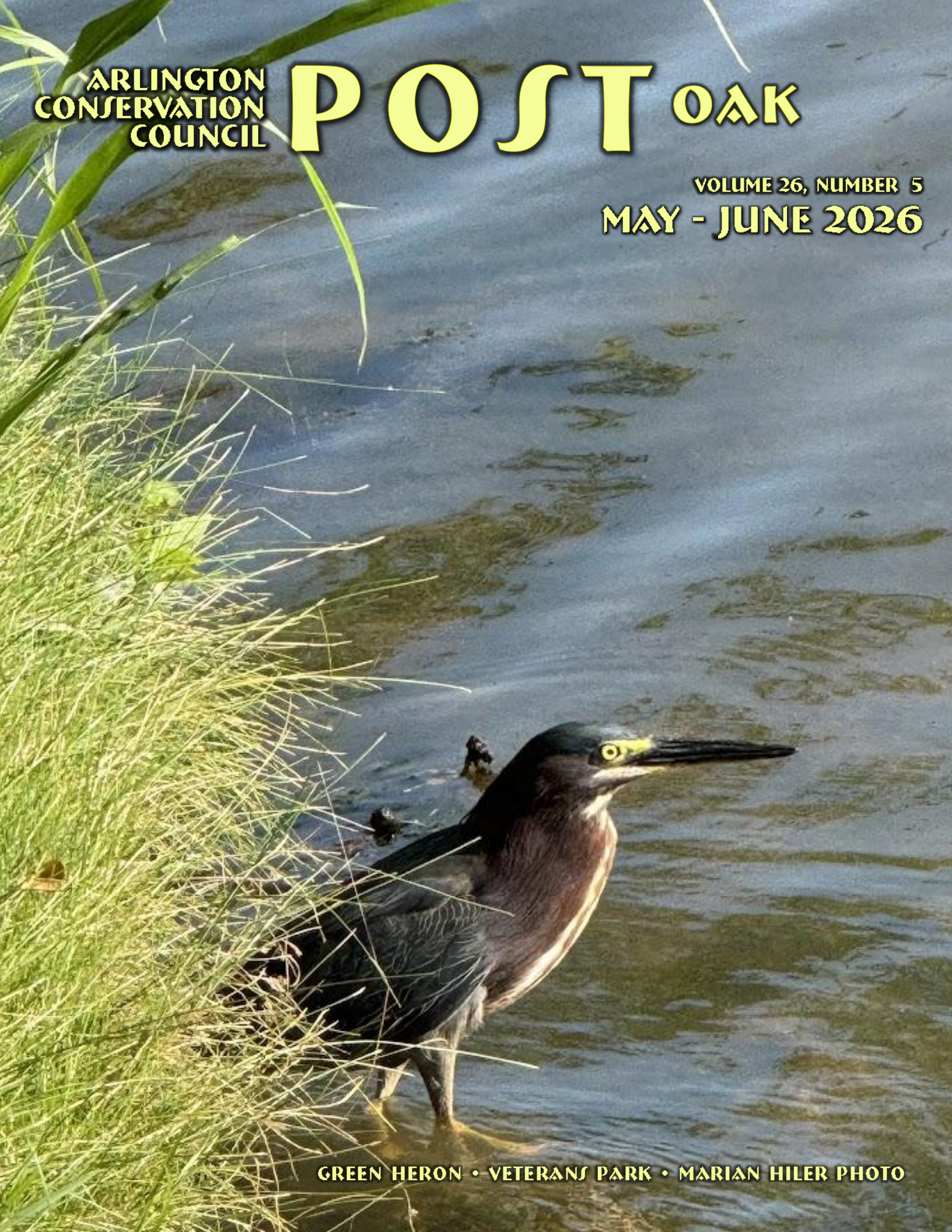

ARLINGTON CONSERVATION COUNCIL

POST OAK

VOLUME 26, NUMBER 5

MAY - JUNE 2026

GREEN HERON • VETERANS PARK • MARIAN HILER PHOTO

June Zoom Meeting

See more on page 6

6:30 pm social time and equipment check, 7 pm presentation

Join Zoom meeting https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87175066299

For assistance accessing the meeting, contact Frank Keeney, webmaster@acctexas.org

Contents

From the President Dick Schoech

Our health is entwined with the health of our planet

Marvelous brains and ingenuity enable our species to overcome obstacles and make Earth livable. However, overpopulation and thoughtless human actions are barreling us to a tipping point. Innovations/disruptors like nuclear energy and resource-intensive artificial intelligence threaten our ways of living together. We must pivot from misusing our environment to actively healing it.

Instant knowledge creation and communication now let us look beyond our own fate and ponder the fate of the planet. Yet instead of deploying our knowledge to restore our degraded water, air, and soil, we're struggling to even agree there's a problem.

Youth around the world face an uncertain future that our news media, movies, and conversations often present in frightening terms. The violent, greedy aspects of human nature combined with our evolutionary tribal instincts paint a risky place to live.

Fortunately, we already possess the foundational blueprints for positive change. The desire to understand our ancestry and our universe proves that humans value continuity and connectivity. Our communities thrive on cooperation, shared responsibilities, and deep familial ties, but as we become more numerous, mobile and disconnected, achieving individualistic goals frequently comes at the expense of planetary survival.

Aggressive global competition is overshadowing the win-win dynamics of local neighborhoods. While expanding populations often heighten the competition for dwindling resources, local communities can still serve as hubs for sustainability if we enthusiastically tame our confrontational instincts.

Technology is producing a world that stifles mutually beneficial Earth/mankind activities. Instant gratification and a pervasive media

continued on page 4

ACC POST OAK

Our mission: ACC works to protect Arlington's natural environment through education, community service, and advocacy for a sustainable future

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From the President continued from page 3

encourage everyone everywhere to compete and constantly track and broadcast individuals' success at surviving. Not only is our world becoming more win-lose, but the counteracting ideologies for a win-win world seem almost impossible to instill in future generations. Such powerful activities as sports and politics are not always successful in taming our competitive instincts and bringing us together.

