THE ROBINS NATURE CENTER AT MAYMONT REOPENS JULY 2
NEW JAMES RIVER EXPERIENCE WILL DELIGHT, EDUCATE AND INSPIRE ALL AGES

An immersive new James River experience will make a big splash with guests at The Robins Nature Center when it reopens to the public on Thursday, July 2 from 10am to 4pm. The attraction has been closed since November 1 to complete renovations and enhancements, the first major improvements since it originally opened in 1999. The reopening scheduled for April 5 was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. New precautions and protocols are in place to offer a safe environment for guests.

Themed “Run of the River,” the $2.3 million project highlights the remarkable ecology of the James River located along Maymont’s southern border in Richmond, and emphasizes the natural history of the area and environmental stewardship opportunities for the community.

“The new James River experience at The Robins Nature Center is filled with innovative and imaginative activities for young guests and visitors of all ages,” said Parke Richeson, Maymont Executive Director. “It’s a celebration of Richmond’s iconic waterway and the place it holds in our hearts for recreation, appreciation and delight. I’m excited to welcome the community to explore the river’s diverse natural wonders through fascinating digital technologies and engaging fun.”

New features includes:

- **River Reach** – A 34-foot-tall centerpiece sculpture that encourages active play and learning within a series of netted rising platforms that depict microscopic river organisms. *Made possible through the generosity of Jeanette Lipman through The Lipman Foundation in memory of her grandson, Sage MacFarlane, who loved everything in nature.*

- **Run of the River, Activity and Exploration** – Lively recreation, characterized by the textures and energy of the James River, with rocks to climb, a beaver lodge to visit, a kayak to hop in, and other playful pursuits.

- **Run of the River, Education and Inspiration** – Giant river murals, vividly illustrated species information, fascinating facts and figures, life size (and larger!) animal models, and simple citizen science options designed to engage guests in the river ecosystem.

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- **Baby Sturgeon** – Juvenile Atlantic sturgeon, a local endangered species. Maymont is the only area organization with the special permit to keep these young fish in its care.

- **Freshwater Interactive Animation** – A multimedia experience that replicates lifelike interactions with animals and water in a river environment. Fish were scanned using photogrammetry, and a realistic underwater simulation was achieved with additional photographs, CG artistry and other inventive technology. A collaboration of the Digital Life Project, the Natural History Museum at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Richard Lewis Media Group. The Digital Life Project will provide eight Maymont animal 3D models to scientists, educators and the general public free-of-charge for nonprofit use.

- **Digital Pool Touch Stations** – Two virtual shallow pools with touch responsiveness, teeming with wildlife and native plants waiting to be discovered.

- **My James River Learning Tools** – Fun facts, short videos, river trivia and opportunities for action in an entertaining app on multiple screens, providing a new way to engage and educate guests.

- **Dynamic Fish Identification** – Realistic digital animal illustrations to identify the aquatic and terrestrial life in the aquariums, learn about their remarkable abilities and instincts, and test water wisdom.

- **Enhanced Guest Amenities** – A reimagined gift shop, a book nook and a locally-crafted guest services desk with custom artwork in the entrance lobby as well as improved snack and beverage vending. **Aquarium Upgrades** – Improved habitats and heating systems for the resident fish, turtles, venomous snakes and other animals with new lighting that allows better visibility for guests.

“Guests can explore the amazing biodiversity of the James River like never before,” said Krista Weatherford, Maymont Director of Programming and Community Engagement. “Everything from the virtual interactions with turtles and otters to the play spaces and fun facts will enhance appreciation of Richmond’s greatest natural resource. We’re especially eager to use all the new teaching tools to inspire curiosity in guests of all ages.”

The Robins Nature Center, a 29,000-square-foot attraction, is the largest facility of its kind in central Virginia and holds close to 30,000 gallons of aquaria showcasing animals of the James River and Chesapeake Bay. Approximately 45,000 guests visit for environmental education each year.

The Robins Nature Center will reopen to the public on Thursday, July 2 from 10am to 4pm, and initially, it will be open Thursdays-Sundays. Tickets must be purchased online at Maymont.org/nature-center and are available in 45-minute time slots with limited capacity for entry. Maymont members will have early access during special preview days, Thursday-Sunday, June 25-28.

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Consistent with guidelines from local officials, face coverings will be required of guests, staff, and volunteers inside The Robins Nature Center. Exceptions to this requirement include individuals with a medical condition and children under the age of 10. Face coverings are recommended for any children older than two years old. Capacity will be reduced to provide space for social distancing, and hand sanitizer will be available at the entry, exit and within the new experience. Contactless payment and use of credit/debit cards for retail purchases will be encouraged. Thorough cleaning and disinfection of surfaces will be performed regularly.

Daily admission to the new James River experience at The Robins Nature Center is $8 for adults and youth ages 13 and older; $6 for children ages 3-12 and seniors ages 65 and older; and free for children ages 2 and under. Maymont members receive free admission year round. Individual or family Maymont memberships may be purchased online at Maymont.org/membership.

This renovation is the capstone project of Maymont’s $26 million dollar Spirit of Generosity capital and endowment campaign. Major funding for The Robins Nature Center upgrades and enhancements is provided by Moses D. Nunnally, Jr. Charitable Trust, The Lipman Foundation, Beirne Carter Foundation, Mary Anderson Harrison Foundation, Barbara A. Peers Trust, and Marietta McNeill Morgan & Samuel Tate Morgan, Jr. Trust.

For more information on The Robins Nature Center renovation and reopening, visit Maymont.org/nature-center or call 804-358-7166, ext. 310. Parking and entry to the attraction are located at 2201 Shields Lake Drive in Richmond.

The Spirit of Generosity campaign was a multi-year, multi-project capital campaign that supported efforts to preserve and protect Maymont. In addition to The Robins Nature Center renovation, other advancements included restoration and construction of a central administrative office and event space at 1000 Westover, renovation and expansion of the Maymont Farm, upgraded interpretive and way-finding signage, new windows at Maymont Mansion, and an endowment for the historic estate.

Since 1975, Maymont has been maintained and operated by the nonprofit Maymont Foundation. The Foundation is committed to creating experiences that delight, educate and inspire its guests. More than $3.5 million must be raised each year through donations to keep the estate and park open to the public. Maymont Foundation administrative offices are located at 1000 Westover Road in Richmond, Virginia.