



WEST TEXAS SPRING MIGRATION

Cibolo Creek Ranch and Davis Mountains

April 29– May 6, 2027



Varied Bunting © Brad McKinney

Located at the base of the Chinati Mountains in the Big Bend Country of West Texas, Cibolo Creek Ranch is, simply put, a birder's paradise. This incredible resort features luxury rooms, superb cuisine, swimming pool, and great birding as soon as you step outside your room. We will spend three nights at the ranch scouring the oasis-like grounds and surrounding Chihuahuan Desert for resident and breeding birds like Scaled Quail, White-throated Swift, Vermilion Flycatcher, Cassin's Kingbird, Canyon Wren, Black-throated Sparrow, Summer Tanager, and Blue Grosbeak, as well as a number of Southwest specialty birds such as Zone-tailed Hawk, Gray Vireo, Lesser Goldfinch, Canyon Towhee, Scott's Oriole, Pyrrhuloxia, and Varied Bunting. Late April is nearing the peak of spring migration in West Texas, and a wide variety of western migrants are possible, including Cassin's Vireo, Brewer's Sparrow, MacGillivray's Warbler, and many others.

Cibolo Creek Ranch is the paragon of a ranch-style retreat. Offering luxurious accommodations, marvelous cuisine, and access to an abundance of birds and outstanding scenery. The ranch surely ranks among Texas' finest getaway destinations. Every guest room is designed to capture the style and spirit of the dramatic history of the ranch. Each room has been individually designed and uniquely furnished according to traditional Mexican architectural style and includes spacious verandas and Saltillo tile floors, Mexican and Spanish antiques, down comforters, hand-stitched quilts, painted tin retablos, vintage lamps, bath amenities, and adobe fireplaces. The ranch grounds meanwhile are a tantalizing draw, particularly for morning and afternoon birding excursions.



The beautiful Mexican and ranch-style Decor at Cibolo Creek Ranch ©Brad McKinney

In addition to our time at Cibolo Creek Ranch, we will have two days in the Davis Mountains, where higher elevations and heavily wooded slopes yield a different variety of birds. Here, we will look for Montezuma Quail, Plumbeous Vireo, White-breasted Nuthatch (Rocky Mountain race), Chihuahuan Meadowlark, Grace's Warbler, Hepatic Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, and many others. This should be a relaxing trip since we only use two accommodations, but should also produce a very impressive list of birds. Spring is also an excellent time for reptiles and mammals, so this should be a great all-around natural history experience.

April 29, Day 1: Arrival in El Paso

Participants should make arrangements to arrive in El Paso today. A complimentary hotel shuttle is available from the airport to the Wyndham Airport Hotel, where a room has been reserved in your name. The hotel is located just a couple of hundred yards away from the airport baggage claim area.

We will meet in the lobby at 5:30 p.m. for a brief orientation session, followed by dinner at a restaurant near the hotel.

NIGHT: Wyndham Airport Hotel, El Paso

April 30, Day 2: El Paso to Fort Davis

We will likely start out this morning at Rio Bosque Park located along the Rio Grande in southeast El Paso. This can be a very good spot for finding a variety of passerine migrants (flycatchers, vireos, warblers and sparrows), in addition to such resident species as Gambel's Quail, Harris's Hawk and Crissal Thrasher among others. Later, we will work our way southeast along the river valley making brief stops at nearby irrigation impoundments which should yield a variety of waterbirds. Both Western and Clark's grebes are to be expected, and numerous ducks, shorebirds, and terns are possible. The drive through the agricultural lands will provide more opportunities for locating a Crissal Thrasher.

Other species to look for include Swainson's Hawk, Greater Roadrunner, Western Kingbird, Cave Swallow and Blue Grosbeak. By mid to late morning, we will head eastward toward Van Horn, where we will stop for lunch.

The drive from Van Horn to Fort Davis will take us through high desert grasslands. Pronghorn may be seen along the way. A variety of sparrows are possible, as are other open country species such as Swainson's Hawk, Loggerhead Shrike, Cassin's Kingbird, Lark Bunting (lingering birds) and Chihuahuan Meadowlark.

