

OVERTON PARK

notes

June 2026

Overton Park turns 125!

When city leaders decided in 1901 that they wanted to develop a park system, Memphis had 102,000 residents and only six acres of public parks. Judge L.B. McFarland believed that “no city will be greatly populous or truly great without proper provision for the pleasurable and the aesthetic.” The newly-formed Memphis Park Commission envisioned two new signature parks, one downtown (today’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Riverside Park) and one on the city’s northeast edge. The Commission hired renowned landscape architect George Kessler to develop these parks, along with a system of boulevards that would connect them. On November 14, 1901, the City purchased a tract of land for \$110,000 (over \$4 million in today’s dollars), and Overton Park was born.

The new park grew rapidly, with the building of playgrounds and pavilions, the addition of a zoo and the region’s first public golf course, and the creation of a veterans memorial. Over the following decades, it became a cultural destination, with the Brooks Art Gallery, the Works Progress Administration-constructed Overton Park Shell, and the Memphis Academy of Arts all going up in the park.

Such an important civic space has inspired deep investment from the community, especially when access to the park was threatened. Black Memphians fought to integrate public spaces throughout the city by staging sit-ins at segregated Overton Park



Pretty Useful Co.

attractions, winning a Supreme Court case in 1963. The park was the subject of a decades-long battle to prevent Interstate 40 from being built through the forest and Zoo, which ultimately resulted in the highway being diverted around the park.

Overton Park was not immune to the turn-of-the-century trend of city disinvestment in public parks, and conditions began to deteriorate. In 2011, the community rallied to advocate for the formation of Overton Park Conservancy and the designation of the Old Forest as a Tennessee State Natural Area, providing the park with dedicated stewardship and legal protection.

The future of Overton Park is bright. We’re planning improvements to the Rainbow Lake and East Parkway areas, a new Greensward walking loop, and more accessible ways to reach and navigate the park. The Metal Museum will open in September, reinvigorating Rust Hall’s artistic tradition. The Shell is celebrating its own big milestone with 90th-anniversary concerts. The Memphis Zoo is embarking on projects including a new stingray exhibit set to open next year. And as the Brooks Museum prepares to move downtown, we’re excited to have conversations about the next chapter for the building and campus.

One thing’s for sure: Overton Park—the joy it brings, the discovery it enables, the creativity it inspires—never gets old. We’re so glad you’re a part of this ever-evolving story.

Survey time: Rainbow Lake and East Parkway areas

After almost 15 years of managing Overton Park, we've had a lot of time to see how the park is used and how important your insights are as we plan improvements. That's why through early July, we're asking for your feedback on the Rainbow Lake and East Parkway areas. We want to invest in smart design decisions that make the park more accessible, welcoming, and exciting. Our online survey guides you through some of the ideas we're considering. It should take about 5 minutes to complete.

Rainbow Lake Area

Most of the big changes are in the Rainbow Lake area: the lake, playground, pavilion, and dog park.

- Because the Memphis Zoo has gifted us with a parcel of land between the lake and the forest (a plot that formerly hosted temporary exhibits), we'll be able to expand the lake eastward. The current area around the lake is about 80,000 square feet, and with this addition, we gain 13,000 square feet.
- We envision removing the lake's concrete bottom and creating a more natural edge filled with aquatic plants that provide wildlife habitat.
- We're proposing boardwalks that provide new ways to view and experience the lake, Greensward, and forest.
- The playground needs some reworking to build more environmentally-sustainable structures that prioritize safety and nature play.
- We're proposing to replace the current pavilion with a larger one that could serve as a home base

for our educational programs, provide an indoor space for event rentals, and add to the amount of shaded outdoor space.

We have two potential designs for the pavilion. Option A features a building designed to feel light and transparent within the landscape. While it creates a defined edge along the lake, it's detailed to minimize its visual presence, allowing the landscape to remain the dominant feature. Option B features a sculptural form that enhances the arrival experience. The lake informs the building's shape, creating a fluid edge between architecture and nature. Take a look at each concept and tell us what you like or dislike about each.

