



Field Guides Tour Report

Spring in South Texas II 2018

Mar 17, 2018 to Mar 25, 2018

Tom Johnson

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE.



We were quite fortunate to see a group of three Tamaulipas Crows at the Brownsville Landfill. This Mexican species has had a bit of a resurgence into the US over the past year or so.

This birding tour of South Texas took us between the famed Coastal Bend near Rockport & Corpus Christi and finished in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, with its subtropical forest and Mexican specialties. Along the way we visited the specialty-rich oak groves and pastures of the King Ranch. Bird highlights included endangered Whooping Cranes up-close during our boat trip, thousands of shorebirds including a vagrant Purple Sandpiper, nesting Aplomado Falcons, Tamaulipas Crows, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls on the King Ranch, Morelet's (formerly White-collared) Seedeaters in riverside cane, Altamira and Audubon's orioles, Green Jays, and much more.

We had lovely weather for the duration of the trip, and an amicable group made things flow easily. Delicious Gulf seafood and Tex-Mex treats along the way helped keep us birding happily, too. Thanks for joining me for this exploration of one of the most diverse regions of the US!

Photos by guide Tom Johnson.

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*) – We found these delightful ducks almost every day of the trip.

FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) – Three of these lovely tree ducks were at Estero Llano Grande SP, and another flew in and landed at Tiocano Lake.

SNOW GOOSE (*Anser caerulescens*) – Five lingered in a pond along Highway 77 south of King Ranch.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Spatula discors*) – Common, often in flocks of dozens or more.

CINNAMON TEAL (*Spatula cyanoptera*) – Our best views were at Estero Llano Grande SP.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*) – Common and widespread.

GADWALL (*Mareca strepera*) – Fairly common.

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Mareca americana*) – Small groups lingered, mostly in the Rockport area.

MALLARD (MEXICAN) (*Anas platyrhynchos diazi*) – We studied one of these dark brown Mallards at Salineño.

MOTTLED DUCK (*Anas fulvigula*) – Common; usually seen in pairs.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – Small groups lingered at several locations; a flock of 15 migrated over heading north during our boat trip at Aransas.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN) (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – Small flocks were still around, but we saw far fewer of these than Blue-winged Teal.

REDHEAD (*Aythya americana*) – A few were mixed with other ducks on roadside ponds near Port Lavaca.

RING-NECKED DUCK (*Aythya collaris*) – We saw single birds twice - once at Port Lavaca and once at Salineño.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – Good-sized flocks were on saltwater and larger ponds.

BUFFLEHEAD (*Bucephala albeola*) – At least two female-plumaged birds were at Packery Channel Park.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – Small numbers were scattered along coastal locations throughout our journey.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – Just a couple in Rockport, Port Lavaca, and along Highway 77.

Cracidae (Guans, Chachalacas, and Curassows)

PLAIN CHACHALACA (*Ortalis vetula*) – We enjoyed close views of these social birds at several forested preserves in the Lower Rio Grande Valley - at Quinta Mazatlan, they were essentially walking across our toes!

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

NORTHERN BOBWHITE (*Colinus virginianus*) – Three scampered through the grass at King Ranch, and another avoided us well at the Hargill Playa.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – Very common at King Ranch - about 45 during our morning there.

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – These wintering birds were common on the intracoastal waterway - we saw about 25 during our Aransas boat trip.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LEAST GREBE (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – Excellent, close views at Estero Llano Grande SP.

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Common in freshwater wetlands.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – This slim cormorant generally outnumbered Double-crested during most days of our trip, especially in freshwater areas and in the Rio Grande Valley.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Especially common around Aransas NWR, where we saw ~500.

Anhingidae (Anhingas)

ANHINGA (*Anhinga anhinga*) – Scattered sightings of these "snakebirds."

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – Small handfuls were scattered around, and then we saw about 25 flapping past during our morning watch at Salineño.

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – Common along the saltwater portions of our trip.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

AMERICAN BITTERN (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) – We heard one "thunder-pumping" from the wetlands at Tiocano Lake. [*]

LEAST BITTERN (*Ixobrychus exilis*) – The bird that we watched in the scope at South Padre Island couldn't have given us a better show. Awesome!

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – Common; seen on most days of the trip.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Common.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – Common.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*) – We saw a handful of these dark egrets, mostly in the Rockport area.

