

President's Message



Romey Swanson T.O.S. President.

Dear T.O.S. Friends,

One of the greatest gifts birding gives us is the reminder that there is always something left to discover.

Earlier this summer, I experienced one of those moments I'll remember for the rest of my life. For several years, I've been fortunate to participate in owl research in the Davis Mountains of West Texas. We spend countless hours hiking canyons after dark, listening more than looking, searching for

species that often reveal themselves only to the patient observer.

This year, while following up on information shared by another biologist and friend, I found myself standing beneath a stand of towering Ponderosa Pines, listening to an unfamiliar screech not too distant, a pair of screeches actually. A few minutes later, the mystery resolved itself into something extraordinary: three fledgling Long-eared Owls, accompanied by two attentive adults.

Finding five Long-eared Owls together was thrilling enough. But what made the experience so meaningful was the reminder that even after years of studying a place, nature still rewards curiosity. There is always another canyon to explore, another question to ask, another discovery waiting just beyond the next ridge.

I think birding – and organizations like T.O.S. – are at their best when they cultivate that same sense of curiosity.

That spirit was certainly alive during our Spring Meeting in Del Rio, where we partnered with the outstanding Birding the Border celebration. Bringing our members together with local landowners, conservation partners, guides, and birders from across Texas created exactly the kind of collaborative experience we envisioned.

One of my favorite moments came while leading a field trip to Monarch Ranch along the Devils River. Early that morning we enjoyed beautiful looks at a brilliant Phainopepla, a species that seems perfectly at home among the limestone canyons and desert shrubs of Southwest Texas. Not long afterward, we found ourselves watching an American Bittern tucked into emergent wetland vegetation.

Honestly...how many birding field trips can claim Phainopepla and American Bittern before lunch?

Moments like that remind us just how remarkable the Devils River region truly is – a place where eastern, western, and southern bird communities overlap in ways that continually surprise even experienced birders.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without our many partners. My sincere thanks go to the Birding the Border organizers, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, our generous private

landowners, field trip leaders, and the many participants whose enthusiasm made the weekend such a success. T.O.S. continues to benefit from partnerships built on trust, shared purpose, and a collective desire to connect people with birds.

Looking ahead, we're already excited for our next opportunities to gather.

Our Winter Meeting will take us to Amarillo, January 15–17, where we'll explore the remarkable birdlife of the Texas Panhandle – from prairie grasslands and playa lakes to the breathtaking landscapes of Palo Duro Canyon. Whether you're hoping to find a Northern Shrike or simply enjoy a weekend of outstanding birding and fellowship, I hope you'll make plans to join us. And, if all goes well, perhaps this will finally be the meeting where someone helps me check American Tree Sparrow off my Texas list. I'm keeping my fingers crossed!

Then next spring, we'll travel east to Tyler, May 20–23, where towering pines, hardwood forests, and the rich birdlife of East Texas will provide a completely different birding experience. One of my favorite aspects of T.O.S. meetings is that they continually remind us there is no single "Texas." Every region has its own landscapes, birds, traditions, and stories to share.

As I write this, I can't help but think back to those young Long-eared Owls. Their discovery wasn't the end of a story – it was the beginning of many new questions. Where else do they breed in Texas? How successful are they? What else have we overlooked?

That's a lesson worth carrying beyond owl research.

Whether you're chasing a county bird, mentoring a new birder, leading a field trip, volunteering for a Christmas Bird Count, or simply watching birds from your backyard, I hope you'll continue to approach every outing with the same curiosity that first drew you outdoors.

Our future won't be built only by discovering new birds. It will be built by discovering new birders, new leaders, new conservation partners, and new reasons for people to fall in love with the birds of Texas.

Thank you for being part of that future. I hope to see many of you in Amarillo this winter.

With curiosity and gratitude,

–Romey Swanson

President, Texas Ornithological Society
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T.O.S. – Texas A&M AgriLife - Birding the Border - Del Rio - May 2026

Del Rio Big Day

Del Rio Trip

“We are here! Let’s get this party started!!!” That’s what I said when my friend, Renee Langler, and I arrived in Del Rio to check in at the festival event center. While I have lived in Texas all my life, in the DFW metro area, I have never been to Del Rio or any of the counties, towns, or cities, in this part of Texas. I was excited to go birding, explore, and experience this very special part of our state. Renee’s familiar with the area, as she and her husband have some land in Sutton County, but she was just as excited to see and experience place’s she’d never been.



