

Tributes

DECEMBER 12, 2023

Remembering Kathrine G. McGovern

by Helen E. Drummond



We are deeply saddened by the passing of Kathrine (Kathy) G. McGovern. Houston Audubon has lost a dear friend, fellow champion of bird conservation, and longtime generous supporter.

Mrs. McGovern was always thoughtful and intentional in her unwavering support of Houston Audubon. She helped make us a stronger, more impactful organization and helped improve the greater Houston landscape for the betterment of birds and people's enjoyment. From the iconic McGovern Canopy Walkway overlooking the Smith Oaks rookeries in High Island to supporting those committed to improving urban green space through Houston Audubon's urban conservation award which was named in her honor, Mrs. McGovern's mark of generosity, care for community, and love for the place she called home will be felt, seen, and experienced for years to come.

On a personal note, I will truly miss our regular visits to catch up on conservation over lunch, watch a tennis match at her home, or enjoy brief outings to local art galleries. She was an amazing and thoughtful person with a sweet sense of humor, and one who delighted in being able to help make a difference. We bid our farewell to a most kind and beautiful soul. I know she flies in the winds of love, grace, and peace. She earned her wings and can now soar with the birds she loved.

The memorial service will be held on Wednesday, December 13 at 11am at St. Paul's United Methodist Church.

Helen E. Drummond
Houston Audubon President & CEO

[Obituary](#)

[Article in Houston Chronicle](#)

OCTOBER 11, 2020

REMEMBERING DORTHYLE HEADRICK



More than anything, Dorthyle loved nature, a lifelong passion that began when her father took her on treks through the Piney Woods of East Texas as a small child. She had a keen interest in bird watching and a vast knowledge of plants and animals of Texas. That knowledge led to a part-time job at Chickadee Nature Store and to volunteering as an Audubon docent at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary, a role she treasured for more than 20 years, which allowed her to share her love of wildlife with visiting children. Houston Audubon is named in the obituary as one of the organizations for memorial contributions.

JANUARY 12, 2018

Remembering Flo Hannah

by Helen Drummond



Flo Hannah will be missed beyond measure and remembered always for her steadfast dedication to the plants, birds, and people of the Texas Gulf Coast. Flo was our dear friend and colleague. She was a champion of endangered coastal prairies and a remarkable advocate for nature. She was loved and respected by the many people she encountered. Houston Audubon feels a significant loss and will miss Flo's passion, expertise, and sweet humor. We plan to honor Flo and her remarkable contributions to Houston Audubon and to our community, and we will share details when we have them. May we all carry her prairie fire forward. We love the attached picture of Flo in her favorite Texas Coneflowers in an urban prairie remnant in Houston. Flo was known for saying, "You can never have too many Texas Coneflowers!"



Flo at Nash Prairie



Flo at College Park



Flo at McBride Hayfield

Photos by Don Verser

[Flo Hannah Tributes](#)

These tributes were collected from co-workers and friends of Flo Hannah.



Sheryl Marquez, Flo, Warren Pruess, Dr. Brown
Native Plant Society of Texas field trip to Russ Pitman Park, April 29, 2012.
Photo by Don Verser

From the day Flo began as a Sanctuary Assistant at Houston Audubon in 2002, good changes began to happen. Houston Audubon sanctuaries far and wide—especially Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary—began to get badly needed attention. Flo quickly won the respect and friendship of the Audubon Docent trail crew which had been handling most of the Edith Moore grounds and trail maintenance under the leadership of Don Gray. She then made friends and allies for Houston Audubon everywhere as she took on the daunting job of improving oversight and maintenance of Houston Audubon sanctuaries from the Piney Woods to Galveston Island. Everything she did was with enthusiasm and a sense of humor, making even the toughest jobs fun for all involved.

