

# HAS Hero Naturalist Articles

By Joy Hester

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## HAS Hero - Caroline Callery

by Joy Hester, Executive Director

September 2002

Houston Audubon currently has 5,500 members drawn from 13 counties extending in all directions around the city of Houston. It owns and manages over 2,000 acres in 16 sanctuaries, and it runs an education program that reaches thousands of children every year. A full-time staff of five runs the organization under the guidance of a Board of Directors with the help of hundreds of volunteers. In the beginning, though, there was only a small committed group of birdwatchers who worked all day in their professions and then met for long evenings to shape the organization that became Houston Audubon Society. They were the first volunteers, and when they moved on others stepped into their places. The breadth of the organization expanded to include many who weren't birders but who nevertheless cared about the world that birds live in.

Some of those pioneers are still a part of Houston Audubon, and some are no longer with us. They are our "HAS Heroes" and we want to honor them by a series of articles in the Naturalist. The first is about **Caroline Callery**, a member of our Board of Advisors, a former Board of Directors member, and the long-time guiding spirit of our fundraising programs. The birds of High Island were what brought Caroline Callery to Houston Audubon Society. A casual birder who enjoyed watching birds in Memorial Park and at her family's weekend home in the Hill Country, she didn't know much about Houston Audubon Society until **1981**.

That was the year she participated in a weekend trip to High Island run by friend Ben Feltner's Peregrine Tours. When she walked out of the Gulfway Motel that weekend morning with Feltner, his wife Linda, and leader Bob Behrstock, birders were already out in force -- Roger Tory Peterson and Victor Emanuel among them. It was the beginning of a fallout, and the birding world was there to see it. "That did it," she laughs. "I was hooked."

By 1983 she was on the Board of Directors of Houston Audubon, meeting in Board President Ted Eubanks' home for marathon meetings, and helping to raise funds for the first purchases of land at High Island. Her long history of non-profit activities and experience as a member of the Board of Directors of the Museum of Fine Arts proved

invaluable. Funds were needed for purchase of High Island properties and a much-needed renovation of the cabin at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary, and Caroline brought her experience and professionalism to those challenges. Later it was the building of an administration building at Edith L. Moore, for which she helped raise funds and established an endowment fund for office equipment. There was always another fundraising project that needed her expertise, so her occasional “retirements” didn’t last long.

Most recently, it was the Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary expansion project that brought her back full steam to help with the successful raising of \$750,000 for that purchase. In addition to her intense support of Houston Audubon and her other nonprofit activities, Caroline managed to raise three daughters (with husband Charles) and create needlepoint designs that she marketed for many years through her business Caroline Design. Through it all, she was birding. In the early days at Memorial Park, she birded with her German Shepherd, Max, beside her. These days she travels with her latest German Shepherd, Jasper.

An accomplished birder, she’s listed in the 2001 ABA List Report with 711 U.S. birds, 463 Texas birds, and 658 Mexican birds. Last winter the writer of this article had the pleasure of chasing the Lubbock Gyrfalcon with her, catching a noon flight on a cold winter day and returning successful to Houston that evening. More recently she enticed a small group of Houston Auduboners to accompany her to El Cielo in Mexico. “It’s a paradise,” she promised, and it was. She talks from time to time about “retiring” again from her duties as heart and soul of fundraising for Houston Audubon, and maybe someday she will. Our consolation will be that she’ll still be out there birding with us.



HAS Board of Advisors member Caroline Gallery with birding companion Max and friend Flora.

# HAS Heroes - “Miss Bessie”

by Joy Hester, Executive Director

October 2002

This month we honor **Bessie Cornelius** as our HAS Hero. “Miss Bessie”, as she is popularly known, turned 95 years old recently and was beautifully honored at a birthday party given by her good friends Virginia and Roger Norton. Appropriately, the Nortons live next door to Houston Audubon’s Boy Scout Woods Sanctuary, the place Bessie helped build.

Most of us know her as indefatigable fundraiser and guardian at the gate of our High Island sanctuaries, but many may not realize that Bessie and her fellow members of the East Texas Nature Club were the ones who “discovered” High Island. Fellow ETNC member Cora Hooks invited them there to bird on her property in the 1960’s, and the history of the High Island sanctuaries began.

Even before that, though, Bessie led an active life in conservation, involving herself in conservation projects wherever she lived. Her early work as a clerk in the Federal Court of the Northern District of Iowa, and various positions in the legal field that she held during a long professional life, prepared her ably for full-time activism in her retirement. Houston Audubon and other conservation groups have been the beneficiaries.

As for birding, Bessie learned from her father, a self-taught naturalist, and the popular colored bird cards found in Arm & Hammer baking soda boxes at that time. Now coveted collectors’ items, the cards were painted by Louis Agassiz Fuertes and had information on the back of the cards about the featured birds. It wasn’t until she graduated from high school in 1926 in Lake Benton, Minnesota, though, that she had the experience of looking through a pair of binoculars. They were lent to her and a school friend by the friend’s father, and they provided Bessie with her first bird through binoculars – a Northern Flicker. It was a number of years before she owned her own binoculars, but by 1960, when she joined the East Texas Nature Club, she was a full-fledged birder.

