

South Texas Birding & Nature Species List | January 21-29, 2026 With Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by guides Robert Petty and Sharon Goldwasser. Our clients included Julie, Janet, Lori, Gary, Ed, Eileen, Deborah, Vickie, Linda, Toni, and Diane.

Our group of 11 nature enthusiasts and two guides spent 9 days exploring the southern Texas coast from Corpus Christi to Brownsville which is one of North America's most important wintering regions for birds, shaped by barrier islands, shallow lagoons, and the subtropical influence of the Gulf of Mexico. At Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, on a boat tour led by Captain Tommy Moore, we visited tidal marshes and estuaries which support the primary wintering grounds of the endangered Whooping Crane, alongside vast numbers of wintering waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds. Farther south, the hypersaline Laguna Madre remains highly productive through winter, hosting concentrations of Redheads, Northern Pintails, Reddish Egrets, and overwintering shorebirds spread across extensive tidal flats.

Heading south, we passed through Mustang Island which provides critical coastal and dune habitat, we stopped at several known locations for Aplomado Falcons, two of which we viewed on hacking platforms and hunting along the roadside. Along the lower Rio Grande, riparian corridors and resacas create a winter-green refuge of tropical biodiversity. At Salineño Wildlife Preserve—affectionately known as DeWind's Yard—we saw Texas specialties like Green Jays, Ringed Kingfishers, Great Kiskadees, and Plain Chachalacas. In Brownsville, we visited some urban green spaces such as Olivera Park where we saw and heard a remarkable population of Red-crowned Amazons and other parrots, a reminder of the region's strong Neotropical influence. And in Edinburg at another municipal park, we were able to track down a Crimson-collared Grosbeak, a rarely seen vagrant from Mexico.

Together, the barrier islands, productive lagoons, and the riparian and thornscrub habitats of the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas create a winter refuge of continental importance for birds. Although we were somewhat affected by the winter storm that severely impacted much of the country during our trip in late January, the bird abundance was high. We tallied over 175 species during our 9 days of exploring this region, one of the most distinctive and rewarding winter birding destinations in North America.

BIRDS: 175 species were recorded of which 2 were heard only, 2 were endemic, 3 are considered exotic with provisional status, and 1 is considered an escapee. The eBird link below details the 175 species of birds our group observed during the tour.

[South Texas Birding & Nature | January 21-29, 2026 | eBird Trip Report](#)

The following is a list of additional mammals, reptiles, and butterfly species we observed during the trip. The cold and windy weather from the winter storm that impacted much of the country this week severely limited the number of herps and butterflies seen during much of this tour.

MAMMALS (10):

Mexican Long-Nosed Armadillo *Dasypus novemcinctus*—first seen at Laguna Atascosa NWR near the visitor's center.

Eastern Cottontail *Sylvilagus floridanus*—Sharon and Robert saw a few cottontails at Suter Wildlife Refuge while scouting the day before the clients arrived. We did not see them during the group tour itself.

Black-tailed Jackrabbit *Lepus californicus*—One seen along Old Port Isabel Road.

Eastern Fox Squirrel *Sciurus niger*—Several encountered throughout the trip including at the UTRGV Campus and the Santa Anna NWR feeders

Rio Grande Ground Squirrel *Ictidomys parvidens*—We saw burrow holes for this squirrel at Rancho Lomitas..

Hispid Cotton Rat *Sigmodon hispidus*—Two individuals seen, one at Salineño Wildlife Preserve, and one at Resaca de la Palma.

Collared Peccary (Javelina) *Pecari tajacu*—Seen in several locations along roadways in the Rio Grande Valley.

White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus*—seen near Goose Island State Park..

Bottlenosed Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*—We saw several during our boat tour of Aransas NWR.

Gray Fox *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*—One was seen by one of the guides at the Edinburg Municipal Park

REPTILES (6):

American Alligator *Alligator mississippiensis*—First Observed near Goose Island SP in a residential pond..

Rio Grande Cooter *Pseudemys gorzugi*—Several individuals seen along the Rio Grande at Salineno.

Red-eared Slider *Trachemys scripta*—Many were at various ponds we visited.

Texas Spiny Softshell *Apalone spinifera emoryi*—Seen in the wetlands at Edinburg Municipal Park

Texas Indigo Snake *Drymarchon melanurus erebennus*—Seen on the road at Laguna Atascosa NWR

Green Sea Turtle *Chelonia mydas*—Seen during our boat tour of Aransas NWR.

BUTTERFLIES (11):

Dainty Sulphur *Nathalis iole*—First seen at Suter Wildlife Refuge and then later at the National Butterfly Center

Large Orange Sulphur *Phoebis agarithe*—Seen at the National Butterfly Center

Great Southern White *Ascia monuste*—The most frequently seen butterfly on this tour, seen at various locations during the first four days of the trip including Aransas NWR and Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center.

Queen *Danaus gilippus*—Seen at the National Butterfly Center

Gulf Fritillary *Agraulis vanillae*—Seen at the National Butterfly Center

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*—Seen at the National Butterfly Center

Reakirt's Blue *Echinargus isola*—Seen at the National Butterfly Center

White-checkered Skipper *Burnsius albezens*—Seen at the National Butterfly Center

Tropical Checkered-Skipper *Burnsius oileus*—Seen at the National Butterfly Center

Lavinia White Skipper *Trachemys scripta*—Seen at the National Butterfly Center

Clouded Skipper *Lerema accius*—Seen at the National Butterfly Center