East Parkway Area

Along East Parkway, we plan to improve and enhance the pavilion, playground, and picnic areas that extend from Bike Gate south to the fire station.

- The pavilion—the park's oldest surviving structure—needs structural and aesthetic repairs.
- The demand for events at this location might suggest that a second pavilion should be considered.
- The playground hasn't had a significant renovation in decades, so this is a chance to reimagine it.
- We're proposing some new walking trails and additional seating inspired by the beloved, historic concrete picnic tables.



Take the survey at overtonpark.org/blog/2026survey or scan the QR code.

OPTION A



OPTION B



Scan Me

Thanks to our partners at Design Workshop and A2H - Engineers | Architects | Planners for creating the survey and these drawings of a new Rainbow Lake Pavilion! We look forward to hearing what you think.

kaci's message

Good Dog: Coco Bean Forever

A few weeks ago on a Friday afternoon, I said goodbye to my husky, Coco Bean. Since then, I have been carrying a grief that feels larger than words.

Coco and I found each other nearly 14 years ago — two wild girls searching for adventure. Together we explored mountains and creeks and learned to live without our mothers in Knoxville. We later moved to Nashville, where we attempted to “sleep” in our condo directly above Broadway’s endless parade of karaoke and bachelorettes. We drove Tennessee’s backroads, visiting nearly all 95 counties while preaching the gospel of free college. And finally, in 2018, we returned to our shared Memphis roots where my now-husband, Ian, convinced her to love him and Coco became the best big sister to our daughter, Celeste.

For much of my adult life, Coco has been woven into the fabric of my life. **And when I think of our years together, so many of my favorite memories are set against the backdrop of Overton Park.**

When I first joined the Conservancy team, Ian and I lived in a shotgun apartment at the corner of McLean and Overton Park Ave. During the pandemic, Coco and I spent hours wandering the Old Forest together. I’ll never forget her sniffing through spring wildflowers while I talked with loved ones about trauma, sickness, vulnerability, and growth. And when my busy brain and Coco’s busy body couldn’t sleep, we would walk beneath the moon through the Formal Gardens in the quietest hours of the night. (Sorry, Tina. I know you said this was against the rules. Strange times.)

Coco Bean was a clever, stubborn gal. Overton Bark was never quite the expansive dog park experience she enjoyed in her younger days in Knoxville. But she did enjoy circling the interior perimeter and playing a game of “Who is going to break first?” with me when it was time to leave. We rarely stayed for less than an hour and always left with new friends.

Since saying goodbye, many people have reached out with stories of how profoundly animals shape our lives. **One message from my coworker, Fields, has stayed with me: Coco was my witness.**



She was there for nearly every chapter. She witnessed heartbreak and healing, career changes and cross-state moves, first dates and wedding vows (in the Formal Gardens!), the arrival of our daughter, restless nights trying to piece together the puzzle that is this beloved park, and all the beautiful ordinary days in between. **She knew versions of me that no longer exist and loved every one of them anyway.**

Grief, I’m learning, is simply love with nowhere to go. What brings me comfort is knowing that so much of our story is woven into this park. Every trail, every patch of wildflowers, every late-night walk and stubborn hour spent at Overton Bark remains. The places we loved are still here, holding memories too precious and too real to ever be lost.

One of the greatest privileges of caring for Overton Park is witnessing how it becomes a part of people’s stories. For some, it is where they found confidence running a mile, where they fell in love, met a new friend, recovered from loss, or introduced a child to nature. For me, it is all of those things. It is also where I spent some of the best years of my life with a curious, skeptical, tenacious husky named Coco Bean.

And while I would give anything for one more walk together through the Old Forest, I am deeply grateful for the many that we had.

Thank you, sweet girl, for the adventure.

