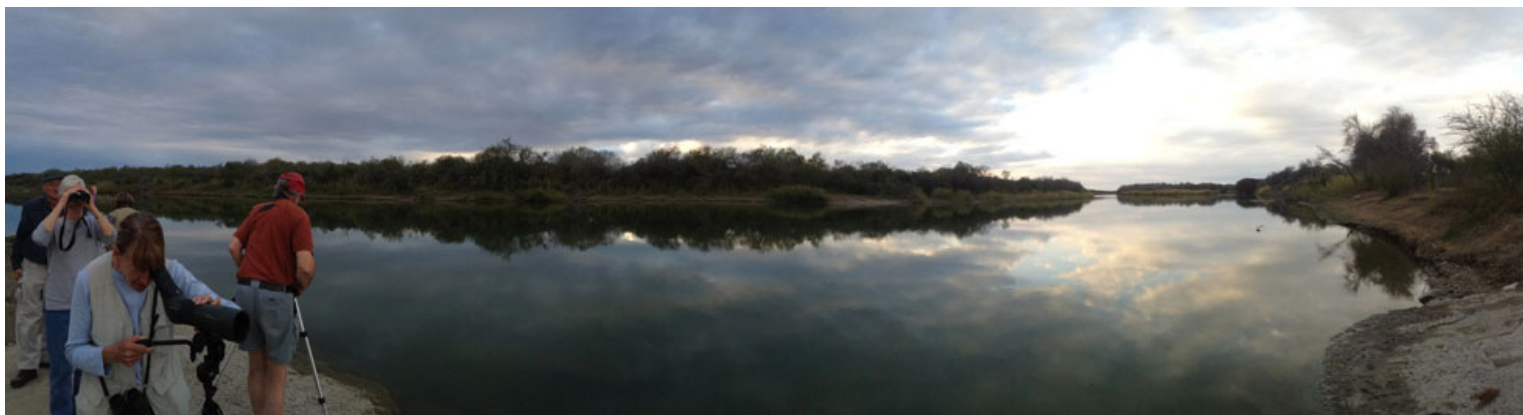


*Field Guides Tour Report*  
**South Texas Rarities 2013**

Jan 18, 2013 to Jan 24, 2013  
Chris Benesh

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*



*Birding along the Rio Grande at Salineno. (Photo by guide Chris Benesh)*

It was a pleasant week in south Texas during our Rio Grande Rarities tour. The one thing missing from the valley this year- rarities. But even so, we did manage to see quite a few cool things including Groove-billed Ani and Flammulated Owl (or at least the bits and pieces that were exposed while it was on its day roost). The valley is also a great place for all of those Rio Grande specialties, and we had a great time with a lot of these. White-collared Seedeater, three species of kingfisher, Clay-colored Thrush, a huge flock of Green Parakeets, a roosting Zone-tailed Hawk, along with Green Jay, Altamira Oriole, and Great Kiskadee.

Thanks to all of you for coming along. I had a great time birding with all of you and look forward to catching up with each of you again in future. Until then I wish you the best in birding.

-- Chris

---

#### KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

---

### **BIRDS**

#### *Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)*

**BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK** (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*)

**FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCK** (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) – We were fortunate to see a sneaky bird darting in and out of the reeds at Santa Ana NWR.

**GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** (*Anser albifrons*)

**SNOW GOOSE** (*Chen caerulescens*)

**ROSS'S GOOSE** (*Chen rossii*) – One was mixed in with the flock of Snows and White-fronteds.

**WOOD DUCK** (*Aix sponsa*) – Judy J spotted a pair of these at Estero Llano Grande!

**GADWALL** (*Anas strepera*)

**AMERICAN WIGEON** (*Anas americana*)

**MOTTLED DUCK** (*Anas fulvigula*)

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** (*Anas discors*)

**CINNAMON TEAL** (*Anas cyanoptera*)

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Anas clypeata*)

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*)

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN)** (*Anas crecca carolinensis*)

**CANVASBACK** (*Aythya valisineria*)

**REDHEAD** (*Aythya americana*)  
**RING-NECKED DUCK** (*Aythya collaris*)  
**LESSER SCAUP** (*Aythya affinis*)  
**BUFFLEHEAD** (*Bucephala albeola*)  
**RUDDY DUCK** (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

*Cracidae (Guans, Chachalacas, and Curassows)*

**PLAIN CHACHALACA** (*Ortalis vetula*) – One of the more iconic birds of the lower Rio Grande, this species is strangely quiet at this season.

