

TOS Field Trips – Golden Triangle, Winter 2025

Friday – 11 trips Saturday – 10 trips Sunday – 5 trips

Please have a second option in mind for each day, as some trips fill quickly.

NOTE: Participants must meet their field trip group at the Holiday Inn & Suites at least 15 minutes prior to start time. Due to logistical complications, it is not possible for individuals to meet the group at any other location. Please plan accordingly. **NOTE: There will be entrance fees at some locations. Please have small bills available as well as bringing your state and national parks passes.**

NUMBER	FIELD TRIP AND DESCRIPTION	COUNTY	DIFFICULTY	DEPARTURE & HOTEL RETURN TIMES		
				FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1	<p>SHADOW BIRDS OF ANAHUAC NWR: Nighttime audio safari by special use permit. Our targets will be the rails – Clapper, King, Virginia and the enigmatic Black Rail. We are also likely to hear Least Bitterns, Great Horned Owls and Barn Owls, and probably Short-eared Owls as well.</p> <p>This is a “hear only” trip. Do not expect to see any birds. No playback or spotlights will be used on this trip.</p> <p>Extreme mosquito conditions are always a possibility here. Long sleeves, long pants, gloves and a head net are recommended. Expect to return to the hotel between midnight and 12:30 am.</p> <p>NOTE: As this is a nighttime trip, be sure you are able to drive after dark or carpool with someone who is!</p> <p><i>All stops will be on gravel or paved roads.</i></p>	CHAMBERS	EASY	6:30 p.m. to 12:00 midnight		
2	<p>BOLIVAR PENINSULA, HIGH ISLAND: We begin the day at the famed Houston Audubon Shorebird Sanctuary off Rettillon Road in Port Bolivar. Species expected include Short-billed Dowitcher, Boat-tailed Grackle and Red Knot, along with a variety of shorebirds. Sparrows along Rettillon Road are also likely, with Nelson’s Sparrow a good bet.</p> <p>On the way back to our hotel we will make quick stops in High Island at the TOS Hooks Woods Sanctuary and possibly one or both Houston Audubon Sanctuaries.</p> <p>NOTE: \$8 fee at Hooks Woods for non-TOS members. Parking stickers are REQUIRED for all vehicles to park on Bolivar beaches. They can be purchased locally for \$10 at most stores.</p> <p><i>Walking on the beach and close to the car; smooth trails at Hooks Woods.</i></p>	GALVESTON	EASY	6:15 am–3:30 pm	6:15 am–3:30 pm	

3	<p>ANAHUAC NWR: This 37,000-acre refuge contains vast expanses of fresh and brackish marshland, flooded soil units and prairie bordering Galveston Bay - welcoming habitat for migrant and resident coastal specialty birds.</p> <p>Potential sightings include Seaside Sparrow, Sedge and Marsh Wrens, Northern Harrier, White-tailed Kite, Osprey, Crested Caracara, large numbers of ducks including Fulvous Whistling Ducks, both cormorants, Boat-tailed Grackles and a variety of rails, herons, egrets. Seaside Sparrow and possibly Burrowing Owls are likely.</p> <p>There is good restroom access and minimal walking.</p> <p><i>Frequent stops along refuge roads, and birding close to the car, with some walking on the boardwalk.</i></p>	CHAMBERS	EASY	6:00 am-3:00 pm	6:00 am-3:00 pm	6:00 am-12:00 pm
4	<p>SEA RIM, MCFADDIN, SABINE PASS: Sea Rim State Park is where the marsh grass and wetlands meet the sea. The park covers 4,000 acres and contains nearly 2 miles of beach.</p> <p>We start out on the Gambusia Nature Trail Boardwalk. Our targets here will be Clapper Rails, Soras, Roseate Spoonbills, and other waders. White-tailed Kites and Northern Harriers are also possible as are Long-billed Curlew, Short-billed Dowitcher and Marbled Godwit.</p> <p>On the beach our targets will be gulls, terns, Least and Western Sandpipers, Dunlins, Willets, Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings and both pelican species. There is also the potential for Red Knots and Stilt Sandpipers.</p> <p>At McFaddin NWR our primary targets will be duck species but Red-breasted Mergansers, Snow Geese, Black-bellied Plovers and Wilson’s Snipe are possibilities as well. The usual gulls, terns, waders and shorebirds will also be present, with Golden-crowned Kinglet highly likely.</p> <p>In Sabine Pass we will primarily be searching for Seaside Sparrows.</p> <p><i>Round trip on the boardwalk is approximately .9 miles; short walk to the beach.</i></p>	JEFFERSON	MODERATE	7:00 am – 3:00 pm	7:00 am – 3:00 pm	

