

# WINNERS REPORT



## Great Texas Birding Classic 2005





## MISSION STATEMENT

To increase appreciation, understanding and conservation of birds along the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail through education, recreation, nature tourism and conservation fundraising.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about how your business or community can be involved in this year's event, please contact the Birding Classic Staff:

**1-866-GTBCLAS (482-2527)**  
[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/gtbc/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/gtbc/)

## TOURNAMENT COORDINATOR

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## COVER ARTWORK

Cover artwork by Craig Farquhar  
The original signed artwork will be sold at the traveling silent auction held at all sanctioned events during the week of the Birding Classic to raise money for habitat conservation on the Texas coast.



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Winners Report: PWD BK W7000-547 (5/05)

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# Thank You!

The Birding Classic staff would like to extend a warm thank you to all participants, host communities and sponsors for making the 9th Annual Great Texas Birding Classic such a great success! Thank you for your support in our effort to conserve coastal habitat and wildlife along the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail.

- We had the financial support of nine Texas coastal communities.
- We had 46 additional sponsors, including corporations, small businesses, artists, foundations and individuals.
- 294 people participated in the competition.
- A total of 55 teams from 13 states and the District of Columbia competed in all categories.
- We had 21 youth teams participate, 12 Big Sit! teams and three teams in the Outta-Sight Song Birder Tournament for blind and visually impaired birders.
- The combined species total seen or heard by all teams during the Birding Classic this year was 362! 251 species were counted on the lower coast, 257 on the central coast and 272 species on the upper coast. To see which birds were seen by the winning adult teams, go to [www.gcbo.org/gtbcr.html](http://www.gcbo.org/gtbcr.html).
- Over the past nine years, winning teams have donated \$453,000 to avian habitat conservation along the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail!



## MISSION STATEMENT

*To increase appreciation, understanding and conservation of birds along the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail through education, recreation, nature tourism and conservation fundraising.*

Thanks to the Brazosport  
Convention and Visitors  
Council for hosting our Awards  
Brunch on Sunday, April 24!

The top three Weeklong Tournament teams were eligible to win individual prizes, and the top sponsored teams competing the entire week earned the right to designate which conservation projects received \$20,000, \$12,000 and \$9,000.

# GTBC Conservation Cash Grand Prize Winners 2005

## Environmental Partners

Reliant Energy

Bill Baker  
Lalise Mason  
Tom Roberts  
Driver: Greg Mason

The winning team received the 1st place prize of Bushnell Elite Binoculars (donated by Bushnell Performance Optics) and selected the winning \$20,000 conservation project (listed on page 5).

Number of species: 332



Photo by Mike Gray

# SECOND PLACE

## Swift WildBirders

Swift Optics and *WildBird*  
Magazine

Michael Retter  
Matt Hafner  
Pete Hosner  
Ken Behrens

Individual prizes for 2nd place were Swarovski 8x30 SLC Binoculars (donated by Swarovski Optik) and the selection of the \$12,000 conservation project.

Number of species: 331



## Winner: Weeklong Migration Challenge



Photo by Mike Gray

# THIRD PLACE

## The ConocoPhillips Cranes

ConocoPhillips

Tom Collins  
Sherry Collins  
Tony Frank

Individual prizes for 3rd place were Pentax IQZoom 105S Cameras (donated by Pentax Imaging Company), Polar Neck Ties (donated by Polar Products) and the selection of the \$9,000 conservation project.

Number of species: 317



Photo by Mike Gray

# Conservation Cash Grand Prize Money for the Birding Classic 2005

The real winners of the Great Texas Birding Classic are the birds and the habitat that supports them. Through increased awareness of birding and nature tourism, we hope to bring to light the importance of habitat conservation. This awareness, along with the money donated directly to habitat conservation projects each year, will preserve and protect important coastal habitat for many years to come.

The top three places in the Weeklong Tournament win the privilege of awarding \$41,000 to the habitat conservation projects of their choice. The following projects were recipients of the Weeklong Conservation Cash Grand Prizes.

## **\$20,000 – Donated by Environmental Partners/Reliant Energy:**

**Bird Observation Tower and Education Platform Project – submitted by Scenic Galveston, Inc.**

This project involves a 2500-acre wetland and coastal prairie complex on the I-45 Estuarial Corridor and Virginia Point Preserve. The spartina marsh, tidal flats and nesting islands are host to a large variety of birds year round. This project will contribute toward a roadside marsh viewing / wetlands interpretive / birding area.



Carolyn Raizes Davis Bird Sanctuary

## **\$12,000 – Donated by Swift Wildbirders/Swift Optics and Wildbird magazine:**

**Habitat Protection for Houston Audubon's Carolyn Raizes Davis Bird Sanctuary – submitted by Houston Audubon Society.**

This project will help protect 63 acres of bottomland hardwood forest along Chocolate Bayou from intrusion and erosion caused by All-Terrain vehicles.

