

# BIRD TREKS

## LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY & the extreme SOUTH TEXAS GULF COAST, with a very good chance for FERRUGINOUS PYGMY-OWL

**Dates** Friday, 9 February through Sunday, 18 February 2018: 10 days and 9 nights

**We'll visit** Estero Llano Grande, Santa Ana, Anzalduas, Bentsen, and Salineno: oases of native vegetation, and home to great birds on the Mexican border.

South Padre Island and Convention Center, and other beautiful sanctuaries along the Gulf Coast for songbirds, raptors, shorebirds, and seabirds.

Many new refuges in the Rio Grande Valley that have become fantastic birding hotspots. We'll also visit the King Ranch for our best chance of finding the rare **Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl**.



**Muscovy Duck** - - John Puschock,  
tour leader

### **SOUTH TEXAS target species include . . .**

Least Grebe	Piping Plover	Verdin
Eared Grebe	Long-billed Curlew	Cactus Wren
American White Pelican	White-winged Dove	Sedge Wren
Neotropic Cormorant	Inca Dove	Black-tailed Gnatcatcher
Anhinga	Common Ground-Dove	Long-billed Thrasher
Reddish Egret	White-tipped Dove	Curve-billed Thrasher
White Ibis	Red-crowned Parrot	Sprague's Pipit
White-faced Ibis	Green Parakeet	Loggerhead Shrike
Roseate Spoonbill	Greater Roadrunner	Orange-crowned Warbler
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	Common Pauraque	Black-throated Gray Warbler
Ross's Goose	Buff-bellied Hummingbird	Pyrrhuloxia
White-tailed Kite	Ringed Kingfisher	Olive Sparrow
Harris's Hawk	Green Kingfisher	Lark Sparrow
Gray Hawk	Ladder-backed Woodpecker	Black-throated Sparrow
White-tailed Hawk	Couch's Kingbird	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Crested Caracara	Vermilion Flycatcher	Brewer's Blackbird
Plain Chachalaca	Great Kiskadee	Bronzed Cowbird
Sandhill Crane	Cave Swallow	Altamira Oriole
Snowy Plover	Green Jay	Audubon's Oriole

*[Rarities, and Days 1 - 4 are on page 2]*

**RARITIES** that we have found on past winter Texas 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 Thrush  
Tropical Parula

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

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## The Lower Rio Grande Valley

9 - 18 February 2018

### Day   Agenda

1      Plan to arrive at Harlingen Airport by early afternoon. Depending upon how much time we have, we will either go in search of a local rarity, or visit Estero Llano Grande State Park for some great afternoon birding. Our first three nights will be in Harlingen.

- 2      Our first big adventure will be to the Norias Division of the King Ranch. This is where we will search for the highly sought-after **Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl**. There is no guarantee that we will find one, but there is certainly a good chance. The King Ranch has the largest Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl population in the US. We will find many additional species that may include **White-tailed Hawk, Crested Caracara, Northern Bobwhite, Wild Turkey, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Vermillion Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Green Jay, Audubon's Oriole, and Botteri's and Olive Sparrows**. Our second night in Harlingen.
- 3      We look forward to a full morning of birding on South Padre Island for **rails, raptors, gulls, terns, waterfowl, and shorebirds**, including our first **Piping Plovers**. The native plantings at the Convention Center often hold interesting songbirds. We will search for **Aplomado Falcon** on the nearby mainland. Boca Chica will yield some **seabirds**, and perhaps **Snowy Plover, Red Knot, and Northern Gannet**. If time allows we will head toward Brownsville or back to Harlingen to look for **Green Parakeet** and **Red-crowned Parrot** in the late afternoon. Our final night in Harlingen.
- 4      We'll begin the day at Estero Llano Grande State Park. Because of its varied habitats, Estero Llano Grande has a well-deserved reputation as a superb birding destination. We will see a large variety of songbirds and aquatic species. It is often possible to find a **Common Pauraque** and **Eastern (McCall's) Screech-Owl** on their day roosts. Our afternoon at Santa Ana NWR may 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** at this "Gem of the National Wildlife Refuge System". **Clay-colored Thrush** and **Tropical Parula** have become regular winter residents. In late 2015 we found a

**Northern Jacana!** We will end the day with a stop at the refuge visitor center and bookstore. Our first of three nights in McAllen.

5 We'll begin our day at the Frontera Audubon Society Refuge in Weslaco. This 15-acre sanctuary is almost over-flowing with birds. The feeding stations are well-maintained and water is provided for drinking and bathing. Many of the Lower Rio Grande specialties can be found here, including **Green Jay, Plain Chachalaca, Great Kiskadee, and Clay-colored Thrush**. Past visits have yielded rarities that include **Crimson-collared Grosbeak, White-throated Thrush, Elegant Trogon, and Roadside Hawk**. There are several additional nearby locations that will treat us well, such as Quinta Mazatlan, where **Rose-throated Becard** is sometimes found. We'll have another late day opportunity to look for **Green Parakeet and Red-crowned Parrot**. Second night in McAllen.

