

Summer 2015

TREK TRACKS

PUBLISHED FOR THE FRIENDS OF NORTHWEST TREK WILDLIFE PARK



40 years after it opened on July 17, 1975, there's still a lot of buzz about Northwest Trek

Washington Gov. Dan Evans, wearing a suit and tie, bent low over a stack of alder logs, revved up a chain saw and chewed through.

This was not a traditional ribbon cutting.

It was July 17, 1975, opening day for Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, and the ceremony befit the unique conservancy showcasing native animals in natural settings.

Northwest Trek has grown in size and stature since that day, marking many milestones, making many changes, but its mission has not veered from the original vision.

The wildlife park is a place of joy, education and conservation where children and adults learn about and appreciate native Northwest animals.

In remarks before the opening, Evans called Northwest Trek “a gift of monumental proportions to generations to come.”

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Northwest Trek
Wildlife Park

METRO PARKS TACOMA



Happy Birthday!

Join the party July 17-19 as Northwest Trek turns 40

It's a celebration so big, it takes three days!

Come mark four decades of awe-inspiring animals and natural surroundings during Northwest Trek's birthday party on Friday, July 17 through Sunday, July 19.

The festivities will include treats for the animals and mini cupcakes for visitors (while supplies last) each of the three days.

Here are some of the highlights

11:30 a.m. each day: Wetlands animals will receive special birthday cakes made just for them.

1 p.m. each day: Bears will receive birthday enrichments.

2 p.m. each day: Cat Country animals will snack on specially prepared birthday cakes so delicious they would make a cougar purr.

Plus, there will be birthday-themed games for people and all of the awesomeness that is Northwest Trek every day – tram tours through the Free-Roaming Area, quiet walks along forested pathways and amazing animals around every corner. There also will be talks about the history and legacy of the wildlife park.

It will be a party to remember. And so much fun you might say, well, that it will just take the cake!

40 years after...

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And so it was. And so it remains.

The zoological park grew from the original vision of David T. “Doc” and Connie Hellyer, who dreamed of bison and other animals roaming free on their lake-and-forest studded land in the shadow of Mount Rainier. They originally donated 537 acres to Metro Parks Tacoma so it could be preserved for public enjoyment. A \$2.5 million voter-approved bond issue financed Northwest Trek’s development.

In four decades, the wildlife park has fulfilled its promise as that gift of nature to generations.

More than 6.5 million visitors have walked through the gates. Northwest Trek now encompasses 725 acres and includes the Hellyer Natural History Center, Cheney Family Discovery Center, a Conservation Center and the Zip Wild complex of zip line/challenge courses. It won two prestigious North American Conservation Awards from the Association of Zoos & Aquariums in recent years. The staff’s work to reintroduce the endangered Oregon spotted frog to the wild is known and praised throughout the Northwest.

And Northwest Trek continues to build for the future.

The Kids’ Trek nature-themed play area is scheduled to open next year.



“We are pleased that Northwest Trek is known around the world as a zoological park where visitors can view

native animals and learn a great deal about the natural world,” said Gary Geddes, director of Zoological and Environmental Education for Metro Parks Tacoma.

And just like that day 40 years ago when the governor fired up the chainsaw, there’s still a lot of buzz in the air about Northwest Trek.

Champions to raise \$40,000 in 40 days to benefit Kids’ Trek play area

Northwest Trek Foundation Champions Challenge will benefit nature-themed playground to open next year

Northwest Trek members – and residents all around the Puget Sound region – have a wonderful opportunity to invest in the future this summer by joining the Champions Challenge.

The Northwest Trek Foundation is raising \$40,000 in 40 days to celebrate the wildlife park’s 40th Birthday.

The proceeds will benefit the Kids’ Trek nature-themed play area.

The Champions Challenge kicked off over the weekend of May 30.

It’s easy to join in.

Area residents can sign up to be a Kids’ Trek Champion and pledge to raise \$1,000 through individual fund-raisers like walks, runs, garage sales, car washes, and bake sales. Or, find a Champion and support them. Or make a donation at www.nwtrek.org/kidstrek

Although construction has already begun on Kids’ Trek, additional funds will be needed to complete the project.



Model shows the Kids’ Trek play area now under construction near the Forest Café and Gift Shop. The \$1.9 million nature-themed play area will be completed next year.

The half-acre, nature-themed play area will encourage outdoor play and promote a greater appreciation of the environment among children who visit the wildlife park.

“We’re building for the future – all of the children who visit Northwest Trek,” said Deputy Director Alan Varsik. “Kids’ Trek will provide children with a place for fun exercise while at the same time stimulating their imaginations and helping them to learn more about the world around them.”

