

## President's Message



Romey Swanson TOS President.

Dear TOS Friends,

Winter is a season of transition—in the field and within our organization. Birds shift ranges, communities gather, and long-standing traditions remind us why we do this work together. As we close out the year and look ahead to what's coming, I'm grateful for the energy, leadership, and shared purpose that continues to define the Texas Ornithological Society.

Just weeks ago, the TOS Board of Directors gathered for our annual retreat at **Inspiring Oaks Ranch in Wimberley**. Set among more than a thousand acres of live oaks and Hill Country skies, the retreat gave us the space to step back from day-to-day operations and focus on the future of TOS. Much of our time together centered on collaborative working sessions—refining priorities, aligning committee work, and advancing implementation of our Strategic Plan. The conversations were thoughtful, forward-looking, and grounded in a shared commitment to strengthening TOS as a welcoming, relevant, and impactful organization for birders across Texas.

That spirit of collaboration and service is on full display right now as we kick off **Christmas Bird Count season**, the ultimate community science effort for birders in Texas and across the country. Just yesterday, I joined the **Matagorda County CBC**, where I was struck not only by the birds we encountered, but by the people. No fewer than **four current TOS directors** were out in the field that day, volunteering as counters. Their presence is emblematic of what makes this organization special: leadership that shows up, contributes, and remains deeply connected to the grassroots work of birding and conservation.

Across the state, TOS members will once again lead, organize, and participate in dozens of counts, contributing invaluable data to one of the longest-running wildlife monitoring efforts in the world. Whether you're coordinating a count, covering a territory, or tallying feeder birds, thank you for being part of this extraordinary collective effort.

As we look ahead to 2026, there is much to be excited about.

Our **Winter Meeting will take place January 15–18, 2026, in Alpine, Texas**, where we'll explore the **Mountains and Basins region of far West Texas**—one of the most dynamic and rewarding birding landscapes in the state. From desert grasslands and riparian corridors to sky island habitats, the Big Bend Region offers exceptional opportunities to encounter wintering specialties, regional endemics, and

unexpected vagrants. This gathering will invite members to experience the diversity and scale of West Texas birding while enjoying the camaraderie and shared discovery that define TOS meetings.

In the spring, we'll head towards Southwest Texas for our **Spring Meeting, partnering with *Birding the Border 2026 in Del Rio, Texas, April 29–May 3, 2026***. This homegrown birding celebration highlights the extraordinary avian diversity of the Devils River and Southwest Texas region, a landscape where international flyways, cultures, and ecosystems converge. We're excited to partner with Birding the Border and its organizers to offer a meeting that highlights both world-class birding and the importance of conservation along the Texas–Mexico border.

Beyond meetings, TOS continues to invest in the future of birding and bird conservation in Texas. We are supporting **young avian scientists**, investing in **youth birding teams through the Great Texas Birding Classic**, expanding **scholarship opportunities for nature-based camps**, and cultivating **new board and committee leaders** who will help guide this organization in the years ahead. At the same time, we're advancing sanctuary management efforts and strengthening conservation partnerships, including ongoing work at **Magic Ridge**, where TOS is collaborating with **Audubon Texas** to survey and monitor breeding shorebirds.

Recently, while filming an upcoming segment for **Texas Parks and Wildlife Television** focused on owls in the mountains of far West Texas, I was reminded how interconnected these efforts truly are. Research, storytelling, mentorship, stewardship, and simple joy in discovery all stem from the same place: curiosity and care. That's the heart of TOS.

As winter unfolds, I hope you'll find time to get outside, join a count, plan for an upcoming meeting, or simply pause to appreciate the birds that connect our landscapes and seasons. Thank you for being part of this community—for showing up, sharing your knowledge, and helping shape a strong future for birds and birders in Texas.

Good birding to you all,

—Romey Swanson

President, Texas Ornithological Society  
romey.TOS@gmail.com

## Regional Reports

### Region 1—Panhandle

—Kelly Smith

### Region 2—North Central Texas

October 18<sup>th</sup> will forever be known as the 1<sup>st</sup> TOS sponsored Birds and Brews event. It was called OctoBirdfest and was held at Oak Grove Park on Lake Grapevine and Hop & Sting Brewery in Grapevine. Karen Carpenter, Christian Walker and I (Ron Huebner) coordinated the event, inviting TOS members, as well as members from all the surrounding Audubon chapters, a women's birding group, a Master Naturalist group, Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area, and the Southside birders list. The idea was to include ALL birders in the North Texas Region. It worked!

