

SPRING IN SOUTH TEXAS

APRIL 4-13, 2021

HILL COUNTRY EXTENSION

APRIL 13-17, 2021

©2020



Whooping crane © Barry Zimmer

This tour covers the Central Texas Coast, the King Ranch, the Lower Rio Grande Valley, and an extension to the beautiful Texas Hill Country, all at their finest when wonderful weather, a spectacular array of flowers, and arguably the best birding in the country combine for a truly memorable natural history experience. Beginning in Corpus Christi, the tour travels to Rockport – wintering grounds of the majestic Whooping Cranes and breeding grounds for many species of herons, egrets, and shorebirds. It is also a stopover point for migrant shorebirds and landbirds alike. We will then head south through the famed King Ranch to the Rio Grande Valley, home to 25 tropical species of birds whose United States range is basically restricted to this incredibly rich area. Included in this list are such highly sought species as Red-billed Pigeon, Ringed Kingfisher, Common

Pauraque, Great Kiskadee, Green Jay, Morelet's Seedeater, and Altamira and Audubon's orioles. The tour will conclude with an extension in the scenic Hill Country, the nesting grounds of the Golden-cheeked Warbler and the Black-capped Vireo. Including the extension, we should see over 250 species of birds as well as fantastic wildflower displays.

April 4, Day 1: Arrival in Corpus Christi.

Participants should plan to be in Corpus Christi (airport code CRP) today and proceed to our hotel where a room will be reserved in your name. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 5:00 p.m. for a get-acquainted session, likely followed by some brief afternoon birding at a nearby marsh and a delicious seafood dinner.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites Navigation Blvd., Corpus Christi

April 5-6, Days 2-3: Corpus Christi, Rockport and Whooping Crane Boat Trip.

Although our schedule will be somewhat flexible over the next two-and-a-half days, mostly depending on weather patterns, it is likely that we will begin the day by visiting a migrant trap or two. Passerine migration is just beginning in early April, and though we are not likely to see large numbers of migrants, we should encounter a sprinkling of flycatchers, vireos, and warblers. Early migrant possibilities include Northern Parula, Black-and-white, Black-throated Green, Worm-eating, Blue-winged, Prothonotary, and Hooded warblers. Nearby coastal estuaries could harbor stunning pink Roseate Spoonbills, comical Reddish Egrets, Snowy (declining), Piping and Wilson's plovers, Long-billed Curlew, and Gull-billed Tern, among others.



One morning we will board the "M/V Skimmer" to travel up the Intracoastal Waterway, where our target will be the endangered Whooping Crane. These magnificent birds begin migrating north in late March, but we have a very good chance to find a few lingering family groups. At one time only 15 Whooping Cranes remained in the wild, but now more than 500 make the long flight to and from their Canadian breeding grounds. Our search for the Whoopers should yield many other birds as well, including a variety of herons and egrets, American Oystercatcher, Black Skimmer and up to seven species of terns. Another morning will be spent at a nearby spartina marsh in hopes of locating Clapper Rail, Sedge Wren, and Seaside Sparrow. White and White-faced ibis, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Mottled Duck, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Long-billed Curlew, and Stilt, Pectoral, and Baird's sandpipers are among the many possibilities. Coastlines around Rockport should yield Wilson's Plover and perhaps Least Tern as well. One afternoon we will visit the Goose Island area in search of additional passerine migrants and seek out Boat-tailed Grackles at the southern edge of their range.

