

TOS Field Trips – Alpine, Jan. 15-18, 2026

Friday – 9 trips

Saturday – 9 trips

Sunday – 6 trips

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

NOTE: Participants must meet their field trip group in the parking lot of the Civic Center 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. Bring your walkie talkies!**

NUMBER	FIELD TRIP AND DESCRIPTION	COUNTY	DIFFICULTY	FRIDAY *A.M. DEPARTURE *P.M. CIVIC CENTER ARRIVAL	SATURDAY *A.M. DEPARTURE *P.M. CIVIC CENTER ARRIVAL	SUNDAY *A.M. DEPARTURE *P.M. TRIP END TIME
1	MARATHON: POST PARK/PRAIRIE DOG TOWN/GAGE GARDENS: This trip will focus on three areas in Brewster County that often produce some wonderful birds. The first is the Gage Gardens in Marathon that provides a great stopover for migrants and a breeding location for residents. The second location is Post Park/Post Park Road that traverses wonderful scrub and open habitat with a few livestock watering stations along the road that attract birds. Finally, the Marathon Prairie Dog Town which serves as a wonderful habitat for grassland and open habitat birds. Target Birds: Scaled Quail, Pyrrhuloxia, Golden Eagle, Cactus and Rock Wrens, longspurs, Ferruginous Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Horned Lark, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Clay-colored and Brewers Sparrows, Say's Phoebe, Canyon Towhee, Chihuahuan Meadowlark, and waterfowl in the Post spring. Driving time to first stop is about 40 minutes. <i>Easy walking short distances.</i>	BREWSTER	EASY	7:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m.		7:00-11:30 a.m.

2	ALPINE: AROUND TOWN: This trip will explore Kokernot Park, Alpine Cemetery, and Johnson Ponds. Kokernot Park on the north side of town has a host of large trees attractive to birds like Lewis's and Acorn Woodpeckers, plus Pyrrhuloxia and winter sparrows. Alpine Cemetery hosts Sharp-shinned Hawks, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Cactus Wren and Curve-billed Thrasher. At Johnson Ponds Mexican Duck and, surprisingly, Anna's, Allen's and Rufous Hummingbirds have been reported. <i>Easy walking short distances.</i>	BREWSTER	EASY			8:00-11:30 a.m.
3	DAVIS MOUNTAINS STATE PARK/MCDONALD OBSERVATORY/LAWRENCE E. WOOD PICNIC AREA/CHUHUAHAN DESERT RESEARCH INSTITUTE: These hotspots within a variety of elevations of the Davis Mountains should produce an excellent bird list. Davis Mountains State Park is well known to many birders because of the reliability of seeing some great birds. Montezuma Quail, Woodhouse's Scrub Jay, Bushtit, Phainopepla, Acorn Woodpecker and winter sparrows and thrushes will be sought throughout the park. McDonald Observatory and the Lawrence E. Wood Picnic Area are even higher in elevation, and the alert birder might see Common Raven, Western Bluebird, Williamson's and Red-naped Sapsuckers, and more. Driving time to first stop is just over half an hour. Entry fee or parks pass required at the state park. <i>Some walking through the campground at the state park but mostly birding the bird blinds. Easy walking on paved road at L.E. Wood and McDonald Observatory. CDRI is all walking trails and to the bird blind but easy.</i>	JEFF DAVIS	EASY	7:15 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	7:15 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	7:15-11:30 a.m.

