TRANSCRIPT
INTERVIEWEE: **Ted Eubanks** (TE)
INTERVIEWERS: David Todd (DT) and David Weisman (DW)
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DT: My name is David Todd. I’m here for the Conservation History Association of Texas. We’re in Austin, TX, at the office of Fermata, Incorporated. And it’s April 15, year 2002, and we have the good fortune to be interviewing Ted Eubanks, who’s a celebrated birder and has been active on many levels with birding groups, conservation groups of Houston, Texas and National Audubon and many other environmental groups. He’s also been a great student of ecotourism and a promoter of same. I wanted to thank you for taking the time…
1:51 – 2191
TE: Yeah, my pleasure.
DT: …to talk about your life. We usually begin these interviews with a question about where it all began for you. Was there an event or a family member or relative that might have introduced you to caring about and understanding a lot about the environment?
2:12 – 2191
TE: Well, that’s a good question. I mean, it’s a—I think for many people, it is sort of an—there is some an epiphanic moment, you know, lightning bolt out of the sky type stuff. For me, it was part of the fabric of my life. Both of my parents, now in their late 70’s, they’re still involved in the outdoors, I’ll—I’ll be birding with them in a couple of weeks from now, on the Texas coast, which is sort of a ritual for our family. So I grew up from the first possible, you know, cognizant moment, being aware of the natural world. My mother, several years ago, gave me some first grade or second grade drawings that I had done. Every drawing has flying birds in the background, so it’s obvious to me that this was always part of who I was.
3:03 – 2191
DT: Can you recall any early birding trips that you might have taken with your family?
[Misc.]
TE: OK.
[Misc.]
DT: Birding trips, as a child. Do you remember any?
3:12 – 2191
TE: Well, I, you know, I remember—sort of a, you know, this sort of montage of trips. We always had sort of a traditional trip down to Galveston in the summer, you know. Yes, we have a vacation every year, as we used to say. We did the same vacation every year. We always went down to Galveston. And I can remember a real fascination with shore birds at a very early age. They were accessible and they’re visible, animated, so, I have—yeah, I

have pretty vivid memories of seeing Sanderlings and things like that. I
3:48 – 2191
can remember a Goldfinch in the yard when I was a little kid and being fascinated by the—those birds coming into a sweet gum tree. So, yeah, I mean, it's—there are many, many moments in my young childhood, and then, of course, by the time I was, really in high school, it was more formal.
DT: Was it mostly wild birds, or did you also have captive birds, birds in a cage?
4:12 – 2191
TE: Never a pet person. I mean, as far as birds, I mean it was—I like birds out of cages, flying free, so that was not something I ever did.
DT: Did you build birdhouses or feed birds or anything around the house?
4:27 – 2191
TE: Yeah, I fed birds. Don't remember building many birdhouses. You know, all those sorts of artificial accoutrements never interested me at all. I always thought it got in the way of… You know, I don't like these sorts of structures between me and what I'm looking at. I mean, I like that more intimate experience between me and the outdoors and so, it wasn't as much a home based activity as something outside. But I could, you know,
4:54 – 2191
I'd walk to school, I can remember, you know, fascinated—being fascinated by, not only by the birds, but you know, soft-shelled turtles and all those other sorts of things that were around.
DT: Was there anybody who taught you how to identify birds, or call them, or band them, the whole sort of lore of…
5:14 – 197
TE: Well, you know, there's—ea—each—each of those has a different set of mentors. I was very lucky, when I was in second grade—yeah, second grade—second grade? Yeah, I—I guess it was second grade, I'm not sure—no, it must have been fifth grade. When I was in fifth grade at Spring Branch Elementary School, my science teacher was Robert Vines, who wrote—who wrote the—the, you know, guide to all of, you know, woody—vines and woody shrubs and—woody shrubs and trees of Texas. And we were his little
5:48 – 2191
minions. We would go out and collect specimens for him. I mean, he was—he was a cool guy and it was pretty interesting stuff. We would go out and bring back leaves and—I—I remember one time vividly. He picked up this road kill. It was an opossum, he picked up, brought it in and, you know, we stuffed it. I mean, it was a pretty—you know, that—that was a—that was a great mentor to have when you're in fifth grade. And, you know, later in life, even when I was out of school altogether, I guess between high school and college, I—I continued my contact with him, up until he died, I mean, the day he died. For all those other sorts of things, I would say the viewing aspect, watching birds,
6:29 – 2191
would—would've been my father, who—who was a hunter, and I hunted. Then we both sort of evolved out of it, simultaneously, and he's, you know, he's still to this day, fascinated by birds and astronomy, and you know, you name it. So I think that ethic was instilled at a very young age.
DT: Do you recall any of your first Christmas counts?
6:54 – 2191

TE: Yeah, I can re—you know, I can remember a very early Christmas count with, God, I'm trying to think of—maybe was it Houston? A Houston Christmas count in the late 60's, early 70's, something like that, with John Tveten and then going to Freeport and Vic was there, Victor Emmanuel and you—you know—sort of that—that was sort of the early group. That, I think sort of showed me that there was this sort of formal recreation built around watching all these things that I had done very informally as a young—as a young kid.
7:26 – 2191
DT: For people that haven't been on a Christmas count, can you describe how they work? What are sort of the highlights?
7:35 – 2191
TE: Well, you go out with your buddies in—in a 24-hour period and count all the birds within a 15-mile diameter circle. And, you know, it's about 25% counting birds and about 75% hanging out with your buddies once a year, you know, having a great time, and having some dinner that evening, and, you know, telling stories and swapping lies. I mean, it's the—it's a—it's a social event as much as anything. But it, for many, many years, it was a very important part of my Christmas season, to be doing all these
8:07 – 2191
Christmas counts. Lately, I—I'm always somewhere else, I don't have the time to do them. But yeah, I did, I don't know how many, twenty-five years of Freeport's, or something like that.
DT: I've heard that Freeport is usually one of the top five…
8:20 – 2191
TE: It is.
DT: …in the nation. Can you say why it is such a good bird counting area, why there's such a diversity of species there during the…
8:29 – 2191
TE: Well, it has that unique mix of habitats, I mean, it's the same thing for the—the areas to the—just to the immediate south, San Bernard and Bay City, and sort of that—you know, Matagorda, Mad Island, all that sort of stretch, where those are really the top three to four counts every year in the—in the nation. You have this interesting juxtaposition of coast and then you have these major river systems like the Brazos which bring in this
8:56 – 2191
woodland riparian part of it. So you get both woodland birds and coastal birds. And then, most importantly, you're in Texas. I mean, you know, you're—you're basically in a place that has all the birds. So you get the right mix of habitats on the Texas coast, you're going to see lots of stuff.
DT: When you're at these Christmas counts, what is the culture there? What are the people who come there like? Is it a pretty eclectic mix of people?
9:24 – 2191
TE: Yeah, birders are an eclectic mix anyway. But, yeah, it's—it's, you—well, you know, first of all, it's people you've known for a long time. I mean, if you've been at this stuff for a while it's sort of like this is where you reconnect with people you haven't seen in a year. But, yeah, it's a pretty—pretty—pretty interesting group of people that are willing to commit a day like that every year. There are those that'll do ten or eleven of
9:50 – 2191
them, I mean they basically spend their—most of their Christmas season counting birds.

And—and, then again, there's that sort of social overlay, you know, it's—it's more so—so—it's more socializing than it is science.
DT: Can you tell us a little bit about the science of it, and what trends these Christmas counts have identified?
10:10 – 2191
TE: Well, Christmas counts do provide some significant macro level data. It tells you what was there and now what's not there or visa versa. It's no—it's hard to interpret at the micro level because observer effort, observer skills just varies dramatically year to year. But, it tells you a lot about general trends, and particularly in those counts that have now been going on for about a century. Pretty interesting to see things that have happened. Birds that has appeared that were not there before. This is particularly true in
10:50 – 2191
places like the Great Plains, where we once had prairie grasslands and now we have lots of communities that have, you know, elms and sycamore and rather a mature forest, and therefore, woodland birds have appeared that weren't there before. And it also, sort—you can see the disappearance of some of the species, prairie chickens and things like that that we used to have fairly commonly around the Houston area. A lot of the really famous lakes for Atwater's Prairie chicken in Houston, was at the corner of Fondren and Westheimer.
DT: This is where they'd boom?
11:26 – 2191
TE: Yeah, yeah. This is where they've been.
DT: Can you describe the experience of watching the prairie chickens?
11:31 – 2191
TE: Oh, it's a—it's just—well, they're all like that, all the—all the different prairie chickens and—and grouse, but the, you know, it's comical, almost, you see this, you know, chicken like bird that—with these incr—credible tempital sacs on the side of it's head, all swollen up and, you know, with its tail stuck straight—and then they have these penayed feathers on the side of the head, they point out, and you know, they're doing this incredible dance in this circle. And the females are sitting on the edge, completely blasé,
12:02 – 2191
and just, you know, not involved at all in this display. And it—it—it—it—it's really one of the great wildlife spectacles and it's just sad to think that, you know, here we had, at the turn of the century, probably a million on the Texas coast, and now we have what, fifty, a hundred, handful.
DT: Can you talk about any of the other birds, spectacles, that have really caught your eye?
12:31 – 2191
TE: There are thousands, in—in fact, that's one of the things in our work that we look at a lot, building programs around these spectacles. It's the—it's the Sand Hill Cranes on the Platt River in Nebraska, you know, five hundred thousand Sand Hill Cranes in the river, once. The largest aggregation of cranes in the world. I can remember being north of Cannes in Queensland, and looking out across this sort of, you know, edge, of forest edge. And it looked like it was filled with cattle lickers, it was completely filled with
13:06 – 2191
white birds and I stopped and looked with my binoculars and they were all Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos. Thousands upon thousands in the trees in Australia. It's the monarchs in—at El Rosario [Butterfly Sanctuary] and Michoacan. It's—it's Tree Swallows feeding on