NIGHTS: Hampton Inn & Suites Rockport-Fulton

April 7, Day 4: Mustang Island to Kingsville. We will begin the day by taking the ferry across the bay to Port Aransas. Here, at a freshwater marsh, we may encounter Least Bittern (scarce), Cinnamon Teal, Sora and Virginia Rail, in addition to many other shorebirds and waterfowl. Nearby Paradise Pond provides yet another opportunity

for landbird migrants with a lovely boardwalk through a willow-lined pond. Although damaged by Hurricane Harvey, this spot is still worth a stop. Finally, we will cruise down the beaches of Mustang Island where numerous rarities have been recorded. We will likely encounter such regular fare as Piping Plover, Red Knot (very uncommon), and Least, Sandwich, and Royal terns. In the early afternoon we will begin heading for Kingsville via the Chapman Ranch. Fields in this area may harbor Upland Sandpiper, American Golden-Plover, and perhaps the rare Buff-breasted Sandpiper as well.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn, Kingsville

April 8, Day 5: King Ranch to McAllen. The better part of the day will be on the Norias Division of the spectacular King Ranch. Here, in the undisturbed mesquite savannas and small oak mottes, we will get our first taste of South Texas birding. Possibilities include White-tailed and Harris's hawks, Crested Caracara, the gem-like Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed woodpeckers, Couch's Kingbird, Vermilion Flycatcher, Green Jay, Long-billed Thrasher, Olive Sparrow, and Hooded Oriole. In addition, the very local Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet and the declining Audubon's Oriole might also be encountered. Our real targets here, however, will be the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and the Tropical Parula – two species rarely seen in the United States outside the boundaries of this ranch. While both are elusive and somewhat scarce (and certainly not guaranteed), we will devote considerable time and effort to locating these King Ranch specialties. Depending on our arrival time in McAllen, we may spend the early evening searching for Red-crowned Parrots and Green Parakeets as they noisily descend to their nighttime roosts.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites, McAllen



Tropical Parula © Barry Zimmer

April 9-10, Days 6-7: The Lower Rio Grande Valley. We will have many options to choose from for our two days of birding. The southernmost tip of Texas has multiple state parks, wildlife refuges, Audubon sanctuaries and the like, and all are worth a visit. Our exact schedule will be determined in part by the presence of rarities. Possible destinations include Sabal Palm Grove, Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, Frontera Audubon Thicket, Estero Llano Grande State Park, Edinburg Scenic Wetlands, Bentsen State Park, and South Padre Island. Whichever areas we opt for, we will seek out such specialties as Least Grebe, Plain Chachalaca, White-tipped Dove, Ringed and Green kingfishers, Aplomado Falcon, Great Kiskadee, Green Jay, Long-billed Thrasher, Olive Sparrow, and Altamira Oriole. If any are known to be present, we will likely devote some time to searching for the rare and highly sought Hook-billed Kite as well (although this species has all but dried up in recent years in the United States). Some of these areas also play host to migrant landbirds when conditions are right, with a variety of warblers, vireos, flycatchers, orioles, and buntings possible. South Padre Island can be particularly good for such “fallout” events. On occasion, past tours have had the good fortune of encountering rare Mexican strays. Masked Duck, White-throated Thrush, Gray-crowned Yellowthroat, Crimson-collared Grosbeak and Blue Bunting have all made appearances. While none of these species are at all likely on a given trip, the mere possibility of such superb vagrants adds to the excitement of birding this area. One night after dinner we will have an optional nightbird excursion in hopes of locating Common Pauraque, as well as Elf (very uncommon) and Eastern Screech-Owls.

NIGHTS: Hampton Inn & Suites, McAllen



Elf Owl © Barry Zimmer

April 11, Day 8: Rio Grande Valley to Zapata. Today's schedule will be largely determined by what valley specialties we are still missing, by what rarities may be present, or by weather conditions that might be conducive to passerine fallouts. Visits to Bentsen State Park, Quinta Mazatlan, or the Frontera Audubon House Thicket in Weslaco are possible destinations. Clay-colored Thrushes, once accidental, have become a regular resident in recent years, making this species a very good possibility. If conditions are right, migrating raptors, including large flocks of Broad-winged and Swainson's hawks and smaller numbers of Mississippi Kites, often move through this area in April. The afternoon will find us heading upriver toward Zapata with the possibility of desert birding en route. An evening owl trip will be planned if we are lacking any of our nocturnal targets.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express, Zapata