NIGHT: Indian Lodge, Davis Mountains State Park



Gambel's Quail at Rio Bosque Park © Brad McKinney

May 1, Day 3: Davis Mountains Preserve

As promoted by The Nature Conservancy, “The wild and remote Davis Mountains are considered one of the most scenic areas of Texas. Indeed, they are one of the most biologically diverse. Rising above the Chihuahuan Desert, the range forms a unique “sky island” surrounded by the lowland desert. Animals and plants living above 5,000 feet are isolated from other similar mountain ranges by vast distances. These are true ecological islands, preserving living remnants that otherwise occur nowhere else in Texas.”

By any measure, the Davis Mountains are a special place, a very different part of Texas that features unique landscapes and an ambience of its own. We will have most of two days to explore this wonderful area. On this day we will focus on the Nature Conservancy’s Davis Mountains Preserve, while part of the following day will be dedicated to time in Davis Mountains State Park.

The Davis Mountains are higher and wetter than the desert ranges to the west and south, allowing for significant differences in birdlife. Blanketed with forests of pines, junipers, and oaks, these mountains host a suite of birds that convey avian flavors of the Rockies and Desert Southwest. Acorn

Woodpecker, Cassin's Kingbird, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Bushtit, White-breasted Nuthatch, Black-crested Titmouse, Western Bluebird, Grace's Warbler, Hepatic Tanager, and Black-headed Grosbeak are among the many birds possible.

Closer to Fort Davis, we will spend part of the afternoon birding near the famous McDonald Observatory in search of Montezuma Quail and others.

NIGHT: Indian Lodge, Davis Mountains State Park



Hepatic Tanager © Brad McKinney

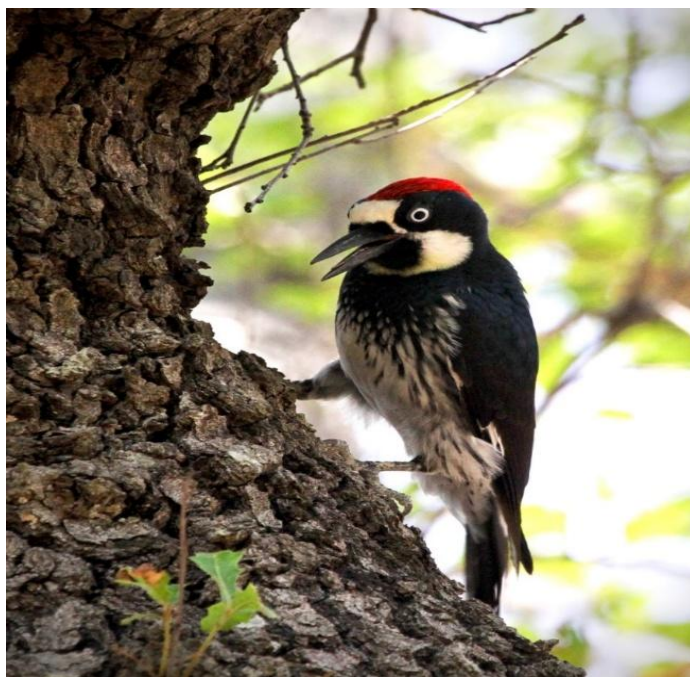
May 2, Day 4: Davis Mountains State Park & Cibolo Creek Ranch

Our day will begin with a visit to nearby Davis Mountains State Park for a morning of birding. Nestled in the foothills of the Davis Mountains, a short distance outside the town of Fort Davis, Davis Mountains State Park is a beautiful natural area set amid palisade rock formations and oak-juniper woodland. The elevation is lower here and the birdlife is typical of this life-zone. Time spent in and around the campground and on the scenic drive may turn up Acorn Woodpecker, Say's Phoebe, White-breasted Nuthatch, Phainopepla, and Spotted and Canyon towhees. Montezuma Quail are regularly encountered in the park, and we will make every effort to pin down this ultra-furtive species.

