

TOS Field Trips – Weslaco, Spring 2024

Friday – 9 trips Saturday – 8 trips Sunday – 5 trips

Please select a first and second option each day, as some trips fill quickly.

There is a minimum of two (2) participants per trip.

NOTE: Participants must meet their field trip group at the Valley Nature Center, 301 S. Border Ave, Weslaco at least 15 minutes prior to start time. Due to logistical complications, it is not possible for individuals to meet the group at any other location. Please plan accordingly. Also, there will be **entrance fees** at some locations. Please have small bills available as well as bringing your state and national parks passes.

NUMBER	FIELD TRIP AND DESCRIPTION	COUNTY	DIFFICULTY	DEPARTURE & HOTEL RETURN TIMES	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1	<p>BIRDY BROWNSVILLE: Discover the riparian treasures near Brownsville at the Sabal Palm Sanctuary, home to one of the last remaining tracts of Sabal Palm forest in the USA. This unique habitat, with its wetlands, forests, and proximity to the Rio Grande attracts many bird species including exciting rarities.</p> <p>Our journey also takes us to Resaca de la Palma State Park in Brownsville, where eight decks overlook the resaca, and woodland species abound.</p> <p>Depending on recently reported birds, we may visit one or two additional sites.</p> <p>Note: Be prepared to pay a \$6 admission fee at Sabal Palm, and bring your state parks pass for Resaca de la Palma.</p> <p><i>45-minute drive to Brownsville from the VNC. There will be some walking on paths and trails in both parks.</i></p> <p><i>Capacity: 12 participants</i></p>	CAMERON	MODERATE	Depart 6:00 am End 12:30 pm	No Trip	No Trip	Erin & Romey Swanson

2	<p>COASTAL EXTRAVAGANZA: We begin with a quest for Aplomado Falcons in the coastal prairie.</p> <p>Then travelers will experience a captivating boat trip from Port Isabel. Accompanied by Captain Henry, we'll explore island bays where the elusive Mangrove Yellow Warbler nests and shore birds gather, all while enjoying the possibility of Bottlenose dolphins in the bow's wake.</p> <p>Our day continues on South Padre Island with the pursuit of spring migrants and coastal specialties at spots up and down the island, including the grounds of the SPI Birding and Nature Center and Alligator Sanctuary and the Valley Land Fund Migratory Bird Lots on Sheepshead St., plus the Convention Center property.</p> <p>Early registration is crucial due to Coast Guard occupancy limits.</p> <p>Note: The \$50 fee for the boat trip is paid when you register online for this event. Be prepared to pay a fee of \$8 - \$10 at the SPI Birding Sanctuary.</p> <p><i>55-minute drive to falcon viewing area from the VNC. You <u>must</u> be able to navigate steep drop into and out of the boat. Somewhat lengthy walking on the boardwalk at SPI Nature Center. TRIP LEADER WILL ASK THOSE DEEMED UNABLE TO BOARD THE VESSEL TO REMAIN ON SHORE. Capacity: 10 participants.</i></p>	CAMERON	MODERATE	<p>Friday/Saturday Depart 5:45 am Arrive Back 3:15 pm</p>	Judy Kestner & Christine Turnbull	Susan Foster	No Trip
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<p>3</p>	<p>SPI SPECIALTY EXPLORATION: This trip is similar to Trip 2 but without the boat trip.</p> <p>The day begins with a quest for Aplomado Falcons in the coastal prairie.</p> <p>We then move to South Padre Island looking for spring migrants and coastal specialties at spots up and down the island, including the grounds of the SPI Birding, Nature Center and Alligator Sanctuary and the Valley Land Fund Migratory Bird Lots on Sheephead St., plus the Convention Center property.</p> <p>On Friday and Saturday, if time allows, we will finish the day checking the resacas on Hwy 100 (think Amazon Kingfisher!).</p> <p>Note: Be prepared to pay a fee of \$8 - \$10 at the SPI Birding Sanctuary.</p> <p><i>55-minute drive to falcon viewing area from the VNC. Somewhat lengthy walking on the boardwalk at SPI Nature Center; birding from the car and paved walks. Capacity: 12 participants</i></p>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">CAMERON</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">EASY/MODERATE</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Saturday</u> Depart 5:45 am Arrive back 2:45 pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Sunday</u> Depart 5:45 am End 12:00 pm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">John Berner & Lynn Thompson</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Randy Pinkston & Byron Stone</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ken Hartman & Angelina Vasquez</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>KING RANCH (KENEDY COUNTY CENTURY CLUB TRIP): Indulge in the exclusivity of the King Ranch (Norias Division) bird tour. This is the southernmost part of King Ranch in Texas and provides a great birding experience, with some of the rarest breeding birds in the U.S. such as the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl and Tropical Parula, and habitat for migrating songbirds. Other species we'll look for include White-tailed Hawk, Northern-beardless Tyrannulet, Vermilion Flycatcher, Botteri's Sparrow, and Audubon's Oriole.</p> <p>Lunch provided, and soft drinks and water are available throughout the trip. Hiking boots with high ankle support (for support in sandy soil and tucking in pant legs for tick and chigger control) desirable.</p> <p>Please note: The \$165 entrance fee for King Ranch covers a local guide, lunch, and van transportation. It is payable when you register for the meeting online.</p> <p><i>One-hour drive to ranch gate. Birding from the van; amount of walking depends on the birds. Capacity: 12 participants.</i></p>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">KENEDY</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">EASY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Depart 5:30 am Arrive back 3:30 pm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">No Trip</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Erin & Romey Swanson</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">No Trip</p>

