

The Making of a Million

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



COVER: Fireflies at TNC's Independence Creek Preserve. © KENNY BRAUN

THIS PAGE: Rock Creek Ranch in the Texas Panhandle. © BRENT CAVANAUGH

From the Director



We made it ... 1 million acres protected by The Nature Conservancy in Texas! In a place where over 95% of land is privately owned, such an achievement is no small feat. This milestone has been made possible by so many of you, including many conservation trailblazers who helped start this journey nearly 60 years ago. While it's important to pause and commemorate this incredible accomplishment, there is still much more work to be done now.

How big is a million acres, you may wonder? Larger than the city of Philadelphia, and bigger still than the entire state of Rhode Island. But perhaps more important than the size is what lies within this protected area: thousands of plants and wildlife species, millions of acre-feet of water, and hundreds of ranches, parks, and scenic places now preserved for future generations of Texans.

What does TNC have in store as we look ahead? For starters, our mission won't change. TNC remains dedicated to collaborating with partners, Indigenous Peoples, landowners, and others to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We'll continue to protect and steward Texas' most treasured landscapes, rivers, wildlife, and way of life, just as we have since 1964.

However, what continues to change is the urgency of our mission. While there is much to applaud related to protecting a million acres, it is only a very small sliver of Texas. We already have our sights set on big opportunities to safeguard the natural places, working lands, and wildlife habitat we love. The growth of our state is inevitable, and as climate change impacts us all, it is vital that we support smarter and more resilient development for the benefit of people and nature.

On behalf of the Texas Chapter—preserve managers, scientists, prescribed fire practitioners, government relations managers, and more—we can't thank you enough for your confidence in our expertise and the support you provide for our projects and activities. There's much more to come as we celebrate our *Million-Acre Milestone* next year. For now, we're proud to report on another great year for Texas. Enjoy this look back at our conservation wins and successes from 2023.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Suzanne B. Scott". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a matching green color to the organization's branding.

Suzanne B. Scott

2023 Bright Spots

Shining a light on the people, places, and projects that are illuminating our conservation work.

JANUARY: We collaborated with clean energy company Ørsted on an agreement to preserve nearly 1,000 acres of the largest remaining example of a rare type of tallgrass prairie endemic to Texas, known as the **Smiley-Woodfin Native Prairie Grassland**. With this upcoming land donation, TNC will have protected nearly 5,000 acres of prairie in total in North Texas.

FEBRUARY: TNC supporters and staff gathered to honor former TNC Texas State Director **Carter Smith** on his retirement from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. To commemorate Smith's legacy, TNC established the Carter Smith Conservation Internship, welcoming Texas State University student **Thalia Williams** as our inaugural intern.

MARCH: TNC colleagues from the Grassland Conservation Network and the Regenerative Grazing Lands Team joined us at the **Refugio-Goliad Prairie Project** to experience our grassland conservation work firsthand. Visiting staff had the opportunity to speak directly with ranchers about land management practices and enjoyed sightings of Attwater's prairie chickens and whooping cranes.

APRIL: Earth Month was filled with a flurry of outdoor activities. TNC staff supported bird and nature walks at Brackenridge Park in San Antonio, hosted wildflower tours at **Clymer Meadow Preserve**, and conducted guided hikes at both **Love Creek Preserve** and **Marathon Grasslands Preserve**. As part of the 2023 Witness Series, we also worked with partners to hold a bioblitz for the **2023 City Nature Challenge** in Houston's Burnett Bayland Park.

MAY: We authored and released new research with the **Texas Living Waters Project** that demonstrates how water markets can help alleviate water scarcity, protect the economy, and benefit the environment. Read the full report at nature.org/texaswatermarkets.

JUNE: Director of Strategic Initiatives **Jeff Weigel** and Conservation Science and Strategy Specialist **Lisa Williams** celebrated their 40th and 30th anniversaries, respectively, during the month. We're deeply grateful for their many years of service with the Texas Chapter.