One of the more interesting birding events in her life was her involvement in 1967 in a team led by ornithologist John Dennis in search of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. That effort led to an unconfirmed sighting by Dennis on the Neches River and the opportunity for Bessie to meet James Tanner, famous even then for his study of Ivory-bills.

Membership and active participation in Houston’s Outdoor Nature Club/Ornithology Group and Houston Audubon followed. Her role in publicizing, fundraising, and daily volunteerism at High Island are legendary. For years she was at Boy Scout Woods every day during migration to meet and greet (and collect money from) visitors to the High

Island sanctuaries. Her attendance in recent years has become less and less frequent until she's there now only occasionally, but she continues to be an inspiration to all who carry the High Island torch for her.



**Young Bess, law clerk, in front of Federal Building in Cedar Rapids, Iowa**



**Bess with HAS President Fred Collins at dedication of Boy Scout Woods in October 1982**

# HAS Heroes - Craig and Malcolm Damuth

by Joy Hester, Executive Director

November 2002

The name **Damuth** is familiar to most Houston Audubon members because of the Damuth Sanctuary located north of Houston near Cleveland. Many know that the Damuth family donated the 617 acres to Houston Audubon that became the Damuth Sanctuary and that they later donated the nearby 165-acre Winters Bayou Sanctuary.

What most people don't know is that the **Damuths** also were major players in the initiative that led to expansion of the High Island sanctuaries. Their donation of \$100,000 to Houston Audubon for migratory bird habitat came at a critical time in that initiative and enabled Houston Audubon to begin its acquisition of the many properties that ultimately made up the High Island sanctuaries. **Steve Gast**, HAS Vice-president for Finance at the time, has stated that without question one of the key elements to the success of the entire program was the initial \$100,000 from the Damuth family.

**Malcolm Damuth** established the family relationship with Houston Audubon a number of years ago when he contacted HAS **President Fred Collins** after reading an article in the newspaper about Houston Audubon. Impressed with Fred and what he had to say about Houston Audubon, he arranged to meet with him on the property that was to become the **Damuth Sanctuary**. Fred walked the land with him and unhesitatingly agreed that Houston Audubon would accept the property as a sanctuary in perpetuity, a condition that Texas Nature Conservancy hadn't been willing to agree to. Because Malcolm's **son Stewart** had recently been killed in an auto accident, it was important to the family that the land be restricted permanently as a sanctuary in his honor, and the HAS Board was honored to accept. The relationship between the Damuths and Houston Audubon that led to the Damuth and Winters Bayou Sanctuaries, and the financial impetus for the High Island sanctuaries, was forged that day.

**Malcolm and son Craig** have been solid HAS supporters and friends ever since. Craig Damuth is well known to other conservation organizations as well because of his intense interest in conservation and his generous behind-the-scenes support. Saving the land is his passion, his "broken record" he calls it, and he finds many ways to support those groups who share that passion. Generous donations to land funds and silent auctions are often made anonymously by him and his father, and Craig is presently working on an internet fundraising project that he hopes will support habitat acquisition on a broad scale. His strong interest in nature, combined with his skills as a photographer, have given him the tools to take on the unique project.

His father's love of the land and Craig's childhood birding and fishing in the pineywoods pointed him toward his eventual studies in botany and his present dedication to land conservation. However, he attributes the greatest influence on him to **conservationist Edward C. ("Ned") Fritz**, who he came to know through his college botany studies. Dr. Fritz founded the National Area Preservation Association and the Texas Committee on Natural Resources which, in Craig Damuth's opinion, is the "greatest conservation advocacy organization in the United States." Also, in Craig's opinion, Ned Fritz is one of the top five conservationists in U.S. history.

Although his father is seen only occasionally at public functions these days, Craig is a familiar sight with his video camera at birding sites across the state and at fundraising events for Houston Audubon and other conservation organizations. The early important contributions of his father, and Craig's ongoing single-minded support of birds and their habitat, make them both heroes of Houston Audubon.



Malcolm and Craig Damuth

# HAS Heroes – Robert and Mabel Deshayes

By Joy Hester, Executive Director

March 2003

When **Robert Deshayes** assumed the presidency of Houston Audubon Society in 1973, HAS got a two-for-one deal. With him the organization also got his wife **Mabel Deshayes**, who assumed duties alongside her husband as de facto secretary, editor of the newsletter, and volunteer in all things. Charter members of Houston Audubon when it was incorporated in 1969, they worked side-by-side with other HAS pioneers such as **Terry Hershey**, **Hana Ginzburg**, and **David Marrack** to get the fledgling organization off the ground.

At that time there was no **Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary** or HAS office of any kind. HAS business had to be transacted in the homes and businesses of its leaders, and Board meetings were held at the **Museum of Natural Science** when it was available. By the end of the Deshayes presidency that had changed, and Houston Audubon had an office and a home in its first sanctuary – the **Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary**. When **Bob (also known as Rob to many) Deshayes** died in August of 2001, an article in *The Naturalist* by **Judy Boyce** described the key role he and **Mabel** played in bringing the Edith L. Moore Sanctuary to Houston Audubon: “In the early 1970’s, while president of HAS, Deshayes was instrumental in obtaining the Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary property. The Deshayes befriended **Mrs. Moore**, and she donated the property with only one string attached – the HAS had to take care of her several dogs after her death.

