

# Texas Big Bend: Birding & Wildlife | Species List

July 20 - 27, 2019 | Compiled by Michael Marsden



With guide Michael Marsden and participants Jean, Nancy, Chip, and Lisa

## Outline of the Itinerary/Areas covered in report:

20th: El Paso - Van Horn - Marfa - Sul Ross Cactus Gardens - Holland House, Alpine

21st: Holland House - Marathon Pena Park (the Post) - Gage Gardens - Marathon grasslands - Fossil Discovery Exhibit, Big Bend National Park - Panther Junction - Chisos Mountain Lodge (CML)

22nd: CML - Rio Grande Village Campground & Nature Trail - Daniel's Ranch - Boquillas Canyon - Dugout Wells - CML

23rd: CML - Chisos Mountains loop (Laguna Meadows Trail - Colima Trail - Boot Canyon Trail - Pinnacles Trail) - CML

24th: CML - Sam Nail Ranch site - Lower Burro Mesa Pour-off - Cottonwood Campground - Santa Elena Canyon - Big Bend Ranch State Park Visitors Center - Lajitas - Terlingua - CML

25th: CML - Christmas Mountain Oasis - Fort Davis - Lake Balmorhea - Limpia Hotel, Fort Davis

26th: Limpia Hotel - Davis Mountains State Park - Lawrence Wood Picnic Grounds - Madera Canyon Trail - McDonald Observatory - Fort Davis National Historic Site - Davis Mountains State Park - Limpia Hotel

27th: Limpia Hotel - Marfa - El Paso

## **BIRDS (100 species recorded, of which 2 were heard only):**

**SP** = special species of note (rare, local or endemic)

**(HO)** = heard only

**(#)** = number of days encountered out of 8

### **Anatidae: Ducks, Geese and Swans (1)**

**Mexican Duck** *Anas diazi* **SP (1)(HO)**— our only encounter was hearing ducks calling in the distance by the Rio Grande.

### **Odontophoridae: New World Quails (1)**

**Scaled Quail** *Callipepla squamata* **SP (6)**— small groups seen just about every day that we were in lowland shrub desert habitat.

### **Podicipedidae: Grebes (2)**

**Western Grebe** *Aechmophorus occidentalis* (1)— we were able to identify at least 3 definite Westerns among the many *Aechmophorus* grebes (no doubt including hybrids!) on Lake Balmorhea.

**Clark's Grebe** *Aechmophorus clarkii* (1)—at least 6 definite Clark's on Lake Balmorhea.

### **Columbidae: Pigeons and Doves (6)**

**Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia* (3)— just seen around settlements.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* (7)— small numbers at just about every lowland settlement and, perhaps more surprisingly, in the Hwy 90 pecan groves (and this a species not even mentioned in Peterson and Zimmer's *Birds of the Trans Pecos*, published as recently as 1998!).

**Inca Dove** *Columbina inca* **SP (2)**— at Marathon and Rio Grande Village only.

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**Common Ground-Dove** (3)— our best views were at Rio Grande Village very soon after seeing Inca Doves.

**White-winged Dove** *Zenaida asiatica* (6)— just about everywhere!

**Mourning Dove** *Zenaida macroura* (7)— absent only from high altitude woodland habitats.

## Cuculidae: Cuckoos and Allies (2)

**Greater Roadrunner** *Geococcyx californianus* SP (7)— one of the highlights of our trip, both for their innate appeal and the extraordinary number we came across - at least 30 individuals!

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo** (1)— along the Post road at Marathon.

## Caprimulgidae: Nightjars (1)

**Common Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* (2)— we came across several day-flying nighthawks, all of which a little unexpectedly turned out to be Common Nighthawks - perhaps migrants?

## Trochilidae: Hummingbirds (5)

**Blue-throated Hummingbird** *Lampornis clemenciae* SP (1)— wonderful views of one at Boot Springs.

**Lucifer Hummingbird** *Calothorax lucifer* SP (1)— several, including stunning views of adult males, at the Christmas Mountain Oasis feeders.

**Black-chinned Hummingbird** *Archilochus alexandri* (7)— the most frequent hummingbird species encountered.

**Broad-tailed Hummingbird** *Selasphorus platycercus* (1)— a female or immature male at the McDonald Observatory feeders.

**Rufous Hummingbird** *Selasphorus rufus* (2)— an adult male we saw at Christmas Mountain Oasis on the 25th was Carolyn's first of the season there; the next day we came across another at Davis Mountains State Park.

## Recurvirostridae (1)

**American Avocet** *Recurvirostra americana* (1)— memorable views of 2 of these elegant shorebirds at Lake Balmorhea.

## Charadriidae: Plovers (1)

**Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* (1)— at Lake Balmorhea.

## Scolopacidae: Sandpipers (1)

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* (1)— at Lake Balmorhea.

