



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

HIGH ISLAND MIGRATION

APRIL 19-26, 2025

©2024



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher © Michael O'Brien

Every spring, millions of birds migrate north from the American tropics to the forests of the eastern United States. Just after sunset, they take off from Central America for the long journey over the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Typically, they are riding a south wind, so when they reach the Texas/Louisiana coast, most of them continue inland before putting down. But if the trans-Gulf migrants encounter north winds or rain during their flight, they are forced down into the isolated groves and bushes of the Texas and Louisiana coastal prairie. The result can be a staggering phenomenon, a fallout, as thousands of migrants reach the safety of the coast. The greatest of these

fallouts occur only once or twice a spring when conditions are just right, but some birds put down along the coast every day, and a great variety can always be seen over the course of the week.

This tour is designed to focus on spring migration along the upper Texas coast. Most nights will be spent near High Island, where isolated groves of live oaks and other trees always attract migrants, sometimes in large numbers. . Each day's activities will depend on the weather, and our schedule will be flexible. If fallout conditions occur, we will bird High Island and other migrant traps. If the weather is good, with a south wind, we will concentrate on



the rice fields for shorebirds, the extensive marshes for wading birds, and the great Bolivar Flats for coastal shorebirds, terns, and wading birds. We will visit Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, which is famous among birders as a good place to observe such notoriously secretive marsh-dwellers as Least and American bitterns, King Rail, Purple Gallinule and Sora. Fulvous Whistling-Duck, White-faced Ibis, and occasionally Glossy Ibis are also seen at Anahuac. Nearby, flooded rice fields are often swarming with migrant shorebirds. Sometimes thousands of shorebirds are present, including such scarce species as Hudsonian Godwit, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, American Golden-Plover, White-rumped Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, and Stilt Sandpiper. Upland Sandpipers migrate through here too, most often found in pastures near grazing cattle.

We will make a special trip into the pine forests and bayou country farther inland to look for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Brown-headed Nuthatches, and other specialty nesters such as Swainson's and Prairie warblers. Regardless of the weather, every day on the Texas coast in late April will be an eventful one.

April 19, Day 1: Arrival in Houston. Participants should plan to arrive in Houston at George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) today and transfer to our hotel where a room will be reserved in your name. The hotel offers a complimentary shuttle service from the airport. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 6:30 p.m. for a brief orientation and dinner.

NIGHT: SpringHill Suites Houston Intercontinental Airport, Houston

April 20, Day 2: Jones State Forest to High Island. An early morning visit to W.G. Jones State Forest, about an hour north of Houston, offers our best chance on the tour to find the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker. This scarce southeastern endemic shares these woods with other woodpeckers including Pileated, Red-headed, and Red-bellied, as well as such other nesting species as Brown-headed Nuthatch, Carolina Chickadee, Pine Warbler, and Wood Duck. Departing the pine woods, we will be on our way toward High Island, birding any flooded rice fields en route for shorebirds and watching pastures for migrating Upland Sandpipers.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express, Winnie



Pineywoods © Erik Bruhnke



Black-throated Green Warbler © Erik Bruhnke

April 21-24, Days 3-6: High Island Area. Our activities at High Island for the next four days will depend on the weather. Wet or stormy weather on the Texas coast in the spring often means good birding – in the sense of more migrant songbirds stopping in the High Island sanctuaries – and we will hope that a “norther” hits while we are here. The rain and winds associated with such frontal movements can cause a large number of migrants to take sanctuary in the coastal groves. If this happens, we will tailor our plans to take advantage of the spectacle.

The Texas coast is the perfect place to get a feel for migration, and High Island is the best migrant arrival site on the entire coast. Despite the name, High Island is not an island but a geologically raised area that stands about 30 feet above the coastal plain, high enough to support groves of larger trees within a sea-like expanse of coastal marshlands. We will check the High Island woods on most days and should see many migrants including Hooded, Blackburnian, Black-throated Green, Kentucky, Chestnut-sided, Blue-winged, Tennessee, and Black-and-White warblers, among others. Both Scarlet and Summer tanagers are regulars in the sanctuaries, as are Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Painted Bunting, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and both Baltimore and Orchard orioles. Our tour typically records 20 or more species of warblers over the week. At a breeding colony of large waders at High Island we’ll get amazingly close views of nesting Roseate Spoonbills, Snowy and Great egrets, Tricolored Herons, and other species.



Roseate Spoonbill © Erik Bruhnke

On at least one day we will visit Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. Established in 1963, Anahuac is a haven for thousands of marsh animals, among them birds, otters, and alligators. Anahuac is famous among birders as a good

place to observe such notoriously secretive marsh-dwellers as Least and American bitterns and King Rail, as well as Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Gull-billed Tern, Sora, Purple Gallinule, White and White-faced ibises, and Marsh Wren.

Near Anahuac and along adjacent farm roads are rice fields that, when flooded in April, are magnets for migrating shorebirds. Sometimes thousands of shorebirds are present, with 20 or more species including such scarce species as American Golden Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, and Stilt Sandpiper.



