

## President's Message



Romey Swanson TOS President.

Dear TOS Friends,  
I'm writing this note while spending a few days along the Devils River, where "working remotely" this week has meant watching Gray Hawks, Common Black Hawks, and Zone-tailed Hawks tracing slow circles above limestone bluffs and spring-fed canyons. Mid-spring in this part of Texas is a reminder that birding here is never confined to one region, one tradition, or one way of knowing a landscape. It's a

place where East, West, and South meet, sometimes all in a single morning, and where the birds tell that story better than anything else could.

It also feels like the right setting from which to look ahead to our upcoming Spring Meeting in partnership with Birding the Border in Del Rio, a gathering that reflects many of the values that continue to shape the work of TOS: strong conservation partnerships, meaningful access to privately stewarded lands, and a shared appreciation for one of Texas's ecological gems. Few places better illustrate the richness of Texas birding than the Lower Pecos and Devils River region. Where else could you reasonably hope to encounter Barred Owl, Phainopepla, and Morelet's Seedeater in the same landscape?

I hope many of you will join us April 29 – May 3 as we explore this remarkable region together.

Before looking too far ahead, though, I want to pause and reflect on what was truly an outstanding Winter Meeting in Alpine. The Mountains and Basins region offered us a spectacular backdrop for field trips, learning, and fellowship, and I continue to hear high praise from members about the quality of the birding and the spirit of the gathering. Highlights included an unforgettable Nutting's Flycatcher near Marathon, along with the many desert, sky-island, and arid grassland specialties that make West Texas such a compelling destination.

Meetings like this only happen because of strong partnerships and generous hospitality. I want to extend special thanks to our landowner hosts, whose willingness to welcome TOS members onto their properties made several of our most memorable field experiences possible. I'm also deeply grateful to our new Meetings Co-Chairs, Crystal Ledezma and Bob White, whose leadership, together with the support of many dedicated volunteers, helped make the Alpine meeting such a success. Their work reflects the collaborative spirit that continues to strengthen TOS as an organization.

Spring also brings its own reminders of why sharing birds matters so much. Recently, I had the chance to guide my

good friend Heather Bullock to see her first Golden-cheeked Warblers at Pedernales Falls State Park. Heather is already a seasoned birder, but even so, there's something special about witnessing someone connect with a species for the first time in its home landscape. Moments like that remind me that sharing birds and encouraging one another along the way remain one of the leading causes of the ever-expanding birding epidemic. It's the kind of epidemic I hope we'll continue spreading widely, and always with the friendliness, patience, and generosity that define the best of our community.

That same spirit of stewardship and shared responsibility is reflected in the continued evolution of our Board of Directors. I'm pleased to welcome Christian Walker, who has joined the board in a one-year appointment representing Region 6. Christian brings passion, experience, and a thoughtful approach to TOS's mission, and I'm grateful for his willingness to serve.

Finally, I want to take a moment to recognize someone who has helped shape how many of us experience TOS communications over the years. This note is addressed to our long-serving editor, Jack Eitniear, who will soon step away from his role after many years of dedicated service to *Texas Birds* and the Society. Jack's steady guidance and care for the publication have supported countless contributors and helped maintain one of the most important voices in Texas ornithology. We're deeply grateful for his work.

As we prepare for this transition, we would welcome any interest or referrals to help support future editorial or publication efforts for TOS. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you'd like to learn more.

Spring is one of the most exciting times to be in the field anywhere in Texas. I hope it brings each of you opportunities to explore new places, share birds with friends, and join us in Del Rio for what promises to be a memorable gathering along one of the state's most remarkable rivers and landscapes.

