



President's Message



Byron "Doc" Stone,
TOS President

Your hard-working Board of Directors convened in Victoria, TX in late September for a weekend board meeting and retreat. I asked the board to meet in Victoria because I wanted to give those in attendance an opportunity to visit our two nearby sanctuaries—Magic Ridge

and Schroeder Island, and to learn something about the history of those two properties, and their respective management and maintenance needs. TOS member and past president Brent Ortego of Raisin (near Victoria) was kind enough to meet us Saturday afternoon and again Sunday morning to give us a tour of the two properties, do a bit of birding, and help us better understand the habitats that each property provides for birds and the unique challenges that each property presents with regard to preservation, visitation and maintenance.

One of the great things about birders is that most of them really care about birds, not just in the sense of wanting desperately to see them and check them off of some county, state, life or year-list, but also in the sense of wanting to see individual birds and bird populations prosper. Birders are notorious for providing feeders and backyard water features to attract birds, and also for providing or improving habitats in backyards and on other properties large and small to insure that resident or migrant birds have what they need in the way of food, water and shelter so that they can survive and reproduce. All of these little "kindnesses" are self-serving for birders, of course, but they also often benefit birds greatly.

This past summer, I was invited by the Highland Lakes Birding and Wildflower Society to do a talk for them in Marble Falls in early September on "Raptors of Central Texas." After my talk, they presented me with a book—"Hawks Aloft" by Maurice Broun. Interestingly, I had never read the book, but I started it promptly and found it fascinating. It is the story not only of the establishment of Hawk Mountain, the famous hawk-watching site in Pennsylvania, but also of the beginnings of raptor conservation. Hawk Mountain was the first preserve in the world established specifically to protect raptors. The sanctuary was envisioned by people who cared about birds. They were horrified at the annual slaughter each autumn by gunners who drove up to the ridge to shoot passing raptors for sport. These early bird lovers and conservationists, who called themselves the Emergency Conservation Committee, decided to do something to stop this annual slaughter of hawks. Led by a woman named Rosalie Barrow Edge, the group purchased a

2-year lease on the property at the top of the mountain, and hired Maurice Broun, who had no formal ornithological training but had a reputation as a dedicated, dependable field ornithologist, to become the first warden of Hawk Mountain. The group eventually purchased the property, and Maurice and his wife Irma continued as the onsite wardens and property managers for Hawk Mountain for the next 4 decades. What a story! I can recommend this conservation literature classic to you without reservation and I am most grateful to the HLBWS book club chair for bringing it to my attention.

The story told in "Hawks Aloft" shows what can be done by people with sufficient dedication, imagination and resources. Raptor conservation and dedicated sites for hawk watching are something that many of us take for granted now, but in the early 1930's it was a radical new idea that initially met with much resistance. As a result of the dedication and determination of Maurice and Irma Broun and Rosalie Edge and others, however, the idea was eventually accepted by almost all who visited or even heard of Hawk Mountain. And now, raptor conservation has spread far beyond the original site to become embraced and practiced by people worldwide. And it all started with people who cared about birds.

Our organization, TOS, also cares about birds. Overseeing sanctuaries is one of the ways we express that caring organizationally. Some of our preserves, like Schroeder Island in Victoria, are important primarily as refuges for resident birds, with limited access for visiting birders. Others, however, like Hooks Woods and Sabine Woods, simultaneously provide important stopover habitat for birds and excellent opportunities for bird observation during spring and fall migration. I have heard talks at times from TOS members interested in having the organization acquire additional sanctuary property. The primary motivations appear to be twofold—to preserve more habitat for birds, but also perhaps to provide additional locations for TOS members to bird. Both of which, in my opinion, would be great for birds and birders.

But sanctuary stewardship entails responsibilities. This is evident whether you read about the acquisition and establishment of the world's first raptor sanctuary in "Hawks Aloft," or tour a couple of TOS's sanctuaries with a critical eye, as our board members and I did in September with Brent Ortego. There are trails, fences, and boardwalks to be maintained, invasive species to be kept in check, and sometimes litter or vandalism to be dealt with. The Schroeder Island sanctuary has been vandalized one or more times, resulting in the loss of a large wooden sign that had the name of the sanctuary and its donor, and in the destruction by arson of large wooden steps that once facilitated access to the property. There are also quite a few invasive plants like Chinese tallow that need to be removed at Schroeder Island to maintain its value as a sanctuary for local breeding and wintering birds. Magic Ridge does not have as much of a problem with invasive species, but it is missing a number of sanctuary signs, and there is a litter problem in one

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portion of the property as a result of several individuals who reside in trailers on an in-holding (a lot owned by someone other than TOS). The good news regarding the litter is that I was able to speak in person with one of the current residents of the inholding, and subsequently to speak on the phone with the other resident (Kenneth, whose daughter owns the lot) and he agrees that there is a problem with litter and he is amenable to working with us to clean the place up and try to find a more workable, permanent solution to trash disposal at the site.

In addition to our tour of the central coastal TOS sanctuaries, the board heard a comprehensive report from Region 8 Director and Sanctuaries Committee Chair Chuck Davis on the maintenance needs of the upper coast sanctuaries. It is clear that there is a great deal of work that needs to be done to bring those sanctuaries up to snuff, including repair and/or replacement of signage and one or more boardwalks, trail improvement, endangered species removal and installation of memorials, benches and water feature(s). These projects

will require significant investments of time, labor and money, but such investments are necessary if we are to be responsible sanctuary stewards. And in my opinion, we need to demonstrate we are responsible stewards before we seriously consider acquiring additional sanctuary properties. Most of us want to protect and preserve as much bird habitat as possible, because good habitat is disappearing much faster than it is regenerated, but it is important that we consider our responsibilities and factor in the expense of such obligations before we acquire additional sanctuary property.

So, if you see or hear a notice about a “work weekend” at one of our sanctuaries, or some other call to service for a TOS sanctuary, I hope you will respond as fully as you are able. Those of us who are passionate about birding are likely also to be passionate about birds. It is incumbent on us to do everything we can to encourage birds not only to survive but to thrive, and that includes providing and properly maintaining bird sanctuaries.

Good birding ya’ll,

—Byron “Doc” Stone, TOS President

Photos from the Board retreat at Schroeder Island



REGIONAL REPORTS.....

