



# Audubon TEXAS

## A FIELD GUIDE





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# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends –

We spent a lot of time this last year working to identify what success looks like for Audubon Texas and eventually came to one simple conclusion – success for Audubon is based on our ability to win over the hearts and minds of everyone we reach on the importance of protecting birds and critical landscapes throughout Texas. We do this because where birds thrive, people prosper, and let's be honest...successful conservation ensures that our own quality of life remains rich and robust for now and in the future.

These last 12 months were incredible. New programs and experiences were launched at our three Audubon centers, new areas of science were developed and applied across the state, and new people joined the Audubon family. Ours is a shared success. All of you are a big part of our journey and I am deeply grateful for what you have made possible.

I hope you enjoy reading this annual report and can see your support at work. It is a testament to what is possible and where we are going in the years to come.

Your partner in conserving Texas,



Brian Trusty  
Executive Director, Audubon Texas  
Vice President, National Audubon Society





# A YEAR AT A GLANCE

DOGWOOD CANYON  Audubon  
CENTER AT CEDAR HILL



## WINTER

In partnership with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, we hosted a Project WILD Facilitator Training for educators interested in exploring the world of wildlife using fun, hands-on educational activities.

We launched our **Overnight Tent Camping Program** with Audubon Dallas at Cedar Ridge Preserve. We provided an in-depth nature experience for more than 150 scouts, students, and teachers and expect more than 500 in 2015.

## SPRING

David Allen Sibley visited Dogwood Canyon to promote his newest edition of the *Sibley Guide to Birds*. Mr. Sibley hosted bird walks, gave a presentation and signed more than 100 books.

Wedding bells! Dogwood Canyon hosted its **first wedding**. Guests had a splendid view from above of the basin ceremony, then enjoyed an elegant reception in the Trout Lily room.



## SUMMER



The City of Cedar Hill and Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center teamed up to bring **unforgettable summer camp experiences to more than 100 kids ages 6-12**. Eight weeks of exploring through technology, animal encounters, recreation, art, and so much more!

In partnership with the Cedar Hill ISD we launched **the highlight of our year - the Dogwood Canyon Education Research Study**. The study looked at 600 5th grade students to determine the impact on the Center's **customized Eco Investigations lessons on student academic performance**, including STAAR testing results. On 21 STAAR science questions covered on the test, student improvement ranged from 4% to more than 30% with an average of 12%. In Texas no study on outdoor environmental education has ever demonstrated state testing improvement, until now.

Dogwood Canyon partners with NBC 5! **David Finrock, NBC 5 Chief Meteorologist**, joined the Center's Stewardship board and NBC 5 employees scheduled a service day at Dogwood Canyon.



# FALL

A new partnership with the Dallas Museum of Art on its Autism Awareness Family Celebration events began. We hosted an event at the museum focused on nature and next year the Center will host events focusing on autism awareness.

NOV

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Our most successful **Cocktails in the Canyon** fall fundraiser yet! We raised more than \$30,000 for education, conservation, and summer camp. Save the date for this year's event – November 5, 2015.

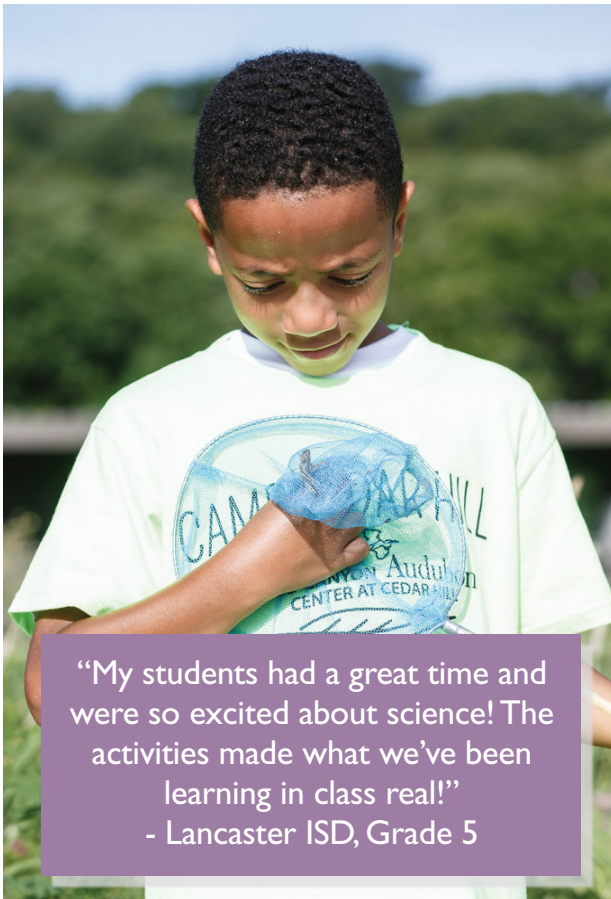
Center Director, Haily Summerford, traveled to the Audubon Center at Bent of the River in Connecticut to collaborate on an **Audubon program focused on dementia patients**. Look for the launch of this program in 2015.