With gratitude and anticipation,

–Romey Swanson

President, Texas Ornithological Society  
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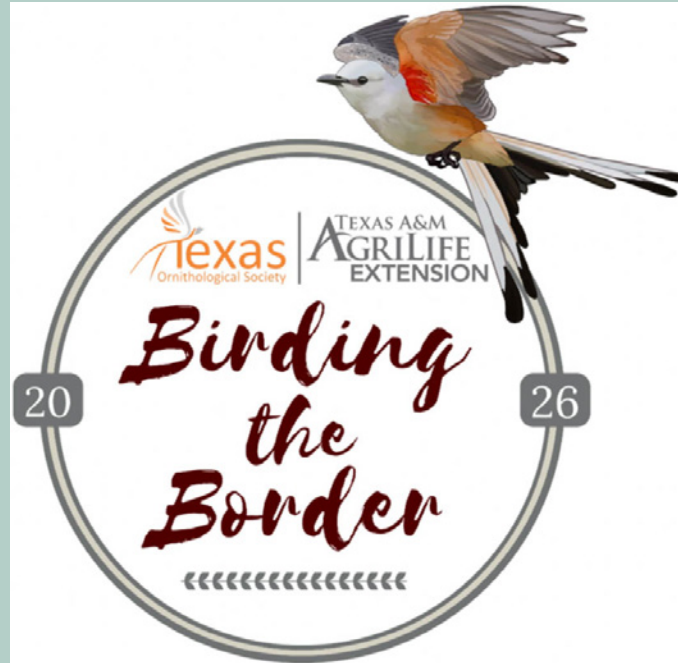
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## Birding the Border - Don't forget to register!



This year, TOS will hold our spring birding weekend and annual meeting in conjunction with Birding with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Services' program, Birding the Border. TOS members receive a DISCOUNT registration. For information on how to receive your discount, email [agrillife.birding@gmail.com](mailto:agrillife.birding@gmail.com).

Birding the Border 2026 returns April 29 - May 3, 2026, in Del Rio, Texas, offering an unforgettable spring birding immersion in the scenic borderlands where the Hill Country, Edwards Plateau, and South Texas Brush Country converge. This unique event brings together birders of all skill levels to explore habitats rarely open to the public, including private ranches and restricted-access lands rich with avian diversity.

Over multiple days, attendees can:

- Participate in guided birding trips led by expert guides, with small group sizes ensuring personalized exploration in diverse eco-regions.
- Choose from specialized tracks like the Photography Track or Beginner Track — designed to elevate skills and deepen appreciation for birds and nature.
- Join the TOS Texas Century Club Trips, perfect for birders chasing county lists and Big Day challenges.
- Engage with fellow birding enthusiasts during social events, educational seminars, and community gatherings throughout the festival.

***REGISTER TODAY!*** <https://wildlife.tamu.edu/.../birding-the-.../registration/>

## Regional Reports

### Region 1—Panhandle

—Kelly Smith  
tosregion1@gmail.com

### Region 2—North Central Texas

## WINTER TOS MEETING A SUCCESS

The 2026 Winter TOS meeting in Alpine, Texas was a rousing success with over 160 participants, including many new members experiencing their first dose of Texas Ornithological energy, exploration, and great birding. Field trips included the usual hotspots such as Big Bend and the Christmas Mountain Oasis, but also added many private properties that are normally off limits to the public, including the Catto Gage Ranch, not to mention several Century Club trips.

Several myths were dispelled on this trip. First, Texas is not all flat! Second, casual birders and “Numbers obsessed Century Club birders” get along just fine. And lastly, West



*Stephen Hummel*



*Wendy Harte got lunch.*



*Alpine Meeting*



*Balmorhea Trip*

## Regional Reports (continued)

Texas is not always hot. BIRD ON GARTH!!!



*Big Bend Trip*



*Davis Mountain Preserve*

—Ron Huebner  
[Feralbirder@gmail.com](mailto:Feralbirder@gmail.com)

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

—Bob White  
[bobwhitebsacbc@gmail.com](mailto:bobwhitebsacbc@gmail.com)

### Region 4—Trans-Pecos

We held a very successful winter meeting in Alpine the weekend of January 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>. Many great birds were seen by a great number of birders!

