



Prairie Pathways And Low-Mow Program Update

Chione Lawton, Ziad Kharrat,
Marshall McGee & Erik Miller

PRB 26-021 August 3, 2026



*American Bumblebee
on Green Antelopehorn Milkweed
Fire Station 8 (Pilot Site)
April 29, 2026*

The Program So Far

Virtual Engagement	In-person Engagement
~ 10,800 observations	Seven Community Events
1,000+ Species	Over 75 Volunteers
Over 270 Observers	200+ total participants
Over 1,400 Identifiers	~30 Organizations/Departments

Events Include:

- Sustainability Fairs
- Herpetology Walks
- Bioblitzes
- Prescribed Burns
- Site Preparation
- Bird Walks

- Keep Denton Beautiful
- Environmental Services & Sustainability
- Texas Women's University
- North Texas University
- Denton Fire Department
- City of Lewisville PARD
- Texas Master Naturalists
- Ray Roberts State Park
- Texas Parks & Wildlife
- Trinity River Audubon
- Heard Natural Science Museum

National Recreation & Parks Association

Denton celebrates 30 Days of Pollinators event

Sophia Carbajal Sep 11, 2025



ELM Fork Chapter Master Naturalist Renee Province tables during the 30 Days of Pollinators celebration at Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center on Sept. 6, 2025. Photo by Dilip Devanda

Denton's 30 Days of Pollinators is part of a national initiative called [Parks for Pollinators BioBlitz](#), where people across the United States are documenting as many insects, birds and plants as they can by using an app called iNaturalist. As of Sept. 8, Denton community members have uploaded [over a thousand](#) observations, putting the city in first place for the most observations so far.

Denton kicks off month-long ecology event with Eco-Fair and bird walk

POLLINATORS continued from page 1

The 30 Days of Pollinators events are organized by Denton Parks and Recreation employee Chione Lawton, who is earning their master's in environmental science at the university. Lawton has been actively improving Denton's green spaces through a city project called Prairie Pathways, where individuals are working to create native prairies in over 300 acres of unused space in 19 sites around Denton.

Lawton and other community members have created an interactive map showing each green space and the species observations they have made. Lawton said these projects have started Denton's restoration and conservation journeys off strong.

"I got a lot of people finding out about, not just this program, but these other [organizations] and I feel like this is the important start we needed," Lawton said. "People start learning about them, start becoming excited about them and they start seeking more knowledge."

The Eco-Fair took place from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and involved over 14 local organizations. These groups ranged from city organizations like the Denton Fire Department and Sustainable Denton, to university student groups and Girl Scouts.

Each organization had its own table, complete with educational information and activities for

attendees of all ages. Swaim also helped tend the UNT Bird Campus Committee's table, which had information about local native bird species and what people can do to help conserve them.

"When we educate people on the importance of birds, we also educate them on ways to help promote a safe environment for them to live," Swaim said. "I think it's good to let people know all the ways they can contribute, and hopefully they spread the word too."

Madalyn Chandler, university senior and member of the university's chapter of the Society of Ecological Restoration, a national organization focused on restoring biodiversity, created a game for the event. The game allowed attendees to match eight seeds to pictures of a native plant and identify an invasive species called Johnsongrass, which Chandler said is one of the most abundant invasive species.

Chandler said this game is meant to highlight the importance of identifying native plants as well as spread awareness about invasive species to enact change in communities like Denton.

"The world is changing rapidly and there's only so much we can do, but the more we do, the longer we'll be okay," Chandler said. "The longer we'll have clean water, sustainable food, and a natural environment that isn't a concrete hellscape, we'll instead have something to connect with."



SER member Madalyn Chandler tables at the eco-fair during the 30 Days of Pollinators celebration at Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center on Sept. 6, 2025. Photo by Dilip Devanda

Lawton said they use the iNaturalist app every day, which makes them curious and encourages them to examine everything around them with a magnifying glass. Lawton described ecology restoration as their passion and hopes the Denton community falls in love with thriving green spaces.