The only problem was that the weather forecast was for heavy rain on that day....so, we did it anyway. After all, we ARE birders.

Everyone, including the Brewery, showed great interest from the beginning and we ended up with 23 birders, some super experienced and some who were almost brand new to birding and eager to learn from more seasoned folk. Christian Walker led the group birding the park for almost 3 hours, lending his great birding skills to all. We had the usual suspects and a few migrants (45 species total), but the real stars of the day were all the birders from the area who spent a few hours birding and visiting and yakking like kids on a playground. It was AWESOME! And...it didn't start raining until we were headed back to the cars in the parking lot... WIN/WIN!

Since it was so close to Halloween, we were also blessed with a plethora of many different Birder Costumes. We even have pictures.

So, WHAT ABOUT THE BEER part, you ask? That came next at HOP & STING Brewery, voted the best brewery in Dallas/Fort Worth by whoever votes on breweries? We descended on that place like a swarm of thirsty locusts and it did not disappoint. We practically filled the inside seating area. Great brews were had by those who like great brews, but absolutely EVERYONE had a superb time getting to know each other, exchanging secret birding hotspots, and all the other nerdy things birders talk about.

So, will we ever do this again? Heck yeah, we are already planning the next one. I challenge all the other TOS regions to try having one ASAP. It's not much work...just a few emails and a phone call or 2 and...BOB'S YOUR UNCLE!

And it's a pretty great way to introduce non TOS birders to TOS. I'm pretty sure we recruited several at OctBIRDfest. So, I hope to see you all at a Birds & Brews event near you SOON. Don't wait!

—Ron Huebner

### Region 3—East Texas Timberlands (Pineywoods)

—Bob White

### Region 4—Trans-Pecos

The big news for region 4 since last report is RAIN! At my house in Jeff Davis County, we have had over 19 inches of rain this year with over 14 inches falling since July 1. Water on the landscape is still abundant. This is great for the birds, but not so great for birders as migrants are dispersed instead of concentrating on little mud puddles. I am not sad about this!

Since August, 342 species were reported to eBird in the 16 counties of Region 4. Of interest are Black-bellied Whistling Duck (Lake Balmorhea, 8/17 – 8/23), Greater White-fronted Goose (Lake Balmorhea, 10/29 – 11/11), Lesser Black-backed Gull (Lake Balmorhea, 11/11), Common Tern (Lake Balmorhea, 09/23), Roseate Spoonbill (Lake Balmorhea, 08/24 – 10/16), Groove-billed Ani (Alpine, 9/14), Red-faced Warbler (Davis Mountains Preserve, August), Lewis's Woodpecker (Fort Davis, 11/14), and Anhinga (El Paso, 10/09 – 11/02).

As it is now officially fall, the Turkey Vultures are gone (no report since the week of November 8), but many of our winter friends have arrived. I hope that you will join us for the winter birding weekend (Alpine, January 15-18) to see as many of them as you can!

—Pamela Pipes

### Region 5—Edwards Plateau Report

—Crystal Ledezma

### Region 6—Central Prairie

—OPEN

### Region 7—Rio Grande Brushlands

It feels like winter is right around the corner here in South Texas with the last cold front sending a big push of wintering waterfowl and shorebirds to our coast, the Rio Grande Birding Festival well underway, and many compilers already starting to wrangle their Christmas Bird Count volunteers. One of our most iconic wintering species is the Whooping Crane; please enjoy this note from the Director of the International Crane Foundation's Gulf Coast Programs!

The original winter Texan, the Whooping Crane, has started arriving back on the Texas coast. We often say that Whooping Cranes are in Texas from scary to scary: Halloween to Tax Day. This year the first sighting came in one week before Halloween, and additional birds have arrived since. Reports from the nesting grounds in Wood Buffalo National Park are very promising, so we are expecting a lot of family groups with chicks this winter in Texas.

From 16 individuals in our Aransas-Wood Buffalo population in 1941-1942, to an estimated 557 in the primary survey area last winter, these birds have made an incredible comeback story. I invite you to visit the Texas coast to see these magnificent birds in the wild. My favorite way to see them is from a boat. You can book a boat tour with Rockport Birding and Kayak Adventures (<https://www.whoopingcranetour.com>).

