



EAST TEXAS:

Gulf Coast and Pineywoods

April 10–17, 2019
\$2,800 double, \$3,150 single

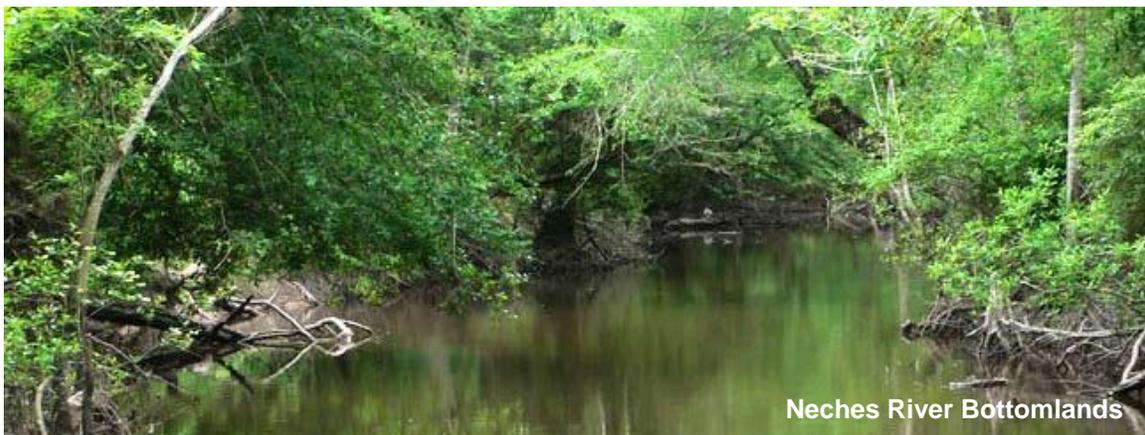
We are excited to return to the Texas Pineywoods as part of our International Woodpecker Conservation Tours. We have visited all corners of the Lone Star State, but our special fondness for the eastern “red” woodpeckers—the Red-headed, Red-bellied, and Red-cockaded—continually brings us back to this forested region. We will spend plenty of time with up to eight woodpecker species in the Texas pine forests, but the trip is about much more than just the woodpeckers. As with our past tours to this region, we combine a few days in the forest with the migration spectacle of High Island and the upper Texas Coast for a world-class birding vacation. Join us in Texas this spring for a real woodpecker & migration spectacle.

Your Host and Trail Boss, Stephen Shunk

TOUR SUMMARY

Our tour route begins and ends in the mega-metropolis of Houston. After our airport rendezvous, we quickly leave the city and enter rural eastern Texas. Our first afternoon will take us to Brazos Bend State Park, on the Brazos River, where a walk around the productive freshwater swamps should produce an abundance of singing Prothonotary Warblers—and equal numbers of alligators! We will also look for our first woodpeckers, with locally nesting Red-bellied, Downy, and Pileated. Waterbirds at Brazos Bend may include Purple Gallinule, Anhinga, White Ibis, and Black-bellied Whistling-Duck. We will spend our first night just across the river in Angleton, on the broad coastal plain.

After breakfast on our first morning, we will head straight to the Gulf Coast. We will make various stops on our way up the coastline, including the Quintana and Dos Vacas Muertas Bird Sanctuaries, followed by lunch in the busy coastal town of Galveston. After lunch, we will take the ferry across Galveston Bay to the Bolivar Peninsula, birding our way north toward High Island. Time allowing, the afternoon will include visits to one or more of the well-managed sanctuaries at High Island (which is not a true island, but an island of habitat atop a geologic salt dome!).



We will spend our next three nights in the tiny town of Winnie, just north of High Island, and our days here will be spent exploring the High Island sanctuaries and nearby coastline and coastal plain. We will hope for a northern cold front to optimize the viewing opportunities of migrant songbirds. When these exhausted trans-gulf migrants hit a cold front, they ‘crash’ onto the first piece of land they see. More than 20 warbler species are possible, along with dozens of other songbirds, including vireos, orioles, tanagers, buntings, thrushes, and more. Migrating waterbirds also take advantage of the long gulf coastline and the surrounding flats, and we could see more than 20 species of shorebird.