Also in January, I was invited to represent the Texas Ornithological Society at the Alpine Wildlife Weekend. I was



privileged to share information about our great organization with attendees at the family activities event held in the Granada Theatre on Saturday, January 31<sup>st</sup>.

Because we had so much rain in 2025, water on the landscape has persisted through the winter months. As spring migration ramps up, I am hopeful that birds moving through will find the resources they need—and maybe stick around long enough for birders to see them!

Breeding birds are beginning to arrive. Of particular interest to me is the Hooded Oriole. At my home in Jeff Davis County, this species is considered rare. We have seen it during spring migration each year since 2023. Last year, they apparently nested nearby, with a male and female regularly visiting our jelly feeder throughout the summer. They fledged at least three young (seen with the adult female in late summer). In preparation for their arrival (and other species as well), we put up the jelly feeder and mounted a motion activated Birdfy 2 Pro camera adjacent to it. On March 27, we had our first visit by an adult male! We hope a female soon joins him. Below is a screen grab from the Birdfy video.



—Pamela Pipes  
[pspipes@gmail.com](mailto:pspipes@gmail.com)

### Region 5—Edwards Plateau Report

The Region is off to a good start to spring. Kerr county is making some progress with native plant restoration along the Guadalupe River. A local coalition is partnering with groups such as Texas Master Naturalists, Native Plant Society, TPWD, and others to plant native trees, grasses, forbs, and other plants that will benefit the birds, other wildlife, as well as the humans, that were impacted by the flood.

Kerrville is delighted to be hosting a Black Skimmer, along with all of our returning migrants. Golden-cheeked Warbler in surveys conducted in Real County were very productive, and don't forget to look up, Swainson's Hawks are migrating through in big numbers right now!

TOS was invited to have a table at the Migratory Bird Day event at the Riverside Nature Center. There were 4 speakers, including myself, and a short bird walk in the garden. It was a nice event, and the group enjoyed good looks at a singing Yellow-throated Vireo.

—Crystal Ledezma  
[crystalledezma@gmail.com](mailto:crystalledezma@gmail.com)

## Regional Reports (continued)

### Region 6—Central Prairie

TOS is excited to welcome our newest board member, Christian Walker. Recently appointed to fill the vacant position of Regional 6 Director, he brings with him a passion for birds and an enthusiasm for this organization. Read below to learn more about Christian in his own words.

“Hello! My name is Christian Walker, and I have been birding in Texas since I was 12 years old. I live in Irving, Texas where I work as an insurance adjuster and a part time bird guide at my new company, Montezuma Birding, named after my favorite bird the Montezuma Quail. I go birding as often as I can, whether sneaking in a morning’s birding at my patch Campion Trails - Mountain Creek Preserve, doing some Dallas county birding, working on my Century Club list around Texas, or traveling outside the state with friends either in the US or abroad! I became involved with TOS a few years ago, and love volunteering to lead field trips at the bi-annual TOS meetings, especially the Texas Century Club trips. I proudly received my TCC 75 counties pin at our last spring meeting. I am honored to be appointed the Region 6 interim regional director and hope to visit soon for some birding trips with local TOS members.”



~Christian Walker  
montezumabirding@gmail.com

### Region 7—Rio Grande Brushlands

—Samantha Wolfe  
swolfe@manomet.org

### Region 8—Central Prairie

What a winter for rare birds in Region 8! The season was particularly good for gulls, raptors, and flycatchers. Identifying birds in these 3 groups is not always straightforward, but practice pays off!