## Regional Reports (continued)

com/), Aransas Bay Adventures (<https://aransasbayadventures.com/>) or CoastalBird.com (<https://coastalbirds.com/>). You can also join the International Crane Foundation and Goose Island State Park staff on a guided Whooper Walk almost every Wednesday this winter (<https://savingcranes.org/events/guided-texas-whooping-crane-walk/>).

*-Dr. Carter Crouch, Director of Gulf Coast Programs,  
International Crane Foundation*

*—Samantha Wolfe*

### Region 8—Central Prairie

This fall saw a notable influx of western species in Region 8. There were multiple reports of **Black-headed Grosbeak** (Galveston, Brazoria, Fort Bend, and Austin Co.), **Western Tanager** (Galveston, Waller, Harris Co.), **Black-throated Gray Warbler** (Galveston, Harris Co.), and **Cassin's Kingbird** (Galveston, Victoria Co.). Other western visitors included **Pyrrhuloxia** (Matagorda Co), **Western Wood-Pewee** (Brazoria Co.), and **Green-tailed Towhee** (Galveston Co.).

Region 8 also saw several county firsts this season. A **Snail Kite** (Fort Bend Co.) delighted birders for nearly two weeks at Cullinan Park. Several people took advantage of boat rides out to see a **Red-footed Booby** (Harris Co.) that was reported for a week, often seen alongside a **Brown Booby** for direct comparison. A lone **Cattle Tyrant** made a brief appearance (Galveston Co.) as a one-day wonder.

Some birds stuck around long enough to make a lasting impression. A **Gray-headed Kingbird** (Harris Co.) nested at a local golf course and successfully fledged young (likely hybrids). A **Yellow-headed Caracara** continues to be observed (Galveston, Harris Co.) since 2024, though its varying habits make it challenging to chase. Sighting of **American Flamingos** (Galveston Co.), reported intermittently since 2023, are becoming increasingly regular.

With cooler days upon us, I hope you'll get out, participate in Christmas Bird Counts, and take time to appreciate the winter birds sharing our region!

*—Kendra Kocab*



**Gray-headed Kingbird.** Photo by Cin-Ty Lee.



**Red-footed Booby.** Photo by Cin-Ty Lee.



**Snail Kite.** Photo by Orlando Fonseca.

### TOS NEWS Staff

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TOS is thrilled to invite you to attend our winter 2026 birding weekend in **Alpine, Texas**, “the Gateway to Big Bend.” Dates for our event are January 15-18, 2026, and registration runs from December 1, 2025, through January 9, 2026.

Field trips will take you to iconic locales such as the Christmas Mountains Oasis and Big Bend National Park, plus private ranches, and hot spots like the Lawrence E. Wood Picnic Area and the University of Texas’ McDonald Observatory. The famous Rarity Round-up and three Texas Century Club trips top off an unforgettable experience.

We have booked rooms at the Quality Inn, 2401 US-90, Alpine. Because of limited availability, a list of alternate lodging options appears in the registration section below.

All events take place at the **Alpine Civic Center, 801 W. Holland, Alpine, TX 79830**. On Thursday you’ll hear Stephen Falick’s talk on what to expect in this area. On Friday, Sul Ross students will recap their research projects, which are partly funded by TOS, and Saturday’s keynote speaker is Stephen Hummel, Dark Skies Initiative Coordinator at the McDonald Observatory. The Friday and Saturday talks will be preceded by reports of the day’s birding results and Texas Century Club awards will be presented on Friday evening as well, so be sure to attend!

Trip caravans will depart from the Civic Center each morning. Please be prepared to carpool to birding locations and remember to bring your reusable drink containers and walkie-talkies! A **map** has been created with pins marking the birding locations to be visited to give you an idea of distance from Alpine. We also ask that you bring your reusable beverage containers as there will not be drinks available with the boxed lunches.

Our TOS merchandise will be on sale (new shirts and hats!) and David Sarkozi will have his book, *Birds of Texas*, on sale. We’ll have a prize drawing at each evening’s presentation, and you’ll have lots of time to network and socialize.

We are eager to explore these West Texas counties and look forward to seeing you there!

—Bob White, TOS Region 3 Director and Planning Committee Co-Chair

## EVENT REGISTRATION

Online registration will open on **December 1, 2025, at 6:00 a.m.**, and will close on **January 9, 2026, at 11:55 p.m.** A confirmation email will be sent once your payment is complete. We are offering our new long-sleeved Blue Bunting t-shirts for sale on the registration form as well. More details under Registration Information below.

