

BIRDIEST FESTIVAL IN AMERICA

April 20-23, 2017

South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center

8545 S. Staples Street, Corpus Christi, TX

Field Trips

Our field trips have been designed with a low ratio of leaders to participants. Water and snacks provided on all trips. Remember to bring your own bug spray and sunscreen. The times listed are for departure, please plan to arrive 15 minutes early.

Corpus Christi won the last 10 years of the Birdiest City Contest. Our highest total was 243 species, and that is just within the city limits! With proper weather conditions the festival total should be around 300 species.

All field trips are limited, so to get your first choice sign up early. **Manual (printed) registration will be available starting January 1 (Please check back for printed registration forms.)**

The Norias Division of the King Ranch

This full day tour visits the remote Norias division, the southernmost section of the legendary King Ranch. With some of the rarest nesting birds in the U.S. like the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and Tropical Parula, and habitat for both resident and migrant bird species, the ranch is an incredible place to go birding in April. Some other species we will look for include Harris' Hawk, Groove-billed Ani, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Vermilion Flycatcher, Audubon's Oriole, and Botteri's Sparrow. Lunch, snacks and drinks are provided, vegetarian meals available.

Friday and Saturday ONLY (Very Limited – 18 per day maximum)

5:30 am to 3:30 pm

\$120

The Fennessey Ranch

The Fennessey Ranch has offered Spring Migration Tours for the past 25 years. Over 400 species have been sighted here. This tour travels through the most primitive areas of the ranch, exploring prairies, riparian forest, wetlands and marshes. Nine miles of the Mission River make this an exciting trip with experience guides on a hay wagon.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday (Limited – 22 maximum per day)

5:30 am to 12:30 pm

\$60

Port Aransas Area

Driving on the beach while looking for shorebirds and seabirds is a treat for those that do not live near the ocean. Add in a world class neotropic trap and very birdy fresh water pond and marsh, plus sparrows, ducks, and waders makes this area fairly easy to see over 100 species in a single day.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday

6:00 am to noon

\$45

A shorter afternoon trip is also planned to look for neotropic migrants coming in. If they are slow the trip will go to shorebird spots

Friday, Saturday ONLY

1:30 to 5:30 pm

\$35

Corpus Christi Area

Two neotropic migrant traps near downtown often have 18 to 20 species of warblers at this time of year. Time permitting, unless there is a fallout, this field trip will also go to two spots along the bay for shorebirds, waders, ducks and so much more.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday

6:30 am to noon

\$45

An afternoon trip is also planned to watch for neotropic migrants coming in. If they are slow the trip will go to shorebird spots.

Friday, Saturday ONLY

1:30 pm to 5:30 pm

\$35

Lake Choke Canyon State Park

The lake is located at the edge of the thorn-brush desert that hosts a different suite of birds. The diversity is great with a hundred species being possible. Audubon Oriole, Cactus Wren, Verdin and Black-throated Sparrow, Black Phoebe and Vermilion Flycatcher are some of the target birds.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday (Limited)

5:30 am to 12:30 pm

\$45

Hazel Bazemore County Park

Best known for the hawk watch with the largest and most diverse migration of raptors in the US, this park is also like getting a taste of South Texas. Green Jays, kisskadees, White-tipped Dove, Buff-bellied Hummingbirds are only a few birds that may be seen.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday

6:00 am to noon

\$45

A full day trip is also planned with the emphasis being on raptors. After a morning of general birding learn how to ID raptors at a distance. Lunch will be at the local Whataburger (cost not included). We will provide the chairs so plan to have a relaxing time at the hawk watch.

FULL DAY OPTION: Friday, Saturday ONLY!

6:00 am to 4:30 pm

\$60

Shorebird Trip

This field trip is designed for those that find shorebirds interesting but very challenging. It will be a workshop to hone your skills. Target birds are Snowy and Piping Plover, Reddish Egret, and American Oystercatcher. The leaders will scout the day before to provide the best possibility for the most species.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday

6:30 am to noon

\$45

Big Day – FULL DAY TRIP

This full day trip will be fast paced, challenging and fun. Seeing or hearing as many species of birds as possible in a single day is not easy. Be flexible, as we will go to as many spots as possible, based on scouting. With good weather and even better luck you may join the 150 club. **Lunch (not included)** will also be flexible, maybe a local Whataburger, as we all will need a mid-day break.