January

© JUSTIN PARKER



February

© THALIA WILLIAMS



March

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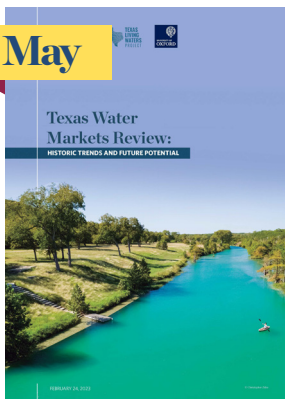


April

© APRIL FRAZIER

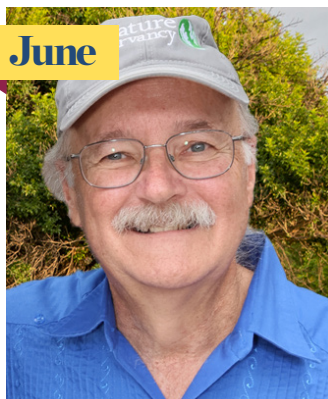


May



© CHRISTOPHER ZEBO

June



© MARY CANDEE



© JACQUELINE FERRATO

July

© CHARLOTTE NASH



JULY: Our Texas Climate Team hosted the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees at **Lap Reef in Copano Bay**. Lap Reef is a 60-acre oyster reef restored by TNC in 2019 as part sanctuary, part harvestable reef. Sampling at the site has shown a dramatic increase in species, emphasizing the importance of oyster reefs in providing habitat for other marine species.

August

© KENNY BRAUN



AUGUST: We hosted our second annual **West Texas Women in Conservation Retreat** at the **Davis Mountains Preserve** for a group of college women in early August. Participants got their hands dirty learning new skills in the field from 20 professional women working in conservation.

September

© BRENT CAVANAUGH



SEPTEMBER: TNC purchased the 9,550-acre **Rock Creek Ranch** in the Texas Panhandle near Lake Meredith, which was at risk of being developed into a housing subdivision. This property will be put under easement and resold as part of a multi-state effort to secure a network of grasslands across the Southern High Plains—a region threatened by sprawling development and land conversion.

OCTOBER: Emeritus Trustee **Carol Dinkins** was awarded the **Oak Leaf Award**, TNC's highest honor, at the 2023 Volunteer Leadership Summit in Washington, DC. Carol has been a steadfast supporter and dedicated ambassador of TNC for nearly 40 years, and her leadership has significantly advanced TNC's local, divisional, and global priorities.

© KEN CEDENO



October

NOVEMBER: TNC's **Lennox Foundation Southmost Preserve** participated in the **30TH Annual Lower Rio Grande Birding Festival**. As one of the top birding locales in the nation, festival enthusiasts took field trips to the preserve to observe numerous rare species.

© RICH KOSTECKE



November

DECEMBER: TNC will have protected its **1 millionth acre** in Texas! Help us celebrate this milestone by visiting nature.org/donatetexas and making a year-end gift to the Texas Chapter. Here's to safeguarding a million more!

© R.J. HINKLE



December







HONEY CREEK RANCH:
**A Sweet
Success**

Honey Creek State Natural Area.

© DAVE SIMS MEDIA

Honey Creek Ranch: A Sweet Success

This year, we completed the final piece of a complex conservation puzzle. Honey Creek Ranch's 515 acres connect the lands that now protect a wide swath of Hill Country habitat and watershed. To appreciate the intricate pathway to this victory, it's important to first understand TNC's long-standing conservation ties to Honey Creek.

