

Kalamazoo Nature Center to host traveling art exhibit

Many people associate the Kalamazoo Nature Center with beautiful scenery: rolling woodlands carpeted in wildflowers in spring, the prairie and Hummingbird Butterfly Garden in bloom in summer, or hillsides full of brilliant trees in autumn. But beyond those pretty "pictures," many might not think of a nature center as a place to find art.

Actually, KNC is the site of frequent exhibits by local and national artists who work in various media, including painting, photography and sculpture. The Glen Vista Room, with a panoramic view of the beech-maple forest of Cooper's Glen, serves as a gallery and is a peaceful spot to enjoy both nature itself and the various nature-related art exhibits that are displayed there each month.

Beginning in July, KNC will host Wildlife 2000 – Art for



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Conservation in the New Millennium, a traveling exhibit featuring the original art of seven nationally-known wildlife artists. The exhibit will be on display from July 3 through August 19.

The exhibit's opening reception will be July 7 from 5 to 8 p.m., as part of the Arts Council's Gallery Hop. Refreshments will be served and the public is invited to attend free of charge.

Wildlife 2000 is a partnership between some Cincinnati artists

to celebrate their love for nature and to focus attention on conservation issues.

The artists believe they have a special role to play because their work can create an emotional connection between an audience and the artists' subjects. They say these connections lead to awareness, and awareness leads to action.

This philosophy is also behind the mission of the Kalamazoo Nature Center: "to inspire people to care for the environment by providing experiences that lead them to understand their connection to the natural world."

In addition to creating these powerful connections through their work, the artists are also helping the cause of conservation by donating a portion of all sales from the exhibit to the Nature Center.

The exhibit at KNC will include paintings and wood carv-

ings by seven of the artists – John Agnew, DeVere Burt, Gary Denzler, Mark Eberhard, Charley Harper, Les LeFevre and John Ruthven. All are nationally known, award-winning wildlife artists following in the tradition of John James Audubon, a fellow Cincinnati artist who documented wildlife through his paintings.

Agnew, Burt and LeFevre will be present and will sign posters at the exhibit. In addition, the artists will sketch one of the Nature Center's resident birds of prey, with the original drawings to be auctioned that evening to benefit KNC.

Before Wildlife 2000 is installed, there are still a few days to see the current exhibit on display in the Glen Vista Room. The annual show of the Pen Dragons Calligraphy Guild will be up through the end of June. Several members of this local group of

lettering artists are displaying their work, which features a variety of media, including pen-and-ink, watercolor, cut paper and multi-media. The theme of this year's show is "Spirit of the Earth."

The Kalamazoo Nature Center is at 7000 North Westnedge and is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Saturday; and from 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday. Fourth of July hours are 1 to 5 p.m. Admission is charged for non-members. Call (616) 381-1574 for more information.

KIT ALMY is community relations coordinator for the Kalamazoo Nature Center. Her column about the nature center alternates with others about the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, the Kalamazoo Public Library, the Kalamazoo Valley Museum and the Kalamazoo Aviation History Museum.