

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

BIRDS

OF

BENTSEN-RIO GRANDE VALLEY
STATE PARK

WORLD BIRDING CENTER



A FIELD CHECKLIST

2014

Cover: Illustration of Mississippi Kite by Rob Fleming.

INTRODUCTION

Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park consists of 797 acres of subtropical resaca woodlands and drier thorny brushlands that once characterized the entirety of the Lower Rio Grande Valley but which is now limited to scattered fragments. The park supports about 358 species of birds, many of which are subtropical species typical of eastern Mexico and not found north of the border beyond extreme southern Texas. Some of the characteristic species of the region include Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Gray Hawk, Hook-billed Kite, Plain Chachalaca, White-tipped Dove, Groove-billed Ani, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Couch's Kingbird, Great Kiskadee, Green Jay, Olive Sparrow and Altamira Oriole. Additionally Bentsen has become well known for consistently producing extremely rare visitors from Mexico, often the first records for these species north of the border.

The natural habitats of the park have been created by the evolution of the Rio Grande over time as it has carved out and then abandoned channels and nourished the lands along it with life-giving floods. Presently the river has been controlled by numerous dams throughout its watershed, and vegetation communities in the park have been gradually drying out and becoming more arid. The transition of Bentsen from traditional state park to headquarters of the World Birding Center has resulted in tripling the size of the protected area with the incorporation of donated land and a cooperative relationship between the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

This checklist, compiled by John Arvin, is based on observations by numerous individuals, and includes those species which have been observed within or passing over the park. Nomenclature and organization for this checklist follow the A.O.U. *Check-list of North American Birds*, 7th edition, 1998 as currently supplemented.

Because we will be updating this checklist as additional observations are made, we ask that you report details of new or unusual sightings. Reports may be sent to Bentsen-RGV State Park, World Birding Center, 2800 South Bentsen Palm Drive, Mission, Texas 78572 or may be left at the park headquarters.

Please help us protect the natural avian communities in our parks by refraining from using playback tapes of bird songs. Frequent use of these tapes disrupts normal avian activity patterns and essential territorial behavior, and may lead to nest failure. Thank you for your cooperation.

LEGEND

- C - common; seen daily in some numbers
U - uncommon; usually seen daily in proper habitat and season but only one or a few individuals
R - rare; seen only once or twice a year and may not occur every year
X - extremely rare; only one or two records exist
* - has nested in the park
• - a species found north of the Mexican border entirely in extreme southern Texas or one which can be found there more reliably than in other areas
- Sp - Spring (March-May)
Su - Summer (June-August)
F - Fall (September-November)
W - Winter (December-February)

CHECKLIST

	W	Sp	Su	F
DUCKS & GEESE				
___ * • Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	R	U	U	R
___ Fulvous Whistling-Duck	X	R	R	R
___ Greater White-fronted Goose	U			U
___ Snow Goose	U			U
___ Ross's Goose	R			
___ Muscovy Duck (feral)	U	U	U	U
___ Wood Duck	R			R
___ Gadwall	C			C
___ American Wigeon	C			C
___ Mallard	R			R
___ * "Mexican Duck"	U	U	U	U
___ * Mottled Duck	U	U	U	U
___ * Blue-winged Teal	C	C	R	C
___ Cinnamon Teal	R	R		R
___ Northern Shoveler	C	C		C
___ Northern Pintail	U			U
___ Green-winged Teal	C	U		C
___ Canvasback	R			R
___ Redhead	R			R
___ Ring-necked Duck	C	U		C
___ Greater Scaup	R			
___ Lesser Scaup	U	U		U
___ Bufflehead	R			R
___ Hooded Merganser	R			R
___ Masked Duck	X	X	X	X
___ * Ruddy Duck	U	U	R	U
CHACHALACAS & GUANS				
___ * • Plain Chachalaca	C	C	C	C

