Eagle-Eye Tours

Texas Spring Migration & Hill Country Itinerary

Link: Texas Spring Migration & Hill Country

Tour Overview

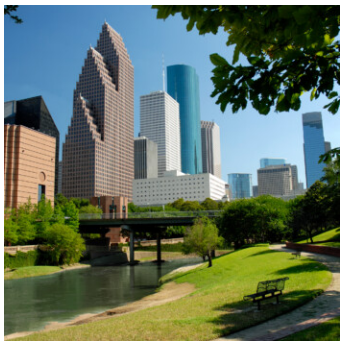
The upper Texas coast is a birding paradise this time of year as tens of thousands of migrating birds pass through this region. We will spend a few days birding High Island, Bolivar Flats, Galveston Island and Anahuac NWR for neotropical songbirds, shorebirds, egrets, terns and many, many more!

Afterwards we'll head out to the beautiful Edwards Plateau where not only will the wildflowers be at peak, but the critically endangered Black-capped Vireo and Golden-cheeked Warblers will be singing on territory in the juniper clad hills. In addition to this pair, the birding opportunities are full of great birds here, and the Edwards Plateau is an amazing spot where eastern and western North American birds co-mingle.

There is little overlap with the winter Texas tour and a list total of well over 200 species to be expected! In addition to the birds, we will visit a bat tour where millions of Mexican Free-tailed Bats emerge from an old mine; it is truly a spectacle to witness!

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival and Orientation, Houston



Our Texas spring migration birding tour begins in Houston for our evening meet and greet dinner. Night in Houston.

Day 2: Houston to Winnie



We drive toward the coast in the morning. We'll spend the rest of the day birding some of the excellent sites here and then head to Winnie for our hotel check-in and dinner.

Days 3 - 5: High Island, Bolivar Flats, Galveston Island and Anahuac NWR



This can be spring migration at its finest in the ABA region. When conditions are right, fallouts of thousands of neotropcal songbirds can fly off the ocean and use High Island for foraging and resting after their long flight from the Yucatan Peninsula. In the early morning, we will search the woodlands around the village of High Island; these areas can be simply full of migrant land birds. Warbler diversity can be astonishing, up to almost 30 species, all in resplendent summer plumage. There can be flocks of commoner species such as Yellow, Magnolia, Chestnut-sided, Blackpoll, Bay-breasted, Tennessee, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Nashville and Black-and-white Warblers, Northern Parula, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush and Common Yellowthroat and these flocks can also include scarcer species such as Blue-winged, Golden-winged, Cerulean, Prothonotary, Hooded, Kentucky, Worm-eating, Swainson's and Wilson's Warblers, and Louisiana Waterthrush. Mixed species flocks could contain a wealth of exciting species from Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Veery, Gray Catbird, Philadelphia and Blue-headed Vireos, Scarlet and Summer Tanagers to Indigo Bunting, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, and Rose-breasted and Blue Grosbeaks. Yellow-billed Cuckoos should have arrived, along with Common Nighthawks and Chimney Swifts. The coastal marshes and wetlands at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge are a haven for huge numbers of waterbirds. Pied-billed Grebe, waterfowl including Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Mottled and Ruddy Ducks, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teals and Redhead, Black Tern, and Common and Purple Gallinules. Marshes support American and Least Bitterns, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, White-faced Ibis, Sora, Clapper and King Rails, and flooded areas are a magnet for migrating shorebirds from American Golden Plover, Long-billed Dowitcher, Hudsonian Godwit, and Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs to Buff-breasted, Upland, Pectoral, Solitary and Stilt Sandpipers, Wilson's Phalarope, as well as resident Black-necked Stilts. Raptors include Swainson's and Broad-winged Hawks, Northern Harrier, Osprey, American Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon, and maybe an evening sighting of a Barn Owl. Songbirds here include 5 or more species of swallows, Seaside and Nelson's Sparrows and Dickcissel. South of High Island lie the superb Bolivar Flats, a wonderfully productive wildlife area. Shorebirds abound. Plovers include Black-bellied, Snowy, Wilson's, Piping and Semipalmated, sandpipers include Whimbrel, Short-billed Dowitcher, Red Knot, Sanderling, Dunlin, and lots of peeps - Semipalmated, Western, Least, White-rumped and Baird's Sandpipers. Flying over the flats will be terns - Common, Least and Sandwich – and foraging on the flats will be egrets – Great, Snowy and Reddish. This is also an area along the Gulf Coast where ranges of Boat-tailed and Great-tailed Grackles overlap. Nights in Winnie.