Region 2—North Central Texas

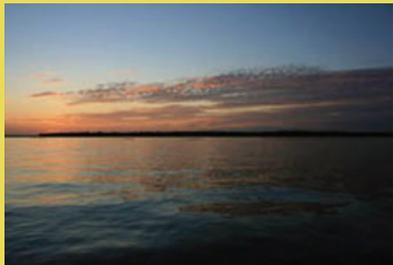


Birding in TOS Region 2 this summer and fall has been interesting as usual and the maturing and departure of first-year songbirds with their drab plumage and unusual sounds. When they are accompanied by molting and mostly-silent adults, birding becomes a bit more challenging. Our region has seen some interesting rarities, well documented elsewhere, and a good cross-section of southward migrating shorebirds. Lake levels have been high but slowly receding; so shorebird habitat has been good at many locations.

Not particularly unusual but striking nonetheless, has been the observation of large flocks of White Pelicans at Hagerman NWR off and on during late September. On one day, Jack Chiles reported during the weekly survey that 8000 were seen, sometimes huddling together and seemingly covering all available space on small islands and shorelines. By the end of that day, most of these birds had moved on.

—Gailon Brehm, Regional Director

Region 3—Piney Woods



I live on Cedar Creek Lake and it is a great place to bird. The lake hosts 3 WMA. I have a bird list for my yard of 196 birds and for Henderson County 231 birds

Cedar Creek Lake Information

The fourth largest lake in Texas, Cedar Creek Lake is 32,623 acres, 18 miles long and offers 320 miles of shoreline. The widest point of the lake is 8.5 miles and the deepest is 53 feet. Cedar Creek Lake is located 55 miles southeast of Dallas, Texas so the short commute to it is a big benefit to “weekenders” or permanent residents that commute to DFW.

Cedar Creek Lake was created in 1964 as a water reservoir for Tarrant County and is one of the very few lakes in Northeast Texas that allows property ownership of the waterfront with the ability to have your own private boathouse. Cedar Creek Lake has also been recognized as one of the best places in the country to live for retirement. Cedar Creek Islands.

The Cedar Creek Islands WMA is comprised of three islands totaling 160 acres in Cedar Creek Reservoir, Henderson

County. The WMA is heavily used as a rookery by aquatic birds and should not be disturbed during spring or summer.

Please note:

- Wildlife viewing is from boats or the banks of Cedar Creek Reservoir only.

—Linda Belssner, Regional Director

Region 5—Edwards Plateau



Sandhill Cranes flying over, the “je-ditt” call note of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Northern Flickers rapping on the eaves of the house—these are signs that summer is finally done and cooler weather on the way. Time to clean the seed feeders and pare down to one hummingbird feeder. Also time to start planning for Christmas Bird Counts. One of the best resources for checking dates and contact information for Texas CBCs is houstonaudubon.org.

Audubon groups and other birding clubs in the Edwards Plateau have resumed field trips and programs after the summer break. On October 10, San Saba Bird and Nature Club members guided local High School and Middle School students in clean up activities at the San Saba River Nature Park’s Butterfly Garden and Bird Blind areas. There were many teaching moments to talk about the importance of native plants to birds.

—Jimma Byrd, Regional Director

Region 6—Central Prairie

Late summer and early fall were largely characterized by the birding doldrums, as breeding species became quiet and moved on, and birds in our feeders dwindled, likely due to the availability of seed crop. Fall migration brought numerous reports of mass movements of hawks, vultures, and Franklin’s Gulls, among other species. Species out of their usual range added interest, however, with reports of the continuing Great Kiskadees in Berry Springs Park and Least Grebes in Cedar Park (both Williamson Co.), two ravens (sp.) in Comanche County, Pyrrhuloxia and Burrowing Owl in McLennan County, and most recently, Buff-bellied and Calliope Hummingbirds on private properties in Brazos County. Wintering species are starting to arrive, with scattered reports of Chipping and Lincoln’s Sparrows, as well as Red-breasted Nuthatches. Things could get interesting, so go out and have a look!

—Betty Vermeire

Rockport's Hummerbird Festival

TOS had a vendor table selling memberships, tee shirts, and caps, and just basically promoting TOS and our mission, at the recently held 28th annual Hummerbird Celebration in Rockport. According to Event Chairman, Steve Reisinger, "The event celebrates the spectacular annual hummingbird migration through Aransas County." The table was manned by fiercely loyal member, Georgina Schwartz, on Friday and Saturday, and by Judy Kestner and me on Saturday afternoon and Sunday. Besides the vendors selling bird- and birding-related items, there were native plants for sale, well-known speakers and programs, tours of local homes that feed the hummingbirds around Rockport, and tours to other well-known birding destinations in the area, such as the Corpus Christi Hawkwatch at Hazel Bazemore and the Fennessey Ranch. There were also boat trips with Capt. Tommy aboard the Skimmer. The bus tours' last stop included demonstrations by a licensed hummingbird bander, Sue Heath, of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory. Tour participants were able to see a hummingbird measured, weighed, banded, and once again released at the demonstrations. By Sue placing a hummingbird up to our ears, we were able to hear and feel the tiny heartbeat of the flying jewel. There was no shortage of oohs and aahs. Make sure you check out the festivities, and more importantly, the hummingbirds, at next year's Hummerbird Celebration!

—Susan Foster



Bander Sue Heath of Gulf Coast Bird Observatory at the Hummerbird festival Banding station.
Photos by Lorrie Lowrie.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!!!!TOS WINTER MEETING ...JANUARY 12–15 2017
www.Texasbirds.org

Shorebirder Weekend

Greater Yellowlegs or Lesser Yellowlegs? That is the question. Spending a few days with Mel Cooksey can help you see the difference, as well as gain an understanding of many of the other species of shorebirds. When a Spotted Sandpiper approaches, you know what it is by its flight pattern. Pretty cool. For a weekend this past August, we listened and learned as Mel shared with us (the hopeful ones) his knowledge of shorebirds. Whether Mel was showing us the key points of shorebirds with his classroom instruction or Mel and Larry Jordan were showing us the birds in the field, we were captivated. Walking the boardwalk at Charlie's Pasture, or the mudflats at Oso Bay with Mel and Larry, is a not-to-be missed experience for anyone wanting a better understanding of these frustrating birds.

—Kathie Holde



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TOS Charter Member Passes...



Effie Joe Holloway Adkins

Adkins, 98, of Beeville, who was a longtime supporter of causes to benefit her community and South Texas, passed away Oct. 12, 2016. A true student and champion of her world.