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – Fairly common on saltwater flats and wetlands. We saw ~20 during the Aransas boat trip.

REDDISH EGRET (*Egretta rufescens*) – Good views of these fine dancers. Most of ours were dark morph, but we did see a few white birds as well.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Scattered around in small groups. Close views at the Brownsville Landfill.

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – One at South Padre Island, and another at Tiocano Lake.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Only a few sightings in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – Good views on several occasions, including a roost at Estero Llano Grande SP.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

WHITE IBIS (*Eudocimus albus*) – Fairly common, but we were lucky to see a big flight of these striking waders during our Aransas boat trip. Flocks of hundreds streamed north overhead, with a total of ~1310 individuals for the morning.

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) – This is the expected species of dark ibis here, but we didn't see very many on this trip.

ROSEATE SPOONBILL (*Platalea ajaja*) – We found these pink beauties near Corpus Christi and also at Tiocano Lake in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – Common and widespread.

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Common and widespread.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Common - we saw these fishing along the coast as well as along the Rio Grande.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

WHITE-TAILED KITE (*Elanus leucurus*) – We had a few sightings of these elegant raptors at Bentsen-RGV State Park and on the Hargill Playa.

HOOK-BILLED KITE (HOOK-BILLED) (*Chondrohierax uncinatus uncinatus*) – One dark morph bird made a quick, unsatisfying appearance near the hawk tower at Bentsen-RGV State Park.

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus hudsonius*) – Scattered sightings of either wintering birds or migrants.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – One flew over us on the border at Granjeno.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Scattered sightings of this widespread Accipiter.

HARRIS'S HAWK (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) – Several good sightings - the birds that circled overhead at the King Ranch were particularly memorable.
WHITE-TAILED HAWK (*Geranoaetus albicaudatus*) – Our first was a perched bird in the scope at Mustang Island. Later, we saw several more at the King Ranch and in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.
GRAY HAWK (*Buteo plagiatus*) – Two of these riparian specialists were along the Rio Grande at Salineño.
BROAD-WINGED HAWK (*Buteo platypterus*) – Scattered migrants mixed with Swainson's Hawks in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.
SWAINSON'S HAWK (*Buteo swainsoni*) – Small groups of migrants were moving during our time in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.
RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Widespread.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

KING RAIL (*Rallus elegans*) – Heard calling at Tiocano Lake, and we saw the marsh vegetation moving, but we couldn't quite see this big rail. [*]
CLAPPER RAIL (GULF COAST) (*Rallus crepitans saturatus*) – Excellent views at close range at South Padre Island.
SORA (*Porzana carolina*) – Regular sightings in freshwater wetland spots around the Lower Rio Grande Valley - best views were at South Padre Island.
COMMON GALLINULE (*Gallinula galeata*) – Best views were at South Padre Island.
AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*) – Common and widespread.

Gruidae (Cranes)

WHOOPIING CRANE (*Grus americana*) – During our excellent boat trip in Aransas Bay, we saw an even 30 of these massive, extremely rare cranes. Fantastic! This wintering population migrates north to breed in Wood Buffalo National Park in northern Alberta.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Very common in freshwater wetlands.
AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*) – Common - we saw these beautiful shorebirds in large flocks along the coast.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus*) – Several pairs were in the area between Aransas NWR and Corpus Christi.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A common shorebird wintering in the Corpus Christi-Rockport area.
AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis dominica*) – We had a few nice sightings in the Brownsville-South Padre Island area, including some vocal flyovers and a nice comparison with Black-bellied Plover.
WILSON'S PLOVER (*Charadrius wilsonia*) – We saw these scarce, stout-billed plovers at a few beachside sites at the southern tip of Texas - our closest views were at Holly Beach.
SEMPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – This was the common small plover that we saw along the coast between Corpus Christi and South Padre Island.
KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Widespread sightings of this familiar plover.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

