

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

ANZALDUAS COUNTY PARK (Fee: \$50)

Thursday, Friday / 6:00a – 12:00n

Look above and beyond the picnic tables and the playground—Anzalduas will surprise and delight. You'll understand why this riverside area's fame goes beyond its county park status. The mature ash and live oak can hold quite a variety of species, both resident and rare.

Targets: Hook-billed Kite (rare), Gray Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk (rare), Ringed and Green Kingfishers, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Black Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Eastern Bluebird, Curve-billed Thrasher, American and Sprague's Pipits, Pine and other wintering warblers.

Facts: Moderate walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available at site. Shade and sun. Insects very possible.

BENTSEN-RIO GRANDE VALLEY STATE PARK (Fee: \$50)

Friday, Saturday, Sunday / 6:00a – 12:00n

A mere state park? Nope. As the headquarters for the World Birding Center, Bentsen breaks its bounds into world renown, both for birds and butterflies. The forests are home to many of the Valley's bird specialties, the ramped tower gives great views into the skies, and the gardens surrounding the green-designed Visitor's Center sport exciting butterfly sightings as well.

Targets: Plain Chachalaca, Hook-billed Kite (rare), Gray Hawk, White-tipped Dove, Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Green Jay, Clay-colored Thrush, Long-billed Thrasher, Olive Sparrow, Altamira Oriole.

Facts: Moderate walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available on site. Shade and sun. Insects very possible.

***BIG DAY VANS (Fee: \$75)**

Wednesday / 6:00a – 4:30p

Ever hear about Big Days and wonder what it would be like? Here's your chance to get in on the action. Some call it 'whirlbirding'—fast and furious fun. Prepare to be flexible, as destinations will be chosen depending on what's being seen where, and exercise those speedy get-on-it skills! Two vans will go out, bound for birds and friendly competition. A great choice for Festival returnees, or even the adventurous first-timer.

Goals: Racking up an impressive day list—Valley specialties, anything, everything!

Facts: Box lunch provided. Restrooms at some sites. Shade and sun. Insects possible. Please note this special offering is on Wednesday only, and space is limited.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

BIRD BANDING DEMONSTRATION (Fee \$40)

Saturday/ 7:30a – 11:30a

A bird in the hand *is* worth more...and find out why with biologist and nature educator Mark Conway, who has spent many years banding and studying local avian populations. Join Mark at Los Ebanos, a very special private reserve, for some close encounters and a chance to bird the lovely lawns, woods and wetlands.

! Note: For those interested in banding-also check out the *Raptor Banding* trip, below.

Targets (both in and out of the net): White-tipped Dove, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Great Kiskadee, Green Jay, Long-billed Thrasher, Altamira Oriole.

Facts: Light walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available at site. Shade and sun. Insects possible. Space is limited on this special offering.

BIRDING 101 WORKSHOP (Fee \$50)

Saturday / 8:00a – 4:00p

Get hooked on this fast-growing and widespread hobby. Learn or refresh the basics of birding—both visual and sound identification—in a combination of classroom tips and field trip fun. All this at the nation's birdiest wildlife refuge with top Valley birder Brad McKinney, co-author of *A Birder's Guide to the RGV* and author of *A Checklist of Lower RGV Birds*. His co-leaders are none other than Jon Dunn, author of the *Nat Geo Field Guide*, and Kim Eckert, veteran leader with Victor Emmanuel Nature Tours.

Goals: Developing basic birding skills, learning how to identify birds on your own, and seeing a nice variety of birds in the field.

Facts: At Laguna Atascosa NWR. Participants must ride bus, departing from Municipal Auditorium at 8am. Box lunch and soft drinks included. Moderate walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available on site. Shade and sun. Insects possible.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

***BIRDING BY EAR with MICHAEL O'BRIEN – Field Session (Fee: \$75)**

Friday, Saturday / 6:00a – 1:00p

Join well-known guide and author Michael O'Brien (*Flight Calls of Migratory Birds CD-ROM, The Shorebird Guide, Peterson Field Guides*) in this workshop designed to develop and improve your ability to describe and identify bird songs and calls. Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, with its mix of Texas thorn-scrub, freshwater marsh, and adjacent farm fields, will provide a rich diversity of bird sounds. A variety of learning tools will be explored, always emphasizing comparison, to aid you in building a framework of familiarity.

