

# Say hello to the Harry J. Enns Wetland Discovery Centre

AWARD-WINNING FACILITY AT OAK HAMMOCK MARSH EMBARKS ON NEW ERA OF WETLAND EXPERIENCES

by ASHLEY LEWIS

To a mallard hen flying overhead, the limestone building with its grass-covered roof blends seamlessly into the surrounding prairie. It's a safe place to build her nest.

To a bright-eyed school kid, the wooden boardwalk stretching out into the inky marsh water invites exploration. It's an outdoor classroom filled with learning and discovery.

To a visiting biologist studying the interconnectivity of wetland species, the buzzing of dragonflies and calls of songbirds are opening doors to the next great discovery about the natural world. This habitat—and society's understanding of it—is key to our future.

For the past 27 years, this unique destination known as the Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre has operated alongside Ducks Unlimited Canada's (DUC) national office, welcoming wildlife and people to its locale just outside of Winnipeg, Man.

Managed jointly by DUC and the Province of Manitoba, the Centre offers educational programs for school groups and tourists through a variety of guided activities, as well as interactive exhibits and displays. This fall, the Centre is embarking on a new era—one that includes a new name and exciting plans to elevate the experience.

On September 10, 2020, the Province of Manitoba shared details of its long-term funding agreement with DUC in support of the Centre. This includes a \$6-million endowment for the ongoing operation of the Centre, as well as a \$1.5-million capital renewal fund to support a comprehensive update and re-imagining of the Centre, its programs and facilities.

"The funding will allow us to leverage the best in conservation science and education, inspiring a new generation to take up the cause," said Karla Guyn, CEO of DUC.



**Top:** DUC president John Eaton and executive vice-president Stew Morrison during early construction of the Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre. **Above:** Karla Guyn, DUC CEO, and Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister at the announcement in September.



As part of the announcement, it was announced that the Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre will be re-named the Harry J. Enns Wetland Discovery Centre as a testament to the people and partnerships that make its work possible. Enns was Manitoba's member of legislative assembly for Lakeside from 1966 to 2003 and championed the development of the interpretive centre.

"Our dad understood the benefits of this project both for Ducks Unlimited Canada, which he admired as a first-class organization, and to the thousands of Manitobans who would be able to visit the interpretive centre to experience first-hand the wonders and importance of a living wetland," said Andrew Enns, son of Harry J. Enns.

## VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

**Harry J. Enns** served as Manitoba's Minister of Natural Resources during the time that the Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre was proposed, and subsequently built. He was a strong proponent of establishing the Centre in its unique location and an advocate for connecting people to the natural areas that play an important role in their lives.

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— **KARLA GUYN**, CEO, DUCKS UNLIMITED CANADA

While the name of the Centre will be changing, we're committed to delivering the same great experience visitors have come to know and enjoy.

We hope to see you soon at the Harry J. Enns Wetland Discovery Centre.

There were many passionate leaders working alongside Enns who believed in the vision of Oak Hammock Marsh and worked tirelessly to make that vision a reality. They included DUC past presidents Claude Wilson and John Eaton, as well as executive vice-president emeritus Stewart Morrison.



## DISCOVERY AWAITS

- ✦ Oak Hammock Marsh is one of North America's birding hotspots and is recognized as a RAMSAR Wetland of International Importance.
- ✦ The marsh is home to 25 species of mammals, 300 species of birds, numerous amphibians, reptiles and fish, and countless invertebrates.
- ✦ During migration season, the number of waterfowl using the marsh can exceed 100,000 daily.
- ✦ Visitors can explore an aspen-oak bluff, artesian springs, some of Manitoba's last remaining patches of tallgrass prairie and 30 kilometres of trails.
- ✦ The building has been carefully integrated into the natural surroundings of the marsh; it features a green roof where waterfowl often nest in spring.
- ✦ The award-winning facility is visited by approximately 100,000 people every year.