Following lunch, we will begin making our way toward our next destination: Cibolo Creek Ranch. Located about an hour to the southwest, our route will take us back through Fort Davis and on down to the artist outpost of Marfa. We'll see a drop in elevation as we move away from the mountains in which grasslands give way to cactus and patches of open desert. Here again, we may see Pronghorn along the roadsides.

We'll arrive at the ranch in the mid-afternoon, at which point we will spend some time checking in and getting settled in our rooms. We'll reconvene in the late afternoon for a social hour and perhaps our first bird walk on the lodge grounds.

NIGHT: Cibolo Creek Ranch, Marfa



Acorn Woodpecker © Brad McKinney

May 3-4, Days 5–6: Cibolo Creek Ranch

Cibolo Creek Ranch is a 25,000-acre ranch that sits at the base of the Chinati Mountains. The owner has built a beautiful resort adjacent to two springs. This luxurious facility is complete with lovely rooms and excellent food. Best of all, it is crawling with birds. The resort grounds themselves and the nearby springs serve as an oasis for both resident and migrating birds. Species seen commonly near

the lodge include Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Say's and Black phoebes, Vermilion Flycatcher, Cassin's Kingbird, Cactus Wren, Curve-billed Thrasher, and Summer Tanager.

Cottonwoods and willows surrounding the nearby springs may harbor Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Phainopepla, Bells' Vireo, Blue Grosbeak, Painted and Varied buntings, and Orchard Oriole. We will have two full days to leisurely bird the ranch property itself.

Our journeys around the ranch will take us into higher canyons of the Chinatis. Here, one may encounter Scaled Quail; Zone-tailed Hawk; White-throated Swift; Rock, Canyon, and Bewick's wrens; Black-tailed Gnatcatcher; Rufous-crowned and Black-throated sparrows; and Canyon Towhee. With spring migration in full swing, we could find a variety of migrant passerines, including Western, Dusky, Gray, and Hammond's flycatchers; Western Wood-Pewee; Olive-sided Flycatcher; Warbling and Plumbeous vireos; Orange-crowned, Virginia's, Townsend's, Black-throated Gray, Yellow-rumped, Wilson's and MacGillivray's warblers; and Lark, Vesper, Brewer's, Clay-colored, Lincoln's, and White-crowned sparrows. Western Tanager, Green-tailed Towhee, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, and Scott's Oriole are also possible. Even the highly sought Gray Vireo is a possibility in this area. Previous trips to this oasis have also produced a nice list of rarities over the years. With the presence of water in the midst of the desert, one never knows what might turn up! One evening we will venture out on an owling expedition with Western Screech-Owl as our main target. Any nocturnal prowl could also turn up an unexpected surprise such as a Gray Fox or a group of Javelinas.

NIGHTS: Cibolo Creek Ranch, near Marfa



Cactus Wren © Brad McKinney

May 5, Day 7: Cibolo Creek Ranch to El Paso

Our schedule today will depend on what species we are missing and the movement of migrants throughout the area. We may spend some part of the morning around the ranch, but we will certainly reserve time for birding back in the El Paso area. This may include revisiting the local reservoirs for waterbirds (species change on a day-to-day basis in this season). White-faced Ibis, Mexican Duck, Cinnamon Teal, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Baird's Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope and Black Tern are among the possibilities. By late afternoon we will be back at the Wyndham Airport Hotel in El Paso.

NIGHT: Wyndham Airport Hotel, El Paso

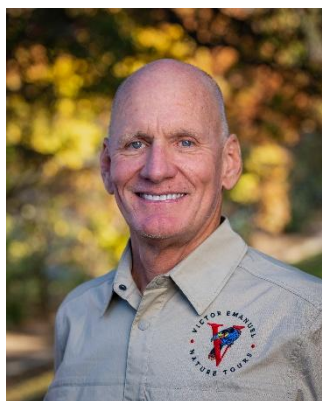
May 6, Day 8: Departure for home

Participants may make arrangements to depart El Paso at any time today.

ESSENTIAL TOUR INFORMATION

TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to **12** tour participants.