Rare gulls were common, especially in Galveston County which tallied 5 notable species, including **Little Gull** (Galveston Co.), **Glaucous Gull** (Harris and Galveston Co.), **Slaty-backed Gull** (Galveston Co.), **Iceland Gull** (Harris, Galveston, and Brazoria Co.), and a **California Gull** that was seen over two months around Bolivar Roads, the waterway between Galveston and Bolivar (Galveston Co.). Also reported in Region 8 were **Black-legged Kittiwake** (Jefferson Co.) and **Great Black-backed Gull** (Harris Co.).

Several raptor species were reported this winter, including **Golden Eagle** (Jefferson, Chambers, and Colorado Co.), **Harris’s Hawk** (Jackson and Harris Co.), **Zone-tailed Hawk** (Waller and Victoria Co.), **Short-tailed Hawk** (Matagorda Co.), **Ferruginous Hawk** (Waller, Austin, Colorado, and Matagorda Co.), and **Aplomado Falcon** (Brazoria Co.). Also of note, the **Yellow-headed Caracara** (Galveston Co.) that had been seen regularly since late 2024 continued into December 2025 until it was found deceased. Lastly, there were a couple reports of late **Swallow-tailed Kites** (Fort Bend Co. and Galveston Co.). The Galveston sightings are interesting – two reports within 1 hour of each other and 5 miles apart, suggesting potentially the same bird happened to be spotted independently by two separate birders several miles apart!

It was a good winter for rare flycatchers, including **Hammond’s Flycatcher** (Fort Bend Co.), **Western Flycatcher** (Fort Bend Co.), **Black Phoebe** (Colorado and Matagorda Co.), **Cassin’s Kingbird** (Galveston Co.), **Gray Kingbird** (Chambers Co.), and **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** (Chambers Co.). Also notable, **Say’s Phoebes** were widespread, appearing in 10 out of our 14 counties in Region 8 (Austin, Calhoun, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Jackson, Matagorda, and Victoria Co.).

As we get ready for Spring, the spectacle of colorful warblers is upon us. However, spring and fall are not the only times these birds can be seen. From November through February, **28 species** of warblers were reported in Regions 8, including **Black-throated Blue** (Chambers Co.) and **Black-throated Gray** (Harris Co.). Other notable birds this winter included a **Long-tailed Duck** that spent the winter in a residential retention pond (Fort Bend Co.), **Lesser Nighthawk** (Galveston and Matagorda Co.), **Eastern Whip-poor-will** (Chambers Co.), **Broad-billed Hummingbird** (Harris Co.), **Red-naped Sapsucker** (Matagorda Co.) and **Lazuli Bunting** (Jefferson Co.).

While it is clear this was a great winter for unexpected sightings, it is notable that more than half of the species listed were only seen as one-day wonders. The best way to encounter rare birds is not to wait for a report, but to get out there and explore – you never know what you’ll find!

## Regional Reports (continued)



*Ferruginous Hawk. photo Mary Anne Morris*



*Broad-billed Hummingbird. Photo Cin-Ty Lee*



*Long-tailed Duck. Photo Frank Farese*

– Kendra Kocab  
[kenner7683@gmail.com](mailto:kenner7683@gmail.com)

## SAVE THE DATE!

### Red-Cockaded Woodpecker & Walker County Weekender



Janey Woodley will lead an exploration on May 29-31 to the Sam Houston National Forest in search of the much sought after Red-cockaded Woodpecker. We'll also spend some time exploring Huntsville State Park to help bump up your Walker County species count. Besides Red-cockaded Woodpecker, other likely species will be Piliated, Red-headed, Red-Bellied and Downy Woodpeckers, Bald Eagle, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wood Duck, Fish Crow, Great-crested Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and many others.

## Hooks Woods Update

Big improvements are taking flight at Hooks Woods! Take a sneak peak at our new boardwalks....

Shelia Hargis oversaw a project to replace our aging boardwalk and build two additional boardwalks. Using a more durable, longer-lasting material, this project will reduce the need for repairs, improve safety and accessibility,



and provide better access to key features of the sanctuary. Construction began in February and is now complete

This project is made possible through donations and member support. Your generosity helps keep the sanctuary accessible, sustainable, and thriving. Thank you for supporting the birds and the future of this special place!