Flo's interest in native plants, especially grasses, was always evident but became a dominating force when loss of the Saums Road Prairie became imminent. Her efforts to save Saums Road Prairie were the beginning of the crusade she helped found and lead with Houston Audubon encouragement and support. That experience resulted in the now extensive network of organizations committed to saving prairies and promoting native plants. It was a crusade she led the rest of her life with close friends and allies, seeking recognition always for them, never for herself. She changed Houston Audubon and the conservation world for the better in everything she did.

- Joy Hester

Flo Hannah--our dear friend, colleague, native plant expert and champion of our endangered coastal prairies passed this afternoon surrounded by family and lots of love. Flo was a remarkable person and tireless, passionate advocate for nature. She was loved and respected by the many she worked with, mentored, advised and touched with her passion, expertise, and sweet humor. Flo will be missed beyond measure and remembered always for her steadfast dedication to the plants, birds, and people of the Texas Gulf Coast. May we all carry her prairie fire forward.

- Helen Drummond

Flo lead the Natives Nursery including the recent expansion project. Many plants have been propagated and distributed across the city. The Houston Arboretum native plant sale was supplied with many plants. The Katy Prairie Conservancy school pocket prairies used many of the plants from the nursery. Plants were taken to offsite sales such as Earth Day at Fulshear.

Flo built up and ran her own native plant nursery - Hannah Native Grasses. She grew many species of native prairie grasses and sold them to those working on garden projects or restorations.

She was an excellent teacher and mentor regarding native prairie plants and encouraged all her nursery volunteers to visit prairies, collect seeds, and grow native prairie plants.

- Julie d'Ablain

Flo meant a lot to me regarding her coastal prairie conservation passion and her direct assistance with the Deer Park Prairie Flora, Cullen Preserve, and many prairie sites we visited together. I learned a lot about the local flora of the upper coast from Flo. This is a huge loss and I know how dear of friend she was to both of you.

- Jason R. Singhurst



Flo on UH Coastal Center fieldtrip
May 15, 2010. Photo by Don Verser

I will so miss Flo because she was a true fellow prairie enthusiast, conservationist, and Tallamite. She referred to herself as a Tallamite, someone who Tallamizes (preaches) about Doug Tallamy's book "Bringing Nature Home."

She also gave Tallamy talks showing what bird food looks like, i.e., caterpillars and other insects. Flo went on numerous Native Plant Society field trips led by Dr. Brown, took his taxonomy class, and took on the challenge of grass identification. Often a microscope is required to key out grasses. I think she made numerous visits to Dr. Brown's Spring Branch Science Center herbarium.

Included here is a picture of a Native Plant Society field trip with Dr. Brown and Warren Pruess, another old botany friend. Also a picture of a field trip to Nash Prairie led by David Rosen. And another picture showing a field trip to UH Coastal Prairie.

Another thing Flo did other than prairies was the work she did with Mike Lange and connecting him and his Columbia Bottomlands project with Houston Audubon.

- Don Verser



Flo on Nash Prairie
Fieldtrip led by David Rosen, May 17, 2008.
Photo by Don Verser

The first time that I met Flo, she was teaching a Grass Identification class for the Cradle of Texas Master Naturalist down at Demi John near the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge. I had become a Master Naturalist in 2001 and I was attending this class for Advance Training credits. I couldn't wait to take this class from Flo and made sure that I did not miss it because after she made her presentation, we were going to go see a patch of Yellow Indiangrass on the side of the road. I had become excited about knowing and seeing real native prairie grasses after my initial training from Dr. Barron Rector and Dr. John Jacob about The Gulf Coast Tallgrass Prairie, and hydrology. I was in awe of what she was doing at the time, going and finding patches of remnant prairies and documenting and collecting and rescuing plants and trying to find ways to preserve them. She gave her presentation with a calm and quiet confidence. She seemed genuinely joyful and thankful to be able to share her love and passion and knowledge of the plants and fate of the prairie.