After our migration experience at High Island, we will head north through the bottomlands of the Neches River—once the realm of the magnificent Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Our base for the next three nights will be the town of Jasper in the heart of the Texas Pineywoods. Here we will focus on seven species of resident woodpeckers, along with other specialty birds of the riparian and bottomland forests. The spunky little Red-cockaded Woodpecker will be a top priority, with at least a couple chances to watch this charismatic bird. Each morning and evening, Red-cockaded family groups leave from and return to their ‘cluster’ of cavity trees, never quietly and always exhibiting a broad array of entertaining antics.

In addition to the Red-cockaded, we should see plenty of Pileated, Red-headed, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and the surrounding forests support a number of unique songbird populations, which will easily distract us from our woodpecker watching. Nesting warblers include Pine, Prairie, Prothonotary, Hooded, Kentucky, and Swainson’s Warblers. We will seek out Bachman’s Sparrow in the grassy forest understory and Brown-headed Nuthatch squeaking overhead. The Neches River hosts nesting Swallow-tailed Kite, and we may see flocks of migrating Mississippi Kites.

On our final day, we will make our way west and south toward Houston, with birding stops along the Trinity River and one more chance to watch Red-cockaded and their cousins in the pine forests. After lunch on the outskirts of Houston, we will return to the airport by noon for 2 p.m. or later departures.

DAILY ITINERARY

The itinerary below is subject to spontaneous changes throughout the tour. Our daily plan will depend on the weather, tides, local bird reports, and our success at finding certain species. We will do our best to optimize the prime birding times and concentrate our time in the best quality habitats. We appreciate your flexibility while we expect the unexpected!

Wednesday, Apr 10—Meet at Houston International Airport (IAH) at 2 p.m. Afternoon birding at Brazos Bend. Dinner and night in Angleton.

Thursday, Apr 11—Birding and travel along the upper Texas Coast, from Quintana to Galveston, plus the Bolivar Peninsula and High Island. Dinner and night in Winnie.

Friday, Apr 12—All day birding High Island and Bolivar Peninsula. Dinner and night in Winnie.

Saturday, Apr 13—All day birding High Island and the coastal plain. Dinner and night in Winnie.

Sunday, Apr 14—Birding through the Big Thicket and into the Pineywoods. Dinner and night in Jasper.



Monday, Apr 15—All day in the pine forests and bottomlands. Dinner and night in Jasper.

Tuesday, Apr 16—All day in the pine forests and bottomlands. Dinner and night in Jasper.

Wednesday, Apr 17—Birding our way eastward, returning to IAH by noon for 2 p.m. or later departures.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

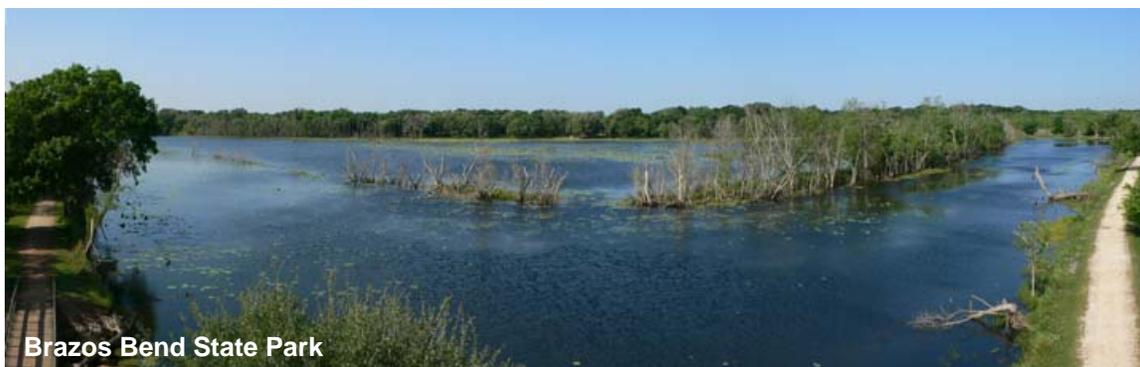
Most of our East Texas birding is done on foot, with many short walks and a few longer walks, all on generally flat terrain. We typically follow well-established trails or walk on open beaches, with much of the birding in public parks and private preserves.