Ours is the first generation tasked with operationalizing the truth that **human health is inseparable from planet health.** Ecological degradation directly triggers human health crises, from respiratory illnesses to mental health struggles. Conversely, research proves that immersion in thriving ecosystems dramatically improves our physical and psychological well-being.

To secure a viable future, environmentalists and global citizens alike must champion we-all-win solutions that treat nature not as a resource to exploit but as our primary partner in doing whatever it takes to save our world.

Blackland Prairie Preserve, Southeast Arlington, May 24, 2026.

Letter to an Editor

THIS WRITER SAID IT BEST:

Texas is in the middle of an electricity crisis of its own making. Data centers, hungry for cheap, abundant power, are flooding into the state, and ERCOT is responding by greenlighting billions in new natural gas infrastructure.

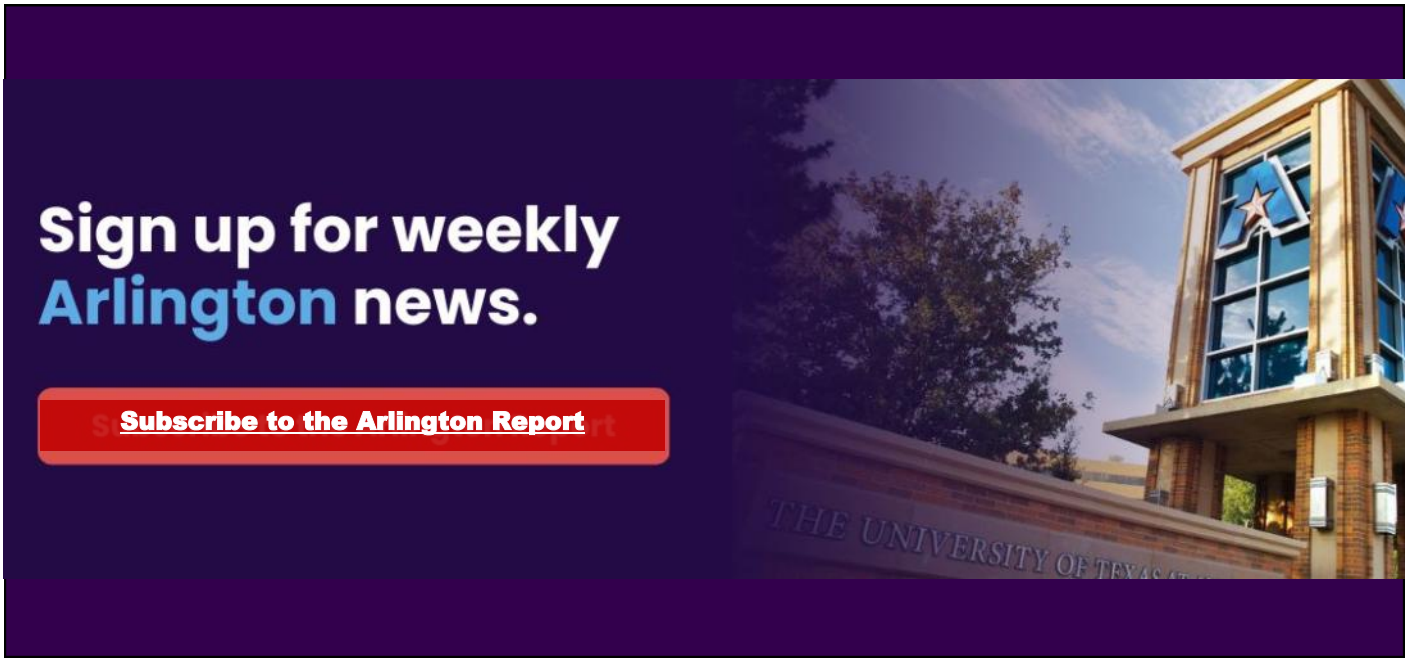
Meanwhile, the state requires nothing of these facilities in return. Other states have begun tying large commercial energy consumers to clean power requirements.

Texas, with the most wind capacity in the nation and enormous solar potential, has every tool it needs to do the same. Instead, lawmakers have welcomed data centers with open arms and zero conditions. Every new gas plant locks Texans into decades of fuel costs, grid vulnerability and emissions.

Requiring new data centers to source clean energy (or fund renewable buildout directly) would drive investment without adding fossil dependence.

Our legislators are choosing the easy path over the smart one. Texas families will pay the price — on their bills, and in the air they breathe.

Andrea Christgau, Keller [*The Dallas Morning News,* Letters, 5-30-26]

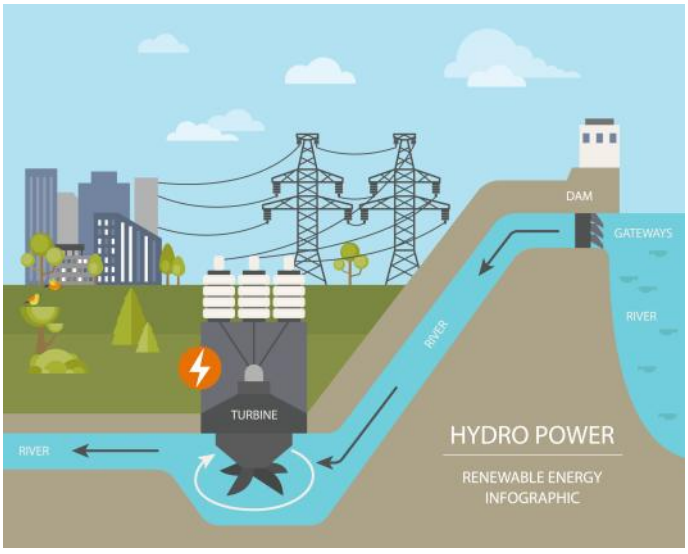


Positivity John Dycus and John Darling

Here is more positive environmental news, thanks again to John Dycus. Like me, he sees way too many negative developments, but he finds answers, as you see on this page. Try it! See something positive you like? Send me a link to something good. Just try to spot new things so we don't repeat ourselves.

