

June 2026



Naturalist Notes

Upcoming

Tue, Jun 23rd – Shrike Prairie Planting Day.
Help Coastal Prairie Conservancy plant
and seed in front of the Matt Cooke
Viewing Platform. Sign up with CPC.

Thu, Jul 2nd – Monthly Chapter Meeting at
HANC, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm.

Sat, Jul 11th – Winter in July SPLASh
cleanup at Arthur Storey Park, 8 am – 11
am.

Share Your Passion

What are you passionate about
as a Texas Master Naturalist?
Planting, counting, cleaning,
maintaining, transporting?
Whatever it is, tell the chapter
about it. Articles both long and
short, photographs, book
reviews – all are welcome.

Haiku for a Cool Kingfisher

Hey girl, fish lover,
Sitting on a dead gray tree,
Love the blue Mohawk.

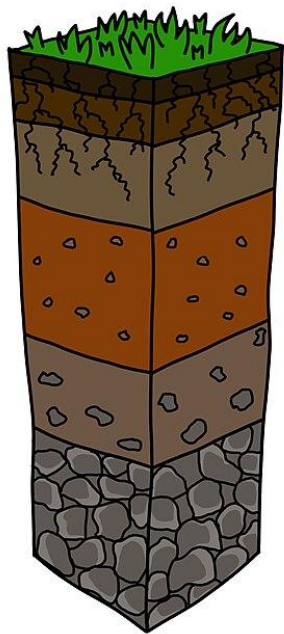
– Jane Yolen (1939-2026)
'Birds of a Feather'



Soil – Mima Mounds

Mima mounds, also known as 'pimples' are a sign of a remnant prairie that has never been plowed. Although the elevation change is measured in inches to feet, the soil of the mounds is very different from that of the surrounding prairie. First, a quick overview of soil horizons.

Soil Horizons



O Horizon
A Horizon
E Horizon
B Horizon
C Horizon
R Horizon

In soils with distinct layers, the layers follow a predictable sequence. The topmost layer (O horizon) is composed of fresh or decomposing plants and animals. The next layer (A horizon), also known as topsoil, is rich in minerals and humified plant materials. In contrast, the E horizon is rich in sand and silt materials and poor in clay, iron, and minerals. Minerals and clay leached from above accumulate in the B horizon. In areas where there is bedrock, the C horizon consists of partially weathered rock fragments, while the R horizon is unchanged bedrock.

Mima Mounds

Mima mounds have an extra thick A and E horizon consisting of coarse, well-drained sand and loam mixtures. A flat or slightly depressed clay rich B horizon lies beneath. Drainage creates a drier micro-environment at the top of the mound, which supports unique plant species.



"The top three conservation issues in Texas are water, water and water."

Robert Cook

Executive director of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department 2002-2008

Organism of the Month

Assassin Bug (*Zelus cervicalis*)

One of many critters caught in the sweep net at Deer Park Prairie at the recent open house, this assassin bug lacks a common name. *Zelus cervicalis* is widespread across the Americas. It is a slender true bug with long legs and long antennae. Undergoing incomplete metamorphosis, the nymph may look very different from the adult.



While most Hemipterans use their piercing and sucking mouthparts on plants, assassin bugs prey on other insects. This species and others in the genus *Zelus* use a sticky trap to help catch prey. Skin glands on their legs secrete a sticky substance. The insect rubs this substance into hairs, setae, along the leg. This may be why you can see various bits stuck to the legs of this individual. Once caught, prey is injected with digestive saliva and the resulting juices sucked up.

Because it feeds on plant pests, assassin bugs are beneficial to home gardens. It's best to admire them from a distance though, as many assassin bugs can deliver a painful bite.

Sources: Wikipedia, Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District - Virginia



New World screwworm Case in South Texas

The flesh-eating New World screwworm has been detected in South Texas, marking the parasite's return to the U.S. decades after it was eradicated nationwide. The New World screwworm is a parasitic fly whose larvae feed on the living tissue of warm-blooded animals, including cattle, wildlife, pets and, in rare cases, humans. Left untreated, infestations can cause severe injuries and death.

The parasite was eradicated from the United States in the 1960s through a program that released sterilized male flies to stop the species from reproducing. The effort pushed the pest south, but in recent years it has steadily spread back north through Mexico, prompting state and federal officials to closely monitor its advance toward the U.S. border.

The state already launched an effort earlier this year, including plans for a new \$750 million facility in South Texas aimed at preventing the parasite's spread.

-Excerpted from Lucio Vasquez, HPM

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Awards Statewide Recreational Trails Grants Totaling \$6.17 million

AUSTIN—The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission approved more than \$6.17 million in grants during its May meeting in Austin, funding 21 trail construction and maintenance projects across the state.

The National Recreational Trails Fund (NRTF) supports recreational trail construction, renovation and acquisition through grants funded from a portion of the federal gas tax generated by fuel purchases for off-highway vehicles. The fund must be used to support a diverse mix of both motorized and non-motorized trail projects.

This year, \$3.675 million in NRTF funds were made available for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Recreational Trails Grants Program. In addition to the federal funds, \$1.59 million of the state Sporting Goods Sales Tax was allocated for eligible trail projects.

A portion of the grant funds, up to \$900,000, will be used to support trail improvement projects in state parks.

In Galveston County, \$220,304 has been awarded to the Galveston Bay Foundation for the construction of a 1.5-mile, 7-foot-wide multi-surface trail which will include bridges, picnic tables, benches and an educational kiosk. This new trail will be the Gessner Center Trail & Resiliency Project.

-TPWD News Release 6/1/26



“But when I sit still and alone
trees hatch warblers rapid as sparks.
The price of seeing is silence.
A voracious furnace of shrew darts
in the grass like a truncated snake.
On my arm a woodnymph lights probing
me curiously, faintly, as she opens
and closes the tapestried doors of flight.”

Excerpt from ‘Intruding’
Marge Pierce
‘Circles on the Water’