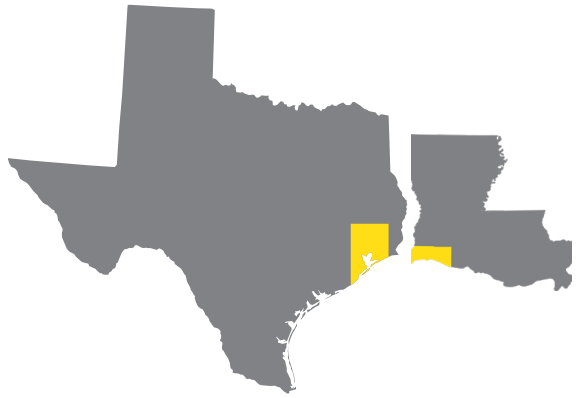


BIRDING BETWEEN BORDERS





BIRDING BETWEEN BORDERS

The confluence of the Central and Mississippi Flyways in Southeast Texas & Southwest Louisiana

WELCOME TO THE “RAIL CAPITOL OF THE WORLD”

Located on the edge of two migratory bird flyways and with their proximity to the Gulf Coast, Beaumont, Texas and Lake Charles, Louisiana provide an excellent base to observe hundreds of species of birds throughout the year.

Not only do these two cities offer outstanding birding opportunities, they also provide fantastic lodging, restaurants, and entertainment. Both cities allow birders the opportunity to “run down” to the coast for a migratory fallout. Casually bird by vehicle along a wildlife drive or take a stroll through the piney woods looking for the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker. The best part? This is ALL only a short drive from your hotel accommodations.

Within a 90-mile radius, witness more than 34 birding hotspots including Peveto Woods Sanctuary, Cameron Prairie NWR, Sabine NWR, Cattail Marsh, High Island, Anahuac NWR and Bolivar Flats Sanctuary.

SPRING MIGRATION

If flocks of colorful warblers, tanagers, and buntings is what you enjoy, spring is the time to visit! Depending on weather conditions, any day one can see thousands of songbirds flying in off the Gulf of Mexico. If you love the Biggest Week in American Birding, you'll be delighted by this region in April. Spend springtime exploring the region to see a flock of Indigo Buntings, Blue Grosbeaks and Painted Buntings. Find a tree full of Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Summer and Scarlet Tanagers. In addition to the migrant songbirds, shorebirds move through in the hundreds of thousands. Watch a stunning flock of several thousand American Avocets. Alongside you can see hundreds of Least Terns, Snowy, Wilson's, and Piping Plovers, and with some luck a Red Knot, Whimbrel, or Long-billed Curlew. The spring is also the best time to visit the piney woods that lie less than 90 miles to the north. Species such as Red-cockaded

Woodpecker and Brown-headed Nuthatch can be seen year-round, but Bachman's Sparrows are much easier to see in the spring when they are singing their musical trill to attract mates and defend territories. Also, species such as the Swainson's Warbler and Swallow-tailed Kite breed nearby. Needless to say, the birding opportunities are endless here in the spring!

FALL MIGRATION

Due to the possibility of seeing six species of rails some dub this region the “Rail Capital of the World”. With all the easy access into the coastal marshes in this region, you have a good chance of seeing Sora, Virginia, King, and Clapper Rails. The Yellow and Black Rails, while more difficult to find are present in good numbers as well. With some luck and local expertise on your side, you may just get a glimpse at one or two of these mythical rails. This region also hosts thousands of raptors, ducks, geese, and shorebirds

during the winter months, so there is always something to look at for any birder! A couple of the wildlife refuges, Anahuac NWR in Texas and Lacassine NWR in Louisiana are especially good in the winter. Three species of geese, more than 15 species of ducks which number in the thousands, and many raptors can be seen. The number of wintering birds can be mind-blowing!

In addition to exceptional birding, these areas have so much more to offer. Varied local cuisines from seafood to Cajun to Creole to sushi and po-boys; breweries and distilleries; live music; casino gaming; championship golf; world-class spas; charter fishing or fishing from the pier/shore; photogenic historic districts, and the list goes on and on. The area also boasts a wide range of accommodations from budget to 4-star, from bed & breakfasts to casino resorts.