## **\$9,000 – Donated by the ConocoPhillips Cranes/ConocoPhillips:**

**South Padre Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary – submitted by The Valley Land Trust.**

Further enhancements of this haven for neo-tropic migrants will include a drip fed shallow water feature, additional native vegetation, a viewing blind and a boardwalk.

## ADULTS – Lower Coast Only

### 1. Necked Jaybirds

*Independent*

Ted Cleveland, Linda Pechacek, Terry Baldwin

Number of species: 118

Prizes: Pentax IQZoom 105S Cameras  
(donated by Pentax Imaging Company)



Necked Jaybirds

### Three Rails and A Young Coot



## SENIORS – Lower Coast Only

### 1. Three Rails and A Young Coot

*Independent*

Gary Waggerman, Jane Kittleman, Russel Nelson, Chris Watenpool

Number of species: 120

Prizes: Best-1 Hummingbird Feeders (donated by Best-1) and  
Polar Neck Ties (donated by Polar Products)

## ADULTS – Central Coast Only

### 1. Lovely Zorrillos

*Independent*

Gene Blacklock, Linda Fuiman, Jim Bowman

Number of species: 159

Prizes: Pentax IQZoom 105S Cameras (donated by Pentax Imaging Company)

### 2. Aplomado Falcons

*Independent*

Ray Allen, Jay Pruett, Vicki Allen

Number of species: 158

Prizes: Endangered and Threatened Animals of Texas  
(donated by TPWD) and Polar Neck Ties (donated by  
Polar Products)

### 3. (tie) Poules D'eau

*Independent*

David Newstead, Sonia Najera, John Keller

Number of Species: 149

Prizes: *Texas Wildlife Viewing Guides* (donated by TPWD)

### 3. (tie) Zeiss Optics NOCA PIPL

*Carl Zeiss Optics*

Richard Gibbons, Jason Garvon, Shannon Garvon,  
Kimberly Vetter

Number of Species: 149

Prizes: *Texas Wildlife Viewing Guides* (donated by TPWD)

Zeiss Optics NOCA PIPL





# ADULTS – Upper Coast Only

## 1. Leica Lone-Starlings

*Leica Sport Optics*

Jeff Bouton, Jessie Barry, Nick Block, Cameron Cox, Sean Smith

Number of species: 215

Prizes: Swift Ultra-Light 929 Binoculars (donated by Swift Optics)



Leica Lone-Starlings

## 2. Swarovski/Gulf Coast Bird Observatory Roadside Hawks

*Swarovski Optik N.A., Ltd.*

Clay Taylor, John Arvin, Cin-Ty Lee

Number of species: 196

Prizes: Thayer Software Birds of North America (donated by Thayer Birding Software), and Pájaro Waist Bags (donated by Pájaro)



Swarovski/Gulf Coast Bird Observatory Roadside Hawks

## 3. Audacious Anis

*Jordan Outdoor Enterprises (Realtree) & Houston Audubon Society*

Orion Weldon, Susan Knock, Stephan Lorenz, Chuck Folden (driver), Amber Albores (counter)

Number of species: 192

Prizes: Thayer Software Birds of Texas (donated by Thayer Birding Software)



Audacious Anis

## 4. The Butcherbirds

*Bushnell and Birders World Magazine*

David Womer, David Dendler, Don Freiday

Number of species: 183

WINNER: SECTIONAL MIGRATION CHALLENGE

## 5. Long-Horned Larks

*American Electric Power*

Jeff Troy, Erin Herbez, Clint King,

Julie Hurlbert (driver)

Number of species: 150



The Butcherbirds

## 6. Team Audubon

*ConocoPhillips*

Steve Gast, Peter Stangel, Dave Cagnolatti

Number of species: 146

## 7. Whooping Sea Aggies

*American Electric Power*

Laura Ware, David Lindsey,

Rosaleen Baluyot, Thomas Riddle

University: Texas A&M University at Galveston

Number of species: 140

WINNER: COLLEGE CHALLENGE



Long-Horned Larks

## 8. NETFO Bird Brains

*Eastman Chemical Company*

Barbara Cavin, Lisa Evers, Peggy Harding, Candra Troup

Number of species: 125



### 9. Necked Jaybirds

*Independent*

Ted Cleveland, Linda Pechacek, Terry Baldwin

Number of species: 114

## SENIORS – Upper Coast Only

### The Old Gray Birders

*Independent*

Gardner Campbell, Ray Flake, Phil Huxford, Al Clarke

Number of species: 122

Prizes: Best-1 Hummingbird Feeders (donated by Best-1) and Polar Neck Ties (donated by Polar Products)



Photo by Mike Gray

## Sectional Conservation Cash Grand Prizes

Sectional Conservation Cash Grand Prizes of \$3,000 each were awarded by the winning team of each section of the coast to the habitat conservation project of their choice.

This guarantees that at least one project will be funded in each section of the coast every year!

The following projects were recipients of the Sectional Conservation Cash Grand Prizes.

