

The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail (the Trail) has been developed to help birders find the great avian resources along the Texas coast, and to ensure that the Texas coastal birding experience is rich and varied. Private citizens, landholders, conservation groups, businesses, governmental agencies, and communities are working together to build this natural promenade. While Texas is famed for its birds, Texans are known for their hospitality. On the Trail, birders benefit from

the union of the two. The Texas Coast is a palette of tanagers, buntings, orioles, warblers, and hummingbirds (to name but a few). No wonder travelers converge on Texas to marvel at this colorful array, for Texas eclipses all other states in its numbers of bird species—over six hundred! Of these, more than 75% have been seen along

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) jointly sponsor the Trail. Highway enhancement funds allocated to each state through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) provided financial support. The Central Texas Coast (CTC) section of the trail consists of 95 distinct birding sites. Each site is marked with the Trail logo and with a unique site number. Seven sites are enhanced with boardwalks, kiosks, observation platforms, and/or landscaping. The Trail map informs visitors about birds that may be found at each site, the best season to visit the locations, and information about food and lodging in

The Trail is comprised of twelve separate loops. Each encompasses an array of associated sites and birds. The color-coded loops on the front and back of the map provide easy access to related information. Site symbols on the map are shaped and colored to show access, indicate fees when applicable, and denote the availability of developed overnight facilities at each location. Sponsoring coastal communities and landholders generously pledge their backing, and invite the Trail and its visitors into their local communities. Local goods-and-service providers—hotels, motels, B&B's, campgrounds, restaurants, auto rental agencies, airlines, bookstores, gift shops, gas stations—champion the Trail and are the foundation for its future. They need and deserve your support.

So, welcome to the Trail! Enjoy a leisurely, relaxed journey as you wend your way along the coast. While you are here, be sure to say "hello" to your fellow birders, and let the local folks know that you are a visiting birdwatcher. We are happy you came; we want to make your stay memorable. Thanks for taking the time to drop by, and good birding in Texas! Andrew Sansom Charles Wes Heald **Executive Director** Executive Director

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Texas Department of Transportation

GUIDE TO USING THE MAP

The natural beauty and history of Texas are often hidden and subtle. Not all of Texas nature destinations are as conspicuous as Big Bend National Park or Padre Island National Seashore. This map furnishes information about the Trail locations, including detailed instructions on how to reach each site. Using this map, birding travelers will no longer struggle to locate obscure birding spots that may contain the species they traveled to see This publication contains an illustrated highway map of the central Texas coast that shows the 95 designated sites. Each site is marked with a symbol that points to its location, with the shape of the symbol signifying the following: Circle: The site is open daily, and developed camping is available at the site.

Iriangle: The site is open for day use only. **Square:** Call ahead, access to the site is restricted; visitation may be arranged by contacting the managing entity at the address and telephone number provided. Note: If the symbol is outlined in black, an entrance fee or donation may be In addition, each symbol is colored to distinguish the segment or loop to

which the site belongs. Each site has been assigned to one of the twelve loops, and no loop requires more than two days to leisurely traverse. For birders who wish to visit the Trail over a weekend, try one or two of the loops. Descriptions of the sites are on the back of the map, and include directions to each location, the most productive seasons for visiting, examples of the birds to be seen, and contacts for additional information. The text, like the map, is organized by loops. A list of contacts (chambers of commerce, convention-and-visitors bureaus) begins each section. Information about food, lodging, and local points of interest may be obtained from these organizations. Several also publish maps and guides to the birds and sites in their regions, including the following: Port Lavaca/ Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce, Palacios Chamber of Commerce, Rockport/Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce, Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Kingsville

To aid travelers, each site is marked with a brown sign illustrated with the familiar Black Skimmer logo, as well as a unique site number that corresponds with Trail to confirm your route and location. Information about traveling Texas highways may be requested from TXDOT TPWD may be contacted about state parks and wildlife management areas (see addresses and telephone numbers below). The statewide Rare Bird Alert, supported by the Houston Audubon Society, should be called for the most recent information about unusual birds sighted along the coast.

Texas Department of Transportation

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department 4200 Smith School Road

Visitor Center.

Travel and Information Division Austin, Texas 78744-3291 P.O. Box 5064 Park Reservations: (512) 389-8900 Austin, Texas 78763 Information: (800) 792-1112 (800) 452-9292 www.tpwd.state.tx.us www.traveltex.com

Audubon Statewide Rare Bird Alert Telephone: (713) 369-9673 www.io.com/~pdhulce/txrba

NOAA Weather Information Corpus Christi Radio: 162.550 MHz Victoria Radio: 162.400 MHz Internet: www.srh.noaa.gov/crp

LA BAHIA LOOP continued

▲ CTC 042: MISSION RIVER FLATS Season: Winter, Migration

Continue south on FM 2678 toward Bayside. The road crosses the Mission River, and the Mission River Flats may be birded (with caution) from the shoulder. In late summer and early fall Wood Storks may be seen here, and waterfowl flocks in the winter may be prodigious. Low water levels in spring may expose vast expanses of mudflats, and migratory shorebirds will concentrate in the shallow waters (also look for American Avocet here in winter). ▲ CTC 043: BLACK POINT (BAYSIDE)

Season: All Seasons, especially Migration

Continue south on FM 2678 (which becomes FM 136 immediately south of the Mission River) to Bayside. Inspect the flats south of Bayside for pelicans, herons, egrets, waterfowl, and shorebirds. These shallows are especially attractive to Reddish Egret, and at low tide thousands of shorebirds may crowd the exposed flats (test your prowess with "peeps" here). Notice that Bayside is perched upon a bluff overlooking Copano Bay. During migration hawks ride the updrafts from this ridge, which offers an advantageous spot from which to see raptors such as Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawk, all three falcons (American Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine), and Northern Harrier at eye level. Bird this area in fall during the passage of cold fronts or northers to enjoy the peak raptor movements.

Season: All Seasons

▲ CTC 044: EGERY FLATS

Continue south on FM 136 from Bayside to Egery Flats, turning left (east) after leaving the causeway onto Egery Road. Search the flats along the road for herons, egrets, and waterfowl, and the salt marshes for Clapper Rail, Seaside, and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow. During low tides a broad selection of shorebirds, ncluding American Avocet, Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Curlew, Black-bellied Plover, both dowitchers, Dunlin, and Least Sandpiper will frequent the acres of exposed mudflat. The shallow waters of Egery Flats attract all of the resident terns, so look in warm months for Caspian, Royal, Sandwich, Gull-billed, Forster's, and Least here. Black Terns may also be seen here in migration. Watch the marshes in the evening for flights of Roseate Spoonbills going to roost, and listen for the squawk of Black-crowned Night-Herons as they fly out to the flats to feed each evening.

▲ CTC 045: WELDER PARK (SINTON) Season: Winter, Migration

Continue south on FM 136 to the intersection with TX 188. Turn right (west) on TX 188, and continue to Sinton and US 181. Welder Park (not to be confused with the Rob and Bessie Welder Park) may be reached off US 181 on N. Rachal in Sinton. From the intersection with N. Rachal, turn right (look for the sign to the Wayne Hitt Law Enforcement Center). Continue on N. Rachal across Chiltipin Creek to the entrance to the park (700 North Rachal Avenue). Old Welder Park (along with Oyster Lake Road near Palacios and Live Oak Park in Ingleside) is a rare find in this age of bird hotlines, field guides, and the Internet: an outstanding birding site that is rarely birded. Welder is tucked away in a remote corner of Sinton, and the park is now closed to vehicular traffic in order to ensure its sanctity and solitude. Park at the entrance and stroll into the park. As with Lion's / Shelley Park in Refugio, Welder is a magnet for migrating andbirds. The immense trees along the creek may harbor flocks of migrants in the spring, and be sure to walk along the edge of the creek to find the two waterthrushes, Prothonotary Warbler, or Common Yellowthroat, Check the densest underbrush for skulkers such as Worm-eating, Hooded, and Mourning warblers. Adjacent to the park entrance is mesquite scrub, and a brief stop at the fence's edge may uncover a number of species (such as Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Bewick's Wren) that may not be seen within the park itself.

▲ CTC 046: ROB AND BESSIE WELDER PARK (SINTON) **Season: Winter, Migration**

Rob and Bessie Welder Park is located on US 181 N approximately 2.5 miles north of Sinton. Within this multi-use facility (approximately 300 acres), the City of Sinton has recently dedicated about 45 acres to remain as a natural preserve Enter the park, and stay to the right past the ballparks until reaching the parking area for the nature trail. The trail loops through an area of open grasslands with scattered trees, and eventually passes by an observation platform overlooking a densely vegetated pond. Look in the cattails for Common Yellowthroat and Marsh Wren, and in the trees surrounding the pond for migrant landbirds. As this nature preserve ages, the habitat, as well as the birding opportunities, will

The Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation is located approximately 8 miles north of Sinton on US 77. The refuge is open to the public each Thursday at 3:00 p.m. Contact the Welder Wildlife Foundation for a bird checklist and nformation about public access. **Welder Wildlife Foundation** P.O. Drawer 1400

Sinton, TX 78387 (361) 364-2643

ARANSAS LOOP

Rockport-Fulton Area Chamber Aransas Pass Chamber of Commerce 452 Cleveland Blvd. 404 Broadway Aransas Pass, Texas 78336 Rockport, Texas 78382-2765 (361) 758-2750 or (800) 633-3028 (361) 729-6445 or (800) 242-0071

Season: Winter, Migration Leaving Sinton on TX 188, travel east toward Rockport. After crossing the intersection with TX 136, continue east and stop at Port Bay. Scan the bay for waterfowl and wading birds, and inspect the mudflats for shorebirds. Continue east to the intersection with TX 35 Bypass, and turn left (north) and travel for 1.6 miles to the entrance to Aransas Woods (to your right). Park at the gate and enter. During "fallouts," coastal mottes such as Aransas Woods offer food and protection to thousands upon thousands of weary landbirds who might otherwise perish if forced to continue inland to the nearest contiguous forests. Goose Island State Park, Connie Hagar Sanctuary, and Aransas Woods are vital links in the migration chain, and no spring trip to the Texas coast is complete without a visit to these coastal woods. The site contains an observation platform contributed by the family of Robert M. Latimer as a memorial to his interest in the birds

• CTC 048: GOOSE ISLAND STATE PARK Season: Winter, Migration

Continue north on TX 35 Bypass until reaching its deadend at FM 3036. Turn right (east), and continue until the intersection with TX 35. To reach sites 48 and 49, turn left (north) on TX 35 and continue across Copano Bay on the Lyndon B. Johnson Causeway. Turn right (east) on Main Street in Lamar after

MATAGORDA LOOP

Brazosport Chamber of Commerce Angleton Chamber of Commerce 420 Texas 332 West P.O. Box 1356 Clute, TX 77531 Angleton, TX 77516 (409) 265-2505 (409) 849-6443

▲ CTC 001: SARGENT BEACH Season: Winter, Migration Begin your journey down the central section of the Great Texas Coastal Birding rail (GTCBT) by taking FM 457 south from its intersection with FM 521 in Matagorda County. Explore the coastal grasslands and marshes along FM 457 approaching the coast (White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Sandhill Crane in rinter). Scan the beach for shorebirds (Black-bellied Plover, Piping Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling). The bottomlands along Caney Creek, immediately southwest of Sargent, accommodate a rich woodland avifauna. Many of the eastern

BIRD CANEY CREEK FROM THE PUBLIC ROADS. ■ CTC 002: BIG BOGGY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

woodland species, such as Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, and Swainson's

