

winners report



APRIL 26 – MAY 3

2009 Great Texas Birding Classic

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE GULF COAST BIRD OBSERVATORY
AND THE TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT



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 you, your business or community can be involved in this year's event, please contact the Birding Classic Staff:

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www.birdingclassic.org

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Cover Artwork

Original artwork by Cherie McBride is featured on the cover.



PROUD PARTNER

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Thank You!

The Birding Classic staff would like to extend a warm “thank you” to all participants, our host community, Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau, our sponsors, and special guest Kenn Kaufman for making the 13th 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 seven Texas coastal communities.
- We had 72 additional sponsors, including corporations, small businesses, artists, foundations and individuals.
- 228 people participated in the competition.
- A total of 36 teams with birders from seven states and Canada competed in all categories.
- We had 14 youth teams participate and 12 Big Sit! teams.
- The combined species total seen or heard by all teams during the Birding Classic this year was 328! To see which birds were seen by the winning teams, go to www.gcbo.org
- Through the past 13 years, winning teams have donated \$686,000 to avian habitat conservation along the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail! This is a significant accomplishment—one that cannot be celebrated enough. The creation and continuation of this event has benefited birds, other wildlife and people, as well.



TAMUG WildBirders



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Thanks to the Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau for hosting our Awards Brunch on Sunday, May 3! The Bayfront Omni Hotel in Corpus Christi and our special guest Master of Ceremonies Kenn Kaufman were also instrumental in making the concluding event a wonderful celebration.

2009 GTBC Conservation Grant Grand Prize Winners

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

Environmental Partners

RRI Energy

Bill Baker

\$20,000 Conservation Grant (listed on page 3).

Tom Roberts

Individual prizes: First-place prize of framed 2009 Birding Classic artwork and Donana Bags donated by Swarovski Optik NA.

Andy Dietrich

Number of species: 288



Photo by Mike Gray.

Second Place

California Thrashers

Independent

Individual prizes: Tripods donated by Swarovski Optik NA.

Number of species: 204



Photo by Mike Gray.

Steve Frank
Chad Naylor
Andrew McClung

Conservation Grant Grand Prize Money for the Birding Classic 2009

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 place in the Weeklong Tournament won the privilege of awarding \$20,000 to the habitat conservation project of their choice. The following project was the recipient of the Weeklong Conservation Grant Grand Prize.

\$20,000 – Donated by Environmental Partners/RRI Energy:

Matagorda County Birding and Nature Center Habitat Improvement

Restore and enlarge the wetlands and prairie areas of the property to the benefit of the birds and other wildlife.

Property size: 34 acres in Matagorda County, Central Texas Coast

Energy Saver – Coast Wide

This was the second year we had a tournament with a little greener twist. The basic rules were that a team had to travel a minimum of 50 miles and turn in their mileage with their Official Checklist. Once the judges assessed the species list, we then calculated the number of species seen per mile driven. Both Gliders and Adult teams were eligible to compete in the coast wide Energy Saver tournament. A \$3,000 Conservation Grant was awarded by the team with the highest number of species per mile. The teams that participated had a great time and enjoyed the challenge of determining a very birdy route.



Weslaco Slice of Good Lifers

1. Weslaco Slice of Good Lifers

Weslaco Chamber of Commerce

Wayne Bartholomew, JD Cortez, Martin Hagne, Dan Jones, John Yochum

Number of species per mile: 3.04 (152 species)

\$3,000 Conservation Grant

Individual prizes: Framed 2009 Birding Classic artwork and *Peterson Field Guide to the Birds of North America* books donated by Houghton Mifflin.

\$3,000 Energy Saver Conservation Grant – Wetland Creation and Educational project, Valley Nature Center

A half-acre wetland will be created and educational signage will be installed next to the new education center due to open in the fall of 2010.

Property size: 6 acres, Hidalgo County, Lower Texas Coast

2. GCBO Cuckoos

*Brazosport Convention & Visitors Council
and D&D Hickner*

John Arvin, Sue Heath, David Benn

Number of species per mile: 3.02 (151 species)

Individual prizes: *Gulls of the Americas* books donated by Houghton Mifflin and certificates with special art for the 2009 Classic.



GCBO Cuckoos. Photo by David Benn.

