



The Naturalist

Celebrating 50 Years of Bird Conservation



Greg Lavaty

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Light Right to Bring Back the Night

Speaker: Deborah Moran

Date: Thursday, November 14, 2019
Place: United Way Center, 50 Waugh
Time: Social at 7:00 p.m. Presentation at 7:30 p.m.

The focus of this presentation will be on light pollution and the adverse impact from unshielded light on plants, animals and humans. Topics include glare and visibility problems as well as health effects. Deborah will discuss the threat of the proliferation of bright white street lighting and present solutions that double down on the advantages of LED light. We will learn how to light with minimum impact for greater visibility with the least energy use and where to buy good quality lighting.

Deborah Moran has had a lifelong interest in astronomy since her childhood in Midland, Texas where all the scenery is in the sky. She has been a long-time member of the Houston Astronomical Society where she has served in a number of capacities. She also participates in outreach programs and is a volunteer telescope operator at the George Observatory in Brazos Bend State Park. She retired from the Houston Symphony after 27 years in the violin section.



Deborah is the 2017 recipient of the International Dark-Sky Association's Hoag-Robinson Award for education of government officials about outdoor lighting issues. In 2010, her Woodside neighborhood became the first one within the Houston city limits allowed to install low-glare fully shielded decorative streetlights. For the past four years she has presented concerns about the choice of high-glare white LED street lights in Houston to city officials, and hopes that the Houston area will someday join other communities in moving to warm, soft-white or amber LEDs which are recommended by the American Medical Association for their reduced glare and reduced disruption of day/night circadian function. She has also lobbied for a lighting ordinance or education program to reduce security light glare. Deborah created the website softlighthouston.com to educate citizens on lighting issues. The site prompted the Houston Police Department to recommend soft shielded lighting.

This event is free and open to the general public. Please let us know if you're coming by signing up on the Speaker Event page of our website.



Flagstaff, Arizona uses narrow-band amber lighting to protect its dark night sky.

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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Sign up for E-News on our website for monthly updates and a link to The Naturalist.

The Three E's

by Sam Smith, President

Fifty years have come and gone since Houston Audubon was founded. Along the way, many volunteers, donors, staff, board members, and presidents have contributed and helped build the organization that we have today. So what do the next fifty years hold?

While I cannot answer that question, I would like to share what I hope to contribute over the next two years with the help and support of the board and staff.

I like to call it "The Three E's" where the E's stand for Education, Edith L. Moore, and Execution.

Education: Did you know that last year Houston Audubon held over 600 education events that involved more than 35,000 children and adults? All indications are that the greater Houston area is hungry for more. We are in a great position to retool, refresh, and feed the Greater Houston area with more education opportunities and to further this element of our mission which is to educate people about the importance of birds.

The staff has done wonders, and I want to make sure that they have what they need to support and grow our education programs. This means maintaining our programs at the Raptor and Education Center and at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary while also providing opportunities at other locations such as High Island, Damuth, and Winters Bayou.

Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary: As the neighborhoods around the sanctuary have evolved over the years, they have at times put pressure on this great oasis in the middle of the urban area. Programs are limited by the facilities, parking, and bus transportation loading points. The functionality of the organization and our building has also evolved as urban pressures continue to present challenges on maintaining the sanctuary to support birds and wildlife.

While a preliminary plan has been drafted, it is time to complete and implement a new master plan for the sanctuary. With a well-thought-out plan, we should be able to accommodate more programs and visitors, meet the functional needs of the organization, and protect the property for the next fifty years.

Execution: Houston Audubon is currently executing the largest capital project in our history: the canopy boardwalk and restrooms for Smith Oaks Bird Sanctuary. We are also poised to add additional acreage to our sanctuary holdings. It is very important that we execute the completion of the capital project and land addition as efficiently as possible and in a timely manner.

All the tools are in place to track and manage the project, reviews of the land deal have been done, and we fully expect to complete these two items on time and on budget over the next year.

As with all things in our organization, no one person does it all. It is a group effort, and I am grateful for all those that help and contribute to Houston Audubon, in the past, now and the future. Here's to another fifty years!



A special thanks to our inaugural YPAC for coordinating the first-ever Houston Bird Week. Thank you to everyone who helped make it a success and to all who came out and attended events.

