

2007 Great Texas Birding Calendar

Year-round events

Available Daily

King Ranch Nature Tours — King Ranch, Kingsville. Guided birdwatching and nature-related tours on the famous King Ranch. Focus of tours, length and cost will vary. (361-592-8055, www.king-ranch.com)

Available Daily

Pontoon Boat Eagle Tours — Lake Conroe. Boat tours to observe bald eagles, waterfowl, kingfishers, wading birds and many others. \$40 per person. (936-851-0114, www.christmascreek.com)

Second Saturday of Each Month

Beginner's Bird Walk — Judson Nature Trails, Alamo Heights. Binoculars are provided. All are welcome. 8 a.m. each month except June, July and August, when groups meet at 7:30 a.m. Free. (210-342-2073, www.saaudubon.org)

Third Saturday of Each Month

Monthly Bird Walk — Lake Houston Park, New Caney. Guided bird walk for ages 13 and up. Bird enthusiasts of all experience levels are welcome. 8 a.m. Free with \$3 park admission. (281-354-6881)

Third Saturday of Each Month

Passerine Bird Banding — Gulf Coast Bird Observatory Headquarters and Sanctuary, Lake Jackson. Usually held the third Saturday of every month, the bird banding station is open to the public for observation. 8 a.m.–12 noon. Free. (979-480-0999, www.gcbo.org)

April

Every Weekend

Birdwalks — Blucher Park, Corpus Christi. Audubon Outdoor Club of Corpus Christi members lead walks through Blucher Park and the expansive lawns of the homes across the street from the park. Blucher Park is the site of large migrant fallouts during spring migration. 7:30 a.m. Free. (361-443-0744, www.ccbirding.com)

April 13–15

18th Annual Spring Native Plant Sale — Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary, McKinney. Check out more than 300 varieties of native Texas plants such as trees, shrubs, perennials, vines and grasses. All sales are tax-free. Free entry. Friday: 4–7 p.m. (members only); Saturday: 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday: 1–5 p.m. (972-562-5566, www.heardmuseum.org)

April 14

Birdathon 2007 — Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, San Antonio. Annual birding fundraiser features guided birding tours of the refuge. Call for details on fees. All day, beginning at 7 a.m. (210-628-1639, www.tx.audubon.org/mitchell.html)

April 14

14th Annual Bluebird Festival — Wills Point. Wills Point celebrates its birds with entertaining and educational programs. Driving tours give festival attendees access to hundreds of bluebirds and nesting boxes lining the roads into town. Arts and crafts, games and food booths are set up throughout the brick-lined streets of downtown. (800-972-5824, www.willspointbluebird.com)

April 14 and 21

Fennessey Ranch Spring Migration Tour — Fennessey Ranch, Refugio County. Guided full field day on 4,000-acre private ranch. Includes lunch and possibility of spotting more than 100 species of birds. \$58/person. (361-529-6600, www.fennesseyranch.com)

April 14–15

Attwater's Prairie Chicken Festival — Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge, Eagle Lake. Experience the beautiful courtship dance of the critically endangered Attwater's prairie chicken and virgin coastal prairie habitat through several guided tours by van or on foot. Free. 7 a.m. (979-234-3021)

April 14–15

14th Annual Migration Celebration — Lake Jackson. This event will have information booths and expert speakers, but the key to this festival is the birding field trips. Home to over 250 species of birds, the area's diverse habitats include coastal prairies, hardwood forests and southern bayous along the Central Flyway. (888-477-2505, www.refugefriends.org)

April 15 and 21

Yellow Rail Walks — Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, Anahuac. Search for the elusive yellow rail on foot through salty prairie habitat. Interested participants should bring waterproof boots, binoculars, insect repellent and drinking water. All tours begin at the refuge's Visitor Information Station. Free. 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. (409-267-3337, www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges)

April 15–22

11th Annual Great Texas Birding Classic — Texas Coast. This weeklong birding tournament gives birders the opportunity to compete for the chance to award \$50,000 to habitat conservation projects along the Texas coast. 400 species possible! Entry fees vary. (979-480-0999, ext. 303, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/gtbc or www.gcbo.org)

April 16–21

Earth Week 2007 — Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center, Orange. Enjoy a visit to the center's heronry and take guided nature walks or boat trips down the bayou.