## Ardeidae: Herons and Egrets (1)

**Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* (1)— 2 at Lake Balmorhea.

## Cathartidae: New World Vultures (2)

**Black Vulture** *Coragyps atratus* (1)— our only sighting was a singleton at Boquillas Canyon.

**Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura* (7)— seemingly ubiquitous.

## Accipitridae: Hawks, Kites and Eagles (3)

**Swainson's Hawk** *Buteo swainsoni* (4)— frequent over grassland and shrub desert habitats throughout.

**Zone-tailed Hawk** *Buteo albonotatus* SP (1)— exhilarating views of an adult flying over the cliffs at Buro Mesa.

**Red-tailed Hawk** *Buteo jamaicensis* (6)— scattered individuals, some showing characteristics of the southwestern *fuertesi* ssp.

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## Strigidae: Owls (2)

**Elf Owl** *Micrathene whitneyi* SP (1)— brief views of 2 emerging from their daytime roost at Davis Mountains State Park.

**Burrowing Owl** *Athene cunicularia* (1)— at least 4 among the prairie dog burrows on the Marathon grasslands.

## Picidae: Woodpeckers (4)

**Acorn Woodpecker** *Melanerpes formicivorus* SP (3)— frequent at mid to high elevation wooded areas throughout.

**Golden-fronted Woodpecker** *Melanerpes aurifrons* SP (2)— in riparian cottonwoods at Marathon and Rio Grande Village.

**Ladder-backed Woodpecker** *Picoides scalaris* (4)— the most widespread of the three regular woodpecker species.

**Northern Flicker** *Colaptes auratus* (1)— a red-shafted singleton at Madera Canyon.

## Falconidae: Falcons and Caracaras (1)

**American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius* (1)— memorable views of one harassing Common Ravens above the cliffs at Boquillas Canyon.

## Tyrannidae: Tyrant Flycatchers (11)

**Western Wood-Pewee** *Contopus sordidulus* (2)— our only sightings were in the Davis Mountains at the State Park and Madera Canyon.

**Gray Flycatcher** *Empidonax wrightii* (1)— at least 2 along the Madera Canyon Trail and at the Lawrence Wood Picnic Area in the Davis Mountains.

**Cordilleran Flycatcher** *Empidonax occidentalis* (1)— at Boot Spring in the Chisos Mountains.

**Black Phoebe** *Sayornis nigricans* (2)— singletons by ponds at Marathon Post and Lajitas.

**Say's Phoebe** *Sayornis saya* (5)— frequent in all grassland habitats, but our best views were around the cabins at Chisos Mountain Lodge.

**Vermilion Flycatcher** *Pyrocephalus rubinus* SP (3)— happily fairly common, with particularly memorable views at the Post and Cottonwood Campground.

**Ash-throated Flycatcher** *Myiarchus cinerascens* (1)— at Christmas Mountain Oasis and the Davis Mountains.

**Brown-crested Flycatcher** *Myiarchus tyrannulus* SP (1)— at Cottonwood Campground.

**Cassin's Kingbird** *Tyrannus vociferans* SP (3)— frequently encountered whenever we came across mature wooded areas at Marathon and the Davis Mountains but none at Big Bend, even in apparently suitable habitat by the Rio Grande.

**Western Kingbird** *Tyrannus verticalis* (6)— the common widespread lowland kingbird.

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** *Tyrannus forficatus* (1)— several views of these delightful birds along Hwy 90 between Valentine and Marathon..

## Laniidae: Shrikes (1)

**Loggerhead Shrike** *Lanius ludovicianus* (4)— roadside views throughout lowland areas..

## Vireonidae: Vireos (3)

**Bell's Vireo** *Vireo bellii* (4)— frequent in bushy habitats throughout, but generally more often heard than seen!

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**Hutton's Vireo** *Vireo huttoni* (1)— several in high elevation woodland on the Chisos Mountains loop.

**Plumbeous Vireo** *Vireo plumbeus* (1)— our only sightings were in the Davis Mountains.

## Corvidae: Crows and Jays (4)

**Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay** *Aphelocoma woodhouseii* (2)— frequent in the Davis Mountains.

**Mexican Jay** *Aphelocoma wollweberi* SP (2)— many encountered on the Chisos Mountains loop.

**Chihuahuan Raven** *Corvus cryptoleucus* SP (3)— frequent in desert scrub and grassland areas, particularly along Hwy 90 between Van Horn and Marfa.

**Common Raven** *Corvus corax* (5)— widespread at higher elevations in both the Chisos and Davis Mountains.

## Hirundinidae: Swallows and Martins (2)

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* (6)— frequent throughout at lower elevations.

**Cave Swallow** *Petrochelidon fulva* SP (3)— small flocks seen around culverts along Hwy 90, but our best views were of birds flying with Barn Swallows over the pond at Gage Gardens.