Friday and Saturday ONLY (Very Limited – 20 per day maximum)

6:00 am to 5:00 pm

\$65

Great Texas Birding Classic Big Sits – ALL DAY!

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department has put on the largest birding contest for the past 20 years. The Birding Classic has awarded \$880,500 in on-the-ground habitat acquisition, restoration, and enhancement projects. Of the 113 teams in last year's Classic 40 of them were "big sit" teams. Simply put a team tries to see or hear as many species of birds from a 17 foot circle as possible.

Two local birding organizations, the Audubon Outdoor Club of Corpus Christi and the Oso Bay Wetlands Preserve, will field teams. Both are sponsored by Swarovski Optik. Twelve spots on each team is open for you to sign up for. Bird for as little or as much time as you like, but remember 80 to 90% of the species are seen between 6:30 and 11:00 am. **No transportation provided** and you are on your own for lunch. The organizations will have people there all day and will provide chairs for all. Classic t-shirts provided to all team members.

Audubon Outdoor Club Big Sit

Friday, April 21 ONLY (Very Limited – 12 per day maximum)

5:30 am to 5:00 pm at Packery Channel

\$20

Oso Bay Wetlands Preserve Big Sit

Saturday, April 22 ONLY (Very Limited – 12 per day maximum)

5:30 am to 5:00 pm at Oso Bay Wetlands Preserve

\$20

"Skimmer" Boat Tour

Join us on the Skimmer for this 4-hour springtime spectacular. We will visit 4 separate colonial waterbird rookery islands to see the magnificent spring rituals that take place on these remote islands. See many species courting, sparring, mating, and nesting. Waterbirds such as egrets, herons, pelicans, terns, and shorebirds are sure to make you come back for more.

This tour will leave from Fulton Harbor in Rockport. **No transportation provided**, but is only an hour from Corpus. Captain Tommy Moore has graciously provided a \$20 discount for the regular price. A relaxing tour to end your festival and may be even on your way home.

Sunday, April 23 ONLY (Limited – minimum of 12 needed make)

8:00 am to noon

\$40

South Texas Botanical Gardens Nature Walk

Take an exploratory bird and nature walk on the 182 acre center site. You should encounter migrating songbirds in riparian mesquite forest habitat and shorebirds in large wetlands. Includes snacks and drinks.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday

7:30 am to 11:00 am

\$8

Talks and Speakers

The talks are offered to all paid festival registrants at no charge, but seating will be reserved. They are scheduled twice on different days and times to provide more opportunities for everyone to participate in their choice of talks. Please DO NOT select a talk that conflicts with your choice of field trips. Most participants should be able to attend 3 to 4 talks.

“The Corpus Christi HawkWatch- 20 Years and Beyond”

Thursday, April 20 at 2:30 pm

Sunday, April 23 at 1:30 pm

Speaker Dane Ferrell is an avid birder, raptor enthusiast and educator, teaching kids (big and small) about Texas flora and fauna at Corpus Christi's Oso Bay Wetlands Preserve. Dane has completed 15 raptor migration projects for HawkWatch International, including the past 13 fall seasons at the Corpus Christi HawkWatch.

The Corpus Christi HawkWatch at Hazel Bazemore Park is widely known as having the largest number of migrating raptors as well as the most diversity of any watch in the US. Dane will discuss the first 20 years of results that will include some great stories. What comes next? You will have to attend to find out.

“Positive Vibes- A Texas Big Year”

Thursday, April 20 at 4:00 pm

Sunday, April 23 at 12:15 pm

David Sarkozi began birding in high school after reading Kenn Kaufman's 1973 big year. David has since become a big fan of Big Days and Big Years. He has served as president of the Texas Ornithological Society and worked on its executive board for 16 years. He has recently retired from the University of Houston where he worked for 35 years.

The talk is a travelogue of David's quest to find 500 species in Texas in 2015. Boating in sleet, disappointing stakeouts, hiking up mountains, and sliding in mud and frozen roads were all a part of his quest. He traveled 30,000 miles around Texas on a 365 day adventure, and always keeping the vibes positive.

“Forty Years of Observing Birds and Just About Everything Else on Coastal Bend Barrier Island Beaches”

Friday, April 21 at 11:00 am

Saturday, April 22 at 12:30 pm

Anthony F. “Tony” Amos has been with the University of Texas Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas for the past forty years. He officially retired in 2003 but continues an active role with the University as a Research Fellow doing long-term observations on Mustang and San Jose Island Gulf beaches, and directing the Animal Rehabilitation Keep (ARK). His oceanographic career has spanned 53 years and includes research expeditions to all the world’s oceans and many of its seas.