Warbler (rare), may be found in the forests along this waterway. **PLEASE**, **ONLY**

Season: Winter Access to this refuge, part of the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) complex, is located along FM 521 between Sargent and Matagorda in Matagorda County. Continue west on FM 521 from Sargent until reaching Chinquapin Road turn left (south) on Chinquapin Road, and then drive by Big Boggy NWR to Chinquapin Landing. This refuge is closed to the public, although day trips are periodically offered by the refuge staff. Contact the Brazoria NWR staff in Angleton for information about arranging for visitation. Big Boggy National Wildlife Refuge

RIO COLORADO LOOP

Angleton, Texas 77515

(409) 849-6062

(409) 245-8333

Bay City Chamber of Commerce

Bay City, Texas 77404-0768

Eagle Lake Chamber of Commerce 408 East Main Eagle Lake, TX 77434 (409) 234-2780

▲ CTC 003: MATAGORDA COUNTY JETTY PARK

Season: Winter, Migration

Continuing west on FM 521 to the intersection with TX 60 at Wadsworth, proceed south on TX 60 to Matagorda. The grasslands along FM 521 between Sargent and Matagorda offer a fine opportunity to see White-tailed Hawk, a south Texas specialty. The woodlots within the City of Matagorda have been planted with a variety of exotic trees and shrubs that attract neotropical migrants in spring and fall (be sure to check the feeders in town for wintering hummingbirds). This area is also an important part of the nationally renowned Mad Island Marsh Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Turn left (south) on FM 2031, and follow the Colorado River to the Gulf. There are numerous pull-outs along this road, and the marshes adjacent to this road support a wide variety of wading birds such as White Ibis, White-faced Ibis (look closely for Glossy in spring), and Roseate Spoonbill, as well as salt marsh specialists such as Clapper Rail and Seaside Sparrow. Walk out onto the pier in winter and scan the Gulf for Northern Gannet, scoters, or jaegers (in the summer, look for Magnificent Frigatebirds soaring over the placid Gulf waters). Gulls, terns, and shorebirds roost at the mouth of the river adjacent to the pier. In addition, the beach to the east is an excellent spot to look for Snowy and

▲ CTC 004: ATTWATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Season: Winter, Migration Travel north on TX 60 from Matagorda to Wharton, take FM 102 north to its merger with FM 3013, then take FM 3013 east to the refuge entrance (approximately 6 miles northeast of Eagle Lake). Attwater Prairie-Chicken NWR encompasses one of the most significant expanses of native grassland remaining in Colorado County. Established to protect a vestige population of Attwater's Greater Prairie-Chicken, the refuge is home to many species of grassland birds that have become scarce with the conversion of the native prairies to agricultural Grasshopper Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, and Harris's Sparrow are among the species that are relatively easy to find here in winter. A number of rarities have eared here, including Least Grebe, Masked Duck, Zone-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, and Say's Phoebe. Access to the refuge is restricted. Eagle Lake is host to a prairie-chicken festival each spring, so check with the Chamber of Commerce in Eagle Lake for the dates. In addition, the Attwater Prairie-Chicken NWR CBC is held each year in late December. Contact the refuge personnel if you wish to participate. Eagle Lake (approximately 2 miles south of the town of Eagle Lake on FM 102) furnishes quality viewing ortunities for waterfowl. Bald Eagles are frequently seen soaring over Attwater Prairie-Chicken National Wildlife Refuge P.O. Box 519

▲ CTC 005: TEXAS R.I.C.E. / PIERCE RANCH WATERBIRD VIEWING SITE

Season: Fall (October) through early Spring (March) Return to Wharton, then travel southwest on US 59 (toward El Campo) to Pierce Continue on US 59 past Pierce, then exit on Pierce West Road and travel south for four miles. The waterbird viewing sites are well marked and may be accessed from the roadside. Texas R.I.C.E. is a coalition of rice growers, conservationists, and interested groups and individuals who have gathered to "foster and strengthen relationships between the rice industry and other users and interest groups in the Texas rice-growing area." The rice fields here are maintained throughout the waterfowl season for the benefit of roosting geese, ducks, cranes, and shorebirds. Also try visiting this area during October, when the rice growers are harvesting their second crop of the year. The rice harvesting machinery will often flush waterbirds from the rice fields as they cut the rice, and several species of rails (King, Virginia, Sora, Yellow) are relatively easy to see as they fly ahead of the harvesters.

▲ CTC 006: SOUTH TEXAS PROJECT PRAIRIE WETLANDS

Eagle Lake, Texas 77434

(409) 234-3021

Season: Fall (October) through Spring (April)
Return to the intersection of FM 521 and TX 60 and travel west two miles past the Colorado River to the South Texas Project. Park at the observation area. The 110 acre project consists of three seasonally flooded wetlands which host many species of wintering ducks and roosting geese. In spring, look for migrant shorebirds and other waterbirds. For a tour of the site, contact the Visitors Center (361-972-3611).

TRES PALACIOS LOOP

Palacios Chamber of Commerce 312 Main Street Palacios, Texas 77465 (361) 972-2615

Mad Island Office: The Nature Conservancy of Texas P.O. Box 163 Collegeport, Texas 77428-016 (361) 972-2559

■ CTC 007: MAD ISLAND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA, CLIVE RUNNELLS FAMILY MAD ISLAND MARSH PRESERVE

Season: Fall through Spring From the South Texas Project, take FM 521 west to FM 1095, then take FM 1095 eft (south) toward Collegeport and its intersection with Brazos Tower Road. Turn left (south) on Brazos Tower Road, and then left (east) on A-P Ranch Road. After two miles the gate marks the entrances to both Mad Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA), managed by TPWD, and The Clive Runnells Family Mad Island Marsh Preserve, managed by The Nature Conservancy of Texas (TNCT). Both of these sites are closed to the public, although access may be arranged through the managing agencies and organizations on special occasions. In addition to seasonal public trips into these properties, the Mad Island Marsh CBC is conducted each year in December. Contact TPWD or TNCT if you wish to participate.

▲ CTC 008: OYSTER LAKE ROAD Season: Winter, Migration

From the intersection of A-P Ranch Road and Brazos Tower Road, continue west on Franzen Road. Turn south onto Oyster Lake Road. Oyster Lake Road continues toward Matagorda Bay for several miles as a gravel road. During most weather conditions this road is passable, but be cautious during heavy rain. Oyster Lake Road travels through an extensive salt marsh, and in winter many species such as Clapper Rail, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, and Seaside Sparrow may be abundant along the roadside. Scan the islands along the bayshore for American Oystercatcher, and watch for bay ducks such as Redhead, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, and Red-breasted Merganser. In migration the scrubby trees along the roadside may be swarming with migrants, and always remember to watch overhead for raptors and swallows. The rice fields that border the northern section of Oyster Lake Road (as well as along Franzen Road) may be packed in spring with nigrant shorebirds such as American Golden-Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, Baird's indpiper, and White-rumped Sandpiper. Both Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes are ubiquitous in winter, and remember to examine each Snow Goose flock for Ross.' As you return to Brazos Tower Road, you may wish to continue west toward Collegeport. Park at the end of the pavement and search the bay for loons, grebes, and ducks.

▲ CTC 009: CASH'S CREEK

Season: Winter, Migration Return to the intersection of FM 1095 and FM 521, go west on FM 521 to FM 2853, then take FM 2853 south. The agricultural fields in this region of Texas (particularly rice) attract hundreds of thousands of cranes, geese, and ducks each winter (for example, over two million Snow Geese annually winter along the upper Texas coast between the Sabine River and Corpus Christi). Check the Snow Goose flocks carefully; Ross' Goose is an increasingly common winter visitor to this region. Cash's Creek crosses FM 2853, and the freshwater marshes along the creek can be viewed from the shoulder of the bridge. Cliff Swallows nest under the bridge in the summer. Search the grasslands along FM 2853 for raptors, including White-tailed Hawk.

Season: Winter

▲ CTC 010: BAYSHORE DRIVE

From Cash's Creek Bridge (Site 9) proceed on FM 2853 1.3 miles south to Bayshore Drive (which parallels Tres Palacios Bay to Business 35/1st Street). The drive offers an opportunity to inspect Tres Palacios Bay and the bordering marshes for a variety of waterbirds. Look for Common Loon, Eared Grebe, and a selection of diving ducks such as Redhead, Common Goldeneve, and Red-breasted Merganser. The three species of scoters, as well as rarities such as Pacific Loon and Oldsquaw, are always a possibility in the winter.

▲ CTC 011: TRULL MARSH

Enhancements: Parking, Boardwalk, Observation Platform At Trull Marsh This site extends for two blocks north of the intersection of Business 35 and Bayshore Drive, with Trull Marsh on the west and Brookings on the east of Business 35/1st Street. With the water beginning where the highway shoulder ends, ducks often dabble within a few feet of the cars that whiz by. Ducks such as Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, and Bufflehead, and shorebirds such as Black-necked Stilt (nesting), Greater Yellowlegs, and Long-billed Dowitcher crowd the shallow agoons. The observation deck at Trull Marsh places birders in the midst of an avian riot, with dozens of herons, egrets, ibis, shorebirds, and waterfowl vying in a feeding frenzy. Both sites will be enhanced for birding over the next few years, so be sure to track their progress.

▲ CTC 012: PALACIOS WATERFRONT AND TEXAS BAPTIST ENCAMPMENT Season: Winter

The Texas Baptist Encampment is situated on a point of land (Hamilton's Point) near the conjunction of East and South Bay Boulevards, and may be reached by continuing south 3 blocks on Business 35 from Trull Marsh and turning left on East Bay Boulevard. Park along Bay Drive near the fishing pier, and search Tre Palacios Bay for loons, grebes, pelicans, ducks (Common Goldeneye), gulls, and terns. Combined with Bayshore Drive (CTC 010), and Lookout Point (CTC 013) the time invested here in scouring the bay for waterbirds should be well rewarded.

▲ CTC 013: LOOKOUT POINT Season: Winter

From Site 12, proceed west on Business 35 past the turning basins, then turn eft (south) on Margerum Road toward Tres Palacios Bay. Park at the end of Margerum Road and scan the bay for waterbirds (as with the previous two sites) n addition, pay close attention to the various gulls that congregate around the shing boats docked in the harbor. Bonaparte's, Laughing, Ring-billed, and Herring are to be expected in winter, but each year a few oddities such as Lesser Black-backed, Glaucous, and Black-legged kittiwake wend their way to the coast as well.

▲ CTC 014: PALACIOS MARINE EDUCATION CENTER NATURE TRAIL Season: All Seasons From the intersection of Margerum Road and Business 35, drive west 0.6 mile to Camp Hulen Road and go south 0.7 mile to the entrance gate. Park in the visitor's

parking lot, and walk the nature trail beginning to the left of the pier. At times n spring the scrub along the trail may be alive with migrant vireos, warblers, untings, and orioles. Check the pond for wading birds such as herons, egrets, and bitterns, and walk out onto the observation deck to search Tres Palacios Bay for waterbirds. In the marsh around the observation deck you should find Clapper Rail, Seaside Sparrow, and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (winter).