The fee for the event remains \$100 per TOS member. Students may attend for free. An administrative fee of \$35 will be deducted from refunds made between January 3-9, 2026. **No refunds can be made after January 9, 2026.**

Once your payment for this event is received, a confirmation email will be sent to you showing which trips, box lunches, merchandise and banquet meal you have selected. Please look it over for accuracy.

Another email will be sent closer to the meeting date with additional details.

Any merchandise you order online will be distributed at check-in.

NOTE: Our meetings are open only to those whose dues are current. Confirm that your membership payments, as well as your email address and phone number, are up to date by visiting [www.texasbirds.org](http://www.texasbirds.org) and clicking Member Login.

## LUNCH SELECTION

Box lunch options from Subway, including gluten-free and vegetarian choices, will be available to order on the online registration form at \$14 per meal. Box lunches will be distributed each morning at the Civic Center. Your order must be submitted by **JANUARY 9, 2026**. No refunds after this date. See Lunches section below.

## BANQUET SELECTION

The price will be \$40 per person for the chicken piccata buffet. A gluten-free vegetarian option will be available. Meals can be ordered on the online event registration form and must be submitted by **January 3, 2026**. No refunds after this date.

## Health and Safety During the Meeting

For the health and safety of everyone, TOS asks that participants fully comply with health guidelines set by private businesses and municipal entities.

As we will be close to the border, any participant who is not a U.S. citizen is encouraged to bring paperwork showing legal status in the country.

## Hotel and Breakfast

To reserve a room at the **Quality Inn**, 2401 US-90, Alpine, **call 432-837-1530 or send an email to the direct mail [qinnalpine.gm@gmail.com](mailto:qinnalpine.gm@gmail.com)** and let them know you are with the Texas Ornithological Society. Price for double or king rooms is \$139 plus tax including hot breakfast that will be served starting at 5:30 am. **Deadline to register is December 29, 2025.**

Should our block of rooms at the Quality Inn be booked, here are some alternate lodging suggestions. Remember to make plans for your own breakfast!

- **Airbnb** and **Vrbo** have several listings in Alpine.
- **Visit Alpine** covers over 70 options.

## Lunches

Box lunch options provided by Subway may be ordered when you register for this event. They will be distributed at the Civic Center each morning. The cost is \$14 per meal, and your order must be submitted by **JANUARY 9, 2026**. No refunds will be given after that date.

## Saturday Night Banquet

We will offer a buffet of chicken piccata with scalloped chevre potatoes, with a gluten-free vegetarian option available. Make your selection when you register for the meeting online. Cost is \$40 per person. **ORDERS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY JANUARY 3, 2026.** No refunds will be given after that date. A cash bar will be open on Saturday from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

## Merchandise Orders

We will have TOS merchandise on sale on all three nights featuring our new long-sleeved Blue Bunting shirt which will also be offered on the event registration form. As a convenience, you may pre-order any item from our online store and pick it up at the event on Thursday evening. Simply log in to your account on our website, [www.texasbirds.org](http://www.texasbirds.org), and select the Store page from the menu. Look for the “**on-site**” sales category which will allow you to avoid shipping costs.

## Registration Information

Online event registration begins on **December 1, 2025, at 6:00 a.m.**

A list of field trips appears at the end of this message. Some trips fill quickly, so have in mind a second choice each day just in case. If you would like to be on a waitlist for a trip that is full, contact Judy Kestner at 361-701-1962 by phone or text, or [tosmember@yahoo.com](mailto:tosmember@yahoo.com). Please include

**your name, the trip number and how many spaces you'll need.**

You may register in two ways:

1. Click the link **HERE** and register.
2. From the home page of our **website**, log in to your TOS account and go to View Upcoming Events.

For questions, or if you do not have access to the internet, you may call or text Judy Kestner at 361-701-1962 for assistance. If you don't get an answer, leave a message and Judy will return your call.

## Event Prices

The winter weekend package includes three field trips (excluding special entry fees) and three evening presentations.

\$100 for TOS members

Non-TOS members must **submit membership dues** prior to registration.

