

Houston Audubon Volunteer Policy Handbook

About Houston Audubon

Houston Audubon is a financially independent 501(c)(3) charitable conservation, education, and advocacy organization that focuses on protecting the natural environment for birds and people. Established in 1969 as an autonomous, self-supporting chapter of the National Audubon Society, **Houston Audubon's mission is to advance the conservation of birds and positively impact their supporting environments. This is accomplished through acquiring and maintaining critical habitat as bird sanctuaries, providing education programs and nature experiences, and advocating policy and management actions in support of the mission.** Houston Audubon owns and manages 17 nature sanctuaries encompassing 4,121 acres across the Greater Houston and Galveston regions and became an Accredited Land Trust in 2017. Counties assigned to Houston Audubon are Brazoria, Chambers, Ft. Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Waller, Washington, and Wharton.

Our strategic plan states:

"The flight and song we nurture today defines the quality of life and sense of place we share tomorrow. Houston Audubon aims to inspire a culture of conservation and a way of life that allows us to thrive in harmony with nature. Our vision is the creation of a healthier, more beautiful place to live by leading and nurturing a community that values and supports birds."

More info and history can be found online by visiting our [History Page](#).

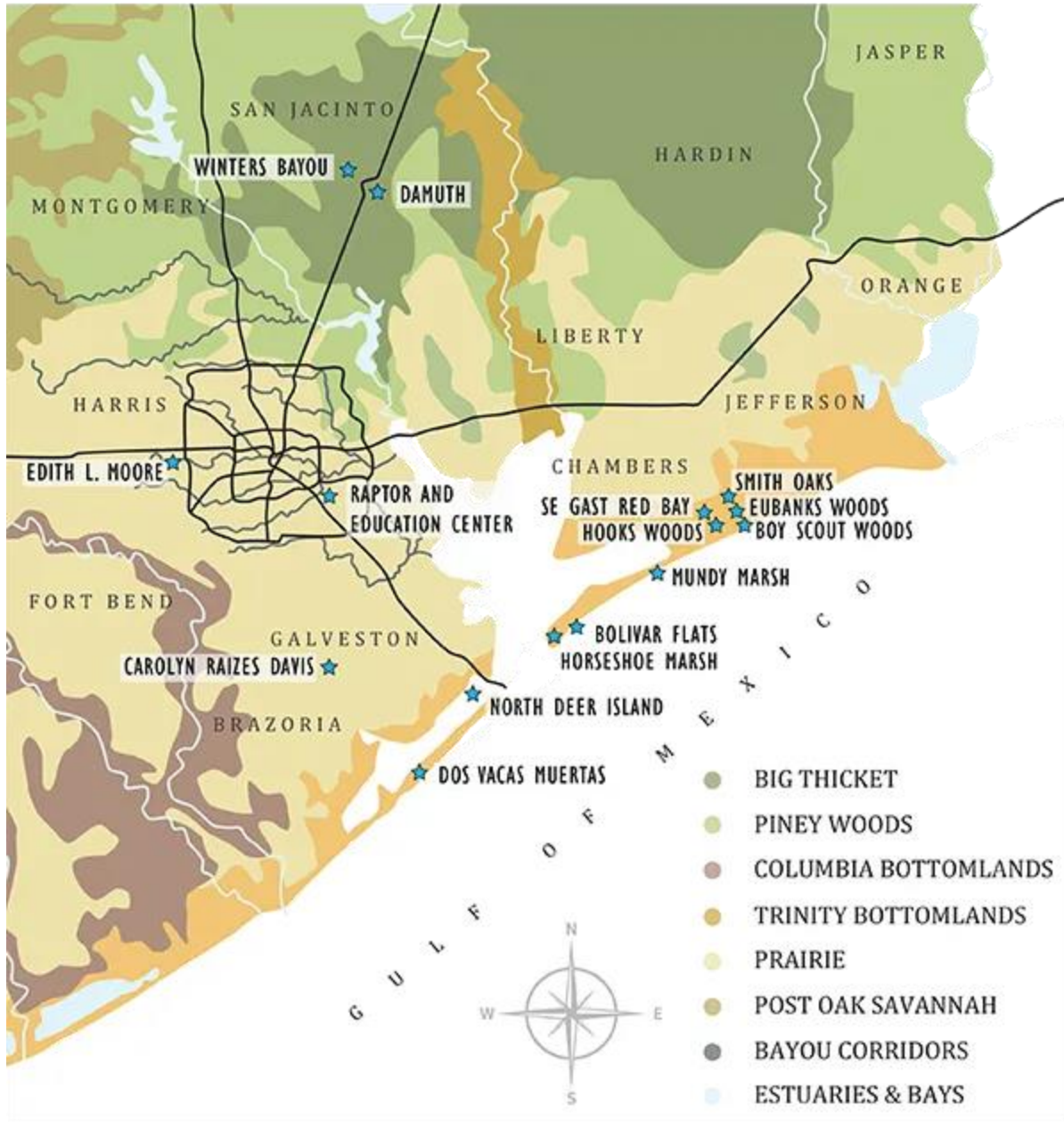
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Houston Audubon is a regional nonprofit conservation organization focusing on protecting the natural environment for birds and people since 1969. We envision a healthy, thriving Houston Gulf Coast natural environment by leading and nurturing a diverse community that values and supports birds. Our mission and vision can only be achieved when we engage, support, and serve individuals and communities that reflect the diversity of our state and region. This longstanding celebration of diversity in nature fuels an even greater understanding of the beauty and importance of working and recreating alongside individuals of widely diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities.

