

Texas

Whooping Cranes & Rio Grande

21 Feb – 03 Mar 2018



Texas highlights (Clockwise from top left): Audubon's Oriole • Altamira Oriole • Green Jay • Clapper Rail • White-tipped Dove • Whooping Crane. Photos © Chris Charlesworth/Limosa

**Report compiled by tour leader:
Chris Charlesworth**

Texas | Whooping Cranes & Rio Grande**Leader:** Chris Charlesworth**Tour participants:** Brigid Campbell, John Durell, John & Christine Richardson, Clifford Smout, Nigel Turnbull.

DAY 1 – By about 3PM, the first tour participants emerged from the arrivals hall at Houston International Airport, and soon, we were all on our way to Rosenberg. It was an overcast and periodically rainy afternoon with a lot of rush hour traffic, so the journey from Houston Airport to Rosenberg took about an hour and a half, which is to be expected. Along the way we saw a few birds such as Great-tailed Grackles, Great Egret, a Cooper's Hawk, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and the usual Feral Rock Doves and European Starlings. We checked into our hotel and then went for dinner.

DAY 2 – It was cool and overcast this morning as we left our hotel and made our way towards Brazos Bend State Park. Upon arrival, we were greeted by a small group of American Robins foraging on the ground beneath a Live Oak. We spent a couple of hours circumnavigating 40-acre Lake, racking up a nice list of birds along the way. The first order of business was to scope the lake and, since this was our first morning of birding, almost everything was new. There were Pied-billed Grebes, American Coots, Common Gallinules, Gadwall, a Ring-necked Duck, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and some lovely Anhingas found here. An adult Little Blue Heron crept through the aquatic vegetation looking for morsels and White Ibis, Snowy and Great Egrets, Great Blue Heron and Double-crested Cormorant were also in attendance. The path took us alongside some woodland where Red-bellied Woodpecker was briefly seen, and Downy Woodpeckers showed quite nicely. There were quite a few 'Myrtle' Yellow-rumped Warblers along with a few Orange-crowned Warblers and Ruby-crowned Kinglets bopping about in the trees. American Goldfinches were quite numerous. We had exquisite views of several American Bitterns this morning, which was a real treat, since this species is often hidden away in the thick marsh vegetation. A stunning male Vermilion Flycatcher appeared alongside the path and caught our attention for several minutes. Buff-bellied Pipits were also seen, as were Swamp Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Marsh Wren, Carolina Wren, Carolina Chickadee and Tufted Titmouse. Skimming over the lake were Tree Swallows and singles of Cave Swallow and Barn Swallow. A couple of American Alligators were noted, one of which was quite large. A short rain shower produced enough rain for us to dig out our umbrellas and jackets, but it stopped just in time for us to have very good views of a Sedge Wren.

By about 10:30AM, we were on the road, weaving through the countryside on our way towards Rockport. There were many American Kestrels noted on the power lines and we probably saw at least 30 of these miniature falcons. Also, a few Loggerhead Shrikes were seen from the van as we drove along. We stopped to ogle at some very close Sandhill Cranes and, by the end of the drive, we had tallied over 100 of these majestic birds. Our next stop was at the highway 35 causeway near Port Lavaca, where a Purple Sandpiper, a Texan rarity, had been thrilling birders for the past few days. Rain was dribbling down periodically while we searched, but we only found Ruddy Turnstones, Spotted Sandpipers, Willet, and some nice American Oystercatchers. There were some Least Sandpipers foraging in a muddy puddle. Farther out on the water were up to half a dozen Common Loons and a Red-breasted Merganser. We ate our lunch here and then turned around and started to drive back to the highway. As we drove along we saw a little group of Ruddy Turnstones fly up from the water's edge, along with one slightly smaller darker shorebird. Guess what? It was the Purple Sandpiper. We, and several other Texan birders, had great views of the bird and we left with smiling faces.

The next stop on the agenda was at Lions/Shelly Park in Refugio. We had hoped to find Green Kingfisher here, but you can't win them all. We were rewarded with great views of our first Golden-fronted Woodpecker here, however. Other goodies included Eastern Bluebird, Pine Warbler and Wilson's Warbler. We were almost in Rockport when we spotted a lot of shorebirds on some flats, and we just couldn't drive by them without stopping. There was quite a nice variety here including Long-billed Dowitcher, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Dunlin, Greater Yellowlegs, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Tricolored Heron, Reddish Egret and more. We finally made it to Rockport, after having tallied up an impressive list of 100 bird species. Dinner at Charlotte Plummer's was nice.

DAY 3 – It was an overcast morning, with a bit of patchy fog as we found ourselves at Fulton Harbor, ready to board the MV Skimmer, led by Captain Tommy, to see one of North America's rarest birds, Whooping Cranes. Before we even left the harbour we had added a new bird to our list as an adult Franklin's Gull accompanied the more common Laughing Gulls, offering an excellent comparison of the two somewhat similar species. We left the harbour and, as Captain Tommy gave us instructions on what to do in the unlikely event we needed to use life jackets, we began picking up birds through the window of the Skimmer. There were Common Loons, as well as a few Common Goldeneye and Bufflehead. Brown Pelicans and both Double-crested and Neotropic

cormorants were here. Once we got into the protected waters of Aransas, we began to see large white birds on the horizon that eventually took the shape of Whooping Cranes. The first group of three - two adults and a rusty-plumaged immature - fed in the marsh no more than 50 yards in front of the boat. An amazing success story, Captain Tommy explained that only about a dozen of these majestic birds remained in the wild in the 1940s, though today they number over 500. We saw 39 Whooping Cranes today, a fairly large percentage of the world population. In addition to the cranes there were many other birds to enjoy. Roseate Spoonbill, Clapper Rail, Osprey, Royal Tern, Reddish Egret and many other species were tallied. We were thrilled to see Bottlenose Dolphins around our boat, with one individual sporting a green tracking tag on its dorsal fin. It had been a very enjoyable morning we all agreed, as we returned to Rockport, where we picked up lunch and ate at a picnic area next to the gulf. It was now quite sunny and warm and the breeze had picked up considerably. We had a fair journey to make this afternoon, all the way from Rockport down to the LRG (Lower Rio Grande) and Harlingen where we would be staying for the next three nights.

