



THE PEGGY NOTEBAERT
NATURE MUSEUM

The Museum of the Chicago Academy of Sciences

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***Fish Tales Showcases the Unexpected Beauty of Midwest Fish
Art Exhibition at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum Begins August 14***

CHICAGO (June 22, 2009) – Beginning with a trout destined to be gull-food, something about fish struck a chord with Chicago artist Sue Sommers. Since then, she’s been transcribing their scaly iridescence to paper with watercolors. The fish, both native and fanciful, swim upstream through her paintings in exuberant colors and lifelike forms. Her work will be on display at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museums *Fish Tales* exhibition, Aug. 14 through Oct. 25, 2009.

The exhibition is the culmination of three years of work. Twenty-eight watercolor paintings depict native Midwest fish, including yellow perch, walleyes, salmon, white fish, small mouth bass and trout. Sommers uses a “wet-on-wet” technique by constantly dampening the paper and using a spray bottle to enhance the drip effect.

“Fish have been a symbol in art for centuries, and they are absolutely gorgeous creatures,” said Sommers. “I tried to let go of the fish and see it for its color, shape and composition. I think the result is a watery medium with drips and watermarks, which make the paintings feel even more real.”

To obtain her subjects for *Fish Tales*, Sommers visited local fish markets in Chicago (where she purchased fish and painted them in her studio) and fishermen in Montrose Harbor, and spent countless hours observing and drawing fish specimens at the Field Museum.

Alvaro Ramos, director of exhibits at the Nature Museum, said *Fish Tales* fosters appreciation for a species that is all too often ignored. “Sommers’ work takes us to the incredible bounty and beauty of fish living right here in our lakes and rivers,” he said.

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Fish Tales, which includes 28 paintings, will be on display at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum Aug. 14 through Oct. 25, 2009. Admission to the Museum, including special exhibitions, is \$9/adult, \$6/child 3-12, \$7/seniors and students. Thursdays are suggested donation days. Located at 2430 North Cannon Drive in Chicago's Lincoln Park, the Museum is open weekends from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.naturemuseum.org or call 773-755-5100.

Photos available upon request:

1. Walleyes Not Being Fooled, by Sue Sommers
2. Caught, by Sue Sommers

About the Artist

Sue Sommers is a Chicago artist, educator and author of "Teaching from the Inside Out," a book on art and education. Sommers has been an exhibiting artist for 35 years, showcasing her work in the Chicago area, and in shows in Wisconsin, Maryland, Michigan, New York and California. In addition, her work has been exhibited in museums in Jaipur, India and at MOMA Wales.

Sommers is a long-time teaching artist of children and adults. She has taught drawing and watercolors to adults, and classes in everything from puppetry and mural-making to kites and paper mache for kids in nursery school through graduate school. She has also been involved in grant programs studying the effect of the arts on education. For more information on Sue Sommers, visit www.suesommersart.com.

About the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

Celebrating more than 150 years of science exploration and education, the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum is the teaching and learning center of the Chicago Academy of Sciences, founded in 1857 as Chicago's first museum dedicated to educating Chicagoans about nature and science through the preservation and display of native specimens, classroom activities, and dissemination of scientific knowledge.

Today the Nature Museum continues the Academy's tradition of education about nature in greater Chicago, research, and conservation through participatory exhibits and programs, educational outreach, and ongoing scientific activity. Its collections, due to their age and type, are among the most important in the region. The Museum's distinctive experience includes extensive involvement in schools and classrooms, and the opportunities for visitors to learn about nature up close.

Since its opening 10 years ago, the Nature Museum has welcomed more than 1.8 million visitors and provides hands-on exhibitions and programs to 70,000 students annually and trains and provides resources for more than 1,500 Chicago teachers in over 430 schools. The Nature Museum engages visitors, especially urban dwellers, in new ways to connect with and preserve the natural world through a unique indoor/outdoor experience. The Museum is one of the city's best examples of eco-friendly building technology with lush outdoor nature trails and habitat, green roof, rain barrels and solar panels.

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