



Field Guides Tour Report

Spring in South Texas 2020

Mar 7, 2020 to Mar 15, 2020

Chris Benesh

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



Certainly one of the most critically endangered birds in the world, the Whooping Crane is also the tallest in North America. We had a few terrific encounters with this species during the first couple of days of the trip. All photos by guide Chris Benesh.

Birding in the time of covid-19, a novel coronavirus soon to become a pandemic. That is no doubt how most of us will remember the 2020 Spring in South Texas tour. It was one last look at innocence and (relatively) carefree birding, complete with hotels, restaurants, and for most of us, air travel. I am hoping through our due diligence, we managed to stay virus free throughout and were able to enjoy some of the amazing birding that south Texas has to offer.

We started off in the Rockport area, where we spent the first morning enjoying one of the rarest birds in the world, namely the Whooping Crane. As Jay later explained on the boat, while this species favors blue crabs above all else in the winter, it had to adapt its feeding habits during severe drought years. At least one pair discovered deer feed during that time, and noticed that there was a feeding station on Goose Island. Soon several pairs were visiting this site for food, a behavior that continues to today.

We spent some time exploring Port Aransas, at the top end of Mustang Island, where Aplomado Falcon, Sandwich Terns, and a couple of scarce gulls added to the excitement. We had a wonderful day at the King Ranch with the expertise of Tom Langschild, who got us on to a great Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and puzzled with us over an apparent hybrid parula. Farther south in the valley we spent some time at Resaca de la Palma and Santa Ana trying to track down some stubborn rarities. While they eluded us, it did not keep us from enjoying many amazing things. We also spent some time at Estero Llano Grande, where we were fortunate to get a private tour from the amazing Laura Paulson along with some keen spotting from her husband Steve.

Then we headed west with a stop in Roma to pick up Morelet's Seedeater. Salineno provided a lot of goodies for us, with Red-billed Pigeon topping the list. Some nice desert birds were icing on the cake, so to speak. Especially in these trying times, I hope that all of you are healthy and safe and I look forward to further birding adventures once everything settles again. — 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*) – One of the more distinctive ducks out there; we enjoyed quite a few of these in the Rockport area.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Spatula discors*) – One of the more common species seen, with great looks in Port Aransas.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*)

GADWALL (*Mareca strepera*)

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Mareca americana*) – Four distant birds on our boat trip and two females at Estero Llano Grande.

MOTTLED DUCK (*Anas fulvigula*) – Widespread in small numbers, often seen in pairs.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – We had a male at Cape Valero.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN) (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – The jury is still out as to whether Green-winged Teal and the Old World populations Common Teal are one or two species. But we did see a fair number of these on the tour.

REDHEAD (*Aythya americana*) – Some years, huge numbers of these winter in the shallow waters of the Laguna Madre and Aransas Bay. Apparently in drought conditions (as is currently the case) their favorite food, shoalgrass (*Halodule*) is depleted and they largely abandon these areas.

RING-NECKED DUCK (*Aythya collaris*) – There was a lone female hanging out with coots and scaup at Anzalduas Park.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – A small number of these were still hanging out.

BUFFLEHEAD (*Bucephala albeola*) – A small number of these were still evident along the coast where they winter in good numbers.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – A few seen in the waters around Corpus Christi.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – The only ones seen were at Moore Pond near Rockport where we saw 21.

Cracidae (Guans, Chachalacas, and Curassows).

PLAIN CHACHALACA (*Ortalis vetula*) – Chachalacas are the northernmost representatives of a large Neotropical family, Cracidae. We got to hear some of their raucous calls at Santa Ana.

Odontophoridae (New World Quail).

NORTHERN BOBWHITE (*Colinus virginianus*) – A beautiful male put in an appearance at the feeders in Salineno.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies).

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – Well seen on the King Ranch and some saw another group at Resaca de la Palma.

Podicipedidae (Grebes).

LEAST GREBE (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – We had some terrific views of this species at the aptly named "Grebe Marsh" at Estero Llano Grande.