ADULTS – Lower Coast Only

1. Swarovski Roadside Hawks

Swarovski Optik N.A., Ltd

Clay Taylor, Mary Beth Stowe, Huck Huchins

Number of species: 161

\$3,000 Conservation Grant (listed on page 6)

Individual prizes: First-place prize framed 2009 Birding Classic artwork and *Peterson Field Guide to the Birds of North America* books donated by Houghton Mifflin.



Aplomado Flacons



Swarovski Roadside Hawks

ADULTS – Central Coast Only

1. Aplomado Falcons

Independent

Ray Allen, Gene Blacklock, Jay Pruett, Linda Allen

Number of species: 150

Individual prizes: First-place prize framed 2009 Birding Classic artwork and four boat trips for two people to see the whooping cranes donated by Rockport Adventures Captain Tommy Moore.

ADULTS – Upper Coast Only

1. TAMUG WildBirders

WildBird

Susan Knock, Jason Perry, Katie St. Clair, Laurissa Noack, Andrew McInnes

Number of species: 180

\$3,000 Conservation Grant (listed on page 6)

Individual prizes: First-place prize framed 2009 Birding Classic artwork and *Peterson Field Guide to the Birds of North America* books donated by Houghton Mifflin.

2. Free Falling Falcons

Independent

Tony Frank, Lynn Barber, David Sarkozi

Number of species: 170

Individual prizes: Owl Shacks donated by Owl Shack and framed 2009 Birding Classic artwork certificates.

3. Whooping Craniacs

GDF Suez Gas NA and Greg & Lalise Mason

Lalise Mason, Greg Mason, Bob Nailing, Jamie Schubert

Number of species: 141

4. Accidental Accipiters

Independent

Jessica Coleman, Elizabeth Farley-Dawson,

Dan Dawson, Jamie Cantrell

Number of species: 130



Free Falling Falcons



Whooping Craniacs

Sectional Conservation Grants

Sectional Conservation Grants of \$3,000 each were awarded by the winning sponsored team of each section of the coast (that had sponsored teams participate) to the habitat conservation project of their choice.

The following projects were recipients of the Sectional Conservation Grants.

LOWER TEXAS COAST \$3,000 – Donated by the Swarovski Roadside Hawks, Swarovski Optik NA

South Padre Island World Birding Center Habitat Improvement

The eastern most portion of the property will be enhanced for birds by creating an upland brush habitat by planting native trees and shrubs. Property size: 10 acres, Cameron County, Lower Texas Coast

UPPER TEXAS COAST \$3,000 – Donated by the TAMUG WildBirders, WildBird

Acquiring an addition to the Texas Mid-Coast NWR Bird Pond Unit

Property size: 28-acre addition, Brazoria County, Upper Texas Coast

Gliders Teams (14- to 18-year-olds)

The youth tournaments continue to attract new birders every year! A special “thank-you” goes out to all of the mentors, teachers, parents 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.

1. TAS/TOS Towhees (central coast)

Travis Audubon Society, Texas Ornithological Society, Wimberley Bird Society, San Antonio Audubon Society

Additionally supported by Jerry Hall, Bill Johnson, Sterling Medical, Dave Collins, J.F. Gerard, Fournier, Field Guides, Jackson Walker, Sylvia Bartay, Michael Morgan, Melania Miller, Jackie Norman, Mary Lavender, Jackson Walker II. Jesse Huth, Austin Walker, Christian Walker, Irene Smith, Caleb Dye

Chaperones: Jaci Kroupa, Mr. Walker

Number of species: 191

Individual prizes: *Peterson Field Guide to the Birds of North America* donated by Houghton Mifflin and first-place framed 2009 Birding Classic artwork.



TAS/TOS Towhees



The Laughing Gals

2. The Laughing Gals (central coast)

Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce/Visitors Bureau Kelsey Abel, Lily Cartwright, Megan Hardegree, Mary Ellen Flood

Chaperone: Joan Holt

Number of species: 143

Individual prizes: *Hummingbirds of Texas* signed by the author and donated by Clifford Shackelford and framed 2009 Birding Classic artwork runner-up certificates.

Roughwings (8- to 13-year-olds)

1. Rockport Roadrunners (central coast)

Rockport-Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce

August Smith, Savannah Rozacky, Emily Duprie, Olivia Smith

Chaperones: Dale Pogue, Valerie Smith, Gayle Rozacky

Number of species: 87

Individual prizes: "Birds of our Region" software donated by Thayer Birding Software, Texas Birds Publications Collection donated by TOS and the first-place framed 2009 Birding Classic artwork.



