

## Holiday Highlights

### Texas Eclipse

1 – 16 April 2024

**Guides:** Darren Rees and Roy Atkins

**Guests:** Anne Seebeck, Jean Brown, Judy and Steve Down, Gill and Martin Gooch, Shirley and Paul Graber, Carol and David Gover, Jayne Behenna, Kirsten Osa

**Day 1:** Most of us gather at Heathrow for the flight out to Houston – which leaves bang on time. It is a smooth flight and goes well and we land in Houston surprised to find it rather cloudy, but nice and warm. It takes quite a while to get through passport control and sort out the vehicles - but at last we are on way spotting our first birds as we go, with both Black and Turkey Vultures, several Great-tailed Grackles and doves on the wires, including Collared and Mourning Doves. There are one or two American Crows and a nice flock of Snowy Egrets flies over.

We make a stop for an evening meal enroute at a place where service is quick, so we can crack on with identifying Cliff Swallows around the car park as we go in. Inside there are all kinds of stuffed animals - which is a slight shock but we can't help identifying the different species including various deer, a Coyote, a Bobcat, Black Bears and Elk, plus some birds and fish such as White-fronted and Snow Goose and Marlin! It is all a little macabre... but the food is good and served with speed.

It is still some way to go and we enjoy a beautiful sunset as we drive the last bit of our journey, arriving at our hotel at around 9pm tired and well ready for a good night's sleep, but excited about tomorrow

**Day 2:** Our day starts with Great tailed Grackles calling from the wires as the sun rises and several Laughing Gulls flying around calling rather like Common Gulls. We are surprised to see fly over Black-bellied Whistling Ducks as we walk down towards some trees behind the hotel and on the wires is a calling Mourning Dove.

A small bird flits across the road, landing in the short grass and is identified as a Savannah Sparrow but when it flies to another grassy area we realise there is also a Lark Sparrow here - a very nicely marked bird. A calling Kingbird in the tree tops is quickly identified as a Couch's Kingbird and over the next few minutes we find a few more and get great views of Golden-fronted Woodpecker. Two White-tailed Deer cross the road then there is great excitement when a Scissor-tailed Flycatchers flies in, perching on the wires and giving us fabulous scope views. It is quickly joined by another - then three more! They are just stunningly beautiful and we take turns at the scopes until they fly on. A couple of Chimney Swifts fly over and we find our first Northern Mockingbird singing from the tree tops and sounding just like a Song Thrush!

White-winged Doves coo from the wires and there are plenty of fly over Great and Snowy Egrets and Great Blue Herons. A Red-winged Blackbird appears and Jane spots our first Eastern Fox Squirrel - rather like a Grey with a buffy coloured belly and tail. We also notice some very familiar birds - European Starling and House Sparrow.

After a surprisingly good breakfast with cereals, yogurts, eggs and bagels we head down to the waterfront, where we meet Captain Tom and his assistant Wendy for our boat trip in search of Whooping Cranes. This is the main target species but we are expecting many more species as well and before we leave the harbour we get to compare Double-crested and Neotropic Cormorants side by side and pick out a few waders. There is a small flock of Sanderlings and a few Ruddy Turnstones and lovely close views of breeding plumage Laughing Gulls - by the far the most common species here - and an American Herring Gull (though still considered a subspecies of Herring Gull by the American Bird Association.) There is a stunning Common Loon (Great Northern Diver) and a few Barn and Tree Swallows migrating through.

We head right out across the bay towards the island Reserve here and as we get closer we see a few Bottlenose Dolphins, including a couple right beside the boat. As we reach the islands we start seeing loads more birds including waders of various species, including American Oystercatcher, several Willets and a small flock of Western Sandpipers with a single Dunlin and a Semipalmated Plover. There are one or two Black-bellied (Grey) Plovers too and lots of terns - mainly Royal Terns but also a very smart Gull-billed Tern and scattered Forster's Terns with their pale primaries, a useful feature to help identify them. A few Sandwich (Cabot's) Terns are flying overhead too and when we get much further out we also find Caspian Terns. (There are quite a few species split by the IOC but not by the Americans and most consider any Sandwich Tern this side of the Atlantic to now be Cabot's Tern).

At one of our first islands there is a nesting colony of Great Blue Herons with both Great and Snowy Egrets in amongst them. There are herons and egrets scattered over the whole scene and a few White Ibis too. On the water are a few ducks which all seem to be Lesser Scaup, but Darren brilliantly picks out a female Bufflehead. Further out we start finding a lot of Tricolored Herons too, plus occasional Spotted Sandpiper and American Avocet - including at least a couple with lovely rusty heads. We spot Roseate Spoonbills and enjoy some superb views of Ospreys including one with a very big fish. A Northern Harrier puts on a good show too.

Our big target of course is Whooping Crane and we check all these distant white birds that all seem to be Great Egrets and White Ibis until suddenly - alongside some egrets - we realise there are two bigger birds and Captain Tom points out the different posture - they are Whooping Cranes. We pull the boat in and enjoy views through the scope. They are quite distant but the scope makes a big

difference. We soon realise there are another two some way to the right and another three much more distantly beyond those - so seven here all together.

We spend a while taking turns at the scopes before moving on, stopping at various spots where we enjoy more terns, waders and a small flock of Blue-winged Teal. We find a flock of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and a Crested Caracara flies through and enjoy better views of Lesser Scaup.

Further on we find another Whooping Crane that is much closer and enjoy absolutely superb views, again stopping so we can use the telescopes - what a gorgeous bird, so elegant and still a very rare species indeed. There is also a very bizarre looking Reddish Egret here with normal colour plumage, but with almost pied wings with lots of totally white feathers scattered amongst the primaries and secondaries - which show very well as it flies right past us. We find Caspian and Royal Terns side by side and a Ring-billed Gull, as well as more Forster's Terns as we start back towards the harbour - what a fabulous trip it has been!

After a short break we gather to head out for lunch at a nearby Subway. We then head out towards Goose Point, where we stop to check out some bird feeding areas after pausing to look at a group of White-tailed Deer on the way in.

At the first one we abandon it quite quickly due to too few birds and too many mosquitoes! The next one is less scary but also with rather few birds with just a single hummingbird that comes in that we believe is a female Black-throated Hummingbird. There is a delightful little Green Anole here - a bright green lizard running through the lower trigs of the bushes.

We give up here and try further on where there is a 'bird host' - someone who will help you with the birds if you need help identifying them and also keeps feeders topped up. Here there are more feeders including seeds, a hummingbird feeder and some water sprays and at last we start finding a nice selection of birds. This starts with a stunning Northern Cardinal and a pair of Black-crested Titmice, which show very well. Roy spots a Yellow-throated Warbler in the tops of the oaks - a stunning male. A Lincoln's Sparrow comes out on the ground by the water trough and we spot White-winged Doves, a few female Red-winged Blackbirds and a White-throated Sparrow. Next a Black-and-white Warbler appears and shows well and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird flies in hovering round the feeder. Jane spots another hummingbird with a red bill which has to be Buff-bellied Hummingbird. Darren picks out a Northern Parula flitting through the tree tops. We notice a couple of birds flitting around where the little water sprayer is and realise they are new too - first a Black-throated Green Warbler and then a Nashville Warbler. Three Mourning Doves come down to feed on the ground.

We decide to head back to the vehicles passing perched Black Vultures, a Crested Caracara and a few Turkey Vultures. The flowers in the edges are lovely and we

think we have Blue-eyed Grass, Brown-eyed Susan, Coneflower, Meadow Pink, Prickly Poppy, Texan Thistle and a variety of alliums.

We head back so we have plenty of time for showers before gathering for our evening meal and our first run through the checklist - we've seen a lot of birds today!

**Day 3:** After breakfast we are about to leave when Jean comes over saying she has seen a Carolina Wren nearby so we head over for a look, quickly getting some nice views.

We get going and head round to the local 'park' where we follow the coast line and check out a large heronry. There are loads of Great Blue Herons and amongst them Great and Snowy Egret and lots of gorgeous Roseate Spoonbills - as long as you ignore their ugly faces! There are also several Reddish Egrets here including at least two reddish morph and three or more white morph birds. A couple of Common Loons fly over and we find Mottled Ducks, Black-bellied Whistling Duck and a few other bits and bobs.

There are lots of Laughing Gulls that look like they are intending on breeding nearby and amongst them a colony of Black Skimmers, so we decide to drive round for a closer look and we're soon enjoying superb views of Black Skimmers, Laughing Gulls and Royal Terns at close quarters - and a Ring-billed Gull. What strange looking bills the skimmers have with that very long lower mandible.

We get on our way and head round to get the ferry across to Mustang Island, enjoying the sight of lots of Brown Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants and a few Bottlenose Dolphins bow riding a passing cargo ship.

On the island we head to a superb Reserve where we are expecting to see some wetland birds, but we are amazed to arrive and find loads of birds in a small cluster of trees at the entrance. In the car park is a Lark Sparrow but in the trees are warblers and they are just gorgeous and showing extremely well right in front of us. In Texas, birders often provide a source of water for the birds instead of food and this is attracting them in to bath and drink while others feed in the lower branches of the trees right at eye level - perfect! The most common species by far is Yellow-rumped Warbler but they are also the most drab as none are in breeding plumage - which seems odd given that just about everything else looks stunning! That includes at least two or three Yellow-throated Warblers, at least two Northern Parula, Black-throated Green Warbler, a stunning male Hooded Warbler and a much drabber Orange-crowned Warbler. A Black-and-white Warbler performs beautifully, behaving like a nuthatch on the tree trunks and we see at least two gorgeous male Nashville Warblers. The trees seem alive with birds!