FREE for all students

**A \$35 administrative fee will be deducted from any refunds issued between January 3 and 9, 2026. No refunds will be issued after January 9, 2026.**

## Meeting Agenda

**All activities take place at the Alpine Civic Center, 801 W. Holland.**

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2026

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 3:00-6:00 PM | Event check-in   |
| 6:00 PM      | First-time meeting attendee orientation  |
| 6:30 PM      | Sales Tables/Welcomes, Introductions, Announcements: Bob White, Planning Committee Chair, and Romey Swanson, TOS President (Lots of useful information is given during this time, so please attend.) |
| 7:00 PM      | Evening presentation: Stephen Falick   |
| 7:45 PM      | Meet your leaders for tomorrow's trips   |

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2026

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| All Day      | Birding caravans leave Civic Center between 5:45 and 7:15 a.m. |
| 4:00-8:00 PM | Event late self-check-in/Sales tables                          |
| 6:00-7:00 PM | Announcements/ Birding Reports/ Century Club Presentations     |
| 7:00 PM      | Evening presentation: Sul Ross Students                        |
| 7:45 PM      | Meet your leaders for tomorrow's trips                         |

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 2026

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| All Day      | Birding caravans leave Civic Center between 5:30 and 7:15 a.m. |
| 5:00-7:00 PM | Cash bar/Sales tables  |
| 5:30 PM      | Banquet/Announcements, Birding Reports                         |
| 6:45 PM      | Keynote speaker: Stephen Hummel                                |
| 7:45 PM      | Meet your leaders for tomorrow's trips                         |

## SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2025

Half Day      Birding caravans leave Civic Center  
between 5:45 and 8:00 a.m.  
12:00-1:00 PM      Depart for home.

## 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<br>*A.M. DEPARTURE<br>*P.M. CIVIC CENTER<br>ARRIVAL | SATURDAY<br>*A.M. DEPARTURE<br>*P.M. CIVIC CENTER ARRIVAL | SUNDAY<br>*A.M. DEPARTURE<br>*P.M. TRIP END TIME |
|--------|--|------------|------------|--|---|--|
| 1      | <p><b>MARATHON: POST PARK/PRAIRIE DOG TOWN/GAGE GARDENS:</b> This trip will focus on three areas in Brewster County that often produce some wonderful birds. The first is the <b>Gage Gardens</b> in Marathon that provides a great stopover for migrants and a breeding location for residents. The second location is <b>Post Park/Post Park Road</b> that traverses wonderful scrub and open habitat with a few livestock watering stations along the road that attract birds.</p> <p>Finally, the <b>Marathon Prairie Dog Town</b> which serves as a wonderful habitat for grassland and open habitat birds.</p> <p><b>Target Birds:</b> 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.</p> <p>Driving time to first stop is about 40 minutes.</p> <p><i>Easy walking short distances.</i></p>   | BREWSTER   | EASY       | 7:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m.  |   | 7:00-11:30 a.m.                                  |
| 2      | <p><b>ALPINE: AROUND TOWN:</b> This trip will explore <b>Kokernot Park, Alpine Cemetery, and Johnson Ponds.</b></p> <p><b>Kokernot Park</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Alpine Cemetery</b> hosts Sharp-shinned Hawks, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Cactus Wren and Curve-billed Thrasher. At <b>Johnson Ponds</b> Mexican Duck and, surprisingly, Anna's, Allen's and Rufous Hummingbirds have been reported.</p> <p><i>Easy walking short distances.</i></p>   | BREWSTER   | EASY       |  |   | 8:00-11:30 a.m.                                  |
| 3      | <p><b>DAVIS MOUNTAINS STATE PARK/MCDONALD OBSERVATORY/LAWRENCE E. WOOD PICNIC AREA/CHUHUAHAN DESERT RESEARCH INSTITUTE:</b> These hotspots within a variety of elevations of the Davis Mountains should produce an excellent bird list. <b>Davis Mountains State Park</b> 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. <b>McDonald Observatory and the Lawrence E. Wood Picnic Area</b> are even higher in elevation, and the alert birder might see Common Raven, Western Bluebird, Williamson's and Red-naped Sapsuckers, and more.</p> <p>Driving time to first stop is just over half an hour.</p> <p>Entry fee or parks pass required at the state park.</p> <p><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></p> | 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.                                  |