We paused to look for more shorebirds at Sunset Lake near Corpus Christi and we were rewarded with half a dozen species of plover including our first Wilson's Plover, Snowy Plover and endangered Piping Plover, as well as Killdeer, Semipalmated Plover and Black-bellied Plovers. Close to 200 American Avocets were estimated to be here today, with one or two beginning to show the pink head feathers of breeding plumage. As we continued south along Hwy 77, the vegetation changed to thorn forest, characterised by mesquite trees. We stopped at a rest stop, just south of Sarita, a regular stop for birders since it gives them their first opportunity to see some Rio Grande species. We were rewarded with lovely views of Green Jays, our first Black-crested Titmouse, and the only Brewer's Blackbirds we saw on the entire tour. Nigel spotted a female Rufous Hummingbird visiting some flowers, the only one of that species we encountered on the tour. As we made our way closer to Harlingen, sightings of Crested Caracaras and a couple of White-tailed Hawks interrupted the drive. Once in Harlingen we checked in at our hotel, then went for a scrumptious Mexican dinner at Los Asados.

DAY 4 - I took the group to the Hugh Ramsey Nature Park in Harlingen first thing this morning. I 'sold' the idea of visiting this park to the group as 'just a place we'll kill an hour before the sandwich shop opens up'. It turned out the hour and a half or so we spent here was the most productive birding we had today! A feeder station set up near the parking area produced sightings of such goodies as a male Buff-bellied Hummingbird, White-tipped Doves, Great Kiskadee, Black-crested Titmouse, Altamira Oriole, Green Jay and Northern Cardinal. Walking the trails, we happened upon a single Least Grebe on a little pond covered in green sludge. A Lincoln's Sparrow sat on a branch long enough for lengthy scope views and a White-eyed Vireo posed nicely for great views in the morning sunshine as well. One and possibly two Olive Sparrows, another species found in the USA only in south Texas, were nice to add to the list this morning. Up to three Long-billed Thrashers put on a lovely show. A Grey Catbird skulked in the underbrush and our first Harris's Hawk of the tour sailed overhead. Not everyone saw it, but a Collared Peccary dashed through the brush and disappeared into the thickets. Not a bad start to the day!

We picked up lunch and then headed out towards Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. Upon arrival we were led to an area where a roosting Common Pauraque was meant to be, but he wasn't there, unfortunately. Around the headquarters, various feeders are peppered about and we visited the various stations, where hundreds of Great-tailed Grackles caused a great noise. Green Jays were surprisingly common and there were many Red-winged Blackbirds as well. From the visitor center, we took a stroll along the first half a kilometer of the Bayside Loop, which was pretty quiet. A few butterflies were about, however and Nigel managed to identify Mimosa Skipper and White Peacock. We had lunch at Osprey Overlook, where the wind was howling, as per usual. A few birds were feeding along the muddy edge including some nice Roseate Spoonbills, a Reddish Egret and a number of ducks including our first American Wigeon of the tour. John D headed off towards the bushes and came back exclaiming that he had seen a roadrunner. We dashed off to look for ourselves, but there was no sign of the bird anywhere. Some of us, however, did have a brief look at a Verdin here. We headed back to the van and piled in, but Nigel was nowhere to be seen. Just as we were about to head out and look for him, he came up and said he had seen the roadrunner so out we got once again. This time we saw the bird, a Greater Roadrunner, sitting still in the shade beneath the mesquite trees. We headed back to the center for one more look before leaving the refuge. This time we were lucky to see a little group of Plain Chachalacas, some of which were feeding at the station.

We departed the refuge and headed south, hoping to see an Aplomado Falcon. We were not disappointed, as a large, very long-winged, long-tailed falcon soared in front of the van and over the field. Soon after, we stopped to search for a Tropical Kingbird and were rewarded with one, as well as a lovely male Vermilion Flycatcher. We carried on to the coast at Laguna Vista where we scanned the water, adding Redhead to our trip list. Other species present included Red-breasted Merganser, Bufflehead and the usual Brown Pelicans, White Ibis, Snowy and Great Egrets and Laughing Gulls. The day was getting on so we returned to our hotel before heading out for a very tasty meal at the Texas Road House.

DAY 5 – From Harlingen we made our way to a lovely place called The Inn at Chachalaca Bend, near Los Fresnos. On the way we added a few birds to our list such as Lesser Scaup on a resaca and a White-tailed Kite next to the road. Once at the Inn, we mulled around the office area hoping to catch a glimpse of a local rarity, a Rose-throated Becard. Unfortunately, today, luck was not on our side. There were a number of other nice birds about however, including Buff-bellied Hummingbird, a number of Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, a Blue-headed Vireo, Black-crested Titmouse, and Long-billed Thrasher. Feeling a little defeated by the becard, we left Chachalaca Bend and headed for Brownsville and the Sabal Palms Sanctuary. It was cloudy and dark skies threatened to rain on us, though for the most part it was dry. We headed first for a hide next to a pond. All the ponds and waterways here were rather dry, a sign of less rain than in past seasons. There was just enough water to attract some birds and there were several Least Grebes here as well as Pied-billed Grebe, Mottled Duck, Blue-winged Teal and the ubiquitous American Coot. On the far side of the pond, a Couch's Kingbird sat atop a tree and sang, our first for the trip. Wandering more trails we caught up with Ladder-backed Woodpecker and the tiny whiny-voiced Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. We had lunch next to feeders where Green Jays, Northern Cardinal, Olive Sparrow, Long-billed Thrasher and, best of all, a Clay-coloured Thrush, came in to feed.

From Brownsville we headed east, crossed over a long causeway and found ourselves on South Padre Island, a long, thin barrier island covered in hotels, resorts and sandy beaches. One area remains a gem for birds, however, the boardwalk at the 'World Birding Center'. We spent some time exploring the mudflats, Black Mangrove groves and marshes along the boardwalk, tallying close to 70 species of birds on our visit! Herons and egrets of all sorts were here, including Reddish Egrets and our first Green Heron of the tour. Waterfowl were in good numbers with Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Redhead, Mottled Duck, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal and more. Some shorebirds foraged on the mudflats, including Long-billed Curlew, Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, Wilson's Snipe and Black-bellied Plover. At one point a Clapper Rail came right out in front of us and wandered around in the open, in a most un-rail-like fashion. Ospreys seemed to be everywhere and another professional fish catcher, the Belted Kingfisher was also noted here. Our one and only Gull-billed Tern of the tour flew over and a couple of us caught a glimpse of a speeding Peregrine Falcon. A few Alligators were observed, and one, though only its snout could be seen beneath the boardwalk under us, appeared to be very large. All in all, it was a very pleasant afternoon on South Padre Island. We returned to Harlingen for the night and enjoyed some Chinese food at the China Star.