"You get to restore and recreate an environment and watch everything come back," Lawton said. "It's hands-on, very involved and no day is the same as the next because restoration starts from the soil up."

During the Eco-Fair, Lawton discussed with attendees the importance of incorporating prairie grass into Denton's green spaces, highlighting how its long roots benefit the ecosystem's soil. Lawton

created a handmade scale model for kids to guess how long the roots of prairie grass are. The kids would then pull on the top of the cardboard plant model until the 15-foot-long roots made of yarn came trailing out.

Lawton said they constantly had people at their table spinning for prizes, using the plant model and wanting to learn about native flora and fauna. Lawton said this was precisely the kind of engagement they were hoping would come out of 30 Days of Pollinators.

"The fact that I was so busy I couldn't step away from my tri-fold for a second is a grace that I was given," Lawton said. "I think it couldn't have gone better and I hope everyone enjoyed it."

30 Days of Pollinators & Media Coverage

NEWS

VOL 131 No. 9 • THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2025 PAGE 3

Denton ranks first in nation for pollinator observations

By Isabella Ferreri
Staff Writer

After a month-long competition, Denton has been named first in the nation for pollinator observations during the National Recreation and Park Association's biodiversity event, BioBlitz.

Throughout September, more than 300 volunteer pollinator observers across the city documented insects, plants, hummingbirds, bees and other species that support the local ecosystem.

Using the iNaturalist app, participants recorded and shared their findings with naturalists across the country, contributing to a growing network of citizen scientists.

"We are in peak time for [migration], so we have birds and butterflies migrating further south from Canada all the way south into Central America and South America," said Marshall McGee, Denton resident and parks manager at Denton Parks and Recreation. "We are a funnel point for all of those migrating birds and insects [...] they can stop here, collect pollen and sustenance for the trip."

BioBlitz is an event that focuses on finding and identifying as many species as possible in a specific area over a short period of time.

Observers captured pollinators in action in multiple spots around Denton. McGee said people made observations in parks and preserves across the city, including Denton's own Cross Timbers and Backland Prairie.

One of those participants was Chione "Kiwi" Lawton, a university



Members of the Denton Parks and Recreation department discuss their previous observations during the pollinating BioBlitz on Oct. 16, 2025. Photo by Isabella Ferreri

graduate student and seasonal employee at Denton Parks and Recreation. Lawton helped coordinate several observation events throughout the month.

"I came in with a blank sheet to figure out what we can do, and that ranged from doing little bioblitzes with UNT students to doing larger bioblitzes here at Clear Creek," Lawton said. "The Pollinator BioBlitz is a call to all park associations across the United States as a way to connect with your community and not only recognize the pollinators that are in your space but have your community learn about them too."

Lawton said several employees from the department also joined in. They also reached out to students studying ecology at the university to help them gain hands-on experience through the project.

"We also have an ecology program at UNT, where part of their curriculum is to go out and do observations," Lawton said. "In the ecology or science-related fields, they get a lot of experience through some of these organizations."

Lawton said they reached out for student volunteers to help them gain experience from these observations.

"There are BioBlitz competitions

that happen from different organizations throughout, and anytime they do happen, that group of students is always gung ho to just win," Lawton said. "We were looking at the rankings and encouraging each other to get out and do more observations."

To boost engagement, Denton Parks and Recreation organized several events during the month, some of which featured giveaways donated by Keep Denton Beautiful. These activities encouraged residents to participate and learn more about local wildlife conservation.

Ziad Kharrat, Richardson resident and assistant director of Denton Parks

and Recreation, praised the support they received from the community.

"I was pleasantly surprised that we ranked number one, being that this is a nationwide initiative put on by the National Recreation and Parks Association," Kharrat said. "The Denton community is already very passionate about the environment [...] there is already an existing demographic of people who are already doing observations."

Kharrat said the Denton Parks and Recreation Department is accredited through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies, attained by NRPA.