Special presentation by nature photographer Wyman Meinzer on April 19. Free. (409-670-9113, www.shangrilagardens.org)

April 17, 21, 24 and 28

Walking Bird Tour — Lost Maples State Natural Area, Vanderpool. Experienced birder will accompany you on trails. Often-seen species include golden-cheeked warbler, black-capped vireo and green kingfisher. 8:30 a.m. \$8/adult, \$4/child. (830-966-3413, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/lostmaples)

April 21

Early Morning Birding Walk — Armand Bayou Nature Center, Pasadena. Biologist George Regmund will lead an extended birding tour of Armand Bayou Nature Center as a part of the nature center's Earth Day Celebration. The walk will cover the extensive woodland and prairie grasslands that the nature center manages. Expected species include warblers, thrushes, flycatchers and vireos. \$3/adult. 7–10 a.m. (281-474-2551, www.abnc.org)

April 21

Earth Day-Bay Day 2007 — Cole Park, Corpus Christi. A free family fun event that educates citizens about environmental and conservation issues. Free. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. (361-882-3439, www.baysfoundation.org)

April 24–29

Nature Quest 2007 — Concan. Enjoy birding at its best with field trips to various hill country sites and other programs and field trips for butterflies and dragonflies. Workshops and seminars will be held covering a wide variety of nature topics. Fees charged for field trips. (800-210-0380, www.thcrr.com)

April 27–30

Balcones Songbird Festival — Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, Lago Vista. A celebration of birds, butterflies and wildflowers. Join birding nature walks and enjoy family events at Balcones Canyonlands NWR. You may get to see the endangered golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo. Located about 30 miles northwest of Austin. Nature tours: \$20/person. (512-965-2473, www.balconessongbirdfestival.org)

April 28

Kids Birding 101 — Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, San Antonio. Learn about bird identification, habitat, behavior and how to use binoculars. Free, but RSVP required. 9–11 a.m. (210-628-1639, www.tx.audubon.org/mitchell.html)

April 28 and May 5

Early Opening for Birders — Armand Bayou Nature Center, Pasadena. The nature center will open its gates early for birders on these two Saturdays. These are self-guided birding opportunities. \$3/person. Open at 7 a.m. (281-474-2551, www.abnc.org)

April 30

Birdathon 2007 — Statewide. Last day to participate in the Houston Audubon Society's Annual Birdathon, the Olympics of Texas birding. Bring your team to win terrific prizes and help raise money to support education and conservation work along the Upper Texas Gulf Coast. Free. (713-932-1639, www.houstonaudubon.org)

May

May 4–6

WildFest San Antonio — Bexar County and surrounding area. WildFest San Antonio is an exciting birding and nature festival that will be held at numerous venues in San Antonio and surrounding areas from May 4 to 6. Price varies based on activity or event: free to \$20. (210-886-9991, www.wildfestsa.com)

May 5

Nature Center Festival — Matagorda County Birding Nature Center, Bay City. Nature Center Festival highlights families and wildlife. Activities include kayaking, fishing, a carnival area with games for kids and six wildlife speakers. Entrance fee: \$7/armband. 2 p.m.–8 p.m. (979-245-3336, www.mcbnc.org)

May 17–20

Dragonfly Days — Valley Nature Center, Weslaco. Guided field trips to Valley wetland destinations to watch dragonflies and damselflies. Speakers and keynote banquet. Pre-registration required. (956-969-2475, www.valleynaturecenter.org)

May 26

Warbler Woods Bird Sanctuary Open Gate — Cibolo. A renowned inland stopover location for migrating birds, especially songbirds. Thirty-six species of warblers identified on this property, and on their peak day in May, 19–20 species of warblers were identified in a single day. Free. Gates open at 8 a.m. (210- 658-0089, www.warblerwoods.com)

August

August 8–11

11th Annual Davis Mountains Hummingbird and Nature Festival — Fort Davis. Plans for this year's festival include seminars, workshops, field trips of local birding sights and great hospitality as you look for as many as 10 species of hummingbirds seen in this area at this time. General birding and bird banding will also be featured. See Web site for registration fees. (432-364-2499, www.cdri.org)

August 15–November 15 (daily)

Smith Point Hawk Watch — Hawk Watch Tower, Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area. Come observe and/or volunteer with the Hawk Watch staff as they identify and count the raptors making their way along the coast heading to Latin America for the winter. Free. (979-480-0999, www.gcbo.org)

August 18

Bluebird Symposium — Camp Chaparral, west of Wichita Falls. Keith Kridler (author of *The Bluebird Monitor's Guide*), Denise Townsend, Laura Packer and John Cys will give presentations. Registration and nature walk begin at 8 a.m. \$10–\$25/person. 9 a.m.–4 p.m. (940-691-5702, www.texasbluebirdsociety.org)

