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INTERIOR SECRETARY TO LAMENT THE PLIGHT OF THE BUMBLE BEE

Remarks on Importance of Restoration of Natural Areas to Highlight Concerns with Dwindling Populations of Pollinators

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt will speak in Austin, Texas, at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, September 30, on the importance of cooperative efforts and private/public partnerships in restoring conservation areas, open space and wildlife habitat.

In his remarks, to be made at the L.B.J. Auditorium on the main campus of the University of Texas, Secretary Babbitt will explain his concern for the animals and insects that pollinate a wide variety of the foods we eat, as well as most other important and endangered plants. Common pollinators are native bees, butterflies, bats and hummingbirds.

"These hard-working heroes of nature are not well understood but are clearly in peril in relatively recent times," Secretary Babbitt said. "Loss of habitat, poisonings, and fragmentation of the plant life on which they depend is reducing the number of pollinators alarmingly. Their dwindling numbers and even disappearances increasingly threaten the human food supply and the essential diversity of natural and agricultural plants."

Secretary Babbitt will make his remarks before a group of conservationists, scientists and academics attending a conference of the Society for Ecological Restoration. **Following the speech and a question and answer session with conference participants, Secretary Babbitt will be available for questions from the media. Media is welcome to attend his remarks, which will begin at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday.**

"It's very appropriate to discuss my concern with pollinators in Austin, since I know that bats have become a beloved and unique part of this city's considerable charm," Babbitt said. "I'm hopeful that when the public becomes more aware of the threats to these admirable creatures, more cities and communities will make efforts to conserve the wild plants and natural places essential to the survival of pollinators, whose future is so crucial to our own."

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