



Montana
Audubon

SOUTH TEXAS BIRDING 2012

Sunday April 22th- Sunday April 29th

Because of its southern latitude, diverse mix of habitats and unique position along a major migration corridor, South Texas offers a nearly unparalleled opportunity to observe birds in North America. Not only are there a suite of resident species with limited North American ranges like Green Jay, Tropical Parula, Ferruginous Pygmy-owl, Great Kiskadee, Altamira Oriole, Olive Sparrow and more, but in late April, a tremendous variety of neotropical migrants sweep through the area. The first part of this trip will involve birding the spectacular King Ranch (825,000 acres), which encompasses a whole range of habitats from coastal grassland to thorn-scrub brush to stands of live oak that are home to nearly all of the South Texas specialty birds.

The second part of the trip will be in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, home to more birds that have slim U.S. ranges. Throughout the trip we'll have the flexibility to take advantage of favorable weather patterns to visit coastal migrant traps where a vast number and diversity of migrating songbirds can be seen at close range. We will likely see between 175 and 200 species on this tour, possibly more if conditions are good. Brian Williams and Steve Hoffman will be your expert guides. *The cost is \$1795/person which includes double occupancy lodging (single supplement \$350), meals, and transportation from Harlingen, Texas. A \$425/person deposit reserves your place.* Below is a sketch of the trip itinerary:

Sunday, April 22nd:

Arrive in Harlingen Texas.

Dinner and night in Harlingen.

Monday, April 23rd

We'll leave Harlingen before dawn for the 1.5 hour drive north to Kingsville, Texas. Once there, we'll begin by visiting La Copita, a private ranch in the arid western portion of South Texas to look for Ash-throated Flycatcher, Verdin, Cactus Wren, Roadrunner, Black-throated Sparrow, and Painted Bunting.

In the afternoon, we'll begin touring King Ranch, visiting the Santa Gertrudis Division in Kingsville. Here we should begin seeing unique South Texas birds in abundance including: Black-bellied Whistling Duck; Least Grebe, Neotropic Cormorant, Harris' Hawk, White-tailed Hawk, Crested Caracara, Inca Dove, Common Ground Dove, White-tipped Dove, Groove-billed Ani, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Vermillion Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Couch's Kingbird, Scissor-tail Flycatcher, Green Jay, Black-crested Titmouse, Long-billed Thrasher, Olive Sparrow, Cassin's Sparrow, and Bronzed Cowbird.

Night in Kingsville, Texas.

Tuesday, April 24th:

Today we'll visit areas along the mid-Texas coast between Corpus Christi and Port Aransas where there are excellent opportunities for viewing neotropical migrants and coastal birds. Several migrant traps in Port Aransas can be spectacular for warblers, vireos and songbirds if the weather conditions are right (and regardless of weather patterns, these areas are quite productive in later April). We'll also explore the coast line and sand flats for shorebirds, gulls, terns and try our luck again at the grocery store parking lot for Tropical Kingbird.

Night in Kingsville, Texas.

Wednesday, April 25th:

We'll spend today on the Norias Division of King Ranch, home to some of the rarest resident birds in North America. Our target species will include such rarities as Ferruginous Pygmy-owl, which breeds in fairly good numbers on King Ranch, Tropical Parula, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Audubon's Oriole, and Botteri's Sparrow as well as Buff-breasted Hummingbird and Brown-crested Flycatcher.

After leaving Norias, we'll continue down into the Rio Grand Valley and spend the night in McAllen, which will serve as our base of operations to explore the valley the last three days.

Night in McAllen, Texas.

Thursday-Saturday April 26th-28th:

These final three days will be spent in the Rio Grande Valley, a long corridor filled with quality birding locations. We'll leave the itinerary for these days loose to take advantage of weather conditions and rarities that may show up. We'll be looking for Rio Grande specialties like Plain Chachalaca, Altamira Oriole, Clay-colored Robin, Common Parakeet and possibly Gray Hawk or Hook-billed Kite, at some birding gems like Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, Bensen-Rio Grande World Birding Center, Estero Llano Grande, and more. We'll also plan at least one visit to South Padre Island, a wonderful migrant trap with eye-level viewing opportunities for many species of warblers, vireos, thrushes, and more.

Thursday and Friday night in McAllen, Texas

Sunday night in Harlingen to prepare for flights out on Monday.

Sunday, April 29th:

Depart from Harlingen.