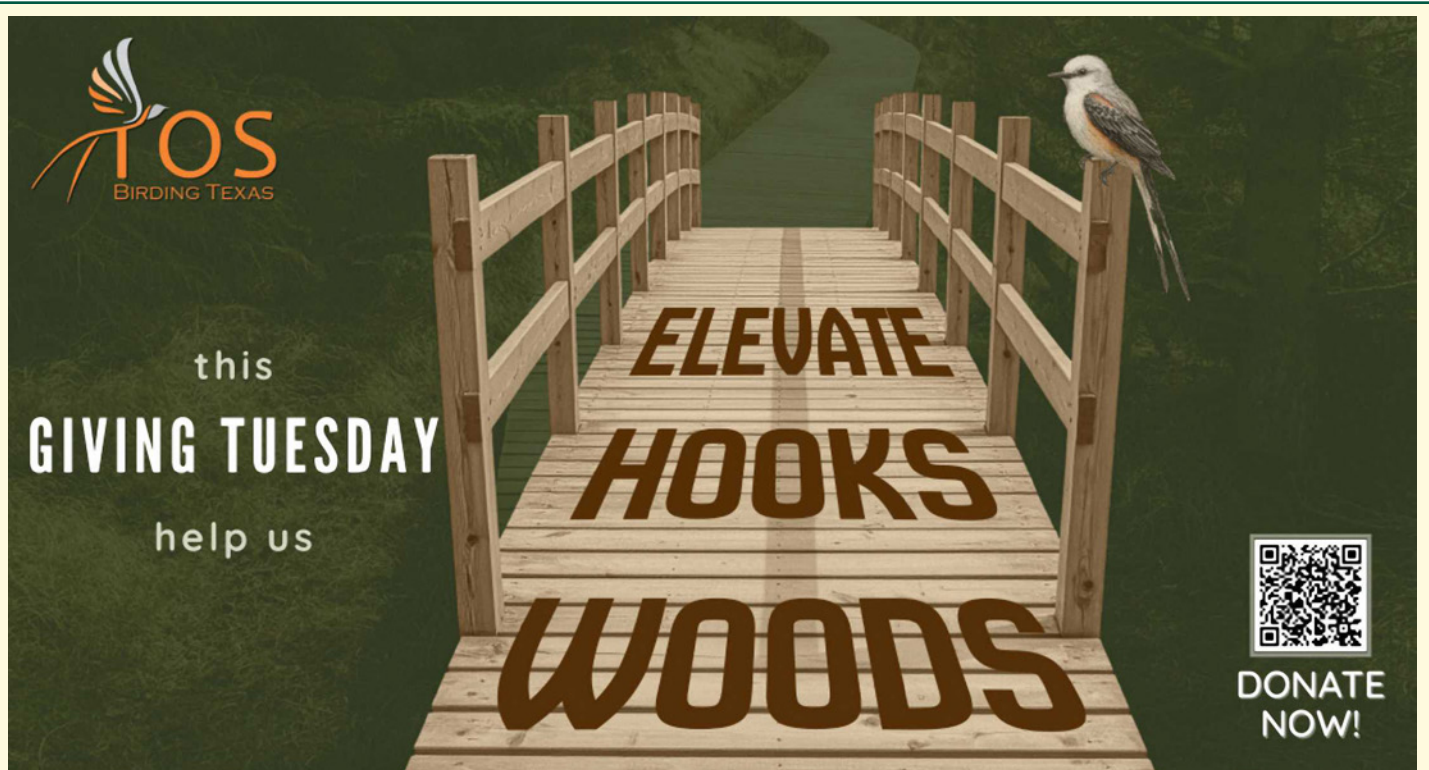
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|---|--|---------------------|--|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 4 | <p><b>DAVIS MOUNTAINS PRESERVE HIGH COUNTRY AND MID-ELEVATION:</b> The high-country part of this field trip will focus on the mesic pine forest habitat of <b>Tobe Canyon</b> 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.</p> <p>Target birds here: Montezuma Quail, Williamson's Sapsucker, Golden Eagle, Acorn Woodpecker, Winter/Pacific Wren, thrushes and winter sparrows and towhees.</p> <p>The mid-elevation portion of the trip will focus on the pine and pinyon-juniper woodlands along <b>Madera Creek on The Nature Conservancy's Davis Mountains Preserve</b>.</p> <p>We will drive up <b>Madera Canyon Road</b> (high clearance vehicles required, 4WD recommended if conditions have been rainy) to <b>Wolf Den Canyon or Road Canyon</b>, where we will bird some of the lower elevation pine stands on the preserve.</p> <p>Target birds: Bushtit, Rock Wren, Western Bluebird, as well as numerous wintering sparrows.</p> <p>Driving time to the first stop is about one hour.</p> <p><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></p> | 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 | <p><b>BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK EAST:</b> Who knows what birds will be found at <b>Dugout Wells, Rio Grande Village, and the Chisos Basin</b>? 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.</p> <p>Driving time is just short of two hours.</p> <p>Entry fee or parks pass required at the park.</p> <p><i>Easy walking on paved roads and flat trails.</i></p>   | 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 | <p><b>HISTORIC C.E. MILLER RANCH:</b> 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).</p> <p>Early in the morning you will see Gambel's and Scaled Quail feeding at the <b>Miller Ranch</b> 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.</p> <p>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 <b>Sierra Vieja Mountains</b> 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.</p> <p>Driving time to first stop is about 90 minutes.</p> <p><i>Easy walking and driving combo on the lower ranch; hike to the canyon about a mile round trip on rocky path.</i></p>   | JEFF DAVIS/PRESIDIO | EASY TO MODERATE                           | 6:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. | 6:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. |                 |
| 7 | <p><b>LAKE BALMORHEA/BALMORHEA STATE PARK:</b> 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. <b>Lake Balmorhea</b> 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.</p> <p>At <b>Balmorhea State Park</b> we can find Black and Say's Phoebe, wintering sparrows, possibly Mexican Duck, with Marsh Wren and Northern Flicker in the mix.</p> <p>Driving time is about 75 minutes.</p> <p>Entry fee or parks pass required at the state park.</p> <p><i>All driving and stopping to bird the shoreline at the lake; strolling under trees at the park to look for canopy birds.</i></p>  | REEVES              | EASY                                       |                     | 6:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. | 6:30-11:30 a.m. |

