



The Naturalist

Celebrating 49 Years of Bird Conservation



Joanne Kamo

Volume 37, Number 5

September/October 2018

Speaker Event

A Swift Night Out at the Movies

Speakers: Sarah Flournoy and Mary Anne Weber

Date: Thursday, September 13, 2018
Place: Midtown Arts & Theater Center Houston (MATCH), 3400 Main Street, Houston 77002
Time: 7:00 p.m. – Social in Matchbox 3 Lobby
7:30 p.m. – Presentation begins in Matchbox 3

Houston Audubon's Sarah Flournoy, Bird-Friendly Communities Program Manager, and Mary Ann Weber, Education Director, will give a brief presentation about the importance of conserving Chimney Swift habitat in the city. This short talk will be followed by a movie screening of *On the Wing* (60 minutes)—a film about Vaux Swifts in Portland and the importance of protecting these birds in our urban landscape.

Chimney Swifts, similar to Vaux Swifts, are birds specialized for high-speed aerial life and can be seen from March through October, when they migrate through our area and stop to rest and raise their young.

Like many bird species, Chimney Swifts are declining in numbers and need our help. Because of losses to their natural nest sites—hollowed trees—Chimney Swifts rely almost completely on humans for their nesting and roosting structures.

Learn why Chimney Swift populations are in decline and what Houston Audubon is doing to monitor and protect them as well as how you can help.



This event is free and open to the public.

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.

The Past Year in Review

by Helen E. Drummond, Executive Director

Resilient, compelling, and consequential are three words that come to mind when thinking about the people, the mission, and the work of Houston Audubon. When staff, donors and volunteers are as caring, generous, and resilient as those connected to Houston Audubon, you know you are a part of something lasting, meaningful, and impactful. Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 was a true testament to this fact.



We began FY2018 with great news over the summer. Houston Audubon was nationally recognized and awarded accreditation as a land trust, and the months-long expansion and enhancement project for Natives Nursery was finally complete. But things changed quickly as summer was coming to an end. We were gearing up for our extensive fall programming season when Hurricane Harvey hit in late August. A couple of Houston Audubon sanctuaries were impacted and many areas surrounding staff homes and our headquarters remained under water for days; but our office space was left untouched. Once we were able to return to the office, we were compelled to act by the devastation around us and were determined to help family, friends, volunteers and others personally affected. In the same way, friends, donors, volunteers, and organizational partners reached out to Houston Audubon to help us. Upon our return to the office, we were also struck by sad news of losing Agnes Stanley, a long-time volunteer, to the storm. And once again, the Houston Audubon community reached out to us.

As days passed, we went on to spend the fall recovering, helping others, and devising special programming we thought would be a relief and respite for our neighbors and others who had experienced so much damage and harm. Later in the year, Houston Audubon received the devastating news of Flo Hannah's passing. Flo was a beloved, long-time team member who contributed so much to Houston Audubon and to prairie conservation. She was the mastermind and hands behind the Natives Nursery, which due to her passion and hard work, is thriving and playing a significant role in providing native plants to restore Houston landscapes.

Hundreds gathered to honor Flo when the Houston area was hit with a winter blast. While the snow was messy and inconvenient, it was also refreshing to see—a stark contrast to our blistering summers. Fortunately, the wet, freezing conditions soon gave way to better days which allowed recovery efforts to continue and project work to gear up. Accompanying the productive spring migration season were many notable improvements to Houston Audubon sanctuaries.

At the close of FY2018 as another hurricane season draws near, we are reminded of the kindness, generosity and resilience of the people around Houston Audubon and this wonderful Houston community. We remember and give tribute to those who have touched our lives and have since soared on to still waters and greener pastures. Now we push on, stronger than before, building on the great work achieved in 2018 as we prepare and plan for a momentous 2019.

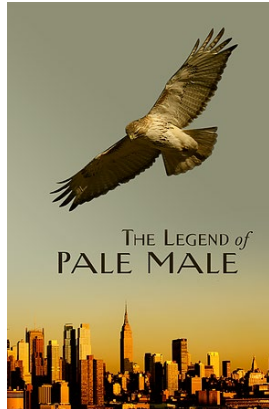
Migrating Hawks

Wednesday, September 5

Join Land Sea & Sky and Houston Audubon for a special event at Brasil, beginning at 7:00 p.m. Order a fabulous meal or decadent drink, then grab a seat on the back patio.

