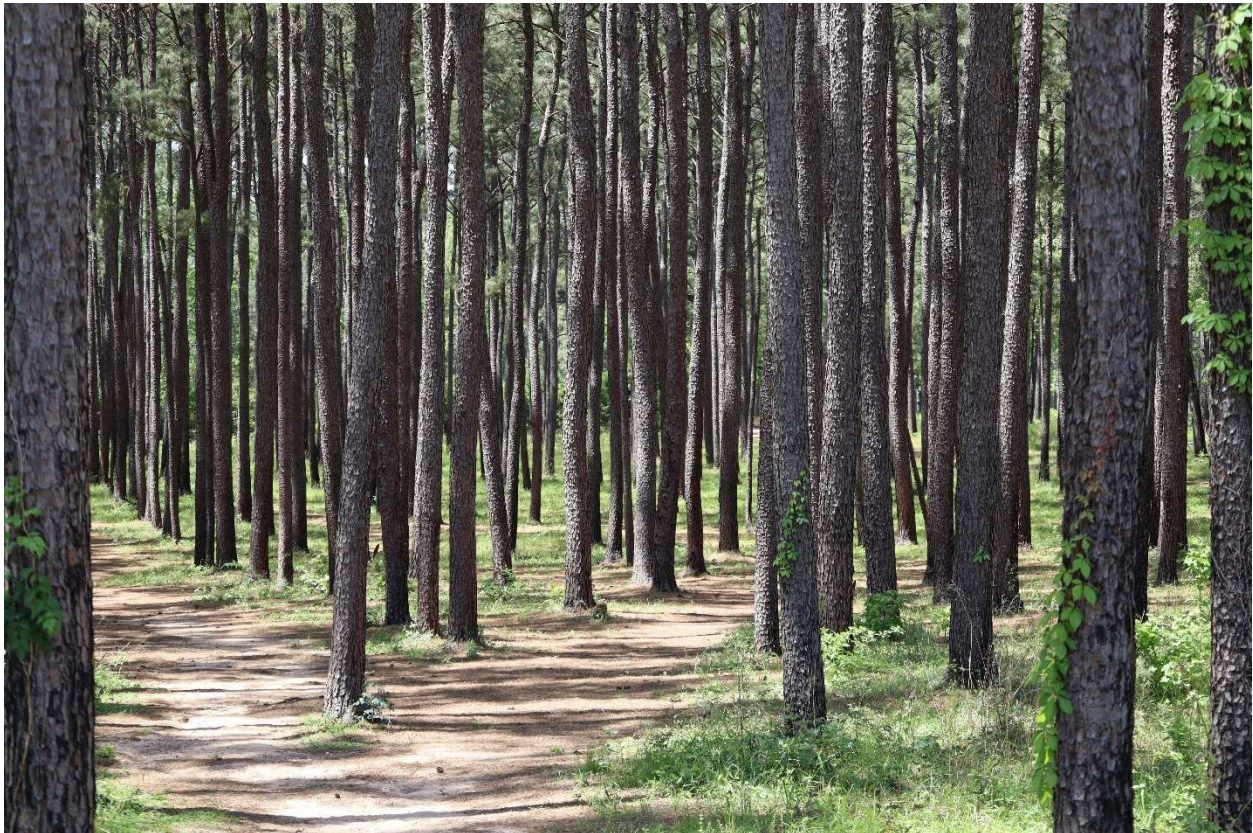




**East Texas Pineywoods  
Exploring the Rainforest of Texas  
May 14-18, 2026**



WG Jones State Forest © Oscar Carmona

Nestled between the Louisiana border and Interstate 45, the East Texas Pineywoods is a region unlike any other in Texas. Often called the “Rainforest of Texas” due to its lush vegetation and high annual rainfall (35–60 inches), this area features rolling hills, deep pine forests, hardwood bottomlands, and cypress-tupelo swamps. The landscape is a mosaic of loblolly, shortleaf, and longleaf pines interspersed with magnolia, beech, and oak, creating a rich tapestry of habitats that attract both resident and migratory birds. Birders are drawn here for the chance to encounter southern forest specialties and a remarkable diversity of

migratory species, making the Pineywoods a must-visit destination for anyone seeking an immersive birding adventure.