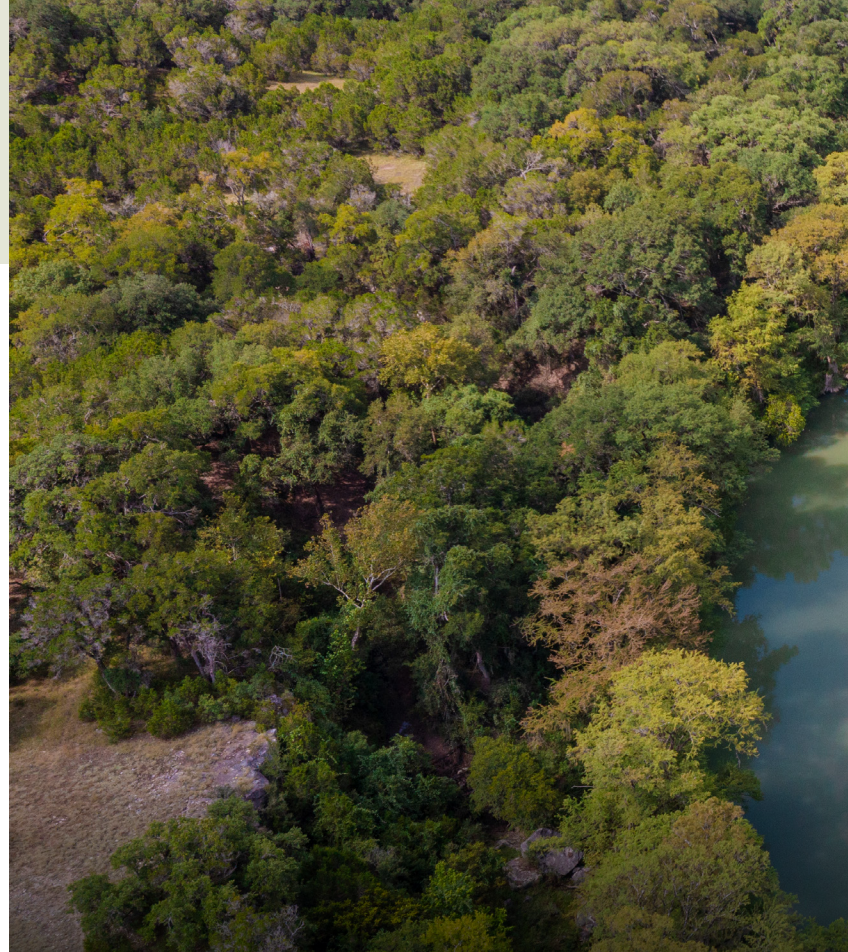
Our Honey Creek History

The story of Honey Creek begins in 1981, when TNC acquired 1,825 acres just 30 miles north of San Antonio, dotted with caves and trickling turquoise waters. In Texas, conservation is collaborative—many diverse people and partners are essential for getting things done right. So, in 1985, we transferred this initial acreage to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to create the 2,294-acre Honey Creek State Natural Area. Together with the adjacent Guadalupe River State Park, these lands encompass nearly 5,000 acres of protected habitat in Central Texas.

Nearly four decades later, safeguarding the Texas Hill Country remains one of our highest priorities. As the region's scrubby woodlands disappear, species like the endangered golden-cheeked warbler and rare black-capped vireo are at risk of losing their nesting territory. Developments continue to pop up across Central Texas, like rain lilies sprouting after a storm, especially as the population rises each year. While this growth has contributed to a prosperous economy, it's still important that we carve out spaces that protect our natural areas, growing the region with biodiversity in mind.

Safeguarding a Spring

In 2021, TNC secured a conservation easement on 612 acres located directly next to Guadalupe River State Park. The property, known as Honey Creek Spring Ranch—not to be confused with Honey Creek Ranch—is home to Honey Creek Cave, the longest-known cave system in Texas, which provides habitat for many threatened and endemic species like the Comal blind salamander. Here, the cypress-lined spring that feeds the headwaters of Honey Creek bubbles to the surface, giving life to the watershed. Preserving the acreage was essential to keep this "land of milk and honey" flowing into the future.



Hope for Honey Creek Ranch

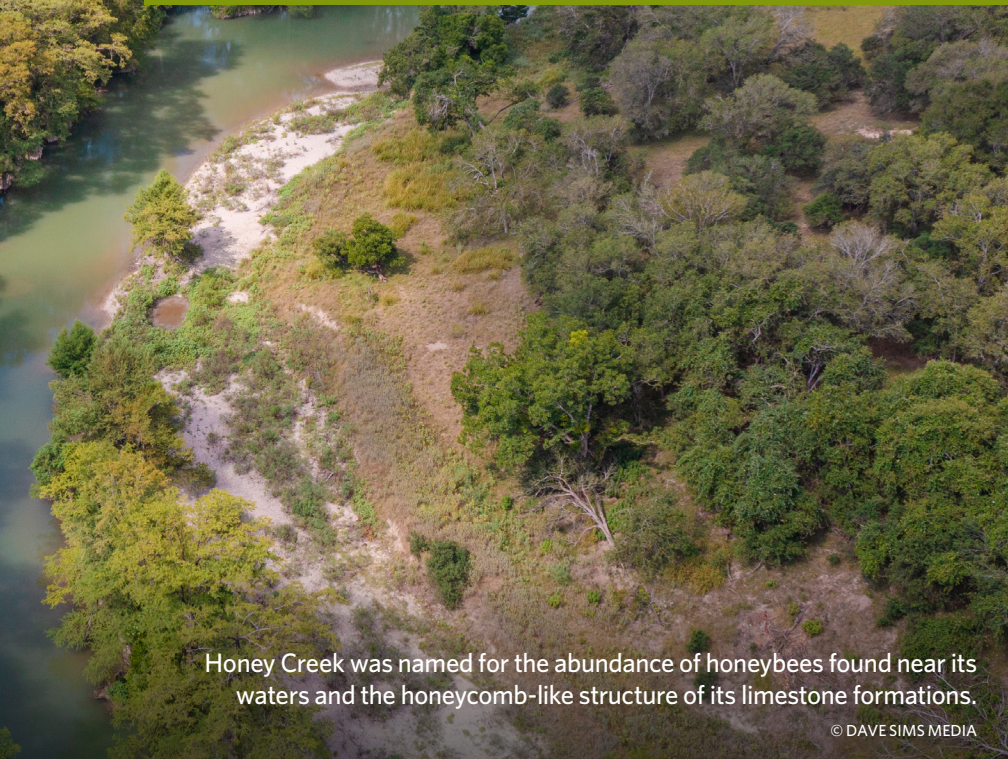
Then came the challenge of Honey Creek Ranch. A 1,600-home housing development was proposed on an unspoiled 515-acre tract in Comal County abutting the Honey Creek State Natural Area. TNC, TPWD, Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation (TPWF), and local community members knew they needed to act, or 40 years of conservation work might be washed away. Runoff and wastewater from this potential development posed risks to the water quality of Honey Creek, the Edwards Aquifer, and Canyon Lake Reservoir—on which roughly 36,000 Texans depend for drinking water.

