

CALENDAR RELEASE

Houston Parks Board Hosts “Bats on the Bayou” Aug. 28

Event highlights special feature in Watonga Park along White Oak Bayou Greenway

WHAT: The Houston Parks Board (HPB), in partnership with the Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD) and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), presents “Bats on the Bayou,” an event to introduce families to the bat colony living under Watonga Boulevard Bridge and highlight this special feature along White Oak Bayou Greenway. Attendees will learn about bats from the experts, enjoy bat-themed activities and watch the bats emerge for their evening hunt.

Ecologist Cullen [“Batgirl” Geiselman](#), Ph.D., an HPB board member; Jed Aplaca, HPARD Natural Resources Manager; and representatives from TPWD and the Houston Area “Bat Team” will share their knowledge about the Mexican free-tailed bat. The Watonga Parkway bat colony along White Oak Bayou Greenway is just one of the many special places being made more accessible through Bayou Greenways 2020, a project that will create a system of 150 miles of parks and hike and bike trails along Houston’s major waterways. Learn more and RSVP at www.houstonparksboard.org.

WHERE: Watonga Park at the Watonga Blvd. Bridge along White Oak Bayou Greenway. (Across the street from the Oak Forest Masonic Lodge at 4721 Watonga Blvd.)

PARKING: In keeping with the spirit of the Bayou Greenways, attendees are encouraged to bicycle or walk to the event. Limited parking is available at the Oak Forest Masonic Lodge (4721 Watonga Blvd.) and at Watonga Park (4100 Watonga Blvd.)

WHEN: Friday, Aug. 28. Family activities provided by the Houston Area Bat Team begin at 6:30 p.m. Bats will emerge around dusk. Attendees are encouraged to bring folding chairs, blankets and bug spray. (Rain date: Friday, Sept. 18)

ABOUT: **The Houston Parks Board** is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization whose mission is to create, improve, protect and advocate for parkland in the Greater Houston region. Since its inception in 1976, the organization has raised and leveraged millions of dollars and touched at least 75 percent of the city’s parkland either through acquisitions and/or capital improvements. For more information, visit www.houstonparksboard.org.

Bayou Greenways 2020 will create a continuous parks system along Houston’s major waterways. The project will establish an interconnected system of parks and trails linking people, places and green space while enhancing air and water quality, reducing flooding and stimulating economic development. The Houston Parks Board is leading the private fundraising of \$120 million and managing the acquisition, design and construction of the Bayou Greenways 2020 Project over the next five years. Bayou Greenways 2020 was made possible by Houston voters who supported the “Parks by You!” city bond referendum of 2012. For more information, visit www.bayougreenways.org.

Cullen Geiselman, Ph.D., is a member of the Houston Parks Board and is the chair for the Cullen Trust for Health Care, which commits funding to health organizations and programs in the Houston area. She began her career studying bats at the Bat Conservation International, an Austin-based nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of bats and their habitats. Geiselman received her Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Science and Policy from Duke University and proceeded to earn her M.A. and Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Columbia University. As part of her studies at Columbia, Geiselman spent several years in French Guiana doing research and co-authored a book entitled *Seed Dispersal by Bats in the Neotropics*. Geiselman serves on the board of several Houston civic organizations, including Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston, the Houston Zoo and the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center. She is the current board chair of Bat Conservation International.

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards and manages over 37,859 acres of parkland and greenspace for the City of Houston and develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on Watonga Park or the bat colonies at either Watonga Park or Buffalo Bayou Park, and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call 832-395-7022 or visit www.houstonparks.org.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department manages and conserves the natural and cultural resources of Texas and provides hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. Within TPWD is the Wildlife Diversity Program. The program as a whole works to conserve the fabric of over 800 habitat types for the benefit of current and future generations and the program's urban biologists do the same for habitats within urban communities. TPWD's Wildlife Diversity Program works closely with the Houston Area Bat Team, through which volunteers discover and monitor bat populations in the region as well as educate and encourage the public to value bats in our ecosystems.

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