### Lower Texas Coast

#### **\$3,000 – Donated by the Three Rails and A Young Coot**

Estero Llano Grande State Park Wetland Habitat Restoration – submitted by Estero Llano Grande State Park.

This project will provide funds for purchasing Montezuma Bald Cypress trees for planting as part of an ongoing 20-acre wetland restoration project to provide additional complexity and structure to the habitat.

### Central Texas Coast

#### **\$3,000 – Donated by the Lovely Zorrillos**

Fred Jones Sanctuary Enhancement – submitted by Audubon Outdoor Club of Corpus Christi.

This Audubon Outdoor Club of Corpus Christi, Inc., project will provide funding for purchasing materials for constructing a viewing blind and repairs to existing structures.

### Upper Texas Coast

#### **\$3,000 – Donated by the Leica Lone Starlings**

Quintana Island Habitat Enhancement – submitted by the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory.

This will help fund the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory's continuing project creating forested woodlots on this small island to provide additional habitat for trans-gulf migrants, and also expand public viewing areas.



Travis Audubon Towhees  
Photo by Mike Gray

The youth tournaments continue to attract new birders every year! A special thank you goes out to all of the mentors, teachers, parents, scout leaders and sponsors for taking the time to help guide these young people into the field and educate them about birds and conservation along the Texas coast.

## GLIDERS TEAMS (14-18 YEAR-OLDS)

### 1. Travis Audubon Towhees (Upper Coast)

*Travis Audubon Society*

Valyo Calvert, Vitalik Nelson, Jesse Huth, Katrina Troppy, Walter Heymann

Chaperones: Amy Sugeno, David Arctur, Dave Sugeno, Alicia Nelson, Mike Troppy, David Heymann

Number of species: 146

Prizes: Pentax IQZoom 105S Cameras (donated by Pentax Imaging Company)



Travis Audubon Towhees  
Photo by David Arctur

### 2. The Mysterious Empids (Lower Coast)

*Independent*

Emma Buckingham, Sean Fitzgerald, Keri Bryan

Chaperone: Sumita Prasad

Number of species: 136

Prizes: *Endangered and Threatened Animals of Texas* (donated by TPWD), Polar Neck Ties (donated by Polar Products) and Brunton Compass and Map Navigators

### 4. Dow Raptors (Upper Coast)

*Dow Texas Operations*

Becca, Jose, Jennifer, Janna, Cindy  
Chaperone: David Plunkett

Number of Species: 38



Golden Eagles  
Photo by Mike Gray

### 3. Golden Eagles (Upper Coast)

*Independent*

Wesley Davis, Brian Barker, Brenda Davis

Chaperones: Brenda Davis, Ginger Himelright

Number of Species: 65

Prizes: *Texas Wildlife Viewing Guide* (donated by TPWD), Ken Kaufman's *Birds of North America* (donated by Naturally Curious)

### 5. Seadrift Seagulls (Central Coast)

*Dow Seadrift Site*

Natalie, Kerynn, Matthew, Ezekiel, Miguel  
Chaperones: Steven Bone, Beverly Bone

Number of Species: 30

# ROUGHWINGS (8-13 YEAR-OLDS)

## ROUGHWINGS – Lower Coast Only

### 1. Red-crowned Parrots

*Brownsville Convention and Visitor's Bureau*



Elyssa Trevino, Steven Trevino, Victor Borrego,  
Gabriel Arguelles, Francia Cedano

Chaperones: Eddie Trevino, Steve Labuda

Number of Species: 166

Prizes: Eagle Optics 8x42 Triumph binoculars,  
baseball caps (donated by Eagle Optics), and  
Polar Neck Ties (donated by Polar Products)

### 2. Edinburg Kingfishers

*Edinburg World Birding Center*



Jesus Franco, Cristina Franco, Rebecca Sova,  
Teresa Sova, Vicente Franco

Chaperones: Marisa Oliva, Jesus Franco, Diana Sova

Number of Species: 73

Prizes: *Endangered and Threatened Animals of Texas*  
(donated by TPWD)



Houston Audubon Accipiters

Photo by Mike Gray

## ROUGHWINGS – Upper Coast Only

### 1. Houston Audubon Accipiters

*Houston Audubon Society*

Patrick Bryan, John Bryan, James Justice Haynes,  
Brianna Bartholomew, Sierra Kneifel

Chaperones: Stennie Meadours, Wayne Bartholomew

Number of species: 109

Prizes: Eagle Optics 8x42 Triumph binoculars, baseball caps  
(donated by Eagle Optics), and Polar Neck Ties (donated  
by Polar Products)



Steiner Peregrines

### 2. Steiner Peregrines

*Steiner Germany*

Dock Smith, Cody  
Smith, Alexandra  
Karr, Melody Lynn

Chaperones: Laura  
Karr, Terrie Smith

Number of  
species: 103

Prizes: Birding By  
Ear Eastern/Central  
CDs (donated by  
Houghton Mifflin)