Rockport Roadrunners



Eagle Eyes

2. Eagle Eyes (upper coast)

Independent

John Hale, Jason Oehring, Stephen Spears

Chaperones: Ron Weeks, Linda Hale, Sandy Spears, Vickie Oehring

Number of species: 85

Individual prizes: Stokes binocular kits donated by Eagle Optics, Texas Birds Publications Collection donated by TOS and the second-place 2009 Birding Classic artwork.



Emerging Eagle Scouts.

Photo by Kathie Holder.

3. TOS Emerging Eagle Scouts (upper coast)

Texas Ornithological Society

Shawn Haller, Michael Hernandez,

Luke McFall, Jerry Kohler

Chaperone: Kathie Holder

Number of species: 82

Individual prizes: Stokes binocular kits donated by Eagle Optics, Texas Birds Publications Collection donated by TOS and the Second place framed 2009 Birding Classic artwork.

4. Dow Ospreys (upper coast)

The Dow Chemical Company

Dylan Etie, Jeremy Simon, Elijah Simon, Sarah Milichich

Chaperones: Sheree Etie, Dana Simon

Number of Species: 78

5. B.E.S.T. (central coast)

(Birding Elementary Spotting Team)

Independent

Hank Brennan, David Lancaster, B.J. Grimes,

Charlotte Ramsden, Patrick Watson

Chaperones: Julie Findley, Elizabeth Lancaster

Number of species: 70



B.E.S.T.

5. Birding is for the Scouts (upper coast)

Independent

Dane Sawyer, Natalie Sawyer, Gabi Walter

Chaperone: Bob White

Number of species: 70

7. TOS Edinburg Kingfishers (lower coast)

Texas Ornithological Society

Kathryn Braugh, Lauryn Braugh, Teresa Sova

Chaperones: Javier de Leon, Beverly Braugh

Number of species: 67



TOS Edinburg Kingfishers



Weslaco Kiwanis Fledglings. Photo by Susan Hoehne.

8. Weslaco Kiwanis Fledglings (lower coast)

Weslaco Kiwanis Club

Ali Ayala, Christina Franco, Vincente Franco,

Gabriel Silva, Celeste Garcia

Chaperones: Kyle O'Haver, Jennifer Owen-White

Number of species: 60

9. Mighty Mockingbirds (central coast)

Independent

Cathryn Johnson, Dana Alaroso Baker, Hayley

Chaperone: Robyn Cobb

Number of species: 58

Mighty Mockingbirds.

Photo by Tom Shearer, USFWS.



Cuckoo Cockatoos. Photo by Tom Shearer, USFWS.

10. Cuckoo Cockatoos (central coast)

Independent

Jackie Black, Teller Martin,

Victoria Rangel, Katie Fisher, Camille

Chaperone: Mary Ellen Vega

Number of species: 57



11. Olsen Ospreys (central coast)

Independent

Cole Longanecker, Hailey Zollars, Sabrina Cody,

Michael Forsberg, Chase Denton

Chaperone: Beau Hardegree

Number of species: 55

Olsen Ospreys. Photo by Tom Shearer, USFWS.



12. Golden Eagles (central coast)

Independent

Pattie Rivera, Max Elzondo, Steven Silera, Matt Moffitt, Dillon Gumpal

Chaperone: M. Clare Lee

Number of species: 54

Golden Eagles.

Photo by Tom Shearer, USFWS.



Central Coast – Incarnate Word Kids. Photo by Tom Shearer, USFWS.



TOS Edinburg Kingfishers vs. Weslaco Kiwanis Fledglings.

Photo by Susan Hoehne.



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 \$3,000 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 Least Sandpiper). This team then selects the habitat project to receive \$3,000. The Big Sit! Tournament continues to grow so we made the decision to award two Lone Star Bird Award grants this year. Individual prizes are also given in this tournament category.



Southmost Sitters. Photo by David Benn.

1. Southmost Sitters

McAllen Chamber of Commerce

Joshua Rose, Mary Gustafson, Kyle O'Haver, David Benn, Max Pons, Katherine Miller, John Yochum, Roy Rodriguez

Location: The Nature Conservancy's Southmost Ranch

Number of species: 104

Individual prizes: Hummingbird feeder kits donated by Best "1" and first-place 2009 Birding Classic artwork.