wax myrtle berries at Brigantine. It's—those are the great—what we call them are portal events, because those are the things that allow entry to the most casual, the most uninitiated observer. I mean, to appreciate the Sandhill Cranes in the Platte River, you don't need binoculars, you don't need a field guide; you just need to be there and experience this, you know, every evening when the cranes come in to where eventually the water disappears and it's a river of birds. So, I've been lucky, I've seen lots of that stuff.
13:54 – 2191
DT: You talked a little bit about the science side and the spectacle side to bird watching, and earlier you mentioned something about the social side. I was curious if that might be a lead-in to talking about some of the birding groups that you've been involved in, some of the non-profit groups—Houston Audubon, I know you were deeply involved with, and also the Texas and National level. Can you talk about some of your impressions from being a volunteer with a group that has sort of transitioned from being a nature study group to more of a advocacy group and how you helped make that transition?
14:37 – 2191
TE: Yeah, it one of the most—it's really sort of—I mean, you—you know, you—th—there's a human dimension side of this science of birds and it—it really expresses itself in the—in the recreations. And I've really found myself for the last, oh sure, certainly fifteen years, moving much more into the human dimension side. I mean, I'm—a—you know—I'm convinced that there are scientists in this country that would just count things to zero. I'm not willing to simply s—s—sit on the sidelines and watch things go away. And if you're going to change policy, you're going to have to deal with the human
15:19 – 2191
dimension side. You know, we live in this remarkably urbanized country, I mean, look at our state, I mean, it's an incredibly urbanized state. In the 1990's, 80% of all the people that moved to our state moved to three cities. 90% of the new jobs were created in five cities. We're—we're—we're this state of these massive urban centers like, Fort Worth and Dallas and Austin and Houston. And, it's—it's through—it's through this urban resident that—that we really are going to dealing with future conservation efforts. That—you know, less than 1% of the American public lives on the land and derives its income from farming or ranching. It's an insignificant part of our population at this time.
16:10 – 2191
Therefore, we're talking about a disconnected group. They find their way to nature, if they ever find their way to nature, through recreation. That's the primary way people connect with the outdoors. Therefore, I've focused on that recreation. Therefore, I've worked with thousands of these groups, getting back to your question, and its really sort of, you know, you see the best and the worst of humanity, sort of, you know, en—en—encapsulated in these organizations. You know, we—we, as human beings, like to sort of band together and—and it's been a—I—I—I think Houston's a good example, I'll—I'll just use that as, you know, sort of our departure point. I became very involved in The
16:58 – 2191
Ornithology Group [OG] of the Houston Outdoor Nature Club, which was the original sort of bird study, nature study organization, formed in the early part of the last century. And that group, the ornithology group, really was the—was the club for birders in Houston. And I became involved in the OG, I don't know, early 70's, late 60's, somewhere—somewhere around there. And it was for almost exclusively a bird watching group, I mean this was a

recreational group, didn't deal with conservation really, to speak of. This was you know, pre—you know, clean air, clean water, NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act], Endangered Species, I
17:41 – 2191
mean, it was kind of, you know, this was sort of—sort of an ill-defined sort of conservation ethic, but primarily a recreational group. And in the—I guess—I'm—I'm not really sure of the year, mid-70's, early 70's, '73, '74, '75, somewhere in there, the National Audubon Society began creating Audubon chapters throughout the nation. It was a major effort that was taken on by National Audubon. And it came to Houston, and those of us who were very interested in forming a Audubon chapter said, well, the logical way to do that is, let's use our existing structure, this Ornithological Group, let's just
18:19 – 2191
create an Audubon chapter, let's make sure the Houston Outdoor Nature Club becomes the Audubon Group. Huge resistance, huge resistance from people in those groups that did not want to deal with environmental issues and conservation issues. And therefore, the Houston Audubon Society was created separately from that existing group. That's—you would say, well, God, that's—that's unique to Houston. Wrong. You'll find that all throughout the nation. You go to Corpus Christi, Texas, there is a Coastal Bend Audubon and a Corpus Christi Audubon. Well, the Corpus Christi Audubon is the bird watching group that was there originally, Coastal Bend is the National Chapter. You'll find the
19:02 – 2191
same thing in San Antonio. Through many of these communities throughout the nation, those bird watching groups didn't want to become the advocacy group and they split. And it's that split system that, in my mind, continues to plague this recreation. This inability for some reason, on the part of some people, to not see the link between the resource and the recreation.
DT: Can you recall any of the arguments of the leaders in the Outdoor Nature Club, particularly, The Ornithology Group, were making when those of you who wanted to set up these Audubon chapter, sort of presented the idea and you got this reaction, said no. Did they say why?
19:55 – 2191
TE: Oh, there were a number of reasons, o—one of the reasons I do recall was sort of like, you know, this is, you know—control will be coming from some, you know, entity far, far away. You know, this will be a, you know, Washington based, or New York based effort, not a Texas based effort. That was one of the reasons. There were some major political concerns. There were—and there were strong sentiments to the fact that, you know, I'm in—I'm—I'm involved in this group to have a good time and enjoy birds. I don't want to get caught up in environmental advocacy. Takes away from my pleasure.
20:38 – 2191
I'll give you a story. This is a good story. I just thought of this the other day, I had forgotten it. In the 1970's, for—for many, many years, when you joined the Houston Outdoor Nature Club, it was like joining a country club. There was a membership committee and your membership was sort of scrutinized. You know, they would check your—I don't know what they'd check. I don't think anybody was ever turned down, but there was some process by which you were approved. Up until finally, there—there was a person that was rejected. And it was a person very much involved with us in the Outdoor

21:12 – 2191
Nature Club and those of us who were young and pretty aggressive at the time, took great offense at this. And the guy that was the President of the group, Jack Jilad, resigned and there was this huge, huge blowup in the organization. And we changed the constitution to do away with this. And I can remember this big boat one night, and I can remember a woman getting up and speaking, it was Johnny Fay Barnette, I'll never forget her. Went in
21:43 – 2191
to the fact that this has always been a conservative organization and this now was going to let anyone in, the riff raff was now to be joining the group. The person they had rejected was Victor Emanuel. Because of his politics, I mean, that was pretty liberal at the time. So that, to me, sort of gives you the substance of the argument, it was sort of like, you know. It was like a Boy Scout troop or something.
DT: Can you tell about some of the advocacy projects that eventually did spring up that Houston Audubon got involved with? I mean, down the road, I guess there is West Side Airport and Lake Jackson…
22:18 – 2191
TE: Oh.
DT: …Golf Course and maybe you can give us some examples.
22:22 – 2191
TE: Oh, we got in quick. I mean, it was—we were in the thick of it very early on. I mean, I think that the—the Wallisville fight was very early on. I mean, I remember public meetings in the mid 70's, early 70's, so this would've had to have been one of the very first projects taken on by Houston Audubon. And lawsuits involved in that, a major effort regarding Eckert's Bayou and Galveston, Texas and sort of trying to control a—a resort community that was really doing great damage to some freshwater marshes. You know, the organization took on, you know, some very significant issues very early in its history.
23:01 – 2191
I mean, you know, we didn't have a lot of capacity to do any of this, it was very small group. I mean, I look at the organization now, I mean, we would have been awestruck that that could happen. It was a very small group, very small group of people, very dedicated group of people. The—you know, Jim Blackburn was involved early, early on, and Terry was involved, Terry Hershey was involved very early on. All these—you know it was kind of a nice coming together of like-minded people and it really took on a life of its own very early.
23:29 – 2191
DT: You mentioned Wallisville, I think that was a very significant controversy for a lot of people.
23:35 – 2191
TE: Absolutely.
DT: Can you tell a little about the issue involved?
23:39 – 2191
TE: Well, it sort of morphed over time. I mean the real issue was, it was going to be the last dam on the Trinity Barge Canal. That's really what was going on. We were going to have this barge canal that goes from, you know, Galveston Bay to Dallas. Not a good idea for, you know, the health of Trinity Bay or the health of Galveston Bay or the health of that Riparian Corridor and we opposed it very early on, opposed the construction of Wallisville. And it was ini—initially conceived of being a massive project. I think the

