

Jay C. Hormel Nature Center News

50th Anniversary Edition

Fall & Winter 2020-2021

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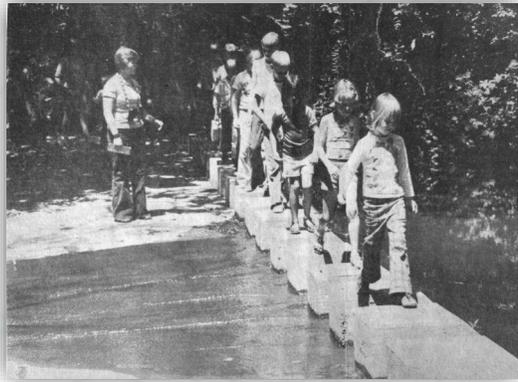
Contents

50th Anniversary	2
Nature Center History	3
Notes from Director & President	4
Friends Membership Information	4
Event Calendars	5-6
XC Ski & Snowshoe Rental	7
Nature Center Store	7
Facility Rental & Sola Fide Observatory	8



Jay C. Hormel Nature Center History—Past 50 Years

Ninety-three years ago, Jay C. Hormel began planting the first of 200,000 trees that became part of his legacy for the Austin community. Jay was an early conservationist who wanted to create an arboretum for him and his family to enjoy. He wished to restore the forests of his youth that were disappearing from the agricultural landscape. After Jay's passing in 1954, the land was passively managed and it became wild. Eventually in the late 1960's, "King's Woods" was put up for sale and considered



for development. A group of Austin citizens and planners believed that the land should not be developed commercially but be preserved in a natural state and provide conservation and environmental education opportunities for future generations.

In 1970, the Austin Public School District was one of twelve schools selected to pilot an environmental education project. The future facilities and land (as yet unnamed) would be used to teach curriculum on conservation and the environment. Area schools, students, and conservation organizations, from the Austin and Albert Lea communities, as well as southern

Minnesota, and northeastern Iowa counties, urged the project to be funded. Amazingly, these are the same area schools, students, organizations, and groups that are still utilizing the Nature Center 50 years later.

In 1970, the City of Austin worked with the State of Minnesota to obtain funding to acquire the original 123 acres. On March 11, 1971, the city closed on the original land acquisition. A second grant was obtained in 1971 from The Hormel Foundation which was matched by the State and then in turn by the Federal government. The additional \$56,000 of funding was used to begin the development of the area by putting in a parking lot, a pond, several bridges, and 2.5 miles of pedestrian trails. This was a modest beginning, but big dreams were envisioned for the future of this land.



A lay advisory committee was formed and charged with the task of managing the new center. Under the chairmanship of Dr. Richard Nordin, the new committee met and originally decided on June 14, 1971 that this natural area should be called the "King's Woods Nature Center" but there was strong community opposition to the name chosen. Members of the community preferred the name Jay C. Hormel Nature Center to honor Jay's foresight and commitment to creating a natural space. On August 10, 1971, the committee met again and changed the name to the

Jay C. Hormel Nature Center. Over the next 50 years, the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center would go on to enrich the lives of our community and region by providing a place to experience, learn from, and be inspired by the natural world.

March 3, 1971— Original 123-acre property acquired by the City of Austin

1971— The Hormel Foundation provides match for state and federal funding of initial infrastructure

1973— Pond excavated

1974— Lions Club Bridge dedicated

1974— First director, Richard Birger, is hired

1975— Sen. Hubert Humphrey speaks at Interpretive Center dedication

1976— First school visit



1979— First prairie restored south of pond

1978— 101 acres of land added & Vince Shay takes the helm as Director/Naturalist

1980— Red the red-tailed hawk is acquired



1982— Noon Kiwanis Club of Austin Donates the Sugar Shack

1984— Additional 55 acres of land acquired

1985— Large gneiss rock moved over snow and ice from Todd Park area

1987— Grumpy the Great-Horned Owl acquired

1988 — Friends of the Hormel Nature Center established

1988— Larry Dolphin begins as Director/ Naturalist. Environmental Education curricula are aligned to state science standards

1990— 350 year old "Old Oak" tree falls in a thunderstorm

1992— Jacques Chipault Memorial Trail dedicated

1994— Ruby Rupner Auditorium completed

1996— 25th anniversary celebration features Nina Leopold Bradley, daughter of Aldo Leopold

1996— Tree & Wildflower Endowment established by the Lutheran Brotherhood

2002— Log cabin built. First Thanksgiving Feast Fundraiser

2002— Fundraising for land acquisitions begins

2003— 62 acres acquired to be restored to prairie

2004— Grumpy the great horned owl passed away. 8 acres of land acquired

2005— Guka the barred owl is acquired



2009— Tornado destroys over 350 trees and damages the interpretive center

2010— Red turns 30. 148 acres of land acquired

First Nature Play Offered

2011— Welcome circle installed
Solar panels at Ruby installed

2013— Red, the red-tailed hawk passes away. Plans announces for a new Interpretive Center



2017— James Hormel attends opening of the new Interpretive Center. Red tailed hawks, Sha & Wiyaka acquired

2016— Larry Dolphin retires and Luke Reese replaces him. First of several conservation grants awarded to the HNC.