As concerns mounted about the development, the planning process for the subdivision continued for years. But after months of discussions with the property owners, nearby school officials, and stakeholders, TNC and TPWD reached an agreement to purchase over 500 acres from the landowners for \$25 million in June of 2023. The best part: The property will eventually be incorporated into the Honey Creek State Natural Area, offering folks the chance to camp, hike, swim, and more on the land.

Financing this conservation endeavor took the support of many. The acquisition was funded in part by TPWD's Land and Water Conservation Fund allocation—which was expanded by the Great American Outdoors Act in 2020. Thanks to this bipartisan legislation, the state's budget for land acquisitions from federal funding went from \$3 million to more than \$17 million overnight. The Fund, which requires a "one-to-one" match, allowed TNC and partners to leverage both private donations and state funding to take full advantage of these new federal dollars.

Although Honey Creek Ranch proved to be one of the most complex land deals in TNC's history it has also been one of our sweetest victories—a golden opportunity to do right by both people and

Thanks to the help of landowners **Ronnie and Terry Urbanczyk, Comal ISD, TPWF**, partners and funders like the **Horizon Foundation, Karen Hixon, Knobloch Family Foundation, Mays Family Foundation, Jacob and Terese Hershey Foundation, Kronkosky Charitable Foundation, The Meadows Foundation, and Amy Shelton McNutt Charitable Trust**, we protected an invaluable slice of the Texas Hill Country.



Honey Creek was named for the abundance of honeybees found near its waters and the honeycomb-like structure of its limestone formations.

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nature. We're proud to have safeguarded the watershed—and the communities and species that depend on it—and we hope the tale of Honey Creek will inspire others to come together and preserve the natural treasures all around them.

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© ELE CHEW



TO LEARN MORE, BUZZ OVER TO [nature.org/honeycreekranch](https://www.nature.org/honeycreekranch)

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Making of a Million

Beneath the feet of many Central Texans lies the Edwards Aquifer, a source of drinking water for nearly 2 million people in the region. Since the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program was founded in 2000, TNC and partners have protected more than 173,000 acres located over this critical water resource to preserve the quality and quantity of water recharging the aquifer.



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: Comal Blind Salamander

The Comal blind salamander, or Honey Creek Cave blind salamander, is endemic to the water-filled caves of Comal, Bexar, and Kendall counties, fed by the Edwards Aquifer. This small amphibian has a translucent body with frilly external gills in place of lungs. Since it lives in total darkness, it has no need for vision. Despite its lack of sight, the salamander is an expert hunter, sensing prey by changes in water pressure caused by movement. The greatest threats to the rare Comal blind salamander are the pollution and depletion of freshwater supplies to the Edwards Aquifer.

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The Many Meanings of Fire





Prescribed burn at TNC's Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary.

© CLAIRE EVERETT

The Many Meanings of Fire

The word “fire” may conjure images of destruction and danger, especially in recent years as more frequent and intense wildfires have drastically impacted people and nature here in Texas and across the nation. But not all fire is necessarily bad. Prescribed fire—planned burns conducted by trained fire practitioners to manage and restore our lands and waters—is perhaps the most important tool we use for conservation. It not only revitalizes and enhances biodiversity, but also helps prevent catastrophic wildfires by removing excess fuel.



