

# SOUTHWEST TEXAS BIRDING TOUR

## Birding the Hill Country, Big Bend, and Davis Mountains

April 26-May 4, 2023

A birding tour organized by *Seven Ponds Nature Center* and *KoziBirding*

Two areas of southwest Texas – the Hill Country and the Big Bend area – are legendary among birders. This is partly because these areas are rich in bird diversity, but more so because they are home to three birds that are not found anywhere else in the United States: Colima Warbler, Golden-cheeked Warbler, and Black-capped Vireo. If you want to see any of these birds, this is the place you must go. We'll target this trio of birds, and a couple hundred more!



We'll start our tour in the scenic Hill Country of the Edwards Plateau, with its limestone hills, spring wildflowers, and ancient oak trees. We'll spend an evening at the Rio Bat Cave as 10-12 million Mexican Free-tailed Bats emerge from the cave for the evening. Then we'll move westward to the limestone canyons, mountain peaks, and hidden springs and waterfalls of Big Bend National Park – which boasts the biggest bird list of any of our national parks. Our tour will conclude in the Davis Mountains, a sky island area surrounded by desert that provides opportunities for additional birds not yet encountered on our trip. Join us for this adventure!

## TOUR ITINERARY

Our daily activities will be flexible based on species we've seen to date and recent bird reports, but the following daily outline provides a preliminary plan of how we will spend our days. Our plans are subject to change based on rare bird sightings, weather conditions, and road closures. Note: the birds listed are not intended to be an exhaustive list – just a sampling of what may be found at each location.

**DAY 1 – Wednesday, April 26 – Arrival in San Antonio** Plan your arrival in San Antonio by midday and take the shuttle to our hotel. We'll meet in the lobby for a briefing before heading out to dinner. Night in San Antonio.

**DAY 2 – Thursday, April 27 – Hill Country** After breakfast we'll head out to a nearby park for our first birding of the trip – and a good shot at **Golden-cheeked Warbler**. From there we will head west through the Hill Country to either Lost Maples State Natural Area or Garner State Park for **Black-capped Vireo**. After dinner and checking into our hotel, we'll venture out into the evening to the Rio bat cave, where we'll experience the spectacle of thousands of bats emerging from the cave for the night. Overnight in Uvalde.



**DAY 3 – Friday, April 28 – Hill Country & travel day** We'll start the morning birding at Kickapoo Cavern State Park, where we'll have another opportunity to see both Golden-cheeked Warbler or Black-capped Vireo. Then we'll hit the road toward Big Bend, with stops along the way for some birding. We'll turn in early tonight in preparation for our very early morning wake-up and hike up to Boot Springs. Overnight in Big Bend.

**DAY 4 – Saturday, April 29 – Big Bend National Park** This morning we'll rise early for a pre-dawn hike up the Pinnacles Trail toward Boot Springs. Before sunrise we may hear **Mexican Whip-poor-will** and perhaps **Flammulated Owl**. Our main target this morning is the highly desired **Colima Warbler**. On the way we should also encounter **Mexican Jay** and **Blue-throated Mountain-gem**, with **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** possible as well. This will be an all-day adventure, with breakfast and lunch on the trail. We'll return to the lodge, tired but happy, by mid-late afternoon. Either tonight or tomorrow night we will have an owling opportunity for **Western Screech-Owl** and **Elf Owl**. Overnight in Big Bend.



**DAY 5 – Sunday, April 30 – Big Bend National Park** Today we will focus on the "lowlands" of Big Bend, such as Daniel's Ranch and Cottonwood Campground, for birds such as **Common Black Hawk**, **Lucy's Warbler**, and **Gray Hawk**, among others. Overnight in Big Bend.

**DAY 6 – Monday, May 1 – Davis Mountains** We will leave Big Bend early and head up to the Davis Mountains, about 2.5 hours to the northwest. On the way we'll stop at Christmas Mountains Oasis, where we'll search for **Scaled Quail**, **Lucifer's Hummingbird**, and **Varied Bunting**. After dinner in Fort Davis, we'll seek out **Montezuma's Quail** for dessert. Overnight in Fort Davis.