The Great Green Wall of China looks like an enormous project headed for long-term success. Behind it are lessons that sound simple: stable funding and learning from your mistakes. **You really should read this one.** It's big.

This one has an uncomplicated sound, with no obscure details lurking in the background to spoil it: **Dam demolitions free 100 American rivers**. Just in 2025. A lot of the good here comes from reconnecting fish to spawning grounds, but there's much more to be happy about with this news.



More money for hydropower improvements. Okay, not glamorous, but still this does sound like a good thing.

Rewilding transforms old mine in Portugal. Another item that looks great, happened pretty fast, and has the wonderful virtue of simplicity. Great for nature and even has some ecotourism thrown in.

June Zoom Meeting: Wednesday, June 3

Endangered Beauty on the Wing
The Perils and the Promise of Monarchs in North Texas

Carol Clark
Conservation Specialist, Monarch Watch

Join Zoom meeting https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87175066299

6:30 pm social time and equipment check, 7 pm presentation

Texas Master Naturalist Carol Clark will cover the amazing story of the Monarch butterfly lifecycle and migration, clear some misconceptions, detail historic and present threats, and explain why Texas is a pivotal location for Monarchs' future success.

There are real steps North Texas residents can take to boost the Monarch population, and you'll hear those, too, plus learn what favorite (and nutritious!) plants you can introduce into the garden to create your own Monarch waystation.

Carol is a longtime Native Plant Society of Texas member and a Conservation Specialist with Monarch Watch. When not busy teaching about natural history topics, she enjoys tending her own remarkable 37-acre Clark Haven Farm wildlife refuge in Cooke County.

Our YouTube Videos Marian Hiler

Take a look at any of our programs since October 2023 on **ACC's YouTube channel**. Here they are.

Coyote Coexistence: Living in Harmony with America's Song Dog
Karin and Roberto Saucedo, April 2026

Beyond Parks – Update on the Redesigned Department
Gary Packan, March 2026

Horned Lizards and Horny Toads
Michael Smith, February 2026

2025 Environmental Progress; Planning for 2026
January 2026

The Wonderful World of Bats
Hester Schwarzer and Ellen Ravkind, November 2025

Spiders in the Garden
Meghan Cassidy, October 2025

Soils for Wildlife
Sam Kieschnick, September 2025

Where Are Reptiles and Amphibians Going … and Who Is Helping?
Michael Smith, August 2025

EV Myths and FUDs (Fears, Uncertainties, Doubts)
Eric Pratt, June 2025

Why We Should Care: Covering the Environment at FW Report
Nicole Lopez, John Geer, May 2025

Tarantulas: They're Awesome. Ooh, Tell Us More
Erika Swyryn, April 2025

Symbiosis in Your Backyard: Insects, Trees and the Link Between Them
Kimberlee Peterson, March 2025

Prairie Seekers Training: Learning in Nature's Classroom
Kate Morgan, February 2025

2024 Environmental Progress; Planning for 2025
January 2025

What I learned in South Africa: Climate Adaptations for Texas Plants
Laura Miller, November 2024

Looking Forward: The Next Legislative Session
Rita Beving, October 2024

Solar Hybrid Pumping Solution
Larry Bentley, September 2024

Native Plants Are for the Birds
Charley Amos, August 2024

Dallas-Fort Worth High-Speed Transportation
Ian Bryant, June 2024

The Benefits of Native Plants
Ann Knudsen, May 2024

Perspective on the 88th Texas Legislative Session
Rita Beving, April 2024

Prairie Restoration in the Built Environment
Clint Hail, March 2024

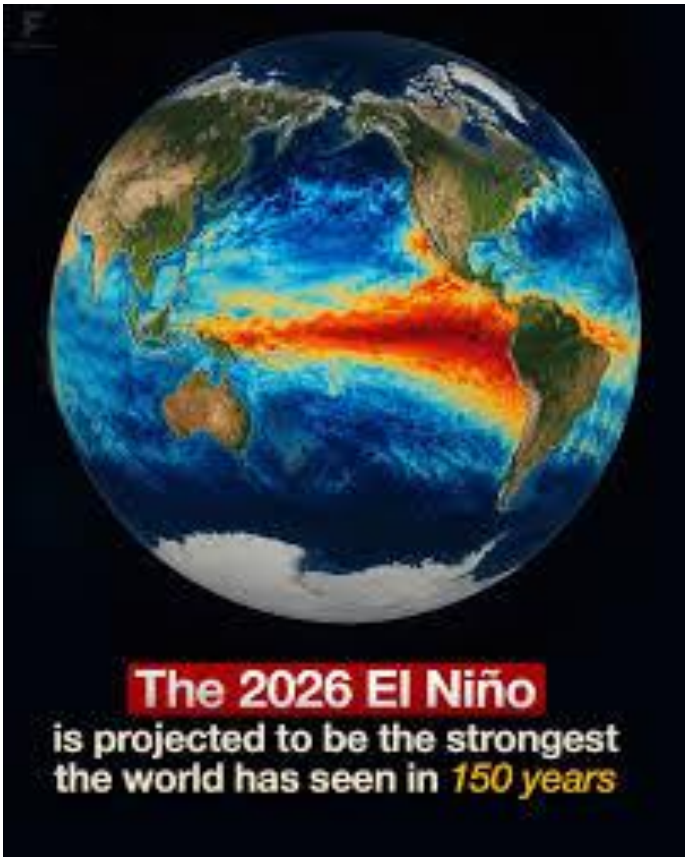
Trees as Habitat for Wildlife
Hester Schwarzer, February 2024

ACC 2024 Annual Meeting FAUNA Parks Presentations
January 2024

Texas Turtles
Carl J. Franklin and Viviana Ricardez, November 2023

Weathering the Climate Change Storm
Jeff Ray, October 2023

In Case You Missed It Grace Darling



Scientists said this week that **a developing El Niño is likely to amplify heatwaves, droughts and floods this year**, but remind us that the long-term warming caused by burning fossil fuels remains the main driver of climate extremes. El Niño is the warm phase of a semi-regular temperature oscillation in the tropical Pacific Ocean, during which massive amounts of heat stored in the ocean are released into the atmosphere, temporarily raising the average annual global surface temperature by as much as 0.3 degrees Fahrenheit. The consequences of a moderate or strong El Niño today are more damaging than those of similar events just a few decades ago because the entire global climate system is now substantially warmer.

