Birding Trip:
Texas and the Rio Grande Valley

Escape the northeast winter with two Environmental Education Center (EEC) Naturalists on a 9-day journey to the Rio Grande Valley in southern Texas and watch your life list grow before your eyes!

This section of the United States is home to several species found nowhere else in the country. A few of our target species include:

You also never know what rarity might show up in southern Texas!

This trip is for active adults and seniors with an interest in bird watching and natural history. Trip information handouts are available upon request. Please note the itinerary is subject to change.

Group size will be between 8 and 10 participants. Enrollment is first come, first serve. All payments are non-refundable.

Trip and Contact Information

Trip Departs: Saturday, February 8, 2020
6:00 am from the EEC
Trip Returns: Sunday, February 16, 2020
7:30 pm to the EEC

Course Code: 55000-01

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Payment Information

$3500 per single registrant
$3000 per registrant if registering as a double

*An $800 non-refundable deposit is due at the time of registration. Non-refundable balance due November 11, 2019

Registration begins 9:00 am on September 6, 2019 and closes November 6, 2019

Price includes transportation to and from airports, airfare, transportation throughout Texas, lodging, entrance fees, and interpretation. Meals are the responsibility of each participant. The trip begins and ends at the Environmental Education Center with no exceptions.

The Environmental Education Center welcomes everyone to participate in its programs. If you have individualized needs due to a disability, please call 908-722-1200 ext. 5324, and we will be happy to arrange reasonable modifications. Six weeks notice is required for this trip to ensure that appropriate modifications can be provided.
Birding Trip:  
Texas and the Rio Grande Valley Itinerary

Day 1: Saturday 2/8: Arrive at the EEC at 6:00 am and transfer to Newark Airport for our San Antonio flight. Upon arrival into San Antonio we will drive toward the coastal town of Rockport, Texas. We will have an early night to recover after our day of travel.  
Hotel: Rockport/Port Aransas, Texas

Day 2: Sunday 2/9: On our first day of birding we will spend all day at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge searching for the endangered Whooping Crane. We will return to the same hotel in the early evening.  
Hotel: Rockport/Port Aransas, Texas

Day 3: Monday 2/10: We will depart in the morning and make the drive to McAllen and the Rio Grande Valley. We will check into our hotel, rest, and will plan an evening birding activity in the vicinity of McAllen.  
Hotel: McAllen, Texas

Day 4: Tuesday 2/11: On our first day of birding in the Rio Grande Valley we will visit the famous Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park. We will spend the morning hiking the trails and watching the feeders. In the afternoon we will explore the gardens and trails of the beautiful National Butterfly Center. A few other local birding stops can be made if time allows.  
Hotel: McAllen, Texas

Day 5: Wednesday 2/12: In the morning we will visit Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge and explore a portion of the 14 miles of trails this wonderful refuge has to offer. In the afternoon we will visit a jewel of the Texas State Park system, Estero Llano Grande State Park. Once again, a few other local birding stops can be made if time allows.  
Hotel: McAllen, Texas

Day 6: Thursday 2/13: We will head east of McAllen to the beautiful Sabal Palm Sanctuary for a morning of birding. The afternoon activities will be decided closer to time, but may include a visit to South Padre Island or Resaca de la Palma State Park.  
Hotel: McAllen, Texas

Day 7: Friday 2/14: An early morning departure to the western side of the Rio Grande Valley. We will spend the morning at the Salineno bird feeders and along the banks of the Rio Grande. Following Salineno, we will visit the nearby Falcon Dam State Park and, if time allows, the Roma Bluffs World Birding Center.  
Hotel: McAllen, Texas

Day 8: Saturday 2/15: On our final morning of birding in the Rio Grande Valley we will plan to visit Edinburg Scenic Wetlands, but alterations can be made depending on what birds we still want to find. Following our morning of birding we will drive back to San Antonio where we will spend the night in preparation for our flight home to Newark the next day.  
Hotel: San Antonio, Texas