Houston Audubon is committed to fostering and nurturing an organizational culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion within our workplace and sanctuaries, and in our work in the community. We believe that the rich blend of ideas, perspectives, and viewpoints that come with diversity are essential to our long-term success. Our values and actions reflect our commitment to diversity and inclusion of all as reflected in our hiring practices, team interaction, and outreach and engagement at large.

The Sanctuaries

Houston Audubon owns and manages 17 nature sanctuaries totaling 4,121 acres, most of which are open to the public. Counties assigned to Houston Audubon: Brazoria, Chambers, Ft. Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Waller, Washington, and Wharton.



Detailed history and info can be found for all 17 sanctuaries online by visiting our [Sanctuaries Page](#).

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Volunteer Program Mission

To provide an opportunity for community members to connect with, learn about, and advocate for the natural world through hands on conservation and advocacy opportunities. Volunteers play a key role in carrying out the mission of Houston Audubon and helping it reach its full potential.

Volunteer Program Objectives

- To engage the local community in environmental conservation and advocacy through a diverse number of hands-on volunteer opportunities
- To provide a rewarding and fulfilling volunteer experience where volunteers learn, grow, and develop their skills
- To increase capacity of Houston Audubon programming which promotes the Center's conservation, community engagement, and advocacy work
- To build a network of environmental stewards to restore, enhance, and protect our local parks and waterways

Volunteer Program Agreement & Expectations

What can you expect Volunteering for Houston Audubon?

- Meaningful and rewarding activities in service to the community
- Supportive climate where volunteers receive recognition for their contributions
- Building new friendships and valuable relationships
- Opportunity to discover and promote the natural and cultural history of the Upper Texas Coast

What does Houston Audubon expect from volunteers?

- Timely arrival in consideration of programming schedules
- Adherence to prescribed procedures of volunteer role/position and only perform tasks that are designated by the Staff Lead or Volunteer Coordinator
- Respect staff, the space, and other volunteers
- Let the Volunteer Coordinator know if questions regarding the scope of the project make you feel unsafe or uncomfortable
- Enjoy yourself and share feedback about your experience

Volunteer Tiers

Tier 1: The easiest way to get involved with Houston Audubon.

Volunteers sign up and receive any necessary training at the event, after signing the Houston Audubon waiver. One-time volunteers are welcome to attend Tier 1 volunteer opportunities.

Opportunities include:

- Sanctuary Workdays (all sanctuaries)
- Bird Surveys
- Spring Migration Kiosks

Tier 2: Volunteer positions that involve a flexible time commitment, training, and orientation. A background check and CPR training may be required in addition to signing the waiver due to increased

independence and potential proximity to youth. Those that require a background check are marked with an asterisk (*).

Opportunities include:

- Sanctuary Stewards
- Natives Nursery (Edith L. Moore location and Coastal Location)
- Trail Crew
- Camps and Education Program Assistance*
- Office Assistant
- Collision Monitoring
- Bird Survey or Tour Lead
- Event Support* (background check required if youth-focused event: e.g. Camps)
- Community Outreach
- RV Volunteers*

Tier 3: The highest level of volunteer responsibility.

Tier 3 volunteer positions require a significant time commitment, and involve more rigorous application, screening, onboarding, and training processes. Tier 3 volunteers will need to complete the waiver and participate in position-specific volunteer training as outlined by their Staff Lead. Background checks and CPR training also may be required of Tier 3 volunteers depending on proximity to youth and are marked with an asterisk (*).

Opportunities include:

- Young Professionals Advisory Council (YPAC)
- Spring Migration In-Charge Volunteer*

Board Members: While members of the Board of Directors volunteer their time, this position is recruited and coordinated via the executive leadership team and Houston Audubon leadership.

Serving as an Ambassador of Houston Audubon

While volunteering, please remember that you are an ambassador of Houston Audubon. Volunteers should adhere to the expectations outlined in this manual, and maintain a professional, kind, and welcoming manner when interacting with visitors.

