

HOUSTON AUDUBON ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022



Nashville Warbler / Greg Lavaty



WWW.HOUSTONAUDUBON.ORG

ABOUT HOUSTON AUDUBON

HOUSTON AUDUBON'S MISSION IS TO ADVANCE THE CONSERVATION OF BIRDS AND POSITIVELY IMPACT THEIR SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTS.



Houston Audubon protects [over 4,100 acres](#) of wetlands, piney wood forest, coastal woodlots and prairie, and beach habitat within its system of sanctuaries located throughout the Houston Gulf Coast region. Our sanctuaries provide critical habitat for [over 300 species of birds](#) and other wildlife and serve as community spaces where people walk, learn, meditate, socialize, explore, and connect with nature. Houston Audubon is a nationally Accredited Land Trust and a recognized leader in avian conservation and nature education, delivering hundreds of programs annually that connect people to nature and inspire communities to take action to protect birds and wildlife.



Painted Bunting and Indigo Bunting / Zhen Li

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

Houston Audubon's community-centered approach to conservation has a sizeable role in addressing the biodiversity and climate challenges we're facing. Engaging the community is also central to addressing the lack of equitable access to nature and open spaces, and it contributes to the creation of a healthy, thriving region for birds and people.

The talent and skills of our staff, volunteers, and partners have contributed to steady and notable progress. The increasing abundance and distribution of native plants in our city further fuels more robust food webs that support biodiversity in our urban parks, schools, bayou corridors, and our sanctuaries. With over 3 billion birds in North America lost over the last 50 years and more than half of the U.S. bird species in decline, preserving these local food webs and taking local action to address threats like window collisions and cat predation are more important than ever. Supporting local diversity has global impacts and creating safer spaces for birds at the local level provides much-needed refuge for migrating birds and more productive spaces for resident, breeding, and wintering birds to thrive.

Efforts to engage our communities and our volunteers have resulted in an exponential impact. Surveys and monitoring, community outreach, and education programming in schools and libraries have been enhanced as a result of the collective action and teamwork of staff and volunteers. Building strong partnerships were also key to growing our impact, as demonstrated by the repeated success of Houston Bird Week and the budding engagement of the Sunnyside community.

This report highlights initiatives that are bridging our community-focused work with regional needs and reflect the future that is possible when we work together. We are grateful for the relationships being built and the progress being made, but know much more work remains to be done.

Houston Audubon's vision and leadership remain steadfast as we are moved by the commitment and devotion of our volunteers, donors, and members, and inspired by the beauty and wonder of the birds and nature that surround us every day. Thank you for being a part of our efforts to preserve the diversity and abundance of birds and to build a brighter tomorrow for generations to come. Together, we will continue to make a difference.

HELEN E. DRUMMOND

Executive Director, Houston Audubon

SANCTUARIES



Houston Audubon owns and manages 17 nature sanctuaries spanning Greater Houston and the Upper Texas Coast, totaling **over 4,100 acres** of diverse habitat critical to **over 300 species** of birds.



In addition to providing critical habitat for birds, our sanctuaries offer respite for thousands of visitors each year looking to connect with nature in our city. While most of our bird sanctuaries are open to the public for free or low cost year-round, we welcome the highest number of visitors on the coast and at our urban sanctuaries.

IN THE CITY

Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary

saw many improvements as community, corporate, and Trail Crew volunteers worked to complete delayed projects. While a storm took out a boardwalk, the incident showed us how well our property withstands downpours. We helped gather data for the Regional Assessments of Wildlife Along Riparian Corridors (RAWARC) and were delighted to see that coyotes, river otters, and beavers are using our habitat in addition to our usual wildlife.

An exciting new addition to the **Raptor and Education Center** was the installation of the *100 Birds of Texas* mural by Doug Hiser and his art students from Gateway Academy. Additionally, a new overlook and kayak launch was built on Sims Bayou, providing greater viewing access and increased capacity for cleanup efforts along the bayou.



