



The Naturalist

Celebrating 49 Years of Bird Conservation

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Greg Lavaty

Speaker Event

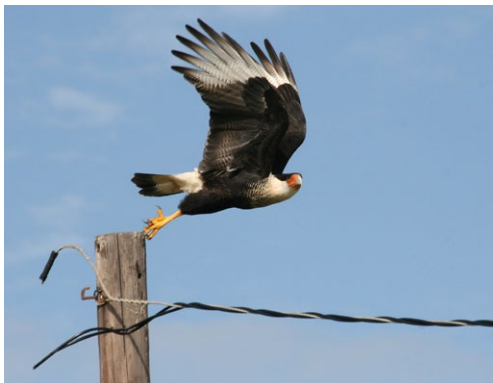
Birding Then and Now

Speakers: Fred Collins and Bob Honig

Date: Thursday, May 9, 2019
Place: United Way Center, 50 Waugh
Time: Social at 7:00 p.m. Presentation at 7:30 p.m.

How has Houston area birding changed in 50 years? Relying significantly on the Houston Ornithology Group's 1968 "Good Birding Trips" guide, Fred's firsthand perspective, and Bob's analysis of satellite imagery, our speakers will explore changes over time at popular birding locations: some that birders visited 50 years ago but have disappeared, some current hot spots that were not available to birders 50 years ago, and some that birders have frequented for the past 50 years and more. The presentation will include North and South Boulevards in Houston, White Memorial Park, High Island, Bolivar Flats, Galveston Island, the Katy Prairie and prairies on the west side of Galveston Bay, plus more. It's a story that documents the overall loss of valuable habitat over the years as well as more recent protection of and public access to sites important to birds.

Houston native Fred Collins made his first year list in 1962 and has kept one every year since. He earned a B.S. in Wildlife Science and attended graduate school at Texas A&M, where he studied wintering Wilson's Snipes. From 1994 to 2002 he served as Director of Russ Pitman Park's Nature Discovery Center. Since 2002, he has been Regional Park Manager for Harris County Precinct 3, where he developed and is currently director of both Kleb Woods Nature Center and Cypress Top Historic Park. He sits on advisory boards for Houston Audubon and the Katy Prairie Conservancy, and he is Compiler of the Cypress Creek CBC.



Crested Caracara by Bob Honig. This species was rarely seen 50 years ago on the Upper Texas Coast.



Attwater's Prairie-Chicken by Greg Lavaty. Common 50 years ago. Now fighting extinction.

Bob Honig has spent many years observing and studying natural history, particularly birds, dragonflies, and damselflies. He is a member of the Advisory Board of the Katy Prairie Conservancy after having served on its Board of Directors for 25 years. He is a past Chairman of the Ornithology Group of Houston's Outdoor Nature Club and a former Compiler of the Buffalo Bayou and Brazos Bend Christmas Bird Counts. Professionally, as an environmental consultant, he has addressed such diverse issues as endangered species, wetlands, archaeology, recycling, and sustainable development, and has performed numerous bird surveys.

This event is free and open to the general public. The Houston Audubon board election will precede the program. Please let us know if you're coming by signing up on the Speaker Event page of our website.

Our Mission: To advance the conservation of birds and positively impact their supporting environments.

Houston Audubon is a financially independent 501(c)(3) charitable conservation organization registered in the state of Texas and a chapter of the National Audubon Society.

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The Naturalist is also available in digital format on our website.

Sign up for E-News on our website for monthly updates and a link to The Naturalist.

Destination High Island

by Helen E. Drummond, Executive Director

In 2016, Houston Audubon, in collaboration with several partners, submitted for RESTORE act funding for the Bolivar Peninsula Nature Trail (BPNT) proposal. The BPNT is a joint project developed by residents, landowners, businesses, and non-profit organizations on the peninsula. It includes 13 nature trail sites designed to introduce visitors to each of the major habitat types found on the peninsula, provide unique educational opportunities about coastal resources, and enhance other recreational activities, including birding. It is also designed to enhance the overall visitor experience.



The proposal passed most of the major hurdles. It was included in Texas' final State plan which was approved by the Department of Treasury. However, the BNRT was not selected to receive Round 1 funding.

There is GREAT news though. Thanks to the John P. McGovern Foundation, Houston Audubon has been able to move forward on some elements of the BPNT which are related to Houston Audubon sanctuaries.