**DAY 7 – Tuesday, May 2 – Davis Mountains** This morning we'll start our birding at Lawrence E. Wood Picnic Area, where we hope to see **Gray Flycatcher**, **Hepatic Tanager**, and **Western Bluebird** among many other birds. From there we'll explore Davis Mountains State Park and seek out any birds we haven't yet found. Overnight in Fort Davis.



**DAY 8 – Wednesday, May 3 – Departure from San Antonio** Today is a long travel day back to San Antonio (six hours). But we'll break up the drive with a stop at Lake Balmorhea for **Clark's Grebe** and **Western Grebe**, then stop at nearby Sandia Wetlands for shorebirds and waterfowl. Arriving in San Antonio, we'll have our final dinner together and recall the wonderful birds and scenery we enjoyed during the tour. Overnight in San Antonio.

**DAY 9 – Thursday, May 4 – Departure from San Antonio** Plan your departure for any time today. Enjoy breakfast at the hotel and take the shuttle to the airport to catch your flight home. Hotel check-out is 11:00 AM.



## **TOUR LEADERS**

**David Sarkozi** began birding as a teen in central Texas. After college, his hobby became an obsession. David joined the Houston Outdoor Nature Club, eventually becoming chairman and leading numerous field trips. He served a term as President of the Texas Ornithological Society and served on the board of the society for sixteen years. David has been organizing and leading trips across Texas and Central America for nearly two decades. In 2015 he completed a Texas Big Year in which he recorded 500 species. David looks forward to sharing what he has learned about Texas and its amazing bird life with our tour participants.

**Daryl Bernard** is a long-time birder and amateur naturalist who loves being outdoors and embraces every opportunity to share nature with others. He enjoys organizing trips and tours and strives to ensure that every participant has a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Daryl has organized and led numerous birding field tours throughout North America, many local birding trips in Michigan, and bird walks for Seven Ponds as well as birding festivals. Daryl is the Executive Director at Seven Ponds Nature Center in southeast Michigan, and regularly presents birding programs at Audubon clubs, libraries, and birding festivals.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Lodging for this tour will be in a handful of locations:

- Day 1: San Antonio – LaQuinta Inn & Suites
- Day 2: Uvalde – Days Inn by Windham
- Day 3: Big Bend National Park – Chisos Mountain Lodge
- Day 4: Big Bend National Park – Chisos Mountain Lodge
- Day 5: Big Bend National Park – Chisos Mountain Lodge
- Day 6: Fort Davis – Mountain Trails Lodge
- Day 7: Fort Davis – Mountain Trails Lodge
- Day 8: San Antonio – LaQuinta Inn & Suites

## **FEE and REGISTRATION INFORMATION**

- Tour Fee: \$2850 per person in double occupancy from San Antonio, Texas
- Deposit: \$300 (due upon online registration)
- Final Payment Due (\$2550): March 1, 2023
- Group size is limited to **8 individuals** and early registration is encouraged

### **WHAT THE TOUR FEE INCLUDES:**

- full guide service – David will be with us every birding step of the way
- hotel accommodations for eight nights
- all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 9
- van transportation in a single 15-passenger van
- all park entrance fees and highway tolls
- pre-trip information and a post-trip mailing with a list of all species observed by the group
- eBird checklist sharing (for those using eBird)

### **WHAT THE TOUR FEE DOES NOT INCLUDE:**

- your airfare to and from San Antonio
- alcoholic beverages
- laundry
- other items of a personal nature
- gratuity for local birding guide services (optional)

**ONLINE REGISTRATION WILL OPEN FOR SEVEN PONDS MEMBERS ON  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2023 at 9:00 AM**

**ONLINE REGISTRATION WILL OPEN FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC ON  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2023 at 9:00 AM**

Registration for this tour will take place online at [www.sevenponds.org](http://www.sevenponds.org) with a \$300 deposit due at the time of registration. At the Seven Ponds home page, go to Programs then Seven Ponds Field Tours and select the West Texas Birding Field Tour registration button. You should receive an email confirmation upon successfully completing your online registration. Registered participants will be mailed a registration form to return.

For more information, contact Daryl Bernard at (810) 796-3200 or (989) 513-5195 (cell)  
or via e-mail at [dbernard@sevenponds.org](mailto:dbernard@sevenponds.org).