As well as these we see Orchard Orioles and several Great-tailed Grackles come to drink and display for us, performing a sky-pointing display at each other. We

are also pleased to see White-eyed Vireo after failing to a singing bird yesterday and there is a Warbling Vireo plus a rather skulky Swainson's Thrush. A nice male Red-winged Blackbird comes to drink and as we eventually drag ourselves we find a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Above our heads a superb White-tailed Hawk is circling with the sun shining through his tail! What a stunner!

The wetland is alive with birds, with masses of ducks and waders out there. The majority of the ducks are Blue-winged Teal but there are quite a few Green-winged Teal too, as well a small number of Gadwall, American Wigeon, a couple of Mottled Ducks and single Pintail and Lesser Scaup. There are plenty of shorebirds and we enjoy some beautiful American Avocets with rusty coloured heads. There are a few Lesser Yellowlegs and right in front of us lots of Long-billed Dowitchers with a single Stilt Sandpiper in with them. There are Common Gallinules, (recently split from Moorhen), a few American Coots and a single Pied-billed Grebe. Double-crested Cormorants are perched on branches in the water and at the back is a flock of American White Pelicans looking enormous. The swallows migrating through are mainly Barn Swallows with a few Tree and Cliff Swallows amongst them and a single American Golden Plover flies over. A Northern Harrier is disturbing a flock of waders on the far shore, too far away to identify. The herons and egrets include a very close and beautiful Tricolored Heron and our first Little Blue Herons.

Finally we drag ourselves away for lunch at a nearby subway and then we head on down the island hoping to find an Aplomado Falcon nest site. We eventually spot the nest site but it is Judy who spots the falcon perched high above us on the wires. We are thrilled and jump out to enjoy fantastic views through the scopes as it is joined by second, and both have a fly around.

We head off the island into Corpus Christi where there have been recent reports of a Cattle Tyrant, a new bird for the USA so it would be rude not to have a try to see it - but sadly despite having been seen several times today it doesn't put in an appearance in the limited time we can afford to give it - which is kind of frustrating but we still have a long way to go to our next hotel! We make a very enjoyable stop at a Dairy Queen for ice-cream and loos on the way and pass Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and Harris's Hawks on the way - arriving in time to settle into our rooms before gathering to eat and do today's checklist.

**Day 4:** After breakfast we make up our own lunches from the ingredients available and get on our way. We are heading to a Reserve nearby where there is a tower from which you can scan the tree tops and hopefully see raptors rising from the trees where they have roosted and continue on their migration northwards.

We have hardly set off when we spot a parrot on one of the electricity cables above the road - a large parrot with red on the front of its head, so a female Red-crowned Parrot and a great find!

As we arrive at the Reserve there are Mockingbirds and Lark Sparrow on the wires and as we start our walk into the Reserve we spot a Rabbit under the bushes. It looks rather like ours at home which suggests it is an Eastern Cottontail. A Louisiana Waterthrush is at the edge of a concrete waterway and above it a Northern Parula is feeding. There seem to be Golden-fronted Woodpeckers everywhere and we also enjoy stunning views of a Hooded Oriole - a beautiful bird! There are Kiskadees, Plain Chachalacas, a Green Jay flies through and there are a few Couch's Kingbirds. A couple of Northern Rough-winged Swallows are perched in the branches above a pool where there are a few Blue-winged Teal and two Least Grebes, then a couple of Broad-winged Hawks fly up above the trees.

Since we are seeing a couple of hawks we decide to get to the tower as quick as we can and climb to the top, viewing out over the tree tops. Straight away we start spotting more and more Broad-winged Hawks which is clearly going to be the commonest raptor. There are Altamira Orioles in a couple of the tree tops too and a very smart looking Long-billed Thrasher singing its heart out. A Bronzed Cowbird is here too and more raptors appear - an Osprey, a Northern Harrier and shortly the first vultures and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. There is a very distant Swainson's Hawk. There are small number of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and we are surprised to spot a hovering Belted Kingfisher. The bigger surprise is spotting a flock of Anhingas circling up higher and high as if they are raptors too!

We continue to scan and a young guy joins us. He is clearly keen and scanning around, he too spots Broad-winged Hawks and other species we have seen already - then to our amazement he finds a Great Horned Owl! He tells us his mother found it earlier and told him where to look, but we can't imagine what possible directions she might have given him as it was hard to find even with his directions. We spot a distant White-tailed Hawk and then at least two and perhaps three Harris's Hawks. A Gray Hawk appears too, which is more of a local speciality, and more Broad-wings but gradually things start to slow down and we decide to go and check out some of the wetlands.

We walk round to one of the pools and as we arrive enjoy great views of a Common Yellowthroat. The pools are alive with birds and it is hard to know where to start with so many waders and ducks and more. We are surprised to find the most common wader here is Stilt Sandpiper, with many starting to gain breeding plumage and quite barred. There are quite a few dowitchers and again we can identify quite a few Long-billed Dowitchers, but many are hard to be sure of. We find several Lesser Yellowlegs, lots of Least Sandpipers, several Pectoral Sandpipers, a Greater Yellowlegs and a single Wilson's Snipe. We are astonished when a Collared Peccary wanders out onto the marsh!

There are Ibis here too and we check one very carefully concluding eventually it is a Glossy Ibis while a small group later are without doubt White-faced Ibis. On this and the next pool we find a lot of ducks too with Blue-winged and a smaller number of Cinnamon Teal and amongst a flock of ducks on the embankment we

find gadwall, Pintail and a single female Ring-necked Duck. There are quite a lot of Ruddy Duck here too and a couple of Mottled Ducks. A Swainson's Hawk appears over the trees and a Grey Hawk too. Darren spots a couple of Baird's Sandpipers, a very nice find. There is a group of Glossy Ibis here too and it is useful to see both species in such quick succession.

Back at the Visitor Centre we enjoy our lunch in the shade of the trees at the picnic site and then spend a little while watching the feeders where we enjoy close views of Red-winged Blackbirds, Kiskadees, Golden-fronted Woodpeckers and a gorgeous Green Jay - what a superb bird! A Plain Chachalaca appears and a pair of Lesser Goldfinch. Then as we head back to the vans to return to the hotel for a break, a Ladder-backed Woodpeckers pops up in the treetops.

After a break in the heat of the day we head out to a Reserve not too far away where we are hoping to see an Elf Owl - but first we are having a bit of a look round. As we walk in Judy spots a White-tipped Dove walking unobtrusively under the bushes, then at the benches where there a couple of hummingbird feeders and we glimpse a Buff-belled Hummingbird which flies up into the trees and perches briefly. A Collared Peccary appears briefly. A few Turkey Vultures are flying overhead on migration and there are a few Barn and Cliff Swallows too. We get very good views of Plain Chachalacas before walking on to view the river.

As we walk up the road Judy spots a Wild Turkey cross in the road up ahead. On the river there are at least three Least Grebes and a couple of Anhingas while one island has lots of Great-tailed Grackles, a few Neotropic Cormorants and two Double crested Cormorants going to roost. We get good views of Green Heron and then Roy is delighted to spot a Green Kingfisher flying our way. It perches up and tries for fish a few times, before we have to leave if we are to get back for the Elf Owl in time.

Back at the telegraph pole where the Elf Owl is nesting we get into position and wait along with quite a few other people. We have been told the golden hour is 8pm and so we watch the time count down and 8pm comes and goes but it is really not long after eight when suddenly a little face appears in the hole looking almost angry as it peers around. It is tiny and we watch it for quite a while enjoying great views before it finally pops out and vanishes into the bushes.

Well pleased we head back up the track a little way to see if we can find any other night birds, but while we do hear a calling Pauraque we can't see it and nothing else appears - apart from Jupiter with four moons visible through the scope which is nice to see. As we head back to the vans there is much working going on erecting the next section of 'Trump's Wall' which is more of a corrugated iron fence really - but is certainly tall.

**Day 5:** Jean is out and about before it is barely light and is delighted to spot an owl - a small one with ear tufts so without doubt an Eastern Screech Owl - a great find. Then after breakfast we get on our way.

At our first destination we check some small water-features but it is very quiet at those, so we walk through the scrubby bushes finding a skulking Olive Sparrow and a much more obliging Wilson's Warbler. We get good views of a Ladder-backed Woodpecker and then from the platform overlooking the dried out oxbow lake we find Kiskadee and Couch's Kingbird.

Walking back we can hear a Brown-crested Flycatcher and spend a while working on trying to get a decent view. As we do this, we enjoy great views of Golden-fronted Woodpecker, three Green Jays and an Altamira Oriole before at last the flycatcher shows itself very well.

Back at the car park we enjoy cookies and, the braver of us, some bacon and cheese flavoured crickets - yes, real crickets - for sale in the shop. They are quite nice, totally dry and crunchy like crisps, but crisps are nicer! A couple of Clay-colored Thrushes appear on the other side of the car park, also a pair of Hooded Orioles and more Green Jays, Northern Mockingbirds and a Tropical Kingbird which is a nice find. It is very hard to tell from the Couch's Kingbird but the bill looks a little longer and slimmer and Roy manages to check the primaries which are distinctively uneven in length!

We move on and head now to South Padre Island, where we make a stop at a small area of woodland where they put out water for the birds and some fruits too. There is a lovely male Nashville Warbler, a Lincoln's Sparrow and lots of Red-winged Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds. There is also a big list of birds on the board that have been seen here today, but very few of them seem to be around now sadly.

We head to a shelter where we can eat lunch in the shade with a lovely breeze off the sea, where we can watch passing terns and Brown Pelicans. As well as plenty of Royal Terns we spot a few Sandwich/Cabot's Terns, and a couple of Least Terns. There are a few Sanderlings on the beach and Steve spots a single Clay-colored Sparrow in the sand dunes.