## BY THE NUMBERS

14,000 visitors  
6,000 students  
5,000 volunteer hours

## What teachers say about Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center



"My students had a great time and were so excited about science! The activities made what we've been learning in class real!"  
- Lancaster ISD, Grade 5



"This experience was priceless for my students. The opportunity to reinforce taught concepts with real-world, hands-on opportunities has increased progress in math and science." - YMLA Leadership



"A wonderful way to teach! Being able to touch and hold will stay with these students for a long time."  
- Duncanville ISD, Grade 6



# A YEAR AT A GLANCE

## MITCHELL LAKE Audubon CENTER

### WINTER



We extended our hours for the public! We're now open to visitors **Tuesday through Sunday, 8am – 4pm**, with the front gate kept open and welcoming during business hours.

Every year the Christmas Bird Count brings birders to the ever-important Mitchell Lake wetlands wintering habitat, but this year marks our second **CBC4Kids (Christmas Bird Count for Kids)**! This separate counting event brings youth into the fun of citizen science, birding, and conservation for bird-friendly communities.

### SPRING

Our renamed spring fundraiser, **Wine in the Wetlands**, brought in just over \$20,000 for education and conservation at the Center. The event featured food trucks and a birdhouse-themed silent auction under the early spring sunset. **Save the date for 2015 - April 9!**

We introduced our wildly successful **Birding for the Blind** program with the **San Antonio Lighthouse for the Blind**, led by Jason "The Birdnerd" St. Sauver. Blind and visually-impaired students get an introduction to the outdoors through tactile and auditory games and activities.

Joined by nearly a dozen local partners, we celebrated **International Migratory Bird Day**. This free community event served thousands of families across the city and brought hundreds of visitors to the Center to learn about the migratory birds of the Central Flyway.

APR  
9



### SUMMER



We hosted two interns from the **JOVEN Youth Organization of San Antonio**, who helped around the office, in the field doing trail maintenance and invasive species removal, and participated in daily opportunities to further their environmental education.

The Center's newest citizen science project, a satellite team of Invaders of Texas, searched and **mapped 352 acres of upland habitat** and identified several species of invasive plants for removal later in the year.



# FALL

The start of another school year brought three new options within our award winning Nature of Learning program: *WET & WILD* Wetland Researchers, *EARTH & SKY* Eco-Investigators, and *BFF* Bird Friends Forever! **Students become scientists for a day**, check the health of local wetlands, and use technology to track bird species.

Our most successful free fall community event yet! Eight live birds, 10 snakes, two TV stations, 300 native plants, four food trucks, and over 2,000 visitors made our **10th anniversary Hoot & Harvest Festival one to remember. Save the date for this year! October 17, 2015.**

OCT  
17

We took our **Birding by Ear** program on the road, and held a sold-out class at Trinity River Audubon Center in South Dallas.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- Over **4,500** children served
- **69%** increase in Center membership
- Over **6,000** volunteer hours
- **98.9%** program satisfaction rate among participating educators



## What teachers say about Mitchell Lake Audubon Center



"Loved the natural, hands on experience & the Audubon staff; they are great role models." - Hartman Elementary, Grade 5



"I recommend Mitchell Lake Audubon Center to all 5th grade teachers. The students can see real life applications of TEKS." - Wright Elementary, Grade 5



"An adventurous experience & fun for every age." - Morrill Elementary, Grade 5



# A YEAR AT A GLANCE

## TRINITY RIVER Audubon CENTER

### WINTER



Citizen scientists at the Center counted the **highest number of species documented in our Christmas Bird Count - 135.**