Mary Anne Weber, Education Director at Houston Audubon, will present *Migrating Hawks*, including a very special guest. Next, she will introduce a wonderful film, *The Legend of Pale Male: a hawk, a city, a love story*. You'll be among the first lucky viewers to experience this newly released update of a classic film. There is no better place to enjoy dinner and a free movie. Special door prizes will be provided by Land Sea & Sky. Free admission. Food and drinks are extra.

Brasil is located in Montrose at 2604 Dunlavy Street. This event is presented by Land Sea & Sky in partnership with Houston Audubon.



Natives Nursery Open House

Saturday, September 8 8 a.m.–1 p.m.

Join Houston Audubon for the first Natives Nursery Open House. Start in the Edith L. Moore cabin for a quick presentation about the nursery, the native plants we grow, and how to plant with natives. Then head out to the nursery where a group of native plant experts will be on site, ready to answer any questions you may have and help you select the best plants for your yard.

A special open house discount will also be given for the event! So stop by and learn all about our real-deal native plants! Short presentations to introduce Houston Audubon's Natives Nursery will be given at 8 a.m., 10 a.m., and noon.

Light refreshments provided.



Birds, bugs & blooms

2018 Gala: Celebrating Bird-Friendly Communities



Thursday, October 18, 2018
The Briar Club | 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.

Honorary Chairs

Kathy and Clive Runnells

Gala Co-Chairs

Claire Caudill
Doris Durbin Heard
Janeen Judah

Honorees

The Garden Club of Houston
Don Verser

Our annual gala will celebrate Houston Audubon's Bird-Friendly Communities program. This program aims to transform the greater Houston area into a thriving community that supports birds, butterflies and other pollinators while providing more accessible opportunities for people to experience the wonder and joy of birds.

For more information or to attend the event, please visit www.houstonaudubon.org/gala or contact Zineera Seth at zseth@houstonaudubon.org.

Fall Events

Swift Night Out

August 28 at St. Paul's United Methodist Church
September 7 at Russ Pitman Park
September 14 at Spring Branch Silos
September 15 at Lakeview Elementary School in Sugar Land
September 28 at Kleb Woods

Fall Raptor Photography Shoot

October 13: 9:30-11:30 a.m.

You will have the opportunity to photograph Houston Audubon's education raptors in an intimate setting at Sims Bayou Urban Nature Center. Register to attend on our website.

Owl Prowls

November 2, December 7 at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary
November 10, December 15 at Sims Bayou Urban Nature Center

Additional dates are listed in the website description.

Youth and Family Programs

BIRD Buddies

Every week we will discover a new bird and some of the other animals that live in its habitat. This program will run from September through May with a special BIRD Bonanza Celebration in May for all participants. Natural history education, crafts, games, song and dance and more await your children on this fun journey through the bird world. Children ages 3-5 are welcome to enroll. Friday morning and afternoon classes are held at Sims Bayou Urban Nature Center.

Titmouse Club

Titmouse Club is our preschool program for children ages 2½ to 5 at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary. Through stories, crafts, hands-on activities, and nature walks your children will be inspired with a deeper understanding and appreciation for the natural world around them. Resuming on Tuesday, September 18, Titmouse Club meets on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings through mid-May, 10:00–11:00 a.m.

After School Nature Explorers Club

Nature Explorers Club is designed for school-age children who are interested in investigating the natural world. Each month, we'll explore a different ecology topic, focusing on our own native plants and animals. We'll make a craft to take home, go on a nature hike, dip-net in the ponds, and get to know the plants and animals of the Bayou City. Nature Explorers Club is held on the 3rd Thursday of the month, September–May at Edith. L. Moore Nature Sanctuary.

Saturdays in Nature

On the 4th Saturday of each month (September–May), Houston Audubon Docents host an open house at the Edith L. Moore Log Cabin. The 1-4 p.m. program includes guided nature hikes and hands-on science activities for families to participate in together.

Family Nature Explore Club

We welcome all Houston Audubon families, big and small, to join us for outdoor adventures, crafts, games, live animals, and unique discoveries of the natural world. The club is perfect for families with children between the ages of 3 and 14. We love exploring those special outdoor places in the Houston area. Join us for all the adventures! To RSVP or for more information please contact Mary Anne Weber (maweber@houstonaudubon.org).