TOUR LEADER(s): This tour is led by **Brad McKinney** and **Second Leader**



Brad McKinney began birding during the winter of 1987–88, a landmark season for rare Mexican species appearing in South Texas. That early excitement ignited a lifelong passion that has taken him across North America, Mexico, Central America, and Hawaii on countless birding and photography adventures. A specialist in coastal and pelagic birding, Brad has guided Texas pelagic trips since 1995, many departing from his home on South Padre Island. He has long served as a tour leader for the Rio Grande Birding Festival and has led numerous birding tours across Texas and Mexico. His leadership and expertise have made him a respected figure in the regional birding community.

Brad earned his biology degree from the University of Texas at Austin and a master's degree in marine ecology from the University of Texas at Brownsville. He served six years on the Texas Bird Records Committee and coauthored *A Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley*, a key reference for birders in the region.

When not guiding, Brad enjoys nature photography, surfing, and snowboarding with his son, Will. He lives on South Padre Island with his wife, Janette, and their dog, Sam.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: \$4,225 per person based on double occupancy or \$5,705 for a person requiring single accommodation. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 8, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the "TIPPING" sub-section below.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The deposit for this tour is \$500 per person. We accept MasterCard and Visa

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), 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 120 days (December 30, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can handle the hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES (CANADA): Tour prices are based on the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If rates change drastically, it may be necessary to impose a

surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges have been passed on to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL SURCHARGES: Our prices are based on fuel prices at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TIPPING: An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, \$5 to \$10 a day is a common amount.

Tips for your VENT tour leader(s) are **not** included, but it is customary to tip one or both if you feel that you have received exceptional service. To assist in your planning, we recommend tipping your VENT tour leader(s) \$15 to \$20 per day, or the equivalent of approximately 2–4% of the tour fee.

If you plan to give tips by cash, they should be given directly to your tour leader at the end of the tour and **not** sent to the VENT office. Some of our tour leaders use mobile payment applications such as Venmo, PayPal, and Wise. If you would like to use this method, please ask your tour leaders directly whether they can accept tips through such an application.

We emphasize that tipping is optional and that these amounts are only recommendations. The amount you decide to tip is based entirely on your experience and at your discretion.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit.
- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:** No refund will be provided.
- **Optional add-ons:** Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable.

Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of booking. By selecting

and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

This cancellation policy applies to all participants and all tours. Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

CANCELLATION BY VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A “**Force Majeure**” event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

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

SUGGESTED OPTIONS: 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 Travel Protection** as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its comprehensive **Ripcord** plan, which includes a medical evacuation benefit. With this in mind, it is important to note that medical evacuation is not offered by Redpoint as a stand-alone policy or benefit. For travelers not interested in comprehensive travel insurance, VENT recommends **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist®** plan. Medjet is not an insurance company, and Medjet Assist is not an insurance product; rather, Medjet is a membership-based air-medical transport company specializing in moving hospitalized travelers from an admitting hospital to a medical facility of choice. Medjet does not provide medical evacuation service from the point of injury or illness; yet, the MedjetAssist plan offers robust enough travel protection to satisfy the medical evacuation insurance requirement in place for many VENT tours.

About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan

Ripcord is a completely integrated travel insurance program with single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims. Critical benefits include comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a "Cancel for Any Reason" benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

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

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first

trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, second deposit, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip costs in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a [Coronavirus FAQ page](#) on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company’s primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: [Medjet.com/VentBird](https://www.Medjet.com/VentBird) or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: 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. Per-person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: Please limit baggage to one piece of luggage and one carry-on. The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your pre-departure materials and/or airline to find out specific weight restrictions.

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of the [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](#) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORTS: A passport is not required for this tour.

VISAS: Visas are not required for U.S. citizens traveling to this destination. If you hold a passport from another country, please check with your consulate or embassy for the most accurate guidance.