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*)

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – We spotted a dozen of these in the waters at Packery Channel near Corpus Christi. This species winters in numbers, but most have headed north by this time.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves).

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [I]

RED-BILLED PIGEON (*Patagioenas flavirostris*) – We saw a total of nine of these at Salineno. Most were flybys, but one swooped in and perched, allowing us decent scope views while it sang for 20 minutes or so. This part of Texas is the only place to see this species in the ABA area.

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

INCA DOVE (*Columbina inca*) – Closely related to the ground doves; we saw this species at most of the valley locations.

COMMON GROUND DOVE (*Columbina passerina*) – Alas, seen only by the lead van during our visit to the King Ranch.

WHITE-TIPPED DOVE (*Leptotila verreauxi*) – Though this species is expanding its range farther north into Texas, it is still considered a valley specialty. We had great looks at Resaca de la Palma and in Salineno.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*)

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*)

Cuculidae (Cuckoos).

GREATER ROADRUNNER (*Geococcyx californianus*) – A favorite and always a crowd pleaser. We saw one well at the King Ranch and another pair were on the road to Chapeno at the end of the tour.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies).

COMMON PAURAQUE (*Nyctidromus albicollis*) – Thanks to Laura, we had great looks at a couple at Estero Llano Grande. They are so well camouflaged.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds).

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*) – A beautiful male put in an appearance in the desert near Salineno.

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus alexandri*) – One was coming to a feeder in Salineno.

BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia yucatanensis*) – Thanks again to Laura, we had great views of one visiting her feeders at Estero Llano Grande.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).

CLAPPER RAIL (GULF COAST) (*Rallus crepitans saturatus*) – We were fortunate to see at least four of these at Indian Point on our second visit there.

SORA (*Porzana carolina*) – Nice views of one at the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center.

COMMON GALLINULE (*Gallinula galeata*) – Also seen at the birding center, including one with diluted plumage, giving it a coffee with cream appearance.

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*)

Gruidae (Cranes)

SANDHILL CRANE (*Antigone canadensis*) – A few were still hanging out on Goose Island where they were coming to deer feed. Another dozen or so were seen elsewhere in the Rockport area.

WHOOPIING CRANE (*Grus americana*) – One of the highlights of the trip was seeing this super rare species so well. Their numbers are up to nearly 500 migrants now, from a low of 15 or 16 migratory birds.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Best seen at the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center.

AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*) – We had a huge flock of 145+ at Sunset Lake and another 40+ at the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus*) – The only one seen was at Indian Point.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

SNOWY PLOVER (*Charadrius nivosus*) – A few out on the mudflats at Sunset Lakes with gobs of Semipalmated Plovers.

SEMI PALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

PIPING PLOVER (*Charadrius melodus*) – There were a few of these mixed in with the masses of Semipalmated Plovers at Sunset Lakes.

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*)

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

LONG-BILLED CURLEW (*Numenius americanus*) – Just a small number seen. This is one of the largest sandpipers in the world.

MARbled GODWIT (*Limosa fedoa*) – These were concentrated at Sunset Lake and Indian Point.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*)

STILT SANDPIPER (*Calidris himantopus*) – After some painfully distant ones at Cape Valero we had five really close ones at Indian Point.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*)

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – A few big flocks encountered, numbering roughly 60 individuals.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*)

WESTERN SANDPIPER (*Calidris mauri*) – Indian Point was where we encountered most of the ones we saw. Just coming into breeding plumage at this season.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*) – A couple flocks of this species at Sunset Lake and Indian Point.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – There was a small number of these at the birding center in Port Aransas and a couple at Indian Point.

WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*) – Good looks at a couple of these in a flooded pasture at Goose Island. These ended up being the only ones seen.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularia*) –

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – The high count for this species was eight at Cape Valero.

WILLET (*Tringa semipalmata*) – Willets are considered by some to be comprised of two species, Western and Eastern. The ones we saw were all lingering Westerns, while Easterns arrive around the end of Marsh to take over marshy areas for breeding.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – There were more than 40 present at Cape Valero and a scattering of them elsewhere.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – The most abundant gull seen along the coast and a noisy one at that.