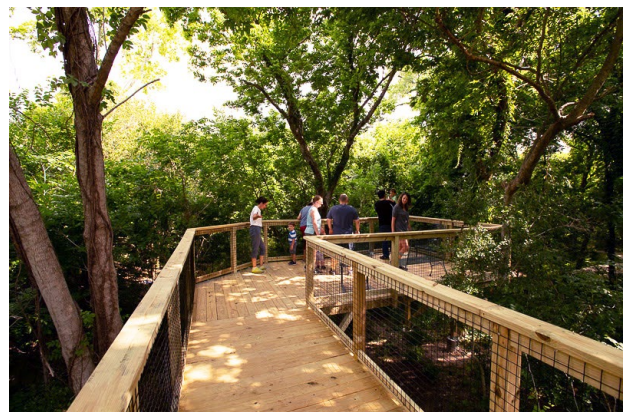
Adult Programs

New!

Senior Field Trips to Sims Bayou Urban Nature Center

Houston Audubon is excited to be able to offer field trips to our Sims Bayou Urban Nature Center starting this fall. The 2-hour field trip is perfect for senior bus excursions and similar senior groups. The visit includes a tour and up-close visits with some of the Houston Audubon hawks and owls.

A short walk will lead to the new canopy deck in the forest and another short walk will lead the group out to the bayou deck overlooking picturesque Sims Bayou. For booking and fee information, please contact Mary Anne Weber at maweber@houstonaudubon.org.



Volunteer with Houston Audubon!

Edith L. Moore 4th Saturday Family Workdays

September 23, October 28
Contact: Bethany Foshée
bfoshee@houstonaudubon.org

Bolivar Beach Cleanup

September 15
Contact: Pete Deichmann
pdeichmann@houstonaudubon.org

High Island Workdays

October 13, November 10
Contact: Pete Deichmann
pdeichmann@houstonaudubon.org

New Volunteer Orientation

Work in the Woods with Us!
Conserve Nature! Learn New Things!

Saturday, September 15
9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary

Register online at
www.houstonaudubon.org
or RSVP to Juanita at 713-932-1639
jperkins@houstonaudubon.org

Herp Study at Edith Moore

by Bethany Foshée, Edith Moore Sanctuary Manager

Since Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary's (ELMNS) founding in 1976, Houston Audubon staff and volunteers have made many observations of our resident species of herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles, i.e., "herps"). One of the more poignant and frequent observations in recent years, and even more so since Hurricane Harvey, has been the decline and even disappearance of some of our key native species of herps. It is for this reason that at this juncture in our sanctuary's history, we chose to invest in a robust, baseline data collection of our current herp populations. From this baseline survey, we can now establish a clear management direction to increase and even restore populations of vital native species.

What we did:

From January to May 2018, Texas A&M Wildlife Biology student researcher Dillon Jones surveyed the herpetofauna of Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary. Dillon also compiled iNaturalist findings over the past 4 years, 2015–2018. Each of Dillon's surveys consisted of 2 visual encounter surveys (day and night) and trapping individuals in aquatic minnow traps. Over 100 hours were spent surveying the sanctuary and much was discovered!



Dillon Jones

What we found:

A total of 158 individual animals were recorded during on-site surveys. Further, combined survey and iNaturalist data yielded a fairly complete picture of the current herpetofauna. In total, 300 individuals, representing 24 species of amphibians and reptiles can be found at ELMNS. Perhaps of greater interest is what we did not find—fairly common and expected Harris County species, including green treefrogs, gray treefrogs, rat snakes, racers, cottonmouths, mud turtles, and several common species of water snakes (*Nerodia spp.*).

What's next:

ELMNS has a fair level of diversity but could support many more species. We are particularly concerned to restore our native treefrogs. This report's findings support the establishment of more permanent marsh habitat pockets within the sanctuary, providing vital breeding habitat, safely away from our resident population of highly predatory bullfrogs within our permanent ponds.

In the Newsroom on our Website

The Texas Conservation Corps spent two weeks at our northern sanctuaries, making improvements to the trails and infrastructure at Winters Bayou and Damuth.

Eagle Scout Projects at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary:

- Replacement of the steps and wheelchair ramp at the cabin
- Deepening the main pond.

Six new informative videos on Houston Audubon's Bird-Friendly Communities website:

- Transforming Houston for the Birds
- Why Bird?
- Birds and Butterflies at Home
- Houston Audubon's Natives Nursery
- Nest Boxes for Screech Owls and Chimney Swifts
- Make a Splash for Birds

Photo galleries of workdays, camps, and summer watch events

The report also recommends reintroduction of expected species to their correct ecosystem niche, i.e., restoring native water snakes (*Nerodia spp.*) and ribbon snakes to the permanent water bodies of ELMNS.