Houston Audubon and the Deshayes fulfilled that promise.” Those were momentous times. Not only was there Mrs. Moore to care for in her declining years, there was the task of making much-needed repairs to the cabin and securing the grounds after she died. Also there was the problem of \$17,000 in back taxes owed on the Moore property when Houston Audubon received it, an enormous sum at the time for the new organization. Since the tax laws at that time didn’t allow exemptions for land owned by nonprofit organizations, Houston Audubon set out to change the laws. HAS member **Ken Burns**, a lawyer and neighbor to Edith L. Moore, took on the task and succeeded in getting an exemption for the new sanctuary through the state legislature. The restoration of the cabin was eventually accomplished as well under **Bob Deshayes’** expert guidance as an architect.

Another important Deshayes legacy is the role that Houston Audubon played in the formation of **Armand Bayou Nature Center**. **Armand Yramategui** was director of the **Burke Baker Planetarium** in Houston and active in many conservation organizations around the city when he was killed in 1970. He was also a Board member of Houston Audubon and a longtime friend of Bob and Mabel Deshayes. When the conservation

community recovered from the shock of his murder alongside Highway 59 after an evening of starviewing in the country, a determination formed to honor him in some way. Houston Audubon became instrumental in that effort during the Deshayes presidency, with **Hana Ginsbarg** spearheading the effort. In time the Armand Bayou Nature Center became a reality, and Bob Deshayes helped design the nature center building built there.

The Deshayes friendship with **Armand Yramategui** began when they met him during their many travels in Mexico. From the earliest days of their marriage, Bob and Mabel birded deep into Mexico, always camping so that they could be sure to experience dawn song and evening song. Their Mexico travels carried them all through Mexico and into Panama, eventually leading them to fabulous **El Cielo**, the northernmost cloud forest in the western hemisphere. Mabel did extensive Breeding Bird Survey work there over a period of years, under often dangerous conditions, which is described by her BBS partner **Marie Webster** in the book Road to El Cielo.

**Mabel** lives alone now in the country in a home built after Bob left the architectural firm in Houston where he worked for most of his career. A handsome Plymouth Rock rooster named Big Foot keeps watch around the house and greets guests as they arrive, and birds flock to feeders hung from a large oak tree by the house. Mabel's sister walks down the road to lunch with her every day from her small house on the property, and together they plan their gardens and their futures as Big Foot struts and crows nearby.

**Mabel** is active in their community, as Bob was when he was still with her. "Of course we were involved," she says and laughs at the word retirement. The house is a small jewel of a home designed and actually built by Bob with Mabel's help, filled with lovely works of art that Bob produced throughout his adult life. Books and collections reflecting their love of birds are displayed throughout the house, along with collections from their travels. **Mabel's** stunning collection of molas (a unique form of decorative needlework from Panama) is being donated to the Houston Museum of Natural Science and will be displayed in a special exhibit there in the near future.

Many of the works of art and books are being donated to **Houston Audubon**, and Mabel has enthusiastically endorsed their use in the silent auction that will be a part of Houston Audubon's upcoming For the Birds Dinner. "They belong with people who will appreciate and care for them," she says, continuing the long legacy of **Deshayes** hard work and generosity to Houston Audubon.





**Robert and Mabel Deshayes in early days of Houston Audubon**



**Mabel Deshayes today in her country garden**

# HAS Heroes – Ted Eubanks

By Joy Hester, Executive Director

March/April 2004

This issue of The Naturalist is devoted to spring migration, the time of year when our hearts and minds turn to High Island. The sanctuaries owned and managed by Houston Audubon in that small town on the Bolivar Peninsula provide habitat for tens of thousands of tired and hungry birds migrating across the Gulf of Mexico every year. One of those sanctuaries is named after our HAS hero this month—**Ted Eubanks**, who played a major role in bringing those sanctuaries into being. Ted Eubanks was at first just a birder with family on the Bolivar Peninsula, who appreciated the value of its wooded mottes. Circumstances, however, soon vaulted him into a leadership role to preserve those areas. First was the disappearance of a stand of trees at Port Bolivar for a prospective oil well, which sent a shockwave through the casual group of birders who had enjoyed and taken the spot for granted. Ted and his birder friends felt the need to "do something."

When an opportunity to buy land at High Island arose in the early 1980s, they suggested Houston Audubon buy it. After much deliberation, the **HAS Board of Directors agreed to take on debt for the first time and buy the land**. It was the beginning of a series of complex transactions that led Houston Audubon to own the HAS High Island sanctuaries as we know them today.

It was also the beginning of Ted's leadership role with Houston Audubon. **Over a number of years he served as President and as a member of the Board of Directors—years that proved to be filled with great accomplishments**. It was a wonderful and unique Board, Ted says, one that "understood the creative process" and wasn't "afraid to get blood on the carpet" to make change happen and get things done.

