement, and celebration—all made possible by the enthusiasm and dedication of our amazing volunteers. These individuals bring diverse skills, interests, and passions that elevate our programs and help connect the community with the beauty and importance of the Gorge's natural and human history.

A shining example of this collaboration was our *Grossology* event. Held in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, this candy-free Halloween event brought families with costumed kids to see our Museum in a new light through daring flashlight-lit tours of our darkened exhibits. The kids made the flashlights themselves with one of our terrific volunteers, Mike. Long-time volunteer Billy O'Keefe, brought his collection of creepy crawly beetles, insects and spiders to share, and the slime table was heroically manned by another long-time volunteer and Board Member, Bill Weiler.

Visitors learned to identify wild animal scat and then made fake scat themselves complete with bits of fur or feather pieces with the guidance of US Forest Service Rangers, along with other hands-on touch tables and STEM activities. The turnout exceeded expectations, and it was the hard work of our volunteers that made *Grossology* such a success—they truly went above and beyond.



Bill Weiler, Board Member and Volunteer
- valiantly manning the Slime table



Billy O'Keefe, Volunteer Bug Man

Educational Programs cont...



We hosted a wreath-making event in December, where participants created wreaths using boughs clipped from a small forest of pine, fir, and cedar, infusing the museum with the festive scent of the holidays. We are already planning for next year, and envision volunteers joining us in the woods with loppers, saws, and USFS collection permits to help establish this new holiday tradition!

Looking ahead, our SECRETS school-based Columbia Gorge Ecology program will launch new sessions in January and again in March. SECRETS takes us into fifth-grade classrooms throughout Hood River County, The Dalles, and Washington, helping students connect with the ecosystems surrounding their homes and schools. Volunteers play a vital role in creating the one-on-one moments that are so powerful in sparking curiosity and engagement.

We also have a unique opportunity for volunteers with a creative flair—specifically, anyone with costume design skills! Each SECRETS lesson opens with an educational skit, and we need help creating costumes to bring these lessons to life. Imagine transforming a fifth grader into a woodpecker, a staff member into a mighty oak tree, or even bringing a fungus to life! If this sounds like something you'd enjoy, we'll provide materials and collaborate with you to design fun, imaginative costumes that will captivate and educate our students. Your creativity could make these lessons unforgettable—please reach out if you're interested in helping!

Contact Program Director: Britney Gitch (britney@gorgediscovery.org)

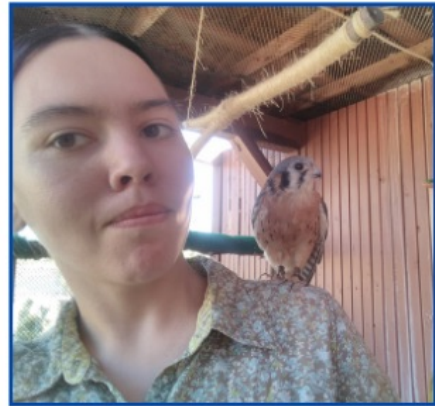
Support our Education Programs by becoming a Museum Member or Donor today!
gorgediscovery.org/541-296-8600

Mews News

As The North Wind Blows!

By Morgan Olson, Raptor Coordinator

*Morgan takes flight -
We wish her all the best adventures and hope
that she returns to the nest once in a while!
Ferguson, Liberty, Killer and Hank will miss you
and so will we all!*



Morgan Olson with Hank, American Kestrel

The Dark-eyed Juncos and White-crowned Sparrows are flittering about. The larger Spotted Towhees are knocking around leaf litter. And then, in a moment everyone knows is coming but not sure when, they are gone.

How much can change in six years? It's a span of time that can feel endless and yet so short. It was just over six years ago, back in October of 2018, that I started my time here at the Discovery Center. I've met so many wonderful people and done at least 1,000 presentations in that time. A funny thing happens once you announce your departure, that impossibly distance date suddenly feels too close, too soon. But like the juncos, I have new adventures waiting for me on the other side of the mountains.

I hope that you'll come out to the museum and say hello to our new Raptor Coordinator Julia Khoury. She's been doing a fantastic job this past year working with our resident raptors as she teaches old birds new tricks. If you would like to attend a raptor program, please double check our website to confirm presentation days and hours.

