

Rio Grande Valley
BIRDING FESTIVAL

Nov. 6-10, 2019



Aplomado Falcon
Falco femoralis
Michael LP. Retter

**HARLINGEN CONVENTION CENTER
701 HARLINGEN HEIGHTS DRIVE - HARLINGEN, TEXAS**

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Red-crowned Parrot Sponsors

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Welcome to the 26th Annual Birding Festival!

If you want to add 30-plus new birds to your life list, memory card, or just your memory, come join us for the 2019 Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival in Harlingen, TX. The dates are Nov 6-10, with pre- and post-trips planned (Upper Texas Coast and El Cielo, Mexico).

Plenty of field trip offerings to the traditional spots, and some new ones added for our return visitors. Special trips in the field with our featured speakers to further demonstrate their presentations will be super exciting. With the coast about 30 miles away, hints of the Chihuahuan Desert only 2 hours to the west, and the ribbon of the Rio Grande to our south, we have lots of habitat and diversity of birds to offer!

We offer field trips, keynote speakers, workshops, fun socials, and lots of birds. Plan to join us in 2019!

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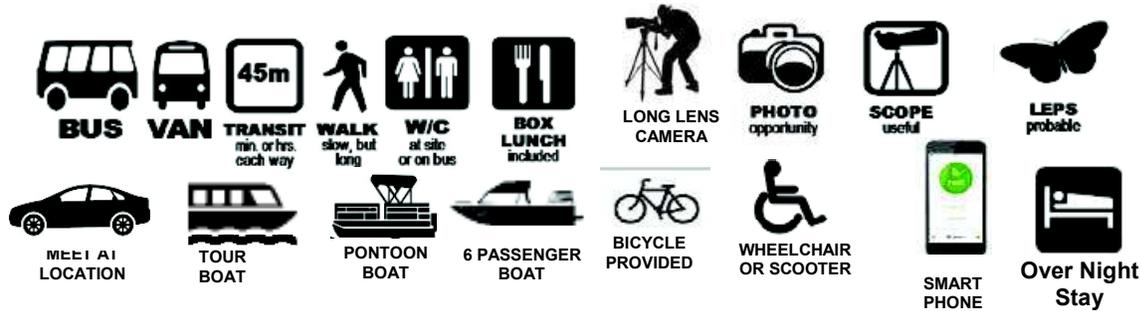
Featured Artist Michael L.P. Retter has been leading field trips at the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival for 18 years. He is the editor of the American Birding Association’s Birder’s Guide magazine, author of the ABA Field Guide to Birds of Illinois, and a part-time tour leader for BRANT Nature Tours.

During college, Michael regularly went on road trips with friends into Mexico over holiday vacations, and he has been tour-leading there ever since. He is currently putting his knowledge of the area’s birds to paper by writing an upcoming Princeton identification guide to the birds of Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize. Michael serves as an eBird reviewer for Mexico, Illinois, and Indiana, where he formerly served as chair of the state records committee. Michael runs QBNA, North America’s informal club for LGBTQ+ birders and their allies. He currently lives and gardens in Fort Worth, Texas.



Photos and Photographers: Thanks to our growing family of photographers who regularly contribute to our Facebook page, and to this (and previous) brochures. Your photos are exquisite, alluring, and enticing. Muchas gracias to our amigos Tamie Bulow, Alicia Cavazos, Chuck Lorenz, Donna McCown, John Saenz, Steve Sinclair, Bill Supulski and Rene Valdes.

FIELD GUIDE TO THE ICONS



The RGVBF has long been known for its low ratio of participants to guides and for the quality of its leaders. Check out the Trip Leaders section on the webpage for a summary of this year's guides. We have an outstanding group of talent this year to guide our field trips. Also expanded this year is the Young Birders track plus a series of trips for photographers, another for mobility-challenged birders.

While we have kept the classic field trips that define our Festival, we have also added a few new locations, and a few twists on old favorites. Click on Trip Worksheet on the webpage for a simple overview of the daily trips. Below is a more detailed daily description of the activities offered.

IMPORTANT NOTES ON TRIPS:

Please stay in Harlingen during the Festival – trips leave early!

For special trips for photographers, see the PhotoTrack section. Most meet at the destination site, except Martin Refuge and Photo Rodeo: Birds in Flight: Hawks and Gulls.

Get eBird checklist daily at rgvbfbird.blogspot.com.

**** Designates a special trip – new offering or distinctive leader or just one scheduled this year.***

Be prepared for South Texas sun and bugs on all trips. Chiggers live here, so stay on paths when on field trips and avoid tall grasses. Bring appropriate remedies if chiggers love you.

Water and water bottles provided. Fill'em up in the Lobby.

Check with driver to be sure your scope and tripod will fit on vans. On bus trips, tripods may need to be stored in luggage area of bus.

Hand-held cameras are fine on most trips; icons just designate a better opportunity.

Cameras with long lenses and tripods cannot be accommodated on van trips other than PhotoTrack. For special trips for photographers, see the PhotoTrack section.

Bus / Van designation may change. We reserve the right to make adjustments as needed.

**** Accessible Birding meets at the destination site.***

*** ACCESSIBLE BIRDING**



with Virginia Rose

Fee \$60 / Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday 8:00am – 12:00pm

Join Virginia (who uses a manual wheelchair) to bird the most accessible sites in the Valley! She knows the birdy sites that are tailor-made for folks with mobility challenges: wheelchairs and scooters are welcomed! We will enjoy the birds at a slower pace without the bushwhacking or dirt paths.

To avoid the difficulty of transporting mobility devices, participants will be given directions to **MEET YOUR RGVBF GUIDES ON SITE**, which is not allowed on regular trips. Limited group size. Please contact us for additional information before registering if you have hesitations or questions.

- Wednesday** – Estero Llano Grande State Park
- Thursday** – Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park
- Friday** – Valley Nature Center
- Saturday** – Quinta Mazatlán
- Sunday** – National Butterfly Center



Note: Restrooms available at each site. Start time quoted is MEETING time at the field trip site. Directions to meeting sites will be given to registered participants at Registration Pick-up.

Targets: See each site listing for details.

ARROYO COLORADO UNIT



with Tony Henehan

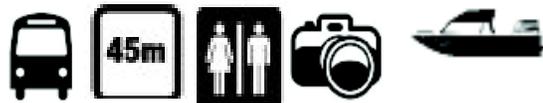
Fee \$90 / Wednesday, Thursday 6:30am – 12:00pm

By special arrangement for the Festival, Wildlife Biologist Tony Henehan will take us on a tour of the closed Arroyo Colorado Unit of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. In recent years, this area of thorn scrub habitat near the Arroyo Colorado has attracted a variety of rarities (including Blue Bunting and Rose-throated Becard). As it is an under-birded tract, the day's list could be surprising.



Targets: Common Ground and White-tipped Doves, Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, Great Kiskadee, Carolina Wren, Long-billed and Curved-billed Thrashers, Olive Sparrow, wintering warblers.

AUDUBON ISLANDS of LAGUNA MADRE with *Stephanie Bilodeau*



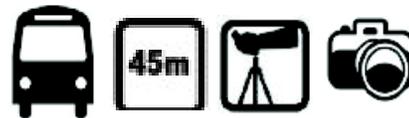
Fee \$110 / Wednesday, Friday 6:30am – 12:30pm

This is a wonderful opportunity for a small group to view some of the spoil islands of Laguna Madre Bay. The islands were created from materials dredged during the construction of the Intracoastal Waterway and, under the protection of the National Audubon Society, are now invaluable habitat for nesting, feeding and roosting waders, shorebirds and larids. Stephanie is the Conservation Biologist with the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program, which has for many years studied and monitored the bird populations of the islands. Participants will divide into two groups upon arrival at the dock and each group will spend half their time on the water and half their time on land, birding the trees, bushes and beachscapes of Adolph Thomae County Park.

Note: Hand-held cameras are appropriate for this boat trip. Restrooms at dock only – no facilities on the boat. It can be cool on the water– bring a jacket.

Targets: Close views of herons and egrets, gulls and terns and, with luck, Mangrove Warbler. The park can hold plenty of migrant and resident passerines.

BAHIA GRANDE UNIT



Fee \$85 / Wednesday, Friday 6:30am – 12:30pm

The ongoing restoration of the Bahia Grande is the most significant environmental success in South Texas in recent years. Over 21,000 acres were acquired as part of Laguna Atascosa NWR in 2000. At that time, because construction of the Intracoastal Waterway had severed its connections to the Bay, Bahia Grande was an arid wasteland with only ephemeral wet areas. New channels have now been excavated, restoring the natural tidal flow. On this trip, we'll have an opportunity to witness the dramatic results and the privilege of birding an area not generally open to the public.

Note: There are no restroom facilities on the Bahia Grande Unit. We plan a restroom stop before and after our birding.

Targets: Herons, egrets, shorebirds, gulls and terns, Aplomado Falcon, White-tailed Hawk, wintering sparrows.



*** BATTLEFIELDS AND BIRDS***with Jon Dunn and Bob Powell**Fee \$65 / Saturday 7:00am – 1:00pm*

Join us on a trip back in history! Did you know expert birder Jon Dunn is quite the history buff, and is passionate about the Civil War? Putting these two resources together - birds and battlefields - for Jon was the perfect combination. The Battle at Palmito Hill, contested more than a month AFTER Lee's surrender to Grant, was the last battle of the Civil War. The Palo Alto Battlefield was where the first battle of the Mexican American War was fought. Both these sites are in the coastal prairie with expansive vistas and, of course, the birds that love these open tracts. Learn about the history and significance of these geographic areas as you appreciate the prairie birds.

