

## [Welcome to the 29<sup>th</sup> 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 2022 Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival in Harlingen, TX. The dates are Nov 9-13.

There are many 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 2022!

### REGISTRATION INFORMATION

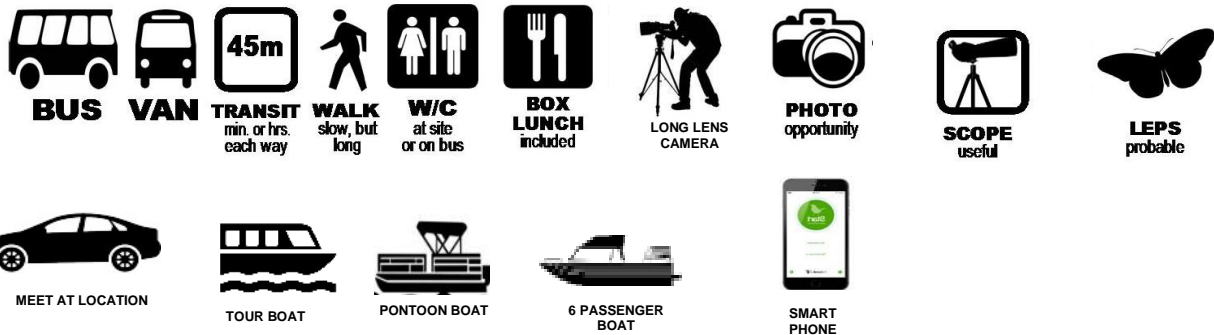
**Event registration is required for all participants wishing to sign up for field trips, keynote speakers or seminars. It is not necessary to attend the Birder's Bazaar Tradeshaw or family and children's activities.**

Registration is \$50. The \$30 *Kiskadee Pass* can be added to provide 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**

**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 is provided. Bring your water bottles & 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.**

**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.

### **ARROYO COLORADO UNIT**

**with Ernesto Garcia-Ortega**

**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.

## LAGUNA MADRE ISLANDS AND WATERBIRD CONSERVATION

with Justin LeClaire

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



This is a wonderful opportunity for a small group to explore the world-class Laguna Madre and Arroyo Colorado by boat and get close, intimate views of birds utilizing this coastal ecosystem. The Laguna Madre encompasses vital breeding, foraging, and roosting habitat for dozens of species of waterbirds and shorebirds in the form of dense rookery spoil islands, extensive prey-rich tidal mudflats, and complex black mangrove marshes among many other habitat features. Justin is an Avian Conservation Biologist with the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, which has researched, monitored, and managed important spoil islands and mudflats for waterbirds throughout the Central and Lower Texas Coast for decades.

**Note:** Although there will be excellent photo opportunities, please only bring hand-held cameras for the boat trip. Much of the trip will be spent standing or sitting on an outboard boat in potentially windy conditions. A restroom will only be available at the start and end of the boat tour. It can be cool on the boat, so bring an extra layer! Life jackets will be provided.

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

## BAHIA GRANDE UNIT

Fee \$90 / Wednesday, 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.

## BENTSEN-RGV STATE PARK

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



With its nearly 800 acres of land and bird list of some 360 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 Valley 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 one would be like? Here's your chance to get in on the action! Our most talked-about trips, some call it 'whirlbirding' – it's fast and furious fun. Prepare to be flexible, as routes will be chosen by your skilled leaders. Exercise those quick get-on-it skills – and wear your speedy shoes! Several vans will be involved for lots of birds and for 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!

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

## BIRD BANDING

*with Mark Conway*

**Fee \$90 / Sunday 7am - 11:30am**



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.

## BIRDING FOR NEW BIRDERS

*with Hannah Buschert & Erik Ostrander*

**Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Sunday**

**Fee \$90 / Thursday 7am – 1pm**



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

Wednesday: Frontera Audubon / Valley Nature Center – birding basics & ethics

Thursday: Bentsen RGV State Park – identification & record keeping

Friday: Estero Llano Grande State Park – bird lives & behavior

Sunday: South Padre Island Bird and Nature Center – migration, habitat & distribution

**Goals:** Developing basic birding skills, learning bird identification and good practice in reporting sightings, progressing beyond bird listing, and above all enjoying time in the field.

## BOCA CHICA & ROCKET RANCH

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



We'll explore Boca Chica Road all the way to the Gulf of Mexico, access allowing (the road is sometimes closed for SpaceX testing). If we cannot access Boca Chica Road we will explore coastal prairie habitat on other roads. This area of coastal prairie has interesting areas of salt flats, grasslands and thornscrub habitats. We will visit a new site in the Boca Chica area - Rocket Ranch, where we can bird along the Rio Grande River and take a snack and restroom break!

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

## BUTTERFLIES – RGV JEWELS

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



Over 300 species of butterflies have been recorded in the Lower RioGrande Valley, making it by far the richest butterfly area in the U.S. This tour, led by lepidoptera experts, explores our most productive sites. On Wednesday and Friday we'll go to the National Butterfly Center in Mission, the flagship of the North American Butterfly Association. On Sunday we'll go to Resaca de la Palma State Park for a chance at some Cameron County specialties.

**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 adjacent to Laguna Atascosa. 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.

**Target:** Sandhill Crane, Long-billed Curlew, raptors, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Great Kiskadee, Couch's Kingbird, Green Jay, wintering sparrows

## COLLEY'S "PRIVATE" ISLAND

with Scarlet and George Colley

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



A special version of the South Padre Island trip made famous by 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 may be cool on the boat – don't forget your jacket. The boat portion of the trip might have to be canceled if the weather is not cooperative.

**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!

## EASY (BUT NOT LESS!) BIRDING TOUR

Fee \$90 / Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday 7am – 1pm



Prefer less walking? These are the trips for you. *Bird from electric carts at State parks, and 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 is necessary. Restrooms are available at each site, but not on vehicles.

**Targets:** See target listing for each of the destination sites.

## EDINBURG AND QUINTA MAZATLAN

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



Edinburg Scenic Wetlands and Quinta Mazatlan are World Birding Center sites as well as 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, 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, 'McCall's' Eastern Screech-Owl, Vermilion Flycatcher, wintering warblers and sparrows.

## KING RANCH NORIAS

*with Tom Langschie*

**Fee \$130 / Thursday, 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](mailto:info@rgvbf.org) or (956)423-5565.

**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 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

## LEARNING TO LISTEN

with Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis

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



The ability to recognize bird songs and calls is critical to becoming a proficient birder. Yet many of us do have difficulty mastering the skill, often because we approach it in the wrong way. These workshops will help get us on the right path. And we will be learning from the best - Michael O'Brien (*Flight Calls of Migratory Birds* and *Larkwire*, an app for learning bird sounds) and Louise Zemaitis, who also happens to be this year's Festival artist!

## 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 over 30 breeding pairs grace the coastal prairies, and Old Port Isabel Road cuts right through this area. Join the search to see this beautiful species, with 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.

## 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.

## PORT MANSFIELD

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



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 the Sacahuistale Flats for a picnic lunch by the bay in Port Mansfield and take advantage of their 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 \$100 / Saturday 7:30am – 12pm



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

**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

with Dave Irons & Shawneen Finnegan  
Fee \$95 / Wednesday, Thursday 7am – 1pm



Join birding luminaries Dave and Shawneen on this visit to Resaca de la Palma State Park with its 1200 acres of protected land, including the largest tract of native thornscrub and woodlands in the World Birding Center network. 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, which have hosted some extraordinary rarities in recent years.

**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 \$90 / Thursday, Saturday 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. If, as sometimes happens at short notice, Anzalduas is closed, we shall instead visit the World Birding site at Hidalgo Pumphouse.

**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 / Friday, Saturday 6:30am – 12:30pm



The Sabal Palm Sanctuary is now managed by the Gorgas Science Foundation. 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! If time permits, we shall visit a local wetland on our way back to Harlingen.

**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, Saturday, Sunday 6:30am – 12:30pm



Widely famous and justly so, Santa Ana NWR has one of the highest bird counts 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. Added attractions are the 40' hawk-watch tower and the 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.



## SHOREBIRD FIELD WORKSHOP

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



Many birders profess difficulty in identifying shorebirds, but it is a skill that can readily be acquired. Once mastered, it is both a pleasure in itself and a potential tool to aid shorebird conservation - shorebird numbers can, after all, only be accurately monitored if they can be identified with confidence. The emphasis of these workshops will be on identification, but we are fortunate that Manomet, the global leader in shorebird conservation, has a booth at the Festival this year and we will learn about their work in addressing the threats to shorebirds and unravelling the mysteries of shorebird migration.

## SOUTH PADRE ISLAND and BAY CRUISE

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



Sure, spring breakers migrate here in mid-March, but 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 Birding and Nature Center (and Alligator Sanctuary) was built as a part of the World Birding Center and has over 3300 feet of boardwalk! The boardwalk 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 Birding 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 & Kowa Optics

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.

## UPPER RIO GRANDE

Fee \$110 / Wednesday, 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 while recognizing that our chances of success are slight. 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. 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 raptor world-authority Bill Clark (author of *Peterson Guide to Hawks*, *A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors*, and *Raptors of Mexico and 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

with Jon Dunn

Fee \$65/ Wednesday, Thursday 7:30am to 1pm



This is a wonderful opportunity to bird in a small group with birding icon Jon Dunn, co-author of the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, and *Peterson Field Guides to Warblers* and *Gulls of the Americas*. On this leisurely tour we'll visit two urban gems in Weslaco – the 15 acres of Frontera Audubon thicket and the 6 acres of Valley Nature Center. Don't be misled by their size – both have attracted an impressive array of Mexican vagrants, including Crimson-collared Grosbeak and Golden-crowned Warbler on previous Festival tours. With their mix of thornbrush, 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/ Wednesday, Friday, Sunday– Cameron County 6:30am – 1pm

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



Every birder has those out of the way locations, known only to a few, 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 \$60 / Wednesday, Thursday, Sunday 6:30am – 2pm  
\$130 Friday (King Ranch)  
\$110 Saturday (Upper Rio Grande)*



Lucky young birders aged 12-20 will join expert guides for exclusive field trips limited to 8 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 for King Ranch and Upper Rio Grande Valley, in a van for Estero, Santa Ana, and the clean up trip!

**Wednesday** – to Estero Llano Grande State Park

**Thursday** – to Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge

**Friday** – to King Ranch on the bus

**Saturday** – to the Upper Rio Grande Valley on the bus

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

**Target:** See target lists for each site.

**The following trips will meet at the site.**

## HUGH RAMSEY PARK (HARLINGEN ARROYO COLORADO WBC)

*with local volunteers*

*Free / Saturday, Sunday 9am & 11am*

The 55 acres of this World Birding Center are a microcosm of South Texas habitats enhanced by trails, water features, bird-feeding areas, photographic blinds and extensive plantings of native vegetation. They truly are a birding oasis close to the center of Harlingen, with over 270 recorded species. .

The Park will be open for birding from dusk to dawn throughout the Festival. There are no tours from the Festival itself, but local birders will lead walks for Festival registrants at the Park each morning at 8 & 10 am. Each will last about 90 minutes. You can reserve a place on one of the walks through the Festival’s website in the normal way.

## SAN BENITO WETLANDS

*with local volunteers*

*Free / Thursday, Friday 8am & 10am*

The restoration of wetlands and riparian habitat on some 65 acres at the San Benito Wetlands is one of the most exciting on-going environmental projects in the area. It’s spearheaded by Jaime Flores, the Program Coordinator of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership, and actively supported by the City of San Benito, the owners of the land.

For the time being, the site can only be entered with specific permission from the City of San Benito. During the Festival, however, there will be guided walks led by local birders at 8am and 10am each morning. Reservations should be made in the usual way through the Festival’s website. In addition, anyone attending the Festival will be allowed entry to walk the trails between 2pm and 5pm each afternoon from the 9th to the 13th. Just take a little care when walking, particularly after wet weather.

The site is well worth visiting. Almost 200 species have been seen to date (it is an eBird hotspot), and at times the sheer numbers of cormorants, herons, egrets and wildfowl can be overwhelming.

# RGVBF PHOTOTRACK

Our 2022 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 Sunsets, Birds and More*) meet on site – directions to PhotoTrack destinations will be provided in your registration packets.

## \*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](mailto:Clay.Taylor@swarovskioptik.us). Clay will also have digiscoping adapters for DSLR cameras and smart phones available.

## LAGUNA SECA RANCH

**with Ruth Hoyt**

**Fee \$150 per session, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, 6:15-10:30am or 2:30-6pm, Sunday, 6:15am-10:30am only**



Laguna Seca Ranch is open for special opportunities for a small number of festival participants in morning and afternoon sessions. Morning participants meet at 6:00am at Love's Truck Stop, Exit 12 on highway 281/69C. Afternoon participants meet at 3:00pm at the ranch gate; driving directions to the ranch are provided and the ranch owner will meet afternoon participants at the gate.

Once on the property, you will be escorted to a shared photo blind to photograph songbirds attracted to the water feature or food near the blind. Modern bathroom on the premises. Photo opportunities for all hand-held cameras and those requiring tripods. Lenses equivalent to 300mm and longer are recommended.

## MARTIN REFUGE

*Fee \$165 / 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 eight participants and is suitable for photographers of all levels. Bring lots of batteries – there is no electricity on site. Restroom available.

## 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!