© LUKE BALL

While suppression was once standard practice, TNC is using prescribed fire as a critical land management technique to create healthy and resilient landscapes. This year, we invested significantly in our skilled team of fire practitioners to help put more beneficial flames on the ground. In 2023, our Texas Prescribed Fire Team burned nearly 5,500 acres of land, ranging from conservation easements to TNC-owned nature preserves to partner properties and beyond. Just like the diverse habitats that comprise this acreage, fire holds very different meanings for the countless human and natural communities that depend upon and live within our uniquely Texan landscape.

Beneficial Flames: Just as Nature Intended

For conservationists, prescribed fire represents maintaining the health and diversity of our natural habitats—just as they were once inherently managed by nature. Most of Texas’ landscapes are fire-adapted, meaning they need fire at regular intervals to flourish. But due to an overemphasis

on putting fires out as quickly as possible over the last century—and an underemphasis on utilizing safe, planned burns—fire has largely been excluded from the places that need it most. Natural systems now require prescribed fire as a type of managed disturbance to remove dead vegetation, prevent encroachment from invasive or non-native plant species, spread seeds, and return nutrients to the soil, just as nature intended.

To burn landscapes at scale, it takes the assistance of many people, ranging from landowners and municipalities to agencies and volunteers. For these partners, controlled burns can equal prevention. Prescribed fire is one of the best ways to reduce the risk of disastrous wildfires. Historically, frequently occurring natural fires significantly shaped the ecology of our grasslands and forests, reducing the intensity of any unplanned fires by removing leaf litter and other plant material that could serve as fuel. Fire practitioners safely mimic this natural process, using burn plans to apply “the right fire at the right place at the right time.”

Prairies, like those found at TNC's Clive Runnells Family Mad Island Marsh Preserve, depend on fire to replenish their soil nutrients.

© ERNEST LOVE



For Indigenous peoples, like the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, prescribed fire signifies culture and heritage—a resource they have used to steward their lands for millennia. The magnificent longleaf pine of their native Big Thicket region is fire dependent, meaning it relies on consistent occurrences of fire to thrive. Providing healing medicines and materials for homes and baskets, these pine forests have stood as a pillar of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe's way of life, helping shape the traditions and customs that have been passed down over time to new generations of tribal members. Investing in fire to proactively manage the longleaf pine means investing in their identity and future.

For Texas' flora and fauna, prescribed fire implies a healthy environment: rich soils with recycled nutrients, diverse plant growth, and plenty of pollinators abuzz. The resulting checks and balances created by fires allow nature to thrive. Most native animals and plants that live in fire-prone communities become accustomed to these events and adapt to them. On the other hand, an invasive plant species would likely be less fire tolerant and easily removed by flames. The effects of a healthy natural community are felt all the way up the food chain, from cattle and other foragers to top-level predators.

Taking Shape Together

Put all of these meanings together and it's clear that, under the right conditions, fire offers many benefits to people and nature. Ensuring that we have well-trained fire practitioners—and the resources they need to effectively manage our lands and waters with prescribed burns—is just one way that we can help nature get back on track to functioning properly. One little flame can ignite much more than just land—it can spark change, growth, and resilience.

EXPLORE OUR PRESCRIBED FIRE WORK AT
nature.org/texasprescribedfire

The Making of a Million:

In Texas, we have records of burns on our properties dating back to 1975, but the first burn done by fire practitioners at The Nature Conservancy in Texas took place in 1978 at the Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary. Today, our team of 10 fire specialists and three burn bosses continues to use fire to help nature thrive.



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT:

Longleaf Pine Tree

Did you know that longleaf pine trees are fire-resistant? Mature longleaf pines reach average heights of 80 feet to 100 feet tall! Shaped like a telephone pole, the tree's lengthy inner trunk is protected from fire by a layer of thick outer bark while most of its needled canopy sits at the top of the tree, out of reach of low-intensity flames.

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Could Blue Be the New Green?



TNC's Clive Runnells Family
Mad Island Marsh Preserve.
© KENNY BRAUN

Could Blue Be the New Green?

The Lone Star State may be better known for rocky mesas and arid grasslands, but Texas' coastal wetlands could be part of an untapped solution to climate change. Our wetlands can store substantial amounts of carbon and, if undisturbed, that carbon can remain locked in the soil for thousands of years. At the same time, marshes, mangroves, and other wetland habitats protect coastal communities from sea level rise and damaging storms. All along Texas' 3,355 miles of shoreline, coastal wetlands exist as both an asset and an opportunity.