! Note: For the best experience, we suggest you combine this trip with Thursday's *Birding by Ear with Michael O'Brien, Class Session* (see Seminars).

Goals: To improve your field identification skills. and recognize many of Santa Ana's common bird sounds by the end of the morning.

Facts: Santa Ana NWR or similar site. Moderate walking, long but slow, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available at site. Shade and sun. Insects very possible. Limited seats available for this very special offering.

BROWNSVILLE EAST—The NATURE CONSERVANCY SOUTHMOST PRESERVE (Fee: \$50)

Thursday, Saturday / 6:00a – 1:00p

Adjacent to the Sabal Palm Sanctuary (now closed) is a little-known jewel of shared habitat—the Southmost Preserve. Festival-goers are being allowed access by special arrangement, so don't miss the chance to visit this unique area, home to many of our specialties. Plus, a drive toward the Gulf on Boca Chica Road will offer a completely different habitat, one of coastal lagoons and oak mottes.

Targets: Least Grebe, White-tailed Kite, Aplomado Falcon, Groove-billed Ani, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds, Cassin's Sparrow, Hooded and Altamira Oriole.

Facts: Moderate walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available at first site. Shade and sun. Insects very possible.

! Important: There is a US Border Patrol Check Station on Boca Chica Road. Make sure you have your ID along. Participants who do not have proper identification may not be permitted to board. If you are not a US or Canadian citizen, please contact us.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

BROWNSVILLE WEST—The RESACA of UT and RESACA DE LA PALMA STATE PARK (Fee: \$50)

Saturday / 6:00a – 1:00p

Let's be students for a bit and start our birding trip at the University of Texas in Brownsville. An interesting wild *Resaca* (oxbow) of the Rio Grande curves through campus, sheltering waterbirds and songbirds. Plus the palms in this area are well-known as a prime place to search for both parrots and parakeets. Then on to the nearby and very new Resaca de la Palma World Birding Center, the largest tract in the WBC system, where several semi-tropical habitats should yield Valley species as well.

Targets: Least Grebe, waterbirds, White-tailed Kite, White-Tipped Dove, Green Parakeet, Red-crowned Parrot, Groove-Billed Ani, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Great Kiskadee, Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds, Bewick's Wren, wintering songbirds.

Facts: Moderate walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available at last site. Shade and sun. Insects very possible.

*** BUTTERFLIES—BIRDERS GONE BUGGY! (Fee: \$50)**

Saturday / 11:00a - 4:00p

The Valley abounds with special bird species, but did you know that the Valley is renowned for its numerous special butterfly species as well? So much so, that the North American Butterfly Association sites its unparalleled International Butterfly Park right here near the Rio Grande, where new US species are discovered every season. Since the Festival is in prime butterfly time and since many of our leaders are lep-savvy, we couldn't resist offering this great trip, which might include the nearby and extensive gardens around the Bentsen World Birding Center headquarters.

! Note: Bring your own packed lunch or eat early. Water, but not food provided. See also *Leps Odes Herps* trip description, below. And don't forget the Thursday night keynote: *Mariposa Road: A Butterfly Big Year*, by Robert Michael Pyle (see Seminars).

Targets: Pixie, Zebra Heliconian, Banded Peacock, Malachite, Red Rim (rare), Mexican Bluewing, Gray Cracker (rare), Tropical Leafwing, Guava Skipper, Brown Longtail

Facts: Moderate walking, mostly flat on dirt, pavement. Restrooms available at site. Mostly sun. Insects-hopefully!

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

CANOE THE RIO GRANDE (Fee: \$75)

Thursday, Friday / 7:00a – 1:00p

How about a bit of adventure? Want to see the river as the Green Kingfisher does? Can you paddle and handle a canoe, or want to learn? Then join us and the Friends of Santa Ana, operators of these famous trips, and embark from the National Wildlife Refuge and head slowly downstream on an exciting and productive journey.

Targets: Mottled Duck, waterbirds, Hook-billed Kite (rare), Groove-Billed Ani, Ringed and Green Kingfishers, swallows, Altamira Oriole, songbirds.

