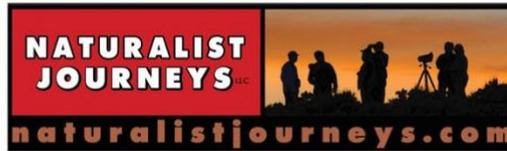


# South Texas Birding & Nature | Species List

February 18 – 25, 2018 | Compiled by Carlos Sanchez



**With Guides Michael Marsden and Carlos Sanchez, and 9 participants:  
Al, Kurt, Lea, Terry, Linda, Kathy, Lionel, Julie, Shelton**

(HO)= Distinctive enough to be counted as heard only

(SP)= Special species of note which is rare, local, or endemic

(#) = Number of days encountered in parentheses

**Summary:** A visit to South Texas is like a rite of passage for the North American birder. Many species typical of tropical areas further south barely make it across the border into Texas, giving birders a chance to see colorful species like Altamira Oriole, Green Jay, and Great Kiskadee within the United States. On this tour, we saw many of these specialties and then some.

We started near Port Aransas, where a pleasant boat trip got us in close to the area's wintering population of endangered Whooping Cranes. We learned how these stately birds were nearly wiped out in the 1920s and 30s, and how conservation efforts have succeeded in a big population rebound. Heading over to South Texas proper, we explored the subtropical thickets and woodlands along the Rio Grande Valley for birds like Plain Chachalaca, Olive Sparrow, and Common Pauraque. Throw in epic numbers of wintering waterfowl, the spectacle of a parrot roost, fun Tex-Mex cuisine, a hands-on presentation on local medicinal plants, and fluffy quinceañera dresses, and you have an experience not soon to be forgotten!

## **BIRDS (171 species recorded, of which 2 were heard only):**

### **Anatidae: Ducks and Geese (17)**

**Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna autumnalis* (2) – great views of a large flock loitering on the golf course at Hazel Bazemore Park

**Snow Gose** *Anser caerulescens* (1) – we observed a large flock of both white and blue morph birds along Refugio Taft Road on our way out of the Corpus Christi area

**Ross's Goose** *Anser rossii* (1) – about a half-dozen of these smaller geese among the large flock of Snow Geese at Refugio Taft Road

**Blue-winged Teal** *Spatula discors* (5) – this long distance migrant was present at nearly all freshwater wetland sites

**Cinnamon Teal** *Spatula cyanoptera* (2) – beautiful views of several stunning drakes right at the entrance of Estero Llano Grande State Park

**Northern Shoveler** *Spatula clypeata* (5) – common and widespread in freshwater wetlands; they use comb-like projections along the edges of its bill to filter out food from the water

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**Gadwall** *Mareca strepera* (5) – these large dabbling ducks were present in a variety of freshwater habitats throughout. Their numbers have increased since the 1980s, partly due to conservation of their breeding habitat through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

**American Wigeon** *Mareca americana* (3) – small numbers at Hans A. Suter WMA, Hazel Bazemore Park and the South Padre Island Convention Center were looking pretty sharp

**Mottled Duck** *Anas fulvigula* (4) – the common resident dabbling duck of South Texas, present at most wetland sites. There was an impressive congregation of 40 or more at the Brownsville Landfill.

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* (3) – large numbers of these elegant ducks at Hans A. Suter WMA and Mustang Island State Park – more localized and less common in South Texas

**Green-winged Teal** *Anas crecca* (5) – common and widespread at all freshwater wetland sites

**Redhead** *Aythya americana* (4) – the majority of the Redhead population winters in South Texas and northeast Mexico – we were understandably impressed with the sheer number of these ducks on South Padre Island and elsewhere along this route

**Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* (3) – rather uncommon but seen well at the lagoon at the University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley

**Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* (3) – good numbers at Aransas NWR, but very few once we got to South Texas

**Bufflehead** *Bucephala albeola* (1) – these tiny sea ducks were bouncing about in the surf on our Aransas NWR boat tour. They nest almost exclusively in holes excavated by Northern Flickers – fascinating!