	W	Sp	Su	F
NEW WORLD QUAIL				
___ * Northern Bobwhite	U	U	U	U
PARTRIDGES & TURKEYS				
___ Wild Turkey	X	X	X	X
GREBES				
___ * • Least Grebe	U	U	U	U
___ Pied-billed Grebe	C	U	U	C
___ Eared Grebe	R	X		X
STORKS				
___ Jabiru		X		
___ Wood Stork			U	U
FRIGATEBIRDS				
___ Magnificent Frigatebird				X
CORMORANTS				
___ * • Neotropic Cormorant	U	U	U	U
___ Double-crested Cormorant	C	C		U
ANHINGAS				
___ * Anhinga	U	C	C	C
PELICANS				
___ American White Pelican	U	U		U
___ Brown Pelican	X			
HERONS				
___ American Bittern	R	R		R
___ * Least Bittern		R	R	
___ Bare-throated Tiger-Heron	X			
___ Great Blue Heron	C	C	U	C
___ Great Egret	C	C	C	C
___ Snowy Egret	U	U	U	U
___ Little Blue Heron	R	U	U	U
___ Tricolored Heron	U	U	U	U

	W	Sp	Su	F
___ Reddish Egret		X	X	X
___ Cattle Egret	C	C	C	C
___ *Green Heron	R	C	C	C
___ *Black-crowned Night-Heron	U	U	R	U
___ Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	R	U	U	R
IBIS & SPOONBILLS				
___ White Ibis			R	R
___ White-faced Ibis	U	U		U
___ Roseate Spoonbill			R	R
NEW WORLD VULTURES				
___ Black Vulture	U	U	U	U
___ Turkey Vulture	C	C	C	C
OSPREYS				
___ Osprey	C	C	R	C
HAWKS, KITES, & EAGLES				
___ *• Hook-billed Kite	R	R	R	R
___ Swallow-tailed Kite		R		R
___ * White-tailed Kite	C	C	U	C
___ Snail Kite		X		
___ Mississippi Kite		C		C
___ Bald Eagle	X			
___ Northern Harrier	U	U		U
___ Sharp-shinned Hawk	U	C		C
___ * Cooper's Hawk	C	C	R	C
___ *• Harris's Hawk	U	U	U	U
___ Roadside Hawk	X			X
___ Red-shouldered Hawk	U	U		U
___ Broad-winged Hawk	X	C	R	C
___ *• Gray Hawk	U	U	U	U
___ Short-tailed Hawk		X	X	X
___ Swainson's Hawk	X	C	U	C

	W	Sp	Su	F
___ • White-tailed Hawk	U	U	R	U
___ Zone-tailed Hawk	R	R		R
___ Red-tailed Hawk	C	U		U
___ Ferruginous Hawk	R			R
RAILS				
___ *King Rail	R	R	R	R
___ Virginia Rail	R	R		R
___ Sora	C	C		C
___ Purple Gallinule		R	R	X
___ *Common Gallinule	U	U	R	U
___ *American Coot	C	C		C
CRANES				
___ Sandhill Crane	U	U		U
STILTS & AVOCETS				
___ *Black-necked Stilt	U	U	U	U
___ American Avocet	U	U		U
PLOVERS				
___ Black-bellied Plover				X
___ American Golden-Plover		R		
___ Semipalmated Plover		R		R
___ *Killdeer	C	C	C	C
JACANAS				
___ Northern Jacana		X	X	X
SANDPIPERS				
___ Spotted Sandpiper	U	C	R	C
___ Solitary Sandpiper	R	U		U
___ Greater Yellowlegs	U	C		C
___ Lesser Yellowlegs	C	C		C
___ Upland Sandpiper		C		C
___ Whimbrel	X			