After leaving the HAS Board of Directors, **Ted started Fermata, Inc.**, a company that promotes nature tourism as a sustainable business for communities. One of Fermata's earliest projects was **The Great Coastal Birding Trail**, a system of maps that show and describe all of the major birding sites along the Texas coast. Those maps proved to be so popular that Fermata was asked to create wildlife trail maps in Texas, other states and countries. Ted recently started a second business, **World Nature Trails**, to provide goods and services to help make ecotourism programs successful.

Ted currently lives in Austin but serves on the **HAS Board of Advisors**. He is also a founding member of the board of directors of the **Texas Nature Tourism Association** and serves as a member of the steering committee of the **Texas Parks and Wildlife Landowner Incentive Program**. Nationally, he is a founding board member of **Watchable**

**Wildlife, Inc.** In addition, **he has served as a member of the board of directors of the National Audubon Society** and is a **former president of the Texas Ornithological Society**. He has received the Roger T. Peterson Excellence in Birding Award; Take Pride in America Certificate of Merit (U.S. Department of the Interior); Steve Thompson Award for Special Achievement on Behalf of Wildlife (Rio Grande Birding Festival); and Chandler Robbins Conservation/Education Award (American Birding Association). Ted is also a writer with two books under contract. He is a co-author **with Bob Behrstock and Ron Weeks of Birds of the Upper Texas Coast** (Texas A & M Press, 2005), which is a comprehensive study of birds in the Houston-Galveston area. Bird-Finding Guide for the Upper Texas Coast, also with Bob Behrstock and Texas A & M Press, will be available later this year. Ted is the keynote speaker at Galveston's FeatherFest 2004 birding festival, where his presentation "Faces of Flight" will include spectacular photos of birds that he took himself. He is also leading field trips to the Bolivar Peninsula, where FeatherFest participants can enjoy sanctuaries he helped make a reality. **The HAS Eubanks Woods Bird Sanctuary is one of those sanctuaries, named in honor of Ted Eubanks for his dynamic leadership and lasting contribution to Houston Audubon.**



**HAS Hero Ted Eubanks**



# HAS Heroes - Steve Gast

By Joy Hester, Executive Director

February 2003

Houston Audubon's **S.E. Gast Red Bay Sanctuary** is an 8.8-acre enclave of hackberry and live oak that hosts thousands of birds every spring and fall at High Island. A splendid old red bay tree shares the naming honors with our HAS hero this month, **Steve Gast**. Steve holds that honor because of the role he played in acquiring the land that makes up the sanctuary along with other donated properties from Amoco. Those donations plus other extraordinary work on his part were major factors in making Houston Audubon's High Island sanctuary system become a reality. All of the sanctuaries that make up the High Island sanctuaries – **Boy Scout Woods, Smith Oaks, Eubanks Woods, and Gast Woods** – owe their existence in great part to his efforts.

When Steve came to the **HAS Board of Directors in 1991**, Houston Audubon had recently completed retirement of the debt it had taken on when it purchased approximately four acres at Boy Scout Woods and 40% of 11 acres at Smith Oaks. **In December of 1991 a donation in the amount of \$100,000 was received from the Damuth family** to benefit Houston Audubon's efforts to secure the remaining 60% of Smith Oaks and other threatened migratory bird habitat.

An employee of **Phillips Petroleum**, Steve quickly recognized the potential opportunity of forming a partnership modeled on Phillips' experiences in the **Playa Lakes Joint Venture**, a project in the five-state area surrounding Phillips operations in the Texas Panhandle. At the same time, it was discovered that Amoco was selling its property holdings in High Island, most of which were considered prime migratory bird habitat. The need to raise funds to save the properties became urgent. Using the **Playa Lakes Joint Venture and Partners in Flight concepts**, Steve wrote two complementary challenge grant proposals to the **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation** and to **Phillips Petroleum** in the amounts of \$60,000 each. Those funds coupled with the Damuth donation, a smaller grant from **U.S. Fish and Wildlife**, and donations from High Island visitors in the spring of 1992 formed a fund of \$240,000 to start the **High Island Initiative**.

By the end of 1992, Steve had also convinced Amoco to donate the bulk of lands it still owned at High Island that contained high quality habitat. In 1993 he was able to acquire additional donations via numerous partnership grants. It could be said that Houston Audubon has Phillips Petroleum to thank for transferring **Steve and his family (wife Elizabeth and daughters Susannah and Laura)** to Houston and for supporting the

conservation proposals he presented to them. After assignments in the U.K., Bahrain, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia, Phillips brought Steve to Houston during a time that coincided with Houston Audubon's need for critical funding and formation of partnerships. Steve's personal background as a longtime birder and his professional experience as a world-wide employee of Phillips made him the perfect person for the job.

**Working with other key figures such as Ted Eubanks, Jim Stewart, Gary Clark, Gary Woods, and Winnie Burkett, the High Island Initiative became a reality.** It wasn't Steve's first experience with an Audubon chapter. He was a young boy in Illinois when his Boy Scout troop leader sent him to **Three Rivers Audubon** after working with him on his Nature Study badge. By the time Steve was 16, he had his own Christmas Bird Count quadrant. He'd also been written up in the St. Louis newspapers and the local Audubon chapter's newsletter for his documented sighting of the first **Black-necked Stilt** seen in Illinois since 1908. His years as an avid lister in the U.K. (he admits he was a "twitcher") led to his becoming a conservationist and strong supporter of bird observatories, a concept well established in England.