She was born in Donna, TX in 1917 and attended Texas State College for Women (now TWU), where she received a B.S. in Vocational Home Economics in 1939. She came to Beeville

to teach school that fall and, after meeting Walter Teal Adkins, married him on Dec. 1, 1939. He preceded her in death (2004).

Mrs. Adkins has had a long history of civic involvement, of which she would say the designation of Padre Island a National Seashore was her greatest achievement. It was her work and 18 page paper on the Seashore, that both the Secretary of the Interior and its director called "a [rare] practical, well-reasoned argument for park preservation" and that its many "impressive facts [were] eloquently and effectively [presented] [and] have summarized the case for the PAIS better than anyone else has ever done" [1962]. It was read into the Congressional Record. And in 1965 the park opened.

Her memberships, past and/or present, include:

Retired Teachers Association, after teaching 12 years in the Beeville public schools, the last eight as head of the high school home economics department; and she received a life membership from the Texas Congress of Parents and

Teachers in recognition of her work as local past president of the Rosetta Club, which she has served as Conservation Chairman, and also was state Conservation Chairman of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs. Her work there led Gov. Price Daniel to appoint her to the Padre Island Study Commission and the State Water Commission. The Rosetta Club named her outstanding clubwoman in 1984, and now she is lifetime honorary member.

Beeville Garden Club, Texas and International Palm Societies, North American Butterfly Association, Corpus Christi Botanical Society (charter member). A Texas Ornithological Society charter member and founder, she continues the tradition of active birding even into her 90's. At age 89, she went on a birding and butterfly trip to Trinidad in 2007. Her life and story are an inspiration for TOS members.

Keenly interested conservation, she has led efforts to save the golden eagle, Harris's hawk and Attwater prairie chicken. She also is a member of the Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society Wildflower Nature Center, and the Sierra Club.

In 1994, she was chosen by the Victoria Advocate/University of Houston as one of eight outstanding "South Texas Women." Led the restoration of an old mansion in 2000 preserving the treasures it contained, and making it available to the public. "The Goliad (Co.) Mansion" offers tours to this day.

In 2014 she was given "The Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Bee County Chamber of Commerce, for her service.

Also preceding her in death were her beloved parents, Effie and Joe Holloway, her brother Donald Scott Holloway, and her son-in-law Samuel David Reilly, Sr.

—Austin American-Statesman October 14, 2016

Get your TOS Yellow-throated Warbler Tee Shirt

Now you can get your Yellow-throated Warbler tee shirt by mail.

The price is \$15 each (price includes tax of \$1.24).

Add \$5 if ordering by mail for postage/handling.

For ordering details contact Georgina Schwartz
Email: gbird@att.net or by telephone 210-342-2073



Changes in the 2017 Election of TOS Board Members

The election of members of the Texas Ornithological Society Board of Directors will be held early in 2017. This is the first election to be held under the new Bylaws that became effective May 5, 2016. One aspect of these bylaws attempts to assure that our elections should be conducted using a meaningful, competitive process that is open to all. For this initial election, the TOS Nominating Committee is charged with recommending at least two candidates for each of the 12 positions on the board: 8 regional directors and 4 members-at-large. *Any interested TOS member is encouraged to apply for candidacy.*

In contrast to prior years, in next year's TOS Board Election, TOS Members will not select ~~which~~ the various officers (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer). **Officers will be selected by the board for one-year terms.** Regional Directors as well as At-Large Board Members will be elected by the membership and may hold officer positions while retaining their respective Regional Director positions.

The tables below provide additional information on the TOS Board and its election under the new bylaws.

TOS Nominating Committee:

Gailon Brehm g-brehm@msn.com cell 214-435-1186

Shelia Hargis shelia.hargis@gmail.com

Teresa C Keck birdisaverb@gmail.com

Ron Weeks ronweeks@sbcglobal.net

TOS Bylaws - explanation of changes.

	How things were	How things are now (this election)	Reasoning
Size	Board had 13 members: 8 regional directors & 5 officers	Board has 12 members: 8 regional directors & 4 at-large positions	
Term	2 years	3 years	
Officers	Officers were elected by the membership to specific officer positions. Typically, a person started as Vice President, then moved up to President Elect, and then to President. That was a 6-year commitment. The President then would usually serve 2 more years as Past President for a total of 8 years on the Board.	Officers (President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer) will be elected annually by the Board at the annual meeting and will serve a 1-year term. All 12 Directors are eligible to hold an officer position.	The philosophy behind this change is that the Board is in the best position to know who has the needed skills to lead the organization at this time. Someone who had the needed skills four years ago may not have the skills that are needed currently. This allows the Board the flexibility to elect the best person for the job right now.
Term Limits	There were no term limits.	Term limits for Directors is 2 consecutive terms or 6 years. Term limits for officers is 3 consecutive terms or 3 years.	Term limits are one way to assure turn-over of members on the Board, thereby getting new ideas and fresh eyes on the Board.
Election Frequency	Every 2 years, all positions on the Board were up for election/re-election at the same time.	Now, there will be an election every year with 4 positions up for election/re-election.	This allows for continuity on the Board. Under the old Bylaws, the whole Board could have been voted out and a completely new Board elected. No one on the new Board would have known what had been happening or how things had been working.
Transition Election	Not applicable.	The 2017 election will be a transition election in which the staggered terms begin. For that election, 4 positions will be chosen to serve for 1-year terms. Four positions will be chosen to serve for 2-year terms, and 4 positions will be chosen to serve for 3-year terms.	