P.S. This experience feels like being inducted into a strange, supportive society of loss. I told Shelby Farms Park Conservancy CEO Jen Andrews that Celeste keeps asking when I will have a new puppy in my belly?? Jen shared her own story and reminded me that Coco’s love will be a gift forever — and that when I’m ready, I can pop a new puppy out of my belly and fall in love all over again. As an optimist by nature, I like this idea.

Kaci Mif

P.P.S. Hearing others’ stories has helped a lot. If you have a sweet, heartbreaking, or inspiring story, will you please email it to us? And because you know I can’t end a letter without a request for support: **If this story touched you, would you consider making a donation in honor of a four-legged friend?**

Invasive Avengers create a healthier forest

It's early March, and the Old Forest is turning green. The first velvety pawpaw flowers are emerging, and cellophane bees are digging their nests among the huge tree roots alongside East Parkway Pavilion. All this activity means that Bill Bullock's volunteer invasive removal crew is out for one last expedition, celebrating another winter of creating a healthier forest.

Today, Bill's crew of regulars is joined by a first-time volunteer, so Bill shows her the ropes. "We're mostly focusing on large woody plants like Chinese privet and cherry laurel this time of year," he explains. "In the winter, non-native plants tend to be the only ones with green leaves, so they're highly visible and we can spot and remove them easily. We want to get to them before they produce berries and distribute seeds."

He points out a Chinese privet plant that's about two feet high, with small bright green leaves. After working it out of the soil, he hangs it upside-down by the roots on a nearby tree. "There are three reasons we do this," he says. "One, so their roots don't have contact with the ground, which would allow them to resprout. Two, so we know where we've been. And three, so the little privets know we're onto them."

After discovering that around 100 of the Old Forest's 350+ flowering plants were non-native, Bill decided to learn everything he could about the best way to remove the most damaging invasives—and how to prevent the cycle of non-native plants making their way into natural areas from home gardens. He started volunteering with Overton Park Conservancy to complete training in selective herbicide application and manual removal. In 2019, he began recruiting volunteers—affectionately known as the Invasive Avengers—and they've been working ever since.

Bill's crew meets every Friday during the winter months, when native wildflowers are lying dormant under the soil and won't be trampled by the volunteers' boots. He also hosts larger weekend workdays that attract college students who get an ecology lesson along with a day of hard work.

Victoria Van Cleef runs in Overton Park several times a



Victoria Van Cleef searches for privet plants in the Old Forest.

week, and one morning she saw the sign Bill puts out during every workday that encourages folks to stop and ask the volunteers what they're up to. She did, and wound up attending first a Saturday workday and then the regular Friday events. She estimates that she removes more than 50 plants each day, and thousands over the course of the winter. "You can really see the difference—it opens up the forest in a beautiful way," allowing sunlight to reach the forest floor and giving the next generation of native plants a chance to grow.

With ten years under his belt, Bill is seeing the progress in real time. "There are very few large woody invasives now," he says. "My hope is that since we have vastly decreased the number of seed-bearing invasives, the pace at which the new invasive plants pop up is slowing down."



Bill Bullock shows Juliet Jones how to identify cherry laurel.

With the space created by the removal of these plants comes an opportunity to kickstart the growth of natives, particularly in areas like the one just inside the gateway that leads from the dog park into the forest. This area had been covered with invasive paper mulberry trees that were removed last summer. Working under the Conservancy's supervision, Bill broadcast seed pods he'd collected from Eastern redbud trees in this area.

When the Conservancy's Director of Operations, Dr. Eric Bridges, found through his research that white oak acorns in the forest were having trouble growing into young trees due to

seed predation, Bill began collecting acorns from the forest and germinating them at home. Over the past two autumns, he's planted thousands of white oak seedlings in the canopy gaps, where they'll have plenty of access to sunlight that will help them grow quickly.