The title just about tells it all, but whatever your imagination can think of, the things Tony has observed will easily surpass. Think about the changes that have occurred over the past forty years. He truly gives an interesting talk and rare insights from such a vast career.

“A Birding Tour of the Texas State Parks in South Texas”

Friday, April 21 at 12:30

Saturday, April 22 at 11:00 am

Speaker Ben Horstmann serves as the regional Interpretive Specialist for South Texas State Parks. His addiction to birding was a direct result of moving here and birding with the park staff and volunteers at the parks. His favorite pastime is birding in the parks and natural places of Texas.

Take a birder’s tour of the State Parks of South Texas with an avid birder who visits them on a regular basis. The tour will go through each park identifying the birds you can find there in different seasons, and tell you how you can take an actual birding tour with our interpreters or volunteers in several of the parks. No need for binoculars for this tour but ready to take notes about some of the best birding spots in Texas!

“Bird Song Through the Ages”

Friday, April 21 at 2:00 pm

Saturday, April 22 at 3:30 pm

Dr. Robert Benson is a retired professor of physics and astronomy and the founder of Texas A&M University’s Center of Bioacoustics. He is a long-time birder and remains actively involved in avian research. He has served as president of the Texas Ornithological Society and as its Bulletin editor.

Learn how birdsong may have evolved, discovering how it has changed and is changing over time and across distances. Did you know that some species’ repertoires of songs and calls exhibit regional dialects and that those dialectal differences are often noticeable over just a few miles? This information rich and down to earth presentation will have you “hearing” bird vocalizations in a brand new way.

PLAN YOUR FIELD TRIPS AND TALKS:

FRIDAY MORNING/ALL DAY FIELD TRIP (April 21)

- (1st Choice): _____ Time: _____ Cost: _____
- (2nd Choice): _____ Time: _____ Cost: _____
- (3rd Choice): _____ Time: _____ Cost: _____

FRIDAY AFTERNOON FIELD TRIP (April 21)

- (1st Choice): _____ Time: _____ Cost: _____
- (2nd Choice): _____ Time: _____ Cost: _____

SATURDAY MORNING/ALL DAY FIELD TRIP (April 22)

- (1st Choice): _____ Time: _____ Cost: _____
- (2nd Choice): _____ Time: _____ Cost: _____
- (3rd Choice): _____ Time: _____ Cost: _____

SATURDAY AFTERNOON FIELD TRIP (April 22)

- (1st Choice): _____ Time: _____ Cost: _____
- (2nd Choice): _____ Time: _____ Cost: _____

SUNDAY MORNING FIELD TRIP (April 23)

- (1st Choice): _____ Time: _____ Cost: _____
- (2nd Choice): _____ Time: _____ Cost: _____
- (3rd Choice): _____ Time: _____ Cost: _____

SEMINARS (Reservations Required/ No Fees):

Thursday, April 20

- _____ 2:30 The Corpus Christi Hawk Watch (Dane Ferrell)
- _____ 4:00 Positive Vibes-A Texas Big Year (David Sarkozi)

Friday, April 21

- _____ 11:00 40 Years of Observing Birds/Etc. on Coastal Bend Barrier Island Beaches (Tony Amos)
- _____ 12:30 A Birding Tour of the Texas State Parks in South Texas (Ben Horstmann)
- _____ 2:00 Bird Song Through the Ages (Dr. Robert Benson)
- _____ 3:30 Solving Shorebird ID Pitfalls (Mel Cooksey)

Saturday, April 22

- _____ 11:00 A Birding Tour of the Texas State Parks in South Texas (Ben Horstmann)
- _____ 12:30 40 Years of Observing Birds/Etc. on Coastal Bend Barrier Island Beaches (Tony Amos)
- _____ 2:00 Solving Shorebird ID Pitfalls (Mel Cooksey)
- _____ 3:30 Bird Song Through the Ages (Dr. Robert Benson)

Sunday, April 23

- _____ 12:15 Positive Vibes-A Texas Big Year (David Sarkozi)
- _____ 1:30 The Corpus Christi Hawk Watch (Dane Ferrell)