Denise and Renee on our way to Del Rio

We heard about this birding opportunity through T.O.S. and friends who are a part of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. We waited and watched for the field trip info to be published. Once we saw them, it was so hard to choose only 3! There were so many great opportunities to go birding on private ranches, different areas of the Devils River SNA, Amistad Reservoir, parts of the Amistad National Recreation Area, Kickapoo Cavern State Park, Fort Clark Springs, Century Club field trips



Pronghorn



Fort Clark Springs

to several counties, and a Big Day in Del Rio. We chose our field trips according to our interests. We attended different field trips on the first 2 days but were on the same trip on the last day. In addition to the field trips, there were chances to learn about



Early Worm Coffee Bar at Event Center

different topics in educational seminars every afternoon and we attended several of them. There were also vendors with items to purchase; incredible paintings, drawings, jewelry, artistic creations, clothing, and an incredible artist who painted and drew birds and wildlife on site.

Every day we were pampered and spoiled! Each day began with coffee and pastries. If anyone knows me it’s coffee, then birding!! We also had wonderful lunches provided, sometimes delivered to us out in the field while we were birding, which were nice and convenient. We had birding themed pre-dinner drinks, amazing dinners and desserts, incredible speakers, awards, lots of laughter and fun, as well as beautifully decorated Scissor-tailed Flycatcher cookies on our last day!

We had a wonderful time seeing friends, making new ones, spending each day with incredibly knowledgeable and fun, field trip guides, exploring new counties, parks, private properties, seeing and hearing beautiful birds, incredible scenery, adding new county and state birds, great



Early Worm Coffee Bar at Event Center

food, interesting topics shared by very knowledgeable and amazing people...a great time overall!! Thank you T.O.S. and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension for partnering together and making this event so special, Birding the Border - Del Rio was an amazing experience!



Great-crested Flycatcher

I have included my personal trip notes from each day. I hope you enjoy them. Maybe they will encourage you to explore and bird Del Rio or places you've never been to; on your own, with friends, T.O.S., or with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. There are so many amazing places to bird and experience in our great state!

Today was so fun!! We split into 2 teams competing against each other to see who could get the most birds before 2pm. It rained off and on, but we saw a lot of birds! Both teams smashed last year's record. Beth and Stephen were our team leaders. Romey and Erin were the other team leaders. We ended up with 111 species and their team had 102. Everyone had a great time seeing a lot of incredible



Great Horned Owl

birds. Some of my favorite birds of the day were a pair of Barred Owls, Verdin, Tropical/Couch's Kingbird, Ringed Kingfisher, several Vermilion Flycatchers, Black Phoebe, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Rock, Canyon and Cactus Wrens, Cassin's, Black-throated, Olive and Clay-colored Sparrows, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Pyrrhuloxia, Morelet's Seedeater, Northern Bobwhites, one of my all-time favorites, a Wild Turkey (gobble, gobble) and so many more! Took a few photos, but it was mostly Go, Go, Go!!!



Lazuli Bunting

After we got back, we attended 2 seminars... one on Talking to Owls, the other about the Black-capped Vireo. They were wonderfully insightful and inspiring!

Sutton County Century Club Trip

It was a very early morning... got up at 3:45am. Thankful for the coffee bar at the event center!! Today we explored and birded Sutton County, trying to get as many birds as possible by 2pm. Crystal was our guide and Bob was our driver and birding buddy for the day. They did a great job finding birds and getting everyone on them. We ended up with 69 species, which is great for this county. I had one additional bird, so I now have 70 species total for the county. Thank you both for a wonderful day! Some highlights of the day were a couple Zone-tailed Hawks, a nesting Black-chinned Hummingbird, Common Ground Dove, Black-capped Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireos, Yellow-throated Warbler, Spotted Towhee, Yellow-breasted Chats, and many, many more!

We had our T.O.S. Spring dinner and meeting tonight. The guest speaker was Rebekah Rylander who spoke about "Crossing Lines: Tales of a Borderland Biologist". Was very informative and heartfelt. Loved the song too! The Century

Club pins for 25, 50, 75, and 100 counties with 100 species or more were given out tonight. And there were other awards and prize drawings. A really fun evening!