Facts: Light walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. A bank climb remotely possible. Moderate to intense canoeing. Restrooms available at site, start and end. Much sun. Insects possible. Wear shoes, clothing that can get wet.

* CHASE VAN (Fee: \$50)

Sunday / 6:00a – 12:00n or 1:00p

Want to chase that rare bird found on one of our trips? Missing some target birds? Hop on the Chase Van, and hang onto your hat! Destinations and species will be chosen during the event, from information gathered from participants, checklists, and field trips. Call it 'Leader's Choice,' call it the 'Clean-up Van,' but be prepared to be flexible and have fun.

Targets: Whatever's hot! No guarantees!

Facts: Anything goes. Walking? Probably! Restrooms? Likely!. Sun, bugs? Maybe!

* COLLEY'S PRIVATE ISLAND (Fee: \$85)

Thursday, Saturday / 7:00a – 1:00p

A special version of the South Padre Island trip, with island naturalists Scarlet and George Colley of Fins to Feathers. Scarlet is well-known for her years-long dolphin research, and the Colley's are strong voices for Island and surrounding Gulf areas conservation. Enjoy being out on the Laguna Madre bay in one of their two pontoon boats (weather permitting) and exploring these unique eco-systems.

Targets: Dolphins, Brown Pelican, Least Bittern, Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, Peregrine Falcon, Clapper Rail, Sora, Snowy and Piping Plovers, American Oystercatcher, Marbled Godwit, gulls, terns, and possible Mangrove (Yellow) Warbler.

Facts: Boat ride. Moderate walking, mostly flat on pavement and boardwalk. Restrooms available. Mostly sun. Insects possible.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

* DIGISCOPING WORKSHOP VANS (Fee: \$50)

Thursday, Friday / 6:00a – 12:00n

Combining camera and scope is an expanding possibility—find out for yourself with this in-the-field workshop led by the forerunners in digiscoping. Equipment, settings, field techniques will all be discussed and put into practice with hands-on, on-site learning. Destination will be chosen according to best photography conditions, so grab your equipment (or use the available loaner scopes and cameras) and be ready to capture those close-ups.

Goals: To introduce and/or expand your digiscoping imaging efforts

Facts: Light to moderate walking, carrying tripods, etc., mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement, boardwalk. Restrooms probably available. Sun, insects possible.

* EASY (BUT NOT LESS!) BIRDING TOUR (Fee: \$50)

Thursday, Friday, Saturday / 7:00a – 12:00n

Prefer or need less walking? This trip is designed for you. Bird from pleasant trams or chauffeured electric carts that leisurely loop the wildlife drives and back roads of three different, famous Valley refuges. The line-up is: Thursday—Bentsen State Park / Friday—Estero Llano Grande State Park / Saturday—Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge (see more details for these destinations under their regular trip descriptions). Therefore, this is a trip that can be taken all three days!

Targets: See listings for each of these sites, in descriptions above and below.

Facts: Little walking—on and off bus, van, tram, or cart. Restrooms available at site, but not on vehicles. Mostly shade. Insects very possible. *These tram and cart trips made possible by the generosity of Valley Nature Center, USFWS, and the World Birding Centers.*

* eBIRD IN-THE-FIELD WORKSHOP (Fee: \$50)

Thursday, Friday / 6:00a – 12:00n

If you're not eBirding yet, here's an offering for you. Learn about this powerful tool that is changing hobbyist birders into scientific birders. With its real-time, easy-to-use, online checklist programs, eBird is revolutionizing the way that the birding community reports and accesses information. Bring your binoculars, your laptop if you like, and join the eBird Project Leaders from Cornell Lab of Ornithology for a great morning birding and collecting sighting data. Destination may vary, but likely to be Estero Llano Grande or Bentsen State Park, due to wi-fi availability.

Goals: Data collection while birding in the field, followed by a classroom session of data entry. You can set-up and start your own section on the eBird website!

Facts: Moderate walking, slow. Restrooms probably available. Sun and shade. Insects possible.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

* ESTERO LLANO GRANDE GRAND TOUR (Fee: \$50)

Sunday / 6:00a – 12:00n

An in-depth exploration of one of the World Birding Center system's hottest sites. Reclaimed wetlands, marshes, and ponds—all part of the Arroyo Colorado—are fine habitats for shorebirds, waders, waterfowl, and beyond (keep your eyes out for the gator!). Add in boardwalks, trails through mature woodlands and thornscrub, active butterfly gardens, and a green-design visitor center—and you'll see why ELG has skyrocketed into deserved eco-fame.