▲ CTC 015: PERRY R. BASS STATE MARINE FISHERIES RESEARCH STATION

Season: All Seasons Go west on TX 35 from Palacios for 7.5 miles, then turn left (south) for 5.5 miles on FM 3280 to the Perry R. Bass State Marine Fisheries Research Station. Examine the prairies and marshes along FM 3280 for a variety of coastal grassland species such as Northern Harrier, Sandhill Crane, and Short-eared Owl (in winter), and scan the Gulf at the end of the road for loons, grebes, ducks, gulls, and terns. Shorebirds such as Ruddy Turnstone and Sanderling may be seen along the beach. During migration, the hedge and fence rows may be lined with migrants such as Eastern and Western kingbirds, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, and Dickcissel.

> ▲ CTC 016: OLIVIA / PORT ALTO Season: Winter, Migration Continue west on TX 35 to Carancahua Bay. Park at the boat ramp, and search

the bay for ducks (Redhead, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser) and perhaps an Osprey or two. Although not a major stop on the Trail, the bay always has the potential to produce a surpris Continue west on TX 35 to the intersection with TX 172. Before entering the Texana Loop to the north, turn south on TX 172 toward Port Alto and Olivia. From the end of TX 172 south in Olivia, scour Keller Bay for loons, grebes, and bay ducks, and search the adjacent marshes for rails and shorebirds. Travel east from Olivia on CR 314 toward Carancahua Bay and Port Alto. This road transects thickets of Tamaulipan scrub that may be teeming with warblers during a spring fallout. Along this road you may also hear the skylark song of the Cassin's Sparrow (summer only). Eventually you will reach the western shore of Carancahua Bay. Scan the bay for waterbirds, and at low tide shorebirds. Turn north and take M. Johnson Ave. toward Port Alto. The scrub along this road is home to both Bewick's Wren and Curve-billed Thrasher, South Texas species that rarely range farther north along the coast. Return to TX 172 on Spur 159, checking the fields for Sandhill Cranes in winter and grassland shorebirds in spring.

TEXANA LOOP **Jackson County Chamber of Commerce**

P.O. Box 788 Edna, Texas 77957 (361) 782-7146

▲ CTC 017: LAKE TEXANA MUSTANG CREEK BOAT RAMP Season: Winter, Migration Returning to the intersection of TX 35 and TX 172, travel north on TX 172 toward Ganado. The Lavaca Navidad River Authority (LNRA) Mustang Creek boat ramp near Ganado offers the opportunity to park and bird the oak woodlands that typify the bottomlands of the sister rivers: the Navidad and the Lavaca. Eastern woodland species such as Red-shouldered Hawk, Pileated Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, and Carolina Chickadee abound here. Wood Ducks often spill

out over the woodlands in early morning while the lake waters around the boat

CTC 018: MUSTANG CREEK RECREATION AREA Season: All Seasons except for Summer

ramp are frequently swarming with a variety of dabbling ducks.

This interesting wooded enclave is admittedly difficult to find. From Ganado go west on Loop 522 W to FM 2982 S, then turn left (south) on FM 2982 to CR 249. Turn left (east) on CR 249, and drive straight to the entrance of the Mustang Creek Recreation Area. Relatively unspoiled and rarely visited, thi forested area offers the opportunity to see a variety of eastern woodland birds, most of which are identical to those seen in Lake Texana State Park (SP). However, migration tends to shuffle the deck, and one will never know exactly what to expect at any given location. Wilderness camping is allowed. ▲ CTC 019: LNRA LAKE TEXANA BOAT RAMP

Season: Winter, Migration Continue southwest on US 59 and cross the Lake Texana bridge. Immediately west of the lake exit for the LNRA boat ramp on the north side of the lake. The waters around the boat ramp offer protection to waterfowl during winter northers so search this area for a variety of dabbling ducks including Cinnamon Teal. Southern Bald Eagles nest in the woodlands along the north shore of the lake, and they may at times be seen from the boat ramp or from the causeway. Continue southwest on US 59, turn north on FM 530 for a stretch of interesting roadside birding between Cordele and Vienna, including the Navidad River crossing in Lavaca County.

• CTC 020: LAKE TEXANA STATE PARK Season: All Seasons Return to US 59 and continue southwest on US 59 to Edna, then turn south on

TX 111. Continue on TX 111 as it veers to the east until reaching the entrance to Lake Texana SP (approximately 6.5 miles from Edna). In pre-European Texas, prairie grasslands dominated the coastal landscape. Only along the rivers that intermittently bisect these coastal grasslands were there woodlands. Lake Texana SP safeguards an example of this Texas coastal riparian forest, as well as the woodland birds that inhabit such a forest. Mississippi Kite (in summer), Red-bellied, Downy, and Pileated woodpeckers, Carolina Chickadee, and American Crow are examples of eastern species that soon disappear (to be replaced by more tropical species) as one drifts to the south. The park offers overnight facilities (campsites with water and electrical hookups, showers, restrooms). Lake Texana State Park P.O. Box 760 Edna, Texas 77957 (361) 782-5718

© CTC 021: BRACKENRIDGE PLANTATION PARK AND CAMPGROUND Season: All Seasons

With similar habitats, birds, and facilities as the state park, Brackenridge Plantation is a private counterpart to the public facilities at the state park. Brackenridge Plantation is located directly across TX 111 from the entrance to Lake Texana SP. Full hook-ups are available at this campground. **Brackenridge Campground** P.O. Box 487 Edna, Texas 77957 (361) 782-5249 or (361) 782-7145

▲ CTC 022: PALMETTO BEND DAM

(361) 749-5246

Season: All Seasons

Season: Winter Return west on TX 111 to the intersection with FM 3131, then travel south on FM 3131 as it turns east to Palmetto Bend Dam. The agricultural fields along FM 3131 are attractive to grassland shorebirds in the spring, so be alert for flocks of American Golden-Plovers, Long-billed Curlews, and Upland Sandpipers. Turn left (east) on CR 417, and continue to Lake Texana and the LNRA Simon's Boat Ramp. Returning to FM 3131, continue 2 miles south to Palmetto Bend Dam. Upon reaching Palmetto Bend Dam, park in the designated sites and scan the lake for loons, grebes, and diving ducks. In recent years Palmetto Bend Dam has been among the most consistent locations along the Texas coast to see Western Grebe. Also listen for a variety of woodland birds in the bottomland forest below the dam.

> Continue on S. Staples across Oso Creek to the entrance to the Corpus Christi anical Garden on your right. The Corpus Christi Botanical Garden preserve boasts an impressive assortment of south Texas habitats, including wildflower fields, nature trails through virgin mesquite, an herb-lined "Bird and Butterfly Trail," and a cattail-lined "Gator Lake" which can be observed from both the "Palapa Grande" (an open-air, thatched-roof gazebo), and a birding tower. The nature trails, which at some locations border Oso Creek, offer a glimpse of south Texas scrub birding, with species such as Groove-billed Ani, Long-billed Thrasher

Corpus Christi Botanical Gardens 8545 S. Staples

(361) 852-2100

Season: Winter, Migration Travel north on Staples Street to proceed to South Padre Island Drive, then turn right (east) on South Padre Island Drive and continue to the Ennis Joslin Road exit. Turn left (north) on Ennis Joslin Road and continue along Oso Bay. Stop at the first small park on your right, and scan Oso Bay for pelicans, waterfowl, and shorebirds. This site (as well as sites 69 and 70) are best birded on a falling tide, so be sure to check the tide tables that are published in the local newspaper. Few tidal flats along the central coast can boast of a birdlife spectacle equal to

▲ CTC 069: HANS A. SUTER WILDLIFE AREA Season: Winter, Migration Continue north on Ennis Joslin for a short distance to Hans A. Suter Wildlife Area

nature trail that connects the parking lot with the boardwalk may be teeming with landbirds in migration, so don't be so quick to rush to the lagoon. As with site 68, the waterbird display at Hans Suter is staggering, so check the tides and be prepared to spend an hour or two relishing the show. CTC 070: TEXAS A&M - CORPUS CHRISTI NATURE TRAIL Season: Winter, Migration

The third site from which to view Oso Bay is the nature trail at Texas A&M -Corpus Christi. Continue north on Ennis Joslin to its merger with Alameda Street and veer right as Alameda ends at Ocean Drive. Turn right on Ocean Drive and take the first entrance into the campus. The guard at the security kiosk can give

shoreline, inspect the tidal flats here for Piping and Snowy plover, and watch for flocks of Roseate Spoonbills in the shallow waters of Oso Bay itself. Each of these three sites (68-70) offers a different view of Oso Bay, so watch both the tide and the angle of the sun for determining which vantage point to choose. ▲ CTC 071: BLUCHER PARK Exiting Texas A&M - Corpus Christi, turn west on Ocean Drive and travel into downtown Corpus Christi, Ocean Drive becomes Shoreline Drive as you enter the waterfront area, and continues north to the downtown business district. Blucher Park is located on Carrizo Street, next to the Central Library. Turn left on Williams off Shoreline Drive, and continue up the hill (Williams will make a slight jog to the

left and become Lipan) to Carrizo Street. Turn left on Carrizo, and travel a short distance to Blucherville and Blucher Park (the corner of Carrizo and Tancahua). This densely wooded park with a small creek flowing through its center attracts migrating landbirds. Stroll through the park and check every nook and cranny for flycatchers, thrushes, vireos, and warblers. Several original Blucher family homes have been restored by the Junior League of Corpus Christi along N. Carrizo (the Blucher heirs, in fact, donated the land for Blucher Park to the city), and an environmental education and information center is being established here. The Audubon Outdoor Club conducts birdwalks every Saturday and Sunday in April (meet at Blucher Park at 7:30 a.m.). Information on these birdwalks, as well as a pamphlet on Birding in the Corpus Christi Area, may be obtained from the Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau, located at 1201 N. Shoreline Dr.

Season: All Seasons;

Return to Shoreline Drive, and continue north on I-37. Take TX 35 / US 181 north across the high bridge over the turning basin toward Portland, and exit at Surfside. The aquarium is located on Corpus Christi Beach to your right. Although dedicate to the conservation of the oceans, the aquarium considers seabirds to be an integral part of the marine ecosystem as well. A bird rehabilitation center is operated out of the aquarium, and a number of injured and orphaned birds (such as pelicans) are kept on display. The aquarium also offers a rather extensive environmental education program, and information on area birds and birding is always available here. **Texas State Aquarium** 2710 N. Shoreline Blvd. Corpus Christi, Texas 78463 (361) 881-1200 or (800) 477-GULF

Follow the signs from the Aquarium to US 181 north and stay on the frontage

road until you reach the the wetlands adjacent to the south end of the Nueces Bay

Causeway. You'll have access to both Nueces and Corpus Christi Bays. Peregrine

Falcons, Brown Pelicans, Snowy and Piping plovers and all of the bay ducks can be seen here. Shorebirds are best viewed from the south frontage road. ▲ CTC 073: INDIAN POINT / SUNSET LAKE Season: All Seasons

Road. Indian Point is located to your immediate right on Corpus Christi Bay as you exit (follow the signs). With two new boardwalks jutting into the surrounding marshes, Indian Point is an exceptional spot for observing waterbirds. Look for various shorebirds on the tidal flats and along the beach, and search the bay for gulls and terns. Old Portland Road continues toward Portland for another 2 miles, eventually coming to Sunset Lake (look for loons, grebes, and diving ducks here). However, the road is rutted and rough, so drive with caution. The salt cedars along Old Portland Road are worth checking in migration for landbirds. ▲ CTC 074: FRED JONES NATURE SANCTUARY