It was in that PowerPoint program that she showed a slide of what I remember her saying was the last pristine prairie left in Brazoria County that she knew of, and it was in the middle of a ranch on CR25. She had been taking seeds from it along the side of the road and jokingly said that so far she had not been shot. My hands started shaking because at that point I realized that the ranch Flo was talking about was on the Kittie Nash Groce Ranch that had been willed in part to St Mary's Episcopal Church in West Columbia, where my husband Peter was the rector. I went home and told Peter what the Church owned and that is what started us on a 10-plus year journey in preserving the Nash Prairie.

Flo, in all of those years, was a constant source of support and always ready to help promote the Nash whenever we asked and even when we didn't, like the Cash for Nash Project idea, that so impressed the diocesan treasurer that he bought 10 Texas coneflowers for his on yard in Houston. In our very first Prairie Day held at St Mary's, she talked to the parishioners to tell them what a treasure they had in the Nash Ranch. Flo on numerous occasions came out to the ranch to assess the rest of the 12,000-acre ranch with David Rosen, Mike Lange, Peter, me and at times, other biologists and botanists. It was always a great day when Flo showed up, she was happy and grateful to be out on the prairie and in the Columbia Bottomlands. She made me happy and grateful to be there also. I can't count the many times she came out to collect seeds or teach a class or help with a tour. I remember the many conversations we would have out on the Nash while we collected seeds. I remember collecting seed out on the Nash with Flo, Peter, and Don Verser, during the time that the Saums Prairie was destroyed and the realization that Flo had, that maybe the Nash would go the way of the Saums, and we could not let that happen. And, as always when we were with Flo, the reality of the situation was never minimized, but we would have a new resolve to double down and keep fighting. That is what Flo did she inspired us to be and do more and not give up. That we would find a way. She inspired this in the way that she shared her knowledge with a generous and humble kind spirit. She seemed to have endless energy.

In this past couple of years, we had been meeting Flo out on Follett's Island with Mike Lange and other close friends of Flo's and I discovered her first love, the coast. It was always such a joy to be with her because she was always joyful in the places and with the people she loved. I think the word that comes to my mind the most when I think of Flo is gratefulness and kindness. When we taught a grass id course together for the Master Naturalists, she expressed her gratitude working with me and doing the class together. And the last time I was at the Nash with Flo she again expressed the gratefulness she felt about life. At the time Peter was too sick to join us on the prairie and I expressed my sadness and hopelessness and exhaustion from taking care of Peter. And in the way that only Flo could do, she did not minimize the situation, but acknowledged the difficulties and basically just said you can do this, and gave me practical advice on how to proceed. I will be forever grateful for Flo.

- Susan Conaty

What an awful loss, not just for family and friends but for the world of nature conservation advocates. I have known Flo for almost 40 years. She was responsible for introducing me to Houston Audubon and then spent nearly a year trying to train me with a "Houston Audubon 101" course of her devising. Obviously the primary focus was the connection between the quality of habitat and the fauna that are attracted to it. As a result, I was occasionally able to avoid making a complete idiot of myself among other board members who were actually qualified for the job. She will really be missed!

- *Ben Hulsey*

Yes, I hired her. We had birded together before that. I met her when she was starting her graduate work on Henslow's Sparrow, but had never seen one. I took her to see one on a pipeline right of way east of Houston, and she was so excited. She, Joy Hester, Sara Bettencourt and I did the Attwater Christmas Bird Count for many years.

- *Jeff Mundy*

Webmaster note: The Henslow's Sparrow is one of the desktop wallpapers used on the staff computers at Houston Audubon.

I first met Flo in about 2002 at Greens Bayou. I was on a Native Plant Society field trip and she was birding looking for a Clay-colored Sparrow. She walked up to ask me what I was looking at through my scope; I said take a look. She did and then smiled and laughed that warm and easy laugh of hers and said "That's the first time I have ever seen anyone looking at a water lily in a scope." We talked a bit.

This was before she became so interested in plants. I became acquainted with Flo and watched her love of native plants and especially grasses and prairies grow. We will remember her for all the wonderful work she did with grasses and prairies. And I, personally, will always remember her warm hearted smile and laugh, and the gentle soul that she was.