The combination of El Niño on top of ongoing warming has driven a "whiplash" between extreme moisture and extreme drought in some regions. Grasses and brush thrive during heavy rains, then dry out quickly when the heat returns, turning into combustible fuel. This year, wildfires on several continents have already scorched an Alaska-sized area of land — more than half a million square miles and 50% more than average over the past 25 years — and we are bracing for hotspots at the confluence of El Niño-driven droughts and ongoing planetary heating in wildfire-prone regions, including the Amazon, Canada, the western United States and Australia.

The serious climate impacts resulting from this confluence of factors can be measured in terms of life and death, especially regarding extreme heat, explained an Indonesian minister. "Heat is exactly the kind of crisis that our systems are designed to ignore until it's too late, … It doesn't arrive with a named storm or a visible floodline. It kills quietly, in homes, in open fields, in the bodies of workers who have no choice but to be outside," she said, tallying grim statistics like the estimated 546,000 total annual heat-related global deaths. "We have normalized a public health emergency by failing to name it as one," she said. "Those who contributed the least to this crisis are often those paying the highest health costs, . . . the equity scandal at the heart of everything we are discussing today."

ICN podcast discusses what to expect from El Niño, what it is and how it changes weather around the world, whether we're now entering a period when record-breaking weather becomes normal, and if the impacts of El Niño this year could be permanent. [ICN Sunday Morning, insideclimatenews.org, 5/17/26]

In a settlement described as "by far **the largest payout in American history from a utility to Indigenous tribes**," Seattle Mayor Katie B.

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In Case continued from page 9

SOURCE: ESRI

PAUL HORN / Inside Climate News

Wilson recently signed a $1.35 billion agreement with three Skagit River tribes, saying the city now views them as "essential partners" in the future of the river and its habitat. City Light in Seattle expects to secure a third 50-year license for its Skagit dams from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The deal commits the utility to pay compensation of about $1.35 billion to the tribes, which will require significant increases in electricity rates. The winners in this settlement are three small Skagit River tribes. Their livelihoods, culture and religion had for hundreds of years revolved around healthy salmon runs in a free-flowing river. Much of their existence for the last dammed-up century has been infected by poverty, dislocation and anger for being ignored by a greener-than-thou utility.

The story of why Seattle settled with the tribes is a case study in how powerlessness in Indian Country can be transformed into real-world negotiating muscle. Keys to the transformation are outspoken tribal leadership, tribal casino money, world-class legal talent, and a seismic change in public attitudes toward Indigenous people.

When City Light obtained approval in 1917 for hydropower dams on the Skagit from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the utility didn't need to trouble itself with the rights of the tribes: they had none. An 1855 treaty had taken nearly all their traditional land, which encompassed 2,656 square miles of the Skagit River Basin. Their right to vote would not come until 1924. The Endangered Species Act that now lists Skagit River Chinook salmon and steelhead as threatened wasn't passed until 1973. Federal courts did not affirm the tribes' treaty-reserved rights to half the catch in salmon rivers until 1974.

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In Case continued from page 10

For most of the decades that dams have throttled the Skagit, the three tribes had no influence on the utility. When City Light commissioned a consulting report in 1988 on the impacts of its dams on fish, nothing in the report reflected the point of view of Indigenous people from the Skagit region.

"The city of Seattle was built on cheap power from the Skagit," said a spokesman. The city now gets a fifth of its power from Skagit dams, but they were the city's primary electricity source for much of the 20th century. "We exported a lot of power and didn't return value for that entire period," he added. "We do very much recognize the fact that our dams have harmed the tribes, harmed the environment they rely on — economically, spiritually and culturally. *The agreements we negotiated with the tribes are, in part, to make good on past harm."*

Nearly $1 billion will go to the creation of a fish passage system. Young migrating salmon will likely be sifted out of the upper Skagit and trucked around City Light's dams, allowing them to swim out to the Pacific. Adult salmon returning from the ocean will be trucked above dams to spawn. Most of the rest of the money will go to the tribes for various reservation projects, cash payments to individuals, and habitat restoration in the river delta on Puget Sound.

Brace yourself for a bitter reality: **Wild bee populations across the U.S. have declined by more than 50% in the past two decades.** The causes are well documented: habitat loss, pesticides, the modern obsession with manicured lawns that offer pollinators nothing to eat. Without wild bees, apple trees don't fruit, tomato plants don't set, wildflower meadows thin out and fade. The garden doesn't die overnight — it just slowly stops coming back.

Clay Bolt

People buy **mass-produced bee hotels** with the best intentions, but they are useless or worse, can be a death trap. They **may have one or more fatal flaws**, such as rough-drilled tunnels (if not glass-smooth, the bee shreds her wings going in and out); made out of pine or fir (treated softwoods held together with synthetic adhesives that bees can smell and won't go near); no proper roof (rain gets in, the wood swells, mold grows inside the tunnels and suffocates the larvae); too-short tunnels (must be 6 to 8 inches long to avoid the larvae being eaten from the entrance by parasitoid wasps); and accessorized with decorative fillers (like pine cones, straw, park chips, etc. which only attract spiders and earwigs that raid the bee brood).