Bird of Houston: Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

by Anna Vallery, Conservation Specialist

Designating an official bird to represent Houston not only creates a symbol that reflects our city's culture, but also brings attention to the hundreds of bird species that reside in and migrate through the Bayou City each year.

Houston's location on the central flyway is a vital stopover for migratory birds and a welcoming, year-round home to our resident bird. Not only do birds need our city to thrive, but Houston needs a healthy bird population. Birds are essential to human welfare thanks to the many ecosystem services they provide, from pollination and pest-control to clean-up and seed dispersal. A representative Bird of Houston is just the thing to connect our residents to their avian neighbors.



Our birthday bash was held at Axelrad on September 28. Find more photos of Bird Week events on our website.



On September 24, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner alongside Helen Drummond, Houston Audubon's Executive Director, proclaimed the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron as the official Bird of Houston.

Pictured in the photo left to right: Stuart Nelson (YPAC), Zineera Seth, Anna Vallery, Helen Drummond, Mayor Sylvester Turner, Wes Gapp (YPAC), Chris Carroll (HPARD)

In an effort to increase awareness of the birds around us, Houston Audubon hosted the Bird of Houston contest. Houstonians voted on their favorite local bird through a series of bracket rounds. Over 60 bird species were originally nominated, leading to the final round which pitted the Attwater's Prairie-Chicken against the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. In the end, Houstonians selected the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron as the winner!

The Yellow-crowned Night-Heron is an excellent species to represent the Bayou City. This bird is found in Houston year-round, with higher numbers present from March to October. Houstonians can see this striking bird foraging along the bayous, in our salt marshes, and even along roadways as it hunts for crawfish and other crustaceans. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons breed and raise their young in Houston, with nesting sites scattered across the city, instilling neighborhood pride for those fortunate enough to have large rookeries present.

Like a Houstonian, the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron is successful from the coast to the big city. These birds raise their families here and fish in our waters. City residents can connect to nature at home by going outside and watching them.

Because of all this, the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron is officially the Bird of Houston.

High Island Patch

The 2020 High Island Sanctuaries patch features the Pine Warbler. Pre-orders are now being accepted on our website. The art was once again generously donated by Linda Feltner. Linda is an award-winning nature artist and educator. She combines the creativity of artistic design with strict standards of scientific accuracy into what has become her trademark. Find out more about Linda on her website: LindaFeltner.com.



HOLIDAY AT THE CABIN

at the Raptor and Education Center
Saturday, December 7 6–8 p.m.

Crafts for kids, hot chocolate and cider, yummy holiday treats, holiday movie on the lawn, shopping in the nature store, special guests, raffles and much more! \$3.00 per person



Thank you for supporting the
Houston Audubon Raptor and Education Center

Houston Audubon Financial Summary

by Andy Lopez, Treasurer

<i>For the fiscal years ended June 30, 2019 and 2018:</i>		2019		2018	
Support & Revenue	Grants, contributions and memberships	1,071,782		3,821,089	
	Special events	308,056		357,731	
	Admission and program fees	196,969		189,247	
	Merchandise sales	67,915		70,545	
	Net investment return	188,434		175,768	
	Other revenue	110,924		0	
	Total Support & Revenue	1,944,080		4,614,380	
Expenses	Program services:				
	Sanctuaries and habitat conservation	546,823	37%	760,364	47%
	Environmental education and outreach	522,171	35%	470,999	29%
	Management and general	199,328	13%	184,743	11%
	Fundraising	229,014	15%	203,872	13%
	Total Expenses	1,497,336		1,619,978	
	Resulting Change in Net Assets	446,744		2,994,402	
Assets, Liabilities & Net Assets	Cash	689,322		469,088	
	Contributions receivable	273,569		458,964	
	Other assets	109,840		54,763	
	Investments and life insurance	4,968,154		5,082,608	
	Depreciable property	1,176,229		742,893	
	Nature sanctuaries	3,984,701		3,934,924	
	Total Assets	11,201,815		10,743,240	
	Accounts payable and accrued expenses	54,950		41,089	
	Deferred revenue	3,845		5,875	
	Total net assets	11,143,020		10,696,276	
	Total Liabilities & Net Assets	11,201,815		10,743,240	

The audit of our financial statements for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2019 is complete, and a favorable opinion was issued by our auditors, Blazek & Vetterling. Above is a financial summary of activities for the past two fiscal years.