Targets: Cinnamon Teal, a wide variety of herons and egrets, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Rose-throated Becard (rare), Northern Beardless Tyrannulet (rare), Vermillion Flycatcher, Sedge Wren, Black-throated Gray Warbler, alligator

Facts: Walking, slow but long, on dirt, pavement, boardwalk. Restrooms available at site. Some shade, mostly sun. Insects very possible.

KING RANCH (Fee: \$85)

Thursday, Friday, Sunday / 6:00a – 1:00p

The Valley is separated from the rest of Texas by mile after mile of grass-oak-thornscrub rangeland, and it's mostly the fabled King Ranch, one of the largest ranches in the world (nearly the size of Rhode Island!). This popular trip will give you access to the Norias Unit, one of the state's first wildlife reserves and established by the famed Kleberg family. Special species from this special region await.

Targets: Wild Turkey, Least Grebe, White-tailed Hawk, Crested Caracara, Greater Roadrunner, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Vermillion Flycatcher, Sedge Wren, Sprague's Pipit, Olive and LeConte's Sparrows, Audubon's Oriole.

Facts: Moderate to intense walking, long but slow, mostly flat on grass, dirt. Restrooms not available at site. Sun and shade. Insects very possible.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

* KING RANCH GRAND TOUR (Fee: \$140)

Wednesday / 6:00a – 4:00p

By demand, an expanded version of our popular standard King Ranch trip, as outlined above. This unequalled trip will give you access to the Norias Unit, plus a bonus visit to the infrequented Santa Gertrudis Unit (named after the King Ranch's own special cattle breed). Add in a 'ranch-style' box lunch, and a very special experience awaits. *Note:* This special all-day trip conducted Wednesday Nov. 10th only.

Targets: see King Ranch trip, above, plus Masked Duck (very rare), Say's Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher.

Facts: Moderate to intense walking, long but slow, mostly flat on grass, dirt. Restrooms available on bus, not at site. Mostly sun, some shade. Insects very possible. Lunch included.

! Important: There is a US Border Patrol Check Station at Sarita. Make sure you have your ID along. Participants who do not have proper identification may not be permitted to board this trip. If you are not a US or Canadian citizen, please contact us.

LAGUNA ATASCOSA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (Fee \$50)

Thursday, Friday, Sunday / 6:00a – 12:00n

Which National Wildlife Refuge has more bird species recorded than any other? Yup, this one. Its vast and varied landscape offers up habitats from woodlands to wetlands, lomas to lagoons. Plus the exceptional Visitor Center feeding stations are the place for potential up-close sightings and prime photo-ops. Keep your eyes open for javelina here, too.

Targets: American White Pelican, Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, Crested Caracara, Aplomado Falcon, Snowy and Piping Plovers, Willet, Groove-billed Ani, Green Jay.

Facts: Moderate walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available at site. Shade and sun. Insects possible.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

* LEPS, ODES, AND HERPS (Fee: \$50)

Wednesday / 11:00a — 4:00p

South Texas natural treasures are not just avian–lepidoptera (butterflies), odonates (dragonflies and damselflies), and herps (amphibians and reptiles) all offer fascinating and unique species here in the Valley. Did you know that the list of recorded butterfly species for just one of our parks goes beyond that of most entire state lists? And that new odonate records are discovered yearly? Get in on these frontier fields with specially-chosen, expert leaders, who will choose the best destinations based on recent scouting.

! Note: Bring your own packed lunch or eat early. Water, but not food provided. See *also* Butterflies trip, and don't forget the Thursday night keynote: Mariposa Road: A Butterfly Big Year, by Robert Michael Pyle (see *Seminars*).

Targets: Mexican Bluewing, Bordered Patch, Texas Crescent, Guava Skipper, Potrillo Skipper, Mazan's Scallopwing, Malachite / Bar-sided Darner (rare), Roseate Skimmer, Red-tailed Pennant, Pin-tailed Pondhawk / Texas Indigo Snake, Green Anole, Spotted Whiptail, Rose-bellied Lizard

Facts: Moderate walking, mostly flat on dirt, pavement. Restrooms mostly available at sites. Sun, some shade. Insects-hopefully!