- *Glenn Olsen*

Willow Waterhole Native Prairie

Flo was an invaluable prairie enthusiast who greatly assisted Harris County Flood Control District and mentored staff over more than a decade. She helped discover and map the prairie remnants at the Willow Waterhole Detention Basin, advised on opening up and restoring the 15-acre prairie site, and led the charge in rescuing prairie plants from the adjacent future basin site. She engaged many volunteers in the plant rescue efforts which included digging up more than 400 plants over a 30-acre site over three weekends, repotting plants, securing a site to nurse the plants at the nearby Houston Independent School District Science Center, and then watering and caring for the plants over a two-year period. Through this entire process, Flo demonstrated her love of prairies, her interest in teaching and mentoring, and her strong leadership skills. We are eternally indebted to Flo's enthusiasm and character.

- *Carolyn White*



Willow Waterhole workday
Nov 11, 2010. Photo by Don Verser

What a great legacy she leaves behind. Her dedication and commitment touched so many. She used her abilities for positive impact, and everyone on this thread has fond memories of her impact on them. I was walking alone late one afternoon in the Rio Grande Valley brushland back in the 1980s. And ahead of me in the distance walking back towards me was a solo woman. Who were we to interrupt each other's quiet and personal moments in this environment? We met with a smile of recognition, a mutual greeting of welcome. We walked back together, largely in silence, enjoying the sharing of a quiet beautiful moment. That is how I will remember her. We will all miss Flo, but each of us are glad to have shared a portion of our paths together.

- Steve Gast

I miss Flo very much. I miss her enthusiasm, her commitment to people and projects, her willingness to try something new and to make it succeed. I am forever grateful to have known Flo, and to have had her friendship.

- Mary Carter

From an email interview with Jaime Gonzalez, Community Conservation Director, Katy Prairie Conservancy Coastal Prairie Partnership

Is it correct that you and Flo were co-founders of the CPP? *Yes. When was it founded? April 17, 2009 (on Flo's birthday) and what was the immediate impetus for creating the partnership? After the destruction of the Saums Road Prairie and a successful multi-institutional rescue effort, it became apparent that we needed two things (1) better coordination, planning, and communication between groups and individuals saving and restoring prairies, and (2) the need to elevate the status of the prairie would take a truly collaborative approach. Flo and I were also very concerned about the long term fate of the University of Houston Coastal Center and other local "platinum prairies."* I assume you and Flo were officers? *I was the first president and she was the first vice president. She served as vice president for 3 years and was active on the board for the first 5 years.*

Deer Park Prairie Preserve / College Park Prairie

I find the web site info, linked below to be excellent. And the start of a successful \$4 million campaign! Why is it called the Lawther – Deer Park Prairie Preserve? *It is named the Lawther-Deer Park Prairie because Dean Lawther, the former owner and a real estate developer, was willing to sell the property for conservation purposes - it was part of the final negotiation. Did Terry Hershey donate a million for the purchase? \$2 million.*

Saums Prairie

We typically referred to it as the Saums Road Prairie. I've not found anything on the web about it. There's a YouTube video I made about the rescue effort. There is an accompanying Texas Parks article.

I know it was captured in August but do not know in what year? 2008. It is also important to know that Flo was awarded the 2009 Army & Sarah Emmott Conservation Award from the Citizens Environmental Coalition for our leadership role in the Saums Road Prairie rescue.

Wasn't it inventoried at Katy Prairie Conservancy (KPC) and then used to create Pocket Prairies? Rescued material was used to make pocket prairies by KPC, Nature Discovery Center, Don Verser, Houston Audubon, Harris County Flood Control, and private individuals.

Are Pocket Prairies a KPC, CPP, NPAT or Flo Hannah innovation? It all happened around the time of the Saums Road Prairie rescue. Our first target pocket prairie project, Whistlestop Prairie in Hermann Park, was an effort lead by KPC and Houston Audubon. Since that time more than 30 pocket prairies have popped up across the region.