Bronze frog at ELMNS

Finally, and most importantly, this report supports regular monitoring of our herpetofauna and continued development of our team of citizen scientists, trained to use iNaturalist to easily and effectively capture which species are found here at our sanctuary.

By 1) restoring vital habitat niches, 2) reintroducing native species and 3) growing our monitoring efforts, we hope to show an increase in both the abundance and diversity of ELMNS herpetofauna in the years to come. Email Bethany (bfoshee@houstonaudubon.org) to join our conservation efforts, beginning this fall!

Find Dillon's full report on the research page of the conservation section on our website.

Bats in Houston

by Glenn Olsen, GO Birding Ecotours

We will be offering a Nature at Night class in October, and one of the most interesting and often-seen types of wildlife at night is bats. We most often notice bats flying erratically at dusk or early morning in our neighborhoods. Bats roost (sleep) during the day and we can find them in many different habitats including cavities in trees, behind the loose bark of trees, in tree leaves, on tree trunks, under bridges and in buildings. Perhaps the best known bat in Texas is the Mexican/Brazilian free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*). This is the species that many people go to the Waugh Street bridge in Houston or the Congress Street bridge in Austin to watch leave their roost site under the bridges at dusk. This species is highly migratory, arriving in late February-early March to spend the summer in Texas and breed. In the fall they migrate south to Mexico for the winter. The Mexican/Brazilian free-tailed bat is our state flying mammal.



Bats in general are very beneficial mammals that consume hundreds of thousands of insects per night, including mosquitos, moths, and beetles. According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department studies have shown that the agricultural value of insect control by bats is \$1.4 billion annually in Texas alone!

We have several other bat species but these do not receive the attention that the above-mentioned species does. A few of these are the eastern red bat, the northern yellow bat, big brown bat, and the evening bat. These are the ones we are more likely to see in our neighborhoods. Thirty-three species of bats have been recorded in the state but several of these are rare occurrences. In class we will discuss what we can do to help these beneficial mammals.

Bats suffer from a poor public image. So many inaccurate and damaging ideas persist concerning this group of mammals. Many of these erroneous ideas stem from fiction books and films, especially concerning Dracula, vampire bats, and horror films. Join us for our class and learn to separate fact from fiction about bats and many other species of our urban wildlife.

Birding and Nature Classes with Glenn Olsen

Each Houston Audubon course consists of a Tuesday evening class at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary and a Saturday field trip. Details and online reservation links on our website.

NEW CLASS

Nature at Night: October 13

Adults and accompanied youth (age 10+) can discover the joys of urban wildlife—mammals, rodents, birds, frogs, and crawling creatures. Before we head out on the trails of Edith L Moore Sanctuary, we will meet in the historic cabin to learn about the wildlife of our city and neighborhoods and how these animals find food, shelter and why we rarely see them. With luck we may find an Eastern Screech-Owl or a raccoon along the banks of the creek searching for food. An armadillo or opossum may shuffle across the trail, and we may find exciting insects like the beautiful but ferocious golden-eyed lacewing, a praying mantis (the Tyrannosaurus Rex of the insect world), or the weird walking stick.

RETURNING FAVORITES

Hawk Migration: September 18 and 22

Gulf Coast Birding at the Glasscock School of Continuing Studies at Rice University.

In this introduction to birding, learn to identify birds that can be seen throughout the Texas Gulf Coast. Co-sponsored by Houston Audubon. Five classes on Thursday afternoons beginning on September 27. Field trip on Saturday, November 3.

Introduction to Birding: October 23 and 27

Sparrow Identification: November 27, December 1

Wintering Birds: December 11 and 15

Houston Audubon Field Trips

Monument Hill & Kreische Brewery State Historic Site
Saturday, September 22 8 a.m. – Noon

Smith Point Hawk Watch
Saturday, October 27 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.

Houston Audubon Seniors Bus Trips

Smith Point Hawk Watch, Anahuac NWR
Wednesday, September 12

Destination TBA
Monday, October 22

These trips are for Houston Audubon members who are over 50. The bus departs from Memorial City Mall and is provided by Harris County Precinct 3 Commissioner Steve Radack.

BIRD SURVEY WORKSHOP

Saturday, September 29 1–4 p.m.
Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary

This workshop is for current urban bird survey leaders, those interested in becoming survey leaders or co-leaders, and all who would like to become more involved with citizen science. Topics will include monthly urban bird survey highlights, Chimney Swift monitoring needs, eBird updates, and surveying needs in habitat restoration areas.