CAUTION: Our Senior Quality Control Analyst has flagged the following as an infomercial. Read at your own risk. See note at the end. Enter Clayton Dawson of Brevard, North Carolina. After 43 years of researching the nesting habits of *Osmia lignaria* and building and testing prototype bee houses, he stands behind the Blossom Guardian, named for its purpose as a shield for our pollinators. Made from hand-smoothed cedar tunnels 3/32" to 3/8" in diameter, they are calibrated specifically for solitary bees and attract everything from tiny masked bees to large

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In Case continued from page 11

blue orchard mason bees. Each tier targets a different species because "one size fits all means one size fits none," says Clayton. **Confession: We just received Clayton's hotels. Saw two differences from those in his video: only a strip of copper on the roof, and the holes don't look smooth. We'll work on the holes, put them up, and report to you later. — *Ed.***

For some interesting background, try this link and then scroll down a bit to The Big Bee Hotel Experiment video. All British and lots of good info.

Ending a long-running, tri-state **dispute over management of the Rio Grande,** the U.S. Supreme Court has just approved a settlement package that calls for reducing groundwater pumping along the dwindling river and retiring water rights from irrigated farmland in southern New Mexico. The states held up the proposal as a promise to restore order to an elaborate system of storing and sharing water between two vast irrigation districts in southern New Mexico and western Texas.

Farmers in southern New Mexico increasingly have turned to groundwater to irrigate pecan orchards and chile crops as hotter, drier conditions have reduced river flows and storage over recent decades. That pumping is what prompted Texas to sue in 2013, claiming the practice was cutting into water deliveries. Under the settlement, New Mexico must reduce annual groundwater depletions by 18,200 acre-feet, or about 5.9 billion gallons (22.3 billion liters). Officials expect to achieve most of the necessary reductions from buying water rights from willing sellers, meaning more than 14 square miles (36 square kilometers) of farmland would be retired.

Researchers have warned that *unsustainable use of the Rio Grande* — which originates in Colorado and stretches south into Mexico — *threatens water security for millions of people* who rely on the binational river basin. While the Colorado River gets all the headlines, experts say the situation along the Rio Grande is just as dire. Stretches of the river as far north as Albuquerque are expected to go dry again this year, marking the third time in five years. [CHRON 5/27/26]

Sand bars develop along the Rio Grande as stretches of the river begin to dry in Albuquerque, N.M., on May 14, 2026. Susan Montoya Bryan/AP Photo/

Positive environmental news is often hard to come by. As the headline in Euronews Green proclaims, "with powerful nations **rolling back climate protections** and temperatures soaring ever closer to **dangerous thresholds**, it's hard not to feel worried about the state of the planet…Eco anxiety is very real, so we share this year's most uplifting stories to prove there's hope for our climate." Enjoy! [euronews.com/2026/05/22/Carbon-capturing bison and bill-slashing renewables: Positive environmental stories from 2026]

Bits & Pieces

The Terse Treehugger

Privet anyone?

Don't worry, there's plenty for everybody.

Visit ACC's Facebook page and Discussion Group

More Than Just Ice Cream

Here's a big favorite, a Texas bluebell Dick Schoech noticed near Benbrook Lake at Pecan Valley Park. It's declining through overcollecting. That's an old story: Those good looks are its downfall. Maybe we should try its fussy seeds.

Spineless prickly pear.

Faux Avian Poop Season Returns

Time again to enjoy one of nature's marvels. This Exposed bird dropping moth showed up recently, and for several years it's been the most common species coming to a UV light in central Arlington. This one's too organized; the messier, splotchy ones are more convincing.

Join us and act locally. Use the application form on the back page.

Question Corner Professor J. Lewis Corner

Q: Weren't you the maniac who got arrested in the garden center last week after punching that guy with a cart full of petunias? Is that supposed to help us think of you as some kind of source for good environmental information? I mean, what's your problem anyway?

A: Look, I just finally had enough, okay? That self-satisfied ape was babbling about "going green" with his mountain of pesticides, fertilizer, and ANNUAL COLOR, and I tried to reason calmly with him about how he couldn't possibly be more asinine. Annual color? Here's the evil list: greenhouse emissions, water, fertilizer, and pesticides as they're being grown, plastic waste, little or no pollen or nectar, and of course, peat moss. He really needed a punch. Next!

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Eve's necklace.

My Nature Notebook

Just a crummy mushroom

Me And Brainiac were poking at a beat-up orange mushroom in the Creepy Old Guy's yard when he caught us and had to start going on and on about don't eat that it's a Jack-o'-Lantern mushroom that's poisonous but Brainiac said why does it look like it's been eaten already? And the COG said raccoons! They like mushrooms but they will will get sick if they eat a toxic one. Then Brainiac said I bet you don't know why some mushrooms bioluminesce. You know, a recent Brazilian study found the glow regulated by a temperature-compensated circadian clock so the glow is brightest at night. The authors suggest the light attracts insects that inadvertently distribute the mushroom's spores. Let's go, I'm getting bored.

Any Time Is Dues Time

Pay ACC dues? Really?

No, not you. Those big hairless things that care about us.

Join today.
Check out the back page; it's so easy to pay.
And cheap.

Randol Mill Park Carol Marcotte

Trail mulching events were disrupted by all the RAIN in April! NO one is complaining. UTA Big Event set for April 18 and another April 25 were both cancelled. That said, Neighbors of Randol Mill Park volunteers did manage to get in some trail mulching time. We worked on both the north and south mulch piles, and May 23 both piles were leveled. And invasive plants removed — Thank you, Josh Parkerson. Volunteers were Jimmy Barrera, Dick Schoech, Faith Salfen, Josh Parkerson, Carla Frierson, Laurie Jagielski, and Carol Marcotte.

Thank you ALL! And thanks to APRD for the mulch and tools. Park visitors have expressed their appreciation for the work and look.

continued on page 18

Randol Mill Park continued from page 17, continued on page 19

On May 16, Josh Parkerson removed privet with his magic shovel while participating in a trail mulching event.

After a windy, cloudy morning, our 4th Thursday Volunteers were excited to see their results on the Pond Triangle Garden. Thank you, each and every one! *From left,* Faith Salfen, Ann Hawkins, and Dick Schoech. Carol Marcotte photos.

From left, Dick Schoech, Ann Hawkins, Carol Marcotte, and Faith Salfen.

Randol Mill Park continued from page 18, continued on page 20

May rains produced high levels in the park's big pond, but at a certain point the overflow system took care of all the excess water.

