

New and Returning Members for Board Slate
2024-2025 Board of Directors

New Board Members

Ben Cowan, Director

Ben is an environmental lawyer specializing in wildlife and endangered species law, including the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and Endangered Species Act. He is an avid birder and nature photographer, focusing on birds and wildlife, landscapes, and underwater photography. He is a member of the Renewable Energy Alliance-Houston and a Board Member for the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center. Ben currently serves on Houston Audubon's Board of Advisors and Land Conservation Committee.

Stuart Nelson, Director

Stuart is the President and CEO - Institute for Spirituality and Health at the Texas Medical Center. In his spare time, Stuart enjoys birdwatching, bird photography, camping, and hiking. He is a member and affiliated with Nature Health Alliance, Oregon Health Justice Center, and YogaMass. Stuart is a former member and past Chair of Houston Audubon's Young Professionals Advisory Council and currently serves on the Board of Advisors.

Renewing Board Members

Carol Price, Director

Carol is a Native Texan and an active community volunteer. She served as the 2023 Avian Affair Co-Chair. She also currently serves on the Hermann Park Conservancy Advisory Board and is a past member of Da Camera of Houston's Board. She has also been a member of the Garden Club of Houston since 2010, serving in various leadership positions, and is a master gardener. Professionally she worked at The Menil Collection from 1998-2015. Carol received a B.A. in Art History from Connecticut College and an M.A. in Art History from Rice University. She enjoys spending time in nature and has participated in Houston Audubon's Christmas bird counts for many years. Her newest venture is partnering in an online Louisiana Iris nursery, Standards & Falls Iris.

Letha Slagle, Director

Letha's lifelong interests throughout her career and volunteer work have focused on the natural world and sciences. She studied Environmental Science at University of Virginia and conducted a National Sciences Foundation grant study on the effects of local stream channelization with a small team of classmates.

During her geologic career at Shell Oil Company, she explored the Americas from Alaska through South America. Since retirement, she has volunteered in organizations focused on educational outreach in natural sciences. In 2011, she became a Texas Master Naturalist, and served on the training committee. She teaches the geology section of the training curriculum for Gulf Coast and Liberty County chapters.

Letha is active in her neighborhood and has worked as a landscape committee chair, focusing on a water efficient landscape to reduce groundwater withdrawal and subsidence. She also serves as an elected Director of Municipal Utility District 355, addressing local drainage and infrastructure issues.

Her lifelong hobby is “birding” and she is a frequent contributor to the Cornell University database, “ebird.” She has volunteered to lead bird walks and Christmas Bird Count sections. At Houston Audubon, she chairs the Education Committee, served on the strategic planning committee, currently chairs the CEO search committee, and leads a Birdathon team.

New Executive Committee Positions

Greg Whittaker, Chair

Greg Whittaker grew up on the family farm in upstate New York, inheriting a stewardship for nature and a lifelong appreciation for biodiversity and the wonders of water. Texas A&M University brought him to Galveston in 1985, which immediately became home. His professional animal care career began in 1988 at Sea Arama-Marineworld and progressed through his current role as Animal Husbandry Manager at Moody Gardens with stops along the way in Japan, China and the Philippines. He has participated as a trip leader in FeatherFest since 2014 and serves on the GINTC board since 2016. Greg was Chair of Houston Audubon for 2 years prior and also serves on the Land Conservation Committee.

Pam Smolen, Chair-Elect

Pam was raised as an army brat living in Alaska, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and finally settling in Texas. She grew up enjoying the outdoors, hiking and camping. She graduated from the University of Texas with a degree in Chemical Engineering. She discovered the wonderful world of birds about 20 years ago and has been hooked ever since. Pam is a former Vice-Chair and Chair of the Houston Ornithology Group. Pam serves as Co-Chair of the DEIB committee, Chair of the Bolivar Peninsula Nature Trail committee and serves on the Name Change, Advocacy, Avian Affair and Education committees.

Bill Matthews, Secretary

Bill has over 25 years of experience in oil and gas from technology adoption and consulting to hands-on expertise in the search for new reserves. He has held senior leadership positions at both Schlumberger and Landmark/Halliburton resulting in unique perspectives and in-depth knowledge of leading E&P technologies that reduce risk.

Bill began his career as an interpreter and joint ventures for renowned wildcatter Moncrief Oil for ultra-deep prospects and drilling wells from the Rockies to the Gulf Coast. He has a Master’s in Geology from Rice University, Houston, Texas and a B.S. degree in the same from Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

Bill enjoys birdwatching and photography especially at Houston Audubon’s gems in the UTC. He served on the Executive Committee as Secretary for 2 years and President-Elect for one year. He has also served as Chair of the Development Committee and Thank You Note Committee and a member of the Risk Management Committee and Avian Affair Host Committee. He also volunteers at our High Island sanctuaries.