SOUTHEAST TEXAS



NORTH



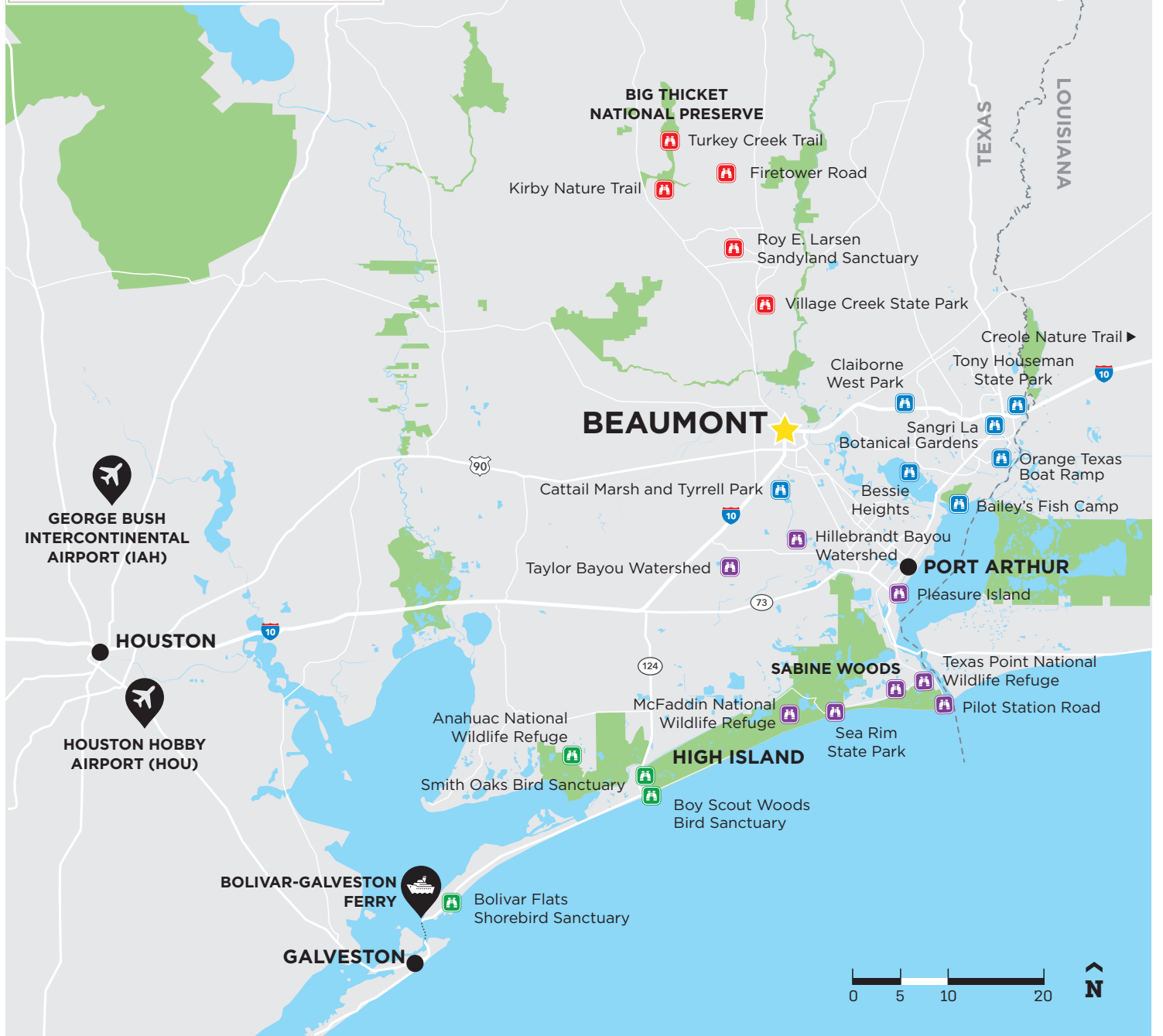
EAST

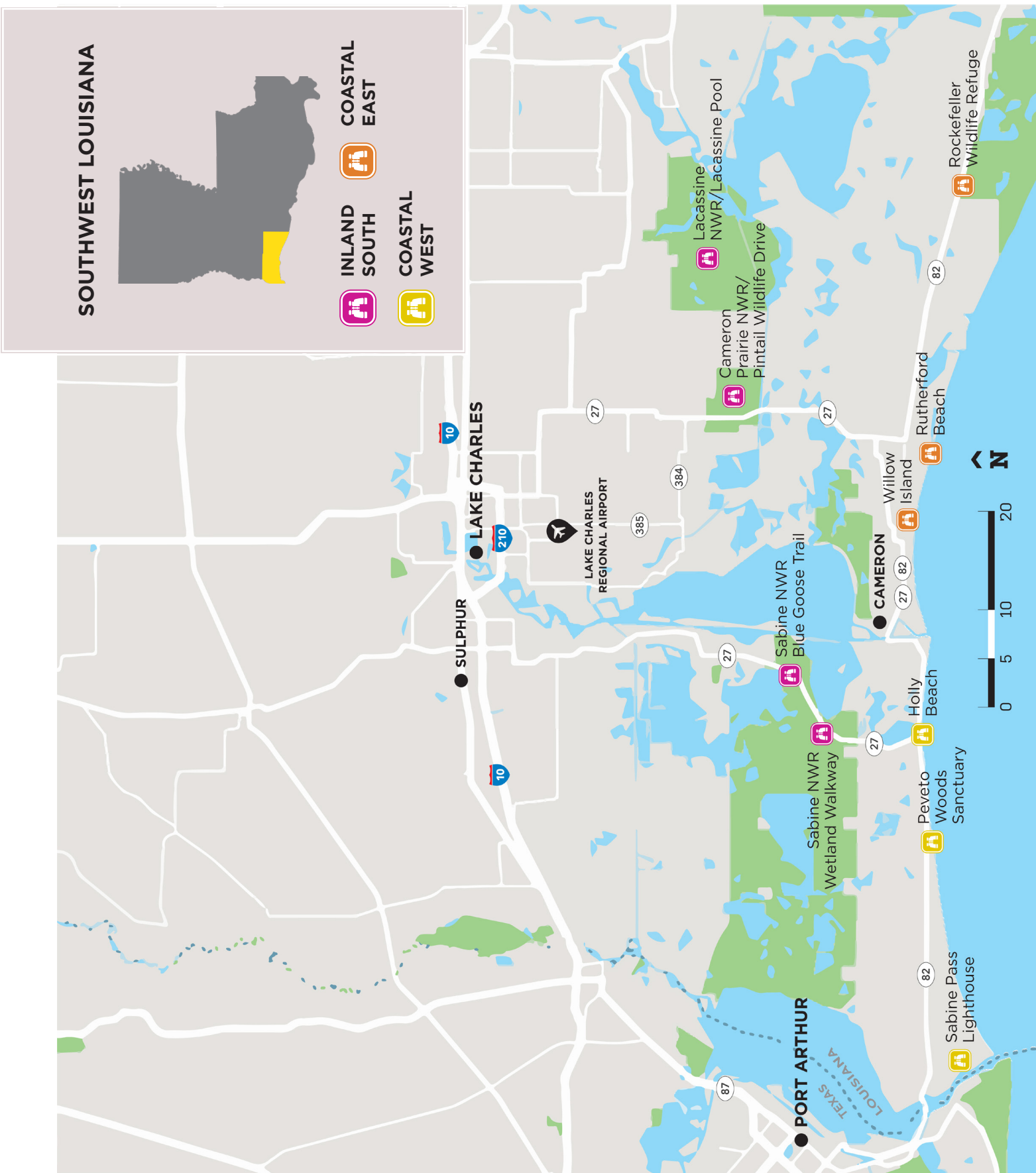


SOUTH



WEST





Lifelong birder or just beginning, Birding Between Borders is the place for you. Birding is truly just the tip of the iceberg for all the amazing things to experience in Southeast Texas (Beaumont) and Southwest Louisiana (Lake Charles.) For more information or to plan your trip, check out:

BIRDINGBETWEENBORDERS.COM

COVER IMAGE: JEFF TRAHAN

BIRDS & BUTTERFLIES, OH MY!

A great way to be sure you see all the birds in the area is via a Grosse Savanne Ecotour, by boat or by land.