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* (2) – several males and females seen from the boardwalk at the South Padre Island Convention Center

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* (1) – a few of these stiff-tailed ducks at Moore's Pond in Rockport

### Cracidae: Guans and Chachalacas (1)

**Plain Chachalaca** *Ortalis vetula* (2) (SP) – named for their raucous calls, these largely arboreal birds were common and confiding at Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park

### Gaviidae: Loons (1)

**Common Loon** *Gavia immer* (1) – three out on the bay on our Aransas NWR boat tour

### Podicipedidae: Grebes (2)

**Least Grebe** *Tachybaptus dominicus* (1) (SP) – we saw this smallest of North American grebes at the campus of the University of Texas, Santa Ana NWR and Estero Llano Grande State Park. We even got to observe some courting behavior at Santa Ana!

**Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* (5) – a common and widespread wetland species

### Phalacrocoracidae: Cormorants (2)

**Neotropic Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax brasilianus* (5) – common and widespread, mostly in freshwater

**Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus* (5) – large numbers in marine habitats and freshwater sites with access to deeper water. The seawall at Fulton Harbor had an especially large congregation.

### Anhingidae: Anhingas (1)

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**Anhinga** *Anhinga anhinga* (2) —rather uncommon in South Texas, but we did see a nice male in the scope at the lagoon at the University of Texas

### **Pelecanidae: Pelicans (2)**

**American White Pelican** *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos* (4) – large numbers of these impressive birds at Hans A. Suter WMA and on our boat tour to Aransas NWR

**Brown Pelican** *Pelecanus occidentalis* (4) – common whenever we were near the coast – this is the only pelican species in the world to feed by plunge diving!

### **Ardeidae: Herons and Egrets (10)**

**Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* (5) – our largest and most widespread heron, common at all wetland and even some marine sites on our route

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* (4) – these large white birds were regular at all wetland sites

**Snowy Egret** *Egretta thula* (5) – especially impressive congregations at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend and Estero Llano Grande State Park

**Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea* (2) – singles at Hazel Bazemore Park and the South Padre Island Convention Center – a stockier bird than the following species

**Tricolored Heron** *Egretta tricolor* (4) – small numbers of these lanky, colorful herons at Aransas NWR and South Padre Island Convention Center

**Reddish Egret** *Egretta rufescens* (4) – great fun to watch these elegant egrets actively ‘dance’ as they fed in coastal habitats at Hans A. Suter WMA, Aransas NWR and South Padre Island Convention Center. We observed both reddish and white forms of this species.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* (2) – our first one was at Port Aransas Wetland Park but not common at all

**Green Heron** *Butorides virescens* (1) – a statuesque individual standing quietly on a post at South Padre Island Convention Center was our only one of the tour

**Black-crowned Night-Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* (4) – both adults and juveniles seen at a roosting site at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend and at a quiet lagoon at Estero Llano Grande State Park

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea* (3) – several nice adults seen through the scope at the same sites as the preceding species

### **Threskiornithidae: Ibis and Spoonbills (3)**

**White Ibis** *Eudocimus albus* (4) – not uncommon at freshwater wetland sites throughout

**White-faced Ibis** *Plegadis chihi* (1) – two birds at Port Aransas Wetland Park were our only ones of the tour – superficially very similar to Glossy Ibis

**Roseate Spoonbill** *Platalea ajaja* (4) – we saw these flamboyant birds along the Lamar Beach Road while watching the Whooping Cranes, as well as on our Aransas NWR boat tour and at the Brownsville Landfill

### **Cathartidae: New World Vultures (2)**

**Black Vulture** *Corabyps atratus* (5) – common overhead, with notable congregations at Brownsville Landfill and Salineno Wildlife Preserve

**Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura* (6) – very common overhead at all sites, with hundreds seen at the Brownsville Landfill

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### Pandionidae: Osprey (1)

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* (6) – we saw many of these throughout the length of the tour, especially around the coast and sites with sizeable bodies of water

### Accipitridae: Hawks, Kites, and Eagles (7)

**White-tailed Kite** *Elanus leucurus* (1) – one of these elegant ‘dancing’ raptors hunting by the highway on our way to an Aplomado Falcon site

**Northern Harrier** *Circus hudsonius* (5) – common in open habitats around Aransas NWR and Corpus Christi. One female-type individual was constantly harassing the ducks and egrets at Estero Llano Grande State Park.