I found an excellent Medical Center Pocket Prairie article on the web. Yes, I wrote that article to explain the value of these plantings. We used some of Flo's plants on this project and nearly every other pocket prairie that KPC has helped to install on public school campuses in four school districts, at the University of Houston and University of St. Thomas, at a local church, and a public parks like Buffalo Bayou Park.

Nash Prairie

The person to ask about Flo's participation in this effort is Susan Conaty. Susan was very much inspired by Flo and it led her to work with her husband, the late Rev. Peter Conaty, to help save Nash.

- Jaime Gonzalez

- [Coastal Prairie Partnership](#)
- [Deer Park Prairie](#)
- [Let's Save College Park Prairie!](#)
Vimeo video, 3 minutes 55 seconds
- [Texas Coastal Prairie Series - Saums Road Prairie Rescue](#)
YouTube video, 8 minutes 58 seconds
- [Saums Road Prairie](#)
Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine
- [Army & Sarah Emmott Conservation Award](#)
Houston Chronicle article
- [What's a prairie doing in the middle of the Medical Center?](#)
Houston Chronicle article about pocket prairies
- [Nash Prairie Preserve](#)
The Nature Conservancy article

JANUARY 5, 2018

Remembering Bruce McCandless

by Brad Billetdeaux



Bruce McCandless II, former NASA astronaut and Houston Audubon board member, died on Thursday, December 21, 2017. The articles below cover Bruce's career in the space arena. His contributions to bird conservation in the Upper Texas Coast start with his long tenure on our Board of Directors. He was an At Large Director in 1973-4, Vice President in 1974-5, President in 1975-6, Vice President again in 1976-7, President again in 1977-9. This was during the time that the Edith L. Moore property was willed to Houston Audubon. Bruce was instrumental in working along with former President Ken Burns to settle the back taxes and obtain a tax exemption for the property. We have been benefiting from that work ever since.

Unfortunately this was before *The Naturalist* published photos, and I could not find any photos in our archives of Bruce in birding attire.

[Read his NASA biography](#)

[Wikipedia page](#)

[Houston Chronicle](#)

[Washington Post obituary](#)

SEPTEMBER 1, 2017

REMEMBERING AGNES STANLEY

Agnes Stanley was a longtime volunteer with Houston Audubon's Docent Guild, which develops educational programs at the Edith Moore sanctuary in west Houston. Stanley worked specifically with the Titmouse Club, a program that introduces preschool children to birds and botany to develop their interest in the environment. The link goes to a Houston Chronicle article about Agnes' death.

Flooding victim, 89, spent later years teaching about nature

By Cindy George Updated Sep 14, 2017 6:42 p.m.

An 89-year-old victim of the recent flooding spent decades of her senior years teaching Houston's smallest adventurers about nature.

Agnes Stanley was a longtime volunteer with Houston Audubon's Docent Guild, which develops educational programs at the Edith Moore sanctuary in west Houston.

Stanley worked specifically with the Titmouse Club, a program that introduces preschool children to birds and botany to develop their interest in the environment.

"She was devoted and she loved that kids' program," said Helen Drummond, executive director of Houston Audubon. The bird conservation, education and advocacy organization owns 17 sanctuaries in the Houston-Galveston region.

The retired nurse also volunteered at a local Ronald McDonald House, Drummond said.

Stanley took a hiatus from volunteering to care for her husband. Recently widowed, she wanted to return to her work with children.

"She was fierce and determined. She was small in stature, but strong-willed and invincible," Drummond said. "She just meant so much to us and she will definitely be missed."

Stanley perished in her one-story brick home, flooded by the effects of Tropical Storm Harvey. Her body was found in four feet of water in the 4300 block of Meyerwood, very close to Brays Bayou. She is believed to have died on Sunday morning.