Following the successful completion of a major habitat restoration project to create two new rookery islands at Smith Oaks sanctuary in FY2018 and the FY2018 receipt of a transformative gift from the McGovern Foundation for a skywalk, restrooms and visitor pavilion, both revenues and program efficiency remained strong in FY2019. In addition, operational investments continued in FY2019 with two High Island property acquisitions that will support growing operations on the Gulf Coast. Significant boardwalk improvements were made at Boy Scout Woods and Damuth sanctuaries in FY2019, and aviaries and trails were constructed at the newly named Houston Audubon Raptor and Education Center (formerly Sims Bayou Urban Nature Center) to improve public access and expand educational opportunities.

The complete audited financial statements are available at houstonaudubon.org or by calling the Houston Audubon main office.

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all who supported Houston Audubon's gala this year. At the time of this printing, \$261,732 has been raised in pre-event contributions alone, with more to be raised from the Fund-a-Need and silent auction during the Gala on October 17.

We would like to thank all of our underwriters, donors, volunteers and attendees who are truly making a difference for the birds.



Underwriters

Golden Eagle: Jane and Robert Cizik • Kathrine G. McGovern

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As of the October 15th print deadline

Raptor Photo Shoots

Hawks, falcons, owls and more await you at Houston Audubon's Raptor Photo Shoots. You will have the opportunity to photograph our education raptors in an intimate setting at both the Houston Audubon Raptor and Education Center (HAREC) and at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary (ELMNS). Sign-up details are on our website.

All camera types are welcome at the photo shoots. This photo of our Barn Owl was taken by Trey Morris on his iPhone.



Upcoming Dates: November 23 (HAREC), January 27 (ELMNS), March 20 (HAREC), May 22 (ELMNS)

HANPA

Upcoming Meetings: November 6, December 4

Check our website for details on the presenters.

The Houston Audubon Nature Photography Association meets on the first Wednesday of the month from 7 to 9 p.m. at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary.

Meet Aimee Friend

Aimee is our new Development Director. Aimee oversees all development activities for Houston Audubon. These include membership, fundraising, grant writing, and planned giving. In addition, her staff conducts the gala, Birdathon and the annual appeal as well as many other events. She has served Houston nonprofits in a variety of development roles for the past 19 years and has a passion for bringing individuals together for great causes.



Aimee is a 5th generation Texan and a graduate of the University of Texas. She and her husband make their home in Memorial and enjoy home restoration projects, visiting art museums, and attending cultural events and concerts around Houston. They have 2 teenage daughters.

Aimee and her family can be seen on the weekends enjoying the outdoors and love spending time at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary. She is excited to be a part of an organization that impacts both her local community as well as the greater Houston-Gulf Coast region.

High Island Photo Blind Rental Schedule

During the spring migration season (March 27–May 3, 2020), reservations are required in order to use the photo blind at Boy Scout Woods in High Island. The cost is \$25 per seat per day. Houston Audubon members may go online to reserve a space in the photo blind beginning on Friday, December 6 at 10 a.m. For non-members, reservations start on Monday, January 6 at 10 a.m.

Owl Prowls

Owl Prowls begin with a lively program on owls and include an opportunity to meet Houston Audubon's live, rehabilitated owls.



Greg Lavaty

Then we go out on the sanctuary's wooded trails in search of wild owls.

Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary:
November 23, December 28, January 11, February 8

Raptor & Education Center: November 16, December 14, January 25, February 22

Join us at a Work Party!

North Jetty Cleanup
Saturday, November 16

High Island
November 9 | December 14

Edith L. Moore
November 23 | December 28

Raptor & Education Center
November 16 | December 21



Hooded Merganser—*Lophodytes cucullatus*

by Glenn Olsen, GO Birding Ecotours

The male Hooded Merganser is a strikingly handsome and distinctive member of the duck family. The moniker of "hooded" seems a bit of a stretch to me since there is no hood similar to other species with the name hooded. The neck and head are black with a large white patch on the side of the head behind the golden-yellow eye. To me, this does not look like a hood. The feathers of the head form a crest that the bird can raise like a fan. When it does, the broadened white patch makes the head appear disproportionately large and oblong. Perhaps this is what hooded refers to.



