

# HOUSTON AUDUBON ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2022–2023

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023



*Great Horned Owl / Brenda Lightfoot  
2022 Flock Together Photo Contest Winner, Birds of All Feathers Category*



[WWW.HOUSTONAUDUBON.ORG](http://WWW.HOUSTONAUDUBON.ORG)



# ABOUT HOUSTON AUDUBON

HOUSTON AUDUBON'S MISSION IS TO ADVANCE THE CONSERVATION OF BIRDS AND POSITIVELY IMPACT THEIR SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTS.



Houston Audubon protects **over 4,100 acres** of wetlands, piney wood forest, coastal woodlots and prairie, and beach habitat within its system of sanctuaries located throughout the Houston Gulf Coast region. Our sanctuaries provide critical habitat for **almost 400 species of birds** and serve as community spaces where people walk, learn, meditate, socialize, explore, and connect with nature. Houston Audubon is a nationally Accredited Land Trust and a recognized leader in avian conservation and nature education, delivering hundreds of programs annually that connect people to nature and inspire communities to take action to protect birds and wildlife.



Northern Cardinal / Nicole Land [2022 Flock Together Photo Contest Winner, Not Just A... Category]

# MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

Dear Friends,

During Fiscal Year 2023, Houston Audubon maintained its course in addressing the biggest threats to birds through habitat restoration, urban conservation, science, and outreach while also dedicating critical time and attention to charting a future course to help curb notable declines in bird populations and create healthier, more sustainable communities for birds in the years to come. The 2024-2034 strategic roadmap to collaborative conservation will benefit birds, wildlife, and people throughout the Houston Gulf Coast region. Extending our connection to and collaboration with more diverse communities, partners, landowners, and schools are key elements of our plan, and we have been busy laying the groundwork to build these efforts in big ways.

In addition, another round of important infrastructure projects for sanctuary visitors, partnering researchers, volunteers, and coastal staff was completed, bringing us closer to successfully implementing the final phase of the 2017 High Island Master Plan. But that's not all. We remained committed to improving habitat that helps build important food webs needed to support the diverse bird populations residing, wintering, breeding, and migrating through our region. We have delivered more plants for on-the-ground projects in our sanctuaries, in Houston area communities and backyards, and local green spaces through Houston Audubon's two native plant nurseries. We hope you'll enjoy this snapshot of what our staff and volunteers have been working on this year!