Visitors at Smith Oaks / Jonnu Singleton/SWA

ON THE COAST

Visitors again flocked to our **High Island sanctuaries** to witness the spectacle of spring migration on the Upper Texas Coast. We sold **8,100 admission patches and day passes** - a record number! We saw a great diversity of birds but steady south winds meant visitors saw fewer birds as they continued their migratory journeys in favorable conditions. While birdwatchers had to work harder to find the usual spring migrants, they were rewarded with a rare Dusky-capped Flycatcher, which hung around through most of April. A rare bird for this area, the Dusky-capped Flycatcher is found regularly in Central and South America.

CONSERVATION

Houston Audubon works diligently to protect and restore habitat to provide maximum ecological value. This includes planting native vegetation that provides food for birds and other wildlife, maintaining safe places for birds to eat, rest and nest, creating additional nesting capacity for species of concern, and providing quality experiences for people in nature while inspiring them to preserve habitat.



High Island Volunteer Workday

HABITAT RESTORATION

Quality habitat is essential for birds and we are committed to ensuring the highest quality for our feathered friends. Staff and volunteers helped restore an additional **6.5 acres** at Smith Oaks Bird Sanctuary. Chinese Privet and Tallow trees were completely removed from areas near the Rookery, which was replanted with native trees and plants propagated in our Natives Nursery. Additionally, we began restoration and removal of the common cane (*Phragmites australis*) at Dos Vacas Muertas Bird Sanctuary in Galveston, which regularly conceals viewing of the small pond on the property. Work is ongoing, but visitors will have better views and birds will have better habitat!



Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Indigo Buntings at Dos Vacas Muertas Bird Sanctuary / William Trey Morris III

SURVEYING & MONITORING

Staff and volunteers conducted **239 bird surveys** across the region. We added four new survey locations at Spring Creek Nature Trail, Lorraine Cherry Nature Preserve, Texas City Dike, and Moody Gardens, bringing us to a total of **18 monthly surveys** reaching as far north as Tomball and as far south as Galveston. This community science effort is critical to monitoring trends in bird species and helps inform strategies to maintain healthy bird populations.



Bird Survey at Mercer Botanic Gardens

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

We broke ground on the **Clint and Mary Frances Morse Field Station** in High Island, which will serve as coastal headquarters for staff and volunteers. The new field station is expected to open in Spring 2023 and will provide facilities for a variety of educational programs, workshops, and scientific research to enhance stewardship and conservation of critical bird habitat, expand and enhance nature tourism and outdoor recreation opportunities, and build a more resilient nature-based coastal economy.

A ribbon-cutting was held for the the **Entergy Coastal Natives Nursery** at the Hulsey Coastal Operations Center in High Island. The new nursery doubles our capacity to distribute native plants to the community and allows us to begin growing native trees.

BIRD-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

NATIVES NURSERY

Our native plant nursery at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary sold and donated **over 7,000 plants**, continuing to increase the amount of high-quality bird and wildlife habitat in our region. We also provided plants or consulted on habitat planning for **almost 700 acres** of land. Our fall open house allowed for in-person shopping and consultations with our dedicated and knowledgeable nursery volunteers, who nurture the plants year-round.



Yard of Kimberlee Henao

BIRD-FRIENDLY SPACES

The Bird-Friendly Spaces Program developed by our 2021 YPAC took flight this spring. This program recognizes and encourages individuals and organizations that are taking actions to support birds. Participants can apply for free, and in turn, receive a welcome packet with resources, a monthly newsletter, access to an online community, free stickers, and the option to purchase a yard sign to recognize their space. By the end of spring, the program had **80 members** that took a cumulative **878 bird-friendly actions**. An additional **83 acres** of community spaces were recognized.





