

# HABITAT HERALD

Wildlife Austin's monthly Newsletter



## March 2015



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## Congratulations Austin!

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) has named Austin the # 1 City for wildlife. Thanks to all of the hard work of our Habitat Stewards, partnering volunteers and non-profit organizations. In this edition of the Habitat Herald we will look at wildfire behavior and plant selection in the WUI. We also have a Love Wildlife Day update from February 13th. First let's take a look at Wildlife Fire Behavior in the WUI and some principles in plant selection recommended by Firewise as guidelines to choosing fire resistant plants.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Habitat Herald. ~ Ranger Tucker

### Wildlife Austin

City of Austin  
Parks and Recreation  
919 W. 28 1/2 St.  
Austin, TX 78705  
(512) 978-2606  
[wildlife@austintexas.gov](mailto:wildlife@austintexas.gov)

### UPCOMING :

#### Ecology Action Back to the Land Work- days

Saturday 03/21/2015  
10am-1pm  
Circle Acres, 420 Kemp Street, 78741  
[http://www.keeptaustinbeautiful.org/  
node/2558](http://www.keeptaustinbeautiful.org/node/2558)

#### Zilker Garden Fest

Saturday and Sunday 03/28/2015,  
03/29/2015  
Zilker Botanical Garden  
2220 Barton Springs Rd  
Austin TX 78746

#### Landscape Professional Trainings

Trees & Plants \$20  
March 24, 2015 -  
Learn about earth-wise landscaping and  
management practices from the experts,  
so you can provide sustainable services  
for your commercial and residential cus-  
tomers.  
<http://goo.gl/RncTB1>



# Living In a WUI

## Fire Resistant Landscaping: Fire Behavior and Plant Selection

In previous issues of the *Habitat Herald* we've discussed the importance of landscaping for Wildlife by providing food, shelter and a place to raise young in backyards, school yards and even in usual places like [rooftops](#) and [alley ways](#). In this edition of "Living in a WUI" we will discuss fire behavior as well as look actions to mitigating fire risk by plant selection when providing habitat for wildlife .When landscaping for wildlife it is important to remember that in the WUI (wildland urban interface), the risk of wildfire is always present. By being aware of the risk in our landscapes we can safely provide the critical habitat elements to wildlife while minimize the dangerous effects of fire to human populations.

Although the Bastrop Complex Fire of 2011 and the compost fires at Hornsby Bend in 2013 has definitely heightened our awareness of the destructive power of fire; wildfire is an ecologically beneficial force. Fire plays an important role in our natural environment; fire enriches the soil and prepares it for new growth, clears dead material from forested areas and assists with invasive species control. When fire is used to as a land management tool, the intensity of fire in an landscape decreases. Overtime in our area local wildlife have grown accustomed to the benefits that fire has provided in the WUI.



In Central Texas a growing population has increased the number of homes and business located in the WUI . By increasing manmade structures in wilderness settings, the fuel load— the material available to fuel a fire—has also increased. Fire needs fuel, oxygen and an ignition source to survive and

spread. Light fuels such as grasses and some ground covers, generally burn quickly and spread rapidly. Heavier fuels, such as large shrubs and trees burn longer and usually contain latter fuels which carry ground fires to the crown of a forested areas.

# Living In a WUI

To decrease the intensity of fire in the WUI research your plants selections that are fire resistant. It is important to note that no vegetation or structure is *fire proof* and with exposure to fire's he Here are a few plant characteristic suggested by the National Fire Protection Association's Firewise Program of fire resistant plants:

⇒ Height and spread that fits well into the intended space

⇒ Low amount of duffage or leaf litter

⇒ High Water Retention Ability

⇒ Hight Salt Retention Ability

⇒ Lack of Aromatic Oils

⇒ Low Fuel Volume

If you are interested in learning more about Firewise landscaping NFPA's Firewise Program has a host of online resources to educate the public on fire risk and mitigation.

[Austin Fire Department's Wildfire Division](#) is also a valuable resource and on May 2nd 2015 they are hosting a Community Wildfire Preparedness Day.





## Residents Keeping Austin Weird AND Wild

*Austin Tops National Wildlife Federation's List of America's Top 10 Cities for Wildlife*