Even if you're not able to join the regular work in the forest, there's still plenty you can do to help out. Bill is particularly passionate about educating homeowners that what they plant in their yards matters to places like the Old Forest. Cherry laurel, a small ornamental tree not native to our region, was not recorded in the 1987 inventory of the Old Forest conducted by Dr. James Guldin. But over the past few decades its seeds escaped from neighborhood plantings and it became



Front row: James Brooks, Bill Stegall, John Joyner; back row: Bill Bullock, Victoria Van Cleef, Juliet Jones, and Jim Brooks

abundant in the forest, taking up space, sunlight, and nutrients needed by the plants of our local ecosystem. Likewise, Japanese honeysuckle and English ivy cover areas of the forest floor and wrap around trees, while providing little to no nutritional value to our native insects. Refraining from planting these at home reduces seeds being spread into areas like the forest, where they

can do a lot of damage in a short time.

"The forest has been invaded by what we've planted at home for 100 years," Bill says, handing his new volunteer a pair of gloves. "But what we're doing out here is giving oaks a fighting chance." With that, they disappear into the woods, ready to show some little privets who's boss.



The Invasive Avengers aren't the only folks pitching in on the trails! In January, we hosted our annual MLK Day of Service, in which volunteers spread fresh surfacing and cleaned out clogged drainage on the limestone loop. Special thanks to Sam Blair and Park Friends for their expertise in guiding the group! This spring, Christian Villanueva of Boy Scout Troop #34 took on a washed-out footbridge in the forest as his Eagle Scout project. With the help of his troop and support from Grace-St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Christian rebuilt the bridge just off the paved trail in the eastern end of the forest. We're so grateful to everyone who helps maintain our trails!

Volunteer Ranger Spotlight: Katherine Wiggins

The Conservancy's volunteer ranger program began in 2024 as a way for regular visitors to deepen their connection to the park and play an active role in its care. For Katherine Wiggins, one of the first volunteers to sign up, the program has done just that.

"I'm at the park all the time," Katherine says. "I run and bike here with friends because we can avoid traffic. When I saw an email about the ranger program, it seemed perfect. I'm going to be here anyway—why not pick up some trash?"

Katherine visits at least once a week, and often focuses on trash pickup because she can fit it into her schedule whenever she has time. She's also worked at Conservancy programs like the Owl Prowl, helping to greet guests, set up materials, and clean up afterwards. It's been a great way to meet other rangers and guests who use the park, making them feel like part of a community.

The program has also been something she and her mom can do together. "My mom will be 91 this summer, and she had a stroke a few years ago and moved in with me. I take her to the park and push her in her wheelchair, and she loves it there. When I started the program, I told her from now on, I'd bring her to the park and she can pick up trash too. She points it out and then uses the pick-up stick to grab it. It's good for her hand-eye coordination, but it also makes her feel like she has a purpose."



Katherine Wiggins finishing up a ranger shift

The program is sponsored by the Conservancy's cleaning partner, ServiceMaster by Stratos, and rangers supplement the work the ServiceMaster team does every day to maintain the park. Stacy McCall, President of ServiceMaster by Stratos, says, "Our team fills their days 'Setting the Stage for Tomorrow' for our customers. So helping support the volunteer

ranger program that sets the stage for Overton Park visitors every day just felt like a perfect fit."

Rangers commit to working at least two hours per month, whether that's helping at an event, inspecting facilities and reporting any issues to staff, or picking up litter. With more than 30 rangers giving their time, the difference is noticeable. "I've had so many people stop me and say thank you," Katherine says. "I work a lot on the perimeter of the park, and even people in cars will honk at me and say thanks."

Katherine recommends the program to any regular park user, saying it's a fulfilling way to give back to a place where she's spent many happy moments. "It's so easy to do, and you get out of it what you put in. I enjoy the benefits myself because when I'm here running and walking, there's less trash on the ground. It's also rewarding to know that I'm helping preserve the park for the future."



Our next orientation will be in September.
Learn more at overtonpark.org/volunteer.



Growing into our new forest trail

On a beautiful day in mid-November, hundreds of Memphians did what no one has done since the 1980s: they walked through a rolling section of woods that connects the Memphis Zoo with the 126-acre Old Forest State Natural Area.