2. Port Aransas Spoonbills

Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce/Visitors Bureau

Scott Holt, Ann Vaughan, Joan Holt, Becky Corder, Bobby Sherwood, Suzette Freeman, Nick Lorette, Mikael Behrens, Mary Judson, Bob Fisher

Location: Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center Observation Tower

Number of species: 102



Port Aransas Spoonbills

3. McRee Ford Thunderbirds

McRee Ford

Dennis Myers, Camy Myers, Breck Sacra, Tom Roberts, Andy Dietrich, Bill Baker, Brad Adams

Location: Cedar Bayou Cooling Pond

Number of species: 100

4. Groovy-billed Anis

Eagle Optics & the South Padre Island Convention and Visitors Bureau

Marci Fuller, Terry Fuller, Michael O'Brien, Louise Zemaitis, Ben Lizdas, Danny Hoehne, Susan Hoehne

Location: South Padre Island Convention Centre

Number of species: 98

5. Bitterns

BASF & Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

Cecilia Riley, Mike Gray, John Arvin, Jan Cato, Kay Hale,
Reba Craft, Kay Lookingbill, Robert Lookingbill, Bob Woods
Location: San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge
Number of species: 86



Bitterns. Photo by Mike Gray.

Sora Winners. Photo by Kathryn Garcia.



6. Sora Winners

Corpus Christi Convention & Visitors Bureau

Scott Large, David Newstead, Jerry Bately, Mandy Ruddy, Zane Ruddy,
Courtney Lee, Jon Anderson, Marty Straight, Keith Johnson, Linda Fuiman
Location: Hazel Bazemore
Number of species: 78
WINNER: LONE STAR BIRD AWARD – \$3,000 CONSERVATION GRANT

7. Brazosport Birders

Freeport LNG

Tom Taroni, David Plunkett, Charlie Brower, Olivia Brower,
Jennifer Wilson, Gary Brooks, Tom Morris, Bea Harrison,
Jim Harrison, Phil Huxford
Location: Quintana Sanctuary
Number of species: 76



Brazosport Birders. Photo by Carol Jones.

Knight Birds. Photo by Kathryn Garcia.



8. Knight Birds

Corpus Christi Convention & Visitors Bureau

Jo Creglow, Phyllis Yoakum, Mel Cooksey, Leah Pummil,
Ann Nightingale, Larry Botkin, Pat Botkin, Maggie Haynie,
Jimmy Swartz, Teresa Guerra
Location: Packery Channel
Number of species: 70

**Bay City
Beauties**



9. Bay City Beauties

Matagorda County Birding & Nature Center

Marilyn Sitz, Karen McBride,
Faye Cunningham, Donna Younger,
Francine Sanders, Karen Barrett, Sherrie Head
Location: Matagorda County Birding & Nature Center
Number of species: 69

9. Swarovski Optic Sitting Hawks

Swarovski Optik N.A., Ltd.

Clay Taylor, Joel Simon, Vicki Simon, Arlene Steltzer, George Colley

Location: Clay's Spot – South Padre Island

Number of species: 69

11. Stewart Title Peepers

Stewart Title Company – Port Aransas

Nancy Teller, Diane Albright, Carolyn Grosse, Julie Finley, Dana Jensen

Location: Paradise Pond – Port Aransas

Number of species: 65



Vopak Vultures. Photo by Carol Jones.

11. Vopak Vultures

Vopak North America

Don Verser, Mary Ann Beauchemin, Betsy Black, Marcy Brown, Flo Hannah, Pam Smolen, Gary Gray

Location: Smith Oaks, High Island

Number of species: 65

**WINNER: LONE STAR BIRD AWARD –
\$3,000 CONSERVATION GRANT**

Sora Winners Team Sponsor – Corpus Christi CVB



Lone Star Bird Award

\$3,000 – Donated by the Vopak Vultures

Warren Lake Wildlife Viewing Platform, Katy Prairie Conservancy

This project will pay to purchase native coastal prairie seed and plant it along both sides of a 650-foot-long access path to the viewing platform.

Property size: half-acre restoration in Waller and Harris counties, Upper Texas Coast

\$3,000 – Donated by the Sora Winners, Corpus Christi Convention & Visitors Bureau

Wetland Creation and Educational project, Valley Nature Center

A half-acre wetland will be created and educational signage will be installed next to the new education center due to open in the fall of 2010.