While volunteers represent Houston Audubon and help facilitate its programs, volunteer positions are not a means to future employment, nor are volunteers considered employees of Houston Audubon.

Communication, Transparency & Feedback

Houston Audubon is committed to offering a safe, engaging, and enjoyable volunteer experience. Much of this depends on clear communication, transparency between staff and volunteers, and feedback from volunteers.

We encourage volunteers to provide feedback on the program and their experience. Volunteers can always contact the Volunteer Coordinator in-person or via email with feedback. If you would prefer to do so anonymously, or you can fill out the [“send us an email” form on the website](#) using alias information.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM PROCEDURES & POLICIES

Age Requirements

All ages are welcome to volunteer with Houston Audubon; however, volunteers must be at least 16 years old to volunteer without a parent or guardian. We also request that unsupervised volunteers aged 16 or 17 supply a written permission slip from their parent or guardian before volunteering.

Waivers, CPR + First Aid & Background Checks

Prior to volunteering, **all volunteers must read and sign the general Houston Audubon waiver.** Volunteers may either print the waiver at home and bring it with them on their first day of volunteering or complete a copy when they arrive onsite. Volunteers only need to complete a waiver once. Waivers are stored in alphabetical order by last name at our headquarters in the Edith L. Moore Sanctuary. **Volunteers who: (i) handle personal information (donor records, etc.); (ii) stay with us as an RV Caretaker; (iii) serve as a designated “in-charge volunteer”; or (iv) assist an event or program targeted to youth, must complete a background check.** Background checks are issued and tracked by the Volunteer Coordinator and processed at no cost to the volunteer by IntelliCorp. **Any volunteer designated as an “in-charge” volunteer must also supply proof of CPR training prior to the start of their volunteer hours.** In-charge volunteers are trained to run volunteer workdays or programs independently of staff supervision; e.g. Spring Migration In-Charge Volunteers. **Houston Audubon offers CPR and First Aid training once per year to in-charge volunteers.** While the Volunteer Coordinator will notify you of these training opportunities, it is the volunteer’s responsibility to attend and complete the training.

Scheduling & Commitment

Tier 1 volunteers have a flexible time commitment, typically one event. Tier 1 volunteers will sign up via the system designated by the Volunteer Coordinator for each Tier 1 event or opportunity. Most all registration is processed via the Houston Audubon [Volunteer Web Calendar](#). Tier 2 and 3 volunteers agree to a time commitment specific to their volunteer activity(ies). For example: RV Volunteer Caretakers contribute 24 hours per week during their stay; Board and YPAC members serve a year-long term in addition to the service minimums set by the Staff Lead. Volunteers of every tier are asked to please contact the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible if you need to reduce your commitment for any reason or are no longer able to volunteer with Houston Audubon.

Signing In/Out & Recording Your Hours

Houston Audubon tracks volunteer hours for the purposes of grant funding, reporting, and volunteer appreciation. The Volunteer Coordinator or Staff Lead will provide directions for recording service hours for each volunteer. The information collected to track these hours includes the volunteer's name, date(s) and time(s) of service, and the assigned task/project.

If you forget to record your hours, or complete volunteer work independently (such as sending committee emails at home), please contact the Volunteer Coordinator with your hours – including travel time - and other relevant information by email.

Smoking

Houston Audubon sanctuaries and buildings are **smoke-free**. This includes the use of vapes and electronic cigarettes. Please refrain from smoking during your volunteer shift.

Alcohol & Drug Use

Reporting for volunteer duty while under the influence of alcohol, legal, or illegal drugs may result in immediate dismissal from Houston Audubon.

Prescription and over-the-counter drugs are not prohibited when taken in standard dosage and/or according to a physician's prescription. If the use of a medication could compromise the safety of visitors, staff or other volunteers, it is the volunteer's responsibility to notify the Volunteer Coordinator. The illegal or unauthorized use of prescription drugs is prohibited. It is a violation of our drug-free policy to intentionally misuse and/or abuse prescription medications. Appropriate action will be taken if volunteer duties deteriorate and/or accidents occur.

Weapons Policy

The transport, use, and/or carry of weapons of any type to Houston Audubon property is prohibited.

Technology Policies

Volunteers who utilize Houston Audubon computers for assigned projects will be instructed on our policies in detail. Audubon technology includes our computer systems, email, Internet, telephone systems (including voicemail) and any other Houston Audubon provided and/or maintained computer or network related hardware or software. Access to Houston Audubon technology is provided to support the organization, its staff, and its visitors. You are responsible for the content of all text, audio or images that you place or send over Houston Audubon technology.