**HELEN E. DRUMMOND**

President & CEO, Houston Audubon



*Nature Heritage Society field trip to the Rookery at High Island*



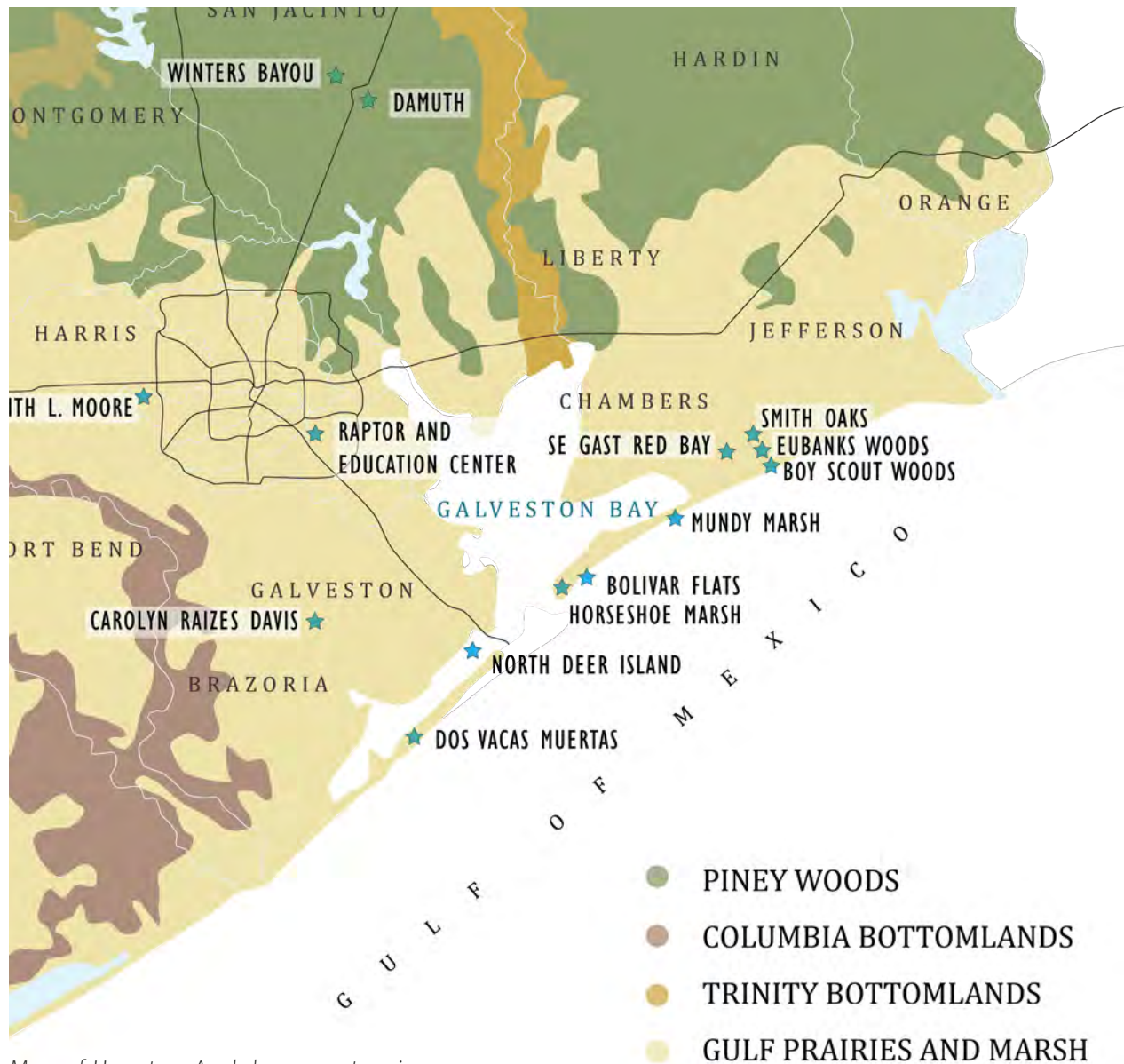
*Native planting at the new Morse Field Station in High Island*



*Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights Mayoral Proclamation at Houston City Hall*



# SANCTUARIES



Map of Houston Audubon sanctuaries

Houston Audubon proudly renewed its Land Trust Accreditation this year, following initial accreditation in 2017. This noteworthy achievement is the result of a meticulous verification process, affirming our commitment to upholding the highest conservation standards. The accreditation attests to Houston Audubon's exemplary financial practices, ethical conduct, and responsible governance, reinforcing our ability to guarantee enduring stewardship of **over 4,100 acres** of bird and wildlife habitat in our care.

Scan to learn  
more about our  
sanctuaries



Our coastal sanctuaries were improved by two significant projects designed to enhance the visitor experience, accommodate a larger audience, and provide dedicated spaces for conservationists to collaborate and foster valuable research initiatives.

## MORSE FIELD STATION GRAND OPENING

Spring marked the grand opening of the Clint and Mary Frances Morse Field Station in High Island, Texas! This state-of-the-art facility functions as the coastal hub for High Island's dedicated staff and volunteers. Designed to support a range of educational programs, workshops, and scientific research initiatives, the field station is a beacon for conservation efforts. We've already hosted a multitude of birding classes and fostered impactful collaborations with our partners at this remarkable new facility.



*Morse Field Station, High Island, TX*

## HORSESHOE MARSH NATURE TRAIL OPENS TO THE PUBLIC



*Horseshoe Marsh Bird Sanctuary*

The Horseshoe Marsh Nature Trail opened to visitors this spring with a culvert, expanded parking area, mowed trail, and 600 ft of elevated boardwalk over a pond. This project offers a path into the core of the sanctuary, allowing visitors to witness Nelson's Sparrows in spring, White-tailed Kites and Gull-billed Terns in summer, and diverse waterbirds year-round. Continued updates also included simple trailhead amenities, habitat restoration, a longer boardwalk, two overlooks, interpretive signage, and a natural trail to a view of the Bolivar Point Lighthouse.

