

TEXAN by NATURE™

MESSAGE FROM DR. MATT WAGNER, INTERIM DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS



Over the past three months, I have been honored to serve as interim director of operations for Texan by Nature. Erin Franz, former executive director, left the organization on firm footing as she pursues other interests in her life. Former First Lady Laura Bush, the board of directors and staff are all passionate and committed to the mission of engaging citizens in conserving the precious natural resources that form the heritage of the Lone Star State. We do that best when we connect people to the natural world, while at the same time demonstrating the economic importance of healthy ecosystems.

For example, this past May, Texan by Nature hosted the South-Central Monarch Symposium to identify knowledge gaps and formulate conservation targets to ensure the long-term security of the monarch butterfly. This winged wonder connects people from Mexico to Canada in a way that no other animal can: the iconic harbinger of spring. And yet, this species is facing serious decline over the past 20 years, to the point where it has been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act. By working with agencies, conservation and civic groups, business leaders and property owners across the rural and urban landscape, we can make a difference and reverse the monarch's decline.

Texas is blessed with nearly 170,000,000 acres of land, 95 percent of which is in private hands. These private landowners understand the economic importance of wildlife on their properties, as many of them lease hunting rights for deer, quail and other game species. This system has been a success for over 60 years in Texas and continues to grow in popularity. At the same time, good wildlife habitat provides benefits to a wide range of species, including the monarch butterfly and other pollinators, which, in turn, sustain a multi-billion dollar agriculture industry. I cannot think of another species that serves as such a fine ambassador for the mission of Texan by Nature and demonstrates the connection between people, prosperity and natural resources.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Matt Wagner". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Dr. Matt Wagner
Interim Director of Operations

SOUTH-CENTRAL MONARCH SYMPOSIUM

Over 200 monarch conservation partners and scientists, representing over 80 different organizations, gathered for the [South-Central Monarch Symposium](#), a two-day symposium hosted by Texan by Nature at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center on May 31st and June 1st, 2017. The symposium is part of a project funded by the [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation](#) to develop a comprehensive partnership between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities, the private sector and Texas private landowners to identify key strategies for recovery of the monarch in the south-central region of the migratory pathway.



The symposium boasted over 50 speakers, included several working groups and a round of lightning talks by a myriad of experts. Topics ranged from milkweed availability, distribution, and resources, as well as monarch population risks, to private landowner perspectives on monarch conservation. In addition, college students participated by showcasing their monarch-related research during an interactive poster session. Findings from the presentations and working group discussions will be used to determine strategies for successful recovery. These strategies will serve as the catalyst for a coordinated effort among organizations across the south-central range. The project will continue through May 2018.

[Watch the full South-Central Monarch Symposium webinar here](#)

CONSERVATION WRANGLER

Texan by Nature's founder, [Mrs. Laura Bush](#), developed a platform to touch the hearts and minds of all Texans, from school children to business leaders, by highlighting conservation successes through the organization's [Conservation Wrangler Program](#). The program features the very best Texan-led conservation projects in Texas and includes a visit by Mrs. Bush to acknowledge singular achievements. This is one of three program offerings through Texan by Nature that engages citizens in stewardship. Texan by Nature supports select innovative and transformative projects in the field of conservation with tailored aid, resources and visibility. Collaborative partnerships for conservation yield great benefits — for our natural landscapes, native plants and wildlife and for everyone involved. Two of our three 2017 Conservation Wrangler projects will be highlighted this fall.



In 2013, [Lake Livingston Friends of Reservoirs](#) (LLFoR) began to restore the aquatic habitat in Lake Livingston, the state's second largest lake. This will benefit fish and wildlife populations, improve fishing and water quality and reduce erosion by regularly planting vegetation in non-bulkhead areas to inhibit silt flow and

provide shelter for small fish and fingerlings to restore the fishery of the lake. The next major planting is scheduled for September with Mrs. Bush and members of Texan by Nature in attendance.

The Rio Grande Valley Learning Landscapes Collaborative grew from a 2015 Urban Refuge Partnership between [Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District](#) and [Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge](#), where "mini refuges" were planted by students on their own school campuses to enrich their everyday academic life. A healthier choice of regionally native Learning Landscapes is now being embraced by McAllen, Donna, Harlingen and soon other independent school districts of deep South Texas. [National Wildlife Federation's Certified Schoolyard Habitats](#), a key component, will increase the demand for more regional native plant growers and ensure the use of these habitats for academic purposes. Not only are Learning Landscapes highly educational and ecologically critical, they are water-wise and economically beneficial to overall maintenance and appearance of our schools and community. Mrs. Bush will attend an event highlighting the Rio Grande Valley Learning Landscapes Collaborative in November.

Showcasing exemplary conservation projects in the state helps educate everyone about the benefits of taking care of Texas.

RECENT EVENTS

Texas Wildlife Association's Private Lands Summit

On July 13th, Texan by Nature staff, Matt Wagner, interim director of operations, Shannon Harris, program manager, and Taylor Keys, conservation associate, attended [TWA's Private Lands Summit](#) in San Antonio, TX. The theme of this year's event was, "Understanding a Changing Texas." The event featured an outstanding cast of speakers discussing a wide variety of topics including: Why Texas is Changing, Eminent Domain, Landowner Liability, Landowner Trends from a Realtor Perspective, Agrotourism Act and the important role that private lands stewardship plays in the sustainability of these land-based products. Find more information on TWA [here](#).

Keep Texas Beautiful's 50th Annual Conference

On June 14th, Texan by Nature staff, Shannon Harris, program manager, and Taylor Keys, conservation associate, spoke at [Keep Texas Beautiful's](#) 50th Annual Conference at an educational session about Texan by Nature and the [Monarch Wrangler Program](#). Keep Texas Beautiful's mission is to educate and engage Texans to take responsibility for improving their community environment. They focus their efforts in three major areas: litter prevention, beautification and waste reduction.



**Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's Nature Nights:
Pollinators**

On June 22nd, Texan by Nature attended [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's Nature Nights: Pollinators](#) to educate families about the monarch butterfly lifecycle and Texan by Nature's [Monarch Wrangler Program](#). All of the children had a great time creating monarch masks. Nature Nights are free, family-friendly events filled with exciting explorations of native plants, animals and the ecology of Central Texas. Find more LBJWC events [here](#).



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) is the state agency that administers Texas' soil and water conservation law and coordinates conservation and nonpoint source water pollution abatement programs throughout the state. Headquartered in Temple, the agency offers technical assistance to the state's 216 soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs).

A seven-member state board governs the TSSWCB and is composed of two governor appointees and five landowners elected from across Texas by the more than 1,000 local SWCD Directors. On April 26, 2017, Governor Greg Abbott appointed Tina Buford, Texan by Nature's board president, to the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board...[Read more](#)

UPCOMING CONSERVATION PARTNER EVENTS

- August 25th: [Cibolo Nature Center & Farm Conservation Easement Workshop](#)
- Septemeber 21st: [Hill Country Alliance Leadership Summit](#)
- October 20th-22nd: [Texas Master Naturalist 18th Annual Meeting](#)
- November 7th & 8th: [Texas Children in Nature Summit and Champion Awards Luncheon](#)
- November 7th-9th: [Monarch Joint Venture Annual Partnership Meeting](#)

See all of our Conservation Partners [here](#)

CONNECT

Connect with us on social media and use the hashtag #TexanbyNature to show us how you are taking care of Texas. We hope to see you in the great outdoors!



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