Randol Mill Park continued from page 19

A few of the many park residents we're seeing this spring. *From left,* Yellow salsify, Venus's looking glass, White prickly poppy. Carol Marcotte photos. *Bottom,* Louisiana red crawfish. Jimmy Barerra photo.

Molly Hollar Wildscape Update Marian Hiler

Volunteers welcomed lovely weather during several workdays this period. Cooler temps and rainfall made for easy weeding and planting. These tasks were made even less troublesome with assistance from Arlington's 2nd Ward - The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who joined us as part of their group service project on a Saturday workday.

Church members removed bunches of weeds from the overgrown north end of the stone bridge path and from under the bluebird house in the new prairie. They also planted greenhouse-grown frogfruit in the path to the pocket prairie to mitigate its erosion.

Another workday was spent cleaning up a spot along the disc golf 18th hole fairway where little bluestem was planted 3 years ago. The grass obviously likes it there so more — all from the greenhouse — was added.

It was heartening to learn that the group of homeschooled children we've been seeing in the park regularly on our Wednesday workdays this spring are part of Barefoot University, a nature-based, child-led learning program. One outing, they had invited Texas Conservation Alliance to introduce the kids to bird migration. Another plus. We've got a lead on a speaker for one of ACC's monthly meetings.

continued on page 22

The hard-working team from Arlington 2nd Ward - The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Ann Knudsen photo.

Wildscape Update continued from page 21, continued on page 23

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at work in the wildscape

Church members take out weeds that covered the path entrance. Marian Hiler photo.

Members plant frogfruit on the west end of the path to the pocket prairie. Marian Hiler photo.

Dana Austin (wildscape shirt) and church members clear out brome from under bluebird house. Marian Hiler photo.

Wildscape Update continued from page 22, continued on page 24

Time for more Little bluestem

Above, Faithful volunteers clear out weeds from Little bluestem patch at fairway. *From left,* Christine Brinson, Carol Marcotte, Ann Knudsen, Chris Raney, Cindy Underwood, and Marylee Thomason. *Left,* Chris Raney applies compost to freshly planted grasses. Below, Planting is complete. Marian Hiler photos.

Wildscape Update continued from page 23, continued on page 25

It's all happening at the wildscape

Above, Volunteers plant more little bluestem in the pocket prairie. *From front,* Ann Knudsen, Cindy Underwood, Dana Austin, and Chris Raney. *Right,* Marylee Thomason and Dana Austin weed along the edge of the lonesome oak area. *Below,* Mei Ling Liu of Texas Conservation Alliance. Marian Hiler photos.

Wildscape Update continued from page 24, continued on page 26

More compost!
And more Purple martins, too!

Below, Patsy Miller adds compost to the newly planted Blackfoot daisy in the berm area. Sezar Fakhimi photo. *Right,* Volunteers complete overdue maintenance on purple martin birdhouse. Ann Knudsen photo.

Wildscape Update continued from page 25, continued on page 27

Above, Translucent wings of the Satellite fly and Eastern band-winged hover fly. Ann Knudsen photo. *Below left,* Diamondflowers. Marian Hiler photo. *Below right,* Hunter's little paper wasp on Prairie parsley. Ann Knudsen photo.

First Saturday mini-classes

There wasn't a first Saturday workday/mini-class in May due to the Native Plant Society's successful plant sale at Randol Mill Park.

At the mini-class scheduled for June 6, Morgan Chivers and Kayli Nauls will talk about the "Maverick Prairies" initiative at UTA which maintains four (and counting!) native polyculture habitats across campus. Morgan is the UTA Maker Literacies Librarian for Experiential Learning. Kayli is an undergraduate student at UTA in her second year of the Sustainable Urban Design program.

Mini-classes are held in the compost area and begin about 10:30 as the workday volunteers put away the day's tools.

Volunteer Opportunities Summer Hours 8 - noon
Wednesdays and first Saturdays

All are welcome, no experience necessary. Members of ecology and garden groups can earn credit hours.

Wildscape Update continued from page 26, continued on page 28

Below, Spectacular Standing cypress came up from Molly's memorial seedballs. Marian Hiler photo. *Above right,* A katydid visits an American basketflower. Marian Hiler photo. *Below right,* Tiny Carolina mantis. Ann Knudsen photo.

Wildscape Update continued from page 27

Above, Agarita berries, both bright and tasty. Marian Hiler photo.
Above right, Sawgill mushroom, so named for its serrated, sawtooth-like gills. Ann Knudsen photo.
Below right, Mason Wasp on prairie parsley. Ann Knudsen photo.

Social Media? Yup.

Be sure to visit

ACC's Facebook page

(865 followers)
and
Discussion Group

(161 members)

What do you want to talk about today?

Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve

City Nature Challenge Events at SCNP **Michael Smith**

Around Earth Day, nature throws a party, and the dancing and eating and games all involve iNaturalist. The party's host is called "City Nature Challenge," a four-day global bioblitz in which the partygoers look around at all the life that surrounds us and take photos or recordings so that everyone can see all the riches, the birds, fish, insects, trees and grass, all the life that our planet offers.

In our little corner of southwest Arlington, we joined the party at Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve.

A wonderful group of folks gathered at 8:00 pm on Friday, April 24, and I played recordings of our toads, treefrogs, true frogs, and cricket frogs. And the Blanchard's cricket frogs at the south pond joined in, giving us a nice chorus of "grick-grick-grick" multiplied by a good number of frogs. That resulted in a call index of 3, using the system developed for rating the intensity of frog symphonies and song cycles. So many frogs calling that the sound, for a little while, was continuous and overlapping.

As the light faded and the moon shone in the darkness, we walked the trails to the big pond. Right away we found a striped bark scorpion which glowed a ghostly blue under Glen's black light. Then as soon as we got to the water's edge, we noticed a mammalian partygoer swimming in the pond, reaching the surface and then disappearing, and then briefly heading for shore until she or he spotted all the flashlights and humans watching. Someone noticed the animal apparently had a flattened tail, and so we concluded (without a photo) that it had been a beaver.