UPLAND SANDPIPER (*Bartramia longicauda*) – We saw 2 of these long-distance migrants at the King Ranch. Another 4 dropped in at the Hargill Playa.
WHIMBREL (HUDSONIAN) (*Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*) – A calling bird was a surprise flyover at the Norias division of the King Ranch.
LONG-BILLED CURLEW (*Numenius americanus*) – Our best views came during our boat trip in Aransas Bay.
MARbled GODWIT (*Limosa fedoa*) – Small numbers scattered along the coast near Corpus Christi. A flock of 20 at Port Aransas Wetlands Park was our high count.
RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – Common and widespread.
STILT SANDPIPER (*Calidris himantopus*) – Three at South Padre Island, and about 30 more at nearby Holly Beach.
SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – Small groups along the coastline.
DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – Groups of several dozen at a time were on coastal mudflats.
PURPLE SANDPIPER (*Calidris maritima*) – The stakeout bird that we saw at Point Comfort was a major rarity for Texas. Excellent views at close range. It would be more typical to see this bird in New Jersey or Massachusetts at this time of the year.
LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – Common and widespread.
PECTORAL SANDPIPER (*Calidris melanotos*) – Good views of migrants on freshwater ponds at the King Ranch and also on South Padre Island.
SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*) – At least 4 were with other shorebirds at Holly Beach. These birds likely overwintered at this site.
WESTERN SANDPIPER (*Calidris mauri*) – We saw dozens of these droopy-billed peeps at many locations, and over 100 at Holly Beach.
SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*) – A few revealed themselves by their rapid calls during the Aransas boat trip.
LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – Quite common, with many in breeding plumage - up to 300 at one site in Port Aransas.
WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*) – One was at the Formosa-Tejano Wetlands inland from Point Comfort.
WILSON'S PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus tricolor*) – Three were at Holly Beach; another was at the Hargill Playa.
SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – Scattered sightings.
GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Widespread, though in small numbers.
WILLET (*Tringa semipalmata*) – Common at coastal sites, especially in the Rockport area.
LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – Common at many wetland sites; more common than Greater Yellowlegs during our trip.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Very common along the coast.
FRANKLIN'S GULL (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) – These migrants were just starting to appear on the Texas coast during our visit (after wintering on the Pacific Coast of South America, mostly in Chile and Peru). One immature bird was at Sunset Lake near Rockport and an adult was on the beach at Port Aransas.
RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – Widespread in small numbers along the coast.

HERRING GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) – Widespread in small numbers, with at least 35 at the Brownsville Landfill.
GULL-BILLED TERN (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – We saw these long-winged, stout-billed terns at quite a few coastal and wetland locations throughout the trip.
CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – At scattered coastal locations and also fishing along the Rio Grande at Salineño.
COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*) – At least 7 were on the beach with other terns at Port Aransas.
FORSTER'S TERN (*Sterna forsteri*) – Common along the coast.
ROYAL TERN (*Thalasseus maximus*) – These orange-billed, crested terns were common in coastal areas.
SANDWICH TERN (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) – About 180 were on the beach at Port Aransas.
BLACK SKIMMER (*Rynchops niger*) – Large flocks near Rockport and South Padre Island.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Common in settled areas. [I]
RED-BILLED PIGEON (*Patagioenas flavirostris*) – We saw six of these locally rare pigeons along the Rio Grande at Salineño. Though widespread in Central America, the species reaches its northern limit here in the borderlands of the western Lower Rio Grande Valley.
EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Widespread, especially in settled areas. [II]
INCA DOVE (*Columbina inca*) – Small numbers at scattered locations in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.
COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina*) – Ten at the King Ranch, and two more at Salineño. Most were seen as they flushed up from the side of the roads.
WHITE-TIPPED DOVE (*Leptotila verreauxi*) – These large, ground-dwelling doves made some nice appearances in forested preserves in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.
WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) – Common and widespread.
MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Very common.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

GREATER ROADRUNNER (*Geococcyx californianus*) – Two of these iconic "Texas Ground-Cuckoos" were roaming through the campground at Falcon State Park. Another two were near Salineño. No coyotes were harmed during these observations.

Strigidae (Owls)

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL (MCCALL'S) (*Megascops asio mccallii*) – One stared at us from its nestbox at Estero Llano Grande SP.
GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*) – One flushed from overhead along a track on the King Ranch; another was perched along a utility line pre-dawn as we drove to Salineño.
FERRUGINOUS PYGMY-OWL (*Glaucidium brasilianum*) – Excellent, close views on the Norias Division of the King Ranch. This is one of the most localized owls found north of Mexico.
ELF OWL (*Micrathene whitneyi*) – We staked out a nest hole at dusk in the Lower Rio Grande Valley - as darkness fell, we saw both members of the pair emerge.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

COMMON PAURAQUE (*Nyctidromus albicollis*) – We enjoyed fantastic views of this cryptic nightjar on a day roost at Quinta Mazatlan.