5	<p>W. JEFFERSON CO., CATTAIL MARSH & MORE: We start on the boardwalk at Cattail Marsh hoping for Marsh & Sedge Wrens, Soras, Cinnamon Teal and White-faced Ibis. Possibilities also include Bald Eagles and Osprey.</p> <p>Next, we walk down to Cell #1 looking for more ducks, and Eared Grebe and Long-tailed Duck are not out of the question.</p> <p>Leaving Cattail Marsh, we head to W. Jefferson County for a fun scavenger hunt! Rice fields, pastures and possibly a turf farm are all on the agenda. Possible species include Hudsonian Godwit, Upland Sandpiper, Black-bellied Plover, Ruddy Turnstone and Whimbrel to name a few.</p> <p>We'll be driving back roads in the country so fencerows should yield LeConte's Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlarks and wrens.</p> <p><i>Round trip to Cell #1 is about 1 mile on even surface. At other locations, short walks from the car.</i></p>	JEFFERSON	EASY	6:45 am-3:00 pm		6:45 am-12:00 pm
6	<p>BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE – one of East Texas' wildest places: This trip is led by TOS President Romey Swanson and wife Erin. Romey spent four years working with the National Park Service to document the unique bird and wildlife diversity of the rich woodland eco-systems of the Turkey Creek Unit.</p> <p>Expected species will be Brown-headed and Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pileated and Red-headed Woodpeckers, Fish Crow to name a few.</p> <p><i>Hike of around 3 miles on flat terrain, with 1-2 other short walks.</i></p>	HARDIN	MODERATE/DIFFICULT	6:30 am-3:00 pm	6:30 am-3:00 pm	
7	<p>EXPLORING ORANGE COUNTY: This trip begins with a visit to Lower Neches WMA, Bailey's Fish Camp and Tony Houseman WMA. These sites mostly contain coastal marsh so we will make a stop at Claiborne West Park to add some woodland species.</p> <p>The excursion continues at the famed Shangri La Botanical Gardens. This 252-acre site includes upland forests, cypress/tupelo swamps and Adams Bayou, a lush riparian area.</p> <p>We may find a six-pack of woodpeckers, including Red-headed, with Wood Duck and Hooded Mergansers in the mix.</p> <p>NOTE: Entrance to the Gardens is free but a donation is suggested.</p> <p><i>Walking on smooth or paved trails.</i></p>	ORANGE	EASY	7:00 AM-2:30 PM		

8	<p>PLEASURE ISLAND/NE JEFFERSON COUNTY: We start at Pleasure Island South Levee Road looking for American Pipit, Crested Caracara, White-tailed Kite, Osprey, Black-crowned Night Heron, Red-breasted Merganser, Bonaparte’s Gulls, Royal Tern, both pelican species and several species of ducks.</p> <p>Next, we head up to Pleasure Island to walk the short boardwalk and spend some time exploring the Park. Potential species here are Wilson’s Snipe, Belted Kingfisher, Red-Tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier, American Bittern, Caspian and Royal Terns and several duck species.</p> <p>If lucky, we’ll get Greater Scaup, Common Goldeneye, and Common Loon on the water, and maybe Winter Wren, Brown Creeper and Golden-crowned Kinglet in the woods.</p> <p><i>Periodic stops and short walks close to the car, plus a short walk on the boardwalk at Pleasure Island.</i></p>	JEFFERSON	EASY			7:00 am-12:00 pm
9	<p>COASTAL LOUISIANA: Enjoy a rare chance to bird a neighboring state and add some species to your Louisiana list!</p> <p>This excursion into Cameron Parish environs will kick off with a visit to the historic Sabine Pass Lighthouse. Here we will be able to find salt marsh species and some coastal waders. A small chenier – or wooded hummock – is present and can hold interesting passerines. Look for Bonaparte’s Gull, Boat-tailed Grackle and Clapper Rail.</p> <p>We leave there and travel to other back ridge and freshwater marsh locations and then to the Holly Beach area followed by a visit to the Sabine NWR, walking on the Wetland Walkway 1.5-mile trail over an impounded freshwater marsh, and Blue Goose Trail for a mile or so for more brackish marsh species.</p> <p>At Holly Beach we could see 15 species of shorebirds as well as gulls and terns and a variety of herons and egrets. Target birds include Peregrine Falcon, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Loon, Surf Scoter.</p> <p>All locations are subject to changes based on bird intel before the event.</p> <p><i>NOTE: Prior approval of all participants is required for entry into the lighthouse. Bring your driver’s license or other government ID to present upon entry.</i></p> <p><i>Walkway trip is 1.5 miles; long walks on the beach.</i></p>	CAMERON PARISH, LA.	MODERATE	6:15 am–3:00 pm		