Birding at High Island sanctuaries can be challenging at times, with small birds frequently skulking in the underbrush or flitting high in the trees, but many of the birds are easily viewed at eye-level. Water-birding is typically very easy, with flocks of sandpipers, terns, and wading birds spread across the mud flats. Most woodpeckers will be easily seen in the open woodlands.

As with any group outing, birders with more advanced skills will be able to find and identify more of the anticipated species, while those with less experience will delight in the abundance of 'life-birds' throughout the tour. This tour may even be fine for some beginners, but they should be prepared for the abundance of birds and new information. Your trail boss, Steve Shunk, is a patient, professional educator, and he will work diligently to help each participant learn bird sounds and visual identification, as well as general natural and cultural history of the region.

This tour is for moderately active people in good health. Our guides are certified first aid providers, although at times we may be a couple hours from the nearest urban medical facilities. Every day will involve considerable walking, and we may hike a total of two or three miles per day. We will do our best to cater each day's activities to the average ability level of the group. To take advantage of cooler temperatures and the height of bird activity, we will usually start birding early each morning, with breaks or meals in the heat of the day, often birding until sunset.

Depending on group size, we will either travel in a large passenger van or a minivan. In either case, we will leave ample room for each guest to have his or her own window in the vehicle. If we drive a large van, we will use a step stool for easy entry. This is a non-smoking tour. We will stay in non-smoking rooms and eat in non-smoking areas.



CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT

Warm to hot temperatures and high humidity predominate in eastern Texas, but the daily weather can be quite changeable. We may experience thunderstorms, light rain, fog, and extended periods of sun, all in one day. You should be prepared to be outside, away from the vehicle or other shelter, for a couple hours at a time. Please pack conservatively to allow room for all our gear, but do not compromise your ability to be comfortable in a wide variety of conditions out-of-doors.

Biting insects will occur in some areas, and we recommend that you take the proper precautions. Recent rains could cause us to encounter enough mosquitoes to add an additional level of challenge to the birding experience, and you may need chemical repellent or bug resistant clothing. You should also be prepared to protect yourself from the sun, as we will spend many hours outdoors on most days.

We recommend that you bring your own binoculars and favorite field guide. A spotting scope will also come in handy, especially on the beaches, although we will have at least one scope available for the group. We also carry an extensive birding library for reference and learning.

We encourage you to take photos as souvenirs, but this is not a photography tour. If you wish to focus on photographic opportunities, we ask that you remain sensitive to the group's needs and the tour schedule. Ensuring that everyone gets their binoculars or scope on a bird will take precedence over shooting photos. That said, photo opportunities are outstanding at High Island in particular, and you are welcome to haul along any camera gear you can tolerate carrying. You might at least want a small camera to capture some of the region's unique habitats.

LODGING, MEALS & REFRESHMENTS

We will spend one night in Angleton, three nights in Winnie, and three nights in Jasper, all in comfortable motels. We will forward details on specific lodging facilities as we get closer to the tour date. If you are traveling with a birding partner or are willing to share a room with another birder, we will do our best to place you in a double room. Early registrants will be the first ones placed with available roommates. If we are not able to match you with a roommate, you will be responsible for the single tour rate.

Your tour fee includes all meals from dinner on Tuesday, April 10, through lunch on Tuesday, April 17. We will eat in restaurants that appeal to a wide variety of food preferences, but it may be difficult to accommodate the most restrictive diets. If you maintain such a diet, remember that appropriate foods may not be available at restaurants or rural stores. To prepare for these contingencies you may wish to bring foods that will meet your needs.