PARROTS OF THE AREA (Fee: \$30)

Thursday, Friday, Saturday / 4:00p – 6:00p

With the nesting season concluded, parrots and parakeets play hide-and-seek with us. Use your eyes and ears and join the search, while these colorful and countable tropical icons choose their nightly roost around our local urban areas.

Targets: Green Parakeet, Red-crowned Parrot.

Facts: Light walking, mostly flat on grass, pavement. Restrooms not available at site. Shade and sun. Insects possible.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

* **RAPTOR BANDING with BILL CLARK (Fee: \$75)**

Sunday/ 8:00a – 2:00p

A great opportunity for birds of prey close encounters (prime photo ops!) with Bill Clark, author of *Peterson Field Guide to Hawks of North America*. Join Bill in his research on Harris's Hawks and White-tailed Hawks—marveling as he captures, data-collects, and bands these and other magnificent raptors of South Texas.

Note: See also the *Valley Raptors* trip and talk, for related offerings. Plus, for those interested in banding, check out the *Bird Banding* trip, above.

Targets: In hand and in the field: Cooper's Hawk, Harris's Hawk, White-tailed Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, and more!

Facts: Light walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms not available at site. Mostly sun. Insects possible. Box lunch included.

RIVER PONTOON and QUINTA MAZATLAN (Fee: \$75)

Thursday, Friday, Saturday / 6:00a – 1:00p

Step aboard the large and comfortable *Riverside Dreamer*, and see the Rio Grande in a new way. The wooded banks on either side can yield many of our area's exceptional species and other exciting possibilities, too. As if this isn't enough, we'll then visit Quinta Mazatlan, the McAllen wing of the World Birding Center—with its truly gracious and historic hacienda, grounds, and trails.

Targets: Hook-billed Kite (rare), Gray Hawk, Sora, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Ringed and Green Kingfishers, Black Phoebe, Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds, Green Jay, Clay-colored Thrush, Long-billed and Curve-billed Thrashers, Olive Sparrow.

Facts: Light walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available at site. Shade and sun. Insects possible. Can be cool on boat in mornings.

SAN YGNACIO and ZAPATA (Fee: \$75)

Wednesday / 6:00a – 4:30p

Let's get right to it: White-collared Seedeaters. Often, but not always seen, this tiny tropical species roosts in the giant cane along the river, but forages afield during the day. But beyond seedeaters, many other birds are worth the two -hour-plus trip to this distinctive region of drier, desert-like brushlands and villages steeped in Texas history.

Targets: Red-billed Pigeon, Vermilion Flycatcher, Chihuahuan Raven, Cactus and Bewick's Wrens, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (rare), White-collared Seedeater, Olive and Black-throated Sparrows, Pyrrhuloxia, Audubon's Oriole.

Facts: Moderate walking, mostly flat, some inclines, on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms not available at site. Sun and shade. Insects possible. Box lunch included.

! Note: Brown Jays were located here last winter after a two-year absence. If they return, we'll use the latest available information to see them out!

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

SANTA ANA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (Fee \$50)

Thursday, Friday / 6:00a – 12:00n

Trails that wind through Cedar Elms, moss-draped and towering, make for a magical memory. Widely famous and justly so, with the second highest bird count (after Laguna Atascosa, above!) in the entire US NWR system, the riparian woodlands and cattail-lined waterways of Santa Ana are a great place to experience many of the Valley's compelling species. A plus is the 40' hawkwatch tower, offering a rare look out over the forest canopy.

Targets: Ducks, Plain Chachalaca, Least Grebe, waterbirds, Hook-billed Kite (rare), Long-billed Dowitcher, Groove-billed Ani (rare), Ringed and Green Kingfishers, Green Jay, Clay-colored Thrush, Olive Sparrow.

Facts: Moderate to intense walking, long but slow, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available at site. Shade and sun. Insects very possible.