April 12, Day 9: Falcon Dam Area. We will have a full day to thoroughly explore the rich Falcon Dam area. Here the avifauna shows more of a western flavor than in the lower valley, with Scaled Quail joining Northern Bobwhite, and such species as Curve-billed Thrasher, Cactus Wren, Pyrrhuloxia and Black-throated Sparrow common in the brushy uplands. Along the banks of the Rio Grande, the shy and retiring Audubon's Oriole is making its last stand within the U.S. borders. Altamira Orioles suspend their pendulous nests from riverine trees, and Ringed (declining) and Green kingfishers patrol the snag-lined banks. Noisy Great Kiskadees and Couch's Kingbirds call from exposed perches, while Long-billed Thrashers and Olive Sparrows scratch in the undergrowth. The rare Red-billed Pigeon, like the Audubon's Oriole, clings to a tenuous U.S. existence along the willow-lined banks of the river. Muscovy Duck, Gray Hawk and Hook-billed Kite are rare and irregular, but possible. Common species include Greater Roadrunner, Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed woodpeckers, and Bewick's Wren.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express, Zapata



Santa Margarita Bluff © Barry Zimmer

April 13, Day 10: Falcon Dam to Laredo (main tour ends); extension to the Hill Country begins. We may briefly revisit the Falcon Dam area in the early morning. If Morelet's Seedeaters are present in San Ygnacio, Zapata or Laredo, we will make a special effort to locate them. This small finch was once very common in this area up until the 1940's, but by the end of the 1970's, it had all but vanished north of the Mexican border. In recent years it has reappeared in small numbers in the Falcon Dam area. The weedy edges and river banks here offer the last U.S. refuge for this tiny Mexican finch. From here we drive north to Laredo where the main tour will conclude at the Laredo airport at around 11:00 a.m. Flights out of Laredo (airport code LRD) should be scheduled for 1:00 p.m. or later. For those continuing onto the Hill Country extension, we will have an early lunch in Laredo and then head north to Concan and Neal's Lodges.

Hill Country Extension:

April 13, Day 1: Drive to Hill Country. The Texas Hill Country is one of the state's most pleasant and scenic regions. A two and half hour drive through mesquite brushland will lead us from Laredo to Neal's Lodges on the southern edge of the Hill Country. En route we may spot Cave Swallows utilizing the highway culverts, or "skylarking" Cassin's Sparrows. Crested Caracaras and Chihuahuan Ravens should be seen along the highways. We should arrive at Neal's Lodges by late afternoon. Neal's is a rustic, family-operated establishment on the banks of the clear, cool, rushing Frio River. Although the accommodations are basic, the family-style meals and homey atmosphere are delightful. Best of all, birds are everywhere on the grounds of the lodges. The amount of bird song and bird activity here is a real treat.

NIGHT: Neal's Lodges, Concan



Golden-cheeked Warbler © Barry Zimmer

April 14-16, Days 2-4: Concan Area. We will have the better part of three days to enjoy the pleasures of the Texas Hill Country. Birds are everywhere here, from the rocky flower-covered hillsides to the thick brush and cypress-lined river banks. The Hill Country is simply one of the “birdiest” places around and provides a unique setting for eastern and western birds to meet. Located right on the dividing line between the junipers and oaks of the Texas Hill Country and the thick brush of South Texas, the Concan area is an ideal spot for studying the birds of both habitats. Some of the expected species present on the lodge grounds include Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Black and Eastern phoebes, Ash-throated and Brown-crested flycatchers, Verdin, Carolina Chickadee, Black-crested Titmouse, Bell’s Yellow-throated, and White-eyed vireos, Bewick’s, Carolina, Canyon and Cactus wrens, Yellow-throated Warbler, House Finch, and Canyon Towhee. A concerted effort will be made to find the two special Texas Hill Country birds, the Golden-cheeked Warbler (which nests nowhere else in the world!) and the Black-capped Vireo, both scarce and difficult to locate. This, however, is the heart of their range. Other typical Hill Country birds we should see are Black-chinned Hummingbird, Vermilion Flycatcher, Woodhouse’s Scrub-Jay, Common Raven, Lesser Goldfinch, and Rufous-crowned and Field sparrows. Green Kingfisher and Bushtit (declining) are also possible. Several South Texas species reach their northern limits in the Uvalde area, and thus are more readily found here than elsewhere in the Hill Country. Ringed and Green kingfishers, Couch’s Kingbird, Long-billed Thrasher, and Olive Sparrow will certainly be targeted. We will likely visit Chalk Bluff Park one morning where rarities are occasionally seen, with the park hosting a vagrant Rufous-capped Warbler in 2011 & 2012.