Prohibited uses of Houston Audubon technology include:

- Use of Houston Audubon technology in violation of any Houston Audubon policy including but not limited to the Discrimination and Harassment-Free Workplace Policy or Violence-Free Workplace Policy
- Use of Houston Audubon technology for personal financial gain or commercial activities unrelated to the organization
- Use of Houston Audubon technology to access or distribute inappropriate text or graphic materials, specifically pornographic or sexually explicit materials
- Use of Houston Audubon technology in violation of copyright law
- Use of Houston Audubon technology to break in or attempt to break into a computer system
- Use of Houston Audubon technology with any other employee's password
- Use of Houston Audubon technology to access Houston Audubon data unrelated to duties and/or to which they have not been granted access authorization

- Use of Houston Audubon technology to read, record, copy, or listen to data delivered to another person's email or voicemail without management authorization
- Use of Houston Audubon technology for any activity that violates federal, state, or local laws

Any violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate dismissal.

Power Tool Policy

Volunteers may only operate Houston Audubon power tools and equipment when necessary to perform an assigned task. The Staff Lead will review the safe operation of equipment with a volunteer prior to its use, and volunteers may not operate equipment prior to equipment training. The operation of power tools and equipment is always voluntary and performed at the volunteer's own risk after the volunteer receives training and agrees to abide by Houston Audubon Safety and Risk Management policies (see below). Proper protective gear must be worn when operating power tools and equipment.

Dress Code

Volunteer dress code will vary depending on roles and responsibilities. In general, please keep in mind that at any given time there may be youth onsite. Refrain from wearing any clothing displaying profanity, promoting alcohol or drug use, or featuring images that may be triggering for another individual. Once received, volunteers should wear their shirt and nametag while volunteering whenever possible.

Handling Wildlife

Houston Audubon is not a wildlife rehabilitation center. Volunteers should contact a staff member upon finding hurt or dead animals on sanctuary grounds and should not attempt to handle, move, treat, or dispose of wildlife. For more resources on what to do if you find dead or hurt animals, please review our webpage: [Help for Wildlife in Trouble](#).

Volunteer Code of Conduct

RESPECT:

- Treat all individuals with a sense of dignity, respect, and worth. Make a personal commitment to be nonjudgmental about cultural differences, living conditions and/or the lifestyle of each person with whom you interact. Be courteous and polite in all of your actions.
- Avoid abusive language and disruptive behavior that is dangerous to self and others.
- Abstain from the use of photo, audio or video recording equipment unless given consent.
- Respect all confidential information. Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves a single staff, volunteer, visitor or other person.
- Do not pressure others to accept your political, cultural, or religious beliefs.
- Be mindful of others' personal space and boundaries, and keep in mind that comfortability levels of others' may differ from your own in a variety of situations.
- Be respectful of Houston Audubon buildings, grounds, and the natural landscape.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY:

- Be dependable and recognize the commitment and responsibility to your volunteer assignment.
- Accept assignments consistent with your interest, abilities, and available time.
- Accept assignments with an open mind and a willingness to learn.
- Avoid conflict of interest situations and refrain from actions that may be perceived as such. Volunteers should reveal any potential or actual conflicts of interest as they arise.
- Be mindful that you are representing Houston Audubon whenever you report for volunteer duty.
- Communicate with Houston Audubon staff if you are ever feeling unsure, uncertain, or unsafe.
- If you are unable to continue volunteering with Houston Audubon, let the Volunteer Coordinator and/or your Staff Lead know as soon as possible.

SAFETY:

- Volunteers are to follow Houston Audubon safety guidelines as outlined below, as well as participate in trainings led by the Volunteer Coordinator and the volunteer's Staff Lead. This includes following safe practices, including participation in applicable education sessions, using appropriate personal safety equipment and reporting accidents, injuries, and unsafe situations as required by Houston Audubon.
- Do not engage in criminal conduct or acts of violence, or make threats of violence toward anyone, fight or provoke a fight or negligently damage property when representing Houston Audubon.
- You are expected to obey instructions properly as issued by your Staff Lead and Volunteer Coordinator.
- Do not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs at any time.
- Abstain from all illegal activity.
- Do not willfully falsify or misrepresent yourself on your volunteer application or other volunteer records; do not alter agency records or other agency documents.
- Behave appropriately toward visitors; do not violate organizational policies and guidelines on abuse or harassment.
- Wear appropriate clothing. All items of clothing must be suitable for the professional environment, your volunteer position, and should not contain offensive or objectionable material.
- Report suspicious activities to the appropriate authorities.

COLLABORATION:

- Be a team player and be open to collaboration at all times.
- Keep an open mind and value the input and suggestions of fellow volunteers and staff.
- Be patient when working on group projects. Support your project to the best of your ability.
- Be open to working with volunteers whose experience may be less than your own.
- Heed the direction of Staff Leads; if you have a concern or disagreement with the direction of a program, please bring it to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteer Dismissal Policy

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of Houston Audubon or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment are subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be released until the volunteer has an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with supervisory staff. Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct or insubordination, theft of property or misuse of agency materials, mistreatment of visitors, staff or

other volunteers, failure to abide by agency policies and procedures, and failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties.