DAY 6 – It was a misty morning as we made our way back to the Inn at Chachalaca Bend for one more try for the sought-after Rose-throated Becard. On our way into the property, a pair of Great Horned Owls was spotted as they roosted in a large tree outside the gate. We had decent, although foggy, views of them just before they flew off to hide in a more concealed location. Wandering around the property we found much of the same as we had found the previous day, but perhaps the highlight was the opportunity to study five species of swallows all lined up on a wire side by side. These were Northern Rough-winged, Cliff, Cave, Barn and Tree swallows.

Next, we made our way to Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge where we headed for Willow/Cattail Lakes before lunch. On the lakes there was a nice variety of waterfowl including some lovely Cinnamon Teal. In fact, on one log, there were Cinnamon, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal all lined up side by side. Brief views of Black-and-white and Nashville Warblers were obtained here by some, though most of the warbler types we encountered were 'Myrtle' Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned Warblers. We had lunch while watching the usual Green Jays, Red-winged Blackbirds and Altamira Orioles visit feeders, then we headed out for one more try on the trail, this time to Pintail Lakes. John D spotted the highlight bird here, a lovely little female Green Kingfisher sitting on a stump next to the lake. White-faced Ibis came in and allowed us to study their features through the scope and we flushed several Wilson's Snipe from the grassy shore. Hovering over the horizon were White-tailed Kite and Harris's Hawks, while a Grey Hawk called, but remained hidden. As we made our way back towards the visitor center, I glimpsed a Bobcat as it leapt into the roadside vegetation. We crept forward slowly, but couldn't see the cat, and we were then distracted by a calling Grey Hawk so we carried on, hoping to see the hawk. Nigel lingered and was rewarded with a view of the Bobcat as it disappeared into the thorns. We headed for McAllen, checked into our hotel, then went searching for parrots at dusk.

Green Parakeets and Red-crowned Parrots are two parrot species that are 'tickable' in North America, so we headed out to known roosts for both species in hopes of seeing them. We arrived at the Green Parakeet roost, which consisted of a busy intersection, a large grocery store parking lot and overhead telephone wires. Small groups of Green Parakeets soon began arriving and we tallied over 70 of them before I exclaimed we should head off to look for the Red-crowned Parrots before it got dark. We made our way to a residential neighborhood with lots of trees and it didn't take too long to find a tree full of large amazon-type parrots. We tallied 76 of them, and 74 were Red-crowned Parrots! The other two, a Yellow-headed Parrot and a Red-lored Parrot, were nice to see, but not officially countable in North America...yet. We headed for dinner at the Olive Garden and then retired for the evening.

DAY 7 – This morning we made our way to a park called Quinta Mazatlan, another of the Rio Grande's 'World Birding Centers'. This lovely park, with trails, feeders and a historical adobe mansion, was a pleasure to explore and we began at the stone amphitheater, since there had been a Mexican rarity seen here recently, an immature male Blue Bunting. One of the park staff came out with food and placed orange halves on trees, smeared peanut butter on branches and sprinkled seed about. As soon as he left, the first bird appeared at the feeders and wouldn't you know it, it was the Blue Bunting! We enjoyed great views of this Mexican vagrant, as it gobbled down seed alongside Great Kiskadees, Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, Northern Cardinals, Green Jays and hordes of Red-winged Blackbirds. We were happy to see several little groups of Cedar Waxwings come in to feed in the treetops and we saw our first Inca Doves of the tour here at feeders as well. We tried, along a dirt road through agricultural fields, to find Burrowing Owl this morning, with no luck. Christine did spot our first Black Phoebe of the tour, however and we had an opportunity to study a group of Western Meadowlarks as they foraged in the fields. Peregrine Falcon, Northern Harrier and American Kestrel patrolled the fields, while Red-tailed Hawk surveyed the horizon from its perch on a telephone pole.

Our next stop was at Estero Llano Grande State Park, where we spent a couple of hours, beginning with devouring our lunches, on the deck of the visitor center. I ran into a good friend from back home who gave me valuable news on where to find a roosting Pauraque so, as soon as we had finished eating lunch, off we went, for crippling views of a Pauraque as it spent its day on the ground. We then braved the very strong winds atop a dyke as we scanned the lake below for a Fulvous Whistling-Duck that had been reported with some Northern Shoveler. I found the shovelers easily - and there was the whistling duck in with them. Because of the strong winds, the scope wobbled a lot, but we all got decent views of the duck at least, and there was a pair of White-tailed Kites sitting in a tree next to the lake. Bonus! Before we left Estero Llano, we explored the 'Tropical Region' where a few trailer park snowbirds put out feeders. We hoped, in particular, for a locally rare species, a Broad-tailed Hummingbird, that had been seen earlier in the day. We never did see the Broad-tailed Hummingbird, but we did have our one and only encounter with Black-chinned Hummingbird of the tour, as a male and a female came in to feed. Buff-bellied Hummingbird was also here. Lesser Goldfinches paused long enough in a tree top for me to get them in the scope and offer people their first look at the 'black-backed' race of this species found in the Rio Grande. As we left, Nigel informed us of the list of butterflies he had racked up, which was quite impressive. After one more unsuccessful try for the Burrowing Owl, we headed back to McAllen and went for dinner at Applebee's. After dinner, we visited Bentsen Rio Grande State Park, in hopes of finding some night creatures. Shortly after parking the van, we discovered a Brown Tarantula in the middle of the road, which was quite spectacular to see. Farther along, we began hearing the calls of Pauraques. I shone my flashlight towards some feeders and we saw a Northern Raccoon just as it decided to 'head for the hills'. Just as we were about to leave, a Coyote appeared. To top things off, two Pauraques flew up from the roadside and fluttered about in my spotlight for several seconds. It had been an enjoyable evening, all except for the constant annoyance of the US border helicopter hovering above.

DAY 8 – Anzalduas County Park was our first stop this morning and here we enjoyed our first views of the Rio Grande and Mexico. One of the first birds we found at the dam was a Muscovy, the only 'tickable' USA population of this species. Cave Swallows swarmed near their nests built on the dam itself. Straddling the river between Mexico and Texas were groups of Lesser Scaup and Ring-necked Ducks. Ospreys and Caspian Terns sailed up and down the river, entering the USA and then Mexico, no passports needed. A Couch's Kingbird and a young male Vermilion Flycatcher were spotted here, but the best was yet to come. We fanned out and walked through a field of short grass, eventually flushing about four Sprague's Pipits. The looks weren't great and were just of pipits flushing from the grass and giving distinctive call notes. I explained to the group that this was the best look one would normally get of a Sprague's Pipit. At that moment we found another Sprague's, but this one did not flush it sat long enough for scope views. Another bonus!

At Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park we took the 'tram' to an area with feeders. This was the location that an Audubon's Oriole had been visiting. We waited for perhaps an hour with no sign of the oriole. There were Altamira Orioles, Green Jays, Plain Chachalaca, White-tipped Dove, Olive Sparrow and dozens of Red-winged Blackbirds about, however and all the activity had attracted a Bobcat. We had a rather quick glimpse of the Bobcat as it ambled across an opening beneath the feeder. Nigel racked up several new butterfly species here as well, with the likes of Teleus Longtail, Texan Crescent, White Peacock and Dusky Blue Groundstreak being just some of the highlights. Our westward migration continued and we soon found ourselves in Rio Grande City, a somewhat less urbanized area than Harlingen and McAllen. We checked in at our hotel and had lunch, before emerging once again into the afternoon heat for a visit to Salineno. The drive to Salineno was about half an hour and took us through the historic towns of Rio Grande City and Roma. Once at Salineno, we headed for the feeders, which are cared for and filled multiple times each day by a friendly fellow from Iowa. This feeder set up is perhaps the best and most reliable place in the USA to see Audubon's Oriole, though we didn't see one this afternoon. We were treated to several great views of Altamira Orioles though, as well as Great Kiskadees, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Green Jay, Northern Cardinal and Black-crested

Titmouse. A Sharp-shinned Hawk, our one and only for the tour, harassed the birds at the feeder occasionally. We followed a trail upstream along the river, through mesquite woods and open fields. We were rewarded with the sighting of a Cassin's Sparrow giving a flight song. Also new for the list here today were Chipping Sparrows and a pair of Bewick's Wrens. Back in Rio Grande City, we had dinner this evening at Chili's.

DAY 9 – We left our hotel in Rio Grande City shortly after 7AM and returned to Salineno where we hoped to find a few of our final target species. Ringed Kingfisher just wouldn't cooperate, so unfortunately we missed this species, while Red-billed Pigeons were not flying up and down the river as they often do. We put it down to the fact that there was a gale force wind blowing through the valley this morning. We were, however, quite happy to have a great scope view of an adult Grey Hawk in a riverside tree. Mexican Ducks were found along the river here too, though they didn't evoke the same excitement that the Grey Hawk did. At the feeders, we spent close to an hour waiting and watching the same species that had come in the evening prior. Just as I was beginning to get nervous that we might miss Audubon's Oriole, a pair of these beautiful birds came in for a leisurely feed. Next, we explored Falcon State Park, where the habitat had become decidedly more arid. As we drove in, I spotted a Pyrrhuloxia foraging on the ground next to the road and this was the only individual of the species that we found. We followed a trail through the scrub, finding species like Blue-grey Gnatcatcher and a very dapper Black-throated Sparrow! Before we left, we were treated to views of several Collared Peccaries as they fed in grassy areas at the edge of a campground.

Lunch was picked up in Zapata and we had a picnic at the local city park. After lunch we had a quick try for one of the area's more sought-after species, White-collared Seedeater. A tiny 'peep' call note announced the presence of a seedeater and it didn't take too long to locate the tiny bird, a female, in the grasses nearby. It was time for us to begin the drive to Rockport, a journey of 3.5 hours. Driving Texas roads is an exercise in stamina. The roads are long and straight with no bends. The countryside is flat with no scenery to look at. This describes the particular area of Texas we were in. If one were to travel north to San Antonio, the rolling oak-covered hills of Hill Country are lovely, while to the west the mountains of Big Bend are scenic as well. I broke the drive up with the occasional 'pit-stop' and by about 5:45PM we arrived at our hotel in Rockport. We had dinner at Charlotte Plummer's and it was the opening night of Oysterfest so we were treated to a very impressive show of fireworks!

DAY 10 – It was our last morning in Texas and we made the best of it. We headed for Goose Island State Park, which, it was good to see, was still standing after Hurricane Harvey. Upon arrival we checked some mudflats where Least Sandpipers, Semipalmated Plover, Dunlin and our first Western Sandpipers of the tour were noted. Waterfowl included Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye and Redhead, plus the usual herons and egrets. We headed for another area known as 'the Big Tree'. This area has open fields and a wetland, as well as a very large and impressive Live Oak. We got reacquainted with Whooping Cranes here, as perhaps up to ten of them were seen in the general area. A flock of meadowlarks played hide and seek with us and we were eventually able to see that at least some of the birds in the flock were Eastern Meadowlarks, a first for the tour.

It was still about three hours to Houston, so we started the journey, stopping at Wharton for lunch at Denny's. On the grass outside Denny's, I counted 50 Buff-bellied Pipits wandering about, mostly hiding in shady spots. In Houston, we stopped in at the Sims Bayou Nature Center, where Monk Parakeets can often be found. The parakeets were nowhere to be seen today, but we did add Blue Jay to the trip list and we had some great views of Cedar Waxwings. I knew an Eastern Screech Owl liked to roost in a box down along the bayou so I peered through the trees looking for the best angle. Once I found the box, I was happy to see a little 'red' morph Eastern Screech Owl peering out of the box. Everyone else was happy as well, as it was a lifer for several. Once we were in the vicinity of the airport we made a short stop at Jesse Jones Nature Park to check the feeders. There were Chipping Sparrows at the feeders but little else. It was nice to see Red-bellied Woodpeckers once again, and we heard a Pine Warbler singing. We headed for the hotel, at which I would be staying for one more night and everyone packed their telescopes, binoculars and got ready for the flight. Before we left though, we squeezed out one more final species, number 194, a House Finch.

ANNOTATED BIRD LIST
(192 species)

Black-bellied Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna autamnalis*

Noted at Brazos Bend State Park, Hugh Ramsey Park, the Inn at Chachalaca Bend, Santa Ana NWR and Goose Island State Park.

Fulvous Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*

One with a few shoveler and Gadwall at Estero Llano Grande State Park.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

We encountered one particularly large group of Snow Geese (perhaps 3000) in a field along Hwy 35, west of Columbia. The majority of the birds were typical Snow Geese, but some were 'blue' morph.

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

At least half a dozen Ross's Geese were mixed in with Snow Geese along Hwy 35, west of Columbia.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

Pair seen in flight at Brazos Bend SP.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

One along the Rio Grande River at Anzalduas County Park.

Cinnamon Teal *Spatula cyanoptera*

Noted at both Santa Ana NWR and at Estero Llano Grande SP.

Blue-winged Teal *Spatula discors*

Common throughout in wetland areas.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Quite common in wetland areas throughout tour.

Gadwall *Mareca strepera*

Small numbers at most wetland areas. Most common at Santa Ana NWR where there were a dozen Gadwall.