"This helps us to achieve some of our long-term goals in terms of public engagement, environmental awareness and education," Kharrat said. "To be ranked number one means that we are recognized for being a city that values the environment and values community."

McGee said Denton surpassed 109 park departments across the United States, with Fort Worth finishing second in the competition. The ranking was announced on Oct. 10 in the Friday Staff Report.

"There are a lot of people here, especially in the coming generations, who have a mind for environmentalism conservation, and that excitement makes it easier to move forward to take action and do more of these projects," Lawton said. "I think this rank just highlights the fact that we are already doing that in our city, and this is a recognition of those efforts that are already being made."

Utilizing marketing, multi-departmental collaboration and over 40 volunteers across over a dozen groups, the City of Denton beat out over a hundred other PARs and groups across the nation during the annual Parks for Pollinators Bioblitz hosted by the NRPA.

Keep Denton Beautiful donated items used for prizes for the Top 5 Observers in the city. Marketing crafted and released informational media posts about pollinators throughout the month. We kicked off the month with a three-part event that saw over 120 attendees.

Prescribed Burns

Fun Fact: Indigenous tribes used fire to help push back woody species like trees, revitalize grass, and recycle nutrients back into the prairies.



As part of our restorative process, prescribed burns occurred across three sites in the last 12 months.

Some sites saw multiple burns in that time.

Sites include:

- **Fire Station 7** (burned twice)
- **North Lakes Park Wildflower Trail**
- **Burch Property**

Let's Discuss Denton



Our [Discuss Denton](#) site was launched this year in May of 2026.

On this site we discuss our mission, goals, and our current projects we call 'Phases'. We are gearing up for Phase 2.

We offer event and project updates, important links and resources, as well as an interactive map that shows all observations across our sites.

Phase 1

Fire Station 8 – Pilot Site

Home to both wetland and prairie ecosystems and over 160 species. Awarded the Native Plant Society of Texas – Trinity Forks Chapter Grant to aid our efforts in September of 2025.

Phase 2

Audra Open Space

Roughly 4.5-acres, located off Audra Ln and has already been the subject of multiple seedings by staff. Over 150 species have been documented in this tree-bordered plot.

Phase 3

Cooper Glenn/Monterey Open Space

Home to over 400 species. Both share Cooper Creek, showcasing different fish, lizard, and bird species – representing a well-suited habitat for riparian and wildflower restoration efforts

ArcGIS Interactive Map

Denton GIS - Prairie Pathways Interactive Map

Explore Prairie Pathways

Denton's greenspaces through the lens of community members just like you. Thank you.

