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# Houston's monk parakeets can cause power outages, but the invasive green birds are mostly harmless

By **Alexia Partouche**, Staff writer  
June 21, 2025



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Spotted a flash of green in the Houston suburbs? It might have been a monk parakeet, an invasive species that has been flying around in Texas for nearly 50 years.

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## When did monk parakeets get here?

The monk parakeet is originally from South America, according to Houston Audubon. In the 60s, large numbers of the birds were brought over for the pet trade, according to Texas A&M AgriLife Research. The first reported monk parakeets in Texas were seen in the 1970s, about 50 years ago.

Now, the bird has been spotted across the state, but it tends to prefer urban and suburban habitats, according to Houston Audubon. Monk parakeet colonies can be found in the suburbs of Austin and Houston, as well as near Kemah, according to AgriLife Research.

## Are monk parakeets harmful?

Despite being named an invasive species, Jessica Eberhard, an assistant professor in Louisiana State University's Department of Biological Sciences, said she hasn't been able to find information about the parakeets competing with native species.

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"The 'invasive' word kind of sounds scary, but so far the populations in the US really aren't behaving in any kind of alarming way," said Eberhard, who works with the [Texas Invasive Bird Project](#).

Although there were concerns in the decade after the monk parakeet was brought over that it was negatively affecting agriculture, that's not where the birds have done the most harm, according to the [Texas Invasive Species Institute](#).

Instead, they've caused problems with their nests. Monk parakeets are unique in that they build nests out of sticks, unlike other parrot species that nest in natural cavities like tree hollows, Eberhard said.

The parakeets have been known to build their nests, which are large enough to fit multiple birds, around the utility poles of power lines, causing outages, according to the [Texas Invasive Species Institute](#). Even when a nest is removed, the birds have been observed rebuilding it in the same location.

CenterPoint Energy said in a statement that the birds have been known to nest on the company's power delivery equipment.

"In some cases, monk parakeet nests present operational concerns, and we carefully remove them." CenterPoint Energy said in the statement.

"As part of our comprehensive avian protection program, we manage bird nests in a humane manner, under proper authorizations and in collaboration with natural resource agencies and wildlife rehabilitation professionals."

## **What can you do if you see a monk parakeet?**

The [Texas Invasive Bird Project](#) encourages community members to fill out a form whenever they spot the parakeet or any of the five other invasive birds the Project is studying.

Details like when a bird is observed, where it was found and what the habitat was like can help researchers document the bird's spread across the state, according to the [Project's report form](#).

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Alexia Partouche





REPORTING INTERN



Alexia Partouche is a reporting intern for the Houston Chronicle.

She graduated in May 2025 from American University with a degree in journalism and served as co-editor-in-chief of the school's investigative student media outlet, AWOL. Alexia previously interned for the Investigative Reporting Workshop, Agence France-Presse, The Missoulian, Current, Street Sense Media and Houstonia Magazine.

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