	W	Sp	Su	F
___ Long-billed Curlew	C	C		C
___ Hudsonian Godwit		R		
___ Stilt Sandpiper	C	C		C
___ Baird's Sandpiper		R		R
___ Least Sandpiper	C	C		C
___ White-rumped Sandpiper		U		
___ Buff-Breasted Sandpiper		U		U
___ Pectoral Sandpiper	U	U		U
___ Semipalmated Sandpiper		U		U
___ Western Sandpiper	U	U		U
___ Short-billed Dowitcher		R		R
___ Long-billed Dowitcher	U	U		U
___ Wilson's Snipe	C	C		C
___ Wilson's Phalarope	R	R		R
GULLS & TERNS				
___ Laughing Gull		U	R	U
___ Franklin's Gull		U		U
___ Ring-billed Gull	U	U		U
___ Least Tern		R	R	
___ Gull-billed Tern		U	R	U
___ Caspian Tern	U	U		U
___ Black Tern		U		U
___ Forster's Tern	U	U	X	U
___ Black Skimmer			R	R
PIGEONS & DOVES				
___ Rock Pigeon	U	U	U	U
___ * Red-billed Pigeon		R	R	
___ Eurasian Collared-Dove	U	U	U	U
___ * Inca Dove	C	C	C	C
___ * Common Ground-Dove	C	C	C	C
___ Ruddy Ground-Dove	X			

	W	Sp	Su	F
___ Ruddy Quail-Dove	X			
___ * White-tipped Dove	C	C	C	C
___ * White-winged Dove	R	C	C	U
___ * Mourning Dove	C	C	C	C
CUCKOOS & ANIS				
___ * Yellow-billed Cuckoo		C	C	
___ Black-billed Cuckoo		R		X
___ * Greater Roadrunner	U	U	U	U
___ * Groove-billed Ani	R	U	C	C
BARN OWLS				
___ * Barn Owl	U	U	U	U
TYPICAL OWLS				
___ * Eastern Screech-Owl	C	C	C	C
___ * Great Horned Owl	U	U	U	U
___ • Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl	X	X	X	X
___ * Elf Owl	X	C	U	
___ Burrowing Owl	R			R
___ Mottled Owl	X			
___ Long-eared Owl	R			
___ Stygian Owl	X			
___ Short-eared Owl	R			
NIGHTJARS				
___ * Lesser Nighthawk	X	C	C	U
___ Common Nighthawk	X	C	C	R
___ * Common Pauraque	C	C	C	C
___ Common Poorwill		X		X
___ Chuck-wills-widow		C		R
___ Eastern Whip-poor-will		U		U
SWIFTS				
___ Chimney Swift		C	R	R

	W	Sp	Su	F
HUMMINGBIRDS				
___ Green Violetear		X		
___ Lucifer Hummingbird		X		
___ Ruby-throated Hummingbird	R	C	R	C
___ Black-chinned Hummingbird	U	U	U	U
___ Anna's Hummingbird	X			
___ Rufous Hummingbird	U			R
___ Allen's Hummingbird	X			X
___ Broad-billed Hummingbird			X	
___ *• Buff-bellied Hummingbird	R	U	U	U
TROGONS				
___ Elegant Trogon				X
KINGFISHERS				
___ *• Ringed Kingfisher	U	U	U	U
___ Belted Kingfisher	U	U		U
___ *• Green Kingfisher	U	U	U	U
WOODPECKERS				
___ *• Golden-fronted Woodpecker	C	C	C	C
___ Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	U			R
___ Red-naped Sapsucker	X			
___ *• Ladder-backed Woodpecker	C	C	C	C
___ Northern Flicker	R			R
FALCONS & CARACARAS				
___ Collared Forest-Falcon	X			
___ *• Crested Caracara	U	U	U	U
___ American Kestrel	C	C		C
___ Merlin	R	R		R
___ Aplomado Falcon			X	
___ Peregrine Falcon	R	U		R
___ Prairie Falcon	X	X		

	W	Sp	Su	F
PARROTS & PARAKEETS				
___ • Green Parakeet	X	X	X	X
TYRANT FLYCATCHERS				
___ * N. Beardless-Tyrannulet	U	U	U	U
___ Olive-sided Flycatcher		U		U
___ Eastern Wood-Pewee		C		C
___ Yellow-bellied Flycatcher		U		C
___ Acadian Flycatcher		U		
___ Alder Flycatcher		C		C
___ Willow Flycatcher		U		U
___ Least Flycatcher		C		C
___ Gray Flycatcher	X			
___ Cordilleran Flycatcher	X			
___ * Black Phoebe	U	U	U	U
___ Eastern Phoebe	C	U		C
___ Say's Phoebe	R			R
___ Vermilion Flycatcher	U	U		U
___ Dusky-capped Flycatcher	X			
___ Ash-throated Flycatcher		R		
___ Great Crested Flycatcher		C		C
___ * Brown-crested Flycatcher		C	C	
___ * • Great Kiskadee	C	C	C	C
___ Social Flycatcher	X			
___ Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher		X		
___ Piratic Flycatcher		X		
___ • Tropical Kingbird	R	R	R	R
___ * • Couch's Kingbird	R	C	C	C
___ * Western Kingbird		U	U	U
___ Eastern Kingbird		C		C
___ * Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	R	C	C	C

