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Lincoln Park
Zoo

Plunge into a new urban oasis *Nature Boardwalk at Lincoln Park Zoo*

What: Visitors to Nature Boardwalk at Lincoln Park Zoo immerse themselves in a lush Midwestern prairie ecosystem. The landscape of this newly naturalized oasis in the heart of the city has been completely transformed to provide a haven of native trees, plants and animals and offers unique opportunities for visitors to engage and connect with the natural world like never before. The massive revitalization of what was once a dilapidated manmade pond features more than 100 newly planted trees, acres of prairie and wetland grasses and plants and more than a half-mile of boardwalk around the pond.

Rare migratory birds, such as the black-crowned night heron can be spotted nesting, while turtles sun themselves and dragonflies skim the water. The newly restored habitat is attracting more spectacular wildlife sightings than ever before in the pond's 140-year history.



The stunning Peoples Gas Education Pavilion, created by award-winning architectural design firm Studio Gang, hosts yoga and other educational programming seasonally.

Size: 14 acres
Opened: June 24, 2010
Cost: Approximately \$12 million

Funding: Nature Boardwalk at Lincoln Park Zoo has been made possible through the support and generosity of the Chicago Park District, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Brooks McCormick, Robert R. McCormick Foundation, Peoples Gas, The Regenstein Foundation, the Women's Board of Lincoln Park Zoological Society as well as the generosity of numerous zoo friends and other private and corporate foundations.

Featured Plants & Wildlife (see a field guide and blog of recent horticultural highlights and wildlife sightings): <http://www.jpzoo.org/nature-boardwalk>

Hours of

Operation: Nature Boardwalk is free and open to the public from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily. Educational programming takes place daily during regular zoo hours.

Noteworthy awards:

- **Patron of the Year – 2010**
Chicago Architectural Foundation
- **GreenWorks Award for Sustainable Innovation in a Built Environment – 2010**
Mayor Daley, City of Chicago
- **Illinois Governor's Sustainability Award – 2011**
Illinois Sustainable Technology Center and the Office of the Governor
- **Distinguished Building Award- 2011**
American Institute of Architects - Chicago Chapter
- **Community Contributor of the Year- 2011**
Lincoln Park Chamber of Commerce
- **Golden Trumpet for Community Relations – 2011**
Publicity Club of Chicago

Conservation Science at Nature Boardwalk:

- **Painted Turtle Reintroduction**



Approximately 20 painted turtles were carefully introduced to Nature Boardwalk during 2010 & 2011. Transponders were implanted in the turtles so that biologists can identify individuals and monitor their health. Several turtles were fitted with small radio transmitters so that scientists can follow their status from afar. Turtle-friendly landscaping is part of the design of Nature Boardwalk, providing ample basking surfaces, including boulders, where the turtles can thermoregulate.

Black Crowned Night Heron Surveillance



Black crowned night herons are endangered in Illinois, so the presence of a nesting colony at the south end of Nature Boardwalk is an extraordinary treat for both the public and for scientists. Biologists count the birds daily until they migrate in the fall. With the help of binoculars, researchers observe and record bird behaviors as part of a long term study to better understand this rare species. Wildlife biologists at the zoo are particularly interested in observing how these birds are affected by human activity in such an urban area.

- **Fish Surveys**



The pond at Nature Boardwalk was stocked with native fish including bluegills (the state fish of Illinois), largemouth bass, fathead minnows, and pumpkinseeds. To monitor how the fish population changes over time, zoo biologists will conduct regular seine surveys. Seines are specialized nets used to collect fish. Fish will be identified by species and released. Seining will also provide an educational opportunity, as fish caught in seining nets can be shown to visitors. Biologists are interested to learn how the fish use the habitat at Nature Boardwalk to determine if the habitat contains adequate cover, spawning areas, and food resources. Observations about fish habitat usage may help the zoo make future management decisions.

- **Wildlife Surveillance**



One of the exciting aspects of creating a new urban ecosystem is to see what wildlife will arrive. One way biologists monitor life at the pond is by motion triggered cameras to observe wildlife without disturbing the animals. The cameras feature infrared capacity, so nocturnal animals can be observed at night. Wildlife surveillance also occurs through direct visual observation. A biologist regularly conducts perimeter surveys, taking detailed notes of all the birds, insects, reptiles and amphibians observed.

- **Avian Surveys**

Everyone, from children to expert ornithologists, can enjoy bird watching at the Nature Boardwalk. Zoo biologists are fortunate in that this activity is part of their daily duties at the pond. Nature Boardwalk landscape structures have been designed to take into account the specific needs of birds. For example, support structures under the Lester E. Fisher Bridge will provide nesting habitat for swallows. Biologists are interested to see how the birds use these sites.

- **Water Quality Monitoring**

Water quality is important for all life at Nature Boardwalk. Native prairie and wetland vegetation filters runoff entering the pond. The plants protect against erosion as well. Aerators provide oxygen that is important for fish and other aquatic life. The pond has been deepened to provide sustainable habitat for overwintering. Biologists are interested to see how these improvements to the pond impact water quality.