



Wings of Winter

Port Aransas
Winter Birding Guide

PORT ARANSAS

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.”

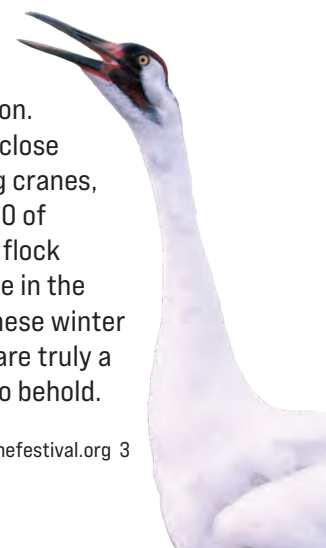
— George Archibald, Co-founder, International Crane Foundation

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.

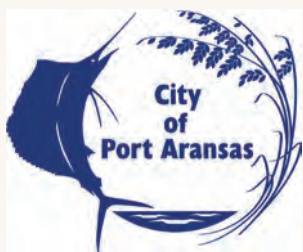




Least Bittern



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



PORT ARANSAS
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BEST *bird* WATCHING SITES & POINTS OF INTEREST

- A** Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center &
- B** Port Aransas Nature Preserve, Port St. Entrance (Trails Closed) &
- 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** Port Aransas Nature Preserve, Hwy 361 Entrance (Trails Closed) &
- 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
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
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
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
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/

Aransas Pathways

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

Fennessey Ranch

(608) 381-1262
FM 2678
Refugio, TX 78377
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) 749-4158
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/
Guided wildlife and bird-watching tours.

Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center

(361) 749-4158
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) 749-4158
1300 Port St. (Cut-Off Rd.)
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, 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.

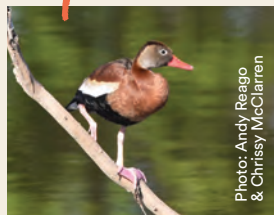


Photo: Andy Reago & Chrissy McClarren

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.

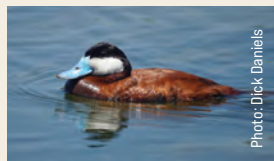


Photo: Dick Daniels

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

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