**Cooper’s Hawk** *Accipiter cooperii* (2) – good views at Estero Llano Grande State Park

**Harris’s Hawk** *Parabuteo unicinctus* (2) – we observed these striking, cooperative hunters along the Port Isabel Highway, Santa Ana NWR and McAllen Nature Center. Formerly known as ‘Bay-winged Hawk’

**White-tailed Hawk** *Geranoaetus albicaudatus* (4) **(SP)** – we were super excited to connect with this large and striking hawk along the highway at Mustang Island State Park, and we subsequently saw it again at the Brownsville Landfill, Santa Ana NWR and Salineno Wildlife Preserve

**Gray Hawk** *Buteo plagiatus* (1) **(SP)** – Al was not feeling well enough to walk, so he took the tram tour through Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park – and ended up being the only person to see this striking hawk species

**Red-tailed Hawk** *Buteo jamaicensis* (4) – nice views at Aransas NWR near the visitor center and again at Anzalduas Park on the border with Mexico

### Rallidae: Rails, Crakes, and Coots (3)

**Sora** *Porzana carolina* (2) – Lea managed to actually see one scuttle through the reeds at Aransas NWR, and we heard another at the South Padre Island Convention Center

**Common Gallinule** *Gallinula galeata* (3) – several in the freshwater pools at Aransas NWR and South Padre Island Convention Center

**American Coot** *Fulica americana* (4) – these gawky birds were abundant in all bodies of water throughout the tour

### Gruidae: Cranes (2)

**Sandhill Crane** *Antigone canadensis* (2) – small flocks of these elegant beauties along Lamar Beach Road and Refugio Taft Road

**Whooping Crane** *Grus americana* (1) **(SP)** – these wonderful birds graced us with their presence at Lamar Beach Road and the Aransas NWR boat tour. All of today’s approximately 600 birds descend from a surviving 1941 population of 15 birds – **VOTED BIRD OF THE TRIP!**

### Recurvirostridae: Stilts and Avocets (2)

**Black-necked Stilt** *Himantopus mexicanus* (4) – we saw these dapper birds in small numbers at Hazel Bazemore Park, South Padre Island Convention Center and Santa Ana NWR

**American Avocet** *Recurvirostra americana* (4) – a couple hundred at Port Aransas Wetland Park were a sight to see, but our best views were of a couple close in at Hazel Bazemore Park

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### Haematopodidae: Oystercatchers (1)

**American Oystercatcher** *Haematopus palliatus* (2) – really nice views of these stocky bivalve-eaters on our Aransas NWR boat tour and at the South Padre Island Convention Center

### Charadriidae: Plovers and Lapwings (4)

**Black-bellied Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* (3) – we saw these largest of North American plovers on the Aransas NWR boat tour and South Padre Island Convention Center

**Snowy Plover** *Charadrius nivosus* (1) – seen just once through the scope for some of the group

**Wilson's Plover** *Charadrius wilsonia* (1) – these small crab-eaters were seen only once in the distance

**Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferous* (5) – common and widespread plover of dry habitats

### Scolopacidae: Sandpipers and Allies (14)

**Long-billed Curlew** *Numenius americanus* (4) – we observed North America's largest shorebird at Hans A. Suter WMA, Refugio Taft Road, Old Isabel Road and the Aransas NWR boat tour – not necessarily tied to water

**Marbled Godwit** *Limosa fedoa* (2) – we observed these handsome shorebirds on the Aransas NWR boat tour and at the South Padre Island Convention Center