American Wigeon *Mareca americana*

Small numbers at Aransas NWR, Laguna Atascosa NWR and at Santa Ana NWR.

Mexican Duck *Anas diazi*

Noted on both visits to Salineno. Also pair briefly seen at Anzalduas Park.

Mottled Duck *Anas fulvigula*

Quite common in wetland areas.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Quite a few seen on boat trip to Aransas NWR. Also, we saw several at Osprey Overlook at Laguna Atascosa NWR. Three were present at South Padre Island at the birding center and on our last day, some were seen at Goose Island State Park.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Small numbers noted at most wetlands including Aransas, Osprey Overlook at Laguna Atascosa, South Padre Island birding center, Santa Ana NWR and at Estero Llano Grande SP.

Redhead *Aythya americana*

A few distant Redheads were seen on boat trip to Aransas, but better views obtained at Laguna Vista where we scanned the sea from the marina, as well as at South Padre Island and Goose Island SP.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

One female type was at Brazos Bend State Park and later, up to a dozen were seen on the Rio Grande at Anzalduas County Park.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

Small group noted on a resaca, west of Los Fresnos. Also noted at Santa Ana NWR and twice on the Rio Grande at Salineno.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*

A few seen from boat trip from Rockport to Aransas. Also noted at Goose Island State Park.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Small numbers from boat to Aransas and also later on in trip at Goose Island SP.

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

Male and female seen on boat trip at Aransas NWR.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Found at several coastal locations including Point Comfort (Purple Sandpiper location), Aransas NWR, Laguna Vista, South Padre Island and Goose Island SP.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

One female type on lake at Santa Ana NWR.

Plain Chachalaca *Ortalis vetula*

Found at Laguna Atascosa NWR, as well as at Quinta Mazatlan in McAllen and at Salineno at the feeder.

Great Northern Diver (Common Loon) *Gavia immer*

Up to five noted at Point Comfort. Another 5 were tallied during our boat trip from Rockport to Aransas. Two also at Goose Island SP.

Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus*

First individual was on a slimy green pond at Hugh Ramsey Park in Harlingen. Four later noted at Sabal Palm Sanctuary, and up to 5 at Santa Ana NWR.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

Quite common in wetland areas. Just a few locations we saw them at include Brazos Bend SP, Sabal Palm Sanctuary, South Padre Is, Goose Island SP, and Anzalduas County Park.

American White Ibis *Eudocimus albus*

Common throughout, especially in wetland areas such as Estero Llano Grande SP, South Padre Island boardwalk, and Goose Island SP.

White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi*

Two observed at Estero Llano Grande SP and two more at Santa Ana NWR.

Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja*

Small numbers here and there. Two seen from the boat trip to Aransas NWR, and three noted at Osprey Overlook at Laguna Atascosa NWR.

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*

Close to half a dozen noted at Brazos Bend SP.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Several roosting along resaca at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend. Also seen well at Estero Llano Grande SP.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax violacea*

Several seen, but best views came from Estero Llano Grande SP.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens*

Noted at South Padre Island boardwalk.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

One with cattle in a pasture near entrance to the Inn at Chachalaca Bend, Los Fresnos.

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*

Common in wetland areas throughout.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Common in wetland areas throughout.

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens*

Our first was in a tidal pool along side of hwy near Rockport. Also noted on our boat trip to Aransas NWR. Seen at Sunset Lake near Corpus Christi, as well as at Osprey Overlook at Laguna Atascosa, South Padre Island boardwalk and at Goose Island SP.

Tricoloured Heron *Egretta tricolor*

Fairly common in small numbers at wetlands. Best sightings from the Boardwalk at South Padre Island.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*

Best sightings were at Brazos Bend SP and from the boardwalk at the Nature center at South Padre Island.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*

Fairly common in wetland areas.

Neotropic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

Numerous on boat trip to Aransas NWR. Also tallied at South Padre Island and at Goose Island SP.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Quite common throughout.

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga*

Fantastic views at Brazos Bend SP. Also noted along resaca at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend, Estero Llano Grande SP and at Goose Island SP.

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

Seen quite often, with memorable sightings from Aransas NWR, Sunset Lake, Estero Llano Grande SP and Goose Island SP.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*

Common along the coast.

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Common throughout tour.

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*

Fairly common throughout

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Common in coastal areas, such as South Padre Island, Goose Island SP and elsewhere. Several seen well from the boat at Aransas NWR as well.

White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus*

Singles noted several times, including a bird hovering at Santa Ana NWR as well as another hovering at Quinta Mazatlan. Along the highway near Los Fresnos we saw a single bird on various occasions. Best sighting of all was of two birds sitting beside one another at Estero Llano Grande SP.

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus*

One was terrorizing birds at the feeders at Salineno.

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii*

Seen most days, often as a 'fly by' as we drove along the highway. One was seen at Laguna Atascosa near the refuge headquarters. Another made a pass by the tidal flats along the boardwalk at South Padre Island.

One perched along the edge of a resaca at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend.

Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius*

Quite a few sightings, of mostly females, including singles at Brazos Bend SP, Estero Llano Grande SP, and at Goose Island SP. Good views of harriers obtained on our boat trip also.

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

One seen in the distance along Hwy 35, near West Columbia.

Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus*

First sighting was of one in flight at Hugh Ramsey Nature Park in Harlingen. Later noted at Laguna Atascosa NWR, Sabal Palm Sanctuary, Santa Ana NWR and at Bentsen Rio Grande SP.

White-tailed Hawk *Geranoaetus albicaudatus*

As we drove south along Hwy 77 towards Harlingen, we had two separate White-tailed Hawks fly by the van. Also noted at Laguna Atascosa NWR and singles were seen a few times along the highways as we traveled.

Grey Hawk *Buteo plagiatus*

Although heard several times, we only got one view of this species, albeit a good view, of an adult Gray Hawk along the Rio Grande at Salineno.

Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus*

One or two seen along highways as we traveled, and one good view at Brazos Bend SP.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Common throughout, most often seen from the van alongside the highway.

Clapper Rail *Rallus crepitans*

Excellent view from the boat of a Clapper Rail in the marsh at Aransas NWR. Seen later very well from the boardwalk on South Padre Island.

Sora *Porzana carolinensis*

One seen well hiding under pond side vegetation at Santa Ana NWR.

Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata*

Fairly common in wetland areas, and most numerous at Brazos Bend SP and at South Padre Island.

American Coot *Fulica americana*

Common in wetlands throughout.

Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis*

Quite a few were noted along Hwy 35 in fields south of West Columbia. One flew over us at Laguna Atascosa NWR. At Goose Island SP we had 20 or so more Sandhills.

Whooping Crane *Grus americana*

We tallied 39 Whooping Cranes on our boat trip to Aransas NWR. Later, we visited the open fields at Goose Island SP and had another 10 or so.

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*

Seen fairly often at wetlands including at Sunset Lake near Corpus Christi, the boardwalk at South Padre Island and ponds at Santa Ana NWR.

American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana*

First noted at tidal flats near Rockport. Several seen on our boat trip to Aransas NWR and close to 200 estimated at Sunset Lake.

American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus*

Three noted at Point Comfort, and up to 5 tallied on our boat trip to Aransas NWR. Single bird also noted at Sunset Lake, and two more at Goose Island State Park.

Grey (Black-bellied) Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Small numbers at coastal locations including Aransas NWR, Sunset Lake, South Padre Island and Goose Island SP.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

Noted at Point Comfort, Sunset Lake and at Goose Island SP.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*

Fairly common throughout.

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus*

Two on beach at Sunset Lake in Corpus Christi.

Snowy Plover *Charadrius nivosus*

Estimated up to 20 on beach at Sunset Lake Park near Corpus Christi.

Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americanus*

Our first sighting was of one at the tidal flats near Rockport. Later noted on our boat trip to Aransas. Up to a dozen were at Sunset Lake and others observed at Laguna Atascosa and at South Padre Island.

Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa*

Up to 6 were at Sunset Lake near Corpus Christi and four were at South Padre Island.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Fairly common in coastal areas including Point Comfort, Aransas NWR, The Fulton Harbor, Sunset Lake and at Goose Island SP.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Four seen well at Sunset Lake Park near Corpus Christi.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Small numbers noted at several locations throughout tour, including tidal flats near Rockport, Aransas NWR, Sunset Lake and Goose Island SP.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One at Point Comfort. Locally rare.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

Half a dozen at Point Comfort and more at Sunset Lake Park and Goose Island SP.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*

Two at Goose Island SP.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

Large flocks of dowitchers seen a number of times and from what I could see and hear they were Long-billed. Found on mudflats near Rockport, as well as at Aransas NWR from boat and at the Santa Ana NWR.

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*

One seen well at South Padre Island along boardwalk. Three flushed from grass at edge of pond at Santa Ana and another at Goose Island SP.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*

Fairly common in small numbers throughout.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

Smaller numbers than Greater Yellowlegs. Noted at mudflats near Rockport, Aransas NWR, Sunset Lake and at South Padre Island.

Willet *Tringa semipalmata*

Fairly common in coastal habitats. Found at mudflats near Rockport, Point Comfort, Aransas NWR, Sunset Lake, South Padre Island and Goose Is.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

Found at mudflats near Rockport, Aransas NWR, Sunset Lake, South Padre Island, Santa Ana NWR and at Goose Island SP.

Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger*

Up to 100 seen on boat trip to Aransas NWR. Another estimated 100 at Sunset Lake. Two flew over the boardwalk at South Padre Island.

Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*

Common throughout, especially at coastal locations.

Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan*

One adult at Fulton Marina, alongside similar Laughing Gulls.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

Found at a number of locations such as Point Comfort, Aransas NWR, Sunset Lake, Laguna Vista, South Padre Island and Goose Is. SP.

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*

Small numbers encountered at Point Comfort, Aransas NWR, Sunset Lake and South Padre Island.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Single bird flew by at the boardwalk on South Padre Island.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

Noted at eight locations on tour, some of which included Brazos Bend SP, Aransas NWR, Sunset Lek, South Padre Island, Anzalduas County Park and Goose Island SP.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus*

A few at coastal locations including boat trip at Aransas NWR, Sunset Lake Park and at South Padre Island.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*

Regularly encountered small tern, noted at places including Point Comfort, Aransas NWR, Sunset Lake, and Goose Island SP.

Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Common throughout, especially in towns and cities.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common throughout, especially in towns and cities.

Inca Dove *Columbina inca*

Heard at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend and later seen well at Quinta Mazatlan and at Bentsen-Rio Grande SP.

White-tipped Dove *Leptotila verreauxi*

Regular visitor at feeding stations including those at Laguna Atascosa, Hugh Ramsey Nature Park, Sabal Palm Sanctuary, and at Salineno.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*

Common throughout.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica*

Common throughout.

Greater Roadrunner *Geococcyx californianus*

Seen very well at Laguna Atascosa NWR.

Eastern Screech Owl *Megascops asio*

One at Sims Bayou Nature Center in Houston. Bird was roosting at front of entrance to nest box.

Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus*

Two on a foggy morning in large tree at entrance to the Inn at Chachalaca Bend.

Pauraque *Nyctidromus abicollis*

Great views of a roosting bird at Estero Llano Grande SP. Heard and seen well at Bentsen-Rio Grande SP on evening visit.

Buff-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia yucatanensis*

Good views at Hugh Ramsey Nature Park in Harlingen. Also seen well at feeders at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend and at Estero Llano Grande SP.

Black-chinned Hummingbird *Archilochus alexandri*

Male and probably female visiting feeders at trailer park at Estero Llano Grande SP.

Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus*

One female type feeding in flowers at rest stop along Hwy 77, south of Sarita.

Green Kingfisher *Chloroceryle americana*

One female seen well at edge of lake at Santa Ana NWR.

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon*

Encountered several times, and our first was at Lions / Shelley Park in Refugio.

Golden-fronted Woodpecker *Melanerpes aurifrons*

Common woodpecker in the Rio Grande. Our first sighting was at Lions/Shelley Park in Refugio.

Red-bellied Woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus*

Noted at Brazos Bend SP, and at Houston's Jesse James Nature Park.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*

Single bird at Lions / Shelley Park in Refugio, and at Jesse Jones Nature Park.

Ladder-backed Woodpecker *Dryobates scalaris*

Common throughout tour with near daily sightings at parks and refuges.

Downy Woodpecker *Picoides pubescens*

Two at Brazos Bend SP.

Northern Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway*

Common, especially along roadsides, with sightings nearly every day.

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

Common, especially along roadsides, where we saw many of them each day.

Apomado Falcon *Falco femoralis*

One flew across road and field, showing lovely long wings and tail, near Laguna Atascosa NWR.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

One along roadway in Los Fresnos, atop tree.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

One sped past at the boardwalk at South Padre Island and another sailed in the wind as we searched for Burrowing Owls in fields near Santa Ana.

