



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Texas

Winter: Whooping Cranes and the Lower Rio Grande Valley
23rd February to 3rd March 2022 (9 days)



Whooping Crane by Dubi Shapiro

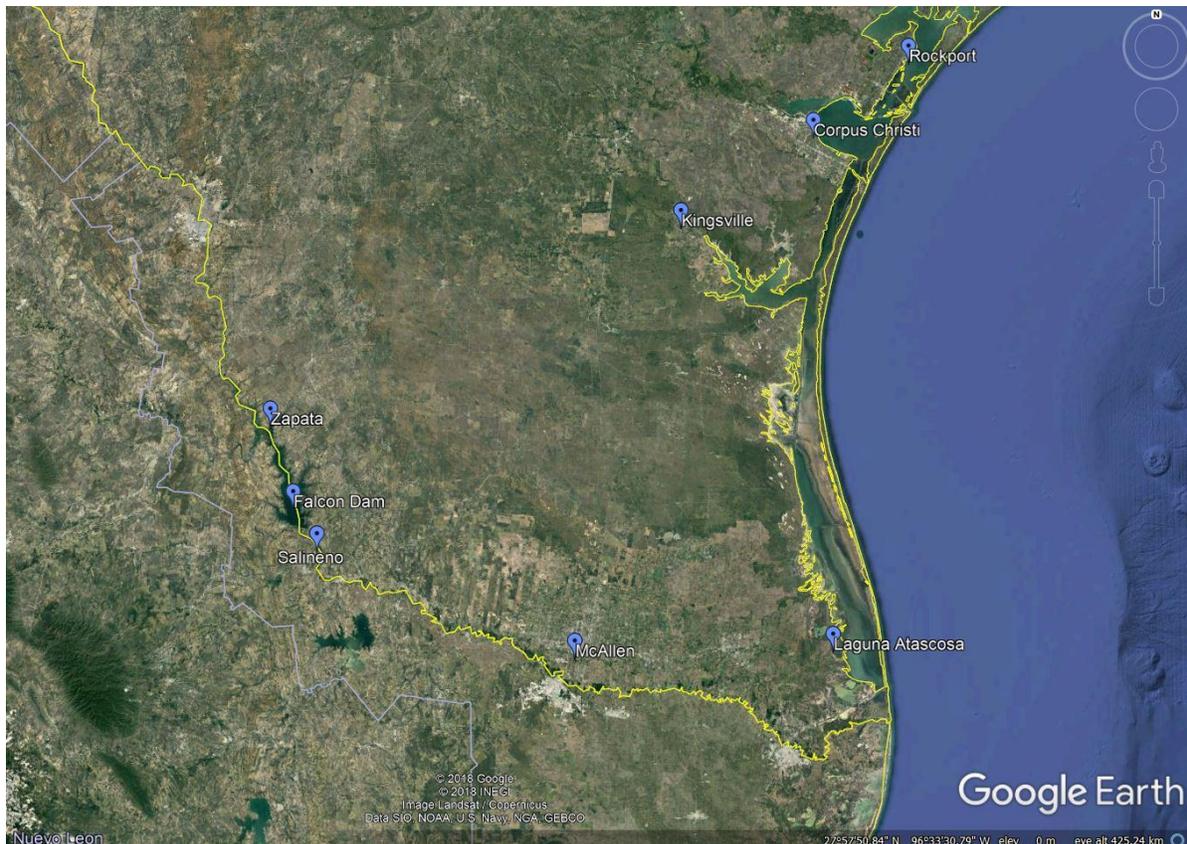
South Texas is a birder's paradise at any time of the year, but especially during late winter when the spectacular array of resident birds in south Texas are joined by an abundance of wintering shorebirds and waterfowl. This 9day tour begins and ends in Corpus Christi with a leisurely swing through the birding hot spots of the lower Rio Grande Valley.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

TEXAS IN WINTER ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrive in Corpus Christi and transfer to Rockport
Day 2	Boat tour of Aransas NWR, transfer to Kingsville
Day 3	King Ranch
Day 4	South Padre Island and Brownsville to McAllen
Day 5	Estero Llano Grande State Park and surrounds
Day 6	Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge
Day 7	Bentsen-Rio Grande SP to Zapata via Rio Grande, Salineño and Falcon SP
Day 8	Zapata, San Ygnacio and Laredo birding
Day 9	Final departure

TOUR MAP



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1: Arrive in Corpus Christi and transfer to Rockport. We'll meet this afternoon and take a group transfer to Rockport. You'll want to have binoculars accessible, as we'll be making a stop at Indian Point Park for an hour or so of easy coastal birding. The combination of mudflats, marsh and open water makes this an ideal birding location and we should see a variety of shorebirds, waders and waterbirds, possibly including Black-bellied and Piping Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Common Loon and Clapper Rail. Later we'll continue to Rockport to get checked in to our hotel and enjoy our first dinner together.



Roseate Spoonbill by Rich Lindie

Day 2: Boat tour of Aransas NWR, transfer to Kingsville. This morning we'll enjoy a cruise on the MV Skimmer from Rockport to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. The chance to see Whooping Cranes is our primary motivation, but there will be many other birds to enjoy, including Roseate Spoonbill, Little Blue and Tricolored Herons, Reddish Egret, White Ibis, American Oystercatcher, Royal Tern and Black Skimmer. After a harborside lunch, we'll do some additional birding around Rockport and then head south towards Kingsville. Our plans will be flexible, but could include a visit to Mustang Island for additional coastal birding and a chance to see Aplomado Falcon.