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* (3) – one on our afternoon beach drive at Mustang Island State Park and several more at the South Padre Island Convention Center

**Stilt Sandpiper** *Calidris himantopus* (1) – one of these elegant shorebirds in the freshwater marsh at the South Padre Island Convention Center

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba* (2) – very numerous on expansive, sandy beaches such as Mustang Island State Park and the beach near the South Padre Island Convention Center

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* (2) – our best views were at the beach near the South Padre Island Convention Center, told apart from the similarly sized Sanderling by their overall browner plumage and longer, slightly decurved bills

**Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla* (1) – several sitting (unusually) on a log in the middle of a marsh at Estero Llano Grande State Park – the smallest shorebird species in the world!

**Western Sandpiper** *Calidris mauri* (1) – a large flock scoped on a distant mudflat were our only ones

**Short-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus griseus* (2) – our first one tried to hide among a flock of Willet on Mustang Island State Park; we subsequently came across flocks at Port Aransas Wetland Park and at Aransas NWR

**Wilson's Snipe** *Gallinago delicata* (1) – one spotted by Carlos on the edge of the freshwater wetland at South Padre Island Convention Center, trying its best to remain camouflaged

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* (3) – our best views were of a non-spotted individual at the freshwater marsh at the South Padre Island Convention Center, told apart from other small shorebirds by its stocky body structure and habitual tail bobbing

**Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* (4) – good numbers seen at Aransas NWR, Hazel Bazemore Park and South Padre Island Convention Center

**Willet** *Tringa semipalmata* (4) – big numbers of these large shorebirds on Mustang Island, Aransas NWR and South Padre Island Convention Center. One they flew, they reveal a beautiful black and white wing pattern.

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**Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* (3) – a few in the freshwater wetland on South Padre Island offered lovely side-by-side comparisons with the much larger Greater Yellowlegs – the size difference is really big!

### Laridae: Gulls and Terns (10)

**Bonaparte's Gull** *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* (1) – a couple of these dainty gulls at Port Aransas Beach on an afternoon beach drive, mixed in with large flocks of Laughing Gull

**Laughing Gull** *Leucophaeus atricilla* (4) – the most common gull, omnipresent and vocal at all coastal sites – and to think this gull is even more numerous and vocal in the summer!

**Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* (4) – very numerous at sites around Port Aransas, less so once we got into South Texas proper

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus* (3) – small numbers seen at all coastal sites, with a particularly large congregation at the Brownsville Landfill

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* (2) – one on the beach at Mustang Island SP and another spotted by Michael at the Brownsville Landfill. Once a rarity, this species has undergone a population explosion as a wintering species in the United States.

**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* (2) – spectacular views of a flyby individual at South Padre Island Convention Center, showing off its typical feeding habit of picking off food morsels right off the surface of the water

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* (3) – we saw these impressive terns at Hans A. Suter WMA, Aransas NWR and South Padre Island Convention Center, the largest tern species in the world

**Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* (4) – these attractive terns, with their characteristic 'bandit' masks when in winter plumage, were very numerous on Mustang Island and on the Aransas NWR boat tour

**Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maximus* (2) – locally numerous loitering on sandy beaches along the gulf coast; we enjoyed an especially large congregation at the South Padre Island Convention Center

**Black Skimmer** *Rynchops niger* (2) – big winter flocks at Hans A. Suter WMA and South Padre Island Convention Center, where they loaf during the day. They feed mostly at dawn and dusk.

### Columbidae: Pigeons and Doves (6)

**Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia* (5) – omnipresent in all urban areas, usually as a flock on a wire

**Eurasian Collared-Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* (5) – small numbers noticed throughout, usually right near our hotel on a wire or street lamp. Some were already performing aerial display flights that they use as part of their courtship ritual.

**Inca Dove** *Columbina inca* (2) – a couple gave brief views at Hazel Bazemore Park, and we saw another at Rancho Lomitas near the feeders

**White-tipped Dove** *Leptoptila verreauxi* (3) (SP) – our best views were of a confiding individual at the Rancho Lomitas feeders. Common by voice in most wooded habitats, sounding much like someone blowing over an empty glass bottle.