### 3. Snowy Owls

*Gulf Coast Bird Observatory*

Preston Davis,

Tristan Davis, John

Kenny, Reginald Pettus,

Nichlaus Dulworth

Chaperone:

Brenda Davis,

Mary Jo Kenny

Number of Species: 48

Prizes: *Texas Wildlife*

*Viewing Guide* (donated

by TPWD)



Snowy Owls

## ROUGHWINGS – Central Coast Only

### 1. (tie) The Laughing Gulls

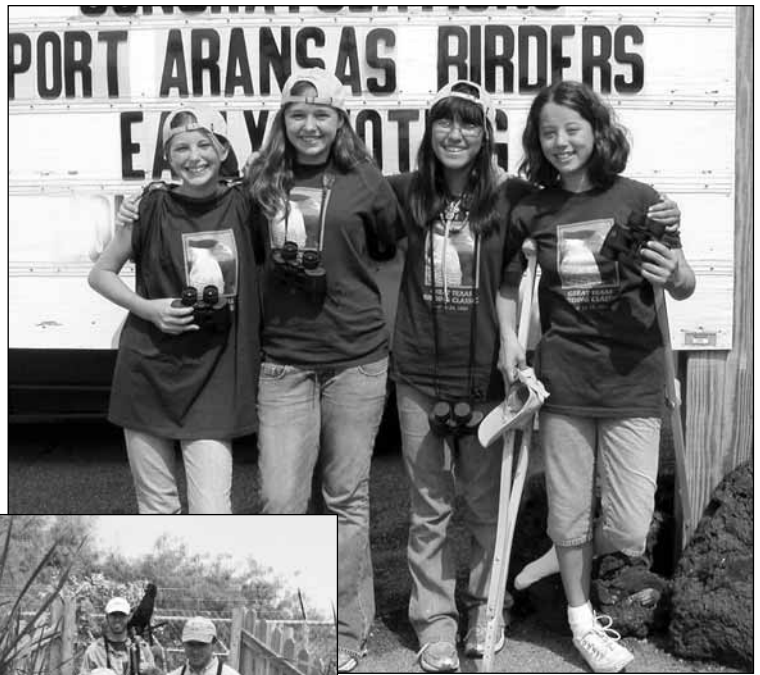
*Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce*

Kalani Balcom, Lily Cartwright, Akiko Ambuehl,  
Kelsey Abel, Nicole Chambers

Chaperone: Joan Holt

Number of Species: 98

Prizes: Eagle Optics 8x42 Triumph binoculars,  
baseball caps (donated by Eagle Optics), and  
Polar Neck Ties (donated by Polar Products)



The Laughing Gulls

### 1. (tie) Kickin' Kingfishers

*Independent*

Baltzaer Drodoswski, Alexa Dickey,  
Nick May, Tیره Morros, Hazel Morris

Chaperone: John Keller

Number of species: 104 (late checklist)



Kickin' Kingfishers

### 2. Crazy Cuckoos

*Independent*

Matthew Fries, Ryan Miner,

Shea Rogers, Akshay Patel

Chaperone: Nan Dietert

Number of Species: 87

Prizes: Birding By Ear Eastern/Central CDs  
(donated by Houghton Mifflin)

### 3. Travis Audubon Tanagers

*Travis Audubon Society*

Sam Fason, Josef Hale, Briana Hale

Chaperones: Drake Fason, Brian Hale

Number of species: 84

Prizes: *Texas Wildlife Viewing Guide* (donated by TPWD)



Travis Audubon  
Tanagers

### 4. Keen-Eyed Kingfishers

*Independent*

JMeagan Hardegree, Sarah Harrod,

Brittney Sikes, Brandy Sahr

Chaperone: Beau Hardegree

Number of species: 78

### 5. Super Sparrows

*Independent*

Lauren Kuffel, Lauren Leavell, Patrick Hickham

Chaperones: Pat Clements, Mary Kuffel, Ron Kuffel

Number of species: 67

### 6. Pesky Pelicans

*Independent*

Mary Ellen Flood, Mallory Sico, Joya Williams

Chaperones: Richard Gibbons, Chuck Williams,

Claudia Williams

Number of species: 62

### 7. Happy Hummingbirds

*Independent*

Hannah Grisemer, Alex Mueller, Karissa Rangel

Chaperones: Robin Cobb, Kelley Mueller, Kelly Kulick

Number of species: 59

### 8. Warbling Webelos

*Independent*

Andrew Hardegree, Val Bailey, David Steinmeyer, Justin Ahlstrom

Chaperone: Beau Hardegree

Number of species: 58

### 9. Looney Loons

*Independent*

Hannah Grunwald, Alegre Elizondo, Meredith Sico, Megan Hinger

Chaperones: Paula Hinger, Eric Hinger

Number of species: 44

# The Big Sit!

The Big Sit! Tournament\* continues to be a popular event. Teams came out in all sections of the coast identifying birds within their 17-foot circle. As part of the Big Sit! Tournament, the \$1000 Lone Star Bird Award was created. The Lone Star Bird Award is chosen by randomly drawing the name of a bird that can be seen along the entire Texas coast. Any Big Sit! team that sees this bird then goes into a drawing to determine the winner of the Lone Star Bird Award (This year's Lone Star Bird was the Blackburnian Warbler). This team then picks which habitat project will receive \$1000. Individual prizes are also given in this tournament category.