LACASSINE NWR – WILDLIFE LOOP/ LACASSINE POOL

Lacassine Pool provides great access to freshwater marsh with a mixture of woodland habitats. Within Louisiana, this is one of the best places for waterfowl during the winter. The 3-mile wildlife drive around Lacassine Pool and an observation tower allow for great views of many species of birds.

On any given day from the late fall through the early spring you can see 10's of thousands of Snow Geese with smaller numbers of Greater White-fronted and Ross's Geese. The numbers of ducks present as you drive the wildlife loop is sure to amaze. 10's of thousands of ducks including species such as Black-bellied and Fulvous Whistling-Ducks, Wood Duck, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teals, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Northern Pintail, Ring-necked Duck, and Lesser Scaup can all be extremely numerous. Make sure to keep an eye on the sky as the winter is also a great time for raptors. Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, and Merlin are all regularly occurring. Songbirds, especially sparrows, use this refuge in good numbers and this site is one of the most consistent places to see Vermilion Flycatchers in Louisiana.

From the spring through fall the birding is also quite rewarding. Most ducks are back on their breeding grounds to the north, but it's a great time to see Fulvous Whistling-Ducks and Mottled and Wood Ducks. This is also a great spot to look for Purple Gallinules which are usually quite numerous and Least Bitterns which may take more searching but are also rather common.

ADDITIONAL BIRDING AREAS:

Intracoastal Park, Corbina Road, Fabacher Road, Fruge Road (south of LA 14), Little Chenier Road

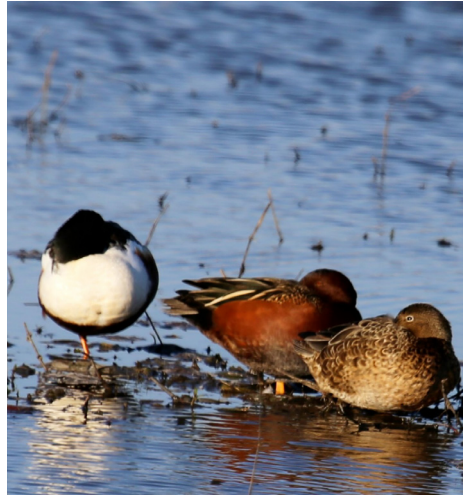


CAMERON PRAIRIE NWR

Driving the Pintail Wildlife Drive, a 3-mile loop through marsh habitat is a great way to explore this refuge. The birding can be great year-round, but from the fall-spring, the number of birds using the refuge can be incredible.

During the winter thousands of Snow and Greater White-fronted Geese with lesser numbers of Ross's Geese can usually be seen at the start of the wildlife drive. At times there are also thousands of ducks present and this is one of the most reliable spots to see Cinnamon Teal in the state. During the winter, watch for Northern Harriers as they fly low over the marsh, searching for their prey. Plenty of other marsh birds are also present during the winter including American Bittern, Common Gallinule, and Marsh Wren. During the spring and summer, Purple Gallinules and Least Bitterns are both common along the drive.

The visitor center is also worthy of a stop. Depending on water levels, the marsh behind the visitor center can have many geese, ducks, and wading birds. Birding the edges of the woods can be productive. During migration many passerines are possible and Eastern Screech-Owls are regular and have roosted in the Wood Duck box in front of the visitor center.



SABINE NWR - BLUE GOOSE TRAIL

The Blue Goose Trail is a one mile (round-trip) trail that leads through a brackish marsh to the edge of Calcasieu Lake. The birding is best during migration and winter, but there are highlights present throughout the year.

During migration, especially spring migration, a shrub line along the trail provides some habitat for many migrant songbirds. A large number of warblers, vireos, thrushes and more are possible. The marsh birding can also be great this time of year. Some highlights include Clapper Rail, Least Bittern, Purple Gallinule, and Seaside Sparrow; all of which are also present during the summer.

During the winter, the marsh is home to more species. Keep an eye out for Soras and Virginia Rails, Northern Harriers, and a number of sparrows including Nelson's Sparrow. Several rarities have been recorded here over the years including a Sage Thrasher and a Say's Phoebe. The possibility of a rarity always makes this location worthy of a stop!

SABINE NWR - WETLAND WALKWAY

The Wetland Walkway at Sabine National Wildlife Refuge is a 1.5-mile trail accessing excellent brackish and freshwater marsh. The trail includes a portion of boardwalk that provides great access into a typically difficult habitat to spend time in. The wetlands can have many waders present including Roseate Spoonbill, Tricolored Heron, Least Bittern (summer), and American Bittern (winter). Ducks can be present in good numbers in the winter and Mottled Duck is present year-round.

Visiting early in the morning or in the evening will give you a better chance to see some hard-to-see species. Rails including King, Clapper, Virginia Rail (winter), and Sora (winter) can all be seen with some patience. Both Common and Purple Gallinules (summer) can be present in good numbers. In general, this location isn't great for passerine diversity, but in the winter, the trailhead tends to be reliable for the stunning Vermilion Flycatcher.





MARSH MADNESS



Swept by salty winds, these saltwater marsh habitats are feasting areas for numerous migrant species, as well as a beauty to behold in their own right.

WILLOW ISLAND

This privately owned site, consisting of mature oaks, shrubby habitats, and pasture is situated close to the coast where migrant songbirds first reach land after flying over the Gulf of Mexico. Luckily, the landowners allow birders access to their property. This is one of the best sites in this region, especially during spring migration. The birding at this site is similar to Peveto Woods, but this location doesn't have as much undergrowth, resulting in smaller numbers of several species.

Spring migration at this site can be outstanding. From April-mid May this site can be packed with migrant warblers, vireos, thrushes, orioles, flycatchers, tanagers, and cuckoos. Visit on the right spring day and you will be amazed by the diversity of birds that migrate through this region. This site is also great birding in the winter. Good numbers of sparrows are usually present and with patience you may find uncommon or rare species such as Clay-colored, Harris's, or LeConte's Sparrows among the more common Savannah, White-throated, White-crowned, Swamp, and Song Sparrows.

There is also access to the beach at this site. Many of the same species that are listed for Holly and Rutherford Beaches can be seen here, but typically in smaller numbers.

ADDITIONAL BIRDING AREAS:

Oak Grove Sanctuary, Price Lake Road, Cameron Downtown, Broussard Beach



ROCKEFELLER REFUGE/ NUNEZ WOODS

This 71,000 acre refuge protects extensive marsh habitats as well as some chenier habitat that can be spectacular birding during spring migration. Nunez Woods is one of the top birding sites in Louisiana during spring migration.