Our partnership with Lakewood Elementary was in full swing. This year we served grades K-2 with weekly programming. **Next year we'll see over 800 Lakewood students!**

### SPRING

Plans for our climbing tower were finalized with sponsor AT&T. This spring even more outdoor adventure comes to our Center: **a climbing wall and spectacular views of the Great Trinity Forest for all.**

Our most successful fundraiser to date. With help from partners, volunteers, and the Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison, we raised \$100,000 for outdoor education. **Save the date for Scissors-tails & Cocktails 2015 - May 14.**

Center staff led the inaugural **Audubon Expeditions** trip to **Big Bend**. Ten Dallas high school students, some of whom had never been camping before, climbed a mountain, ate a total of 56 s'mores, and learned first hand about the conservation challenges of their generation.



### SUMMER



Pop-up river adventures began - when the weather forecast called for a beautiful weeknight evening we invited our email list to a spontaneous River Adventure with only 24 hours notice - and sold out every one. Between pop-ups and our regularly scheduled floats, **over 450 people experienced the Trinity River** from a kayak via our center this year.

**WILD! Dallas Overnight summer camps debuted** with great success. A dozen Ten-to-fourteen-year-olds hiked, biked, and canoed Dallas's wilder side for five days. Registration for all summer camps, as well as spring break camps, opens in January.

**D Weddings featured nuptials at our Center** on the cover of their fall issue. The best kept secret in the Dallas wedding scene is out (hint, hint, be sure to book your events ahead!)



# FALL

**Songbird Supper: A Meal in the Meadow** brought over 200 people, 70% of whom had never visited the center before, to the longest table we've ever seen on a perfect Sunday evening for chef Sharon Hage's farm-to-table meal.

Dozens of our members observed first-hand the drama and majesty of fall migration through new **members-only morning bird walks** every Tuesday and Saturday in November.

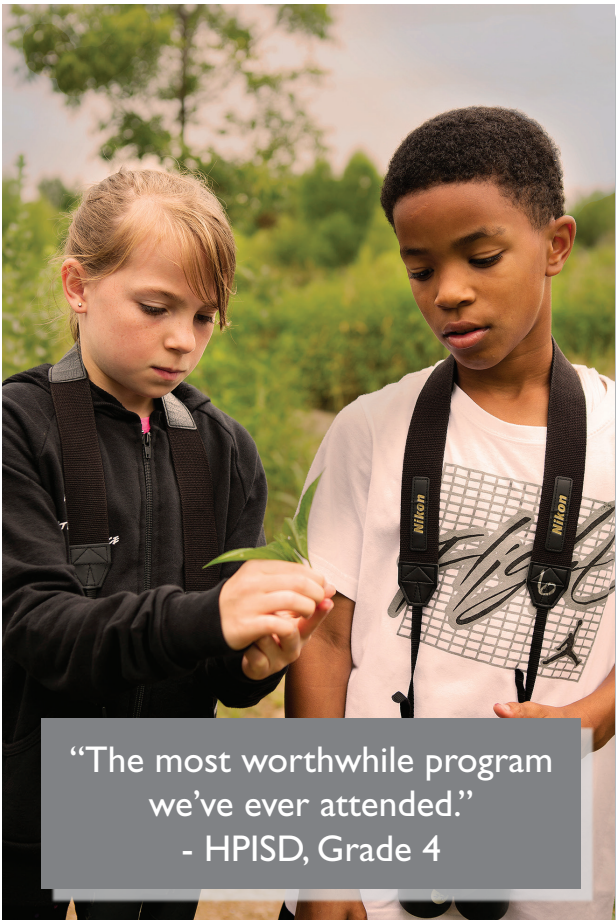
We got word that our largest capital + programming grant in history had been fulfilled. **Thanks to Crystal Charity Ball, we'll be building a floating classroom** on Trailhead Pond next year, for students to learn about our natural waterways, on one.