6 Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park lies on the Mexican border. Target birds at Bentsen include lots of **Plain Chachalacas, Altamira Oriole, Eastern Screech-Owl, and Common Pauraque**. **Clay-colored Thrush** and **Blue Bunting** are sometimes found here. Once again, feeding stations and water create a wonderful attraction for a variety of birds. Past finds here have included **Rose-throated Becard** and the first **Bare-throated Tiger-Heron** ever seen north of the Rio Grande. Later in the day we will be at Anzalduas County Park, on the border at the Rio Grande. This is a reliable area for **Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet**. A large mowed field may contain some **Sprague's Pipits**. We can almost always find some **mixed warbler flocks** in the live oak trees and perhaps a **Green or Ringed Kingfisher** over the river. Final night in McAllen.

7 We'll spend one more morning in the McAllen area, visiting Chihuahua Woods, Weslaco Water Treatment Plant, and McAllen Sewage Ponds. Chihuahua Woods will once again give us a nice variety of species because of its varied habitats. The two treatment plants are excellent for **waterfowl** and **shorebirds**, with several that will be new for the tour. We will work our way up the Rio Grande, with our final three nights in Rio Grande City.

8 A drive west will take us to the Falcon Dam area for a full day of birding. We will attempt to see **Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Scaled Quail, and Hooded Oriole**. Salineno is often very good for **Muscovy Duck, Audubon's Oriole, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Common Ground-Dove, Zone-tailed Hawk, and Gray Hawk**. There may be **Red-billed Pigeon** and **Groove-billed Ani**. Falcon State Park should produce a few **Vermilion Flycatchers, Pyrrhuloxia, Nashville Warbler, and Greater Roadrunner**. And perhaps the very rare **Roadside Hawk** will return. Second night in Rio Grande City.



Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl by R. Gallardo [Lizard in left foot!]

[Days 9 and 10, and special note are on page 4]

- 9 San Ignacio is the most reliable location for **White-collared Seedeater** in the Valley. And even though we will see many other species, the **seedeater** is our target bird for the day. It won't be easy, but we'll give it our best try. On a past tour a single **Brown Jay** was frequenting a feeder in San Ignacio. It was the only known Brown Jay north of the Rio Grande in several years. We'll hope that it is still there, and perhaps has even attracted a friend or two. Our final night in Rio Grande City.
- 10 We'll work our way toward **Harlingen** and our afternoon flights home. We will bird as time allows, the end of **TEN WONDERFUL DAYS** in the Rio Grande Valley.

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

<https://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msid=215986731009322774066.000482baacfa9ef157796&msa=0&ll=27.320535,-99.08844&spn=1.425055,2.469177>

### PLEASE NOTE

This tour concentrates on the refuges of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, from the Gulf Coast as far upriver as San Ignacio. Unlike the January tour, this one does not include a boat ride to search for Whooping Cranes in Aransas Bay. Instead, we will visit the King Ranch in an attempt to see a Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. This may help you to decide which tour you would prefer to take.

You will enjoy either, or both!

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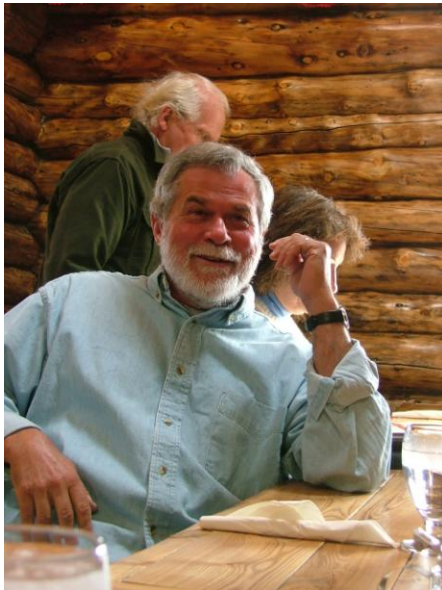


**Reddish Egret, what a beauty!**

- - Dick Scribner, tour participant

*[Important details on page 5]*





**Bob Schutsky**  
*Photo by Mary Brenner,  
tour participant*

**Leader** Our **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** \$2890 per person based upon double occupancy. Single accommodations are available for an extra charge of \$535. 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 nine nights, **ALL meals** and entrance fees, and ground transportation within Texas. **ALL tips** are also included in the tour fee, except for anything extra that you may wish to give to your tour leader(s).

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

**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. Contact her at Bailey Travel/Travel Time toll-free at **1-800-224-5399**, direct at **717-855-2128**, or e-mail her at **lori@trvltime.com**. By dealing with Lori you have the security of a 24-hour toll-free phone number in case of any travel emergency. She can also assist you with all pre- and post-tour travel plans. There is a small fee for these services.

**Deposit** A \$600 deposit will assure your reservation on the tour. The balance is due 9 December 2017.



**Olive Sparrow** is sometimes elusive.  
-- *Barry Ulman, tour participant*

**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** or by phone at **1-866-884-3556**.