Return to TX 35 / US 181 and continue north to Portland. Exit at Moore Avenue (FM 893), and turn left (west). Travel on FM 893 west approximately 6 miles until

until reaching the Fred Jones Nature Sanctuary (on your left), Park along CR 69E. and enter. This sanctuary, owned and managed by the Audubon Outdoor Club of Corpus Christi, is well worth the sidetrip during migration. Situated on the upper reaches of Nueces Bay, and well vegetated with native brush (mesquite, blackbrush acacia, brasil, agarita, Texas olive), this tiny site is an oasis in the middle of

CALHOUN LOOP

Port Lavaca/Calhoun County

Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture **Chamber of Commerce** 2300 Hwy 35 Bypass P.O. Box 701 Port O'Connor, Texas 77982 P.O. Box 528 Port Lavaca, Texas 77979 (361) 983-2898 (361) 552-2959 ▲ CTC 030: PORT LAVACA BIRD SANCTUARY

Season: Winter, Migration

Return to the intersection of US 87 and TX 35 in Port Lavaca, and go east on TX 35 a short distance to the Port Lavaca Lighthouse Beach and Bird Sanctuary (exit to your right immediately before the bridge across Lavaca Bay). Walk out on e Formosa Wetlands Walkway to the Alcoa Birding Tower. Look in the marsh that borders the walkway for Seaside Sparrow, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (in winter), and Clapper Rail. The bay may be viewed from the birding tower, and you should see Brown Pelican, and a variety of gulls and terns. If you have time, drive east across the Lavaca Bay bridge toward Point Comfort and then out onto the old causeway. Search the bay and spoil islands for Common Loon, Horned Grebe (uncommon), Common Goldeneye, American Oystercatcher, and Osprey. ▲ CTC 031: MAGNOLIA BEACH

Port O'Connor

Season: Winter, Migration

From Port Lavaca travel west on TX 35 to the intersection with FM 2433. Turn left (south) and continue to the intersection with TX 238, then veer right on TX 238 and travel a short distance to the intersection with TX 316. Continue straight on TX 316 and follow the signs to Magnolia Beach and Indianola. The prairie in this region is generally intact with scattered rice fields, and in winter Sandhill Cranes. Snow Geese, and a variety of hawks (including White-tailed) abound. The rice paddies should be searched in spring for migrating shorebirds (including Wilson's Phalarope, Hudsonian Godwit, and Buff-breasted Sandpiper). The marshes near he end of the road (near Magnolia and the LaSalle Monument) are worth a look (or listen) in spring for rails, including Black. Wander from Magnolia Beach north along the bay, and search both the beach and bay for waterbirds (a number of interesting gulls have been discovered in the area, as well as the three species

CTC 032: INDIANOLA Season: Winter, Migration

Continue south along the bay from Magnolia Beach until you reach Indianola Beach. At one time the most significant seaport in Texas, a series of devastating hurricanes in the late nineteenth century led to its abandonment. The original townsite is submerged by Lavaca Bay. Walk along the elevated caliche ridge behind Town Lake (Zimmerman Road: park on pavement) in the spring to see migrants and an interesting variety of thorn-scrub species such as Curve-billed Thrasher, Long-billed Thrasher, and Bewick's Wren. Both species of whistlingduck may be seen in this area, and Boat-tailed Grackles are common in the marshes. Leaving Zimmerman Road, continue straight (south) to Powderhorn Lake and Indianola. Check the mouth of Powderhorn Lake for roosting waterbirds and American Oystercatcher.

Season: Winter, Migration

STATE PARK

▲ CTC 033: POWDERHORN LAKE

Return on TX 316 to TX 238, turn left on TX 238 (toward Seadrift) and travel a short distance to FM 1289, then turn left (south) on FM 1289 toward Port D'Connor. Powderhorn Lake may be viewed from along FM 1289 where Coloma Creek crosses the highway and widens into Powderhorn Lake. At low tide the mudflats here may be crawling with shorebirds. Also watch for flights of cranes and geese at sunrise.

■ CTC 034: PORT O'CONNOR / MATAGORDA ISLAND

Season: All Seasons Gravel to the intersection of FM 1289 and TX 185, then go left (southeast) on TX

185 to Port O'Connor. Port O'Connor is the port of embarkation for Matagorda Island State Park. Matagorda Island is jointly managed by TPWD, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Texas General Land Office. TPWD operates a dock and ferry service at 16th and Maple in Port O'Connor to allow for pedestriar access to the island. No island on the Texas coast with public access is as unspoiled as Matagorda, and no visitor to Texas should leave without experiencing the breathtaking scenery and birdlife to be found here. Over 320 species have been catalogued by TPWD and the USFWS, including White-tailed Hawk, Whooping Crane, Brown Pelican, Peregrine Falcon, and a host of shorebirds. Call TPWD ahead for information and to reserve space on the ferry, and be sure to leave early (if not, you will arrive on the island after the dawn flurry of bird activity). Around Port O'Connor, try the mudflats at the north end of Washington Street at low tide

Matagorda Island State Park P.O. Box 117 Port O'Connor, Texas 77982 (361) 983-2215 or (361) 983-4358

▲ CTC 035: SEADRIFT / SWAN POINT

Season: Winter, Migration Travel west on TX 185 to Seadrift. Swan Point, near Seadrift, is an excellent location for viewing San Antonio Bay. To reach Swan Point follow the signs to the variety of bay ducks have been seen in this area, so inspect the bay waters closely. Return to Seadrift, and drive along the bayfront. Numerous duck, gulls, and terns may be found here (including Oldsquaw in the winter of 1995).

CTC 036: GUADALUPE DELTA WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA Season: Winter, Migration

Enhancements: Parking, Observation Platform Travel north on TX 185 back to TX 35, then turn left (west) on TX 35. Continue until reaching the Guadalupe Delta WMA entrance and observation deck (the platform is located on the south side of TX 35). The observation platform is open throughout the year, but the WMA itself is closed and is accessible only during scheduled events. The freshwater lake and marshes at Guadalupe Delta are seasonally swamped with flood waters as well as attendant waterfowl, shorebirds, and a variety of herons and egrets. Wood Storks may be seen here in late summer and early fall, and the marshes around Buffalo Lake usually swarm with herons, egrets, White-faced Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, and Least Bittern (in summer). Listen or the bubbling trill of the Marsh Wren in late spring. The woodlands within Guadalupe Delta offer fine migrant birding. Tours are scheduled in both spring and fall for Guadalupe Delta through the TPWD Texas Conservation Passport Program. Guadalupe Delta WMA **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department**

Season: Winter, Migration FM 893 continues west until reaching FM 1074. Turn right on FM 1074 (eventually

2601 N. Azalea, Suite 31

(361) 790-0308 (regional office)

Victoria, TX 77901

(361) 576-0022

north), and continue to the intersection with FM 631. Turn left (west) on FM 631 and continue to the intersection with US 77 in Odem. Turn left (south) on US 77 and return to I-37. Take I-37 east toward Corpus Christi, and exit at Nueces River Park. The riparian woodlands along the river here attract migrant landbirds in spring, and kingfishers (Belted) often perch on low-slung branches over the water. ▲ CTC 076: HILLTOP COMMUNITY CENTER

continue to the intersection with Leopard Street. Turn right (west) on Leopard, and drive a short distance to the Hilltop Community Center (on your left). The nature trail here traverses native brush habitat, so search for migrants as well as for residents (Groove-billed Ani, Pyrrhuloxia, Olive Sparrow). Walk along the creek and look for a variety of sparrows in winter (Swamp, Lincoln's), and listen in late spring for the incessant "chick three beers" song of the White-eyed Vireo. ▲ CTC 077: POLLYWOG POND

Continue east on I-37 and exit at Violet Road. Turn right (south) on Violet, and

Return east on Leopard Street to Violet Road, and turn left (north). Cross I-37 and continue to Up River Road. Turn left (west) on Up River Road, and travel a short distance (approximately 2 miles) to Pollywog Pond (marked by the sign on your right). Used by the water department as settlement ponds, this collection of lakes and pools provides habitat for a rich assortment of waterfowl (Black-bellied Whistling-Duck). Look for Least Grebe here, as well as Least Bitterns in the summer. The willows that line the ponds attract migrants (as well as White-winged Doves and Great Kiskadee), and Groove-billed Ani is often seen here in the low scrub. Tule Lake (off the 7200 block of Up River Rd.) is often worth checking for waterbirds as well.

(which becomes FM 624 at US 77) to the sign marking the entrance to Hazel Bazemore County Park. Ask for a map and bird checklist as you enter the park. Hazel Bazemore County Park is renowned for its hawk migration in September and October. Tens of thousands (at times perhaps hundreds of thousands) of Broad-winged Hawks, Swainson's Hawks, Mississippi Kites, and accipiters pass along the Nueces River and through the park each year, and birders from around the world travel here to witness the display. Hawks will migrate on the first cold fronts of the fall (arriving this far south in late September and early October), so watch the weather reports. The nature trail here is also worth checking for Olive Sparrow, Groove-billed Ani, and Long-billed Thrasher, and search the ponds for

BRUSH COUNTRY LOOP

▲ CTC 079: WESLEY SEALE DAM AND THE CITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Proceed west on FM 624 to the intersection with FM 666, then turn right (north) on FM 666 and continue to Mathis and the intersection with TX 359. Turn left (southwest) on TX 359, and proceed to Park Road 25. Turn right, and after a short distance (0.1 mile) park at the entrance to the City of Corpus Christi Wildlife Sanctuary. The nature trail entrance is to your left. The trail enters a rather dense elm-hackberry forest where a number of tropical species may be found. Continue on Park Road 25 north for 0.5 mile, and park at the north end of Wesley Seale Dam (on your left). Walk along the dam to the Nueces River. The pools at the base of the dam often attract waterfowl (Blue-winged Teal Gadwall American Wigeon), and for several years Black Phoebes have wintered along the rocks here. When reaching the dam walk the trails into the woods that extend along the river. Watch for Osprey flying down the river from the dam, and always look and listen for migrant landbirds in the trees.

• CTC 080: LAKE CORPUS CHRISTI STATE PARK Season: All Seasons Returning to Park Road 25, travel north for 0.8 mile to the entrance to Lake

Corpus Christi State Park. The park is generally dry chaparral (unlike the woodlands below the dam, which are considerably more humid), and scrub species such as Curve-billed Thrasher, Greater Roadrunner, and Pyrrhuloxia are quite common. Check the dry grassy areas in late spring for singing Cassin's Sparrow. Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are usually found on the lake, and in winter a number of additional waterfowl species may appear. Camping facilities are provided in the park. **Lake Corpus Christi State Park**

Mathis, Texas 78368 (361) 547-2635

Return on Park Road 25 to the intersection with TX 359, turn right (southwest)

and continue across the Nueces River. Immediately after crossing turn right at the sign for Camp Shawondasse, and continue approximately 0.5 mile to the south end of Wesley Seale Dam. Park and walk down to the river below the dam. Look for bitterns, Common Yellowthroat, and Marsh Wren in the marsh, and similar birds in the woodlands as those seen at the previous two sites (79, 80). Return to TX 359 and listen for Great Kiskadee and Green Jay in the woods along the river. Turn right on TX 359 and proceed west to Sandia. Turn left (south) on FM 70 in Sandia, and continue until making an abrupt right. Drive for a short distance (approximately 2.5 miles) and turn left on CR 58. This road will eventually curve to the left, and continue straight to the entrance to Fort Lipantitlan State Historic Park (at the end of CR 101). Search the ancient mesquites and surrounding brush for Greater Roadrunner, Curve-billed Thrasher, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Lark Sparrow. Eastern Bluebirds may be found in winter along the barbed-wire fences near the entrance. Primitive camping is allowed in the park. Accomodations, complete with birding on the Nueces River, are available at Knolle Farm & Ranch's Bed, Barn (for horses) & Breakfast (361-547-2546).

