

Spring 2016

TREK TRACKS

PUBLISHED FOR THE FRIENDS OF NORTHWEST TREK WILDLIFE PARK



Celebrate a birthday at Northwest Trek!

Let exploration be the entertainment! Host a birthday party at the new Kids' Trek Pavilion, a covered picnic shelter just steps from our half-acre recreation zone.

A 90-minute Pavilion rental pays for admission for up to 15 guests of all ages, reserved seats on a Discovery Tram tour, and the nonstop exploration and fun of the Kids' Trek playground.

Add-on items like a keeper visit with an animal; a naturalist showing items like skulls, antlers and pelts from the Discovery Cart; and a visit from Footloose the Moose also are available.

For more information, call Joy Tevis at 360-832-7181 or joy.tevis@nwtrek.org, or go to www.nwtrek.org/birthday.



Northwest Trek
Wildlife Park
METRO PARKS TACOMA

Slide! Climb! Splash! Explore!

Kids' Trek playground to open Saturday, April 2

Step into the tree rings and count: How many do you see?

Splash a bit in the stream and wonder. Where does water come from?

Zoom down the smooth, granite-like slide. Scramble up and down the cargo nets. Crawl through a tunnel. Explore a hollow tree. Learn how beavers construct a dam.

Welcome to Kids' Trek. It's a playing space. A laughing place. A come-back-again-and-again-because-nature-is-calling-place.

The half-acre, one-of-a-kind nature-inspired playground opens Saturday, April 2 at Northwest Trek.

The \$1.9 million project is designed for kids of all abilities and is ADA accessible. It is one of the largest outdoor play spaces in the state.

Every visit to this nature-inspired wonderland is free with membership or admission to Northwest Trek.

Kids' Trek connects children with nature, turning the forest into a thing of wonder and the grounds into an interactive romp. *Continued on page 2*



Kids' Trek *Continued from page 1*

And from the moment they dash under the giant cedar entryway, toddlers to tweens can find something different on every visit.

"Kids' Trek provides a close link between our younger visitors and the natural world, encouraging them to explore more," said Northwest Trek Deputy Director Alan Varsik. "It's a good fit for our mission of conservation, education and recreation."

A spirit of exploration guided the project's design, said Jessica Moore. As the wildlife park's education curator, Moore points out that each feature of the playground has a specific purpose. Kids will use their imaginations in a mini construction site; engage in creative tinkering around a huge log reclaimed from Mink Marsh in the Free-Roaming Area; count the concentric rings in a replica cross section of a huge tree; and learn about predator and prey. Or perhaps pretend they're eaglets as they negotiate a giant nest constructed of ropes on which they must balance.

Kids' Trek adds up to a lot of fun. And don't worry, Mom and Dad: There's plenty of comfy seating to watch the kids play. Relax. You might be here a while.



Member exclusive playtimes at Kids' Trek

Northwest Trek members will get early admission and exclusive use of Kids' Trek from 9 to 9:30 a.m. every Sunday and Saturday in April, beginning April 3. The dates are: April 3, 9, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24 and 30.

Kids' Trek

TOP 10

Exploring is playing at the new Kids' Trek. Here are some of our favorite ways to enjoy this unique play space:

- **Slip** down the tunnel and granite-like slides
- **Build** your own forts at the nature construction zone
- **Clamber** up and down cargo-net ladders
- **Identify** the animal tracks embedded in the paths
- **Follow** the stream from beginning to end
- **Pull** yourself up through a huge tree trunk
- **Clamber** down a series of rope nets
- **Investigate** natural wonders hidden all around
- **Balance** on ropes inside the Eagles' Nest
- **Count** the concentric rings in a giant "tree slice"

Spring is in the air, a moose is growing up, and it's a great time to visit Northwest Trek

Spring at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park is a time to meet new friends—and see how the young ones are getting along.

Willow, the moose calf born on Northwest Trek's 40th birthday last July, ventures around the meadow on her own a little more often—so chances are, when you take a tram tour of the Free-Roaming Area, you might spot Willow as she strays farther from her mother, Connie. Willow is bigger and sturdier, too. She stands more than 4 feet tall and weighs some 250 pounds—about eight times heavier than when she was born!

Connie is a wonderful mother, with all the right maternal instincts, Northwest Trek Zoological Curator Marc Heinzman said. That's a wonderful accomplishment for a moose who was hand-reared after coming to the wildlife park as an orphaned calf, he added. Northwest Trek is committed to minimizing impact on animals and their habitats.

When you make a visit this spring, you'll likely see bears that are more active after their winter rest. And then there is our newest resident, a porcupette, or juvenile porcupine, named Thistle. She arrived at the wildlife park last fall and is getting acquainted with Northwest Trek's other spiky citizen, Tolmie, a male porcupine. The two just might show up on a Trailside Encounter.