During spring migration Nunez Woods can be dripping with birds including warblers, vireos, thrushes, orioles, flycatchers, tanagers, buntings, cuckoos and more. To access this site, you need to stop by the refuge headquarters to pick up a key for a gate to the woods. This site is closed, due to deer hunting, from September 1-February 1. Luckily for birders, this site is open throughout the entirety of spring migration.

The marsh habitats that this refuge protects are similar to many other wetlands in the area so many of the same species are likely to be seen. However, this refuge is particularly good for waterfowl and thousands of ducks and geese can be seen overwintering here. Depending on the season, this site is another good place to look for American and Least Bitterns, Purple Gallinule, and other marsh species.



RUTHERFORD BEACH/ RUTHERFORD BEACH ROAD

The marshes and inland ponds, in addition to the beach and open Gulf make this location a must-stop for birders in this area. The ponds along Rutherford Beach Road can be busy with waterfowl during the winter. Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mottled Duck, Northern Pintail, Redhead, and Lesser Scaup are all regular. The marsh along the road and around the ponds are great for American Bittern, Sedge and Marsh Wrens, and sparrows during the winter.

Once you reach the beach, the birding is similar to that of other birding sites along the coast. Many species of gulls, terns, and shorebirds are usually feeding or resting. This location tends to be good for Piping, Snowy, and Wilson's Plovers during the appropriate time of year. Scanning offshore can be productive with scoters (winter), Magnificent Frigatebird (summer), and Northern Gannet (winter) being possible.

A LIVING COAST



Peveto Woods was the first chenier sanctuary for migratory birds established in Louisiana. As many as two million birds use the sanctuary each year.

PEVETO WOODS

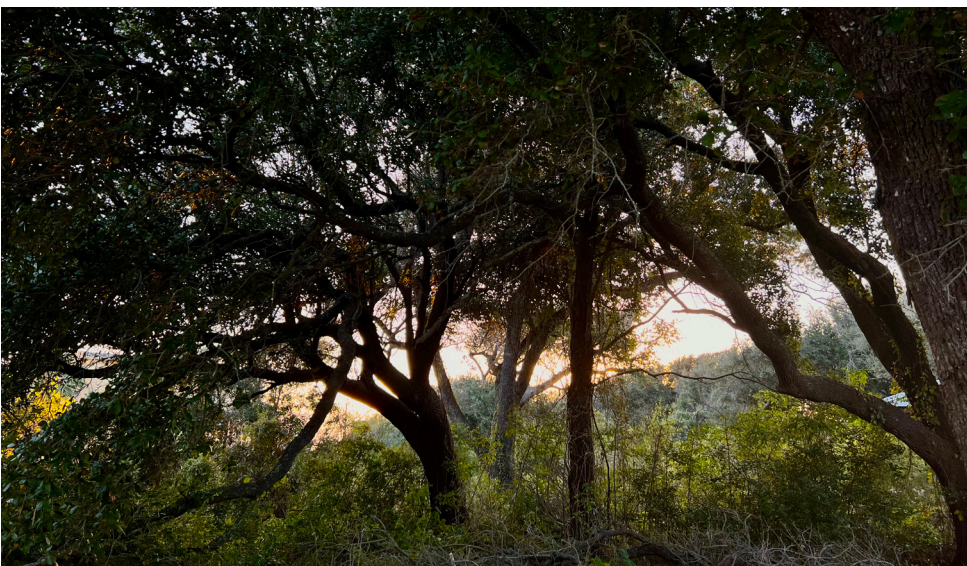
Peveto Woods Sanctuary, owned and operated by the Baton Rouge Audubon, protects about 40 acres of coastal woods and wetlands. This sanctuary is one of the premier birding destinations in Louisiana as well as anywhere along the Gulf Coast.

This location provides great birding opportunities from fall-spring, but the peak time to visit is during spring migration from April through mid-May. As migrant passerines are making their way north across the Gulf of Mexico, this property is the first tract of habitat that they encounter. Depending on weather conditions, these woods can be alive with warblers, vireos, thrushes, orioles, flycatchers, tanagers, buntings, and cuckoos.

Birding at Peveto can also be quite rewarding in the fall and winter. Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, House Wrens, and Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warblers are all quite common. This time of the year is also a good time to search for vagrant songbirds that rarely occur in Louisiana. In October of 2021, the first Louisiana state record of Golden-crowned Warbler was found; a species that is rarely recorded north of Mexico!

ADDITIONAL BIRDING AREAS:

Hackberry Ridge (private), Mae's Beach, Long Beach Road, Deep Bayou Road



HOLLY BEACH

The town of Holly Beach and coastline throughout this region didn't fare well when Hurricane Laura made landfall in 2020. Even with all the destruction that the hurricane brought, the habitats have started to recover, and the birding can be great.

Large flocks of gulls, terns, shorebirds, and pelicans can be seen resting on the beach throughout the year. Laughing Gulls are the most numerous throughout the year, but during the winter other gulls such as Ring-billed and Herring become numerous, and Bonaparte's and Lesser Black-backed Gulls are also regular. Depending on the time of the year, you may see Caspian, Royal, Sandwich, Gull-billed, Common, Forester's, Black, and Least Terns mixed in with the flocks. Sanderlings, Black-bellied Plovers, and Ruddy Turnstones are regular on the beach and with a little luck you may see Wilson's, Snowy, or Piping Plovers as well.

If you scan out over the Gulf during the winter, you might spot scoters or during the summer a Magnificent Frigatebird. During migration, this is a good spot to watch for flocks of ducks, terns, and wading birds wing past. Occasionally, Northern Gannets will also be visible from shore.



SABINE PASS LIGHTHOUSE

The road to Sabine Pass Lighthouse provides birders with access to extensive saltmarsh, mudflat, and open water habitats to view many difficult to see species. The extensive salt marshes in this region provide breeding habitat for such retiring species as Clapper Rail, Least Bittern, and Seaside Sparrow. And, if you get extremely lucky, you might even hear a Black Rail. In the winter, you have a good chance to see several species of sparrows including Seaside, Nelson's, and Swamp Sparrows.

This site also has good mudflats and some limited habitat for migrant passerines. The mudflats at this location can be great for many species of shorebirds including some stunners such as American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, and Marbled Godwit. Although limited, the habitat for migrant passerines can be active on certain days. Depending on weather conditions during spring migration, a large number of warblers, vireos, thrushes and more can be seen.