[Red-lored Parakeet *Amazona autumnalis*

'Yellow-cheeked' race bird in with Red-crowned Parrots at E. Houston Ave in McAllen. Not technically countable in North America.]

Red-crowned Parrot *Amazona viridigenalis*

Up to 75 at dusk in trees at E. Houston Ave in McAllen, where they come in roost.

[Yellow-headed Parrot *Amazona oratrix*

One in with Red-crowned Parrots at roost on E. Houston Ave in McAllen. Not technically countable on the North American list.]

Green Parakeet *Psittacara holochlorus*

One was seen on telephone wire from the van in Brownsville. Up to 48 were counted at roost at 10th St and Trenton in McAllen, and three flew past at Quinta Mazatlan.

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*

Common throughout.

Black Phoebe *Sayornis nigricans*

Noted under small bridge in farm country near Santa Ana. Also noted at the dam at Anzalduas County Park.

Vermilion Flycatcher *Prycephalus rubinus*

First encounter was with a stunning male at Brazos Bend SP. Also sighted at Laguna Atascosa NWR, Anzalduas County Park, and at Salineno.

Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus*

Big and bold flycatcher common in the Rio Grande where we had them almost daily, with sightings at most refuges and parks.

Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus*

Near Laguna Atascosa in an old derelict residential area, we saw our first Tropical Kingbird, which called to verify its identity. Others were at the boardwalk at South Padre Island and at Santa Ana NWR.

Couch's Kingbird *Tyrannus couchii*

Very similar to Tropical Kingbird and usually only separated by song. We heard several before seeing our first from the hide at Sabal Palm Sanctuary. Also seen at Quinta Mazatlan, Estero Llano Grande SP and at Anzalduas County Park.

Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus*

Found several times on tour. Laguna Atascosa NWR, South Padre Island, Estero Llano Grande S.P., and Falcon S.P. Quite a few others seen on wires as we drove along roadways.

White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*

Heard often, but seen only a few times. Sightings at Laguna Atascosa NWR, as well as Hugh Ramsey Nature Park, Quinta Mazatlan.

Blue-headed Vireo *Vireo solitarius*

One at Lions/Shelley Park in Refugio. Another at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend and another at Quinta Mazatlan.

Green Jay *Cyanocorax luxuosus*

Lovely, gaudy species seen at most refuges and parks where feeding stations attract them; Laguna Atascosa NWR, Santa Ana NWR, Sabal Palm Sanctuary, Salineno, Falcon SP.

Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata*

Excellent views at Sims Bayou Nature Center in Houston.

American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos*

A few were noted on the tour, within fairly close range to Houston. Absent from the Rio Grande Valley.

Chihuahuan Raven *Corvus cryptoleucus*

Several as we traveled from Brownsville to South Padre Is on TX 48. Two also seen near Salineno.

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*

Several flocks encountered at locations including Quinta Mazatlan, Salineno, Goose Island S.P. and the Sims Bayou Nature Center near Houston.

Tufted Titmouse *Baeolophus bicolor*

One seen well at Brazos Bend S.P.

Black-crested Titmouse *Baeolophus atricristatus*

Common in the Rio Grande and present at most parks and refuges, especially where feeders present.

Carolina Chickadee *Poecile carolinensis*

Singles at Brazos Bend S.P., the only location at which I would expect them on this itinerary.

Verdin *Auriparus flaviceps*

As usual, heard often and seen less often. Noted at many locations, inc. Laguna Atascosa NWR, Inn at Chachalaca Bend, Santa Ana NWR, Estero Llano Grande S.P., Bentsen Rio-Grande S.P., Salineno, etc.

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*

Numerous at Brazos Bend S.P. Also at Inn at Chachalaca Bend, Santa Ana NWR, Quinta Mazatlan and Estero Llano Grande S.P.

Purple Martin *Progne subis*

First migrants beginning to return, with our first sighting at Lions / Shelley Park in Refugio. Seen best at the Fulton Harbor as we waited to take boat. Also found at a number of additional spots such as Laguna Atascosa, Santa Ana, Quinta Mazatlan and Estero Llano Grande S.P.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

Observed at Sunset Lake, near Corpus Christi. Also at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend, where several species of swallows lined up on the wire for comparison. Fairly numerous at Santa Ana NWR. A few at Anzalduas County Park on both US and MX side.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

One was at Brazos Bend S.P., with additional sightings or 3-6 birds at S. Padre Island, the Inn at Chachalaca Bend and at Santa Ana NWR.

American Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

Two at Santa Ana NWR and two more on wires at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend.

Cave Swallow *Petrochelidon fulva*

Quite numerous this year, with sightings most days. Found at Brazos Bend S.P., Sabal Palm Sanctuary, the Inn at Chachalaca Bend, and more.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*

A few here and there at Lions / Shelley Park in Refugio, the Kiskadee Trail at Laguna Atascosa, Hugh Ramsey Nature Park in Harlingen, and other locations.

Sedge Wren *Cistothorus platensis*

Two seen well in grasses at Brazos Bend S.P.

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*

Heard several times, but seen quite well in reeds at Brazos Bend S.P.

Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii*

Found at Salineno and at Falcon State Park.

Carolina Wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus*

A species we often heard. We had good views at Brazos Bend S.P. Also at The Inn at Chachalaca Bend, Sabal Palm Sanctuary and at Santa Ana.

House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*

Occasionally heard, and eventually seen well at Bentsen-Rio Grande S.P.

Blue-grey Gnatcatcher *Poliottila caerulea*

Fairly common and recorded at many locations on tour.

Grey Catbird *Dumatella carolinensis*

Single birds noted at Hugh Ramsey Nature Park in Harlingen and at Sabal Palm Sanctuary in Brownsville.

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*

Common throughout.

Long-billed Thrasher *Toxostoma longirostre*

Excellent views at Hugh Ramsey Nature Park in Harlingen. Seen at many other locales including The Inn at Chachalaca Bend, Sabal Palm, Santa Ana NWR, Quinta Mazatlan and Bentsen-Rio Grande S.P.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common throughout.

Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis*

Perhaps three, at Lions / Shelley Park in Refugio. Bentsen Bentsen

Clay-coloured Thrush *Turdus grayi*

Found at Sabal Palm Sanctuary, Santa Ana NWR, Quinta Mazatlan and Bentsen-Rio Grande S.P.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*

A number of robins seen foraging on ground beneath oak trees at Brazos Bend S.P. Also seen on lawn near Jesse Jones Nature Park in Houston.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Common throughout.

Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens*

First sightings at Brazos Bend S.P. Near the end of the tour we saw up to 50 on a bit of grass beside our lunch restaurant as we returned to Houston.

