



Field Guides Tour Report

South Texas Rarities II 2014

Jan 24, 2014 to Jan 30, 2014
Chris Benesh

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



Dusk arrives on the Rio Grande in Salineno. (Photo by guide Chris Benesh)

The second 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. It was a close call for us, but we did manage to connect with this rare species.

Other highlights included an Aplomado Falcon near the coast and a cooperative Tropical Parula in Edinburg. The feeders in Salineno were wonderful, especially on such a cold day, and our two Zone-tailed Hawks generated a lot of excitement. Perhaps the most exciting moment was the last-minute flyover of a Ringed Kingfisher in Salineno just as we were about to depart.

My thanks to Tiffany Kersten for her help on a couple days of the trip. And of course thanks to all of you for making the trip such a joy to lead. It was a great group, and I look forward to finding some great birds again 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 nice looks at the Edinburg Wetlands.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*)

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Anas americana*)

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

MALLARD (MEXICAN) (*Anas platyrhynchos diazi*)

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*)

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*)

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*)

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

Cracidae (Guans, Chachalacas, and Curassows)

PLAIN CHACHALACA (*Ortalis vetula*)

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

NORTHERN BOBWHITE (*Colinus virginianus*) – We flushed a couple of coveys along the Old Port Isabel Road.

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*)

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LEAST GREBE (*Tachybaptus dominicus*)

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*)

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

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

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*)

HOOK-BILLED KITE (HOOK-BILLED) (*Chondrohierax uncinatus uncinatus*) – Well into our second miss for this species, a nearby birder miraculously spotted a perched Hook-billed Kite through a tiny window that we were all able to see through the scope. First, a male, then a female, and finally (and briefly), the dark morph bird.

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*)

BROAD-WINGED HAWK (*Buteo platypterus*) – A juvenile bird was at the overlook in Roma. This species is pretty rare in the winter in the US.

GRAY HAWK (*Buteo plagiatus*)

ZONE-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo albonotatus*) – Hurrah! While birding at North Central Park, Judy spotted her lifer Zone-tailed Hawk right over our heads! And remarkably, we had a second one that same evening in Salineno.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – We had a nice intermediate-dark morph bird at the Mission Nature Park as well as a Krider's type in the Falcon area.

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*)

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

SNOWY PLOVER (*Charadrius nivosus*)

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

PIPING PLOVER (*Charadrius melodus*)

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*)

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*)

SOLITARY SANDPIPER (*Tringa solitaria*)

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) [*]

WILLET (*Tringa semipalmata*)

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*)

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*)

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*)

WESTERN SANDPIPER (*Calidris mauri*)

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*)

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*)

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

GREATER ROADRUNNER (*Geococcyx californianus*)

GROOVE-BILLED ANI (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) – We were really fortunate to finally track down these elusive birds at Santa Ana.

Strigidae (Owls)

GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*) – Great views of a nesting bird at Sabal Palms.

BURROWING OWL (*Athene cunicularia*) – Thanks to a tip and an assist from some locals, we managed to see one of the only known Burrowing Owls in the LRGV.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

COMMON PAURAUQUE (*Nyctidromus albigollis*) – Amazingly cryptic.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia yucatanensis*)

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

RINGED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle torquata*) – Talk about eleventh hour birds! We were loading into the van when finally a Ringed Kingfisher appeared flying high over the river at Salineno. Fortunately, it then swung around and showed well!

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle alcyon*)

GREEN KINGFISHER (*Chloroceryle americana*) – Good scope views of a couple of birds at the Edinburg Wetlands.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes aurifrons*)

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – Scarce in the valley.

LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Picoides scalaris*)

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

CRESTED CARACARA (*Caracara cheriway*)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*)

APLOMADO FALCON (*Falco femoralis*) – Having missed it the first time around, our second chase down into Brownsville turned up this species perched cryptically out of the wind. Whew!

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*)

Psittacidae (Parrots)

GREEN PARAKEET (*Aratinga holochlora*) – We saw a spectacular evening roost of these guys and met Charles Alexander, who pointed out the Mitred Parakeet and its two hybrid offspring, as well as Hope, the gold colored parakeet.

MITRED PARAKEET (*Aratinga mitrata*) – One bird hanging with the Green Parakeets.

RED-CROWNED PARROT (*Amazona viridigenalis*) – About 200 of these noisy birds were in the giant roosting flock at Oliviera Park in Brownsville.

RED-LORED PARROT (YELLOW-CHEEKED) (*Amazona autumnalis autumnalis*) – There were a couple of these seen in the big flock.

YELLOW-HEADED PARROT (*Amazona oratrix*) – As many as six of these were in the the rest of the flock.

WHITE-FRONTED PARROT (*Amazona albifrons*) – There were some 30 of these in a big flock at Oliviera Park. This is a species that seems to be increasing in recent years here.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

NORTHERN BEARDLESS-TYRANULET (*Camptostoma imberbe*) – This one took us a bit of a wild chase around the trails at Santa Ana, but we eventually had good looks once it settled down a bit.

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*)

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*)

GREAT KISKADEE (*Pitangus sulphuratus*)

TROPICAL KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)

COUCH'S KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus couchii*)

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

Vireonidae (Vireos)

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

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

GREEN JAY (*Cyanocorax yncas*)

CHIHUAHUAN RAVEN (*Corvus cryptoleucus*)

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*)

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

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*)

Poliophtidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila caerulea*)

Regulidae (Kinglets)

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*)

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

CLAY-COLORED THRUSH (*Turdus grayi*) – Sabal Palms was the place for this species. Some of the gang saw four together at the feeders!

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*)
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)

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – One hanging out at Sabal Palms.
BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*)
ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis celata*)
COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*)
AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – This winter rarity was at the convention center on SPI.
TROPICAL PARULA (*Setophaga pitiayumi*) – Thanks to Javier for getting us right to the right spot at Edinburg Wetlands for some good looks at this rarity.
YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE) (*Setophaga coronata coronata*)
YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S) (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*)
YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (*Setophaga dominica*)
BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (*Setophaga nigrescens*)

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

WHITE-COLLARED SEEDEATER (*Sporophila torqueola*)

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

OLIVE SPARROW (*Arremonops rufivirgatus*)
SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)
LINCOLN'S SPARROW (*Melospiza lincolni*)
SWAMP SPARROW (*Melospiza georgiana*) – One at the convention center.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)
PYRRHULOXIA (*Cardinalis sinuatus*)

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)
EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*)
WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*)
BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)
COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – Four of these in the park in Zapata were a bit out of place.
GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*)
BRONZED COWBIRD (*Molothrus aeneus*)
HOODED ORIOLE (*Icterus cucullatus*)
ALTAMIRA ORIOLE (*Icterus gularis*) – The feeders in Salineno were great for three species of oriole!
AUDUBON'S ORIOLE (*Icterus graduacauda*)

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*)

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*)

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

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

MAMMALS

NINE-BANDED ARMADILLO (*Dasypus novemcinctus*)

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)

FOX SQUIRREL (*Sciurus niger*)

HISPID COTTON RAT (*Sigmodon hispidus*)

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 166 bird taxa and 5 mammal taxa