2020— The COVID-19 pandemic closes the nature center for 2 months

2019— HNC designated as regionally significant. Austin designated as a bird city MN. Gov. Walz opens pheasant season in Austin

2021— The community of Austin celebrates having a nature center for 50 years



Director and President's Letter

Luke Reese, Jay C. Hormel Nature Center Director/Naturalist

Gary Zimmerman, President of the Friends of the Hormel Nature Center

We frequently talk about adaptations in nature. 2020 has forced us, like everyone else, to adapt. Right about when the spring newsletter hit your mailbox, it became almost entirely irrelevant.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to close the Interpretive Center for over 2 months, cancel spring field trips, cancel many summer adventure classes, cancel Senior Special and Nature Play Days, cancel the Dammen Adventure Course, and rethink fundraising. As the spring and summer wore on, we were able to find ways to open the Interpretive Center, hold some Summer Adventure Classes, and hold Sola Fide Observatory viewings. This staff has utilized social media to keep people connected to nature, even if they are unable to come out.

As we look forward to the fall and winter, you may notice that we have fewer things planned. We are focusing on the programs and events that we are confident can happen in COVID-safe manners. The Halloween Warm-Up will be very similar to the past, but there will be smaller groups and no cookie and cider at the end. Christmas Crafts will focus on wreath making and skip candle dipping. That will keep the classes shorter and we'll have smaller numbers in each class. While the Thanksgiving Feast has been cancelled, the Friends of the Hormel Nature Center still need your support. You can support the Friends by making a donation in an amount equal to what you might have spent at the Feast on food, games, and auction items. You can find the Friends on GiveMN's Give to the Max Day on November 19. And finally, you can make sure you renew your Friends membership.

In 2021, we will celebrate the impact of the last 50 years with a yearlong series of programs, activities, and special events for all ages. As the 50th anniversary approaches, it is truly apparent how important the Nature Center has become — especially during the last six months of coping with a pandemic. The Nature Center has become a respite where visitors can get outside and enjoy the fresh air and the beauty of the forests, prairie, water, and wildlife. Please make sure you check out important historical milestones and stay up-to-date on upcoming events by following the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center on social media or checking our website. We look forward to the next 50 years as we continue to enhance and encourage environmental education, scientific opportunities, and the enjoyment of nature at the for families, students, and all visitors.

In the next 50 years, the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center will continue to grow opportunities to enjoy nature while protecting and restoring this native landscape. We will do this by expanding accessible trails, repairing and replacing water crossings, and creating new spaces to learn and play outdoors. We hope to continue to expand outdoor, environmental, and conservation programming opportunities that reach people of all ages, incomes, and ethnicities.

It only took a few people who cared to drive the community effort to create the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center. Over those 50 years, we have grown the number of people that care. Imagine what we will accomplish in the next 50!

Happy Golden Anniversary!



Become a Friends Member

If you love the Nature Center, help sustain all the programs you enjoy with a Friends of the Hormel Nature Center Membership! Becoming a Friends Member is a great way to support and promote environmental education programming in our community. Become a member for a full year for a contribution of \$30 or higher.

Join or renew online at www.hormelnaturecenter.org

Membership Benefits:

- **\$5.00 off** each child's fee for all Summer Adventure Programs (parent must be a member)
- **Access** to members-only events and programs
- **An invitation** to the annual members-only bus day trip
- **An invitation** to the Friends Annual Meeting
- **An opportunity** to give a one-year gift membership to a non-member if renewed by Jan. 25th.
- **A subscription** to *Nature Center News*, to stay up-to-date on all that's going on at the Nature Center!



Mission Statement: *To enhance and encourage environmental education, scientific opportunities, and the enjoyment of nature at the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center*



Changes to 2020-2021 Event Schedule

This year, due to COVID-19 there will be some changes to our programs and events and registration.

We will not be holding our annual Thanksgiving Feast but will be participating in Give to the Max day! Check out our website for more information on how to participate.

We will not be offering any of our free programs this fall or winter.

We will not be participating in Christmas in the City this year.