Our next stop is a lovely wetland Reserve where there are also some nice bushes that can sometimes hold plenty of migrants though today they are fairly quiet. We spot a Northern Parula, a single Orange-crowned Warbler, Warbling Vireo and lots of Lincoln's Sparrows in the grass alongside two or three Clay-colored Sparrows and a Savannah Sparrow.

We head out along the boardwalk and soon we are overlooking a lovely wetland with lots of tall vegetation round the edges but some mud and small islands too. There are loads of birds and perhaps most eye-catching is a flock of Roseate Spoonbills. With them are a few Black-bellied Whistling Ducks and Blue-winged Teal as well as a few waders including Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and a few Pectoral Sandpipers and several Black-necked Stilts.

We can hear a calling Sora Rail and peer into the vegetation beside us as it sounds close. It is Steve who spots it walking through the tall sedges and it comes right out in the open where we get wonderful views as it crosses a small pool. We add Redhead to the growing list and a little further on we get our best views yet of Mottled Duck.

As we walk out on a second boardwalk there are Purple Martins overhead and plenty of Brown Pelicans and terns flying over. At the edge of the Mangroves we find a white morph Reddish Egrets at point black range, as well as several Tricolored Herons and Snowy Egrets. In the distance there is a Black-bellied Plover and some smaller waders too distant to identify. On the sea are Red-breasted Merganser and Pied-billed Grebes - but we really enjoy a pair of Black Skimmers that come winging by several times looking like they are about to start skimming, but they never do quite do it. We spot at least three Ospreys and a few Neotropic Cormorants.

It has been a hot day and we decide that perhaps an ice cream is in order, so we head to a nearby dairy queen for a very enjoyable treat before finally heading for home.

**Day 6:** We start today by visiting a very nice Reserve where, at the entrance, we glimpse a Black-chinned Hummingbird and a few Purple Martins. We walk round past several wetlands, but with the recent drought they have no water in them, but eventually we arrive at the Alligator Pond where we find a few Yellow-crowned Nigh Herons. There is a Pied-billed Grebe here and loads of Great-tailed Grackles making a very noisy background track. We spot a Brown-crested Flycatcher and then as we arrive at a viewing platform we stop to walk round a Red-eared Slider on the path. We notice a very impressive Alligator swimming by and then when it comes up on the bank a Spotted Sandpiper is spotted nearby.

Round at the Levy there are loads of birds, including Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Mottled Duck, Black-necked Stilts and a couple of American Avocets. A dark morph Swainson's Hawk flies right over our heads and an Osprey flies past, while a Northern Harrier is also spotted across the other side.

Further along there is a big flock of waders which is mostly made up of Stilt Sandpipers, but there are plenty of dowitchers too, but too distant to identify them. Quite a few Least Sandpipers are feeding along the far side

As we turn away from the levy we spot our first Common Ground-Doves on the path up ahead. Then we arrive at a very cleverly designed hide - with windows at whatever height you want - where we soon find lots of Red-winged Blackbirds, Green Jay and a Buff-bellied Hummingbird.

But where is Darren? When he appears at the hide he says that we should all follow him as he has a couple of good birds to show us. He then admits that they were generously shown to him by a couple of birders he bumped into just now

and the first is remarkably well hidden. Even with Darren giving directions it is hard to see, but then your eyes focus and there it is camouflaged amongst the dried leaves... a Pauraque. It is a kind of nightjar and when looked at through the scope completely filling the view it is just gorgeous - the markings are exquisite. We spend a while just taking in this great bird, before walking a short distance further on to see an Eastern Screech Owl poking its head out of a hole in a tree - brilliant! There are Green Anoles here too flashing its colourful 'dewlap' and also a slightly pink-throated lizards called a Texas Whiptail Lizard.

We drive round to another small private Reserve where we enjoy lunch before wandering round to the hide. Here there are a few feeders that seem very popular with a couple of Eastern Fox Squirrels, as well as plenty of doves including Inca, White-tipped and White-winged Doves. A few Plain-headed Chachalacas wander into the scene and we spot a Nashville Warbler and a Red Cardinal. We enjoy wonderful views of a pair of Long-billed Thrashers and just before we leave get brief views of a Yellow-breasted Chat. Sadly, the recently seen Crimson-collared Grosbeak is nowhere to be seen.

We now have quite a drive ahead and we get on our way, passing a few nice birds like Scissor-tailed Flycatchers enroute. We check in at the next hotel and have a short break in the heat of the late afternoon, before meeting up again later for a short visit to a nearby boat ramp at the side of the reservoir and some very nice scrub habitat. There are Purple Martins overhead as we start our walk and then some very smart looking Lark Sparrows. We spot a Kiskadee and then a Tropical Kingbird calling in the treetops.

We scan the water and spot Ospreys, Ring-billed Gulls and a White Pelican, as well as a small flock of Lesser Scaup. A Crested Caracara flies over and then Roy is surprised to find a Bobwhite perched half way up a bush! It is a great view through the scope. Judy spots a distant White-tailed Deer and we add Northern Cardinal and Cliff Swallow to the day's list as we walk back to the vans. We decide to leave and as we drive out we are thrilled to spot a Roadrunner on an area of tarmac right out in the open! It is tackling a small snake and is a great sighting before it wanders off into the bushes - what a fantastic finish to the day.

**Day 7:** We head on down to Falcon State Park to see what we can find early in the day, setting off at 6.30am and arriving before 7am. We get out of the vehicles and we're instantly finding new birds, as well as a few familiar ones too. The latter include Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, which are looking stunning as ever. Jane spots a Pyrrhuloxia and we spot a second much closer - strange looking birds. An Ash-throated Flycatcher is on the wires making its referee's-whistle call and we get nice views of a Hooded Oriole. Bewick's Wren is another new bird singing away in the bushes and we spot 'rabbits' with very large ears and big eyes that are quite pale and suspect they are Desert Cottontails - which is confirmed later when we check the books. A Northern Harrier flies past.

We are delighted to spot our second Roadrunner of the trip - such an iconic bird. It doesn't hang around but then again what do you expect of a road runner - 'meep meep'! There are doves all over the place including Mourning, Inca and Common Ground-Doves and crazy numbers of Mockingbirds. We get good, if brief, views of Olive Sparrow and see Lark Sparrow again. We enjoy superb views of two different Bullock's Orioles and another very pale Ash-throated flycatcher. A pair of Bobwhites is walking along the edge of the grass beside the car park. A pair of Vermillion Flycatchers look absolutely stunning - the male glowing in the early morning sunshine.

Very pleased with our success we decide to try another nearby Reserve beside the Rio Grande and arrive to find a couple of birders already watching a Ringed Kingfisher smashing a huge fish against its perch. Eventually enough bits break off for it to get it down its throat... quite a sight!

In the same area we can hear a Marsh Wren singing and eventually get good views. A Green Kingfisher flies by and we see Hooded Oriole, Caspian Tern and Osprey. We walk on down the river and Roy is pleased to find a Grey Hawk perched up on full view and allowing us great views. Further along we get brilliant views of another Green Kingfisher but with little else around. We don't spot anything else unusual so we start back as we are getting rather late for breakfast.

Back at the lodge we decide to head back to where we had last night's meal and here we enjoy a fantastic breakfast before heading back to load up the vans and get on our way. It is a long drive of over three hours to our next spot and time is flying. We make a stop at another Reserve on the way but it is very quiet here with Kiskadee, Couche's Kingbird and not much else. We continue on our way, with a Harris's Hawk on the way and one or two Red-tailed Hawks circling near the road as we go. We make a stop at a Dairy Queen and then get going again and eventually arrive at our lodge and move into our cabins - which are amazingly spacious.

**Day 8:** After what feels like a lie in we meet for breakfast at 7.30am (as it is the only slot they have with so many people around for the eclipse). We gather after breakfast and head slowly through the grounds, finding all kinds of things on the way. There are several Black-chinned Hummingbirds around the feeder where we meet, then as we cross the grounds we find Purple Martins, House Finch, Summer Tanager, Vermillion Flycatcher and our first Chipping Sparrows.

We arrive at some feeders and sit down in the deckchairs to enjoy the show. There are lots of Brown-headed Cowbirds, House Finches, a couple of Chipping and also Clay-colored Sparrows. Several Black-chinned Hummingbirds are here including some very smart males. There are Lesser Goldfinch, a rather shy Rufous-crowned Sparrow comes in briefly and there are plenty of White-winged Doves, a Lincoln Sparrow and a Black-crested Titmouse.

All the while we are here we can hear a singing Bell's Vireo, so after enjoying the birds at the feeders we try to find this bird next - and to our surprise we find it quite quickly and get fabulous views right out in the open. Further along the track we see Canyon Towhee, a superb singing Northern Cardinal and amongst a small flock of Myrtle and Yellow-throated Warblers find an Audubon's Warbler. Audubon's and Myrtle are both subspecies of Yellow-rumped Warbler though the IOC has now split these two as separate species, but Audubon's is much rarer here.

We head further up the track and while looking for another sparrow species Judy spots a bird in the bushes that from her description can only be a Black-capped Vireo! This would be an excellent find as it is a very localised species and can be tricky, so we work at trying to find it again. We try playing just a little of the song and after a few moments it responds singing back and comes out into the open. We are surprised how well it shows and though flitting around a lot, we get several excellent views - yay!!!

We check out the scrub a little further on and find another Rufous-crowned Sparrow before retracing our steps, getting more views of some of the same species but also adding Eastern Phoebe and a vermilion Flycatcher on its nest.