Made by Chione (Kiwii) Lawton
Image by Erik Miller

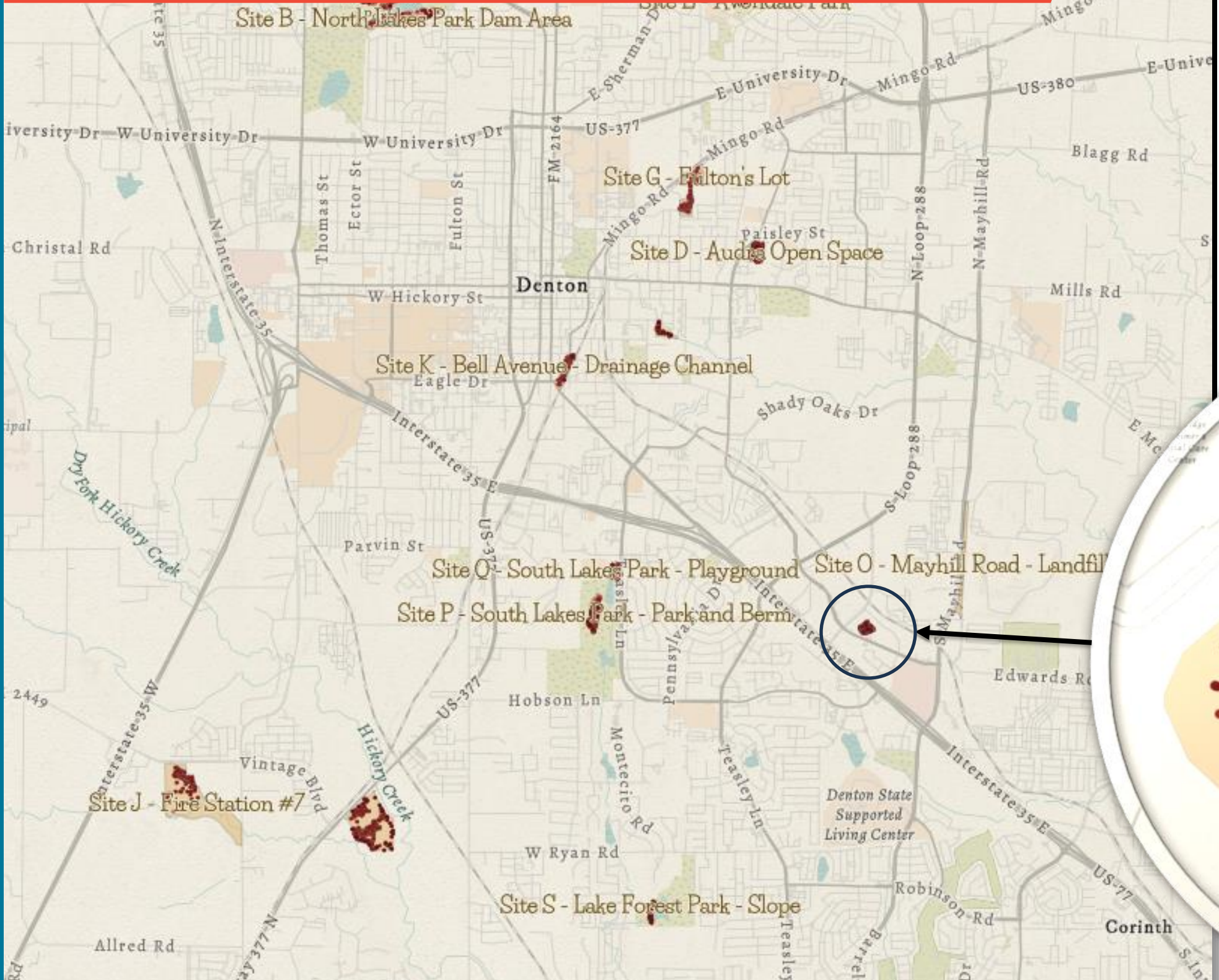