Property size: 6 acres, Hidalgo County, Lower Texas Coast



Photo by Tom Taroni

Big Sit! Excitement: Diamondback Rattlesnake Eats a Red-winged Blackbird

by Bea and Jim Harrison

“Hey, I’ve never heard grackles make that sound before,” Tom Taroni exclaimed as we talked atop the observation tower at the Quintana Bird Sanctuary. We were engaged in the “Big Sit!” portion of the Texas Great Birding Classic. The birding had been slow that day and the calls of the red-winged blackbirds and grackles had become a background noise as they chattered while feeding on the birdseed that had been spread on the trails of the small wooded lot.

My wife, Bea, Tom and I looked down from our perch to see all the blackbirds in the branches looking down at one spot in the grass. Then we saw why the birds were behaving in such a strange way. We could see a red-winged blackbird locked in the jaws of a large diamondback rattlesnake next to the trail. Apparently the snake took advantage of the bird’s focus on the bird seed to catch itself a meal. The struggle of the redwing was primeval, but futile as the rattlesnake maneuvered to swallow the bird headfirst.

We called from the top of the tower to alert the various birders and photog-

raphers below. Of course the event became a huge photo opportunity immediately. All those bazooka-sized lenses were now trained on the snake eating lunch instead of the colorful migrants that were resting and feeding in the surrounding trees.

A few weeks earlier, an unexpected visitor decided to walk the circular trail on the same small wooded lot – a bobcat! You always expect to see some great birds when you visit Quintana Bird Sanctuary each April, but it seems that some other creatures also have an interest in all those birds that visit the park each spring and can

provide great new experiences for the birders visiting the park. Though these were both interesting experiences, they do remind us to be alert when in the field. You never know what might be birdwatching with you.

As a footnote to the snake event— we e-mailed one of our pictures of the snake eating the redwing to a friend at Texas Parks and Wildlife in Austin. Our friend replied that she had already received it from someone else at TPWD. It seems the news of the snake/bird incident moved fast on the Internet!

Eagle Optics at the Great Texas Birding Classic

Ben Lizdas of the Groovy-billed Anis posted this story on his blog 600birds.blogspot.com after participating in the Big Sit! this year.

On Sunday, I participated in the Great Texas Birding Classic's Bit Sit! competition. If you are wondering what exactly is a "Big Sit!", I recommend you check out this YouTube video (www.youtube.com/watch?v=3AvmLM7rUGU) by Bill Thompson and Eagle Optics.

Our Big Sit site was at the South Padre Island Convention Centre. It was a windy day with few migrants but we had a fantastic time, spoke with lots of birders, and saw quite a few birds in the process.



Team member Michael O'Brien scouts for shorebirds from a ladder perched against our modest shelter for the day. Michael literally wrote the book on shorebirds, so if anyone was up to the task it was him. Fellow shorebird author Richard Crossley also joined us for a bit, so I felt we were in exceptionally good hands.



Here's a team photo (left to right): me, Terry Fuller, Marci Fuller, Susan Hoehne, Danny Hoehne, Micheal O'Brien, and Louise Zemaitis. Louise is another amazing birder and bird artist. I feel so grateful to have been part of such a collective wealth of talent on this team.

Here is an overview of our site. We had excellent views of multiple habitats from this spot. The ladder, contributed by Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival President Danny Hoehne, allowed us to get some long views that added significant numbers of species to our list for the day.



We ended the day with a respectable 98 species on our list. Very well considering the windy conditions which blew most all the smaller migrants right past the island on their way north. This blackpoll warbler was one of four warblers we had on Sunday.

The boardwalk at the convention center allowed excellent close-up looks at rails, waders and shorebirds, including this short-billed dowitcher.



Tweeting at the Classic!

Our newest Weeklong team, the California Thrashers, allowed us all to follow them on Twitter throughout the tournament week. For those who missed it, here is a play-by-play of their first Birding Classic experience.