## Paridae: Tits and Chickadees (1)

**Black-crested Titmouse** *Baeolophus atricristatus* SP (3)— the (fairly) common parid throughout the area.

## Remizidae: Penduline Tits (1)

**Verdin** *Auriparus flaviceps* (1)— close views at Sam Nail Ranch.

## Aegithalidae: Long-tailed Tits (1)

**Bushtit** *Psaltriparus minimus* (3)— we came across feeding flocks of these delightful birds along the Chisos Mountains loop and at Davis Mountains State Park.

## Sittidae: Nuthatches (1)

**White-breasted Nuthatch** *Sitta carolinensis* (2)— sightings both along the Chisos Mountains loop and at the Lawrence Wood Picnic Area in the Davis Mountains.

## Troglodytidae: Wrens (4)

**Rock Wren** *Salpinctes obsoletus* (1)— oddly and disappointingly, our only encounter was with a pair at Fort Davis Historic Park.

**Canyon Wren** *Catherpes mexicanus* (4)— heard just about whenever we were in the canyons, with our best views at Lower Burro Mesa.

**Bewick's Wren** *Thryomanes bewickii* (2)— seen along the Chisos Mountains loop and by the Lodge, but our only prolonged views were at the feeders at Davis Mountains State Park.

**Cactus Wren** *Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus* (5)— common and widespread at lower elevations, with particularly cooperative birds in the grounds of Chisos Mountain Lodge.

## Poliophtilidae: Gnatcatchers (2)

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** *Poliophtila caerulea* (2)— seen by the river at Rio Grande Village and in pine-oak woodlands on the Chisos Mountains loop.

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**Black-tailed Gnatcatcher** *Poliophtila melanura* SP (1)— memorable sightings of 2 in shrub desert habitat at Burro Mesa.

## Mimidae: Mockingbirds and Thrashers (2)

**Curve-billed Thrasher** *Toxostoma curvirostre* (4)— occasional in lowland areas throughout.

**Northern Mockingbird** *Mimus polyglottos* (6)— abundant throughout at low to mid elevations.

## Sturnidae: Starlings and Mynas (1)

**European Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* (2)— just seen around settlements.

## Fringillidae: Finches (2)

**House Finch** *Haemorhous mexicanus potossinus* (5)— frequent in mid to low elevations throughout.

**Lesser Goldfinch** *Spinus psaltria* (2)— small numbers at the Post and at Madera Canyon in the Davis Mountains.

## Emberizidae: New World Sparrows (9)

**Cassin's Sparrow** *Peucaea cassinii* SP (1)— at Marathon along Hwy 90 and on the Hwy 385 grasslands.

**Chipping Sparrow** *Spizella passerina* (2)— at Christmas Mountain Oasis and the Lawrence Wood Picnic Grounds.

**Black-chinned Sparrow** *Spizella atrogularis* SP (2)— sightings along the Chisos Mountains loop and at Madera Canyon.

**Black-throated Sparrow** *Amphispiza bilineata* (5)— frequent in shrub desert habitat throughout.

**Lark Sparrow** *Chondestes grammacus* (2)— small flocks along the road to the Post and at Lawrence Wood Picnic Grounds.

**Lark Bunting** *Calamospiza melanocorys* (1)— singleton at Lake Balmorhea.

**Canyon Towhee** *Melospiza fusca* (5)— widespread, with particularly co-operative birds around Chisos Mountains Lodge.

**Rufous-crowned Sparrow** *Aimophila ruficeps* SP (4)— frequent at Big Bend, Christmas Mountain Oasis, and in the Davis Mountains.

**Spotted Towhee** *Pipilo maculatus* (1)— several along the Chisos Mountains loop.

## Icteriidae: Yellow-breasted Chat (1)

**Yellow-breasted Chat** *Icteria virens* (2)— our initial encounters were of birds singing at the Post, but we subsequently had wonderful views of them at Sam Nail Ranch.

## Icteridae: New World Blackbirds (9)

**Yellow-headed Blackbird** *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* (1)— exceptionally close views of 3 co-operative birds feeding at the Fossil Discovery Exhibit at Big Bend.

**Eastern Meadowlark** *Sturnella magna* (3)— widespread in grasslands throughout, with some showing extensive white tail feathers characteristic of *liliana* ssp .

**Orchard Oriole** *Icterus spurius* (3)— in wooded areas at Marathon Post, Gage Gardens, Rio Grande Village, and Sam Nail Ranch..

**Bullock's Oriole** *Icterus bullockii* (1)— our only sighting was in cottonwoods on the Post road.

**Scott's Oriole** *Icterus parisorum* SP (5)— several seen in primarily succulent desert habitat in Big Bend and at Christmas Mountain Oasis, with particularly close views of birds by the trail heads at Chisos Mountain Lodge. .

