



Border Wall vs. Nature

by [Burnt X](#) / October 9, 2019 / [Trending](#)

The Trump Administration has waived 28 environmental laws to facilitate the construction of 33 miles of border wall in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas (RGV). This new wall will be surrounded by a 150-foot enforcement zone with patrol roads and security lights. Not only will citizens be forced to forfeit their private land to make way for the wall, but several natural and historical landmarks will be compromised. A wall designed to inhibit humans from crossing would also inhibit a lot of wildlife from doing the same, permanently changing the ecosystem.

According to the National Butterfly Center's website, construction of a border wall could:

1. Destroy native habitat for endangered species and limit the area where animals can forage and find prey. Additionally, animals north of wall would no longer have access to the river.
2. Trap wildlife in the flood zone during storms - a wall would prevent them from crossing the levee to reach dry ground.
3. Separate animals from their gene pools, obstructing breeding patterns and abetting the extinction of endangered species.

Not only would a wall prevent mammals from crossing, but it would also prevent birds like the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl - which can only fly 6 feet high - from getting over. The Center for Biological Diversity found that 90 species throughout the Southwestern border could be threatened by the wall. In the RGV, these include 17 species, such as the spotted ocelot - of which only 50 remain in the wild in Texas.

Image by Gerrit Vyn - [Macaulay Library](#)

This stretch of the border wall would cut off 70% of the National Butterfly Center. The Center sued the federal government over the matter, seeking a restraining order; they lost. Then, this February, language was added to an existing Congressional Appropriations Bill that exempted five natural and historic landmarks, including the Center, from the construction zone. But the Center's reprieve was short-lived.

When President Trump declared a national emergency, he sought to open up \$6.625 billion dollars of funding that could be used **without restrictions**. Once again, the fate of sites like the National Butterfly Center, Bentsen National Park, La Lomita Chapel, and the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge is jeopardized. In fact, brush clearing has already begun in some places.

Not only would the Butterfly Center's existence be jeopardized, the 766-acre Bentsen State Park could close if the border wall is built through it.

According to *Texas Monthly*, an access gate would likely be built to allow entry to park visitors. However, it would be closed at night, and camping and nocturnal wildlife viewing would be cancelled. With a wall cutting through it, the park could see a drop in paying visitors and close altogether.

With the raging debate over the cost and humanitarian issues surrounding the wall, the environmental impact - which would be significant - is not a core element of public discussion. But it should be.

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