May is a peak month for bird migration in the Pineywoods. The forests come alive with the songs and movements of birds arriving from their wintering grounds. The dense canopy and varied habitats support a wide array of species, many of which are difficult to find elsewhere in Texas. During this time, birders can expect:

- **Warbler Diversity:** The Pineywoods is renowned for its warbler population in May. Species such as Yellow-throated Vireo, Acadian Flycatcher, along with many species of warblers including Pine, Prairie, Swainson's, Prothonotary, Kentucky, and Hooded Warblers. Swainson's Warbler, in particular, is a sought-after specialty of the region.
- **Forest Specialties:** Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Red-headed Woodpecker, Bachman's Sparrow, and Pileated Woodpecker are among the forest specialists that breed here. Auditory identification is key, as many birds are heard before they are seen in the dense woods.
- **Migratory Raptors:** Broad-winged Hawks, Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites can be observed soaring above the canopy, adding excitement to the birding experience.
- **Waterbirds and Shorebirds:** Along the shorelines of Sam Rayburn Reservoir and other water bodies, birders have excellent chances to see Bald Eagles, Ospreys, wintering loons, and a variety of waterbirds.

The Pineywoods' unique combination of habitats and its position along migratory flyways make it a hotspot for both resident breeders and transient migrants. Birders in May should be prepared for patient listening, slow walks, and scanning multiple canopy layers to fully appreciate the spectacle of migration in this "Rainforest of Texas".

#### **Tour Highlights:**

- Explore regional birding hotspots including Angelina National Forest, Sandy Creek Park, Big Thicket National Preserve, and WG Jones State Forest.
- Spot rare and iconic forest specialties such as the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, currently listed as a threatened species.
- Enjoy close encounters with a dazzling array of warblers including the Swainson's Warbler – one of the region's most sought-after specialties.
- Scan the skies for Bald Eagles, Ospreys, Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites.
- Observe wintering loons and diverse waterbirds and waterfowl along the shorelines of Sam Rayburn Reservoir.
- Immerse yourself in the "Rainforest of Texas" and experience the lush, vibrant landscapes that have earned the Pineywoods its nickname.

**TOUR LEADER:** Oscar Carmona



Oscar started birding at an early age while living in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. His passion for birds has taken him to numerous birding trips across North America, Mexico, and Central America. With over 30 years of birding experience, he has led birding tours throughout Texas and Mexico. He received his degree in Parks and Recreation from Texas State University and his master's degree in Public Administration from University of Texas at Arlington. He has devoted his professional career to sustainably managing and developing land and resources for public use and environmental conservation. He has written several articles for Birding magazine, Bird Watcher's Digest, and Birder's

World and has provided input on several field guides and publications.