Important! Bring photo ID or passport. There is a U.S. Border Patrol Check Station on this route. Make sure you have your driver's license or other official photographic ID with you; participants without proper identification will not be permitted to participate.

Targets: White-tailed Kite, Harris's and White-tailed Hawks, Long-billed Curlew, Couch's Kingbird, Curve-billed Thrasher, Grasshopper Sparrow.

**BENTSEN-RGV STATE PARK***Fee \$75 / Wednesday, Friday, Sunday 6:30am – 12:30pm*

With its 760 acres of land and bird list of 358 species, it's not surprising that this oldest of the South Texas state parks was chosen as the headquarters of the World Birding Center complex. The woodlands are home to many of the Valley's specialties. The hawk tower gives uninterrupted views of the skies, and the gardens surrounding the green-designed Visitor Center are a magnet for butterflies and hummingbirds. If this is your first trip to the Valley, prepare to have an infusion of life birds here!

Targets: Plain Chachalaca, Hook-billed Kite (rare), Gray Hawk, Green Kingfisher, White-tipped Dove, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Black Phoebe, Green Jay, Clay-colored Thrush, Long-billed Thrasher, Olive Sparrow, Altamira Oriole.

**BIG DAY VANS***Fee \$135 / Saturday 6:00am – 4:30pm*

Ever hear about Big Days and wonder what they would be like? Here's your chance to get in on the action on one of our most talked-about trips. Prepare to be flexible, as routes will be chosen by your skilled leaders. Five vans will go outbound for lots of birds and friendly competition. This is a great choice for Festival returnees, Texas Century Club members or listers, as it will be speedy birding. A prize will be given to the participants in the van with the longest list!

Goals: Racking up an impressive day list – Valley specialties, visitors and residents – as many as we can see. This is not leisurely birding – box lunch provided.

BIKING for BIRDS

with Dorian Anderson

Fee \$100 / Thursday, Friday, Saturday 7:00am – 1:00pm



Dorian holds an extraordinary record – 617 species seen in the U.S. in one year (2014) and all strictly under his own steam! During that year, he biked 17,830 miles, walked 493 miles, and canoed 8 miles – and raised some \$50,000 for conservation! On these trips, which will be limited to eight participants each, we'll have the pleasure of biking while birding with Dorian. We will be travelling to and from the park sites in a van, so all our energy will be channeled towards our birding! A new fleet of bikes will be available for all participants on site to ensure a fun ride.

Thursday – Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park (4 miles of paved trails)

Friday – Laguna Atascosa NWR

Saturday – Brownsville area habitats

Goals: Encouraging green birding, enjoying a morning's ride in some of the Valley's most productive birding areas.

*BIRDING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

with Ted Floyd

Fee \$100 / Saturday, Sunday 7:00am – 1:00pm



In this field workshop, Ted will demonstrate examples of birding in an electronic age, expanding on his Thursday presentation. He will be sharing tips on eBirding, recording birds in the field, and more. In addition to seeing lots of great birds, we'll interpret what we're seeing with digital resources like eBird, iNaturalist, small cameras, and pocket recorders. In other words, we'll stop and smell the flowers--take pictures of them and even upload them to global databases. This trip will visit the private Cactus Creek Ranch, located in the coastal prairie near Rio Hondo. Cactus Creek Ranch hosts ongoing research projects on wildlife, including Texas Tortoise and the oldest documented Black-crested Titmouse.

Goals: Putting into practice Ted's concepts on how digital age tools can make birding even more enjoyable. The smartphone in your pocket can be the gateway to all your in-the-field questions.



BOCA CHICA ROAD

Fee \$90 / Thursday, Saturday, Sunday
6:30am – 12:00 noon



We'll explore Boca Chica Road, which parallels the Rio Grande, all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. This area of coastal prairie has abundant areas of salt flats, grasslands and thorn scrub habitats rich in wildlife. The diverse landscape of mottes to dry lagunas offers a wide range of species for us to encounter.

Important! Bring photo ID or passport. We will be passing through a U.S. Border Patrol Check Station along this route. Make sure you have your driver's license or other official photographic ID with you; participants without proper identification will not be permitted to participate.

Note: No restrooms on site, but restroom stops before and after.

Targets: Snowy Plover, Gull-billed Tern, Reddish Egret, White-tailed Kite, Harris's and White-tailed Hawks, Aplomado Falcon, Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds, Chihuahuan Raven, Cassin's Sparrow.

*** BREAKFAST WITH THE BIRDS**

**AT THE INN AT CHACHALACA BEND**

with Pete Dunne, Rick Wright, Jeff Gordon and Ann Nightingale

Fee \$95 / Sunday 7:00am – 12:00pm

Enjoy Texas hospitality and a delicious buffet breakfast on the lush grounds of The Inn at Chachalaca Bend. This event center, set on 41 acres of thriving habitat at the curve of a picturesque resaca, offers birding opportunities before, during and after breakfast. Walk extensive trails and visit birding stations along the way. This is an ideal way to relax and unwind on this last day of the Festival with some of the Festival's original founders and special guests.

Targets: Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Mottled Duck, Plain Chachalaca, Neotropic Cormorant, Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Great Kiskadee, Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds, Black-crested Titmouse, Altamira Oriole.

*** BUTTERFLIES – RGV JEWELS**



Fee \$80 / Friday 9:00am – 2:00pm

Over 300 species of butterflies have been recorded in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, making it by far the richest butterfly area in the U.S. This tour, led by lepidoptera experts, is to our most productive site - the National Butterfly Center in Mission, the flagship of the North American Butterfly Association, with a list of 237 butterflies and over 275 birds. Looking up or down, you won't be disappointed.



Targets: Silver-banded Hairstreak, Red-bordered Pixie, Zebra Heliconian, Malachite, Band-celled Sister, Mexican Bluewing, Guava Skipper, Potrillo Skipper, rarities show up anytime.

COLLEY'S "PRIVATE" ISLAND



with Scarlet & George Colley

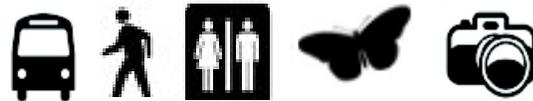
Fee \$135 / Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday 6:00am – 1:00pm

Island naturalists Scarlet and George Colley make this version of a South Padre Island trip very special. Scarlet is well-known for her dolphin research and activism, and for many years both she and George have been leading advocates for Gulf Coast conservation. Enjoy this unique and intimate experience exploring in their pontoon boats (weather permitting), as they share the unique ecosystems of the Laguna Madre.

Note: Although there will be photo opportunities, please only bring hand-held cameras. Most of the morning will be on a small pontoon boat - restrooms at dock only. It can be cool on the boat in mornings – bring your jacket and sunscreen.

Targets: Brown Pelican, Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, Snowy and Piping Plovers, American Oystercatcher, Marbled Godwit, Peregrine Falcon, hopefully Mangrove (Yellow) Warbler. And, of course, dolphins!

EASY (BUT NOT LESS!) BIRDING TOUR



Fee \$85 / Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday 7:00am – 1:00pm

Love birding, but prefer not walking so much? This track is designed for you. *Bird from electric carts or special access van tours that leisurely loop the back roads of famous Valley refuges, getting off at promising vantage points for up-close views of the native wildlife. Walkers, canes and tired joints welcomed!*

Thursday – Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park

Friday – Estero Llano Grande State Park

Saturday – Resaca de la Palma State Park

Sunday – Laguna Atascosa NWR

Note: Getting on and off trams or vans and some walking at site still necessary. Restrooms available at site, but not on vehicles.

Targets: See target birds for each of the destination listed.



eBIRD TIPS AND TRICKS*with eBird Staff of Cornell Labs***Fee \$80 / Wednesday, Thursday 6:30am – 12:30pm**

Want to learn how to get the most out of eBird's free birding tools? Join staff of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird team in the field for insider tips and tricks on becoming a better birder and eBirder. Bring your fully charged smartphone with the free eBird Mobile app downloaded and join in on a birding trip with a side of eBirding! We'll also work on estimating flock size, how and when to use breeding codes, and more. Your local eBird reviewer will love you for it. This is also a terrific opportunity to visit Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, a great venue for a small group, with many of the Valley's specialty birds and always the chance for a rarity!

Goals: Learn how eBird can help you track your sightings, find more birds, and how to become a better eBirder!

**EDINBURG SCENIC
WETLANDS AND
QUINTA MAZATLÁN**
**Fee \$75 / Wednesday, Friday 6:30am – 1:00pm**

Visit two of the nine World Birding Centers on this tour – both inspiring examples of how enlightened local communities can conserve and enhance urban and suburban areas for the benefit of wildlife and the environment. Edinburg Scenic Wetlands has large ponds and smaller water features, birding trails, feeding areas, butterfly gardens, observation platforms and a modern interpretative center set in some 40 acres of native vegetation and wetlands. Quinta Mazatlán is a wonderfully restored adobe hacienda surrounded by 15 acres of sub-tropical gardens and native woodlands with birding trails, statuary, lively feeding stations and attractive water features.

Targets: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Plain Chachalaca, White-tipped Dove, Eastern Screech-Owl, Common Pauraque, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Green Kingfisher, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Green Parakeet, Great Kiskadee, Green Jay, Clay-colored Thrush, Long-billed Thrasher, Olive Sparrow, Altamira Oriole.

**ESTERO LLANO GRANDE
GRAND TOUR**
**Fee \$75 / Thursday, Saturday, Sunday 6:30am – 12:30pm**

Diverse habitat zones attract lots of different species of birds, making this site one of the most popular World Birding Center sites. Reclaimed wetlands, marshes and ponds, all contiguous to the Arroyo Colorado, are ideal habitats for shorebirds, waders, and waterfowl. Add boardwalks, birding trails through woodlands and thorn scrub, a touch of prairie, native butterfly gardens and a green-design visitor center with a super observation deck, and you'll see why Estero Llano Grande State Park is a favorite of local birders.