Downtown Houston / Cornell Lab of Ornithology

LIGHTS OUT FOR BIRDS

The Lights Out for Birds program has grown considerably since Houston Audubon started the citywide initiative in 2017 and now includes several cities around the state, with many conservation partners involved. In Houston, **43 buildings** have pledged to turn their lights out on nights when high bird migration is predicted. We continue to reach tens of thousands of people on social media each spring and fall through our Lights Out Action Alerts.

COLLISION MONITORING

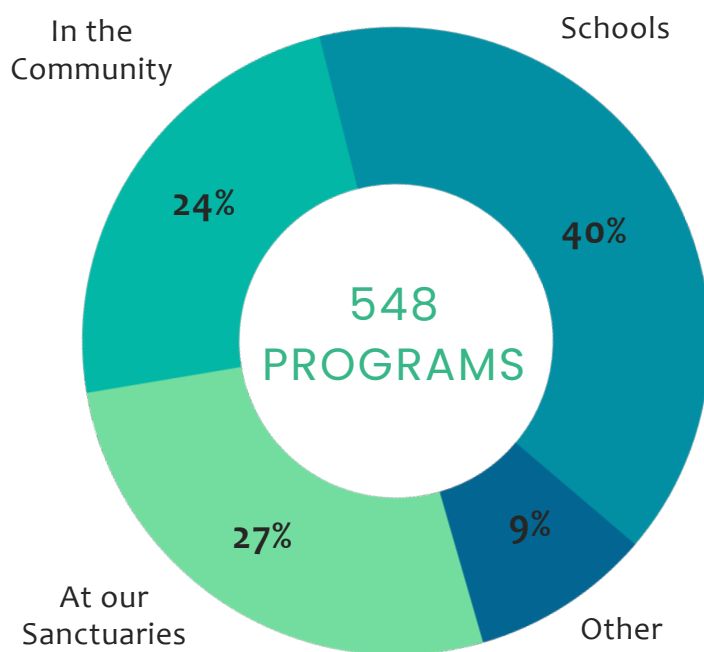
Collision monitoring efforts continued this year, with **40 volunteers** dedicating their early morning hours to record data on bird collisions in downtown Houston, saving injured birds along the way. These important efforts will help scientists better understand the factors that contribute to nighttime collisions and inform conservation strategies. **119 birds** of **29 different species** were observed.



Bird Collision Monitoring Volunteer

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Houston Audubon delivered **548 programs** including presentations, workshops, field trips, and special events for people of all ages. We reached **25,175 youth** and **8,569 adults** through programs such as Art with Raptors, nature photography offerings, watch parties for Purple Martins and Chimney Swifts, camps at our urban sanctuaries, and fun competitions like SuperBird 56. We continued to deliver virtual presentations to groups around the country.



Purple Martin Watch Party



The Ecologist School Field Trip

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

HOUSTON BIRD WEEK 2021

Houston Audubon's third annual Bird Week, coordinated by our Young Professionals Advisory Council (YPAC) and staff, was another resounding success made possible thanks to our great partner organizations, volunteers, and participants. Houston Bird Week touted **39 events** hosted by Houston Audubon and **21 local conservation partners**. Collectively, **almost 2,000 people** participated in our calendar of in-person and virtual events. The events ranged from bird walks and volunteer cleanups to our inaugural AviChat research symposium. Our YPAC also kicked off the inaugural Flock Together Photo Contest during Bird Week, which received **258 photo submissions** from **144 photographers**.



Bike and Bird Event, Houston Bird Week 2021



Sims Bayou Trash Cleanup, Houston Bird Week 2021



Bird Walk at E.R. and Ann Taylor Park

SUNNYSIDE COMMUNITY

A partnership with the Nature Heritage Society was formed and we were able to extend our programming into the Sunnyside community. Monthly activities include bird walks and nature programs at E.R. and Ann Taylor Park and the Hill at Sims, participation in the Witness Series, and events during Black Birders Week and Houston Bird Week.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers continue to be the core of our organization. From managing High Island spring migration visitation to administrative support at our offices, Houston Audubon volunteers contribute expertise, time, effort, and passion that support nearly every single effort of the organization. Sanctuary work days are back in full swing and our wonderful Bird Collision Monitors spent **105 early mornings** in downtown collecting data and saving injured birds, which resulted in a personal thank you letter from Cornell Lab of Ornithology documenting the impact of their service. We truly could not do what we do without our volunteers!