Blanchard's Cricket Frog

As we explored the shoreline, the cricket frogs continued their chorus. These are little frogs — one could sit on your thumbnail — with big voices. So big that I needed to verify for our folks that these loud frogs were indeed cricket frogs. What sounds in the distance like a click, maybe two pebbles knocked together, up close is a "grick!" with a slightly different texture and tone.

And all of that energy coming from a little male pulsing that vocal sac under the chin over and over again to signal his presence to a female. If she comes to him, he will fertilize the eggs she lays in shallow water to start the next generation. Their lifespan is a few months to a year or so, and they are constantly being picked off by a number of predators, and so these choruses are critical to their survival.

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City Nature Challenge

In the midst of all those cricket frogs calling, we began noticing spiders at the water's edge, like the delicate, long-legged ones called long-jawed orb weavers. They're harmless to us, and those long jaws that grab the spider's prey are not a threat to us. Their role is to weave webs near the water so as to trap small insects found there.

Pisaurina dubia

Another was a group of spiders I knew from hanging out with spider expert Meghan Cassidy. One of the spiders she photographed and we used in the *Mindfulness in Texas Nature* book was a small nursery web spider so obscure that it's known only by the scientific name *Pisaurina dubia*. Yet another of the small and inoffensive spiders of the preserve.

But the next one was more substantial (yet still harmless to us). At the base of some cattails was a six-spotted fishing spider, resting on the water with legs spread across two or three inches. They are powerful predators that can catch and eat insects, small tadpoles and frogs, and little fish.

Six-spotted fishing spider

The best, or most noteworthy, of these arachnids was found by Edgar on the last part of the walk. He caught this little beast as it ambled along the trail and brought it for us to try to identify. I was amazed to find that it was a small **solifuge**, the first that I've seen at the preserve. I've found them in West Texas though, and they are fast and have very powerful jaws. Reassuringly, they have no venom, just those big mandibles – two on top and two beneath. They can bite and chew up invertebrates and even small vertebrates. Solifugids have a variety of common names, like wind scorpion or sun spider, though they are neither scorpions nor spiders. They have their own group (their own order) within the class Arachnida.

The solifuge, flourescing under black light. Jenny Kocher photo.

The next morning, the party continued although I was on my own. Starting at 9:00 am I visited the pollinator meadow briefly and then walked up to the bluff, past dozens of blooming spiderworts and whitemouth dayflowers. This is a beautiful time of year, and soon the spotted beebalm should have their time.

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Yucca Moth Walk on May 9 Annabelle Corboy

Thank you to Grace and John Darling for leading a rag-tag group of explorers Saturday evening. What Grace called a lively group consisted of Jan (welcoming us in the parking lot, then wisely not following us down the trails on crutches) me, my son, Ethan, and two of his children, Penny and Teddy. John and Grace were helpful, knowledgeable, and very patient. There were blooming yucca plants with moths; we also found plenty of leaf-footed bugs, spiders, and the kids were introduced to bull nettle. It was a lovely evening! Grace summed it up like this: We had a small but lively group of humans and, though the moths were scarce, the orb weaver spiders along the trail were a big hit! Beautiful webs, probably in the *Argiope* group. We could have used Meghan Cassidy (not for the first time).

Yucca blooms with moths.

And Michael Smith added, maybe spotted orbweavers, genus *Neoscona*? The one in the pic is eating something; the darker thing is not part of the body.

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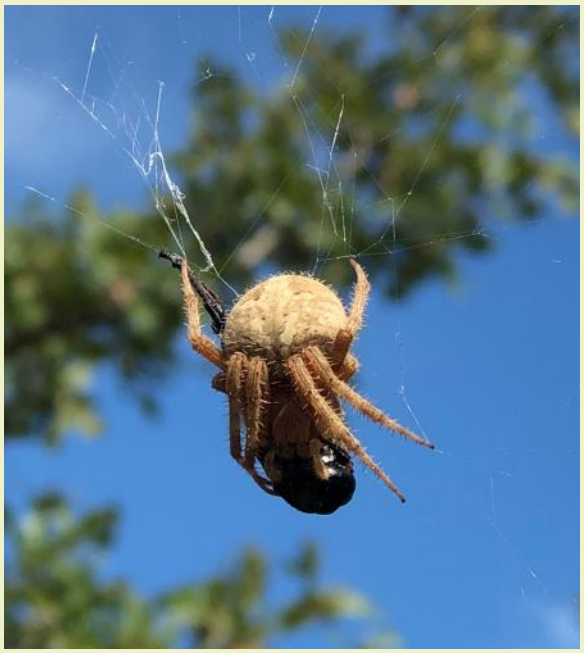
Leaf-footed bug on yucca flowers.

Grace Darling and Ethan Poteet photos.



Orb weaver spider with prey.

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Third Saturday Volunteers and Trails Jim Frisinger

In May, Third Saturday volunteers continued the work of a big trails initiative at Sheri Capehart. After April's major construction efforts by our partners at SouthPoint Constructors to rework two trails, the follow-on work by our volunteers involves trail grading/resurfacing and seeding/transplanting. The Blue Trail along the North Prairie was reworked to fix serious erosion of the old ranch road with a serpentining of the path to dump runoff off the trail. Each swing of the new trail back and forth exposed "pockets" — 17 in all — that need seeding. Two are done; 15 to go! As the rains continue this wet spring, we will fine-tune the drainage at both the Blue Trail and the Yellow Trail, which now has major cedar timber steps installed by our SouthPoint volunteers. Work continues in preparation to hire an outside contractor by the Friends of Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve to fix four other trail segments. When the preserve was opened, no provision was made in the plans for ongoing trail construction and maintenance by the City of Arlington.

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Above, Yellow Trail restoration with timbers by SouthPoint Constructors volunteers in April. Jim Fuquay photos. *Below,* Jim Frisinger (yellow shirt) and Rudy Arnold use decomposed granite to resurface the Blue Trail. Jim Domke photos.