His strong belief in the need for a bird observatory on the Texas coast led to his support for a bird observatory component in the High Island Initiative that eventually led to formation of the **Gulf Coast Bird Observatory (GCBO)**. Steve remains a strong supporter of GCBO and of Houston Audubon. He has continued to support both organizations, including the years he lived in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, after being transferred there in the mid-90's. The merger of Phillips with Conoco has led to his recent return to Houston, where he serves as a member of the **Board of Advisors for Houston Audubon and as a member of the GCBO Board of Directors**, positions he continued to hold while he lived in Bartlesville. He now looks forward to working more closely with both organizations again. Houston Audubon looks forward to that, too, and is delighted to have its old friend back in town.



Steve Gast, HAS Hero

# HAS Heroes – Don Gray

By Joy Hester, Executive Director  
November/December 2003

Our HAS hero this month is **Don Gray**, volunteer overseer and naturalist for Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary. Soft-spoken, but firm in his beliefs of what a nature sanctuary should be, he has long stood guard over the 17.5-acre wooded sanctuary that is home to Houston Audubon's Administrative offices and education programs. No tallows grow along Rummel Creek or the mulched paths that wind through the mixed pine-hardwood forest that make up the sanctuary. Under his leadership, a weekly trail crew of volunteers keeps vigilant watch and acts quickly to remove any tallow that presumes to send down roots, and many a ligustrum and privet are also summarily ejected.

Protected from aggressive exotics, the ELMNS woods flourish with loblolly pine, oak, elm, ash, hickory, sweetgum, and cypress trees. Mustang and muscadine grape vines drape underneath the trees along with an understory made up of native hollies, hawthorns, and blooming buckeyes. Birders walk the trails with binoculars held ready, and families take walks in the woods together. The sanctuary is open to the public year-round, and they have Don Gray to thank for much of what they enjoy.

Don is an almost-native Houstonian who was a self-taught naturalist from an early age, and one of his earliest memories is of time spent reclining in the broad branches of a neighborhood red oak tree. Like many children in those days, Don spent most of his waking hours outside when he wasn't in school or working at the neighborhood drug store. When he graduated from high school and went off to the University of Texas, he began as an engineering major but quickly realized that his interests were more in the dynamics of the earth. Geology was, he says, "the perfect match" for him, so he switched his major to follow in his geologist father's footsteps. With his new wife Jean beside him, he graduated from U.T. and began a career with Shell Oil that would support his family and his interest in the natural world throughout a long professional career.

His volunteerism began long before retirement from Shell, starting with trail work at Armand Bayou and the Houston Arboretum, where he designed and built trails in the 1970s. At the Arboretum he also edited and published the volunteer newsletter for 13 years and has served on its Board of Directors for the last 20 years. His ongoing tenure on the Board of the Friends of Houston Library has also exceeded 20 years, and he has served for the last five years on the Memorial Park Conservancy Board.

Among his favorite volunteer activities is teaching children, which he does at the Houston Museum of Natural Science and with Audubon Docent Guild summer camps. Houston Audubon was fortunate to become a major beneficiary of his volunteerism in 1988, when



he was brought on board by future executive director **Sandi Hoover** to oversee the woods and trails of the Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary. Under his leadership during the years that followed, mulched trails were carved to wind through woods, and boardwalks, bridges, and observation decks were built by hard-working volunteer trail crews. In 1989 he also began writing and publishing a monthly newsletter for the Audubon Docent Guild, an extraordinarily literate newsletter that combines nature essays with reports of activities around the sanctuary. Written almost entirely by Don, the Gadget continues in regular publication.

In addition to his trail work, tree plantings, teaching, and newsletter writing, Don assists **Flo Hannah, Houston Audubon's Sanctuary Steward for the Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary**, in her care of all aspects of the sanctuary. "Don Gray knows more about Edith L. Moore Sanctuary than all the rest of us put together," Flo says in tribute to Don. "Best of all, he's never reluctant to share his knowledge and patiently teach us, then re-teach us about everything wild along the sanctuary's trails and creek. He and his trail crew are not only indispensable, but under Don's leadership the Tuesday Trail Crew shows up week after week to repair, patch and replace every inch of our sanctuary. Don is our best-kept secret and our most delightful volunteer." The woods of Houston Audubon's Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary are in good hands!



HAS Hero Don Gray



Don Gray (second from left) with his ELMNS trail crew, Bob Terhune, Todd Harding, Doug MacLean, and John Miers

# HAS Heroes - Dr. Robert McFarlane

By Joy Hester, Executive Director  
September/October 2004

Our HAS Hero this time is **Dr. Robert McFarlane, a member of Houston Audubon's Board of Advisors**, who has a history of involvement in environmental issues and controversies. He has been a key actor in most of the environmental battles fought by Houston Audubon, beginning with his role as scientific advisor to the "Wallisville Warriors" (a group that included Houston Audubon) that led the fight to stop the Wallisville Dam on the Trinity River in the late '80s and early '90s.