Targets: Cinnamon Teal, Least Grebe, Sora, Anhinga, Roseate Spoonbill, Common Pauraque, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Green Kingfisher, Eastern Screech-Owl, Vermilion Flycatcher, wintering warblers and sparrows, and a random alligator or two.

KING RANCH NORIAS

with Tom Langschied

Fee \$125 / Thursday, Friday, Sunday 6:00am – 1:00pm



One of the largest ranches in the world (larger than the state of Rhode Island), the King Ranch is a magical place. The Norias Division, known for more resident Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls than anywhere else in the US, is only open to the Festival at this time of year. The sandy soils of Norias support extensive areas of grasslands, thorn scrub and live oak woodlands, whose mottes hold the avian treasures we seek. Lead guides for this trip are specialists for the King Ranch and are passionate and knowledgeable about the role of the ranch and the wildlife it supports.

Targets: Wild Turkey, Harris’s and White-tailed Hawks, Crested Caracara, Greater Roadrunner, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Vermilion Flycatcher, Sprague’s Pipit, Audubon’s Oriole, maybe even a Tropical Parula.



KLEBERG COUNTY ROMP

Fee \$110 / Wednesday, Thursday 6:00am – 4:30pm



Kleberg County offers a myriad of delights, from random wetlands to open country, agricultural fields to oak mottes, and the diversity of wildlife that lives there. On this trip, we’ll be visiting the most productive wetlands and hotspots to amass a good list. This is an excellent trip for county listers as well as visitors to the region. The trip will be limited to eight participants. Stops will be made at public restrooms, and we will have a box lunch along the way.

Important! Bring photo ID or passport. There is a U.S. Border Patrol Check Station on U.S. 77 northbound. Make sure you have your driver’s license or other official photographic ID with you; participants without proper identification will not be permitted to board the vans.

Targets: Waterfowl, waders, shorebirds, sparrows plus White-tailed and Harris’s Hawk, Crested Caracara.

LAGUNA ATASCOSA NWR LAKESIDE DRIVE



Fee \$90 / Thursday, Saturday 6:30am – 12:30pm

Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge is the largest protected area of natural habitat left in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. We will be joined by a refuge volunteer who will take us into the wetlands, mottes, and salt flats behind the closed gates of this 97,000-acre refuge (roads permitting). This tour will go around the lake that gives the refuge its name. The fresh-water Laguna Atascosa is the local saloon for Redheads wintering on the hyper-saline Laguna Madre Bay, where 70% of the world's Redhead population congregates in winter.

Targets: American Wigeon, Redhead, Greater Roadrunner, Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, Clapper Rail, Sora, Royal Tern, Peregrine Falcon, Couch's Kingbird, Great Kiskadee, and always a chance at a rarity (Blue Bunting, Rufous-backed Robin, and Fork-tailed Flycatcher have been a few).

* LAS ESTRELLAS and RANCHO LOMITAS



with Rich Kostecke

Fee \$110/ Wednesday, Friday 5:30am – 3:00pm

This is a special trip for birders, botanists, butterflyers and anyone with an interest in the history of the Valley. We'll initially visit Las Estrellas, a preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy near Rio Grande City, not generally open to the public. It is best known for its flora including the endangered Star Cactus, but it has many of the representative bird species of the area. A picnic lunch at Benito Trevino's Rancho Lomitas will give us the chance to explore some special spots at the ranch on foot.

Targets: Scaled Quail, Crested Caracara, Greater Roadrunner, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Verdin, Black-throated Sparrow, Pyrrhuloxia, and Audubon's Oriole.

* LEARNING HOW TO LISTEN



with Michael O'Brien

Fee \$100 / Thursday, Sunday 6:30am – 12:00pm

Join this well-known guide, author, and illustrator (*Larkwire*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, *The Shorebird Guide*, *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*) in this field workshop designed to develop and improve your ability to describe and identify bird songs and calls. Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, with its mix of thorn scrub, woodlands, and freshwater wetlands, will provide a rich diversity of bird sounds.

Goals: Improving field identification skills, learning how to listen to birds and identify some bird calls and songs of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

FIELD TRIPS

26th Annual RGVBF

* LEARNING THE SPARROWS



FIELD WORKSHOP

with Rick Wright

Fee \$100 / Friday, Saturday 6:30am – 12:30pm

Little Brown Jobs can be such a frustration in the field. This trip will focus on sparrows, a large chunk of the LBJ family. What better way to build on Wednesday's workshop than spending some time in the field with Rick, putting your new knowledge into practice. We'll explore the back roads of Hidalgo County in our search for all things sparrow – and other birds of the open range as well.

Goals: Employ the skills learned in Rick's workshop in the field, as you continue to learn from the master.

McALLEN NATURE CENTER and SAN JUAN WETLANDS

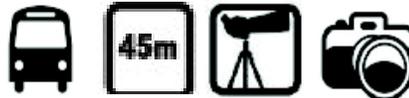


Fee \$90 / Wednesday 7:00am – 1:00pm

The McAllen Nature Center has quickly become a local favorite. We'll explore the trail system through native brush, and spend some time watching the feeding stations. This urban park has had some exciting sightings in the past year which further underlines its importance in the Valley. Afterwards we'll visit the San Juan Wetlands with reclaimed marshes and a host of wetland birds.

Targets: Plain Chachalaca, Green Kingfisher, Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds, Clay-colored Thrush, Curve-billed and Long-billed Thrashers, Olive Sparrow, waterfowl.

OLD PORT ISABEL ROAD – APLOMADO ALLEY



Fee \$90 / Thursday, Friday, Sunday 7:00am – 1:00pm

Aplomado Falcons disappeared from South Texas in the 1950s, but a successful Peregrine Fund reintroduction program was begun in earnest in 1993. Now over 30 breeding pairs grace the coastal prairies, and Old Port Isabel Road cuts right through this expanse. Join the search to see this beautiful species, other local raptors, and often a good variety of sparrows. OPI Road is a bit of a misnomer – think dirt road with two tracks.

Note: If the road is impassable due to recent wet weather, we'll seek the falcons elsewhere. Restrooms are limited, but we will stop before and after birding.

Targets: Aplomado Falcon, Long-billed Curlew, White-tailed Kite, White-tailed and Harris's Hawks, Crested Caracara, Cactus Wren, Cassin's Sparrow, Sprague's Pipit, wintering sparrows.



*ORNITHOLOGY & MORE

with Jon Dunn

Fee \$110 / Wednesday, Friday 7:00am – 1:00pm



Join Jon Dunn for this special trip to Estero Llano Grande State Park. Jon's interest in taxonomy and the history of ornithology are common subjects during his guided tours. This special tour will give you a different way to use a field guide as well as insights into ornithology past and present. The birdy Estero Llano Grande, with its varied habitats, is a wonderful site for this field workshop and will surely spur lively dialogue.

Goals: Developing a deeper understanding of birds and bird identification and honing field-craft skills.

PARROTS OF THE AREA

Fee \$40 / Thursday, Friday, Saturday 4:00pm – 6:00pm



The Valley is home to several large flocks of Red-crowned Parrots – possibly more than are left in all of Mexico at this time. As part of the Tejano Parrot Project, these flocks have been studied and tracked for three years now, to better understand their behavior and habits for conservation purposes. The Harlingen flock, while predictable, is always a chase. Join the search (we need everyone's eyes and ears) as the parrots come in for their final feeding frenzy prior to roosting. These countable parrots, noisy as they are, can instantly go quiet, once roosted. The antics of the younger parrots can be quite entertaining. Come see why these colorful and personable parrots have captured our hearts and were again chosen as a 2019 Giving Back Donation Project recipient.

Note: Guides will not keep an official eBird list for this trip, so you can keep your own.

Targets: Red-crowned Parrot and Green Parakeet. watch for Red-lore and jumbo Yellow-headed Parrots in the mix (not ABA countable, yet).





PORT MANSFIELD

Fee \$115 / Wednesday, Friday 6:30am – 4:00pm

This trip will be an exploration of parts of Willacy County – the least birded county in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. There will be potential stops as we pass through Sacahuistale Flats and head to the Laguna Madre Bay, which is our picnic lunch destination. New birding boardwalks and viewing platforms at the nature center afford additional vistas, while the fishing pier and sand flats always attract shorebirds. On the way back in the afternoon, we'll concentrate on the many seasonal freshwater wetlands in the area. Stops will be made at public restrooms.

Targets: Waterfowl, herons and egrets, shorebirds, raptors, Cassin's Sparrow, wintering sparrows.



***RAPTOR BANDING**

with Bill Clark

Fee \$95/ Saturday 8:00am –2:00pm

A great opportunity for close encounters with birds of prey (and prime photo ops) with one of the world's leading raptor experts and author of the *Peterson Field Guide to the Hawks of North America*, *A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors*, and *Raptors of Mexico and Central America*. Join Bill as he shares information from research on Harris's and White-tailed Hawks – marveling as he captures, measures, and bands these and other magnificent raptors of South Texas. Please consider a donation for the continuation of research on Harris's Hawks as part of our annual Giving Back Project options.

Note: Restroom stops intermittent. This will be a birding trip in case of inclement weather.

Targets: (In the hand and/or in the field) Harris's, White-tailed and Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrel and any other inquisitive raptor that is lured in.

RESACA DE LA PALMA STATE PARK & UNIVERSITY RESACAS



Fee \$90 / Thursday 7:00am – 1:00pm

Resaca de la Palma State Park, one of the World Birding Centers, comprises some 1200 acres of protected land, including a large tract of native thorn scrub and woodlands and some particularly attractive wetlands. It's one of the less birded reserves in the Valley and every visit still has the feel of an adventure. Afterwards we'll go urban and visit the tree-lined resacas on the campus of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (Brownsville) and its surrounds.

