

Each Dawn Brings a New Day to Experience

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Sunrise and mist over the Demonstration Prairie. FWNC&R Staff Photo.

In May, 300 people began following the Fort Worth Nature Center on Facebook, and more than 2,000 used Google Maps to locate us. I assume most of these people are new to the Refuge and have either recently made their first visit or are planning to visit in the near future. In many ways, I envy them. I envy their opportunity to experience the Refuge for the first time: that first drive down Buffalo Road, seeing pocket prairies overflowing with wildflower color; that first stroll out onto the boardwalk, immersed in the tranquility of the marsh; that first glimpse of a majestic post oak standing guard over Oak Motte Trail.

A month away from my 22nd anniversary at the Refuge, I have seen these things more times than I can count. I may even be a bit calloused to them. And yet, each morning, I arrive at work eager to see whatever Mother Nature has in store for me that day.

Even after more than 5,500 workdays, the Refuge still holds new experiences and harbors mysteries for me. That is the real beauty of nature. There's always more to see, more to learn, more to appreciate. The problem is that the more I see and the more I think I know, the more complex and confusing everything becomes as I try to fully understand and appreciate the past, present, and future of the land and life that is the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge.

While I envy those who are discovering the wonders of the Refuge for the first time, I am suffering from a full-blown case of green-

eyed jealousy when it comes to Garrett and C.J., our new natural resource technicians, whom you will meet elsewhere in this issue. These young men are seeing new sights by the minute as they learn their new jobs. In beginning of their Nature Center careers, they are embarking down a long path of discovery. They will experience a multitude of "ah-ha" moments when they think they have figured something out and an equal number of "nope, that's not it" moments as Mother Nature proves them wrong again and again.

On one hand, I regret that I know the Refuge so well that each day no longer thrusts me into new experiences and presents me with new knowledge. On the other hand, it's the knowledge I have gained from such an array of experiences that enables me to more fully appreciate the subtlety of the new ones I do have. It just takes looking a bit closer. It takes being slightly more attuned to the minor vagrancies of nature. It takes time.

To Garrett and C.J. and all the folks who have only recently discovered the Refuge, I encourage you to invest the time to collect natural experiences and the knowledge that accompanies them so that you can fully appreciate the little things in nature.