Fort Clark Springs - Kinney County

On our last day we headed towards Kinney County. We had coffee at the event center first, provided each morning by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension!! Thank you so much!! We stopped to try for Elf Owl early in the morning, but no one was home. Then we headed to Fort Clark Springs. It originally was a U.S. military fort, operating for nearly 100 years beginning in 1852. It was deactivated in 1946. It's now a 2700-acre gated resort and living community. It has a lot of nature trails around the property, beautiful scenery, remnants and ruins from the frontier days preseeded and mixed in with more modern housing and buildings. There is a wonderful spring-fed pool on property. We enjoyed lunch under the trees looking out over the pool area. We had a couple of exciting moments! We saw a fox that climbed up a tree, in addition to a momma Great Horned Owl and fledgling that were in the trees adjacent to the pool area. Other notable birds we encountered were a pair of Lazuli Buntings and a hybrid Northern/Tropical Parula!! It was a wonderful day exploring this amazing historical site.



Hummingbird on Nest



Painted Bunting



Northern Parula



Ringed Kingfisher

The journey home...

First things first.... Coffee!! We stopped by a very cute coffee shop in old downtime Del Rio, Momo's Coffee. It's a locally owned place in one of the historic buildings. If you are in Del Rio, birding or otherwise, stop by and get some coffee! Friendly, fun vibe!

We county birded our way back to Fort Worth, it was a beautiful morning! We enjoyed a pretty sunrise, some wildlife, and many birds along the way. So long for now, Del Rio, we'll be back!

By Denise Stephens



Rock Wren



Summer Tanager



Wilson's Phalarope's



Zone-tailed Hawk



Black Phoebe



Barred Owl



Clay-colored Thrush with Lunch



Vermilion Flycatcher



Amistad NRC Boat Ramp



Couch's Kingbird



Stephen winning the Del Rio Big Day



Beautiful Birding Sunrise

Regional Reports

Region 1 - Panhandle

—Kelly Smith
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Region 2 - North Carolina

By the time you read this, most of spring migration will just be a memory. But what great memories, specifically to those of us who spent time on the Texas coast this spring. I spent the last week of April at two T.O.S. coastal sanctuaries, Hooks Woods and Sabine Woods. I spent that week shooting video of the sanctuaries in full-on use by birders from across the country...and world. This video documentation will be used in future marketing and fundraising videos for T.O.S..

In addition to footage of the sanctuaries being used by birders, I was able to shoot several interviews with some of our volunteers who maintain those facilities and also a birder who was utilizing the new ADA compliant boardwalks at Hooks Woods (Thanks, Shelia). To say he was enthusiastic would be an understatement.

The first part of the week I concentrated on Hooks Woods and was told, "You should have been here last weekend." Story of my life, right? But the last part of the week I spent at Sabine Woods and all of those, "You should've been here's" were put to rest.

On Friday, a massive front moved through the area and stalled just off the coast. To make it more perfect, Friday night was a full moon that encouraged all those navigationally challenged birds to take off under nice night time illumination. The result of all this was a massive fallout that lasted through Saturday. There were so many birds, that most birders got stuck as soon as they got out of their cars on the road by trees dripping with all kinds of neotropical migrants. Then, as soon as they got through the front gate, their jaws were dropped again and again. So many birds that you couldn't concentrate on any one species. It was just spectacular...at least for the birders.

So if that weren't enough to keep me occupied, I returned to North Texas (T.O.S. Region 2) and settled down for a couple of weeks before joining the Nature Conservancy for a tour of Clymer Meadow Preserve, 1500 acres of Blackland Prairie that has never seen a plow. Clymer is just outside of Celeste, Texas and the guided walk through pristine prairie was remarkable. Of course, I made a point of giving T.O.S. literature to everyone who showed an interest...which was most of the small group, including two young Maori ladies. The bird of the day there was DICKSISSELS. Literally, hundreds of them singing, mating, fighting, defending territories, and in general making a truly cool wall of bird song.

