



June 2012



Roth's Forest Snail at Oregon Caves National Monument

This month on the Monument

Be sure to stroll through the historic Chateau at the Oregon Caves. Lodging, fine dining, gift gallery, historical film, 1930's era coffee shop, a relaxing lobby, live music, and more are just across from the cave entrance. Inquire at The Chateau or visit their website for information about entertainment and events: <http://www.oregoncaveschateau.com/>

Explore the caves in the old style - candlelight tours take place on Friday and Saturday evenings.

Want to get muddy? Make your reservations online now for the Off-Trail Adventure tour www.nps.gov/orca or request more information at the Visitor Center.

Roth's Forest Snail (*Monadenia fidelis* subspecies *rothii*)

Be careful where you step. The hardy, but not invincible, Roth Forest Snail might be gliding along near your feet. This unique subspecies of land snail is, so far, only known to be found at the Monument.

Like other forest snails of this region, it feeds on moss, decaying plants, algae, and fungus using a rasp-like tongue with thousands of scraping hooks. It senses light with two upper tentacles and smells using all four. The spiral shell it keeps for life and its slime protects the soft body.

On warm, dry days it will retreat into its shell ('estivate') for protection.

Named after John Roth, the Chief of Resource Management at Oregon Caves, this subspecies' durable shell requires a constant extraction of calcium from the Monument's marble rock (CaCO_3). This snail exemplifies the biodiversity found here.

Pacific Dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*)



Dogwood in bloom

N. Bankston

While driving the mountainous Monument road, visitors may notice patches of white gracing the greening trees and wonder if they belong here in Oregon. Pacific Dogwood is indigenous to the Pacific Northwest, filling in the understory of dense forests.

The hard wood of this low-lying tree was helpful to both American Indians and early settlers in creating wooden tools. The many uses of the Pacific Dogwood include treating malaria, fevers, and stomach problems, increasing appetite, and purifying blood. The bark also has an antiseptic quality and can be used to treat sores and inflammations of the skin.

The Dogwood's four-inch white flowers are actually bracts, or modified leaves. Open and lacy, these broad white bracts seem to glitter in the filtered light of the understory. Visitors can look for a delightful specimen halfway down the exit trail after a cave tour.

Western Coralroot
(*Corallorhiza maculata*
subspecies mertensiana)



Coralroot (pre-bloom)

Anita Varnon

Now sprouting on the Monument is an odd-looking, leafless plant that looks like asparagus popping up from the shady duff. This unusual orchid, the Western Coralroot, is purplish to reddish in color and grows up to 20 inches tall.

This native plant is saprophytic, meaning it gets its nutrients from decaying organic matter. It cannot make its own food from the sun like most green plants. Many curious plants await your discovery at Oregon Caves National Monument, even along the Cave Exit trail after your tour!

Steller's Jay
(*Cyanocitta stelleri*)



Steller's Jay outside the Chalet

The area between the Chalet and Chateau is one of the best places to spot Steller's Jays. These striking birds have dark blue wings, tails, and bellies, and black heads, necks, and chests. They have a pointed black crest on top of their heads, which they can lift at will.

Steller's Jays are common in conifer forests, where they will place their nests as high as 90 feet in the trees. Their call is suggestive of a Red-tailed Hawk, usually described as a "shaar" or "shaack" sound. These jays eat berries, acorns, nuts, seeds, insects, and occasionally frogs and some small invertebrates. They will also beg for picnic handouts, so **please do not feed them** – **Steller's Jays can become dominant and drive out other bird species.**

Oregon Grape
(*Mahonia aquifolium*)



Oregon Grape foliage and yellow flowers

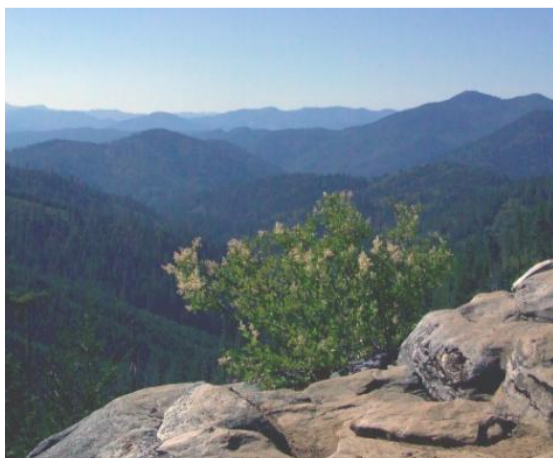
Oregon's state flower, the Oregon Grape, is visible on all the Monument's trails. It is not a grape vine; it is an evergreen shrub related to the barberry bush. The glossy, green foliage looks like holly leaves and turns red in the fall and occasionally in the spring and summer. The plant's yellow flowers come into bloom early summer. By fall, berries that look like clusters of grapes will appear.

Dyes can be made from the roots (yielding yellow) and the berries (providing purple). Many Oregonians who gather the berry clusters make grape jelly, which is very tart until plenty of sugar is added.

Cliff Nature Trail
1-mile loop (1.6 km)

*Moderately strenuous,
steep*

Hike through and over the Oregon Caves where you will discover panoramic views of the Illinois Valley and the Siskiyou Mountains.



Cliff Nature Trail panoramic view

Directions:

Option 1: You can start this hike at the trailhead directly behind the Visitor Center. Bear right.

Option 2: Walk up the paved path to the Cave Exit. Follow signs to the Cliff Nature Trail.

Option 3: Hike this trail after your cave tour!

Time: Allow at least half an hour
Climb: 371 feet (113 m)

The Cliff Nature Trail allows visitors to learn even more about Oregon Caves when hiking above it! This trail offers the opportunity to see Coralroot, Oregon Grape, Steller's Jay, Pacific Dogwood, and Roth's Forest Snail. Inquire at the Visitor Center about additional hiking trails on the Monument - maps are available.