Overlapping that battle was the lawsuit to stop the Westside Airport, another proposed environmental disaster for birds that involved Houston Audubon and found Dr. McFarlane at the middle of the fray. Initially a consultant for the groups hoping to build the airport, he eventually parted ways with them when his studies showed that the proposed airport "was going to be the worst airport in the world by a considerable margin." When his data were misused by others, he went to the press. As a Senior Ecologist of the Ecological Society of America, he felt an obligation to do so under its code of ethics that held issues of public safety above the client/contractor relationship. Appearances before the Houston City Council and other venues followed.

During his involvement in these history making events, Dr. McFarlane joined the Houston Audubon Society, became Vice President for Environmental Affairs and was invited onto the HAS Board of Advisors in 1992.

Also during those years, he wrote a book about Red-cockaded Woodpeckers based on studies earlier in his career that placed him at the heart of another controversy—a lawsuit by Sierra Club and the Texas Committee on Natural Resources against the National Forest Service. A possible turning point in that lawsuit was Dr. McFarlane's testimony that the "law of the minimum" didn't work for these birds and that "extinction is forever." His book, *A Stillness in the Pines: The Ecology of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker*, is the public's best source of information on these woodpeckers.

Dr. McFarlane's consulting activities have involved him in numerous other environmental issues related to birds and other wildlife. One of his current projects is research related to the effects of wind turbines on bird mortality, which would apply to the proposed windfarm project on Pelican Island, another potentially contentious issue.

Less controversial is the Houston Bird Survey he is now compiling for Houston Audubon. He also has offered his services, if needed, to combat a recent effort to build another airport on the Katy Prairie.



When asked what put him on the path to science, birds and controversies related thereto, Dr. McFarlane credits a family move to rural Virginia when he was 12 years old, a move that changed him from a “city boy” to a child of the woods. His involvement in a Junior Audubon Club was another important influence.

Houston Audubon Society and the regional environmental community have benefited greatly from the results of those beginnings and from the long and courageous career of Dr. McFarlane.



**Dr. Robert McFarlane**



**Bob McFarlane and HAS fought to stop the proposed Westside Airport on the Katy Prairie, winter home for millions of snow geese.**

# HAS Heroes - Edith L. Moore

by Joy Hester, Executive Director

January 2003

It is only fitting that we recognize Edith L. Moore as our HAS hero this month because her name is synonymous with the history of Houston Audubon. Readers of this newsletter will immediately recognize her name because our Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary is named for her, but many may not know why.

When Edith Moore died in 1975, she bequeathed to Houston Audubon Society the 17.5 acres and cabin on Rummel Creek that became the Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary. Her will stated that Houston Audubon was to own and maintain the land forever as a bird sanctuary. Mrs. Moore was an elderly lady living alone with her six dogs and numerous cats when Houston Audubon members befriended her in 1973. That help came in response to a letter from a concerned neighbor, Holland McCarver, who wrote a letter to Houston Audubon describing her situation: "Mrs. Moore, who lives in a little cabin on the land, is in her eighties and she cannot protect her property from vandals, trash dumpers, wood cutters, hunters, arsonists, and motorbike riders... You cannot conceive how much trash and junk so-called good citizens dump in Rummel Creek and on Mrs. Moore's land." Unfenced, the land was being used freely and thoughtlessly by the public to the distress of its owner. Houston Audubon acted swiftly to help Mrs. Moore and to protect the land they learned she had long wished to save as a wildlife sanctuary.

Edith Lotz Moore was born July 12, 1884, in Minnesota. At a time when few women acquired a higher education, she sang at weddings to earn money for her education at the University of Minnesota. During World War I she moved to Houston to work as a bacteriologist and pathologist at Camp Logan (now Memorial Park), where she described her arrival as follows: "At sundown after a long taxi ride, I arrived at the base hospital at Camp Logan, still sick from inoculations, and was greeted by the officer of the day who placed me in the care of a housekeeper. She was kind and showed me my quarters with a bath and mosquito-netted bed on a screened porch. By the time I bathed, the moon was shining beautifully and full and a mockingbird opened his repertoire. I loved it. The coolness of the night descended and sleep."

During and following the years of World War I, Edith worked on experiments at governmental laboratories in Beaumont, primarily in relation to malarial fever and bubonic plague. In 1920 she went to work for the City of Houston, where she met and married Jess Moore, a City Milk Inspector. When the City of Houston started to develop around their home on Park Street, Edith and Jess decided to move to the country. The

land that was to become Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary was purchased as part of a larger 180-acre tract in the country west of Houston, and they began their log cabin near Rummel Creek. Edith Moore's diary describes the land as she and her husband found it: "We bought out in the country, 17 miles from downtown, the loveliest place, where yellow jasmine climbed to the top of pines. The dogwood and holly were so numerous..."

Jess and Edith lived together in the cabin, running a dairy and lumbering operation, until they divorced in 1959. Edith lived on alone in the cabin, with the company of her dogs, until her death in 1975.

Edith Moore was a brave and intelligent woman who loved nature. She was a National Audubon Society member for many years, the earliest known member in the Houston area. When Houston Audubon Society was incorporated in 1969, she became a member and remained one for the remainder of her life. In her later years when Houston expanded out and around her log cabin, she hung tenaciously onto her way of life in the woods. Houston Audubon now hangs on for her, taking care of the sanctuary that has become an urban jewel in the middle of West Houston. The sounds of the city penetrate from I-10 and Beltway 8, but the woods are full of birds and other wildlife easily seen and heard in their natural settings.