- 5. Washington, District of Columbia** – Ranked third in parkland as a percent of city area, DC's efforts to protect and preserve parkland have helped restore America's previously-endangered bald eagles and are now luring osprey back to the Anacostia River.
- 6. Seattle, Washington** –The Emerald City ranks third in Backyard Habitats per capita, with more than 30 municipalities and neighborhoods in the area participate in NWF's Community Wildlife Habitat program. Seattle's government has a robust environmental stewardship program and a "Green Factor" program that reduces stormwater runoff and supports the use of native plants and trees.
- 7. Albuquerque, New Mexico** – First in America in parkland as a percent of city area, one quarter of Albuquerque is public park land, providing a home for amazing resident and migratory wildlife like the majestic sandhill crane, Cooper's hawks, black bears, bobcats and deer.
- 8. Indianapolis, Indiana** – With the White River vital to both its people and wildlife, Indianapolis is home to America's second-largest number of Certified Wildlife Habitats (932). It is also home to its own resident reality star, a peregrine falcon named KathyQ, whose live feed has entertained fans for several years.
- 9. Charlotte, North Carolina** – Charlotte ranks third in the US in Certified Wildlife Habitats (849) and the city just achieved certification as a Community Wildlife Habitat. Known as North Carolina's City of Trees, Charlotte's City Council has made it a mission to have 50 percent canopy coverage by 2050.
- 10. New York City, New York** – New York City has the most EcoSchools in America (270), ranks fourth in parkland as a percent of city area (14 percent), and is home to an incredible 168 species of wildlife and more than five million trees. Home to year-round residents like red-tailed hawks and a tourist destination for migratory birds like black-throated blue warblers, the Big Apple is an urban wildlife haven, from Central Park to the Gateway National Recreation Area, one of America's largest urban parks that includes the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge.





## Residents Keeping Austin Weird AND Wild

*Austin Tops National Wildlife Federation's List of America's Top 10 Cities for Wildlife*

March 9, 2015 – The National Wildlife Federation is honoring the **Top 10 Cities for Wildlife** whose citizens have the strongest commitment to wildlife as part of their celebration of National Wildlife Week 2015 – **and Austin ranks number one!**

The National Wildlife Federation ranked America's largest cities based on three important criteria for wildlife – the percentage of parkland in each city, citizen action to create wildlife habitat, and school adoption of outdoor learning in wildlife gardens.

“We have terrific partners in the city's **Wildlife Austin** program and the Austin Independent School District,” said Susan Kaderka, Regional Executive Director of National Wildlife Federation's South Central Regional Center. “Through our Habitat Stewards Program and our K-12 education programs, we work together to educate Austin citizens young and old on how to be heroes for wildlife.”

The National Wildlife Federation determined the Top 10 Cities for Wildlife by analyzing the total number of NWF Certified Wildlife Habitats per capita in each city to measure citizen engagement. NWF also tallied the number of schools per capita that participate in NWF's Schoolyard Habitat or Eco-Schools USA program. Finally, NWF looked at the percentage of parkland within a city, using data from the Trust for Public Land's Park Score Index. Each criteria was given equal weight.

The top cities are found in every region, from Seattle's temperate rainforest to Albuquerque's arid desert:

1. **Austin, Texas** – Austin is a clear-cut choice as America's best city for wildlife, boasting the most Certified Wildlife Habitats (2,154), most Backyard Habitats per capita, and most Schoolyard Habitats (67). Famous for its Congress Avenue Bridge that's home to 1.5 million bats, the city of Austin is certified as a Community Wildlife Habitat. Its residents not only want to Keep Austin Weird – they're the best in America at keeping their city wild.
2. **Portland, Oregon** – The Rose City boasts America's most Schoolyard Habitats per capita. With more than 8,200 acres of natural parkland certified salmon safe and a commitment to provide nature areas within a half-mile of every Portlandian, the dream of a wildlife-friendly city is alive in Portland.
3. **Atlanta, Georgia** – The City in a Forest ranks highly across the board, coming in #3 in total Schoolyard Habitats (54), #2 in Schoolyard Habitats per capita, and #2 in Backyard Habitats per capita.
4. **Baltimore, Maryland** – Charm City's commitment to conservation education shines through with 73 EcoSchools, #2 in America, and a #3 ranking in Schoolyard Habitats per capita. Baltimore's 5,700 acres of parkland include the Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park, the second-largest urban wilderness in the U.S.



Volunteers and city staff gathered at the canoe launch located at Lorraine “Grandma” Activity Center to show their love for Austin’s wildlife. AmeriCorps volunteers with Habitat for Humanity helped to establish wildlife friendly habitat plants. Volunteers removed Glossy Privet (*Ligustrum lucidum*) and Elephant Ear (*Colocasia esculenta*) from the riparian area. This helped to clear the right away in preparation for future planting in this area. After removing invasive species volunteers vegetated the area with plants that provide critical food for wildlife.

Thanks to participants



# School Yard Habitat Update

## Donations and volunteers needed!

Campuses are looking for donations of the following materials for fall workdays:

Compost and/or soil

Native seeds, plants, shrubs and trees

Tools

4 inch pots

Limestone blocks

Cedar logs

Decomposed Granite

Bird Feeders and/or bird seed



**Schoolyard Habitat Success Depends on Volunteers Like You!**

**For more upcoming volunteer opportunities, please contact:**

Anne Muller AISD Outdoor Learning Specialist [amuller@austinisd.org](mailto:amuller@austinisd.org) or 841-5070