



# *Wings of Winter*

2022 Port Aransas  
Winter Birding Guide

**PORT ARANSAS**  

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the island life



## winter whooper wings

Photo: Hagerty Ryan, USFWS

Standing nearly five feet tall with a wingspan of seven to eight feet, the majestic whooping crane is named for its resonant “whooping” call, which can be heard for up to two miles away. They use the call to indicate danger, mating and flight.

### Whooper Winter Texans

Each fall, the only self-sustaining wild population of whooping cranes migrates south from their summer nesting grounds in Canada’s remote Wood Buffalo National Park to their traditional wintering grounds in

the warm, shallow marshes in and near the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. The cranes start arriving in October after completing the 2,500-mile journey, which can take up to 50 days. They start their long journey back to Canada in March, after a winter of feasting on such delicacies as insects, berries and their favorite meal — blue crabs.

### Dance of the Whooper

Whooping cranes form pairs at the age of two or three years. Courting pairs bond through the performance of an elaborate dance,



Photo: Mike Spat



“This winter you have an opportunity to experience the whooping cranes, the birds of superlative; the tallest and one of the loudest birds of our continent, one of the rarest birds worldwide, and without a doubt, one of the most fascinating — cloaked in glistening white with black wingtips and a red cap, dancing, dueting, and like the rest of us, relishing blue crabs.”

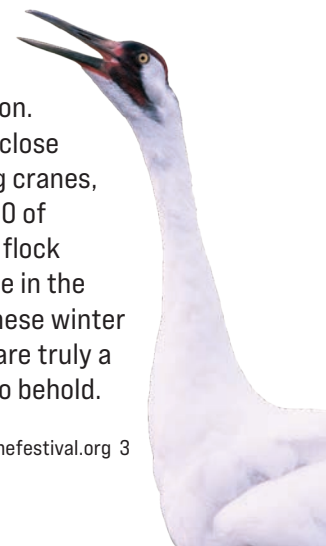
— George Archibald, Co-founder, International Crane Foundation

which consists of leaps, wing flaps, head tosses and flinging of feathers, grass and other small items. They are monogamous and mate for life, but will accept a new mate if one dies.

### Conservation Efforts

The endangered whooping crane represents one of the most well-known conservation stories in the United States. Habitat loss and unregulated hunting reduced the crane’s numbers from an estimated 10,000 before European settlement of North America to about 1,300

by 1870. By the 1940s, there were fewer than 20 birds in the wild. Since then, public awareness and intensive international conservation efforts have rescued the bird from the brink of extinction. Today there are close to 800 whooping cranes, an estimated 500 of which are in the flock that winters here in the Coastal Bend. These winter whooper wings are truly a welcome sight to behold.





Least Bittern



Whooping Crane and Coastal Birding Tours  
"You Never Know What You Will See"



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## BEST *bird* WATCHING SITES & POINTS OF INTEREST

- A** Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center &
- B** Nature Preserve at Charlie's Pasture, Port St. Entrance &
- C** Community Park &
- D** Joan & Scott Holt Paradise Pond &
- E** Lynn Gavit Marsh Bird Exhibit (City Hall) &

- F** Roberts Point Park &
- G** Birding Boat Excursions
- H** Jetty Boat to San Jose Island
- I** San Jose Island (privately owned)
- J** I.B. Magee Beach Park / South Jetty

- K** Horace Caldwell Pier &
- L** Beach and Dunes
- M** Wetlands Park &
- N** Nature Preserve at Charlie's Pasture, Hwy 361 Entrance &
- O** Mustang Island State Park (10 mi) &



# where the *birds* are

Photo: David Joseph Sikes

Enjoy the best birding spots in the Coastal Bend with these guided and self-guided tours.

## BOAT NATURE TOURS

### Mustang Boat Tour

Woody's Marina  
(361) 749-6969  
136 W. Cotter Ave.  
Port Aransas, TX 78373  
[dolphinwatchnaturetours.net](http://dolphinwatchnaturetours.net)  
Narrated 90-minute birding, dolphin and nature tour in the Port Aransas channels.

### Rockport Birding & Kayak Adventures

(877) 892-4737  
15 N. Fulton Beach Rd.  
Fulton, TX 78358  
[whoopingcranetour.com](http://whoopingcranetour.com)  
See whooping cranes and other coastal birds on this 3-hour tour.

### Scarlet Lady Dolphin Adventures

Deep Sea Headquarters  
(361) 749-5597  
440 W. Cotter Ave.  
Port Aransas, TX 78373  
[scarletladydolphincruise.com](http://scarletladydolphincruise.com)  
Narrated 90-minute birding, dolphin and nature tour in the Port Aransas channels.

### Wharf Cat

Port Aransas Fisherman's Wharf  
(361) 749-5448  
900 Tarpon St.  
Port Aransas, TX 78373  
[fishermanswharfporta.com](http://fishermanswharfporta.com)  
Daily narrated 4½-hour tour through the Lydia Ann Channel to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge to view whooping cranes.