## BY THE NUMBERS

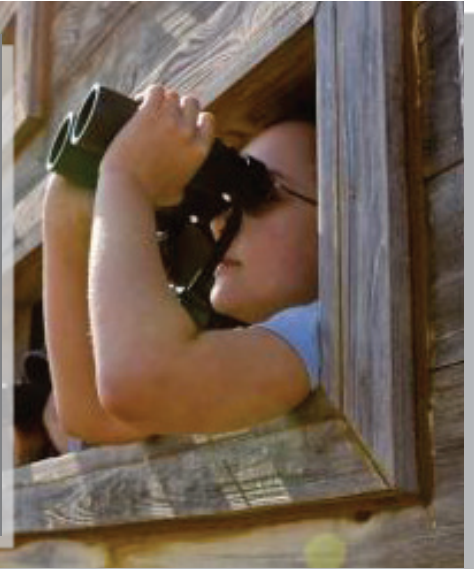
**60,000** visitors  
**69%** increase in Center membership  
**6,622** volunteer hours  
**99.1%** program satisfaction rate among participating educators

## What teachers say about Trinity River Audubon Center

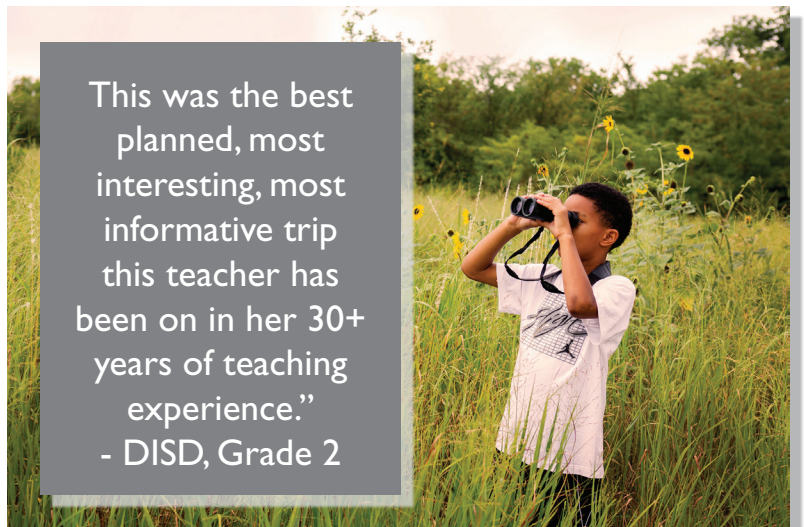


"The most worthwhile program we've ever attended."  
- HPISD, Grade 4

"So informative, so organized, so friendly, and such a wonderful and necessary experience for students to learn." - DISD, Grade 3



This was the best planned, most interesting, most informative trip this teacher has been on in her 30+ years of teaching experience."  
- DISD, Grade 2





# THE YEAR ON THE COAST

## The Texas Estuarine Resource Network

Perhaps the Coast's most exciting event in 2014 was the launch of the Texas Estuarine Resource Network (TERN). This community-based citizen science program promotes bird monitoring and conservation on the Texas Coast. What does that mean? We recruit everyday citizens and train them, for free, in science-based conservation methods. They then take these skills, either during scheduled workdays or on their own time, and monitor bird populations, grow and plant native species, and restore rookery island habitat. They're our boots on the ground for bird conservation on the Coast. And it's not just for Audubon's 178 rookery island leases. Many of our partners are conserving wildlife and we show our support in a big way. TERN volunteers pitch in on partner workdays, bird surveys, special events, and outreach booths and festivities and learn about these local organizations and how their efforts are making our world a better place.



## The RESTORE Act

In 2014, Audubon Texas finalized the development of over \$55 million in conservation project proposals for rookery island acquisition, restoration, and habitat management throughout the entire Texas coast. These proposals have been submitted and are being stewarded through the proceedings of the RESTORE Act, the legal framework for distributing funds from the civil and criminal penalties derived from the Deep Water Horizon oil spill tragedy of 2010. Audubon Texas remains vigilant and well positioned as a bird conservation leader to attract resources that will enhance current and future conservation efforts of the 178 rookery islands we manage that stretch from Louisiana to Mexico.





## Monitoring Black Skimmers – Reversing a Rapid Decline



A Black Skimmer diligently “skimming” the water for breakfast may become a rare sight in Texas. Human disturbance, sea level rise, increased flooding and storms, and predation are causing population declines for this beach-loving species: a drop of 61.5% since 1973. Research is desperately needed to determine exact causes of skimmer colony declines so we can work to reverse this trend.

