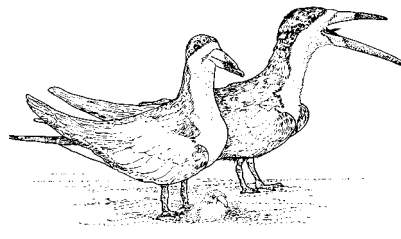


## *Nature Tourism in Texas*



### Texas Parks and Wildlife - August 2001

- ❖ Travel spending by all domestic and international visitors in Texas reached \$36.7 billion in 1999. This represents a 7.6 percent increase over 1998. Nature-based tourism is a fast growing segment of this growing tourism industry.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ Nature tourism can be defined as discretionary travel to natural areas that conserves the environmental, social and cultural values while generating an economic benefit to the local community. Interest in nature tourism is growing in Texas as rural communities look for ways to diversify local economies and landowners look for ways to diversify agricultural income.<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ According to a 1996 survey by the Fish and Wildlife Service, wildlife-associated recreation (fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing) contributed 5.5 billion to the Texas economy.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ Texas is a diverse state with abundant natural resources and wildlife. For example, Texas has 620 documented species of birds, more than any other state. The Lower Rio Grande Valley has 294 species of butterflies, 40% of species recorded in North America north of Mexico.
- ❖ The number of people in the United States 16 years of age and older that participate in birdwatching has grown from 21 million in 1983, to 54 million in 1995, and to 68 million in 2000.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ The percentage of the United States adult population that views or photographs birds (32.8), other wildlife (42.8), wildflowers and natural vegetation (45.2), and natural scenery (54.8) ranges from about 33 to 55 percent.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ Nature tourism brings dollars to Texas.
  - In 1999, travelers on the central coast portion of the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail devoted an average of 31 days per year viewing wildlife on the trail. They spent an average of \$78 per person per day while traveling along the trail, resulting in a direct expenditure of \$2,452 during the past twelve months.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dean Runyan Associates. The Economic Impact of Travel on Texas 1999. Texas Department of Economic Development.

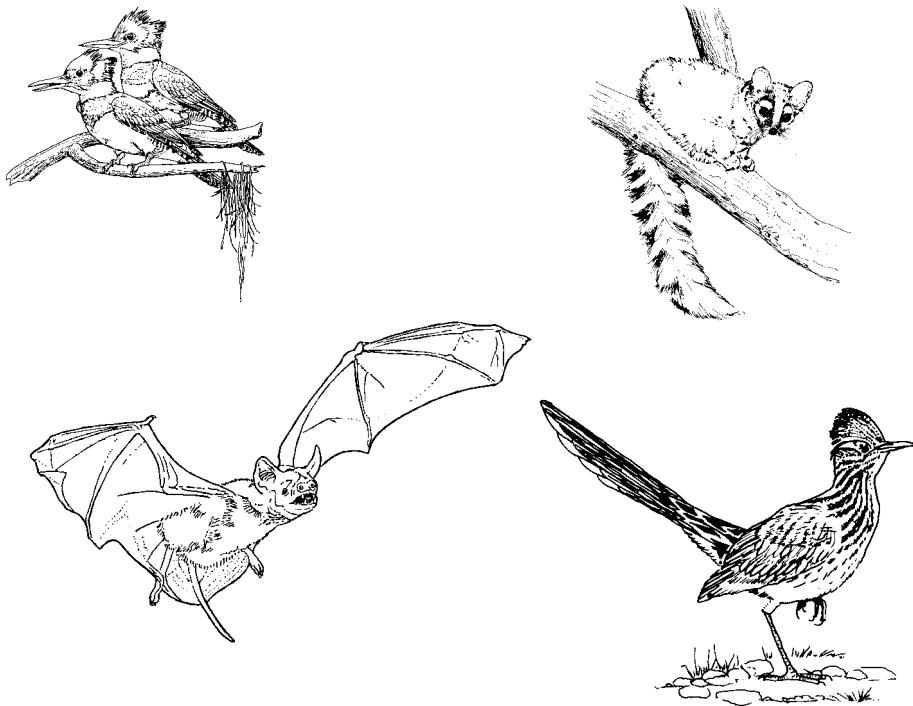
<sup>2</sup> Nature Tourism in the Lone Star State - Economic Opportunities in Nature. A Report from the State Task Force on Texas Nature Tourism. 1994.

<sup>3</sup> 1996 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Economics, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> National Survey on Recreation and the Environment 2000. USDA Forest Service and USDC, NOAA.

<sup>5</sup> Eubanks, Ted and John Stoll. 1999. Avitourism in Texas: Two Studies of Birders in Texas and Their Potential Support for the Proposed World Birding Center. Texas Parks and Wildlife Contract No. 44467.

- In 1995, birdwatchers visiting Santa Ana NWR, Laguna Atascosa NWR, and Sabal Palm Audubon Sanctuary contributed over \$59 million in direct expenditures to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. <sup>6</sup>
  - Nature tourists visiting the HummerBird Festival in Rockport, Texas contributed \$1.4 million in direct expenditures to the local economy in 1995. <sup>7</sup>
  - Visitors to the High Island Audubon Sanctuary in 1992 contributed at least \$2.5 million to the economy of the upper Texas coast. <sup>8</sup>
- ❖ Nature tourism provides incentives for local communities and landowners to conserve wildlife habitats upon which the industry depends - it promotes conservation by placing an increased value on remaining natural habitats.
  - ❖ Nature tourism development in rural communities can diversify local economies, while also providing benefits to the people who live there. Some benefits are economic (local tax revenues were \$623 million in 1999 <sup>1</sup>); others have to do with instilling pride in community and providing jobs for residents.
  - ❖ Nature tourism in Texas provides incentive for habitat conservation, promotes sustainable economic development, and builds broad-based public support for wildlife conservation.



<sup>6</sup> Kerlinger, Paul, T. Eubanks and R.H. Payne. 1995. The Economic Impact of Birding Ecotourism on the Laguna Atascosa NWR, Santa Ana NWR, and Sabal Palm Audubon Sanctuary, Texas.

<sup>7</sup> Scott, David. 1995 The 1995 Rockport HummerBird Celebration: A Survey of Visitors. The Trull Foundation and Texas A&M Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences.

<sup>8</sup> Eubanks, T., Kerlinger, P. and R.H. Payne. 1993. High Island, Texas: Case Study in Avitourism. Birding, Vol. XXV: Number 6. American Birding Association, Inc.