



BIRDING TEXAS & BEYOND

ITINERARY, 2026

Texas Hill Country Spring in the Hill Country April 8 – 13, 2026



Golden-cheeked Warbler © Mark Lockwood

The Texas Hill Country region is located west of Austin and San Antonio and is characterized by its karst topography and rugged limestone and granite hills covered in ashe junipers and a variety of oaks. The region is also well known for its numerous cypress-lined rivers and creeks that provide picturesque backdrops. The area is considered a crossroads where both eastern and western bird species can be seen. This is evident in the habitats we visit and the bird species we observe. We find Tamaulipan thorn scrub around the Uvalde area while encountering stands of Piñon Pine at Kickapoo Cavern State Natural Area. These hills and

canyons are home to the only United States breeding population of the endemic Golden-cheeked Warbler and is also one of the best places to see Black-capped Vireo. We will enjoy comfortable lodging accommodations, great regional cuisine and moderate drives to various birding locations to enjoy the varied bird life in this exciting region. Our itinerary will remain flexible to maximize our opportunities to see as many species as possible.

We start our journey in the Uvalde area by exploring Cook's Slough Nature Park and the Uvalde National Fish Hatchery. These locations offer diverse habitats of thorn scrub, riparian areas and wetlands where we may observe a variety of species including Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Cactus Wren, Bell's Vireo, and Audubon's Oriole. We also visit some local birding spots in the area before heading north to Frio Bat Cave to witness the nightly flight of millions of Mexican Free-tailed Bats from the cave, making for a memorable experience.

We next concentrate our efforts on searching for Hill Country specialty birds including Golden-cheeked Warbler, Black-capped Vireo, Varied Bunting and Zone-tailed Hawk. Kickapoo Cavern State Natural Area is an excellent birding site that offers the opportunity to observe target specialty birds. Notable species include the Gray Vireo, Vermilion Flycatcher, Hooded Oriole, and the rare possibility of spotting a Montezuma Quail. The riparian areas of pecan and live oak trees along Las Moras Creek in Fort Clark Springs are home to a number of bird species that are typically associated with south Texas including Green Jay, Great Kiskadee, Olive Sparrow and Green Kingfisher.

Located an hour north of Uvalde, we also explore the rugged canyons and Sabinal River at Lost Maples State Natural Area. In addition to seeing Golden-cheeked Warblers and Black-capped Vireos, we may also find Yellow-throated Warbler, Black and white Warbler, and Scott's Oriole among others. The afternoon will remain flexible to continue our search for any species we may have missed or to target any rarities that may be present in the area. We spend our last day to the west of Uvalde around Del Rio. Del Rio is located at the crossroads of the Edwards Plateau and the Trans-Pecos regions. Here we spend time birding brushy areas along the Rio Grande River looking for Morelet's Seedeater, Couch's Kingbird and other south Texas species and below Lake Amistad Dam to look for Ringed Kingfisher, Mexican Duck, Canyon Wren and waterbird species on the lake.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Experience Texas Hill Country bird specialties including the endemic Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo.
- Marvel at the nightly flight of millions of Mexican Free-tailed Bats from the Frio Bat Cave.
- Observe a variety of birds typical of both the eastern and western parts of Texas in this region.
- Spot species typically found in south Texas including Green Jay, Great Kiskadee, Audubon's Oriole, Ringed Kingfisher, Morelet's Seedeater, and Olive Sparrow.
- Appreciate the diverse landscapes and scenery encountered on our daily excursions.