SOUTHEAST TEXAS
NORTH

A PINEY WOODED WONDERLAND

Ongoing conservation efforts help rare and endangered species grow and thrive, while working to maintain a habitat unique to Texas and the South.

BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE

The piney woods of the Big Thicket are much different from coastal Texas and thus have a totally different mix of species. A patchwork of protected areas has created a convergence of ecosystems ranging from longleaf pine forests to cypress rimmed bayous, resulting in a biological crossroads and some of the greatest diversity in North America. The trail network could keep you busy for days from the 15-mile Turkey Creek Trail to the 2.5-mile Kirby Trail, but kayaking or paddling is another popular way to explore.

Neotropical migrants navigate across the Gulf to nest at this location in winter and spring. Common sightings include Swainson's, Prothonotary, Hooded, and Yellow-throated Warblers, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Great Crested and Acadian Flycatchers, White-eyed, Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos, Summer Tanager, and many others. The winter brings mixed foraging flocks of Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Blue-headed Vireo, and Pine and Yellow-rumped Warblers. Other species such as Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, and Eastern Towhees are also common in winter.

MAJOR BIRDING SITES:

Kirby Nature Trail, Firetower Road, Turkey Creek Trail, Roy E. Larsen Sandyland Sanctuary, Village Creek State Park



SAM RAYBURN RESERVOIR DAM

The dam at Sam Rayburn Reservoir and B.A. Steinhagen Lake at Martin Dies Jr. State Park are easily incorporated into a day of birding at Angelina National Forest, offering a stark contrast from the forest cover and attracting water birds in droves.

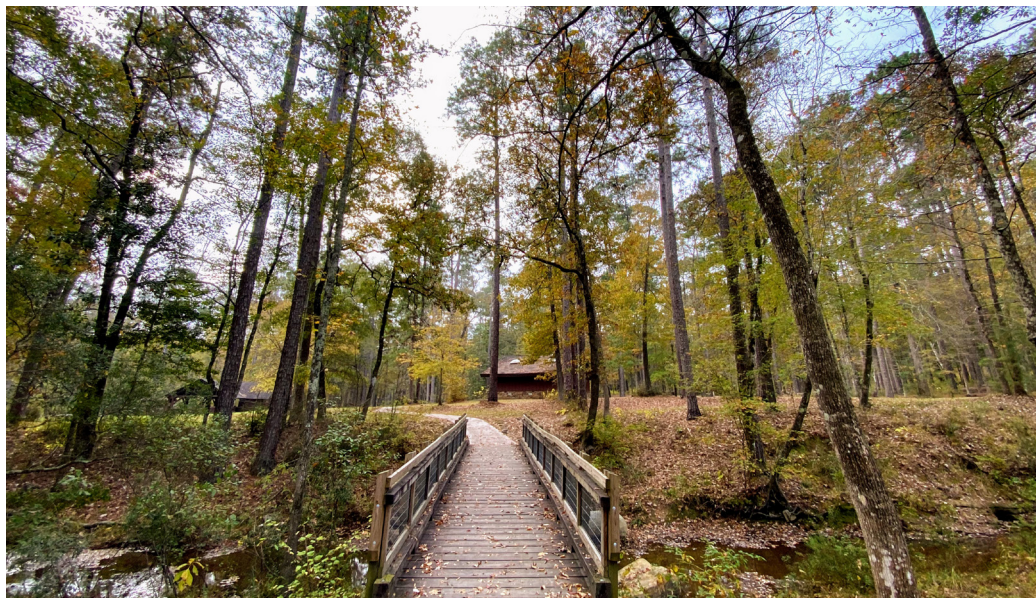
Common sightings include the Common Loon, Bonaparte's, Ring-billed, Herring Gulls, ducks, and grebes. The site is best in the winter but also has great potential for seabirds after a tropical storm or hurricane. It is also one of the few spots in the region where the graceful Swallow-tailed Kite and Mississippi Kites breed. The passerines attracted to the woodlands are similar to those found in the Big Thicket National Preserve.

ADDITIONAL BIRDING SITES:

Sandy Creek Park, Hen House Ridge Unit, Martin Dies Jr. State Park, Walnut Ridge Unit, Martin Dies Jr. State Park, Jasper State Fish Hatchery, Ebenezer Park



Located on two major U.S. flyways and blessed with a unique gulf habitat, Beaumont is an essential birding hotspot for breeding, wintering, and migrating.



ANGELINA NATIONAL FOREST

A place where towering pines and whimsical loblolly shield you from reality, Angelina National Forest is a 150,000+ acre nature retreat. About an hour and a half north of Beaumont, it is one of just four national forests in Texas. The piney woods are home to the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker and the uncommon Bachman's Sparrow, which only occur in the southeastern United States. Both species can be seen around the Boykin Springs Recreation Area.

MAJOR BIRDING SITES:

Powell Park, San Augustine Park, Harvey Creek Park, Jackson Hill Park, Turkey Hill, Boykin Springs Recreation Area

A WETLAND OASIS

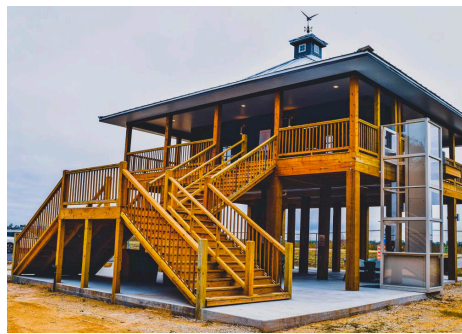
Like humans, birds are drawn to different areas for the physical and physiological characteristics they provide: food, water, shelter, safety. During migration, they trade their wintering grounds for areas rich with food and resources during the breeding season. One area they're particularly attracted to? The Upper Texas Gulf Coast.

