



Field Guides Tour Report

South Texas Rarities 2014

Jan 17, 2014 to Jan 23, 2014

Chris Benesh

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



The Rio Grande River as seen from Salineño (Photo by guide Chris Benesh)

The first Rio Grande Rarities trip of 2014 was a success despite it being a relatively quiet year for rarities. Probably the most notable bird event of the season was the rediscovery of a small group of Hook-billed Kites near Mission, Texas. Five birds in total were found spending the winter here feeding on tree snails. Other highlights included having wonderful views of a pair of Aplomado Falcons near the coast and a cooperative Tropical Parula in Edinburg. Finally, we were able to track down a male White-collared Seedeater in Laredo, which was a treat for all.

I'd like to thank Tiffany Kersten for her help on a couple days of the trip. Thanks also to all of you for making the trip such a joy to lead. You were great cast of characters and I look forward to birding with all of you again in the future. Until then, good 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*) – Some spectacular flyovers at the Edinburg Wetlands.

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*)
REDHEAD (*Aythya americana*)
RING-NECKED DUCK (*Aythya collaris*)
LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*)
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – Up close feeding birds on SPI.
RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

Cracidae (Guans, Chachalacas, and Curassows)

PLAIN CHACHALACA (*Ortalis vetula*)

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*)

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LEAST GREBE (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – Quite a few at Estero Llano Grande.

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*)

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*)

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)

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*)

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Great comparisons of this and the next species at Alligator Pond.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*)

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

WHITE IBIS (*Eudocimus albus*)

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*) – A wonderful show at Santa Ana where three birds came quite close.

HOOK-BILLED KITE (HOOK-BILLED) (*Chondrohierax uncinatus uncinatus*) – Our second, last ditch effort paid off with good flight views of a dark morph bird in Mission.

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

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*)

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*)

HARRIS'S HAWK (*Parabuteo unicinctus*)

WHITE-TAILED HAWK (*Geranoaetus albicaudatus*)

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK (*Buteo lineatus*)

GRAY HAWK (*Buteo plagiatus*)

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

CLAPPER RAIL (*Rallus longirostris*) [*]

SORA (*Porzana carolina*) [*]

COMMON GALLINULE (*Gallinula galeata*)

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*)

Gruidae (Cranes)

SANDHILL CRANE (*Grus canadensis*)

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*)

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*)

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*)

STILT SANDPIPER (*Calidris himantopus*)

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*)

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*)

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*)

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*)

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*)

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*)

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*)

COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina*)

WHITE-TIPPED DOVE (*Leptotila verreauxi*)

Strigidae (Owls)

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL (MCCALL'S) (*Megascops asio mcallii*) – After some searching, we did track down one roosting in an owl box at Estero.

GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*) [*]

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

COMMON PAURAQUE (*Nyctidromus albicollis*) – Amazing how well this species blends into the background.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus rufus*) – One was seen by Jay and Alex.

BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia yucatanensis*)

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

RINGED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle torquata*)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle alcyon*)

GREEN KINGFISHER (*Chloroceryle americana*)

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes aurifrons*)

LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Picoides scalaris*)

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

CRESTED CARACARA (*Caracara cheriway*)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*)

APLOMADO FALCON (*Falco femoralis*) – Good looks at two birds along Highway 100 near Port Isabel.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*)

Psittacidae (Parrots)

GREEN PARAKEET (*Aratinga holochlora*)

RED-CROWNED PARROT (*Amazona viridigenalis*)

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

NORTHERN BEARDLESS-TYRANNULET (*Camptostoma imberbe*) – Great looks at one present at Santa Ana national wildlife refuge.

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*)

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*)

GREAT KISKADEE (*Pitangus sulphuratus*)

TROPICAL KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) – At this season, Tropicals far outnumber Couch's in the valley.

COUCH'S KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus couchii*) – We did eventually track one down at Anzalduas Park. Another pair was seen in North Central Park in Laredo.

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 Valley's iconic birds.

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)

HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*)

SEDGE WREN (*Cistothorus platensis*)

MARSH WREN (*Cistothorus palustris*) [*]

CAROLINA WREN (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*)

BEWICK'S WREN (*Thryomanes bewickii*)

CACTUS WREN (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*)

Poliptilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliptila caerulea*)

Regulidae (Kinglets)

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*)

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

CLAY-COLORED THRUSH (*Turdus grayi*) – Two of these were present at Santa Ana NWR.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Seeing American Robin in the Valley is not an everyday experience.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – A couple of these were present at the convention center on SPI.

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (*Toxostoma curvirostre*)

LONG-BILLED THRASHER (*Toxostoma longirostre*)

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*)

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [I]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

AMERICAN PIPIT (*Anthus rubescens*)

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis celata*)

NASHVILLE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*)

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*)

TROPICAL PARULA (*Setophaga pitiayumi*) – We really worked for this one. But we eventually all had great looks at this rare species.

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

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S) (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) – Once we were as far west as Laredo, some of the warblers were Audubon's.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (*Setophaga dominica*)

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (*Setophaga nigrescens*) – What a stunning male in the mixed flock in Laredo.

WILSON'S WARBLER (*Cardellina pusilla*) [*]

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

WHITE-COLLARED SEEDEATER (*Sporophila torqueola*) – Yay! Our search paid off at our second spot with nice looks at a calling male bird.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

OLIVE SPARROW (*Arremonops rufivirgatus*)

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)

LINCOLN'S SPARROW (*Melospiza lincolni*)

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)

PYRRHULOXIA (*Cardinalis sinuatus*)

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*)

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*)

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*)

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*)

BRONZED COWBIRD (*Molothrus aeneus*)

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*)

HOODED ORIOLE (*Icterus cucullatus*)

ALTAMIRA ORIOLE (*Icterus gularis*)

AUDUBON'S ORIOLE (*Icterus graduacauda*) – Great looks at a pair of birds in Salineno.

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*)

LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*)

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*)

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

MAMMALS

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)

FOX SQUIRREL (*Sciurus niger*)

HISPID COTTON RAT (*Sigmodon hispidus*) – Seen at the feeders in Salineno.

BLACK RAT (*Rattus rattus*) – The rat we saw feeding at Santa Ana keys out to be a brown morph of this species, based in part on the length of its tail.

COYOTE (*Canis latrans*) [*]

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – Nice looks at a couple at North Central Park including a 10 point buck.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 156 bird taxa and 6 mammal taxa