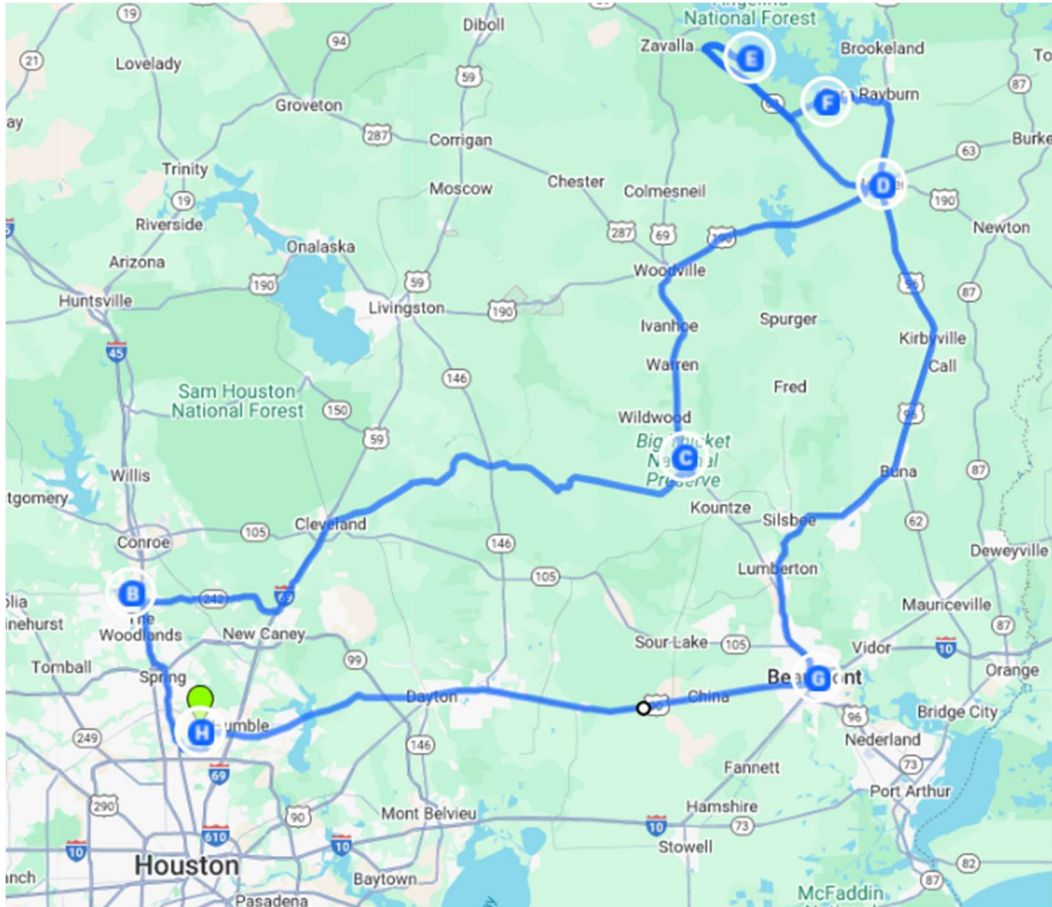
**TOUR SIZE:** This tour is limited to 8 participants

**DIFFICULTY LEVEL & PACE OF THE TOUR:** Moderate (2-3 miles of daily walking). Field time each day is typically between 7-10 hours (weather permitting) and some moderate drive from location to location (up to 1.5 hrs. between stops). Most of the birding is done on trails, boardwalks, and along the road as we drive to various birding destinations. Walking on uneven, soggy terrain, or in the rain is highly possible. Days start with breakfast at the hotel and departure for the field between 6:30 to 7:00 am. We bird throughout the morning, take a break for lunch and resume birding until around 5:00 pm followed by dinner at a local restaurant.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:** The tour price is \$2,150 per person in double occupancy. The single supplement for this tour is \$400. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single room accommodations, or if you prefer to share a room but have no roommate and we cannot arrange one for you. The package includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 5, ground transportation during the tour, entrance fees to parks/preserves, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, and guided services provided by the tour leader(s). It does not include travel expenses including but not limited to airfare to and from the tour destination, travel insurance, extended stays (before and/or after the tour), alcoholic beverages, gratuities, and items/expenses of personal nature.



## TOUR ROUTE



**H: Start/End:** Houston, George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH)  
(Houston - Night 1)

B – WG Jones State Forest

C – Big Thicket National Preserve

D – Jasper – (Nights 2 & 3)

E – Angelina National Forest / Sandy Creek Park

F – Sam Rayburn Reservoir

G – Beaumont: Tyrrell Park / Cattail Marsh Scenic Wetlands & Boardwalk

## ITINERARY

### **Day 1: Arrive in Houston at George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) before 2 pm.**

Participants will transfer to the hotel where a room will be reserved in their name. The hotel offers a complimentary shuttle service from the airport. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 5:00 p.m. for a brief orientation and welcome dinner. Overnight: SpringHill Suites Houston Intercontinental Airport, Houston.



