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**Warning Issued to National Park Service & U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for Failing to Protect Endangered Species at South Florida Water Park Development**

***Miami Wilds Project threatens Endangered & extremely rare Florida Bonneted Bat & Miami Tiger Beetle, as well as Endangered Butterflies***

MIAMI — Conservation groups [notified](#) the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today that they intend to sue the agencies for failing to protect the federally endangered Florida bonneted bat, Miami tiger beetle, Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak, and other imperiled species from the destructive effects of the Miami Wilds water park and retail development in South Florida.

The [Florida bonneted bat](#) heavily uses the proposed development site as a key foraging area. The project footprint also includes critical habitat for [Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak](#) and [Florida leafwing](#), two endangered butterflies, and proposed critical habitat for the endangered [Miami tiger beetle](#). Rare plants, such as [Florida brickell-bush](#) and [Carter’s small-flowered flax](#), are also present around the site.

In February, the Park Service signed off on an agreement to release land-use restrictions on the site of the proposed project, paving the way for construction to proceed. In so doing, the agency failed to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure the development will not jeopardize endangered species or destroy critical habitat, a key step required by the Endangered Species Act.

“It’s shocking that the Park Service plowed ahead knowing the project is likely to hurt endangered species like the Florida bonneted bat,” says Elise Bennett, Florida director and an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. “The agency has a legal duty to ensure its actions won’t drive species toward extinction, and it has to do this *before* taking action. This is a critical failure.”

Miami Wilds plans to build a 27.5-acre water park, retail area, hotel, and more than 40 acres of associated parking lots. Miami-Dade County approved a lease agreement for the Miami Wilds site on June 22, 2022.

“This bat-killing project risks the permanent, irreversible extinction of one of the most endangered mammals in the United States,” says Mike Daulton, Executive Director at Bat Conservation International. “The habitat in and around Zoo Miami supports the second-largest known population of the highly endangered Florida bonneted bat. Destruction of this vital habitat would be devastating.”

Dennis Olle, president of the Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association, observes, “Unfortunately, the failure of the Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service to follow their own rules continues to jeopardize the viability of many endangered species, including the most highly endangered bat in North America.”

Tropical Audubon Society’s senior conservation director Lauren Jonaitis adds, “The Endangered Species Act is a powerful tool to protect wildlife and their habitat. Its purpose is broad, and encompasses protecting biodiversity by preventing the extinction of plants and animals. The Park Service’s failure to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service is a glaring oversight that needs to be remedied. This required step must be taken, otherwise the development could put endangered species at risk of extinction.”

In addition to impacting endangered species, the development also threatens critically imperiled pine rockland habitat on and surrounding the site by hampering natural fire needed to support ecosystem health. Pine rocklands are home to dozens of rare and endangered animals, plants and insects found nowhere else on Earth.

Today’s notice was filed by the Center for Biological Diversity, Bat Conservation International, Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association, and Tropical Audubon Society.

*The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.7 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.*

*Founded in 1982, Bat Conservation International is a global conservation organization dedicated to ending bat extinctions. Bat Conservation International works worldwide to conserve caves, restore critical habitats in danger, and ensure the survival of the world’s bat species. For more information, visit [batcon.org](http://batcon.org).*

*The Miami Blue Chapter serves southeastern Florida, specifically Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. We are a membership-based, not-for-profit organization working to increase the public enjoyment and conservation of butterflies. The Chapter is named after one of the rarest butterflies in North America, which used to (and one day will again) call Miami home.*

*Tropical Audubon Society is a science- and solutions-based nonprofit conservation organization driven by its grassroots community and principles of equity, diversity and inclusion. Tropical Audubon’s Legacy is to protect, conserve and restore South Florida*

*ecosystems by working closely with local governments and other stakeholders, and by fostering wise stewardship of native habitats, birds and other indigenous wildlife.*