Yet development pressure threatens the long-term health of these ecosystems—and their ability to store carbon over significant periods of time. To address that threat, TNC is using innovative methods to map coastal wetlands and their migration pathways and assess their potential for carbon storage.

Wetlands Working Hard

In the 1950s, Texas' wetlands covered some 4 million acres—a diverse mix of seagrass beds, salt and freshwater marshes, and stands of shrubby mangroves. By the early 1990s, development had caused the loss of nearly two-thirds of that historic coverage. Today, climate change is putting new pressure on coastal wetlands by increasing the rate of sea level rise and changing rainfall patterns and the inflow of fresh water into the system.

Those vulnerable habitats provide multiple benefits for people and nature. Wetlands offer critical habitat for wildlife, including birds such as endangered brown pelicans and whooping cranes. They also serve as a buffer between land and sea, protecting coastal communities from flooding and destructive storm surges. As sea levels increase and weather patterns change, wetland habitats soak up and store carbon, boosting coastal resilience.

Exploring Blue Carbon in Texas

Blue carbon is an intriguing possibility in Texas, which produces 13% of U.S. carbon emissions, the highest rate in the country. TNC is assessing how much carbon Texas' wetlands can store and under what conditions—the first step toward developing a blue carbon project along the Texas coast. We've also started to map areas to show where wetlands currently exist and where they might migrate.

TNC recently completed a study to examine technical, financial, and other aspects of developing blue carbon credit projects in Texas. Findings indicate that it is more efficient and cost-effective to protect existing marshes than to create new ones.

As a result, we're tackling a range of demonstration projects to quantify the carbon benefits of different conservation and restoration initiatives. TNC already protects wetlands across the state, like the Francine Cohn Preserve near Port Aransas, and is working to acquire a conservation easement on the 1,200-acre Port Bay Ranch on Copano Bay near Rockport. Such protected sites could serve as living laboratories, where we can collect data and measure the carbon benefits of different restoration strategies, including erosion control methods, hydrological restoration, or the use of dredged material to stabilize shorelines and restore wetlands.

TNC is now working to prioritize and address any key data gaps or research needs to better inform the next stage of this project, including the development of new opportunity maps for the Gulf. These action maps will be co-developed with a working group of state and federal resource managers, environmental NGOs, landowners, and others, then cross-referenced with high-priority areas identified in existing plans and by key stakeholders. A consensus-based action plan will help identify viable carbon credit projects and will be a useful tool for wetland protection funding and decision making.

We'll continue collaborating with property owners, restoration practitioners, and land and resource managers to identify and secure the most promising sites for blue carbon.

Thank you for making this work possible: **COmON Foundation, Janet Harman and Kent Mayes, Alice and Kevin Steiner, Builders Initiative, and The Edaren Foundation.**



Wetlands not only hold significant amounts of carbon, but also provide critical habitat for many species of birds.

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Establishing blue carbon projects in Texas could help landowners obtain funds to protect and manage their wetland properties into the future.

With solid science and hard data in hand, we're developing an action plan to evaluate the possibility of implementing blue carbon initiatives on the Texas Gulf Coast. By finding innovative ways to preserve our coastal wetlands, we can protect biodiversity, help stabilize the climate, and safeguard coastal communities from the increasing hazards of climate change.

DIG UP MORE ON BLUE CARBON AT
nature.org/texasbluecarbon

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The Making of a Million:

The Texas Gulf Coast spans more than 2 million acres from Port Arthur to the Bahia Grande.

With the assistance of partners, TNC has helped protect or manage over 170,000 acres of coastal prairies, marshes, and beaches, from the 60,000-acre McFaddin and Texas Point National Wildlife Refuge complex on the Louisiana state line to Boca Chica State Park just north of the U.S.-Mexico border.



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: Roseate Spoonbill

Each year, millions of migrating birds rely on Texas' coastal wetlands to roost, rest, and eat. The roseate spoonbill can be found wading through this habitat, using its spoon-shaped bill to forage for small fish and crustaceans. These flamboyant birds receive their pink plumage from the shrimp and other marine invertebrates they consume, which are rich with carotenoids (red and yellow pigments). The presence of healthy and abundant marshlands is critical to the roseate spoonbill's survival as they support the species that make up the birds' diet.

© RICH KOSTECKE





Biodiversity Abounds

With the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act approaching in late December and the reintroduction of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act to the Senate this year, the opportunity to invest in the right policies, funding, and science to safeguard our species has never been timelier. More than 1,600 species are already listed under the Endangered Species Act while another 150 are presumed extinct—and state fish and wildlife agencies have identified more than 12,000 that need conservation help now.