1. Welcome to the tweetings of The California Thrashers, competitors in the Great Texas Birding Classic 2009. Stay tuned for developments. 5:27 PM Apr 23rd
2. One of our Thrashers hats has been stolen from my office. **The phenom that is The California Thrashers has begun.** Can you feel the buzz? 4:58 PM Apr 24th
3. For the uninitiated, here is the lowdown on the Great Texas Birding Classic. www.audubonmagazine.com/features0303/texas-birding.html 7:18 PM Apr 24th
4. Classic begins tomorrow Doc and I are en route Frisco to Houston Up at 4 am 7:10 AM Apr 27th
5. here is what awaits us: (they linked to the photo of the Red-winged Blackbird being eaten by the rattlesnake in the previous story) 7:39 AM Apr 27th
6. a few words from the flight Our team is 3: zoologist (Doc), woodworker (Woody) and utility lawyer 9:36 AM Apr 27th
7. Doc is an expert in the laysan finch, **Woody intrepid but horrified by snakes.** W nearly bitten by cottonmouth in TX 2 yrs ago 9:39 AM Apr 27th
8. i am sitting in the car in a motel parking lot in Jasper TX while Doc and Woody unload gear **There is a torrent of rain I refuse to get out** 9:12 PM Apr 27th
9. Rain and Tstorms have been hellish since arriving in TX If it does not clear we will have plenty of time to twitter Tweet tweet 9:16 PM Apr 27th
10. the downpour continues. I remain in the car and see my teammates thru the motel window. **Birding is a lonely business** 9:34 PM Apr 27th
11. While I have the time, let me explain our goal. 200 species over 5 days. First day target 75. Second day 50, then 25, 25 and 25. 9:36 PM Apr 27th
12. The contest begins at midnight. That gives 2 hours to get up the courage to leave the car 9:42 PM Apr 27th
13. up at 4 am. dramatic pause. **this life is for the birds** (i had to do it. i am sorry) 4:56 AM Apr 28th
14. A rough start for The Thrashers. The Big Thicket was the big nasty hiding from us many of its gems. We have 30 species. Next, High Isle. 12:24 PM Apr 28th
15. Thrashers rallied at High Island topping 80 species for the day. Doc's favorite: a carolina wren building a nest in our parked SUV. 9:35 PM Apr 28th
16. Next up: Brazos Bend State Park. See you there at sunrise. 9:38 PM Apr 28th
17. leaving brazos bend with about 97 species total. **Woody nearly stepped on an alligator** missing by inches. next up AttwaterPrairieChickenNWR 11:54 AM Apr 29th
18. our numbers are behind but spirits strong due to fine time at BB and APC. **we even saw the chicken.** total in separate tweet 8:10 PM Apr 29th
19. totals: 112 species, 487 miles traveled and counting, 1 snapping turtle saved crossing the road successfully/safely freed in nearby pond 8:16 PM Apr 29th
20. **arrested. only briefly.** no handcuffs. no fines. we are rolling again. 2:32 PM Apr 30th
21. in port aransas **we met our competition today - the team from reliant.** it was like the boston shamrocks meeting the harlem globetrotters. 6:18 PM Apr 30th
22. after our arrest in choke canyon, we did well today and are leaving the central coast almost on pace to hit 200.. we are off to the border 6:23 PM Apr 30th
23. totals: 146 species, 886 miles and counting, **1 snapping turtle rescued, 1 twelve foot alligator avoided** 6:27 PM Apr 30th
24. finally, add to our tally one interview with an AP reporter who was covering the reliant team. i could tell she liked us 6:39 PM Apr 30th
25. we are waiting in the dark outside sabal palm sanctuary waiting for it to open. **we have been surrounded by four border patrol vehicles.** 7:01 AM May 1st
26. leaving brownsville with 181 species. one more day. **team captain is fried.** 9:53 PM May 1st
27. Day 5, 5 pm: we tripped over our target. 200 birds. Now to celebrate with some cold drinks. Then, just a little more birding. 5:33 PM May 2nd
28. **birding is done at 204 species. driving is not.** we must turn in our forms by midnight in corpus christi. 1498 miles and counting. 8:07 PM May 2nd
29. It is a wrap. Doc and I are at the Corpus Christi airport heading for Houston, then Frisco. Woody is en route to San Antonio to fly home. 1:56 PM May 3rd
30. We just left the awards banquet MC'd by Kenn Kaufman. The Thrashers were runners-up. 1:59 PM May 3rd
31. We lost to the honorable Reliant team (288) species to our 205. 2:01 PM May 3rd
32. As we leave Texas, we tip our hats to the fine people at the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and TX Parks and Wildlife. We will miss y'all. 2:02 PM May 3rd
33. And oh yes, we drove 1630 miles in 5 days. **Yeehaw indeed.** 2:05 PM May 3rd