Targets: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Least Grebe, White-tailed Kite, Groove-billed Ani (rare), Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Green Kingfisher, Red-crowned Parrot, Green Parakeet, Great Kiskadee, Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds, Black Phoebe, Bewick's Wren, wintering passerines.



RIVER PONTOON & ANZALDUAS

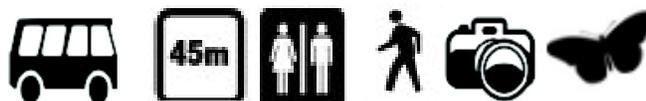
Fee \$110 / Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday 6:00am – 1:00pm

Board the large and comfortable *Riverside Dreamer* and see the Rio Grande River in a delightful new way. The vegetated banks on either side can yield many of our area's exceptional species of passerines and raptors, with other exciting possibilities lurking. Back on land, a visit to Anzalduas County Park will show the river from another perspective and you'll understand why this riverside area's fame goes beyond its county park status. The mature ash and Live Oak trees can hold a wide variety of species, both resident and rare.



Note: It can be cool on the boat in the mornings – bring a jacket.

Targets: Hook-billed Kite (rare), Gray Hawk, Ringed and Green Kingfishers, Black Phoebe, Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds, Green Jay, Clay-colored Thrush, Long-billed and Curve-billed Thrashers, Olive Sparrow, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Altamira Oriole, wintering warblers.



SABAL PALM SANCTUARY

Fee \$65 / Friday, Saturday 6:30am – 12:30pm

The Sabal Palm Sanctuary is managed by the Gorgas Science Foundation and they have done a wonderful job of enhancing the already outstanding habitats and restoring the historic Rabb Plantation House, now the sanctuary's impressive headquarters. The forest of native Sabal Palms is the last major remnant of an ecosystem once much more widespread in the Valley and is unique in the U.S. Its shady depths and managed waterways shelter a remarkable diversity of wildlife, revealed to us along the trails and overlooks. Several feeding stations and butterfly gardens provide photo ops - see the live action cam on their website for a preview of what is to come!

Targets: Least Grebe, Plain Chachalaca, Groove-billed Ani (rare), Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Ringed and Green Kingfishers, Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds, Clay-colored Thrush, Hooded and Altamira Orioles, Olive Sparrow, wintering warblers.





SANTA ANA NWR

Fee \$65 / Thursday, Friday, Saturday 6:30am – 12:30pm

Widely famous and justly so, especially in the news this past year. With the second highest bird count (after Laguna Atascosa) in the entire NWR system, the riparian woodlands and multiple waterways of Santa Ana are a great place to experience many of the Valley’s compelling species. An added attraction is the 40’ hawk-watch tower and suspended walkway, offering delightful views of birds and their habitat from above the forest canopy.

Targets: Mottled Duck, Plain Chachalaca, Least Grebe, Long-billed Dowitcher, Groove-billed Ani (rare), Ringed and Green Kingfishers, Northern Beardless -Tyrannulet, Vermilion Flycatcher, Green Jay, Clay-colored Thrush, Olive Sparrow. This is a terrific place for rarities to show up.



SANTA MARGARITA BLUFFS

Fee \$125 / Wednesday, Saturday 5:00am – 2:00pm

This special edition of our Upper Rio Grande trip will visit the nearby Santa Margarita Bluffs on a private ranch overlooking the Rio Grande. We will walk on uneven and sometimes steep ground a short distance to the bluffs. The vista provided by this elevated bluff gives us a better chance for some difficult species including Muscovy Duck, Red-billed Pigeon, and raptors. After we’ve had our fill of this very scenic spot, we’ll head to Salineño for a riverside view and a visit to the well-stocked feeding station with a seating gallery.

Targets: Muscovy Duck (rare), Hook-billed Kite (rare), Gray Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk (rare), Red-billed Pigeon (rare), Common Ground Dove, White-tipped Dove, Greater Roadrunner, Green and Ringed Kingfishers, Bewick’s Wren, Verdin, Pyrrhuloxia, Altamira and Audubon’s Orioles.



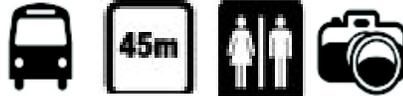
SHOREBIRD ID FIELD WORKSHOP

Fee \$95 / Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday 6:00am – 1:00pm

How about a trip focused on the identification of a group of birds that often confounds and befuddles, especially out of breeding season? Join expert guides on this in-depth field trip to hone your shorebird identification skills. Suitable for birders of all levels. Space will be limited, but with a small group, lucky participants will have an unforgettable experience. While shorebirds are the emphasis, we’ll look at and enjoy all the birds we see!

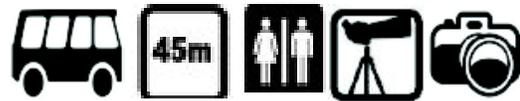


Targets: Willet, Least/Western/Semipalmated Sandpipers, Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, and so on with plovers, gulls and terns.

SONGBIRD BANDING****with Mark Conway*Fee \$95 / Sunday 7:30am – 12:00pm**

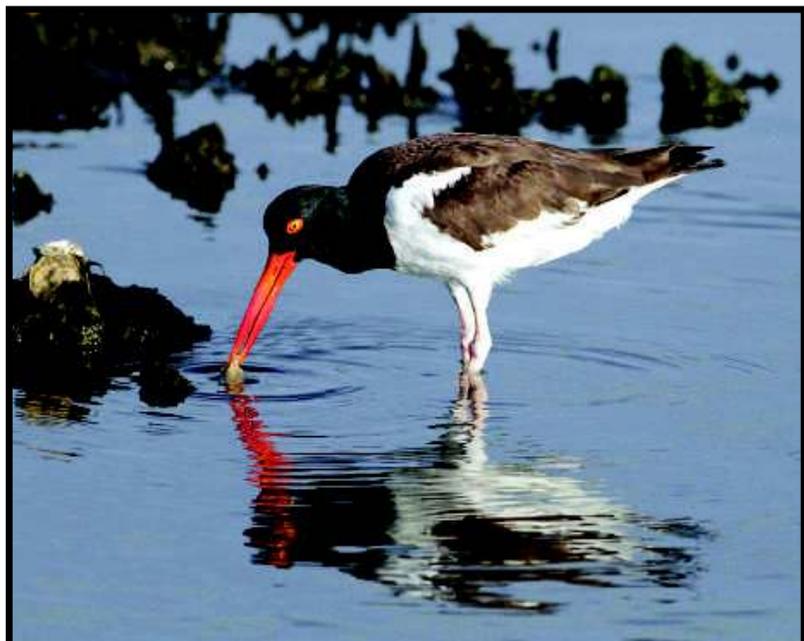
Have you ever had the thrill of releasing a banded bird? Join biologist and educator Mark Conway for some close encounters with Valley specialties in the picturesque, birdy grounds of historic Quinta Mazatlán. Mark will be demonstrating the skills of bird banding and explaining the key role it plays in his long-term studies of bird populations in the Valley. Seeing birds “in the hand” will give you a totally different perspective in your pursuit of becoming a better birder. Between captures, enjoy the many birds of the property flying around you.

Targets (both in hand and in field): White-tipped Dove, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Great Kiskadee, Green Jay, Clay-colored Thrush, Altamira Oriole, Olive Sparrow, Plain Chachalaca.

***SOUTH PADRE ISLAND BIRDING AND NATURE CENTER****Fee \$80 / Thursday 6:30am – 12:30pm**

The Birding and Nature Center was built as a wing of the World Birding Center and has over 3300 feet of boardwalk! The boardwalk spans salt and brackish marsh and lagoons, and often yields surprising sightings - rails can be quite accommodating. After we have checked out the native gardens on site, we'll make a stop at Valley Land Fund's Sheepshead lots to see what might be present at the water features. Late fall has turned up a number of surprises.

Targets: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Redhead, Least Bittern, Neotropic Cormorant, Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, Clapper Rail, Sora, Royal Tern, Peregrine Falcon, Tropical Kingbird, Great Kiskadee, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Marsh Wren and a long list more.



**SOUTH PADRE ISLAND
and BAY CRUISE**



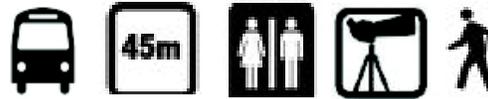
Fee \$110 / Friday, Saturday 6:00am – 1:00pm

Seeing shorebirds in the winter reminds us that this sub-tropical paradise is forever promising, and that winter is miles away. Explore boardwalks over coastal marsh, visit the concentrated woodlots and enjoy a leisurely cruise aboard a pontoon party boat on the salty Laguna Madre, amidst Bottlenose Dolphins and avian flyovers. Always a popular trip, so sign up early.

Note: It can be cool on the boat – bring your jacket.

Targets: Redhead, Brown Pelican, Least Bittern, Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, Neotropic Cormorant, Peregrine Falcon, Clapper Rail, Sora, Snowy and Piping Plovers, American Oystercatcher, Marbled Godwit, Forster’s/Royal/Caspian/Sandwich Terns, Black Skimmer, Marsh Wren, lingering migrant songbirds.

SOUTHMOST PRESERVE



Fee \$90 / Thursday, Friday 6:00am – 12:30pm

Adjacent to the Sabal Palm Sanctuary is a little-known jewel of shared habitat – the Nature Conservancy’s Southmost Preserve. We are being allowed access by special arrangement, so don’t miss the chance to visit this unique area of Sabal Palms and riparian woodland, home to many of our Valley specialties. Using our vans will allow us access to remote areas (weather permitting) that were inaccessible on past trips.