# CONSERVATION

## HABITAT RESTORATION

We restored **17.6 acres** of habitat at our coastal sanctuaries. Restored acreage has been directly treated for invasive plants, such as Chinese Tallow and Chinese Privet, in the last year and is effectively free of these species. There are currently **105 acres** under active management, which refers to the areas where intensive eradication of invasive plants has been undertaken in the recent past and continue to be monitored and treated.



*Houston Audubon's Coastal Conservation Team installing signage at Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary*

## BEACH-NESTING BIRDS

Half a dozen pairs of Wilson's Plovers attempted to nest at Bolivar Flats and East Beach this past summer. While the dry summer made it difficult for the chicks to find food, it also meant that nests were not lost to flooding. Though the number of beach-nesting birds present on the peninsula—particularly Wilson's Plovers and Least Terns—continues to trend downward, recent improvements at some sites due to accretion of sediment on the beaches make us hopeful that next summer's breeding season will be more successful as more habitat becomes available.



## SURVEYING & MONITORING

### URBAN BIRD SURVEYS



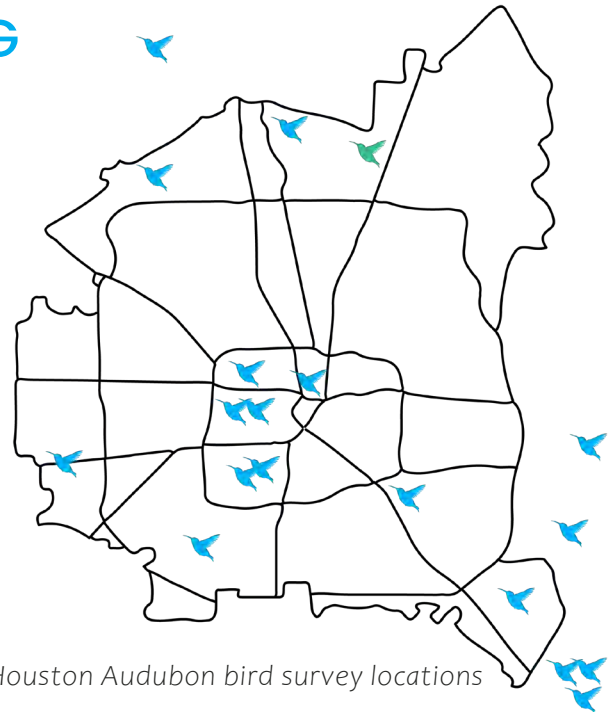
Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center was added as our newest bird survey location

250

bird surveys  
conducted

19

monthly survey  
locations



Houston Audubon bird survey locations

### BIRD BANDING AT CAROLYN RAIZES DAVIS BIRD SANCTUARY



Houston Audubon Conservation Specialist Schyler Brown with a banded Swainson's Thrush

Our conservation team began banding birds at the CRD Bird Sanctuary as part of the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survival (MAPS) banding program. This arduous work consisted of early, humid mornings with tons of big spiders and ants. Nevertheless, the work provided some fruitful surprises, including a late season Swainson's Thrush and an adult one-legged Northern Cardinal that was recaptured 3 times, indicating quality habitat. The data collected will help scientists determine which fine-scale variables affect recruitment, productivity, and survival of breeding birds.

### BIRD COLLISION MONITORING

As part of our Lights Out for Birds initiative, staff and volunteers continued to monitor and collect data on window strikes to help scientists better understand the factors that contribute to nighttime collisions.



# BIRD-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

## NATIVES NURSERY

Our native plant nursery at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary continues to provide plants to our community for individual use as well as large-scale restoration projects in our community. We also provided low-cost plants and free consultations for **over 50** schools, parks, scout projects, and senior centers, including the new Tiger Prairie at Katy High School and the Katy Museum! The Entergy Coastal Natives Nursery in High Island kicked off volunteer workdays, increasing the number of native plants we're able to use in restoration projects at our sanctuaries.



9,000+  
plants sold  
and donated

Natives Nursery at Edith Moore Nature Sanctuary

## LIGHTS OUT FOR BIRDS

Our Lights out for Birds program continues to inspire action by individuals and businesses throughout our city. We had **40 buildings** pledge to go Lights Out and turn off their exterior and non-essential lights during nights with high migration forecasts. Our Lights Out Action Alerts continue to reach thousands of people on social media, further reducing the risk of bird window collisions as a result of light pollution.