Fences now mark the boundaries of the sanctuary, and trails are maintained to keep visitors on paths. Birding and nature classes for children and adults are conducted year-round in the log cabin by Houston Audubon staff and Audubon Docent Guild members. Nestled among the trees, a small two-story building houses the Houston Audubon staff and volunteers that take care of Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary and Houston Audubon's 15 other sanctuaries. We think Edith would be pleased and proud.



Edith L. Moore



The log cabin built by Edith and Jess Moore in 1932 now houses HAS and Docent Guild education programs

# HAS Heroes – Ellen Red

by Joy Hester, Executive Director

May/June 2004

A Purple Gallinule wandered into Ellen Red's yard one day and changed her life. Ellen wasn't a birder then, but she became one that day. When the exotic purple and blue bird walked into her life, it was unlike anything she'd ever seen before, so she went to the only bird book she owned: John James Audubon's 19th-century Birds of America. Turning the pages until she found the painting that identified the mystery bird, she became enthralled with the exquisite bird portraits painted by Audubon. The remainder of the afternoon was spent seeing how many other birds she could recognize in the 500-page collection. It was the beginning of her interest in John James Audubon—and the beginning of her new life as a birder.

Ellen's path to Houston Audubon began with the Houston Outdoor Nature Club, which led her to the Ornithology Group and a birding mentor in the person of **Margaret Anderson**. Another strong influence came into her life in the late 1980s, when she called a man named Al Singleton to inquire about the Houston Christmas Bird Count and he mentioned that his wife **Laura Singleton** was an avid birder and member of Houston Audubon Society. A friendship with Laura Singleton began that led to years of birding adventures and steadily increasing volunteer work for Houston Audubon. That volunteer work included preparation of the 1987 Annual Report and service on the Board of Directors for four years as the VP for Programs and Field Trips. Many of the successful practices associated with HAS membership meetings and field trips were established by Ellen.

Since that time she has continued to volunteer regularly for Houston Audubon in a myriad of ways, most recently by preparing its first Directory of Active Members. The volunteer activity she will probably be best remembered for, however, is the program she presented to HAS membership about John James Audubon's 19th-century visit to Texas. Months of research into Audubon's journals and other historical sources went into preparing for that program, which was received enthusiastically by HAS when she gave it in the late 1990s and later to FeatherFest 2003 participants in Galveston. Audubon's description of Galveston Island and its wealth of birds, his assessment of the culinary worth of various bird species (Bobolink stew was, he said, particularly tasty) and the methods he used to prepare his famous paintings provided her with excellent material. Her painstaking research, talent for writing and endearing style made that a program fondly remembered by all.

Widowed in 2002 after years of marriage to David Red, a Professor of Architecture at Rice University, Ellen is the mother of two children and grandmother of three. She has

enjoyed a rich life surrounded by family and friends. Among those friends are the good birders who mentored her, such as Margaret Anderson, and those she has mentored, such as **Peggy Boston**. “Ellen Red made me a deal I couldn’t refuse,” says Peggy. “She offered to teach me how to bird if I’d help her with a church project.” The church project was completed and long forgotten, while Peggy went on to become a Board member of Houston Audubon and Volunteer of the Year in 2003. Mentoring received by Ellen Red continues through her and others Ellen has mentored. It is a chain that began long ago and continues unbroken, sometimes with the help of a Purple Gallinule or John James Audubon, and it constantly provides Houston Audubon with invaluable volunteers, such as HAS Hero Ellen Red.



**HAS Hero Ellen Red**



**Ellen Red with fellow HAS volunteer Laura Singleton on birding trip to Alaska.**

# HAS Heroes – Jim Stewart

By Joy Hester, Executive Director

May 2003

Our HAS Hero this month is Jim Stewart, a man whose whole life has been about birds. For the last eleven years Houston Audubon has been fortunate to have him on our Board of Directors, as Director at Large and as VP for Science and Research, but his list of accomplishments includes far more.

His service to birds began at an early age. According to his mother, Jim's first word was "bird" and his first sentence was, "See the bird." Born into a family of bird lovers, he was a lister at age seven, and by the time he was a teenager Jim had worn out his grandfather's National Geographic Book of Birds. He still keeps North American and Mexican bird lists, impressive at 668 and 693, respectively, and calls himself a "hard-core birder." Early in life Jim also became involved with bird research. That interest began as a young man in Shreveport, Louisiana, when he participated in a project to band chimney swifts. Membership in the Louisiana Ornithological Society followed, where he met Dr. George Lowery, chairman of the zoology department at LSU. Through Dr. Lowery, Jim was able to participate in bird studies and access extensive skin collections at LSU. His job at Pennzoil also gave him opportunities for birding during field assignments and access to migrant traps in east Texas and in Louisiana. By 1953 he was submitting data to Audubon Field Notes, and from 1960 to 1972 he analyzed data and wrote Breeding Season Reports for the Central Southern Region for Audubon Field Notes.

