

Discovery Center opening 'Tree Houses' exhibit: Find out who's living in, around and under trees

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The focus of the new Tree Houses exhibit is in, around and even underneath trees. Tree Houses includes fun, hands-on ways to explore the important roles that trees play in providing homes for all sorts of wild things, including people. / Submitted photo

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MURFREESBORO — Discovery Center at Murfree Spring has a new exhibit that will have you hanging from the trees, quite literally.

“Tree Houses: Look Who’s Living in the Trees,” opening Saturday, is a hands-on exhibit focusing on wildlife associated with trees. This is the second exhibit created by the Environmental Exhibit Collaborative at The Sciencenter of Ithaca, N.Y.

“At the core of The Sciencenter’s exhibits is learning, ‘How do we find out about our world?’ Wanting to find out about things is the beginning of ‘science,’” said Jennifer Neal with the Discovery Center. “Our first ideas about the world come through our senses, and we ask questions and make guesses. Then we test our guesses, look at our results, and ask new questions.”

Focus of the new “Tree Houses” exhibit is in, around and even underneath trees. It includes fun, hands-on ways to explore the important roles that trees play in providing homes for all sorts of wild things — including people, Neal said.

Incorporating all of the senses, this popular exhibit engages forest explorers of all ages in indoor nature adventures and the ecology of sustainable harvesting of this important natural resource — trees.

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Children will have an opportunity to learn about tree dwellers, real and fictional, as part of the new Tree Houses exhibit at the Discovery Center. The exhibit opens Saturday, with a members-only preview event Friday.

“The ‘Tree Houses’ exhibit investigates the scat and tracks of woodland animals, their adaptations, the sounds they make, and the signs that they leave behind. It also delves into the many uses of trees and the importance of sustainable forestry. The exhibit houses two tree houses connected by a wobbly bridge. The forest-sound dance floor and ‘Be a Forester’ game are sure to be favorites,” Neal said.

As part of the new exhibit, families can:

- Look for signs of animal tree dwellers as they walk through an indoor tree house and across a wobbly, connecting bridge,
 - Watch how a forest becomes house,
 - View the tree houses people have built around the world — even design and build their own.
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- See stereoscopic 3-D images of some of the smaller animals we can find living in New England’s trees.
 - Listen for animals inside the tree house and try to guess their sounds on an “animal dance floor.”
 - Peer down from inside a crow’s nest and check out the folks on the ground.
 - Revisit favorite fictional tree dwellers, from the Ewoks of Star Wars to Winnie the Pooh
 - Wander through a “kitchen” to discover not-so-obvious tree connections in our own houses.

“Tree Houses” will open to the public on Saturday, and it will be at the Discovery Center through Sept. 7.

If you would like to check it out before the opening, a members-only preview event will be held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Friday.

Neal said it is not too late to become a member of the Discovery Center and take advantage of the preview event.

“Visitors can join online at www.discoverycenteronline.org/join-us.html or memberships are always available to purchase at the front desk,” she said.

This exhibit and other traveling displays are included with museum admission. Admission is \$6 per person and free for children younger than 2. Members always get in free and family memberships start at just \$75.

The museum is located at 502 S.E. Broad St. in Murfreesboro. For more information, call 615-890-2300 or visit www.discoverycenteronline.org.

<http://www.dnj.com/article/20120522/LIFESTYLE/305220003/Discovery-Center-opening-Tree-Houses-exhibit-Find-out-who-s-living-around-under-trees>