IMPORTANT: The visa details above are current for U.S. citizens as of August 4, 2026. Because entry requirements can change without notice, we kindly remind all participants to double-check the latest information before traveling. Travelers using non-U.S. passports are responsible for confirming any entry requirements that apply to their home country.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING:

- **Pants:** A couple of pairs of pants are essential. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of nylon or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable. Try not to bring cotton pants for our days in the field. Cotton pants for dinner are fine.
- **Shirts:** Consider bringing several button-up long-sleeved and short-sleeved shirts. These styles include flannel shirts or wool shirts.
- **Light Jacket**
- **Swimwear**
- **Hat**

FOOTWEAR: Bring a comfortable pair of trail shoes or light hiking boots and a second pair of lighter-weight shoes, such as athletic shoes, for the downtime and evenings.

EQUIPMENT: Having the right equipment makes the travel experience more enjoyable. Below is a list of items that will ensure you are well-prepared:

- **Deaypack or Beltpack**
- **Polarized Sunglasses**
- **Sunscreen**
- **Small Flashlight**
- **Reusable Water Bottle**
- **Collapsible Walking Stick:** Recommended items for those who have trouble walking

Binoculars: We strongly recommend you bring a pair of good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. Please do not bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. You will find that 8x32 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes: Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & TOUR CONDITIONS

CLIMATE & WEATHER: Temperatures vary at this season from year to year. Expected highs are in the upper 80s with lows in the low 60s. Despite April being a dry month in West Texas, rain is still possible, especially with the passage of late cool fronts. Overall, dry and mild weather is expected.

CONDITIONS: We will do a few short, relatively leisurely hikes on most days. None of these will likely cover more than one mile total. Most will be over relatively flat ground, but there will likely be some elevational gain on the hikes in the higher canyons. Elevations along our route vary from around 4,000 feet in El Paso to over 6,500 feet in the Davis Mountains. Bring a water bottle along for the hikes. Breakfast times will vary from about 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. Generally, we will bird most of the morning, take a post-lunch break, and then resume in the late afternoon. We will try to allow plenty of time to enjoy the ranch itself while still maximizing our birding hours. This schedule will not apply to travel days.

CURRENCY & SPENDING: Your tour fee includes all necessary expenses; however, you may want to bring US currency to cover personal expenses not included in the program, such as gifts, laundry, gratuities, meals on your own, and personal items. It is best to carry small denominations as lodges, shops, and other service providers may be unable to provide change for large bills.

ELECTRICITY: (adapter)

INTERNET ACCESS: Free Wi-Fi is available at our hotels and at the ranch

TIME: 2 Hours Behind Eastern Standard Time (West Texas observes Mountain Daylight Time in April.)

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is not available at any of the accommodations.

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH: VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult 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.

COVID-19: We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying “Up to Date” with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance for avoiding COVID-19.

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun’s ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), even in winter and early spring. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

BITING INSECTS: Chiggers can be a problem in much of Texas, but less so in the far west of the state. The Davis Mountains are the only place we will visit where chiggers could conceivably present a problem. We suggest you bring repellent as a precaution.

INSECT REPELLENTS: There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- **DEET:** (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide): A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- **Picaridin:** A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- **Herbal insect repellents:** Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

Insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- **Permanone® (Permethrin):** is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for pre-treatment of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so it is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment must be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.

- **Insect Shield® apparel:** Clothing pre-treated with Permanone is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you>

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta Georgia. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

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.

FIELD GUIDES:

Birds

Dunn, Jon L., and Jonathan Alderfer, eds. *National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. 7th edition. National Geographic Society: 2017.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. 2nd edition. Knopf: 2014.

Mammals

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CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY APPS & ONLINE RESOURCES

eBird: Among the largest and most successful citizen science projects in existence, eBird is an essential tool in promoting bird study and conservation. Among a range of benefits, eBird allows users to keep a variety of lists in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, lists are automatically updated. Additionally, trip leaders can share daily lists, so one only need accept a shared list and it will upload to your files! **Highly recommended.**

MERLIN BIRD ID: Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate bird watchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions regarding his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The Photo ID feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app, followed by the appropriate regional "pack."

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, "**VENT**") act only as agents for the participant 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 participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in

the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

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Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on August 4, 2026 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion.

VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "**Airline**") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

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