# 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>FIELD TRIP AND DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>DIFFICULTY</th>
<th>DEPARTURE &amp; HOTEL RETURN TIMES</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>SATURDAY</th>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
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</table>
| 1      | **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. Our journey also takes us to **Resaca de la Palma State Park** in Brownsville, where eight decks overlook the resaca, and woodland species abound. Depending on recently reported birds, we may visit one or two additional sites.  
*Note: Be prepared to pay a $6 admission fee at Sabal Palm, and bring your state parks pass for Resaca de la Palma.*  
45-minute drive to Brownsville from the VNC. There will be some walking on paths and trails in both parks. Capacity: 12 participants | CAMERON | MODERATE | Depart 6:00 am  
End 12:30 pm | No Trip | No Trip | Erin & Romy Swanson |
**COASTAL EXTRAVAGANZA:** We begin with a quest for Aplomado Falcons in the **coastal prairie**.

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.

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.

Early registration is crucial due to Coast Guard occupancy limits.

*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.*

55-minute drive to falcon viewing area from the VNC. You must 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.
### SPI SPECIALTY EXPLORATION:
This trip is similar to Trip 2 but without the boat trip.

The day begins with a quest for Aplomado Falcons in the coastal prairie.

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.

On Friday and Saturday, if time allows, we will finish the day checking the resacas on Hwy 100 (think Amazon Kingfisher!).

*Note: Be prepared to pay a fee of $8 - $10 at the SPI Birding Sanctuary.*

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

### 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.

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.

*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.*

One-hour drive to ranch gate. Birding from the van; amount of walking depends on the birds. Capacity: 12 participants.
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.

On Friday and Saturday we will also check out Hugh Ramsey Park in Harlingen on the way back.

*Note: Bring your national parks pass or $3.00 for entry at Laguna Atascosa.*

One-hour drive to Laguna Atascosa from the VNC. Walking on well-maintained trails. Capacity: 12 participants

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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.

The McAllen Nature Center, 33 acres of Tamaulipan thornscrub, is next. With two bird feeding stations, Plain Chachalacas and Tropical Kingbirds are commonly seen.

*Note: There is a $3-5 admission fee at the Edinburg Wetlands*

35-minute drive to Edinburg Wetlands. Walking on level paths. Capacity: 12 participants
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.

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.

The afternoon will be spent in McAllen at Quinta Mazatlan observing features that may inspire replication in this historic site.

*Note: Be prepared to pay the $5 entry fee at the butterfly center and $2-$3 fee at Quinta Mazatlan.*

40-minute drive to butterfly center from the VNC. Walking on smooth or paved trails; climbing to the hawk tower. Capacity: 12 participants

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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.

Sunday’s trip will focus on Estero Llano Grande only.

*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.*

15-minute drive to Estero Llano Grande from the VNC. Short to medium distance walking on paved and smooth gravel paths. Capacity: 12 participants
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9</th>
<th><strong>JIM HOGG COUNTY CENTURY CLUB</strong>: 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 Hebbronville and extensive roadside birding with leaders who have birded this tough county before.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-hour drive to Randado from the VNC. Birding close to the vehicles. Capacity: 12 participants</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td><strong>BROOKS COUNTY CENTURY CLUB</strong>: 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.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extensive driving to/from sites, and roadside birding close to the vehicles.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td><strong>WILLACY COUNTY CENTURY CLUB</strong>: 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. 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.</td>
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<td>45-minute drive to the NWR from the VNC. Extensive driving to/from sites, and roadside birding. Capacity: 12 participants</td>
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### 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.**

*Note: Bring your state parks pass or $3 for the state park.*

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

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<th>Depart</th>
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<th>Trip Leader</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:00 am</td>
<td>4:30 pm</td>
<td>Ken Hartman &amp; Janey Woodley</td>
<td>No Trip</td>
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### 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.

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**.

*Note: $50 admission fee payable when you register for this trip.*

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

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<th>Trip Leader</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:15 am</td>
<td>4:45 pm</td>
<td>Ryan Rodriguez and Erin &amp; Romey Swanson</td>
<td>No Trip</td>
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### 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.

There could be long walks on trails or in un-shaded areas, depending on where the rarities have been seen. No maximum capacity.

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<th>Depart</th>
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<tr>
<td>6:00 am</td>
<td>12:30 pm</td>
<td>John Berner &amp; Byron Stone</td>
<td>No Trip</td>
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### RAPTOR SEARCH WITH BILL CLARK:

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<tr>
<th>TBD</th>
<th>EASY</th>
<th>Depart 7:00 am</th>
<th>Arrive back 2:30 pm</th>
<th>Bill Clark &amp; Pam Pipes</th>
<th>No Trip</th>
<th>No Trip</th>
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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.