



**Northwest Trek**  
Wildlife Park

**METRO PARKS TACOMA**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** March 1, 2016

Contacts:

Kris Sherman, 253-404-3800; 253-226-6718 or [kris.sherman@pdza.org](mailto:kris.sherman@pdza.org)

Whitney DalBalcon, 253-404-3637 or [whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org](mailto:whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org)

**PLAYTIME IS IN A KID’S NATURE, AND THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET A WHOLE LOT MORE FUN AS ONE OF THE LARGEST PLAY SPACES IN THE PUGET SOUND REGION OPENS APRIL 2 AT NORTHWEST TREK WILDLIFE PARK**

*Nature-inspired playground will provide plenty of exercise along with integrated lessons about how children connect to the natural world through play and awareness of the plants and animals with which we share the Earth*

EATONVILLE, Wash. – Climb up the tree trunk, slip down the tunnel slide and follow the stream to the beaver dam—all at Kids’ Trek, Northwest Trek Wildlife Park’s new half-acre of fun and adventure.



This outdoor playground—one of the state’s largest—opens April 2 just inside the wildlife park gates.

Admission to Kids’ Trek is free with membership or a paid ticket to Northwest Trek.

Kids will slide, scramble, stomp, clamber and crawl at this unique play space. They’ll also imagine, explore, learn and connect with nature in a unique setting that integrates an appreciation of animals and plants into a variety of activities.

Children of all abilities can enjoy Kids’ Trek, which is ADA-accessible.

Work has been underway for more than a year on the \$1.9 million project, paid for with donations from the Northwest Trek Foundation, companies, individuals, grants and a voter-approved Metro Parks Tacoma bond issue.

The play area is a new addition to the many activities that help fulfill the wildlife park’s mission, Northwest Trek Deputy Director Alan Varsik said.

“Kids’ Trek is a link between our younger audience and the natural world, encouraging them to explore more,” Varsik said. “We think engaging children more closely in nature-themed play activities will help them develop a greater appreciation for the world around them.”



Kids' Trek turns the forest into a thing of wonder and the grounds into an interactive romp. From the moment they dash under the giant cedar entryway, toddlers to tweens can find something different on every visit. Here are just a few of the possibilities:

- A 20-foot-tall hollow tree trunk through which kids climb on cargo nets. The tree trunk was built of man-made materials, but it's quite realistic, appearing much like something like you might find in the forests of the Olympics and Cascades.
- Three slides—a pair of 13-foot granite-like chutes and a 20-foot tunnel with a 30-degree bend
- A 78-foot-long stream that cascades down to a "beaver dam." A beaver statue sits under a simulated lodge, and other statues "play" downstream amid the rocks.
- A toddler area with log-cabin playhouses and a "weeping rock" to keep the sand moist.
- Plant and animal tracks embedded on paths around the grounds so children can identify them and follow "stories" as they look for evidence of predators and prey. In one case, you see the tracks of an elk embedded in the path, followed by the prints from a pack of wolves that are apparently chasing down their prey.

All the features have a purpose, Education Curator Jessica Moore explained, from the animal tracks ripe for identification to the collection of tumbled branches ready for creative tinkering. The idea, she said, is to provide opportunities for children to learn and explore. That includes periodic visits from the discovery cart—a mobile science station with magnifying glasses and activities.

The play space fits into the wildlife park naturally. Many of the stumps and plants were collected from fallen trees inside the 435-acre Free-Roaming Area, and from the space that was cleared to make way for the playground.

There's always something new to see at Kids' Trek.

Northwest Trek is currently open from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday through Sunday. Beginning March 18, Northwest Trek will extend its hours to be open from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.

For more information, go to [www.nwtrek.org/kidstrek](http://www.nwtrek.org/kidstrek).

#

*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.*