TOUR LEADER: Troy Hibbitts

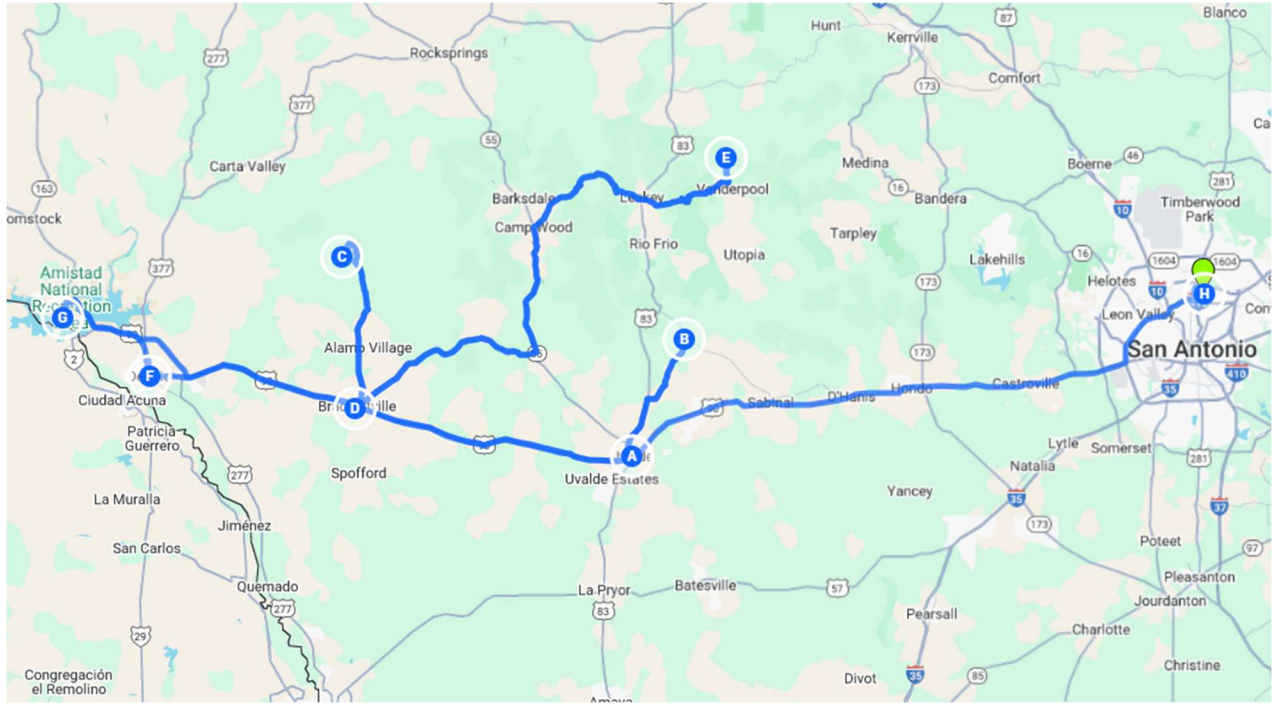


Troy grew up birding on family vacations across the mountain west. After earning his master's degree in evolutionary biology from the University of Texas at Arlington, Troy began a career as a High School Science teacher while filling his weekends and vacation time with birding and general wildlife observation and photography. In addition to birding, he is a leading expert on Reptiles and Amphibians in the southwest, having co-authored three field guides for the state of Texas. He also has somewhat of an eclectic expertise in areas such as dragonflies & damselflies, butterflies, scorpions, and mammals. Troy serves as an eBird reviewer for 5 counties in southwest Texas. He has birded in all of Texas's 254 counties and has many years of birding experience specifically in south and west Texas, as well as in southeastern Arizona.

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). Most of the birding is done on trails, boardwalks, beaches and along the road as we drive to various birding locations. Walking on uneven, soggy terrain, or in the rain is 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 5:00 pm followed by dinner at a local restaurant.

TOUR ROUTE



Start: San Antonio International Airport (SAT)

A – Uvalde, Cook’s Slough Nature Park, Fish Hatchery (Hotel-Overnight Stay, Nights 1-5)

B – Frio Bat Cave

C – Kickapoo Cavern State Natural Area

D – Fort Clark Springs

E – Lost Maples State Natural Area

F – Del Rio

G – Lake Amistad Reservoir and Dam



H- End: San Antonio International Airport (SAT)

DAILY ITINERARY

Wednesday, April 8 – Day 1: Arrive to San Antonio International Airport (SAT) before 2 pm. After meeting everyone at the airport, we head west to Uvalde which will be our base for the next six days. The drive to Uvalde is about an hour and a half from San Antonio and crosses the northern end of the Tamaulipan thorn scrub habitat. If time allows, we may visit a local spot in Uvalde for some birding before our orientation meeting and welcome dinner. Overnight: Hampton Inn, Uvalde.