We are keeping an eye on the time, as the time is approaching for the eclipse! We are not feeling overly optimistic about this as the skies are very cloudy but we decide to head down to a spot beside the river Darren thinks would be perfect to watch from. As we head down we stop to enjoy the sight of lots of Cliff Swallows nesting under the bridge - they look lovely through the scope all busy nest building. We set off down the river and soon hear a Tropical Parula singing above us and after a brief search we enjoy great views. There are Yellow-throated Warblers singing too and we can hear a Canyon Wren singing high on the cliff above us. We scan the cliffs and eventually pick it out almost at the top. A Black-and-White Warbler shows very well right in front of us and we are also pleased to spot a couple of very dark squirrels on the rock face that we realise are Rock Squirrels.

As the rest of us walk on down to the spot where we would like to watch for the eclipse Darren goes back to get the lunches and while we wait we scan the cliff opposite, in the hope of finding a nesting Great Horned Owl. Roy is very pleased when, after checking just about every crevice and hole, he suddenly sets eyes on the adult which later turns out to have two chicks all white and fluffy. We are enjoying lunch when Jean shouts that the eclipse has started!

The cloud is pretty much complete cover but it is thinner here and there and, as the cloud moves overhead, now and then we get a good enough view to be able to use our eclipse glasses or see the shape through the clouds. Over the next hour more, more and more of the sun is covered by the moon looking like a bite taken from the shape. Every time we get a look there are cheers from both us and the other people gathered around to watch as there are several families on

the river bank too. Gradually more and more is gone until our final view is of the thinnest arched line – and the light is now starting to fade. A big cloud covers the view much to our frustration so sadly we never do get to see the total eclipse, but wow – does it go dark! It really is like night and looking around it is amusing to see all the mobile phone screens lit up around the people here - why are they looking at their mobile phones?! It is truly like night now and we look round amazed at how dark it is. It is funny that we wondered how the owl would react so we look in the scope and of course – it is too dark to see it! It is all over far too quickly and, with remarkable speed, the light starts to return and soon it is daylight again despite a large part of the sun being still hidden behind the moon.

We decide to head back and take a break before meeting up again at 4pm for another walk - this time a short drive to some taller trees and open areas. Here, we soon find a gorgeous Yellow-breasted Chat posing right out in the open and singing from the top of a pile of logs and brush. We also see our first Carolina Chickadee and a couple of Hooded Orioles and we find yet more Yellow-throated Warblers singing in the tree tops. We find Bewick's Wren, a pair of Vermillion Flycatchers including a displaying male, more Bell's Vireos, Summer Tanager and Lesser Goldfinch as well as both Chipping and Clay-colored Sparrows.

The flowers are lovely here, with a carpet of Prairie Verbena and a scattering of Prickly Poppy with its large white flowers. This is in turn attracting butterflies, including something that looks just like a Clouded Yellow (sulphur sp), Red Admiral, The Queen and Pipevine Swallowtail.

We walk back and pause at the feeders and water feature to see what is coming in and we can't believe how many Nashville Warblers there are loads of them! There are a couple of Wilson's, a couple of Orange-crowned and a Yellow-throated Warbler. We enjoy gorgeous views of Vermillion Flycatcher coming in to drink and watch a Black-chinned Hummingbird coming to sip from the stream of water from the tap. We see at least two or three Summer Tanagers, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and two Carolina Wrens at the back. A Carolina Chickadee comes in and we get brief views of an Indigo Bunting.

**Day 9:** We have a 7am breakfast and get on our way, heading out to Lost Maples this morning with our best chance of Golden-cheeked Warbler. We drive through our first rain and as we arrive and check into the Reserve the rain starts to ease and by the time we get ourselves together it has stopped - perfect timing.

Around the car park we spot Lark Sparrow and enjoy great views of Bewick's Wren and a Rufous-crowned Sparrow. At the feeders there were a few House Finches, Lesser Goldfinch and Lincoln Sparrow.

We start our walk and we spot Yellow-throated Warbler and glimpse a Scott's Oriole, before getting some great views of Golden-cheeked Warbler singing in the maples. This is a bit of a must-see bird in Texas so we are very pleased to see not

just this one but a couple more further on too. We also get better views of another Scott's Oriole - a beautiful black and yellow oriole with a black head. Steve spots a Western Scrub Jay that flies along the top of the escarpment but sadly lands out of view.

We walk on and can hear a Canyon Wren singing from the escarpment the other side of the river and we pause to scan the cliff face. We search carefully and Roy eventually finds it perched on a loop of tree root where it sits perfectly, singing while we take turns at the scope. We spot Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Ash-throated Flycatcher and Darren picks up a Zone-tailed Hawk doing an excellent Turkey Vulture impression - but you can see the clear pale band on its tail and yellow legs and cere at the base of the bill.

We walk on and enjoy great views of Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, as well as Myrtle Warbler, Cardinal, Black-crested Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Nashville Warbler and a lovely Black-and-white Warbler. We start on our way back and pause to check out a singing House Wren and then nearby find a Black-capped Vireo.

We head back to the vehicles and then drive to the picnic area where we enjoy lunch and great views of Red-tailed Hawk, before heading back home. We only make one stop along the way to look at a wonderful pink field of flowers (which appears to be all Prairie Verbena) alive with butterflies. There are Sulphur species that look like Clouded Yellows, Pipevine and Giant Swallowtails, Cabbage White butterflies, The Queen and Juniper Hairstreak with green on the underside of the wings.

From here we drive through the beautiful rolling hills back to the lodge for a break in the heat of the afternoon, before meeting up again for an early evening meal before our visit to the famous Frio Bat Caves.

We arrive a little early, before the bulk of the people, so we can do a little birding enroute to the car park. We spot a very distant Rock Wren and then get great views of a Black-throated Sparrow. A Merlin flies over and we try playing a few other species hoping for something else but nothing is playing the game.

Soon it is time to head up to the viewing area and we join a throng of people seated on the rocks. Before the bats start to emerge, we spot a rather pale looking Merlin and wonder if it is perhaps one of the 'prairie race' but it is hard to be sure even later looking at photos. A Rock Wren appears right in front of us and we are told they are nesting right amongst all the people so it looks like it is going to have to wait before it can give its babies their last feed of the day. There are also several Cave Swallows flitting around and in and out of the cave where the bats are going to emerge.

The ranger starts talking about what we are about to witness and tells us how many bats are here - between ten and twelve million – yes, million bats! That makes this the second largest collection of animals anywhere on the planet. As he

tells us a bit more about them and the cave itself and also the price of the guano past and present, suddenly there are dozens of bats swirling around in the entrance to the cave and then, wow, there they are pouring out into the evening sky - masses of them like a river of bats.

What a spectacle it is, as a now steady stream of bats hundreds at a time pour out into the night sky in a long ribbon or split into groups heading out in different directions. It is mesmerising to watch and the numbers pouring out of the cave remains apparently constant for such a long time it is jaw dropping. It would be interesting to know how many are emerging per second. You can hear the rustle of their wings as they fly low overhead and both a Harris Hawk and a Merlin successfully catch their evening meal from amongst their number.

After some time, a bat suddenly drops from the sky right beside Paul and lies on its back on the ground so we call the ranger over and he puts on a glove and picks it up. We then have a lovely opportunity to see one in the hand and see the structure of the wings, the large ears and the strange 'free tail' sticking out beyond the tail membrane. It is surprisingly cute and apparently perfectly happy to stay sat in his hand as people get to see it.

It is hard to put into words quite how astonishing a scene it is to witness as the river of bats continues flowing out into the evening sky. A Great Horned Owl is spotted on the skyline, a beautiful silhouette against the fading light. On and on it goes - millions of bats disappearing into the distance. As it gets darker and darker we wonder when it will start to slow down and as we get ready to go it does look like perhaps there are fewer leaving now – but it is still a steady stream of bats even if not a river – it has been incredible to watch.

We finally decide to walk back to the vans but the evening is not over yet - as now, to our astonishment, we are treated to the most astounding light show! Lightning lights up a mass of cumulus clouds in the distance from the inside. Flash after flash - and soon jagged lightning too - lighting up the sky - each flash just seconds after the last. Sometimes the flashes are coming so fast there is no space between them and we even witness the rare sight of a flicker of lighting that bolts straight upwards from the top of the cloud instead of down. Research later suggests this is known as a Gnome (not a sprite as we thought at the time, though there is also a kind of lightning with that name). The scene becomes more and more spectacular and it goes on and on until there is just a constant flashing all through the loud bank. We decide to head back home but continue to watch for the entire journey home... and it is still continuing as we say goodnight back at the lodge. Surely this has been one of the most spectacular and most active lightening displays any of us have ever witnessed.

**Day 10:** After breakfast we have a bit of time to pack and some have a last check of the feeders, even adding a new bird - Spotted Towhee. Then we get on the road as we have a long drive today.

Our first stop is at a cattle ranch where there are a lot of cattle in pens and open fields and there are a lot of blackbirds, cowbirds and grackles. It is busy with these and a few sparrows too and going through the small flock of sparrows we identify Lark and Savannah Sparrows and a new one in the form of Vesper Sparrow.

The blackbird flock is a mixed flock and we go through it checking them and pick out Brown-headed Cowbirds, Great-tailed Grackles, Brewers Blackbirds in good numbers and couple of gorgeous Yellow-headed Blackbirds. There are also Killdeer in the field with them and lots of Purple Martins and Barn Swallows flitting around above. At the side of the road a flock of vultures is feeding on a dead deer with two Crested Caracaras. As we are about to leave Roy notices two birds fly in that look different and they turn out to be Western Kingbirds that perch on the fence long enough for everyone to hop back out of the busses to see them.

We get on our way and have a long drive which is pretty uneventful before we stop for lunch at a rest stop. We make another stop much further on for a coffee and a quick game of Connect Four and Mims... it is that kinds of place.