And finally, don't forget to Keep Your Eyes to the Skies!



Liberty & Ferguson



Julia Khoury with Red-Tailed Hawk - Killer



**Help us keep the
Raptors healthy and
well fed by becoming
a Museum Member or
Donor today!
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541-296-8600**

Collections

It Takes a Village

By Susan Buce,
Museum Registrar

It has been a busy year in Collections. We have continued updating our records and processing new, and sometimes very large donations. The help of volunteers is critical to keeping up with the workflow.

Our W.G. Dick Research Library volunteers, Susan Munger and Georgia Foster have done an excellent job of updating the records to improve access to researchers who are tracking genealogy or topical information.

Team member, Adriana Thompson, has put her skills to great use in Collections. She has done an excellent job in taking on many of the tasks that make a big difference – making more efficient use of our storage space, updating catalog records, helping to process some of those large donations - all in addition to her work in maintaining our exhibits.

We ended 2024 with an exhibition titled “We Believe in Sasquatch” on loan from the North American Bigfoot Center. Our plan for 2025 is to showcase Native American Artwork in the Kuck Wing. And we are working toward a new exhibition opening mid-year.

Managing our collections — the objects in our care — is an involved process. We regularly monitor the environment: temperature, RH (relative humidity), and lumen intensity (light) that affect our artifacts.



Susan in the Museum Library

We also keep an eye on what pests are finding their way into the museum. Most bugs are harmless, but a few can damage delicate artifacts.

Thanks to our volunteer, retired entomologist Billy O’Keefe, we have an expert eye on what’s bugging us.

The question I hear most frequently is “When are the photo archives going to be back online?” It was a frustrating experience to have our photo archives go offline in 2022 due to an undiagnosed computer glitch. It required us to completely rebuild the database, and relink all 29,000 photos.

Volunteer Tami Quinton has been updating our databases toward that goal. Now our only barriers are finding funding and a skilled programmer to get it back online.

We hope that 2025 will allow us to provide a more transparent glimpse into what our collections hold and to provide more content to researchers and history lovers.

Help us maintain our Collection by becoming a Museum Member or Donor today!
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Giftshop News



9am - 5pm
Daily
No Admission
Fee to Shop at
the Store!

COLUMBIA GORGE
DISCOVERY CENTER & MUSEUM

Handcrafted
one-of-a-kind
gifts made by
local artists

COLUMBIA RIVER TRADING COMPANY

Cool
Toys!

Pottery
Jewelry
Artworks

5000 Discovery Drive
The Dalles, Oregon
541-296-8600
gorgediscovery.org

Welcome to the **Columbia River Trading Company**. Stop by when you are looking for a special gift that embraces the creative energy and beauty of the Columbia River Gorge! No Museum admission fee is required when shopping.

Get ready for next year! Now that the holiday season is behind us, all **Christmas items are 50% off** until March 1.

Don't forget that Museum Members receive a 10% discount.

We want to hear from you! Do you have an idea that will to help our store shine? What's on your wish list? Send your ideas to store@gorgediscovery.org

Local Artist
Clayton Carter
Beadwork & Jewelry



Local
Jewelry
Designers



Yvonne Peppin-Wakefield Ceramics

Events

Award-winning Wedding Venue In The Gorge!

You may already know that the Museum's River Gallery is one of the best places in the Gorge to tie the knot! We hosted 11 gorgeous weddings in 2024. But did you know that the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum has a number of excellent options for corporate, government and non-profit organizations for seminars, training workshops and meetings? We have a fully equipped classroom, conference room, the Confluence Cafe and the beautiful M.J. Murdock Theater available for private events, lectures, performances and film screenings. We also have a full catering menu available for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks that you can reserve for your event. Our Events & Catering Manager, Tiffany Bates is an expert at arranging all the details to make your special event a success. **For more information email: tiffany@gorgediscovery.org**



Hosting your event at the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum is a great way to support all the work we do here for our community in Educational Programs, the Raptor Program, historic and ecological preservation and our free special events.

Help us provide our great programs by hosting your event at the Museum or by becoming a Museum Member or Donor today!
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