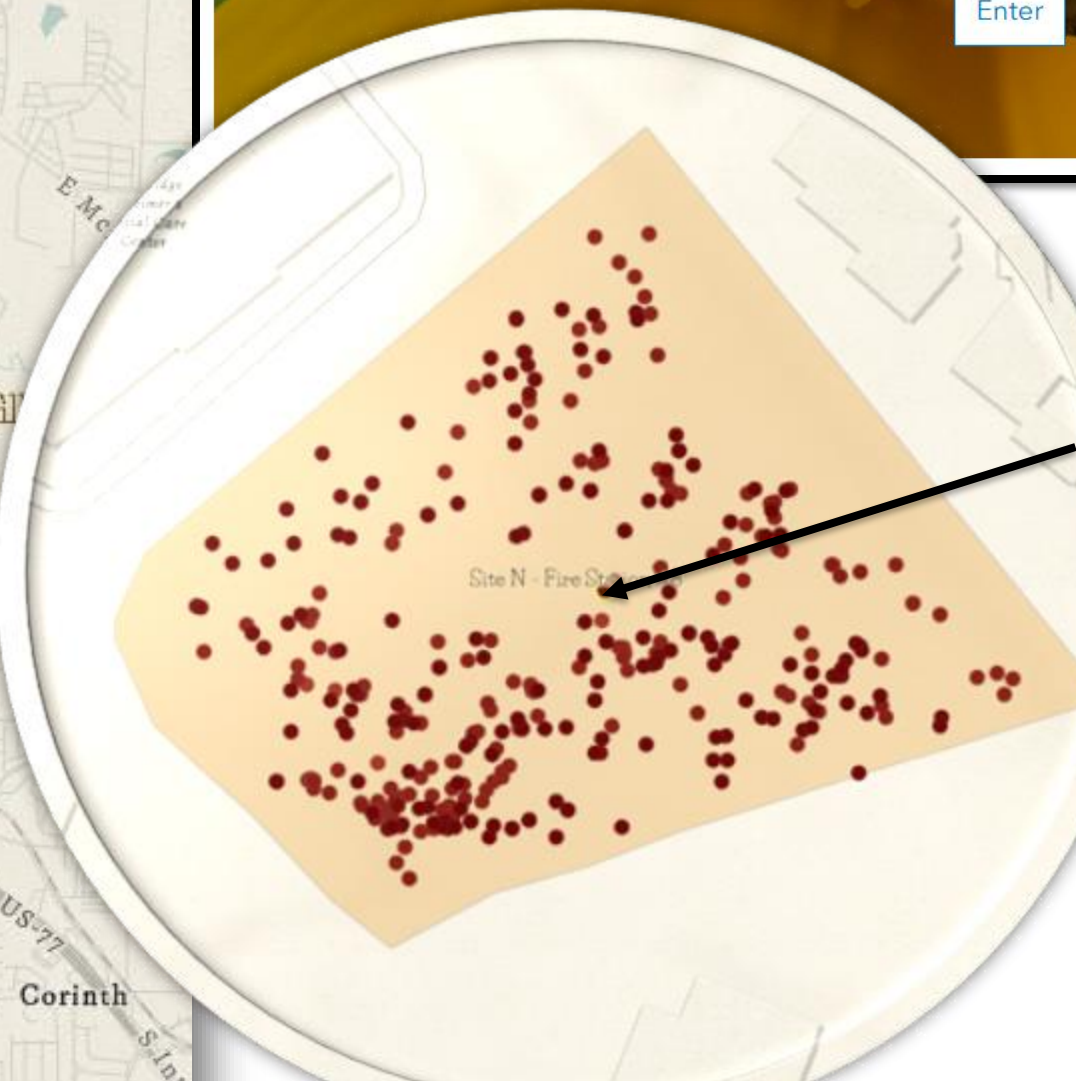
Last Updated: July 2026