It is then a short drive to Attwater Reserve where we pause on the way in to look at Red-winged Blackbirds, Eastern Meadowlark, Swainson's Hawk, Merlin and Red-tailed Hawk, then as we get nearer the Visitor Centre a beautiful American Kestrel.

We park up and take a walk, passing through some beautiful meadows of flowers and spotting more raptors including a White-tailed Hawk. The flowers are gorgeous and include Prickly Poppies, Blue Lupins, Cone-flowers, Meadow Pink, Blue-eyed Grass and Indian Paintbrush. There are butterflies including many Pipevine Swallowtails and lovely Grey Hairstreak that is very pale grey beneath. We finally arrive at a screen looking over a lake where there are Pied-billed Grebes, an Anhinga and a few American Coots and Common Gallinule.

From here we take the vans for a drive round the 'driving route' and start finding more raptors, including a nice close Northern Harrier. Then we pause to look at a mass of bees smothering one end of a road sign - and as we look at these a small group of waders fly in. We check them with the scopes and are delighted to see they are Upland Sandpipers. There are about a dozen and they fly round and eventually land again and we enjoy nice scope views of these oddly proportioned birds with skinny necks and small heads.

Driving on we see more Eastern Meadowlarks and then more Upland Sandpipers and then yet more - one flock being quite close. We also spot a Black-tailed Jackrabbit that seems bizarrely tame, even walking towards our vans. Our final sighting before we head for our hotel is a snake on the road! At least we think it is a snake but research later on confirms it is in fact a Slender Glass Lizard, one of the legless lizards in some ways like our Slow Worm - but much longer.

We head to the hotel, which is not far away and have a quick turn-around before heading out for our evening meal at an excellent Mexican restaurant. Then it is checklist and off to bed - we have an early start in the morning.

**Day 11:** After breakfast we set off for Attwater again and on the way we make a brief stop to enjoy the sight of an adult Bald Eagle on dead trees beside the road. Once there we go round the driving route again thinking we have more time to enjoy it today and again we pause to enjoy views of Upland Sandpipers - sometimes very close to the road and giving a lovely bubbling call. There are a couple of Bobwhites right beside the track and more fly off as we drive past. There are Red-winged Blackbirds and several Eastern Meadowlarks including a brilliant yellow-chested bird and we see American Kestrel, Swainson's Hawks and Savannah Sparrows. If anything it seems slightly quieter than yesterday and we arrive back at the Visitor Centre where we have a look at the displays and a local volunteer asks if we would like to see a video about the 'Attwater Prairie Chickens' that are here but now very rare. This is a subspecies of Greater Prairie Chicken and was almost wiped out. It is very interesting and clearly there is a lot of work going on to try and keep the population going. We have a long way to go today, so as soon as it is finished we get on our way.

From here we drive to another Reserve some distance away where there have been recent reports of a pair of Swallow-tailed Kites. We arrive and walk through the small Reserve, spotting Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks beside the lake and high overhead both Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, which makes for a useful comparison. There is no sign of the kites and we walk to the open area at the far end and scan the skies for a while in hope.

We are pleased to see Eastern Bluebird and we spot an Alligator which is joined by a Red-eared Slider – indeed it climbs onto the Alligator's back which seems rather brave! A couple of Blue Jays fly through, as we walk up a road a little way but decide this isn't helping and turn round to start back – and Darren instantly spots a Swallow-tailed Kite flying high over the road! With great excitement we rush back to a better spot for viewing this gorgeous bird that is soon joined by a second. We watch them head into the Reserve and walk down to see if we can relocate them and this time enjoy unbelievable views including one bird flies through the trees on the other side of the small lake collecting nesting material in the form of Spanish Moss. Also, to our surprise, we realise there are now three birds!

They soon vanish from view and thrilled with our sightings we move on as we still have lots of driving to do - but first we stop at a subway for lunch. Then we drive - drive - drive all the way to our next stop at Brazos Bends. This is a lovely Reserve with a huge area of wetlands and some walkways amongst them, as well as a tower and some woodland. From the first viewpoint we spot plenty of American Coots, Blue-winged Teal, Pied-billed Grebes, Anhinga and fly-over Little Blue Herons. We spot a few Alligators and we're also impressed by a very large

fish that is apparently called an Alligator Gar Fish - very long and slim with a long snout.

As we walk round further paths we spot plenty of White Ibis and other herons and egrets, including Tricolored Heron then get amazing views of a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron eating a crayfish! There is a Tufted Titmouse amongst the trees and on our way to the tower we enjoy exceptional views of a Red-shouldered Hawk. There are more Alligators and from the tower we can see several more including one or two very large ones. From the top we can see so many birds over a huge wetland area - nothing different but just great to see so many birds. We are pleased to spot a Sora Rail down below us and enjoy lovely views of an American Purple Gallinule.

Walking back to the vans we pause to see what we can find in the woodland, finding Gray Catbird and Red-bellied Woodpecker... then it is back in the vans for the final leg of the journey. We pause to eat along the way before we finally arrive at our hotel and settle in to our rooms.

**Day 12:** After breakfast at the hotel we drive literally a few hundred yards to a small woodland called Boy Scout Wood. This is a known migrant hotspot and we are soon rewarded with our first migrants in the form of Indigo Buntings. In the same trees we find our first Tennessee Warblers, a lovely Northern Parula Warbler and glimpse a Gray Catbird.

Walking into the woods proper we arrive at the 'grandstand' - a wooden tiered seating area from where we can watch warblers and other birds coming to drink. There is little happening so we follow the boardwalk round and soon arrive at a spot where other birders are watching birds in the tree tops. We soon identify Black-and-white, Nashville, Orange-crowned and Black-throated Green Warblers.

We continue along the boardwalk to a more open area with a small wetland area and scrubby bushes and from here we soon spot a Marsh Wren and a few Chipping Sparrows the far side of the pool. Jane spots a circling raptor, which turns out to be a Sharp-shinned Hawk and shortly afterwards Roy spots another which turns out to be a Cooper's Hawk - a great comparison with one so soon after the other.

Again we walk on and a Merlin flies through catching dragonflies! Jane is always looking for mammals and somehow she manages to find a Swamp Rabbit under the bushes which looks quite dark with thick grizzled looking fur and rather rounded ears.

We walk back round to the tiered seating and watch the waters trickle in as, with the day warming up, birds are coming in to drink. We start with a Northern Waterthrush that shows well and then a lovely Blue-headed Vireo. A Wilson's Warbler puts in an appearance and we enjoy superb views of a Gray Catbird and a brief Yellow-breasted Chat. To our astonishment a Virginia Opossum appears in

the background, wandering around in broad daylight. Another new mammal is Eastern Gray Squirrel - the same species we have at home. There is a very nice moment when three Tennessee Warblers and Nashville Warbler all come into bath together alongside a couple of Indigo Buntings.

After a rather prolonged lunch we have a short break before heading out at 3pm for the afternoon. We head out to the Bolivar Peninsula and work our way down, making a couple of stops along the way. Our first was along a track that goes out through a sea of tall grasses and sedges and we pause here and there as we spot waders in small pools including a single Solitary Sandpiper, several Lesser Yellowlegs, Willet and Black-bellied Plover. At the far end there are lots of terns passing by including several Forster's Terns carrying fish. There are Brown Pelicans and an Osprey.

We decide to walk back along the track to try and find Seaside Sparrow but with no luck, however we get good views of Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Red-winged Blackbird and another Osprey - and a brief view of a Clapper Rail.

We drive round to a spot where Darren noticed a lot of roosting birds and soon we are going through an excellent mix of birds here. There is a flock of very close waders including lots of Semipalmated Plovers and two Piping Plovers with them. There are a lot of Dunlin plus a smaller number of Western Sandpipers and a couple of Semipalmated Sandpipers. Further out on a shallow island we find lots of Royal Terns, Sandwich/Cabot's Terns and with them several Forster's Terns and a Black Tern. There are also quite a few Black Skimmers and a couple of them even skim for a few seconds. A smaller number of Least Terns are also here and one lands in front of us with the waders - you can really get a feel for just how small they are when they are with Dunlin! We find Marbled Godwit, a single Stilt Sandpiper, several Sanderlings and a Turnstone - and Darren expertly picks out a nearby Baird's Sandpiper.

Driving on, we pause to look at a small group of Upland Sandpipers in a field and also pass a smart Swainson's Hawk. We make a stop to look at a Common Yellowthroat and then drive out to Bolivar flats themselves.

What a wonderful experience this is - so many birds of so many kinds is just fantastic and a real highlight of the trip. There are Royal, Sandwich/Cabot's and Least Terns and amongst them several Black Terns in various states of moult. Lots of Brown Pelicans are cruising by and waders include Willet, Hudsonian Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, plus lots of Semipalmated Plovers and a few more Piping plovers. There are plenty of Laughing Gulls and a few Ring-billed and American Herring Gulls too. In the distance we spot a huge flock of American Avocets and walk on further to get closer, but we're pleased some come our way landing nearby and looking totally gorgeous. We find a few Snowy Plovers - very like Kentish in appearance. The whole scene is lovely but right at the far end we are amazed, looking through the scopes, to see a vast numbers of American

Avocets and many more birds of all sorts – including over a hundred White Pelicans.

Time is running out so we head back to the vans, where Ann spots a Horned Lark which is a nice find and we enjoy our last views of the avocets before heading for home via a fabulous eatery. What a place, full of life and with walls covered with amazing posters of old films and all kinds of crazy things - it has a great atmosphere and fabulous food, including some superb Mexican options making a very nice end to the day before we head back to the hotel.

