

Birding is for Everyone! *Written by Gene Blacklock*

It was not so long ago that anyone having an interest in anything other than gardening, fishing, hunting or sports would have been considered less than normal. It is gratifying to realize that today many people appreciate the natural world and one out of four is especially interested in birds. In the United States and Canada the hobby of birding is exceeded only by gardening and the interest in birding is growing with each passing day.

The Coastal Bend of Texas is not known for its majestic scenery and for some it may appear to be a paradigm of roads that lead to somewhere else. This is a false conception, for the region is the richest place in the U.S. and Canada to observe a great variety of birds. Slightly over 650 species of birds are known to breed in the U.S. and Canada. More than 530 species of birds are known for the Texas Coastal Bend, 402 species on the tiny Angelita Ranch, 15.5 square miles, located northwest of Corpus Christi. In comparison, the famous Big Bend National Park, 1,106 square miles has recorded only 385 species. Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) accomplished along the Texas Central Coast always report 150 species or more. In 1996 Corpus Christi set a new National CBC high with 233! The previous National high had been 227. Mexican and pelagic species are expected occur within the Texas Coastal Bend.

A Review of the Seasons

Summer (May 15 – August 15): This is a time when during periods of inclement weather neotropical marine birds can occasionally be found near shore. More than 130 species of birds breed in the Texas Coastal Bend. Large numbers of pelicans, herons, spoonbills, gulls, terns and skimmers breed here. In July and August look for huge concentrations of shorebirds, most utilize the Texas Laguna Madre and alga habitats within secondary bays. Thousands of black and least terns and red knots can be seen on gulf beaches. A variety of songbirds frequent riparian and oak habitats along the Guadalupe, San Antonio, Mission, Aransas and Nueces Rivers. [Download a checklist for the birds of summer here \(pdf\).](#)

Fall (August 15 – November 15): Great numbers of shorebirds occur. This is a season known for migration, and unusually large concentrations of ruby-throated hummingbirds and buzzard (*Buteo*), hawks. During late August and September, feeders attract hundreds of hummingbirds! The annual migration of buzzard hawks is spectacular! The Coastal Bend of Texas is known to accommodate the greatest concentrations of hawks in the U.S. and Canada. The peak for hawk migration during fall is third week of September through the first of October; an excellent place to observe the hawks migrating is Hazel Bazemore County Park, Five-Points, Corpus Christi. [Download a checklist for the birds of fall here \(pdf\).](#)

Winter (November 15 – March 15): One hundred thousand redhead ducks, thousands of other ducks, geese, cormorants and one million shorebirds winter in the Texas Coastal Bend. South Texas contains the greatest concentrations of reddish egrets, and piping plovers known. More than six species of hummingbirds often frequent some of the local feeders. Occasionally a green-breasted mango, broad-billed, blue-throated, Anna's, Allen's and/or Lucifer can be seen. Boat tours are available from Rockport to see and photograph whooping cranes. Birds of special interest that have been observed during or immediately following winter storms are: flammulated owl, white-collared swift, clay-colored and Aztec thrushes, tropical parula, hermit and red-faced warblers, varied and blue buntings, blue-black grassquit, crimson-collared grosbeak and black-vented oriole. [Download a checklist for winter here \(pdf\).](#)

Spring (March 15 – June 15): birder working the Texas Coastal Bend during spring can expect to see more than 150 species within a day. Large numbers of northeastern forest related migrants, such as thrushes, vireos, wood warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks and buntings, can be grounded during periods of inclement weather. Exceptional concentrations of songbirds can be seen at eye level during and immediately following periods of rain and/or strong north wind. Thousands of buzzards (*Buteo*), hawks, migrating north from the tropics can at times be seen concentrated at know inland sites. *The peak period highlighting spring migration along the Texas Central Coast is from March 20 through May 20.*

The most exciting weather event for birders living in South Texas would be during Nor'easters. This is when a low is stationary over Key West, the Bahamas and/or Cuba. This event can produces heavy rain and strong northeast wind that can impact the Texas Central Coast. Migrants caught up in Nor'easters can be grounded, birds caught up in Nor'easters can be: mangrove cuckoo, gray kingbird, black-whiskered vireo, black-throated blue, blackpoll, Cape May, and Connecticut warblers and bobolink. [Download a checklist for the spring season here \(pdf\).](#)

The Coastal Bend of Texas is the place to be: there can be no better place in temperate North America where a person can find such an exciting diversity of beautiful birds! The Texas Coastal Bend is a Mecca for birders from all over the world. Experience great food, good birds and friendly people, make a point to visit the Texas Coastal Bend today.