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**Red-winged Blackbird** *Agelaius phoeniceus* (1)— just seen by the wetlands at Gage Gardens and the Post at Marathon.

**Bronzed Cowbird** *Molothrus aeneus* SP (1)— in the cottonwoods at the Post.

**Brown-headed Cowbird** *Molothrus ater* (3)— small numbers throughout the lowlands.

**Great-tailed Grackle** *Quiscalus mexicanus* (2)— our only sightings after arriving in the Big Bend area were at Gage Gardens and Alpine.

## Parulidae: New World Warblers (1)

**Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* (1) (HO)— in the wetlands at the start of the Rio Grande Village Nature Trail

## Cardinalidae: Cardinals and Grosbeaks (9)

**Hepatic Tanager** *Piranga flava* SP (6)— frequent in higher woodlands in both the Chisos and Davis Mountains, but our best views were of a pair with a nest with 3 chicks in a tree by the restaurant at Chisos Mountain Lodge; the male, and occasionally the female, persistently attacked its reflection in the glass windows of the restaurant (and had been doing so every day since April!).

**Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra* (2)— in cottonwoods at the Post and Rio Grande Village.

**Western Tanager** *Piranga ludoviciana* (2)— singletons on the Chisos Mountains loop and the Lawrence Wood Picnic Area.

**Northern Cardinal** *Cardinalis cardinalis* (4)— common and widespread.

**Pyrrhuloxia** *Cardinalis sinuatus* SP (5)— frequent in the lowlands, particularly in shrub desert habitat.

**Black-headed Grosbeak** *Pheucticus melanocephalus* (3)—common in mid and high elevation wooded areas throughout.

**Blue Grosbeak** *Passerina caerulea* (6)— frequent in lowland habitats throughout, with particularly good views at the feeders at Christmas Mountain Oasis.

**Varied Bunting** *Passerina versicolor* SP (1)— spectacular views in ideal light of a pair at Sam Nail Ranch.

**Painted Bunting** *Passerina ciris* (1)— a gaudy adult male at Sam Nail Ranch..

## Passeridae: Old World Sparrows (1)

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* (3)— just seen in urban and suburban areas.

## MAMMALS (10)

**Western Pipistrelle** *Parastrellus hesperus*

**Desert Cottontail** *Sylvilagus audubonii*

**Black-tailed Jackrabbit** *Lepus californicus*

**Mexican Ground Squirrel** *Spermophilus mexicanus*

**Rock Squirrel** *Spermophilus variegatus*

**Black-tailed Prairie Dog** *Cynomys ludovicianus*

**Black Bear** *Ursus americanus* SP

**Striped Skunk** *Mephitis mephitis*

**White-tailed Deer** *Odocoileus virginianus*

**Pronghorn** *Antilocapra americana*

## REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS (8)

**Southwestern Earless Lizard** *Cophosaurus texanus*  
SP

**Side-blotched Lizard** *Uta stansburiana*

**Chihuahuan Spotted Whiptail** *Aspidoscelus*  
*exanguis* SP

**Marbled Whiptail** *Cnemidophorus marmoratus* SP

**Western Coachwhip** *Masticophis flagellum*



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**Western Black-necked Garter Snake** *Thamnophis cyrtopsis*

**Texas Spiny Softshell** *Apalone spinifera* SP  
**Rio Grande Leopard Frog** *Rana berlandieri* SP

## **BUTTERFLIES (24)**

**Golden Banded Skipper** *Autochton cellus*

**Fiery Skipper** *Hylephila phyleus*

**Pipevine Swallowtail** *Battus philenor*

**Black Swallowtail** *Papilio polyxenes*

**Two-tailed Swallowtail** *Papilio multicaudata*

**Checkered White** *Ponyia protodice*

**Orange Sulphur** *Colias eurytheme*

**Lyside Sulphur** *Kricogonia lyside* SP

**Sleepy Orange** *Abaeis nicippe*

**Dainty Sulphur** *Nathalis iole*

**Gray Hairstreak** *Strymon melinus*

**Western Pygmy-Blue** *Brephidium exilis*

**Reakirt's Blue** *Echinargus isola*

**Palmer's Metalmark** *Apodemia palmeri* SP

**American Snout** *Libytheana carinenta*

**Gulf Fritillary** *Agraulis vanillae*

**Variegated Fritillary** *Euptoieta claudia*

**Bordered Patch** *Chlosyne lacinia*

**American Lady** *Vanessa virginiensis*

**Red Admiral** *Vanessa atalanta*

**Arizona Sister** *Adelpha eulalia*

**Tawny Emperor** *Asterocampa clyton*

**Monarch** *Danaus plexippus*

**Queen** *Danaus gilippus*