**White-winged Dove** *Zenaida asiatica* (5) – abundant near any construction, with an especially large flock at Salineno

**Mourning Dove** *Zenaida macroura* (5) – most common in open fields and agricultural areas, such as along the Refugio Taft Road and Lamar Beach Road

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### Cuculidae: Cuckoos and Allies (1)

**Greater Roadrunner** *Geococcyx californianus* (1) – one seen along the road to Rancho Lomitas by Lea just did not cooperate for the rest of the group

### Strigidae: Owls (2)

**Great Horned Owl** *Bubo virginianus* (1) – seen by Lea at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend one night

**Burrowing Owl** *Athene cunicularia* (1) – one at a stake-out near Anzalduas Park for the whole group

### Caprimulgidae: Nighthawks and Nightjars (1)

**Common Pauraque** *Nyctidromus albicollis* (1) (SP) – two sitting quietly in the underbrush at Estero Llano Grande State Park provided spectacular views and were a highlight for some in the group

### Trochilidae: Hummingbirds (2)

**Rufous Hummingbird** *Selasphorus rufus* (1) – a bright male attending the feeders at the King Ranch Visitor Center was a nice surprise for the entire group

**Buff-bellied Hummingbird** *Amazilia yucatanensis* (3) (SP) – great views at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend and at Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park

### Alcedinidae: Kingfishers (3)

**Ringed Kingfisher** *Megaceryle torquata* (1) (SP) – seen only once, flying and calling over a resaca on our way out of the Inn at Chachalaca Bend

**Belted Kingfisher** *Megaceryle alcyon* (5) – the most common kingfisher, observed at Aransas NWR, Inn at Chachalaca Bend and Santa Ana NWR

**Green Kingfisher** *Chloroceryle americana* (2) (SP) – this small, iridescent green kingfisher performed nicely for the entire group at Hazel Bazemore Park and at the lagoon at the University of Texas campus

### Picidae: Woodpeckers (3)

**Golden-fronted Woodpecker** *Melanerpes aurifrons* (5) – these rather large woodpeckers were a common feature of all sites with woodland habitat

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** *Sphyrapicus varius* (2) – seen at Shelley Park and at the lagoon on the University of Texas campus

**Ladder-backed Woodpecker** *Picoides scalaris* (5) – the South Texas version of Downy Woodpecker, common at all sites with wooded habitats

### Falconidae: Falcons and Caracaras (3)

**Crested Caracara** *Caracara cheriway* (5) – scattered sightings in most habitats throughout the tour, even as flybys in the center of town. Especially numerous as a scavenger at the Brownsville Landfill

**American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius* (5) – common on the wires on travel days between sites; singles recorded at Aransas NWR, Hazel Bazemore Park and Anzalduas Park

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* (2) – one rushing in at full speed to grab an unsuspecting dabbling duck at Hans A. Suter WMA – what an incredible experience!

### Psittacidae: Parrots (2)

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**Monk Parakeet** *Myiopsitta monachus* (1) – a few flybys and impressive stick nests near the old pumping station

**Red-crowned Parrot** *Amazona viridigenalis* (1) (SP) – a joy to see so many of these garrulous birds at Oliveira Park in Brownsville, attracting crowds of all ages and all backgrounds. Sadly, this species might be more numerous in South Texas than its native range in Tamaulipas, Mexico due to poaching.

*Red-lore Parrot* (*Amazona autumnalis*), *White-fronted Parrot* (*Amazona albifrons*), *Yellow-headed Parrot* (*Amazona oratrix*) were all observed at Oliveira Park as well in small numbers. None of these birds are considered to be ABA-countable and may persist in the wild for decades due to their naturally long lifespan, without rearing any offspring. Miami and Los Angeles also have populations of parrots that fall under the same situation.