Day 3: King Ranch. We will spend most of today birding the Norias Division of the enormous King Ranch with one of their excellent birding guides. Potential highlights here could include Ferruginous



Golden-fronted Woodpecker by Owen Deutsch

Pygmy-Owl, White-tailed Hawk, Sprague's Pipit and Audubon's Oriole. We may also enjoy our first views of South Texas specialties we'll hopefully see almost daily for the remainder of the tour, such as Great Kiskadee, Long-billed Thrasher, Green Jay and Black-crested Titmouse. Later we'll continue south to the Lower Rio Grande Valley for the night, with a birding stop or two as time permits.

Day 4: South Padre Island and Brownsville to McAllen. (Our schedule for the next several days will be flexible based on recent reports and species we'd still like to find. While we'll plan to visit all locations noted in this itinerary, the exact order may



differ.) Our plan for this morning is to enjoy additional coastal birding on South Padre Island. By checking a few favoured mudflats and walking a boardwalk trail we should find a variety of waders, shorebirds and waterbirds. En route to and from South Padre Island we'll watch for raptors such as White-tailed Kite, White-tailed Hawk and Aplomado Falcon. Later, we'll check one or more of the many good birding locations in and near Brownsville. Woodlands and "resacas" (ox-bow lakes) at these locations harbour a nice variety of waterbirds and South Texas specialties. Eventually we'll head west to McAllen, our base for the next three nights.



Greater Roadrunner by Owen Deutsch

Day 5: Estero Llano Grande State Park and surrounds. Estero Llano Grande offers a variety of birding opportunities. We'll start in the tall oaks of the old trailer park where we'll hope to find White-tipped Dove, Great Kiskadee, Couch's Kingbird, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Green Jay, Altamira Oriole and others. Next, we'll scan the small lake from the visitor centre deck where a variety of waterfowl, waders and shorebirds are typically visible. From here we'll make the easy walk to Alligator Lake, stopping to watch for Least Grebe and with luck, we may find a day roosting Common Pauraque on the ground next to the trail. The remainder of the day will be spent visiting nearby birding sites in search of South Texas birds we have yet to see – and at least one of our evenings in McAllen will include an outing in search of Red-crowned Parrots and Green Parakeets coming to favoured roost sites for the night.

Day 6: Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge. At Santa Ana we'll start by watching the visitor centre feeders for White-tipped Dove, Clay-colored Thrush, Altamira Oriole and others. Later we'll follow trails to several small resacas where we'll hope for Least Grebe, Sora, Ringed and Green Kingfishers and a variety of waterfowl, waders and shorebirds. Though rare, Santa Ana is host to Hook-billed Kites, so we'll want to keep checking overhead while we're walking the trails or scanning from the observation tower.



Grey Hawk by Owen Deutsch

After a full morning at Santa Ana, we'll head to Andzalduas County Park for a picnic lunch and more birding. Wintering Western Meadowlarks and sometimes Sprague's Pipits can be seen along the entry road and the open woodlands can be good for landbirds,



including the uncommon Northern Beardless Tyrannulet. We'll also keep a watch overhead for Gray and Zone-tailed Hawks and check along the edges of the Rio Grande for Green and Ringed Kingfishers

Day 7: Bentsen-Rio Grande SP to Zapata via Rio Grande, Salineño and Falcon SP. We'll start the day at Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park, another of the Lower Rio Grande Valley's famous birding locations. Here we'll check the feeders and walk some of the roads and trails. It's another good location to find the regular species of the region and Bentsen has also hosted many rarities over the years.

Later, we'll start traveling to the west, likely with stops at Roma Bluffs and other Rio Grande overlooks to enjoy the views and check for kingfishers. A definite stop will be at Salineño, where volunteers maintain feeders during the winter. It's a great location to see many of the region's regular species up close, as well as less common species like Clay-colored Thrush and Audubon's Oriole. Access to the edge of the Rio Grande is still currently possible here, so we'll spend some time here as well. It's fun to watch birds moving up and down the river and it's a location where Red-billed Pigeon can be seen at times.



Green Jay by Owen Deutsch



Pyrrhuloxia by Owen Deutsch

Day 8: Zapata, San Ygnacio and Laredo birding. Our final day together should be a fun one birding from Zapata to Laredo. If we still need Morrelet's Seedeater, we'll check favored areas in Zapata, San Ygnacio and Laredo and hope for good luck and good views. A stop at Casa Blanca State Park could yield Cactus Wren, Pyrrhuloxia, Black-throated Sparrow and others. Red-billed Pigeons can be challenging to locate in South Texas in late winter, but some years there are regular locations in the Laredo area. If this is one of those years, we will certainly follow up on recent reports! Later we'll check into our hotel and then enjoy a final dinner and checklist session together.

Day 9: Final departure. The tour concludes this morning after breakfast.



FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for these tours are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

The tour price includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 9;
- All accommodations;
- Ground transportation;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- Tips for local guides and services; and
- All guiding services of a Rockjumper tour leader.

...and excludes:

- Any airfares, taxes and visa costs;
- Any beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient participants, a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tippling: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, porters and restaurants) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS

This tour **does not** include ANY international airfares. The tour will commence from Corpus Christi International Airport (IATA: CRP) at 14:30 on day 1 and concludes at Laredo International Airport (IATA: LRD) after breakfast on day 9.



The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS

Corpus Christi International Airport (IATA: CRP) is the main port of entry for this tour, whilst Laredo International Airport (IATA: LRD) is the main port of departure. **Please DO NOT book your international flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