	How things were	How things are now (this election)	Reasoning
Transition Election <i>(continued)</i>		After that election is completed, then the system will be in place to elect all candidates for 3 year terms. See the matrix below for how this will look over time.	
Regional Directors	When possible, the regional candidates lived in the region that they would be representing. They were elected by the members living in the respective region.	All members will vote on all Board positions. The candidates running for regional positions will live in the region they will be representing if at all possible.	This change was needed to bring TOS into compliance with legal requirements. It is the law that all members get to vote on all Board members.
Nominating Committee Composition	The President appointed the chairperson with the approval of the Board. The chairperson formed the committee. The Board could appoint additional members to the committee as they deemed advisable.	When a Past President is still on the Board, he/she will chair the committee. In addition, one member from the Executive Committee (the officers) and two non-Board members in good standing will be chosen by the President to complete the committee subject to review and confirmation of the Board. If there is no Past President still on the Board, the President will name a member of the Board to serve as chairperson.	The Bylaws now require representation from the Board as well as non-Board members. This allows for diversity on the committee as well as provides an opportunity for non-Board members to serve in a very important leadership capacity in the organization.
Nominating Committee Charge	The committee's charge was to present a slate of at least one candidate for each Board position but there was no requirement to make the elections competitive. Dates were given for various tasks but the dates no longer made sense with the current schedule of meetings.	The committee's charge is to meet regularly through-out the year and to present a slate of two candidates for each position that is up for election.	The philosophy is that it benefits the society to have a Nominating Committee that is actively looking for interested and qualified members to serve on the Board. The goal is to hold competitive elections with two candidates on the ballot for each position. This might be a challenge for some of the regions where we have only a few members but the committee is tasked with doing their best to fulfill on this goal.

Laredo
Birding
Festival

February 8-11, 2017
www.laredobirdingfestival.org



TOS TO MEET IN McALLEN, TEXAS

12-15 January 2017

Greetings TOS Members,

After weeks of near record-setting warm temperatures, we finally had a bit of cool weather come through central Texas yesterday (if you call an overnight low of 54 degrees cool), so it looks like we might actually experience autumn in Texas after all.

And autumn means that winter (or what passes for winter in some parts of Texas) shouldn't be too far behind. And that means the winter TOS meeting is on the horizon! Quinta Mazatlan will co-host our winter meeting in McAllen over the MLK Weekend, January 12–15, 2017, and boy am I excited about it. The Lower Rio Grande Valley beckons!

The Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV or “valley” for short) is a special place for birds and birders. Twenty or more species of birds occur regularly in the valley that do not occur anywhere else in the United States, and that doesn't even include the tropical and subtropical rarities that are frequently found there. It doesn't matter whether you've never birded the valley or you've birded it dozens of times—most birders never tire of birding there. With regulars like Green Jay, Green Parakeet, Plain Chachalaca, Hook-billed Kite, Clay-colored Robin and Altamira Oriole, and the frequent appearance of rarities like Northern Jacana, Masked Duck and Crimson-collared Grosbeak, it is easy to see why many birders consider the valley to be the crown jewel of Texas birding locations.

We have some great speakers and a bunch of fantastic field trips planned for the 2017 winter meeting – trips to most of the valley hotspots, hard-core full-day trips for dedicated county listers, several shorter, less intense trips to focus on the avian eye-candy that the valley specializes in (like orioles, kiskadees, Green Jays and Clay-colored Robins), and even a few trips to locations not normally open to the public. This meeting is open to all TOS members, but registration will be limited, so put it on your calendar, make sure your dues are paid up, and watch for registration information (including hotel and field trip info) in the fall newsletter and online soon on the TOS website at <texasbirds.org>

I hope to see you in McAllen in January.

Good birding ya'll,

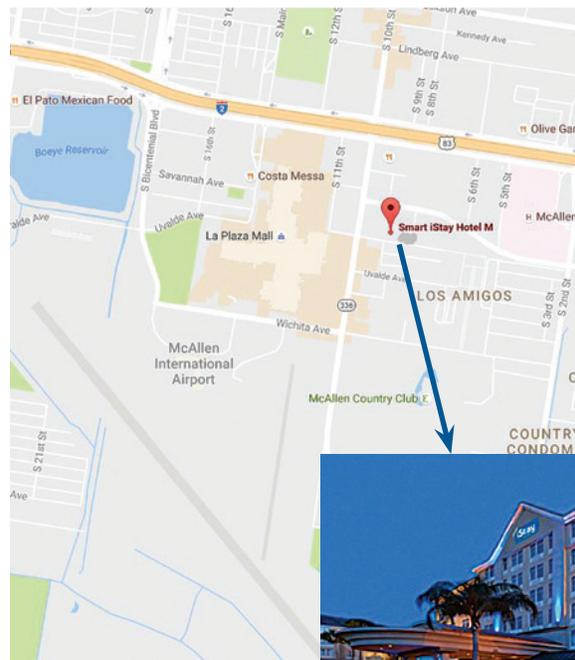
Quinta Mazatlan to Host TOS Meeting

Quinta Mazatlan is excited to serve as the host for the 2017 Texas Ornithological Society Winter Meeting! TOS hasn't hosted a meeting here since 2010, and lots of things have changed! New areas have been set aside for birds, and old areas have been revegetated or revamped with native plants and water features. The Rio Grande Valley is one of the fastest growing places in the United States with an estimated population of over 1.3 million people. Despite the record growth in cities and urban areas, the bird life here is able to find a myriad range of habitats in the 21 nature centers open to the public and hundreds of private properties scattered throughout the area. From the beaches of the Gulf of Mexico to the arid thornscrub in the west, the riparian woodlands along the river, and the urban centers in between, over 500 species of avian life have been seen in Lower

Rio Grande Valley. Many tropical and sub-tropical birds reach the northern limits of their ranges here, and wandering juveniles often explore in the fall and winter seasons. There is a reason the area is known as a World Birding Center!

Sunrise is close to 7:30am this time of year, and the tour departure times have been designed to get you to your sites around then. All of the tours are scheduled to return before 4pm to allow participants to take advantage of the many local, resident birders on hand to present their research on birds in the RGV including Red-crowned Parrots, Buff-bellied Hummingbirds, Laguna Madre water bird colonies, and urban birds. For the Saturday banquet, Bill Clark will present his research on Harlan's Hawks on the large outdoor LED screen on the bat lawn at Quinta Mazatlan. Please dress appropriately for an evening under the stars! If the evening is rained out, we will relocate to the ballroom at the hotel. As a warm up to the banquet, the McAllen Chamber of Commerce is offering a free Border Buttermilk Reception. While the Border Buttermilk does include alcohol, we are unable to sell any at Quinta Mazatlan. Guests are free to bring their own.

We have a wonderful and local, non-chain restaurant, catering the lunches and the Saturday evening banquet. TOS meeting participants are highly encouraged to take advantage of the box lunches or to bring their own lunch on trips. Many of the locations we visit are in rural areas and a restaurant for lunch is not always readily available. Plus, the birding here is incredible, and being inside on a birdy day isn't nearly as fun as a picnic! Vegetarian and gluten free options are available for lunches and for the dinner banquet.