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Bats, Again Jim Frisinger

For the third year, the preserve provided a site for monitoring bats. Texas Nature Trackers at the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department have reached out to Texas Master Naturalist chapters across the state again this year to be the citizen foot soldiers to carry out the program. It's part of a continental monitoring effort, the North American Bat Monitoring Program, to assess the population of bats in the face of White Nose Syndrome, habitat loss, climate change and other factors.

Volunteer Karen Harden helps set up a bat monitoring pole overlooking the South Pond.

A New Fly Jim Frisinger

Last year, a very small fly, the Texas Micropirate, *Townsendia pulcherrima*, was found at Thora Hart Park in Arlington. Until then, it had only been known from a natural history collection's 1903 specimen in Austin. Sam Kieschnick's posting on iNaturalist was the first time this species had ever been captured in a living photograph. There have now been many sightings — this year and last — at Thora Hart and nearby Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve in Arlington. Seven of the sightings at Sheri Capehart have been in the last year at the Glen Rose Yucca Meadow.

The Texas Micropirate is a tiny robber fly, with typical behavior — short sallies from a perch with frequent returns to the same low perch, preferring very sandy areas. Find more about this genus here - https://robberfly.org/townsendia/

Kieschnick wrote that some areas of Thora Hart Park may just seem like "sandy areas without turf." But to the naturalist community, this park is an ideal place of exploration and refuge. It is tremendously rich in biodiversity as well. So far, nearly 1,000 unique species have been documented just within this park.

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Right, Texas micropirate. Sam Kieschnick photo taken May 15 at Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve.

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City Nature Challenge 2026 — Dallas/Fort Worth Jim Frisinger

City Nature Challenge 2026 – Dallas / Fort Worth
The iNaturalist-sponsored City Nature Challenge (CNC) has something for nature nerds and number nerds alike, and it's especially appealing to competitive nature nerds. If you don't know what iNaturalist is, read more here.

This year marks the 11th City Nature Challenge. The competition is the excuse to hold the event, but the reason is to promote community science around the globe. From just 2 cities competing in 2016, it has grown to 754 cities across 71 countries in 2026.

The Dallas/Fort Worth area has participated since the 2nd CNC and has been a top performer throughout the years, winning with most Observations (23,957) in 2017 and placing in the top tier every year since. This year we were third in Observations (85,399), behind Ostrava and San Antonio.

As for Dallas / Fort Worth, a bit of trivia:
Most Observed Plant: Pinkladies, *Oenothera speciosa*
Most Observed Animal: Common Buckeye, *Junonia coenia*

And we always hope to get Observations of species that haven't been recorded in iNaturalist before. There were 30 in our area this year. Here are two of them.

- Bicolored Smooth Hispine, *Stenispa collaris* — only one other Observation, and that one was collected in the Texas panhandle in 1970!
- *Yumachrysa incerta* — a type of lacewing that's only been recorded 2 other times, those both in Austin, Texas.

Mark your calendars! City Nature Challenge 2027 will take place from April 30th to May 3rd.

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Left, *Yumachrysa incerta*. *Right,* Bicolored Smooth Hispine, *Stenispa collaris*.

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SCNP iNaturalist Observations — April 2026 Annabelle Corboy

Well, what a difference the City Nature Challenge makes! Totals for April: 940 Observations, 462 Species, 22 Observers.

And as a result, we have 45 species first observed at SCNP this April. The following photos are a selection of those.

Totals at SCNP at the end of April:

26,769 Observations / 2,224 Species / 2,152 Identifiers / 355 Observers

From left, Basil Beebalm *(Monarda clinopodioides)* - charley, Brown Thrasher *(Toxostoma rufum)* - austenunt, Common Funnel *(Infundibulicybe gibba)* - sambiology

Spiny Softshell *(Apalone spinifera)* – austenunt

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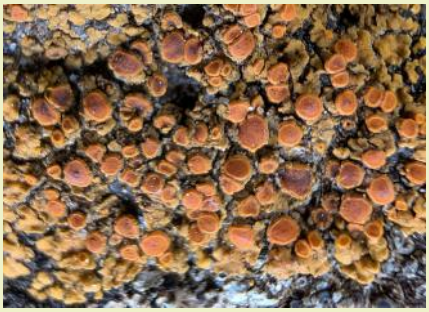
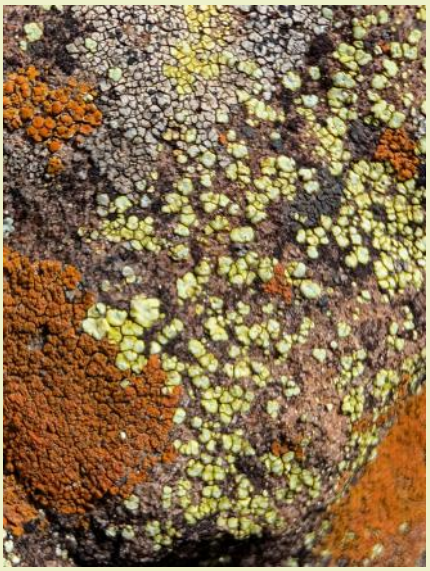
SCNP iNaturalist Observations — April 2026 Annabelle Corboy



Above from left, Eastern Comma (*Polygonia comma)* - drawntoscales, Cottony Maple Scale *(Neopulvinaria innumerabilis)* - sam_dragon-moore, Sidewalk Firedot *(Xanthocarpia feracissima)* - bobbie79

Below from left, DeKay's Brownsnake *(Storeria dekayi)* - wildlifeoftexas, Yellow Cobblestone Lichen *(Acarospora socialis)* - bobbie79, Red-shouldered Melyrid *(Melyrodes basalis)* - sambiology.



Blackland Prairie Preserve Guy Random

All drenched and no sun,
Dry heat would go a long way
To ease this mad rush.
Where are we going?
I know! More up and more out!
Don't think about drought.

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Our June Zoom Meeting on Wednesday, June 3

See page 6 for more on this meeting.