Mexican Free-tailed Bats © Barry Zimmer

One evening (likely the first), we will visit a nearby private ranch to view one of the greatest bat spectacles in the United States. Over ten million Mexican Free-tailed Bats pour from the entrance of a huge limestone cave. So great are their numbers that the long undulating column of bats stretches to the limits of vision and blackens a corner of the sky. The steady stream of bats continues well into the night. Hundreds of Cave Swallows nest here as well. On the way back to Neal’s, we will look for Common Poorwills and Chuck-will’s-Widow on the unpaved ranch roads and Eastern Screech-Owl in the oak forests.

Spring in South Texas & Hill Country Extension, Page 8

In the early afternoon on our final day, we will depart Neal's for the hour and a half drive to San Antonio.

NIGHT: Neal's Lodges, Concan (April 14 & 15)

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites San Antonio Airport (April 16)

April 17, Day 5: Departure for Home. Participants may make arrangements to depart from San Antonio (airport code SAT) any time today.

TOUR SIZE: These tours will be limited to 14 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: Barry Zimmer and Willy Hutcheson



Barry Zimmer has been birding since the age of eight. His main areas of expertise lie in North and Central America, but his travels have taken him throughout much of the world, including such exotic locales as Japan, Russia, Madagascar, Africa, and New Zealand. Barry is a longtime member of the New Mexico Bird Records Committee, and served on the Texas Bird Records Committee for 12 years. He has coauthored three books: *Birds of the Trans-Pecos*, *A Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley*, and *Birds and Birdfinding in the El Paso Area*. Barry has a keen interest in nature photography, having captured over 1,600 species of birds on film. His other interests include sports (a diehard Red Sox fan), cooking, and movies. He received his degree in psychology at the University of Texas in El Paso. Barry resides in El Paso with his wife, Yvonne, and their daughter, Alexandra.



Willy Hutcheson began birding in the South Carolina Lowcountry at age six. As a teenager, he attended VENT's Camp Chiricahua for two years, where he discovered that there were indeed other adolescents in the world who shared his all-consuming obsession with birds. After obtaining one Master's Degree in Conservation Biology and another in teaching science, he began a career in education. For the last decade, he has taught Biology and Environmental Science at a boarding school in Concord, Massachusetts, where he lives with his wife and two teenage sons. In the summers, Willy escapes with his family to Great Wass Island in downeast Maine and enjoys hiking, sailing, kayaking, and birding the maritime boreal ecosystem.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the main tour is **\$3,795** per person in double occupancy from Corpus Christi (tour ends in Laredo) which includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 10, and accommodations and boat trip as stated in the itinerary. The fee for the Hill Country extension is **\$2,095** per person in double occupancy from Laredo (tour ends in San Antonio) which includes all meals from lunch on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 5, and accommodations as stated in the itinerary. Both fees include ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leader(s). It does not include airfare from your home to Corpus Christi or Laredo and return from Laredo or San Antonio, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for the main tour is **\$595**; the single supplement for the Hill Country extension is **\$395**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for these tours, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for each tour is **\$500** per person. If you would like to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard, Visa, or American Express at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at www.ventbird.com) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard, Visa, American Express), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days (November 5, 2020 for main tour and November 14, 2020 for extension) prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For your protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

If you cancel:

180 days or more before departure date

179 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$250*

No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded

No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where you, the customer, are not at fault and have not cancelled in violation of the terms and conditions of any of the contract for transportation or travel services, all sums paid to VENT for services not received by you will be promptly refunded by VENT to you unless you otherwise advise VENT in writing.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Resolutions as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™**. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most highly regarded travel insurance programs available.