Texas Paintbrush (*Castilleja indivisa*)

Enter



Date	04/10/2026, 10:56 AM
iNaturalist Tag	callmekiwii
Observer	Chione (Kiwii)
Kingdom	Plantae
Phylum	Tracheophyta
Class	Magnoliopsida
Order	Lamiales
Greenspace	Site N - Fire Station #8



Fire Station 8 (Pilot Site)

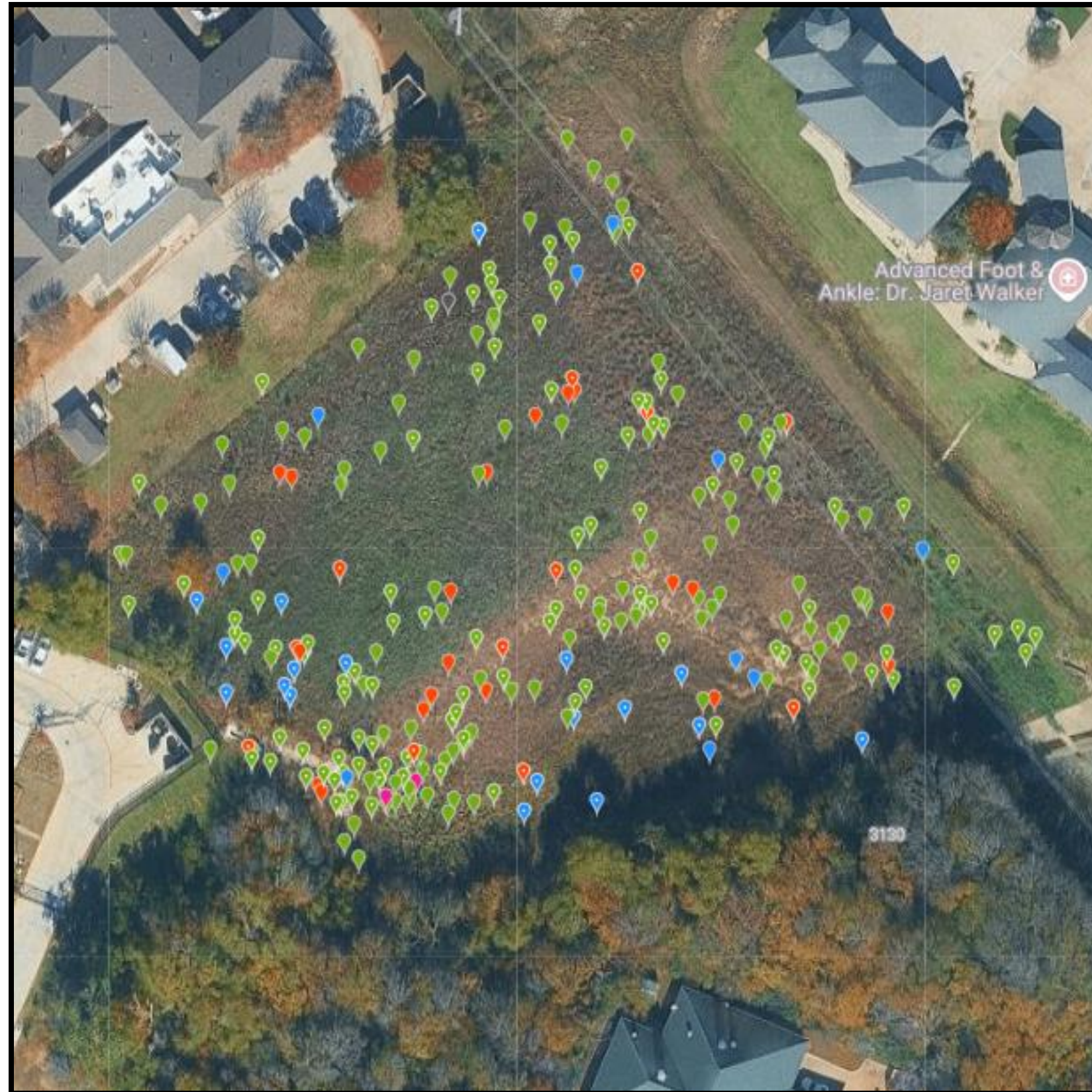
Fire Station 8 is our official pilot site and is roughly 2-acres, located off Colorado Blvd. The first stages began April of 2025 where Fire Station 8 was assessed and seeded with the help of volunteers.

Continued bioassessments persisted through most of the year. We were then awarded the Native Plant Society of Texas – Trinity Forks Chapter Grant to aid our efforts in September of 2025.



We were one of five awarded \$1,000 from the NPSOT-TFC Grant for Fire Station 8 that allowed us to purchase seeds and implement treatment

Fire Station 8 (Pilot Site)



Volunteers came out in April '25 to aid in seeding and initial treatment of woody encroachment and invasive species like Johnsongrass.