Targets: White-tailed Kite, Harris’s and White-tailed Hawks, Couch’s Kingbird, Hooded and Altamira Orioles, Olive Sparrow, wintering warblers.

UPPER RIO GRANDE



Fee \$110 / Thursday, Friday 5:00am – 2:00pm

Luckily for us, birds don’t recognize our international borders. The Rio Grande’s wooded edges and the arid uplands of Starr County are rich with both riparian sub-tropical and desert southwest species. The feeding station at Salineño is always a highlight with a colorful frenzy of orioles, Great Kiskadees, and Green Jays! Some rare specialty birds are found along the Rio Grande in this area, and we’ll certainly look, in hopes of seeing them. After we’ve enjoyed the beautiful view of the Rio, we’ll drive up the road to Falcon State Park, where we’ll look for desert specialties. Ideal for those Texas Century Club members building a Starr County list.

Targets: Gray and Zone-tailed Hawks (rare), Red-billed Pigeon (rare), Common Ground Dove, White-tipped Dove, Greater Roadrunner, Green and Ringed Kingfishers, Cactus Wren, Verdin, Morelet’s Seedeater (rare), Black-throated Sparrow, Pyrrhuloxia, Hooded (rare)/ Altamira/ Audubon’s Orioles.



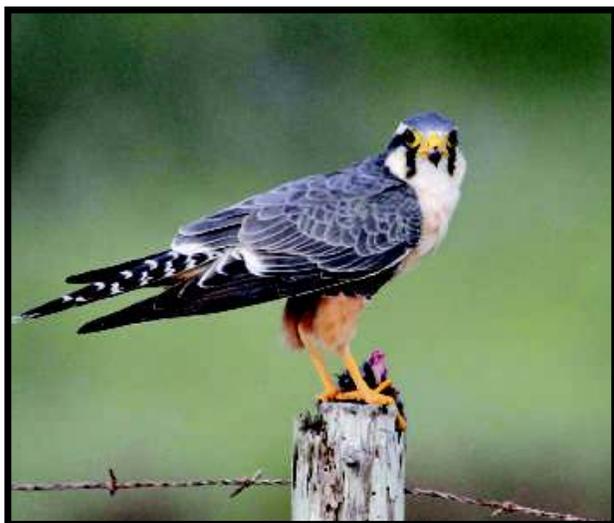
***VALLEY RAPTORS**

with Bill Clark

Fee \$110 / Wednesday 6:30am – 4:00pm



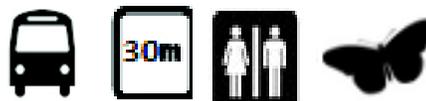
Many birders have a special fondness for hawks. Judging by the number of species nesting in, migrating through, or wintering in the Valley, raptors seem to have a similar feeling for the Valley. On this special trip, led by Harlingen resident and world-renowned raptor expert Bill Clark (*Peterson Guide to Hawks, A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors, Raptors of Central America*), we'll try our best to see as wide a variety of species as possible as we traverse the 5-county area. Tips from Bill on hawk ID – priceless!



Targets: White-tailed Hawk, Hook-billed Kite (very rare in recent years), White-tailed Kite, Gray Hawk, Harris's Hawk, Crested Caracara, Aplomado Falcon and any other raptors that cross our path.

WESLACO'S URBAN OASES

Fee \$95 / Wednesday, Saturday 7:00am – 1:00pm



On this leisurely tour, we'll visit two urban gems in Weslaco – the 15 acres of Frontera Audubon Thicket and the 6 acres of the Valley Nature Center. But don't be misled by their size – both have attracted an impressive array of Mexican vagrants, including a Crimson-collared Grosbeak found on a previous Festival tour. With their wonderful mix of thorn brush, wetlands and butterfly gardens, each provides nesting habitat for many of our Valley specialties and a haven for wintering passerines. Time and conditions permitting, we will stop at a local sod farm on our return trip.

Targets: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Plain Chachalaca, Common Ground Dove, White-tipped Dove, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Green Kingfisher, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds, Green Jay, Clay-colored Thrush, Long-billed and Curve-billed Thrashers, Olive Sparrow, Altamira Oriole, Lesser Goldfinch.



WHERE THE LOCALS BIRD



*Fee \$100 / Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday – Cameron County South and West
6:30am – 1:00pm*

Wednesday, Friday, Sunday – Cameron County North and East 6:30am-1:00pm

Thursday, Saturday – Hidalgo County 6:30am – 1:00pm

Every avid birder knows those special little pocket locations that are close to home and sure to contribute to a productive day of birding. If you are lucky enough to live in the Rio Grande Valley, these seasonal jewels become regular stops on any given day. Join some of our leading local birders as they share these spots to bird on the road less traveled in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties. Ideal for Texas Century Club county listers.

Note: There are no specific targets. Multiple habitat zones will be visited in each county to maximize sightings. Participants (no more than eight per trip) will see many Valley specialties and perhaps flush out a surprise or two.

***YOUNG BIRDERS**



Fee \$80 / Wednesday, Friday, Sunday 6:00am – 12:30pm

Fee \$125 / Thursday, 6:00am – 1:00pm

Fee \$125 / Saturday 5:00am – 2:00pm (lunch included)

Lucky young birders (age 12-20 only) will join our expert guides for exclusive field trips, limited to 10 participants. Each guide is experienced in working with teens. For bus trips, the Young Birders will have their own guide. Destinations will vary each day, as do target species, but sign up for each day for the full valley-wide experience! If this is your first trip to the Valley, be prepared to have your mind blown.

Wednesday – with Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis to Estero Llano Grande State Park (van)

Thursday – with Jennie Duberstein to King Ranch (bus)

Friday – with Jennie Duberstein to Santa Ana NWR (bus or van)

Saturday – with Michael Retter to Santa Margarita Bluffs (box lunch) (bus)

Sunday – with Michael Retter clean-up trip (van)

ALERT: for Boca Chica Road, Battlefields and Kleberg County Romp trips:

Participants without proper ID will not be permitted to board vehicles. **U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Check Stations** are involved with these trips. Each vehicle is subject to a quick inspection and basic questions. The process is routine, most stops are brief. All passengers need to carry one piece of proper identification (Driver's License, Passport, Student ID card) to verify U.S. Citizenship. Foreign nationals must have all appropriate documentation to avoid delay or detainment. Border Patrol agents are required to determine the immigration status of every traveler.



NORTHEAST TEXAS PINEY WOODS AND COASTAL MARSHES!

with Glenn Olsen and additional guide(s) as needed.

Fee \$ 825 double occupancy, \$ 175 single supplement

6:00pm Saturday, Nov 2 – 10:30am Tuesday, Nov 5

The piney woods and marshes of northeastern Texas are home to a wide variety of birds not found in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. We'll explore the pine forests north of Houston before heading to the coastal prairie and hardwoods of Beaumont/Port Arthur to the east. The restricted range of the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker is found here; this colonial nesting woodpecker is a piney woods specialty bird.

Locations to be visited include:

W. G. Jones State Forest specialty birds including Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine Warbler, Eastern Bluebird, Brown Thrasher and many others.

Tyrrell Park and Cattail Marsh The 350 species of birds recorded here is an amazing record and it is a birder's haven. The new boardwalk features two covered platforms, jutting more than 500 feet out over the water, to afford delightful looks at the abundant wildlife.

During our trip, we will sort out the American Crow from the Fish Crow, a great opportunity to see both species in the same day. Same with Boat-tailed vs. Great-tailed Grackle. We will look for the beautiful but overdressed Wood Duck, the stunning Cinnamon Teal (uncommon), the elegant Anhinga, the elusive King Rail, the Pileated Woodpecker (the largest woodpecker in North America), and hopefully, the swamp-loving Barred Owl. The stunning Red-headed Woodpecker and the Great Horned Owl are found here, as well as many more winter migrant species.

We plan to bird **Sabine Woods**. This bird sanctuary is an excellent site for wintering warblers, thrushes and other songbirds.

Sea Rim State Park. where we will search for swallows, gulls, terns, pelicans, sandpipers, plovers, and a variety of other shorebirds, rails, and raptors.

At **McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge** the habitat consists of salt marsh with bayous and channels. Here we'll look for rails, egrets, herons, gulls, terns, and Common Yellowthroat, and watch the skies for hawks.

Detailed instructions concerning hotels and directions will be emailed to each registrant prior to the trip. The trip includes all meals from dinner on Saturday to breakfast on Tuesday. All alcoholic beverages will be at your individual expense. Flight not included.

For full itinerary, see www.rgvbf.org/schedule/special-trips/.

Call (956) 423-5565 for registration questions.

**EL CIELO BIOSPHERE
RESERVE – BIRDING HEAVEN**



with Rene Valdes, Jorge Montejo, Mary Gustafson, plus local leaders

Fee: Single \$1,495 – Double \$ 1,295 – Triple \$1,275 /

6:30am Monday, Nov 11 –6:00pm Friday, Nov 15

Operated by GO WITH JO TOURS – (956) 423-1446

Less than six hours south of the Lower Rio Grande Valley is a magical mountain range that is home to many tropical birds not found in the United States. The name, El Cielo, says it all – this is heaven to birders! The El Cielo Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO site of international significance, offers cloud forest, dense tropical forest, cascading waterfalls, dramatic vistas, and enchanting birds. This is our second year offering a post-festival trip to El Cielo after a hiatus of several years. You can see the results of our 2018 post-festival trip at <https://rgvbfbird.blogspot.com/2018/11/el-cielo-species-list-november-12-16.html>. We are delighted to return to El Cielo and to the diversity of tropical birds found there (255 resident species plus 175 migratory visitors), and the welcoming local communities. Reading a list of bird names is an adventure in taxonomy for a location so close to the US border: Blue-capped Motmot, Lineated Woodpecker, Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, Crescent-chested Warbler, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Spot-breasted Wren, Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush, Blue Mockingbird, Golden-browed Warbler, Yellow-winged Tanager, Melodious Blackbird, to name a few. While this trip is a sampler trip, designed to whet your interest for birding in these magical mountains, we will seek the specialty endemic birds of the area including Tamaulipas Pygmy-Owl, Tamaulipas Crow (locally rare in winter), Altamira Yellowthroat, Crimson-collared Grosbeak, and the Golden-olive (Bronze-winged) Woodpecker. We visit this forested karst topography, 560 square miles of steep mountains and valleys, at the start of the dry season – to enjoy the water pools, lush scenery, and wondrous sounds surrounding them.

For full itinerary, visit www.rgvbf.org/schedule/special-trips/, or call (956) 423-5565.



The RGVBF PHOTOTRACK

Our newly designed and expanded 2019 PhotoTrack is sure to generate excitement, with topics ranging from Digiscoping to 4/3 Cameras to Point-and-Shoot to long lenses. We offer something for every interest level and ability. Indoor classroom topics on photo processing, in-the-field excursions to get hands-on experience, guidance from professionals, action shots, and demystifying those settings are some highlights of the new format. If you are new to digiscoping, you can learn from the master, Clay Taylor. If you're looking to get those crushing Crested Caracara photos, try the Martin Refuge for fantastic photo ops in natural settings. Both the Photo Rodeos and the Point-and-Shoots will touch on every aspect of nature photography to enhance your knowledge and skills.

Note: All trips (*other than Martin Refuge and Photo Rodeo: Photographing Birds in Flight- Gulls and Hawks*) meet on site – directions to PhotoTrack destinations will be provided in your registration packets.

*DIGISCOPING DEMYSTIFIED CLASSROOM

with Clay Taylor, Swarovski Optik Ltd.

Fee \$20 / Thursday 3:30– 5:00pm

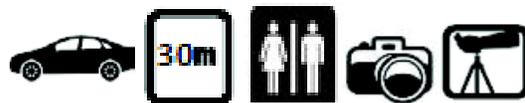
This indoor workshop, sponsored by Swarovski Optik, will explain digiscoping – the process of attaching a digital camera or phone to a spotting scope. The workshop will be conducted by Clay Taylor, the Naturalist Market Manager with Swarovski Optik Ltd and a pioneer of digiscoping in the U.S. Clay will cover scope and camera equipment, attachment devices, and tips for success. This class can be taken in conjunction with Digiscoping on the Deck as a field experience or it can be a stand-alone class. Meet at the Harlingen Convention Center assigned breakout room.

Goals: Understand the best ways to use your scope as a long lens to get the best up-close shots from a basic camera.

DIGISCOPING FROM THE DECK

with Clay Taylor, Swarovski Optik Ltd.

Fee \$20 / Saturday 2:00pm – 5:00pm



This workshop, sponsored by Swarovski Optik, is designed to help digiscopers with all levels of experience but will be particularly valuable for struggling beginners. It will be conducted by Clay Taylor, the Naturalist Market Manager with Swarovski Optik Ltd and a pioneer of digiscoping in the U.S. **Meet onsite** at the deck at Estero Llano Grande State Park Visitor Center. Clay will cover setups, camera settings, field-shooting techniques and reviews of images. Please bring all your equipment including spotting scope, tripod, camera and adapter, fully charged batteries and empty memory cards. If you do not have a spotting scope, let Clay know in advance at Clay.Taylor@swarovskioptik.us. Clay will also have digiscoping adapters for DSLR cameras and smart phones available.

LAGUNA SECA RANCH

with Ruth Hoyt

Fee \$125 / Thursday, Saturday, Sunday 7:00am – 11:30am



Laguna Seca Ranch is renowned for their photo blinds. This world class location is opening their property for a special photo opportunity for a small number of participants. After **meeting at the ranch** gates at 7am, you will be escorted to a shared blind with the opportunity to photograph songbirds that are attracted to the water feature or food near the blind. Bathrooms on premises. Photo ops suitable for all hand-held cameras and those requiring tripods.

Important: Meet promptly at the ranch gate, directions provided.

MARTIN REFUGE

Fee \$200 / Wednesday, Friday, Sunday 6:00am – 1:45pm



The Martin Refuge, owned by John and Audrey Martin, has hosted wildlife photographers since 2003 on its 300 acres of thorn scrub enhanced by water features and professionally designed photo-blinds. It is particularly renowned for the opportunities it affords to photographers for close views of Crested Caracaras, Harris’s Hawks and other raptors. This trip is an excellent opportunity for behavioral observation and study as well. Patty Raney of Martin Refuge will guide us to the blinds for this unique chance to get great shots of wildlife at this private ranch. After a morning of photography with the raptors, the Martins will be providing us with lunch at an open air palapa.

The trip will be limited to eight participants and is suitable for photographers of all levels. Bring lots of batteries – there is no electricity on site. Restroom available.

PHOTO RODEO: INTRODUCTION to BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY

– Estero Llano Grande State Park

with Tropical Birding

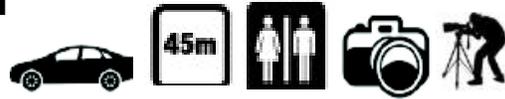
Fee \$50 / Thursday 7:00am – 12:00pm



This workshop is targeted at those who are relatively new to bird photography. We’ll **meet onsite** at Estero Llano Grande State Park Visitor Center. We’ll start with a classroom get-acquainted session going over photo equipment, camera settings, and more before heading into the field to get some guidance and hands-on experience.

Goals: Get jump-started on bird photography with proper instruction.

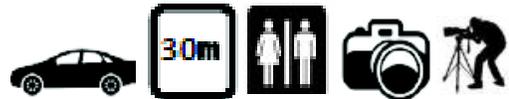
**PHOTO RODEO: INTRODUCTION
to BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY**
– National Butterfly Center
with Tropical Birding
Fee \$50 / Saturday 8:00am – 12:00pm



This workshop is targeted at those who are relatively new to bird photography. **Meet onsite** at the National Butterfly Center. We'll start with a classroom get-acquainted session going over photo equipment, camera settings, and more before heading into the field to get some guidance and hands-on experience. The National Butterfly Center's well-stocked feeders will provide a variety of subjects for practice, and we'll explore the property for other subjects.

Goals: Get jump-started on bird photography with proper instruction.

**PHOTO RODEO: PHOTOGRAPHING
BIRDS IN FLIGHT – Herons and Waterbirds**
with Tropical Birding
Fee \$50 / Sunday 7:30am – 12:00pm



Meet onsite at the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center. We'll start in the classroom before heading onto the back deck and boardwalk. Our focus will be on technique rather than species diversity. We'll explore the coastal marsh on boardwalks and practice with many gulls, terns, or herons.

Goals: Increase your skills photographing birds in flight.

**PHOTO RODEO: PHOTOGRAPHING
BIRDS IN FLIGHT – Gulls and Hawks**
with Tropical Birding
Fee \$75 / Friday 7:30am – 12:30pm



We'll meet at the Harlingen Convention Center for an orientation inside before riding in RGVBF vehicles (required) to the Brownsville Scenic Landfill. Our focus will be on technique rather than species diversity. We'll explore the dump and practice with many gulls, Crested Caracara, or White-tailed Hawks. We'll try to work on action photography in backlit or rapidly changing light conditions. Restroom stops before and after our session at the landfill.

Note: Site may be changed in the event of adverse road conditions or inclement weather.

Goals: Increase your skills photographing perched and flying birds in an open setting.

PHOTO RODEO: CLASSROOM WORKSHOP – INTRODUCTION to PHOTO PROCESSING

with Tropical Birding

Fee \$20 / Thursday, Saturday 1:30pm-3:00pm

We'll meet at the new Harlingen Convention Center for this indoor workshop. This class breaks photo processing down to the basics to a point where it will not be intimidating to anyone. Expert guides will share insights into using Photoshop to process photos of – what else - birds!

PHOTO RODEO: CLASSROOM WORKSHOP – INTRODUCTION to PHOTO CATALOGING and PROCESSING

with Tropical Birding

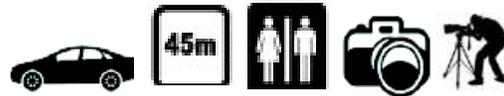
Fee \$20 / Friday 1:30pm– 3:00pm

We'll meet at the new Harlingen Convention Center for this indoor workshop. Expert guides will share their tips and tricks for using Lightroom to catalog and process photos and help manage your photos so you can find what you need when you need it.

POINT-AND-SHOOT: BASIC FIELD TECHNIQUES

with Stephen Ingraham, Zeiss Inc.

Fee \$50 / Thursday 8:00am-9:30am instruction, 9:30am–12:00pm field experience



Meet onsite at the National Butterfly Center. Our focus will be on technique rather than species diversity. We will start with an indoor classroom session before moving outside for ample practice time. We'll explore the water features and feeding stations for photo opportunities with Green Jays, Bronzed Cowbirds, Altamira Orioles and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers.



Goals: Increase your skills photographing birds with your Point-and-Shoot camera of any variety.

POINT-AND-SHOOT: FIELD WORKSHOP

with Stephen Ingraham, Zeiss Inc.

Fee \$50 / Saturday 8:00am – 12:30pm



Meet onsite at South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center, where we'll start with a brief indoor session. Our focus will be on technique rather than species diversity. We'll explore the extensive boardwalks looking for photo opportunities. There will be many!

Goals: Increase your skills photographing birds, butterflies, dragonflies, blooms and scenery.

**POINT-AND-SHOOT: CLASSROOM WORKSHOP –
An Introduction to Point-And-Shoot Nature Photography**
with Stephen Ingraham, Zeiss Inc.
Fee \$20 / Wednesday 1:30pm– 3:00 pm

Meet at the new Harlingen Convention Center for this indoor workshop on point-and-shoot cameras, settings, and how to make them work for you. Bring your camera for hands-on application.

Goals: Getting started on nature photography with your point-and-shoot camera.

**POINT-AND-SHOOT: CLASSROOM WORKSHOP –
Basic Post-processing for Point-and-Shoot Photography**
with Stephen Ingraham, Zeiss Inc.
Fee \$20 / Saturday 3:30pm– -5:00pm

We'll meet at the new Harlingen Convention Center for this indoor workshop that will get you started on post-processing your images.

Goals: Learn the basics of post-processing and what it can do for your photographs.

*** POINT-AND-SHOOT:
ADVANCED FIELD TECHNIQUES**

with Stephen Ingraham, Zeiss Inc.

Fee \$50 / Friday 7:30am– 9:00am indoors, 9:00am– 12:00pm field practice



Meet onsite at Estero Llano Grande State Park. This is a hands-on field workshop to get the most out of your point-and-shoot camera. Point-and-shoot cameras can be wonderful for nature photography – let Steve help you expand your skills.

Goals: Improving your own nature photographs with your point-and-shoot camera.



THE RGVBF GIVING-BACK PROJECTS FOR 2019

How did your donations help last year? Our two projects last year focused on Red-crowned Parrots and Harris's Hawks. For 2019 we have added a third!

The Tejano Parrot Project was able to purchase telemetry collars and tracking equipment with our 2018 donations. Four volunteers have conducted weekly roost surveys in Brownsville, Harlingen, Weslaco, and McAllen utilizing this tracking equipment on collared birds in 3 of those roost areas. Funds donated in 2019 will be used to purchase additional collars for birds in other Valley communities in order to continue gathering behavior information on these amazing parrots.

The **Harris's Hawk Project** used the 2018 funds to purchase the climbing equipment that enabled researchers to access and band chicks in 22 nests.

Donations made this year will be used to study the interaction of these banded birds with the adults from the same nests and to compare and analyze DNA samples extracted during the banding process.

A project on the scene, The **South Texas Hummingbird Banding Project**, is our third selection. This effort will provide the lower Rio Grande Valley with its first and only hummingbird bander. In order to obtain all the required equipment necessary to begin this endeavor, some rather costly, our bander needs financial assistance and we want to help. Buff-bellied Hummingbirds of the Rio Grande Valley will be the focus of this project.

Be sure to attend the speaker presentations on Thursday and Saturday afternoons to hear more about these projects by the recipients of our donations. Your donations and generosity matter!

Entrance to all keynotes, seminars and socials is being offered for one flat price during the online registration period. This *Kiskadee Pass* is \$30 and allows you entry to all those offerings in the auditorium. A huge savings from individually priced admissions, you can purchase the *Kiskadee Pass* only during open registration. During the Festival, individual tickets will be sold for admission. Field trips are not included in the *Kiskadee Pass*.

LEARNING THE SPARROWS, NOT KNOWING THE SPARROWS



with Rick Wright

Fee \$15 or Free with Kiskadee Pass /

Wednesday 3:00pm – 4:30pm

Everything we think we know somebody else had to learn. Ours is a birding world where all we need is a field guide and a good look to identify even the smallest, brownest, dingiest of birds (Little Brown Jobs). But how did we reach that point? How did our ornithological forebears figure out the sparrows, a group that still challenges many of us? And how can their experiences over the centuries contribute to our experience today?

Rick Wright leads Birds and Art tours in Europe and the Americas for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. A native of southeast Nebraska, Rick studied French, German, philosophy, and life sciences at the University of Nebraska, where he worked in the bird collections of the State Museum and served as teaching assistant to Paul Johnsgard. After a detour to Harvard Law School, he took the M.A. and Ph.D. in German at Princeton University. His years as an academic included appointments as assistant professor of German at the University of Illinois, reader/scholar at Princeton University's Index of Christian Art, and associate professor of medieval studies at Fordham University.

Among his scholarly publications are two books on the Latin and German animal literature of the late Middle Ages. He is also the author of the American Birding Association's field guides to birds of New Jersey and of Arizona, and of the Peterson *Reference Guide to North American Sparrows*. A prolific contributor to the birding literature and a sought-after lecturer, Rick lives with his wife, Alison Beringer, and their chocolate lab, Gellert, in Bloomfield, New Jersey.



SOMETIMES IT TAKES A VILLAGE: NESTING HARRIS'S HAWKS IN SOUTH TEXAS



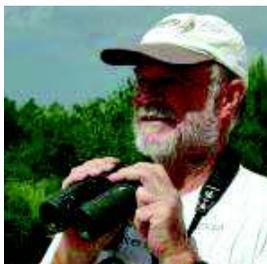
with Andrea Gibbons

**Fee \$10 or Free with Kiskadee Pass /
Thursday 2:30pm – 3:30pm**

Few birds defer their own reproduction to assist other breeding adults with the raising of their young, but the Harris's Hawks of the Lower Rio Grande Valley are doing just that. Most nests in south Texas include at least one adult helping the primary breeders to rear offspring. Why do some hawks help? Let's explore Andrea's initial findings

Andrea Gibbons is a student at the University of North Texas studying the behavior and nesting ecology of Harris's Hawks for her graduate research. She has received a B.S. degree in Biology at Boise State University in Idaho in 2016. She participated in Barn Owl demography research, as well as designed her own undergraduate research project on the foraging habits of the Greater Sage-Grouse. Since receiving her B.S., she has worked with numerous species including Burrowing Owls, Northern Goshawks, White-headed Woodpeckers, and assisted with the trapping and banding of both raptors and songbirds. She fulfilled a lifelong ambition to work with California Condors as a volunteer with Americorp and continues her lifelong passion of studying raptors today.

SHARP-SHINNED OR COOPER'S, A PERPLEXING RAPTOR FIELD ID PROBLEM



with Bill Clark

**Fee \$10 or Free with Kiskadee Pass /
Thursday 3:45pm— 4:45pm**

One of the most difficult raptor identification problems in North America is figuring out whether an accipiter is a Sharp-shinned Hawk or a Cooper's Hawk, whether perched or in flight. Bill's talk will point out the many differences between these hawks in flight and perched. Dazzle your friends and up your game in the field!

Bill Clark is a photographer, author, researcher, and lecturer and has over 50 years' experience working with birds of prey, including 5 years as Director of NWF's Raptor Information Center. He has published numerous articles on raptor subjects; has traveled extensively world-wide studying, observing, and photographing raptors; and regularly led raptor and birding tours and workshops, both home and abroad, with Raptours.

Bill Clark has written a raptor field guide for Europe, another for Mexico and Central America and yet another for Africa. He is a coauthor of the *Photographic Guide to North American Raptors* and the completely revised Peterson series guide, *Hawks*. Bill has on-going research projects on Harlan's Hawk, White-tailed Hawk, and Harris's Hawk. To download pdf's of one or more of the four draft presentations on his work on Harlan's Hawk, go to: <http://www.globalraptors.org/grin/ResearcherResults.asp?iresID=155> and scroll down to 'Publications' and click on 'pdf' after one of the four titles. All publications follow.

Some of his later papers deal with raptor taxonomy. Bill has a personal goal to see and take photographs of all the world's diurnal raptors.

BIRDING THE WORLD

***Free! Open to the Public / Friday 2:00pm – 5:00pm
(20-minute sessions)***

Come tour the world, with a different country presented every 20 minutes, at the RGVBF auditorium. Speakers will be vendors and tour guides who have first-hand knowledge of the destinations, the specialty birds of that country, and the other attractions available to birders.



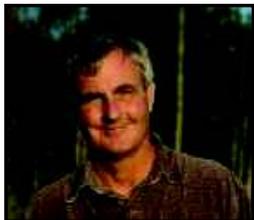
Check the schedule for the countries to be highlighted this year, then plan to attend the destinations on your bucket list. Possible countries include: Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, Portugal, South Africa, and Uganda. While there will be time for questions at the end of each talk, you can also connect with the presenters at their booths in the Birders Bazaar.



Two Keynotes**THOUGHTS ON BIRDING AND NATURE STUDY IN THE DIGITAL ERA****with Ted Floyd****Fee \$20 or Free with Kiskadee Pass / Thursday 6:15pm— 7:30pm**

Many birds are colorful, and some are brilliant. Their songs can be enchanting. Their migrations are often stirring. And they can FLY, for crying out loud. Those are all amazing avian attributes, but are they really what attract us to birdwatching? While all of those may be part of the appeal, Ted Floyd thinks there's something grander, deeper, and more beautiful about birdwatching.

Ted Floyd is the Editor of *Birding* magazine, the award-winning flagship publication of the American Birding Association. He has written five bird books, including the *Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (HarperCollins, 2008) and *How to Know the Birds* (National Geographic, 2019). Ted is also the author of more than 200 popular articles, technical papers, and book chapters on birds and nature. He is especially interested in analyzing bird vocalizations, in interpreting birds and nature for children and beginners, and in applying new media and emerging technologies toward the appreciation of nature. A graduate of Princeton University (A.B., 1990) and Penn State University (Ph.D., 1995), Ted has taught biology, math, and statistics to everyone from second graders to advanced graduate students. He and his family live in Lafayette, Colorado.

THE WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING – STORIES BEHIND THE STORY, NOW IT CAN BE TOLD**with Pete Dunne****Fee \$20 or Free with Kiskadee Pass / Friday 6:15pm – 7:30pm**

May 29, 1984 started it all. After thirty-five years, four car makers and hundreds of misadventures, the hilarious back stories behind the planet's greatest natural treasure hunt can finally be told. Come prepared for an evening of entertainment as Pete recounts one incriminating story after another.

Pete Dunne is famous for his writings on natural history and birding. He is also the founder of the World Series of Birding, as well as the former director of the Cape May Bird Observatory, Birding Ambassador for the New Jersey Audubon Society, and former publisher of New Jersey Audubon magazine. His articles have appeared in most major American birding publications, including *Birder's World*, *Birding*, *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and *WildBird*, as well as in *The New York Times*. His column "Birder at Large" appears in every issue of *BirdWatching*.

In 2001, he received the Roger Tory Peterson Award from the American Birding Association for lifetime achievement in promoting the cause of birding.

THE RAPTOR PROJECT

with Jonathan Wood

Free! Open to the Public / Saturday 11:00am – 12:00pm

Jonathan Wood and his vast collection of stunning hawks, owls, eagles, and falcons are a star attraction, with many national TV appearances. Jon is a Master Falconer, a licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator, and along with his wife Susan, an integral and fascinating part of the Festival.

Do not miss this free offering. Imagine a hawk with a 4-foot wingspan flying over your head! Afterward, visit more birds of prey in the Birders Bazaar (for a fee you can even hold one and get your picture taken!).



PARROTS IN THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY: WHO, WHERE, WHEN AND WHY.

with Simon Kiacz

Fee \$10 or Free with Kiskadee Pass / Saturday 2:30pm – 3:30pm



The Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas isn't just a subtropical paradise for bird watchers. Parrots – six species to be exact – also take advantage of the resources the Valley has to offer. We will talk about each species and their status here in Texas along with how they use their surprisingly urbanized surroundings, with a focus on the endangered, and recently declared native, Red-crowned Parrot.

Simon Kiacz is an ecologist and ornithologist who grew up in mid-Michigan, where he gained his appreciation for nature. As much as he would like to say he has been birding for as long as he can remember, it wasn't until his mid-20s that he picked up a pair of binoculars. After working in central Texas with Black-capped and White-eyed Vireos for two years, he moved to south Texas and is currently a graduate student at Texas A&M University studying the Red-crowned Parrot. Interested in all things outdoors (particularly birds and butterflies), Simon can usually be found exploring parks, shorelines, and roads-less-traveled trying to refine his identification abilities.



GREEN JAYS OF URBAN RIO GRANDE VALLEY

with Tony Henehan

Fee \$10 or Free with Kiskadee Pass / Saturday 3:45pm – 4:45pm



Some of the 529 species of birds seen in the RGV are found nowhere else in the United States, such as our Green Jay. This jay has become an integral part of the local economy, drawing in bird watchers from all over the world. The RGV is the 3rd fastest growing urban area in the United States, putting stress on precious habitat. Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept. has started a project to study habitat use and home range size of Green Jays in the RGV to help municipalities create better habitat management plans.

Tony Henehan grew up in Upstate New York, where he attended SUNY Cobleskill for his bachelor's degree in Wildlife Management. After graduating, he moved to Arkansas to work with Brown-headed Nuthatches, and South Florida to work with birds, sea turtles, and indigo snakes. Upon completion of these positions, Tony attended Texas A&M-Kingsville for his master's degree in Rangeland and Wildlife Management studying the effects of large scale grassland restoration on wildlife. From there, Tony accepted a wildlife biologist position with Texas Parks and Wildlife in the Rio Grande Valley. Currently Tony works with Las Palomas WMA, private landowners, and municipalities to create wildlife management plans and conduct research. Tony is studying urban Green Jays, hummingbirds, and parrots in the RGV.



WELCOME KICK-OFF RECEPTION

Free with Registration / Tuesday 5:00pm – 7:00 pm

After you have picked up your credentials at the new Harlingen Convention Center (12 – 5), come to the Harlingen Arts & Heritage Museum at 2425 Boxwood Street (on Loop 499, across from the airport) for some camaraderie, music, refreshments and hors d'oeuvres. Enjoy the exhibits, mingle with your friends, meet some new ones!



KISKADEE KORDIALS

Free with Registration / Thursday, Friday, Saturday 5:00pm – 6:00pm

You are “kordially” invited to join us at the Birders Bazaar for refreshments during the last hour of the trade show. Kordials offered to anyone over 21 with Festival ID badge, with some light snacks to hold you over until dinner.

BIRDERS BAZAAR TRADE SHOW

Kiskadee Ballroom / Harlingen Convention Center

Free! Open to the Public / Thursday-Sunday (12:00pm – 6:00pm, Sunday until 4:00pm)

Enjoy all things birds and birdy as you wander through rows of vendors’ booths at the Harlingen Convention Center. With over 70 vendors, there are ideas, information and items to buy, all under one roof. Visit booths from tour companies, local refuges and wildlife areas, tourist attractions, artists, birding optics and other gear, local nature organizations, and much more.

BIG SIT

Free! Open to the Public / Saturday 6:00am – 6:00pm

Birds only count if you see them from inside the 17’ circle – want to join in? Spend a little time or all day, just bring your binoculars to scan the skies around the Convention Center. The circle is hosted by the Bay Area Birders, a local birding group, and will keep a running list of the birds seen that day. It’s fun, it can be silly, but always looking for that next new bird. Look for the banner on the south side of the Convention Center.

AUTHOR’S SIGNINGS

During Kiskadee Kordials and after Speaker Presentations

With the array of talented birders in our midst, it is no surprise that many of them have authored books – books that you might need for your library. From where-to-bird guides to identification field guides, adventures to scientific papers, or techniques and tools, these books continue to stir us. Meet the authors who are part of this year’s Festival family, buy a book or have them autograph a label you can put in your trusty book at home. Book sales in the Birders Bazaar all week.

SILENT AUCTION

Thursday-Saturday, Trade Show hours / Bidding closes 4:30pm on Saturday

One of the most fun satellite events for the Festival is the Silent Auction. With most of our vendors contributing items (from artwork to books, novelties to travel packages), and local merchants contributing to the inventory, it makes an exciting (and sometimes competitive) exercise in shopping.

RAPTOR PROJECT

Free! Open to the Public / On Display During Birders Bazaar Hours

Free Educational Shows Thursday – Sunday at 1:00pm and 3:00pm

Flight Show in the Speakers Ballroom on Saturday 11:00am– 12:00pm

Jonathan Wood brings his collection of education raptors (a previous injury has prevented their release into the wild after they have been rehabilitated) to delight and teach us about these amazing creatures. Jon is a Master Falconer, a licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator and, along with his wife Susan, an integral part of our Festival family. See owls, hawks, falcons and maybe an eagle, as they join in the education component of our Festival. So close you can see every feather!

STUDENT AWARDS CEREMONY

Free! Open to the Public / Sunday 1:00pm– 3:00pm

Host and creator of KVEO's *Outdoor Report*, Richard Moore will be emceeing this awards ceremony, recognizing the students who have drawn, painted and written about the birds of the Rio Grande Valley. All students, their families and friends are invited to attend the ceremony, take pictures during the presentations, and enjoy the recognition being bestowed upon the students who entered the Art and Writing Contest. This will take place in a ballroom at the Harlingen Convention Center.



STAR PARTY: STARRY NIGHT OVER THE RIO

Fee \$10 / Wednesday 6:30pm – -9:00pm

Living in an area without a lot of city lights has its benefits – and the stars do shine in South Texas! The headliners of the show will be Saturn and the Orion Nebula, as seen through the lens of the Takahashi Mewlon 210 telescope. View fine details on the surface of the moon. And, if we are very lucky, we will spot meteors from the Taurid Meteor Shower. Bring your binoculars, too, for wonderful lunar and planetary views! Vans provided to the site, so enjoy a good dinner in town before we depart. Be sure to sign up for this special event.

ABA ANNIVERSARY BASH FEATURING THE AMERICAN BIRDING PODCAST LIVE

Free! Open to the Public / Saturday 6:15pm – 8:00pm

Join us for a wonderful evening of celebrating the joy of birding!

The American Birding Association has had a 50-year love affair with South Texas — its birds, its birders, and the countless thrilling, even life-changing experiences that we have all shared in the field here! Thus it is fitting that the ABA celebrate its Golden Anniversary with an evening of fun and games, classic stories, and hopes and dreams for the future right here at the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival. Expect a bunch of great guests, some laughs, and maybe even a happy tear or two as we celebrate the ABA's 50th with a distinct South Texas accent!

The evening's program will be recorded and featured on an upcoming episode of the American Birding Podcast. Be sure to take advantage of the opportunity to see it all happen LIVE on stage! For more information on the line up and how you can participate, go to aba.org/50th.

BIRDING 101 EN ESPAÑOL FOR HARLINGEN CLASSROOMS

Sponsored by Canopy Tower, Panama

Carlos Bethancourt of *Canopy Tower, Panama* will present Birding 101 in Spanish to the Harlingen South High School Spanish Classes and to a specially chosen elementary school in the area. There is no one more charming and hospitable than Carlos – which makes this a community favorite, and the students talk about this day for years.

Rio Grande Valley
BIRDING FESTIVAL

P.O. Box 3162 • Harlingen, Texas 78551

rgvbf.org

956-423-5565

207-227-4823

*A very special Thank You to the
Harlingen Convention and Visitors Bureau,
the City of Harlingen,
Harlingen Chamber of Commerce,
and all the fabulous volunteers at the
Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival.*



Y'all Come Back Now!

November 11-15, 2020

November 10-14, 2021