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FORT WORTH NATURE CENTER & REFUGE CELEBRATES 50 WILD YEARS

Community and state leaders mark golden anniversary of landmark urban nature center

FORT WORTH, Texas – April 15, 2014 – The Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge, recognized as one of the most outstanding urban nature centers in the nation, throughout 2014 will celebrate 50 years of enhancing quality of life by providing sanctuary for wildlife and wildlife enthusiasts alike.

According to city documents, in February of 1964, the Fort Worth Park-Recreation Board designated land for the Greer Island Nature Center & Wildlife Refuge, “a wildlife sanctuary and nature preserve.” The area comprised “Greer Island, some 55 acres plus the surrounding water and shoreline, making about 380 acres in all” – and would eventually become the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge.

Renowned birder and University of Dallas science professor Warren Pulich, with assistance from Fort Worth Audubon Society Field Trip Chair Margaret Parker, marked the first Greer Island trail in March of 1964 – a trail that would earn the Nature Center its first national recognition in 1971. During the first few years, enthusiasts identified “150 species of birds, including phalaropes, herons, reddish, great, and snowy egrets, both bitterns, geese, and 18 species of ducks.” In addition, archivists recorded 35 species of trees and shrubs and 36 species of wildflowers in historical listings. The City of Fort Worth expanded the Nature Center to 3,000 acres in 1967.

“We’re so fortunate that this golden anniversary offers us the opportunity to pay tribute to the commitment and foresight the Nature Center founders displayed when they recognized the need for a natural oasis in the middle of our thriving city,” said Suzanne Tuttle, Nature Center manager. “As proud as we are of everything the Nature Center has accomplished since 1964, we’re equally excited about what the next 50 years will hold.”

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Anniversary celebrations kicked off on March 22 with a 50th Anniversary Founders Plaque Dedication, followed by a bird-watching hike for attendees. A VIP celebration dinner, “Fort Worth Wild,” will be held at the Nature Center’s Broadview Park on April 26, featuring Texas Parks and Wildlife Executive Director Carter Smith. In addition, the Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge will sponsor a juried art show titled *Broadview: A Spectrum of Nature*, featuring original 2D and 3D artwork. The exhibition and benefit sale will be open to the public Nov. 7-23 at the Fort Worth Community Arts Center.

“This will be a wonderful year of celebration involving several special, eagerly anticipated events that express the great debt of gratitude we owe to the founders of the Nature Center,” said Rick Shepherd, president of the Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge – the nonprofit organization that serves as the Nature Center’s chief financial supporter. “Happy 50th Anniversary to the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge!”

About the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge

The Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge is a hidden wilderness composed of forests, prairies and wetlands reminiscent of how the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex once looked in its natural state. Replete with native flora and fauna, the Nature Center is a division of the City of Fort Worth Parks and Community Services Department, and at 3,621 acres, is one of the largest city-owned nature centers in the United States. More than 20 miles of hiking trails provide easy access to the natural wonders of the refuge, and the FWNCR offers a variety of education programs and hikes for individuals, schools and families. Additional financial support is provided by the Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. For more information, visit www.fwnaturecenter.org.

About the Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge

The Friends of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge was established as a non-profit organization on June 1, 1974, by 40 people who shared the common goal of preserving and protecting the natural and cultural resources of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. Since then, the Friends has evolved from hands-on administration of Nature Center programs to its largest nonprofit financial supporter. The support translates into everything from the purchase and care of the bison herd and other ambassador animals, purchase and upkeep of kayaks and canoes, and funding for both staff and intern positions. To learn more about how the Friends supports the Nature Center, please visit www.naturecenterfriends.org.

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