

[Welcome to the 28th 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 2021 Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival in Harlingen, TX. The dates are Nov 10-14, with pre- and post-trips planned (Upper Texas Coast and El Cielo & Northeast Mexico).

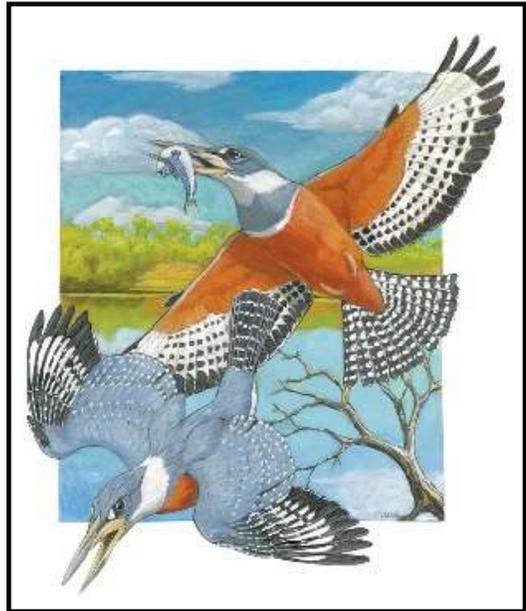
There is over 125 field trip offerings to choose from, with trips going to the traditional spots, and as always some new trips added for our return visitors. Special trips in the field with our featured speakers to further enhance their presentations will be super exciting. With the coast about 30 miles 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 a huge diversity of birds to offer!

We offer field trips, keynote speakers, workshops, fun socials, and lots of birds. Plan to join us in 2021!



Featured Artist Sophie Webb has travelled as a biologist and artist studying and painting birds from the Amazon to the Arctic and Antarctic. In 1995 she co-authored and illustrated *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America* with Steve Howell. She has contributed plates to a variety of neotropical bird guides with night birds being a specialty, and coauthored and illustrated *A Field Guide to the Marine Mammals of the Pacific*. While working in the Antarctic and at sea on research vessels she wrote and illustrated three award winning children's books about her travels and work

as a biologist. A love of travel and field sketching has been an integral part to much of her work. Currently she lives in Northern California with her two dogs, Daiya and Cashew.



REGISTRATION INFORMATION

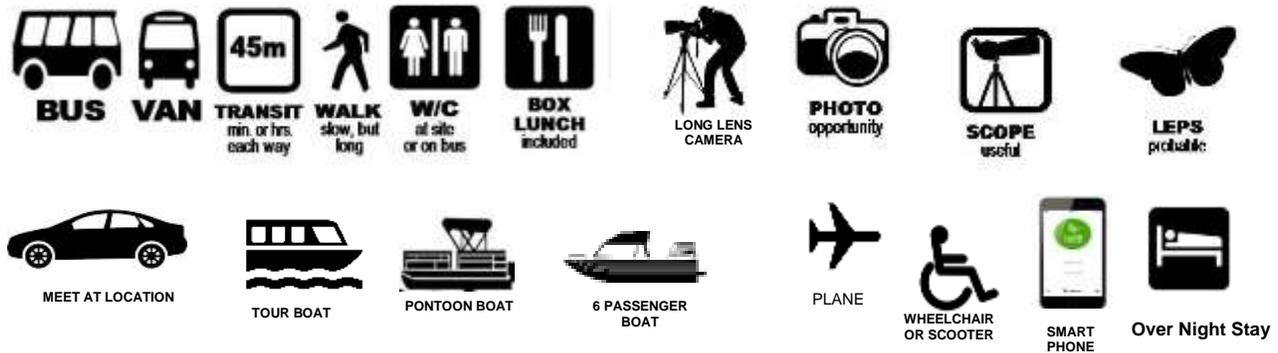
Event registration is required for all participants wishing to sign up for field trips, keynote speakers or seminars. It is not necessary to attend the Birder's Bazaar Tradeshow or family and children's activities.

You may choose from several registration packages. Registration for persons wanting to provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination is \$50. Registration for persons not wanting to provide proof of vaccination is \$300. The \$30 *Kiskadee Pass* can be added to either registration type and provides entrance to all [Keynotes and Seminars](#). It is a huge savings over individually priced admission. You can purchase the Kiskadee Pass only during online registration. During the Festival, tickets for individual events will be sold, providing there are openings available.

Note: Field trips, PhotoTrack and Workshops are not included in the Kiskadee Pass.

FIELD TRIPS

FIELD GUIDE TO THE ICONS



The RGVPF 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 mobility- or visually- challenged birders and photographers.

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:

We encourage you to find overnight accommodations in Harlingen during the Festival – trips leave early!

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

Vegetarian box lunches available when lunch is provided – choose when registering online.

**** 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 designate trips that offer a
better opportunity for photography.***

***Cameras requiring 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 to anything and everything as needed.***

**** Birdability™ trips meet at the destination site.***

Join our Facebook page for updates and latest information.

ALERT: for Palmito Hill & Rocket Ranch, Battlefields and Kleberg Wetlands 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.

* ALLIGATORS AND SEA TURTLES

Fee \$60 / Saturday, 1pm – 6pm



This new trip will visit the South Padre Island Bird and Nature Center and Alligator Rescue as well as Sea Turtle Inc. next door. At each site we will have a presentation with live animals to learn about their conservation needs. While this trip's emphasis is not on birding, it will be heavy on other experiences!

Targets: Learning about American Alligator and Green and other Sea Turtles, and their conservation issues.

ARROYO COLORADO UNIT

with Anthony Henehan

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



This is a rare opportunity to visit the Arroyo Colorado Unit of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. This Wildlife Management Area is closed to visitors, but we've arranged a special tour for the Festival. In recent years, this area of thornscrub near the Arroyo Colorado has had a variety of rarities including Blue Bunting and Rose-throated Becard.

Targets: White-tipped Dove, Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Great Kiskadee, Carolina Wren, Long-billed Thrasher, Orange-crowned Warbler, Olive Sparrow.

AUDUBON ISLANDS of LAGUNA MADRE

with Stephanie Bilodeau

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



This is a wonderful opportunity for a VERY small group to go out on the bay to view some of the spoil islands of Laguna Madre. The islands were created from materials dredged during the construction of the Intracoastal Waterway and, under the protection of the National Audubon Society, and 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.

Note: Although there will be photo opportunities, please only bring hand-held cameras for the boat trip. Half of your morning will be on a small powerboat without restroom facilities (restrooms at dock). It can be cool on the boat – don't forget your jacket. Adjacent land-based locations may be substituted in adverse weather conditions including strong winds!

Targets: Close views of herons and egrets, gulls and terns and, with luck, the striking Mangrove (Yellow) Warbler.

BAHIA GRANDE UNIT

Fee \$90 / Wednesday, Friday, Saturday 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 a more natural tidal flow. On this trip, we'll have an opportunity of witnessing the dramatic results and the privilege of birding an area not generally open to the public.

Note: There are no on-site restroom facilities. We will have a restroom stop before and after our birding.

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

*BATTLEFIELDS OF BROWNSVILLE

with Jon Dunn

Fee \$90 /Saturday 7:00am – 1:00pm



This trip back into history is a relatively new one. Did you know expert birder Jon Dunn is quite the history buff, and is passionate about the Civil War? Putting these two resources together - battlefields and birds - 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 of 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 whatever coastal prairie birds you see.

Important! There is a U.S. Border Patrol Check Station *on Boca Chica Road. 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. If you are not a U.S. citizen, please notify the festival at (956)423-5565.

Targets: Learning about the history, White-tailed Kite, Harris's and White-tailed Hawks, Long-billed Curlew, Couch's Kingbird, Curve-billed Thrasher.

BENTSEN-RGV STATE PARK

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



With its nearly 800 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.

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

BIG DAY VANS

Fee \$135 / Saturday 6am – 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. Some call it 'whirlbirding'—fast and furious fun. Prepare to be flexible, as routes will be chosen by your skilled leaders. Exercise those speedy get-on-it skills – and wear your fast shoes! Several vans will go outbound for lots of birds and friendly competition. This is a great choice for Festival returnees or listers. A prize will be given to the participants in the van with the longest bird species list!

Note: There are no restroom facilities in vehicles. We will have restroom stops periodically during our birding.

Goals: Racking up an impressive day list – Valley specialties, anything, everything!

*BIO-BLITZ USING iNATURALIST AT WEST WILDLIFE PRESERVE

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



Join your guides for a bio-blitz from plants and bugs to birds and mammals! We will visit the private West Wildlife Preserve east of Harlingen, to explore its 11 acres of native and revegetated brush with quiet areas to sit and observe birds and other wildlife. Easy walking trails. Guides familiar with local flora and fauna will be on site - just be prepared to take lots of photos. All information will be compiled on iNaturalist as a baseline survey as this property is restored.

Note: No previous familiarity with iNaturalist required, If you don't have it on your cell phone, please download it. Bring back-up power!

Targets: White-tipped, Inca and Common Ground Dove, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Green Jay, Curve-billed and Long-billed Thrasher, Olive Sparrow.

*BIRD BANDING

with Mark Conway

Fee \$90 / Sunday 7:30am – 12noon



Join biologist and educator Mark Conway for some close encounters with Valley specialties in the picturesque grounds of Quinta Mazatlan. Mark will be demonstrating the skills of bird banding in the context of the key role it plays in his long-term studies of bird populations in the Valley.

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

Birdability



With Birdability's Virginia Rose and Freya McGregor

Fee \$75 / Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday 8am – 12pm

Do you experience an accessibility challenge as a result of a disability or other health concern? Still enjoy birding and learning in a festival group? These are the trips for you. These participants **meet the RGVBF guides on site** to allow for personal transportation needs. (This is not the process for other trips.) These trips are designed specifically for birders who have a disability or other health concern that impacts their ability to go birding, and their birding companion or spouse; these birders are invited to register for this trip. We will take our time and cover less ground, but we'll enjoy all the birds we find. Small group size. If you are unsure if this trip is right for you, please contact us before registering.

Wednesday – Estero Llano Grande State Park

Thursday – Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park

Friday – Valley Nature Center (see Weslaco)

Saturday – National Butterfly Center

Sunday – Frontera Audubon Center (see Weslaco)

Note: Restrooms available on site. **Times are meeting times at the field trip site - allow for your travel time.** Directions to meeting site will be given to participants at registration.

*BIRDING FOR NEW BIRDERS

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday

Fee \$90 / Thursday 7am – 1pm



Whether you're just discovering the joys of birding or seeking to develop your birding skills or wanting to share your love of birding with your family, these are the trips for you! Each day there will be a different site and wonderful slate of guides who will help you develop your birding skills and enjoyment.

Wednesday – Frontera Audubon / Valley Nature Center –

Thursday – Bentsen RGV State Park

Friday – Estero Llano Grande State Park

Saturday – Edinburg Scenic Wetlands

Sunday – South Padre Island Bird and Nature Center

Goals: Developing basic birding skills, learning bird identification, enjoying time in the field.

*BREAKFAST WITH THE BIRDS AT SABAL PALM SANCTUARY

With Hannah Buschert and Erik Ostrander

Fee \$95 / Sunday 7am – 12:30pm

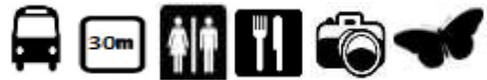


Come and enjoy Texas hospitality and a buffet breakfast on the delightful grounds of Sabal Palm Sanctuary east of Brownsville. Set in some 40 acres adjoining a picturesque resaca, the Inn offers birding opportunities before, during and after breakfast with its extensive trails and birding stations. This is an ideal way to relax and unwind on this last day of the Festival.

Targets: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Mottled Duck, Plain Chachalaca, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Great Kiskadee, Long-billed Thrasher, Black-crested Titmouse, Olive Sparrow, Altamira Oriole.

*BUTTERFLIES – RGV JEWELS

Fee \$90 / Wednesday, Friday, Sunday 9am – 2pm



Over 300 species of butterflies have been recorded in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, making it by far the richest butterflying area in the U.S. And this tour, led by lepidoptera experts from the Festival, is to our most productive site - the National Butterfly Center in Mission, the flagship of the North American Butterfly Association on Wednesday and Friday, and to Resaca de la Palma State Park for a chance at some Cameron County specialties on Sunday.

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

CACTUS CREEK RANCH

Fee \$120 / Thursday, Friday 6am – 12:30pm



This private ranch is “Laguna Atascosa adjacent”. The ranch has nesting Aplomado Falcons, well-stocked feeders, and ranch roads to explore. In a wet year like this one there are wetlands for waterfowl and shorebirds. The ranch has hosted researchers, birders, and students since 1996, with the oldest known Black-crested Titmouse banded on the ranch.

Targets: White-tailed Hawk, Harris's Hawk, Long-billed Curlew, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Black-crested Titmouse, Bewick's Wren, Olive Sparrow

COLLEY'S “PRIVATE” ISLAND

with Scarlet & George Colley

Fee \$125 / Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday 6am – 1pm



A special version of the South Padre Island trip with Island naturalists Scarlet and George Colley. Scarlet is well-known for her dolphin research and for many years both she and George have been leading advocates for Gulf Coast conservation. Enjoy being out on the bay in their pontoon boats (weather permitting) and exploring 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 without restroom facilities. Restrooms near the dock. It can be cool on boat in mornings – don't forget your jacket. The boat portion of the trip may be cancelled due to adverse weather conditions including strong winds!

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

DIGISCOPING FROM THE DECK – see listing in PhotoTrack section

EASY (BUT NOT LESS!)

BIRDING TOUR

Fee \$110 / Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday 7am – 1pm



Prefer less walking? These are the trips for you. *Bird from electric carts at the state parks, vans at other sites* that leisurely loop the wildlife drives and back roads of famous Valley refuges. These are small trips, each to one destination.

Wednesday – Estero Llano Grande State Park – OR – South Padre Island sites

Thursday – Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park – OR – South Padre Island sites

Friday – Estero Llano Grande State Park - OR – Resaca de la Palma State Park

Saturday – Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park - OR - Resaca de la Palma State Park

Sunday – Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge

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

Targets: See target listing for each of the destinations of the sites.

EDINBURG AND QUINTA MAZATLAN

Fee \$85 / Wednesday, Friday 7:00 am – 1pm



Edinburg Scenic Wetlands and Quinta Mazatlan are World Birding Center sites and 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 Mazatlan is a wonderfully restored adobe hacienda set in 15 acres of sub-tropical gardens and native woodlands with birding trails, feeding stations and 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 \$85 / Thursday, Saturday, Sunday 6:30am – 12:30pm



An in-depth exploration of one of the World Birding Center network's most productive sites. Reclaimed wetlands, marshes and ponds, all contiguous to the Arroyo Colorado, are ideal habitats for shorebirds, waders, waterfowl – and alligators! Add boardwalks, birding trails through woodlands and thornscrub, butterfly gardens and a green-design visitor center and you'll see why Estero Llano Grande SP has skyrocketed to deserved fame!

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

*GADGET BIRDING

with Nathan Pieplow

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



Join author Nathan Pieplow (*Peterson Field Guide Bird Sounds of Eastern/Western North America*) in this workshop designed to give you the tools to better identify bird songs and calls by using apps on your smart phone. Bring your smart phones and be ready for a fun experience looking and listening to our local birds.

Goals: Learning to identify types of bird sounds, use cell phone apps to classify and identify bird sounds.

*IDENTIFY ANY BIRD ANYWHERE

Advanced Skills for Beginning Birders – see listing in Keynotes & Seminars section

*INSTINCTIVE BIRDING ~ DAWN BIRD SIT

Understanding The Language Of The Birds – see listing in Keynotes & Seminars section

KING RANCH NORIAS

with Tom Langschied

Fee \$130 /Friday, Sunday 6am – 1pm



Join us for an exciting excursion to the famed King Ranch, one of the largest ranches in the world (larger than Rhode Island!). The Norias division is the second largest section of this ranch and is the most southeastern of the four divisions. The sandy soils of Norias support extensive areas of grasslands, thornscrub and live oak woodlands – and more Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls than anywhere else in the U.S.!

Targets: Wild Turkey, Harris's Hawk, White-tailed Hawk, Crested Caracara, Greater Roadrunner, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Vermilion Flycatcher, Sprague's Pipit, Audubon's Oriole (rare).

*KLEBERG WETLANDS

Fee \$130 / Wednesday, Friday, 6am – 4:30pm



One of the delights of Kleberg County, particularly in years of above average rainfall such as this, is its myriad of fresh and brackish wetlands. On this trip we'll be visiting the most productive sites and, after a picnic lunch we will visit the headquarters of the King Ranch and if time allows, we'll also bird some of Kingsville's hotspots. The trip will be limited to eight participants.

Important! : There is a U.S. Border Patrol Check Station on U.S. 77. Make sure you have your driver's license or other official photo ID with you: participants without proper identification will not be permitted to board. If you are not a U.S. citizen, please notify the RGVBF at info@rgvbf.org or (209)227-4823.

Note: There are no restroom facilities in vehicles. We will have restroom stops periodically during our birding.

Targets: Waterfowl, waders, shorebirds, sparrows.

*LAGUNA ATASCOSA STEVE THOMPSON WILDLIFE DRIVE

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



We're bringing back an old favorite with a new twist! The Steve Thompson Wildlife Drive has been closed to the public since 2013 as portions of the road are relocated and wildlife crossings added to help protect the federally endangered Ocelot. We will have the privilege of exploring portions of the drive (depending on construction progress). This will allow us to access locations like the infamous Redhead Ridge, a vista over the Laguna Madre where 70% of the world's Redhead population winter – and known to birders as a good place to look for Groove-billed Ani in winter. An Aplomado Falcon nest platform is visible from the drive, and we'll look for this species which has been reintroduced in south Texas in part thanks to the work of former refuge manager Steve Thompson.

Targets: Redhead, Harris's Hawk, Aplomado Falcon (fingers crossed), Groove-billed Ani (rare), Clay-colored Thrush

LAGUNA SECA RANCH – see listing in PhotoTrack section

*LEARNING TO LISTEN TO BIRDS

with Michael O'Brien

\$100 / Thursday, 6:30am – 12:00pm



Join well-known guide, author, and illustrator Michael O'Brien (*Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, *The Shorebird Guide*, *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*) in this workshop designed to develop and improve your ability to describe and identify bird songs and calls.

Goals: improving field identification skills, learning how to listen to birds and your enjoyment listening to birds.

MARTIN REFUGE – see listing in PhotoTrack section

OLD PORT ISABEL ROAD – APLOMADO ALLEY

Fee \$100 / Thursday, Friday, Sunday 7am - 1pm



Aplomado Falcons disappeared from South Texas in the 1950s, but a successful Peregrine Fund reintroduction program was begun in earnest in 1993. Now 33 breeding pairs grace the coastal prairies, and Old Port Isabel Road cuts right through this area. Join the search to see this beautiful species, and often a good variety of sparrows as a bonus!

Note: If the road is impassable because of wet weather, we'll seek the falcons elsewhere. Restrooms are limited.

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.

*PALMITO HILL ROAD AND ROCKET RANCH

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



We'll explore sleepy Palmito Hill Road as it winds for three miles in the coastal prairie from Boca Chica Road to the Rio Grande River at Rocket Ranch, bordering the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge part of the way. This area of coastal prairie has an interesting mix of open grasslands with prickly pear, and thornscrub on the higher "lomas". We will visit a new site - Rocket Ranch, a new camping and Space X rocket tourism site where we can bird along the Rio Grande River and look *north* into Mexico. This is a new trip for us, and we're excited to share Rocket Ranch and Palmito Hill Road with you!

Important! There is a U.S. Border Patrol Check Station *on Boca Chica Road. 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. If you are not a U.S. citizen, please notify the festival at (956)423-5565. Restrooms at Rocket Ranch.

Targets: Harris's and White-tailed Hawks, Gull-billed Tern, Green and Ringed Kingfishers, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Couch's Kingbird, Altamira Oriole, Cassin's Sparrow.

PARROTS OF THE AREA

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



With the nesting season concluded, parrots and parakeets play hide-and-seek with us. Use your eyes and ears and join the search, while these colorful and countable tropical icons choose their nightly roost around our local urban areas.

Note: Guides will not keep an eBird list for this trip, but you are welcome to keep your own.

Targets: Green Parakeet, Red-crowned Parrot.

PORT MANSFIELD

Fee \$95 / Wednesday, Friday 6:30am – 3pm



This trip will be an exploration of parts of Willacy County – the least birded county in the Lower Rio Grande Valley – as well as an opportunity to learn a little of its history and culture. We'll bird through Sacahuistale Flats for a picnic lunch by the bay in Port Mansfield and take advantage of the newly improved birding boardwalks and viewing platforms. On the way back in the afternoon, we'll concentrate particularly on the many 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 7:30am – 12pm



The vans will meet Bill Clark, author of the *Peterson Guide to Raptors* and the *Raptors of Mexico and Central America*, in the field where he will be capturing local raptors, weather permitting. In case of adverse and unsafe conditions for trapping, we will spend our time observing raptors with Bill.

Targets: White-tailed Hawk, Harris's Hawk, American Kestrel, who knows what we will see in the hand and in the field on this unique trip!

*RESACA DE LA PALMA STATE PARK & UNIVERSITY RESACAS

Fee \$95 / Wednesday, Thursday 7am – 1pm



Resaca de la Palma State Park comprises some 1200 acres of protected land, including the largest tract of native thornscrub and woodlands in the World Birding Center network 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. We'll also visit a very different area in Brownsville – the resacas on the attractive campus of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley – but equally one that has not been as thoroughly birded as it deserves.

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

RIVER PONTOON & ANZALDUAS

Fee \$115 / Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday 6am – 1pm



Step aboard the large and comfortable *Riverside Dreamer* and see the Rio Grande River in a new way. The wooded banks on either side can yield many of our area's exceptional species and other exciting possibilities. 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: Can be cool on the boat in the mornings. Don't forget your 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 \$95 / Thursday, Saturday 6:30am – 12:30pm



The Sabal Palm Sanctuary is now 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. There's a bird-feeding area that's great for photo-ops and active enough to support a live cam!

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 \$85 / Thursday, Friday, Saturday 6:30am – 12:30pm



Widely famous and justly so, with the second highest bird count (after Laguna Atascosa!) in the entire U.S. NWR system, the riparian woodlands and cattail-lined 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 rare 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, Green Jay, Clay-colored Thrush, Olive Sparrow.

*SANTA MARGARITA BLUFFS

Fee \$130 / Wednesday, 5am – 2pm



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 scenic bluff gives us a better chance for some difficult species including Muscovy Duck (rare), 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 the well-stocked feeding station.

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 and Cactus Wren, Verdin, Pyrrhuloxia, Altamira and Audubon's Orioles.

*SHOREBIRD ID FIELD WORKSHOP

Fee \$100 / Thursday, Friday, Sunday 6am – 1pm



How about a trip focused on the identification of a group of birds that often confounds and befuddles? Join expert guides on this field trip to work on shorebird identification skills. Suitable for birders of all levels. Space is limited but with a small group lucky participants will have an unforgettable experience. While shorebirds are the focus, we'll look at and enjoy all the birds we see!

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND and BAY CRUISE

Fee \$120 / Friday, Saturday 6am – 1pm



Sure, spring breakers migrate here in mid-March, but the birds make full use of this sub-tropical paradise all year round. Explore boardwalks over coastal marshes, check out the concentrated woodlots and enjoy a cruise on the lovely Laguna Madre. Always a popular trip, so sign up early.

Note: It can be cool on the boat – don't forget your jacket.

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

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND BIRDING AND NATURE CENTER

Fee \$85 / Wednesday, Thursday 6:30am – 1:00pm



The South Padre Island Bird and Nature Center (and Alligator rescue) was built as a part of the World Birding Center, and has over 3300 feet of board walk! The board walk spans salt and freshwater marsh and lagoons, and often yields surprising sightings. Rails can be quite accommodating, and resident Alligators are often visible on warm days. Once we've finished at the Bird and Nature Center we'll make a stop at the Valley Land Fund Sheepshead lots to see what might be present. Late fall has turned up a number of surprises here!

Targets: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Redhead, Neotropic Cormorant, Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, Clapper Rail, Sora, Royal Tern, Peregrine Falcon, Tropical Kingbird, Great Kiskadee, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Marsh Wren and so much more!

*SUNSET SHENANIGANS AT RESACA DE LA PALMA STATE PARK

With Land Sea and Sky

Fee \$85 / Thursday 5:30pm – 9:00pm



We will travel just down the road to Resaca de la Palma State Park and World Birding Center for an evening of activities! We will arrive about sunset, and we will spend the evening star gazing, black lighting, and looking for creatures of the night. This is a unique opportunity to join Land Sea and Sky for a look through their astronomical telescopes, local lepidopterists for moths, and a chance to look for nocturnal critters. Bark scorpions, tarantulas, and owls (Eastern Screech, Barn, and Great Horned) are possible as are lingering nighthawks. Snack provided.

*SUSTAINABLE WILDLIFE LANDSCAPES

With the Center for Urban Ecology of McAllen

Fee \$85 / Saturday 7:30am – 1:00pm



Join John Brush and Kate LaVallee of McAllen's Center for Urban Ecology for a tour of areas landscaped with native plants. We'll talk about the importance of natives and ways to enhance even small areas for wildlife using native plants, water features, and minimizing lawn area. Whether you're trying to recover your landscaping after the freeze of February 2021 or just looking for ideas that will attract birds and butterflies to your yard, this trip should give you lots of ideas!

Goals: Learning about wildlife friendly landscapes in South Texas with elements that apply to other areas.

UPPER RIO GRANDE

Fee \$90 / Thursday, Saturday 5am – 2pm



Luckily for us, birds don't recognize our international borders. The river'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, kiskadees, and Green Jays! Some rare specialty birds are found along the Rio Grande in this area, and we'll look for them but not expect to see them. After we've enjoyed the beautiful view of the Rio, we'll move on to Falcon State Park where we'll look for desert specialties.

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

*VALLEY RAPTORS

with Bill Clark

Fee \$95 /Wednesday 6:30am – 4pm



Many birders have a special fondness for raptors. And 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 trip, led by Harlingen resident and world-authority 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 in the time available.

Targets: White-tailed Hawk, Hook-billed Kite (very rare in recent years), Gray Hawk, Harris's Hawk, Crested Caracara, Aplomado Falcon.

*WESLACO'S URBAN OASES

Fee \$65 / Thursday 7:30-1pm



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. And with their wonderful mix of thornbush, wetlands and butterfly gardens, they provide nesting habitat for many of our Valley specialties and a haven for wintering passerines. Conditions permitting, we will stop at a local sod farm on the way back.

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 \$110/ Thursday, Saturday, Sunday – Cameron County 6:30am – 1pm
– Wednesday, Friday - Hidalgo County 6:30am – 1pm



Every birder has those out of the way, known only to a few, locations that are close to home and sure to yield a productive day of birding. If you are lucky enough to live in the Rio Grande Valley, these secret jewels become as familiar as your own backyard. Join some of our leading local birders as they share with you a super opportunity to bird the less traveled roads of Hidalgo or Cameron County. Ideal for county listers.

Note: There are no target lists but a variety of habitats will be visited on each trip and participants (no more than eight on each trip) will see many Valley specialties and perhaps a surprise or two.

*YOUNG BIRDERS

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

Fee \$130 Friday – 6am to 1pm

Fee \$90 / Saturday 5am – 2pm



Lucky young birders age 12-20 will join expert guides for exclusive field trips limited to 10 participants. Destinations vary each day as do target species but sign up every day for a valley-wide experience! On the bus with the main group (but separate Young Birder guide) for King Ranch and Upper Rio Grande Valley, in a van for Estero, Santa Ana, and the clean up trip!

Wednesday – Estero Llano Grande State Park

Thursday – Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge

Friday –King Ranch

Saturday –Upper Rio Grande Valley

Sunday –on a “clean up” trip to various locations looking for desired targets!

Target: See target lists for each site.

RGVBF PHOTOTRACK

Our 2021 PhotoTrack is sure to generate excitement with opportunities for all experience levels no matter what type of camera you have. We offer something for every interest level and ability. Indoor classroom topics on digiscoping, in-the-field excursions to get hands-on experience, guidance from professionals, action shots, and demystifying those settings are some highlights. 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 or Laguna Seca Ranch for a fabulous reflective shot of Green Jays.

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

[TRANSIT TIMES ARE SELF-DRIVE]

*DIGISCOPING DEMYSTIFIED

With Clay Taylor, Swarovski Optik Ltd.
Fee \$20 / Thursday 3:30-5pm

This indoor workshop held at the Harlingen Convention Center and 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 from 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 -5pm



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 \$200 / Wednesday 7-4pm

Fee \$125 / Friday, Saturday 7am – 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. Wednesday will offer both a morning and an afternoon shoot in blinds set up for the changing light conditions. This special RGVBF all day offering may include a chance to shoot at the brand-new reflecting pond! **BRING YOUR OWN FOOD** to this special onetime only opportunity. Important: Meet promptly at the ranch gate, directions provided.

MARTIN REFUGE

Fee \$175 / Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday 7am – 12:45pm

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 Refuge will be providing us with lunch at an open air palapa.

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



INTRODUCTION TO BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY – Estero Llano Grande State Park

Fee \$50/Thursday 7am – 12pm

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.



INTRODUCTION TO BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY – National Butterfly Center

Fee \$50/Saturday 8am – 12pm

This workshop is targeted at those who are relatively new to bird photography. We'll **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



PHOTOGRAPHING BIRDS IN FLIGHT – Herons and Waterbirds

Fee \$50 / Sunday 7:30am – 12pm

Meet onsite at the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center. 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.



PHOTOGRAPHING BIRDS IN FLIGHT – Gulls and Hawks

Fee \$75 / Friday 7:30am – 12:30pm

We will 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 will explore the dump and practice with many gulls, Crested Caracara, or White-tailed Hawks. We will 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.



SUNSETS, BIRDS, AND MORE!

With Clay Taylor, Swarovski Inc.

Fee \$60 / Wednesday, Friday 3:30pm – 9pm



We will depart the Convention Center in the late afternoon and head to South Padre Island, where we will scout locations and discuss settings and equipment. As the sun sets, we will try to silhouette birds in front of the sun for spectacular images! We will head to the South Padre Island Brewing Company for dinner before heading back to the Harlingen Convention Center.

Goals: Learning how to plan for sunset silhouettes of birds and rewarding ourselves with some great food!

PRE-FESTIVAL TRIP

NORTHEAST TEXAS PINEY WOODS AND COASTAL MARSHES!

with Eric Ripma and additional guide(s) as needed.

Fee \$1,199 double occupancy, \$300 single supplement

5:00 pm Friday, Nov 5 to the morning of Tuesday Nov 9 (departing flights)



The Piney Woods and marshes of northeastern Texas are home to a wide variety of birds not found in the Rio Grande Valley. We'll explore the pine forests north of Houston before heading to the coast to visit the prairies, marshes, beaches, and coastal woodland that make this region special. 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:

Sam Houston National Forest: This location will be our chance to explore the Piney Woods. Some of the specialties we will be looking for include Red-cockaded and Pileated Woodpeckers, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Bachman's Sparrow, and many others.

Cattail Marsh Scenic Wetlands & Boardwalk: This 900-acre wetland provides habitat for many of the species that call this region "home". A boardwalk running more than 500 feet out over the marsh features two covered platforms and affords delightful looks at the abundant wildlife. Some of the species we hope to see include Fish Crow, many species of ducks including Cinnamon Teal and Wood Duck, King Rail, Anhinga, and many herons and egrets.

Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge: This refuge consisting of 37,000 acres of coastal wetland supports an unbelievable number of waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, and sparrows during the winter months. The flocks of ducks and geese, many hunting raptors, swirling masses of shorebirds will make it difficult to leave this fabulous refuge.

Bolivar Peninsula: We will visit a number of sites on the Bolivar Peninsula. From the saltmarshes to the tidal flats, we will be sure to see some special species such as Clapper Rail, Snowy and Piping Plovers, Long-billed Curlew, Black Skimmer, and Seaside and Nelson's Sparrows, just to name a few!

Texas Point National Wildlife Refuge: This refuge is one of the best places to see Clapper Rail and both Nelson's and Seaside Sparrows in the region. We also expect to see many species of waterfowl and shorebirds while visiting this site.

Sabine Woods: While this property is best during spring migration it can also be surprisingly "birdy" during the fall. Some of the species we may see include Chuck-will's-widow, American Woodcock, and many species of passerines. This is one of the locations where you never know what you might see!

Pleasure Island: The roads on Pleasure Island provide great views of Sabine Lake and an opportunity to scan for a number of waterbirds that are more common here than elsewhere in the region. Species such as scoters, Horned and Eared Grebes, and Brown Booby are all possible amongst the more common waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading species.

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

For full itinerary, see www.sabrewingtours.com/tour/rgvbfpretrip/
Call 317-324-8505 for registration questions.

POST-FESTIVAL TRIP

NORTHEAST MEXICO MEDLEY - EL CIELO & MONTEREY

with Brant Nature Tours.

Fee \$2099

Sunday, Nov 14 – Sunday Nov 21



Less than six hours south of the Lower Rio Grande Valley is a magical mountain range, home to many tropical birds not found in the United States. The name, *El Cielo*, says it all—this is *heaven* to birds and birders! The El Cielo Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO site of international significance, offers cloudforest, dense tropical forest, cascading waterfalls, dramatic vistas, and enchanting birds, not to mention delicious traditional cuisine in a community of welcoming people. Some 255 resident bird species and 175 transients have been documented in the preserve alone, and surrounding deserts and adjacent mountains offer many other regional specialties, such as Maroon-fronted Parrot and Wornthern's Sparrow. Join us for this fascinating excursion to northeast Mexico, visiting the states of Tamaulipas, Coahuila, and Nuevo León.

For more information and to register go to: <http://www.branttours.com/tours/partner/rqvbfnemexico>

KEYNOTES, SEMINARS and WORKSHOPS

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 and Workshops are not included in the *Kiskadee Pass*.

The Internet Of Wings:

How The Data Revolution Is About To Change The Way You Bird



with *Nathan Pieplow*

Fee \$20 or Free with *Kiskadee Pass* / Saturday 6:15pm

What if your phone could pick out rarities for you from a flock of birds? What if it could tell you exactly where an individual migrant came from and where it is going? These technologies already exist, or soon will. In this talk, Nathan Pieplow will discuss how cutting-edge innovations in bird tracking and automatic identification can enhance conservation, supercharge citizen science, and broaden the appeal of birding. You'll learn how the song of a White-crowned

Sparrow communicates not just its species identity, but its street address. You'll learn what happened when a flock of curlews ran into a snowstorm, and how we know. And you'll learn how YOU can collect the data needed to reverse declines in bird populations.

Nathan Pieplow is the author of the *Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds*, published in two volumes, Eastern (2017) and Western (2019). An avid bird sound recordist and videographer, he is the author of the bird sound blog Earbirding.com, a board member of the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, an author of the *Colorado Birding Trail*, and former editor of the journal *Colorado Birds*. He teaches writing and rhetoric at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

A Big Year of Birding on a Budget



with *Christian Hagenlocher*

Fee \$20 or Free with *Kiskadee Pass* / Friday 6:15pm

'*A Big Year of Birding on a Budget*' describes Christian Hagenlocher's approach to Big Year birding. Follow along as he takes you through how he did a record-breaking continental Big Year on a budget, living out of his Subaru Outback, and cutting corners to save money to find birds in the remotest corners of North America. This journey spans from the remote island of Attu, Alaska to Florida's Dry Tortugas, sharing his encounters with birds and interviews with birders, in

an effort to Engage, Preserve, Inspire, and Connect people. A teacher by profession, Christian will share this amazing journey through photos, videos, maps, and interviews, teaching you something new about the amazing continent we share with an incredibly diverse cast of feathered friends.

Christian Hagenlocher's passion for birds began at an early age, when he saw the pair of Peregrine Falcons nesting on a building in downtown Seattle. Since then, he's read every library book and field guide he could get his hands on, and his passion for birds and education has only grown! He is passionate about the education of people of all ages and went into the teaching profession after completing a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology in 2011. As a high school Science teacher and licensed falconer, Christian has integrated birds into curriculum in unique ways, exposing students to the ancient sport of falconry and leading international science-focused trips to Belize, Costa Rica, Israel, Colombia, and Peru. In 2016, Christian became the youngest person to break the 700 mark in an ABA Big Year. His book *Falcon Freeway: A Big Year of Birding on a Budget* describes his adventures and lessons learned while living on the road, birding in the 21st century. Christian is currently teaching Middle School science in Seattle, Washington

CHANGING BIRDLIFE OF A TROPICAL FRONTIER



with Dr. Tim Brush

Fee \$15 or Free with Kiskadee Pass / Thursday 2:30pm – 3:30pm

The Valley is a prime birding area, given the many tropical bird species seen regularly here. Many parks and other natural areas provide the opportunity to visit the tropics without crossing the border! In recent decades, the Valley has seen many changes to its birdlife, as new species have established themselves while others have declined. Some birds have spread northward quite far, while others have shown different patterns. Dr. Brush will discuss some case studies, and will try to put the Valley into perspective within the broader region, as a stepping stone for bird movements.

Dr. Tim Brush recently retired as a Professor of Biology at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley campus, in Edinburg, Texas. He was born and raised in central New Jersey, where his parents encouraged him to read and to enjoy nature. He became interested in birds at age 14, when he noticed Turkey Vultures flying over the Delaware Water Gap in Pennsylvania, and a foraging Eastern Phoebe in a natural area near his home in Piscataway, New Jersey.

He majored in Biology and further developed his interest in birds at Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana, from which he graduated in 1977. In 1981, he received an MS in Zoology from Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, where he studied cavity-nesting birds in desert riparian woodlands along the lower Colorado River. In 1985, he received PhD in Zoology, for his study of habitat use and foraging behavior of birds in the New Jersey Pine Barrens.

In 1991, after teaching for 5 years at a small college in Iowa, he and his family moved to Edinburg, Texas, to begin what turned out to be a thirty-year career. He has studied and taught about the changing birdlife and habitats of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, trying to understand what is happening and why. He has traveled to and studied birds in Mexico, New Zealand, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. His wife and three children are all strongly interested in nature. Tim looks forward to continued research and travel.

UNUSUAL RAPTOR PLUMAGES: ALBINISM, MELANISM, HYBRIDS, AMELANISM, AND OTHERS



with William S. (Bill) Clark

Fee \$15 or Free with Kiskadee Pass / Thursday 4:00pm – 5:00pm

Raptors do not always look like the illustrations of them in field guides. This talk is a presentation of a vast array of photos of unusual plumages of North American diurnal raptors, including albino, partial albino, and amelanism (dilute plumage, leucism) raptors and on the usage and misuse of these terms. Melanistic, hybrids, and other oddly plumaged raptors will also be shown and discussed, as are long-billed syndrome, methane burner casualties, and others. This presentation is used in raptor identification sessions and is updated regularly.

William S. (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 NWFs 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, which is now being run by his colleague, Sergio Seipke. Bill is on the board of directors.

He has been living in the Rio Grande Valley since 2002. He regularly teaches evening and weekend courses on raptor field identification and biology and frequently presents lectures on raptor subjects.

Bill 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*.

He has on-going research projects on Harlan's Hawk, White-tailed Hawk and Harris's Hawk. Bill has a personal goal to see and photograph 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.



Home Range Dynamics And Juvenile Dispersal Of Gray Hawks (*Buteo Plagiatus*) In The Lower Rio Grande Valley



with Mike Stewart

Fee \$15 or Free with Kiskadee Pass / Saturday 2:30pm – 3:30pm

Mike has color banded dozens of Gray Hawks in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties, along with deploying 30 GPS-GSM transmitters and 15 VHF radio transmitters, to determine when juveniles disperse from their natal sites and how far they travel. He has also determined the extent of breeding and nonbreeding home ranges for adults.

Come hear about his research with this uncommon raptor and discover what relevant information he has found that will guide conservation efforts for Gray Hawks, a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Texas.

Mike Stewart is originally from Texas, but over the past 20 years he has lived in several states throughout the eastern U.S. He has been interested in birds since 2002 when a pair of Blue Jays nested outside his kitchen window. After retiring from the Army in 2019, he enrolled at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley with plans to attend Texas A&M University-Kingsville after completing his Master of Science in Biology. He lives in south Texas with his wife, Yvette, and their Green-cheeked Parakeet, Greenlee. Mike spends much of his spare time birding and trying to photograph birds, as well as banding songbirds and raptors.

Is It Easy Being Green?

Colors And Consequences In Breeding Painted Buntings.



with Christine Gurley

Fee \$15 or Free with Kiskadee Pass / Saturday 4:00pm – 5:00pm

Painted Buntings are a favorite of many bird watchers, but despite their popularity, there are still many things we do not know about their breeding behavior. A team of researchers from the University of North Texas at Denton has been studying Painted Buntings in the Fort Worth area since 2017 to explore some unanswered questions about this charismatic species.

Christine Gurley, a member of this research team, will discuss why many songbirds have colorful feathers, why it matters to study bird behavior, and the mystery of Painted Bunting "green males."

Christine Gurley is a young ecologist interested in the intersection of research, science education, and community-led conservation. She received her Master's Degree in Biology in 2021 from the University of North Texas in Denton, and is a member of the UNT Painted Bunting research group, which works in the Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area in north central Texas. Christine received her Bachelor of Sciences in Biology from Trinity University in 2016 and has done a variety of volunteer work in environmental outreach and educational access. She currently works for the National Ecological Observatory Network and intends to pursue a career in ecological research, teaching, and conservation.

IDENTIFY ANY BIRD ANYWHERE **Advanced Skills for Beginning Birders**



with Kristi Dranginis at Resaca De la Palma SP
Fee \$85 / Wednesday 2:00pm – 4:30pm



Have you reached a plateau with your birding skills? Maybe you are able to identify a handful of birds, but can't really seem to get beyond the basics? If that's the case, you'll want to check out this innovative workshop to learn a unique approach to identifying and connecting with birds. You won't just hear cool tips about backyard birds, you'll actually learn HOW TO LEARN about birds. Kristi Dranginis, founder of Bird Mentor and author of *Identify Any Bird Anywhere* will unveil The Seven and a Half Questions to Bird Identification that will catapult your bird

loving skills and confidence after just a little practice. You will walk away with a solid set of new bird ID skills that you can start applying right away.

INSTINCTIVE BIRDING ~ DAWN BIRD SIT **Understanding The Language Of The Birds**



with Kristi Dranginis
Fee \$15 / or Free with Kiskadee Pass / Saturday & Sunday 6:00am – 8:00am



Did you know that a particular call of a bird can tell you if a deer is sneaking away from you or that a bobcat is nearby or that another person is approaching you on the trail, giving you advance notice and the time you'd need to respond?

In addition to identifying when a predator is moving through the landscape, understanding the language of the birds will also help us learn how to quiet our minds, blend into the world around us and attune to our senses, allowing us to become sensitive to our effect on the natural world and those around us. Kristi Dranginis, founder of Bird Mentor and author of *Identify Any Bird Anywhere*, will help you learn the skills of instinctive birding, interpreting what the language of the birds looks and sounds like, through this engaging dawn bird sit. Bring your favorite morning beverage, binoculars if you choose and the willingness to try something new.

NOTE: This trip will meet at Ramsey Nature Park in Harlingen. Be sure to arrive on time.

Kristi Dranginis is the founder of Bird Mentor, a resource for live and online courses helping people worldwide build confidence learning about birds and the natural world. Through her courses, students are immersed in the principles of instinctive birding, deep nature connection, bird language, and her innovative model for advanced bird identification.

In addition to her 8-month long masters course, Advanced Skills for Beginning Birders, and her bird song identification course, Learning Bird Song, which was featured in the Audubon Magazine, Kristi is the author of the book, *Identify Any Bird Anywhere*, offering an innovative new approach to learning about birds in just 8 easy lessons.

Kristi also teaches birding at traditional skills events like Rabbit Stick, Winter Count, Saskatoon Circle, Buckeye, Sharpening Stone and for amazing organizations like the Boulder Outdoor Survival School, The Women's Wilderness Institute, Crow Canyon Archeological Center, The Vermont Wilderness School, Flanders Nature Center, Eight Shields Institute and The Powerhouse Science Center.

In 2016 she helped found the Dipper Project, a research study designed to look at the effects of the Gold King Mine spill on avian life in the Animas River in Colorado. She also leads tours for the Bosque del Apache Sandhill Crane Festival, Mesa Verde Bird Festival, the Durango Bird Club and The White Memorial Conservation Center.

During a real bird nerd phase, she helped to band birds on Great Gull Island, focusing on the Roseate & Common Terns, as well as migratory birds at Oxbow Preserve and hummingbirds at Mesa Verde National Park.

In addition to geeking out about birds, Kristi is also a Naturalist, Herbalist, Photographer and has contributed to the new Peterson's *Field Guide to Bird Nests* and ABA's *Birder's Guide*.

SPECIAL EVENTS

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 between noon and 5pm, 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!



*DINNER WITH THE GUIDES

Fee \$20 BBQ Plate

Fee \$17 Vegetarian Plate

Wednesday 6:00pm – 9pm

A new Activity has been added to the RGV Birding Festival schedule for 2021. How would you like an opportunity to have dinner with a guide or two? On Wednesday evening you will be able to do just that. Join us at Smoke: Texas BBQ and Watering Hole for a plate of barbeque and sides or a vegetarian plate consisting of a salad with potato salad and macaroni and cheese. Each table will be hosted by one or more festival guides. Cash Bar available.

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, with some light snacks to hold you over until dinner. Beer or wine offered to anyone over 21. Festival ID badge required.

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.

AUTHORS' 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. Books are for sale 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.

COVID-19 Policy and Protocol

We are excited to return to a festival that will be reminiscent, in many ways, of those in years past. Over 125 trips are planned, most of them will take participants to their location on a bus or van. We are also excited to bring back our trade show (held indoors) and socials (indoor/outdoor).

An inherent risk of exposure to COVID-19 and variants exists in any public place where people are present. Please help us to ensure a safe environment by following all posted instructions and instructions by festival guides and volunteers. According to the Centers for Disease Control and prevention, COVID-19 (and variants) is an extremely contagious disease that can lead to severe illness and death. By visiting the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, you voluntarily assume all risks related to exposure to COVID-19 and its variants.

During the 2021 Festival, we will be following all current COVID-19 Safe Protocols which may include:

- **Common Areas will be sanitized regularly, based on Harlingen Convention Center protocols.**
- **Touchless temperature checks and verbal COVID-19 related questioning will take place daily when individuals arrive on site. Everyone clearing this process will be provided a wrist band to prevent having to duplicate the process throughout the day as you move between venues.**
- **Vans and buses will be sanitized after each use.**
- **Contact tracing protocols will be followed.**
- **Face masks are encouraged throughout the Festival and required when in vans and buses where social distancing cannot be maintained.**
- **Hand sanitizer will be available, however we encourage frequent handwashing and keeping personal sanitizer with you during Festival activities.**

NOTE: Updated information will be posted as needed.

REFUND POLICY

Registration Fee

- 100% refund if cancellation occurs before Aug 24, 11:59 PM
- 50% refund if cancellation occurs before Oct 2, 11:59 PM
- No refunds - if cancellation occurs after Oct 2, 12:00 AM

All other Fees

- Full refund if cancellation occurs before Oct 2, 11:59 PM
- 50% refund if cancellation occurs before Oct 9, 11:59 PM
- No refunds if cancellation occurs after Oct 9, 12:00 AM

Online registration closes - Oct 27, 5 PM