Apodidae (Swifts)

CHIMNEY SWIFT (*Chaetura pelagica*) – We saw a few flyby migrants between Corpus Christi and the King Ranch.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*) – Two were foraging on flowers at the convention center on South Padre Island.
BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus alexandri*) – We saw individuals in the desert scrub in the western Lower Rio Grande Valley - the male that was on a display perch near Salineño was particularly striking.
BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia yucatanensis*) – Our sightings of these mid-sized hummingbirds were at Quinta Mazatlan and Estero Llano Grande SP.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

RINGED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle torquata*) – These massive kingfishers made repeated passes overhead at close range during our morning vigil along the river at Salineño.
BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – Fairly common and widespread.
GREEN KINGFISHER (*Chloroceryle americana*) – These small kingfishers greeted us in Refugio and again at Estero Llano Grande SP. They tend to be more reclusive than the other U.S. species of kingfishers, sticking to well-vegetated banks.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes aurifrons*) – Common across south Texas.
LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Picoides scalaris*) – This "desert Downy" was fairly widespread during our travels through south Texas.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

CRESTED CARACARA (*Caracara cheriway*) – Common, especially in open range areas like the King Ranch.
AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – Widespread.
MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – On our final day, we saw one of the widespread taiga-breeding subspecies nicely near the Hargill Playa.
APLOMADO FALCON (*Falco femoralis*) – Two of these beautiful, slender falcons were perched at their nesting site on Mustang Island near Corpus Christi. These birds were reintroduced to south Texas and are now breeding in the wild.
PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – One was on the water tower at South Padre Island, and another was at the Hargill Playa.

Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots)

MONK PARAKEET (*Myiopsitta monachus*) – About 15 birds were building nests at a colony in Hidalgo. [II]

RED-CROWNED PARROT (*Amazona viridigenalis*) – The evening roost at Oliveira Park in Brownsville featured about 100 of these large, raucous Amazona parrots.

RED-LORED PARROT (YELLOW-CHEEKED) (*Amazona autumnalis autumnalis*) – At least 8 of these stocky parrots were mixed with other species at the large parrot roost in Brownsville [I]

WHITE-FRONTED PARROT (*Amazona albifrons*) – We saw about 20 of these beautiful, small Amazona parrots at Oliveira Park in Brownsville. [I]

GREEN PARAKEET (*Psittacara holochlorus*) – A close flock shrieked and posed on roadside wires in McAllen as we admired them from the sidewalk before they headed to their evening roost. A few others were investigating palm trees outside our hotel in Brownsville during our afternoon break.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

NORTHERN BEARDLESS-TYRANULET (*Camptostoma imberbe*) – Great, close views of this subtropical flycatcher on the King Ranch.

BLACK PHOEBE (*Sayornis nigricans*) – These were hanging out at Bentsen-RGV State Park and Anzalduas Park.

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – We saw a few near the northern edge of our tour route.

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) – Good views at the King Ranch and Falcon State Park.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) – We found these noisy desert flycatchers at Falcon State Park.

GREAT KISKADEE (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) – Striking and large, these big flycatchers were very common throughout south Texas. This species has a huge range stretching from Texas south to Argentina!

TROPICAL KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) – These recent colonists put on a noisy, trilling show at multiple sites including Sunset Lake in Portland and Oliveira Park in Brownsville.

COUCH'S KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus couchii*) – Widespread; more common than the previous species across south Texas.

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER (*Tyrannus forficatus*) – Delightfully common during our travels.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – These butcher-birds were seen occasionally in open habitats.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

WHITE-EYED VIREO (*Vireo griseus*) – Common, though we heard these small, striking vireos more often than we saw them.

BLUE-HEADED VIREO (*Vireo solitarius*) – We caught up to a few individuals mixed in with wintering flocks of songbirds in forested areas.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

GREEN JAY (*Cyanocorax yncas*) – These lovely jewels were common in dry forest reserves through the King Ranch and Lower Rio Grande Valley.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – One at Port Lavaca was right on the edge of the range of this widespread species.

TAMAULIPAS CROW (*Corvus imparatus*) – Ooo la la - recent reports had us hopeful, but these rare Mexican visitors had been sporadic at the Brownsville Landfill. However, shortly after we arrived, we spotted 3 small, glossy crows with deep, frog-like voices - Tamaulipas Crows! We enjoyed extended views at close range, though the blowing dust and garbage made things a bit challenging (and odiferous) for sure.