September

September 10–December 3 (Mondays)

Beginning ID Series — South Texas Botanical Gardens and Nature Center, Corpus Christi. Designed for beginning birders, with acclaimed birder and naturalist Gene Blacklock. Includes 12 Monday evening class sessions (6:30–8:30 p.m.) and 6 field trips. Prepaid registration by September 5 required. \$175/person for entire series; \$150/members. (361-852-2100, www.stxbot.org)

September 13–16

Fennessey Ranch Fall Hummingbird Watch — Fennessey Ranch, Refugio County. Fennessey Ranch and Rockport Hummingbird Festival partner up to offer a tour of the private ranch in search of hummingbirds. Two trips daily. \$40/person. (361-529-6600, www.fennesseyranch.com)

September 13–16

Hummer/Bird Celebration — Rockport-Fulton High School. A celebration of the migration of thousands of hummingbirds through Rockport and Fulton. Fees vary for speakers, bus tours and boat trips. 8 a.m.–8 p.m. (361-729-6445, www.rockport-fulton.org)

September 14–16

Second Annual Fall Nature Quest — Concan. Enjoy birding at its best with field trips to various hill country sites and other programs and field trips for butterflies and dragonflies. Workshops and seminars will cover a wide variety of nature topics. Fees charged per field trip. (800-210-0380, www.thcrr.com)

September 14–16

Texas Gatorfest — Fort Anahuac Park, Anahuac. A celebration of the alligator and its wetlands habitat, this family-oriented festival offers unique attractions like airboat rides, Trinity River boat tours and, of course, lots of alligators. \$10/adult, \$5/student (18 & under). (409-267-4190, www.texasgatorfest.com)

September 22

Fennessey Ranch Fall Hawk Watch — Fennessey Ranch, Refugio County. Guided field trip in 4,000 acres with 9 miles of Mission River. Learn to identify hawks and witness kettles of thousands of hawks. \$59/person. (361-529-6600, www.fennesseyranch.com)

October

October 5

Texas Bluebird Society Dinner and Auction — McKinney Roughs near Bastrop. Silent auction and casual dinner (with speaker) on the night before the annual Texas Parks and Wildlife Expo. Some campsites available at nearby McKinney Falls State Park. Cost TBD. (512-268-5678, www.texasbluebirdsociety.org)

October 6–7

Texas Parks & Wildlife Expo — Texas Parks and Wildlife Headquarters, Austin. Presented by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Expo gives visitors an opportunity to try out and learn about a wide range of outdoor sports and pastimes. The birding area offers nature walks, workshops and information about birding in Texas. (800-792-1112, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/expo)

October 12–14

Fall Native Plant Sale — Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary, McKinney. Choose from hundreds of native plants ideally suited for Texas weather, including woody lilies, trees and vibrant colorful perennials and wildflowers at the third annual fall native plant sale. Get expert advice to help you find the right plant for you and your landscape. Friday: 4–7 p.m. (members only); Saturday: 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday: 1–5 p.m. (972-562-5566, www.heardmuseum.org)

October 13

Annual Fall Wildlife Festival — Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, San Antonio. Annual event featuring educational activities and displays on birds, plants and wildlife. Birding tours, raptor show and children's activities. Free. 9 a.m.–4 p.m. (210-628-1639, www.tx.audubon.org/mitchell.html)

October 18–21

Texas Butterfly Festival — Rio Grande Valley, Mission. The festival celebrates the Valley's 280-plus species of butterflies. Learn from internationally renowned speakers and explore the area's natural habitats on expert-guided field trips. (800-580-2700, www.texasbutterfly.com)

October 26–27

Wild in Willacy/Heritage Nature Festival — Raymondville. Ranch tours, cook-offs, trade show, music, food, games and fun for all ages. Free. (956-689-3171, www.wildinwillacy.com)

October 31–November 4

El Cielo Butterfly Festival — Ciudad Mante, Tamaulipas, Mexico. Get a true taste of the tropics beyond Texas' southern border. Local bird and butterfly experts lead tours of this Biosphere Reserve in northeast Mexico. The all-inclusive festival package trip departs from the Texas Valley (boarding choices: McAllen, Harlingen, Weslaco or Brownsville). \$520/person (two people per room). (www.elcielofestival.com)

November/December

November 3

Kids Birding 101 — Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, San Antonio. Kids learn about bird identification, habitat and how to use binoculars. Free, RSVP required. 9–11 a.m. (210-628-1639, www.tx.audubon.org/mitchell.html)

