March 9-15, 2024

Texas Coastal and Rio Grande Valley

Cost
Double $2525 / Single $2950

Event overview
Winter in Texas provides incredible birding and weather, especially if you are from any of the colder parts of the world. This trip will bring us to seeing endangered Whooping Cranes to Rio Grande Valley (RGV) specialties such as Green Jay, Golden Fronted Woodpecker, Buff-bellied Hummingbird and much more. The RGV is the only place many of the birds occur within the US so it is a “must-visit” location to clean up your bird list. Rare birds also tend to pop up in the Valley leaving the possibility for a number of vagrants that really do not show up anywhere else US. We will certainly give these birds special attention and may arrange some schedules to go and see these special visitors.

Day 1
Participant will meet in in Corpus Christi for a late dinner where we will have a meet and greet and discuss plans for the tour.

Day 2
After breakfast, we will head to Goose Island State Park. We will be searching for the endangered Whooping Crane, a stunning white crane that is always worth seeing. Goose Island provides great birding with many common Texas birds being abundant. After spending time here, we will head slightly North to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Waterfowl and waders will be our targets while heading through the Wildlife Drive. Between these first two stops we should have racked up a decent day list. We will then embark on a 2-hour drive to get to Harlingen, Texas where we start seeing the unique birds of the Rio Grande Valley. We will finish our day with dinner and a bird recap.

Day 3
After Breakfast, we will head to Estero Llano Grande State Park. This is a place we could easily spend the entire day at and just might. Birding here host lots of wintering waterfowl including huge flocks of Black-bellied Whistling-ducks and occasionally Fulvous Whistling-ducks. We will also start to see our first “Valley” birds- Green Jays, Orioles and Buff-bellied Hummingbirds. It is a great place to see birds such as Least Grebe and Common Pauraque. Lunch will be at one of my favorite places, Nana’s Taqueria. At lunch we will decided if we want to check out another nearby location or if we want to head back to Estero for some continued fun. Dinner and recap.

Day 4
Today we will head to the coast. South Padre Island offers fantastic birding. We will start at the Birding Nature Center, which is a great place to see some waders such as Spoonbills, Egrets and shorebirds. I also like listening for Rails in this area. Clapper Rails have been known to be out in the open here. Both White and Brown Pelicans will be around as well as Gulls, Terns and Black Skimmer. From there we will head next door to see and scope shorebird flocks. The Laguna Madre Trail offers opportunities to see Reddish Egret and Piping Plovers. We will break for lunch and then head out to another park on the Island or go cruising down the 100 to search for Aplomado Falcons. These birds are from a reestablished population and sometimes hard to track down. There are a couple safe places to pull off and scope for these striking falcons. Dinner and our nightly recap will wrap up this day.

Day 5
We will start out at Santa Anna NWR on their lookout tower. We will hear the dawn song while looking over the trees. Raptors fly by here in decent numbers such as vultures and a variety of hawks, we will also have a small chance at seeing Hooked-billed Kite. Walking around the ponds will give us opportunity to see both Green and Ringer Kingfishers, in addition to Kiskadees that are abundant here as well. I have seen Vermillion Flycatchers and a few other species of more western bird here. We will break for lunch and head to another park after called Quinta Mazatlan. This small park can provide some nice photography opportunities for more of the regularly occurring Valley birds and the potential for a more rarity sighting.

Day 6
No trip to the Valley is complete without a trip to Salineno Wildlife Preserve– Northwest of the other locations we will have went to, this is a great place for Audubon’s Oriole, Seedeaters, Red-billed Pigeon and lots more. We will scan the river some for wild Muscovy Ducks and watch the other birds work the river as we wait. It is a small property with over 300 species documented on it. We will make a 3 hour trek back to Corpus Christi this night where our trip concludes.

Day 7. Flights home

For additional questions, please contact your guide Jeremy at birding@toledozoo.org or 419-385-5721 ext. 3096