MEW GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus canus brachyrhynchus*) – This was a locally rare stakeout at the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center, a first cycle bird hanging out with other gulls.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*)

HERRING GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) – The largest of the gulls we encountered and one of the scarcest as well.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) – Amazingly, we had three sightings (of two birds). An adult was on our boat trip to the intercoastal waterway, and a first year bird was seen at the Port Aransas Jetty and a bit later at the birding center.

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – Five were hanging out at the birding center at Port Aransas, with one in high breeding plumage.

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – Small numbers in coastal areas as well as eight seen flying along the Rio Grande at Salineno.

FORSTER'S TERN (*Sterna forsteri*) – Lots of this small species around coastal areas, with some in breeding plumage while others (immatures) still looking winter-like.

ROYAL TERN (*Thalasseus maximus*) – Small numbers of these were evident at all of the coastal sites we visited.

SANDWICH TERN (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) – Still localized on this date, but we did see one huge group of them (111) at the Port Aransas Jetty.

BLACK SKIMMER (*Rynchops niger*) – A spectacular flock of some 150 were at Sunset Lake north of Corpus Christi.

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – There were three of these hanging out at Indian Point and a few more seen on the boat trip. This species winters in small numbers along the central Texas coast.

Anhingidae (Anhingas)

ANHINGA (*Anhinga anhinga*) – Our best views were of three at Estero Llano Grande.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags).

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – Well seen at a variety of locations. Smaller and longer tailed than the next species and with far less colorful face.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)

Pelecanidae (Pelicans).

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – The largest concentrations were at Port Aransas. This species winters in large numbers along the coast and in the valley, but these birds leave to breed in the interior of the northern US and Canada.

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – Common in coastal areas, with a huge number present at the Port Aransas jetty. It was almost completely wiped out in the 1950s, but since being protected in 1970 has made an amazing comeback.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns).

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*)

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*)

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*)

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*) – Just a couple of these seen.

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – There were a small number of these evident in and around the Rockport-Port Aransas areas.

REDDISH EGRET (*Egretta rufescens*) – A fair number seen in the Rockport area with a dozen at Cape Valero alone. Both white and reddish morphs seen.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – There were two out on a small island at Anzalduas Park, the only ones seen.

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – Two at Estero were the only ones seen on the trip.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Our only ones were at Port Aransas.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – Our only ones were at Estero Llano Grande, where Alligator Lake is a reliable site.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills).

WHITE IBIS (*Eudocimus albus*) – This species was already on the move and we saw a few large gatherings in the Rockport area.

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) – Most of those we saw were at Santa Ana NWR.

ROSEATE SPOONBILL (*Platalea ajaja*) – All of the birds we saw were in the Rockport-Corpus Christi area.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures).

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – Widespread but in smaller numbers than the TVs. We noted their much broader wings and shorter tails.

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Migration was evident and nearly 300 at Anzalduas was impressive.

Pandionidae (Osprey).

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Perhaps the most abundant raptor at this season.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites).

WHITE-TAILED KITE (*Elanus leucurus*) – The only one seen turned out to be the bird seen at Oliveira Park.

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus hudsonius*) – A few seen including a juvenile bird we saw many times from the tower at Santa Ana NWR.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – The only certain one was at Estero Llano Grande.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Three seen on the trip.

HARRIS'S HAWK (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) – Another wonderfully common species on this tour route.

WHITE-TAILED HAWK (*Geranoaetus albicaudatus*) – We saw our first ones north of Rockport which provided some good studies. We also saw more distant birds at Santa Ana NWR on each of our visits there.

GRAY HAWK (*Buteo plagiatus*) – This species has increased in numbers in the valley in recent years and we recorded a fair number of them. The best views were flight views at Anzalduas and the pair perched together at Salineno.