## 1. Port Aransas Spoonbills

*Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce*  
Scott Holt, Ann Vaughan, Joan Holt,  
Becky Corder, Bobby Sherwood, Tom  
Schall, Georgia Neblett, Maggie Guscott,  
Francis Stokes, Linda Fuiman  
Location: Leonabelle Turnbull Birding  
Center Observation Tower  
Number of species: 102  
Prizes: Brunton Lamplights and Polar  
Neck Ties (donated by Polar Products)



Port Aransas Spoonbills



BASF Bitterns

## 2. BASF Bitterns

*BASF*  
Cecilia Riley, Mike Gray, John Arvin, Sharon Rogers,  
Linda Pirtle, Ivory Harris, Joanne Weik, Kay Hale,  
Jennifer Sanchez  
Location: San Bernard Wildlife Refuge  
Number of Species: 91  
Prizes: Best-1 Hummingbird Feeders (donated by  
Best-1) and Polar Neck Ties (donated by Polar  
Products)

## 3. Swarovski Sitting Hawks

*Swarovski Optik N.A., Ltd.*  
Joel Simon, Vicki Simon, Scarlet Colley,  
George Colley, Bob Seltzer, Arlene Seltzer  
Location: Clay's Spot, South Padre Island  
Number of species: 88  
Prizes: Great Texas Birding Classic Mugs and  
Polar Neck Ties (donated by Polar Products)

## 4. The Brazosport Birders

*Clute Chamber of Commerce*  
Charlie Brower, Olivia Brower, Gary Brooks,  
Tom Collins, Denis James, Warren Pruess, Jim Renfro,  
Zane Lee, Ron Weeks, Jennifer Wilson  
Location: Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary  
Number of species: 82



The Brazosport  
Birders

## 5. Rockport Skimmers

*Rockport-Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce*  
Francis Hicks, Martha Hicks, Hilde Kaigler,  
Justin Stiles, Shawntelle Stiles  
Location: Aransas Bird and Nature Club  
Number of species: 77

## 6. Corpus Count

*Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau*  
Bob Creglow, Jo Creglow, Richard Gibbons, Kathy  
Griffith, Nancy Knight, Kimberly Vetter, Phyllis Yochem  
Location: Packery Channel – Corpus Christi  
Number of Species: 75



Corpus Count

## 7. Stewart Peepers

*Stewart Title Company – Port Aransas*  
Nancy Teller, Dianne Fredette, Carolyn Grosse,  
Warren Pulich, Marc Teller  
Location: Paradise Pond – Port Aransas  
Number of species: 62  
WINNER: LONE STAR BIRD AWARD

## 8. Altamiras

*Independent*  
Selena King, Ken King, Bob DeWenter,  
Pat DeWenter  
Location: Frontera Audubon  
Number of species: 54

\* The New Haven Bird Club  
founded and Birdwatcher's  
Digest hosts the original Big Sit!  
that takes place every October.  
For more information about this  
international event, please check  
out their Web site –  
[www.birdwatchersdigest.com/  
site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx](http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx)



Weslaco Buff-bellies

## 9. Weslaco Buff-bellies

*Weslaco Area Chamber of Commerce*  
Martin Hagne, Connie Hagne, Belinda Johnson,  
Don Carrell, Athit Camacho, Honeylet Jones,  
Juan Zamora, Abel Beraza, Alice Zamora  
Location: Valley Nature Center - Weslaco  
Number of species: 51

## 10. LCRA River Raptors

*Lower Colorado River Authority*  
Betsy Terrel, Paul Turner, Melanie Pavlas  
Location: Matagorda Bay Nature Park  
Number of species: 48

## 11. McAllen Green Jays

*McAllen Convention and Visitors Bureau*  
Sarah Cundiff, Colleen Hook, Mike Mangum,  
Sumita Prasad, Matt Cundiff, Javier DeLeon,  
Omar Rodriguez, Tim Brush  
Location: Quinta Mazatlan  
Number of Species: 39

## 12. The Zin Chicks

*Independent*  
Debbie Feagin, Kelly Jobe  
Location: Goliad County, Mud Creek at FM 1726  
Number of Species: 31

## LONE STAR BIRD AWARD

**\$1,000 – Donated by the Stewart Peepers**

**Packery Channel Sanctuary Habitat Restoration –  
submitted by the Audubon Outdoor Club of Corpus Christi**  
Money is to be used for native plant purchases to enhance the habitat.