Sprague's Pipit *Anthus spragueii*

Several flushed from grassy field at Anzalduas Park.

House Finch *Heamorrhous mexicanus*

Male and female at Best Western Hotel near Houston Intercontinental Airport.

American Goldfinch *Spinus tristis*

Perhaps a hundred at Brazos Bend S.P.

Lesser Goldfinch *Spinus psaltria*

Single bird at Hugh Ramsey Nature Park and a pair were seen at Estero Llano Grande S.P.

Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolni*

Singles found here and there at Hugh Ramsey Nature Park, Estero Llano Grande S.P., and at Salineno.

- Swamp Sparrow** *Melospiza georgiana*
Some good views obtained at Brazos Bend S.P.
- Savannah Sparrow** *Passerculus sandwichensis*
Found at various places including Point Comfort near Corpus Christi, S. Padre Island, agricultural fields near Santa Ana NWR, Anzalduas Park & Goose Island S.P.
- Chipping Sparrow** *Spizella passerina*
Flock of half a dozen or so in bushes and trees at Salineno.
- Black-throated Sparrow** *Amphispiza bilineata*
Two seen quite well at Falcon S.P.
- Cassin's Sparrow** *Peucaea cassinii*
One seen well in grassy area at Salineno.
- Olive Sparrow** *Arremonops rufivirgatus*
Fairly common at most Rio Grande locations such as Hugh Ramsey Nature Park in Harlingen, Sabal Palm Sanctuary, The Inn at Chachalaca Bend, etc.
- Western Meadowlark** *Sturna neglecta*
Seen in open farm fields near Santa Ana NWR, where we ran into a flock of perhaps a dozen of them.
- Eastern Meadowlark** *Sturna magna*
Flock in grass at Goose Island S.P.
- Audubon's Oriole** *Icterus graduacauda*
Two came in to feeders after much anticipation, at Salineno.
- Altamira Oriole** *Icterus gularis*
Fairly common in the Rio Grande with sightings at Laguna Atascos NWR, Hugh Ramsey Nature Park, Santa Ana NWR, Sabal Palm Sanctuary and feeders at Salineno.
- Red-winged Blackbird** *Agelaius phoeniceus*
One of the most abundant birds on the tour.
- Brown-headed Cowbird** *Molothrus ater*
Four found at the Rest Area along Hwy 77, south of Sarita. Another at Falcon S.P.
- Brewer's Blackbird** *Euphagus cyanocephalus*
Several seen well at Rest Stop along Hwy 77, south of Sarita.
- Boat-tailed Grackle** *Quiscalus major*
Species associated more with upper coastal areas, where we saw them at Brazos Bend SP.
- Great-tailed Grackle** *Quiscalus mexicanus*
Abundant throughout, but especially in the Rio Grande Valley where huge numbers gather to roost.
- Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia*
One seen well, but briefly at Santa Ana NWR.
- Orange-crowned Warbler** *Leiothlypis celata*
Common throughout.
- Nashville Warbler** *Leiothlypis ruficapilla*
One brief sighting at Santa Ana NWR.
- Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas*
Found at a number of locations including Lions / Shelley Park in Refugio, as well as at Brazos Bend S.P., S Padre Island, and Goose Island S.P.
- Pine Warbler** *Setophaga pinus*
One seen at Lions / Shelley Park in Refugio.
- Myrtle (Yellow-rumped) Warbler** *Setophaga coronata*
Most common warbler species throughout.
- Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla*
Singles at Brazos Bend S.P., and Lions / Shelley Park in Refugio. Heard at a couple of other locations.
- Northern Cardinal** *Cardinalis cardinalis*
Common throughout, especially at feeding stations.
- Pyrrhuloxia** *Cardinalis sinuatus*
One female seen well at Falcon State Park.
- Blue Bunting** *Cyanocompsa parellina*
One immature male at feeders at Quinta Mazatlan. Mexican rarity in the USA.
- White-collared Seedeater** *Sporophila torqueola*
One female seen at little marsh at Zapata City Park.

LIST OF MAMMALS

Eastern Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*
 Eastern Fox Squirrel *Sciurus niger*
 Eastern Cottontail *Sylvilagus floridanus*
 Bobcat *Lynx rufus*
 Coyote *Canis latrans*
 Northern Raccoon *Procyon lotor*
 Collared Peccary *Tayassu tajacu*
 White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus*
 Common Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*

LIST OF REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Red-eared Slider *Chrysemys scripta*
 Spiny Softshell Turtle *Apalone spinifera*
 American Alligator *Alligator mississippiensis*

LIST OF BUTTERFLIES

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail *Papilio glaucus*
 Pipevine Swallowtail *Papilio philenor*
 Polydamas Swallowtail *Battus polydamas*
 Giant Swallowtail *Papilio cresphontes*
 Southern Dogface *Colias cesonia*
 Dainty Sulphur *Nathalis iole*
 Cloudless Sulphur *Phoebis sennae*
 Large Orange Sulphur *Phoebis agarithe*
 Lyside Sulphur *Kricogonia lyside*
 Grey Hairstreak *Strymon melinus*
 Dusky-Blue Groundstreak *Calycopis isobea*
 Red-crescent Scrub-Hairstreak *Strymon rufofusca*
 Reakirt's Blue *Hemiargus isola*
 Gulf Fritillary *Agraulis vanillae*
 Vesta Crescent *Phyciodes vesta*
 Phaon Crescent *Phyciodes phaon*
 Texan Crescent *Phyciodes texana*
 Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*
 American Lady *Vanessa virginiensis*
 Common Buckeye *Junonia coenia*
 White Peacock *Anartia jatrophae*
 Banded Peacock *Anartia fatima*
 Mexican Bluewing *Myscelia ethusa*
 Empress Leilia *Asterocampa leilia*
 American Snout *Libytheana carinenta*
 Monarch *Danaus plexippus*
 Queen *Danaus gilippus*
 Mimosa Skipper *Cogia calchas*
 Teleus Longtail *Urbanus teleus*
 Brown Longtail *Urbanus procne*
 White-striped Longtail *Chiodes catillus*
 Funereal Duskywing *Erynnis funeralis*
 Common Checkered-Skipper *Pyrgus communis*
 White-checkered-Skipper *Pyrgus albescens*
 Tropical Checkered Skipper *Pyrgus oileus*
 Turk's-Cap White-Skipper *Heliopetes macaira*
 White-patched Skipper *Chiomara asychis*
 Whirlabout *Polites vibex*
 Violet-patched Skipper *Monca tyrtaeus*
 Celia's Roadside Skipper *Amblyscirtes celia*