

Disney Wilderness Preserve Celebrates 20th Anniversary

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., April 17, 2013 - The Nature Conservancy is hosting an open house April 27 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of **Disney Wilderness Preserve**. Scientists, Florida cowboys, wildlife biologists and environmental educators will entertain visitors with fun outdoor activities that demonstrate nature at work.

Located south of Walt Disney World Resort, the **preserve** sits at the top of the headwaters of the [Everglades](#) watershed and is home to more than 1,000 species of [plants and animals](#) including bald eagles, sandhill cranes, wild turkeys and red-shouldered hawks.

Open to hikers and bird-watchers, the Preserve is a national model of innovative, large-scale conservation that was created in the early 1990s when The Walt Disney Company donated 8,500 acres to The Nature Conservancy as part of a visionary approach to responsible development and mitigation.

“We learned everything we know about wetlands restoration there,” says Tricia Martin, director of conservation for The Nature Conservancy chapter in Central Florida. “It was the first project to take on the challenge of transforming an entire degraded landscape back to a healthy, functioning ecosystem—one right at the head of the Everglades.”

The scope of the work and the large scale ecosystem approach to mitigation represented a sea change in conventional thinking— and a unique collaboration among government, conservation organizations and business. The conservation and restoration work is already improving the quality and quantity of water within the Greater Everglades and has served as a springboard for The Nature Conservancy’s work in the larger landscape.

Visit the Disney Wilderness Preserve web site:

<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/florida/placesweprotect/the-disney-wilderness-preserve.xml>