The very next day, I headed out to the Hagerman Wildlife Refuge for the Hagerman Bird Festival. There, I set up a T.O.S. table outdoors in 35mph plus winds to promote T.O.S. amongst the festival goers. I had a box of old field guides to give away and more importantly, bird stickers. Apparently, stickers are like crack to young kids and they consistently got super excited at the mention of stickers. When the winds scattered the stickers, an immediate Easter

egg style dash began that was fun to watch. Later in the day, the organizers took pity on me and brought me inside out of the wind. It was a blessing to be out of the wind and I was even visited by the Blue Goose Mascot of the Refuge. The organizers expressed an interest in having T.O.S. come out again next year. Hagerman is an amazing refuge with a ton of birds. But alas, everyone who came for the reports of



massive Bobolinks were told, you guessed it, "You should've been here LAST weekend!" SHEESH!

—Ron Huebner
Feralbirder@gmail.com

Region 3 - East Texas Timberlands (Pineywoods)

The excellent spring migration season experienced at Sabine Woods did not seem to have a significant impact on the birds reported further north in east Texas - at least when it comes to warblers. Sure, there were reports here and there, but the biggest impact was from Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. There were reports from all over the Pineywoods. Quite a few Baltimore Orioles showed up at feeders as well.

Following migration some of our breeding warblers made an appearance. Out of curiosity I stopped along my county road, about two miles from my home. I was hoping to find a Louisiana Waterthrush, but instead found not one, not two, but three singing Swainson's Warblers. I had previously only found them twice in Cherokee County in the seven years that I've lived there. The icing on the cake came two days later when I walked my dogs down that same road. I found three more Swainson's Warblers within a mile of my home! Then for only the second time in the seven years I've run the Cherokee County breeding bird survey, I turned up a Kentucky Warbler. Hooded, Black-and-white and Yellow-throated Warblers have also been easy to see this year.

—Bob White
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Region 4 - Trans-Pecos

—Pamela Pipes
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Regional Reports (continued)

Region 5 - Edwards Plateau

—Crystal Ledezma
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Region 6 - Coastal Prairie

—Christian Walker
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Region 7 - Rio Grande Brushlands

—Samantha Wolfe
swolfe@manomet.org

Region 8 - Central Prairie

If anyone in Region 8 was hoping to see a rare bird the past few months, Galveston County was the place to be. Texas City Dike was a standout hotspot in March with **Western Grebe** and **Red-throated Loon** spotted nearly every day that month and **Pacific Loon** spotted the first couple weeks. **American Flamingos** were reported in a few spots on Bolivar, and there were several one-day wonders in the county, including: **Pomarine Jaeger**, **California Gull**, **Masked Booby**, **Hooded Oriole**, **Bullock's Oriole** (in two separate locations), and **Gray Kingbird**.

Gray Kingbird was also reported in Harris County this spring, at the same golf course where one nested last year. Other notable flycatchers in Region 8 included **Say's Phoebe** (Colorado Co.), **Tropical Kingbird** (one of the few records for Calhoun Co.), and **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** (Jefferson Co.).

While it was a relatively slow spring for rare and unexpected birds, some, like the **Ruff** (Chambers Co.) and **Long-billed Thrasher** (Harris Co.), stuck around long enough for many birders to see. Others were spotted for only one day including Victoria County's first eBird record for **Chestnut-collared Longspur**, as well as **Parasitic Jaeger** (Calhoun Co.) and **Cassin's Sparrow** (Colorado Co.).

With summer in full swing, here are a few suggestions to beat the heat while still learning about and enjoying birds: Visit a natural history collection, free-flying aviary, or even an aquarium. Search your local parks, nature centers, and community colleges for free or low cost classes. Sign up for online courses from universities or birding organizations. Lastly, for all you photographers, sort through and identify your backlog of bird photos!

Happy birding!

—Kendra Kocab
kenner7683@gmail.com

Texas Ornithological Society Sanctuaries



Sanctuary Name: latitude, longitude
Schoeder Island Sanctuary: not open to the public
Magic Ridge: 28.53392, -96.51646
Mary Crawford Sanctuary: 29.57027, -94.39475
Hooks Woods: 29.55666, -94.39334
Sabine Woods: 29.69814, -93.94797



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DARIÉN CANOPY CAMP

OCT 2-9
2027



led by Sue Heath



Dear T.O.S. Members,

Just a quick reminder that Dr. Sue Heath will lead this exciting trip to the Darién area of Panama. This a new area of that country for T.O.S. and many new species are likely to be seen, with the highlight being the possibility of seeing the incredible HARPY EAGLE! Dates are October 2-9, 2027.

