

# Texas Hill Country: Birding & Nature Species List | April 24 – 29, 2026 with Naturalist Journeys



**Compiled by guide James P. Smith with lead guide Bryan Calk. Our wonderful clients included Dawn & Mike, Marilyn & Ed, Mary & Bill, Ellen, Moya, Kate, Joan and Terry.**

The tour began on a warm afternoon in San Antonio where a full group of 11 participants met up with their Naturalist Journeys guides for a decidedly memorable adventure through the Texas Hill Country and beyond. Highlights, of course, were many but over the next six days we enjoyed stellar views of the ‘hoped for’ species that make birding in Central Texas so exciting. We found Scissor-tailed Flycatchers at the local airfield in Uvalde, prolific Painted Buntings at Cook’s Slough Sanctuary, Bell’s and Black-capped Vireos singing in full view at Kickapoo Cavern State Park, Scott’s and Hooded Orioles and Vermilion Flycatchers all dazzled at Kickapoo, and who could forget the pair of Cactus Wrens in the parking lot of our hotel in Uvalde! Warblers captured the imagination too with an impromptu visit to Garner State Park delivering the most exceptional experience with multiple Golden-cheeked Warblers, and we had the great fortune to come across several singing Tropical Parulas, a species that genuinely appears to be expanding its range in Central Texas. There was also a major surprise in the form of a bold male Prothonotary Warbler singing along the banks of the Rio Frio at Neal’s Lodges, the first time that either leader had seen the species there in dozens of visits! South Texas brush country influences also came to with the Great Kiskadees, Green Jays, Audubon’s Orioles, Long-billed Thrashers, Clay-colored Thrushes and Olive Sparrows all seen well in the greater Uvalde area.

In terms of natural spectacles it would be hard to look past the evening at the Rio Frio Bat Cave as millions of Mexican Free-tailed Bats emerged at dusk only to be plundered by Red-tailed Hawk, Swainson’s and Harris’s Hawks taking full advantage of the bounty before them – nature at its most raw. The tour closed out with a fantastic evening of calling Chuck-will’s-widows and close-up spotlight views of a perched Eastern Screech-Owl. And, all of this was set amid the rolling limestone hills, juniper and oak covered hillsides and maple filled valleys of the beautiful Texas Hill Country.

**BIRDS:** 120 species were recorded of which several were distinctive heard-only, one was an endemic breeder and another a near-endemic breeder, and four were non-native/introduced. A few ‘leader-only’ observations appear the checklists too but are mentioned as such in comments.

The eBird link below details the 120 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you’re new to eBird, be sure to click “Show All Details” on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Texas Hill Country: Birding & Nature | April 24-29, 2026 | eBird Trip Report](#)

Following is a list of the birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians we were fortunate to observe during the trip.

### **MAMMALS (9 species)**

**Black-tailed Jackrabbit** *Lepus californicus* — one spotted during the morning walk to the Pecan Grove at Neal's.

**Rock Squirrel** *Otospermophilus variegatus* — great views of this beauty by the Rio Frio at Neal's Lodges.

**Fox Squirrel** *Sciurus niger* — widespread and common, noted daily.

**Mexican Free-tailed Bat** *Tadarida brasiliensis* — one of the highlights of the tour, we watched in awe as millions emerged from the Frio Bat Cave at dusk.

**White-tailed Deer** *Odocoileus virginianus* — frequently encountered, especially around the Concan area.

**Axis Deer** *Axis Axis* - heard several times at Cook's Slough, an introduced species originating from the Indian Subcontinent.

**Eastern cottontail** *Sylvilagus floridanus* – found at Kickapoo and Cook's Slough as well as the Uvalde area.

**Nutria** *Myocastor coypus* – a fine specimen on view at Uvalde Memorial Park, though it is a non-native species.

**Hispid Cotton Rat** *Sigmodon hispidus* – singles spotted near the feeders at Kickapoo Cavern SP and Neal's Lodges.

### **REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS (8 species)**

**(Texas) Common Spotted Whiptail** *Aspidoscelis gularis* — several seen at Fort Clark Springs.

**Blanchard's Cricket Frog** *Acris blanchardi* — several heard Neal's Lodges, and one seen at Lost Maples SNA, all of them picked out by Bryan.

**Red-eared Slider** *Trachemys scripta elegans* – fairly common around the lowland wetlands at Fort Clark Springs and Cook's Slough.

**Rio Grande Cooter** *Pseudemys gorzugi* – good views on partially submerged logs at Fort Clark Springs

**Diamondback Water Snake** *Nerodia rhombifer* – seen well 'basking' at Fort Clark Springs and at Neal's Lodges.

**Texas Spiny Softshell Turtle** *Apalone spinifera emoryi* – nice looks at Fort Clark Springs and Cook's Slough.

**American Bullfrog** *Lithobates catesbeianus* – heard at Cook's Slough.

**Cliff Chirping Frog** *Eleutherodactylus marnockii* – pointed out by Bryan at Neal's Lodges, a 'near endemic' to Central and West Texas.

### **BUTTERFLIES (13 species)**

**Pipevine Swallowtail** *Battus philenor* — the most widespread of the dark swallowtails.

**(Eastern) Black Swallowtail** *Papilio polyxenes* – picked out at Kickapoo Cavern SP.

**Gulf Fritillary** *Agraulis vanillae* — several noted during our day on foot at Neal's Lodges.

**Variegated Fritillary** *Euptoieta claudia* — Fort Clark Springs among other locations.

**Monarch** *Danaus plexippus* — spotted at Kickapoo and Concan

**Red Admiral** *Vanessa atalanta* — seen during the walking tour at Neal's Lodges

**Lyside Sylphur** *Kricogonia lyside* — pointed out by Bryan at Lost Maples.

**Texasn Crescent** *Anthanassa texana* — spotted at Kickapoo.

**Queen** *Danaus gilippus* — found at Kickapoo Cavern and Lost Maples

**Sleepy Orange** *Eurema nicippe* – active at Kickapoo Cavern SP and Neal's Lodges.

**Red Satyr** *Cissia rubricate* – active Kickapoo Cavern SP

**Mournful Duskywing** *Erynnis tristis* – one hitched a ride on the side of our minivan in Uvalde.

**American Lady** *Vanessa virginiensis* – found in the meadows at Neal's Lodges