Volunteers committing any of the following acts will be subject to immediate dismissal:

- Possessing intoxicants, illegal substances, illegal gambling devices, or firearms while on duty with Houston Audubon
- Drinking or consuming alcohol or illegal substances while on duty with Houston Audubon. (Exceptions to alcohol consumption may be made during Houston Audubon sponsored social events.)
- Reporting for volunteer duty noticeably under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Stealing, intentionally destroying or mutilating property
- Fighting, or inciting a fight
- Disregarding Houston Audubon's Safety and Risk Management policies, safety or equipment operating instructions, carelessly operating machinery or equipment, and/or unauthorized use of machinery or equipment

All Houston Audubon property, including nametags, badges, patches, equipment, reference books, and binoculars, must be returned by volunteers on or before their last day.

Volunteer Complaint Procedure

Even in the best of situations, conflicts can arise, and a volunteer may feel he/she has been treated unfairly. A volunteer grievance is a complaint brought by a volunteer and may concern interactions with other volunteers and/or Houston Audubon staff. It can include allegations that the volunteer was treated unjustly or in an arbitrary manner concerning job performance or it can be a disagreement with a specific Houston Audubon policy. Houston Audubon believes in harmonious and cooperative volunteer relations. **Every attempt should be made to resolve differences and disputes before making use of the steps in the Grievance Procedure.**

When a volunteer decides to file a grievance, the following procedures should be followed:

Step 1: Discuss the grievance with the Volunteer Coordinator in an attempt to resolve the complaint. If the grievance is being filed against the Volunteer Coordinator, please reach out directly to the Outreach and Engagement Director.

Step 2: If the grievance is not settled at Step 1, it should be submitted in writing to the Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator shall reply within 14 days of receiving the grievance and will outline next steps and remediation procedures.

Step 3: If the grievance is not settled at Step 2, it should be submitted in writing directly to the Executive Director. The Executive Director shall reply within 14 days of receiving the grievance. The decision of the Executive Director is final.

VOLUNTEER SAFETY & RISK MANAGEMENT

Basic Safety Practices

Volunteer safety is of the utmost importance and should be prioritized at all times. If you are volunteering in a capacity where you will be leading other volunteers or community members, please make sure to provide a safety overview, covering the following basic safety practices. Keep an eye out for safety hazards (i.e. slippery trails, inappropriate clothing) at the beginning of the event. At all times, volunteers should keep the following in mind:

- **TRAILS & TERRAIN:** Please keep in mind that the terrain at Houston Audubon sanctuaries can oftentimes be uneven and unpredictable. If you have any kind of injury or disability that limits your ability to walk along uneven surfaces, please bring this to the Volunteer Coordinator's attention so that we can adjust volunteer tasks accordingly. Volunteers working outdoors must always wear close-toed shoes. Additionally, keep in mind that trails within Houston Audubon properties may become extremely slippery when wet.
- **PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS:** Volunteer tasks may require lifting fairly heavy objects and/or repetitively bending down and standing up. If you have any kind of injury or disability that limits your ability to lift objects or bend down, please bring this to the Volunteer Coordinator's attention so that we can adjust volunteer tasks accordingly.
- **TOOLS:** Volunteers will often be asked to use various tools while volunteering here onsite, especially when participating in Habitat Restoration work. Please be overly aware of your surroundings when using any given tool. If you are unsure how to use a given tool, please ask an experienced volunteer or staff member. Be mindful where you are placing your tools, and make sure that they are in plain sight and are not a tripping hazard. Do not run while carrying tools.
- **POISON IVY & OTHER HAZARDOUS PLANTS:** There is poison ivy found in various locations around sanctuaries. Please be mindful of this and stay on the trails, unless otherwise directed by Houston Audubon staff. Volunteer training will cover identification of poison ivy, and what to do if you accidentally touch poison ivy. Additionally, there are many other species that are prickly and can easily scratch skin. If you have skin that can be easily irritated, please let the Volunteer Coordinator know so that we can adjust volunteer tasks accordingly.
- **TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF:** While volunteering, be aware of how you are feeling physically and mentally. If you are feeling weak or tired, do not try and "power through." Eat beforehand, stay hydrated, and take breaks as needed.

Rule of Two

The Rule of Two protects volunteers. Unless express permission for independent work has been given by a Staff Lead or the Volunteer Coordinator, volunteers will work in a group or as partners. Whenever possible, volunteers should work alongside, or be in close proximity to, at least one additional volunteer or staff member.