AUGUST 19, 2017

Remembering Aaron Stoley



It is with great sadness that Houston Audubon mourns the passing of Aaron Stoley on Wednesday, August 16, 2017. Aaron may have been short in stature but he was a giant at Houston Audubon. A tireless volunteer who was always one of the first to answer the call whether it for clearing trails after a hurricane, tending native plants at the nursery, or mentoring new volunteers.

Aaron Stoley was named the 2007 Laura Singleton Outstanding Volunteer for his many decades of volunteering for Houston Audubon. As a lifelong birder, he cared that bird habitat is preserved and enhanced. He was at High Island after both Hurricane Rita and Hurricane Humberto, chainsawing and clearing brush, and serving as fire captain. Growing up on a farm in South Dakota during the depression, he learned to fix things with what you had available, which wasn't much. Consequently, he helped us with many mechanical repairs. Aaron never said no to any project at any location where he was asked to help. This includes building sheds, placing signs at Winters Bayou, working on the washout below the big pond at Edith Moore Nature Sanctuary, fixing all manner of mechanical equipment, volunteering to lead work groups, Christmas Bird Counts, clearing brush at High Island and at Sims Bayou Urban Nature Center. Aaron was a joy to work with. His stories made every workday fun. Aaron was treasured by all who were lucky enough to know him. Rest in peace, Aaron.

JANUARY 30, 2017

Remembering a Houston Legend, a Force for Nature

TERESE "TERRY" TARLTON HERSHEY (1923-2017)

By Helen Drummond, Executive Director



For more than half a century, Terry Hershey devoted substantial time, energy and resources in significant conservation projects throughout Texas, including the founding of Houston Audubon in 1969. Today, we pay tribute to Terry in memory of and gratitude for her leadership, dedication and passion to making Houston and the life of Houstonians better.

Houston Audubon is honored to have been a part of Terry's life. Not only was she a founding director, but also a long-time member of the Board of Directors and Board of Advisors.

Terry consistently imparted her invaluable wisdom and consistently contributed to important projects that needed a champion, including Houston Audubon's effort to restore the Edith L. Moore Log Cabin in 2012. The log cabin is recognized as a Texas Historic Landmark and is the focal point of Houston Audubon's Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary. Restoration of the cabin was a delicate undertaking given its status and Terry recognized the need. As a result, she gave the lead gift, in honor of her late husband Jake, to make the restoration happen, and her gift came at a critical time. This was one of Terry's trademarks; she always came through when needed most. Today, the cabin stands strong; it continues to host education programs for thousands, providing a setting that establishes a tangible connection to history and to nature.

It was also Terry's lead gift in 2013 that spurred hundreds to give in an unprecedented rally of support to save Deer Park Prairie, a 50-acre coastal prairie remnant representing one of the planet's most imperiled ecosystems. The prairie was under imminent threat of development but because of Terry's leadership and courage, over \$4 million was raised in a very short period of time to purchase and place under permanent conservation protection the largest remaining high quality prairie remnant known in Harris County. Today, the grassland birds, shorebirds, wading birds and an array of associated insects, amphibians, reptiles and mammals that have been found there can now continue to rely on this critical rare habitat.

With every turn, there is a moving story about Terry. And as we honor this amazing woman, the tangible achievements she's made for parks, people and the environment are entrenched in history leaving an indelible mark on the conservation landscape she helped shape. Terry was a true force for nature and catalyst of action. Her example will live on for generations through the many she touched and the many more to be touched by her story.



Terry Hershey at the Cabin Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

Ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the official completion of the cabin's restoration in 2012. From left to right: Judy Boyce (Jacob and Terese Hershey Foundation Executive Director), Jim Winn (Houston Audubon Board President, 2009-2011), Ed Hickl (Houston Audubon Board of Directors), Lynn Johnson (Houston Audubon Board of Directors- deceased), Helen Drummond, Terry Hershey, Martha Wright (Houston Audubon Docent Guild President, 2008-2012), Mary Carter (Houston Audubon Board President, 2011-2013), Ben Hulsey (Houston Audubon Board President, 2013-2015)

See the story of her conservation legacy in the Audubon Women in Conservation video.