Day 6: Transfer to the Texas Hill Country



We will do some local birding early this morning before heading out to start the half-day long drive to the Texas Hill Country, or Edward's Plateau, a beautiful area of green and lush rolling hills and rivers, and roadside scenery adorned with wildflowers. We will spend the next two nights in the Uvalde/Concan area.

Days 7 & 8: Edward's Plateau



The Edward's Plateau is where the ranges of many eastern and western bird species overlap, and we will have an impressive list by the end of our stay. We visit the western edge of the Edward's Plateau looking for the highly localized Black-capped Vireo. This is a very rich area, where we could find Gray and Bell's Vireos, Rufous-crowned, Black-throated, Grasshopper and Clay-colored Sparrows, Scott's and Hooded Orioles, Wild Turkey, Western Kingbird, Verdin, Canyon Wren, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Bell's Vireo, Yellow-throated Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Painted Bunting and Lesser Goldfinch whilst overhead we might encounter Cave Swallow and Zone-tailed Hawk. The bat caves are an amazing spectacle, where millions of Mexican Free-tailed Bats emerge in the evening to forage for the night; while we are awaiting the spectacle, we could see Rock Wren and Ringtails. We also visit state parks to look for the stunning Golden-cheeked Warbler, a scarce species that breeds only in central Texas, as well as Green Kingfisher, Louisiana Waterthrush, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Blue Grosbeak, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Acadian Flycatcher and Carolina Chickadee. Later on Day 8 we drive to San Antonio for our final dinner/trip tally summation. Night in San Antonio.

Day 9: Departure, San Antonio

Our Texas spring migration birding tour ends today. Breakfast is available at the hotel, but you can depart anytime today.

What to Expect

Overview
The Texas in Spring Migration tour is a relatively easy-paced birding tour. You can expect some early mornings, and to spend most of your day in the field. If the temperatures are hot some afternoons or a migratory fallout is going on we may take a break midday and bird again in the evening. One evening we will stay out till dark to witness the bat emergence.

Food
We generally have breakfast at the hotel before we head out for the day. Sometimes we will have

optional pre-breakfast walks. We often take a picnic lunch in the field, but will occasionally stop at a restaurant for lunch. Dinner is usually at the lodge or a nearby restaurant. Each evening after dinner we compile the day’s checklist, review the day’s activities, birds, mammals and other observations, and plan the next day’s activities.

Accommodation
Generally we stay in comfortable hotel rooms, apart from one accommodation where we stay at a historic resort with rustic cabins.

Walking
Walking on this tour is easy to moderate. The Hill Country involves some slight to moderate elevation in our hike there.

Driving
Driving distances vary from short to moderate most days, with one long half-day long journey to go from the coast to the Hill Country (5 hours of driving total).

Climate
Temperatures can start off a little on the cool side and get seasonable warm. Rain and thunderstorms can occur this time of year and if the timing is right can knock big numbers of migrants, but certainly bring a rain jacket! The sun can be intense so sunscreen and brimmed hat are needed. Some minor mosquitoes can occur as well so perhaps some bug spray will be needed.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes
• All accommodation (Good, comfortable)
• All meals & soft drinks
• Ground transportation (15-passenger vans)
• All park, conservation and entrance fees
• 4 - 8 participants with one leader, 9 - 12 participants with two leaders

Tour Price Does Not Include
• Flights to and from start/ end location
• Travel Insurance
• Items of a personal nature
• Alcoholic beverages