Smart iStay Hotel

1921 S 10th St, McAllen, TX 78503

(956) 994-0505

www.smartistay.com

Code: TOS

The newly renovated Smart iStay Hotel is located a couple of blocks north Quinta Mazatlan and the McAllen International Airport on 10th Street. **The Smart iStay hotel will serve as our home away from home during the Winter Meeting.** Some special amenities include free wifi in all guest rooms, complimentary breakfast that will open early to accommodate our field trips, and a manager's reception on Thursday evening with complimentary beer, wine, and hors-d'oeuvres. We have reserved a block of rooms with special pricing for TOS meeting participants, and we encourage you to reserve your room early. The cutoff date for the special \$89 (plus taxes) per night rate is January 5th, and the hotel has set aside a number of king suites and standard doubles. Please call the hotel directly at (956) 994-0505 for more information and to book your rooms. The code for the room block is TOS.

If your trip gets back early or you are looking for a place to explore on your own, spend some time on the trails at Quinta Mazatlan. The urban sanctuary is waiving the entrance fee for all TOS participants (just be sure to check in at the main house so they know you are there). Quinta Mazatlan features some of the most photogenic Plain Chachalacas in the RGV as well as Olive Sparrows, Green Jays, Great Kiskadees, White-tipped Doves, and Clay-colored Thrush. Many of the valley specialties can be seen at the feeders in the amphitheater or at one of the many water features located on the trails. You can also attend one of the weekly morning tours at the mansion: Wednesday gardens, Thursday sculptures, Friday history, and Saturday birding. Be sure to say hello to Francis, our resident javelina, if you see her on the trails!

General Considerations:

- Rio Grande Valley plants are thorny. Please wear appropriate layers and close toed shoes/boots. Wear a hat and bring sunscreen.
- Wet, muddy ground is possible on some trips; so consider waterproof boots.
- Bug spray—while the mosquitos are not too bad this time of year, it is better to have the spray and not need it than to need it and not have it.
- Bring water and snacks/lunch.
- Bring walkie-talkies if you have them. They are indispensable for communicating between vehicles in a car caravan.
- Stops for gas, food or restrooms will be kept short in order to maximize time spent birding.
- Don't forget extra money for the silent auction—we are already lining up a ton of cool things to bid on and take home!
- Keep in mind that trip leaders are volunteering their time and talents to help you see birds—please treat them cordially

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

This meeting's registration is online only. For those with internet access, go to the meeting page on TOS website, <http://texasbirds.org> and follow the directions there. If you receive registration materials only via hard copy and DO NOT have access to the internet, you may call Judy Kestner (361) 387-7329, or Frances Cerbins (512) 372-9039 for assistance with

registration. If you don't get an answer, leave a message with your name and phone number and you will get a call back when someone is available.

SILENT AUCTION ITEMS WANTED

A silent auction will be offered at the meeting. If you have anything you think would make a great silent auction item, please send a photo and information to Kelly Smith at ksmith@mcallen.net. You can also just drop it in the mail Attn: Kelly Smith, Quinta Mazatlan, 600 Sunset Drive, McAllen, TX 78503

Registration for the meeting \$50 for TOS members, \$75 nonmembers, with a \$10 late fee after January

Meeting Agenda

Thursday, January 12

- 3:30-6:00pm Board Meeting
- 4:00-7:00pm Registration
- 5:15-6:30pm Party with Parakeets and Parrots—with leaders
- 5:30-7:00pm Free Happy Hour at iStay Hotel
- 6:00pm Silent Auction opens
- 6:00pm Announcements and Welcome
- 6:30pm Pub Quiz
- 7:30pm Speaker at iStay Hotel—Stephanie Bilodeau—Management and Monitoring of Texas Colonial Water Birds

Friday, January 13

- 5:00-6:30am Breakfast at iStay Hotel
- 5:30-7:00am Field Trip Departures from iStay Hotel
- 4:00-7:00pm Registration
- 4:00pm Speaker at iStay Hotel—Megan Villarreal—Foraging Habits of the Buff-Bellied Hummingbird
- 5:15-6:30pm Party with Parakeets and Parrots—with leaders
- 7:00pm Announcements and trip reports
- 7:30pm Speaker at iStay Hotel—Karl Berg—Red-crowned Parrots

Saturday, January 14

- 5:00-6:30am Breakfast at iStay Hotel
- 6:00-7:00am Field Trip Departures from iStay Hotel
- 4:00pm Speaker at iStay Hotel—John Brush—Breeding Bird Communities of Urban Woodlands and Residential Habitats in McAllen and Edinburg
- 5:00-6:30pm Border Buttermilk reception & social hour at Quinta Mazatlan
- 5:15-6:30pm Party with Parakeets and Parrots—on your own
- 5:30pm Silent Auction closes
- 6:00-7:00pm Dinner Banquet at Quinta Mazatlan
- 7:00pm Field trip reports, announcements, and TOS business
- 7:30pm Keynote at Quinta Mazatlan— Bill Clark—What is Harlan's Hawk? Is it a Red-tailed Hawk?

Sunday, January 15

- 4:30-6:30am Breakfast at iStay Hotel
- 5:00-7:00am Field Trip Departures from iStay Hotel

Food Options

Make your trip more enjoyable and easier by pre-ordering a boxed lunch! Many of our trips are not in urban areas, and there will be little to no time to visit a restaurant. Each lunch option includes a sandwich with homemade bread and a variety of sliced meat and cheese; lettuce, tomato, onion, and a separately wrapped pickle spear; potato chips; fresh fruit; desert (homemade brownie or cookie); and a drink. Your options include: Turkey and Swiss. Ham and American, Veggie, Gluten Free. Cost \$12.00 each. Available Friday, Saturday, Sunday.

SATURDAY BANQUET MENU (tickets \$35.00)

Linguini Alfredo w/ Chicken

Sautéed Veggies

Garlic Bread

Variety Dessert Trays and Caramel Banana Pies

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Speakers



Stephanie Bilodeau is a Coastal Bird Conservation Biologist working for the Coastal Bird Program within Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP). She is based in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and her work is primarily focused on habitat management

for colonial water birds on the spoil islands throughout the Lower Laguna Madre. Her work also includes research and monitoring of breeding and wintering shorebirds in the LRGV. Stephanie's presentation will focus on the water birds that nest on the rookery islands, the management work Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program is implementing on the spoil islands for the birds, and why/how they monitor the water bird populations.