Entergy Coastal Nursery Volunteer Workday

## BIRD-FRIENDLY SPACES

Our Bird-Friendly Spaces Program continues to thrive. One of the biggest accomplishments this year was a 160-acre farm previously degraded by cotton farming that was converted to native habitat for bugs and birds. A small but impactful Bird-Friendly Space is now thriving at the Royal Caribbean Cruise Terminal in Galveston, which has inspired the cruise line to pursue further native plantings. Learn how you can get recognized for taking bird-friendly actions at [www.birdfriendlyhouston.org/spaces](http://www.birdfriendlyhouston.org/spaces)

27  
new  
participants

173  
additional  
acres





## HOUSTON: BIRD CITY

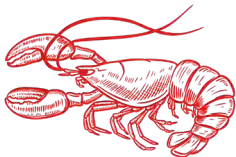
Houston received the **Bird City** certification by Audubon Texas and Texas Parks and Wildlife in 2019. Our staff worked with local conservation partners to apply for this honorable designation in 2019 and again this year for a recertification. This recognition highlights our city's dedication to fostering sustainable habitats for birds and promoting awareness about avian conservation—a feat that would not be possible without the participation of our conservation partners and our local community. We are proud of our city's commitment to creating a more sustainable and ecologically responsible urban environment for both residents and the diverse bird species that call Houston home.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was crowned the **Bird of Houston** in 2019 after Houston Audubon's inaugural Young Professionals Advisory Council held a citywide voting contest for Houstonians. The City of Houston even made it official with a proclamation!



*Yellow-crowned Night-Heron,  
official Bird of Houston*



Their diet consists of mostly crustaceans like crabs and crawfish, but they also eat insects, frogs, fish, turtles, and even young birds and small mammals



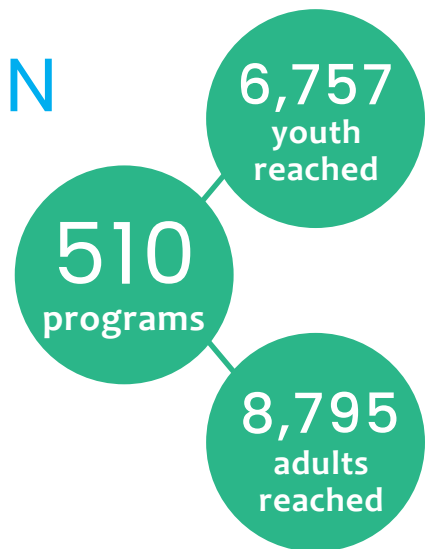
They can be found in and near wetlands in the southeast U.S., concentrated on the coast but regularly found inland. They are abundant in Houston in the spring, summer, and fall, but are less common in winter.



When ready to mate, they perform display flights and males perform a neck-stretching display that may or may not be reciprocated. They nest in trees near water, either alone or in colonies of up to several hundred pairs.

# OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Houston Audubon organized and conducted presentations, workshops, field trips, and special events tailored for individuals of all ages. Our programs include unique offerings for varied interests, such as Art with Raptors, Night Hikes, and watch parties for Purple Martins and Chimney Swifts. We continued to deliver virtual presentations, educating audiences across the country about bird conservation.



## COMMUNITY-BASED OUTREACH

Our community-based initiatives in the Sunnyside and Gulfton communities continued. In addition to bird walks and trash cleanups in both neighborhoods, we also played a key role in the 2nd annual 4-part Witness Series: Exploring Indigenous, African American, Latino, and Asian Connections to Nature and Art. We also held events for Black Birders' Week and Houston Bird Week, and launched a Young Black Birders Club in Sunnyside.



*Witness Series: Gulfton Alive / ¡Celebración de la naturaleza de Gulfton! at Burnett Bayland Park. Attendees went on a bird walk and participated in the City Nature Challenge.*



*Black Birders' Week Field Trip to High Island with the Nature Heritage Society. Many participants experienced the rookery for the first time and relished the opportunity to observe nesting birds, accompanied by insightful nature interpretations from our knowledgeable staff.*



*Witness Series: Bear Witness at E.R. and Ann Taylor Park in the Sunnyside community. Visitors engaged in a participatory public art experience and listened to oral histories documenting the lives of African American women along the park path.*



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## HOUSTON BIRD WEEK 2022

Houston Audubon's 4th annual Bird Week was a resounding success thanks to our YPAC, partner organizations, volunteers, and participants. Houston Bird Week events included bird walks, nature art, birdy bike rides, volunteer cleanups and plantings, library story times, and more. Collectively, **almost 900 people** participated in person and hundreds more through our virtual events like Birdy Game Night and birding classes.

