

Dear Applegate children

BY THALIA TRUESDELL

Scientists have discovered what parents have always known, that children need to play outside every day, where they can see far away, which helps exercise their eyes. Check out the variety of science, discovery, and outdoor activities books we have on the Ruch Branch Library campus, including the A-Frame Bookstore and the Book Barn, and then head outside and *look!*

Take a book about the weather outside with you. On a warm day with some clouds, lie on your back and watch the wind blow the clouds into different shapes, and note how some of those shapes look like animals. You might see a running goose gradually turn into fish! And that fish might change into a T. rex! You never know. Notice the many different types of clouds in the book. Which ones can you see today?

Look carefully at the trees around you. Some have interesting branches that might be just perfect for supporting a floor for a little tree house. Find a book about tree houses with lots of pictures and some good building ideas, and then go on a tree hunt for the perfect tree to hold up your tree

house. Take a grown-up with you. What will you need to do this job? Make a list, draw a plan, find some helpers, and make a cool place to play.

If you wake up early in the morning, you will hear the birds singing in the spring. If you go outside and look into the trees, you will see them. Some like to hop on the ground. Get a bird book with pictures and names and see which birds are at your house. Look for nests in the trees. You could make your own bird book with drawings of birds you have seen.

In the spring, notice the catkins hanging from the alder trees along the river in Cantrall Buckley Park. There are millions of these hanging clusters of flowers. Do you see catkins or cones on other kinds of trees? Can you see any cones high up in the pine and fir trees in the park? You can collect different cones and fallen leaves and do some very fun art projects.

Did you know that for thousands of years salmon have come up the Applegate



Young children about to walk into a deep, dark forest. Photo: Rachelle Thiel.

sunning themselves on logs in the spring, distant mountains, people boating, birds, and maybe a beaver or fish. We have books about local hiking trails and maps of the area.

The Cantrall Buckley Environmental Coloring Book was created by the children in Ruch Outdoor Community School in 2023. Some sixth graders researched the flora and fauna of the park, and then kindergarteners through fifth graders drew all the plants and animals, and the sixth graders arranged them onto the alphabetical pages. In the back are photographs of each of the entries, for reference. The books are available at the A-Frame Bookstore and the office of A Greater Applegate in Sunshine Plaza in Ruch. Take this valuable and timeless gem to the park with you as a field guide. How many of the animals can you see? Can you find the public art throughout the park? (See "A.") You could press some of the wildflowers, with an adult's help, and many books will show you art projects you can do with the dried flowers. Keep a copy of the coloring book/field guide in your car. See if other parks and places you visit have the same animals and plants.

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■ MCKEE BRIDGE

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who helped the citizens do their thing and assure that the span remained sound"—friends like Strahl, McKee Bridge Historical Society (MBHS) Treasurer Dale Petracek, John Ifft with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and MBHS Secretary Barb Mumblo, with the US Forest Service (USFS).

In 1987, USFS ranger Dick Marlega hosted a meeting of 44 people at Star Ranger Station to form the Save McKee Bridge Committee, marshal money and resources, and perform the next round of extensive repairs. In just two years, a flurry of fundraisers—from bingo and chili feeds to the exquisite McKee Bridge Museum Quilt—raised \$68,830, qualifying for state lottery funds for the next round of repairs. Volunteers then gave time and labor on-site to make Port Orford roofing shakes the traditional way and to complete the interior after exterior siding was stripped and replaced.

The committee incorporated as the nonprofit McKee Bridge Historical Society in 1999. An inspection in 2011 revealed "serious structural deficiencies," and the bridge was immediately closed. Again, the community rallied. MBHS raised over \$60,000 in matching funds for a Federal Highway Administration

grant. \$610,000 in rehabilitation work was conducted in 2014-15.

Maintaining our treasured bridge is an ongoing commitment. Last year, MBHS paid for the timbers and the Roads Department provided labor to replace deteriorated boards in the approach walkway. The next mandatory inspection (to be paid for by MBHS) will be performed in 2027; the last inspection cost \$12,000.

Of course, MBHS does much more than bridge work! We share stories and photos daily on Facebook and Instagram, constantly expand the Virtual Museum at mckeebridge.org, and host fun events like Christmas on a Covered Bridge.

Scholarship program

To date, our scholarship program has supported six Applegate scholars—and we are thrilled to announce these recipients for the 2025-26 school year:

- Evan Strickland, a senior at Logos Charter School, will study



New siding on McKee Bridge in 1995.

- engineering and history at George Fox University.
 - Ocean Demmin-Ferneau will continue at the University of Oregon, studying psychology and history.
 - Timothy Root will enter his third year at Pensacola Christian College, majoring in mechanical engineering.
 - Zeyna DiBiasi will continue as a business major, with emphasis on nonprofits, at Oregon State University.
- Congratulations to these scholars, and congratulations to our community for keeping Oregon's most beautiful

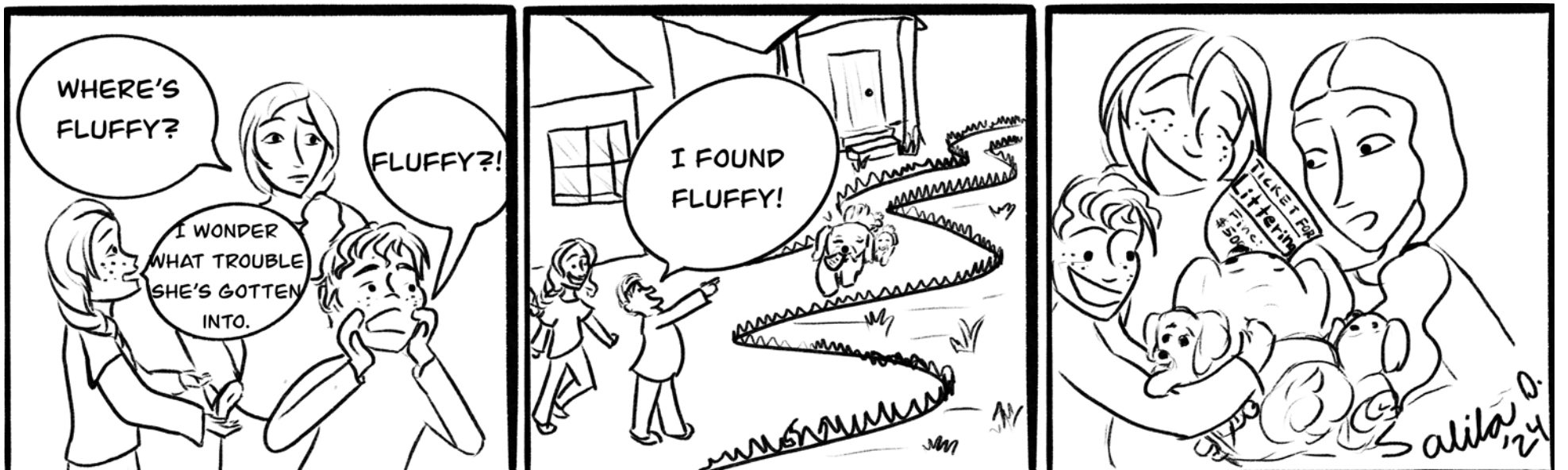


McKee Bridge under renovation.

covered bridge standing in every sort of breeze.

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Ridiculous Rose by Salila Oldham



Salila Oldham, age 14, attends Hidden Valley High School, where she participates in soccer and track. Her favorite outdoor activities are skiing and rock-climbing. She lives with her family on their farm in the Applegate Valley.