

## **Houston Audubon Society Organizational Name Review Statement of Status**

**April 2023**

The Houston Audubon Society is embarking on a process to review the advisability of a name change. There are two primary reasons we are taking this under consideration:

- The concern that our name does not clearly reflect our mission: “To advance the conservation of birds and their habitats in the Greater Houston Gulf Coast region”. Our name does not contain the words “bird” or “conservation. Nor does our current name reflect our true reach and service to the greater Gulf Coast region.
- The ongoing debate over how to approach the troubling legacy of our namesake, John James Audubon. For some people, the name John James Audubon means birding the way the name Edison means electric light. Audubon contributed monumentally to ornithological study by cataloging and painting hundreds of species in the early 1800s for his seminal four-volume work, *The Birds of America*. But he was also an outspoken anti-abolitionist slave owner who held racist beliefs about African Americans. He enslaved nine people to work in his Kentucky home, bought and sold several people, and argued against emancipation, according to biographer Gregory Nobles.

This consideration is and has been taking place throughout the Audubon Society across the country. The National Audubon Society has carefully considered these questions and elected not to change its name.

Many Audubon societies across the nation are currently or already have conducted such a review with varying decisions, for instance:

- The National Audubon Society elected not to change its name.
- Seattle Audubon Society has changed its name to Birds Connect Seattle.
- Golden Gate Audubon Society has changed its name to Golden Gate Bird Alliance.
- Audubon Naturalist Society has changed its name to Nature Forward.
- Audubon societies in NYC, Chicago and Portland have announced they are in the process of selecting new names.

This process will involve gathering feedback from many of our primary stakeholders and carefully considering the data we collect before making any decision regarding this very important matter. This will take time and careful deliberation, so please bear with us.