24:10 – 2191
reservoir itself was somewhere between six or eight thousand acres. I mean it was a massive project, drowning one of the most significant tidal deltas of wetland marshes on the Trinity River that existed. And that fight really went on for, I don't know, twenty years? Something like that. To where it's now, the reservoir—the dam has been constructed, but there's virtually no reservoir to speak of. And if it hadn't been for Audubon, that project would've gone in and it's—I mean, they were building the dam. I mean, this thing was ready to happen. If it hadn't been for Audubon, that—that—Galveston Bay would be a much poorer place today than it is now, I mean, because of it.
24:51 – 2191
DT: What form did the opposition take, what made the difference?
24:57 – 2191
TE: Well, lawsuits. That had a big impact. I mean, being able to force the Corps to go back and do the sort of work it should have done initially, looking…
DT: (inaudible)
25:09 – 2191
TE: Yeah, there was—there was a—you know, NEPA 404 sort of the whole ball of wax. But I think that—that had—I think in the case of Wallisville, that had the impact. It was litigation. In the case of West Side Airport it was public advocacy and getting the public ,involved and opposing it. And they were very different in the way they ultimately manifest themselves, really interesting to see that. Particularly because the West Side, I was involved—I was involved with that from day one, I mean I really put together the
25:41 – 2191
first group to oppose—oppose that. So to see how we were able to really garner public support and change the mind of the public regarding that project, that was pretty interesting.
DT: What was the airport, and what did it involve? What were some of the impacts that you…
25:58 – 2191
TE: Well, the city wanted to build another airport on the bid on the West Side, and they kept talking about it's not going to be commercial, it's going to be a general aviation airport. But, basically, it was a make work project. It was when the—it was in the 80's when Houston was really in a m—major downturn and the mayor decided that this would be a great way to bring in some outside money, federal funds to build an airport, so let's go build an airport. And she decided we'd build it right in the middle of one of the most significant waterfowl wintering areas in the United States. I mean, right in the middle.
26:30 – 2191
And so we immediately began opposing the construction of an airport in that area. And we did it by, really going to the public, going to the press, doing the sorts of things necessary to get the average citizen in Houston to start thinking about it. You know, you're going to put an airport in the middle of, you know, two hundred thousand geese? Does that really make sense? And I think that's why we were able to—to defeat that, in the way that we did ultimately defeat it. It wasn't because of litigation, it was really had to do with public opinion. People finally decided this was not a very smart idea. And—
27:08 – 2191
and—th—th—that's interesting, when I think back, because I remember the first, one of

the first public hearings regarding that airport was out in Katy, Texas, and the, you know, the guy from the, you know, from City of Houston was there, and all the construction people, etc. And they were celebrating this. They were absolutely convinced that there was no way that this project could be stopped. They completely had minimized the opposition in their own minds and they lived to regret it.
27:36 – 2191
DT: Why do you think the strategy changed from the days of opposing Wallisville, using litigation, chiefly, to the days of fighting West Side Airport almost twenty years later? To use the public opinion…
27:53 – 2191
TE: Well, I think a—probably a couple of reasons. One is, litigation's expensive, it's really draining on a small group, a not for profit, it's a…I think the second reason is—is it was clear to some of us that we had in our, you know, eagerness to litigate had overlooked the need to really build public support behind our efforts and to take our message to the public. It's interesting, because I've seen this in the state, you know, back off away from Houston and look at the state. You see those swings, you know, there's a—one moment there's a stridency and then you sort of, you know, let's figure a way to
28:32 – 2191
work together with our opposition and then and—so you see the, you know, the pendulum goes back and forth. In my opinion, we may be—you know, we may be a little too accommodating right now. I mean, I think we've come a little too far in that direction. We need a few good lawsuits at this moment to sort of bring it back in the direction I'd like to see it.
DT: When you brought some of your advocacy campaigns to the public, what sort of support have you found? Do you think it's kind of a mile wide and an inch deep or is it pretty heartfelt? For those who aren't in Houston Audubon, who are the general public. What do they think of environmental issues?
29:14 – 2191
TE: You know, by and large, the public supports the sort of environmental positions that most of us take, those of us who are involved in this sort of thing. I mean—I mean, you look at every poll in this country and its always showing strong support. But it's just consensual support, I mean, it's—it's the sort of support that can be marginalized by more personal issues; jobs, those sorts of things. And it's also not necessarily the sort of support that's going to attract an actual commitment to act—act—action, of getting involved in that opposition. So we have to be careful about how we use that support, it
29:56 – 2191
has—doesn't mean we can just, you know, can forget to go to the public and educate them about these topics, but I've been really, you know, over my lifetime, always surprised by the depth of the support. And if we—if—if we—if—if we take the time to make sure the public understands what the issues are.
DT: One thing I've heard in Texas is that the public has a special feeling for private property rights…
30:31 – 2191
TE: Who says that?
DT: Well, I heard that there's a fellow who…
30:31 – 2191

TE: What percentage of the people in this state own private property? Have you asked—have you asked African Americans and down in Dowling [Street, in Houston] whether or not they care about private property rights? What about the Hispanic population in the valley? That's the—the wealthy Anglo population in this state has a concern about private property rights, yeah.
DT: Well, can you talk about some of the debates you've had with people like Marshall Kuykendall and others about private property rights and Take Back Texas and the whole taking issue, which I think that you were pretty deeply involved with.
31:15 – 2191
TE: Yeah, very much involved in that. I mean, it's an—i—i—you know, it's an interesting phenomenon and it probably, if—if anything has impacted environmental policy and conservation efforts in this state, it has been the assertion by private property owners of their rights in the past decade, eight or ten years. It's had a profound effect, it's has a dramatic effect on Texas Parks and Wildlife, dramatic, transformed that agency. Dramatic effect on the Department of Agriculture. You know, dramatic effect in the legislature about how we deal with these issues. There are very few states in the Union that have a more adamant private property protection sort of mentality than our state. I—
22:04 – 2191
I—I do—I think at this point in time, today, it has—we've been able to carve out some common ground with some of these private property advocates that certainly from a consti—constitutional level, I'm as strong of a private property advocate as anyone. But, I'm also willing to look at the population as a whole and say, OK, for who is this really an important topic and—and who is it really not an important topic to? There is a major split in our—in our state where we have this massive urbanized population that occupies about 6% of the total land mass. Well, wh—wh—what's going on out there in that other
32:51 – 2191
94%, not a lot of people, a lot of private property owners. So, I think in this—in our zeal to make sure that that handful of private property owners are protected, some—in some cases, I think we've overlooked the need of the servant population to have access to recreational opportunities, hunting and fishing opportunities, and those sorts of things. I mean, we've—th—th—it's easy to take a legitimate private property concern, as one would, you know, can be framed within a constitutional context, I mean. You know, Madison said the primary job of government was to protect private property. But, it's
33:40 – 2191
easy then to go to the next phase, as Madison and Jefferson and Adams were wont to do, and basically say, these landed—the landed gentry, in a sense, had special rights and privileges. That, you know, one time in our country we afforded them the right to vote, as opposed to everyone else. Didn't have land, you didn't—you weren't able to vote. So maybe we need to be careful about to what degree we fess the landed gentry with special rights and privileges, and ignore the rights and privileges of the population. That, to me, is the issue. I think there were people like Marshall Kuykendall and others who took it
34:26 – 2191
way beyond what's rational, what's real. You know, it's—it's—this—it's this sort of mentality that we're still this frontier state. We're not; we're a highly urbanized state with a very urban population that, for the most part, has really no connection with the land at all. And may not have had a connection with the land for generations. And I think this—this is

one of the things that Andy Sansom and I and others have talked about for a long time. It's really not an—the issue that concerns me the greatest in our country at this time, is this issue of this—this group that I call the disenfranchised, that have never had
35:10 – 2191
the opportunity to have the epiphanic moment, that will never find their way to nature, that will never have a relationship with the land. And that's a growing group, and that's where we should be spending our time. Yes, let's protect the rights of private property owners, but then let's also start talking about what do we do with this growing population, this mass that we have in our cities that, you know, have—have—have no—no relationship with the outdoors at all. I'm—I'm far more concerned about that group
35:42 – 2191
than a handful of landowners that, for the most part, are, you know, reasonable, rational people that by and—by and large, their rights can be protected within existing framework.
DT: What do you think the threat was that got the private property owners so concerned and defensive and what sort of changes do they seek at Parks and Wildlife and TDA [Texas Department of Agriculture]?
36:11 – 2191
TE: Oh, I think there's two or three different things, probably there's politics. I mean, never underestimate the power of politics, it's—politics, you know, these shifts in politics will always express themselves in the funniest places and so, you know, I think there was a political change afoot and I think there was a—there was a—it was a—it was a beautiful—it was an issue that conservationists in this state used very effectively against Ann Richards and the Democrats at the time. So there was a—there was a political
36:49 – 2191
context. I—I—I think there were some legitimate concerns on the part of private property owners that some of their rights were being eroded and—and, you know, some pretty clumsy work done by Fish and Wildlife and some of the endangered species work, you know, that probably could have been done a little more, you know, judiciously. You know, they tend to go in with the big hammer. And I think that there's also that sort of sh—there's this—you know, underlying all of this is this incredible demographic shift that's taking place, and those last, the—the—the last gasps coming from certain segments
37:34 – 2191
of society as its being—as the—as the shift's going away from them is usually pretty loud and pretty radical. And I think in some degree, that's some of that. I mean, it's—it's—it's a complex issue.
DT: I guess that part of the reason that private property owners have so much influence in Texas is that they own a large part of the state. Over 90…
37:59 – 2191
TE: 97%, something like that. 95, 97%.
DT: Could you talk a little bit about the effort by Houston Audubon and other conservation groups to put more habitat in the public well, whether it's in the state or federal ownership. Or, in the case of High Island, in the hands of a non-profit group? Could you tell about some of the habitat acquisition at Houston Audubon?
38:27 – 2191
TE: Yeah, you know, in the—I was telling this story the other day, so I gu—it's—it's on my mind. I was actually in High Island the other day, first time I'd been there in two or three