Ocelot in South Texas.
© FIN AND FUR FILMS

In Texas, experts have identified more than 1,300 Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the state—species that are declining or rare and need help to recover. Fragmentation and loss of habitat are some of the greatest threats to our biodiversity. As the state grows, investing in natural and green infrastructure is one of the best ways to ensure that species have the habitat they need to thrive alongside communities. Thoughtful planning efforts, like the *Hill Country Natural Resources Plan*, which TNC co-authored with a coalition of partners, are offering pathways toward more sustainable development.

At the same time, it's critical that we capitalize on opportunities to invest in state parks and implement policy initiatives that protect open space, like the Centennial Parks Conservation Fund that we supported this year. This \$1

billion endowment would be the largest investment in parks in our state's history and would allow for the creation of new parks, ensuring Texans have access to public lands for generations to come.

TNC continues to work across the state to connect landscapes, restore habitat, and advance recovery efforts for many distinctly Texan plants and animals—and this year was no exception. Every strategy that guided our work included biodiversity benefits or outcomes to support species. From preserving about 20,000 acres of land statewide to permanently protecting 200 acre-feet of senior water rights downstream of Lake O' the Pines, we celebrated tangible wins in 2023 that are helping TNC strike a balance for flora and fauna.

Biodiversity Abounds

Put your bounty of biodiversity knowledge to the test with this quiz about the species we support with our conservation initiatives in Texas!

All answers listed at bottom right of next page.



© CARLTON WARD, JR.

1. Which species of endangered sea turtle can be found on the shores of South Padre Island, nesting during the day in group events known as “arribadas?”

- A. Green turtle
- B. Kemp’s ridley
- C. Loggerhead
- D. Hawksbill



© RICH KOSTECKE

2. The federally listed golden-cheeked warbler nests exclusively in the Ashe juniper woodlands of Central Texas, often returning to the same area each year to breed. Select all the TNC preserves where this small songbird can be seen.

- A. Barton Creek Habitat Preserve
- B. Love Creek Preserve
- C. Frank Klein Cibolo Bluffs Nature Preserve
- D. Clymer Meadow Preserve

© JACQUELINE FERRATO



3. Can you name the federally endangered cactus that, in Texas, is found in only two counties (Starr and Zapata)? Its dome-like shape resembles that of a sand dollar.

- A. Prickly pear cactus
- B. Tobusch fishhook cactus
- C. Pincushion cactus
- D. Star cactus

4. Did you know there are three types of horned lizards, or horny toads, in Texas? Can you identify the mountain short-horned lizard (aka greater short-horned lizard), which commonly resides in the forests of the Davis and Guadalupe mountains of West Texas?

A.



© RICH KOSTECKE

B.



C.



Bonus Question

Can you name the proposed legislation that, if passed, would allocate \$1.397 billion per year to state and Tribal efforts to help recover endangered species and prevent at-risk wildlife from becoming endangered?



5. The murky, flowing rivers of East Texas provide excellent habitat for this fish, known for its elongated snout. It's also considered the oldest surviving animal species in North America. Can you identify this scale-less, tooth-less creature?

- A. Swordfish
- B. Catfish
- C. Paddlefish
- D. Alligator gar

7. Wild populations of the endangered Attwater's prairie chicken reached a 20-year high in 2023! These beautiful grassland birds depend on coastal prairie habitat, especially for nesting. During mating season, males woo mates by performing an audibly elaborate display for a group of females. Can you guess the term commonly used for the sound these prairie chickens make during their mating displays?



© ELE CHEW

- A. Crashing
- B. Chattering
- C. Booming
- D. Flirting

9. Mexican free-tailed bats are agricultural-pest eating machines! These small mammals can make a big impact by consuming up to two-thirds of their body weight, with a single large colony of bats eating up to 2 tons of insects in a night. They are also impressive flyers, which allows them to cover ground quickly. What is the highest recorded flight speed for these bats?