Day 9: Sunday 2/16: In the late morning we will transfer to San Antonio airport for our flight home to Newark. We will plan to be back at the EEC by 7:00-7:30 pm.  
Hotel: None

*Please note this itinerary is subject to change

Questions or comments? Contact Ben Barkley 908-722-1200 ext. 5326 or bbarkley@scparks.org.
Texas Trip Information
If registering for this trip please thoroughly read this document

Included: Trip fee includes transportation to and from the airport, airfare, ground transportation in Texas, lodging, entrance fees, and interpretation. For information regarding the single supplement, see "Accommodations".

Excluded: The trip fee does not include meals and baggage fees.

Cancellation: Upon registration an $800 non-refundable deposit is due to secure your place. Once the trip has reached a minimum of eight participants, we will contact you with information regarding final payment. Final balance is non-refundable and due by November 11, 2019. If for any reason the Environmental Education Center cancels the trip, you will receive a refund.

Trip Insurance: We are happy to recommend options for trip insurance in case of unforeseen circumstances resulting in your cancellation. Acquisition of trip insurance, however, is the responsibility of the participant.

Hiking/Pace: This trip is geared toward active adults and seniors. We will be birding in well-maintained wildlife refuges, state parks, and sanctuaries. Hiking and pace should be easy to moderate throughout the entire trip. A typical day should start with breakfast around 6:00 or 7:00 am with a birding departure thereafter. Birding activities should conclude between 6:00 and 7:00 pm.

Birding: Birders of all skill levels are welcome. The various hikes and birding activities offered will be geared toward a wide range of skill levels. The purpose of this trip is to educate participants on the identification of birds and other wildlife in Texas' Rio Grande Valley. Birding and nature activities will be offered throughout the trip.

Weather: In February, Texas weather can range from the 40s to the 90s. Rain is possible throughout the week. A rain jacket, a few layers, and some warmer gear are recommended.

Health: Bringing a hat, light long sleeves, sunscreen, and drinking plenty of water will help on hotter days. Since personal medications may be difficult to replenish please anticipate any prescription medications you may need. Mosquitos, ticks, chiggers, rattlesnakes, and fire ants all occur in Texas. Participants are encouraged to use bug spray and stay aware while hiking on trails.

Transportation: This trip begins and ends at the Environmental Education Center with no exceptions. Private transportation to and from the airport is not allowed. In order to participate in this trip, your photo ID will need to be photographed by the EEC and sent to the travel agent for airline ticketing. Ground transportation in Texas will be in two 8-passenger premium SUVs.

Accommodations: All hotels will be standard and comfortable. The program fee for an independent registrant is $3500. If at the time of registration you are signing up with a roommate the fee for each participant is reduced to $3000. Please note we cannot guarantee roommates. If additional participants are requesting a roommate we can work to facilitate a pairing. If no pairing is secured your final balance will reflect the $3500 single registrant fee.

Shopping: Outside of visitor center gift shops, no shopping is scheduled.

Miscellaneous: Personal spotting scopes cannot be carried by EEC staff. Group scopes will be provided on the trip.

Open House and Pre-trip Meetings: An open house is scheduled for Saturday, September 21, 2019 from 1:00-3:00 pm for those interested in the trip. We will run through the itinerary and answer any questions. If you cannot attend the open house, we are happy to schedule a private meeting to discuss the details of the trip.

Once registered, you will be invited to attend our pre-trip meetings. We highly recommend attending them all. The topics covered include general trip logistics, a detailed run-through of the itinerary, packing lists, and bird and animal species identification. This is your best chance to ask questions and meet your fellow participants prior to the trip. Participants will be informed of these dates closer to time. If you miss a pre-trip meeting, we are happy to schedule a time to discuss the information covered.

Pre-trip meeting dates:
Thursday, November 21, 2019 from 6:00-8:00pm AND Tuesday, January 14, 2020 from 6:00-8:00pm