Critical benefits of **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance** include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation and rescue services** from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; comprehensive travel insurance for **trip cancellation/interruption**, primary medical expense coverage, and much more. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available but must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as security evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or other

security events, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause (must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit). Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: ripcordrescuetravelinsurance.com/ventbird; or click the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Neal’s Lodges (Hill Country Extension) does not provide daily room service. Amenities there are limited (a bath towel and hand towel are provided, as is soap), however items such as coffee, blow dryers, shampoo, and bath mats are not. Please bring these items if you require them.

BAGGAGE: Luggage space in the vans is somewhat limited. Soft luggage is preferable to rigid suitcases for making the most of the van’s storage capacity. Please limit your luggage to one medium-sized duffel or soft-sided bag and one carry-on.

SCHEDULE: Most mornings breakfast will be around 6:00 a.m., with departures for birding varying from 6:40 to 7:15 a.m.. The morning of our visit to the King Ranch, however, we will have breakfast at 5:30 a.m. and depart at 6:00 a.m.

CLIMATE: Temperatures in Texas in April range from 60 to 90 degrees with the possibility of even warmer weather (mid 90s) in the Valley. However, a late “norther” may bring rain and temperatures around 50 degrees. Our 2007 tour had record-breaking low temperatures, in the low 40’s, for two days. In the Hill Country, night time lows could also dip into the 40’s (we dipped to 39 degrees on our 2014 trip). Rain is possible at all locations.

CLOTHING: While light field clothing is the norm, you should also bring along a sweater or light jacket and raingear. Comfortable walking shoes or boots are essential, as are a hat and sunscreen for protection from the sun. Dress will be informal throughout. You may wish to bring along swim wear.

LAUNDRY: Guest laundry (self-service and/or valet) is available at all hotels.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). An alarm clock is essential (especially at Neal’s Lodges). Your leader will have a spotting scope; but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. If you are bringing a camera, we suggest you bring sufficient memory cards also, as they will not always be readily available during the tour. A small flashlight may come in handy during owling excursions.

INTERNET & PHONE SERVICE: Wi-Fi is available in all hotels on the main tour and mobile phone service is also readily available throughout.

On the extension, Wi-Fi is limited at Neal’s Lodges. The strongest signal is at the office/store/cafe area. Phone service at Neal’s depends on your carrier. **At the time of publication, AT&T customers have service, while Verizon and Sprint do not.**

HEALTH: If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult with your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots.

INSECT PROTECTION: Chiggers, mosquitoes, and ticks can be a problem in Texas, and insect repellent is strongly recommended (we suggest Cutters or Off).

A Note About Chiggers: This tour visits areas where chiggers are known to occur. Chiggers are tiny parasitic mites found in most warm weather areas of the southern United States and the world's tropics. They are especially numerous in grassy areas, where, in the immature stage, they attach themselves to other animals or humans who make contact with the grass as they pass by. Chiggers do not suck blood and the majority of the world's species do not carry disease. They do feed on bodily fluids, however, through a process in which a digestive enzyme is produced by the chigger which essentially liquefies the skin around the area where the chigger is attached. The chigger is not usually attached to the skin for more than a few hours before it either falls off or is knocked off. Our bodies respond by producing a hardened area as a defense against the chigger's digestive enzyme. Though the chigger may be long gone, it is the presence of the hardened area, and the body's natural process of reabsorbing it that typically causes intense itching, often lasting for a week or more. Chiggers like to attach themselves to areas of thin skin, especially around the ankles, beltline, undergarment lines, knees and elbows.

