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Grand Opening of The Orkin Discovery Zone Marks the Next Phase of Fernbank’s \$27 Million Transformation

ATLANTA, GA, **April 15, 2026**—The all-new “Orkin Discovery Zone,” a hands-on, active learning gallery, will open at Fernbank Museum on May 2, 2026. The grand opening will be celebrated by the museum’s first-ever “Bug Fest.”

The Orkin Discovery Zone marks the next phase of a \$27 million transformation to revolutionize the guest experience and redefine how audiences engage with the museum now and in the future. Through these investments, Fernbank aims to set a new standard for museum experiences, revealing the interconnectedness of science, nature and human culture across the museum, 3D theater and forest.

“The Orkin Discovery Zone” is a hands-on experience that features inquiry-based activities, authentic objects, live animal terrariums, and artwork to inspire guests to explore the natural world and its multi-faceted disciplines.

“We want to use this space to make science, nature and human culture – the pillars of our museum – as accessible and hands-on as possible for all ages,” said Sarah Arnold, Director of Education. “We are inviting guests to actively participate in science and take that experience with them into the world.”

Armed with natural curiosity, guests become scientists as they investigate topics like biodiversity, classification, biomimicry, senses and communication, as well as the intersections between humans and nature, through a series of interactive experiences.

Investigating biodiversity and classifying organisms are two ways scientists can interpret the natural world. Guests will identify insect anatomy and discover the difference between bugs and insects. They can build their own bug

using spinning discs to combine the head, thorax and abdomen from different species. There is a live animal habitat featuring a Madagascar hissing cockroach to show that no matter the shape, all insects have the same anatomical features. A live frog terrarium reveals the characteristics of a frog by exploring their common anatomical traits. To further connect classification across the natural world, scopes looking out into WildWoods invite guests to identify deciduous and evergreen trees by examining their leaves and bark.

Guests will discover biomimicry, including how animals and plants have inspired human design—leading to advances in the medical field, engineering, fashion, transportation and more. Larger-than-life bees and termite mound sculptures, as well as hands-on interactives, allow guest to discover real examples, such as how plant burrs led to the invention of hook-and-loop fasteners like Velcro, and how honeycomb hexagons inspired efficient bridge design. A live tarantula and an interactive web-weaving activity demonstrate how spiders have influenced the development of products, such as body armor and medical sutures.

Inside the gallery, animal communications are highlighted as another fascinating way that scientists explore the natural world. Through auditory communication panels, guests learn different animal sounds that allow for communication, ranging from whales to cicadas to alligators. Other experiences reveal how animals use visual cues to communicate, including examples of blinking fireflies, lizards bobbing their heads and birds posturing. Larger-than-life leafcutter ant sculptures draw guests into an exploration of how ants utilize chemical communication through pheromones and antennae.

Discovery drawers feature a variety of natural history specimens, including rocks and minerals, insects and animal skulls. As guests investigate the specimens, they explore how classification is used in all sciences through topics like biodiversity, animal diet, native and non-native species, and animal flight. Other drawers reveal how humans use materials from the natural world to create a wide variety of cultural objects, including pottery, clothing, and jewelry.

In other areas, art and conservation intersect through a display of artwork created from recycled materials like aluminum cans, scraps of paper and plastic bottle tops. Conservation stories from the sea and land are represented with artwork featuring sea turtles, darter fish, elephants and more.

“We are proud to support Fernbank’s vision for creating experiences that make science and nature come alive,” said Kathleen Rollins, Executive Director of The Gary W. Rollins Foundation. “Education is important to the work we do, and we are honored to be a part of the Orkin Discovery Zone.”

“The Orkin Discovery Zone” gives guests the “tools” to explore science and nature, including the fundamental role insects play in the ecosystem.

“At Orkin, our expertise goes beyond pest control, and we’re committed to sharing what we know about insects and their roles in our world,” said Pat Chrzanowski, President of Orkin USA. “By making science interactive and accessible, the Orkin Discovery Zone has the potential to ignite lifelong curiosity, helping to inspire the next generation of entomologists.”

The Orkin Discovery Zone continues the museum’s commitment to create new experiences, learning galleries, and accessibility upgrades between 2025-2027. The new exhibit, “Our Place in the Cosmos” debuted inside the Star Gallery in November 2025. Following the opening of the Orkin Discovery Zone, the transformation will culminate in 2027 with the grand opening of a new signature exhibit, “Changing Earth,” as well as the addition of a new temporary exhibition gallery, a second passenger elevator, additional automatic doors, and more.

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Related Programming

Fernbank will host the family-friendly Discovery Day, “Bug Fest,” from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 2, to celebrate the opening of “The Orkin Discovery Zone.” Highlights include an exploration of the incredible world of insects with hands-on activities, demonstrations and crafts from many community partners, and exhibition explorations. Additionally, the “Flight of Butterflies” exhibit highlights insects through a rainbow of 25, seven-foot-tall butterfly sculptures located along the paths of WildWoods. Attendance to daytime programming is included with general admission, free for members and is free with CityPASS. For more information, please visit [FernbankMuseum.org](https://www.FernbankMuseum.org).

“The Orkin Discovery Zone” has been made possible by the generous support of The Gary W. Rollins Foundation.

“Bug Fest” Discovery Day is made possible by the generous support of Orkin and The Gary W. Rollins Foundation.

“Flight of Butterflies” is organized by The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum of the Chicago Academy of Sciences and supported locally by Orkin and The Gary W. Rollins Foundation. “Flight of Butterflies” was originally made possible by support from the Tullman Family Office.

TICKETS

General admission tickets include three floors of exhibits in the natural history museum, choice of one giant screen film, and 75 acres of nature explorations in Fernbank Forest and WildWoods. Fernbank is located at 767 Clifton Road NE in Atlanta, minutes from midtown Atlanta and downtown Decatur.

General admission tickets are \$25.95 for adults, \$24.95 for seniors, \$23.95 for children ages 3-12, free for children ages 2 and younger, and free for Fernbank Members. These prices are for tickets purchased online at [FernbankMuseum.org](https://www.FernbankMuseum.org). Tickets not purchased in advance are offered onsite, if available, at a higher price. More information is available at [FernbankMuseum.org](https://www.FernbankMuseum.org).

MEDIA INQUIRIES

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ABOUT FERNBANK

Fernbank is one of the most popular and iconic cultural destinations in Atlanta. Known as Atlanta's Science and Nature Experience, Fernbank invites guests to discover a World of Wow through an expansive natural history museum, 4-story giant screen theater, and 75 acres of nature adventures in WildWoods and Fernbank Forest. One of the oldest not-for-profit conservation organizations in the country, Fernbank was founded in 1939 to preserve Fernbank Forest, the largest urban, old growth, Piedmont forest in the United States. The museum and giant screen theater opened as “a school in the woods for nature studies” on Oct. 5, 1992, and is today known for its giant dinosaurs, hands-on STEAM* programming, immersive experiences, and year-round nature exploration. Visit [FernbankMuseum.org](https://www.fernbankmuseum.org) for more information and join the conversation on Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube and TikTok.

*Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics.