



Week of July 19-25



Banana Slug at Oregon Caves National Monument

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Special Events This Week

Ranger Programs

Free Ranger programs will be offered each day. Check the blackboard in the Visitor Center for fascinating topics and times. Candlelight tours that present a unique perspective of the caves will take place on Friday and Saturday evenings. Reservations for the adventurous off-trail tours are now being accepted.

Join Ranger Suzan Thursday night for a free evening program: "Caves of the National Park Service." Ranger Jennie presents a program on Saturday night: "Bats."

Chateau Programs

Entertainment at the Chateau is in full swing this week. Monday is "Artist's Adventure," featuring an interview with local artist Glenda Krois. Pianist Alan Eisner plays on Tuesday, while David Hodges brings poetry to life on Wednesday. Chateau Artist-in-Residence, Jennie May Donnell reads intriguing stories in the Lobby on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Visitors on Sunday afternoon can enjoy the Celtic harpist, Bob Clark. Inquire at the Chateau's front desk for the finer details of these hotel events.

Pacific Rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*)

One of the most spectacular sights of early summer is the blooming of the Pacific Rhododendron. "Rhododendron" means "rose tree," and this shrub is well named, for its large clusters of flowers range in color from pale pink to



Rhododendron in bloom

red. These colors are striking against the dark green of the conifers the rhododendrons grow among.

Rhododendrons provide year-round cover for wildlife, but no food. Toxins in the leaves and flowers keep mammals, including deer, from nibbling on them. Even honey made from the flowers can sicken humans. Additionally, the undersides of the large leaves have hairs that help them resist drought and insulate them from freezing.

To the eye, though, the blooms are ambrosia. Enjoy them on the No Name, Old Growth, and Cave Exit trails, and from your car as you drive out of the Monument. The state flower of Washington, the Pacific Rhododendron is another treasure of Oregon Caves National Monument.

Banana Slug (*Ariolimax columbianus*)

What's the second largest slug in the world? What is a slug, anyway? And where can you find one? If you guessed you can find it at Oregon Caves National Monument, you'd be right.

It's the banana slug, and, yes, it's generally yellow like a banana (although there are color variations from green and brown to white, affected partly by what they're eating). They grow six to ten inches in length, and can live up to seven years.

Slugs are mollusks, cousins of snails. They feed on decaying plant materials, leaves, and, if they're

lucky, mushrooms. They excrete a nitrogen-rich fertilizer, so they help keep the forests of the Pacific Northwest healthy. Banana slugs are seriously slimy. The slime keeps the slug hydrated, enables it to move easier along the ground, and protects the animal's soft body. It is also a defense, for the slime tastes terrible and numbs the tongue of whatever's trying to eat it.

So if you're lucky enough to see a banana slug, look close and take some photos, but please don't touch!