# Outta-Sight Song Birder Tournament



## 1. Team La Primavera del Valle

Emily Cruz, Maria Tejerina, Jesus Garza, Nora Rodriguez

Blind-Folded: Roy Rodriguez

Volunteer/Driver: Evelyn Cruz

Number of Species: 34

Prizes: Polar Neck Ties (donated by Polar Products) and Great Texas Birding Classic baseball Caps, and *What Bird is That?* Braille Birding Guides

## 2. Tweety Birds

Raul Reyes, Sean Smith, Jessica Garza, San Juanita Torres

Blind-Folded: Eric Ellman

Volunteer/Driver: Nancy Smith, Anitra

Number of Species: 32

Prizes: Bird Songs of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Southwestern Texas (donated by Cornell Lab of Ornithology) and Polar Neck Ties (donated by Polar Products)

Tweety Birds



For the second year, the Great Texas Birding Classic held the Outta-Sight Song Birder Tournament for blind and visually impaired birders. Teams of 3-5 people participated (a maximum of one blindfolded sighted person was allowed per team) and bird species counted were identified by sound only. Thank you to the Valley teams who helped continue this fledgling tournament. We hope to expand this tournament to all sections of the coast in 2006.



Team Hawkeyes

## 3. Team Hawkeyes

Gladie Cruz, Jesus Gonzales, Lydia Guevara

Blind-Folded: Mel Pineda

Volunteer/Driver: Mirta Barrior

Number of Species: 31

Prizes: Insulated Lunch/Drink bags (donated by Gulf Coast Bird Observatory) and Polar Neck Ties (donated by Polar Products)



# South Padre Island Community Birding Day

The South Padre Island Community Birding Day on Saturday, April 16, our kick-off for this year's Great Texas Birding Classic, was a great success. Thank you to all the participants who made this event so much fun and especially to the South Padre Island Convention and Visitors Bureau for hosting the evening's activities.

Local birders, local business people and community leaders all came out to the South Padre Island Convention Centre for a fun evening of birding, wonderful conversation, and great food.

During the Community Birding Day, teams of three to five people got together to see how many birds could be seen in near-by birding hotspots in an hour and a half. After the mini-birding tournament, teams gathered for dinner as awards were presented for the top three teams and the two mystery bird winners.



Loonie Birds



Cat House  
Birders

Jen's Juncos



Chachalaca Team

## Final Results:

### 1. Loonie Birds –

Mark Warner, Debi Warner, Carolyn Napir, Don Napir, Judy Donildson, Jo Corey: 46 species

### 2. Cat House Birders –

Billy Snider, Sue Griffin, Carol Jones, Patricia Mayes: 36 species

### 3. Jen's Juncos –

Jim Harrison, Bea Harrison, Jennifer Mandel, Kate Ball: 33 species

### 4. Three Blind Birders –

Randy Fugate, June Fugate, Juanita Gibson: 32 species

### 5. Chachalaca Team –

Kay Wade, Cecelia Farrel, Blanca Farrel, Edward Farrel: 28 species

## Mystery Bird Awards:

Most Reddish Egrets –  
Three Blind Birders with  
3 individual birds

Most Indigo Buntings –  
Cat House Birders with  
3 individual birds



Three Blind Birders

# Stories from the Road

Date: April 20, 2005

Sponsor: Zeiss Sport Optics      Team name: NOCA PIPL

Participants: Jason Garvon, Shannon Garvon, Richard Gibbons and Kimberly Vetter

Location: Corpus Christi, Texas, a west to east route starting at Hazel Bazemore County Park and ending at North Padre Island

Conditions: overcast with occasional light showers and steady winds from the southeast beginning at 10-15 mph in the morning and 25 mph in the afternoon.

Summary:



Our big day began at Hazel Bazemore County Park at 5:30 AM. Common Pauraque, Common Nighthawk, and Chuck-will's-widow placated our anticipation of the dawn chorus. The overcast conditions delayed the morning singing bouts, but it did finally provide many of the expected brush country species such as Green Jays, Brown-crested Flycatcher, and Olive Sparrow. From here we mounted our bicycles that were laden with a days provisions for birding 55 miles.

We made a stop at the Simon's "bird house" overlooking the Nueces river delta picking up Lesser Goldfinches and Buff-bellied Hummingbird and then went on to Pollywog Pond hoping for migrants, expecting a few regulars. There was nothing unexpected and we had a great look at a Blue Grosbeak that was a first of season sighting for all team members.

From Pollywog we began the first long leg to Tule Lake, a great brackish waterbird spot just off the Corpus Christi Ship channel surrounded by refineries and downwatershed from a Superfund site. We picked up several species here including Wilson's and Snowy Plovers. The fantastic surprise was an immature BALD EAGLE circling overhead with an immature White-tailed Hawk. This bird is rarely seen in the Corpus Christi area and we were elated to have noticed it above.

We picked up a few surprises along the route to Rose Hill Cemetery including Clay-colored Sparrows and Red-tailed Hawk. The latter becomes scarce when wintering birds migrate to northerly breeding grounds. Rose Hill was a strike out and we were ready for lunch. We pulled our bicycles through the Taqueria Garibaldi drive-through and while ordering, noticed a tight group of gulls with a migratory attitude, Franklin's Gulls!

