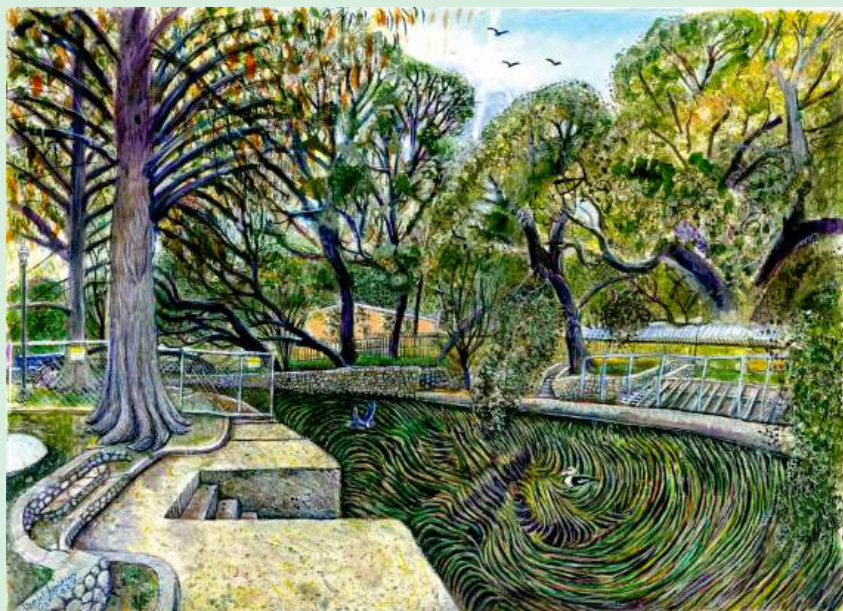


Spring is here with trees and flowers budding, bees buzzing, birds, *and them!*

Can we have Our Parks back already?

By Alesia Garlock



Watercolor/mixed media titled, "Sacred Space" by Daniel Armstrong 2024-Copyright

Spring refers to the season, and also refers to the ideas of rebirth, rejuvenation, renewal, resurrection and regrowth. In the Northern Hemisphere, spring can include parts or all of the months of March, April, May, and June! The beauty of spring also brings beastly allergies. We are now in allergy season according to the seasonal allergy report on pollen.org!

I hear birds chirping, I see ducks gathering on the river and the trees budding, and then I hear that disturbing noise, the noise of banging two by four boards in the park. The sound is extremely loud and hurts my head, much like a hammer banging incessantly!

I have visited *Brackenridge Park* for more than 10 years and I have met all my friends here at *Our Park*. According to a video released by the *City of San Antonio (COSA)*, it is *OUR PARK* (bit.ly/our-park)! If it is "*our park*," then why is the *City* not listening when residents say, **STOP** the noise and harassment of Migratory Birds in our parks? Why is *COSA* not working with the people, like you and me, who provide the funding of our parks?

We love visiting our parks to walk, run, and visit with friends, or to hang around relaxing. We go to the park to unwind and smell the fresh air that seems a little bit fresher

next to the Historic landscape of Heritage Oaks and towering Cypress trees.

Thanks to the water and the trees, the air temperature is lower near the river and even lower in the forest area where the surface temperature was measured by one local arborist to be about 20 or more degrees lower than the surrounding paved areas.

We come to the park to meditate, do Yoga, or paint a picture, while others may come to pray or just get away from stuff! Our parks are our gathering spaces, an ethnographic zone of many cultures.

"An ethnographic zone is a historical, geographical, social and cultural sphere with distinct political economy, societal behavior and traditions, dialects and visual and material culture."

We celebrate Birthday parties, weddings, baby showers, and gather for religious ceremonies there, singing Holy, Holy, Holy at Christian worship events. From the church summer school kids to the Iglesia (church) down the road, the cultural kaleidoscope of religious, agnostic or otherwise multifaced meld of backgrounds comes together as one beautiful fresco in the park."

Photographers wander the park taking portraits of graduates, and families, blushing brides and young ladies dressed in *Quinceañera* gowns!

Brackenridge Park is one of my favorite parks (minus the violence against waterbirds) to share a meal with friends, eat brisket, hamburger, hotdogs or enjoy a home-made sandwich.

We gather to see the Hot Rods, classic cars and meet the civic organizations sharing their work and love for our community like Miguel who sponsors *First Sunday in the Park*.

Connections to our parks-the Interactions

Social interaction is the meaningful contact people have with one another. "Meaningful" is an important word here, because it implies an exchange that includes real communica-



Classic Cars and Hot Rods
cruising Brackenridge Park on a
Sunday—a longtime tradition!
A.Garlock.

tion, even if only for a moment, and leaves each party feeling that he's shared something with another human being. (CH 26 Section 8-Creating Good Places for Interaction.)

The *Community Tool Box* is a free, online resource for those working to build healthier communities and bring about social change (bit.ly/community-tool-box).

Indigenous people have gathered along the river Yanaguana for thousands of years. The Indigenous continue to gather to pray at their church at the Sacred Site along the river known as Yanaguana—*Spirit Waters* that



Laura Yohualthiuz and Chelsea of Kalpulli Ayolopaktzin

mirrors the constellation of *Eridanus*.