OUR FOCAL WOODPECKER SPECIES

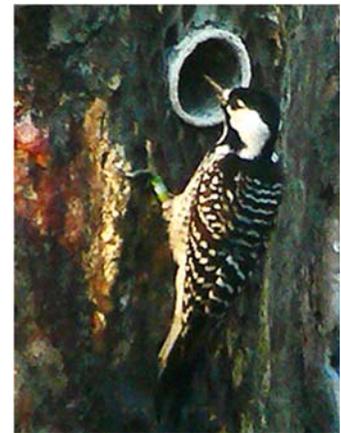
RED-HEADED WOODPECKER, *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

The handsome Red-headed Woodpecker is listed as “Near Threatened” by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The Red-headed is listed at some level of concern in more states and provinces than any other woodpecker in North America. As a weak excavator and a fly-catching specialist, the Red-headed Woodpecker requires a very specific habitat prescription, with plenty of snags and an open canopy. The human behavior of removing snags from the landscape puts the Red-headed at a disadvantage for nesting sites, and several factors have resulted in dense, closed canopies throughout much of its range. Here in Texas, this species comes close to the southwestern limits of its range.



RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER, *Dryobates borealis*

Thanks to the U.S. Endangered Species Act, we probably know more about the Red-cockaded Woodpecker than we do any other woodpecker in the world. A few hundred years of logging in our southeastern pine forests originally put this species in peril, when we cleared millions of acres of very specialized habitat for this spunky little woodpecker. The USFWS first listed the bird as “Endangered” in 1970, and we have subsequently spent many millions of dollars studying this woodpecker’s lifestyle and habitat requirements. Recognizing its need for fire-maintained mature pine forests, intensive management and recovery efforts have led to stable populations throughout the southeastern U.S. Like the Red-headed Woodpecker, the Red-cockaded is listed as “Near Threatened” by the IUCN.



IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER, *Campephilus principalis*

Unfortunately, we will not get to see the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, but we will stand in places where the species once thrived: among the riparian bottomlands of our southeastern forests. The seasonal flooding of the slow, winding rivers in eastern Texas created rich swampland that hosted modest numbers of this majestic bird. John James Audubon even reported the Ivory-bill as “very abundant” on Buffalo Bayou, which today snakes its way through downtown Houston. We will see plenty of other birds along the Neches and Trinity Rivers, but we will have to use our imaginations to picture the primeval forest that once stood where they fly today. The debate continues about whether or not the Ivory-bill persists anywhere in the southeastern U.S. Despite this ambiguity, the USFWS maintains the species as “Endangered,” and the IUCN lists the bird as “Critically Endangered” in the U.S. and Cuba.





Paradise Birding Tour Confirmation and Registration

Greetings! This form will confirm your registration on the following tour:

TITLE: _____ **DATE(S):** _____

Please complete and return to the address below, along with either your \$500 deposit (includes nonrefundable \$100) or the complete tour fee. If you have already paid your deposit, your balance is due 90 days prior to the tour for domestic, 120 days for international tours. For your convenience, we happily accept VISA, Mastercard and American Express. Please also complete the Liability Waiver found on page two. THANK YOU!

Full Name: _____ Nickname (if any): _____

Mailing Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Sex: _____ Birth date: _____ Height: _____ Weight: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Alt. Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Paradise Birding T-shirt preference; please circle your size and color. We'll do our best to accommodate you!

Size: Small—Medium—Large—Extra Large—XX Large | **Color:** Unisex (Blue—Green) or Ladies (Lavender—Yellow)

Would you like to receive periodic emailed updates & birding tips from Paradise Birding? Yes_ No _

Please tell us how you first heard about this Paradise Birding tour: _____

Roommate preference: *(If you will travel with a birding partner and wish to share a room, or if you are willing to share a room with another birder of the same sex, please indicate this here. If we are unable to match you with another birder, or where only single rooms are available, you will responsible for the single tour fee.)*

Dietary Preferences: *(Drink & food preferences. Please be specific. Our tours are often in remote regions without a wide variety of food choices, so we do our shopping for snacks and picnic lunches in advance. Also list any food allergies or dietary restrictions.)*

Medical Information: *(Please alert us to any medical or physical conditions that may affect you or your group's activities on an outdoor tour in remote locations; include any history of heart trouble, asthma, diabetes or epilepsy, as well as environmental and medication allergies. Please also include current prescription medications being taken. Use the back of this page or another sheet if necessary. NOTE: Anyone with an existing or potentially serious medical condition should consult a physician before participating in any outdoor or travel adventure.*