Above: Willow moose calf and mom, Connie. **Left:** Thistle, a porcupette, or juvenile porcupine

"We are confident our members and other visitors will enjoy viewing the animals in springtime and learning more about the various ways they adapt to life in different seasons," said Zoological Curator Marc Heinzman.

So join us this spring: You never know what you might see!

WILD DAYS of Play

Join us for special, nature-based activities and education at 11 a.m. on the first Saturday of every month from April through September. Each event will include activities such as stories, exploration, games and crafts based around a theme showcasing the lives and habits of animals. Each session also will highlight the connections between humans and the natural world. For more information: nwtrek.org/wilddays.

Be part of history—Contribute to Kids' Trek

Kids' Trek will soon be ready for adventure, but there's still time to contribute to this landmark project in Northwest Trek Wildlife Park history.

Generous donations from the Northwest Trek Foundation and funds from a Metro Parks Tacoma voter-approved bond made the \$1.9 million project possible. But there is room for your contribution to count toward connecting kids more closely with nature, Development Manager Tyra Larson said.

Kids' Trek is the first major project at the wildlife park in 13 years.

"Our visitors have been wanting something like this, where children can engage in nature while also getting the exercise that is so necessary to their growing bodies," Larson said.

A donation to Kids' Trek will help immerse an estimated 60,000 kids in nature-based play each year, she added. Those who donate \$1,000 or more will be recognized on a unique donor wall within Kids' Trek.

For more information, contact Tyra Larson at tyra.larson@nwtrek.org or 360-832-7165.

EVENTS CALENDAR



Super Girl Scouts Day April 23

Northwest Trek is the perfect place to work on badges for hiking, helping animals, conserving resources and more! Explore the wildlife park at a discounted price and get a Northwest Trek patch for participating. Registration required. Go to nwtrek.org/scoutday.

Bear Camp May 14-15



Learn to coexist with bears in the Northwest and keep your campsite safe; bring your teddy bear for a "checkup;" see the Karelian Bear Dogs; do some fun crafts; leave knowing more about the role of bears in our environment.

Slug Fest June 25-26

Slug Fest honors the banana slug with games, crafts and everyone's favorite: slug races!

Slug Fest is presented by BECU.



Spring/Summer Hours

March 18-June 30

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

July 1-Sept. 5

Daily: 9:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Open July 4

Thank you to our Community Partner:



Connect with us:



Northwest Trek members enjoy the best of nature

It's a great time to renew your membership to Northwest Trek—or give the enjoyment of nature to a parent, grandparent or close friend. We offer memberships of several levels, and each includes unlimited admission to the wildlife park for an entire year. A membership pays for itself in just a few visits. And if you have kids or grandkids, you'll likely be making quite a few trips once Kids' Trek opens.

For information, go to nwtrek.org/membership or call Jeannie Clay at 360-832-7170.

Get close to the action with photo, keeper tours

We've got a full complement of spring and summer keeper tours for those who want to get closer to the action by climbing into the bed of a truck and observing a keeper on morning rounds as he or she distributes food to Free-Roaming Area animals. Plus, photo tours are a great option for shutterbugs who want the perfect picture from an uncrowded tram with room for all your gear and tripods. The cost for each tour is \$60 per member; \$65 per nonmember. Get all the dates and details at nwtrek.org/programs.



CONSERVATION CORNER



Northwest Trek zoological curator helps reintroduce fishers to the Cascades

Wildlife officials and conservation leaders carried a group of fishers into the Gifford-Pinchot National Forest near Randle in plain, plywood boxes on a gray Northwest day.

Within minutes, the lids went up and the fishers scampered into the woods, reintroducing the species to the Cascades for the first time in more than 70 years.

"To be there to witness conservation in action further reiterates the work

and the goals that we have at Northwest Trek," said Marc Heinzman, the wildlife park's zoological curator.

The fisher, a forest-dwelling mammal in a family that includes weasels, minks and martens, is listed as an endangered species in Washington.

The release of fishers from British Columbia into the Cascades is intended to reestablish populations of the species on federal lands. The program is being carried out by the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, the National Park Service and Conservation Northwest.

Each fisher is equipped with a radio-transmitter so its movements and survival status can be tracked.

Heinzman was invited to participate in the December release because of Northwest Trek's previous participation in fisher conservation as a breeding site.

"It was a special feeling to be there," Heinzman said of the release. "I hope this is the beginning of a success story for the species."

Visitors to Northwest Trek don't need to search the Cascades to see a fisher; the wildlife park has two in the Wetlands Area.



Marc Heinzman, Northwest Trek zoological curator, releases fishers into the National Forest.