Here is also the link to a video created by Ron Huebner, Region 2 Director, that shows the results: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lagQf0o8lhl>.

## TOS inducted into the Beaumont Convention & Visitors Bureau Hall of Fame.



Dania Sanchez.

On February 3, 2026, TOS was inducted into the Beaumont Convention & Visitors Bureau Hall of Fame. This honor recognizes our contribution to the local convention and meeting industry in 2025. According to the bureau, our January 2025 meeting contributed to a successful year in which 133 events generated \$9.1 million for the city of Beaumont.

As a member of the Meeting Planning Committee, I was invited to the induction ceremony in December. Although I could not attend, TOS member and Golden Triangle Audubon President Dania Sanchez graciously accepted the award on our behalf. The plaque was updated to read “Texas Ornithological Society” to honor our entire membership. Dania reports there was local media coverage for the event, which was held at the Tyrrell Park Garden Center, and was, to quote Dania, “...packed, I’ve never seen it so full!”

Lynn Thompson  
[lynn.thompson1954@gmail.com](mailto:lynn.thompson1954@gmail.com)

# Guatemala Travels

## International Trips Committee

In January JB Journeys ran a twelve-day trip to Guatemala that benefited Texas Ornithological Society, Travis Audubon and Community Cloud Forest Conservation. The trip began in Antigua where we birded, shopped, ate wonderful food and enjoyed the mountains and volcanos. We then traveled to Tecpan on the outskirts of Antigua where we birded private forest reserves at 8300-9400 feet in elevation. This area was settled by the Swiss and there was much Swiss influence in architecture, landscape and food. My favorite bird in this area was the Pink-headed Warbler. Our trip included a walking tour of Antigua that covered museums, cathedrals, government buildings and a jade museum. We birded a *finca* (farm land) and saw a coffee plantation with many coffee plants and tall trees that shade the coffee beans. All Guatemalan coffee is shade grown. The hummingbird feeders did not disappoint: Rivoli's, White-eared, Azure-crowned, Beryline, Green-throated Mountain Gem, and Rufous Sabrewing!

The next day we headed northwest to the Motagua Valley. After second breakfast we walked up a steep trail to an archeological site to view ancient ruins. We stayed at rustic cabins with a Mottled Owl calling outside our doors. We also had Golden-cheeked Warblers on their wintering grounds! The next day we visited Ranchitos del Quetzal where we enjoyed my favorite birds of the trip, Resplendent

Quetzals. The tail on the males had me overcome with emotion. So majestic! After breakfast we went on a two kilometer walk on the trails winding around the cloud forest, a truly magical place.

Our next location was the Community Cloud Forest Conservation Center, where we were able to see their good work in action. They train local girls in many different pursuits with the goal of their staying in school and becoming independent women who take what they learn to their villages. We visited churches, a mercado, locally grown coffee and tea shops. That evening we piled into four-wheel drive vehicles to the top of a mountain for a Bearded Screech Owl. Talk about white knuckles—and I wasn't even driving! We had bonus Fulvous Owls on our way down the mountain.

Our final location was the ruins of Tikal where we stayed in the national forest. My best birds there were Orange-breasted Falcons. And we had an ant swarm where insects are followed by small birds followed by bigger birds and then a Roadside Hawk keeping an eye on everything.