43  
events

19  
partner  
orgs



*Houston Bird Week “What’s Growing On” Bike Tour along Buffalo Bayou*



*Houston Bird Week Kids Bird Walk at Memorial Park Eastern Glades*

## CITY NATURE CHALLENGE

Houston Audubon participated in the international City Nature Challenge—a friendly competition among cities to gather the highest number of nature observations. The Houston-Galveston team, which consists of many conservation organizations, recorded the most species in the United States for the 4th year in a row, and finished in the top 5 globally for species recorded and number of observers! **1,478 individuals** observed **3,707 species** of wildlife and plants - a new record for our region and a huge impact towards understanding biodiversity and coexisting with nature.



*City Nature Challenge Bioblitz at Edith Moore Nature Sanctuary*

# VOLUNTEERS

Houston Audubon's crucial initiatives thrive thanks to our dedicated volunteers. Scout projects significantly enhanced Edith Moore Nature Sanctuary by repairing boardwalks, installing benches, and assisting with maintenance at the historic log cabin. Volunteers also played a key role in native planting projects, including the addition of hundreds of native plants at Horseshoe Marsh Bird Sanctuary. Bird collision monitors were vital to collecting critical data, and our High Island volunteers remain essential for spring migration operations. We also welcomed numerous corporate volunteer groups at our sanctuaries.



*Scout Troop 825*



*bp Workday at Edith Moore Nature Sanctuary*

612

VOLUNTEERS

\$383,317

FINANCIAL IMPACT

12,054

HOURS

## YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Our 2022 YPAC spent the second half of their term executing another successful Houston Bird Week, Flock Together Photo Contest, and AviChat, among other outreach and conservation initiatives. The 2023 YPAC kicked off the year with Birdy Book Club in partnership with the Houston Public Library. The group also helped our conservation team clear trails and prep for mist netting and bird banding at our Carolyn Raizes Davis Bird Sanctuary.



*Birdy Book Club*



# FUNDRAISING EVENTS

## AVIAN AFFAIR 2022

Houston Audubon's 2022 Avian Affair raised **over \$350,000**, thanks to our dedicated supporters. Celebrating the connection between art and nature, the experience consisted of stilt walkers, art cars, live raptor ambassadors, and a silent auction featuring works from 19 local artists. Attendees were captivated by an inspiring talk from the keynote speaker, the nationally acclaimed artist Dixie Friend Gay.



Avian Affair 2022



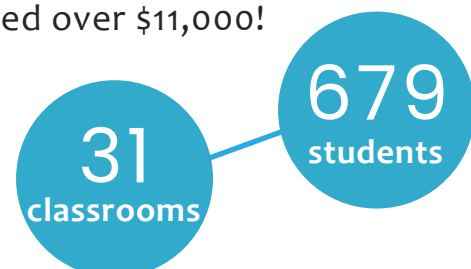
Avian Affair 2022



The Ecologist School students birding

## BIRDATHON 2023

Our annual spring birding fundraiser was a success! We added a Recreational Team category for those interested in a more leisurely birding experience and engaged even more students by expanding Birdathon for the Classroom with a new partnership with HISD. We surpassed our fundraising goal of **\$50,000**. Congratulations to the winning teams! The Noddy Roadrunners identified 187 species within 24 hours, and The Empid Yadas raised over \$11,000!



# DONORS

Thank you to the following generous donors who supported Houston Audubon this year:

## \$100,000+

Estate of Lynne and Wayne Johnson

## \$50,000–\$99,999

Sara and Mark Bettencourt

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## \$5,000–\$9,999

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One Tree Planted

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The Clayton Fund, Inc.