years and it was—and somebody had asked me about this. You know, sort of how did it get started, I mean, what—what—you know, why did this Green River buy a land? And it's pretty straightforward. We—one of the places we used to love to go bird was on the Bolivar Peninsula, sort of right when you got off the ferry, kind of going into Port
38:55 – 2191
Bolivar. It was a wonderful stand of woods, you know, hyperions and Hercules's Club and it was great. And it was always very productive in the spring. And I remember we came down one day and it was gone. It was gone. They had leased it out to oil development and drilled a couple of holes, completely denuded the property, they were dry holes. That was it. So, we—you know, one of those major destinations for us was gone, lost overnight, literally overnight. And it got a number of us to talking about the fact that, by and large, our recreation—going back to that recreation point—our recreation—our ability to be involved in our recreation was largely dependent on a
39:45 – 2191
39:45 – 2191
handful of landowners that could change their mind tomorrow. You know, we were living on their good graces. And so we decided the best way to solve that problem is we need to buy that land. It protects the resource and it protects the recreation. It's that link between the two. And so, for many, many years, High Island had largely been an, you know, oil camp. I mean, it was owned by the oil company. No one owned property. The oil company owned the property, the people who lived there basically just rented their places from the oil company and, you know, worked in the oil field. And that changed. It changed—it's some, I don't know, '70, something like that. And I—I was in High Island
40:32 – 2191
and been–been able to, with my father, buy a piece of land next to the woods at High Island, we were—Scout Woods, we were actually able to buy a piece and then, Mr. Lewis Smith had bought Scout Woods. So, he owned Scout Woods, I owned a piece of land next to him and that was one of our favorite destinations and we were allowed to go into Scout Woods because of his good graces. I was down there one day, and he came up to me and said, you know, I'm thinking about selling my land. That was the Woods. You think these—any group would be interested? OK. I went and got my buddies. It was Fred Collins and Paul Newmas, I mean, Fred Collins and Paul Newmas, that was it, the three
41:17 – 2191
of us, initially. And we went to the Houston Outdoor Nature Club. Now remember, we'd already gone through this Audubon battle in previous years, took it to the thought, OK, this is the group that represents the recreation, they're going to be interested in getting involved in buying this land. And then, I forget, it was not a good meeting, it was immediately after their public meeting, and a guy—a guy gets up and stands up, Aaron Stoley, and basically says to me, The only time you people ever come to us is when you want money. Now, I don't ever remember going to him to ask for money at that time, but OK, that was his point. They rejected the idea of buying that land. We went to Houston
41:51 – 2191
Audubon and that's where it happened. We were able to put together the first purchase of those acres at Scout Woods, and for us, I don't remember what it cost, you know, it wasn't a great deal of money at the time, but it was a lot of money for a small group. And we did cake sales and bake sales and, you know, everything we could do to raise the money and

successfully raised the money to buy Scout Woods. Which then, led us to the next purchase of Smith Woods, then a donation of land from Phillips Petroleum and now look at what Houston Audubon's doing, they just closed on another 750 acres basically on the whole end of Bolivar Peninsula. The recreation and the resource are protected
42:43 – 2191
because we were able to get organized and—and have been able to sustain that effort—not only—not—not just sustain it, I mean, they're doing so much more than we could ever have done. I mean, the capacity has grown to act and I—I—it is a remarkable story to see. And—and—and the joint, sort of mutual respect for the resource and the recreation continues, these are major recreational destinations. High Island's one of the most bird watching places in the world.
43:15 – 2191
DT: Can you talk a little about what it's like birding there during a fallout?
43:22 – 2191
TE: Well, you know, as you know, you know, High Island sits on this salt, it's a little pimple of land that's sitting down there on the Texas coast, and because it's elevated and doesn't flood with any, you know—even in a hurricane, it's high and dry. It has a really significant woodland that's developed on top—Live Oak, and Water Oak, and Pipe Berries. There really aren't any trees for about 30 miles each direction. And so when these trans Gulf migrants are coming across, they've left the Yucatan and Bailey's or wherever and they're flying across the Gulf and this is the first twig they see, is going to
43:58 – 2191
be this little circle of woods that sits there on the Texas coast, it's called High Island. Most of the time, those birds pass on just—I mean, that flight is, you know, it's eight hundred miles, no big deal for a migrant and they just continue on, you know, land in Dallas or something. But when the wind shift, or the winds come out of the north, or it's raining in the spring, those birds will put down. And it's astounding to see literally thousands upon thousands upon thousands of migrants, you know, hanging from every leaf, every twig, in the grass, it is—you know, here are birds that represent literally hundreds of thousands of square miles of breeding, I mean, that—you're talking about
44:42 – 2191
birds from throughout the, you know, eastern two-thirds of the United States all sort of just focused in this one little woodland for about one moment in time, and then, you know, leaving a day later or something like that. And, yeah, over the years I've been real lucky to have experienced a number of those that it's—now the way High Island is built, is managed, it's so much better, I mean its—even though, clearly there are fewer birds. I mean, I'm not sure the great fallouts of the 70's are even possible now, just from the loss of woodland birds that has taken place in the United States, I just don't think it's possible.
45:28 – 2191
But, it's still, for a birder, a much easier place to visit now, with boardwalks and, you know, interpretive signage and places to sit and water features and all this, you know, habitat improvements and now you get to walk up to this wonderful lake that's behind Smith Woods and I was there the other day and it's like four hundred pair of breeding Roseate Spoon Bills, you know, you could throw a rock and hit them. I mean, really, it's a—from a wildlife viewing standpoint, much more satisfactory experience and it's because of the—of—of Audubon and their investments.

46:04 – 2191
DT: Speaking of Audubon and habitat, some of its land that it manages is not so much for viewing as it is for protecting nesting and roosting sites, especially in these coastal sanctuaries. Can you tell me the role in protecting and managing those lands?
46:24 – 2191
TE: That's—that's largely—that's been less of a role for Houston Audubon than for National Audubon in its management of these coastal sanctuaries. National Audubon does have a number of sanctuaries around the country and largely they're managed for their resource and not the recreation, although there are exceptions. Corkscrew Swamp is certainly as much a recreational destination as it is a resource. It's an interesting role for Audubon. It's—it's really sort of the—it's—it's—it's—it's a relic—it's a left—it's—it's—it's really Audubon doing what it did initially that the Nature Conservancy came
47:05 – 2191
along and really does on a much larger scale now. When Audubon got in that business, there was no Nature Conservancy, so it's an interesting fit into—into Audubon as an organization and I'm not sure how good of a fit it is at this time. But it does manage a number of those breeding colonies; Terns and Herons and Egrets and Gulls and that sort of thing along the Texas coast. Been there from the, you know, thirties? Twenties, in
47:36 – 2191
some cases. A lot of the early research done on Whooping Cranes was done by Audubon employees. I mean, you know, Audubon played a very important conservation role on the Texas coast in those early, formative days of Texas conservation. Plays less of a role now as groups such as Conservancy have become so significant.
DT: Could you tell a little bit about some of these sites, Green Island or Deer Island or Sundown Island?
48:00 – 2191
TE: Yeah, Sundown—yeah, Sundown and Green and—and—and Deer are all major colonial water bird sites, that's primarily what Audubon is managing. These areas that, during the summer, these just huge, you know, gatherings of Herons and Egrets and Gulls and Terns takes place. I mean, it's—those rookeries are extremely vulnerable and—and again, represents thousands of birds, or hundreds in some cases, thousands in some cases, crammed in a very small area for a very brief period of time. Deer Island is certainly a very good example of that. Galveston Bay is probably the most significant colonial water
48:36 – 2191
bird site in Galveston Bay that's now protected by—by Audubon. And so it provides wardens, puts signs up on the islands and ensures that, by and large, they're not disturbed during the breeding period.
DT: What about some of the raptor sites? I think there's one by Smith Point.
48:59 – 2191
TE: Yeah, Smith Point.
DT: How is that put together and what sort of migrations are seen there?
49:06 – 2191
TE: Well, the one at Smith Point is actually in a Texas Parks and Wildlife—Wildlife management area, Candy Abshier, and Audubon has worked with Parks and Wildlife to create a raptor viewing area. You know, Smith Point sits down in the Galveston Bay and what hap—what happens is the, you know, the Hawks are coming down in the fall and they

kind of get bottle necked out on the point. And Hawks, by and large, are hydrophobic, they don't want to fly over water, so they just kind of turn around and go back, and you get a wonderful opportunity to see major concentrations. The other is in
49:39 – 2191
Corpus Christi and it is the most significant Hawk watch spot, probably in the United States, where sometimes as many as a million raptors are seen in a season. And then, there's you know, Hawk watch, wonderful Hawk watch spot now in Vera Cruz, down at the river of raptors where you see this just streams of Swainson's Hawks and Broadwinged and Turkey Vultures and stuff moving through. It's been really a neat effort. I mean, it's—we had no formal Hawk watch when I first starting birding in Texas, I mean this is real—this is relatively recent, and now it's become quite formal, I mean, where there's a—an actual employees that are doing—setting up the protocol and doing
50:24 – 2191
the counts and now it's being checked with radar data. They can actually see the Hawks moving around the bay on radar and they can kind of give people a heads up. It's really become quite a—quite an impressive effort and very important data on that group of birds.
DT: We talked about some of the birding sites that you've been involved with and some of the birding groups as well and this whole sort of recreational industry that's built up over the years. You seem to have been one of the first that realized that not only was there real habitat value to understanding and knowing more about birds, but there is also a lot of economic value.
51:03 – 2191
TE: Yep.
DT: Can you talk a little bit about your work over the years about how it affects ecotourism and how to promote it?
51:11 – 2191
TE: Yeah, that's really been the—the focus of my efforts for the—at least the last decade, maybe the last fifteen years. And it's really what my company does. That's what we built this company on. I mean, it's, we're a strange company. This is a cause based corporation. It's a—it's a—it's a for profit that works on issues that are as much ethical as they are financial. I mean, there's an interesting mix here, I'm not sure how many cause based corporations there are, but we certainly call ourselves one. And one of the things that—that became very clear to me and why I ultimately, you know, sold off my
51:56 – 2191
other business and created this one, just so I could do this full-time, was the fact that it was obvious to me that people basically conserve what they use. I mean, that—that's a fundamental, cardinal rule: we conserve what we use. And—and we conserve those things that we value, and that value comes through that use. And so, if people were using these resources for recreation, then I should be able to tie conservation into that equation. OK, we care about this because we use it. We conserve it because we use it. That's really what all of this is about. And one of the things we started off with, is, My God, if we have all these people looking at birds, and they care about this sort of thing, what about those
52:38 – 2191
52:38 – 2191
people that may not use it but would derive economic value from having people visit—travel and tourism. And, so I started looking at that, and I did an early paper, the very first