JB Journeys did an amazing job organizing this trip, and I'm excited to do it again. (Photos by Denise Stephens and Susan Foster)

*By Susan Foster*



*Ceremony at Tikal ruins*



*Ocellated Turkey*



*Brown Jay*



*Smoky-brown Woodpecker*



*Tikal ruins*



*Resplendent Quetzal*



*Lesson's Motmot*



*Birding at CCFC with John Cahill*



*More birding with John Cahill at CCFC*



*Making tortillas*



*Repping my new TOS cap*



*Volcano in Antigua visible from our hotel*



*Mercado*



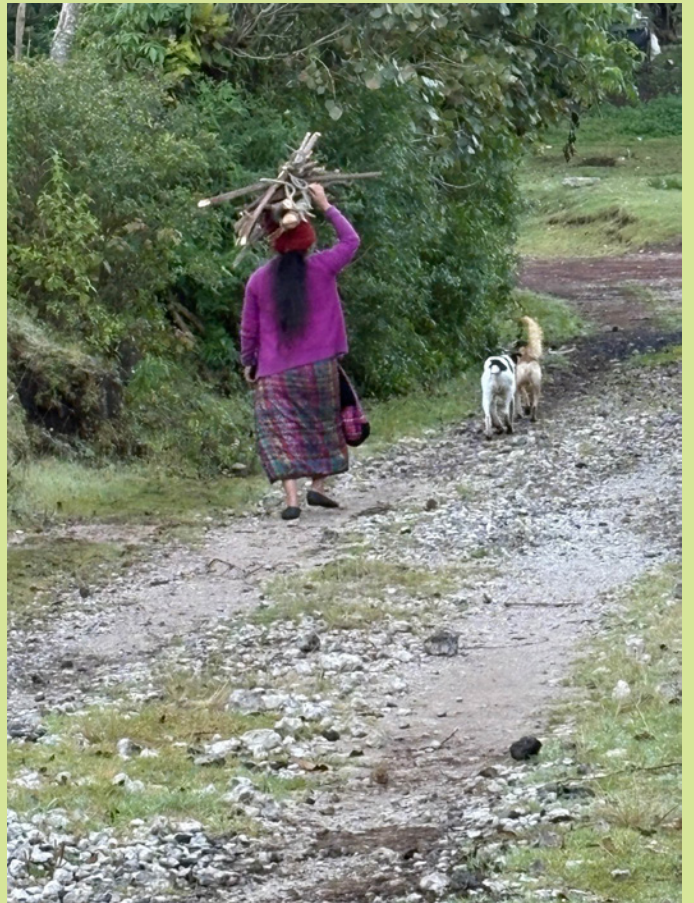
*More CCFC birding*



*Antigua cathedral*



*Guatemalan woman*



*Guatemalan woman*



*Denise Stephens and I enjoying local, shade-grown coffee*



*Jade museum*

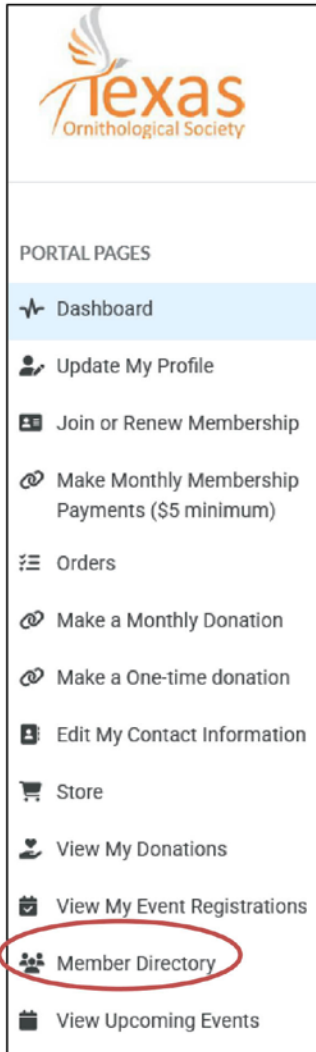
## FIND ANYONE IN THE TOS MEMBER DIRECTORY

What is that person's phone number? Where does he live? How does she spell her first name?

Instead of carrying an address book, or adding extensive contact information to your phone, why not access the TOS member directory online? It's quick, easy, and free.