Plastic-Free July cleanup at ELM Sanctuary



High Island Spring Migration volunteers

393
VOLUNTEERS

\$271,587
FINANCIAL IMPACT

9,068
HOURS

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ADVISORY COUNCIL



2021 YPAC (above) & 2022 YPAC (below)



The 2021 YPAC spent the second half of their term creating the Bird-Friendly Spaces Program after they beta-tested it in their own spaces during spring. They also executed another successful Houston Bird Week, which reached **over 2,000 people** through free and low cost events. The 2022 YPAC started off the year strong, helping with market research for adult education programming, participating in the April AngelShare charity competition, and engaging with the Sunnyside community at E.R. and Ann Taylor Park.

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

AVIAN AFFAIR 2021

Houston Audubon's 2021 Avian Affair raised **over \$325,000**, thanks to our wonderful and dedicated supporters. Held at The Revaire on October 21, 2021, the event highlighted Houston Audubon's outreach and education programs and honored Jim Winn and Western Academy. Special thanks to Nancy Powell Moore, Honorary Chair; Anne and Gus Elmer, Avian Affair Ambassadors; Doug Miller, Emcee; and Sneed B. Collard III, Keynote Speaker.



Honoree Jim Winn at Avian Affair 2021



Birdathon Winners, The Thieving Magpies

BIRDATHON 2022

We had another successful Birdathon, our annual spring fundraiser where teams compete to count the most bird species in 24 hours. This year, we had **54 adults** and **174 students** participate. Increased efforts to engage teachers resulted in **10 new classrooms** participating. With the support of our participants, donors, and sponsors, we were able to raise over **\$40,000**.

EVENING ON THE CANOPY

Our newest fundraising event, Evening on the Canopy, was held in April 2022 at the historic pumphouse at Smith Oaks Bird Sanctuary in High Island. Guests enjoyed an array of locally prepared foods and bird-watching activities. **Over \$17,000** was raised for the inaugural event.

DONORS

Thank you to the following generous donors who supported Houston Audubon this year:

\$50,000–\$99,999

The Brown Foundation, Inc.
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Jacob and Terese Hershey Foundation
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Becky and Sam Smith
Joan Brennecke and Mark Stadtherr
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bonnie and David Weekley
Betsy and Jim Winn

**We greatly appreciate our community
of over 1,150 active members who
support our everyday operations!**

\$2,500–\$4,999

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Elizabeth Winston Jones
David Woodard
Ellen Ziskind

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

JULY 1, 2021 – JUNE 30, 2022

REVENUE

Contributions with donor restrictions	\$ 734,006
Contributions without donor restrictions	618,193
Sanctuary land contributions	3,183
Special events	368,321
Less: direct donor benefits	(87,814)
Admission and program fees	278,001
Merchandise and native plant sales	71,797
Net investment return	(466,259)
Loss on disposal of property	(45,528)
Total revenue	<u>1,473,900</u>