Registration for classes will only be available a month before the class.

Class sizes may be limited and may vary throughout the season.

There are no refunds for classes unless the City of Austin cancels classes due to COVID-19.

Sola Fide Observatory: Public viewing nights are still free but are now done by reservation only on select nights. One group/family per time slot. Call, email, or message on our social media to reserve. You will get 1 on 1 time with our staff exploring the night sky

Christmas Crafts class has been split up into 5 classes. The price has been lowered by \$5 due to no refreshments being served and no candle dipping. Participant numbers have been limited to 8 people. Beeswax candles will be available for sale.

New this year! We will be holding free events for Friends members. You must RSVP ahead of time, as space will be limited.

New this year! Family Cross-Country Ski Lessons.

Our first 50th Anniversary celebration activity will be a free candle-lit ski. This will be open to skiers only. This event does not include the cost of rental skis. You may bring your own skis. Refreshments and cookies will be offered at this event.

Check our website for more information on events.
www.hormelnaturecenter.org

October

3 (Sat)

8 pm Sola Fide Observatory

For more information, see page 8.

9 & 10 (Fri & Sat)

37th Annual Halloween Warm-Up

First Hike: 6:30 pm • Last Hike: 9:10 p.m.

\$8.00 per person

Note: The Interpretive Center will be closed during the day on October 9 & 10.

17 (Sat)

—Archery Deer Hunt Begins—

8 pm Sola Fide Observatory

For more information, see page 8.

November

2 (Mon)

9 am Christmas Crafts registration begins online

07 (Sat)

8 pm Sola Fide Observatory

For more information, see page 8.

19 (Thurs)

—Give to the Max Day—

26 & 27 (Thur & Fri)

—Interpretive Center closed for Thanksgiving—

30 (Mon)

1-3 pm Christmas Crafts class

Session 1 • Interpretive Center

\$30 per person (includes materials)

For more information or to RSVP, visit our website at www.hormelnaturecenter.org, contact the Nature Center directly by phone (507-437-7519) or email (info@hormelnaturecenter.org), or stop by in person.



Fall & Winter Event Schedule 2019-2020

December

TBD: Cross country ski and snowshoe rental begins
(visit our website for trail conditions)

1 (Tue)

6-8 pm Christmas Crafts class
Session 2 • Interpretive Center
\$30 per person (includes materials)

2 (Wed)

1-3 pm Christmas Crafts class
Session 3 • Interpretive Center
\$30 per person (includes materials)

3 (Thurs)

6-8 pm Christmas Crafts class
Session 4 • Interpretive Center
\$30 per person (includes materials)

5 (Sat)

1-3 pm Christmas Crafts class
Session 5 • Interpretive Center
\$30 per person (includes materials)

24 (Thurs)

—Interpretive Center closes at 1 pm—

25 (Fri)

—Interpretive Center closed for Christmas—

28 (Mon)

9 am Ski Lesson registration begins online

31 (Thurs)

—Archery Deer Hunt Ends—

January

1 (Fri)

—Interpretive Center closed for New Year's Day—

18 (Mon)

—Interpretive Center closed for MLK Day—

23 (Sat)

8:30-11 am Family Cross Country Ski Lessons Class
Session 1 • Interpretive Center
\$20 per family (includes ski rental)

25 (Mon)

9 am RSVP for 50th Candle-Lit Ski Begins

30 (Sat)

8:30- 11 am Friends Members Free Cross Country
Ski Lessons
Interpretive Center • Free—Must RSVP
Does not include ski rental cost, you may
bring your own skis.

1:30 pm Friends Annual Meeting

February

1 (Mon)

9 am Maple Syrup class registration begins online

6 (Sat)

8:30-11 am Family Cross Country Ski Lessons Class
Session 2 • Interpretive Center
\$20 per family (includes ski rental)

15 (Mon)

—Interpretive Center closed for Presidents' Day—

20 (Sat)

5:30-8 pm 50th Anniversary Candle-Lit Ski
Interpretive Center • Free—Must RSVP
Does not include ski rental cost, you may
bring your own skis.

March

6 (Sat)

8 pm Sola Fide Observatory
For more information, see page 8.

13 (Sat)

9-11 am Family Maple Syruping Session 1
Interpretive Center • \$15 per family

20 (Sat)

9-11 am Family Maple Syruping Session 2
Interpretive Center • \$15 per family

20 (Sat)

8 pm Sola Fide Observatory
For more information, see page 8.

23 (Tue)

6-8 pm Friends Members Family Maple Syrup Class
Interpretive Center • Free—Must RSVP

For more information or to RSVP, visit our website at www.hormelnaturecenter.org, contact the Nature Center directly by phone (507-437-7519) or email (info@hormelnaturecenter.org), or stop by in person.