“We are thrilled to finally welcome the public into the last remaining section of the Old Forest that has been closed behind this fence for nearly 40 years,” Conservancy Executive Director Kaci Murley told the crowd who assembled for a fence-cutting ceremony. “This project is so exciting because of how long it’s taken to get here—how many people have given their time and passion making this happen.”

Our key partners on this project were on hand to celebrate: Mayor Paul Young and Justice Bolden of the City of Memphis, Congressman Steve Cohen (who secured federal funding to complete the project), and Memphis Zoo President and CEO Matt Thompson, who spoke about why the Zoo elected to give this land to the Conservancy instead of using it for exhibit space.

“We’re a conservation organization and we’re all about discovery,” he said of the Zoo. “It’s really about creating empathy, connecting with nature, and obviously conservation and research,” a mission the Zoo and the Conservancy share. “What better way to do that than to draw people into the forest and jointly explore this new area? When do you get an opportunity in an old forest to unveil a new part of it?”

In the months since the trail opened, it’s quickly become a part of visitors’ regular routines. We hosted the Tennessee Native Plant Society in March and discovered a vibrant patch of coral honeysuckle, the forest’s biggest population of Jack-in-the-pulpit flowers, and some impressively sized grapevines. This month we brought a group out to search for fungi and slime molds on downed trees, and the habitat was so rich that we only covered a quarter-mile in over an hour! The new trail even made the cover of *Memphis* magazine, as a getaway within the city.



Mayor Paul Young, Congressman Steve Cohen, Conservancy Executive Director Kaci Murley, and Memphis Zoo President and CEO Matt Thompson on opening day.

The trail was also selected as the featured segment in a running challenge sponsored by KEEN, Grivet Outdoors, and Strava. For the month of June, runners who complete the half-mile loop and track their runs in Strava are entered to win an entry to a trail running competition in Oregon. KEEN also made a donation to the Conservancy for every segment completed at a Trailfest kickoff event in May.

So what’s next for the new trail? The Conservancy is developing permanent wayfinding markers to replace the current temporary signs, and while we’re at it we’re creating markers for the two trails in the northern half of the forest that we refer to as the red trail and the green trail. And the team at Invasive Plant Control, who helped us clear the large woody invasives before the opening date, will be back this fall to follow up and remove any resprouts.

It’s been so special to both discover the wild treasures of the new trail and see so many people enjoying it. As Kaci said at the fence-cutting ceremony, “What really makes an urban forest so special is that we can take care of the plants and animals and people all at the same time.”



Runners from the Black Men Run group made a strong showing at the KEEN/Grivet Outdoors/Strava Trailfest kickoff in May.

There's so much to do in Overton Park

One of the best parts of the Conservancy's work is getting to meet you, our park visitors! With more than 100 activities each year, we're working to have something to satisfy all interests. Here's some of what we've done to celebrate our 125th anniversary. Thanks to First Horizon Foundation for sponsoring this year of programs in the park!

Nature Education

Through our Third Thursday Treks and guided nature walks, we've explored bird migration patterns, the science of changing leaves, the life cycle of slime molds, the ways owls adapt to life in the city, and the remnants of a 1920s-era car camp in the Old Forest.

Our spring Science Café series featured talks from scientists researching reptile immune response, the evolution of galaxies, urban hydrology, and oak regeneration.



Our tree identification courses moved to the next level this spring, with a focus on trees with compound leaf structures like hickories, ashes, and box elders. Our new Birding Basics course covered binocular use, different families of birds, and birding by ear.

In May, we teamed up with the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation to host a training for their Southeast Bumble Bee Atlas community science program. Attendees learned why bumble bees are threatened and how documenting their habitats can help direct conservation efforts. The event concluded with practice netting, photographing, releasing, and recording data on four bumble bee species.