*Odontophoridae (New World Quail)*

**SCALED QUAIL** (*Callipepla squamata*) – Great looks in the blind at Falcon State Park.

**NORTHERN BOBWHITE** (*Colinus virginianus*) [\*]

*Gaviidae (Loons)*

**COMMON LOON** (*Gavia immer*)

*Podicipedidae (Grebes)*

**LEAST GREBE** (*Tachybaptus dominicus*)

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*)

**EARED GREBE** (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

*Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)*

**NEOTROPIC CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – Quite a few seen including a huge flight flushed by the air boats at Salineno.

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)

*Anhingidae (Anhingas)*

**ANHINGA** (*Anhinga anhinga*)

*Pelecanidae (Pelicans)*

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

**BROWN PELICAN** (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

*Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)*

**AMERICAN BITTERN** (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) – What a great bittern performance on the trip. Tom spotted the first one on South Padre Island and we watched a confrontation between that one and another there. And we had an additional bird the next day as well!

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*)

**GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*)

**SNOWY EGRET** (*Egretta thula*)

**LITTLE BLUE HERON** (*Egretta caerulea*)

**TRICOLORED HERON** (*Egretta tricolor*)

**REDDISH EGRET** (*Egretta rufescens*)

**CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*)

**GREEN HERON** (*Butorides virescens*)

**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – Some terrific views at Estero Llano Grande.

*Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)*

**WHITE IBIS** (*Eudocimus albus*)

**WHITE-FACED IBIS** (*Plegadis chihi*)

**ROSEATE SPOONBILL** (*Platalea ajaja*)

*Cathartidae (New World Vultures)*

**BLACK VULTURE** (*Coragyps atratus*)

**TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*)

*Pandionidae (Osprey)*

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*)

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**WHITE-TAILED KITE** (*Elanus leucurus*)

**NORTHERN HARRIER (AMERICAN)** (*Circus cyaneus hudsonius*)

**SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** (*Accipiter striatus*)

**COOPER'S HAWK** (*Accipiter cooperii*)

**HARRIS'S HAWK** (*Parabuteo unicinctus*)

**GRAY HAWK** (*Buteo nitidus*) – We saw as many as four during the trip. Make note that the taxonomy of this triplist is slightly out of date and the scientific name is now *Buteo plagiatus*.

**WHITE-TAILED HAWK** (*Buteo albicaudatus*) – Our best views ended up being those at the Brownsville Landfill.

**ZONE-TAILED HAWK** (*Buteo albonotatus*) – A fantastic view of one at an evening roost at Frontera when we were looking for parrots.

**RED-TAILED HAWK** (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Notable was a Harlan's Hawk seen on the way to Laguna Atascosa.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

**CRESTED CARACARA** (*Caracara cheriway*)

**AMERICAN KESTREL** (*Falco sparverius*)

**MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*) – Three seen was a good total.

**APLOMADO FALCON** (*Falco femoralis*) – Judy J was on her game and spotted a pair of these sitting on a corral next to the highway. The male of this pair was unbanded.