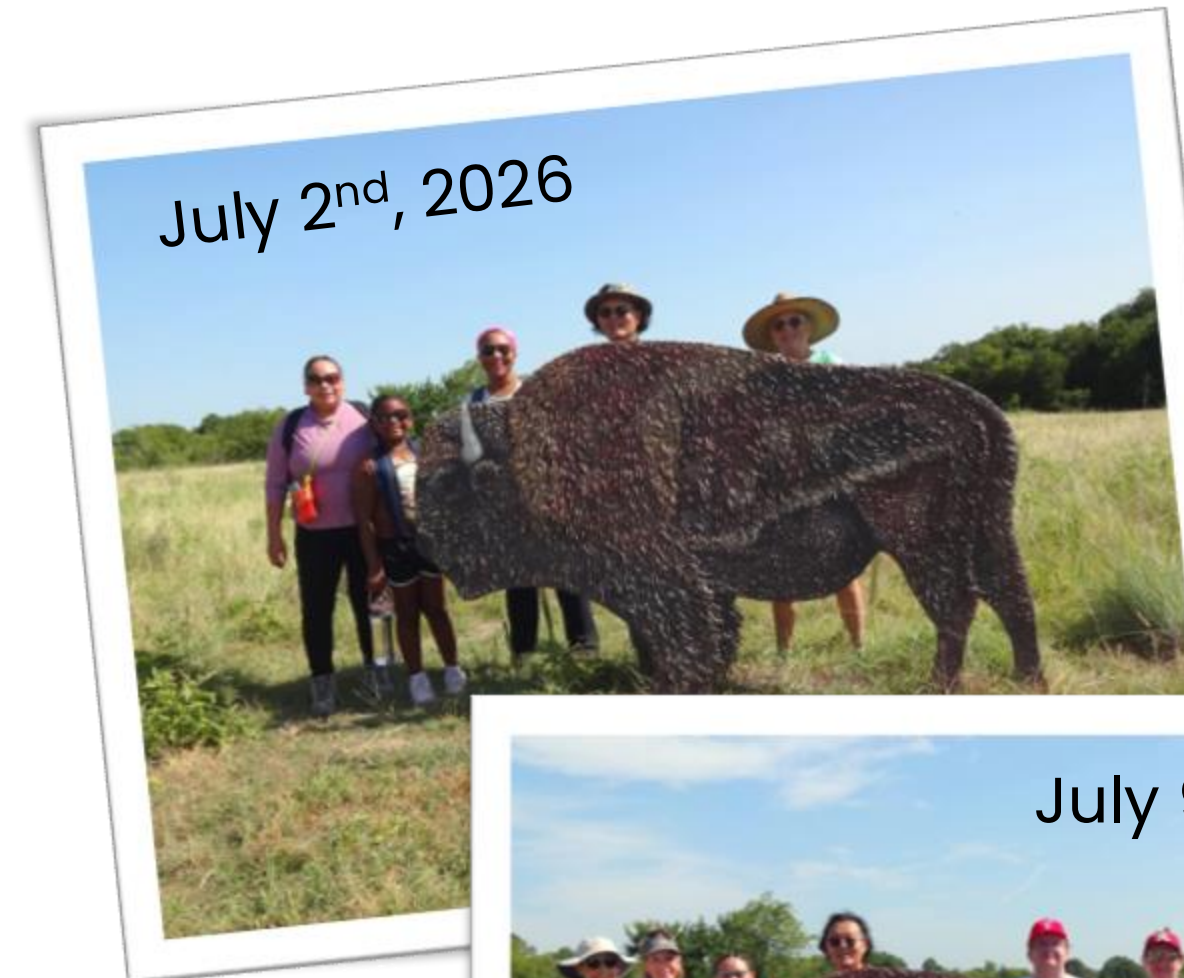
In September '25, we began routine weed removal and put together a novel seed mix of species native to the area.

In November of '25, the entire plot was mowed down and seeded using a blended seed mix from Turner Seed and Native American Seed. Observations are ongoing, capturing successful germination and documenting any persistent invasive species.

June 10th, 2026 wicking was implemented for Johnsongrass, with additional treatments soon to be scheduled.

Our Local Plains Bison

We hand made and installed a life-sized Plains Bison at Clear Creek—now the subject of many photos and media posts. It stands tall at the head of the Collins Prairie Trail.