When completed and opened next year, the \$1.9 million project will include climbing, balance and agility challenges, multi-level play and adventure areas with stairs, bridges, tunnels, overlooks, a slide and lots of interactive play and learning activities.

Kids’ Trek also will have a dedicated play area for toddlers and will be ADA accessible.

Funds from a 2014 Metro Parks Tacoma voter-approved bond issue, grants and donations from businesses and individuals will pay the construction costs. The Northwest Trek Foundation is leading the fund-raising effort.

The Champions Challenge will conclude during Northwest Trek’s 40th Birthday Celebration.

Learn more about Champions Challenge at nwtrek.org/donate.

Calves and lambs and fawns, *oh my!*



Summertime in the forests and meadows of the Free-Roaming Area is alive with the sights and sounds of calves, lambs and fawns.



40th Birthday history nuggets about our Free-Roaming Area herds

It took a lot of work and time for Northwest Trek to go from the dreaming stage to the reality stage and finally to grand opening on July 17, 1975. Here are a few moments in Free-Roaming Area history.

- Roosevelt elk herd, started from various places, released in 1971.
- Six bison from the National Bison Range in Montana, released in the Free-Roaming Area in 1972.
- Six bighorn sheep from the Penticton Game Farm released into the Free-Roaming Area in 1974.

It's a wonderful season to hop aboard a tram and look for the more than half a dozen animals born this year to bison, elk, caribou and deer mothers.

The calves and lambs stick very close to their mothers at first, then venture farther and farther away. Watch the mother-and-child tableaus from the tram as the young ones wander off a bit. Those animal mothers are vigilant, and you will spot them keeping protective eyes on their babies.

Look for the distinctive orange fur of the bison calves and the spotted hides of elk calves and deer fawns. Bighorn sheep lambs look like miniatures of their mothers – minus the horns, of course.

Did you know that a bison calf weighs 30-40 pounds at birth? That's roughly 4 percent the size of its mother, which can weigh about 1,000 pounds. And it can be as little as 2 percent the size of its father. Bison bulls (just call them big daddies!) can grow up to 2,000 pounds.



By the end of summer, changes already will be apparent in this year's newborns. The bison calves' reddish-orange fur will be turning a darker brown. The spots that serve as a natural camouflage for elk and deer calves will disappear as they grow.

So, it's a great time to make a visit now – and then plan to come back in a few weeks to note the differences. Things change as swiftly as the seasons in the animal world.

Northwest Trek staff members are eager to share lots of information about the new life in the wildlife park.

"It's always exciting for us to witness the joy and wonder on our visitors' faces when they experience seeing a new calf or lamb for the first time," Education Curator Jessica Moore said. "Summer is a wonderful time to visit the wildlife park and learn about native Northwest animals."



Northwest Trek Wildlife Park

METRO PARKS TACOMA

Friends of Northwest Trek Wildlife Park
11610 Trek Drive East
Eatonville, WA 98328-9502

General Information

360-832-6117 | nwtrek.org

Summer/Fall Hours

June 27-Sept. 7

Daily: 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m.

Sept. 8-Oct. 4

Mon.-Fri: 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. | Sat.-Sun.: 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

Oct. 5-Dec. 23

Mon.-Thu: Closed | Fri.-Sun.: 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Veterans Day special opening

Nov. 11 and Nov. 12: 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

JEANNIE CLAY, *Membership Coordinator*
360-832-7170 | Jeannie.Clay@nwtrek.org

Northwest Trek, accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, is a 725-acre zoological park devoted to the display, interpretation, research and conservation of North American native wildlife.

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It's *wild* out there!

Watch Northwest Trek animals feast on fish, hunks of meat and other natural foods during Feeding Frenzy Weekend, Aug. 29-30

Visitors loved Feeding Frenzy so much in 2014, it's coming back for an encore.

If they could speak, the animals of Northwest Trek would no doubt say they liked it, too.

After all, it involved food. And all animals like to eat.

The special weekend event, set for Aug. 29-30, highlights the ways in which animals forage for food and helps visitors learn more their eating behaviors.

It also puts the spotlight on the creativity keepers use to find just the right specialized meal for the animals in their care.

During Feeding Frenzy weekend, wolves and a cougar will feast on parts of animal carcasses, just as they would in the wild.

Black bears and a grizzly bear will chow down on salmon and melons.

Other animals will receive natural-diet enrichments, too.

Keepers are working on details for the weekend now, so watch the Northwest Trek Facebook page at facebook.com/NWtrek and the website at nwtrek.org for more specific information about Feeding Frenzy during the month of August.

But mark your calendar now. It's going to be a *wild* weekend!