Season: All Seasons

(2.5 miles), continue straight ahead on CR 360 toward the Nueces River. This

summer. From Sandia continue southwest on TX 359 to the intersection with FM 534. Turn right on FM 534 and head north toward Dinero. Travel a short distance and turn right on the road marked "Pernitas Point" (approximately 5 miles) Bordering this road are excellent tracts of dry chaparral habitat, and species such as Lesser Nighthawk, Verdin, Cassin's Sparrow, Black-throated Sparrow, and House Finch inhabit the brush and open slopes. Buff-bellied Hummingbird and

Groove-billed Ani may be seen around residences in the community of Pernitas

Point. Return to FM 534, and continue to Dinero (look for Harris's Hawk along

the way). Continue on FM 534 until reaching I-37, then turn north on the freeway Exit I-37 at TX 72, and proceed west to Three Rivers. Continue west on TX 72 from Three Rivers to Choke Canyon State Park. Both the Callahan and South Shore units of this park offer exemplary birding opportunities. Ask for a bird checklist and map at the park headquarters. In the Callahan unit, look for Wild Turkey around the campsites, Bell's Vireo nesting in the brush in summer, and Audubon's and Bullock's orioles in the mesquite. Pauraque may be heard at dawn and dusk, and Olive Sparrows abound in the thickets. Look for nesting Cave Swallows in summer under the eaves of the picnic shelters, and Vermilio Flycatcher perched around the lake. A variety of hummingbirds have been seen here in winter around flowering tree tobacco (including Anna's). Camping

Choke Canyon State Park (South Shore Unit) P.O. Box 1548 Three Rivers, TX 78071

(361) 786-3538

▲ CTC 083: LAKE ALICE Season: Winter, Migration From Three Rivers, travel south on TX 281 to Alice. Entering Alice on US 281 (still north of the city), turn left (east) on FM 3376 (Commerce Road). Proceed to North Texas Boulevard (1.5 miles), turn left (north) and continue 0.5 mile to Lake Alice. Lake Alice has been developed into a multi-purpose facility, and little habitat remains immediately surrounding this body of water. Considerable brush remains on adjacent land, however, and the scrub bordering the entrance road may offer rewarding birding. A number of south Texas species are resident here, ncluding Least Grebe (look along the banks of the lake), Groove-billed Ani, Great Kiskadee, and Green Jay. Sprague's Pipit winters in the short grass fields,

▲ CTC 084: JOHN J. SABLATURA NATURE PARK Season: Winter, Migration

and Grasshopper Sparrow breeds in the taller grasslands.

Proceed east from Alice on TX 44 back toward Corpus Christi. Sablatura Nature Park is located on TX 44 between Agua Dulce and Banquette (watch for the signs). This small wooded park, situated on Agua Dulce Creek, may be lively in migration. Depending upon the weather, check for a variety of migrant landbirds attracted to this isolated site (most of the surrounding habitat has been converted to cotton fields). A bit of brush remains immediately adjacent to the park, so search the scrub for representative chaparral birds. Sablatura Park is always

worth a short stop as you make your way to Kingsville from Choke Canyon.

KINGSVILLE LOOP

Bishop Chamber of Commerce US 77 @ Corral Street P.O. Box 426 P.O. Box 1562 Bishop, TX 78343 Kingsville, TX 78364-1562 (361) 584-2214 (800) 333-5032 or (361) 592-8516

▲ CTC 085: BISHOP CITY PARK **Season: Winter, Migration** Continue east on TX 44 to the intersection with US 77, turn right (south) and proceed toward Kingsville. When arriving in Bishop continue on Business 77 until reaching the intersection with Joyce. Bishop City Park is located on your left (look for the ballfields). The City of Bishop is constructing a 0.8 mile nature trail along Caretta Creek, and this greenbelt will connect with Bishop Park at its southeast

corner. When finished, the trail will cross the existing creek, and four observation

around a 9.1 acre lake at the park, and birds such as Vermilion Flycatcher should

be regular here in winter. Species seen around the Bishop Park development

include Least Grebe, Harris's Hawk, White-tailed Hawk, Groove-billed Ani,

Pauraque, Great Kiskadee, Green Jay, Long-billed Thrasher, Pyrrhuloxia,

platforms for birding are planned as well. At present there is a 0.6 mile hiking trail

Olive Sparrow, Hooded Oriole, and Lesser Goldfinch. ▲ CTC 086: SANTA GERTRUDIS CREEK

Season: All Seasons Continue south on Business 77 to Kingsville. Turn right (west) on TX 141, and continue west to the crossing with Santa Gertrudis Creek, Santa Gertrudis Creek forms a rather sizable pool at this juncture with TX 141, and the surrounding trees and brush draw a variety of south Texas species such as Great Kiskadee, Couch's Kingbird, Green Jay, Pyrrhuloxia, and Audubon's Oriole. In an otherwise arid andscape, this lush oasis also attracts landbirds as they migrate north in spring. Look for Lark Bunting flocks in winter along the shoulder of TX 141 as you return toward Kingsville, and be vigilant for White-tailed Kite, White-tailed Hawk, and Harris's Hawk.

CTC 087: KING RANCH Season: All Seasons (Call ahead for reservations)

Return east to Kingsville on TX 141. As you approach Kingsville you will see the entrance to the Santa Gertrudis division of the King Ranch (approximately 3. miles west of US 77) and the King Ranch Visitor Center. The King Ranch offers public bus tours of the famous ranch, and in recent years nature trips have been offered as well. With the entrance of the King Ranch into the nature tourism business, trips solely devoted to birdwatching may be arranged. A number of south Texas specialties, extremely rare anywhere in the United States, are relatively common here on the ranch. **King Ranch Visitor Center** P.O. Box 1090 Kingsville, TX 78364-1090

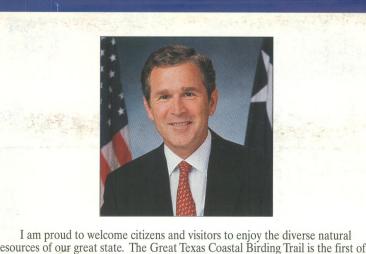
(361) 592-8055 As you leave the King Ranch, continue east on TX 141 to University Boulevard and the Texas A&M - Kingsville campus. Hooded Oriole reside here or the campus, so drive around and look for nests in the scattered palm trees. Contact the Kingsville Visitor Center to receive a copy of Kleberg County Birder's Guide and Checklist of Birds, a helpful resource for your trip to the Kingsville area.

▲ CTC 088: DICK KLEBERG PARK

Season: Winter, Migration

Return on TX 141 to the intersection with Business 77. Proceed south on Business 77 to the intersection with Escondido and Dick Kleberg Park (turn left on Escondido to reach the entrance to the park). Walk the trail along the lake in winter to see Vermilion Flycatcher, a variety of waterfowl (including Black-bellied Whistling-Duck), Lark Sparrow, and in summer look under the bridge at the north end of the lake for nesting Cave Swallows. Resident species here include





its kind in the United States. It promises to guide you on a fun and educational

tour of the Texas coast and its diverse avian wildlife. While Texas boasts numerous state parks, wildlife management areas, federal refuges and forests, the vast majority of our lands are privately owned. Dutstanding conservation efforts are taking place on millions of acres of private and owned by Texans who are good stewards of our state's natural resources. Whether you want to see a Green Jay, a Whooping Crane or a Brown Pelican, chances are excellent that you will see one in Texas, home of one of the most diverse bird populations in North America. After you have traveled the 500 miles of the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, I hope you will continue your birdwatching in other regions of our great state. You never know what awaits you!





and Curve-billed and Long-billed Thrashers. Check the short grass fields for both pipits (Sprague's is uncommon).

BIRD SANCTUARY Season: All Seasons Leaving Dick Kleberg Park, turn right (east) on Escondido. Proceed to the intersection with FM 1717 (Escondido will veer left on Brahma Blvd. before the intersection), turn right and cross US 77, and continue to the Santa Gertrudis Creek Bird Sanctuary (to your left). Walk the levee to view the extensive marsh and its inhabitants: Least Grebe, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Purple Gallinule (summer), Marsh and Sedge Wrens, and a variety of herons and egrets. King, Sora,

CTC 090: B BAR B RANCH INN Season: All Seasons Return to the intersection with US 77, and turn left (south). Continue south until reaching the intersection with CR 2215 E, and turn left (east). Continue to the B Bar B Ranch (located approximately 8 miles south of Kingsville). The B Bar B is a bird, bed, and breakfast ranch, with an assortment of accommodations and activities as well as over 200 acres of surrounding habitat. The B Bar B is a lovely spot for an overnight stay and an early morning bird walk, with easy access to the other sites that enrich the Kingsville area.

Return north on US 77 to the intersection with FM 772 (1 mile). Proceed east on FM 772, and watch for Common Ground-Dove, Groove-billed Ani, the two thrashers, Pyrrhuloxia, and Painted Bunting (in summer) along the fencerows. Continue on FM 772 as it winds though the brush country to the intersection with CR 2250 E, then turn left (east) and continue to the intersection with CR 1132. Turn left and proceed north down the bluff to where the pavement ends and the caliche begins (be extremely careful on this road during rain). Drum Point overlooks Cavo del Grullo (a segment of Baffin Bay), and continue along the unpayed waterfowl (including Bufflehead and Lesser Scaup), and shorebirds. Wilson's

Plover and Least Tern nest here in summer. In migration (April, September)

millions of swallows and martins stream along the bluff. • CTC 092: KAUFER-HUBERT MEMORIAL PARK

Season: Winter, Migration Return to CR 2250E, turn left (east) and proceed to Loyola Beach and FM 628 (CR 1132 will veer south before reaching the town). Veer south on FM 628, eventually angling left to Arana Creek and Kaufer-Hubert Memorial Park (watch for the signs). As you enter the park search the wetlands and mudlats at the mouth of Vattmann Creek for herons, egrets, and shorebirds (Wilson's Plover nest commonly here, Semipalmated, Snowy, and Piping occur in winter, and species such as Stilt, Pectoral, and White-rumped sandpipers may appear in spring). The ponds inside the park may contain flocks of waterfowl (Greater Scaup, Black Scoter, and Surf Scoter have appeared in the past), and look in the brushy areas around the park for Common Ground-Dove, Green Jay, and Olive

of the Laguna Salada. Scan the waters for grebes, pelicans, and waterfowl. Residents in Riviera Beach often lure Green Jays to feeders, and look for Groove-billed Ani in the thick brush along the road. ▲ CTC 094: LOUISE TRANT BIRD SANCTUARY Season: Winter, Migration

the rarities that have appeared here are Red-billed Pigeon and Masked Duck.