- John Bartos, President, Board of Directors
Terry was monumentally important for Houston Audubon and many other conservation groups and issues. She will be dearly missed, but never forgotten.
- Martha Wright, Secretary, Board of Directors
It would have been very difficult to save the cabin without Terry's generosity and dedication. The Docents will be forever thankful for her contribution. She was almost 90 when we had the ribbon cutting but participated and visited with us. It was wonderful to get to know her a little better.
- Victor Emanuel, Board of Advisors
Terry and Jake hired me in 1975 to be the Executive Director of the Citizens Environmental Coalition. It was a honor to work with both of them on one of their many conservation projects. She made a huge impact on conservation and on the lives of many people.
- Peggy Boston, Board of Advisors
Terry was indeed, a force for nature. She taught me so much including how to go high, when they go low. She NEVER said a negative word about anyone. I was honored to work for her and enjoy her wisdom and positive endless energy for conservation. What a Class Act and lovely friend to us all.
- [Houstonia article](#) - Read more about Terry's work in the Houstonia.

JANUARY 24, 2017

REMEMBERING LETTALOU WHITTINGTON

by Helen Drummond



Our very dear friend, Board of Advisor member, and former Board of Director member Lettalou Whittington passed away on January 16, 2017. Lettalou was a lifetime member and served Houston Audubon and the birds in so many ways over the years. She served on the Board of Directors from 1995 to 2004.

As the initial funder of the Winnie Burkett Sanctuary Intern Fund, Lettalou helped establish a program that continues to provide budding scientists with invaluable field experience while offering our sanctuaries a helping hand. This program has become a core element of our sanctuary management efforts today. Lettalou did so much for Houston Audubon and in recognition of her dedication, Houston Audubon named its Birdathon Grand Prize – Most Money Raised award in her honor. We call it the Whittington Award, the highly coveted award for Birdathon.

Lettalou planted many seeds at Houston Audubon over the years and the fruit of her work continues to soar. She will forever be in our heart!

The Naturalist Nov-Dec 2013

Remembering Donal O'Brien—Friend of Birds, Texas, and Houston Audubon

By Jeff Mundy

Donal O'Brien, a member of the Board of Advisors of Houston Audubon, passed away on September 8 at home in New Caanan, Connecticut. Donal was the chairman of the board of National Audubon Society (NAS) for fifteen of its most critical years, and served on the board for twenty-five years. Beginning in the 1990s, Donal and his long-time friend and fellow Houston Audubon advisor Jerry Bertrand, plus other NAS board members, began an often difficult fight to bring National Audubon's focus back to bird conservation after HAS had lost its way in the 1980s.

In the late 1990s, NAS executive director John Flicker announced his "2020 Plan" which was to build 1,000 nature centers by the year 2020. An integral part of the plan was to absorb or extinguish local chapters, such as Houston Audubon, and their donors and supporters. Once absorbed, the new organization led out of New York would set the agendas and goals, while minimizing local advocacy and conservation goals.

The NAS Board of Directors came to Houston to hold a board meeting and announce their new plan to key Houston Audubon members and donors. Fortuitously, Donal and Jerry, both very active birders, requested Houston Audubon to organize a birding trip for a few interested staff and board members before their board meeting began.

At this time, not so long ago, Houston Audubon was in the process of acquiring and protecting the Bolivar Flats holdings. Donal and Jerry visited the Bald Eagles at Wallisville, which were saved when Houston Audubon stopped construction of the Wallisville Reservoir. Next, they visited Anahauc NWR to see Yellow Rails, and then onto High Island for a spectacular day of migration. The finale came with watching the sunset over Bolivar Flats.

By the end of the day, Donal and Jerry recognized the remarkable and very tangible achievements of Houston Audubon towards their passion of bird conservation. They sincerely stated that Houston Audubon was the example of what they wanted for Audubon, and that they would protect and help Houston Audubon pursue its mission. They were invited to join the Houston Audubon Board of Advisors, which they accepted on the spot.