Galveston Bay Estuary Program annual meeting, I presented a paper on ecotourism potential for Galveston Bay. That's over a decade ago. I did some of the first studies: what birders were spending, where they went, where the dollars went, etc. And have now done, you know, I don't know, our body of work's probably the most significant in this field regarding this sort of recreation nationally. And then started taking those numbers and going to Mission, Texas or Hidalgo or Grand Island, Nebraska or wherever and saying, look, you need to understand what this—the Platte River is not just a lot of
52:36 – 2191
Cranes, it's also about 40 million dollars a year in economic impact coming from people who want to see those Cranes. That—that—that relationship—and so, we've been able to open doors that would've never been opened before. And I was in Bottineau, North Dakota last week, I was a keynote at their annual economic development conference talking about the potential for North Dakota. Both of their U.S. Senators were there and both of them are very much involved in what's possible. We're about to look at a major sort of statewide effort. This is North Dakota. The—the—the initial interest, what opened the door was the fact that here is an opportunity for an agrarian economy, who's really
54:10 – 2191
suffered in the last twenty or thirty years, to diversify. It's why I've developed really splendid working relationships with private landowners and—and their groups in this state, in Texas, because we have ranchers and farmers that need to diversify out of a commodity-based, you know, economy into a service-based, or even as I call it, an experience-based economic strategy. There are—be—be—beneath that or overlaying this economic impact, is the fact that, here's this mass of American public that finds its way
54:49 – 2191
to nature through birds. Seventy million. Seventy million Americans find their way to nature through birds. They don't have to be birders. They don't have to call themselves birders. If that's how they—that's their vehicle for entering in the outdoors, in their—in the natural world. If I can develop programs and opportunities, whether it's a trail, Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, the trail we just finished in Virginia, the ones we're doing in Connecticut, Wisconsin. If we can—if we can bring these people into the outdoors and show them the value of those resources and show them the need to conserve those
55:25 – 2191
resources because they do value them, that's major—could have major effect on public policy. Seventy million people? How many of those would I have needed to swing the last election? That's where I want to work, is with that mass, amorphous mass that, you know they're not birders, they haven't defined in that way, their interests haven't crystallized, they just realize that there's something very important, a very important way to connect, to become rerooted. I mean, again, let's go back to that urban population
56:05 – 2191
that's disconnected. What's re—I mean, particularly post-9/11—what's out here that's safe and real and authentic, trustworthy. Well, it's the outdoors, nature, and we've seen that in park visitation post-9/11, we've seen that in sanctuaries, that's—that's—that's really, that will be my life's work, working in that area and trying to swing that mass.
DT: Can you talk about some of the projects in Texas that you were involved in to try to develop that, I mean, the Coastal Birding Trail…
56:41 – 2191

TE: Uh, huh, yeah.
DT: …or maybe the Birding Center down in the valley?
56:44 – 2191
TE: Yeah, it kind of started—well, we did a study in High Island looking at economic impact of birders in High Island. And it was about seven million dollars a year, this was in what, ’93, ’94, something like that, I can’t remember exactly when it was. Got a lot of attention, people were really kind of interested in that. And, so, it wasn’t too long after that that Anne Richards put together a nature tourism—wanted—she wanted a nature tourism strategy for the state and she put together a task force and I was one of the people
57:15 – 2191
asked to be involved on the task force and out of that we came up with a number of recommendations. Really amazing, most of those have been implemented. Really important ones, I mean, really dramatic recommendations that we made concerning extending the Ag exemption for wildlife, camping liability for private landowners. All those—those really remarkable suggestions have become implemented. Anyway, so we put together this strategy. And right after that, Madge Lindsay, with Parks and Wildlife , and I were talking and said, you know, all this theory’s great; we need to do something
57:54 – 2191
real. I mean, we need to implement, we need to put something out there on the ground that shows how this works. It was really obvious to me that, you know, visitation birders were really—birders are as habituated as birds. They go to a handful of sites, and so they would fly into Houston and go to High Island, go to Corpus Christi, go to the valley, and then leave. There was all these wonderful destinations along the coast they would bypass, they didn’t know they were there. So how do we tie all those places together in
58:22 – 2191
something that’s logical and linear and easy to follow and facilitates and nurtures, going back to this casual group. These aren’t the avid birders that already knew where those spots were, I mean, I’m talking about ed—th—you know, the 69 million out of this 70 million. So we came up with the idea of putting together a trail. Let’s just connect the dots. And we went and applied to—at that time the Ice Tea—(?) Ice Tea Funds—Department of Transportation and got funded. And so that first go around, Madge and I literally sat down and just made it up, just figured it out as we went, didn’t have—didn’t
58:57 – 2191
have a clue as to what we were doing. And built the first trail, which was the central coast. Then followed up with the upper coast and the lower coast. But, w—w—well before we had finished the lower coast, it was obvious, this was a home run. I mean, people like this stuff. It was very successful, much more than we ever dreamt. So, it sort of gave us a good impetus to start figuring this thing out and really getting a little more refined in our approach. So we finished the coast, and then, not too long after that Texas Parks and—I—I—I was talking to Andy one night, we were at some dinner, I don’t know, some Audubon dinner or something, and talked about this idea that, you know, perhaps we could, you know, build an interpretive center for birds. You know, this is
59:41 – 2191
such a big deal, you know, why don’t we put it in the valley, I mean, they need it. I mean, that’s where the economic impact was really needed. So this whole idea of a world Birding Center, we certainly didn’t call it that, it was just a Birding Center, start—started to be

kicked around. And who could the partners be, and how would we get the community involved and all that sort of thing. And really, that—so the birding center really evolved out of the trails. I mean, it's obvious the trails worked, it was obvious we were having an impact, therefore, let's have a destination associated with that. And so,
1:00:12 – 2191
my firm and some others, we did the, you know, feasibility study and business plan and of course, it's being implemented right now, it's being constructed. But for us, what's happened, is everybody wants a birding trail, everybody wants a wildlife trail or a nature trail. So not only are we building—you know, just finished three more in—in Texas, which is—starts at the Panhandle and goes all the way to Laredo. Which, by the way, is remarkable in that it involves 75, more or less, ranchers, 90 ranches, three hundred thousand acres of private lands. Pretty interesting. Most significant—most significant private land effort in regards to our recreation, in the world, clearly. Just a major private / public effort.
1:01:01 – 2191
DT: Can you talk about visiting with some of these ranchers or farmers and how you put the pitch to them about why this is in their interest and what their reaction was?
1:01:12 – 2191
TE: Well, that's a good…
[misc]
[End of reel 2191]
1:17 – 2192
TE: Is—well, the question you had asked regarded—was regarding, you know, how do you pitch the landowners and what—how do you deal with that sort of, what the opportunities are. You know, I—I'll tell you what. That's been an interesting evolution. The need to pitch has gone away, I mean, we've evolved into a different place than we were originally. There's a tremendous amount of interest. Far more interest than I can handle. What we are now focusing on, and certainly in my firm, is how do we deliver. It's not how can get them interested, but how do we make good on a promise. How do we
2:39 – 2192
make sure this is workable in a private land scenario? So, I do much less of the pitching than I used to, and much more really working at sort of a strategic level. That really feeds into another question that you'd asked about, the sort of the dark side. What about these projects that—I mean, not every ecotourism project in this nation is—or—or in the world, is beneficial. In fact, one of the interesting sort of adjuncts to this whole globalization and global market argument and, you know, as—as seen in the Seattle demonstrations, etc. is there is a—there is a very significant and vehement collection of people around this world that oppose ecotourism and believe that it does disenfranchise local communities, even though it comes in under a very, you know, seemingly benign heading. But, in a sense, it does, in the end, disenfranchise local people. The problem is this, any project can go astray, no matter how good it is. And you can, you know, plan to build a church and it can go astray, I mean, things just happen. And it really has, from our standpoint, emphasized the need to have really well balanced, substantial, strategic planning in place before any of these projects are taken to the field. It's one of the things
3:23 – 2192
we spend at least half our time doing. I'll give you a couple of examples. We're working on a