5	<p>LAGUNA ATASCOSA: Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, situated along the Laguna Madre’s shores, stands as a haven for avian enthusiasts. With the highest bird species count of all national wildlife refuges in the country, it is also home to the largest remaining population of protected ocelots in the USA. Expect encounters with Reddish Egrets, White-tailed Hawks, and much more.</p> <p>On Friday and Saturday we will also check out Hugh Ramsey Park in Harlingen on the way back.</p> <p>Note: Bring your national parks pass or \$3.00 for entry at Laguna Atascosa.</p> <p><i>One-hour drive to Laguna Atascosa from the VNC. Walking on well-maintained trails. Capacity: 12 participants</i></p>	CAMERON	EASY	<p>Saturday Depart 6:15 am Arrive back 3:00 pm</p> <p>Sunday Depart 6:15 am Finish 12:00 pm</p>	No Trip	Judy Kestner & Christine Turnbull	Crystal Ledezma & Lynn Thompson
6	<p>WETLANDS ADVENTURE: First stop on this trip is the Edinburg Scenic Wetlands with a butterfly garden, canal overlook, and two large ponds. Trails snake through the wooded area, with lots of areas to view migrating warblers as well as Valley natives.</p> <p>The McAllen Nature Center, 33 acres of Tamaulipan thornscrub, is next. With two bird feeding stations, Plain Chachalacas and Tropical Kingbirds are commonly seen.</p> <p>Note: There is a \$3-5 admission fee at the Edinburg Wetlands</p> <p><i>35-minute drive to Edinburg Wetlands. Walking on level paths. Capacity: 12 participants</i></p>	HIDALGO	EASY	<p>Friday Depart 7:00 am Arrive back 2:30 pm</p>	Crystal Ledezma & Angelina Vasquez	No Trip	No Trip

7	<p>MISSION/MCALLEN: Visit the esteemed National Butterfly Center to see many target species, including the distinctive Green Jay, the vibrant Altamira Oriole, the elusive Olive Sparrow, the charming Clay-colored Thrush, Curve-billed Thrasher, and Gray Hawk. Access to the Rio Grande here also provides the opportunity for the coveted kingfisher trifecta.</p> <p>At the renowned Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, the Hawk Tower overlooking the oxbow offers an exceptional vantage point to witness raptors soaring through the skies.</p> <p>The afternoon will be spent in McAllen at Quinta Mazatlan observing features that may inspire replication in this historic site.</p> <p>Note: Be prepared to pay the \$5 entry fee at the butterfly center and \$2-\$3 fee at Quinta Mazatlan.</p> <p><i>40-minute drive to butterfly center from the VNC. Walking on smooth or paved trails; climbing to the hawk tower. Capacity: 12 participants</i></p>	HIDALGO	MODERATE	<p>Depart 6:15 am Arrive Back 2:45 pm</p>	No Trip	Bob White & Janey Woodley	No Trip
8	<p>WESLACO: This lush locale boasts three rich nature sites. On Friday and Saturday we will visit Estero Llano Grande State Park, the Valley Nature Center, and Frontera Audubon. Prepare to encounter a diverse array of local specialties and keep an eye out for possible rarities.</p> <p>Sunday's trip will focus on Estero Llano Grande only.</p> <p>Note: Be prepared to pay the entry fee of \$3-\$5 at Frontera Audubon. Bring your state parks pass for Estero or pay \$3 entry fee.</p> <p><i>15-minute drive to Estero Llano Grande from the VNC. Short to medium distance walking on paved and smooth gravel paths. Capacity: 12 participants</i></p>	HIDALGO	EASY	<p>Friday & Saturday Depart 6:30 am Arrive back 3:00 pm</p> <p>Sunday Depart 6:30 am Finish 12:00 pm</p>	Randy Pinkston & Byron Stone	Angelina Vasquez	Susan Foster & Janey Woodley

