

Gene Graham Land Rescue Fund



Gene Graham, supporter of birdlife and Houston Audubon, established a \$500,000 Land Rescue Fund (LRF) at The Greater Houston Community Foundation with deposits of 250,000 in 2007 and a similar amount in 2008.

The purpose of the fund was to protect bird habitat. More specifically, the fund was used for the evaluation, acquisition and management of ecologically sensitive tracts of land within the State of Texas. As a result of the newly established fund, Houston Audubon developed a land conservation plan that identified key ecosystems in need of protection. The plan helped HAS focus their efforts and financial resources on areas important to birds.

This signature gift, made in consultation with then Board of Advisors member Jeff Mundy, motivated others to donate to this fund. In 2019, the LRF funds were transferred to Houston Audubon and deposited into the newly developed HAS Land and Facilities Stewardship Endowment.

LRF funds have continued to support conservation easements and land purchases for the past sixteen years.

Data Summary

- 2007 and 2008 – Established a \$500,000 Land Rescue Fund (LRF) at The Greater Houston Community Foundation. Other supporters of Houston Audubon were motivated to donate to this fund.

- Land protection and other projects receiving funding from the LRF include:
 - HAS Sanctuary Stewards
 - Columbia Bottomlands – Cedar Creek Tract
 - Nature Conservancy – Whooping Crane Habitat Protection Project
 - Columbia Bottomlands – Bird Pond Unit
 - Columbia Bottomlands – Smith Tract
 - Columbia Bottomlands – Buchanan Tract
 - Smith Oaks High Island – Water Restoration at Claybottom Pond
 - Damuth Sanctuary – Shelby Tract
 - Horseshoe Marsh Bird Sanctuary – 13.86 Acre Adjacent Tract
- In 2018, HAS Board member Bob Westendarp applied his unique creative and collaborative skills in drafting the Land and Facilities Stewardship Endowment (LFSE) – a document to receive all the various funds previously established to aid protection of birds. With the concurrence of Ms. Graham, the balance of the LRF was transferred to the LFSE in 2019.
- The purchase of various British Petroleum tracts on High Island in 2019 required significant funding. The HLFSE was available, and used, in this transaction.
- Ms. Graham has been a member of the HAS Board of Advisors since summer of 2008.
- She is a lifetime member of HAS.

The Naturalist

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Houston Audubon Receives Grant for New Land Fund

Houston Audubon is happy to announce receipt of a \$500,000 grant that will greatly enhance its ability to conserve and protect land in the Houston region.

This generous grant from local businesswoman and conservationist Gene Graham establishes the Houston Audubon Land Fund at the Greater Houston Community Foundation for the purposes of acquiring, conserving, and managing habitat on the Upper Texas Coast.

This new land fund will serve as a ready source of funds for land acquisition and protection when circumstances don't allow time to raise the dollars needed to purchase specific tracts of land. It will also provide funds needed to pay costs associated with acquisition and management of the land.

Most important of all, the Land Fund will allow Houston Audubon to target important habitat and proactively acquire it rather than having to respond in emergency mode when land is already at risk of being developed. With ready funds available from this fund, Houston Audubon can develop a comprehensive regional approach to habitat conservation on the Upper Texas Coast.

The first \$250,000 of the grant was given to Houston Audubon outright in 2007 to establish the HAS Land Fund. The second \$250,000 is a challenge grant that will require HAS to raise matching funds in

order to receive it; that is, the donor will match any funds received from other donors, dollar-for-dollar within 30 days of receipt of the donations at the Greater Houston Community Foundation – up to \$250,000.

Already in this year, our donor matched a \$25,000 grant from The Ralph H. and Ruth J. McCullough Foundation and \$40,000 raised by Houston Audubon for land stewardship. We're off and running! There is much work to be done, though, to match the remainder of the \$250,000 in this calendar year – and we're committed to building the HAS Land Fund beyond the \$750,000 potential afforded by this grant because we must replenish it as we use it.

Houston Audubon will be approaching foundations and major donors to ask for grants to match and build this fund, but we hope that HAS members and supporters will want to help, too. You can be a part of this exciting effort by sending your check (payable to the HAS Land Fund) to the Greater Houston Community Foundation at 4550 Post Oak Place, Suite 100, Houston, TX 77027, with the request that your donation be directed to the Houston Audubon Society Land Fund. Your early help in this effort will help us build our confidence as well as build this important fund!
