



PRESS RELEASE
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Mrs. Laura W. Bush and Texan by Nature Join the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Federation, and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to Announce Corporate Collaborations and Updates to State wide Pollinator Conservation Plan

AUSTIN – On Tuesday, former First Lady Laura Bush, founder of Texan by Nature, joined with the directors of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to hold a news conference at BAE Systems, Inc. in east Austin to celebrate the fall migration of monarch butterflies and to announce new collaborations in the state’s efforts to conserve pollinator habitat in Texas.

BAE Systems is one of the first corporations signed on to Texan by Nature’s Monarch Wrangler program, which provides Texas employers and organizations with results-oriented and meaningful ways to get involved by creating habitat essential to the monarch butterfly.

Mrs. Bush opened the event by tracing the history of Texan by Nature. “A few years ago, I helped to found Texan by Nature with a group of friends and committed conservationists. Today, our vision of strong partnerships between the business, conservation, and scientific communities for the betterment of our precious natural resources has truly come to life,” she said.

According to the organizations involved, this collaboration is especially critical in addressing the plight of the monarch butterfly, whose rapidly declining population over the last two decades has alarmed experts due to the importance of pollinators to our ecological and economic vitality.

“For Texas to remain a thriving central flyway for monarch butterflies, we must come together to conserve and create essential habitat along their migration route – the I-35 corridor just outside these doors; and we must support further research to identify the causes and solutions for their decline,” explained the former First Lady. “That means planting pollinator-friendly plants, like native Texas milkweed, in our school yards, at places of worship, on corporate campuses, on our ranches and farms, and in our own back yards,” she added, reiterating that all Texans can join the cause by applying to become a Monarch Wrangler on the Texan by Nature website.

As one of the early pilot projects in the Monarch Wrangler system, BAE Systems has already made significant progress in creating new monarch habitat in the flyway. Stephen Ford, Program Director at the BAE Austin Business Center detailed how the company has removed invasive species, planted natives, begun collecting rainwater, implemented mobile irrigation, and has engaged employees in conservation with education kits and seedball-making activities.

Mrs. Bush, and all contributing organizations present at the conference hope that more companies will soon follow suit, enhancing Texas' already impressive track record in the field of conservation.

About Monarch Conservation in Texas

Texas' location in the middle of the central monarch migration route between Mexico and Canada makes the Lone Star state crucial in tri-national efforts to conserve monarch and pollinator habitat.

Texan by Nature, USFWS, TPWD, NWF, LBJWC and other groups have joined forces to conserve and rehabilitate habitat for the majestic monarch butterfly and other important pollinators.

TPWD has partnered with government and non-governmental organizations to conduct needed research and promote the expansion of nectar-producing way stations along highways and in our parks, schools, and backyard gardens. Texas Department of Transportation, the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Texan by Nature, and National Wildlife Federation are among those partners.

The Wildflower Center's Project Milkweed is focused on building milkweed supply and diversity by collecting native milkweed seeds from across the state, performing trials to better understand how to propagate native milkweeds, and distributing seeds and plants to schools and growers.

The National Wildlife Federation has launched a major urban initiative for monarch conservation and has secured pledges from 181 mayors nationwide, including 54 in Texas. NWF is also working with more than 40 schools in Texas to engage young people in saving the monarch.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has launched an unprecedented communications campaign and conservation initiative, committing \$2 million for monarch conservation projects in 2015 and \$4 million for the next five years from 2016 to 2020. The Service established the monarch butterfly as a national priority in 2015 and continues to work with partners at all levels - local, state, national, and international - to advance monarch conservation efforts with a large focus on habitat restoration and enhancement.

Over the last decade, the migrating monarch population has decreased by 80%, down from an estimated one billion in the 1990's, and falling to an all-time low of 35 million in 2013. Monarch butterflies and other pollinators who share their habitat, such as hummingbirds and beneficial insects, are a vital part of nature's life cycle. Pollinators ensure the reproduction of flowering plants and pollinate agricultural crops fundamental to the economy and well-being of Texans.

About the Role of Texan by Nature in the Monarch Conservation Plan

Texan by Nature (formerly Taking Care of Texas) was founded in 2011 by former First Lady Laura Bush as a way to align the broad interests of conservation groups with business, healthcare, schools, the scientific community, and faith-based organizations. The organization's core belief is that our state's prosperity and quality of life are strongly linked to the conservation of natural resources, so it is Texan by Nature's mission to spur Texan-led conservation that produces tangible benefits for people, prosperity, and natural resources. They accomplish this by bringing the message of conservation to new audiences and activating new investments in conservation that are Texan-led, community-organized, and science-based.

Texan by Nature has recently introduced the Monarch Wrangler program, connecting businesses, community organizations, and faith-based groups with the resources and scientific expertise they need to positively impact pollinator populations in Texas, as well as beautify their campuses with native Texan plant species. Together, Texans will carry out programs aimed at monarch butterfly and other pollinators that provide beauty and stability to the natural world and our economy.

About BAE Systems

BAE Systems, Inc. designs and delivers advanced defense, aerospace, and security solutions that keep customers at the forefront of modern technology. The company's pride and dedication show in everything it does, from innovative electronic systems to intelligence analysis and cyber operations, from combat vehicles and weapons to the maintenance and modernization of ships, aircraft and critical infrastructure. BAE Systems, Inc., headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, is the U.S. subsidiary of BAE Systems plc.

In a collaboration with Texan by Nature, BAE Systems is aiding essential monarch habitat by planting pollinator gardens, removing invasive species, and restoring native grasses on the company's privately owned campus in Austin, Texas, which lies directly in the migration route of the monarchs.

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