



LOCAL // TRENDING

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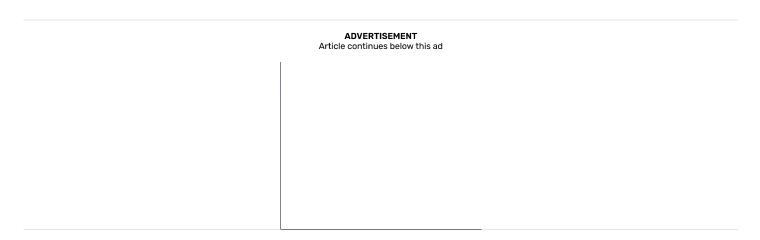
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Spotted a flash of green in the Houston suburbs? It might have been a monk parakeet, an invasive species that has been flying around in Texas for nearly 50 years.

Here's what you should know about our colorful neighbors.

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When did monk parakeets get here?

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

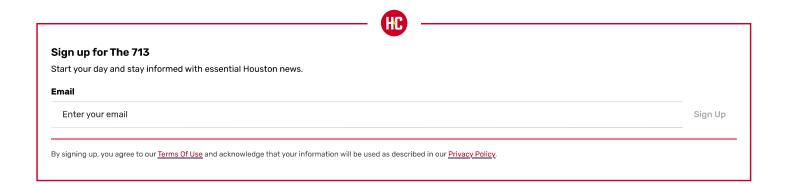
Now, the bird has been spotted across the state, but it tends to prefer urban and suburban habitats, according to <u>Houston</u> <u>Audubon</u>. Monk parakeet colonies can be found in the suburbs of Austin and Houston, as well as near Kemah, according to AgriLife Research.

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.

"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 <u>Texas Invasive Bird Project</u> .	l
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 <u>Texas Invasive Species Institute</u> .	
Instead, they've caused problems with their nests. Monk parakeets are unique in that they build nests out of sticks, unlike ot parrot species that nest in natural cavities like tree hollows, Eberhard said.	her
The parakeets have been known to build their nests, which are large enough to fit multiple birds, around the utility poles of plines, causing outages, according to the <u>Texas Invasive Species Institute</u> . Even when a nest is removed, the birds have been observed rebuilding it in the same location.	oowe
CenterPoint Energy said in a statement that the birds have been known to nest on the company's power delivery equipment	t.
"In some cases, monk parakeet nests present operational concerns, and we carefully remove them." CenterPoint Energy said the statement.	d in
"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 <u>Texas Invasive Bird Project</u> encourages community members to fill out a form whenever they spot the parakeet or any of five other invasive birds the Project is studying.	of the

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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