Injury Protocol

Although we hope to avoid volunteer injury at all costs, it is important to know the steps to take if an injury does occur. If an injury or illness occurs to you, another volunteer, or staff member, assess the situation and call 911 ASAP if needed. If you are certified, provide standard first aid and notify Houston Audubon staff as quickly as possible.

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from administering any medication to victims. Staff/Volunteers may provide over-the-counter medication (i.e., alcohol wipes, sting relief, Tylenol) to the parent/guardian of child victim or to an adult to administer to self.

See below for further, injury-specific, protocol:

Minor Injuries or Illnesses

- **Bee Stings:** Ask the victim if they are allergic to bees or wasps. Observe the person carefully for extreme swelling at the site of sting, swelling around face or neck, difficulty in breathing. If you observe any of these signs, call 911 immediately, whether or not the victim concurs with your decision.
- **Possible Ingestion of or Exposure to Poisonous Plant:** Try to identify the plant. Call 911 if you observe allergy symptoms (swelling, difficulty breathing).
- **Scrapes, Small Cuts, Bruises:** Offer person (adult) or parent/guardian (for minor) a first aid box for treatment and offer to call 911 if they so choose.

Moderate to Severe Injuries

- Remain calm; use your best judgment in all emergencies. Check the scene for clues to what happened, additional dangers, additional victims and/or additional adults to assist you.
- AED is located in Houston Audubon headquarters and field stations. Only AED certified volunteers may use this equipment on someone who is unconscious/unresponsive and not breathing.
- Call 911 if victim shows any of the following life-threatening conditions or any other serious symptom; whether the victim concurs with your decision:
 - Unconsciousness
 - Trouble breathing/Not breathing
 - No signs of circulation (no pulse)
 - Deep burn to face/neck
 - Pain in abdomen that does not go away
 - Vomiting blood
 - Seizures
 - Injury to the head
 - Injury with bone showing through skin
 - Persistent chest, arm or neck pain (may be symptomatic of a heart attack)

- Suspected bone fracture or break
 - Severe allergic reaction
 - Incoherent
 - Severe pain
 - Severe or uncontrolled bleeding
 - Suspected poisoning
 - Prolonged dizziness
 - OR - If victim requests ambulance transport
- Treat any injuries WITHIN YOUR CAPABILITIES and according to your CPR/First Aid training.
 - Do not transport a victim to a medical facility in your own car or a Houston Audubon vehicle; wait for medical personnel to arrive.
 - Stay with the victim; if available, send someone to get help. If away from buildings, alone with the victim and without a cell phone, you may have to leave the victim to get help; use your best judgment.
 - If possible, communicate with emergency personnel and Houston Audubon staff the victim's exact location on property.
 - If possible, send someone to greet and direct emergency vehicles.
 - If possible, obtain the names and telephone numbers of the victim's contacts in case of emergency. Many volunteers and program participants already have this information on file. If needed, contact the Volunteer Coordinator for access to this information.
 - You may yield care of victim to a doctor, nurse, paramedic or other medically trained person.
 - Houston Audubon staff do not have the authority to pronounce someone dead. If a person is found unconscious, call 911 and stay with the person until emergency personnel arrive.

Injuries on the Trail

- If you have a cellphone, call 911 and or send a runner to the nearest building. The caller/runner must be able to specify which trail and approximately where on the trail the injured person is and what type of injury/illness. When sending a runner, if possible, write down the information before sending the runner out.
- If possible, send a person to stand at the front gate or trail head to direct emergency personnel to the injured or ill person.
- If you have been trained, care for the ill person by administering basic First Aid. Unless necessary, do not move an injured person.
- Move bystanders away. As most groups have two or more adults, the staff person or volunteer should provide care to the injured person while other adults move the group away. If the injured/ill person is with a school or other group, make sure an adult from the group is with an injured or ill child at all times. The teacher or group leader should call his/her superintendent, council office or other central authority as soon as possible.

Sun/Heat Exposure

When the body is unable to cool itself through sweating, serious heat illnesses may occur. The most severe heat-induced illnesses are heat exhaustion and heat stroke. If left untreated, heat exhaustion could progress to heat stroke and possible death. If you suspect someone is suffering from heat illness, act immediately and following these guidelines:

- Heat Cramps

- **What are the signals?** Painful muscle spasms, usually in the legs or abdomen.
- **Care:** Move the victim to a cool place, give the victim cool water to drink and have the victim lightly stretch the muscle and gently massage the area.
- Heat Exhaustion
 - **What are the signals?** Headaches; dizziness or lightheadedness; weakness; mood changes such as irritability, confusion or the inability to think straight; upset stomach; vomiting; decreased or dark colored urine; fainting or passing out; and pale, cool, ashen or clammy skin.
 - **Care:** Get the person to a cool shaded area to rest. **Do not leave the victim alone.** If the victim is dizzy or lightheaded lay the person on his/her back and raise the legs about 6-8 inches. If sick to the stomach, lay the person on his/her side. Loose and/or remove any tight/heavy clothing. If the person is conscious, have him/her drink some cool water (about one cup every 15 minutes). Try to cool the person by fanning him/her. Cool the skin with a cool spray/mist of water or a wet cloth. If the person does not feel better in a few minutes, call 911. **Call 911 immediately if the person refuses water, vomits, has seizures, starts to lose consciousness, or becomes unconscious.**
- Heat Stroke
 - **What are the signals?** Dry, pale skin with no sweating; hot, red skin that looks sunburned; mood changes such as irritability, confusion, or the inability to think straight; rapid/weak pulse; rapid/shallow breathing; seizures or fits; and unconsciousness with no response.
 - **Care:** Call 911 for emergency help immediately and then follow the care steps above for heat exhaustion.
- **To reduce the risk of sun and heat exposure, and prevent heat emergencies:**
 - Reference to the current Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) for the area and modify activities to reduce the level of exertion and stress on your body.
 - Keep water handy. Take frequent water breaks – one cup every 15 to 20 minutes
 - Avoid alcohol or beverages with caffeine. These make the body lose water and increase the risk for heat illnesses.
 - Avoid eating large meals before working in a hot environment.
 - Use sunscreen and wear sunglasses, hats or protective clothing.
 - Use the buddy system, if you are working on a project outside, work in pairs.
 - Check with your physician or pharmacist to see if any medicines you are taking may affect you when working in hot environments.

Injury Reporting & Insurance Coverage

All volunteers have coverage for injuries sustained while performing functions at the direction of Houston Audubon staff. **If an injury does occur, contact the Volunteer Coordinator and Operations Director ASAP, within 24 hours (no matter how slight the injury is or appears to be and even if you do not choose to seek medical care). Their contact information can be found on the last page of this manual.**

Youth Protection Policy

Houston Audubon seeks to ensure that youth have a positive, healthy experience when they participate in its programs. Because each young person is an individual, the interaction with each youth will be unique and based upon the youth's needs. This requires that employees and volunteers exercise good judgment and be thoughtful about the speech, gestures and touch they employ and about the

boundaries they establish. Volunteers working with youth are required to undergo youth protection training as part of their onboarding for educational programming in addition to signing the Child Protection Policy Form (appendix one of this manual)

School groups participating in Houston Audubon educational programs will have two adults present whenever possible. **Volunteers should ensure they are never alone with a child – always be within eyesight of others.**

Discrimination & Harassment

Houston Audubon is committed to providing a workplace that is free of discrimination and harassment based on race, color, creed, religion, sex, pregnancy, national origin, ancestry, immigration status, citizenship status, age, physical or mental disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, marital status, military or veteran status, medical condition, genetic information, sexual or reproductive health decisions, or any other status protected by applicable local, state or federal laws ("protected status"). This policy prohibits unlawful discrimination, harassment, and retaliation by any supervisor, manager, coworker, volunteer, and/or any third party that comes into contact with an employee, intern, volunteer, community member, or independent contractor, and applies to all aspects of employment including recruitment, hiring, rates of pay, promotion, training, termination, benefit plans, and all other forms of compensation, terms, conditions, and privileges of employment for employees, applicants, interns and volunteers. This policy governs all conduct in the workplace, on our computer systems and network, and at all work-related events, including Audubon-related functions or trips. Employees or volunteers who violate this policy are subject to discipline, up to and including immediate termination of employment or volunteer service. Violators may also be subject to individual liability.

We strictly prohibit and will not tolerate harassment, including but not limited to sexual harassment.

Employees and volunteers are prohibited from harassing other employees, interns, other volunteers and independent contractors whether or not the conduct occurs on Audubon's premises or during working hours. This conduct includes but is not limited to the following:

- sexually suggestive statements, questions, insults or jokes, or sexual innuendos;
- repeated unwanted sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions;
- pressuring for sexual activity, including offering employment benefits in exchange for sexual favors or denying employment benefits in response to a refusal to provide sexual favors;
- comments of a sexual nature about a person's physical attributes;
- offensive touching or assault, obscene gestures, or suggestive sounds;
- use of slurs or negative stereotyping, including sex stereotyping;
- using Houston Audubon e-mail or Internet resources to receive, view, or send offensive jokes, pictures, posters, or other similar material;
- intimidating acts, such as bullying or threatening based on an individual's protected status;
- circulating or displaying offensive pictures, letters, notes, e-mails, invitations, or other similar materials;
- falsely denying, lying about, or otherwise covering up or attempting to cover up conduct that is prohibited by this policy; or
- any other conduct that shows hostility toward, disrespect for, or degradation of an individual based on the individual's protected status.