Megan Villarreal is a graduate student at the University of Texas—Rio Grande Valley and is currently completing a Master of Science degree in Biology. Born and raised in the LRGV, Megan has always been interested in the natural world. It is hoped that her thesis

documenting the foraging habits and population density of the Buff-Bellied Hummingbird (*Amazilia yucatanensis*) will gather more information on this poorly studied bird as well as assist conservation efforts of other hummingbird species and various pollinators within the wildly diverse LRGV.

Dr. Berg is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Biology at University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in Brownsville where he teaches Ornithology, Ecology and Animal Behavior. He received his B.B.A. at the University of North Florida, a M.Sc. in Biology at Florida International



University and a Ph.D. in Animal Behavior at Cornell University in Ithaca NY. His research interests lie in the diversity and behavioral ecology of tropical birds, especially parrots and how they communicate. Dr. Berg has published his findings in the *Journal of Field Ornithology*,

Animal Behavior, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London* and the *Journal of Experimental Biology*. He recently began a study of Red-crowned Parrots of the Rio Grande Valley in collaboration with Texas Parks & Wildlife and local community members.



John Brush graduated with his Bachelors of Science in Biology from UT Pan-American in the fall of 2013 and is currently a graduate student in Dr. Alexis Racelis' Urban Ecology Lab. His thesis project focused on describing the pattern of breeding bird communities of

urban woodlands and residential habitats in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. His main area of interest is avian ecology. He has done research in Mexico, Turkey, and the Lower Rio Grande Valley. John's passion for birding and ornithology has seen him lead bird tours for the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, conduct research on avian ecology at UT Rio Grande Valley, and work as a naturalist at Quinta Mazatlan World Birding Center. He hopes his research with UT Rio Grande Valley will lead to further conservation of birds and wildlife in the Valley's growing urban component.



Harlan's Hawk was described as a species by John J. Audubon, and it has been considered both a species and a subspecies of Red-tailed Hawk since then. Taxonomic justification for both lumpings lacked justification, but the decision in 1944 to consider it

a species again was supported by justifications. Bill Clark has studied this unusual taxon for more than 12 years and will present many of his findings during Saturday's keynote presentation.

Clark is a photographer, author, and lecturer with over 30 years experience working with birds of prey, including five years as Director of NWF's Raptor Information Center. He has published numerous articles on raptor subjects; has traveled extensively world-wide studying, observing, and photographing raptors; and has led raptor and birding tours and workshops, both home and abroad, with Raptours.

McALLEN TOS Field Trips—January 13,14,15, 2017

(Field trips will leave from Hotel parking lot unless otherwise specified)
Friday & Saturday
<p>1. How Low Can You Go?—Take a trip out to the southern most parts of Texas and explore the Nature Conservancy’s Lennox Foundation Southmost Preserve, normally closed to the public and home to one of the last remaining native sabal palm stands in the US. The wooded fringes of the resacas give us a chance for all three kingfishers, warblers, and a rare subspecies of bird: the Brownsville Common Yellowthroat. A visit to the beaches of Boca Chica will add a nice variety of shorebirds, terns, and gulls to the day’s list. There is a possibility for a stop for Aplomado Falcons on the way home (time permitting). <i>No fees, but a donation for Southmost is always welcome. Extensive driving to/from sites. 6:00am–3:30pm</i></p>
<p>2. Island Fun—What is a visit to the RGV without stopping at South Padre Island? Hotspots on the island include the SPI Birding and Nature Center, the SPI Convention Center, and the Valley Land Fund Sheepshead Lots for gulls, Peregrine Falcons, shorebirds such as Piping and Snowy Plovers, as well as many herons and egrets. We will also make a quick stop on Buena Vista Rd and Old Port Isabel Rd for Chihuahan Ravens, White-tailed Hawks, and a few wintering sparrows on the coastal prairies. <i>The SPI Birding Center has graciously offered to waive their entrance fee for TOS, but donations are always welcome. Extensive driving to/from sites. 6:00am–3:30pm</i></p>
<p>3. Water, Water Everywhere—The Rio Grande River has played an important role in shaping the landscape of Resaca de la Palma State Park and Sabal Palm Sanctuary. As the river changes course, cuts new channels, and abandons old ones, resacas (or oxbow lakes) are often formed. They provide a refuge for many birds in the middle of a thornforest or grove of sabal palms. Target species include Ruddy Duck, Least & Pied-billed Grebe, White-tailed Kite, Green Jay, Great-horned Owl, and Green Kingfisher. <i>Admission fee or state park pass at Resaca; fee at Sabal Palm. Moderate to extensive walking on trails and pavement. Extensive driving to/from sites. 6:00am–3:30pm</i></p>
Friday & Sunday
<p>4. Count Your Lucky Starrs—Take a trip out west to Starr County and explore the drier regions of the Rio Grande Valley. Stops may include Salineno, Chapeno, Starr County Park, Falcon State Park, and Roma Bluffs. Target Species include Cactus & Bewick’s Wren, Audubon’s & Hooded Oriole, Pyrrhuloxia, Red-billed Pigeon, and Muscovy Duck. <i>Admission fee or state park pass at Falcon; possible fee at other sites. Moderate walking on roads and trails. Extensive driving to/from sites. 5:30am–3:30pm</i></p>