9	<p>JIM HOGG COUNTY CENTURY CLUB: Join our fearless leaders in this severely under-birded county of south Texas. Targets include Rio Grande Valley Turkey, Empidonax flycatchers, Cassin's Sparrow, and Pyrrhuloxia. Extensive driving to/from sites in Hebronville and extensive roadside birding with leaders who have birded this tough county before.</p> <p><i>2-hour drive to Randado from the VNC. Birding close to the vehicles. Capacity: 12 participants</i></p>	JIM HOGG	EASY	<p>Depart 5:00 am Arrive back 5:00 pm</p>	Susan Foster & Bob White	No Trip	No Trip
10	<p>BROOKS COUNTY CENTURY CLUB: Go on a quest to get your life list to 100 species in the wilds of this county with a population of just 7,223 people. Brooks County includes the famous Falfurrias Rest Stop which has been home to quite a few rarities over the years. The quirky Sacred Heart Cemetery in Falfurrias has an impressive list of species.</p> <p><i>Extensive driving to/from sites, and roadside birding close to the vehicles.</i></p>	BROOKS	EASY	<p>Depart 5:15 am Arrive back 4:00 pm</p>	No Trip	Crystal Ledezma & Lynn Thompson	No Trip
11	<p>WILLACY COUNTY CENTURY CLUB: Located on the eastern side of the Rio Grande Valley, Willacy County boasts a variety of habitats: agricultural fields, mudflats, beaches, resacas, coastal prairies, thornscrub, and wetlands.</p> <p>We will work our way east to west hitting the Teniente and East Lake Tracts of Lower Rio Grande NWR to Raymondville and ultimately Port Mansfield. We will try for rare residents like N. Beardless-Tyrannulet, Clay-colored Thrush, and Black-throated Sparrow but our focus will be on species diversity and finding water if current drought conditions remain into May.</p> <p><i>45-minute drive to the NWR from the VNC. Extensive driving to/ from sites, and roadside birding. Capacity: 12 participants</i></p>	WILLACY	EASY	<p>Depart 6:00 am Arrive back 4:15 pm</p>	Lisa Edwards & Laura Wilson	No Trip	No Trip

12	<p>ZAPATA COUNTY CENTURY CLUB: Try to knock this county off your Century Club list when we visit Falcon Lake State Park, the boat ramp and county park, and Bravo Park in Zapata. Targets include Greater Roadrunner, Morelet’s Seedeater, Black-throated Sparrow and other birds of the dry thornscrub.</p> <p>Note: Bring your state parks pass or \$3 for the state park.</p> <p><i>2 hours and 15 minutes to Bravo Park from the VNC. Extensive driving to/from site; uneven and steep trails at the boat ramp. Capacity: 12 participants</i></p>	ZAPATA	MODERATELY DIFFICULT	Depart 5:00 am Arrive back 4:30 pm	Ken Hartman & Janey Woodley	No Trip	No Trip
13	<p>STARR COUNTY CENTURY CLUB TRIP: Starr County lies in the western part of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, along the banks of the Rio Grande. Possible sightings include Red-billed Pigeons, Audubon’s Orioles, Morelet’s Seedeater, and more. Arid areas reveal avian wonders like the iconic Greater Roadrunner, the captivating Cactus Wren, the elusive Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, and Scaled Quail.</p> <p>Our journey begins at Santa Margarita Ranch with a stunning Rio Grande River overlook and probable Brown Jay sightings, followed by exploration at Salineño and Falcon State Park.</p> <p>NOTE: \$50 admission fee payable when you register for this trip.</p> <p><i>1 hour and 45-minute drive to ranch from the VNC. Involves a 5-mile round-trip hike up and down steep, rocky hills and through a rough gully in full sun on uneven ground at Santa Margarita; walking stick helpful. Uneven trails at Salineño. TRIP LEADER WILL ASK THOSE DEEMED UNABLE TO TRAVERSE THE TERRAIN TO BIRD NEAR THE VEHICLES ONLY. Capacity: 12 participants</i></p>	STARR	DIFFICULT	Depart 5:15 am. Arrive back 4:45 pm	Ryan Rodriguez and Erin & Romey Swanson	Ryan Rodriguez & Laura Wilson	No Trip
14	<p>RARITY ROUND-UP: Our trip leaders will compile a list of the local vagrants and uncommon species that were seen during the event and put together a morning trip to find as many as possible. This is a great way to get another look at a favorite bird, or to finally check a lifer or county bird off your list.</p> <p><i>There could be long walks on trails or in un-shaded areas, depending on where the rarities have been seen. No maximum capacity.</i></p>	TBD	MODERATE	Depart 6:00 am Finish 12:30 pm	No Trip	No Trip	John Berner & Byron Stone

15	RAPTOR SEARCH WITH BILL CLARK: World-renowned raptor expert Bill Clark will lead a group through the Valley looking for birds of prey. Bill's knowledge about these birds is amazing, and you will learn a lot about these majestic creatures as you drive the fields and forests.	TBD	EASY	Depart 7:00 am Arrive back 2:30 pm	Bill Clark & Pam Pipes	No Trip	No Trip
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