



Texas: Tropical Birding along the Rio Grande

November 16-21, 2021
Tentative Itinerary

Tuesday, November 16- Arrival in McAllen, Texas. Once everyone has arrived we will drive approximately 20 minutes to our hotel in Alamo, TX. Most flights will arrive in the late afternoon, so we will check-in then go to dinner as a group. There are a few nearby options. **Lodging- Alamo Inn, TX**

Wednesday, November 17- This morning we will visit the Tamaulipan Thorn Forest in the Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park. The feeding station at the entrance will attract our first Altamira Orioles, Green Jays, Long-billed Thrasher and Plain Chachalacas. As we walk around the park we may encounter Gray Hawk, Greater Roadrunner and Ringed Kingfisher. We will keep an eye out for such specialties as Tropical Parula, and Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet - this location never disappoints.

Later in the morning we'll visit the nearby National Butterfly Center and take some time to explore the woodland where occasionally Rose-throated Becards show up. We will also explore a small garden that attracts some nice butterflies.

The feeders, towers and ponds of the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge will give us more opportunity to observe the special birds of the Rio Grande Valley. While here we search for Red-shouldered Hawk, the rare Hook-billed Kite, Cave Swallows, and Clay-colored Thrush. **Lodging- Alamo Inn, TX**

Thursday, November 18- Today we will visit the desert region of the Falcon State Park where we will search for Harris's Hawk, Crested Caracara, Curve-billed Thrasher, Pyrrhuloxia and Verdin. Nearby along the Rio Grande River is the famous Salineno boat ramp and feeding station where we can see Audubon's Oriole, and this will be the best chance at the rare Muscovy Duck, Red-billed Pigeon and Morelet's Seedeater. As we make our way back toward the east and as time allows we may visit Rancho Lomitas Roma Bluff. **Lodging- Alamo Inn, TX**

Friday, November 19- Our first stop today will be the sanctuary at the Frontera Audubon. Their 15 acres of restored habitat is a magnet to birds. Invasive Guinea Grass and Brazilian Pepper was removed allowing native Mesquite and Sugar Hackberry to thrive and the planting of many Sabal Palms.

The excellent ponds and wetlands at Estero Llano Grande attract a variety of shorebirds and waterfowl. Among them we could find both Black-bellied and Fulvous Whistling Ducks, Blue-winged

Teal, Mottled Duck, American Avocet, Stilt Sandpiper, and Long-billed Dowitchers. Occasionally there is a stakeout for a Common Pauraque sleeping in the thorn scrub. Nearby Live Oak thickets may host Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Black-crested Titmouse, and Nashville, Yellow-throated and Black-and-White Warblers. In the afternoon we'll visit the sewage treatment settling ponds of the Edinburgh Wetlands. These large ponds are where many water birds find food in the surrounding desert. Many Snowy and Cattle Egrets, as well as Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons can be found here and there, and there are usually a few Least Grebe. **Lodging- Alamo Inn, TX**

Saturday, November 20- Today we will drive about an hour to get to the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. Birding around the headquarters can be rewarding and we'll keep a watchful eye on the sky and power poles for Aplomado Falcon. There has been a successful release program and the Falcons have become established. We'll drive part of the Auto Tour Route here looking for White-tailed Hawk, Redhead, and Loggerhead Shrike.

We'll visit South Padre Island where the local birding center has a very nice boardwalk through the salt marsh. This can be a good location to see Sandwich, Forster's, Royal and Caspian Terns, Black Skimmer, Clapper Rail, and Black-necked Stilts. We may even stand over an American Alligator allowing excellent views from the safety of the boardwalk.

In the afternoon we can visit Boca Chica to look for more terns and shorebirds. As time allows we can visit the Sabal Palm Sanctuary or search for other interesting sightings as we make our way back to the Alamo Inn. **Lodging - Alamo Inn, TX**

Sunday, November 21- Departure Home