**Day 13:** Before breakfast we take a look at Boy Scout Wood, but it seems very quiet. There is nothing at the water drip and nearby, where the sun first hits the trees opposite, we spot a single Indigo Bunting and a Tennessee Warbler but nothing else. After a short time, we decide to call it a day and walk back to the car park where Roy is delighted to spot an Eastern Kingbird then, as we are enjoying this, Darren picks up a gorgeous male Painted Bunting in the same tree - so it was worth coming out after all.

After breakfast we head out to a lovely Reserve not too far away, which is large wetland with a drive round circuit. On the way we spot a few birds, including more Eastern Kingbirds and various birds on the wires including a Belted Kingfisher and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers.

At the entrance to the Reserve we find our first Alligator and there are Cliff Swallows nesting here. Then we drive round the route making our first stop to overlook some lovely pools that are alive with waders. There are lots of Stilt Sandpipers, including quite a few in breeding plumage. Roy has been working on dowitcher identification and carefully he and Darren check through them - and there are quite a lot - but frustratingly we can't find any that appear to be Short-billed. There are a few Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers and a single Western Sandpiper and a small number of Dunlin too. We find a single Pectoral Sandpiper at the back, both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and a single Spotted Sandpiper with lots of spots! One of the Stilt Sandpipers is very strange looking, as most of its neck and head are white. Beside us in the reeds are Red-winged Blackbirds and Boat-tailed Grackles calling noisily. On the other pool are a few American Coots and Common Gallinules and both White-faced and White Ibis plus Blue-winged Teal.

We drive further round, stopping here and there to check out the birds we spot. At one spot we can see quite a lot of ducks, including American Wigeon, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Gadwall and Northern Shoveler. Another Eastern Kingbird shows well here. We walk out on a board walk from which we get very good views of our best White-faced Ibis so far, with plenty of white on its face. There are Black-bellied Whistling Ducks here and we get nice views of a Sora. Oh... and we have been seeing lots of Alligators as we go and I mean lots!!

We drive on and we're astonished to spot an American Redstart, though frustrating views and when it finally flies out of the small bush it is in it flies off miles away sadly. Back at the entrance we find quite a few Tree Swallows before we head back for lunch. We buy this near the hotel and then head to enjoy it at the picnic benches in Boy Scout wood. Here there is still very little going on, but we do enjoy good views of a Grey Catbird.

From here we drive to another local woodland and wetland area, where there is a large 'rookery' as they are calling it - but what we would call a 'heronry'. We start the boardwalk pausing to look at a Swamp Rabbit almost under the boardwalk. It is remarkably quiet for migrants - unusually so - so we walk on to view the heronry from the viewpoint and wow it is superb!

There is a lot going on here, with masses of nesting Great and Snowy Egrets and smaller numbers of Tricoloured Herons. The egrets are squabbling with each other and often fluffing up their aigrettes, which make them look spectacular. There are also plenty of nesting Neotropic Cormorants and Roseate Spoonbills. There are a very small number of Little Blue Herons and we are not sure if they are actually nesting or not. We spend quite a long time here just watching their antics, some birds stealing nesting material - others squabbling or displaying and, now and then, Roseate Spoonbills soaring overhead with the sun shining through their pink wings. There are a few Anhingas here too and in the water another Alligator and several Softshell Turtles amongst the Red-eared Sliders.

We walk through the woodlands and stop here and there to check out feeding areas - but we seem to be doing most of the feeding as the mosquitoes are having a very nice time - so with very few birds around we head back to the vans and head for home. Here we offer a choice to either go out to the coast or have a longer break before the evening meal.

Those of us who head back out have a great time, going back to the same place as yesterday to see what waders are here today, along with the gulls, terns etc. We are pleased to quickly find a Wilson's Plover amongst a large flock of Semipalmated Plovers and a couple of Piping Plovers - a new bird for the trip. There are plenty of Semipalmated Sandpiper and Dunlin and a small number of Western Sandpipers. We are also pleased to find a small number of dowitchers and we try again to put our knowledge into practice... and this time things look interesting. With spots on the sides of the breast and a more arched supercilium and to be honest quite a short bill for a dowitcher, we are finally convinced we have here at least three or four Short-billed Dowitchers - hoorah! There are Marbled Godwits, Willets and lots of Black-bellied Plovers too. Out on the sand bar are masses of terns including lots of Royal, plenty of Forster's and Sandwich/Cabot's, Least and a few Black Terns. There are a few American Herring Gulls and Ring-billed Gulls amongst the Laughing Gulls and we are very pleased to find a Bonaparte's Gull - which looks tiny!

We decide to head further down the peninsula to try for Seaside Sparrow and drive to a little road that cuts through the long coastal grasses. We pause to look at a couple of Upland Sandpipers along the way, then once we are in the right habitat we pause to listen for singing sparrows. We are amazed when one appears almost instantly and flies across and lands quite close by on the tops of the grasses - a lovely Seaside Sparrow! How easy was that - and what is more over the next few minutes we see at least another two more.

At the end of this road there are few waders and we get to compare Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs side by side, which is useful. There are a couple of Spotted Sandpipers here, one almost like a Mistle Thrush underneath! We are also pleased to notice a pair of Common Terns here with their darker wing-tips than the nearby Forster's Terns. There are plenty more birds here, but nothing we have not seen in the last half hour so we start back as time is flying by.

We are heading back towards the hotel when Roy spots a White-tailed Kite and we turn round and head back to see if we can get a better view. We soon locate it perched in the trees here with a Loggerhead Shrike in the foreground, which is a nice bonus. We enjoy superb views through the scope before it takes flight, looking quite harrier like in its buoyant flight - what a lovely finish to the day!

**Day 14:** We decide to check the local woodlands again, before we head further afield and start in a new woodland just up the road, where we find remarkably little. There are a few common species and just down the road a Caroline Wren is carrying food to a nest beside one of the houses. Boy Scout wood is also very quiet, so we decide to get on our way to pastures new - now heading further north and making a stop along the way to check a bayou where Darren has previously seen Prothonotary Warbler.

Here we try playing a little of the song and eventually hear one singing back from further down the road, so we head that way and soon we are enjoying exceptional views of this gorgeous little warbler - such a brilliant yellow it looks like it would glow in the dark.

Our journey continues through some futuristic looking scenery of tubes and pipes and cables and towers of the petroleum processing plant that is truly massive, before we come out to the very pleasant Sea Rim State Park where we have lunch. Here there are pools and reeds and a view of the sea and as we enjoy lunch a Merlin flies through. There are a few swallows passing through, including a couple of Tree Swallows and then as we walk a boardwalk to check the beach Steve finds a stunning male Painted Bunting. We enjoy great views, with a few Savannah Sparrows. There are several Boat-tailed Grackles here and on the beach quite a few Sanderlings and Dunlin, a Black-bellied Plover with a few Brown Pelicans and Royal Terns passing out at sea. Walking back towards the vans we are surprised when a Least Bittern flies across a small pool landing in some dense vegetation just in front of us. We walk down to see if we can see it from the

other side of the pool, spotting a brief Sora Rail as we do so, then the Least Bittern takes flight allowing almost everyone at least a flight view.

From here we drive to Sabine's Wood, where we start walking round the trails to see what we can find. We quickly add a new bird - a Downy Woodpecker. We spend some time at a seating area overlooking a dripping pipe - well two in fact - which seem to be a feature of all these little watching spots in Texas and you can see why. As we sit there, various birds come in to drink including Tennessee Warbler, a Blue Jay and a superb Yellow-billed Cuckoo! What a great surprise and we are delighted to enjoy such great views of what is often a real tree top bird. There are in fact three in total, though the others stay in the trees as does a Summer Tanager and a very odd-looking tanager that has strange black feathering in its wings. We speculate on whether it might be a hybrid between Summer and Scarlet Tanager given the odd plumage, including a black tipped tail. Two beautiful Indigo Buntings appear and one is absolutely stunning. Darren has a little wander and is soon beckoning us so we rush round to join him and get brief views of Brown Thrasher and Veery.

Over the next hour we enjoy great views of Kentucky Warbler at the drip and around a mulberry tree we see several Eastern Kingbirds, two superb male Scarlet Tanagers, an Eastern Wood Pewee and a Red bellied Woodpecker. As we leave, we notice one of the woodpeckers is agitated and suddenly it is chasing a rat along the thicker branches! The rat seems remarkably happy in the tree-tops and dashes round and round before vanishing into a hole. The branch concerned has several holes along it and we can see the rat at the various holes and it is clearly sorting out bedding in there and then peering out at us. It looks rather grey with a clean white belly and after consulting the books later, we are happy that this has to be an Eastern Woodrat – also known colloquially as a Pack-rat.

With the day getting late and a fair drive back home we get on our way, stopping enroute to enjoy another evening meal at a Mexican eatery full of atmosphere and fun and with delicious food, before we finally head for home. Here we do our final run through the checklist and also conduct our traditional roundup, where everyone gets to choose their favourite species (we decide to allow five on this occasion), a favourite place and a 'magic moment' and with such a distance covered on the trip we also all have a guess at the mileage covered on the trip.

Going round the group the number of species that get chosen is remarkable! A total of 34 species get a mention, which is surely testament to the great variety of species we have seen. A great selection of warblers are chosen and some great raptors including Bald Eagle, White-tailed Kite and even Turkey Vulture. From the start of the holiday comes Whooping Crane and the delightful little Elf Owl, as do American Avocet, Green Jay, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Vermillion Flycatcher and many more. The Brazilian Free-tailed Bats too have to be in there and Jayne with her keenness on mammals chooses the Virginia Opossum. A small number of species get several votes and these include Prothonotary Warbler, Painted Bunting

and Great Horned Owl, but the runaway leader is the stunning Swallow-tailed Kite with nine votes.