Outreach Activities

In November, we hosted our annual tree giveaway at Veterans Plaza, with 350 swamp chestnut oak, persimmon, serviceberry, and redbud trees headed



Clockwise from left: Our twice-monthly Songbird Strolls attracted birders of all skill levels; in May, we hosted a workshop on documenting bumble bees for the Southeast Bumble Bee Atlas; guests came to the golf clubhouse to make whiskey cocktails with Old Dominick; volunteer ranger Shannon Maris showed Neighborhood Christian Center campers the bark of a hackberry tree on a walk through the forest.

to new homes across the city. In the spring, we introduced a free monthly Field Notes walk with Stewardship Manager Fields Falcone, keeping people updated on what's new with the Conservancy and in the forest. This month, we hosted campers from Neighborhood Christian Centers and Carpenter Art Garden for nature journaling and forest walks.

Social Events

In February, we partnered with Everbloom Farmacy, ReWild Memphis, What the Doula, Urban Earth, and Bertram Williams for a community growing event in our southeast corner greenhouse. At Sowing Seeds Together, participants started herb and vegetable seedlings, engaged in breathwork and meditation, and learned both the theory and practice of growing food.

Old Dominick Distillery developed a special Squirrel Tale Whiskey to celebrate the 125th anniversary of Overton Park and the 120th anniversary of the OP9 golf course. At several events, guests learned to

blend their own cocktails and heard about how oak conservation is critical to both the Conservancy's mission and Old Dominick's business.

On the Greensward, we hosted our annual Mardi Growl event with Hollywood Feed in March, as well as the Memphis Ice Cream Festival in June.

Creative and Wellness Activities

At a series of nature journaling events co-hosted with Creative Aging Mid-South, we invited seniors to hone their artistic craft while observing the way the forest changed over the spring. Caroline Schratz of Integrative Wellness 901 also hosted an all-ages nature journaling walk.

Coach Alex Carpenter guided both seated and moving meditations in the forest this spring.



To stay up to date on park events, visit overtonpark.org/calendar or sign up for our e-mail newsletter at overtonpark.org/email!



Clockwise from left: Earlier this month, we celebrated the park's 125th birthday at the Memphis Ice Cream Festival on the Greensward; a rainy late spring meant we had to call an emergency nature walk to search for fungi and slime molds; our annual fall tree giveaway placed 350 trees with new homes; at the Sowing Seeds Together event, community members visited the greenhouse to plant seeds and learn about gardening.

Overheard at the Overton Park 99

6:45 AM - Round 1 of 11

"It's pretty muggy out here. Definitely forgot about how wet it is on round 1. Very moist. We went double-digits birdies for the kids, though!"

This year's third annual Overton Park 99 tournament, presented by FedEx, saw 25 golfers endure near-record-breaking heat and raise record-breaking amounts of money for the Overton Park Junior Open, the Loren Roberts Scholarship Fund at First Tee Memphis, and Overton Park Conservancy. They played—and walked—99 holes in one day, and supporters donated and pledged extra based on how many birdies they shot. After raising \$61,000 in their first year and \$111,000 in year two, this year they surprised even themselves by hitting \$143,000.

"While we had some pretty big aspirations at the beginning, I never got this far!" says Will Frazier, co-organizer of the tournament. "It's crazy to sit here and think we just raised almost \$150,000 for so many vital programs for this city and for the future of this game."

9:40 AM - Round 4 of 11

"I'm getting hungry. I woke up at 4:30 AM and all I had was an Uncrustable."

"Luckily, it's only getting hotter."

"I do this every year. Never missed it. A true sicko."

While several golfers were new to the event, many returned with strategies for reducing their misery level. "It's like dropping your kids off at summer camp—you bring 12 outfits, 6 pairs of underwear, a few diaper changes," one said. "The key is to walk as little distance as possible," suggested another (important in a day when the golfers approached 50,000 steps). "Every two rounds is the magic number for switching out socks and shoes." They also welcomed the help of



Alex Presley, Ethan Lee, Harrison Downing, Alex Boggs, and Schuyler O'Brien getting ready for their "vibe round," in which they switched up their wardrobes and music choices to bring up the mood.