* SECRET JEWELS (Fee: \$50)

Thursday, Friday, Saturday / 7:00a – 1:00p

Been to the Valley before? Visited many of the parks and refuges already? How would you like to gain access to private places or little-known parks never before offered? The destinations will vary from habitat-filled yards to private reserves to Nature Conservancy lands. Thursday–Allen Williams' famous parcel / Friday–Los Ebanos private reserve / Saturday–Chihuahua Woods (with cacti expert, more extensive walking). On these flexible trips, other destinations will likely be added, so relax and enjoy the choices of the experts. This limited space offering will add variety and adventure to your trip line-up.

Facts: Moderate to extensive walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms not always available at site. Shade and sun. Insects very possible.

* SHOREBIRD ID with KEVIN KARLSON Field Session (Fee \$75)

Thursday, Friday / 6:00a – 1:00p

A trip with one of the authors of *The Shorebird Guide*? A trip to study that group that often confounds and befuddles? You'll want to sign up early for this one! Join Kevin on this in-depth field trip, which emphasizes a more complete approach to shorebird identification using both non-changeable physical impressions and details of plumage and feather patterns. Suitable for birders of all levels, but limited space will give a lucky intimate group a great experience.

! Note: For the best experience, take in conjunction with the in-class workshop on Wednesday at 3p, *Shorebird ID*.

Targets: Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, Clapper Rail, Sora, Snowy and Piping Plovers, American Oystercatcher, Marbled Godwit, gulls including Franklin's, Forster's, Royal, and Sandwich Terns, Black Skimmer.

Facts: Destinations may vary. Moderate walking probably, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms sporadic. Mostly sun. Insects possible.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND (Fee: \$75)

Friday, Sunday / 6:00a – 1:00p

Sure, Spring Breakers migrate here in mid-March, but the birds make full use of this sub-tropical paradise year round. Explore boardwalks in coastal marshes, check out the concentrated woodlots, and enjoy a cruise on the lovely Laguna Madre (get it? Father Island, Mother Lagoon). Always a popular trip, so sign up early. See also our other SPI field trip offering: Colley's Private Island.

Targets: Brown Pelican, Least Bittern, Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, Peregrine Falcon, Clapper Rail, Sora, Snowy and Piping Plovers, American Oystercatcher, Marbled Godwit, gulls including Franklin's, Forster's, Royal, and Sandwich Terns, Black Skimmer, Marsh Wren, lingering migrant songbirds.

Facts: Moderate walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available at site and on boat. Sun and shade. Insects remotely possible.

*** SOUTH TEXAS PHOTO SAFARI with RUTH HOYT (Fee: \$250)**

Wednesday 3:00p-4:30p and Thursday 6:00a-2:00p (two parts, one session)

Friday 3:00p-4:30p and Saturday 6:00a-2:00p (two parts, one session)

If you are a birder who believes a camera is as vital to carry as binoculars, this very special trip is designed for you. Led by esteemed professional photographer Ruth Hoyt, a select group will enjoy the privilege of not only benefiting from her experience and knowledge, but also doing so at a premier private South Texas ranch that is set up for professional-level photography with photoblinds and waterholes for stellar shooting opportunities. This unique offering filled up immediately last year, so register now!

Facts: Please note that this photo workshop is in two parts on paired days—both included for the one price. In the afternoon, Ruth will meet with her participants in class (at the Fair Park Municipal Complex, site of the Festival) for instruction on equipment choice and use, exposure techniques, etc. The ranch trip and in-field section occur the next morning. Lunch and snacks provided. Be prepared for sun, insects, weather. Easy to moderate walking required. Outhouse restroom available. No electricity on site. Trip designed for the advanced amateur and above.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

* TEXAS TROPICALS with STEVE HOWELL (Fee: \$75)

Saturday, Sunday / 6:00a – 12:00n

A very special version of the Bentsen State Park trip with leader Steve Howell, author of the indispensable and justly famous *Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*. This trip will be by van, giving a fortunate small group of participants an intimate experience in a Valley sub-tropical habitat with one of the world's great tropical experts.

! Note: Don't miss Steve's talk, *The Birth of a Bird Book*, Thurs 3:30p (see Seminars).

Targets: Plain Chachalaca, Least Grebe, Groove-billed Ani, Ringed and Green Kingfishers, Green Jay, Clay-colored Thrush, Altamira Oriole, Olive Sparrow.

Facts: Moderate to intense walking, long but slow, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available at site. Shade and sun. Insects very possible.