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*)

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

**COMMON GALLINULE** (*Gallinula galeata*) – A relatively recent split from the Old World Moorhen.

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*)

Gruidae (Cranes)

**SANDHILL CRANE** (*Grus canadensis*)

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

**PIPING PLOVER** (*Charadrius melodus*) – We were able to compare these with the nearby Semipalmateds.

**KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*)

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

**AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus palliatus*)

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

**AMERICAN AVOCET** (*Recurvirostra americana*)

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*)

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*)

**WILLET** (*Tringa semipalmata*)

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*)

**LONG-BILLED CURLEW** (*Numenius americanus*)

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*)

**SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*)

**LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*)

**DUNLIN** (*Calidris alpina*)

**LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*)

**WILSON'S SNIPE** (*Gallinago delicata*)

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**LAUGHING GULL** (*Leucophaeus atricilla*)

**RING-BILLED GULL** (*Larus delawarensis*)

**HERRING GULL (AMERICAN)** (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*)

**GULL-BILLED TERN** (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)

**CASPIAN TERN** (*Hydroprogne caspia*)

**FORSTER'S TERN** (*Sterna forsteri*)

**ROYAL TERN** (*Thalasseus maximus*)

**BLACK SKIMMER** (*Rynchops niger*)

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) [I]

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) [I]

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** (*Zenaida asiatica*)

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*)

**INCA DOVE** (*Columbina inca*)

**COMMON GROUND-DOVE** (*Columbina passerina*)

**WHITE-TIPPED DOVE** (*Leptotila verreauxi*)

Psittacidae (Parrots)

**GREEN PARAKEET** (*Aratinga holochlora*) – A spectacular showing of these in the streets of McAllen with possibly as many as a thousand birds present.

**RED-CROWNED PARROT** (*Amazona viridigenalis*) – We saw as many as a dozen of these in flight in Weslaco, but were unable to track down their whereabouts later.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**GREATER ROADRUNNER** (*Geococcyx californianus*) – Nice looks at a couple of these at Laguna Atascosa.

**GROOVE-BILLED ANI** (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) – Another great Judy J spot was this secretive bird sunning itself at Laguna Atascosa during our morning visit there. Sadly, it did not stick around for too long.

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

**BARN OWL** (*Tyto alba*)

Strigidae (Owls)

**FLAMMULATED OWL** (*Otus flammeolus*) – Bits and pieces of this well hidden rarity. Most spend the winter in Mexico.

**EASTERN SCREECH-OWL (MCCALL'S)** (*Megascops asio mccallii*) – Nice view of one roosting in a ceramic tube at Laguna Atascosa.

**GREAT HORNED OWL** (*Bubo virginianus*) – Great look at one at Falcon County Park.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

**COMMON PAURAUQUE** (*Nyctidromus albigollis*)

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

**RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD** (*Archilochus colubris*)

**BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD** (*Archilochus alexandri*)

**RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD** (*Selasphorus rufus*)

**BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD** (*Amazilia yucatanensis*)

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

**RINGED KINGFISHER** (*Megaceryle torquata*) – Great looks at the Bentsen resaca and then later at Salineno.

**BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Megaceryle alcyon*)

**GREEN KINGFISHER** (*Chloroceryle americana*) – The best view was of the male at the Edinburg Wetlands.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

**GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes aurifrons*)

**YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER** (*Sphyrapicus varius*)

**LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER** (*Picoides scalaris*)

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

**NORTHERN BEARDLESS-TYRANULET** (*Camptostoma imberbe*) – We were really lucky with this one. Soon after we arrived at Estero, one began singing in the trees just next to the deck.

**BLACK PHOEBE** (*Sayornis nigricans*) – Rather plentiful compared to some years.

**EASTERN PHOEBE** (*Sayornis phoebe*)

**SAY'S PHOEBE** (*Sayornis saya*) – Good lucks at one on our first afternoon.

**VERMILION FLYCATCHER** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) – Great looking bird! The best were the ones in Zapata.

**GREAT KISKADEE** (*Pitangus sulphuratus*)

**TROPICAL KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)

**COUCH'S KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus couchii*) – This species was super scarce this winter. We saw our single bird near Laguna Atascosa.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

**LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE** (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

Vireonidae (Vireos)

**WHITE-EYED VIREO** (*Vireo griseus*)

**BLUE-HEADED VIREO** (*Vireo solitarius*)

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

**GREEN JAY** (*Cyanocorax yncas*) – One of the iconic species of south Texas, we had quite a few fantastic looks. What an amazing assortment of color and pattern.