The river is part of the spiritual ecology of the Indigenous people of south Texas and Northeastern Mexico.

Family traditions

For many families, *Easter at Brackenridge Park* is a family tradition. Jacob Cerna's family has celebrated *Easter* at *Brackenridge Park* in the same spot for over seventy years and are a regularly featured family in local news reports. It is a Big Deal for all!

I met the Cerna family in 2022 while wandering through the park during the *Easter* weekend talking to residents about the planned demolition of the trees. Meet-

ing them again in the park for *Easter* 2023 and 2024. We ate food and cracked some *cascarones* and on Sunday bid each other farewell with a warm hug, and a familiar see you the same time next year?

About that noise

In 2024, after complaints about the noise by residents to city staff, the *COSA* was asked if they would continue with the contractors' banging boards and shooting the explosive cartridges over the heads of residents. The staff's response was, "we are going to continue doing it."

Although, *Park's* Director Homer Garcia, has repeatedly stated that "public safety" is a priority, the unsafe level of noise continues in 2025 at *Brackenridge Park*, *Woodlawn Lake Park* and *Elmendorf Lake Park*.



Cerna Family Easter 2022, Brackenridge Park

The unsafe levels of noise by the banging boards have been measured above one hundred decibels, while one explosive pest control device (*EPCD*) that is listed as an "exploding bomb" on the safety data sheet is advertised by one manufacturer to be 130 Decibels(dB).

One online blog reports that, "120 dB is a decibel level that describes extremely loud sounds. In fact, on a decibel chart, 120 dB marks the limit from which sounds become painful and very dangerous to the human ear (bit.ly/120-decibels)!"

The noise affects more than just the migratory birds, it affects all wildlife, domestic animals, along with the poor Endangered Zoo animals and the people exposed!

One local resident that lives across from the park off of Broadway shared that she could hear the explosives and says that her poor dog jumps each time they hear an explosive boom coming from the park!



Great Egret displaying breeding plumage

Important Habitats:

Our “green spaces” are critical water sources for wildlife and where I have made many friends who appreciate nature and all that comes with it, including the bird poop!

Our parks are important habitats.

The places where Migratory Waterbirds-Egrets, Herons and Cormorants return each year to try to successfully breed to keep their species alive. While resident Hawks, Owls, and songbirds that need the habitat to breed, feed, drink water and cool off find their way to the river and trees in our city parks.

The migratory birds are more than just those “tall white birds” that city staff suggested in one local paper that residents make noise at to scare away!

There are four species of *Migratory Waterbirds* that have



Little Blue Heron-Species of High Concern

nested throughout San Antonio for decades that are listed as a *Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)*, the *Snowy Egret*, *Little Blue Heron*, *Tricolored Heron* and *Green Heron*. The *Tricolored Heron* is a *TPWD Protected Species*. The *Little Blue Heron* is listed as a *USFWS—Species of High Concern* for declining population.



Protected Species-Tricolored Heron-SGCN

This is the season for all wildlife to create new life, even with the loss of habitat, extreme heat and exceptional drought conditions the birds must breed successfully to produce offspring!

Noise is a health hazard!

According to the *American Public Health Association*, “Noise is unwanted and/or harmful sound, first recognized as a public health hazard in 1968. *The Noise Control Act of 1972* declared that “it is the policy of the United States to promote an environment for all Americans free from noise that jeopardizes their health or welfare.(bit.ly/noise-hazard)”

Why do we need Our Parks to be safe from the ongoing unsafe levels of noise?

We asked one expert on noise who shared one of many articles on how noise affects us, especially children. See below:

Speaking of Psychology: How noise pollution harms our health, with Arline Bronzaft, PhD

Episode 292. Arline Bronzaft, PhD, talks about how noise affects health and well-being, how it can harm kids’ learning, why it is not just a problem in big cities, and the most unusual noise complaints she has heard in her 5 decades of advocacy combating noise pollution. See www.apa.org.

Arline Bronzaft, PhD, is Professor Emerita of the *City University of New York*, and a researcher, public advocate, and consultant on the effects of noise worldwide for five decades and is a Program Chair for *Quiet Communities*.

“Quiet matters to the health and well-being of all living things—helping children think and learn, helping us to be calm, thoughtful, and productive, encouraging civil, courteous interactions with others, and connecting us with nature.”

Arline Bronzaft, PHD shares how you can find out why a quieter world is healthier for you and me at *Quiet Communities*, “a consortium of scientific, medical, and legal professionals from the United States and abroad concerned with the adverse impacts of noise and related pollution on health and the environment (bit.ly/quiet-communities).”



Is the public-funded fence to keep residents out?

What can you do?

Consider asking the city to “*Halt the Noise*,” and to include the community in decisions that will impact not only migratory waterbirds, but us as well. Request the creation of a working group of residents that will research and work on a plan for the conservation needs of the migratory birds, so that we can enjoy our parks along with the wildlife that are part of our natural world.

Ask them to **Let us have our parks back!** Because as they keep saying, **It’s Our Park!**

BIO: Alesia Garlock is an author, citizen scientist, bird watcher; environmental/wildlife advocate who has observed and documented the nesting of migratory waterbirds in San Antonio for over a decade—researching, collecting data and partnering with conservation groups and environmental science groups promoting a sustainable ecosystem for wildlife and human well-being.