	W	Sp	Su	F
BECARDS, TITYRAS				
___ Masked Tityra				X
___ • Rose-throated Becard	X			X
SHRIKES				
___ Loggerhead Shrike	U	U	U	U
VIREOS				
___ * White-eyed Vireo	U	U	U	U
___ Bell's Vireo	X	R		R
___ Yellow-throated Vireo		R		R
___ Blue-headed Vireo	U	R		U
___ Warbling Vireo		U		U
___ Philadelphia Vireo		R		X
___ Red-eyed Vireo		U		U
___ • Yellow-green Vireo		R	R	
JAYS & CROWS				
___ * • Green Jay	C	C	C	C
___ Blue Jay	X			
___ • Tamaulipas Crow			X	
___ Chihuahuan Raven	R	R		R
LARKS				
___ * Horned Lark	R	R	R	R
SWALLOWS				
___ Purple Martin		C	C	
___ Tree Swallow	U	U		U
___ N. Rough-winged Swallow	R	U	U	U
___ * Bank Swallow	X	C	C	C
___ * Cliff Swallow		U	U	U
___ * Cave Swallow	C	C	C	U
___ * Barn Swallow	R	C	C	C

	W	Sp	Su	F
TITMICE				
___ * Black-crested Titmouse	C	C	C	C
VERDINS				
___ * Verdin	U	U	U	U
NUTHATCHES				
___ Red-breasted Nuthatch	R			R
CREEPERS				
___ Brown Creeper	R			
WRENS				
___ House Wren	C	C		C
___ Winter Wren	R			R
___ Sedge Wren	R	R		R
___ Marsh Wren	U	U		U
___ Carolina Wren	R	R	R	R
___ * Bewick's Wren	R	R	R	R
___ * Cactus Wren	R	R	R	R
GNATCATCHERS				
___ Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	C	C		C
KINGLETS				
___ Golden-crowned Kinglet	R			R
___ Ruby-crowned Kinglet	C	C		C
THRUSHES				
___ Eastern Bluebird	U	U		U
___ Veery	R			
___ Gray-cheeked Thrush		R		
___ Swainson's Thrush		U		
___ Hermit Thrush	U			U
___ Wood Thrush		R		
___ * Clay-colored Thrush	U	U	U	U
___ White-throated Thrush	X	X		X

	W	Sp	Su	F
___ Rufous-backed Robin	X			
___ American Robin	U	X		R
___ Varied Thrush	X			
___ Aztec Thrush	X			
THRASHERS & MOCKINGBIRDS				
___ Gray Catbird	R	R		R
___ *Curve-billed Thrasher	U	U	U	U
___ *• Long-billed Thrasher	C	C	C	C
___ Sage Thrasher	X			
___ *Northern Mockingbird	C	C	C	C
STARLINGS				
___ European Starling	R	R	R	R
PIPITS				
___ American Pipit	U	U		U
___ Sprague's Pipit	R	R		R
WAXWINGS				
___ Cedar Waxwing	U	U		
WOOD WARBLERS				
___ Ovenbird	R	U		U
___ Worm-eating Warbler		R		R
___ Louisiana Waterthrush		U		U
___ Northern Waterthrush	X	U		U
___ Golden-winged Warbler		R		
___ Blue-winged Warbler		R		X
___ Black-and-white Warbler	U	C		U
___ Prothonotary Warbler		X		
___ Tennessee Warbler		U		R
___ Orange-crowned Warbler	C	C		C
___ Nashville Warbler	U	C		C
___ MacGillivray's Warbler		R		R