UPPER RIO GRANDE (Fee: \$75)

Thursday, Friday, Saturday / 5:00a – 2:00p

Lucky for us, birds don't recognize our international border. The river's wooded edges and the arid uplands of Starr County are rich with both riparian sub-tropical and desert southwest species. Visit the birding places with the famous names: Saliñeno, Chapeño, and Falcon Dam. Box lunch provided.

Targets: Muscovy Duck, Scaled Quail (rare), Hook-billed Kite (rare), Gray Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Red-billed Pigeon, Common Ground-Dove, White-tipped Dove, Greater Roadrunner, Green and Ringed Kingfishers, Cactus Wren, Verdin, Black-throated Sparrow, Pyrrhuloxia, Hooded, Altamira, and Audubon's Orioles.

Facts: Moderate walking, mostly flat, some inclines, on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available at some sites. Sun and shade. Insects very possible.

* VALLEY RAPTORS with BILL CLARK (Fee: \$50)

Friday / 6:00a – 1:00p

Soak up the encyclopedic birds-of-prey knowledge of Bill Clark, author of *Peterson Field Guide to Hawks of North America* and *A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors*. Bill has traveled the globe and studied many of the world's raptors. He now calls the Valley home, and that is a testament to the special species this area offers.

! Note: Best taken in conjunction with the previous day's workshop—Thursday 2p—by the same name (see Seminars). Also, a related offering: Raptor Banding trip, Sunday.

Targets: Hook-billed Kite (rare), Gray Hawk, White-tailed Hawk, Crested Caracara, Aplomado Falcon.

Facts: Light walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restroom stops planned. Mostly sun. Insects possible.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

VALLEY SALT LAKES and EDINBURG SCENIC WETLANDS (Fee: \$50)

Saturday / 6:00a – 1:00p

Centuries ago, Aztec traders and Spanish rancheros came to these mesquite-rimmed, white-crusted lakes to mine salt, and the birds (and birders) still come. The habitat here is the southern edge of the interesting ranch areas that extend northward. Next, a visit to the World Birding Center in nearby Edinburg—wetlands, brushlands, butterfly gardens—round out this novel and engaging trip.

Targets: Wild Turkey, Least Grebe, White-tailed Hawk, Crested Caracara, Sandhill Crane, Snowy Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Wilson's Phalarope, Green Kingfisher, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Cassin's, Vesper, Black-throated, and Grasshopper Sparrows.

Facts: Intense walking, long but slow, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available at last site. Mostly sun. Insects possible.

* WARBLERS and BEYOND WORKSHOP with JON DUNN (Fee: \$75)

Thursday, Friday / 7:00a – 1:00p

This is not your standard trip. Jon Dunn, author of the *Peterson Field Guide to Warblers* and co-author of both the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and *Birding Essentials* will lead a limited lucky few for a special classroom + fieldtrip combination. Centered around Frontera Audubon in Weslaco and other nearby sites, this exceptional offering will focus on Valley wintering warblers, and whatever else presents itself. Participant numbers kept at an intimate level and sell out fast, so don't miss the chance to meet and learn from one of America's most esteemed birders.

Targets: Common Ground-Dove, White-tipped Dove, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds, Long-billed and Curve-billed Thrashers, Black-crested Titmouse, Orange-crowned Warbler, Tropical Parula, Olive Sparrow

Facts: Moderate walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available on site. Shade and sun. Insects very possible.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

WESLACO (Fee: \$50)

Thursday, Saturday / 6:00a – 1:00p

Pronounce it WES-lah-co and sound like a local. This mid-Valley and multi-faceted town boasts several prominent birding spots. The World Birding Center's Estero Llano Grande State Park offers strolls along the boardwalks experiencing the reclaimed wetlands and woodlands. Frontera Audubon Thicket has been, historically, a hotbed of vagrants, such as Crimson-collared Grosbeak and Elegant Trogon, but is always a haven for various residents. These parks have productive butterfly plantings as well.

Targets: Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Harris's Hawk, Stilt Sandpiper, Common Ground-Dove, White-tipped Dove, Common Pauraque, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Green Kingfisher, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds, Clay-colored Thrush, Long-billed and Curve-billed Thrashers, Summer Tanager, Lesser Goldfinch.