As High Island visitors arrive at the Smith Oaks Bird Sanctuary this spring, they are being introduced to our design plans for Destination High Island. Destination High Island includes an elevated walkway and visitor center. The walkway will begin at what will be a newly renovated pumphouse and meander through the tree canopy to the colonial bird rookery islands. The renovated pumphouse will provide a gathering space for visitors, volunteers, and staff—a place to retreat, eat, or just relax. It will also be a place for visitors to learn more about Houston Audubon and High Island as well as the importance of both to spring migration. And, drumroll, please—the plan also includes restrooms.

The Destination High Island plan is presented on a large upright wooden framed sign that contains the site plan and design renderings of the canopy walkway, visitor center, and restrooms. The sign is located near the trailhead on the north end of the parking lot.

We hope you get out to High Island this year. Join in the fun of spring migration and check out the Destination High Island plan at Smith Oaks Bird Sanctuary. Project construction begins after this year's birding season and will be complete by Spring 2020.



Houston Audubon's Plastic Pollution Initiative

by Anna Vallery, Conservation Specialist

The plastic pollution issue has become increasingly evident in the past few years. This holds especially true in the world of birds. Birds are some of the species most heavily impacted by our plastic use. Nearly every seabird on earth, for example, has now been observed ingesting plastic. Birds that aren't found ingesting plastic directly face impacts from the material as a result of entanglement or entrapment. As more research is conducted, evidence of plastic's negative impact on birds and other wildlife is becoming even more apparent.



This year, Houston Audubon is taking several steps in an effort to tackle this conservation issue.

First, Houston Audubon is committing to limiting the amount of plastic used within the organization. This includes no longer providing plastic water bottles at workdays. We will only host plastic-free events beginning in May. We will also be participating as an organization in Plastic Free July. We encourage other organizations and individuals alike to join us in the challenge!

Second, Houston Audubon is committed to continuing our education efforts about the impacts of plastic on birds, both locally and globally, through presentations, events, and leading by example. The topic of our March speaker event, for example, was the effect of plastic on birds. We are also coordinating several events in conjunction with World Migratory Bird Day 2019, the theme of which is the impact of plastic pollution on migratory birds.

Finally, Houston Audubon will continue to work as a partner of the Plastic Pollution Prevention Partnership, working alongside other conservation organizations in Houston to make changes locally.

Birdathon 2019

We had record-breaking attendance at our Birdathon 2019 Kick-off Workshop on March 10. Over 60 people attended the educational sessions including Birding 101 with Glenn Olsen, How to Use eBird with Anna Vallery, and Planning your Birdathon/Fundraising Tips with Barbara Tilton and Sarah Flournoy. We were excited to see lots of new faces—from people curious about birding to more experienced birders wanting to get involved in this fun fundraiser.

If you're interested in participating in Birdathon 2019, visit birdathon.houstonaudubon.org.

Thank you to our Birdathon sponsors: Abbott Contracting, Copy.com, Houston Camera Exchange, Land Sea & Sky, Sword Plumbing, and Wild Birds Unlimited.

Celebrate World Migratory Bird Day at the Houston Botanic Garden

On May 11 in honor of World Migratory Bird Day, the education team will be giving a special program and birding tours of the Houston Botanic Garden. The program will start at 10 a.m. in the Houston Botanic Garden's headquarters building. Afterward we will have a fun bird migration game set up for kids to play and will offer guided birding walks on the property.

The Houston Botanic Garden is at 8205 N. Bayou Drive, Houston, 77017, close to the Raptor and Education Center at Sims Bayou.

Birdathon 2019

Bird for a cause!

New and experienced birders are welcome to participate in Birdathon, a birding fundraiser where teams compete to identify the most bird species in a 24-hour period. Raise money and bird your beaks off, then mingle and win prizes at the Awards Celebration on May 19.

Learn more at birdathon.houstonaudubon.org.



YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER
PHOTO BY GREG LAVATY

North American Prairie Conference

The 25th North American Prairie Conference: *Healthy Prairies, Healthy Watersheds* will be held June 2-5, 2019 at the University of Houston – Clear Lake.

The conference brings together prairie experts from across the nation, including Carol Davit, Dr. Reed Noss, Dr. Dwayne Estes, and Chris Helzer for the conservation and restoration of North America's legacy landscape.

Conference field trips will explore the biologically diverse Texas Coastal Prairie region with additional opportunities to visit the newly designated Texas Institute for Coastal Prairie Research and Education and the Armand Bayou Nature Center.