Jim's association with Houston Audubon began in 1988 when Houston Audubon asked the Pineywoods Wildlife Society to develop a management plan for our newly acquired Damuth Sanctuary. Jim's involvement in that project led to the donation of Winters Bayou Preserve to Houston Audubon and to his being invited in 1992 to be on the Board of Directors. Throughout his 11-year tenure on the HAS Board, he took the lead in the oversight and management of the two sanctuaries. "Houston Audubon was," he says, "a tremendous vehicle for getting me involved in conservation."

The long list of organizations, conservation and otherwise, that have benefited from Jim's participation includes such groups as the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee of Texas Forest Service, the Texas Agriculture and Natural Resources Summit Process, and the Texas Parks & Wildlife Committee that developed the Safe Harbor Plan for the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker.

He is particularly proud of his role in helping establish the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, an organization that came into being through Houston Audubon Society in the early 1990s. His purpose for working on the various committees and boards that he has committed



himself to in recent years, Jim says, is to “build bridges between landowners and conservationists.”

He currently serves on the Advisory Board of Audubon Texas and is a member of the Scientific Advisory Board for Gulf Coast Bird Observatory. While conservation has taken precedence in the last decade, birding continues to be a great source of pleasure to Jim. He recently returned from Mazatlan with 20 new birds on his Mexico list, and he still hopes to go to the high mountains along the coast of Chiapas to add the Horned Guan to his list. Anyone who has birded with him would welcome the chance to go along. Certainly this writer would, having had the pleasure of birding with him during a HAS trip to the Yucatan last year.

Jim Stewart’s presence on the HAS Board of Directors will be greatly missed when he leaves the board on May 31 of this year, but his colleagues know that he will continue to be an active conservationist, devoted birder, and life-long friend of Houston Audubon.



**Jim Stewart has spent his whole life watching, researching and protecting birds.**



**Jim Stewart, center, has led numerous field trips to Damuth Sanctuary by special request.**

# HAS HERO - Lucie Wray Todd

By Joy Hester, HAS Executive Director

January/February 2005

When Lucie Wray Todd was a little girl, her grandfather would take her for walks with him to check on his trees. She remembers well his pride in those oak saplings as he encouraged her to observe the wildlife and birds, including a rare white robin, that benefited from the trees. Her grandfather was J. S. Cullinan, and the saplings he treasured are now the giant oaks that grace the Shadyside enclave and extend onto Main Street near Hermann Park.

Well known for his successes in the Texas oil industry, Mr. Cullinan was also known to family and friends as a self-taught naturalist and ardent bird lover. His love of nature was passed on to his daughter Margaret Cullinan Wray and to his granddaughter Lucie, who in turn passed it on to her children. Grants from the Margaret Cullinan Wray Charitable Lead Trust and the Magnolia Trust, administered by Lucie and her children Emily and David, have benefited Houston Audubon Society and other conservation organizations all over the United States for the past two decades. The Wray Trust was a founding member of Texas Environmental Grantmakers Group, which seeks to educate Texas foundations and other funders about environmental issues and the organizations that address those issues.

Lucie Wray Todd serves on the HAS Board of Advisors and has supported Houston Audubon in various ongoing ways. She personally helped raise funds to place Audubon Adventures materials in Houston ISD classrooms during the 1990s, and a generous gift from her in 2003 will help build a new garage/storage building for sanctuaries at High Island on the Bolivar Peninsula. In 2004 she was Honorary Chair of the HAS "For the Birds" Awards Dinner. Those philanthropic activities are merely her "town job."

Lucie spends half of her time as managing partner of the Wray Ranch, a working cattle ranch in Colorado County. Following her parents' lead, Lucie and her children are focused on all aspects of sustainable agriculture and improving wildlife habitat on the ranch. In commendation of their private land conservation efforts, they have been honored with the prestigious Lone Star Land Steward Award from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

It is clear in talking with Lucie Todd that she prefers to focus the conversation on preserving old trees, environmental education, sustainable agriculture and improving wildlife habitat rather than on her personal contributions. She sees herself, she says, as something of a "catalyst in the corner," and prefers to remain offstage whenever possible. Her good works speak for her, though, and Houston Audubon is proud to have



her as an Advisory Board member and friend. Grandfather Cullinan would have been proud, too.



**Lucie Wray Todd**



**Lucie Wray Todd serves on the HAS Board of Advisors and has supported Houston Audubon in various ongoing ways.**

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### HAS Heroes

Sequence	Name	Deceased as of March 2024	The Naturalist Issue
1	Caroline Callery		Sept 2002
2	Bessie Cornelius	*	Oct 2002
3	Craig and Malcolm Damuth	Malcolm *	Nov 2002
4	Robert & Mabel Deshayes	*	March 2003
5	Ted Eubanks		March/April 2004
6	Steve Gast		Feb 2003
7	Don Gray	*	Nov/Dec 2003
8	Dr. Robert McFarlane		Sept/Oct 2004
9	Edith L. Moore	*	Jan 2003
10	Ellen Red	*	May/June 2004
11	Jim Stewart	*	May 2003
12	Lucie Wray Todd	*	Jan/Feb 2005