<p>10</p>	<p>INLAND LOUISIANA: Enjoy an unusual chance to explore West Calcasieu Parish in neighboring Louisiana with a local expert. Target birds: Bald Eagle, Hooded Merganser and more.</p> <p>The caravan from the hotel will meet our leader at the Louisiana Tourist Travel Center near Vinton and bird the swamp walkway. We then proceed to the Vinton WWTP for ducks and other waterfowl (hoping for a Common Goldeneye here).</p> <p>Next, we drive north east to a private farm to explore fallow fields, ponds and riverside.</p> <p>We will finally explore the 'prairie' lands south of Vinton and if time allows visit Niblett's Bluff Park for another riverside environment.</p> <p>All locations are subject to changes based on bird intel before the event. Habitat coverage will be pine woods, roadside scrub, weedy fields, small lakes and hopefully some mud flats.</p> <p><i>Quite a bit of walking, some uneven ground.</i></p>	<p>WEST CALCASIEU PARISH, LA.</p>	<p>MODERATE</p>		<p>6:00 am-3:30 pm</p>	
<p>11</p>	<p>HUNTING FOR HENSLOW'S IN HARDIN: The Henslow's Sparrow has long been a desired bird on the Texas birding list. They are known to visit Hardin County during the winter, preferring boggy pine savanna with scattered patches of dense vegetation and pines growing at variable distances. The grass may be tall and the terrain wet and uneven.</p> <p>This trip will consist of making stops in the Big Thicket National Preserve where there is appropriate Henslow's habitat. It is recommended that you bring winter clothing in layers, and comfortable waterproof rubber boots are a necessity. Also, bug spray can help with potential mosquitoes, chiggers or ticks.</p> <p>Where we go will depend on where the habitat is in the right successional stage and could involve several miles of hiking. Walking in their habitat can be strenuous, but the reward is well worth it.</p> <p>This trip might include sightings of Inca Dove, Hairy Woodpecker, Fish Crow, Brown-headed and Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, and many sparrow species.</p> <p><i>Several miles of strenuous hiking in dense vegetation.</i></p>	<p>HARDIN</p>	<p>DIFFICULT</p>		<p>6:30 am-3:00 pm</p>	

12	<p>SHOREBIRD ID WITH CIN-TY LEE – BOLIVAR FLATS: The Houston Audubon’s Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary located Northeast Galveston County is a hotspot for shorebirds all year long and is a favorite of shorebird fans.</p> <p>Join Cin-Ty Lee to get a crash course in shorebird identification. We could have 20 species of shore birds including potentially Red Knot, Horned Lark, Nelson’s and Seaside Sparrows pop up along the beach too.</p> <p>The trip includes stops along Rettilon Road to check the ponds and dunes for waterfowl, shorebirds and sparrows, then a drive down the beach as far as possible. The flats area is only accessible by foot. The round trip from the barricade to the flats area is approximately one mile. Spotting scopes are recommended. Potential species include 4 gull species, 5 tern species, cormorants, grebes, sandpipers, plovers, herons, egrets, various raptors, wrens, and swallows.</p> <p>NOTE: Parking stickers are REQUIRED for all vehicles to park on Bolivar beaches. They can be purchased locally for \$10 at most stores locally.</p> <p><i>A 1-mile round trip hike on the flats and on the beach can both be strenuous.</i></p>	GALVESTON	MODERATE		6:15 am–2:30 pm	
13	<p>EXPLORING LIBERTY COUNTY/CRAWFISH FARMS: This is a great chance to give a good boost to your Liberty County list!</p> <p>We will visit the private Broussard’s Crawfish Farm, where there are several wooded areas in addition to the wetlands-like crawfish farm itself. Possible species include a variety of ducks, Hooded Merganser, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson’s Snipe, both yellowlegs species, Western and Least Sandpipers, a variety of herons, egrets and ibis, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks, Kestrels, Peregrine Falcon, Pine Warbler and several species of sparrows to name a few.</p> <p>Before heading back to the hotel, we will make a quick stop at Liberty Municipal Park. Several species of sparrows are possible as well as Osprey, Kestrel, Barred Owl, Northern Flicker, Red-headed Woodpecker and many others.</p> <p>NOTE: There is a \$15 per person fee at the crawfish farm which will be charged when you register for the meeting.</p> <p><i>Over two miles of walking over uneven terrain. Mud boots are advisable.</i></p>	LIBERTY	MODERATE/DIFFICULT	5:45 am –3:00 pm		