There are also quite a few different places mentioned as we go round the group and these include the riverside where we watched the eclipse. Lost Maples and the boat trip both get a couple of mentions and both Bolivar Flats and the River Frio area score three, but it is the bat cave that scores the highest with four votes. This is also the highest scoring Magic Moment - which is surely not surprising as it was truly remarkable! Many other moments from the trip get a mention including the eclipse, which would surely have scored way higher in our memories if we had managed to see totality. Swallow-tailed Kites, Eastern Screech Owl, the Opossum, Ringed Kingfisher, the warbler wave and the tiny Elf Owl all get a mention.

One thing we all agree on is that it has been a fabulous trip with so many great sightings and special moments it is hard to choose. Darren also suggests we should have a go at guessing the mileage of the trip and everyone has a guess - though we won't know the answer until we have got to the airport.

**Day 15:** We have a quick look round the Boy Scout wood before we head for breakfast but sadly all is quiet... though Jean does spot a Common Nighthawk on her way to the woods. Roy and Jayne also enjoy a very tame Swamp Rabbit that seems remarkably inquisitive coming almost to their feet! Then after breakfast there is time to pack before we head for the airport and our flight back home

And who won the mileage competition? Well Roy insists he didn't look at the mileage on his van to help him so this was genuinely not a fix - but his guess of 2,222 was the nearest.

## Birds

Common Loon	Wild Turkey	White-tipped Dove
Least Grebe	Northern Bobwhite	Red-crowned Parrot
Pied-billed Grebe	Clapper Rail	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
American White Pelican	Sora	Greater Roadrunner
Brown Pelican	American Purple Gallinule	Eastern Screech-Owl
Double-crested Cormorant	Common Gallinule	Great Horned Owl
Neotropic Cormorant	American Coot	Elf Owl
Anhinga	Whooping Crane	Lesser Nighthawk
Least Bittern	Black-bellied Plover	Common Nighthawk
Great Blue Heron	American Golden-Plover	Pauraque
Great Egret	Snowy Plover	Chimney Swift
Snowy Egret	Wilson's Plover	Buff-bellied Hummingbird
Little Blue Heron	Semi-palmated Plover	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Tricolored Heron	Piping Plover	Black-chinned Hummingbird
Reddish Egret	Killdeer	Ringed Kingfisher
Cattle Egret	American Oystercatcher	Belted Kingfisher
Green Heron	Black-necked Stilt	Green Kingfisher
Black-crowned Night-Heron	American Avocet	Golden-fronted Woodpecker
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Greater Yellowlegs	Red-bellied Woodpecker
White Ibis	Lesser Yellowlegs	Ladder-backed Woodpecker
White-faced Ibis	Solitary Sandpiper	Downy Woodpecker
Glossy Ibis	Spotted Sandpiper	Eastern Wood-Pewee
Roseate Spoonbill	Upland Sandpiper	Black Phoebe
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	Willet	Eastern Phoebe
Mottled Duck	Hudsonian Whimbrel	Vermilion Flycatcher
Blue-winged Teal	Marbled Godwit	Ash-throated Flycatcher
Green-winged Teal	Ruddy Turnstone	Brown-crested Flycatcher
Cinnamon Teal	Sanderling	Great Crested Flycatcher
Northern Shoveler	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Great Kiskadee
Gadwall	Western Sandpiper	Couch's Kingbird
American Wigeon	Least Sandpiper	Tropical Kingbird
Redhead	Barid's Sandpiper	Eastern Kingbird
Ring-necked Duck	Pectoral Sandpiper	Western Kingbird
Lesser Scaup	Dunlin	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Red-breasted Merganser	Stilt Sandpiper	Horned Lark
Bufflehead	Short-billed Dowitcher	Purple Martin
Ruddy Duck	Long-billed Dowitcher	Tree Swallow
Black Vulture	Wilson's Snipe	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Turkey Vulture	Laughing Gull	Bank Swallow
Osprey	Franklin's Gull	Cliff Swallow
Swallow-tailed Kite	Bonaparte's Gull	Cave Swallow
White-tailed Kite	Ring-billed Gull	Barn Swallow
Northern Harrier	American Herring Gull	Blue Jay
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Gull-billed Tern	Green Jay
Cooper's Hawk	Caspian Tern	Western Scrub Jay
Harris's Hawk	Royal Tern	American Crow
Red-shouldered Hawk	Sandwich/Cabot's Tern	Fish Crow
Broad-winged Hawk	Common Tern	Common Raven
Gray Hawk	Forster's Tern	Carolina Chickadee
Swainson's Hawk	Least Tern	Tufted Titmouse
White-tailed Hawk	Black Tern	Black-crested Titmouse
Red-tailed Hawk	Black Skimmer	Rock Wren
Zone-tailed Hawk	Feral Pigeon	Canyon Wren
Crested Caracara	White-winged Dove	Carolina Wren
American Kestrel	Mourning Dove	Bewick's Wren
Aplomado Falcon	Collared Dove	House Wren
Merlin	Inca Dove	Marsh Wren
Plain Chachalaca	Common Ground-Dove	Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher  
Eastern Bluebird  
Swainson's Thrush  
Veery  
Clay-colored Thrush  
Gray Catbird  
Northern Mockingbird  
Brown Thrasher  
Long-billed Thrasher  
Cedar Waxwing  
Loggerhead Shrike  
European Starling  
White-eyed Vireo  
Bell's Vireo  
Black-capped Vireo  
Blue-headed Vireo  
Warbling Vireo  
Tennessee Warbler  
Orange-crowned Warbler  
Nashville Warbler  
Northern Parula  
Tropical Parula  
Yellow Warbler  
*Myrtle* Yellow-rumped Warbler  
*Audubon's* Yellow-rumped Warbler  
Golden-cheeked Warbler  
Black-throated Green Warbler  
Yellow-throated Warbler  
Black-and-white Warbler  
American Redstart  
Prothonotary Warbler  
Northern Waterthrush  
Louisiana Waterthrush  
Kentucky Warbler  
Common Yellowthroat  
Hooded Warbler  
Wilson's Warbler  
Yellow-breasted Chat  
Summer Tanager

Scarlet Tanager  
Northern Cardinal  
Pyrrhuloxia  
Indigo Bunting  
Painted Bunting  
Spotted Towhee  
Canyon Towhee  
Rufous-crowned Sparrow  
Olive Sparrow  
Chipping Sparrow  
Clay-colored Sparrow  
Vesper Sparrow  
Lark Sparrow  
Black-throated Sparrow  
Savannah Sparrow  
Seaside Sparrow  
Lincoln's Sparrow  
White-throated Sparrow  
White-crowned Sparrow  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Eastern Meadowlark  
Yellow-headed Blackbird  
Brewer's Blackbird  
Great-tailed Grackle  
Boat-tailed Grackle  
Bronzed Cowbird  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Orchard Oriole  
Hooded Oriole  
Altamira Oriole  
Bullock's Oriole  
Scott's Oriole  
House Finch  
Lesser Goldfinch  
House Sparrow  
249 species

## MAMMALS

Brazilian Free-tailed Bat  
Eastern Cottontail  
Desert Cottontail  
Swamp Rabbit  
Black-tailed Jackrabbit  
White-tailed Deer  
Eastern Gray Squirrel  
Fox Squirrel  
Rock Squirrel  
Raccoon  
Virginia Opossum  
Eastern Woodrat  
Collared Peccary  
Bottle-nosed Dolphin

## REPTILES

American Alligator  
Green Anole  
Brown Anole  
Eastern Six-lined Racerunner  
Texas Spiny Lizard  
Texas Rose-bellied Lizard  
Texas Spotted Whiptail  
Slender Glass Lizard  
Red-eared Slider  
Soft-shell Turtle  
Rio Grande Leopard Frog  
Bullfrog

Many thanks to Kirsten for providing a list of butterflies, dragonflies, other insects and flowers

### **BUTTERFLIES – (from Roy)**

Red Admiral  
Pipevine Swallowtail  
Great Swallowtail  
Cabbage White  
The Queen  
Question Mark  
Phaon Crescent  
Bordered Patch  
Juniper (Olive) Hairstreak  
Grey hairstreak  
Common Buckeye

### **Additional species lists from Kirsten:**

#### **BUTTERFLIES**

The American snout (*Libytheana carinenta*) - 4/4  
Common Mestra (*Mestra amymone*) - 4/4  
Orange Sulphur (*Colias eurytheme*) - possibly some similar sp. but this most common 6/4 & 9/4  
Lyside Sulphur (*Kricogonia lyside*) - this seen is massive migrations) 7/4 & 9/4  
Curved-lined Angle (*Digrammia continuata*) - probably 7/4  
Pearl Crescent (*Phyciodes tharos*) - probably 8/4  
Spicebush Swallowtail (*Papilio troilus*) - possibly 8/4  
Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) - possibly 8/4  
Common Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*) - probably 9/4  
Juniper Hairstreak (*Callophrys gryneus*) on Antelopehorn Milkweed (*Asclepias asperula*) - 9/4  
Gulf Fritillary (*Dione vanillae*) - probably 9/4  
Pipevine Swallowtail (*Battus philenor*) - possibly 10/4  
American painted lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*) - 10/4  
Eastern Comma (*Polygona comma*) - 11/4

#### **CATERPILLARS**

Silvered Prominent (*Didugua argentilinea*) - most likely 6/4  
Greater Oak Dagger (*Acronicta lobeliae*) - possibly 8/4  
Pipevine Swallowtail (*Battus philenor*) - 10/4  
Salt Marsh Moth (*Estigmene acrea*) - 10/4 & 11/4 & 15/4  
Isabella Tiger Moth (*Pyrharctia isabella*) - possibly 11/4  
Woolly Gray Moth (*Lycia ypsilon*) - 11/4  
Fir Tussock Moth (*Orgyia detrita*) - possibly 13/4