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK (*Buteo lineatus*)

BROAD-WINGED HAWK (*Buteo platypterus*) – One seen from the tower at Santa Ana NWR on the 13th was the first of what will become thousands by the end of March.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls).

BARN OWL (*Tyto alba*) – Wonderful views of a couple of grown fledglings at the King Ranch and another seen briefly in flight at Salineno.

Strigidae (Owls).

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL (MCCALL'S) (*Megascops asio mcallii*) – Again thanks to Laura, we had a nice scope view of one at Estero Llano Grande. The following day we were shown one by Sue & John Ewan at Santa Ana NWR.

GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*) – A wonderful scope view of one nesting in the Tropical Zone of Estero Llano Grande.

FERRUGINOUS PYGMY-OWL (*Glaucidium brasilianum*) – A nice exciting encounter with this species at the King Ranch, thanks to Tom's expertise.

BURROWING OWL (*Athene cunicularia*) – We saw one at first light in Granjeno.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers).

RINGED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle torquata*) – Good views of this impressive kingfisher at Santa Ana NWR and later a pair of birds at Salineno.

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – The only ones seen were two on our boat trip to Aransas NWR.

GREEN KINGFISHER (*Chloroceryle americana*) – Great look at one at Estero Llano Grande thanks to Laura, and a pair were at the Bravo Park wetlands in Zapata.

Picidae (Woodpeckers).

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – Kris spotted one of these working in the salt-cedar trees at the King Ranch headquarters.

GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes aurifrons*)

LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Dryobates scalaris*)

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

CRESTED CARACARA (*Caracara cheriway*) – Few places on Earth have higher densities of this species than southern Texas.

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*)

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – We had terrific views of one that flew over the Big Tree and landed across the road so we could appreciate it through the scope.

APLOMADO FALCON (*Falco femoralis*) – This beautiful species was seen on Mustang Island where a few of them are now breeding.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – The two that we saw were both hanging out on water towers. One was on Mustang Island and the second was next to Santa Ana NWR.

Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots)

MONK PARAKEET (*Myiopsitta monachus*) – Quite a few of these are breeding locally in Hidalgo. [I]

RED-CROWNED PARROT (*Amazona viridigenalis*) – Huge numbers of this species live and breed in south Texas. We had a spectacular display of them in Brownsville at Oliveira Park.

RED-LORED PARROT (YELLOW-CHEEKED) (*Amazona autumnalis autumnalis*) – A non-countable species in Texas, there are a small number present in most of the border cities. [I]

WHITE-FRONTED PARROT (*Amazona albifrons*) – Currently a non-established species in the ABA area though there is a sizable flock living in the Brownsville area. [I]

GREEN PARAKEET (*Psittacara holochlorus*) – A great encounter with a big flock of these right near our hotel in Mission. The origin of the huge numbers that live in a few of the cities in the valley is unknown. They occur in urban and rural areas from Falcon south and east to the mouth of the Rio Grande.

Tityridae (Tityras and Allies)

ROSE-THROATED BECARD (*Pachyramphus aglaiae*) – Boy, this one was frustrating. We heard it call several times at Resaca de la Palma before falling silent and remaining unseen. [*]

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

NORTHERN BEARDLESS-TYRANULET (*Camptostoma imberbe*) – Great looks at this tiny flycatcher at Santa Ana NWR, which was great after it being a no-show on our King Ranch visit. The genus *Camptostoma* lacks the rictal bristles (stiff, hairlike feathers found around the base of the bill) present on most flycatchers, hence the name "beardless."

BLACK PHOEBE (*Sayornis nigricans*) – Two were at Anzalduas Park and another pair were in Salineno. This species has expanded its range in Texas in recent years.

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – We had a couple of these at Port Aransas, a couple more on the King Ranch, and another farther west at Falcon County Park.

SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*) – One was hanging out at the headquarters area of the King Ranch.

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) – Another wide ranging species that is an eye-popper! We had several really nice studies of this species.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) – We did track this species down in the end; this is the *Myiarchus* that favors desert and drier woodlands in the west.