4	DAVIS MOUNTAINS PRESERVE HIGH COUNTRY AND MID-ELEVATION: The high-country part of this field trip will focus on the mesic pine forest habitat of Tobe Canyon at an elevation of roughly 7,500'. We will drive 5 miles up Madera Canyon (high clearance vehicles required, 4WD recommended if conditions have been rainy) to the gate at Tobe Gap Road. From there we gain approximately 1,500 feet in elevation during the hike. Target birds here: Montezuma Quail, Williamson's Sapsucker, Golden Eagle, Acorn Woodpecker, Winter/Pacific Wren, thrushes and winter sparrows and towhees. The mid-elevation portion of the trip will focus on the pine and pinyon-juniper woodlands along Madera Creek on The Nature Conservancy's Davis Mountains Preserve. We will drive up Madera Canyon Road (high clearance vehicles required, 4WD recommended if conditions have been rainy) to Wolf Den Canyon or Road Canyon, where we will bird some of the lower elevation pine stands on the preserve. Target birds: Bushtit, Rock Wren, Western Bluebird, as well as numerous wintering sparrows. Driving time to the first stop is about one hour. <i>Strenuous 3-mile round trip hike to Tobe Spring through open habitat with high sun exposure. On Madera Canyon Rd. there will be short, relatively easy hikes along the road and trails, all of which are relatively flat.</i>	JEFF DAVIS	HIGH COUNTRY STRENUOUS; MID-ELEV. MODERATE	6:45 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	6:45 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	
5	BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK EAST: Who knows what birds will be found at Dugout Wells, Rio Grande Village, and the Chisos Basin? Winter ducks and water fowl are common, and White-throated Swift has been a regular visitor. Perhaps a Gray Flycatcher will be perched on top of a high tree, or one of the many Verdin hopping in the shrubbery will pop its head up. Tons of winter warblers and sparrows will keep us busy, and perhaps a Black-tailed Gnatcatcher will appear. Driving time is just short of two hours. Entry fee or parks pass required at the park. <i>Easy walking on paved roads and flat trails.</i>	BREWSTER	EASY	5:45 a.m.-4:00 p.m.	5:45 a.m.-4:00 p.m.	5:45-11:30 a.m.

6	HISTORIC C.E. MILLER RANCH: We are on paved roads from Alpine to Valentine, Tex., then unpaved roads to the ranch headquarters. (If it rains, the road is muddy and may be slippery; high clearance is not required). Early in the morning you will see Gambel's and Scaled Quail feeding at the Miller Ranch headquarters. After a short restroom break and birding at the headquarters we transfer to high clearance ranch vehicles for a drive up into the canyon for a moderate hike and birding. Look for Scaled Quail and Sage Thrasher here. A short history and tour of Camp Holland built by the U.S. Army in 1918 in response to Mexican bandit raids is part of the tour. After visiting the old fort and short history lecture there the group has the option of taking the moderately easy hike into ZH Canyon. Then the adventure really begins as we traverse the rugged canyon terrain of the Sierra Vieja Mountains in search of Phainopepla, Peregrine Falcon, Rock Wren, Verdin and many more species. Those that choose not to hike the trail can find some interesting birding around the fort buildings. Driving time to first stop is about 90 minutes. <i>Easy walking and driving combo on the lower ranch; hike to the canyon about a mile round trip on rocky path.</i>	JEFF DAVIS/PRESIDIO	EASY TO MODERATE	6:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	6:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	
7	LAKE BALMORHEA/BALMORHEA STATE PARK: One of the few trips with major water and a wonderful spot for those who have never birded it or have birded it many times. Lake Balmorhea should provide a variety of waterfowl including Common Goldeneye, a smorgasbord of winter ducks, three species of merganser, Scaled Quail, both Western and Clark's Grebes, possible Golden and Bald Eagles, shorebirds, and who knows what gull(s) may stray to the lake. At Balmorhea State Park we can find Black and Say's Phoebe, wintering sparrows, possibly Mexican Duck, with Marsh Wren and Northern Flicker in the mix. Driving time is about 75 minutes. Entry fee or parks pass required at the state park. <i>All driving and stopping to bird the shoreline at the lake; strolling under trees at the park to look for canopy birds.</i>	REEVES	EASY		6:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	6:30-11:30 a.m.