Thursday, April 9 – Day 2: Cook’s Slough Nature Park, Uvalde National Fish Hatchery, and Frio Bat Cave. We spend the day birding the brush country in the Uvalde area, primarily the Cook’s Slough Nature Park. The park’s habitat is home to some of the best birding in the region. The arid habitat in areas of the park provide opportunities to see Ash-throated Flycatcher, Scaled Quail, Verdin, Pyrrhuloxia, Greater



Audubon's Oriole © Greg Lasley

Roadrunner, Cactus Wren, and Black-throated Sparrow among others. In addition, some of the wetland areas and bordering riparian areas may harbor Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and Audubon’s Oriole. We also visit the Uvalde National Fish Hatchery which consists of 93



Frio Cave @ friobatflight.com

acres of ponds, woodlands and open fields. This is a great place to see species such as Mottled Duck, Bullock’s Oriole, Bell’s Vireo and any late migrant shorebirds. After enjoying an early dinner, we drive north to Concan to visit the Frio Bat Cave between 7 pm and 9 pm to witness the evening flight of millions of Mexican Free-tailed Bats leaving the cave for their feeding grounds. Also, at the bat viewing area we will possibly see Cave Swallows, Rock and Canyon Wrens and raptors hunting bats as they exit the cave. Overnight: Hampton Inn, Uvalde.

Friday, April 10 – Day 3: Kickapoo Cavern State Park and Fort Clark Springs.

Today we drive northwest out of the South Texas brush country and up into the Edward's Plateau to visit Kickapoo Cavern State Park. The park has one of the state's eastern most stands of Piñon Pines and is also one of the best places to see both the Golden-cheeked Warbler, Black-capped Vireo as well as Woodhouse's



Black-capped Vireo © Greg Lasley

Scrub Jay, Varied Bunting, Painted Bunting and Zone-tailed Hawk. This is also a great place to see additional species including Gray Vireo, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Bushtit and Canyon Towhee. We spend the afternoon at Fort Clark Springs which is an old frontier fort located in Brackettville. The lush riparian areas of oaks and pecan trees along Las Moras Creek provide habitat for Green Kingfisher, Olive Sparrow, Lesser Goldfinch, Hooded Oriole and Green Jay. If time allows, we may visit a few sites around Brackettville before returning to Uvalde. Overnight: Hampton Inn, Uvalde.



Green Kingfisher © Greg Lasley

Saturday, April 11 – Day 4: Lost Maples State Natural Area.

We drive north to Lost Maples State Natural Area to bird the park's rugged canyons and along the serene Sabinal River. Although the park is well known for its stand of Uvalde bigtooth maples and colorful fall foliage, the park's scenic beauty can be enjoyed year-round. Here we have the opportunity to see Golden-cheeked Warbler,

Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos, Yellow-throated Warbler, Green Kingfisher, Scott's Oriole and Common Raven. This is one of the few places where the ranges of Carolina and Canyon Wrens overlap; hearing them sing simultaneously offers a unique experience. Tropical Parula has also become somewhat regular in this area in recent years. Depending on bird activity, we may depart Lost Maples in the early afternoon and bird some additional sites as we work our way back to Uvalde. Overnight: Hampton Inn, Uvalde.

Sunday, April 12 – Day 5: Vega Verde Road, Lake Amistad Dam, and Del Rio. We drive west to the border town of Del Rio to bird along Vega Verde Road. This road passes through rural areas along the Rio Grande River offering a variety of habitats including mesquite woodlands, South Texas brush country, river cane thickets, and the riverfront. This area has been a



Hooded Oriole © Greg Lasley

fairly reliable location to spot Morelet's Seedeater. Other species we may encounter here include Mexican Duck, Couch's Kingbird, Yellow-breasted Chat, Bronzed Cowbird and other species typically found in South Texas. We continue upriver to Lake Amistad Dam. The lake



Ringed Kingfisher © Greg Lasley

is a large reservoir located between the border of the United States and Mexico. Some of the birds we may observe below the dam include Ringed Kingfisher, Cliff Swallow, Chihuahuan Raven and Black Phoebe. We may also have the opportunity to see some overwintering duck species and migrant shorebirds. If time allows, we will visit a few birding hotspots in the Brackettville area to look for any birds we may have missed earlier in the week before returning to Uvalde. Overnight: Hampton Inn, Uvalde.

Monday, April 13 – Day 6: Tour Conclusion & Departures. We may get in an hour or two of birding before our drive back to San Antonio. Airport drop-off by no later than 11 am. Participants may arrange departing flights from San Antonio International Airport (SAT) after 1 pm.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION: The tour price is \$3,030 per person in double occupancy. The single supplement for this tour is \$600. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single room accommodations, or if you prefer to share 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 6, 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.

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 (we will provide our bank information). Deposits are due 14 days from the date you submit your reservation form. Full payment 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 the cancellation policy, travel insurance, health and fitness requirements, and more.