Cross Country Skiing and Snowshoeing

Let it snow! Skiing and snowshoeing are wonderful ways to experience the outdoors during the winter season and get the benefits of fresh air and exercise. Enjoy the Nature Center's groomed trails, then relax with hot chocolate, tea, or coffee inside the Interpretive Center.



We offer **FREE cross country ski and snowshoe rental on Thursday afternoons from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.** if snow conditions allow and continuing as long as we rent skis/snowshoes.

The Nature Center does not require a Minnesota Ski Pass.

Trail condition updates are regularly posted on skinnyski.com, with links on our website.

Hours

- Monday-Wednesday, Friday, & Saturday: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.*
- Thursday: 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.*
- Sunday: 1:00-5:00 p.m.*

*Skis need to be returned 15 minutes before closing time.



Ski & Snowshoe Rental Fees (3 hours)

Adults—Cross Country Ski Rental: \$6.00
Snowshoe Rental: \$5.00

Children 18 & Under—Ski or Snowshoe Rental: \$1.00!

Coffee, Tea, or Hot Chocolate—\$0.50 Donation

THANK YOU to Belita Schindler for the generous donation in memory of Dr. Richard Schindler. This keeps the rental cost for children's skis and snowshoes at \$1.

Friends of the Nature Center Board Members

- Gary Zimmerman, *President*
Michelle Meiergerd, *Vice President*
Ron Walth, *Treasurer*
Rhonda Alberts, *Secretary*
Dr. Jeff Anderson
Terry Dorsey
Lee Bjorndal
Joe Dolan
Kurt Mueller
Diane Petrik
Arlen Schamber
Mike Skiba
Merrilyn Berg
Tim Ruzek



Jay C. Hormel Nature Center Staff

- Luke Reese, *Director/Naturalist*
Julie Champlin, *Office Manager*
Sydney Weisinger, *Naturalist/Teacher*
Kelly Bahl, *Naturalist Intern*
Alison Jennings, *Naturalist Intern*



Custodian & Event Staff
Jill DeMoss and Duane Champlin

Nature Center Store

Looking for the perfect nature inspired gift? We have just what you are looking for and every purchase goes towards supporting the Nature Center! These are just a few of the things we offer, check online for the full list.

NEW! Sola Fide T-Shirt: 5 different colors: Navy and Black are 100% cotton. Speckled Maroon, Grey, and Blue are 50/50 poly/cotton blend.

Youth sizes S, M, L: \$17.00

Adult sizes S through XL: \$22.00

Adult sizes 2XL: \$25.00

Raw Honey: \$12.00 for 1 lb.

\$20.00 for 2 lb. (While supplies last)

Beeswax Candles: \$6.00 for a pair, \$8.00 for decorated pair



Clean Water T-Shirt:

Toddler sizes (2 through 5/6): \$15.00

Youth sizes S, M, L: \$17.00

Adult sizes S through XL: \$22.00

Adult sizes 2XL and 3XL: \$25.00

Pure Maple Syrup: \$15.00 for 12 oz.

(While supplies last—Harvested in March)



Jay C. Hormel Nature Center
PO Box 673
1304 21st St NE
Austin, MN 55912
507-437-7519
www.hormelnaturecenter.org



Facility Rental

The Hormel Nature Center offers a number of spaces to rent for your next event!

- **Ruby Rupner Auditorium:** great for graduation parties, weddings, and other events
- **Gordon Lonning Resource Room:** perfect for small meetings and conferences
- **Interpretive Center Classrooms:** suitable for medium-sized events (limited availability)

For complete facility rental details, visit our website: hormelnaturecenter.org/facility-rental, or call Julie or Nature Center staff at 507-437-7519. We schedule events one year in advance.



Astronomical Viewing: Sola Fide Observatory

Come out and discover fascinating facts about the night sky during our **free** observatory public viewing nights! Sola Fide Observatory is available to the public by reservation only on specified Saturdays throughout the year (*see event schedule on pages 5 & 6*). Reservations can be made via phone, email, or message on social media. One family/group will be allowed per time slot to keep numbers of people in the observatory low. On these select evenings, Nature Center staff and volunteers are available to assist the public in viewing the night sky (dependent on clear skies).

Address: 53680 180th St., Austin, MN 55912
(GPS Coordinates: N43° 37.000', W092° 58.550')

For more info or to make a reservation, call the Nature Center at 507-437-7519, email info@hormelnaturecenter.org, or visit hormelnaturecenter.org/sola-fide-observatory.