**CHIHUAHUAN RAVEN** (*Corvus cryptoleucus*)

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

**TREE SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

**CAVE SWALLOW (TEXAS)** (*Petrochelidon fulva pallida*)

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

**BLACK-CRESTED TITMOUSE** (*Baeolophus atricristatus*)

Remizidae (Penduline-Tits)

**VERDIN** (*Auriparus flaviceps*)

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

**CACTUS WREN** (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*)

**CAROLINA WREN** (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*)

**BEWICK'S WREN** (*Thryomanes bewickii*)

**HOUSE WREN** (*Troglodytes aedon*)

*Poliptilidae (Gnatcatchers)*

**BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** (*Poliptila caerulea*)

*Regulidae (Kinglets)*

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus calendula*)

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*

**EASTERN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia sialis*) – Nice looks at a few during our ranch visit on the first afternoon.

**CLAY-COLORED THRUSH** (*Turdus grayi*) – Great looks at one at Santa Ana NWR and again at Bentsen. Formerly known as the Clay-colored Robin.

*Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)*

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*) – The state bird of Texas.

**LONG-BILLED THRASHER** (*Toxostoma longirostre*) – One of the few species that were starting to sing some. Gearing up for the breeding season.

**CURVE-BILLED THRASHER** (*Toxostoma curvirostre*) – One of the last new birds of the trip.

*Sturnidae (Starlings)*

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [I]

*Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)*

**AMERICAN PIPIT** (*Anthus rubescens*)

*Parulidae (New World Warblers)*

**BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** (*Mniotilta varia*)

**ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER** (*Oreothlypis celata*) – Wow, this species is super common in south Texas in winter. They were everywhere!

**COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*)

**NORTHERN PARULA** (*Setophaga americana*)

**PINE WARBLER** (*Setophaga pinus*)

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE)** (*Setophaga coronata coronata*)

**YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER** (*Setophaga dominica*)

**BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER** (*Setophaga virens*)

*Emberizidae (Buntings, Sparrows and Allies)*

**WHITE-COLLARED SEEDEATER** (*Sporophila torqueola*) – After a bit of looking, we connected with a nice male bird in Laredo.

**OLIVE SPARROW** (*Arremonops rufivirgatus*)

**CHIPPING SPARROW** (*Spizella passerina*)

**LARK SPARROW** (*Chondestes grammacus*)

**BLACK-THROATED SPARROW** (*Amphispiza bilineata*) – This one was enjoyed in the desert scrub near Salineno.

**SAVANNAH SPARROW** (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)

**LINCOLN'S SPARROW** (*Melospiza lincolni*)

*Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)*

**WESTERN TANAGER** (*Piranga ludoviciana*)

**NORTHERN CARDINAL** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)

**PYRRHULOXIA** (*Cardinalis sinuatus*) – Great looks at this species on the last day.

**BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK** (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*) – There was one overwintering at Bentsen that we got a good look at.

*Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)*

**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

**EASTERN MEADOWLARK** (*Sturnella magna*)

**WESTERN MEADOWLARK** (*Sturnella neglecta*) – We had a single calling bird near Salineno.

**GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus mexicanus*)

**BRONZED COWBIRD** (*Molothrus aeneus*)

**BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD** (*Molothrus ater*)

**ALTAMIRA ORIOLE** (*Icterus gularis*)

**AUDUBON'S ORIOLE** (*Icterus graduacauda*) – Good looks at Salineno thanks to the volunteers that keep the feeders going there.

*Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)*

**LESSER GOLDFINCH** (*Spinus psaltria*)

**AMERICAN GOLDFINCH** (*Spinus tristis*)

*Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)*

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

---

## MAMMALS

**EASTERN COTTONTAIL** (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)

**DESERT COTTONTAIL** (*Sylvilagus audubonii*)

**FOX SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus niger*)

**BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN** (*Tursiops truncatus*)

**WHITE-TAILED DEER** (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

---

## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

---

**Totals for the tour: 178 bird taxa and 5 mammal taxa**