CATTAIL MARSH AND TYRRELL PARK

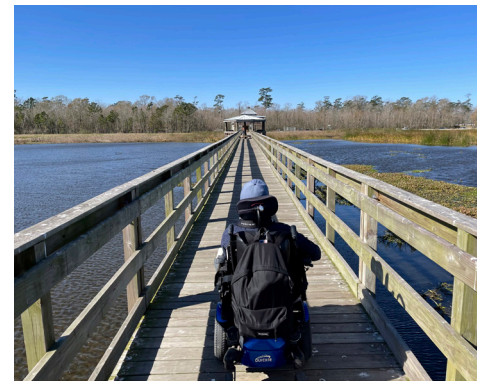
With 900 acres of scenic wetlands, Cattail Marsh is a repurposed wastewater treatment facility, utilizing an innovative nitrification process to reclaim the habitat. 15-20 million gallons of water are processed a day, which has created a thriving ecosystem for animals, birds, and fish. The massive marsh complex boasts over 275 species of fowl, eight miles of levees and boardwalks, and a brand-new wetlands education center. Part of the larger Tyrrell Park, the area has an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities from horseback riding to golf and biking.

The trails skirt around grassy areas which are home to meadowlarks and sparrows and forests that host wintering or migrating passerines. Raptors frequently fly overhead, from Northern Harriers to Crested Caracaras, and a Bald Eagle nest is a thrilling highlight. Egrets, ibis, doves, Red-winged Blackbirds are typical species to look out for.

The views of Roseate Spoonbills, Black-necked Stilts, and American Avocets are standouts, and while the Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, and Northern Shoveler



winter in numbers others like Gadwall should be around in smaller cohorts. Diving ducks like Lesser Scaup may also be present, and the duck species composition is dynamic, which only adds to the fun. Both Black-bellied and Fulvous whistling ducks can be found, although summer is better for Fulvous. Particularly exciting is the strong possibility of Cinnamon Teal, which has recently become more regular, representing an extreme eastern occurrence for this species. Another more recent and regular species is Least Grebe, the northernmost location for this species. Boat-tailed, Great-tailed, and



Common Grackle are another group that coincides at Cattail Marsh, along with the Brown-headed Cowbird and Red-winged Blackbird. In July and August in particular, it's possible to find seven species of swallow (Northern Rough-winged, Cave, Cliff, Tree, Bank, Barn, and Purple Martin) within as little as half an hour.



SHANGRI LA BOTANICAL GARDENS AND NATURE CENTER

With a name inspired by the book *Lost Horizon*, Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center is a 262-acre preserve that includes upland forests, cypress/tupelo swamps, and Adams Bayou, a lush riparian area. More than 300 species of birds have been seen, including a heronry with 15 different species that nest from late February through June. An observation blind is provided that is handicapped accessible and located near restrooms. Alligators are commonly observed in Ruby Lake and in the spring, the garden area is an excellent place to observe migrating songbirds. An Outpost Tour allows visitors to travel to a Beaver Pond where Prothonotary Warblers nest. Common mammals include swamp rabbits and nutria along with a great variety of reptiles and amphibians. Generally, because most of Shangri La has been left in a natural state, it is a wonderland of wildlife.

Bailey's Fish Camp is part of Lower Neches River Wildlife Management Area which grants birders access to the marsh. An observation platform offers great views of herons, egrets, ibis, spoonbills, and waterfowl. Depending on water levels, shorebirds may also be present. Another location to access the marsh is Bessie Heights. For a different habitat in the same region, Claiborne West Park is comprised of mature woodland and pine forest where you can see Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine Warblers, and the Red-headed Woodpecker. It has five miles of trails and a pedestrian bridge over Cow Bayou.

MAJOR BIRDING SITES:

Bailey's Fish Camp, Bessie Heights, Tony Houseman State Park, Claiborne West Park



SOUTHEAST TEXAS
EAST

A LAND OF CONTRASTS



From Rookeries to refuges, rare ecological features like salt marshes, sand dunes, and chenier plains attract passersby in droves, anxious to land and hungry for resources.

SEA RIM STATE PARK

Where the sea meets the marsh, Sea Rim skirts the Louisiana state line, providing great birding year-round with access to salt marsh, sand dunes, and an open Gulf habitat. A delicate ecosystem rocked by the latest bout of hurricanes, it stands defiantly, damaged but never destroyed.

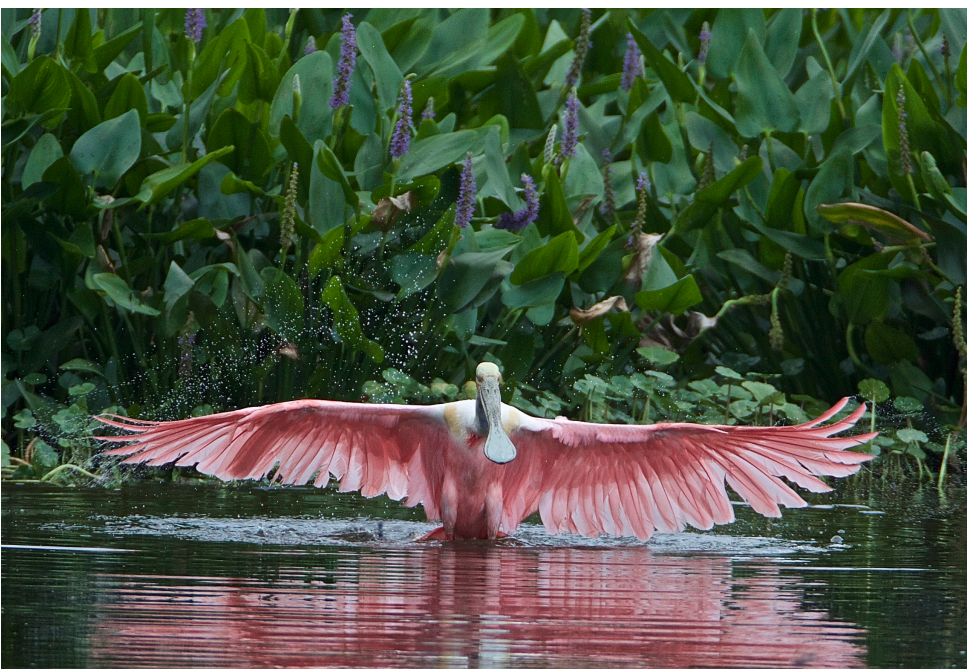
The salt marsh is a good place to see species such as Seaside Sparrow, Clapper Rail, and practically any species of wading birds like Great, Snowy, and Cattle Egrets, Tricolored, and Little Blue Heron, both types of Night-Heron, White Ibis, and Roseate Spoonbill. The best access is a .75-mile-long nature trail called the Gambusia Marsh Boardwalk. The beach provides an opportunity to see uncommon species such as Piping, Snowy, and Wilson's Plovers, many types of terns (Least, Black, Forster's, Common, Caspian, Royal, and Sandwich), and nesting Common Nighthawks. The expansive waters of the Gulf can produce huge flocks of Lesser Scaup and if you're patient, unique species of ducks such as scoters can be picked out. The open areas with short scrub are great for flycatchers such as Eastern and Western Kingbirds and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, as well as raptors like Crested Caracara and White-tailed Kite.

