



# THE FLYCATCHER

Fall 2023 Newsletter



Gray flycatcher  
*Empidonax wrightii*

## Birding the Border Registration is OPEN!

Birding the Border is our feature program and is based in Del Rio, TX! Why should I come to Birding the Border, you ask? Our host city is a very unique location because it sits on the cusp of 3 different ecoregions offering up a wide diversity of birds in a relatively small area. Some of our feature trips are to the Del Norte Unit-Devils River State Natural Area, Below Amistad Dam, and Dobbs Run Ranch, all of which have restricted access to the general public. The Birding with Extension Team is excited to announce the first ever birding trip onto the Dan A. Hughes Unit- Devils River SNA! Stay tuned for a scouting report at the end of Dec.

In addition to fantastic trips, we offer unparalleled hospitality, including delicious meals, fun socials, and a low participant to guide ratio! Our 2024 feature bird will be the black-capped vireo and will be featured prominently on our shirt and at our Birds and Beers social. Saturday evening, we will have our Birding with Extension dinner featuring our keynote speaker and photography track guide, Katy Hoskins.

Registration Pass: \$65  
Trip Prices: Varied, \$100 - \$150

To register today or find out more, visit:  
[wildlife.tamu.edu/birding](http://wildlife.tamu.edu/birding)



FEATURE BIRD  
Black-capped vireo

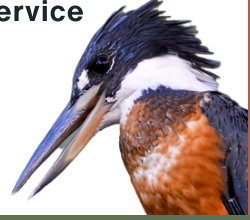
*Vireo atricapilla*  
Devils River State Natural Area

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to keep abreast of updates, access giveaways, and enjoy some lovely bird content of course!

Birding with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

[agrilife.birding](https://www.instagram.com/agrilife.birding)

All bird photography  
by Bryan Calk  
unless otherwise credited.



Ringed kingfisher (*Megaceryle torquata*)

### AVAILABLE TRIPS

#### BEGINNER TRACK

Friday: Zuberbueler Ranch  
Saturday: Las Ciénegas  
Sunday: Dobbs Run Ranch

#### PHOTOGRAPHY TRACK

Friday: McKenna Ranch  
Saturday: Kickapoo Cavern SP  
Sunday: Transition Ranch

#### CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

##### FRIDAY

- Below the Dam
- Del Norte Unit - Devils River State Natural Area
- Dobbs Run Ranch
- Fort Clark Springs

##### SATURDAY

- Big Day Del Rio!
- Del Norte Unit - Devils River State Natural Area
- McKenna Ranch
- Zuberbueler Ranch

##### SUNDAY

- The Ranch at Baker's Crossing
- Dan A. Hughes Unit - Devils River State Natural Area
- Fort Clark Springs
- Las Ciénegas

Visit our website to learn more about individual destinations and the species you might find there!

## IN OTHER NEWS

### MORE UPCOMING EVENTS:

NOV 29, 2023 - 6:30-8:30PM: Virtual Birding Seminar

This two-speaker virtual seminar will explore some ways in which birds are adapting and expanding their ranges, and how people are helping to document these changes across different species through citizen science and other data collection techniques. We will be joined by Chad Witko, Senior Coordinator of Avian Biology for National Audubon, and Dr. Kelsey B. McCune, Research Assistant Professor of Auburn University.

Register now at [wildlife.tamu.edu/birding/virtual!](http://wildlife.tamu.edu/birding/virtual!)  
All proceeds will go to support Rio Diablo Birding Camp '24!

MID-JUNE 2024: Rio Diablo Youth Birding Camp

Are you an avid birder in high school or know someone who is? Then we have the birding camp for you! During camp, we will bird from San Antonio to Big Bend National Park and everywhere in between. We will visit both private and restricted access areas all along the way.

Registration is set to open next January! We will send out a separate email to subscribers when information about RDBC 2024 information becomes available on our website, so please help us spread the word to young birders and their families who might be interested in the program.

### Backyard Bird Tip: Preparing for Winter

Although it has not reached a typical fall in Texas yet, it is time for us to start thinking about preparing our landscape for the winter to benefit the birds. Undoubtedly, the most important elements to consider are food and water. Birds are going to expend more energy, thus losing more weight, in the winter trying to stay warm. By providing high-energy feed such as suet, this can help mitigate the weight-loss problem. Also, consider providing a variety of feeds including different seeds and berries. Be sure to always keep the feeders stocked and clean.