14	<p>IVORY BILLED BOAT TOUR-NECHES RIVER: For a more relaxing birding experience, cruise aboard the Ivory Bill to learn about the unique ecosystems along the Neches River with its dense bottomland forests of hardwoods and pine trees. The area is home to more than 200 tree species, 47 mammals, 300 birds and many reptiles and amphibians.</p> <p>The two-hour Ivory Billed Tour will start at Collier Ferry Park. Potential species often seen on the edges and near the river are Osprey, Belted Kingfishers, Crested Caracaras, Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, American Crows, Fish Crows, cormorants and different species of hawks.</p> <p>Seating is limited to 29 and we will depart the hotel at a time to allow arrival 15 minutes prior to departure.</p> <p>NOTE: There is a minimum of 15 and maximum of 25 passengers. A \$30 fee will be charged when you register for this event.</p> <p><i>Birding from the boat.</i></p>	JEFFERSON	EASY			7:15 am–12:00 pm
15	<p>TRINITY RIVER WETLANDS AND WOODLANDS: The Trinity River in Liberty County offers a beautiful landscape with an opportunity to see many species of birds such as woodpeckers, Wood Ducks, sparrows, wrens, warblers and a variety of songbirds. We will be visiting Trinity River Island Recreation Area, JJ Mayes Wildlife Trace and White Memorial Park. This moderate walking field trip allows birders to explore the areas close to Champion Lake and adjacent Pickett’s Bayou.</p> <p>There is a good chance to find Hooded Merganser, Wilson’s Snipe, Osprey, Merlin, Winter Wren and Dark-eyed Junco in these environs.</p> <p><i>Quite a bit of walking at every stop.</i></p>	CHAMBERS	MODERATE			6:45 am–12:00 pm
16	<p>RARITY ROUND-UP: Our trip leaders will compile a list of the local vagrants and uncommon species that were seen during the event and put together a morning trip to find as many as possible. This is a great way to get another look at a favorite bird, or to finally check a lifer or county bird off your list.</p> <p><i>There could be long walks, depending on where the rarities have been seen. No maximum capacity.</i></p>	TBA				6:30 am–12:00 pm
<p>TEXAS CENTURY CLUB TRIPS: These trips are fast paced outings with the goal of maximizing the number of species seen/heard within the county. There is very little time for lingering looks so prepare to move briskly from spot to spot. Extensive driving to/from sites and roadside birding are a norm. The tour will feature as wide a variety of habitats as possible.</p>						

17	<p>NEWTON COUNTY CENTURY CLUB: It is very safe to say that Newton County is under-birded. The top eBirder has 115 species in that county, and only seven birders have 100 or more species. eBird has nine hot spots listed.</p> <p>This field trip will definitely add to the understanding of birds in the area and hopefully add to the list of good birding locations. Birds to tick off your list include Canada Goose, Bald Eagle, Red-headed Woodpecker and Golden-crowned Kinglet. Winter Wren, Brown-headed Nuthatches and warblers (both migrant and breeding birds) are some of the likely species there.</p>	NEWTON	EASY	5:30 am-4:00 pm		
18	<p>TYLER COUNTY CENTURY CLUB: Although not quite as challenging as Newton County, Tyler County could still be considered under-birded. The top eBirder there has 158 species, with 15 birders having 100 or more species and 10 hotspots listed in eBird.</p> <p>We'll target Canvasback, Snow Goose, Bald Eagle and Cooper's Hawk. Hairy Woodpecker, Brown-headed and Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Fox Sparrow are woodland birds to search for.</p>	TYLER	EASY	6:00 am-3:30 pm		
19	<p>JASPER COUNTY CENTURY CLUB: Jasper County is birded fairly often, so it is not quite as difficult to add species as it will be in other counties we will be visiting during this meeting. The top birder for the county for 2024 has 127 species and 44 birders have 50 or more. With 15 hotspots in the county, we should be able to rack up decent numbers!</p> <p>Look for Canvasback, Bonaparte's Gull and Horned Grebe on the water. Red-headed, Red-cockaded and Hairy Woodpeckers can be found here too, and if we are lucky, we'll spot Bachman's Sparrow and Eastern Towhee.</p>	JASPER	EASY		5:45 am-3:30 pm	
20	<p>ORANGE COUNTY CENTURY CLUB: The tour will feature as wide a variety of habitat as is available. It is safe to say this is an under-birded county. For 2024, 176 species have been seen by 183 birders. The top birder for 2024 has 125 species.</p> <p>Target birds are Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, with Hermit Thrush, Pine Warbler and Boat-tailed Grackles a good bet too. Hooded and Red-breasted Merganser, Bonaparte's and Lesser Black-backed Gull can be found on this trip as well.</p>	ORANGE	EASY		6:00 am-3:45 pm	