The Garden Club of Houston

Betsy and Jim Winn





## \$2,500–\$4,999

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Audubon Foundation of Texas  
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## \$1,000–\$2,499

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David Woodard

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

JULY 1, 2022 – JUNE 30, 2023

## REVENUE

Contributions with donor restrictions	\$ 517,500
Contributions without donor restrictions	894,436
Special events	379,780
Less: direct donor benefits	(85,382)
Admission and program fees	277,204
Merchandise and native plant sales	82,871
Net investment return	268,727
Total revenue	<u>2,335,136</u>

## EXPENSES

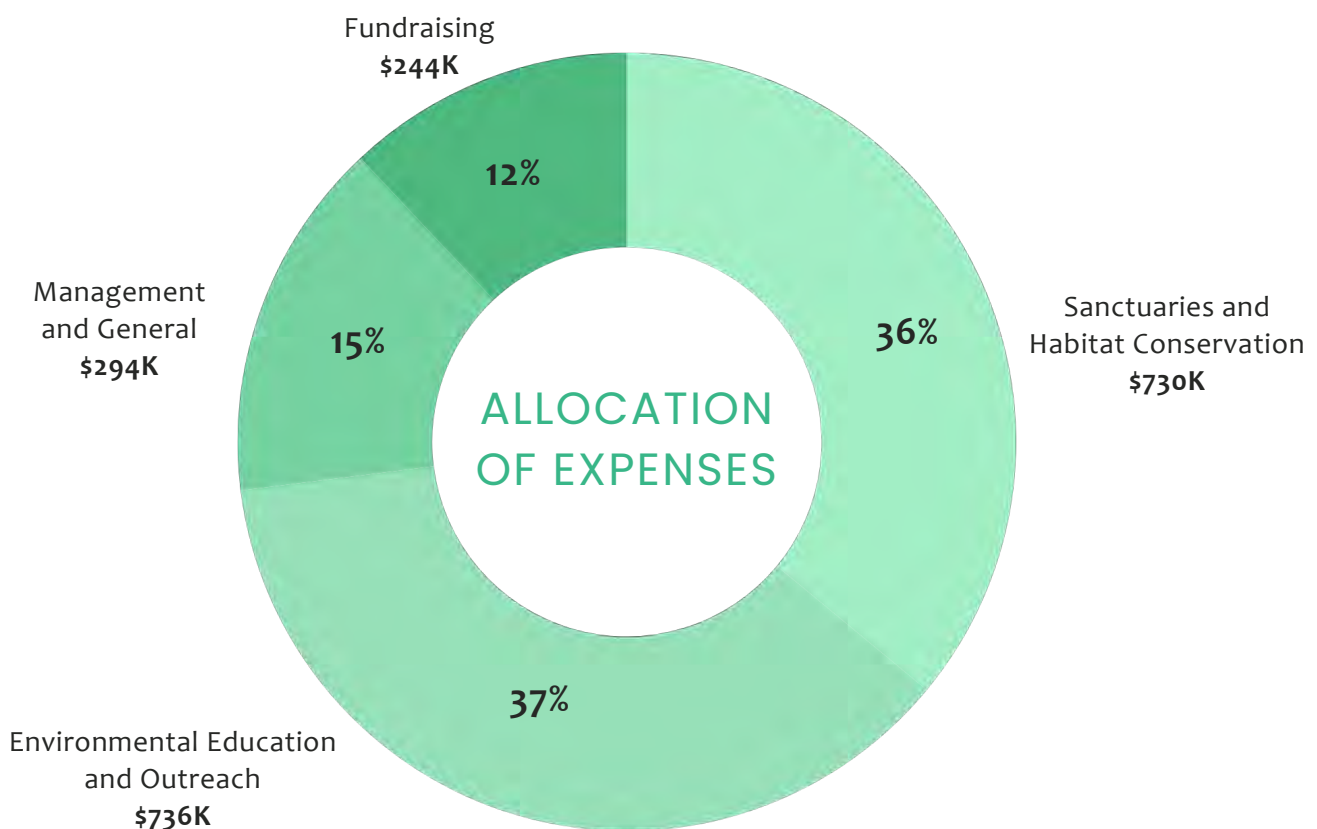
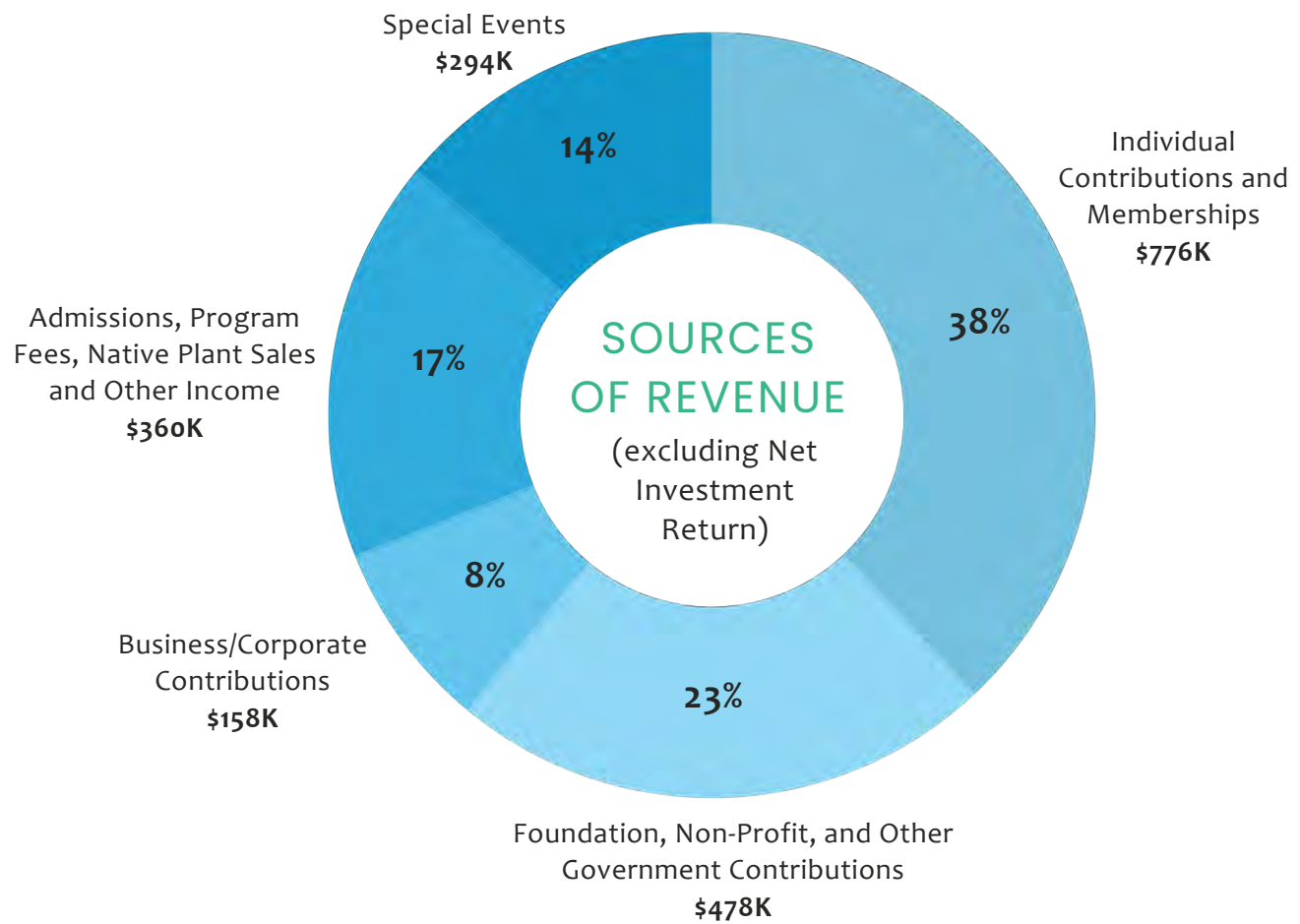
Program services:	
Sanctuaries and habitat conservation	730,302
Environmental education and outreach	735,783
Total program services	<u>1,466,085</u>
Management and general	294,476
Fundraising	243,872
Total expenses	<u>2,004,433</u>

## CHANGES IN NET ASSETS

	330,703
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>13,046,719</u>
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ 13,377,422</u>

Audited financial statements available at [houstonaudubon.org/financials](https://houstonaudubon.org/financials).





# LEADERSHIP

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Land Conservation Director

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Program Manager

**Wyatt Egelhoff**

Conservation Specialist

**Aimee Friend**

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**Vicki Stittleburg**

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**Barbara Thompson**

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