November 7-11

14th Annual Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival — Harlingen Municipal Auditorium, Harlingen. The Rio Grande Valley's premier birding festival is set in Harlingen for a simple reason: great birds. Five action-packed days of expert-led field trips, seminars and the exciting Birding Bazaar. (956-423-5440, www.rgvbirdfest.com)

November 15-18

8th Annual South Texas Wildlife and Birding Festival — Life Center, Kingsville. The festival presents a unique array of birding and nature tours led by renowned guides as well as a variety of seminars hosted by academics, naturalists and guides. On Saturday, the festival hosts a wide variety of educational activities for adults and children from the Valley Nature Center, Last Chance Forever Bird of Prey Conservancy, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Zoo, in addition to fun games with prizes. Free admission; tours \$25-\$60/person. (361-592-8516, www.kingsvilletexas.com)

December 7

GCBO Holiday Sale and Open House — Gulf Coast Bird Observatory Nature Store. Enjoy a holiday treat while shopping for your birder or nature lover. Great selection of birding books and nature guides at a 10 percent discount for GCBO members. Free entry. 10 a.m.–6 p.m. (979-480-0999, www.gcbo.org)

January/February 2008

January 14–May 3

Advanced Birding ID Series — South Texas Botanical Gardens and Nature Center, Corpus Christi. Designed for advanced birders (who have taken a beginners' course) with renowned birder and naturalist Gene Blacklock. Includes 12 Monday evening class sessions (6:30–8:30 p.m.) and 6 field trips. Prepaid registration by January 9 required. \$175/person for entire series; \$150/members. (361-852-2100, www.stxbot.org)

February 7–10

Laredo Birding and Butterfly Festival — Laredo nature trails. One of the few places where you have a good chance to see over 400 species of birds and close to 100 types of butterflies. Hosted by the Monte Mucho Audubon Society and the Laredo Convention and Visitors Bureau. Cost TBD. (800-361-3360, www.visitlaredo.com)

February 9–10

Eagle Fest — Emory. Rains County bills itself as the “Eagle Capital of Texas.” Nature and birding field trips, live bird exhibits, speakers and Native American programs. \$1/person; \$5/person bus tours; \$15/person boat tour. (903-473-3913, www.eaglefest.org)

February 17–21

El Cielo Nature Festival — Ciudad Mante, Tamaulipas, Mexico. Get a true taste of the tropics beyond Texas’ southern border. Local bird and butterfly experts lead tours of this Biosphere Reserve in northeast Mexico. The all-inclusive festival package trip departs from the Texas Valley (boarding choices: McAllen, Harlingen, Weslaco or Brownsville). \$580/person (two people per room). (www.elcielofestival.com)

February 22–24

12th Annual Celebration of Whooping Cranes and Other Birds — Port Aransas. Pack your binoculars and flock to the coast to observe the endangered whooping crane and listen to lectures by birding experts, attend birding tours both by land and sea, go to photography workshops, and browse a nature-related trade show and the International Children’s Art Exhibit. (800-452-6278, www.portaransas.org)

March/April 2008

March 1

Birds of the Texas Coastal Bend Short Course — South Texas Botanical Gardens and Nature Center, Corpus Christi. Study some of the more than 450 known bird species in South Texas with well-known, entertaining birder and naturalist Gene Blacklock. Pre-paid registration by February 24 required. 8:45–11:30 a.m. class; 1:30–4:30 p.m. field trip. (361-852-2100, www.stxbot.org)

March 27–30

Texas Tropics Nature Festival — McAllen. The McAllen Chamber of Commerce’s 12th Annual Texas Tropics Nature Festival offers field trips to birding hot spots and seminars by popular speakers, in addition to a nature marketplace. Costs vary. (956-682-2871, www.mcallenchamber.com)

April 3–6

FeatherFest 2008 — Galveston. A birding and general nature festival focusing on the birds of the Upper Texas Coast during early spring (late wintering birds, early spring trans-Gulf migrants and many all-season birds). Expert-led seminars on many topics, field trips by bus, boat and kayak, activities for non-birding spouses and social events. Registration: \$30/person; cost varies for specific activities. 5 a.m.–5 p.m. (409-392-0841, www.galvestonfeatherfest.com)

April 11–13

19th Annual Spring Native Plant Sale — Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary, McKinney. Check out over 300 varieties of native Texas plants such as trees, shrubs, perennials, vines and grasses. All sales are tax-free. Free entry. Friday: 4–7 p.m.

(members only); Saturday: 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday: 1–5 p.m. (972-562-5566;
www.heardmuseum.org)