Greg Lavaty

When the crest is lowered, the feathers are compressed, causing the white to look like a long narrow patch behind the eye. With a black bill, black-and-white head, and a golden-yellow eye, this bird will turn heads. The under parts are white and the upper back is blackish with cinnamon sides. This is the smallest of our three mergansers and not very common. All mergansers have thin non-duck-like bills. Females are mottled soft gray with cinnamon tones on the head and are subtly attractive.

The primary breeding range of Hooded Mergansers is the eastern half of North America and the Pacific Northwest where they prefer forested wetlands. They may also nest in treeless wetlands where people have put up nest boxes. They are most common in forests around the Great Lakes. Their habitat ranges from spruce and fir forests in the Northwest to pine-hardwood forest and cottonwood riparian forest in the Midwest and oak-cypress-tupelo forest in the Southeast.

Along the Upper Texas Coast, Hooded Mergansers can be found in freshwater ponds, lakes, rivers, marshes, and protected brackish water bays from November to early March. Like some ducks, they feed by diving underwater and consuming small fish, crayfish, and aquatic insects.

I enjoy seeing the wonderful species diversity in our colorful, winter waterfowl. The weather is often very comfortable with few mosquitoes and a glorious time to be outdoors. So visit any of our marshes, bays, or rivers this winter to see if you can find one of these uncommon but beautiful ducks.

Upcoming Birding Classes with Glenn Olsen

- Wintering Sparrows (November)
- Wintering Waterfowl (December)

Each course includes a class at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary and a field trip. Details are on our website.

Member Field Trip

Stephen F. Austin State Park and
San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site
Saturday, November 16

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.

Bus Trips for Seniors

Sam Houston State University
Natural History Collection Museum
Tuesday, November 12

Evening on the Katy Prairie
Tuesday, December 10

Bus trips are for Houston Audubon members who are over 50.

Upcoming dates for our monthly bird surveys are at houstonaudubon.org

Galveston County Audubon Group

Presentation: Thursday, November 21
7:00 p.m. at Rosenberg Library, Galveston

What's Happening in High Island?

Houston Audubon Coastal Sanctuaries Manager Pete Deichmann will talk about ongoing and past habitat projects as well as plans for the future.

Field Trip: Saturday, November 23
Bolivar Shorebirds, Waders, and Ducks

Participation is open to all!
Details at houstonaudubon.org

Christmas Bird Counts

Christmas Bird Counts are scheduled from December 14 through January 5.

Explore areas not normally accessible. All experience levels are welcome! Details for Texas Christmas Bird Counts are posted on our website.



Greg Lavaty

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☐ I would like to include Houston Audubon in my estate plans
☐ I would like to become a member/renew my membership

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\$500 (Gold) \$250 (Silver) \$100 (Bronze)
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 mail in this form with a check to:



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Calendar of Events

- Weekly Mindful Mondays
 Weekly Titmouse Club on Tuesday
 Weekly Bayou Buddies on Tuesday
 Weekly BIRD Buddies on Friday

November

- 2 Bolivar Beach Ramble
 2 Flying WILD Workshop
 6 After School Nature Explorers Club
 6 Nature Photography Meeting
 9 High Island Work Party
 12 Seniors Bus Trip
 14 Speaker Event with Deborah Moran
 16 North Jetty Cleanup
 16 Houston Audubon Field Trip
 16 Raptor and Education Center Work Party
 16 Owl Prowl at Raptor and Education Center
 19 Birding Class: Wintering Sparrows
 21 Galveston Group Meeting
 23 Edith Moore Work Party
 23 Galveston Group Field Trip

- 23 Birding Field Trip: Wintering Sparrows
 23 Raptor Photo Shoot at Raptor & Education Center
 23 Owl Prowl at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary

December

- 4 After School Nature Explorers Club
 4 Nature Photography Meeting
 6 High Island Photo Blind Reservations Open to Members
 7 Bolivar Beach Ramble
 7 Holiday at the Cabin at Raptor and Education Center
 10 Birding Class: Wintering Waterfowl
 10 Seniors Bus Trip
 14 Christmas Bird Counts begin
 14 High Island Work Party
 14 Birding Field Trip: Wintering Waterfowl
 14 Owl Prowl at Raptor and Education Center
 21 Raptor and Education Center Work Party
 28 Edith Moore Work Party
 28 Owl Prowl at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary



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