Lunch was devoured on the porch of the Blucher Nature Center. Blucher Park was relatively slow, but we did manage to pick up a few migrants such as Ovenbird and Orchard Oriole. We were off to Ward Island using the less-windy neighborhood route along Corpus Christi Bay.

A clump of Sugar Hackberries on Ward Island sheltered Yellow-throated Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, and Black-and-white Warbler. The two-mile loop around the island with overlooks to shorebird haunts added many species including Piping Plover, Whimbrel, and our first of many Reddish Egrets. The next stop was Suter Park on the other side of Oso Bay. We had our first and only tailwind for about a half mile bringing the 20 plus mph headwind into sharp focus for the remainder of the day.

The previous days scouting produced an alternate route loop that proved to be very productive. A new honey hole was found after scouting a large pond on a city map. Birds found here were breeding plumaged Eared Grebes, Ruddy Ducks, and a raft of Lesser Scaup. From here, we began the off-road component of the day riding along sorghum fields and a storm drainage filled with shorebirds. Our spirits were lifted with six new birds: Painted Bunting, Crested Caracara (the GTBC t-shirt bird that couldn't be missed), Upland Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, and Long-billed Curlew. Shannon also picked up a Mesquite thorn in her front tire that deflated our morale only temporarily. The flat was fixed in under five-minutes and we were headed to North Padre Island via the Flour Bluff ponds and Laguna Shores Drive. Flour Bluff provided a boost with Pyrrhuloxia and Eastern Bluebird, two great birds. Laguna Shores was packed with shorebirds and we added Marbled Godwits.

Riding with the sunset at our backs, we crossed the JFK causeway to the barrier island and picked up American Oystercatcher and a late Herring Gull on the new beach access road that runs alongside the elevated causeway. Team

morale was splintering at dark so we called it a day and celebrated while completing paperwork. The final total was 149 species. Not bad for only 55 miles of bicycle travel through a mostly urban environment. This exceeded our goal of 135, one more than the 2003 Cape May Bird Observatory's Pedal Power team.

Our helmets are off to Zeiss Sport Optics for sponsoring our team, the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory for stepping up to coordinate the Great Texas Birding Classic, and Texas Parks and Wildlife for continuing their support for bird conservation on the Texas coast.



## From the Edinburg Kingfishers

On Sunday, April 17, the Edinburg World Birding Center and the Edinburg Chamber of Commerce sponsored a "Roughwings" youth team as part of the Great Texas Birding Classic Competition, a statewide event. We had five members on our team between the ages of 7 and 10. The young competitors were challenged to find a bird, identify it and keep track of all the birds they identified though the day. Team members did so with the help of binoculars, scopes, several field guides and individual notebooks. Team chaperones were allowed to provide limited assistance using guidebooks to help them narrow down their choices.

Our team stopped at several locations in the Rio Grande Valley, starting with the grounds of the Edinburg World Birding Center in Edinburg, Texas. There, the team found and identified 33 species of birds including a Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting and Ruddy Ducks. From Edinburg we traveled to Weslaco where we birded the yard of Sumita Prasad, a local birder. We also birded in Llano Grande State Park & World Birding Center in Weslaco (open to the public this summer) with special arrangement. The team not only saw a number of water birds, but had great looks at two large alligators and a beautiful Mesquite Lizard.

From Weslaco, we traveled to South Padre Island, stopping at a popular birding spot, a dirt road just west of Laguna Vista. There the kids got great looks at a Willet, a Loggerhead Shrike, and Western Meadowlarks.

On South Padre, the team birded the boardwalk at the Convention Center, the future site of the South Padre Island World Birding Center. The kids saw many new birds and had great looks at a Least Bittern, Purple Gallinule, and a Tri-colored Heron. After dinner that evening, our last stop was the Osprey Pier at Padre where the team saw a Ruddy Turnstone, a Least Tern and a few other shorebirds.

The five members of the "Edinburg Kingfishers" were: Vicente Franco (age 7) Teresa Sova (age 8), Christina Franco (age 8), Rebecca Sova (age 10) and Jesus Franco (age 10). The team chaperones were Marisa Oliva, EWBC Manager, Jesus Franco, parent & TPW Urban Biologist, and Diana Sova, parent.

## Snapshots of the Classic



Audacious Anis and Team Audubon at check-in



Upper Coast registration



Final checklist dropoff



Community Birding Day raffle



Awards Brunch  
Photo by Mike Gray



Cumulative checklists at Awards Brunch



Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil



Upper Coast registration and silent auction

# Mark Your Calendars!

We could not do this event every year without the continued support of our corporate and community sponsors, prize donors and all of the participants who come down to the Texas coast each year to compete on behalf of coastal habitat conservation. We hope you are able to continue making room in your schedule for this event in the years to come. So, get out your calendars – here are the dates for next year's Great Texas Birding Classic!

