



NATURALIST NOTES

June 2025



Happy Insect Week

This Texas Eyed Click Beetle flew into me at Herman Brown Park before landing on the path.

“Bird, bird, bird. Hello bird.
You lift me up bird.
You sing the day beautiful, bird.”

Excerpt from “Birdsong of Shaker Way” by Ann-Margaret Lim,
submitted by Shannon Morrison

Red-Tailed Hawk Project

Did you know that there are 16 subspecies of *Buteo jamaicensis*? Some don't even have a red tail!

In the Houston area we have the *borealis* subspecies. The Red-Tailed Hawk Project at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is the first to pull together a variety of study methods to better understand this common bird.

For more information, visit <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/>

YOUR Chapter Needs YOU

Our chapter cannot function without dedicated board members and the volunteers who support them. Please consider joining one of the committees.



NPS

Record Number of Kemp's Ridley Nests

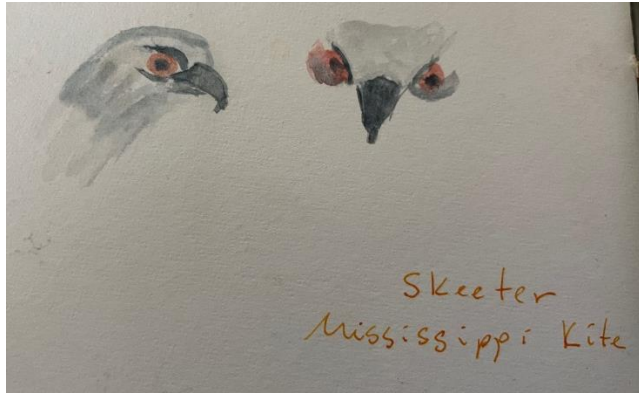
As of June 13th, 383 nests have been documented. As the nesting season is not over, more nests are expected. If you spot a turtle on the beach or see tracks, please contact 956-243- 4361. If you want to watch a hatchling release, please check <https://www.nps.gov/pais/planyourvisit/hatchlingreleases.htm>

Accessible Trail Maintenance at HANC

A small but mighty group braved the heat on Saturday, June 21st to maintain the accessible trails at the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center. From left: Richard Solberg (lead), Ridley Smith, Tony Banks, Jay Dryden, and Michael Breazeale. Not pictured: Susan Coffman and Michelle Victoria.

Please reach out to Richard with questions.





“Skeeter” at the Houston Audubon Raptor Center, September 2022. Watercolor

Organism of the Month – Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)

I’ve been observing these graceful birds lately, and think they make a great addition to the Organism of the Month series.

The Mississippi Kite is a medium-sized bird of prey with pointed wings and a deeply forked tail. Adults have blueish-gray plumage with a darker gray head and lighter belly. The wingspan is 90 cm (3 ft). The bright yellow eyes provide excellent vision for spotting prey. Their average lifespan is 8 years.

Mississippi Kites feed mainly on larger invertebrates and insects such as cicadas, grasshoppers, and crickets. As opportunistic hunters they may also consume small vertebrates. Kites provide important agricultural pest control services.

Monogamous pairs of Kites nest in colonies. Two eggs are laid in twig nests. Both parents provide incubation and nestling care. Although originally nesting in open forests and savannahs, Kites have adapted to hedgerows and other man-made vegetation belts. Nesting success is higher in urban areas due to the absence of predators. Young fledge after only 30 to 34 days.

Kites protect their nests and will dive bomb humans who come too close. This behavior occurs in about 20% of nests. Maintaining at least a 50 ft distance minimizes disturbing the birds. If that is not possible, waving hands in the air keeps birds from making contact with people.

Mississippi Kite populations have increased, and their breeding range may be slowly expanding northward.

Is the Bobcat a Lynx?

If you answered 'Yes', you are correct! Its Latin name is *Lynx rufus* for its reddish brown to grayish coat. There are four varieties of lynx in the world and two may be found in the United States. The Eurasian Lynx is found in Western Europe and into Asia. The Iberian Lynx is found in Spain and Portugal. The two found in the United States are the Canada Lynx and the Bobcat. The Canada Lynx is found in Canada, Alaska and Colorado/New Mexico since being reintroduced in the 1990s. Bobcats are found in Southern Canada, throughout the United States and in northern Mexico.

Bobcats are smaller than the Canada Lynx. Bobcat males weigh up to 30 pounds and females weigh up to 22 pounds. The Bobcat has a stocky build with long legs and a short tail. Its tufted ears are black with a white dot, its tail is white underneath, it has a face ruff and its coat sports distinct black rings. They prey primarily on small mammals and birds.

Bobcats live in a variety of habitats and often live near humans, though they don't typically pose a danger to humans. They raise their young, 2-7 per litter, in dens built in crevices, boulder piles or thickets. Because of their high adaptability, despite habitat loss and poorly monitored hunting, they are classified as a Species of Least Concern. This Spring, while birding at the Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary which is on Quintana barrier island, I saw a Bobcat two different times. Both times it was moving away from me, but its telltale size, shape and color convinced me it was a Bobcat. I've seen them sitting in the tall grass watching us pass as we fished along a small creek off of Chocolate Bayou. And I've seen one with four almost-grown kittens at the edge of a tall grass prairie near John Paul Landing Park in Western Harris County.



Two Bobcats at George Bush Park, Photo by Walter Allmandinger, Source: iNaturalist photo 170967045, [CC By-NC](#)

Sources: [Small Cat Spotlight: What's a Lynx? | Panthera](#) and [Bobcat \(*Lynx rufus*\) | TPWD](#)

Shannon Morrison



Weather – Humidity

Definition

Humidity is defined as the amount of water vapor in the air. Water vapor is invisible, but it tells us how likely precipitation, fog, or dew are. Relative humidity compares the current amount of water vapor to the maximum amount the air can hold at a given temperature. It is expressed as a percentage.

Fog forms when air reaches 100% relative humidity. As the temperature rises, air can hold more water vapor, which decreases the relative humidity. This is why fog tends to be heaviest in the morning and burns off as the day progresses.



Effect of Humidity

Humans use sweating to control body temperature. The evaporation of sweat removes heat from the body. When the humidity is high, sweat does not evaporate as readily. This can lead to overheating, which can be life-threatening. Weather reports use heat index to explain the effect of humidity on our bodies. For example, a relative humidity of 58% can make 92 F feel like 103 F in Houston.

Measuring Humidity

A device that measures humidity is called a hygrometer. Devices that measure both temperature and relative humidity indoors are readily available. On a global scale, satellites measure the concentration of water vapor in the troposphere, between 2.5 and 7.5 miles about the surface. Water vapor absorbs radiation and re-emits it in the infrared range. Satellites measure infrared radiation. These measurements are important for monitoring climate conditions and forecasting weather events such as thunderstorms.

Sources: Wikipedia, wunderground