White-faced Ibis © Erik Bruhnke

Curlew; Semipalmated, Western, and Least sandpipers; Marbled Godwit; Herring, Ring-billed, and Laughing gulls; Forster's, Common, Least, Royal, Sandwich, Caspian, and Black terns; and Black Skimmer. Seaside and Nelson's sparrows and Clapper Rails frequent the nearby brackish marshes. One of the great things about the flats is how very close one can get to the birds. It is an excellent opportunity to study and compare a wide array of shorebirds and terns at once.

We will visit renowned Bolivar Flats and nearby Rollover Pass, two of the best Gulf shoreline birding locales in Texas. Over 50 species of birds gather on the tidal edges and sandbars, including plovers, sandpipers, waders, terns, and gulls. Species typically include bright, breeding plumaged American Avocets; American Oystercatcher; Wilson's, Semipalmated, Piping, and Snowy plovers (there isn't a better place to study small plovers); dowitchers; Whimbrel; Long-billed



American Avocets © Erik Bruhnke

On one of our days, we will visit the East Texas "Piney Woods" region and bayou country within about an hour of Winnie. Here we'll search for a number of other species including Painted Bunting, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Prairie Warbler. Canebrakes and cypress bayous are a likely spot for nesting Northern Parula, Prothonotary, Yellow-throated and Swainson's warblers, as well as Wood Ducks and Barred Owls.

NIGHTS: Holiday Inn Express, Winnie

April 25, Day 7: High Island to Houston. After a final full day of birding, we'll make our way to Houston by late afternoon.

NIGHT: SpringHill Suites Houston Intercontinental Airport, Houston

April 26, Day 8: Departures for Home. Participants may arrange departing flights from George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) at any time today.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 12 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: Erik Bruhnke and Brian Gibbons



Erik Bruhnke has loved birds since he was a child looking at chickadees. In 2008 he graduated from Northland College in Wisconsin with a Natural Resources degree. Erik taught field ornithology at Northland College for three semesters. Between 2009 and 2014, he spent his summers conducting field research focused on breeding bird transects in Upper Michigan, point counts for a breeding bird atlas in Minnesota and Wisconsin's Northwoods, vegetation and breeding bird surveys throughout wind farms in North Dakota's prairie potholes, and cavity-nesting surveys in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. A devoted raptor nerd, he is drawn to hawkwatches. He worked as an interpreter for six seasons at Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Duluth, Minnesota; counted migrating raptors at the Corpus Christi HawkWatch in Texas in 2015; and was the 2016 and 2017 hawk counter at the Cape May

Hawkwatch in New Jersey. Erik's wildlife photography has won national awards, and he's written for the American Birding Association's *Birder's Guide*, *BirdWatching* magazine, and *Bird Watcher's Digest*.



Brian Gibbons grew up in suburban Dallas where he began exploring the wild world in local creeks and parks. Chasing butterflies and any animal that was unfortunate enough to cross paths with the Gibbons boys occupied his childhood. A wooden bird feeder kit sparked a flame that was stoked by a gift of the *Golden Guide* and family camping trips to Texas state parks. Thirty years ago Brian attended two VENT camps for young birders. Birds are now his primary interest, but all things wild continue to captivate him. After college, Brian undertook a variety of field biology research jobs that have taken him to the Caribbean, the Bering Sea, and the land of the midnight sun, arctic Alaska. He enjoys working with kids, hoping to spark environmental awareness through birds. For many years Brian's field research has involved bird banding. His most amazing recoveries were a female Wilson's Warbler that had been banded in Alaska and was captured by Brian in Colorado,

and a Sooty Tern that perished after a hurricane on the Texas coast; it had plied the Gulf of Mexico and the oceans of the world for 24 years. Brian's recreational bird-seeking has taken him to Machu Picchu in Peru, the Great Wall in China, the plains of East Africa, and the Himalayas in Nepal. Brian leads birding trips in the United States, Central America, the Caribbean, South Africa, and Europe. As well as being a fanatical birder, he loves capturing birds with photography. He lives in Tucson, Arizona with his wife, Lacreia Johnson, and their son, Grayson.

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 very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$3,225** per person in double occupancy from Houston, Texas. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 7, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Houston and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$570**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at <https://ventbird.com>) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

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 150 days (November 20, 2024) prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

Cancellation by Participant:

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant's refund will be:</u>
180 days or more before departure date	Participant's deposit minus \$250*
179 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance of the tour fee will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

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.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: 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 **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, 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: <https://ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird>; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and 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, mid-payment, 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 cost in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), 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.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link: https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/.

AIR INFORMATION: 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: We ask participants to please limit their baggage to one medium-sized piece of luggage and one carry-on bag. Please avoid bringing rigid plastic suitcases. **Soft-sided bags are preferred** (roll-ons, duffel bags, etc.), as space for carrying luggage in vans is limited.