From that day forward, they were very vocal supporters of the chapters, especially Houston Audubon, pushing for the addition of board positions on the national board reserved for chapter representatives. Also, they reinforced the push for bird conservation as the focus of the NAS mission.

NAS led by Donal and Jerry became the partner in the United States with BirdLife International for its important Bird Area program to begin to identify the most critical bird habitats as a priority for conservation and advocacy.

Donal's passion for bird conservation grew out of his days as a waterfowl hunter. Drawing from his hunting background, Donal carved decoys of Atlantic Puffins to help attract them back to prior colonies on the New England coast, which worked wonderfully.

Donal loved to visit Texas for birds. Ever the birder, Donal came to Texas every spring for over thirty years for a "big day" birdathon, which raised over \$3 million dollars for bird conservation, and in which he regularly tallied over 200 species in a day.

Donal lives on today through the vibrant organization that Houston Audubon has become thanks to his help, as well as through the birds that are still with us which he dedicated his life to help, and through the ever present laugh and smile that he shared with so many through the years.

*By Jeff Mundy, President, Houston Audubon 2001-2003
Member, Board of Directors 1998-2005*

The Naturalist March/Apr 2004

Passing of Herb Orwig



Herb Orwig has died. His passing on Thursday, January 29, marked the loss of one of the pioneer volunteers who made possible the organization we have today.

Not widely known among HAS members, Herb served Houston Audubon "inside" as an accountant and bookkeeper and outside as the first volunteer to join what is today's trail work crew.

A native of Oklahoma with a characteristic western drawl, Herb retired as the financial officer of a company in the oil industry. Former HAS Executive Director Sandi Hoover recalls, "He just appeared at Edith L. Moore Sanctuary one day, probably in early '87 and asked, 'Kin I he'p ya?'. When I found out he had accounting experience, I almost didn't let him go home that day."

In those days the HAS staff, which was two employees and two or three volunteers, worked in the cramped loft of the log cabin. Herb's station was a dark corner where he nearly bumped his head on a shelf when sitting at the computer. "If I were paid to work here," he told Sandi, "I wouldn't take the job 'cause the conditions are so bad."

But he wound up working not only two days a week in the office but also outside on the trails. For more than ten years Herb helped lay out the trail system and built many of the boardwalks and observation decks, the sanctuary's storage shed, the cabin's teaching deck and the bulkheads that stemmed erosion at Rummel Creek until they washed away.

His invention of the Orwig jig (a tool, not a dance) revolutionized the sawing of 4x4 timbers, making boardwalk construction faster and much neater. There's no doubt the trail work was the highlight of his volunteer time at Houston Audubon.

Those of us privileged to work with him appreciated his intelligence, sense of humor, character and sweetness. It was impossible not to love him. He was a dear friend and one of the finest men I have ever known. —Don Gray

The Naturalist March/Apr 2004

Bessie Cornelius' Legacy



A longtime volunteer and supporter of the Houston Audubon Society, Bessie Cornelius passed away in June, 2003. HAS was fortunate to have received under her Will a substantial gift of her property, including her home in Beaumont. When sold, her bequest resulted in a substantial gift for Houston Audubon. Not only did Bessie give of her time and talent to HAS, but she took the necessary steps with her attorney to make sure that her property was passed on to the agency for which she had life-long love and respect.

The Naturalist April 1972

Bill Ladwig

IN MEMORIAM - It is with deep regret that we tell of the passing of Bill Ladwig, the fourth day of April, 1972. The husband of the Membership Chairman, Katrina Ladwig, and father of Laurel Eloise, Bill had been one of the foremost founders of the Houston Audubon Society. He will be greatly missed.

Donations are being made to the Sanctuary Fund of the Society, 2115 Willow Boulevard, Pearland, Texas 77581, in Bill Ladwig's memory.