Chiggers can be avoided by following these procedures:

- Avoid walking, or standing in particular, in areas dominated by grass. These areas are where one is most likely to encounter chiggers.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to avoid direct skin-to-grass contact. Chiggers can find their way through clothing, but this is a standard and effective prevention technique commonly employed by many.
- Apply insect repellent, such as "Cutters" to your body from the waist down BEFORE putting on your clothing.
- Spray your pants and socks with a spray repellent such as "Cutters" or "Off." Repellants with high concentrations of DEET (70-100%) are most effective. You do not need to apply these to you skin, only to clothing. (Be careful as DEET will damage plastics and lens coatings). Repel Permanone is an odorless aerosol insecticide that offers perhaps the best defense against chiggers. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online. It should only be applied to clothes and allowed to dry before you dress. Never apply Permanone directly to the skin. Permethrin is known to be a highly toxic chemical to insects. It is the active ingredient in Permanone, but is present in a small amount (0.5%).
- Powdered sulfur applied to waist, bottoms of pants, sock and boots is also effective at repelling chiggers. However, be warned that clothes will retain the sulfur odor for several washings.
- Shower at the end of each day in the field. Use a washcloth to vigorously rub your legs, feet, and ankles.

By following these methods, you should be able to avoid all chigger bites, as well as tick bites. If, however, you are bitten by chiggers anyway, you can reduce or eliminate the symptoms by applying benzocaine or hydrocortisone creams, calamine lotion, After Bite, or any number of anti-itch products.

SUGGESTED READING: A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

For use during this tour we recommend either of these two books:

- **Dunn, Jon L. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. The National Geographic Society, 2011 (6th edition).**

- Sibley, David Allan. *National Audubon Society: The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Knopf Doubleday, 2000.
*Note that the Sibley Western guide does not cover most of the South Texas specialties.

Birds:

Holt, Harold. *A Birder's Guide to the Texas Coast*. (Lane/ABA Birdfinding Guide #413.) American Birding Association, 1993 (revised).

Lockwood, Mark, Brad McKinney, Jim Paton, Barry Zimmer. *A Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley*. (Lane/ABA Birdfinding Guide.) American Birding Association, 1999 (revised). Both this and the above guide are great background material.

Oberholser, Harry C. and Edgar B. Kincaid, Jr. (ed.) *The Bird Life of Texas*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974. Edited by Edgar Kincaid. The definitive two-volume reference work on the Texas avifauna, including distribution maps with a few paintings by Louis Agassiz Fuertes. Detailed description material.

Peterson, Roger Tory and James Fisher. *Wild America: The Record of the 30,000 Mile Journey*. Mariner Books, 1997. See Chapters 16 and 17: The adventures of two great naturalists as they bird their way through Texas.

Peterson, Roger Tory and Edward L. Chalif. *A Field Guide to Mexican Birds*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997 (paperback). Has good illustrations of many of the border specialties.

Wildflowers:

Enquist, Marshall. *Wildflowers of the Texas Hill Country*. Austin: Lone Star Botanical, 1989. Very thorough and attractive guide with excellent photographs.

Wills, Mary M. and Howard S. Irvin. *Roadside Flowers of Texas*. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1961. Good selection of typical wildflowers and attractive line drawings.

Loughmiller, Campbell, Lynn Loughmiller and Lynn Sherrod. *Texas Wildflowers*. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1984. Field guide with nice photos of many representative wildflowers.

Niehaus, Theodore S. *A Field Guide to Southwestern and Texas Wildflowers* (Peterson Field Guide Series 31). Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998 (reprint). This book has the greatest selection of species of the popular guides, but many are black and white line drawings only.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on July 28, 2020, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or

passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.

TC:20210445 & TCO:20210413
04/16/19 - BZ
7/28/2020 - PS