For more information and to register, visit northamericanprairie.org.



Laura Singleton Exceptional Volunteer for 2018: Doris Heard

by Juanita Perkins, Volunteer Coordinator

Doris Heard has been an active member of the Houston Audubon Board of Directors since 2013. She accepted the position a bit reluctantly . . . when asked to join, she first said no, she didn't like meetings. Fortunately for us, she eventually accepted the board position and Doris has done so much more for Houston Audubon than just attend meetings!

She's been particularly busy this past year; serving as a gala co-chair; participating in bird surveys and environmental education programs; and being an active member of the Bird-Friendly Communities Committee.

Tributes from some of the nominators:

Doris is a trusted friend and colleague. She is soft-spoken, yet tough. She has spent decades working on wildlife habitat improvements, and she willingly shares her expertise with that humble Doris style and smile.

Doris is both wonderfully kind and fiercely committed. She has a vision for Houston where birds are abundant and where children can delight in nature as a regular part of their days. What really makes Doris stand out, though, is that her vision is matched with real time spent accomplishing challenging objectives that have significant results. Whether it is coordinating planting days, identifying new volunteers, designing and sharing beautiful printed resources, filming videos to educate and inspire, or even providing encouraging words at the end of a hard day, Doris understands the multi-faceted challenges and opportunities of our urban greenspace and works actively to address them.

Doris worked relentlessly for the Birds, Bugs and Blooms gala this past year, serving as co-chair, attending more than a few of those dreaded meetings, and signing hundreds of letters with special notes encouraging people to attend. She designed 30 breathtaking



Doris Heard with Juanita Perkins and Tim White

centerpieces that took months of hard work, including driving all around the city until she found just the right twig or bloom or blade of grass so that she could arrange the right combination of birds and bugs on branches—the results were truly beautiful!

Someone who worked closely with Doris on the gala said:

Doris went all out for Houston Audubon to help make the gala a success. And she did it with a smile on her face and optimism in her heart. She is always humble and will perform any task needed to make a project successful. She is always advocating for Houston Audubon, even to other groups that she is involved in, and truly has our mission in her heart.

And, humorously, one nominator submitted: it should also be mentioned that Doris makes the most delicious brownies from scratch.

For all of the reasons above, including the brownies, it was certainly our honor to recognize Doris Heard as the 2018 Laura Singleton Exceptional Volunteer recipient.

Welcome Birds to Your Yard with Native Plants!

The Houston Audubon Natives Nursery Open House on May 4 is an opportunity to buy plants that will transform your patio or yard into a thriving landscape for birds and butterflies. We offer over 60 species of "real-deal" native plants—these plants are grown from locally-collected seeds and are never treated with pesticides. A small selection of trees and shrubs will also be available this year, thanks to a partnership with Trees for Houston.

During the event, native plant experts—easily identified by their brightly-colored yellow shirts and aprons—will be available to advise on options to consider according to your specific needs. The Open House is from 8 a.m. to noon. Can't make it on May 4? The Natives Nursery is also open on Friday mornings, 8-11 a.m.



Rattlesnake Master: Don Verser

Spotlight On Species



Lanceleaf Coreopsis: USDA Forest Service

Rattlesnake Master: Rattlesnake master stands out in a garden with its unique yucca-shaped leaves and round flowerheads made up of many small flowers. It adds interest to a landscape, providing good wildlife cover and attracting a huge diversity of insects. The root of rattlesnake master has been used medicinally by American Indians and pioneers.

Lanceleaf Coreopsis: Lanceleaf coreopsis makes a colorful addition to any garden with its cheery, yellow blooms. It is drought tolerant, easy to grow, and attractive to many insects.

Buttonbush: This shrub is a new nursery offering as part of the partnership with Trees for Houston. It grows well in moist gardens and blooms best with at least some sun, but it can also be grown in shade. The flowers are attractive to butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds. In winter, the plant provides seed clusters that can offer food for birds.



Buttonbush and Tiger Swallowtail: Wanda Smith

Nature Photography with Houston Audubon

HANPA

May 1: Extreme Macro with Kathy Adams Clark

Pretty soon the summer heat is going to set in and we'll be looking for something to photograph in the air-conditioning. Join Kathy Adams Clark for this program on extreme macro photography. Explore the beauty in bubbles, flowers, insects, and other small objects. Learn about close-up filters, extension tubes, and reversing rings on your existing camera. Gather tips that will save you agony and irritation. The Houston Audubon Nature Photography Association meets on the first Wednesday evening of the month from 7 to 9 p.m. at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary.



