



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lyondell Chemical Company presents Houston Parks and Recreation Department with New Bat Observation Deck

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department in partnership with Lyondell Chemical Company is proud to introduce Houstonians to the City's newest outdoor attraction, the "Waugh Bat Colony Observation Deck." Built by Lyondell in observance of its Global Care Day, the observation deck, located at Waugh Drive Bridge, is easily accessible from the Buffalo Bayou/Tinsley Park hike and bike trail. The "Waugh Bat Colony Observation Deck" will allow bat watchers a comfortable venue from which to experience the spectacle of one of Texas's year-round urban colony of Mexican free-tailed bats departing for its evening hunt while enjoying the scenic beauty of Buffalo Bayou. Unveiling festivities will take place on Wednesday, June 28, 2006, at 10:00a.m.

"The Houston Parks and Recreation Department is delighted to add this observation deck to the amenities of this area," said Joe Turner, director of HPARC. "This will give Houstonians the chance to watch these amazing creatures up close but not be in their way as they go about their nightly activities. We appreciate Lyondell's generosity and their corporate philanthropy."

"Lyondell is proud to be a part of the effort to educate the public about this beneficial mammal species," said David Harpole, spokesperson for Lyondell Chemical Company. "The chance to observe them in action will show people bats are interesting, while educating them on the benefits this fascinating and important mammal provides to our environment."

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department has partnered with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, the Houston Zoo, the Park People and Texas Master Naturalists as well as enthusiastic volunteers to observe the Waugh Bridge Bat Colony. During the summer months (Thursday through Sunday evenings) the Waugh Bridge Bat Team meets to record the Waugh Bridge Bat Colony's activities and provide visitors with guided viewings of the bat's emergence.

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“The deck will be of great help in our evening counts,” Diana Foss, Urban Wildlife Biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife notes. She continues, “The Mexican free-tailed bat is a gentle creature that will not harm visitors if left alone. So we feel perfectly safe observing and witnessing the emergence of this wonderful creature.”

Bat Conservation International, an Austin non-profit that works towards the conservation of bats worldwide, concurs. Bats, like other mammals can contract rabies. However, only ½ of 1 percent of bats are infected. Worldwide, these amazing animals provide humans with great economic, as well as ecological, benefits by consuming night-flying insects and serving as vital pollinators and seed-dispersers of many important plants. Ongoing research in Texas shows bats play an important role in controlling agricultural insect pests that infest corn, cotton and other crops, providing a more environmentally friendly and less costly alternative.

“In Austin, more than 100,000 people visit the Congress Avenue Bridge to watch America’s largest urban bat colony emerge nightly,” says Barbara French of BCI. “We hope Houstonians will take advantage of the opportunity to view the Waugh Bridge Bat Colony as well.” BCI recently donated a large bat house to the Houston Parks and Recreation Department to help bats at Hermann Park find a new roost and co-exist safely with park visitors.

Bat experts from Bat Conservation International, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Houston Zoo will be on hand to answer questions about the 11 different types of bats native to the Houston area and several live bats will be showcased. Information will also be available on the Houston Zoo’s upcoming “Bat Awareness Day” scheduled for July 1st and on how to become a member of the Houston Bat Team. In addition, the Buffalo Bayou Partnership will provide information regarding Waugh Bridge Bat Colony Pontoon Boat Tours.

For information on participants and partners visit the following websites: Bat Conservation International www.batcon.org, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department www.tpwd.state.tx.us, the Buffalo Bayou Partnership www.buffalobayou.org, the Houston Zoo www.houstonzoo.org, the Park People www.parkpeople.org and Texas Master Naturalists www.masternaturalist.tamu.edu.

For information regarding the Waugh Bridge Bat Colony or the Hermann Park Bat House contact the Houston Parks and Recreation Department call 713-845-1135 or visit our website at www.houstonparks.org.