© KARINE AIGNER

- A. 100 mph
- B. 60 mph
- C. 25 mph
- D. 10 mph

- A. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Act
- B. Recovering America's Wildlife Act
- C. America the Beautiful
- D. Species Protection Act

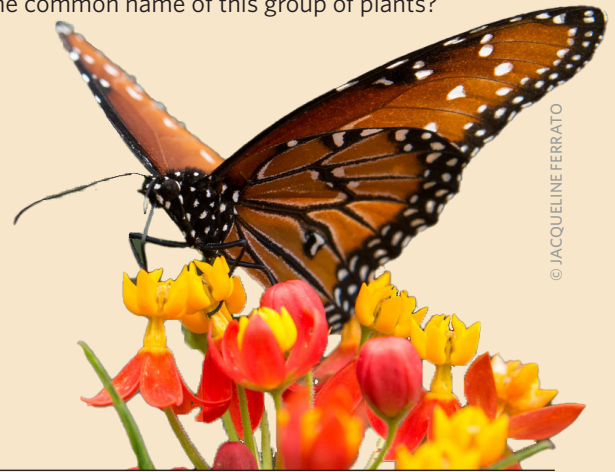


6. Black bears have been steadily returning to Texas after numbers declined significantly in the 1940s. Today, these "beary" rare bruins are protected as an endangered species in Texas. In which part of the state can most of the black bear population be found, often munching on a sotol plant?

- A. Trans-Pecos
- B. Hill Country
- C. Pineywoods
- D. Panhandle

8. The monarch butterfly stores poison in its body as a defense mechanism against predators. Its bright orange colors serve as a warning, mimicked by several other butterflies, such as the queen and the viceroy. The toxicity of the monarchs originates in the caterpillar stage, when they eat a certain plant that contains this toxin. What is the common name of this group of plants?

- A. Milk thistle
- B. Milkweed
- C. Ragweed
- D. Milkvetch



© JACQUELINE FERRATO



10. Oysters are the unsung heroes of our oceans. These beneficial bivalves clean the surrounding water, serving as natural filters and improving water quality. Research shows that in one day, a healthy 25-acre oyster reef can filter roughly the same amount of water as used by which Texas city?

- A. Dallas
- B. Austin
- C. San Antonio
- D. Houston

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SCAN TO LEARN MORE



"I have seen firsthand the amazing work TNC Texas does to protect some of the natural spaces I love the most. I became part of the Legacy Club after my daughters were born, and I made a will with my plans for their future. Watching them enjoy nature as they grow has been one of the best parts of this stage of my life. I am glad that through TNC I can contribute to the preservation of our ecosystems and ensuring more children will be able to thrive in them."

Eva Fernández



Thanks a Million

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Touching Down Beyond Texas

Many of the environmental challenges facing Texas today are being felt across the globe. Nature knows no boundaries, and to achieve our 2030 conservation goals, TNC's work is reaching far beyond the borders of the Lone Star State. Thank you to all the inspiring supporters, who are helping us make a global impact by furthering TNC's efforts around the world.



“Raised in Amarillo, I know first-hand the restorative value of beautiful sunsets, vast mesas and canyons, and healthy grasslands. This landscape—its waters, critters, and people—have no boundaries. I’m delighted to support the Texas Chapter’s inaugural project, Rock Creek Ranch, as part of TNC’s smart, ambitious Southern High Plains Initiative.”

Laura Whiting



With half of the Earth’s coral reefs and 85% of shellfish reefs lost to date, TNC and Mary Kay are urgently working together to protect and restore remaining reefs. “Mary Kay’s founder, Mary Kay Ash, believed that there are three types of people in this world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened. We’re honored to join forces with the first type of people to develop the tools and resources needed to protect our oceans for generations to come.”

Deborah Gibbins

Chief Operating Officer, Mary Kay, Inc.



“Jack and I started supporting The Nature Conservancy over 30 years ago. Back then, the conservation strategy was simple ... find good land, buy it, and protect it. But protected doesn’t always mean healthy, and today’s twin crises of changing climate and vanishing habitat demand a global solution. The Nature Conservancy has set an audacious goal to protect 30% of Earth’s lands and waters by the year 2030. The organization is attacking the challenges by working on six continents and the oceans in between, and Jack and I have been honored to offer challenge matches for new donors around the world. TNC’s conservation work will always be grounded in place, but to achieve global results at scale, TNC uses more tools—protection, policy, impact finance, and strong partnerships—all to benefit nature and people.”

Carolyn Long

Have Questions or Want to Learn more?

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For direct correspondence about making a philanthropic donation or supporting our conservation work in Texas, please send mail to The Nature Conservancy in Texas Headquarters at 2632 Broadway, Suite 201S, San Antonio, TX 78215.

Visit [nature.org/donatetexas](https://www.nature.org/donatetexas) to make a gift online.







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To conserve the lands and
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