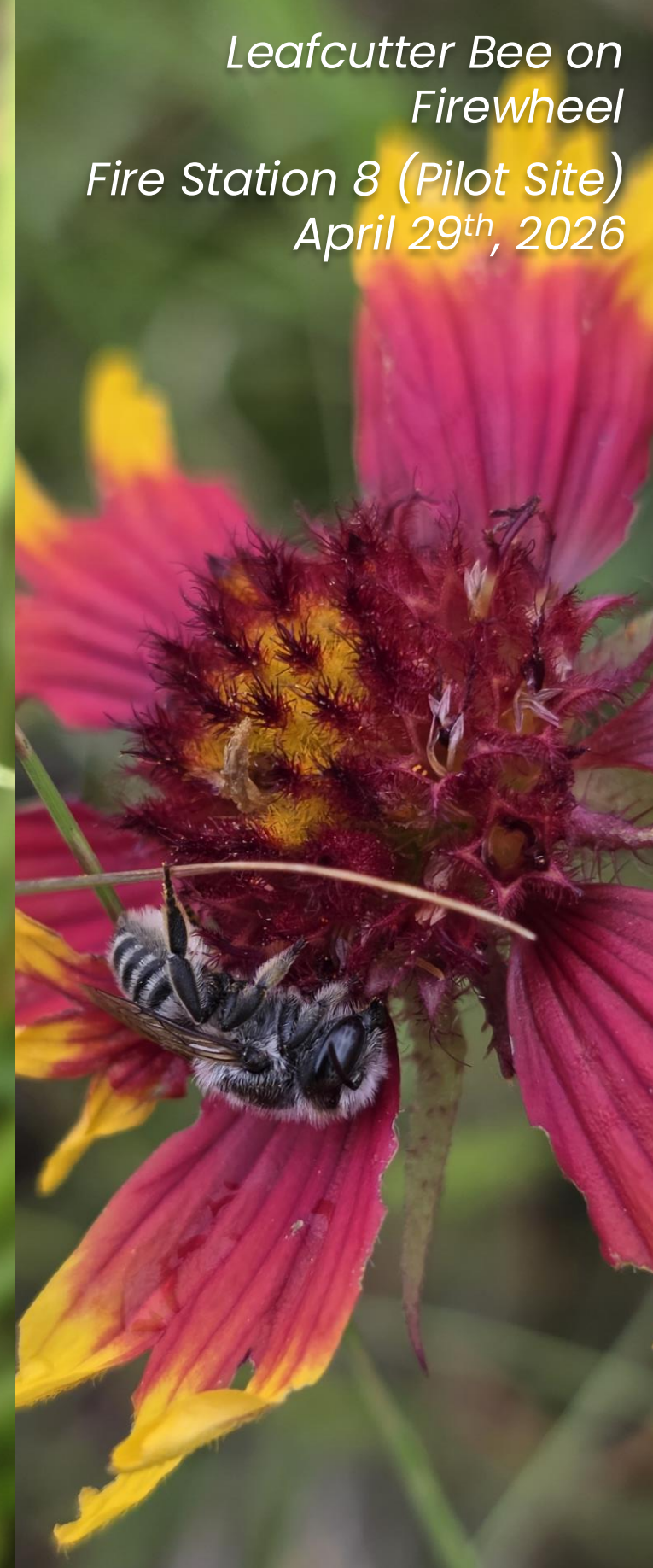
*Tawny Emperor on
Sugar Hackberry
North Lakes Wildflower Trail
Sept 30th, 2025*



*Cuckoo Wasp on
Queen Anne's Lace
Fire Station 8 (Pilot Site)
April 29th, 2026*



*Spotted Horsemint
Audra Open Space
June 29th, 2026*



*Leafcutter Bee on
Firewheel
Fire Station 8 (Pilot Site)
April 29th, 2026*



*Dakota Mock Vervain
Cooper Glenn
July 2nd, 2026*

QUESTIONS?