	W	Sp	Su	F
___ Mourning Warbler		U		U
___ Kentucky Warbler		R		
___ *Common Yellowthroat	C	C	U	C
___ Hooded Warbler		R		X
___ American Redstart		U		U
___ Cerulean Warbler		R		
___ Northern Parula	R	U		U
___ *• Tropical Parula	R	R	R	R
___ Magnolia Warbler		R		
___ Bay-breasted Warbler		R		
___ Blackburnian Warbler		R		
___ Yellow Warbler	X	C		C
___ Chestnut-sided Warbler		R		
___ Palm Warbler		X		
___ Pine Warbler	R			R
___ Yellow-rumped Warbler	C			U
___ Yellow-throated Warbler	R			R
___ Black-throated Gray Warbler	U			R
___ Townsend's Warbler	R			R
___ Black-throated Green Warbler	R	R		R
___ Golden-crowned Warbler	X			
___ Canada Warbler		U		U
___ Wilson's Warbler	R	U		U
___ Painted Redstart	X			
___ *Yellow-breasted Chat		U		U
EMBERIZID FINCHES				
___ *• White-collared Seedeater		X	X	
___ Yellow-faced Grassquit			X	
___ *• Olive Sparrow	C	C	C	C
___ Green-tailed Towhee	R			R
___ Spotted Towhee	X			X

	W	Sp	Su	F
___ Cassin's Sparrow		R		R
___ Chipping Sparrow	U	U		U
___ Clay-colored Sparrow		R		R
___ Field Sparrow	R			R
___ Vesper Sparrow	U			U
___ Lark Sparrow	U	U	C	U
___ Black-throated Sparrow	R			
___ Lark Bunting	X			
___ Savannah Sparrow	C	C		C
___ Grasshopper Sparrow	R	R		R
___ Fox Sparrow	X			
___ Song Sparrow	X			
___ Lincoln's Sparrow	C	U		C
___ Swamp Sparrow	R			R
___ White-throated Sparrow	R	X		
___ White-crowned Sparrow	R			R
___ Dark-eyed Junco	X			

CARDINALS & GROSBEAKS

___ Summer Tanager	R	U		U
___ Scarlet Tanager		R		
___ Western Tanager	R	X		
___ Crimson-collared Grosbeak	X		X	
___ *Northern Cardinal	C	U	U	U
___ Pyrrhuloxia	U			R
___ Rose-breasted Grosbeak	R	U		U
___ Black-headed Grosbeak	X			
___ •Blue Bunting	R			R
___ Blue Grosbeak		U	U	U
___ Lazuli Bunting	R			R
___ Indigo Bunting	C	U		U
___ Varied Bunting	X	X	X	X

	W	Sp	Su	F
___ * Painted Bunting	R	U	R	U
___ Dickcissel	X	C	U	C
BLACKBIRDS & ORIOLES				
___ * Red-winged Blackbird	C	C	C	C
___ Eastern Meadowlark	R	R	R	R
___ Western Meadowlark	C			C
___ Yellow-headed Blackbird	X	R		R
___ Brewer's Blackbird	X	X		
___ * Great-tailed Grackle	C	C	C	C
___ * Bronzed Cowbird	R	C	C	R
___ * Brown-headed Cowbird	C	C	U	C
___ Black-vented Oriole	X			
___ * Orchard Oriole		U	C	U
___ * Hooded Oriole		R	U	R
___ Bullock's Oriole		R		R
___ * • Altamira Oriole	U	U	U	U
___ * • Audubon's Oriole	X	X	X	
___ Baltimore Oriole		U	R	C
OLD WORLD FINCHES				
___ House Finch	X	X	X	X
___ Red Crossbill		X		
___ Pine Siskin	R			R
___ * Lesser Goldfinch	U	U	U	U
___ American Goldfinch	U			
OLD WORLD SPARROWS				
___ * House Sparrow	U	U	U	U

CITATION

Arvin, John C. August 2014. Birds of Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park: a field checklist. Natural Resources Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

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