

# BIRD TREKS presents - - -

## ***The LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY of TEXAS, the SOUTH TEXAS GULF COAST & WHOOPING CRANES***

**Dates** Friday, 19 January through Wednesday, 24 January 2018: 6 days & 5 nights.

**We'll visit** Aransas Bay on the *Wharf Cat* to see the federally endangered **Whooping Crane** and many other aquatic species. Whooping Crane numbers continue a slow but steady annual increase. That is great news!

Special locations for special birds, such as Sinton to search for **Mountain Plover**, and several residential areas for **Red-crowned Parrots** and flocks of **Green Parakeets**.

**Estero Llano Grande State Park, Santa Ana, Anzalduas, Bentsen - Rio Grande Valley:** oases of native vegetation, home to great birds on the Mexican border.

The American Birding Association rates **TEXAS** as the **# ONE** birding destination in the **Lower 48 States!** We hope that you will join us and discover 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  
Crested Caracara  
Plain Chachalaca  
Sandhill Crane  
Whooping Crane

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

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  
Yellow-headed Blackbird  
Brewer's Blackbird  
Bronzed Cowbird  
Altamira Oriole  
Audubon's Oriole  
Lesser Goldfinch

**American White Pelican**  
- - John Puschock

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

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

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

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

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## South Texas & the Gulf Coast 19 - 24 January 2018

### 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 Corpus Christi. [\*\*See bottom of itinerary]**



Plain Chachalaca, 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, very likely close enough to photograph. Nearly **300** have wintered in this area in recent years. We should find 50 or more additional species during our morning on Aransas Bay, which could even include an **American Bittern, Long-billed Curlews**, or a **Bobcat**. We'll spend late 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 in the oaks. Among many wonderful observations, we can guarantee one **gigantic** Live Oak Tree. Second night in Corpus Christi.

3            After breakfast we'll search fields near Sinton for the increasingly rare **Mountain Plover**, where we may also find **Horned Lark, Northern Bobwhite, Crested Caracara, and Harris's Hawk**. Near Kingsville we are likely to see **Great Kiskadee, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, and Long-billed Thrasher**. **Masked Duck** and **Northern Jacana** are two rarities that are possible, especially in the wetlands near Riviera. We'll search as many of these wetlands and ponds as time allows. Our next two nights are at the Best Western in Harlingen.

[Day 4 begins on page 3]

- 4 Most of our day will be on and near South Padre Island. Wetlands and mudflats at the Convention Center may yield **Piping Plover**, **Marbled Godwit**, **Black-necked Stilt**, **American Avocet**, **Common Loon**, **Sora**, and **Clapper Rail**. There will be many additional shorebird and tern species to sort through and identify. There is a very good chance of finding **Aplomado Falcon** on the mainland. If recent sightings warrant, we will save time for Sabal Palm Grove Sanctuary in Brownsville, and any one of several smaller refuges and parks that have become true magnets for rarities. There has been a fairly regular **Tropical Parula** at Sabal Palm in recent years. A second night in Harlingen.
- 5 Santa Ana is considered ‘The Jewel of the National Wildlife Refuge System.’ Our morning here should produce **Green** and **Ringed Kingfishers**, **Least Grebe**, **Golden-fronted Woodpecker**, and perhaps a **Hook-billed Kite**. Last year there was a **Northern Jacana**! Previously we found **Bobcat** and a **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 **Common Pauraque**. **Clay-colored Thrush**, **Blue Bunting**, and **Hook-billed Kite** can sometimes be found. One year we were lucky enough to discover an immature **Roadside Hawk**, the fourth ABA area record! We will spend the night in McAllen, near the airport.



Great Kiskadee is a large, vividly marked flycatcher.

6 We’ll have a full morning to visit Estero Llano Grande State Park. It is known for its rarities, such as **White-throated Thrush**, **Clay-colored Thrush**, and the very unusual **Gray-crowned Yellowthroat**. You will be at the McAllen Airport for your mid-afternoon flights home.

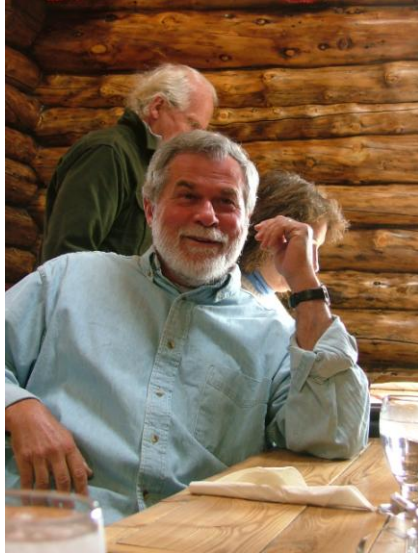
**PLEASE NOTE** This tour includes a **half-day boat trip** to look for **Whooping Cranes**, plus a **nice amount of time** birding in the avian-rich **Rio Grande Valley**.

Click on this link for a **map of the tour route**:  
<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=zDJlwFKF8JcU.kpHFE-UG1qkk>

*[Important details are on page 4]*

## Leaders

**Bob Schutsky** is scheduled to lead our **Texas Gulf Coast - Lower Rio Grande Valley Tour**. Bob is intimately familiar with this great region and will enjoy sharing its natural riches with you. The coastal inlets and flats are teeming with shorebirds, gulls, and terns. Birding such special places as Santa Ana NWR and Estero Llano Grande State Park make for fun and exciting birding experiences. Bob is anxious to share the birds of South Texas with you. It is an exciting destination! We will add a second leader if needed.



Bob will show you many of the exciting birds and locations of **South Texas and the Lower Rio Grande Valley**.

- - photo by Mary Brenner

## Price

\$1995 per person based upon double occupancy. Single accommodations are available for an extra charge of \$315. We will take a maximum of seven participants. On rare occasion we may extend the maximum to ten participants, in which case we will have a second leader and van.

## Includes

Expert guide service, lodging for all five 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.

The price does not include the cost of airfare to Corpus Christi and home from McAllen, 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.

*[Final details are on page 5]*



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 33 years of experience in the travel industry and is a veteran birder. Lori can be reached through **Travel Time** at **717-854-5511 x564** or **717-855-2128**, or via e-mail at [lori@trvltime.com](mailto:lori@trvltime.com). By dealing with Lori you have the security of a 24-hour toll-free telephone number in case of any travel emergency. There is a small fee for this service.

**Deposit** A \$400 deposit will assure your reservation on the tour. The balance is due 19 November 2017.

**Refund and 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 the tour begins. We **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect your investment. Contact **Allianz Global Assistance** and mention BIRD TREKS, ACCAM # F021096. You can apply via the Internet at [www.allianztravelinsurance.com](http://www.allianztravelinsurance.com) or by phone at 1-866-884-3556.

**\*\*TRAVEL NOTE** Most participants choose to arrive in Corpus Christi one day prior to the start of the tour. That would mean an arrival date of 18 January, with the tour beginning 19 January. This eliminates nearly all potential problems with a missed or delayed flight. It is convenient for you to spend the extra night in the same motel in which the entire group will be staying on the first two nights of the tour. The extra night will be at your expense. Lori, our travel agent, will gladly help you with these arrangements. The leader will also plan to arrive in Corpus Christi one day before the tour begins. Arriving one day early helps to relieve much of the stress from your air travel!

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