GREAT KISKADEE (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) – Few birds are as iconic for south Texas as the noisy and flashy Kiskadee. It is also a very successful species, ranging throughout the Americas down to Argentina.

TROPICAL KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) – Our best views were of a pair of birds hanging out at Paradise Pond in Port Aransas where the species is still considered a rarity.

COUCH'S KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus couchii*) – This turned out to be the more common of the two yellow-bellied kingbirds this trip. Many years ago, this was considered a Tropical Kingbird until an astute birder realized that they were vocally distinct.

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER (*Tyrannus forficatus*) – Few flycatchers are more spectacular than the Scissor-tailed. We were there for the arrival of the first ones to Texas this Spring. But by tour's end, we had seen several.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

WHITE-EYED VIREO (*Vireo griseus*)

BLUE-HEADED VIREO (*Vireo solitarius*) – There was one good sighting at Resaca de la Palma.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – Another widespread species, but generally seen singly and often perched on wires.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

GREEN JAY (*Cyanocorax yncas*) – A wonderful and terrific species characteristic of south Texas. With the numerous feeding stations we visited, we got unsurpassed views!

CHIHUAHUAN RAVEN (*Corvus cryptoleucus*) – A huge number of these were seen near San Ygnacio moving from the landfill in the late afternoon.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

BLACK-CRESTED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus atricristatus*) – Common throughout all but the driest habitats.

Remizidae (Penduline-Tits)

VERDIN (*Auriparus flaviceps*) – We saw a fair number of these with the best studies being near San Ygnacio and Salineno.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*)

PURPLE MARTIN (*Progne subis*) – Widespread with good views at Estero Llano Grande.

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Most of the ones seen were on our boat trip.

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – A huge number of these were breeding under the international bridge in Roma.

CAVE SWALLOW (TEXAS) (*Petrochelidon fulva pallida*) – Our only ones seen were at a small colony in a culvert along Hwy 83 near Falcon.

Regulidae (Kinglets).

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – A few wintering birds were still in evidence.

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers).

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – Small numbers seen with a high count of three at Santa Ana NWR.

BLACK-TAILED GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila melanura*) – It took a bit of work but we managed to track down a pair of these in the desert scrub near Salineno.

Troglodytidae (Wrens).

HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*)

MARSH WREN (*Cistothorus palustris*) – We had amazing views of one at the Paradise Pond in Port Aransas.

CAROLINA WREN (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – A few good looks and many more heard, which is generally the case with this skulking species.

BEWICK'S WREN (*Thryomanes bewickii*) – Our best views of this species were at the roadside stop north of San Ygnacio.

CACTUS WREN (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*) – A small number of these seen in the westernmost parts of the tour route. This genus comprises the largest sizes of any of the wrens.

Sturnidae (Starlings).

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [H]

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers).

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – We had one on Goose Island.

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (*Toxostoma curvirostre*) – Birds in Texas are part of the widespread "Eastern" type of Curve-billed that differ in voice and plumage from Sonoran desert birds.

LONG-BILLED THRASHER (*Toxostoma longirostre*) – Well seen at the King Ranch, Resaca de la Palma, and in Salineno.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) – The official state bird of Texas, which fits, as it can be seen at almost every birding stop.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies).

EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia sialis*) – We had one show up at Goose Island while we were watching the Whooping Cranes there.

CLAY-COLORED THRUSH (*Turdus grayi*) – Three of these showed up near the headquarters on the Norias Division of the King Ranch which was the most that Tom had seen at one time there. Even more remarkable was that they ended up being the only ones we encountered on the tour.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows).

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [H]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits).

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT (*Anthus spragueii*) – This species was furtive at the King Ranch, but three were well seen at Anzalduas Park.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies).

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorrhous mexicanus*) – While this species is abundant in parts of the US, it is rather local in south Texas. Our only ones were along the Chapeno Road.

LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*) – A few recorded, with our best views being of a pair of birds seen near the Zapata Library.

Passerellidae (New World Sparrows).