## GUIDED & SELF-GUIDED TOURS

### Aransas National Wildlife Refuge

(361) 349-1181  
1 Wildlife Circle  
Austwell, TX 77950  
[fws.gov/refuge/aransas/](http://fws.gov/refuge/aransas/)

### Aransas Pathways

(361) 729-6445  
Multiple locations, Rockport, TX

### Fennessey Ranch

(608) 381-1262  
FM 2678  
Refugio, TX 78377  
[missionaransas.org/fennessey-ranch](http://missionaransas.org/fennessey-ranch)

### Goose Island State Park

(361) 729-2858  
202 S. Palmetto St.  
Rockport, TX 78382

### Hazel Bazemore Park

4343 County Rd. 69  
Corpus Christi, TX 78410

### Joan & Scott Holt Paradise Pond

(361) 749-0081  
412 Cut-Off Rd.  
Port Aransas, TX 78373

### King Ranch

(361) 592-8055  
2205 Highway 141 W.  
Kingsville, TX 78364  
[king-ranch.com/visit/our-tours/](http://king-ranch.com/visit/our-tours/)  
Guided wildlife and bird-watching tours.

### Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center

(361) 749-0081  
1356 Ross Ave.  
Port Aransas, TX 78373

### Mustang Island State Park

(361) 749-5246  
9394 State Highway 361  
Corpus Christi, TX 78418

### Nature Preserve at Charlie's Pasture

(361) 749-0081  
1300 Port St.  
Port Aransas, TX 78373

### Nueces Delta Preserve

(361) 673-6830  
3410 U.S. Highway 77  
Odem, TX 78370  
**Delta Discovery Day**, Saturdays in February.  
Limited capacity guided tours, sunrise to 11 a.m.  
Self-guided tours, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

### Oso Bay Preserve

(361) 826-3335  
2446 N. Oso Pkwy.  
Corpus Christi, TX 78414  
Guided bird-watching and nature tours.  
Call in advance.

### Padre Island National Seashore

(361) 949-8068  
20301 Park Rd. 22  
Corpus Christi, TX 78418

### Pollywog Pond Bird and Wildlife Sanctuary

(800) 928-8942  
4420 Sharpsburg Rd.  
Corpus Christi, TX 78410

### South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center

(361) 852-2100  
8545 S. Staples St.  
Corpus Christi, TX 78413  
Guided and self-guided tours.

### Texas Sealife Center

(361) 589-4023  
14220 South Padre Island Dr.  
Corpus Christi, TX 78418

*Tours are subject to change. Birding locations are open sunrise to sunset. For tickets, tour times and more information, visit [whoopingcranefestival.org](http://whoopingcranefestival.org), or call (361) 749-5919.*

## birding etiquette



- Maintain a safe distance from the birds and their habitat.
- Talk in whispers and avoid behavior that might distract other birders.
- Leave pets at home.
- Set your cell phone to vibrate or turn it off.
- Stay on designated paths and respect private property boundaries.
- Follow regulations of public areas.
- Walk quietly and move slowly.

# Winter Wings of the *Coastal Bend*



Photo: Mike Sloat

## ROSEATE SPOONBILL

The official bird of Port Aransas is often seen at the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center, Nature Preserve and SH 361 Wetlands Park.



Photo: Scott Holt

## AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN

With a 9-foot wingspan, this winter visitor to the Coastal Bend is one of the largest birds in North America.



Photo: © Frank Schulenburg

## BLACK-NECKED STILT

This eye-catching black and white bird with long pink legs and a long thin black bill moves deliberately when foraging for tiny aquatic invertebrates. It is locally abundant along the edges of shallow water.

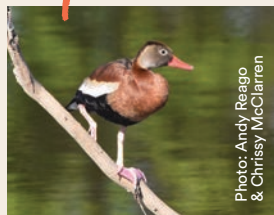


Photo: Andy Reago & Chrissy McClarren

## BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING DUCK

This distinctive waterfowl, with its long legs, long neck, black belly, red bill and white wing patch, is a year-round resident of the Coastal Bend.

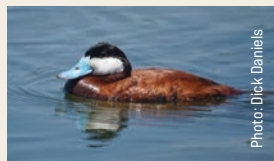


Photo: Dick Daniels

## RUDDY DUCK

The adult male has a rust-red body and a striking blue bill. They make their winter home at the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center.

Visit the Port Aransas Welcome Center for the latest *birdy* information



*play stay eat*

Book your stay in Port A so you are ready for early morning *birding* and everything else the island life has to offer.

## WELCOME CENTER

Port Aransas Tourism Bureau  
& Chamber of Commerce  
403 W. Cotter Ave.  
in Port Aransas  
on Mustang Island, Texas  
(361) 749-5919  
[visitportaransas.com](http://visitportaransas.com)

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Cover: Ryan Hagerty/USFWS