

Butterfly Appreciation, Conservation and Education are Major Themes at NABA International Butterfly Park

by Sue Sill

The initial educational programs at the Butterfly Park, developed by a core group of staff and volunteers, have found an enthusiastic audience among Rio Grande Valley schools. The love of butterflies instilled in a child can be a life-changing event, as experiences with butterflies become treasured childhood memories. If these experiences are part of sound scientific learning, they build respect for nature with the potential to inspire a conservation ethic in future generations. As our society becomes more technologically oriented, we also become



Top: The Sharyland High School Science Club helps plant a new garden at NABA Butterfly Park.

Bottom: University of Texas, Pan American students help with the revegetation of the southern section of the Park.

increasingly isolated from the natural systems that nourish us. Butterflies know this; but what of the other millions of people who never spend time enjoying or contemplating nature?



Above: A Head Start group of children visit the Park to learn about butterflies, biodiversity and the natural world.

Left: Ann Vacek, Park restoration ecologist, shows visiting teachers Giant Swallowtail caterpillars and explains the interdependence of butterflies and native plants.

NABA Butterfly Park's education programs expose children to the wonder of butterflies, and help to build a new generation of conscientious stewards of the natural world. Our precious natural resources are threatened on many fronts, including urban sprawl, agri-

culture, logging, mining, just to name a few. We, as butterflyers and nature lovers, have an opportunity to make an important difference by introducing children to the role that butterflies and other small creatures play in the fabric of nature.