



Northwest Trek
Wildlife Park

METRO PARKS TACOMA

NEWS EDITORS: Here's the link to a gallery of downloadable photos.

<https://pdza.smugmug.com/NWTrek/NWT-Media/Babies/>

Password: trekbabies

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NEED AN ALL-AMERICAN WAY TO SPEND MEMORIAL DAY? COME SEE THE NATIONAL MAMMAL – AND BABY ANIMALS GALORE - AT NORTHWEST TREK WILDLIFE PARK

Not only is there a bison herd at Northwest Trek, there are five adorable bison calves, plus bighorn sheep lambs, three beaver kits and gaggles of goslings in the meadows, forests and wetlands

EATONVILLE, Wash. – It's been Mother's Day all through May at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, where the forests, meadows and wetlands are brimming with new life.



A bison calf nuzzles with its mother in the Free-Roaming Area at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park.

Photo by Mike Centioli

Already, there are five distinctive orange bison calves, one elk calf and two bighorn sheep lambs in the forests and meadows. And over in the wetlands area are three newborn beaver kits. The wetlands also are alive with the rustling of goslings; and the trumpeter swans are sitting on a nest.



Two newborn bighorn sheep lambs peek out from among ferns in the forest at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park as part of the annual spring baby boom among animals in the 435-acre Free-Roaming Area.

More calves are expected among the elk herd in the near future, and deer fawns won't be far behind. In the meantime, two caribou calves are living behind the scenes until they're big enough to join the rest of the caribou herd in the wildlife park's 435-acre Free-Roaming Area.



Mama goose is protective of her goslings in the wetlands at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park.

And if that's not enough news for a banner holiday weekend, there's this: Northwest Trek is home to the newly designated National Mammal, the American bison. Visitors can come and see them roam right here in the Puget Sound area. No long road trip to Yellowstone National Park or Montana needed.

President Barack Obama signed the National Bison Legacy Act into law in May, designating the bison as the official mammal of the United States. The legislation passed the House and Senate in April.

It's a tremendous honor for an iconic American animal, which once roamed the Great Plains by the millions but came close to going extinct due to hunting and disease.

Visitors to Northwest Trek long have known and appreciated the unique animals, which grow up to 2,000 pounds. The herd traces its roots to Oct. 13, 1971, when six animals from the National Bison Range in Montana, were contributed by federal authorities to the fledgling wildlife park, Northwest Trek co-founder David T. "Doc" Hellyer wrote in his memoir, "At the Forest's Edge."

The bison herd was well established when the wildlife park opened its gates to visitors nearly 41 years ago, on July 17, 1975.

“We’re extremely pleased to exhibit this iconic animal and allow our visitors to learn more about the history of bison in America,” said Northwest Trek Deputy Director Alan Varsik.

Northwest Trek’s herd of 23 bison is the second largest among Association of Zoos & Aquariums’ accredited zoos in the United States, Zoological Curator Marc Heinzman said. There are roughly 254 bison in U.S. zoos, meaning that Northwest Trek has nearly 10 percent of that number.

More information about the National Mammal designation and a list of fun facts about bison is available at www.nwtrek.org/national-mammal.



Three beaver kits were born earlier this month in the Wetlands Area at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park. Their parents are caring for them in their den, but staff members were able to get photographs during veterinary checkups of the trio.

Spring and summer, meanwhile, always are a wonderful time to visit Northwest Trek, which lies near Eatonville, just a short drive from most points in the Puget Sound area.

The first of the animal babies – a bighorn sheep lamb – arrived at the end of April. And new mothers have been birthing their offspring ever since.

“Our calves, lambs and other young animals always bring joy to visitors,” Heinzman said. “And we’re excited as our wild family continues to grow.”

In the wetlands exhibit, the beaver kits are already growing fast and learning to explore their environment.

At birth, beaver kits are small enough to fit in the palm of a hand—and they look just like miniature adults, with all their fur and their signature tails, Heinzman said. Mama beaver spends plenty of time in her den, grooming the kits and helping them settle in.

“The kits are like little fuzz balls. They’re pretty adorable,” Heinzman said.

As they grow, they'll explore their environment, swim in their pool and start breaking down logs, he added. "Their parents will show them the ropes for all the things that beavers do."

Eventually, the kits can grow to be 3 to 4 feet long, and weigh more than 40 pounds.

The three-day holiday weekend is a perfect time to see Northwest Trek and look for the new arrivals. And with each visit, there's likely something new to see. Babies grow up fast!

Every ticket to Northwest Trek comes with a 50-minute narrated tour aboard a tram that makes a circuit through the Free-Roaming Area. Visitors often can spot bison, elk, moose, deer, bighorn sheep and other animals from the tram. Moose calf Willow, born on the wildlife park's 40th birthday last year, is nearing her first birthday. She will be 1 year old on July 17. Willow and her mother, Connie, often are spotted by visitors on the tram tour.

Also free with membership or admission to the wildlife park is the opportunity for kids from toddlers through tweens to explore the new \$1.9 million, nature-inspired Kids' Trek playground. Children have hours of fun on the play structures, splashing in the stream, building creative structures out of sand and sticks, and getting closer to nature in the half-acre play area.

For more information about Northwest Trek, go to www.nwtrek.org.

Northwest Trek is open from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, and until 5 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

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Northwest Trek, accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, is a 725-acre zoological park dedicated to conservation, education and recreation by displaying, interpreting and researching native Northwest wildlife and their natural habitats. The wildlife park is a facility of Metro Parks Tacoma and is located 35 miles southeast of Tacoma off State Highway 161.