### Tyrannidae: Tyrant Flycatchers (6)

**Black Phoebe** *Sayornis nigricans* (1) – a nice pair at the University of Texas campus, feeding right by the shore of the lagoon

**Eastern Phoebe** *Sayornis phoebe* (5) – common in open wooded and brushy habitats throughout, often giving away its presence by its distinctive ‘chip’ note

**Vermilion Flycatcher** *Pyrocephalus rubinus* (2) – we saw both males and females at Hazel Bazemore Park, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park and Anzalduas Park. Conspicuously bright red males are always great to see.

**Great Kiskadee** *Pitangus sulphuratus* (4) (SP) – loud, boisterous and colorful at every single site we visited in South Texas, often attending feeders or just calling from the tops of trees.

**Tropical Kingbird** *Tyrannus melancholicus* (1) – a pair at Anzalduas Park readily responded to their own calls, clinching a positive ID for this species

**Couch’s Kingbird** *Tyrannus couchii* (2) (SP) – seen at Hazel Bazemore Park and the Inn at Chachalaca Bend. This species is extremely similar to Tropical and best sorted by call.

### Tityridae: Tityras and Becards (1)

**Rose-throated Becard** *Pachyramphus aglaiae* (2) (SP) – although common in Central America, this is a rare and special wanderer to southern Texas. We were fortunate to see a female individual on both mornings at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend. What a treat!

### Laniidae: Shrikes (1)

**Loggerhead Shrike** *Lanius ludovicianus* (2) – these raptorial songbirds were not uncommon, with sightings at Hazel Bazemore Park, Old Port Isabel Road and Anzalduas Park among others

### Vireonidae: Vireos (2)

**White-eyed Vireo** *Vireo griseus* (2) – common by voice in the thick scrub of many sites, and we finally got reasonable views at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend and Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park

**Blue-headed Vireo** *Vireo solitarius* (1) – a trio of these spectacled vireos at Shelley Parkin a mixed feeding flock, being not so ‘solitary’

### Corvidae: Jays and Crows (2)

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**Green Jay** *Cyanocorax yncas* (5) (SP) – these colorful, tropical jays entertained us at feeding stations and wooded parks throughout South Texas – so great to have such a beautiful bird also be so common  
**Chihuahuan Raven** *Corvus cryptoleucus* (1) – a few seen at the Brownsville Landfill, where a steady wind revealed the white bases of the neck and body feathers – a diagnostic fieldmark for this species

### Hirundinidae: Swallows and Martins (4)

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow** *Stelgidopteryx serripennis* (3) – flocks of early migrant swallows were pushing through southern Texas towards the end of our tour, and we picked out several of these large, brown swallows in flocks over Santa Ana NWR and Anzalduas Park

**Purple Martin** *Progne subis* (1) – these large, dark swallows were already attending man-made gourds at the McAllen Nature Center on our final day

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* (1) – several observed from the hawkwatch platform at Hazel Bazemore Park were very early migrants

**Cave Swallow** *Petrochelidon fulva* (2) – flocks overhead at Estero Llano Grande State Park and the McAllen Nature Center

### Paridae: Tits and Chickadees (1)

**Black-crested Titmouse** *Baeolophus atricristatus* (4) (SP) – formerly considered the same species as Tufted Titmouse, this close relative was very common in all wooded habitats throughout Texas

### Remizidae: Penduline Tits (1)

**Verdin** *Auriparus flaviceps* (1) – a male and female observed briefly at Santa Ana NWR in a busy mixed feeding flock were our only ones. Verdin is the only American representative of a primarily Old World bird family.

### Troglodytidae: Wrens (5)

**House Wren** *Troglodytes aedon* (2) – a couple brief observations around fallen debris at Santa Ana NWR

**Marsh Wren** *Cistothorus palustris* (1) (HO) – we heard the mechanical song from the cattails at Aransas NWR

**Carolina Wren** *Thryothorus ludovicianus* (2) (HO) – the loud ‘tea kettle’ song resounded through the woodlands of southern Texas for us on two dates

**Bewick’s Wren** *Thryomanes bewickii* (1) – a spritely little bird popped up for us at Starr County Park, singing away at close range

**Cactus Wren** *Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus* (1) – it took a little while, but we finally found the source of this bird’s song at Starr County Park, where we had amazing views of a pair. No bird exemplifies the desert southwest better than this noisy wren!