Here's how to access this valuable resource:

1. Log in to your TOS account from our website. [www.texasbirds.org](http://www.texasbirds.org).



2. On the dashboard on your account page, click Member Directory. Then enter a first name, last name, city or region and then click Search. You may also click on a letter of the alphabet to reveal all members whose last names begin with that letter.

By the way, if a name appears in capital letters, that person is a life member in TOS.

Have fun looking up your birding buddies!

# MEMBERSHIP AND DONATIONS

Spring 2026 newsletter

## GENERAL FUND

Diane Gregoire (non-member)

Lynn Thompson  
*Memory of Ethel Kutac*

Terry Stelly (non-member)

Stanley Casto

Romey & Erin Swanson

Pam & Chris Pipes

## GIVING TUESDAY 2025

Shannon Davies

Dee Ayn & Tim Cromer

Deborah Lancaster

Dennis Casserly

Chuck Davis

Lorrie Mathers

Lori Markoff

## SANCTUARY FUND

Pat Morgan (non-member)  
*Sabine Woods*

Jan Dauphin  
*Memory of David Dauphin*

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Kurt & Jenny Thedford

## NEW MEMBERS

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Amy Christianson

Marie Schneider

Deborah Lancaster

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Scott Wendorf

Marie Schneider

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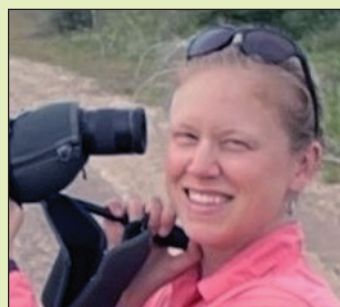
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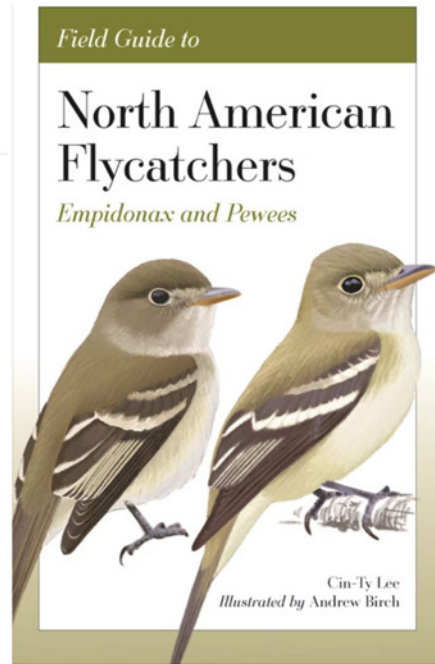
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Princeton Nature

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

Cin-Ty Lee and Andrew Birch

A richly illustrated, portable field guide to flycatcher  
identification



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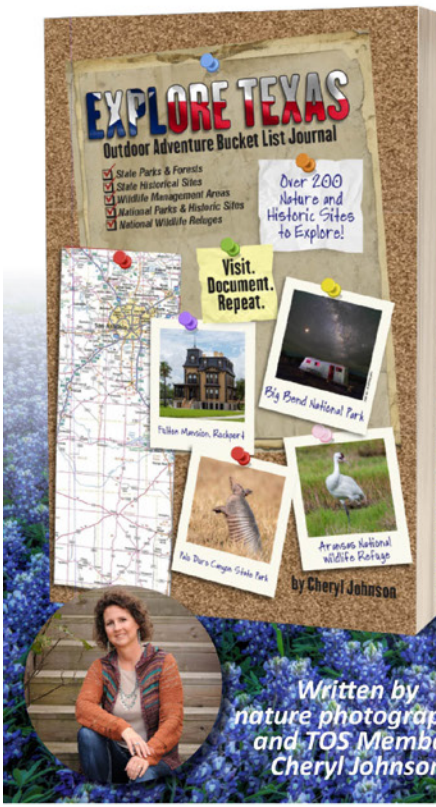
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