

AUSTIN

# Up, up and away on a marvelous spring day



Deborah Cannon photos AMERICAN-STATESMAN

The Zilker Kite Festival, which was delayed a week because of rain, proved worth the wait for the thousands who went downtown Sunday to launch

their crafts. The biggest challenge for some was trying to avoid tangling with other kites. See more festival photos on [austin360.com](http://austin360.com).



## Perfect kite-flying weather beckons thousands to Zilker festival

By Patrick George

AMERICAN STATESMAN STAFF

The kites have spoken: Spring has officially arrived in Austin.

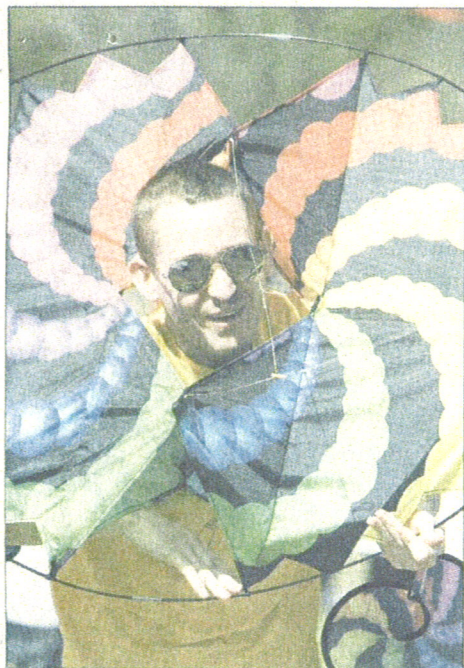
The thousands of people who filled every corner of Zilker Park on Sunday would probably agree. Sunny skies, a nice breeze and temperatures in the low 80s made it a picture-perfect day for the 82nd annual Zilker Kite Festival.

All day, the sky was crowded with birds, butterflies, dragons, jet airplanes and the occasional googly-eyed octopus. Kites were everywhere: in the air, on the ground, and, in a few sad cases, lodged in trees.

Wanting to represent Austin properly, Stephen Mercer brought a bat kite, one he acquired at a shop in San Francisco's Chinatown. But the bat, made of fabric over a wooden frame and complete with fangs and eyes, wasn't the easiest kite to get into the air.

"It flies like a bat, so it bobs and weaves, then dives like it's going to kill something," Mercer said as he tried to get the bat up. "It's not the best launcher we've ever had."

See **KITES**, B4



Seth Shaffer's attempt to launch his kite ends with it over his head.



Charity McIntosh, 7, nearly gets lost behind her kite. Some festivalgoers with creative kites said they were a challenge to send aloft.



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Marc Alcedo shows his daughters, Avery, 4, left, and Cameron, 6, the finer points of kite-flying Sunday at Zilker Park. The day's light winds were ideal for kites.

## KITES: Some played soccer, enjoyed rays after long winter

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His friend Mike Saulters had less trouble. At one point, Saulters' kite appeared to be one of the highest-flying in the whole park, at an estimated height of 250 feet.

"The wind is just really good," Saulters said. "More than anything, I try to keep it off the other lines."

The event was originally scheduled for last weekend, but it was postponed because of a rainy forecast.

On Sunday, the rain was a distant memory, as was

on the grass barefoot, and moms coated their toddlers in sunscreen.

Still others used the day to show off some ingenuity. Eleven-year-old Powell Sand flew a kite attached to a fishing pole. He said he saw someone do it a few years ago and wanted to try it himself.

"The string is a lot stronger," Powell said of fishing line. In addition to being easier to reel in, the fishing pole made untangling from another kite simpler.

"All I had to do was go down and under, and it was off," he