<p>5. Hidalgo Hotspots—Hidalgo County is known for the birds that favor Tamaulipan brushland habitat. Anzalduas County Park usually hosts a roosting Zone-tailed Hawk as well as House Finches (uncommon in the RGV). Bentsen RGV State Park is an excellent place for Green Jays, Gray Hawks, Hook-billed Kites, and Black Phoebes. The last stop of the day will be in Granjeno to search for a Burrowing Owl. <i>Admission fee or state park pass at Bentsen; fee at Anzalduas. Moderate to extensive walking on pavement. 6:45am–3:30pm</i></p>
<p>6. Hugh’s Harlingen Hustle—Hugh Ramsey Nature Park in Harlingen is a wonderful example of what local volunteers can accomplish when they set their mind to a goal. Originally a city landfill, the park is now home to a large array of habitats and birds including Blue-headed Vireos, Long-billed & Curve-billed Thrashers, Common Pauraque, and Olive Sparrows. Visitors frequently spot the resident bobcat or her cubs. Other stops during the tour may include the Harlingen Thicket and the City Lake where Red-crowned Parrots and Green Parakeets can occasionally be found as well as winter waterfowl. <i>Moderate walking on trails and pavement. 6:30am–3:30pm</i></p>
Friday
<p>7. Bahia Grande Bash—Laguna Atascosa NWR has graciously offered to give us a tour into the closed Bahia Grande tract. We will meet at the visitor’s center for a little bit of early morning birding before gathering on a van for a private tour of Bahia Grande. When we return, we can have a quick picnic in the pavilion before exploring the trails around the visitor’s center, Osprey Overlook for winter ducks (which hosts almost 3/4 of the world’s Redheads), and other areas of the refuge. Target birds include Cactus Wren, Aplomado Falcon, Northern Harrier, Chihuahan Raven, and shorebirds. <i>There is a \$4 fee per person for the Bahia Grande tour, but the refuge admission fee has been waived. Moderate walking on trails and pavement. Extensive driving to/from sites. 6:00am–3:30pm</i></p>
<p>8. Jim Hogg County Century Club—Join our fearless leaders on a quest for 100 species in the wilds of Jim Hogg County. Targets include Northern Bobwhite, Rio Grande Valley Turkey, Verdin, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Pyrrhuloxia. <i>Possible fees. Extensive driving to/from sites, and roadside birding. 6:00am–3:30pm</i></p>
<p>9. Meet Me in McAllen—Quinta Mazatlan is an urban sanctuary located just a few blocks from the international airport, a golf course, and an array of homes/apts/condos. The newly opened Ebony Grove has been revegetated with a variety of native plants to attract birds and butterflies, but the highlight is the bubbling creek that flows into a large pond. Formerly known as the Botanical Gardens, the McAllen Nature Center has been reimagined as a site dedicated to increasing the health and wellness of city residents through enjoyment of the outdoors. The site hosts a large number of native plants and animals. Target birds include Olive Sparrow, Clay-colored Thrush, White-tipped Dove, and Plain Chachalaca. <i>No fees. Walking on gravel trails. 7:00am–12:00pm</i></p>

10. Wild Wetlands—One of the original nine World Birding Centers, Edinburg Scenic Wetlands is known for its large platforms overlooking freshwater lagoons, and excellent surrounding butterfly habitat. Located nearby, the 7 acre San Juan Wetlands are home to many birds and mammals including javelina and bobcats. A final stop for a walk around the UTRGV campus which is home to many student and teacher birders may be possible. *Possible fees.* Moderate walking on trails and pavement. 6:45am–12:00pm

11. On the South Side—Located on the south side of Military Highway, Santa Ana NWR and the Hidalgo Pump House offers spectacular and differing views of the Rio Grande River. Known as the Jewel of the Wildlife Refuge System, Santa Ana is a 2088 acre tropical wonderland dotted with ponds and trails dripping with Spanish moss which provides refuge for Northern-beardless Tyrannulets, Northern Jacana (annual), and Couch’s Kingbirds. Located next to a large tract of USFWS land, the Old Hidalgo Pumphouse has gardens planted specifically for hummingbirds and native valley birds. *Duck stamp or fee at Santa Ana; possible fee at pumphouse.* Moderate to extensive walking on trails. 6:45am–3:30pm

12. Raptour with Bill Clark—Raptors can be a confusing group of birds to identify. Learning the sizes of each sex and species, the changes in molt, and details to determine age is a complex and intriguing task. World renowned raptor researcher and bander Bill Clark will take us on a trip specifically designed to search for raptors. Be sure to bring a pen and a notepad to jot down all of the information our local ‘walking raptor encyclopedia’ has to offer. The exact location of the tour will depend on recent raptor sightings. Target species include Harris’s Hawk, White and Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Crested Caracara, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, and possibly Prairie Falcon (rare). *Extensive driving.* Possible fees. 7:00am–2:00pm

Saturday & Sunday

13. A Dash of Salt—One of only three naturally occurring salt lakes in the area, La Sal del Rey (the King’s Salt) is seven times saltier than the ocean and sports a wide variety of wildlife and birds. Rio Grande Valley Wild Turkey, Sandhill Cranes, Cassin’s Sparrows, and 10% of the world’s population of Long-billed Curlews are found here as well as deer, javelina, coyote, bobcats, and many southern snake species (but don’t worry, we will stay on the trails!). Other possible stops include Brushline Rd for sparrows, Delta Lake, and Hargill Playa. *Possible fees.* Moderate to extensive walking on trails. 6:15am–3:30pm

14. Follow the Leader—One of the best things about a winter meeting is that it follows closely on the heels of Christmas Bird Counts, and any rare or unusual birds may have been recently found by a counter. Fall and winter are an excellent time for rarities in the Lower RGV, and we have already had a Variegated Flycatcher and two Northern Jacana show up! Last year’s rarities included Blue Bunting, multiple White-throated Thrush, and Crimson-collared Grosbeaks. Where will this trip go, and what will you see? It is totally up to the leaders, and you can bet they will be on the lookout for valley specialties and rarities. *Possible fees.* 6:30am–3:00pm

15. Winged Wonders of Weslaco—The city of Weslaco is a birder’s paradise, especially if you don’t care for much driving. It hosts three unique birding hotspots within its city limits and all of them offer up different habitats with a huge variety of birds. Estero Llano Grande State Park has wetlands, prairies, and forests; Frontera Audubon has hosted many winter rarities in its forest of trees; and the Valley Nature Center is home to an evening meeting place for a large number of Red-crowned Parrots. Target birds include Common Pauraque, warblers, winter ducks, and wading birds. A visit south to the Progreso Granaries for Yellow-headed Blackbirds is possible time permitting. *State park pass or fee at Estero; fees at other sites.* Moderate walking on trails and pavement. 6:45am–3:30pm

Saturday

16. Linger at Laguna—While similar to the Bahia Grande Bash, the highlight of this trip will be a tour around Bayside Loop which is closed to vehicular traffic due to construction to prevent accidents involving the elusive and endangered Ocelot. We will meet at the visitor’s center for a little bit of early morning birding before gathering on a van for a private tour through the coastal prairies and Laguna Madre shores surrounding Bayside Loop. When we return, we can have a quick picnic in the pavilion before exploring the trails around the visitor’s center, Osprey Overlook for winter ducks (which hosts almost 3/4 of the world’s Redheads), and other areas of the refuge. *There is a \$4 fee per person for the Bayside Loop tour, but the refuge admission fee has been waived.* Moderate walking on trails and pavement. *Extensive driving to/from sites.* 6:00am–3:30pm