▲ CTC 095: HAWK ALLEY Season: Winter, Migration Before continuing south to the Lower Rio Grande Valley, proceed west on TX 285 toward Falfurrias. Kingsville birders have named this stretch of highway "Hawk Alley," and an assortment of raptors (White-tailed Hawk, Harris's Hawk, Crested Caracara are residents, Mississippi Kite, Broad-winged Hawk, and Swainson's Hawk migrate through this region by the hundreds of thousands) may be seen

Madge Lindsay, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Trail Coordinator; Billy Goodrich and Pete Stricker, Texas Department of Transportation Highway Districts (Yoakum, Corpus Christi); Ted Eubanks and Sandra Skrei, Fermata Inc., consultants; Sheehan Communications Incorporated, graphic design and production; Ross Carnes, illustration; Patrick Lafferty, calligraphy; Jack Puryear, digital photography and imaging; Ted Eubanks, text; Universal Printing, printing

Printed on recycled paper with soy-based inks.

to Goose Island State Park. Notice the live oaks within the esplanade as you approach the park. During a spring cold front these trees may be congested with migrant landbirds, and the groundings or "fallouts" that have occurred here on the southern tip of the Lamar Peninsula are legendary. Travel straight to Lamar Beach Blvd. at St. Charles Bay. Turn left (north), and proceed along the bayfront, halting periodically to view the rafts of waterfowl that crowd these waters (loons, grebes, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Redhead). The road will veer left (west) on 12th Street, and you will soon approach Big Tree, the national champior Live Oak estimated to be around 2000 years old. Continue straight to Palmetto Street, and turn left to return to Park Road 13 and the entrance to Goose Island State Park. As you pass through the park (be sure to ask for a bird checklist at the entrance) look for migrants in the live-oak thickets, and search the marshes for rails, gallinules, Common Yellowthroat, and Marsh Wren. Walk the nature trail within the park if you wish to escape your auto, or simply enjoy the scenic beauty of the bay and the wind-sculpted oaks that fringe the shore. Camping facilities are available within the park

the Sea-Gun Resort. Continue straight ahead to Park Road 13 and the entrance

Star Route 1, Box 105 Rockport, Texas (361) 729-2858

Goose Island State Park

• CTC 049: COPANO BAY STATE FISHING PIER Season: Winter, Migration Return via Main Street from Goose Island State Park to TX 35, and turn left (south) toward Fulton. The Copano Bay State Fishing Pier extends from the tip of Lamar Peninsula to Fulton, and may be accessed (for a fee) from the base of the Lyndon B. Johnson Causeway. Try walking the fishing pier with a scope, and scanning the bay for loons, grebes, and diving ducks. Look for American Oystercatcher on the shell spoil islands (particularly those adjacent to the southeast corner of the causeway), and watch over the causeway itself during spring and fall for migrating hawks. Raptors are generally hydrophobic, and will fly directly along the causeway rather than over the open bay waters when migrating along the coast. Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Osprey, and Swallow-tailed Kite (rare) have been

seen traversing the bridge, and a Pacific Loon appeared near the south end of

the causeway in the fall of 1995. ▲ CTC 050: ROCKPORT DEMO BIRD GARDEN AND

WETLANDS POND Season: Migration (especially Fall) Enhancements: Boardwalk And Observation Platform Continue south on TX 35 toward Rockport, and stop at the TXDOT highway resi area on the left (0.9 mile south of the intersection of TX 35 and FM 3036). Park and walk around the humming bird garden jointly developed and maintained by TXDOT and the community of Rockport. In early September tens of thousands of hummingbirds (predominantly Ruby-throated) pass through Rockport, and the community celebrates this event with their annual Rockport Hummer/Bird Celebration (contact the Rockport-Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce for information concerning the festival). At this rest-stop garden you may study hummingbirds, as well as learn about the various native plants that may be cultivated to attract these personable sprites. A new boardwalk extends into an immense patch of Trumpet Creeper (one of the vines with flowers that attract hummingbirds) to end at a willow grove and wet slough (inspect this area in

migration for landbirds). In addition, enjoy the wetland demonstration pond constructed to show the value of wetlands as a natural resource. ▲ CTC 051: CONNIE HAGAR COTTAGE SANCTUARY

sanctuary may change noticeably each day.

The Wharf Cat

P.O. Box 387

Fisherman's Wharf

Port Aransas, Texas 78373

(361) 729-7525 or (800) 782-BIRD

Season: Migration Enhancements: Pond, Kiosk, All-Weather Trail to be confused with SITE 51). Search for grebes, pelicans, and waterfowl (particularly Redhead). Continue south on TX 35, staying in the left lane. Pass through the Rockport business district on Loop 70. Continue on Loop 70 (E. Market) to S. Church. Turn left on S. Church, and continue until reaching the Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary at E. First. Turn right on E. First, and enter the sanctuary through the entrance on your right. On this site Connie Hagar and her husband Jack, owned and operated a small motel, the Rockport Cottages, that sheltered the pride of the ornithological world beginning in the 1930s. Connie Hagar alerted the national birding community to the enormity of the bird migrations that sweep the Coastal Bend of Texas. This sanctuary, established and maintained by the Friends of Connie Hagar, perpetuates her memory as well as the migrants that continue to stream through the oak mottes in Rockport. Although diminutive (a little over 6 acres), the Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary contains a surprising assortment of habitats. Multitudes of vireos, warblers, grosbeaks, flycatchers, and thrushes may jam the woods during a spring grounding, and the bordering grassy fields are frequently packed with Dickcissels, assorted sparrows, and buntings (Painted

for colonial waterbirds in the summer. For the best views of Whooping Crane it is advisable to go by boat (you may see Whooping Crane from the observation tower at Aransas NWR, but such views are normally distant). For boat trips to see birds, in season, contact the following (this list is not inclusive Capt. Ted's Whooping Crane Tours Captain John Howell's Pisces (The Skimmer) 1015 North Allen #B **HCO 4, Box 225J** Rockport, Texas 78382 Rockport, Texas 78382 (361) 729-7525 or (800) 245-9324 (361) 729-9589 or (800) 338-4551

included). Check the daily bird list posted in the kiosk to see what others before

Rockport is also the base for several boats that visit the feeding areas of

the Whooping Crane at Aransas NWR in the winter, and various nesting islands

you have seen. Migration is dynamic, and the collection of birds within the

Season: Winter, Migration **Enhancements: Hummingbird Garden** When leaving the Connie Hagar Cottage Sanctuary, continue west on E. First to where it deadends at TX 35. Turn left (south) on TX 35, and travel to Aransas Pass. Entering on TX 35, continue into Aransas Pass to the intersection of TX 35 and Loop 90, and then veer right on Business 35 to Lamont (when approaching this intersection on Business 35, you may turn left on Lamont at the Dairy Queen and continue straight into Newbury Park). Within this small community park, cloaked in its shroud of coastal live oaks, the City of Aransas Pass, in cooperation with TPWD and TXDOT, has developed a hummingbird garden. Built with funds from the Trail project, the Newbury Park Hummingbird Garden is a striking example of wildlife habitat created within an urban setting. Since, as in Rockport tens of thousands of hummingbirds pass through Aransas Pass in migration, the

hummingbird garden offers a relaxing and intimate place for watching and

for migrant landbirds, particularly during spring cold fronts.

enjoying the smallest of our migratory birds. Also inspect the oaks in the park

▲ CTC 052: NEWBURY PARK HUMMINGBIRD GARDEN

▲ CTC 053: RANSOM ROAD NAVIGATION DISTRICT PARK

Ingleside (don't take TX 361 east to Port Aransas yet) and turn left on Ransom oad (look for the sign to the municipal airport). Travel to the end of Ransom Road, and turn left into Ransom Road Navigation District Park. The channel may be viewed from the observation platform, so look for loons, grebes, pelicans, and diving ducks. Search the wetlands here for rails and shorebirds. Restrooms and picnic facilities are available in the park. ▲ CTC 054: ARANSAS PASS COMMUNITY PARK

parks). Recently developed, this community park offers a view of Redfish Bay

from the observation platform. A boardwalk into the adjoining grassy fields and

From Newberry Park, continue on Harrison Boulevard south to TX 361 toward

Continue south on TX 361 a short distance from Ransom Park to Johnson Avenue, and turn left into the Aransas Pass Community Park (look for the ball-

Season: Winter, Migration

wetlands is being planned, so keep an eye on this site over the next few years. Restrooms and picnic facilities are available within the park. ▲ CTC 055: LIVE OAK PARK **Season: Migration** Continue on TX 361 to Ingleside and the intersection with FM 1069 (entering Ingleside, TX 361 will swing to the west toward Gregory). Turn left (south) or FM 1069 and continue to Sherry Street and the sign to Live Oak Park. Turn left on Sherry and enter Live Oak Park. Carved out of a dense oak motte, Live Oak Park is a community facility that provides outdoor recreational opportunities as well as a nature trail. Live Oak Park is a small remnant of the extensive oak forest that once covered the coast bordering Redfish Bay. Walk the nature trail, and notice

carpeting the forest floor is particularly attractive to thrushes, thrashers, and ground-dwelling warblers such as Worm-eating, Ovenbird, Hooded, and

▲ CTC 056: ARANSAS PASS WETLANDS Season: All Seasons Continue on FM 1069 to the intersection with FM 2725, turn left (north) on FM 2725 and travel to the intersection with TX 361. Turn right on TX 361, and continue north to the intersection where TX 361 will swing to the right (east). Turn right and continue toward Port Aransas. Before crossing the bridge, turn left at the sign into Conn Brown Harbor (left on the dirt road, right on the paved road that proceeds into the harbor). Conn Brown Harbor is best birded in winter; search the waters here for loons, grebes, diving ducks, and pelicans. Return to TX 361, and continue east toward Port Aransas. The stretch of TX 361 between Aransas Pass and Port Aransas is bordered by Redfish Bay and associated wetlands, tidal flats, and sand spits. Stop periodically along this road (the Dale Miller Causeway) and

look for waterfowl, shorebirds, loons, grebes, American Oystercatcher, Snowy

Plover, and a cornucopia of water birds. Sooty Tern has been seen feeding over

the dense red bay understory that dominates this woodland. The deep leaf litter

MUSTANG ISLAND LOOP

Port Aransas Area Chamber of Commerce Tourist & Convention Bureau 421 W. Cotter, P.O. Box 356 Port Aransas, Texas 78373 (361) 749-5919 or (800) 45-COAST

these waters on occasion in summer.

▲ CTC 057: PORT ARANSAS BIRDING CENTER Season: Winter. Migration Continue on TX 361 to the ferry landing. After crossing on the free ferry (enjoy the Bottle-nosed Dolphins and Brown Pelicans during the brief trip), deboard the ferry and follow the signs to the Port Aransas Birding Center (take Cut-Off to the right to Ross Avenue). This birding facility is a vivid example of what a community may do to attract birds and birders alike. The boardwalk extends into a freshwater marsh associated with the adjoining wastewater treatment plant. Little fresh water is available for much of the year on barrier islands such as Mustang, and the ponds here offer a consistent supply of water for a wide variety of wetland species. The boardwalk here allows for close observation of many birds. Walk to the observation platform and look for waterfowl (Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Cinnamon Teal), grebes (Least included), heron and egrets, cormorants, shorebirds (such as Black-necked Stilt), and flaming pink Roseate Spoonbills. The parking area

and land along the boardwalk are being planted in native species, so be alert for

▲ CTC 058: PORT ARANSAS JETTY Season: All Seasons

Return to Cut-Off Road, turn right, and continue to Alister. Turn left, and continue north to Port Aransas Park and the Port Aransas Jetty. The jetty extends for several hundred yards into the Gulf, and furnishes an excellent vantage point from which to look for a variety of open water species. Gulls and terns often roost at the base of the jetty, and shorebirds may be seen feeding along the beach. Scan the Gulf, particularly in winter, for species such as Northern Gannet, Bonaparte's Gull, and jaegers, and in summer for Magnificent Frigatebird, Masked and Brown Booby (also seen at times perched on rocks of the jetty itself), and Sooty Tern. Day use is free, with a fee for overnight camping. It is possible to ride as an observer on a fishing boat out of Port Aransas. The snapper boats travel out to deep water, and at times (particularly in the fall) a number of pelagic species such as boobies, shearwaters, and jaegers may be seen. Contact the Fisherman's Wharf in Port Aransas (361-749-5760, 361-749-5448) for information about offshore birding opportunities (such as on the Scat Cat). In addition, boat trips to The Nature Conservancy of Texas Shamrock Island may be arranged by contacting the Port Aransas Area Chamber of Commerce. The island hosts immense numbers of nesting herons, egrets, and spoonbills in the summer.