strategic plan in north central Pennsylvania, the Allegheny Mountains. It's about 800 elk left in that area, it's a growing elk population, one of the large—largest east—eastern elk populations. And a—a huge public land holding, about 2.4 million acres of public lands in that area, Allegheny National Forest, lots of state forest lands. And little communities up in the hollows. And the, you know, the elk are in people's backyards; they're eating the apples off the trees; you know, elk are everywhere. And over the last
4:02 – 2192
decade or so, people have started coming out to see the elk during bugling. To the point now, it's grown to about 60,000 come out to see the elk. They park in people's driveways, they trespass, they hop their fences, they—it's wildlife viewing at its worst, not it's best. And so the state hired me to come in and fix it, you know, make, you know, make some order out of this madness. And that's what we've been doing is sort of backing off, and seeing, OK, how can we manage traffic? How can we create a much broader wildlife viewing opportunity? How do we make sure it's not just seasonal? How
4:39 – 2192
can, you know, all these sorts of things that should have happened at the front end, not the back end. And so a lot of our work around the world is really dealing with the front end. The example you brought up about the—the conservation lodge that was proposed for Matagorda. Probably those issues could have been dealt with up at the front end, and—and I s—I would imagine we would've come to exactly the same conclusion, which is, nice project, wrong place. You know, just not the place to do it. Let's—let's—let's go somewhere else and do that project. I mean, all the arguments in favor of the project were the right ones, it just wasn't the right setting, perhaps.
5:24 – 2192
DT: What was the tradeoff, what was the for-and-against?
5:28 – 2192
TE: Well, for one, let's go demonstrate to the world that we can go and do this sort of lodge. That was, in general. I mean, you know, I knew the guys who were involved, good guys, good people, you know, certainly had the right—right sentiment, had the, you know. The down side was it was using public lands; it was using public lands in a—in a—in a subsidized fashion; it was using public lands in a sense to create an entity that would ultimately compete with some of the private sector lodges, etc., in the—in the area.
6:02 – 2192
Most importantly, it was Matagorda. And if you look at the fight over Matagorda, and the history of environmental involvement and conservation communities involved in creating that. It, you know, I think anyone could've told you, this is just not the place. This is just a little too touchy; this is not the place I would do this; it's not appropriate at this place. Doesn't mean the idea's not a good one, doesn't mean it can't be done elsewhere. I mean, we're working on this project right now in San Luis Pass right now where a private landowner owns it, owns that whole west end of Galveston Island. He wants to set aside
6:37 – 2192
the flats, one of the great—the last wild ti—tidal pass left on the upper Texas coast. Never been touched. No bulkheads, no channels, no cuts, it's a wild tidal pass that hosts probably millions of birds every year constantly flowing in and out, backwards and forwards. He wants to set aside the pass, some of the marshes, and he's working with us to come—come up with the right type of development that fits that spot. In that sense, I come out being pro

development. I mean, one of the—there's two things that really concern me, when we in the conservation and environmental community become
7:20 – 2192
stridently anti-development. Number one, poverty trumps all. It's the big card. In the end, no matter what you're working on, poverty will do you in. You have to deal with that economic and social reality up front. Poverty will do you in. Galveston's not a wealthy community. It has a very poor segment of its population. They need jobs, they need tax revenues, they need development on that west end. What we need to do is make sure that can happen in a responsible fashion. Because number two, second point I was making is, if you leave a void, you know, this sort of, private landowner owns the land, but we want him or her to do nothing, just, you know, and—and—and—and we don't come in to fill
8:11 – 2192
the void, buy the land, or do something of that sort. Something else will come in to fill it that's worse than anything you possibly could've ever imagined. Voids are always filled by the worst possible projects, you know. Trailers, or—something—something's going to happen down there. So get ahead of it, be proactive, how can we do the right thing? Get that set aside, get the right—you know, get the sanctuary set aside and get everything done, make sure there's a good relationship between any development. I mean, go to Frasier Island, go to the Kingfisher Lodge in Australia. There's a great example of a—of a lodge that—that, you know, lives lightly on the land, I mean, it's really a perfect fit.
8:54 – 2192
And Frasier Island is a, you know, a world hemispheric site. I mean, it's, I mean the—it—it can be done. And—and it's something that's really—I—I've been struck by in my travels—I mean, one—again, one of the nice things about my job is I get to travel the world. I get to see a lot and lots and lots of nice places, you know. Australia, or Iriomote, Japan, or Scandinavia, or just looking at other coastal settings. One of the things that really strikes me is: we as Texans have this remarkable, I don't know, we undervalue our coastal resources. We have valued them traditionally on what they can provide us from an extractive sense, they're either a good fishery or we can build our petrochemical plants
9:36 – 2192
down there because there's water and we can use barges or we can, whatever. I mean, we always have this long list of things that we can do with the coast. But we've had a—we've been very slow in coming to the realization that, you know, that these places left alone have great value. A lot of our coast, you know, is ratty. It looks like hell. You know, we've got these abandoned double-wides, and crap thrown off the side of the road, how can that be? Why is it we don't have the respect for—I mean, look at Padre Island, I mean talk about a brilliant move. Here today, after it was, you know, the credible moves
10:17 – 2192
in the early days to make sure that it's conserved, we have the longest undeveloped barrier island in the world, in the world. What an unbelievable treasure. What a way to be able to develop a sustainable travel and tourism program. It can carry you into the future. Think about it. We're down to one tidal pass on the upper coast, that's left. You know, Freeport? We moved the Brazos River. They didn't like it where it was; we moved it. Sobean Lake, Port Arthur, it's all channelized. What about Bolivar Roads? We—all across Galveston Bay into the Port of Houston, it's all channelized. Just go look at all
10:55 – 2192

the—Here's the last one, think what an opportunity there is. And that's one of those icon sites, one of those places where you can go, stand on the edge of the water and it's like it was when Audubon came in 1837. Ignore the bridge, just look back over the bay. It's like it was. Allows you to sort of be transported back in time. That's the sort of thing I like my grandkids to be able to do, is to be able to go to the same place I went, you know, and be able to see virtually what I saw. T—Texans need to deal with that. We as Texans have
11:37 – 2192
got to, you know—I—I love—I—I love our pride of place and who we are, because it's very different than a lot of states, a lot of states don't have that. In fact, a lot of states, people ask you why in the world you came. You know, I mean, it's like, how could anybody find something of interest here? It's not like that in Texas. My God, we're the first people to—to brag about who we are. We're not always the first people to brag about where we are.
DT: You mentioned the special quality to be able to go to a place like San Luis Pass to see the birds, but also to get the sense of history of the place and to see what Audubon might've seen when he visited it, and I suppose there's another aspect to this. You go to an old ranch and you get the idea of the culture of the place, you know, the ranching culture, the…
12:36 – 2192
TE: Permanence.
DT: …cattlemen of the west. Can you talk about how this experiential tourism, nature tourism, ecotourism, maybe brings together nature, history, culture?
12:37 – 2192
TE: Sure, I mean, there's experiential tourism—recognizes—there's very soft edges on those interests. I mean, it's very difficult to be a student of nature and not see how it influenced history and culture. And so one of the things we've been working on at the firm is, how do we literally meld those interests together. I'll give you an example. We're doing a project right now in Ohio along Lake Erie. We're doing a strategy for all the counties that front Lake Erie. Cleveland's in the middle, Toledo to the west, you know, Conneaut to the east. Last place you'd probably think about nature tourism. I mean, Lake
13:17 – 2192
Erie. Cuyahuga River burning. Algae blooms in the lake. I mean, it's not what you think of. It's interesting, though. It has been cleaned up. I mean, things are improving in that area and there's still little bits and pieces left of what was. So what we have done is, first of all, went in and identified the nature tourism sites we're interested in. Then we said, OK, how'd this affect culture and history and let's find cultural attributes and historical attributes that are clearly derived from the nature that was here. And so, for example, we're very interested in this area around Toledo, it was where the Great Black Swamp was. The Great Black Swamp was drained. It was one of the great inter—you know,
14:01 – 2192
wetland areas, really in the United States and largely, it's been lost. Lost to agriculture and a bunch of other things. There's still some icon sites in there, though, but, it's interesting. Right outside of Toledo, where the Great Black Swamp was, is also where the Battle—Battle of Fallen Timbers took place, Fallen Timbers in a swamp. In other words, the battle, history, took place in that area that is one of our nature sites. So we start tying
14:32 – 2192
history and nature together. Well then you start thinking about culture. In Texas, the ranching culture is derived from what was there on the land, I mean, it's derived from

