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### BACK TO NATIVES CELEBRATES 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

**SANTA ANA, Calif., February 28, 2017** – **Back to Natives Restoration**, a local environmental non-profit with a focus on habitat restoration and native plant education, is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a 501(c)(3) non-profit.

Back to Natives (BTN) began in 2005 when BTN Executive Director Reginald Durant saw a need for habitat restoration in local wildlands. Non-native invasive plant species were crowding out the native plants that local wildlife need to survive. He also realized that habitat restoration would be more successful if the work was done by community volunteers.

“A little ‘ecological enlightenment’ and a chance to get your hands dirty is the best way to improve relations between people and Nature,” says Durant.

Durant believes that if community members are involved in restoring their local wildlands, they will take ownership of the projects and work to protect that habitat and spread the word about the importance of native plants, biodiversity and healthy ecosystems.

BTN is celebrating their 10<sup>th</sup> year with a special 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo, and a ten month long celebration of everything Back to Natives, beginning with the release of a video celebrating the milestone. Community members will also have the opportunity to donate \$10 and have a native plant planted in their honor at a BTN habitat restoration site.

Back to Natives was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit public charity in 2007 to restore open space with appropriate native plant species, while reaching out to the community through restoration-based education programs and volunteer opportunities. BTN coordinates with land managers – that do not always have the funds or staff available to recruit, train and supervise volunteers – to provide service-learning programs and assist with habitat restoration.

BTN currently works with the City of Santa Ana to restore a portion of Santiago Creek, as well as with the USFS in the Cleveland National Forest where BTN is restoring a portion of the San Mateo Wilderness and some areas near Elsinore Peak.

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In 2015 BTN received a 2.5 acre donation of land in Dana Point from Kato Properties. It is undeveloped and also in the process of being restored by BTN volunteers so that it will provide habitat for birds and butterflies. BTN has named it the Back to Natives Native Plant Reserve, “Cuesta Kato” for short, in honor of the donor.

The Back to Natives Nursery at Santiago Park in Santa Ana grows plants for habitat restoration and to raise funds for service learning and environmental education programs. Back to Natives is also a licensed c-27 Landscape Contractor, license # 963706. Proceeds from landscape design, installation and maintenance support the organization’s environmental education and habitat restoration programs as well.

“The more people that go native with their landscaping, the more habitat we create for native animals,” says Durant. “Native birds and butterflies - for the most part - do not care if the natives they depend on are growing in home gardens, parkways, or surrounding commercial buildings. With the loss of habitat we have to make the most of the green spaces we have left – and maybe if people see more habitat happening around them, they’ll be more likely to want to protect the open spaces that remain.”

### About Back to Natives

Back to Natives Restoration, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization connects the community to habitat restoration through service learning and native plant education. The Back to Natives Nursery at Santiago Park in Santa Ana, staffed by community volunteers, grows plants for habitat restoration and to raise funds for service learning and environmental education programs. The Back to Natives Native Plant Reserve provides habitat for birds and butterflies in Dana Point. For more information, please visit [www.backtonatives.org](http://www.backtonatives.org) or call 949-509-4787.