### Polioptilidae: Gnatcatchers (1)

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** *Polioptila caerulea* (6) – the standard little gray bird in mixed feeding flocks throughout our route in Texas

### Regulidae: Kinglets (1)

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**Ruby-crowned Kinglet** *Regulus satrapa* (6) – these nervous little brown balls of lint were a common member of feeding flocks throughout our route in Texas, usually with Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Black-crested Titmouse

### Turdidae: Thrushes (2)

**Eastern Bluebird** *Sialia sialis* (1) – several of these pretty little birds in the open parkland of Anzalduas Park

**Clay-colored Thrush** *Turdus grayi* (2) **(SP)** – formerly a genuine rarity to the United States, this species is rapidly expanding its range northward and seemed quite common at Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park and the McAllen Nature Center

### Mimidae: Mockingbirds (3)

**Curve-billed Thrasher** *Toxostoma curvirostre* (3) – we saw our first ones in a palm along the Old Port Isabel Road, but our best views were of a confiding pair at the McAllen Nature Center which approached to within a few feet from us

**Long-billed Thrasher** *Toxostoma longirostre* (4) **(SP)** – a true South Texas specialty, we had many wonderful observations of this species: Inn at Chachalaca Bend, Santa Ana NWR and Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park just to name a few

**Northern Mockingbird** *Mimus polyglottos* (6) – a very common and widespread species in Texas

### Sturnidae: Starlings (1)

**European Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* (4) – recorded in small numbers at several sites in South Texas, but not as overwhelmingly abundant as elsewhere in the United States – phew!

### Motacillidae: Pipits and Wagtails (1)

**American Pipit** *Anthus rubescens* (1) – a couple of fellow birders alerted us to a trio of these birds cavorting in a grassy field at Bentsen

### Bombycillidae: Waxwings (1)

**Cedar Waxwing** *Bombycilla cedrorum* (2) – a flock of these silky smooth birds flew in close at Holt Paradise Pond, and we saw another flock at the McAllen Nature Center. It's been a really good year for this irruptive species in areas which tend to be south of its normal winter range.

### Parulidae: Wood-Warblers (6)

**Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* (2) – really nice views of this nuthatch-like warbler at Shelley Park

**Orange-crowned Warbler** *Oreothlypis celata* (6) – this plain, cold-hardy warbler was by far the most common and widespread species in South Texas

**Nashville Warbler** *Oreothlypis ruficapilla* (1) – a nice find in a mixed feeding flock at Santa Ana NWR

**Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* (4) – often heard but not seen by all in marshy grass and cattails throughout our route in Texas

**Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Setophaga coronata* (8) – common and widespread in Texas

**Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla* (1) – nice spot by Linda of a bright male at Shelley Park

# South Texas Birding & Nature | Species List

## February 18 – 25, 2018 | Compiled by Carlos Sanchez

### Emberizidae: Sparrows (6)

**Olive Sparrow** *Arremonops rufivirgatus* (4) (SP) – these large and chunky sparrows were common by voice but quite skulky by nature. We saw our first ones at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend crippling views at the feeders of Rancho Lomitas

**Chipping Sparrow** *Spizella passerina* (1) – a small number of these cute sparrows at Anzalduas Park in a mixed feeding flock that included bluebirds, finches and siskins

**Black-throated Sparrow** *Amphispiza bilineata* (1) – a couple of these desert sparrows at Rancho Lomitas, with one coming to the feeder at the last minute while we were departing

**Savannah Sparrow** *Passerculus sandvicensis* (1) – a few of these heavily streaked sparrows on Lamar Beach Road

**Lincoln's Sparrow** *Melospiza lincolnii* (4) – the most commonly encountered winter sparrow on our route, we saw a couple at the bird bath at Hazel Bazemore Park really well with further sightings at Estero Llano Grande, Bentsen and Salineno