nature, the way cattle could be raised and you know, the fact that things like chaps were ever developed. I mean, chaps were developed because of the habitat, the chaparral that, you know, that thick, brushy, you know, thorns grow with everything that has a spine or a thorn on it. Made sense. OK, so suddenly we can almost study nature through studying culture and history and visa versa. In fact, it's sort of like this multi-faceted gem or stone,
15:08 – 2192
you just keep turning it and with every facet, OK, now I'm looking through history but I always find my way to nature, or I can look through nature and I'll always find my way to culture and history. It's the interrelationship, it's understanding that man and nature are just intertwined, whether we want to admit it or not, we are intrinsically linked. One reflects the other.
DT: Could you talk a little bit about your, not just about ecotourism, but maybe about your own business and the whole idea of a cause oriented corporation.
15:43 – 2192
TE: Yeah.
DT: You know, like the ecology—commerce link that I think you're trying to develop?
15:50 – 2192
TE: Yeah, you know, we're still, Fermata's still pretty much involved in tourism and travel, although it's become much also involved in nature interpretation and, you know, all kinds of different sort of programs. But still, largely, o—our work is through travel, in—in—in—in travel and tourism. We've become so convinced of the power of these sorts of products in getting the public involved, and this—just—just the absolute critical need to facilitate and nurture that sort of relationship to make sure, and make it easy for
16:30 – 2192
people to find their way to nature, that we've really devoted our careers to that end. And so one of the things we're involved in right now, the very formative stages, is because of the success and—and being able to understand how these trails have worked so successfully and why they work. See, these—these trails—all a trail is is a thematic itinerary. It's a way of taking the experiences and just arraying them along a line. They're linear. If it works in Texas, then it works in the nation. So we're going to build a nation—national system with these trails. We're going to do them all. And, they're going to be
17:09 – 2192
like the Great Plains, we're gon—we're starting now in the Great Plains, where you'll be able to go from Manitoba to Coahuila and have your whole trip interpreted, where, for by that end, you'll understand grassland ecology, you'll understand that the Great Plains are not just this giant—it's not just this giant, you know, the Great American Desert between the two mountain ranges. It is a destination in itself. It is a remarkable ecosystem, and
17:38 – 2192
therefore, we can interpret it and—and—what's interesting is these trails end up being longitudinal, not latitudinal, in a sense reflect the ebb and flow, the seasonal ebb and flow. I can be driving down the trails as the sand hills are migrating to the south, or the mountain clovers are going to the grasslands of Coahuila and I can interpret prairie dog ecology in Manitoba, but I can also interpret Mexican prairie dog ecology at El Prado. See, a—a—again, a way of tying and linking this altogether. Ultimately, the American public can have access into all of these wonderful resources and understand, first of all,
18:21 – 2192

the great value of the outdoors, it's—it's—it's transcendent value. But then, also, understand why we see what we see, why people did what they did, what happened with the bison and what that was all about and then what can bring that back. I mean, to me it's a—what—to—to me, at this moment, there are some great, positive, encouraging stories to tell and this is a way to tell those. And—and, therefore, there needs to be—yeah, there's travel and tourism, but there's also educational layers and there's conservation layers and communication and outreach. All this gets layered into this trail to where people can mine down through these information sources, these sort of—it's
19:04 – 2192
kind of like creating a GIS, but for travel and tourism. That's what our firm does is—is—OK, here's an example. If I can build this trail, we can use the travel and tourism industry to help fund the development of the economic development site, the travel and tourism site. But what about conservation information? You know, it's interesting, there's a lack of that in some areas. Well then, we'll just partner with U.S. Fish and Wildlife, or somebody of that sort, to fund those activities as well. In other words, we can leverage, for every dollar that travel and tourism puts in, we—that matches a dollar that's being put in for the co—see it's an interesting way of linking—interlinking all of these different information sources and recognizing that if the primary way people find their way to
19:45 – 2192
nature is through recreation, then let's maximize the benefit from that recreation. And that's precisely where many of the environmental groups who see recreation as being demeaning, I mean, come on, we're out there saving the world, recreation's just for fun, really miss the boat. Not understanding that's the way people define their relationship with the outdoors, is through their recreation. But it's also, I think, sort of highlights that contrast we were talking about, with some of the birding groups or some of the recreation
20:21 – 2192
only groups which is, we're missing an unbelievable opportunity to rel—to relate to the public, to make sure they understand why it's important that these places exist. Why—why it's important that we protect ANWR [Arctic National Wildlife Refuge]. Why it's important that the Platte River ecosystem as a whole be protected. It's…
DT: Maybe you can talk
[misc]
a little bit about these very special jewels that are pristine and maybe give me an idea of the sort of response you give to a deep-ecology, wilderness, RARE II [Roadless Area Review and Evaluation II], sort of advocate who says, these places should be off-limits and you're promoting access.
21:04 – 2192
TE: Mmm-hmm. There are places that should be off-limits. I—I'm the first one to—to say that. I mean, it's—but we should—we should approach that with an understanding that for every one of those places that gets placed off-limits, we lose an opportunity. We may gain an opportunity, but we also lose one. There's a cost associated with doing that. An example is on the Texas birding trail in the valley, there are sites that have star cactuses, one of the most endangered cac—cacti in the United States. There are only about five populations left. I'm not going to put star cactus on a birding trail. First of all,
21:38 – 2192
they'd be dug up and put in a pot somewhere or sold, I mean, you know, that's—clearly, we

do not want visitation in that area. Those need to stay off the radar screen. And there are others of those sites. There are some bog habitats in the, you know, the east, and there's orchid bogs, and you know, all that stuff. There are many sensitive habitats and communities that need to be protected. But just remember that when we do that, then the public at large doesn't value them. They're unknown. They don't care what happens to those. I don't believe anything's inviolate, I don't think anything's forever. The only way
22:13 – 2192
to ensure that these sites are protected is to make sure people value them and let them see them and understand them. It's also me recognizing that, you know, how many wilderness areas are there? I mean, I'll give you a great example. We work on the—on the upper peninsula of Michigan, U.P. [Upper Peninsula] was all cut, you know, the turn of the century, late 1800's, the Big Cut it was called. It's where forestry in America really got its start was on the U.P. It's now wilderness like, it functions essentially as a wilderness. It's not a natural forest; it's a naturalized forest. It doesn't matter. For people traveling in the area to that Hiawatha National Forest, it's as close as wilderness as it needs to be. And so, yes,
23:01 – 2192
there are those icon sites that should be protected, but for me, I'd rather find a way to get that seventy million more involved. Then I could effect elections, then I could make sure that there's wilderness areas.
DW:: A question I had about that, is a lot of times when you talk about this kind of recreation is motorized recreation. What I saw when we were visiting South Padre was people, you know, spinning 360s and pickup trucks on the beach and you talk about pristine, right? Why is California valued in a different way? This is absolutely unheard of, and I'm wondering if they're trying to ease off on the fill-up-the-tank, let's-spin-360s-on-the-preserve mentality, if it's makes it hard to overcome when you want to enlist the support of these people but their idea of enjoying it is not…
23:54 – 2192
TE: You know, that's in—I'm—I'm going through exactly that issue right now in San Luis Pass, where one of the pa—one of the component parts of our efforts there is to close—is to manage traffic on 3 ½ miles that front the Gulf to San Luis. It, through a number of studies, particularly Pipe and Clover, it's clear that this functions as an ecosystem, that birds, then high tides go to the beach and backwards and forwards. Right now the beach is completely open to vehicular traffic. The dunes are torn up, all the, you know, dune community back on the bay side's completely ripped and shredded. And
24:28 – 2192
we're getting major opposition to managing traffic there from a, you know, group of very vocal and vehement anglers that basically say, we want to drive our fat asses to the edge of the water with our fishing poles. I don't want to share it. You know? Well, you know, I gu—that's that fronti—yeah, I guess that was the—that was the state of my grandfather, great-grandfather, but, you know, we got 3 ½ million people living right up the road in Houston. We're going to have to deal with these issues of, you know, 21st century approach, which is, you know, our dunes are more valuable than just to be places to drive our ATV's. Those beaches are more valuable than just to be a place to park your pickup
25:13 – 2192
truck. And so, there have to be compromises and there has to be a consideration given to all of the different values. I mean, I love the Texas Open Beach Act. The Texas Open Beach Act

didn't guar—guarantee that you could drive your pickup truck to the edge of the water. It says you would be able to go to the edge of the water and I am absolutely in favor of that. But, if we're not careful, we're going to lose some of these absolute—the last of the last sites, because we're not willing to tackle that issue. Good—that was a good question.
25:45 – 2192
DT: I guess the big question that a lot of us struggle with is what are the big challenges for the future and I was wondering what sort of environmental issues you see, and opportunities as well.
26:06 – 2192
TE: Yeah, it's probably something along the lines of what I've talked about before, but I think the great challenge of us—for us in this next hundred years is to emancipate environmentalism. To emancipate conservation. It's still elitist. It's still white. It's still leaving out huge segments of our population. And in a state like Texas, con—conservation will suffer because of that, and those populations that deserve better will suffer from that. I mean, Houston, Texas is a great example. I mean, that ought to be cutting edge for this work. I mean, it's the only—I can't remember, it's the only state in the south, I mean, the only city in the south, one of the big cities in the south, that's in the top ten in Hispanic, African-American, and Oriental population. Now think about that,
27:04 – 2192
it's remarkable. Here's this melting pot where we should be able to come together, cross ethnic boundaries and—and—and—and to deal with these issues. I think we've started in the valley. I think the work with the World Birding Center and the way the Hispanic community is involved in that has happened, but still, you know, I give a lot of talks and I go and I see a lot of white faces in the crowd. I'd like to change that. So, I would say, m—my goal, or my—is how do I improve on that. It's 285 million Americans, h—you know, how do we make sure they all find their way to the outdoors, not just that small subset. That's the challenge. That's where we should be spending our time and effort. I think—you know, there is a group that is spending time and effort on saving habitat and
27:56 – 2192
buying land. Wonderful. But, let's not do that and ignore the human element, which is, we need their support. We need their votes. We need their involvement. And, by and large, those people, our neighbors, if they ever involved in the outdoors, it's going to be through some form of recreation. And I don't care if its camping or hiking or biking or water-skiing or whatever. How can we use all those? I've done interpretive trails for mountain bikers. I mean, come on, there's—you know, you're mountain biking down a trail and you're seeing things, I mean, what are these things we're seeing? I mean, I—we—we need to be much broader in our—our understanding of just how powerful recreation is in our country. It's one of those common interests we all share.
28:43 – 2192
DT: What's your attitude about the consumptive versus the nonconsumptive recreation, the hunters and fisherman? You said earlier that you, for one reason or another, evolved out of that.
28:56 – 2192
TE: Oh, I think, yeah, that's an interesting topic. I mean, it's one I deal with all the time. I mean, I've got a pretty straightforward answer. Hunting goes away. It's going away. It's—you know, it's not anything anyone's done. It's not a, you know, anti-hunters, or any of that