Facts: Moderate to intense walking, long but slow, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Restrooms available on site. Sun and shade. Insects very possible. Space limited.

WILDSCAPING (Fee: \$40)

Saturday / 8:00a – 12:00n

Isn't it fun to see other people's creative landscaping? That's what we do on this entertaining and informative excursion, visiting private properties that range from tiny yards to waterfront acreage. Native plant use is the focus, and each annual tour includes a new group of interesting and diverse sites illustrating creative and affordable ideas for landscaping, water features, and feeding stations. As a bonus, color-illustrated handouts included.

Facts: Moderate walking, mostly flat on grass, dirt, pavement. Water and snacks provided. Restroom break mid-tour. Shade and sun. Insects possible. Hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, repellent, and closed comfortable footwear recommended.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

POST-FESTIVAL TRIP

WHOOPERS! The NORTH of SOUTH TEXAS (Fee: \$550)

Monday, 15 November – Wednesday, 17 November

Whooping cranes are one of the rarest of the world's birds, and among the most majestic. The bulk of the current population winter in Aransas NWR (last year, numbering about 265 birds), just a few hours drive northeast of the Valley. Their return to Texas from their breeding grounds in northern Alberta begins about mid-October.

Round out your South Texas experience by traveling with us on a post-Festival journey to see this magnificent and important species. We'll travel north through the famous King Ranch country, take a coastal waters cruise aboard the famous *Skimmer*, and stay in the lovely Rockport/Fulton area—a prime base for exploring the north of South Texas.

Facts: Group size will be limited to 16 participants, with 2 leaders. Included: All transportation from the Harlingen Municipal Auditorium Complex or Country Inn & Suites and back, experienced guides, meals, 2 nights lodging. Not included: Lodging in Harlingen pre- and post-tour, Sunday and Wednesday nights. A complete itinerary and detailed information bulletin will be sent to you upon registration.

Questions: email Jeffrey A. Gordon jeffgyr@mac.com

! Note: Our route will twice take us through a U.S. Border Patrol Check Station along US 77 near Sarita, Texas. All passengers must carry proper identification at all times; anyone lacking such will not be permitted to make the trip.

Fee of \$550 per person based on double occupancy. Single Supplement \$100.

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

SIDEBARS

! Important note for King Ranch Grand Tour, Brownsville Southmost, and Whooper trips: Vehicles for these trips travel through a U.S. Customs and Border Patrol Check Station. Each vehicle is subject to a quick visual inspection and brief questions to determine citizenship. The process is routine, and most stops average less than a minute in duration. All passengers need to carry proper identification to verify U.S. Citizenship such as a Drivers License or Student ID card. Foreign nationals planning to cross a checkpoint should be sure to carry the appropriate documentation to avoid unnecessary delays, as Border Patrol agents are required to determine the immigration status of every traveler. Participants who do not have proper identification will not be permitted to board vehicles for these trips.

EASIER

For those that need minimal walking:

Easy, But Not Less

River Pontoon

Parrots of the Area

South Padre Island

Banding Trips

PHOTOGRAPHY

Ranging from casual to advanced:

South Texas Photo Safari

Digiscoping Vans

Leps Odes Lizards

Banding Trips

FAMILY

Families are welcome on any trip, and the following would be a special experience:

Birding 101

River Pontoon

South Padre Island

Banding

BEEN BEFORE?

RGVBF '10 Field Trip Descriptions

Interesting choices beyond the famous parks:

Big Day Van

Secret Jewels

Colley's Private Island

Warblers and Beyond with Jon Dunn

Birding by Ear with Michael O'Brien

Shorebird ID with Kevin Karlson

Texas Tropicals with Steve Howell

King Ranch Grand Tour

eBird Trips

BUTTERFLIES

Are you a BGB (Birder Gone Buggy)? Enjoy the amazing Valley leps here:

Butterflies-Birders Gone Buggy

Leps Odes Herps

Trips with Estero Llano Grande

Trips with Bentsen

BEGINNER

Beginners are always welcome on our all trips. Some sites are easier for new birders to spot birds and enjoy their trip. We recommend:

Birding 101

Bentsen State Park

Laguna Atascosa

Santa Ana NWR

Weslaco

River Pontoon