|    |  |                   |                      |                     |                     |                  |
|----|--|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 8  | <p><b>CHRISTMAS MOUNTAIN OASIS:</b> This trip will head to Carolyn Ohl's place called the <b>Christmas Mountain Oasis</b> 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.</p> <p>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."</p> <p>Driving time is about 90 minutes.</p> <p><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></p>   | BREWSTER          | EASY                 | 6:15 a.m.-2:30 p.m. | 6:15 a.m.-2:30 p.m. |                  |
| 9  | <p><b>CATTO GAGE RANCH:</b> 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.</p> <p>The property has a large diversity of plants and is also known for vibrant populations of wild-life including mule and white-tailed deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, black bear, mountain lion, javelina, coyotes, and bobcats.</p> <p><b>TARGET BIRDS:</b> 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.</p> <p>Drive time 30 minutes to ranch gate where birding begins.</p> <p><i>Driving between waterholes where group will stop, get out and bird, plus feeders and water features at the home.</i></p>  | BREWSTER/PRESIDIO | EASY                 | 6:45 a.m.-3:00 p.m. |                     |                  |
| 10 | <p><b>RARITY ROUNDUP:</b> 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.</i></p>  | VARIOUS           | TBA                  |                     |                     | 6:00 -11:30 a.m. |
| 11 | <p><b>DIXON WATER FOUNDATION - MIMMS UNIT:</b> The <b>Dixon Water Foundation – Mimms Unit</b> 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Restroom at the Dixon office.</p> <p>Driving time to first stop is about 30 minutes. <b>MAXIMUM OF 10 PARTICIPANTS.</b></p> <p><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></p> | 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. |        |



Giving Tuesday was on December 2. Our goal this year is to raise funds for repairs and improvement at our Hooks Woods Sanctuary, and it's not too late to make a tax-deductible donation to this cause!

Shelia Hargis, our Hooks Woods Sanctuary manager, recently raised a safety concern about the boardwalk there and believes it needs to be replaced before the 2026 spring migration.

She also recommends a couple of additional extensions to the boardwalk to increase access to the sanctuary for birders with mobility issues.

Our board of directors recently invited to a meeting the incomparable Virginia Rose of Birdability, an organization

which focuses on removing barriers to access for birders with mobility challenges, blindness or low vision, or who are deaf or hard of hearing.

After hearing Virginia's impassioned presentation, all directors agreed that this is a concept that should be included in our birding events.

By donating to the GivingTuesday campaign, you can help TOS achieve this important goal.

When you give today, you're doing more than just donating. You'll make it possible to provide a safe, accessible birding area in the Lone Star State.