#### **DAMSEL and DRAGONFLIES**

Red Saddlebags (*Tamea onusta*) - possibly 2/4  
Powdered Dancer (*Argia moesta*) - possibly 8/4  
Aztec Dancer (*Argia nahuana*) - possibly 9/4  
Blue Dasher (*Pachydiplax longipennis*) - possibly 12/4  
Eastern Pondhawk (*Erythemis simplicicollis*) - possibly 14/4

#### **OTHER INSECTS**

Common flower scarab (*Euphoria kernii*) - most likely 7/4  
Red paper wasp (*Polistes carolina*) - probably 7/4  
Arizona Net-winged Beetle (*Lycus arizonensis*) - possibly 8/4  
Metric Paper Wasp (*Polistes metricus*) - perhaps 11/4  
Clay-colored Billbug (*Sphenophorus aequalis*) - 13/4  
Eastern Lubber Grasshopper (*Romalea microptera*) - 14/4

#### **FLOWERS (from Roy)**

Green-flowered Milkweed      *Asclepias asperula*  
Texas Prickly Pear              *Opuntia lindheimari*

Dayflower	<i>Commelina erecta</i>
Texas Thistle	<i>Cirsium texanum</i>
Indian Blanket	<i>Gaillardia pulchella</i>
Gumhead	<i>Gymnosperma glutinosum</i>
Common Sunflower	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>
Coreopsis	<i>Coreopsis tinctorial</i>
Black-eyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>
Texas Ragwort	<i>Senecio ampullaceus</i>
Wild Morning Glory	<i>Impomaoea trichocarpa</i>
Meadow Pink/Texas Star	<i>Sabatia campestris</i>
Blue eyed Grass	<i>Sisyrinchium sagittiferum</i>
Texas Bluebonnet	<i>Lupinus texensis</i>
Paloverde	<i>Parkinsonia aculeate</i>
Large-leaf Wood Sorrel	<i>Oxalis amplifolia</i>
White Prickly Poppy	<i>Argemone albiflora</i>
Scarlet Pimpernel	<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>
Texas Indian Paintbrush	<i>Castilleja indivisa</i>
Prairie Verbena	<i>Verbena bipinnatifida</i>
Texas Vervain	<i>Verbena halei</i>

### Additional species list from Kirsten:

American Blue-eyed-grass (*Sisyrinchium montanum*) - probably 2/4 Goose Island State Park, Lamar  
 Bristle Thistle (*Cirsium horridulum*) (aka purple thistle, or yellow thistle) - 2/4 Goose Island SP (poss purple ones at High Island? iNat)  
 Indian Blanket aka Furewheel (*Gaillardia pulchella*) - 3/4 Mustang Island, Port Aransas  
 Blue Scarlet Pimpernel (*Lysimachia loeflingii*) - 3/4 Mustang Island, Port Aransas  
 Berlandier's Yellow Flax (*Linum berlandieri*) - 3/4 Mustang Island, Port Aransas  
 Paysonia Sp. Perhaps ? (iNat) Not at all sure - 3/4 Riviera  
 Mexican Palo Verde (*Parkinsonia aculeata*) - 4/4 Santa Ana NWR but all over the place  
 Prickly Pear possibly Engelmann's Pricklypear (*Opuntia engelmannii*) - 4/4 Santa Ana NWR  
 White Leadtree (*Leucaena leucocephala*) - 5/4 South Padre Island  
 Prickly Pear - 6/4 Estero Llano Grande State Park, Mercedes  
 Honey Mesquite (*Neltuma glandulosa*) - 6/4 Estero Llano Grande State Park, Mercedes  
 Anacahuita or Mexican Olive (*Cordia boissieri*) - 6/4 Estero Llano Grande State Park, Mercedes □  
 Cochineal Nopal Cactus (*Opuntia cochenillifera*) (iNat) probably (tree) - 6/4 Estero Llano Grande State Park, Mercedes  
 Cenizo aka Texas Barometer Bush or Texas Sage (*Leucophyllum frutescens*) official "State Native Shrub of Texas - 6/4 Falcon Reservoir, Falcon Lake Estates  
 Another Prickly Pear possibly Western Pricklypear (*Opuntia orbiculata*) (iNat) or Texas Plains Pricklypear (*Opuntia alta*) - 6/4 Falcon Lake  
 Texas Bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*) - 6/4 Falcon Lake and 10/4 Attwater  
 Thymophylla Sp. Possibly Parralena aka Fiveneedle Pricklyleaf (*T. pentachaeta*) or Bristleleaf Pricklyleaf (*T. tenuiloba*) - 6/4 Falcon Lake  
 Prickly poppy (*Argemone* Sp.): Southwestern prickly poppy or Mexican prickly poppy, *Argemone pleiacantha* - most common but there are 15 species! We saw pink & white ones - 7/4 Roma  
*Oenothera* Sp. Cutleaf Evening Primrose (*Oenothera laciniata*) possibly or Showy Evening Primrose (*Oenothera grandis*) (iNat) - 7/4 Roma similar ones on 10/4 Attwater (id as *O. laciniata* iNat+) & 14/4 Sabine Woods and 15/4 Gulfway motel area (leaves slightly different but probably the same  
 Bicolor Fanmustard (*Nerisyrenia camporum*) (iNat) - 7/4 Roma  
 Two-leaved Senna (*Senna roemeriana*) - 8/4 Neal's Lodge  
 Pink Mimosa (*Mimosa borealis*) (iNat) - 8/4 Neal's Lodge  
 Mealy Blue Sage (*Salvia farinacea*) (iNat) - 8/4 Pecan Grove, Uvalde  
 Dakota Mock Vervain (*Glandularia bipinnatifida*) (iNat) - 8/4 Pecan Grove, Uvalde  
 False Dayflower (*Tinantia anomala*) (iNat) - 9/4 Lost Maples State Park  
 Snapdragon Vine (*Maurandella antirrhiniflora*) (iNat+) - 9/4 Lost Maples State Park  
 Western Horse Nettle (*Solanum dimidiatum*) (iNat) - 9/4 Lost Maples State Park  
 Ohio Buckeye, Texas Buckeye or Fetid Buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*) (iNat) - 9/4 Lost Maples State Park  
 Slender Hedeoma or Slender False Pennyroyal (*Hedeoma acinoides*) (iNat) - 9/4 Lost Maples State Park  
 Onion Weed (*Nothoscordum gracile*) possibly (iNat) - 9/4 Lost Maples State Park

Scarlet Leather Flower (*Clematis texensis*) (iNat) - 9/4 Lost Maples State Park  
Tenpetal Anemone (*Anemone berlandieri*) (iNat) - 9/4 Vanderpool□  
Antelopehorn Milkweed (*Asclepias asperula*) - 9/4 Vanderpool□  
White Leadtree (*Leucaena leucocephala*) - 9/4 Neal's Cabins (with lots of the pale yellow butterflies on Kricogonia lyside)  
Pinkladies (*Oenothera speciosa*) - 10/4 Attwater (APC NWR Rd) & 11/4  
Texas Bull Nettle (*Cnidioscolus texanus*) - 10/4 Attwater (CR 116)  
Spiderwort sp. (iNat) - possibly Western Spiderwort (*Tradescantia occidentalis*) or Texas Spiderwort (*Tradescantia humilis*) or Virginia Spiderwort (*Tradescantia virginiana*) - 10/4 Attwater also 11/4 at Brazos Bend State Park (not on iNat)  
Prairie Nymph (*Herbertia lahue*) (iNat+) - 10/4 Attwater  
Desert Chicory Sp. (iNat) - Smallflower Desert-Chicory (*Pyrrhopappus pauciflorus*) - possibly 10/4 Attwater  
Texas Toadflax (*Nuttallanthus texanus*) - 10/4 Attwater  
Meadow Pink (*Sabatia campestris*) - 10/4 Attwater  
Longbract Wild Indigo (*Baptisia bracteata*) (iNat+) - 10/4 Attwater  
Golden Wave Tickseed (*Coreopsis basalis*) (iNat+) - 10/4/Attwater  
Winecup Mallow (*Callirhoe involucrata*) probably - 10/4 Attwater  
Lanceleaf Blanketflower (*Gaillardia aestivalis*) (iNat+) - 10/4 Attwater  
Bristle Thistle (*Cirsium horridulum*) common nectar source of pipeline swallowtail (pipe vine behind which is food for caterpillars) - 10/4 Attwater  
Allium SP. Drummond's Onion, *Allium drummondii* possibly - 10/4 Attwater  
Blue-eyed Grass sp. Roadside Blue-eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium pruinatum*) (iNat) probably or Narrow-leaved Blue-eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*) - possibly 10/4 Attwater  
Texas Vervain (*Verbena halei*) - possibly 10/4 Attwater  
Prairie Clover Sp. Wedgeleaf Prairie Clover (*Dalea emarginata*) - probably 10/4 Attwater  
Texas Paintbrush (*Castilleja indivisa*) - probably 10/4/ Attwater  
Carolina Desert-Chicory aka Texas dandelion (*Pyrrhopappus carolinianus*) - possibly 11/4 Attwater  
Large-flowered Pink-Sorrel (*Oxalis debilis*) - probably 11/4 Brazos Bend State Park  
Meadow Pink aka Texas Star (*Sabatia campestris*) - probably 12/4  
Spring Spiderlily aka Texas Spiderlily (*Hymenocallis liriosme*) (iNat) - 13/4 Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge  
Mediterranean Linseed (*Bellardia trixago*) - possibly 14/4 Beaumont  
Coral Bean (*Erythrina herbacea*) - 14/4 Sabine Wood