Texas

Birding the Rio Grande Valley

Tour Leader: Eric Ripma
December 10-17, 2024
The Rio Grande Valley offers the chance to see a large number of species that are difficult or impossible to regularly see in the rest of the United States. This list includes species such as Green Jay, Common Pauraque, and Plain Chachalaca. We’ll explore all the amazing birding destinations in the area while looking for these species as well as any rarities from Mexico that might also be around.

### Itinerary Overview:

- **December 10:** Arrival in Harlingen and Oliveira Park - Transfer to Brownsville
- **December 11:** Resaca De La Palma State Park and Boca Chica
- **December 12:** Laguna Atascosa and South Padre Island - Transfer to McAllen
- **December 13:** Day in the McAllen area visiting a variety of preserves
- **December 14:** Salineño and Beyond
- **December 15:** Day in the McAllen area visiting a variety of preserves
- **December 16:** Lower Rio Grande Valley and Agricultural Fields - Transfer to Harlingen
- **December 17:** Departure from Harlingen, Texas

### Detailed Itinerary:

#### December 10: Arrival in Harlingen and Oliveira Park - Transfer to Brownsville

Upon arrival at Harlingen Airport (Valley International Airport, HRL), you will meet your guide for this tour and transfer to Brownsville, Texas. If time permits, we will look for Red-crowned Parrots and Green Parakeets in Brownsville on this evening.

*Overnight: Brownsville, TX*

#### December 11: Resaca De La Palma State Park and Boca Chica

The morning will be spent at Resaca De La Palma State Park. Many of the south Texas specialties should be seen including Plain Chachalaca, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, White-tipped Dove, Green Jay, and Long-billed Thrasher. In the afternoon, we’ll head to Boca Chica Beach to look for a number of coastal species. The drive to the beach gives us an opportunity to look for the numerous raptors and sparrows that spend the winter in the area. Once we reach the flats and beach, Reddish Egrets and many shorebirds including Long-billed Curlews are likely to be seen.

*Overnight: Brownsville, TX*
December 12: Laguna Atascosa and South Padre Island - Transfer to McAllen

We will begin this morning around the Laguna Atascosa area. Our first stop will be at a boat ramp that usually has large numbers of waterbirds. Next, we’ll visit a viewing area for the Aplomado Falcon. In addition to the falcon, we’ll be looking for a variety of raptors, sparrows, and other grassland species. By the mid-morning, we’ll head to South Padre Island. The boardwalks here provide great access to view a variety of gulls, terns, shorebirds, and wading birds. We will also look for Yellow Warbler (Mangrove) and Clapper Rails in the mangrove habitat on the island. In the afternoon, we’ll start driving towards McAllen and might make a couple of stops depending on the timing.

-Overnight: McAllen, TX

December 13: Day in the McAllen area visiting a variety of preserves

This part of the itinerary will be highly dependent on recent sightings in the area which your guide will be tracking. There are many birding locations in the area, and we’ll use our time to find as many species as possible. A few of the parks we may go to are Estero Llano Grande State Park, Santa Ana NWR, Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park, the Delta Lake area, Edinberg Scenic Wetlands, Frontera Audubon Center, Quinta Mazatlan, and Anzalduous Park. Practically all specialties of the region will be possible, and some rare Mexican species may also show up.

-Overnight: McAllen, TX

December 14: Salineño and Beyond

On this morning we’ll head up the Rio Grande to birding locations such as Salineño, Falcon State Park, San Ygnacio, Roma Bluffs World Birding Center, and Zapata. Targets include Muscovy Duck, Red-billed Pigeon, Morelet’s Seedeater, and Audubon’s Oriole. Vagrants from Mexico are also found in this region with regularity, so we’ll have to keep our fingers crossed!

-Overnight: McAllen, TX

December 15: Day in the McAllen area visiting a variety of preserves

We’ll continue to monitor bird reports and will make stops at whichever parks and preserves have the best birds. If we are still missing any of the specialties of the region we’ll spend time locating them!

-Overnight: McAllen, TX
December 16: Lower Rio Grande Valley and Agricultural Fields - Transfer to Harlingen

We will arrange this day to target the species we’re still missing. We may head up the Rio Grande again or stay in the general area of McAllen. We will also spend some time in the countryside looking for species such as Sprague’s Pipit, Mountain Plover, and Burrowing Owl. In the evening, we will make our way back to Harlingen to enjoy a final group dinner before departures the next day.

-Overnight: Harlingen, TX

December 17: Departure from Harlingen, Texas
**Trip Details:**

**Cost:**
Price per person (double occupancy), from Harlingen, TX: $3,499  
Single Supplement: $650  
Minimum Participants: 4  
Maximum Participants: 6

**Price Includes:**
- Expert Guide  
- Ground Transportation in Texas  
- All Lodging  
- All Meals  
- Park Entrance Fees

**Price Does Not Include:**
- Airfare to and from Harlingen, TX  
- Airport Taxes  
- Visa and Passport Fees (if applicable)  
- Alcoholic Beverages  
- Personal Items  
- Tips  
- Travel Insurance

**Deposit:**
A deposit of $500 per person is required to hold your spot on this tour. The remaining balance is due no later than 3 months prior to the scheduled start date of the tour (September 8, 2024).

If you have any questions about this tour or would like to sign up for it, please contact Rob at info@sabrewingnaturetours.com, by phone at 317-324-8505, or register through our website at sabrewingnaturetours.com.

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