**Swamp Sparrow** *Melospiza georgiana* (1) – one briefly seen on the marsh trail at Aransas NWR

### Cardinalidae: Grosbeaks and Buntings (2)

**Northern Cardinal** *Cardinalis cardinalis* (6) – common and widespread in Texas

**Pyrhuloxia** *Cardinalis sinuatus* (1) – we saw these 'desert cardinals' in the desert scrub of Starr County Park and Rancho Lomitas

### Icteridae: Blackbirds and Orioles (9)

**Western Meadowlark** *Sturnella neglecta* (1) – a flock of these while having a picnic lunch at Anzalduas

**Eastern Meadowlark** *Sturnella magna* (2) – our first encounter with this familiar species was at Refugio Taft Road while watching the flock of white geese

**Hooded Oriole** *Icterus cucullatus* (1) – one immature bird at Starr County Park was a nice surprise!

**Altamira Oriole** *Icterus gularis* (4) (SP) – this largest oriole of the United States was a common sight in South Texas, and we even had one give us its full song at Bentsen

**Audubon's Oriole** *Icterus graduacauda* (1) (SP) – two came into the feeders at Rancho Lomitas much to our group's delight. This species is by far the rarer of the two South Texas specialty orioles.

**Red-winged Blackbird** *Agelaius phoeniceus* (6) – abundant in South Texas, especially at feeders!

**Brown-headed Cowbird** *Molothrus ater* (3) – we saw these nest parasites in mixed blackbird flocks at Lamar Beach Road, the Sarita Rest Area and the grain silos near McAllen

**Brewer's Blackbird** *Euphagus cyanocephalus* (1) – a small number of these small blackbirds at the Sarita Rest Area nicely broke up the long drive

**Great-tailed Grackle** *Quiscalus mexicanus* (7) – top contender for most numerous bird in South Texas

### Fringillidae: Euphonias and Finches (6)

**House Finch** *Haemorhous mexicanus* (1) – a few of these at Anzalduas Park, including a brilliantly colored male. The subspecies here is a brighter red than the ones in the eastern USA.

**American Goldfinch** *Spinus tristis* (1) – one seen briefly at Anzalduas Park

**Pine Siskin** *Spinus pinus* (1) – a small, continuing flock at Anzalduas Park was seen well by all

### Passeridae: Old World Sparrows (1)

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**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* (4) — common in urban areas or taking advantage of feeders

### **MAMMALS (8 species recorded):**

**Northern Raccoon** *Procyon lotor* (1) — a handsome little fellow on the University of Texas campus

**Collared Peccary** *Pecari tajacu* (1) — great views at a blind at Bentsen

**Feral Pig** *Sus scrofa* (3) — unfortunately, not uncommon with several individuals flushed from the marshes at Aransas NWR in the same areas used by Whooping Cranes

**White-tailed Deer** *Odocoileus virginianus* (3) — several encounters with these large mammals

**Eastern Cottontail** *Sylvilagus floridanus* (2) — seen particularly well at the feeders of Rancho Lomitas

**Fox Squirrel** *Sciurus niger* (2) — we saw these large, attractive squirrels a couple times in the Rio Grande Valley

**Mexican Ground Squirrel** *Spermophilus mexicanus* (1) — a few of these attractively patterned squirrels at the Rancho Lomitas feeders

**Bottlenose Dolphin** *Tursiops truncatus* (1) — a family group of these cetaceans on our Aransas boat tour

### **REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS (4 species recorded):**

**American Alligator** *Alligator mississippiensis* (3) — several smaller ones seen well around Aransas NWR

**Red-eared Slider** *Trachemys scripta* (2) — the common pond turtle of the area

**Cuban Brown Anole** *Anolis sagrei* (1) — an adaptable, introduced species to the area

**Carolina Green Anole** *Anolis carolinensis* (1) — one hiding behind a sign at Hazel Bazemore Park