MAJOR BIRDING SITES:

McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge

ADDITIONAL BIRDING AREAS:

Clam Lake Road, Pilot Station Road



SABINE WOODS

Privately owned by Texas Ornithological Society and managed by local Audubon chapter, Sabine Woods is a shining example of a chenier plain woodlot. The slightly elevated beach ridge allows oak trees to grow along the coast, which attracts migrants in droves. The peak time to visit is late March-early May when the woodland is practically dripping in neotropical passersby. Many trails wind through the woods filled with mulberry trees, providing access to birds along with locally-maintained water drips to entice even more.

Warblers, Vireos, Thrushes, Orioles, Flycatchers, Tanagers, and Cuckoos can be seen in stunning numbers if you get the right weather to produce a fallout. Standout species include Black-billed Cuckoo, Veery, and Gray-cheeked Thrush, Cerulean, Golden-winged, and Swainson's Warblers, Summer and Scarlet Tanagers, Indigo and Painted Buntings, Blue Grosbeak, and Orchard and Baltimore Orioles. Sabine Woods is also the place to see grassland species such as Sedge Wren and other wading fowl because the site is surrounded by marsh. Both species of kinglets can be found in winter along with a handful of warblers like Black-and-white, Orange-crowned, and Yellow-rumped. The Hermit Thrush also winters here, along with a few dozen Greater White-fronted Geese, and a few hundred to thousand Snow Geese in the adjacent wetlands.

Texas Point National Wildlife Reserve provides further access to the saltmarsh and a large body of water, Clam Lake. Birds such as Seaside Sparrow and Clapper Rail can be seen along Cattlewalk Trail, while Pilot Station Road is a great location for Clapper Rail, Seaside Sparrow, and Nelson's Sparrow in winter. Species such as Lesser Scaup and Red-breasted Merganser can be common in the ship channel that parallels the road. This location is good for species such as Common and Purple Gallinules as well as several species of waterfowl.

Pleasure Island offers birders road access to Sabine Lake, a great spot to scope for ducks, grebes, and seabirds. Best in winter and early spring, Ruddy Ducks can be particularly numerous but Northern



Shoveler, Gadwall, Northern Pintail, Canvasback, Redhead, and a few others can also be seen, along with Horned and Eared Grebes, Ospreys, Bald Eagles, and the occasional Brown Booby, Long-tailed Duck, and several species of scoter.

Also birded from the road, Taylor Bayou Watershed and Hillebrandt Bayou Watershed are more good sites in winter and spring. Close to the coast, it is much different than the typical marsh and Gulf birding. Hillebrandt Bayou hosts thousands of Snow Geese with smaller numbers of Ross's and Greater White-fronted Geese, along with species such as Broad-winged Hawk, Pileated Woodpecker, Barred Owl, and Wood Ducks.

MAJOR BIRDING SITES:

Pilot Station Road, Texas Point National Wildlife Refuge

ADDITIONAL BIRDING AREAS:

Pleasure Island, Taylor Bayou Watershed, Hillebrandt Bayou Watershed

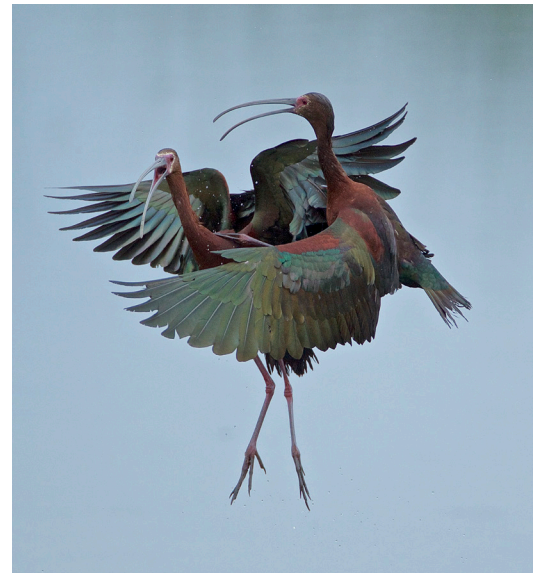
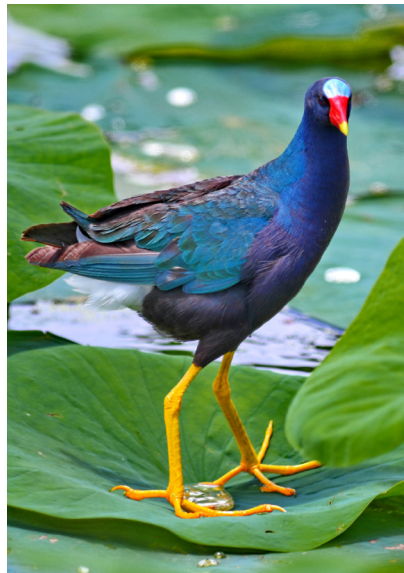
WORLD- RENOWNED COASTAL BIRDING

The most sought-after stop when birding Texas, the West is privy to immense diversity in both species and habits thanks to a phenomenal passerine migration.

ANAHUAC

A sprawling 34,000-acre wildlife refuge, Anahuac is an oasis for birds and a paradise for birders. Home to hundreds of thousands of birds you can see on a driveable car-loop, the coastal marsh and prairie habitat is a year-round birding hotspot that only gets hotter during spring migration. Waterfowl and shorebirds are common throughout the bayou in winter, but perhaps the most exciting is the potential for raptors. Once an ancient flood plain, the area is now teeming with flora, fauna, and feathered friends.

