

Once on the bridge traversing the pond, we look out over turquoise water shimmering like a dark mirror in the afternoon sun. Giant cutgrass clusters around the bridge. In the center of the pond, we see the remains of abandoned railroad trestles from when trains transported East Texas lumber to far points in the state.

"I don't see any alligators," my son says. Unfortunately, neither do I.

"You should probably go around 3 or 4 in the afternoon," my friend Laura advises. She has heard my story about looking for the preserve's reptile residents, and she has responded in typical Texas Master Naturalist fashion. She has looked things up on the iNaturalist website.

"According to iNat," she continues, "most of the alligator sightings in the preserve have been mid-afternoon. Maybe you'll have more luck then."

Alligators are native to this part of the state, but I haven't seen one in the wild yet in the 10 years I've lived in North Texas. We plan another visit to the preserve, hoping we will

finally glimpse the elusive crocodilian.

"Oh, no!" my son exclaims. "Not the alligators again!" With the steady increase of summer heat indices in East Texas, his enthusiasm for alligator hunting has definitely cooled.

We crunch over the gravel of the city-owned and -managed park's Rawhide Trail, under the welcome shade of thorny locust, willow oak and sugar hackberry trees, our faces shiny from the late June heat.

As we approach Beaver Pond, I hear the low, resonant bugle of a bullfrog and the cry of a hawk overhead. Summer blooms of climbing prairie roses and meadow pinks cluster alongside the path. Ahead of us, half a dozen monarchs the size of my palm scatter in a swirl of tangerine.

Leaning over the railing of the now-familiar bridge, we scan the tranquil, algae-laden water for any signs of an enormous reptile. A tiny green anole darts away from us on the splintered wood. We watch a great blue heron lift off in flight above our heads.

"No," I say. "Not the alligators."

burn bans during the dry and hot summer.

Additional severe events included hail, high winds and a record-breaking summer heat resulted in billions of dollars in combined losses.

"For millions of Americans impacted by a seemingly endless onslaught of weather and climate disasters, 2023 has hit a new record for many extremes," NOAA Chief Scientist Sarah Kapnick said.

Hailstorms in May and June resulted in billions in losses to Texas. The storm in May affected 62,000 Texans and brought \$1.6 billion in losses.

High winds in late June caused damage across the state, and devastating tornados hit Matador and Perryton.

National severe weather events that also affected Texas in 2023 caused \$47.2 billion in losses.

Along with four other states, Texas had the warmest year on record in 2023. June 20 set the heat record for Del Rio and Rio Grande at 113 degrees and San Angelo at 114 degrees.

Along with the highest number of billion-dollar disasters experienced, the report noted Texas also leads the U.S. in total cumulative costs, almost \$402 billion, from billion-dollar disasters since 1980.

**Weather disasters in 2023 cost Texas billions in damage**

By Emmy Powell  
TFB Communications  
Specialist

Texas saw a record-setting year in 2023 for weather and climate disasters in the nation.

A recent report from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) shows Texas led the nation with the most billion-dollar weather and climate disasters last year.

The report shows a total of 28 disasters hit the nation in 2023, 16 of which hit Texas.

The Lone Star State is seeing more than \$20 billion in shared losses.

Among the 16 disasters that hit the state, the drought caused the most damage.

"Record heat waves, drought, wildfires and floods are a sobering reminder of the consequences of the long-term warming trend we're seeing across our country," Deke Arndt, NOAA's director of the National Centers for Environmental Information, said.

Texas farmers and ranchers were forced to make changes because of drought and extreme heat, and more than 200 Texas counties were under

**ORDER OF ELECTION FOR OTHER POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS**

An election is hereby ordered to be held on Saturday, May 4, 2024 for the purpose of:  
Electing School Trustees (date)

Applications for a place on the ballot shall be filed by: Friday, February 16, 2024  
(A deadline is required to be stated in the order for a special election.)

Early voting by personal appearance will be conducted each weekday at

Coke County Clerks Office - Coke County Courthouse - Robert Lee, TX

(location)

between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 Mon. - Thurs. 1 Fri. p.m. beginning on Monday, April 24, 2023

and ending on Tuesday, May, 2, 2023  
(date)

Applications for ballot by mail shall be mailed to:

Jennifer Burdett, Coke County Clerk  
(Name of Early Voting Clerk)  
Coke County Courthouse - 13 E 7th  
(Address)  
Robert Lee, TX 76945  
(City) (Zip Code)

Applications for ballots by mail must be received no later than the close of business on

Tuesday, April, 23, 2024

(date)

Additional early voting will be held as follows:

Location	Date	Hours
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Issued this the 17<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2024.

Member \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Presiding Officer [Signature]

Member \_\_\_\_\_ Member \_\_\_\_\_

Member \_\_\_\_\_ Member \_\_\_\_\_

Member \_\_\_\_\_ Member \_\_\_\_\_

**ORDEN DE ELECCION PARA OTRA SUBDIVISION POLITICA**

Por la presente se ordena que se llevará a cabo una elección el sabado, el 4 de mayo, 2024 con el propósito

de: elegir fideicomisarios escolares (fecha)

Solicitudes para un lugar en la boleta serán presentadas por: viernes, el 16 de febrero, 2024  
(De acuerdo con la orden de elección especial se requiere una fecha límite)

La votación adelantada en persona se llevará a cabo de lunes a viernes en

Coke County Clerks Office Coke County Courthouse - Robert Lee, TX

(sitio)

entre las 8 de la mañana y las 5 lunes-jueves 1 viernes de la tarde empezando el lunes, el 24 de abril, 2023  
(fecha)

y terminando el martes, el 2 de mayo, 2023  
(fecha)

Las solicitudes para boletas que se votarán en ausencia por correo deberán enviarse a:

Jennifer Burdett, Coke County Clerk  
(Nombre del Secretario(a) de Votación Adelantada)  
Coke County Courthouse - 13 E 7th  
(Dirección)  
Robert Lee, TX 76945  
(Ciudad) (Zona Postal)

Las solicitudes para boletas que se votarán en ausencia por correo deberán recibirse para el fin de las horas de las horas de negocio el martes, el 23 de abril, 2024  
(fecha)

La votación adelantada además se llevará a cabo de tal manera:

Sitio	Fecha	Horas
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Emitida este día 17<sup>th</sup> de enero, 2024.

Miembro \_\_\_\_\_ Firma del Oficial que Preside [Signature]

Miembro \_\_\_\_\_ Miembro \_\_\_\_\_

Miembro \_\_\_\_\_ Miembro \_\_\_\_\_

Miembro \_\_\_\_\_ Miembro \_\_\_\_\_

Nota de instrucción: Se deberá entregar una copia de esta orden de elección al/a la Secretario(a) del Condado/Administrador(a) de Elecciones y el/la Registrador(a) de Votantes a más tardar 60 días antes del día de elección.

**Emergency Siren Signals**

*Cities of both Bronte and Robert Lee*

1 Long Ring - Wind Advisory over 60 mph

2 Rings - Fire or VFD Meeting

Another 2 Ring - Call for Additional Firefighters

3 Rings - Tornado Warning

1 Long Continuous Ring - All Clear for Tornado