Photo by Kathy Adams Clark

Raptor Photo Shoot

Wednesday, May 8

Hawks, falcons, owls and more await you at this morning event at the Houston Audubon Raptor and Education Center at Sims Bayou. Whether you use a simple point and shoot or serious photography equipment, you will enjoy meeting and learning about these awesome birds. Details and registration on the Nature Photography webpage.

Houston Audubon at OKRA Charity Saloon

Thank you to our Young Professionals Advisory Council (YPAC) and all of you who supported our fundraising month at OKRA Charity Saloon! Throughout April, we've been toasting Houston's resident and migratory birds by participating in the OKRA Charity Saloon. To support birds, all you need to do is stop in and buy a drink (or two)!



Each drink purchased at OKRA entitles you to one vote to cast for the charity of your choice. We're competing against three other charities, and the organization with the most votes will receive OKRA's proceeds for the month of May 2019.

YPAC members are: Patrick Bolgren, Daniel Crump, Tony Dang, Claire Everett, Ian Wesley Gapp, Cassidy Kempf, Alexander Kneubehl, Andrew Martinez, Hannah Muegge, Stuart Nelson, Christina Neveu, Andy Newman, Carl Nooteboom, Shantelle Patterson, Taylor Rhoades, Dana Scanes, and Amanda Woormer. Read about the YPAC members at houstonaudubon.org/ypac.

WILD about Raptors Saturday, May 4, 2019 6 - 8 p.m.

Can't get enough of hawks, falcons, owls and kites? Join us at the Houston Audubon Raptor and Education Center for this special evening. Our program begins with a fun interactive program on raptors. You will then meet some of the Houston Audubon education raptors and learn more about their natural history. This is a family-friendly program for all ages. Space is limited. Pre-registration is required. Visit our website for details.



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *Nyctanassa violacea*

This seemingly hunch-backed bird can be difficult to spot. Both species of North American night-herons, yellow-crowned and black-crowned, forage mainly at night and spend most of the day hidden among branches near a body of water. The two species can be differentiated easily by their plumage on their heads. The most obvious difference is stated in their names: Yellow-crowned Night-Herons have a yellow crown and Black-crowned Night-Herons have a black crown.



Yellow-crowned Night-Herons have a black head and face with a distinct thick white cheek stripe. Their gray front and neck make a sharp contrast with their facial pattern. Other identifying features of a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron include a thick black bill, long and showy plume feathers that drape behind the head, and yellow legs. Immature individuals take three to four years to reach adult plumage; they are brown overall, sometimes with a lightly developing white cheek stripe.

Yellow-crowned Night-Herons forage in both salt and freshwater, including marshes, ponds, ditches, swamps, and mangroves. As long as they can find crustaceans like crabs and crawfish to eat, they'll forage, sleep, and nest in that location. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons are common on the Upper Texas Coast spring through fall and are often found in wooded areas inside Houston's city limits.

— Lark Heston

While Glenn Olsen takes a well-deserved break from writing, we're featuring content from the Beak of the Week. Members of the sanctuary team have been writing these Facebook posts for several years. Their write-ups, as well as Glenn's profiles, are included in the Bird Gallery on our website. Don't forget to check out the Fun Facts which are also posted on our website.

FUN FACT

Ever wondered what those loud early birds are singing about? Studies suggest this "dawn chorus" is made up of males communicating that they were strong and healthy enough to survive the night, thus intimidating competitors and attracting females.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER
GREG LAVATY



Member Field Trips

Brazos Bend State Park

Saturday, May 18 | 8 a.m. – Noon

Houston Audubon field trips are open to members and a limited number of guests. Field trips are free but reservations are required. You must provide your own transportation.

Bus Trips for Seniors

Galveston: Railroad Museum and Hotspots

Tuesday, May 14

Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge

Monday, June 17

These bus trips are only for Houston Audubon members who are 50 and over. The bus departs from Memorial City Mall. Find details about the trips on our website.

Swifts Over Houston

We count Chimney Swifts at a variety of locations in Houston throughout the summer.

If you would like to participate, let us know and we will put you in contact with the count leader.



Red-vented Bulbul Census: June 1

Please join us for the 4th annual census of Red-vented Buleuls on June 1, 7–9 a.m. We'd like to expand our coverage if possible. The census is organized by Fred Collins and Kendra Kocab with the help of Houston Audubon's Citizen Science Committee. Find details at houstonaudubon.org.