Red-cockaded Woodpecker © Greg Lasley

### **Day 2: WG Jones State Forest and Big Thicket to Jasper.**

We head to the nearby WG Jones State Forest in search of Pineywood specialties including the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-headed Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Pine Warbler and other species. Around mid-morning, we head east towards the Big Thicket region, stopping along the way for brief birding stops. Big Thicket National Preserve was established in 1974 to protect the high biodiversity that characterizes the East Texas piney-woods and wetland ecosystem. With more than 113,000 acres of bottomland forest along the Trinity and Neches River drainages, this rich area provides extensive habitat for a wide variety of breeding songbirds. We spend time birding along the road in the Big Thicket area looking for Prairie Warbler. We may also encounter other warbler species as well as Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites, Northern Parula, Summer Tanager, Indigo Bunting, White-eyed

Vireo, Pileated Woodpecker, and Yellow-throated Vireo. After an afternoon of birding the Big Thicket we drive to Jasper which will be our base for the next two nights. Overnight: Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Jasper.

### **Day 3: Angelina National Forest and Sandy Creek Park.**

This morning we'll begin at Angelina National Forest, home to more than 150,000 acres of longleaf and loblolly pine stands, hardwood sloughs, riparian corridors, and reservoir edges along Lake Sam Rayburn. Our focus will be on searching for several pine forest specialties, particularly Red-cockaded Woodpecker (if not found at WG Jones State Forest)



Swainson's Warbler © Greg Lasley

and Bachman's Sparrow. We are also likely to see Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Pine Warbler, and possibly Louisiana Waterthrush. Later, we'll visit Sandy Creek Park along the shores of Lake Steinhagen – a hidden gem for birding in the East Texas Pineywoods, offering a mix of lake, wetland, and forest habitats where birders can expect to see everything from waterfowl



Brown-headed Nuthatch © Greg Lasley

and raptors to colorful warblers and orioles. Here we have a good chance of finding Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Wood Thrush, and numerous warblers including Prothonotary, Swainson's, Kentucky, and Yellow-throated. Overnight: Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Jasper



Purple Gallinule © Greg Lasley

**Day 4: Jasper to Beaumont and back to Houston.** Today we drive toward Beaumont on the Upper Texas Coast, sitting at the intersection of two major migratory flyways and offering access to wetlands, pineywoods, and coastal habitats. We start at Cattail Marsh Scenic Wetlands and Boardwalk. This 900-acre refuge within Tyrrell Park is one of Beaumont's signature birding destinations. With 8+ miles of trails and a raised boardwalk,

birders can observe species such as Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Painted Bunting, Purple Gallinule, Fish Crow, Boat-tailed Grackle, among many others. By late afternoon, we'll start traveling back to Houston. Overnight: SpringHill Suites Houston Intercontinental Airport, Houston.

**Day 5: Tour Conclusion & Departures.** Participants may arrange departing flights from Houston, George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) any time today.

## Target Species

While we cannot guarantee sightings of the birds listed below, we believe that encountering these species is likely during this tour.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Brown-headed Nuthatch	Acadian Flycatcher
Swainson's Warbler	Yellow-throated Vireo
White-breasted Nuthatch	Prothonotary Warbler
Red-headed Woodpecker	Fulvous Whistling-Duck
Pileated Woodpecker	Painted Bunting
Pine Warbler	Purple Gallinule
Prairie Warbler	Boat-tailed Grackle
Swallow-tailed Kite	And many more!
Mississippi Kite	
Northern Parula	
White-eyed Vireo	
Yellow-throated Vireo	
Bachman's Sparrow	

**REGISTRATION & PAYMENTS:** To register for this tour you will need to complete an online reservation form. The non-refundable deposit for this tour is \$300 per person. All payments, including initial deposits and final balances, may be made by credit card through PayPal, check, money order, or bank/wire transfer. Deposits are due 14 days from the date you submit your reservation form. The remaining balance is due as soon as the tour confirms or 60 days prior to the tour start date, whichever comes first. We will invoice you accordingly.

**Please read our Terms and Conditions for more information before booking any of our tours or services. Our Terms and Conditions include important information about how we operate our tours, including cancellation policy, travel insurance, health and fitness requirements, and more.**