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# TEXAS WATERFOWL WORKSHOP

Feb 16, 23 • Mar 2, 9 | 6:30–8:30 PM



SHELIA HARGIS

**\$120 (non-members \$155\*)**

*\*1 year membership included*

**Field Workshop**

**Mar 6–8 | \$60**

Registration is now open for the second series of instructional sessions by Shelia Hargis: ***Introduction to Waterfowl***.

This workshop is offered in two parts—the virtual classroom session and an in-the-field session.

The virtual classroom session will include four classroom sessions via Zoom. Each session will be two hours long. Class dates are February 16, 23, March 2, and 9 from 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM (Central Time). The class fee is \$120 for TOS members, part of which goes to the instructor and part of which goes to TOS. The fee is \$155 for non-members, which includes a one-year membership. Sessions will be recorded and access shared with participants for additional study opportunities.

The fieldwork will be held in Austin over one weekend when we'll visit numerous ponds in the general Austin area. Not all the species in Texas

are expected there, but a good many of them are, especially the more common species. If the birds cooperate, most of the ponds that we visit will have flat and smooth trails or sidewalks and close views of the waterfowl. The weekend fieldwork will be available on a first-come, first-served basis to those who are registered for the classroom session.

The weekend fieldwork in the Austin area is optional for students of the classroom session. It will be held March 6–8, starting in the afternoon on Friday and ending around lunch on Sunday. The cost is \$60, which is separate from the classroom fee. The field session is limited to 15 participants. Hotel information will be provided to registrants.

An email announcing the classes will be sent separately, but if you are ready to register for the classroom sessions, click **HERE**.

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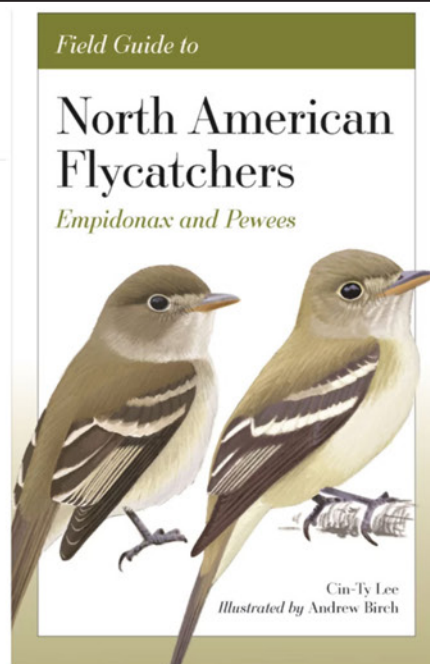
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Princeton Nature

## Field Guide to North American Flycatchers: *Empidonax and Pewees*

Cin-Ty Lee and Andrew Birch

A richly illustrated, portable field guide to flycatcher  
identification



The identification of *Empidonax* flycatchers and pewees can be a daunting challenge for even the most seasoned birder. *Field Guide to North American Flycatchers* takes bird identification to an entirely new level by training readers to observe subtle differences in structure, color patterns, and vocalizations before delving into the finer details of a particular species. Because the plumages of flycatchers are so similar, this one-of-a-kind guide uses illustrations that highlight slight variances among species that photos often miss. One of the last frontiers of bird identification is now accessible to everyone—once one knows what to look for.

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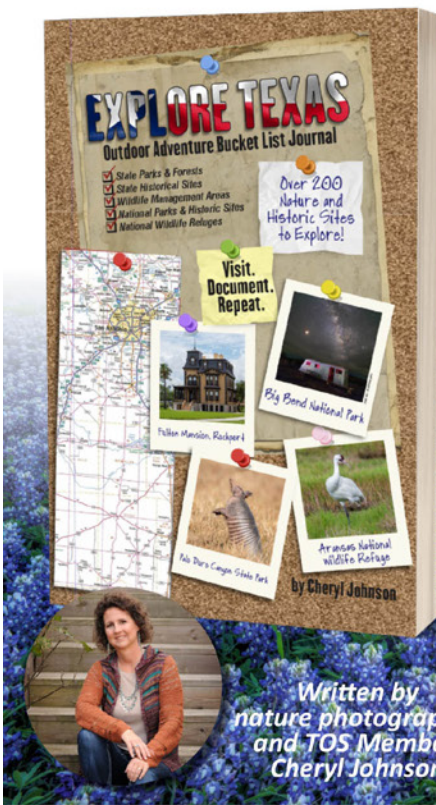
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