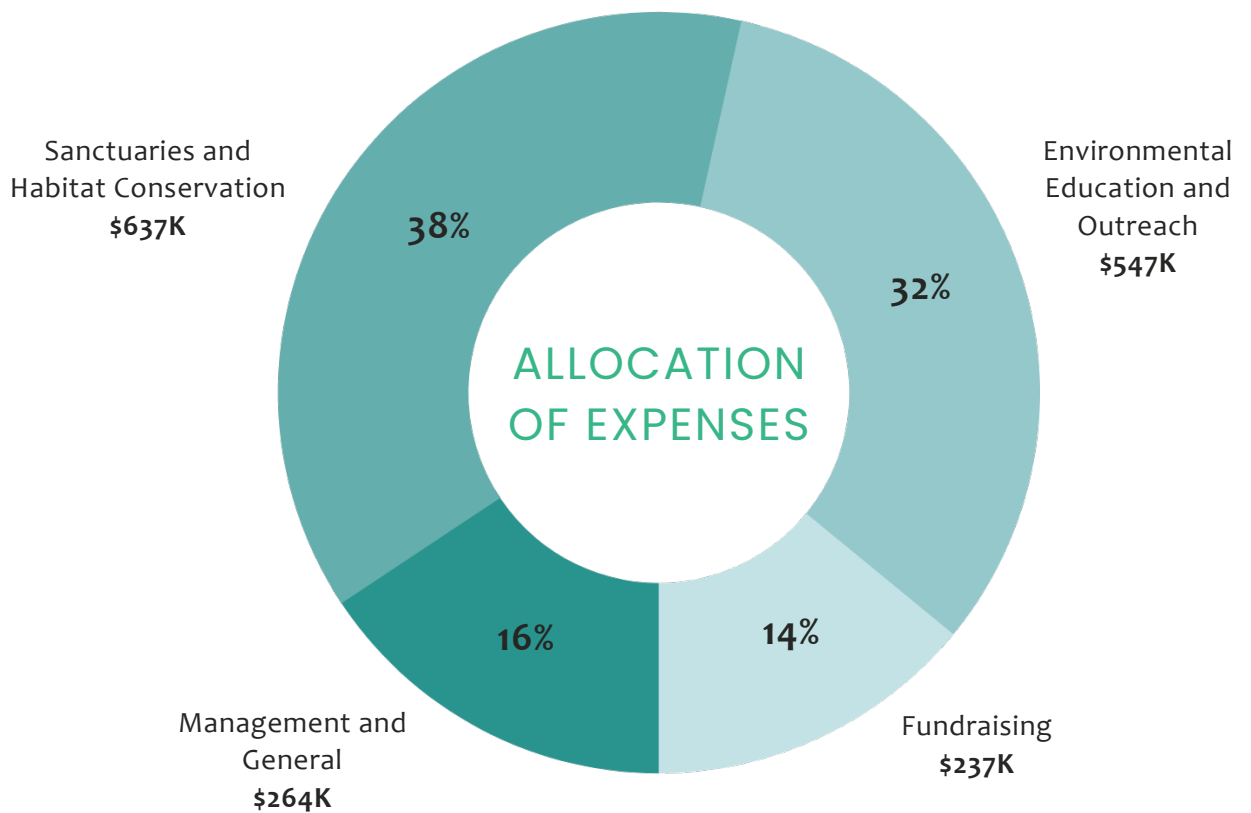
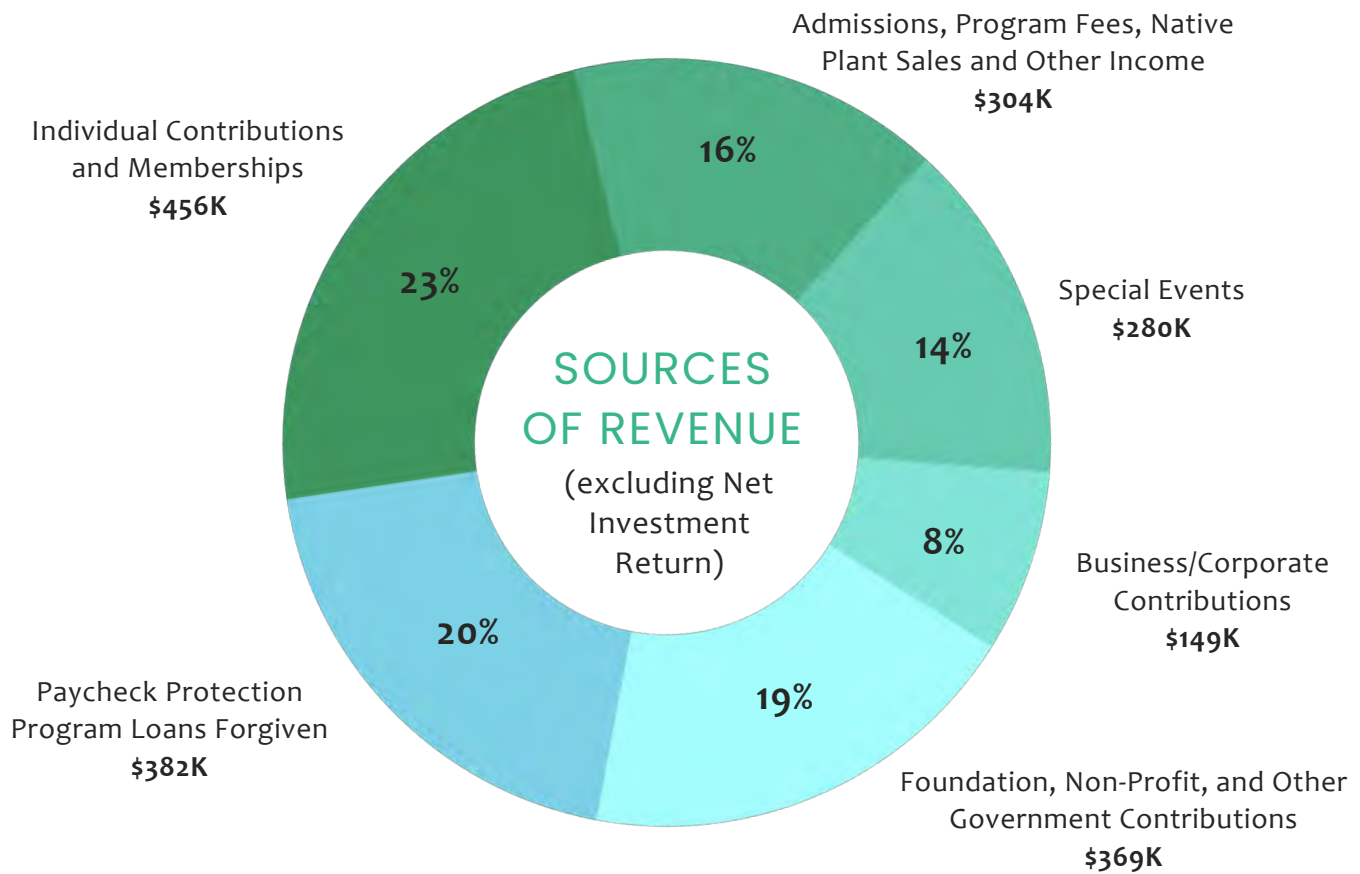
EXPENSES

Program services:	
Sanctuaries and habitat conservation	637,186
Environmental education and outreach	546,571
Total program services	<u>1,183,757</u>
Management and general	263,527
Fundraising	237,484
Total expenses	<u>1,684,768</u>

CHANGES IN NET ASSETS

	(210,868)
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>13,257,587</u>
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ 13,046,719</u>

Audited financial statements available at houstonaudubon.org/financials.



LEADERSHIP

STAFF

Helen E. Drummond

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Conservation Director

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Land Director

Gabriel Durham

Volunteer Manager

Wyatt Egelhoff

Conservation Specialist

Shelby Fletcher

Environmental Educator

Aimee Friend

Development Director

Julie Gold

Corporate Relations Director

Scott Jones

Operations Director

Amber Leung

Environmental Educator

Karen Miles

Accounting Assistant

Berri Moffett

Sanctuaries Manager

Mary Anne Morris

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Elaine Ross

Operations Administrator

Zineera Seth

Communications Manager

Barbara Thompson

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Vicki Stittleburg

Environmental Educator

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