soar + strut

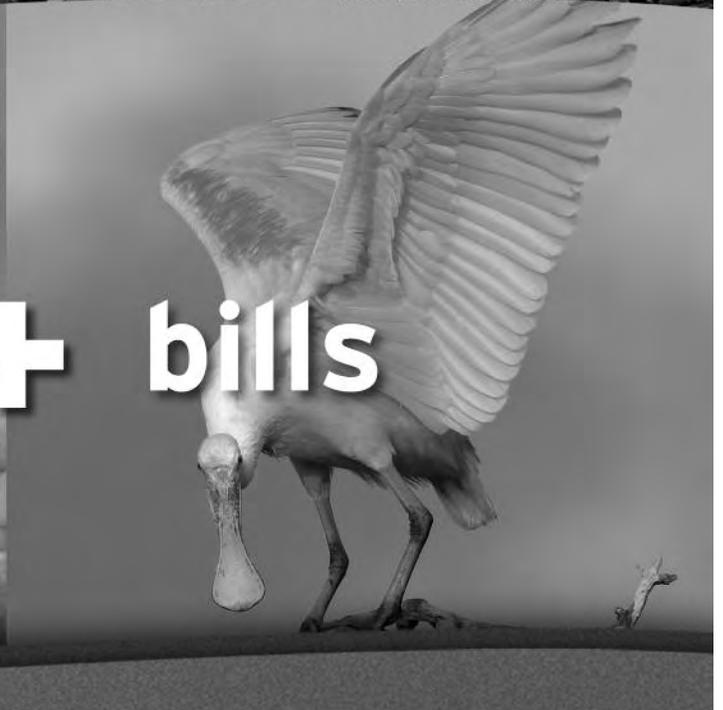
photo by Bill & Sharon Draker, Welder Wildlife Refuge



photo by Sean Fitzgerald, Fennessey Ranch



beaks + bills



Birding Hot Spots

- Blucher Park
- Hans & Pat Suter Wildlife Park
- Mustang Island State Park
- South Texas Botanical Gardens
- Hazel Bazemore County Park
- Pollywog Pond
- Tule Lake

BirdtheBend.com

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and the
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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.

14th Annual Great Texas Birding Classic: Sunday, April 25 – Sunday, May 2, 2010

15th Annual Great Texas Birding Classic: Sunday, April 10 – Sunday, April 17, 2011

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

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

E-mail: cjones@gcbo.org

Check us out on the Web at: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/gtbc and www.birdingclassic.org



Birding Classic staff, judges and volunteers: Standing – Cliff Shackelford, Michael Gray, Bryan Plante, Carol Jones, Bob Barth, Noreen Damude, Keith Arnold; Sitting – Shelly Plante, Cecilia Riley, Bev Arnold.

Thank You!

The Great Texas Birding Classic is co-hosted by the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and the 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
Reba Craft – Office Manager
Sue Heath – Web site assistance
Karen Barrett – Sunday auction

Additional GCBO Volunteers:

- Michael Gray
- Mary Helen Israel
- Gerald Forest
- Heather Walter
- Dick Barrett

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT:

Shelly Plante – Nature Tourism Coordinator
Cliff Shackelford – Texas Partners in Flight Coordinator

OFFICIAL ARTIST FOR 2009:

Cherie McBride

JUDGES:

Cliff Shackelford – TPWD ornithologist, Texas Partners in Flight
Keith Arnold – ornithologist and retired professor
Noreen Damude – natural history writer and biologist
Bob Barth – ornithologist and retired professor

ADDITIONAL BEHIND THE SCENES HELP:

Auction set-up and sign-in table: Reba Craft and Bryan Plante



The Weeklong teams find a spare moment to pose for a picture.

Photo by Mike Gray.

Thanks to all of our community partners for helping coordinate the Awards Lunch:

Michelle Horine, Nature Tourism and Communications Director at Corpus Christi Convention & Visitors Bureau



Thanks to emcee Kenn Kaufman for leading the Awards Lunch and signing books for his young fans.

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

Coastal NWRs
Jasper Fish Hatchery

Coastal WMAs
Texas City Prairie Preserve

Private homes of our birding friends throughout the Texas coast

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

Glenda Beasley	Tom Harvey	Tim Peterson
Darcy Bontempo	Chris Hunt	Frank Robinson
Randy Brudnicki	Robert Macias	Lydia Saldaña
Carly Drees	Cecilia Nasti	Jim Stone

**We hope you will choose to be a
part of next year's event!
April 25 – May 2, 2010**

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