Will Frazier with his dad Tim, who first played the course 65 years ago.

junior caddies from the Western Golf Association's Chick Evans Scholarship Fund, who volunteer at golf events and receive college assistance.

2:30 PM - Round 6 of 11

"We have peaked the parabola and now we are on the downward slope."

"I have a buttery hot core."

"We've got a good support group here. I've only called my therapist twice."

"One of us is consistently hitting the ball where he intends to, and there's four of us zig-zagging. We've got some blind squirrels in this group."

8:00 PM - Round 11 of 11

"Someone in our group chat said that nothing unifies like communal suffering, and boy was there plenty of that to go around this year from about noon to 3:00 pm!" Will says. By the end, "the guys from other groups, their friends and family members all joined the last few groups for their final few holes. There was quite a crowd and everyone was picking each other up until every last one of us got it done."

"Thanks to the people who were good stewards of the gift that is Overton Park (and the OP9) over the last 125 years, we get to do this and hope, in doing so, the next 125 years are even better than the last."

This year's OP99 was presented by FedEx, with additional sponsorship from Colliers, MAA, and Paula & Bob McEniry. Colliers: Embry Stringfellow Daves, Farmhouse, First Horizon, Glenview Partners, Iron Tribe Fitness, and Seacap Advisors were hole sponsors, and AJAX Beverage Distributing, Alma del Jaguar, City Silo, Grind City Designs, Hard Times Deli, Huey's, LSI Graphics, and Old Dominick provided in-kind sponsorship.

The Bold and the Buteo - Cast Meet & Greet

If you subscribe to the Conservancy's e-mail newsletter, you may be familiar with the soap operatic drama of the Old Forest's red-shouldered hawks. Throughout the spring, we followed a sometimes-young and always-restless group of *Buteo lineatus* as they fought for territory, paired off, and bred future scions. While the nature of the drama has changed from spring's romantic rivalries to summer's sibling skirmishes, we continue to be riveted by the lives and loves of our charismatic raptors. Here we invite you to meet our ever-growing cast of characters.



Couple #1: Ralph and Mariah

Him: A sophisticated gentleman with a snow-white mustache and a talent for catching rodents with panache. Her: A diva who, like her famous namesake, favors fluffed-out feathers, high-pitched vocals, and sitting prettily as her adoring public brings her gifts. All spring they used the golf cart path as their boudoir.



Couple #2: Bert and June

Him: An absolute stalwart who took on nest-building, food-capturing, and even some egg-incubating. Her: A young lass new to child-rearing but open to learning from her more mature mate. As the more expressive member of the duo, she graced the green trail with her exclamations throughout March.



Ralph and Mariah's twins (or are they triplets?!) took their first flight in May, and their hobby is seeing who can scream the loudest at the golfers.

Bert and June's babies fledged, appropriately, in June, but not before fighting like maniacs over a lizard that one sibling refused to share with the other.

Catch up on past episodes at overtonpark.org/naturezen, and visit overtonpark.org/email to sign up for their continuing adventures and get notified about October's NatureZen Month events!

Overton Park Conservancy gratefully acknowledges the individuals and organizations who made donations and in-kind gifts from January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025, including donors to the Overton Park 9 golf course and Overton Park Junior Open. We also thank those donors who wished to remain anonymous. If we have inadvertently omitted the name of one of our supporters, we sincerely apologize. While not listed individually here, we are also grateful for the more than 450 supporters of last year's Overton Park 99 tournament!

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The Overton Almanac



WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR SUMMER

According to The Farmer's Almanac, June – September will be abnormally hot and dry. We predict lots of watering will be necessary to keep the park's pollinator gardens healthy and robust.



KEEP A LOOK OUT FOR THESE

Many birds are nesting in the park, including ruby-throated hummingbirds, Northern cardinals, downy woodpeckers, blue jays, and white-eyed vireos. Listen for the begging sounds of baby birds in the forest and look up to see who's calling. On the Greensward, look to the sky to see Mississippi kites and several hawk species put on aerial displays.