New Bird Surveys!

Rice University

Cin-Ty Lee and Mark Kulstad are leading weekly surveys of the Rice University campus on Tuesday mornings. 228 species of birds have been recorded at Rice. At the right time of the year and with the right weather patterns, numerous migrating songbirds and sometimes migrating hawks and waders can be seen.

Eastern Glades

This special project is being conducted on the 1st Saturday of each month through August. Eastern Glades is the first major Master Plan project to be implemented in Memorial Park. This survey will help assess the bird diversity within Eastern Glades and is being led by Kirsten Thoede.

Free Sanctuary Walks

Bolivar Beach Rambles

Monthly on the 1st Saturday

Leader: Pete Deichmann

Edith Moore Bird Walks

Monthly on the 4th Saturday

Leader: Paul Fagala

Bird Surveys

Archbishop Fiorenza Park

4th Wednesday in West Houston

Leader: Mary Anne Weber

Armand Bayou Nature Center

2nd Saturday in Clear Lake

Leader: Andrew Hamlett

Baytown Nature Center

3rd Thursday on 450-acre site surrounded by bays

Leader: David Hanson

Eastern Glades

1st Saturday in Memorial Park

Leader: Kirsten Thoede

Hermann Park

2nd Monday in city park south of downtown

Coordinator: Jim Winn

Hogg Bird Sanctuary

1st Monday in Memorial Park bird sanctuary

Leader: Skip Almoney

Houston Arboretum

2nd Saturday in Memorial Park

Leaders: Theo Ostler, Kelsey Low

Houston Botanic Garden

1st Thursday across from Raptor & Education Center

Leader: Mary Anne Weber

Kickerillo-Mischer Preserve

3rd Tuesday at Marshall Lake and Cypress Creek

Leaders: Mary Anne Weber, Skip Almoney,
& Geoff Newton

Rice University

Weekly on Tuesday mornings

Leaders: Cin-Ty Lee & Mark Kulstad

Seabrook

1st Saturday at Pine Gully Park

Leader: Stennie Meadours

Willow Waterhole

3rd Saturday in Southwest Houston

Leader: Mary Ann Beauchemin

Woodland Park

4th Saturday in Woodland Heights

Leader: Jason Bonilla

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Calendar of Events

Weekly on Tuesdays: Rice University Bird Surveys

May

- 1 Spring Bird Walk at Edith Moore
- 1 Nature Photography Meeting
- 2 Houston Botanic Garden Bird Survey
- 4 Natives Nursery Open House
- 4 Bolivar Beach Ramble
- 4 Eastern Glades Survey
- 4 Seabrook Bird Survey
- 4 WILD about Raptors
- 6 Hogg Sanctuary Bird Survey
- 6 Mindful Monday
- 7 Titmouse Club
- 8 Raptor Photography Shoot
- 9 Speaker Event & Membership Meeting
- 11 World Migratory Bird Day Programs at Houston Botanic Garden
- 11 Armand Bayou Bird Survey
- 11 Houston Arboretum Bird Survey
- 13 Hermann Park Bird Survey
- 14 Bus Trip for Seniors
- 16 Baytown Bird Survey
- 18 Raptor and Education Center Workday
- 18 Member Field Trip to Brazos Bend

- 18 Willow Waterhole Bird Survey
- 19 Birdathon Awards Ceremony
- 21 Kickerillo-Mischer Bird Survey
- 22 Archbishop Fiorenza Bird Survey
- 25 Edith Moore Bird Walk
- 25 Community Workday at Edith Moore
- 25 Woodland Park Bird Survey

June

- 1 Bolivar Beach Ramble
- 1 Red-vented Bulbul Census
- 1 Eastern Glades Survey
- 1 Seabrook Bird Survey
- 3 Hogg Sanctuary Bird Survey
- 6 Houston Botanic Garden Survey
- 8 Armand Bayou Nature Center Bird Survey
- 8 Houston Arboretum Bird Survey
- 10 Hermann Park Bird Survey
- 15 Willow Waterhole Bird Survey
- 17 Bus Trip for Seniors
- 18 Kickerillo-Mischer Bird Survey
- 22 Woodland Park Bird Survey
- 26 Archbishop Fiorenza Bird Survey



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represents Houston Audubon in
the Earth Share of Texas payroll
deduction plan for charitable giving.