Having fresh water out for the birds is also key to maintaining a healthy habitat in your yard. Although we do not often experience freezing temps, we need to be prepared when we do. From replacing the water in a bird bath on a regular schedule to having a heating element in stock troughs and small ponds, these are things to consider before the cold weather arrives. Speaking of stock troughs, a simple DIY project to benefit our feathered friends is to take a five-gallon bucket lid and drill a few holes in it to create a floating, shallow surface for the birds to land and drink water.



Brandon Nooner (Guide) and Barbara Pankratz (Birding Buddy) with participants at Las Cienegas



Cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*)

### Team Member Spotlight: Rainey Bingham

Birding with Extension Program Coordinator

Rainey is the Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent for Real County, TX. She develops programs for agricultural producers, 4-H youth, and the wider community. Rainey grew up in South Texas, and went on to earn her undergraduate degree in Agricultural Science from Texas A&M University, followed by a master's degree in Agriculture at Angelo State University. Through her academic career, she worked for AgriLife Extension and was an active member of 4-H in both Uvalde and Medina Counties. Rainey and her family have a ranch in southern Atascosa County, where they raise cattle. She began her Birding w/ Extension adventure at Birding the Border '23. By joining the team, she hopes to learn more about birds as well as eco- and agritourism operations, so she can better support her county.



### Research Highlight:

As a whole, birds populations are on the decline due to a variety of human-driven factors, such as urbanization, agriculture, and habitat loss. However, some bird species have been able to overcome these hurdles and expand their population and ranges. One of these species is the Anna's hummingbird (*Calypte anna*). Historically, Anna's hummingbirds were restricted to southern California and northwestern Mexico, but since 1940, their range has expanded north to British Columbia, Canada, and east to western Texas. The vast range expansion is thought to be facilitated by introduced plants and supplemental feeding. One concern with the range expansion is its effect on Anna's hummingbird genetics. Adams (2022) looked into the gene flow and genetic diversity of Anna's at the edge of their range. Blood and tissues samples were collected from 338 hummingbirds across the historical range and at the edge of the range expansion. DNA analysis on the samples compared genetics across the range.

Results showed that Anna's hummingbirds have high genetic diversity, low divergence, and little evidence of selection on the expansion fronts. The high genetic diversity means that there is a low chance of harmful or maladaptive traits to form in the populations at the edge of the range. Low divergence indicates that individuals on the edge of the range are related. In the future, this could lead to some genetic issues for populations at the edge of the range if the trend continues. However, the fact that genetic diversity is still high would suggest that the chance is slim. More research would need to be done to better understand this relationship. Little evidence of selection suggests that individuals at the edge aren't diverging towards a new species because of different environmental pressures.

Future studies will be needed to see if these trends continue and if additional drivers of change are factors for Anna's. There is speculation that their range will continue to expand over the coming years. As a species, their high diet diversity and ability to adapt to slight variations in weather will only aid in their range expansion.



Anna's hummingbird  
*Calypte anna*

stock photo



Hand-felted bird figurines and Christmas ornaments made by the Zuberbueler family using wool from the ranch are available for purchase during BTB.

### Birding the Border Featured Location: Zuberbueler Ranch

The Zuberbueler Family has welcomed Birding the Border to experience this historic ranch in the Chihuahuan Desert ecoregion. Target birds include: Curve-billed thrasher, black-throated sparrow, pyrrhuloxia, black-tailed gnatcatcher, and cactus wren. This trip is highlighted by the unique opportunity to enjoy a homemade lunch in the shearing barn where the family shears their Angora goats and Rambouillet sheep. Combined with unique hand-felted birds figurines made from wool produced on the ranch and a great morning birding the Zuberbueler Ranch trip offers so much more than just great birding.



Barbara Pankratz (Guide) and Delaney Kempf (Birding Buddy) with LTB participants at Twin Forks

Check out Cup Chat on Wednesday mornings at 7:30am CST

Every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, we host a casual but informative conversation with a variety of expert guest speakers. In the past we have discussed bird ID skills, gardening for birds, new research, and much more! Cup Chats are streamed live on the Birding with Extension Facebook page. You can also find all our past videos on both Facebook and YouTube!



CUP CHAT