The Black Skimmer is a beach-nesting species that seeks out a very specific nesting habitat. Choosing a nesting site is a delicate balance. Often it is a game of luck and timing; skimmer chicks from later nests are endangered by July storms. Few natural islands remain in Texas due to erosion and these birds depend on dredge spoil islands created from the digging of navigation channels for large ships and barges.

Audubon is working with partners up and down the Texas coast in a collective effort to monitor and manage Black Skimmer colonies. Right now, we’re working on a network of cameras along the coast to monitor as many colonies as possible in many different bays and locations. Cameras will allow monitoring of colonies without causing disturbance to the birds and giving us clear numbers on how many skimmer chicks are surviving each season. Learning more about how a colony reacts to disturbance will allow us to develop better ways to minimize this ongoing problem and, with time, reverse declines.

### BY THE NUMBERS

**400**  
MILLION

Dollars in annual tourism  
on the Texas Coast

**70**

Percentage of the  
Coast our islands cover

**178**

Number of coastal islands  
managed by Audubon Texas

**98.5**

Percentage of long-distance migratory bird  
species in North America that pass through  
the Texas Coast



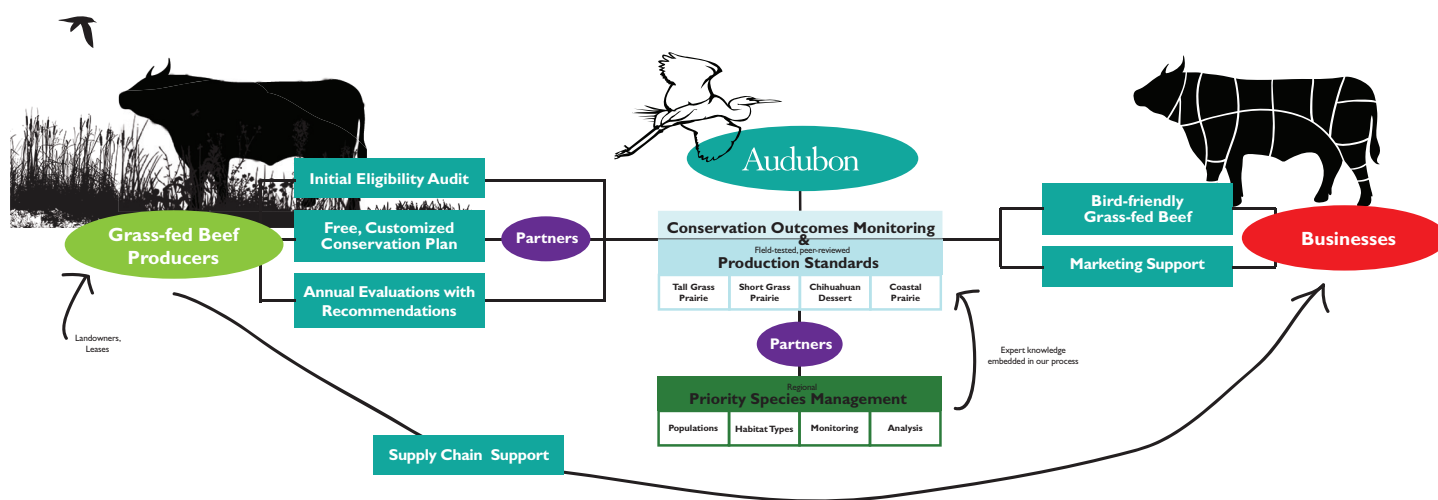


# THE YEAR IN PRAIRIE CONSERVATION

In 2013, Audubon re-launched an initiative in Texas that focuses on grassland and prairie bird conservation with a unique and innovative approach to engaging landowners. To date, Audubon enlisted over 70,000 acres producing habitat benefits and is exploring marketing opportunities for bird-friendly, grass-fed beef. The growing market for healthier beef alternatives provides landowners the opportunity to protect and restore native prairies and grasslands with agricultural practices that are financially lucrative, economically stable, and ecologically sound.

This year we established new relationships and grew existing partnerships, worked with individual cattle ranchers actively demonstrating responsible grazing practices, and convened a number of workshops around production standards which lay the groundwork for certification standards.