Cost for T.O.S. members is \$3,557 per person double occupancy in the six standard suite tents, and for non-members it is \$3,592 which includes a one-year membership. For the two deluxe suite tents it is \$4,693 for members and \$4,728 for non-members . There is an additional single occupancy option.

The cost of the trip includes lodging, meals, daily tours with a local guide, and local transportation. You can see a further description [HERE](#).

To reserve your spot on this unique excursion, you may make a deposit of \$700 beginning on August 1, 2026. An email will be sent closer to the date.

Make your plans now for a wonderful birding experience!

Texas Ornithological Society

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T.O.S. Lincoln Center Sparrows Sunrise to Noon Tournament Day: College Station, Texas

Great Texas Birding Classic Youth Team Sponsored by T.O.S.

Team Captain: Linda Hale

Team Members: Omo, Holli, Phoenix, Arlette

The T.O.S. Lincoln Center Sparrows started out bright and early on Saturday, April 25, 2026, at 7:30 a.m. Our goal was to beat our last year's total of 21 species by at least one bird, and to have fun doing it!

We birded the Lincoln Recreation Center quickly as we loaded the bus, picking up Great-tailed Grackle and House Sparrow, and then headed to Gabbard Park to see the Yellow-crowned Night-Herons and Green Herons that nest there annually. Those have consistently been a highlight of our outings.

We found two of our dove species, a very cooperative Common Grackle, an Eastern Bluebird, a close-up Blue Jay, and multiple Red-bellied Woodpeckers there before heading over to John Crompton Park.

The highlight at Crompton Park was finding a recently fledged Northern Cardinal with a still-visible yellow gape—and very protective parents! I let each team member get a good look before telling them that we needed to leave the parents in peace.

We proceeded down the trail and found young Carolina Wrens and their parents, about six to eight birds all totaled. The bush was full of bouncing, chattering wrens, and the kids loved that. One of the girls spotted a hummingbird in the honeysuckle. We had numerous Barn Swallows there, too.

Next it was off to the “scenic” utility substation where I was able to get them on a male American Kestrel that I have been watching for some time. I pointed out to the team where on the utility pole I thought he and his mate were nesting. There were also some Western Kingbirds on the wire at the kestrel site, and good looks at a Killdeer. The kids all wanted to hear it call its name, and just as we had to leave, it flew and called. This bird and the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron were Omo's favorites.

Our final stop was supposed to be Lick Creek Park. We had been moving rather quickly because I'd promised the kids a reward—time at LCP to take in the BioBlitz event that was going on there. We stopped at the old landfill along the way because I spotted Scissor-tailed Flycatchers on the utility wire. The birds flitted around for us and showed off those beautiful tails. The girls were suitably impressed! We also picked up a Red-tailed Hawk, Phoenix's favorite, sitting cooperatively on top of one of the poles. On to LCP!

It was getting warm, and the girls were tired, but I encouraged them to persevere. We got our Inca Doves quickly and then a Tufted Titmouse. The girls were getting warm, so we stopped and looked at the BioBlitz booths inside the air-conditioned nature center. Although the insect table was outside, I think it was their favorite exhibit of the BioBlitz.

One of the most interesting happenings at LCP wasn't bird-related. Our driver/chaperone who followed us around had a question mark butterfly land on her. It stayed put for 30 minutes while we birded and finally flew off.

On the way back to the Lincoln Center, I realized that we had just enough time to swing by Carter Lake and pick up a couple of birds there, although the Double-crested Cormorant that we saw was not one that I expected! It was still and close enough for the girls to study and use our Sibley's guide to concur with the ID. Then we noticed a Canada Goose on the bank. We then saw several Purple Martins and an Eastern Phoebe on someone's boat dock. Our little side trip netted four species!

The clock struck noon and we headed home after a wonderful morning of birding, exceeding our species goal and having had lots of fun. We returned to the Lincoln Center tired but happy.

Linda Hale





photo courtesy of Leslie Linehan

Birders Mourn the Loss of Georgina Schartz

“The Texas birding community suffered another loss today with the passing of Georgina Schwartz. Georgina did so much for the San Antonio area. I met her when I moved to San Antonio in 2002. She made me feel welcome and we shared a lot of time in the field. She was an integral part of San Antonio Audubon Society. She shared her knowledge with so many people. She was 95 years old.” **Sheridan Chattin Coffey**

MEMBERSHIP AND DONATIONS

Spring 2026 newsletter

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