8	CHRISTMAS MOUNTAIN OASIS: This trip will head to Carolyn Ohl's place called the Christmas Mountain Oasis in Terlingua Ranch. This location is a good spot for Anna's and Rufous Hummingbirds. Birders should also see Scaled Quail, possibly Crissal Thrasher, with Say's Phoebe, Lark Bunting, and many winter sparrows a given. Per Carolyn Ohl-Johnson, "Almost every winter the oasis gets an exciting overwintering species, but I never know what it will be. One year it was a Varied Thrush, one year a small flock of Black-chinned Sparrows, one year an adult male Allen's Hummingbird, etc. Hopefully, something nice will show up soon and stay the winter." Driving time is about 90 minutes. <i>Very little walking is involved. It's just a few yards to the seating in the blinds, and there are flat trails to walk if you choose.</i>	BREWSTER	EASY	6:15 a.m.-2:30 p.m.	6:15 a.m.-2:30 p.m.	
9	CATTO GAGE RANCH: Explore this historic, 190,000-acre private ranch spanning both Brewster and Presidio counties. Portions of the property encompass areas within the Glass Mountains and Del Norte Mountains, with Maravillas Creek on the southern end of the property, along with various other dramatic topographical features. This huge sprawling piece of the Chihuahuan Desert is a very scenic part of West Texas. The property has a large diversity of plants and is also known for vibrant populations of wildlife including mule and white-tailed deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, black bear, mountain lion, javelina, coyotes, and bobcats. TARGET BIRDS: Scaled Quail, Wild Turkey, and, most importantly, a wide variety of wintering sparrows await, along with Greater Roadrunner, Cooper's Hawk, Verdin, wrens, Bushtit, Phainopepla, and Lesser Goldfinch. Drive time 30 minutes to ranch gate where birding begins. <i>Driving between waterholes where group will stop, get out and bird, plus feeders and water features at the home.</i>	BREWSTER/PRESIDIO	EASY	6:45 a.m.-3:00 p.m.		

10	RARITY ROUNDUP: 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. <i>There could be long walks, depending on where the rarities have been seen.</i>	VARIOUS	TBA			6:00 -11:30 a.m.
11	DIXON WATER FOUNDATION - MIMMS UNIT: The Dixon Water Foundation – Mimms Unit is a working cattle ranch in the Marfa grasslands that holds an Audubon Certified Bird Friendly Land designation. The ranch partners often with Sul Ross State University on research projects, including research on Baird’s and Grasshopper Sparrows. While there is only a small chance of finding these cryptic species, many other target birds are regularly spotted on the property. We will look for Chestnut-collared and Thick-billed Longspurs, American (and maybe Sprague’s!) Pipits, Chihuahuan Meadowlarks, Sagebrush Sparrows, and large flocks of Horned Larks and Lark Buntings. Black-throated Sparrows prefer brushier areas, and Northern Harriers often cruise low over the grasslands. We will check all the small falcons to try to find a Merlin and search bare ground for Burrowing Owls! In addition to birds, American pronghorn roam the gently rolling hills, and javelina may also make an appearance. There is a restroom at the Mimms Unit headquarters, but participants should be prepared to spend 4-5 hours afield without a brick-and-mortar restroom option. Brush is sparse but available. Restroom at the Dixon office. Driving time to first stop is about 30 minutes. MAXIMUM OF 10 PARTICIPANTS. <i>This trip will include a combination of walking and driving. Participants should plan for about 1-2 mi walking on uneven terrain and be able to climb in and out of vehicles.</i>	PRESIDIO	MODERATELY DIFFICULT	7:15 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	7:15 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	

TEXAS CENTURY CLUB TRIPS: These trips are fast paced outings with the goal of maximizing the number of species seen/heard within the county featuring as wide a variety of habitats as available. 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 pace and intensity require a moderate amount of effort.

Extensive driving to/from sites, and roadside birding close to the vehicles.

NUMBER	COUNTY NAME	A.M. DEPARTURE TIME & P.M. CIVIC CENTER ARRIVAL TIME		
		FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
12	JEFF DAVIS COUNTY		5:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.	
13	PECOS COUNTY	6:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.		
14	PRESIDIO COUNTY		5:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.	