Enhancements: Parking, Landscaping, Boardwalk, Observation Platform Return on TX 361 S to Cut-Off Road. Continue south on TX 361 for 0.3 miles from this intersection to the new Port Aransas Wetland Park (look for the sign on

As you resume the trip south along Mustang Island, cut back to the beach

whenever possible to look for gulls, terns, and shorebirds. A Lesser Black-backed

Gull returned each winter for over a decade to the beach near Port Aransas, and

▲ CTC 059: PORT ARANSAS WETLAND PARK

Season: Winter, Migration

your right). This park is a joint project of the City of Port Aransas, TXDOT, and TPWD. The observation platform overlooks a freshwater basin that may be thick with a variety of waterfowl and shorebirds during wet periods. As with the Port Aransas Birding Center (SITE 57), in dry periods this location may offer the only freshwater habitat within miles. However, unlike the ponds at the Birding Center, this site is ephemeral. The park itself has been landscaped to establish a native dune community, and during migration the scrubby vegetation and grasses may attract a number of migrant landbirds. • CTC 060: MUSTANG ISLAND STATE PARK Season: All Seasons

Glaucous Gull are seen here with some consistency in early spring. At high tide check along the beach for small flocks of Piping and Snowy plovers, as well as Red Knots. Mustang Island SP is located on PR 53 (TX 361) approximately 14 miles south of Port Aransas. The state park subsumes an entire barrier island ecosystem. encompassing dunes, coastal grasslands, marshes, and bayside tidal flats, and sloughs. The beach may be particularly rewarding in winter for gulls, terns, and shorebirds (scan the Gulf for seabirds), and a walk in the coastal grasslands should uncover Sedge Wren and perhaps LeConte's Sparrow. Look for nesting Wilson's Plover along the beach and on the tidal flats in summer, and Horned Lark among he dunes themselves. Camp sites with hookups are provided in the park. Mustang Island State Park P.O. Box 326 Port Aransas, Texas 78373

▲ CTC 061: CORPUS CHRISTI PASS Season: All Seasons As you proceed south along Mustang Island toward Corpus Christi, you will cross several hurricane wash-over sites. These inlets or passes have been cut through the island by the scouring action of past tropical storms, and are a relatively common phenomenon on coastal barrier islands. Corpus Christi Pass slices across the island south of Mustang Island State Park, and the bayside flats here are the wintering haunts of such species as Piping Plover and Long-billed Curlew. Search the inlet waters for waterfowl (such as Hooded Merganser), and look for nesting Snowy Plover in late spring.

▲ CTC 062: PACKERY CHANNEL Season: All Seasons Continue south to Packery Channel, another "boca" that divides the island. The bayside flats at Packery Channel may retain thousands of shorebirds at low tide, and search the flocks for Marbled Godwit, American Oystercatcher, and Long-billed Curlew. Ruddy Turnstone, Black-bellied Plover, and Snowy Plover often scurry along the edges of the pass, and watch for diving ducks, loons, and grebes in the clear waters of the channel.

• CTC 063: PADRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE

Continue south on TX 361, and turn left (south) on PR 22 to Padre Island National Seashore (TX 361 / PR 22 also continues to the right or west to Corpus Christi). Untrammeled and pristine, a visit to Padre Island National Seashore (along with Matagorda Island) is unrivaled among Texas barrier island experiences. Continue along PR 22 to the entrance and visitor's center (approximately 10 miles). Ask for a bird checklist, as well as a map of this 133,000-acre park. The national park extends south for over 80 miles to Port Isabel, and most of the beach is accessible only in a four-wheel-drive vehicle. From the visitor's center, it is possible to drive approximately 5 miles beyond the end of the paved road before encountering soft sand. However, the flavor of Padre Island may be tasted near the visitor's center and along the entrance road. Peregrine Falcons pass through the park by the hundreds in fall, and migrant landbirds swarm the scrubby vegetation in the spring. Gulls, terns, and shorebirds line the beaches, and a variety of raptors (White-tailed Kite, White-tailed Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk in winter) may be seen perched on the power poles along PR 22. Also try Bird Basin Road, which can be reached 2.6 miles north of the visitor's center as you leave via the park entrance road (look for the signs on your left as you depart the park). In the marshes along this road you may find gallinules, bitterns, and shorebirds, and nesting colonies of colonial waterbirds (herons, egrets, terns, Black Skimmer) may be seen by scope from the end of the road. Both primitive and developed camping

Padre Island National Seashore 9405 S. Padre Island Driv Corpus Christi, Texas 78418 (361) 949-8068

icilities are furnished in the park.

Kingbird, and Black-whiskered Vireo.

1201 North Shoreline Boulevard

P.O. Box 2664

Season: Winter

▲ CTC 064: PACKERY CHANNEL PARK Season: Winter, Migration Return north on the park entrance road, and turn left (west) on PR 22 toward Corpus Christi. After a short distance turn right into Packery Channel County Park. The park offers another view of Packery Channel (see site 62), and the birds normally associated with the "bocas" are present here. As you enter the park, however, notice the oak mottes to your right among the private houses. These woods attract landbirds in migration, and birders from Corpus Christi consider this to be one of their most fruitful spots in spring. Walk along the public roads (do not trespass), and examine the trees for migrants. A number of rarities have been discovered here in the past, including Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Gray

CORPUS CHRISTI BAY LOOP

Corpus Christi, Texas 78403 (361) 881-1888 (800) 678-6232 ▲ CTC 065: JFK CAUSEWAY WETLANDS Season: All Seasons

Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau

From Packery Channel County Park, return to PR 22 and turn right (west) toward Corpus Christi. After traversing the bridge over the Laguna Madre, the JFK Causeway becomes a rather low crossing that offers opportunities to park and view the bay. The flats along the causeway may be awash with herons, egrets (look for Reddish), pelicans, and shorebirds. Toward the west end of the causeway you will notice an area of beach that is protected for nesting Black Skimmers. The skimmers and their young may be seen here in summer, and also look for nesting Least Terns and Wilson's Plovers. ▲ CTC 066: REDHEAD POND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Continue west on the JFK Causeway (which becomes South Padre Island Drive

west of the Laguna Madre) and enter Flour Bluff. Exit South Padre Island Drive

hores Road. Turn right and continue south on Laguna Shores to Redhead Pond

WMA. Redhead Pond is a joint project of TNCT and TPWD, and the observation

platform here affords a protected view of the waterfowl that winter in the ponds.

Soulevard to the intersection with S. Staples Street, and turn left (south).

on Waldron Road, turn left (south) under the freeway and return to Laguna

Redhead is particularly common, but a number of duck species (as well as grebes and Black-crowned Night-Heron) winter here. Watch for Common Goldeneye and Hooded Merganser, two species that may be difficult to see elsewhere along △ CTC 067: CORPUS CHRISTI BOTANICAL GARDENS Season: All Seasons (Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday) Return to Laguna Shores Road, and turn right (south). Continue to the intersection with Yorktown Boulevard, and turn right (west) again. Travel on Yorktown

rather arid grass and brush country to the south. A number of eastern woodland species nest within the park, including Prothonotary and Kentucky warblers, Northern Parula, and Indigo and Painted buntings. The chicken farms in Gonzales County attract numbers of Crested Caracara, and roosting flocks of caracaras in Palmetto SP and the surrounding woodlands in winter are often **Palmetto State Park** Route 5. Box 201 Gonzales, TX 78629 (830) 672-3266

▲ CTC 023: LAVACA / NAVIDAD ESTUARY

Continue on FM 3131 east to the intersection with FM 1593, then turn right

on FM 616, and proceed until reaching the observation deck on FM 616 that

outh) on FM 1593 until reaching FM 616 at Lolita. Turn right again (west)

overlooks the Lavaca / Navidad estuary. Few sites along the Texas coast match

this estuary for its wildlife spectacle. The thousands of herons, egrets, spoonbills

Anhingas, ducks, bitterns, and shorebirds milling in, above, and around these

marshes will thrill even the most stone-hearted observers. In late summer and

early fall look for Wood Stork, a wading bird that breeds in the tropics to our

Local birders consider Bennett Park to be the foremost site for migration birding

in Jackson County. The number of migrants to be seen along the Texas coast is

always a reflection of weather conditions, yet Bennett Park always rates a visit

palmettos or Texas sabal palms (Sabal mexicanas), a species once thought limited

n Texas to the Rio Grande Valley in southernmost Texas. The palms in the park

aSalle. Cross the tracks, and at the T-intersection (0.7 mile) follow CR 325 left.

Retrace your path from Bennett Park to FM 616 at LaSalle, then continue west

on FM 616 to the Garcitas Creek crossing. Park at the boat ramp, and bird the

surrounding woodlands. The boat ramp offers a similar habitat to Bennett Park.

and with proper weather conditions (inclement) migrants will enliven these woods

as well. Check the marshes adjacent to the boat ramp for Common Yellowthroat

CROSS FENCES OR TRESPASS ON ADJACENT PRIVATE PROPERTY.

Continue west on FM 616 to the intersection with TX 185 in Bloomington. Go

T-intersection, turn left and go 1.4 miles to the 90° turn. It is another 0.7 mile

accessible to the general public from the parking lot. Both the knoll and the plat

form overlook DuPont's constructed 50-acre wetland which is part of DuPont's

\$180 million voluntary program to return millions of gallons of clean water to the

Return east on FM 616 to its intersection with US 87 in Placedo. Go north on US

87 to Victoria. From the intersection of US 59 and US 87 in Victoria, go north on

US 87 to Red River, and turn left (west) and continue to Vine. Turn right (north)

on Vine and continue to the Victoria South Texas Crossroads RV Park. Park near

the entrance to the Athey Nature Sanctuary at the RV park and walk across the

bridge to the gate into the park. Riverside Park is situated along the Guadalupe

reaching the park entrance). A trail has been created that connects Athey Nature

Sanctuary and Riverside Park (crossing an old river channel or resaca), and a visit

Travel north from Victoria on US 87 to Cuero. The historic community of Cuero

River adjacent to Athey Nature Sanctuary (continue west on Red River until

to Grover's and Fox's Bend may yield a surprising variety of woodland birds.

is a splendid location from which to base daily forays into the rich grass and

brushlands of DeWitt and Karnes counties. Drop by the DeWitt Historical

Museum (312 East Broadway) and DeWitt County Wildflower Association

photographing) the spring wildflower displays. The grasslands of this region are

renowned (at least among birders) for wintering sparrows, and roadside birding

is the rule here. Venture out from Cuero onto the backroads and bird the fence

and hedgerows. In the brush of Karnes County, a number of South Texas thorn-

Continue north from Cuero on US 183 to Gonzales. Gonzales is known as

"The Cradle of Texas Independence." The first shot for Texas independence

was fired here in 1835, and many artifacts from that era are displayed in local

museums. Gonzales is also a congenial spot to stay when visiting Palmetto SP, located 14 miles north of Gonzales on US 183. The park is located within the

palmetto swamps of the San Marcos River, and offers a striking change from the

(located at the museum) for information about areas for viewing (and

Guadalupe River. Visitors wishing to tour the Wetland interior should schedule

to the DuPont Wetlands parking area. There are two raised observation areas

north on TX 185 to FM 1686. Go left (west) on FM 1686 0.7 mile to the

Marsh Wren, and the two species of waterthrush in migration. PLEASE DO NOT

P.O. Box 510

(361) 275-2112

P.O. Box 134

(830) 672-6532

Gonzales, Texas 78629

Cuero, Texas 77954

DeWitt County Wildflower Association

The Gonzales Chamber of Commerce

occur here naturally and if left undisturbed will eventually grow to tree size. To

reach the park, continue west on FM 616 and turn right (north) on CR 325 at

Turn left on CR 326 (1.3 miles) to the entrance to the park (1 mile).