Register online. For more details or questions, contact sflournoy@houstonaudubon.org.

Galveston County Audubon Group

Presentations

Our presentations take place in the Wortham Auditorium at the Rosenberg Library, 2310 Sealy St. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and we encourage everyone to come visit about recent outings and sightings. The presentations begin at 7 p.m.

Thursday, September 20:

Flight Identification of Birds in Texas with Jim Stevenson

Thursday, October 18:

Are You Sure of Your Shorebirds? with Kristine Rivers

Field Trips

Saturday, September 22: Smith Point Hawk Watch

Saturday, October 20: Galveston's East End

Everyone is welcome! Find details, including special arrangements for Smith Point, at www.houstonaudubon.org



Free Sanctuary Walks

Bolivar Beach Rambles

Monthly on the 1st Saturday
with Pete Deichmann

Edith Moore Bird and Nature Walks

Monthly on the 4th Saturday
with Bethany Foshée & Paul Fagala

Monthly 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

Hermann Park

2nd Monday in city park south of downtown
Coordinator: Jim Winn

Hogg Bird Sanctuary

3rd Saturday in Memorial Park bird sanctuary
Leader: Cin-Ty Lee

Houston Arboretum

3rd Saturday in Memorial Park
Leaders: Theo Ostler, Kelsey Low

Houston Botanic Garden

1st Thursday across from Sims Bayou Nature Center
Leader: Mary Anne Weber

Kickerillo-Mischer Preserve

3rd Monday at Marshall Lake and Cypress Creek
Leaders: Mary Anne Weber, Skip Almoney

Willow Waterhole

3rd Saturday in Southwest Houston
Leader: Mary Ann Beauchemin

Woodland Park

3rd Saturday in Woodland Heights north of downtown
Leader: Jason Bonilla

Check our website for details, directions, times, and any last minute date changes. All are welcome!

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Calendar of Events

September

- Weekly BIRD Buddies on Friday at Sims Bayou Nature Center
 Weekly Titmouse Club on Tuesday & Wednesday at Edith Moore
 1 Bolivar Beach Ramble
 5 Migrating Hawks
 6 Houston Botanic Garden Bird Survey
 7 Swift Night Out – Nature Discovery Center
 8 Natives Nursery Open House
 8 Armand Bayou Nature Center Bird Survey
 10 Hermann Park Bird Survey
 12 Seniors Bus Trip
 13 Speaker Event
 14 Swift Night Out – Spring Branch
 15 Bolivar Beach Cleanup
 15 New Volunteer Orientation
 15 Hogg Sanctuary Bird Survey
 15 Houston Arboretum Bird Survey
 15 Willow Waterhole Bird Survey
 15 Woodland Park Bird Survey
 15 Swift Night Out – Spring Branch
 17 Kickerillo-Mischer Preserve Bird Survey
 18 Hawk Migration Class
 20 Baytown Bird Survey
 20 Galveston County Audubon Group Meeting
 22 Hawk Migration Field Trip
 22 Galveston County Audubon Group Field Trip
 22 Bird and Nature Walks at Edith Moore
 22 Family Workday at Edith Moore
 22 Saturdays in Nature, Edith Moore

- 26 Archbishop Fiorenza Bird Survey
 28 Swift Night Out – Kleb Woods
 29 Bird Survey Workshop

October

- 4 Houston Botanic Garden Survey
 6 Bolivar Beach Ramble
 8 Hermann Park Bird Survey
 13 High Island Workday
 13 Raptor Photo Shoot
 13 Armand Bayou Nature Center Bird Survey
 13 Nature at Night Class
 15 Kickerillo-Mischer Preserve Bird Survey
 18 Baytown Bird Survey
 18 Houston Audubon Gala: *Birds, bugs & blooms*
 18 Galveston County Audubon Group Meeting
 20 Galveston County Audubon Group Field Trip
 20 Hogg Sanctuary Bird Survey
 20 Houston Arboretum Bird Survey
 20 Willow Waterhole Bird Survey
 20 Woodland Park Bird Survey
 22 Houston Audubon Seniors Bus Trip
 23 Introduction to Birding Class
 24 Archbishop Fiorenza Bird Survey
 27 Introduction to Birding Field Trip
 27 Bird and Nature Walks at Edith Moore
 27 Family Workday at Edith Moore
 27 Saturdays in Nature, Edith Moore



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