Tens of thousands of geese make landfall in winter, most commonly the Snow Goose. Greater White-fronted Geese are also abundant with Ross's Geese present in smaller numbers. Thousands of ducks in over 15 species call the area home in winter and you can expect to see the Fulvous and Black-bellied Whistling species, although most Fulvous head south for the winter. It's also a great location to spot American Bittern, White-tailed Hawks, and White-tailed Kite during the colder months. Migration brings thousands of shorebirds if the water levels are right. Hudsonian Godwit and White-rumped Sandpiper are two of the highlights along with vagrants such as Ruff and Surfbirds. Swallows



are common in the refuge and Cave is regular from spring-fall. In the spring and summer, you can usually see Purple Gallinules and Least Bitterns.

Smith Point is a fantastic location to catch the fall hawk migration. There's an official raptor count so there is always a good birder or two present. Large numbers of geese and ducks can be seen, such as Franklin's Gulls, Wood Storks, Anhingas, big flocks of American White Pelicans, Mississippi Kites (peak days in the thousands), Broad-winged Hawks (peak days in the tens of thousands), hundreds of Eastern Kingbirds, and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers in the late summer/fall, thousands of swallows (seven species), hundreds of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and smaller numbers of other migrants.

MAJOR BIRDING SITES:

Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge Shoveler Pond Loop, Willows Trail, Skillern Tract

ADDITIONAL BIRDING AREAS:

Candy Cain Abshier Wildlife Management, Smith Point and James H. Robbins Memorial Park



HIGH ISLAND

Best known from the movie, *The Big Year*, High Island is a spectacular birding location in the spring when migrants come pouring across the Gulf. A salt dome and mineral spring set at the edge of the Gulf of Mexico, the island's name is apropos as the habitat does rise 32 feet above the surrounding marshes, providing soil conditions favorable to trees and shrubs. Sightings and numbers are highest during a fallout, which generally occurs with a fast-moving cold front so be sure to keep an eye on the weather.

The Houston Audubon society manages four bird sanctuaries in the area, the two most popular being Boy Scout Woods, which is staffed with volunteers from mid-March through mid-May, and Smith Oaks, the largest reserve, which also has a rookery with two great overlooks. Boy Scout Woods has bleachers set up next to water features so you can post up for a while and study their behavior. All four have great hiking trails that provide an amazing view into the lives of these unique creatures.

MAJOR BIRDING SITES:

Boy Scout Woods Bird Sanctuary, Smith Oaks Bird Sanctuary

ADDITIONAL BIRDING AREAS:

Eubanks Woods Bird Sanctuary, S.E. Gast Red Bay Sanctuary

BOLIVAR FLATS

Bolivar Flats produces the most consistent phenomenal birding in the area with impressive concentrations of species resting and nesting year-round. A "Globally Important Bird Area" according to the Shorebird Reserve Network, the habitat is a combination of salt marsh, mudflats, and beach. Weather plays a big role in diversity, but on average, the number of birds at this location is a spectacle to see. It's also where you catch the ferry to Galveston, a quick 20-minute ride away.

Thousands of American Avocets winter at this location along with 30 other species of shorebirds such as Red Knot, Snowy, Wilson's, Piping Plovers, Long-billed Curlew, and Marbled Godwits. Least Terns are common breeders and usually start arriving in late March or early April. This is also a great location to see Reddish Egrets (year-round), Magnificent Frigatebirds (summer), and one of the most consistent places to spot Franklin's Gulls during migration.

MAJOR BIRDING SITES:

Rollover Pass, Bolivar Peninsula, Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary, Bolivar-Galveston Ferry



PLAN YOUR TRIP

Peak spring migration occurs March through May while peak fall migration takes place from August through November. Close to 400 bird species are spotted in and around Beaumont, and over 400 in Southwest Louisiana annually, so you're all but guaranteed to check more than a few off your life list.

BEAUMONT

HOTELS:

MCM ELEGANTE HOTEL

2355 I-10, Beaumont, TX 77705 | 409-842-3600

HAMPTON INN BEAUMONT

3795 I-10, Beaumont, TX 77705 | 409-840-9922

HOLIDAY INN & SUITES BEAUMONT- PLAZA

3950 I-10 South & Walden Rd, Beaumont, TX 77705 | 409-842-5995

RESTAURANTS:

J. WILSON'S

4190 Gladys Ave, Beaumont, TX 77706 | 409-899-8686

TIA JUANITA'S FISH CAMP

5555 Calder Ave, Beaumont, TX 77706 | 409-434-4532

FLOYD'S SEAFOOD

2290 I-10, Beaumont, TX 77707 | 409-842-0686



CREOLE NATURE TRAIL

HOTELS:

GOLDEN NUGGET LAKE CHARLES HOTEL & CASINO

2550 Golden Nugget Blvd, Lake Charles, LA 70601 | 337-508-7777

SPRINGHILL SUITES

1551 W Prien Lake Rd, Lake Charles, LA 70601 | 337 474-1112

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON SULPHUR LAKE CHARLES

330 Arena Rd, Sulphur, LA 70663 | 337-527-0858

RESTAURANTS:

DARRELL'S POBOYS

119 W College St, Lake Charles, LA 70605 | 337-474-3651

LUNA BAR & GRILL

719 Ryan St, Lake Charles, LA 70601 | 337-494-5862

SEAFOOD PALACE

2218 Enterprise Blvd, Lake Charles, LA 70601 | 337-433-9293



BIRDING FESTIVALS

FEATHERFEST GALVESTON

April | galvestonfeatherfest.com

WHOOPIING CRANE FESTIVAL

February | portaransas.org

BIRDIEST FESTIVAL IN AMERICA, CORPUS CHRISTI

April | birdiestfestival.org

YELLOW RAILS & RICE FESTIVAL

October | yellowrailsandrice.com

RIO GRANDE VALLEY BIRDING FESTIVAL

November | rgvbf.org



RESOURCES:

CREOLE NATURE TRAIL

visitlakecharles.org/creole-nature-trail

BEAUMONT VISITOR AND CONVENTION BUREAU

beaumontcvb.com/birding

PEVETO WOODS SANCTUARY

braudubon.org/conservation/sanctuaries

HOUSTON AUDUBON

houstonaudubon.org

TOUR COMPANIES SPECIALIZING IN BIRDING:

SABREWING NATURE TOURS

One of the premier birding companies in the US, Sabrewing Nature Tours is run by a passionate team that's very active in the birding community. No matter how long your stay, the size of your group, or your experience level, they offer custom guided trips throughout the US and beyond and are happy to help you check off new species from your life list. **SabrewingNatureTours.com** | ++1 317 324 8505