▲ CTC 025: GARCITAS CREEK BOAT RAMP

GUADALUPE LOOP

▲ CTC 026: DUPONT WETLANDS

in advance for a wetland escort (361-572-2137).

AND ATHEY NATURE SANCTUARY

▲ CTC 027: RIVERSIDE PARK

Season: Winter, Migration

▲ CTC 028: CUERO

Pauraque, and Olive Sparrow).

Season: All Seasons

• CTC 029: PALMETTO STATE PARK

Season: Winter, Migration

Victoria Chamber of Commerce

Cuero Chamber of Commerce

P.O. Box 2465

and Agriculture

124 East Church

(361) 275-2112

Cuero, Texas 77954

Season: All Seasons

Victoria, Texas 77902

even if only briefly. The palms within this small park (40 acres) are Mexican

south but migrates north after nesting to loaf along the Texas coast.

Enhancements: Parking, Observation Platform

▲ CTC 024: BENNETT PARK

Season: All Seasons

Season: Migration

Season: Migration

Curve-billed Thrasher, Pyrrhuloxia, and Olive Sparrow relatively easy to see here. At the lake and creek search for waterbirds, including Least Grebe (also look for Couch's Kingbird in the trees that border the lake). The Botanical Garden is in the process of planting more bird attractors in individual garden areas, as well as screen and border plantings and native trees.

Corpus Christi, Texas 78413 ▲ CTC 068: OSO BAY PARK

Oso Bay. Thousands of waterbirds pack these shallow waters, and a sunset here in winter should be unforgettable.

(on the right). The boardwalk here provides access to the lagoon, and be sure to check the tidal pools bordering the boardwalk for rails and shorebirds. The short

you parking instructions. As you walk the nature trail that follows the Oso Bay

△ CTC 072: TEXAS STATE AQUARIUM

(Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday)

Continue north on TX 35 / US 181 toward Portland, and exit at Old Portland

Season: Migration reaching CR 69E. Turn left on CR 69E, and continue for approximately 0.5 mile

miles and miles of barren agricultural fields. Landbirds crossing the bay are naturally drawn to this spot, and the selection of vireos and warblers here in spring may be sizable. Donations are requested. O CTC 075: NUECES RIVER PARK

Season: All Seasons

▲ CTC 078: HAZEL BAZEMORE COUNTY PARK Season: Winter, Migration Continue west on Up River Road to US 77. Continue west on Up River Road

rails and waterfowl.

Season: All Seasons

▲ CTC 081: FORT LIPANTITLAN STATE HISTORIC PARK **Season: Winter, Migration**

• CTC 082: CHOKE CANYON STATE PARK

Return to FM 70, and turn right toward Sandia. When the road curves to the left

narrow lane winds through picturesque Nueces bottomland country, and eventually curves back northwest to FM 1540. Turn left on FM 1540, and continue to the intersection with FM 70. Turn right and return to Sandia. As you drive these backroads look for Lark Bunting and a wealth of sparrows and Sandhill Cranes feeding in Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, Green Jay, Great Kiskadee, the pastures in the winter, Crested Caracara, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in the

• CTC 040: COLETO CREEK RESERVOIR AND PARK Travel east on US 59 from Goliad to the entrance to Coleto Creek Reservoir and Park (approximately 12 miles southwest of Victoria on US 59). Coleto Creek Park is a multi-use facility operated by the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority. The

Coleto Creek Park **Fannin, TX 77960** (361) 575-6367

■ CTC 041: FENNESSEY RANCH

Fennessey Ranch Nature Tours

Bayside, TX 78340

(361) 529-6600

Season: All Seasons (Call ahead for reservations)

LA BAHIA LOOP

Refugio County Chamber of Commerce

Sinton Chamber of Commerce

2818 W. Sinton

(361) 364-2307

▲ CTC 037: ARANSAS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

than Aransas NWR, the winter home of the Whooping Crane. To reach the

entrance to the refuge, continue south on TX 35 until reaching the intersection

with TX 239, then turn left (east) and follow the signs through Austwell. The

wildlife interpretive center (located near the entrance to the refuge) contains

a well-stocked book store, and a number of valuable reference books and field

guides may be purchased here (don't forget to ask for a map and bird checklist as

well). Although famed for wintering cranes (best seen in the refuge from atop the

among birders for its exceptional variety of resident and transient birds (the num-

ber of species seen within the refuge is now approaching 400). Look in the shallow

observation tower along the Tour Loop Drive), Aransas NWR is better known

waters along the margins of San Antonio Bay (as well as from the Jones Lake

viewing platform) for Roseate Spoonbill, Reddish Egret, both ibis (White and

along the birding trail immediately past the Heron Flats parking area are

White-faced), and a variety of ducks, grebes, and shorebirds. The oak woodlands

especially favorable for migrant landbirds. The Turk's Cap along Heron Flats Trail

is an excellent spot to see Buff-bellied Hummingbird from late spring through fall

(ask the wildlife interpretive center staff for the most recent sightings). Search for

wading birds (ducks, grebes, Purple Gallinule, Common Moorhen) and alligators

along Heron Flats Trail and from Jones Lake Platform as well. Wildlife along the

evening, with Crested Caracara, Javelina (Collared Peccary), and Nine-banded

Armadillo among the species that will sally forth from the brush to feed in open

fields and along the shoulder. The refuge is open daily from sunrise to sunset; the

tour loop becomes active (and therefore visible) in early morning and late

wildlife interpretive center hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

• CTC 039: GOLIAD STATE PARK

▲ CTC 038: LION'S / SHELLEY PARK (REFUGIO)

From TX 35 and FM 774, travel west to Refugio. Search the power poles and

Hawk (rare), and a rich assortment of Red-tailed Hawks are usually present.

Park is situated on the Mission River, and the bottomland forests here often

brush along the road for raptors. Crested Caracara, White-tailed Hawk, Harris's

Continue on FM 774 across US 77 and into Lion's / Shelley Park. Lion's / Shelley

swarm with migrant landbirds in spring and fall. Riparian woodlands such as these

focus the migrants since the surrounding terrain (coastal prairie, now mainly either

along the Mission River for Green Kingfisher, a South Texas specialty that is seen

agriculture or brush) is generally inhospitable to forest species. Carefully look

From Refugio, take US 183 north toward Goliad, and continue until reaching the

entrance to Goliad State Park (on US 183 just south of Goliad). Goliad is among

the most hallowed of Texas cities, with the Mission Espiritu Santo, the General

Zaragoza birthplace, the grave of Col. James W. Fannin and his soldiers, and the

therefore, presents the rare opportunity to simultaneously experience human as

well as natural history. Goliad is situated within a transition zone, where broad

Presidio la Bahia indelibly imprinted on the pages of Texas colonial history (and in

the memory of every child who studies Texas history). A visit to Goliad State Park,

ecological influences join at a biological juncture. Nature trails in the park traverse

a selection of upland and bottomland habitats, and during an early morning walk

an observer will be confronted by an eclectic mix of eastern, western, and south

park contains camping and picnic sites, restrooms, nature trails, and a variety of

other day-use opportunities. Birding is generally best around the reservoir itself,

any inland reservoir in Texas may lure an odd gull, grebe, or duck in the winter,

so scan the lake for Bald Eagle, Osprey, waterfowl, grebes, and cormorants. Almost

Texas thorn-scrub species. Camping facilities are provided in the state park.

Aransas National Wildlife Refuge

(361) 286-3559; (361) 286-3533

P.O. Box 100

Season: Migration

here regularly.

Season: All Seasons

Goliad State Park

Goliad, TX 77963

P.O. Box 727

(361) 645-3405

Season: Winter

Austwell, Texas 77950

No single location along the Texas Coast captures the traveler's imagination more

Sinton, Texas 78387

Goliad Chamber of Commerce

P.O. Box 606

(361) 645-3563

P.O. Box 127

(361) 526-2835

Goliad, Texas 77963

Refugio, Texas 78377

Season: Winter, Migration

FM 2678. Turn right (south) on FM 2678, travel 4.6 miles south to the entrance of the Fennessey Ranch. The Fennessey Ranch is private, and visitation must be arranged through Fennessey Ranch Nature Tours. With an array of habitats (inland marsh, riparian woodland, coastal grassland, thorn-scrub brush), the Fennessey supports an equally prolific and diverse birdlife. Black-bellied Whistling-Duck and Mottled Duck nest in the marshes (along with Least Bittern, Purple Gallinule, Common Moorhen, and Marsh Wren), and Masked Duck has appeared here in the recent past. In winter hordes of sparrows seem to litter the grasslands, and Sprague's Pipits often "rocket" out from underfoot when hiking hrough the fields. The riparian forest along the Mission River is a vector for migrant landbirds moving inland in spring (and toward the coast in fall), and in migration the trees vibrate from the sound of hummingbirds feeding on turk's cap and hawking insects. A winter's sunset at the Fennessey Ranch, skies choked with tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes, geese, and waterfowl, evokes the spirit of the

Return to Refugio, then take FM 774 east 2 miles to the intersection with

David M. Laney Commissioner of Transportation Texas Parks and Wildlife

▲ CTC 089: SANTA GERTRUDIS CREEK

and Virginia Rails winter here (listen for their calling in late winter and early spring). Look for Great Kiskadee and Green Jay in the surrounding mesquite

woodlands. Cave Swallows nest in summer in the culverts under FM 1717.

B Bar B Ranch Inn RR1, Box 457 Kingsville, TX 78363 (361) 296-3331

CTC 091: DRUM POINT Season: Winter, Migration road for approximately 1 mile to look for herons, egrets (Reddish), pelicans,

Sparrow. Camping facilities (including RV and trailer hook-ups) are available in ▲ CTC 093: RIVERA FISHING PIER **Season: Winter, Migration** Retrace your path to FM 628, and turn south toward Riviera Beach. After a short distance FM 628 will turn right (west) to the intersection with FM 1526, turn left (south) on FM 1526 and proceed to FM 771, then turn left (east) and continue to Riviera Beach and the Rivera Fishing Pier. The fishing pier overlooks the mouth

Return on FM 771 west to Riviera. Travel north on US 77 for 0.1 mile, and watch for the Louise Trant Bird Sanctuary just north of the intersection. This marsh is maintained by the Audubon Outdoor Club of Corpus Christi. Soras winter in this pond, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds may frequent the cattails in spring. Among

perched on power poles or soaring over the fields. Red-tailed Hawk is resident, and Ferruginous Hawk and American Kestrel are common in winter. Also look

for flocks of Lark Buntings along the shoulder during winter.

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of the Texas coast. It overlooks a complex of grassland, oak motte and shallow wetlands, making this site attractive to birds and other wildlife year round.

▲ CTC 047: ARANSAS WOODS