sort of—you know—those sort of, most obvious sort of reasons. It's—it's an inappropriate activity for an urban population. And it doesn't fit. Not inappropriate, it doesn't fit an urban population well. You know, when my grandfather hunted, he walked out the back door and my dad had—you know, you'd go a mile away and when I hunted, you know, we didn't have to go far, you know, a few miles. My kids? You'd have to
29:43 – 2192
drive 35 miles, hope you get a lease, you know, you're not competing, video games and soccer and all, you know? And therefore, you're looking the last ten years, hunting license sales in Texas have declined by 42% compared to the population as a whole. That's market share. You know who—I'll tell you who gave that talk the other day, it was in Alpine, Texas. You know who was talking about that? David Langford. Look, we know what's going on out there. Those of us that have been working on this understand clearly what is happening. We are losing a population of hunters. Do you know what
30:24 – 2192
percentage of the population in the United States hunt—hunt waterfowl? Four percent. Do you know what population are involved in wildlife viewing and—away from their home? Fifty-five percent. It's—there's a disconnect here. And so we have a Game Commission, or a Parks and Wildlife commission, or whatever it is, that does largely cater to this one group of users that's declining. And that causes great difficulties with funding because, you know, Pittman-Robertson and Wallet-Burrough and all those funds are important to help fund these agencies which receive no general funds. A—and yet that—that's going away. It's just going away. So, go ahead. Jump in.
31:14 – 2192
DW: When you say that about hunting, do you—does that also include, say, hunting for culling or (?) wildlife herd management as well?
31:25 – 2192
TE: Doesn't matter what it is. Hunting. Hunting is going away. Hunting as an outdoor recreation is declining. Some states it's radical, some states are kind of holding their own. Only two, by the way, are holding their own. The rest have declining populations of hunters. Some types of fishing are holding their own. Some are growing. Some are declining, but by and large, the consumptive activities are increasingly disconnected from an urban base. That's all I'm saying, and unless you can convince me that suddenly
31:56 – 2192
everybody's going to leave the city and move back to the rural communities, that will continue. So, I think, in our state, we can assume that consumptive use will decline. Consumptive use, particularly hunting, has also become increasingly exclusive. High dollar. It's one of the things that Langford and I have talked about many times. And—and—I—if—if you're ever going to get to 200 million, 280 million people, if you're ever going to get to this mass that will create that as I've said years ago in Audubon, that culture of conservation where it becomes the part of the fabric of society, I would say
32:35 – 2192
hunting's a pretty poor tool this time. Just doesn't involve enough people. Also, what do you do in a state like Texas when 95 or 96% of the hunters are male, and 95 or 96% are Anglo. What do you do about those other masses of Hispanics or African-Americans or Asians or whatever it might be. I mean, how do we get them involved in the outdoors, you're not going to do it thorough hunting. What's the fast—fastest growing family unit in the

country? Single-parent. Single parent's female. You think Mom takes little Joey hunting? No. I mean, what this state needs is an honest discussion of this, and just say,
33:13 – 2192
here are the facts, you know, what do we do? But, I tell you, typically what I've found is, most people don't want to hear it, involved in this business. Most people at the Game Commissions do not want to hear this. They want to stick their heads in the sand, and pretend that somehow it's all going to right itself—or at least they'll be able to ride it out till they retire. That's reality.
33:34 – 2192
DT: Well, again, looking towards the future, you mentioned something about creating a culture of conservation.
33:42 – 2192
TE: Yeah.
DT: How do you recruit the young people that might be coming up and considering different avenues for themselves?
33:53 – 2192
TE: Well, it has to be, you know, I would like to say, gosh, the way you do it is through this sort of, you know, have a life like I've lived, where your parents are involved. But look at what's—I'll give you an example. Look at the newest Audubon program to build Audubon centers. That's exactly what we should be doing, particularly urban centers. And not urban centers in rich, suburban neighborhoods. You know, which is where a lot of the nature centers in this country are, they're out there where the money is so they can always end up in sort of, you know, out there in some exclusive neighborhood. No, I
34:26 – 2192
mean, ur—you know, urban nature centers in—in Houston on Dowling. You know, I'm talking about where the people are, where the people that really need them—do you realize that I was—I was in the 70's—I can't remember, in the seventies, eighties, something like that—Rice University did a study of the kids that live in the projects in Galveston and 60% of the kids in the projects have never been to the beach.
DT: And they live on an island.
34:53 – 2192
TE: They live within walking distance, never been to the beach. We better fix that. that's the issue we better be dealing with. In the end, they vote. In the end, they're your neighbor. In the end, they're one of our fellow citizens that deserves to be able to enjoy the things we've enjoyed. That's where I'd be p—how do you get young people involved? Get them involved early. So the investments of Audubon and these centers and all of these other programs that are going on to build more significant outreach efforts, particularly at—you know, for the disadvantaged. That's exactly what we should be
35:29 – 2192
doing. And then, to be able to sort of carry them out of high school and then making sure the professions are there and that there are, you know, this sort of in—economic incubators that are necessary to create these businesses that can thrive on. Because whether it's guides or B&B's or whatever, and to look—and then to rethink some of these things. I means, I'll say this, Susan Combs is good about this, I mean, I like Susan and I like Susan period. She's the one that's been—really—that's been talking about value added agriculture as long as I can remember. Always talking about, how do we get out of just

commodities. I mean, it can't be just grow wheat, how do we make pasta? Not
36:07 – 2192
only how do we make pasta, how do we serve pasta in a restaurant? I mean, how do we make sure that that part of the economic benefit stays in our state? And one of the ben—one of the examples she says, which I think is just a hoot, is that in our state, we buy something like a billion dollars worth of cut flowers a year. We grow five percent of them. There's an example. So how do we do the sorts of—I mean, you know, how do you take culture and economics and history and nature and all tie it together into an economic strategy that is sustainable and emancipated, it involves all segments of her society. That's the challenge for us. It can't just be well buy it, lock it up. We'll lose. You can't buy enough. You will never buy enough.
36:52 – 2192
DT: One more question?
TE: Yeah. Oh, sure.
DT: You've been fortunate to visit many places around the world, some of which are very beautiful and give you wonderful release and relaxation. Can you tell about one that is particularly special to you?
37:16 – 2192
TE: Well, I probably should mention the Texas side. I mean, I could certainly mention other parts of the world which I think are very special. A—probably a—I'll mention two in Texas. Certainly the—the—the coast, G—Galveston, particularly. I mean, I just have this relationship with Galveston. Some of my earliest memories are in Galveston, I hope to retire in Galveston, that's where I hope to spend my last days is in Galveston. That's where culture, history and nature blend, to me. I mean, you know, the 1900 storm, a great
37:40 – 2192
natural event, which dramatically impacted history and culture. So, Galveston, certainly. But, in Texas, the other that I would mention is the South Rim. If you—if you hike up to the South Rim and Big Bend and look out across to Mexico, then it—then Texas makes sense to you. It sort of brings it together, just this—the overwhelming power of nature in our state and to see it there, sort of just displayed before you. In fact, I made a—I remember—I can't remember who I was talking to, one of our governors at one point in time. And I said, you know, we really—we really ought to pass a bill that says in order to
38:20 – 2192
run for office in the state of Texas, you have to hike to the South Rim. I mean, it would rid us of people that aren't particularly fit, but the other thing is, how can you understand it? I mean, how can you understand this state, this state where, you know, when we built our capital we didn't have any money. We had lands. We gave them a million acres. It's one of the great ranches in Texas. We paid off—paid them off in land. You have to understand that. It does—it does—it does—it does tie into to this private land ethic in our state, which is as much about sentiment as it about law. It's our connection back to these
38:53 – 2192
great open spaces. And so, the South Rim is a good place to reconnect for me. It sort of brings it all back into—you know, into perspective.
DT: Is there anything you'd like to add?
39:07 – 2192
TE: No. It was enjoyable. I've—you know, th—th—yeah, one last point. Just me personally.

I—I don't really have a chance very often to think back, because I'm really more interested in thinking forward. You know, I'm fifty-two years old and, you know, I'm—I'm—I'm hoping that it's just getting started. That—the—that it took this period of time to—to—to work through some of these details and work through the emotions and
39:35 – 2192
work through, you know, projects. To be able to go out and buy land and understand how that works and what that means and to implement projects like the [Glen] Burney Trail and then see how that works and then be able—finally have this little, you know, bag full of tools that now you can—I feel as though you can start taking these out there and doing something. So, I think for us who have been whacking away at this thing for a while in this state, you know, we got a lot more to do.
40:06 – 2192
DT: Well, good. We'll let you get to it.
[Misc.]
[End of Reel 2192]
[End of Interview with Ted Eubanks]