**2006 – Tenth Annual Great Texas Birding Classic**  
Saturday, April 22 – Sunday, April 30  
Sectional Tournament Order: Central, Upper, Lower

For information on the Great Texas Birding Classic 2006, contact Tournament Coordinator, Carol Jones:

Toll free: 1-866-GTBCLAS (482-2527) · In Lake Jackson: 979-480-0999

By mail: The Great Texas Birding Classic

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, 103 West Highway 332, Lake Jackson, TX 77566

Email: [cjones@gcbo.org](mailto:cjones@gcbo.org)

Check us out on the Web at: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/gtbc](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/gtbc) and [www.gcbo.org/gtbc.html](http://www.gcbo.org/gtbc.html)

# Sponsors 2005

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Lower Colorado River Authority  
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Polar Products  
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Gerald Sneed – artist  
South Padre Island Convention  
and Visitors Bureau  
Texas Audubon  
Whataburger, Inc.  
Wild Lines, Maren Phillips – artist

## TEAM SPONSORSHIP

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\* part of sponsorship package

American Electric Power *	Leica Sport Optics
BASF *	Lower Colorado River Authority *
Brownsville Convention and Visitors Bureau *	Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce/Tourist Bureau *
Bushnell Performance Optics * and <i>Birder's World Magazine</i>	Reliant Energy *
Clute Visitors Bureau	Rockport-Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce *
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Houston Audubon Society	Weslaco Area Chamber of Commerce
Jordan Outdoor Enterprises (Realtree) *	<i>WildBird</i> and Swift Optics, Inc. *

The Great Texas Birding Classic is co-hosted by the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and the Wildlife Division of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. We would like to extend our gratitude to the following people for making this year's event fly!

**GULF COAST BIRD OBSERVATORY:**

Cecilia Riley – Executive Director  
 Carol Jones – GTBC Tournament Coordinator  
 Maudlynn Drake – Administrative Assistant  
 Jim and Bea Harrison – Registration, Checklist Dropoff and Silent Auction Volunteers

**Additional GCBO Volunteers:**

- Sherry Collins
- Mickey Dufilho
- Alice Seiling
- Jim Calvert
- Rosalee Marshall
- Gardner Campbell

**TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT:**

Shelly Plante – Nature Tourism Coordinator  
 Ron Ellis – Nature Tourism Intern  
 Pat Morton – Conservation Outreach Program Leader  
 Cliff Shackelford – Texas Partners in Flight Coordinator  
 Ron George – Director, Wildlife Science, Research and Diversity Program  
 Mike Berger – Director, Wildlife Division

**OFFICIAL ARTIST FOR 2005:**

Craig Farquhar, TPWD

**JUDGES:**

Cliff Shackelford, TPWD, Texas Partners in Flight  
 Dr. Keith Arnold, Texas A&M University  
 Noreen Damude, Natural History writer and biologist  
 Pat Morton, TPWD  
 Dr. Timothy C. Moremond

**ADDITIONAL BEHIND THE SCENES HELP:**

Mike Gray, John Herron and Bryan Plante

**Thanks to all of our community partners for helping coordinate our sanctioned events:**

Connie Ledbetter, South Padre Island Convention and Visitors Bureau  
 Sandi Ridgley, Rockport-Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce  
 Edith Fischer, Brazosport Area Convention and Visitors Council  
 Doug Chandler, Cherotel Hotel

**Special thanks to the following for opening their gates to Classic competitors:**

Coastal NWRs                      Coastal WMAs                      El Canelo Ranch                      Texas State Parks  
 Private homes of our birding friends throughout the Texas coast

**Thanks to all the people at TPWD who helped make this year a success:**

- |                 |                  |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Randy Brudnicki | Mark Klym        | Tim Peterson     |
| Susan Dillon    | Charles Lohrmann | Lydia Saldaña    |
| Ron George      | Karen Loke       | Brian Schwegmann |
| Tom Harvey      | Robert Macias    | Jim Stone        |
| Chris Hunt      |                  |                  |



GTBC 2005 judges and staff



Photo by Mike Gray

Birding Classic judges



Cecilia Riley, GCBO

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Patricia Morton	Conservation Outreach Program Leader
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Ron Ellis	Nature Tourism Intern
Clifford Shackelford	Texas Partners in Flight Coordinator

### Communications Division:

Lydia Saldaña	Division Director
Darcy Bontempo	Marketing and Web Services Branch
Tom Harvey	News and Information Branch
Richard Roberts	Media Productions Branch
Jim Stone	<i>Texas Parks &amp; Wildlife</i> Magazine Advertising Consultant

Written and coordinated by Shelly Plante and Ron Ellis  
Publication layout by Chris Hunt, Creative Services  
Cover artwork by Craig Farquhar  
Artwork by Rob Fleming and Clemente Guzman III, Creative Services  
Project coordination and layout direction by Tim Peterson, Creative Services