17. Birds and Butterflies—With more than 300 species of butterflies and over 500 species of birds seen in the LRGV, it is easy to be distracted when you walk the trails of the many nature centers in the area. The focus of this trip isn’t birds and it isn’t butterflies...it is both! The National Butterfly Center has been landscaping for birds and has a nice blind with a water feature and feeders. Other stops for this trip may include the Yturria Brush Tract and Sparrow Road. *Possible fees.* Moderate walking on trails. 7:00am–2:30pm

18. Brooks County Century Club—Go on a quest to find 100 species in this underbirded county of south Texas with a population of just 7,223 people. Brooks County includes the famous Falfurrias Rest Stop which has been home to a Painted Redstart the past few winter seasons. *Extensive driving to/from sites, and roadside birding.* 6:00am–3:30pm

19. Willacy County Century Club—Located on the eastern side of the Rio Grande Valley, Willacy County boasts a variety of habitats: agricultural fields, mudflats, beaches, resacas, coastal prairies, thornscrub, and wetlands. Enjoy a day of exploring as you rack up the species to check this county off your Century Club list. Target species include Sandhill Crane, Mountain Plover, White-tailed Hawk, and Long-billed Curlew. *Possible fees.* *Extensive driving to/from sites, and roadside birding.* 6:15am–3:30pm

20. People and Plants—Toni and Benito Trevino purchased Rancho Lomitas outside of Rio Grande City in 1986. Since then they have grown and sold over 800,000 seedlings, mostly used for habitat restoration, with the majority of the seeds gathered from local plants in the Rio Grande Valley. Participants will arrive to fresh coffee and pan dulce followed by a tour of the ranch in a wagon with Benito. Afterwards, Toni will meet us at the house for a cooking demo with native plants. Bring your lunch and relax on the covered patio before going on a short walk for Vermillion Flycatchers, Great Kiskadees, dragonflies, and butterflies. *\$15 fee. 8:00am–3:00pm*

21. Sounds of Santa Ana—There is a reason the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival selected Santa Ana NWR as the location for a birding by ear tour: this place is full of birds! We will check out the woodlands and ponds as well as the 40' foot hawk watch tower and canopy-high suspended walkway. Target species include Vermillion Flycatcher, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Northern Harrier, and Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet. *Duck stamp or fee. Moderate to extensive walking on trails. 7:00am–12:00pm*

22. Have a Ball at Bentsen—Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park boasts one of the largest tracts of alluvial flood plain in the Lower RGV, and is the headquarters of the World Birding Center. Visits to the bird blinds and the two story hawk watch tower are a must. Target species include Hook-billed Kite, Grey Hawk, Clay-colored Thrush, Black Phoebe, and Common Ground-Dove. *State Park pass or fee. 7:00am–12:00pm*

Sunday

23. Zapata County Century Club—Knock this county off your Century Club list on your way home from a bird-filled weekend. Targets for the 100 species include Greater Roadrunner, Red-billed Pigeon, Muscovy Duck, Hooded & Audubon's Oriole, and Black-throated Sparrow. *Possible fees. Extensive driving to/from sites, and roadside birding. 5:15am–3:30pm*

24. Put a Ring on It—What's better than seeing a bandit-masked Great Kiskadee or a colorful Green Jay? How about seeing one up close and personal? Join local researcher and bird bander Mark Conway for a relaxing morning at Quinta Mazatlan, and learn about the beautiful birds that call the Rio Grande Valley home while sipping bird-friendly coffee. Participants will go on a short walk around the park after the banding demo. *7:30am–12:00pm*

25. Seedeater Salsa—One of the most sought after birds in south Texas is the White-collared Seedeater, and the goal of this trip is to add that bird to everyone's list. In some of the most arid locations in the area, the seedeaters find refuge on the riparian river edges. Other target birds include Scaled Quail, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Black-throated Sparrow. *Possible fees. Extensive driving to/from sites, and roadside birding. 5:00am–2:30pm*

26. View From the Deck—One of the most popular places to bird in the Lower Rio Grande Valley happens to be an old onion field. Estero Llano Grande State Park is made up of a variety of habitats that birds love including wetlands, woodlands, thornscrub, prairie, and butterfly gardens. During a recent Big Sit, the staff racked up over 50 species from the deck by 8:30am! Target species include Cinnamon Teal, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Vermillion Flycatcher, and Wood Stork. *State park pass or fee. 6:45am–12:00pm*

Friday, Saturday & Sunday

27. Picture This!—A handful of lucky participants will join Ruth Hoyt at the private Laguna Seca Ranch for a morning filled with bird (and other) wildlife photography. Participants are guided and provided with instruction as needed, as they photograph birds from below-ground photo blinds set up on water holes. The photo blinds are conveniently positioned along the ranch's main north-and-south road so there isn't a need for long hikes to find birds to photograph. The birds come to perches and other props set up around the water holes. This is a fun learning experience for beginner to intermediate level photographers and a great location for seasoned photographers to perfect their shots. After a morning filled with photographing birds in great lighting conditions, participants return to Quinta Mazatlan to view and assess what they photographed. Participants should have cameras with telephoto lenses of 300mm or more. A favorite lens for many is the 100-400mm or 80-400mm. Tripods are highly recommended to support your camera and prevent a lot of movement coming from the photo blinds. *\$125 fee. 6:00am–2:30pm (About the leader: Ruth Hoyt is a full-time nature photography tour leader, guide, instructor and consultant. In addition she writes for publication, accompanying it with her photography. Ruth has been teaching photography for more than 25 years and has an impressive track record coaching kids and adults for competition photography. She contracts with land trusts and various nature parks to conduct nature photo workshops and nature photo camps for youths every summer and is currently expanding these programs.)*

28. Party with Parrots and Parakeets—Red-crowned Parrots and Green Parakeets are always a favorite bird for visitors and residents of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Their loud raucous calls make them easy to find as they hide in the green leaves of trees eating fruits and seeds. However, when they are quiet, you could walk by 100 of them and never know they were there! Our guides will have sites staked out for these green wonders, and TOS participants are invited to visit the roost locations on maps provided during the meeting. Please note that there will not be leaders at the sites on Saturday due to the banquet. *No registration or admission fee. Just show up! Standing on neighborhood roadsides/parking lots. Please note these are evening times: 5:15pm–6:30pm*

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