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Escapes: Get back to nature center

Burnet Woods' Trailside reopens after two years of remodeling

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Join the party Saturday afternoon as Cincinnati Parks celebrates the reopening of the Trailside Nature Center in Burnet Woods. Closed for more than two years of extensive renovations, Trailside, which also houses the Wolff Planetarium, is the oldest of the park system's five nature centers.

"Traditionally, the summer season kicks off with a concert at (Eden Park's) Seasongood Pavillion," says Julie Horne of Cincinnati Parks. "But this year, the kickoff is at Trailside."

After a kids parade, the Blue Birds Big Band will provide live music. Magicians, face painters and balloon artists will be on hand, as well as birds from Raptor Inc., the Cincinnati Police K-9 unit and a pumper truck from the Cincinnati Fire Department. Throughout, naturalists will lead hikes through the woods, and, of course, Trailside will be open for tours.

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"The building is infused with history," says Steven Schuckman, superintendent of



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The inside houses a display on habitats, and a two-story window looks out on a birding area.

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planning and design for Cincinnati Parks. His department oversaw the \$700,000 renovation.

"It's been through a couple of remodels," says Michael George, transferring from Avon Woods to be Trailside's head naturalist. "It had a 1970s feel before."

"We've retained the original feel, but with changes and improvements," Schuckman says of the 1939 Works Progress Administration stone building designed by architect Carl Fruend and influenced by the style of Frank Lloyd Wright. Burnet Woods became a park in 1872.

Among Trailside's features is a two-story corner window looking out on Burnet Woods' 89 acres, designated as an Important Birding Area by the Audubon Society. A 1930 photo mural of the park's lake graces the stairwell and a new mural, painted by wildlife artist John Agnew, highlights a gallery area featuring local artists.

Also revamped is Trailside's Wolff Planetarium, considered one of Cincinnati Parks' best-kept secrets. The planetarium, purchased in 1950, seats 20 and is the oldest west of the Allegheny Mountains. While charmingly low-tech, the planetarium now features a live feed from NASA.

"It's a window to the universe," Schuckman says. Planetarium programs regularly last about an hour and cost about \$5, but free shortened shows will be offered during the celebration.

After all the festivities, Trailside plans to be open daily, offering scheduled educational programs, day camps and drop-in activities, many offered free or for a nominal charge. Schedules can be picked up in the lobby or at any nature center.

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TRAVEL

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What: Trailside Nature Center and Wolff Planetarium reopening celebration

Where: 3251 Brookline Drive in Burnet Woods, Clifton

When: 1-4 p.m. Saturday

Cost: Free

Information: 513-321-6070; www.cincinnati-oh.gov/cityparks/pages/-3444/.

Request to be put on the mailing list for information on all of the Cincinnati Parks' nature center activities.

Did you know?: This year marks the 100th anniversary of Cincinnati Parks' original master plan by renowned landscape architect and city planner George Kessler. Learn more at www.georgekessler.org.



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Burnet Woods' Trailside Nature Center was a 1939 project by the Works Progress Administration. Its architecture was influenced by the style of Frank Lloyd Wright.

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