CASSIN'S SPARROW (*Peucaea cassinii*) – After a bit of searching, we had some great looks at this species near Falcon.

OLIVE SPARROW (*Arremonops rufivirgatus*) – Some good views and more heard, with the best views at Resaca de la Palma.

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*) – A small flock was seen at the King Ranch.

BLACK-THROATED SPARROW (*Amphispiza bilineata*) – A striking sparrow seen at the overlook near San Ygnacio, in the desert scrub near Salineno, and along the Las Palmas Road.

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)

LINCOLN'S SPARROW (*Melospiza lincolni*) – A few scattered individuals seen throughout the tour.

SWAMP SPARROW (*Melospiza georgiana*) – Several of us saw a Swamp Sparrow at the birding center in Port Aransas.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies).

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*) – We had some big flocks of these on the King Ranch and around Anzalduas.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*) – This was the abundant species in the pipit field on the King Ranch.

HOODED ORIOLE (*Icterus cucullatus*) – Several seen in Starr and Zapata counties near the end of the tour. Birds in south Texas are a stunning orange in color.

ALTAMIRA ORIOLE (*Icterus gularis*) – A stunning species well seen, with our first ones at Resaca de la Palma.

AUDUBON'S ORIOLE (*Icterus graduacauda*) – Nice looks at a pair of these at the King Ranch and again in Salineno.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – This species is abundant in Spring in south Texas and often swamps out other species at feeders there.

BRONZED COWBIRD (*Molothrus aeneus*) – A few seen at the Progresso Grain Silos and again in Mission while viewing the Green Parakeets there.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – Quite a few were present in the big blackbird flocks at the Progresso Grain Silos.

COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – A few of these were seen in Tivoli, about the southern edge of the range along the coast of Texas.

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus major*) – Seen north of Rockport, including big numbers in the town of Tivoli.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – An often ignored, iconic part of the south Texas avifauna. The huge numbers coming to evening roosts can be quite impressive.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) – Seen by most in a mixed flock at Santa Ana NWR.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Leiothlypis celata*) – This is the most abundant species of warbler in south Texas during the winter months.

NASHVILLE WARBLER (*Leiothlypis ruficapilla*) – A couple seen.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*)

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – We saw one of these in a mixed flock at Resaca de la Palma.

TROPICAL PARULA (*Setophaga pitiayumi*) – Included here on the basis of the apparent hybrid seen on the King Ranch. While the bird we saw included a lot of Tropical Parula features, it also had some white feathering around the eyes, some grayish chest banding, and reduced yellowish underparts. It did sing a Texas style Tropical Parula type song.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE) (*Setophaga coronata coronata*) – Yellow-rumped Warbler is made up of several distinctive populations that are sometimes considered distinct species. Myrtle Warbler is the most widespread of these and is the one commonly encountered on this tour route.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S) (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) – We saw a couple of these with the most interesting being one at Goose Island.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*) – Kris saw one at Resaca de la Palma.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)

PYRRHULOXIA (*Cardinalis sinuatus*) – The desert cardinal, well seen on the King Ranch and again in the Falcon area.

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies)

MORELET'S SEEDEATER (*Sporophila moreletii*) – Good views of a pair of birds in Roma. This species was recently split into two species, and it appears in some recent guides under its pre-split name White-collared Seedeater, *S. torqueola*.

MAMMALS

VIRGINIA OPOSSUM (*Didelphis virginianus*) – One seen after our late dinner at Paradise Key.

NINE-BANDED ARMADILLO (*Dasypus novemcinctus*) – We saw this one well at Estero Llano Grande.

FOX SQUIRREL (*Sciurus niger*) – This is the common squirrel in this part of the world.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – A few were seen on the Aransas boat trip.

COYOTE (*Canis latrans*) [*]

COLLARED PECCARY (*Tayassu tajacu*) – Also known as javalina, we had some nicely on the King Ranch.

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

NILGAI (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) – Seen by the lead van on the King Ranch visit. [I]

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 199 bird taxa and 8 mammal taxa