Emergency Contact: *(Please include detailed contact information for the person or persons we should contact in case of an emergency.)*

Name(s) and relationship(s) to you: _____

Contact number(s): _____

Credit Card #: _____ Expiration Date: _____ or Check #: _____

Signature: _____ Charge/Check Amount: \$ _____

Paradise Birding LLC | Stephen Shunk, Owner & Lead Guide

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HIKING AND BIRD WATCHING PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT and RELEASE and ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RISK

In consideration of the services of PARADISE BIRDING LLC, their officers, agents, employees, volunteers, advertisers, and stock holders, and all other persons or entities associated with this business (hereinafter collectively referred to as PARADISE BIRDING LLC) I agree as follows:

Although PARADISE BIRDING LLC has taken reasonable steps to provide you with appropriate equipment and skilled guides so you can enjoy an activity for which you may not be skilled, we wish to remind you this activity is not without risk. Certain risks cannot be eliminated without destroying the unique character of this activity. The same elements that contribute to the unique character of this activity can be causes of loss or damage to your equipment or accidental injury, illness, or in extreme cases, permanent trauma, paralysis, or death. We do not want to frighten you or reduce your enthusiasm for this activity, but we do think it is important for you to know in advance what to expect and that you be informed of the inherent risks. The following describes some, but not all, of those risks:

- 1.) Accidents can occur on land. You could slip or fall during a hike, causing damage to equipment, personal injury, or even death. You could also otherwise be injured while hiking or visiting other land-based phenomena.
- 2.) You could suffer injuries or trauma during the land and air transportation portions of the trip, in vehicles or aircraft.
- 3.) Exposure to the natural elements can be uncomfortable or harmful. You should be aware that this exposure could cause hypothermia, sunburn, illness from drinking water or food, and/or dehydration.
- 4.) You will be staying at accommodations not owned or operated by PARADISE BIRDING LLC. You could suffer injury, damage to equipment, trauma, or even death while staying at these places.
- 5.) Errors on the part of PARADISE BIRDING LLC and its employees, including insufficient instruction or assistance.

I am aware that this birding tour, including related transportation and activities, entails risks of injury or death to myself. I understand the description of these risks is not complete and that other unknown or unanticipated risks may result in injury or death. I agree to assume responsibility for the risks identified herein and other risks inherent to a birding trip. My participation in this activity is purely voluntary and I elect to participate in spite of the risks.

I certify that I am fully capable of participating in this activity. Therefore, I assume full responsibility for myself, including my minor children, for bodily injury, death, and loss of personal property and expenses thereof as a result of those inherent risks and dangers and of my negligence in participating in this activity.

I agree that if any portion of this agreement is found to be void or unenforceable, the remaining portions shall remain in full force and effect. In the event that I file a lawsuit against PARADISE BIRDING LLC, I agree to do so solely in the state of Oregon, and I further agree that the substantive law of that state shall apply in that action without regard to the conflict of law rules of that state.

I have read, understood, and accepted the terms and conditions stated herein and acknowledge that this agreement shall be effective and binding upon myself, my heirs, assigns, personal representatives and estate for all members of my family including any minors accompanying me. I acknowledge I am not relying on any oral, written, or visual representations or statements made by PARADISE BIRDING LLC, including those made in its brochure and other promotional material, to induce me to go on the birding tour. I also acknowledge that in any and all promotional material the use of the word "safe," "safe as possible," or the like does not mean, imply or suggest that this trip is without risk. I have also read and agree to comply with the PARADISE BIRDING LLC cancellation policy.

Photographic Release: PARADISE BIRDING LLC reserves the right to take photographs or film records of any PARADISE BIRDING LLC tour, program, or activity, and each trip member hereby agrees that PARADISE BIRDING LLC may use such photographs or film records for promotional, commercial, or any other marketing purposes, including Internet use.

Name (please print): _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

If under 18, parent or guardian signature: _____

Mailing Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Cell/Primary Phone: _____ Alt. Phone: _____

Name of Trip: _____ Trip Date: _____