Here's what the process looks like for getting not just grass-fed beef, but beef from cows grazed on restored native grasslands, from our landowners to your table. Our responsible grazing practices help to restore much-needed habitat to dozens of threatened and endangered species, as well as to wintering, migrating, and resident bird populations. Plus these cows are happier, healthier, and more valuable to the marketplace for it!





# THE YEAR IN URBAN CONSERVATION

Did you know that of the 27 million people in Texas, 86% live in urban areas? Or that 8 of 15 fastest growing US cities are in Texas? Texans have never needed urban conservation more. The world is waking up to the idea that we can't survive without nature at a time when most of us live our day-to-day lives in urban areas. The notion that nature should exist in one place and cities in another is changing, and with that comes the realization that our cities must drastically change to sustain health and happiness in their residents.

This was a year of rapid growth in our newly formed Urban Conservation program. We now have capabilities for conservation programs, trainings, research, and more, and have engaged multiple partners to do on-the-ground conservation work through Audubon Texas. We've done more than dip our toe into this arena; we've jumped right in and couldn't be more excited about where it will take us and Texas's cities.



## TRAINING • RESEARCH

The Urban Conservation program is delivering a 5-session series of Urban Ecology Awareness trainings for City of Dallas staff in four major departments working on the Trinity Corridor Project and in city parks. Started in November 2014, these training sessions focus on management/planning considerations that will support healthy native ecosystem function in Dallas's green spaces.

In 2014 we began work with the City of Cedar Hill to craft a research study examining the diverse values of urban greenspace (economic, ecological, educational, and public health) that will demonstrate the importance of long-term sustainable urban growth plans. Our goal is to engage multiple partners and create a product that will have regional applicability.

## CONSERVATION PLANNING

This summer we provided conservation planning services for 70 acres of Blackland Prairie restoration in the Trinity Forest Golf Course in Dallas. To give you an idea of the scale of 70 acres of restored prairie, consider that we've worked for almost 5 years to restore 10 acres at Trinity River Audubon Center, next door to the course. This incredibly intensive and expensive restoration work will bring a significant piece of the most endangered eco-system in the world back to life. In addition to supplementing the biodiversity of the Great Trinity Forest, successful implementation of this plan will showcase a new paradigm of urban conservation to the million-plus viewers of the Byron Nelson Championship in 2017.





**Why birds? Birds are excellent indicators of ecosystem health because they are an environmental proxy – the literal canary in the coalmine for the health of our land. By protecting birds and their habitats, Audubon protects landscapes and resources that support the rich biodiversity of Texas and protects the natural and human communities of which birds are an essential part.**



**For us, climate change isn't a political issue.**

## **IT'S A BIRD ISSUE**



"We didn't just say that nearly half of America's bird species are threatened by climate change. We did what Audubon has always done: We offered a centrist path forward. First, let's protect the places that will buy birds time to adapt; second, let's address the underlying causes of climate change by supporting reasonable land-use policies, renewable energy standards, local climate action plans, and, when possible, federal action."

David Yarnold  
President & CEO, Audubon





# THANK YOU FROM THE STATE BOARD OF DIRECTORS...

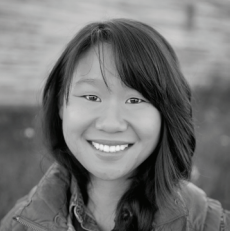
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## ...AND THE STAFF OF AUDUBON TEXAS





# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

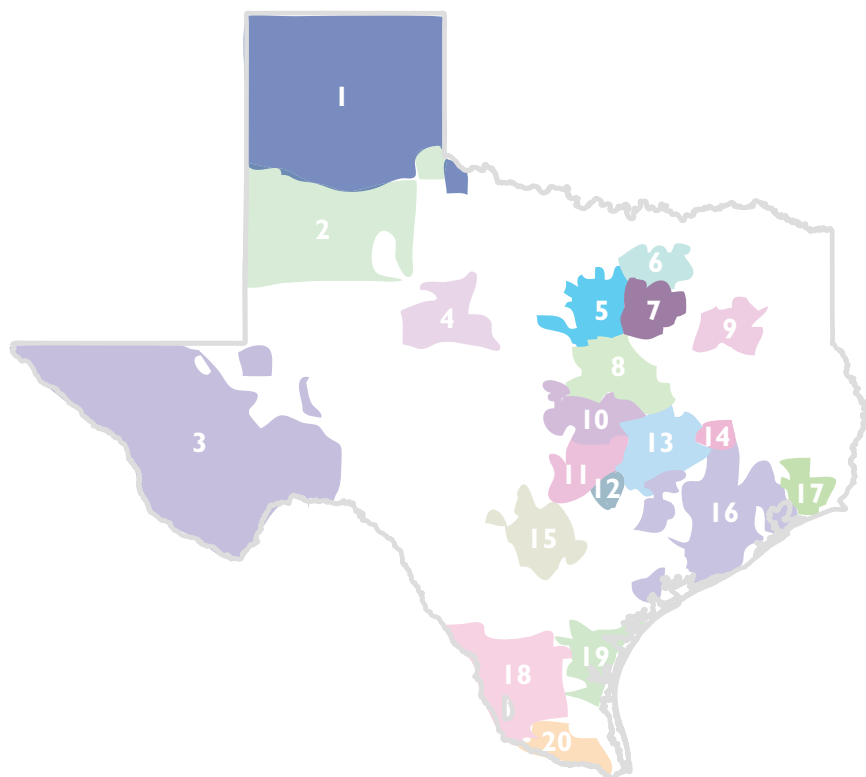
50+ partner school districts  
American Bird Conservancy  
Ash Grove Cement  
Association of Nature Center Administrators  
Audubon Center at Bent of the River  
Audubon Dallas  
Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy  
Bexar Audubon Society  
Big Thought  
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Boy Scouts of America  
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Cedar Hill State Park  
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Coastal Bend Bay Estuaries Program  
College of the Mainland  
Conference for the Advancement of Science Teachers  
Crystal Charity Ball  
Dallas Arboretum  
Dallas Zoo  
Ducks Unlimited  
Environmental Institute of Houston (UHCL)  
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Friends of GISP  
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Lakewood Elementary  
Land Heritage Institute  
Last Chance Forever  
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Log Cabin Village  
Medina River Natural Area  
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NBC 5  
North Texas Master Birders  
NRCS  
NRG Energy  
Pegasus School of Liberal Arts  
Perfect Score  
Perot Museum of Nature and Science  
Port of Galveston  
REI  
Rogers Wildlife Rehabilitation Center  
San Antonio Audubon Society  
San Antonio River Authority  
San Antonio Water System  
San Antonio Youth  
San Antonio Zoo  
SeaWorld San Antonio  
TAMU Galveston  
TCEQ  
Texas Association for Environmental Education  
Texas Children in Nature  
Texas Conservation Alliance  
Texas General Land Office  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
Texas Public Radio  
Texas Wildlife Association  
The George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum  
The Wildlife Center of Texas  
Trinity University  
Texas A&M San Antonio  
Texas Children in Nature  
Texas Master Gardeners  
Texas Master Naturalists  
United Way of San Antonio  
University of Dallas  
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University of Texas San Antonio  
USFWS  
Waste Management  
Wild Birds Unlimited  
Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation



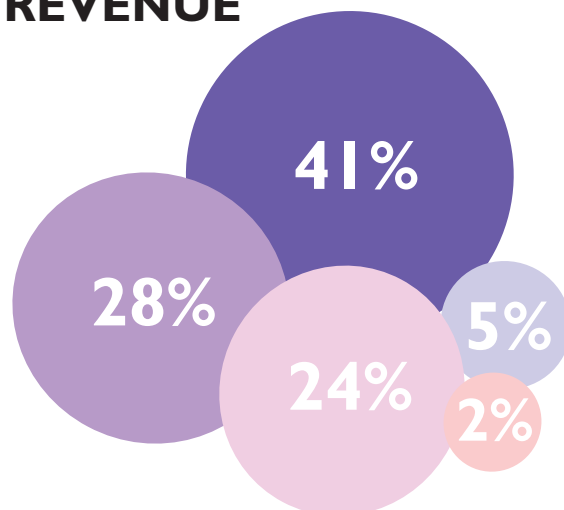


# TEXAS AUDUBON CHAPTERS

- 1 Texas Panhandle Audubon Society
- 2 Llano Estacado Audubon Society
- 3 El Paso Trans Pecos Audubon Society
- 4 Big Country Audubon Society
- 5 Fort Worth Audubon Society
- 6 Prairie & Timbers Audubon Society
- 7 Audubon Dallas
- 8 Central Texas Audubon Society
- 9 Tyler Audubon Society
- 10 Twin Lakes Audubon Society
- 11 Travis Audubon Society
- 12 Bastrop County Audubon Society
- 13 Rio Brazos Audubon Society
- 14 Huntsville Audubon Society
- 15 Bexar Audubon Society
- 15 Houston Audubon Society
- 17 Golden Triangle Audubon Society
- 18 Monte Mucho Audubon Society
- 19 Coastal Bend Audubon Society
- 20 Rio Grande Delta Audubon Society



## 2014 FINANCES REVENUE



Foundations

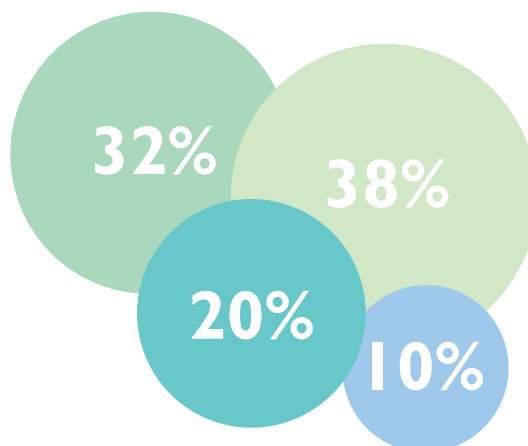
Earned Revenues

Individuals

Corporations

Government grants

## EXPENSES



Education Programs

Center Operations

Conservation

Administration



# 2013-2014 HONOR ROLL OF DONORS

Audubon Texas sincerely appreciates these generous donors who gave \$1,000 or more to our programs between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014. To all of our donors, thank you for your philanthropic investment and passion for the natural world that Audubon Texas strives to protect.

## \$100,000 & MORE

Anonymous  
Estate of Lydia Bryant Test  
Eugene McDermott Foundation

## \$50,000 - \$99,999

Doolin Family Foundation for Biodiversity  
Gay and Lesbian Fund for Dallas  
The Horizon Foundation  
The Meadows Foundation Inc.  
United Way of Metropolitan Dallas

## \$25,000 - \$49,999

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The Dixon Water Foundation  
George & Fay Young Foundation  
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H-E-B

## \$10,000 - \$24,999

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Peggy and Web Carr  
Cedar Hill Rotary Foundation  
Chip Clint  
Steve and Geri Clouse  
Reba Collins  
Community Foundation of North Texas  
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Michael and Patricia Deeds

## DONOR HIGHLIGHT



# Helping Here.®

"H-E-B accepts the responsibility to create a sustainable future and preserve the natural beauty of the communities we serve. While H-E-B has adopted environmental conservation and efficiency efforts in every aspect of our business and taken proactive measures to reduce our impact on the environment, we know it takes more. Through enthusiastic investment in Texas' future and Audubon Texas, we are assured that efforts to preserve our great state's natural assets are moving forward and will be successful in providing a superior legacy for tomorrow's Texans."



Earth Day Texas  
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 David Finrock  
 Ruth Flournoy  
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\*gifts specifically designated for Texas

## DONOR HIGHLIGHT



“We support Audubon because it supports what we value for the future: the conservation of birds and other wildlife and their habitats from an ecosystem perspective. The organization is large enough and has the reputation, track record, and expertise to make a significant impact. The Audubon approach is science-based, long-term, and balanced—all very important in our estimation.” - Tom & Patsy Inglet



# WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

We at Audubon are in awe of our natural world.

Its resiliency, its unwavering rhythm, its contrary serenity, and its incredible capacity to improve the human spirit.

We believe we're living in a dangerous and important time, when even the smallest choice – to protect or destroy, to deplete or conserve, discard or reuse – holds weight in the balance of nature.

And we believe nature is a human right. That our children have a right to the kind of natural experience that feeds the soul and quiets the mind. That they should be able to experience the prairies and rivers and forests they learn about in history books, as history's subjects experienced them.

At Audubon, we're leaving the legacy of our natural heritage. And we're creating a Texas where conservation is *the* way of life.



## Audubon TEXAS

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