

To embark on a wild adventure that will lead you to the highest level of wildlife habitat stewardship, download or request a BTBH application today. Applications can also be obtained by writing to:

Wildlife Diversity Branch  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
4200 Smith School Road  
Austin, TX 78744 or

[www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/texasparcs.cfm](http://www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/texasparcs.cfm)  
[www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)

### Habitat Resources

TPWD and NWF have quality resources that will help you with your habitat project whether you have just begun or are already on Phase Four.

National Wildlife Federation's®  
Backyard Wildlife Habitat™ Starter Kit \$25.00

Wildlife Habitat Planning  
Guide for Backyards and Beyond \$14.95

To order these items and others, visit [www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat](http://www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat) or call (585) 461-3092

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's *Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife* a complete guide for wildscaping in Texas by Noreen Damude and Kelly Bender available at bookstores or through TPWD at 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744. An electronic version of this book will be available on CD soon. For more details visit: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wildscapes](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wildscapes)



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PWD BR W7000-861 (10/02)

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TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

# Best of Texas Backyard Habitats



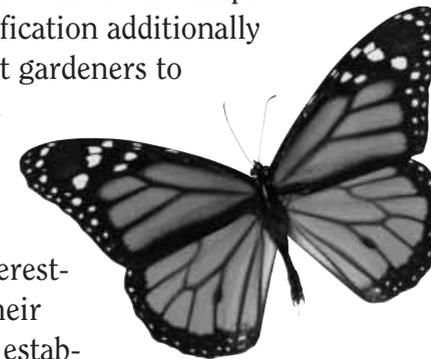
National Wildlife Federation®

## Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and National Wildlife Federation® Present Best of Texas Backyard Habitats



Calling all Texas Wildlife Habitat Gardeners, present and future! Whether you are a Texas Wildscaper or a Backyard Wildlife Habiter, you have the opportunity to participate in a new and exciting wildlife habitat certification option brought to you by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and the National Wildlife Federation® (NWF). If you are new to wildlife gardening, read on to learn how you too can create a wildlife habitat and certify it as an official wildlife habitat site.

TPWD and NWF have developed an innovative partnership that offers Texans an easy way to certify their landscapes as official wildlife habitat sites by both entities under one simple process. This certification additionally encourages habitat gardeners to reach new heights in their pursuit to invite breath-taking birds, butterflies and other interesting critters into their outdoor world. It establishes additional goals that aim to make Texas landscapes more wildlife and environmentally friendly. Integrating these ecological principles into typical landscaping practices will not only help support wildlife, but will also reward the entire community by contributing to a healthier environment.



Decide if you are up to the test:

- Do you provide plants, especially native plants that offer wildlife food throughout the seasons in addition to or instead of feeders?
- Are the majority of the plants in your habitat native to your area?
- Do you provide a dependable source of clean water in your habitat even if you have a natural source on your property or nearby?
- Do you actively collect rainwater to irrigate your habitat?
- Are plants that attract caterpillars as well as butterflies included in your landscape?

If you answered YES to most of these questions, then you are probably ready to apply for the Best of Texas Backyard Habitats (BTBH) certification. If you answered NO to some of these questions, then you are an ideal candidate to participate in this new opportunity. Through this experience you will discover the delights of the natural world by transforming your landscape into a valuable home for wildlife.

### Habitat In Need of Help!

In keeping with TPWD's Wildscapes and NWF's Backyard Wildlife Habitat™ programs, the focus of this additional certification is to encourage people to create wildlife habitat by providing the four essential elements animals need to survive: food, water, cover and places to raise young. Why are TPWD and NWF working to raise con-



# Best of Texas Backyard Habitats



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consciousness about wildlife habitat creation and restoration? Habitat loss is occurring at an alarming rate nationwide and is the most significant threat to wildlife populations in the U.S. In Texas, from 1992 to 1997, an estimated 178,700 acres per year of rural land were converted to urban use according to the Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service Inventory. Urban land development in Texas surpassed that of any other state in the U.S. When a new subdivision is built or a new strip mall is developed, what do you think happens to all the wildlife? Typically, animals must learn to live on smaller fragments of habitat that often do not provide enough essential habitat elements for them to survive. Traditional development practices reduce the wildlife corridors and migratory pathways that support remaining habitat tracts leaving these natural areas and the critters that depend on them for survival isolated and at risk for decline.

## Habitat in Your Hands

The fate of wildlife habitat in Texas is literally in your hands. With 97% of land in our state being privately owned and 85% of our population living in urban areas, it is up to us to ensure that wild places and wild things remain a part of our Texas heritage.

Making a commitment to redefine how our landscapes look and feel as well as increasing their wildlife value is the core of the BTBH certification. Reaching the goals this certification has established is an easy and valuable contribution you can make to reconnect our fragmented ecosystems through a balanced and sustainable approach that benefits both wildlife and people.

## Defining Habitat Basics

When determining what habitat type you would like to create or enhance in your own landscape take cues from nature. Learn about the major ecosystems in your area such as woodland, prairie, desert, wetland or coastal environments and then incorporate mother nature's hints into a design that is comprised of plants and habitat elements that best match the intended ecosystem model. Keep in mind that plant diversity is the first step to attracting lots of different types of wildlife. All habitat types have four main components: food, water, cover and places to raise young. Let's take a closer look at these important elements:  
**Food-** Plants make up the key ingredient of any wildlife habitat site and using locally native plants will provide more viable food, use less water and reduce overall maintenance and associated costs.  
**Water-** A fresh, reliable water source is normally

the limiting factor related to attracting wildlife. Providing this crucial component will increase wildlife visitors enormously.

**Cover-** Ample cover offers refuge from the weather and predators. It is provided by retaining existing vegetation and planting evergreens and understory shrubs and trees. Secondary cover sources can include structures that house wildlife such as log piles, brush piles, rock walls and mulch.

**Places to Raise Young-** This is the "living room" area that wildlife need to define territories, mate and raise their young. Supplying both larval host and nectaring plants for butterflies to complete their lifecycles, leaving dead trees standing when appropriate and erecting nest boxes are all ways to provide this final element of habitat.

## Do Your Part for Wildlife

Certifying your landscape at the Best of Texas Backyard Habitats level will recognize you as a



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leader in environmental stewardship and wildlife conservation. If your habitat is already certified with NWF and TPWD you will be awarded with a BTBH certificate of merit. If you are a participant in only one program, then you will receive a certification packet from the other organization. For example, if already certified with NWF you will receive a certification packet from TPWD along with your BTBH certificate. As a new applicant you will automatically be certified as both a TPWD Texas Wildscape and a NWF Backyard Wildlife Habitat™. No additional paperwork will be required. Upon certification you will receive the following:

- Certification packets from both NWF and TPWD that will include a personalized color certificate, a unique habitat number from both organizations, option to display a yard sign and opportunities for further involvement with NWF and TPWD
- A special Certificate of Merit that identifies your landscape as a "Best of Texas Backyard Habitat" that is suitable for framing
- Opportunity to share your extraordinary achievement with your community through a press release to your local newspaper and your habitat profile on NWF's national Web site



TEXAS WILDSCAPES



BACKYARD WILDLIFE HABITAT NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION