

# BIRD TREKS

## LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY SOUTH TEXAS GULF COAST & WHOOPING CRANES

**Dates** Tuesday, 11 January through Thursday, 20 January 2011: 10 days and 9 nights

**We'll visit** Aransas Bay on the *Wharf Cat* to see the endangered **Whooping Crane** and many other aquatic species. Whooping Crane numbers are increasing annually.

**Mustang and Padre Islands**, National Audubon Society Sanctuaries along the Gulf Coast, for shorebirds and seabirds.

**Laguna Atascosa, Santa Ana, Anzalduas, Bentsen, Salineno, and King Ranch:** oases of native vegetation, home to great birds on the Mexican border.

The American Birding Association rates **TEXAS** as the **# ONE birding location in the lower 48 states!** We hope that you'll join us and find out why.



### SOUTH TEXAS target species include . . .

Least Grebe  
Eared Grebe  
American White Pelican  
Neotropic Cormorant  
Anhinga  
Reddish Egret  
White Ibis  
White-faced Ibis  
Roseate Spoonbill  
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck  
Ross's Goose  
White-tailed Kite  
Harris's Hawk  
Gray Hawk  
White-tailed Hawk  
Crested Caracara  
Plain Chachalaca  
Sandhill Crane  
Whooping Crane  
Snowy Plover

Piping Plover  
Long-billed Curlew  
White-winged Dove  
Inca Dove  
Common Ground-Dove  
White-tipped Dove  
Red-crowned Parrot  
Green Parakeet  
Greater Roadrunner  
Pauraque  
Buff-bellied Hummingbird  
Ringed Kingfisher  
Green Kingfisher  
Ladder-backed Woodpecker  
Couch's Kingbird  
Eastern Phoebe  
Vermilion Flycatcher  
Great Kiskadee  
Cave Swallow  
Green Jay

Verdin  
Cactus Wren  
Sedge Wren  
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher  
Long-billed Thrasher  
Curve-billed Thrasher  
Sprague's Pipit  
Loggerhead Shrike  
Orange-crowned Warbler  
Black-throated Gray Warbler  
Pyrrhuloxia  
Olive Sparrow  
Lark Sparrow  
Black-throated Sparrow  
Yellow-headed Blackbird  
Brewer's Blackbird  
Bronzed Cowbird  
Altamira Oriole  
Audubon's Oriole  
Lesser Goldfinch

**Muscovy** - - John Puschock

RARITIES that we have found on recent winter tours include . . .

Masked Duck  
Hook-billed Kite  
Roadside Hawk  
Mountain Plover  
Northern Jacana  
Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl

Green-breasted Mango  
Elegant Trogon  
Brown Jay  
Tamaulipas Crow  
Clay-colored Thrush  
White-throated Robin  
Tropical Parula

Gray-crowned Yellowthroat  
Golden-crowned Warbler  
White-collared Seedeater  
Le Conte's Sparrow  
Crimson-collared Grosbeak  
Blue Bunting

\* \* \* \* \*

## South Texas & the Gulf Coast

11-20 January 2011

### Day      Agenda

1      Plan to arrive at Corpus Christi Airport by early afternoon. We'll drive north along the coast where species such as **Roseate Spoonbill**, **Long-billed Curlew**, **American White Pelican**, **Reddish Egret**, **Vermilion Flycatcher**, and **Neotropic Cormorant** are just a few of the many exciting birds that we may see. Overnight in Rockport.



Plain Chachalacas, abundant and noisy!  
-- Diana Schnelbach, tour participant

2      A morning boat trip out of Rockport Harbor on the *Wharf Cat* will give us our best chance to see the endangered **Whooping Crane**, hopefully at close range; more than **250** have wintered in this area in recent years. We should find 50 or more additional species during our morning on Aransas Bay. [Tomorrow is reserved as a back-up day for the boat ride, in case of bad weather.] We'll spend the afternoon at Goose Island State Park. There we'll see lots of **American Wigeon** and **Ring-necked Ducks** and look for mixed flocks of songbirds among the oaks. We can guarantee one gigantic Live Oak Tree. Second night in Rockport.

3      We'll search fields near Sinton for the increasingly rare **Mountain Plover**, where we may also find **Horned Lark**, **Crested Caracara**, and **Harris's Hawk**. Near Kingsville we will see **Great Kiskadee**, **Ladder-backed Woodpecker**, and **Long-billed Thrasher**. **Masked Duck** and **Northern Jacana** are two rarities that are always possible, especially in the ponds near Riviera. We'll search as many of these ponds as time allows. Overnight in Harlingen near the Mexican border.

4      Our first stop is South Padre Island for rails, raptors, gulls, terns, waterfowl and shorebirds, including our first **Piping Plovers**. Boca Chica will hopefully yield some seabirds, and perhaps **Snowy Plover** and **Northern Gannet**. Late in the day we'll look for **Green Parakeet** and **Red-crowned Parrot**. One year at this

time we were happily surprised with a **Tropical Parula!** A second night in Harlingen.

5 We look forward to a full day of birding in the 45,000-acre Laguna Atascosa NWR, on the inland side of Laguna Madre. We'll look for **Aplomado Falcon, Harris's Hawk, Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Curlew, Sedge Wren, King Rail, and Olive Sparrow.** Thousands of **Redheads** winter here, along with an abundance of other waterfowl. Late in the day we may see **Greater Roadrunner, Plain Chachalaca, Wild Turkey, and Nine-banded Armadillo,** as we have in past years. If recent sightings warrant, we will save time for any one of several small refuges and parks that have become true magnets for rarities. A third night in Harlingen.

6 Our morning at Santa Ana NWR should produce **Green and Ringed Kingfishers, Least Grebe, Golden-fronted Woodpecker,** and perhaps a **Hook-billed Kite.** Previously we have seen **Bobcat and Texas Coral Snake.** After a stop at the refuge visitor center and bookstore, we'll finish the day at Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park. Target birds at Bentsen include lots of **Plain Chachalacas, Altamira Oriole, Eastern Screech-Owl, and Pauraque.** **Clay-colored Thrush and Blue Bunting** are sometimes found here. One year we were lucky enough to discover an immature **Roadside Hawk,** the fourth ABA record! We'll make time for a visit to the Frontera Audubon Sanctuary or Estero Llano Grande State Park, especially if any rarities are being seen there. Overnight near Rio Grande City.



**Great Kiskadee,**  
a specialty of  
the Lower Rio  
Grande Valley.

- - Sandy Roe

7 A drive west will take us to the Falcon Dam area for our morning birding. We will attempt to see **Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Scaled Quail, and Hooded Oriole.** Salineno is often good for **Altamira and Audubon's Orioles, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Common Ground-Dove, Zone-tailed Hawk, and Gray Hawk.** Falcon State Park should produce a few **Vermilion Flycatchers, Pyrrhuloxia, and Greater Roadrunner.** San Ignacio is the most reliable location for **White-collared Seedeater** in the Valley. We'll spend the night in Kingsville.

8 Our first stop is the King Ranch, famous for its great habitats and vast quantities of birds. We'll search well for **White-tailed Hawk, colorful Lesser Goldfinch, Grasshopper Sparrow,** and lots more waterfowl that may include **Black - bellied Whistling - Duck and Mottled Duck.** Recently we watched **FIVE MASKED DUCKS** in a small pond, right beside the road! We'll drive north

and spend a pleasant afternoon at Hazel Bazemore Park and Pollywog Pond. Then we head for the coast for the night in Corpus Christi.



9 We'll begin the day at Hans Suter birding, close-up and personal. **Roseate Spoonbill**, some **Long-billed Curlews**, a few **American White Pelicans**, **Reddish Egrets**, and **Neotropic Cormorants** are just a few of the many birds we'll see. The boardwalk at Hans Suter is a nature photographer's dream come true! We'll bird some of the barrier beach islands as time allows, especially looking for **Snowy Plover** and **Northern Gannet**. Overnight in Corpus Christi.

10 This morning we may go inland for **Mountain Plover**, or scan the ocean and beach for **Wilson's Plover**, **Sandwich Tern**, and **Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphins**. We'll return to the Corpus Christi Airport for our early afternoon flights home.

Click on this link for a **map of the tour route**:

<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=117812928873209532533.00046632c45e48cd567e3&ll=27.504617,-97.9953&spn=0.446422,0.881653&z=11>

**PLEASE NOTE** This tour includes a boat trip to look for **Whooping Cranes**, plus a nice amount of time birding the **Rio Grande Valley**.

The **February South Texas Tour** does **NOT** include a **Whooping Crane** boat trip, but gives you extra time to bird the **Rio Grande Valley**. This may help you to decide which tour you would rather take. Both tours are excellent.



**Piping Plovers** are relatively easy to find when we are driving along the beach.

- - *Tom Amico*

*[Important details are on page 5]*

**Leader** Our Texas Gulf Coast - Lower Rio Grande Valley Tour will be led by **Bob Schutsky**, who is intimately familiar with this great region and will enjoy exploring it with you.

**Price** \$2395 per person based upon double occupancy. Single accommodations are available for an extra charge of \$485.

**Includes** Expert guide service, lodging for nine nights, **ALL meals** and entrance fees, ground transportation within Texas, and the Whooping Crane boat ride. **ALL tips** are also included in the tour fee, except for anything extra that you may wish to give to your tour leader(s) and boat captain.

Does not include the cost of airfare to and from Corpus Christi, Texas. BIRD TREKS will, upon request, gladly help you obtain the best possible airfare. Also not included are the cost of alcoholic beverages and items of a personal nature.

**Whooping  
Cranes**  
are simply  
magnificent!

- - *Les Eastman,*  
*tour participant*



**Extra Services** We offer the services of our exclusive BIRD TREKS travel agent, **Lori Heathcote**, in arranging your air travel. Lori has 25 years of experience in the travel industry and is a veteran birder. Lori can be reached through Bailey Travel at **1-800-224-5399**, or you can e-mail her at [lori@baileytravel.com](mailto:lori@baileytravel.com). By dealing with Lori you have the security of a 24-hour toll-free telephone number in case of any travel emergency. Please discuss any service fee directly with Lori.

**Deposit** A \$600 deposit will assure your reservation on the tour. The balance is due 10 November 2010.

**Refund & Cancellation Policy** With written notice more than 60 days prior to the first day of the tour, 100% of your deposit will be refunded, minus a \$75 service fee. With 30-60 days notice, you will receive a 50% refund of the full cost of the tour. No refund can be made with less than 30 days notice. You will receive a full refund if you provide a replacement for your spot on the tour. No partial refund can be given once a tour begins. We **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect your investment. Contact Access America at **1-800-284-8300** and mention **BIRD TREKS (ACCAM # F021096)**. You can apply by phone or via the Internet at [www.accessamerica.com](http://www.accessamerica.com).