CHIHUAHUAN RAVEN (*Corvus cryptoleucus*) – These provided a nice comparison to the smaller, rare Tamaulipas Crows at the Brownsville Landfill.

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – A few were singing and working the fields at the Hargill Playa.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – Fairly widespread. Especially common at Salineño.

PURPLE MARTIN (*Progne subis*) – Common and widespread.

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Scattered around in small numbers - our peak count was about 12 at South Padre Island.

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – We saw about 65 of these returning long-distance migrants along the Rio Grande at Salineño.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Common and widespread.

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – Fairly widespread, but most were concentrated at breeding colonies. We studied a nice colony with dozens of birds present at a bridge just northeast of Tivoli.

CAVE SWALLOW (TEXAS) (*Petrochelidon fulva pallida*) – Common and widespread. They nest under bridges and in culverts here, and we enjoyed a nice swarm at a breeding culvert just south of San Ygnacio.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

BLACK-CRESTED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus atricristatus*) – Common across the area.

Remizidae (Penduline-Tits)

VERDIN (*Auriparus flaviceps*) – We saw these small desert sprites on several occasions at Bentsen-RGV State Park, Falcon State Park, and Salineño.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*) – These small wrens were chattering and creeping around vines and brushpiles throughout the region.

SEDGE WREN (*Cistothorus platensis*) – We heard the sharp, metallic chip notes of one bird during the Aransas NWR portion of our boat trip. [*]

MARSH WREN (*Cistothorus palustris*) – Repeated sightings in emergent wetland vegetation at Aransas NWR, Black Point, and Tiocano Lake.

CAROLINA WREN (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – We saw a couple in Refugio and had excellent views at the National Butterfly Center feeders. The birds there showed the strongly barred flanks typical of the local population.

BEWICK'S WREN (*Thryomanes bewickii*) – Good views, especially near the western edge of our tour route at Salineño.

CACTUS WREN (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*) – We found these big, boisterous wrens on the outskirts of the town of Salineño.

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – These small, long-tailed songbirds were sprinkled through the dry forest in the Rio Grande Valley.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – We only saw a few - most had left their wintering grounds here to migrate north. Great studies at Blucher Park in Corpus Christi.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia sialis*) – One greeted us in the morning at the King Ranch.

CLAY-COLORED THRUSH (*Turdus grayi*) – After we worked hard to get views of a bird feeding in mulberries at Estero Llano Grande SP, a few perched out in the open (and one sang) along the Rio Grande at Salineño.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – One was at South Padre Island and another was at Estero Llano Grande SP.

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (*Toxostoma curvirostre*) – These thrashers prefer slightly drier areas than the next species, but they overlap broadly in south Texas. Particularly good views in the parking lot at Quinta Mazatlan.

LONG-BILLED THRASHER (*Toxostoma longirostre*) – Common and widespread in forest habitats in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. This species replaces Brown Thrasher in south Texas.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Everywhere.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Common around humans. [H]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT (*Anthus spragueii*) – Jim Sinclair rustled up one of these secretive grassland birds for us during our drive through the pastures of the King Ranch.

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – Sporadic sightings, with good-sized flocks at Quinta Mazatlan and Salineño.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia motacilla*) – One was chipping along the boardwalk at South Padre, but we couldn't see it very well through the thick vegetation. [*]

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis celata*) – These wintering warblers were widespread throughout our tour route.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Repeated sightings in edge and wetlands habitats.

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – Several males were singing in Refugio; later, we saw a migrant at South Padre Island.

TROPICAL PARULA (*Setophaga pitiayumi*) – One singing male with a fully dark face was in the oaks on the Norias division of the King Ranch, and we enjoyed a close study.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE) (*Setophaga coronata coronata*) – Fairly common throughout the tour route - this is the common subspecies group in the region.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S) (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) – We saw two yellow-throated males along the Rio Grande at Salineño.

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

WHITE-COLLARED SEEDEATER (*Sporophila torqueola*) – We had wonderful experiences with these seedeaters along the Rio Grande at Salineño and San Ygnacio. This species is now called "Morelet's Seedeater" after an AOS nomenclature update. Look for this name change in this summer's Clements/ eBird update.

