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

#### DUCKS & GEESE

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**GULLS & TERNs**

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**PIGEONS & DOVES**

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**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  |   |
| Common Poorwill          | X |    | X  |   |
| Chuck-wills-widow        | C |    | R  |   |
| Eastern Whip-poor-will   | U |    | U  |   |

**SWIFTS**

<p>| Chimney Swift            | C | R  | R  |   |</p>
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**CARDINALS & GROSBEAKS**

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In 1983, the Texas Legislature created the Special Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Fund. This fund may be used for nongame wildlife and endangered species research and conservation, habitat acquisition and development and dissemination of information pertaining to nongame management. Money for this fund is obtained through private donations and sale of nongame wildlife art prints and stamps. This fund now gives Texans a unique opportunity to help support this state’s valuable and sensitive nongame resources. Your individual contributions and purchases of nongame art prints and stamps will help determine the level of nongame conservation activities in Texas. For more information call toll-free (1-800-792-1112) or contact: Nongame and Endangered Species Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744.