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Butterfly Pavilion Celebrates the Retirement of Dr. Rich Reading, Vice President of Science and Conservation

Westminster, Colorado – May 12, 2026 – Butterfly Pavilion announces the retirement of Dr. Richard Reading, Vice President of Science and Conservation, effective May 31, 2026. After **over** a decade of transformative leadership, Dr. Reading leaves behind a nationally recognized research and conservation program, a global network of scientific partnerships, and an enduring legacy for invertebrate science that extends far beyond Colorado.

Dr. Reading joined Butterfly Pavilion in 2016 as Director of Research and Conservation and was elevated to Vice President of Science and Conservation in 2022. Under his leadership, Butterfly Pavilion's research and conservation programs grew into a body of work recognized by peers across the zoo and aquarium community. During Butterfly Pavilion's most recent Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) reaccreditation, its Animal Collections Plan, Research and Conservation programs, and Education efforts were specifically cited as exemplary — a reflection of the scientific credibility and institutional depth Dr. Reading helped build.

"Rich joined us just over a decade ago and, through his vision and dedication, transformed what invertebrate research and conservation looks like at an institution our size," said Ryan Welch, President and CEO of Butterfly Pavilion. "He forged relationships with researchers, institutions, and conservation organizations around the world that have positioned Butterfly Pavilion as a genuine voice in invertebrate science globally. That is not a small thing, and it did not happen by accident. We are deeply grateful for everything he has given this organization, and we look forward to finding ways to stay connected to his expertise and passion for years to come."

Dr. Reading's impact spans six continents. At home in Colorado, his team advanced pollinator habitat restoration and pioneered conservation work with native fireflies, tarantulas, and dragonflies — including the first-ever successful completion of a Colorado firefly's full lifecycle under human care, announced in 2025. Globally, his initiatives encompassed butterfly farming and forest protection in Indonesia, safeguarding monarch migration across the U.S. and Mexico, bee fencing to reduce human-elephant conflict in Tanzania, and *Parnassius* butterfly conservation in Mongolia.

"It has been the honor of my career to work alongside the extraordinary team at Butterfly Pavilion," said Dr. Reading. "Invertebrates are the foundation of life on Earth, and I leave knowing that the work to protect them remains in incredibly capable hands. I am proud of what we built together, and I am excited to watch as the program and organization only get stronger."

Dr. Reading's academic credentials include a Ph.D. and three master's degrees from Yale University in Wildlife Ecology and Human Dimensions of Wildlife, along with an Honorary Doctorate from the National Education University of Mongolia. In 2020, he was awarded the Order of the Polar Star — Mongolia's highest honor for foreign nationals — for his extraordinary contributions to conservation. He holds an academic appointment at Colorado State University, serves as a Fellow at the University of Nebraska's Center for Great Plains Studies, and has authored or edited ten books with hundreds of publications in both scientific and popular media.

Dr. Reading currently serves as Chair of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission, where his leadership helps shape conservation policy across the state.

About Butterfly Pavilion: Founded in 1995, Butterfly Pavilion is the first Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)-accredited, standalone, non-profit invertebrate zoo in the world. Located in Westminster, Colorado, Butterfly Pavilion is a global leader in invertebrate conservation, research, and education. From restoring pollinator habitats and conducting tarantula research to inspiring over 100,000 students each year, Butterfly Pavilion works locally and globally to protect the small but mighty animals that keep our planet thriving. Learn more at www.butterflies.org.

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