Passerellidae (New World Buntings and Sparrows)

CASSIN'S SPARROW (*Peucaea cassinii*) – These grassland sparrows were singing along the Rio Grande at Salineño.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW (*Ammodramus savannarum*) – We saw a few of these sparrows on the King Ranch and heard another singing at Salineño.

SEASIDE SPARROW (*Ammodramus maritimus*) – This marsh-loving sparrow was in the foreground of our observation of a family of Whooping Cranes during our Aransas boat trip.

OLIVE SPARROW (*Arremonops rufivirgatus*) – These are common in forested habitats throughout the Lower Rio Grande Valley, and we saw them several times.

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*) – We saw a large flock in Refugio and another two at the feeders in San Ygnacio.

FIELD SPARROW (*Spizella pusilla*) – Four of these lovely, slim sparrows were at the Formosa-Tejano Wetlands.

BLACK-THROATED SPARROW (*Amphispiza bilineata*) – These desert sparrows were at Salineño and Falcon State Park.

LARK SPARROW (*Chondestes grammacus*) – These beautiful sparrows were in grasslands at several stops during our trip. The one that sat on the fence at Hargill Playa gave us a particularly good show.

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – Widespread migrants.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW (*Melospiza lincolni*) – These finely streaked, wintering sparrows were particularly common at bird-feeding sites throughout the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The National Butterfly Center feeders were almost overrun with them.

SWAMP SPARROW (*Melospiza georgiana*) – A few were in the brushy marsh edge at Aransas NWR during our boat trip.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*) – A red male flew in and disappeared into a treetop at Oliveira Park in Brownsville.

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – Common and widespread.

PYRRHULOXIA (*Cardinalis sinuatus*) – We found these desert cardinals were at Falcon State Park and Salineño.

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*) – A few buzzed from the understory of the forest at Bentsen-RGV State Park.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*) – We found a few flocks in the meadows of the King Ranch that we studied closely and heard giving "chuck" calls in flight.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*) – This was the more widespread meadowlark that we located at several locations.

HOODED ORIOLE (*Icterus cucullatus*) – These bright, slim orioles chased each other around and perched in the open near the buildings upon our arrival at the King Ranch.

ALTAMIRA ORIOLE (*Icterus gularis*) – These big orioles showed off at Bentsen and again at Salineño.

AUDUBON'S ORIOLE (*Icterus graduacauda*) – These orioles are fairly scarce along the Rio Grande, and are more common at the western edge of our tour route. We enjoyed these black-and-yellow stunners in the treetops at Salineño.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Widespread.

BRONZED COWBIRD (*Molothrus aeneus*) – About 6 of these red-eyed cowbirds were at Salineño.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – Widespread in low numbers.

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus major*) – We saw a few in the marsh during our Aransas NWR boat trip.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – This was the abundant large grackle through our trip.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies).

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – Two were at Granjeno along the Rio Grande, where they are quite local.

LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*) – We saw only a few of these widespread western goldfinches - at Bentsen, Blucher Park, King Ranch, and Zapata.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows).

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Common in areas with people. [1]

MAMMALS

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – This was the widespread bunny of the trip.

FOX SQUIRREL (*Sciurus niger*) – These were the large gray-and-rust squirrels that we studied at Quinta Mazatlan and elsewhere in the Rio Grande Valley.

HISPID COTTON RAT (*Sigmodon hispidus*) – Fairly common; seen at several bird feeding stations.

SOUTHERN PLAINS WOODRAT (*Neotoma micropus*) – This large-eyed, handsome woodrat came out and fed at the National Butterfly Center's feeding station near the cotton rats.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – Commonly seen at close range (even under the boat) during our boat trip to Aransas NWR on the Skimmer.

COYOTE (*Canis latrans*) – Several sightings, with 2 on an island at Aransas NWR and 4 at the King Ranch.

BOBCAT (*Lynx rufus*) – One lurked near the feeding station at Bentsen-RGV State Park.

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – We saw plenty on the King Ranch.

NILGAI (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) – These large South Asian antelope were introduced to Texas for hunting. We saw a few of these odd critters on the King Ranch. [1]

IMPALA (*Aepyceros malampus*) – These African antelope were in a small herd near the main buildings in the Norias Division at King Ranch, where they were introduced for hunting. [1]

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 216 bird taxa and 10 mammal taxa