If you experience or witness any activity that you think may be discrimination or harassment, please bring this to the Volunteer Coordinator's attention immediately.

Emergency Procedures

Fire

Building Fire

- If there is a fire in a Houston Audubon building, call 911 then notify Houston Audubon staff as soon as possible.

- If you are in the building, do your best to stay calm and find the safest exit route. Head to the parking lot unless a different meeting spot is designated by Houston Audubon staff. If the fire expands beyond the building, follow the evacuation procedure listed below.

Outdoor Fire

- If there is a fire in a Houston Audubon property, call 911 then notify Houston Audubon staff as soon as possible
- Stay calm and move to a safe location, do not go closer to investigate or attempt to put the fire out with a hose
- If there is a fire that is closer than 300 yards in any direction, please follow the evacuation procedure included below

Theft

Vehicle or facility theft or break-ins on Houston Audubon property must be reported to the Houston Police Department and the Houston Audubon staff. Houston Audubon does not assume responsibility for loss due to theft of personal items, cars or other property. Houston Audubon recommends filing a police report if personal property is stolen from our site.

Evacuation Procedure

If Houston Audubon grounds need to be evacuated for any reason, please make contact with your Staff Lead. Once contact has been made, calmly make your way out of the property using the most accessible route to the location the Staff Lead provided. Staff and volunteers will gather at the appropriate location to assess next steps. Stay with your Staff Lead and do not leave the group until everyone has been accounted for.

Contacts & Resources

[Jed Aplaca](#)

President & CEO

(713) 932-1639 ext. 107

[Kimberly Lobit](#)

Outreach and Engagement Director

(713) 932-1639 ext. 108

[Caroline Nixon](#)

Volunteer Coordinator

(713) 932-1639 ext. 113

Appendix 1

HOUSTON AUDUBON SOCIETY

Child Protection

One of Houston Audubon Society's most urgent and compelling goals is to create a generation of whole and healthy children that respect and love the natural world. To that end we must provide quality educational opportunities in a positive, supportive, and secure setting. We are committed to cultivating the safest possible environment for the children entrusted to our care and hereby establish the following corporate policy that acknowledges our uncompromising responsibility for child protection.

General Guidelines

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children—without exception—have the right to protection from abuse.
- All staff, volunteers, and parents who have direct access to children during organized HAS activities shall be subject to rigorous recruitment and selection processes to determine eligibility and suitability.
- HAS personnel will control the setting within which children's activities take place.
- All staff, volunteers, and parents have a responsibility to report any concerns to the HAS Education Coordinator and/or the Docent Guild Coordinator who will then report to the Executive Director.
- All alleged incidents of abuse will be reported immediately to the Executive Director and President; as well as the appropriate governmental authorities.

All staff and volunteers interacting with children shall familiarize themselves with the law regarding reporting of abuse and comply with the spirit and letter of the law. By their signature below, the staff/volunteer dealing with children acknowledges receipt of the key provisions of law dealing with reporting of the abuse of children.

Program Settings and Requirements

- Normally, two adults (staff, volunteer, parent) will supervise children's activities.
- An application (HASForm 001) is required to participate in a children's program.
- Background checks—including criminal—will be performed by an accredited agency for all staff, volunteers and parents who have direct access to children. Parents who desire active participation in a children's program must make that desire known in

advance so that appropriate background checks can be performed, and the parent must bear the expense of the background check. Background checks will be updated annually.

- All information disclosed attendant to an application and background check shall be “confidential” and available only to specified staff members, e.g., Education Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator, Docent Guild Coordinator, and the Executive Director.
- A parental permission form (HASForm 002) must be completed for each child who participates in a HAS summer camp or home school program. Parental permission forms must include emergency contact information, a liability release statement, a list of persons permitted to pick-up/drop-off children, and any specific medical condition(s) that could put a child in extremis under certain circumstances.
- Staff and volunteers shall not use a private automobile to transport children involved in any HAS program.
- Every effort will be made to have a member of the HAS staff and/or volunteer trained/certified in minor first aid and CPR available during organized activities.

Action

- As a result of the background investigation, the following criteria shall be used to determine eligibility:
 - Any felony conviction shall disqualify the applicant.
 - Any conviction or misconduct involving children or a sexual offense shall disqualify the applicant.
 - The approval of any application is subject to the final approval of the Executive Director who shall confer with the President as appropriate and needed.

Approved: _____ Houston Audubon Board of Directors/ Julia Garrett _____

Title: Recording Secretary

Date: 8-3-2005

I have read and understand the provisions of Title 5, Subtitle E. Chapter 261, Subchapter A, regarding Investigation of Report of Child Abuse or Neglect.

Signed: _____

Date: _____