CLIMATE & CONDITIONS: Temperatures on the upper Texas coast in April normally involve lows in the 60s and highs in the 80s, with the possibility of even warmer weather. However, a late ‘norther’ may bring rain and temperatures in the 50s so you should bring along a warm sweater or light jacket and raingear.

Much of the tour will be based in Winnie at the comfortable Holiday Inn Express. Winnie is about half an hour from High Island. Birding activities will include easy walks on trails and along roadsides (most less than 1 mile) and drives to important birding areas. **The tour involves a good bit of level, slow walking and standing in the wooded sanctuaries; although the walks are not long you will be on your feet a good bit. Walking in the rain is possible.**

A typical day will begin with continental breakfast at the hotel and departure for the field at 7:00 a.m. We will bird in the field throughout the morning, breaking for lunch. Most lunches will be in local cafes. Most days we will take a break at the hotel after lunch. All travel will be aboard 15-passenger vans to various nearby natural areas. Because many migrant birds arrive late afternoon, we often bird until about 6 p.m., then have dinner at a local restaurant on the way back to the hotel.

CLOTHING & FOOTWEAR: Dress will be informal throughout. Light field clothing is the norm, you should also bring along a warm sweater or light jacket and raingear. Lightweight, long pants and long sleeve shirts are ideal for woods birding where some mosquitoes are typical. Dull colors or earth tones are preferable in the woods. Comfortable walking shoes or boots are essential. If there has been a good bit of rain, the trails can be muddy, in which case you might want to consider bringing along a pair of rubber boots that come up over your ankle. A hat and sunscreen for protection from the sun are essential.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). An alarm clock is essential. Your tour leaders will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. If you are bringing a camera, we suggest you bring sufficient memory cards as there may not be time, nor a convenient location, to shop for more during the tour. You may wish to bring a pocket notebook or something similar for taking notes in the field.

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 regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19. Please visit the **Coronavirus Travel Update** page of our website <https://ventbird.com/covid-19> for our official statement regarding COVID-19 and the operation of our tours. Please visit the CDC website for the most up to date information about COVID-19 and associated guidance for proper health and hygiene: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

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.

An 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 is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to 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 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). You can check the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

MISCELLANEOUS: Restaurants able to accommodate vegetarian, vegan, diabetic, low-cholesterol or other special dietary requests are rare in the High Island area. Your leaders may be unable to fulfill these requests at many locations. Please feel free to bring food to supplement what is available on the tour.

A hat and sunscreen for protection from the sun is essential as is an alarm clock, and it is also recommended that you bring a refillable water bottle to carry water. The hotel in Winnie does have a coin laundry. A compact travel umbrella can come in handy when birding away from the van.

SUGGESTED READING: 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.

For use during the tour, we recommend:

Bird Identification:

Dunn, Jon & Kimball Garrett. *A Field Guide to the Warblers of North America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

Kaufman, Kenn. *Birds of North America*. Kaufman Focus Guides. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

- National Geographic Society. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Sixth Edition. Washington, D.C., National Geographic Society, 2011.
- Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. 2nd Edition. New York: Knopf, 2014. Excellent for all levels and highly recommended.
- Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*. 2003. Older than the above book but small, quite portable and still very serviceable.
- Peterson, Roger Tory. *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America*. 6th edition. The most recent of a long and classic series by the man who almost single-handedly invented modern bird identification. Particularly good for beginning and intermediate birders.
- O'Brien, Michael, R. Crossley, and K. T. Karlson. *The Shorebird Guide*. 2006. A particularly valuable reference for this trip where so many shorebirds are on stage.
- Paulson, Dennis. *Shorebirds of North America: The Photographic Guide*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Stephenson, Tom and Scott Whittle. *The Warbler Guide*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Migration:

- DeGraaf, Richard M. & John H. Rappole. *Neotropical Migratory Birds: Natural History, Distribution, and Population Change*. Ithaca: Comstock/Cornell U. Press, 1995.
- Wiedensaul, Scott, *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds*. North Point Press. 1999. A must read for anyone visiting the Texas coast during migratory periods for birds. Brilliantly written. One chapter, "The Gulf Express," deals exclusively with the Texas coast migration in spring.

Finding Birds:

- Holt, Harold R. *A Birder's Guide to the Texas Coast*. American Birding Association, 1993.

General and reference:

- Choate, Ernest A. *The Dictionary of American Bird Names*. Boston: Harvard Commons Press, 1985.
- Ehrlich, Paul R., David S. Dobkin & Darryl Wheye. *The Birder's Handbook. A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds*. NY: Simon and Schuster. 1988.
- McFarlane, Robert W. *A Stillness in the Pines: The Ecology of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker*. New York: Norton, 1992.
- Peterson, Roger Tory and James Fisher. *Wild America*. Boston: Riverside Press, 1963. See chapters 16 and 17 for the adventures of two great naturalists as they bird their way through Texas.
- Oberholser, Harry C. Edited by Edgar Kincaid. *The Bird Life of Texas*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974. The definitive two-volume reference work on the Texas avifauna, including distribution maps; with a few paintings by Louis Agassiz Fuertes. Detailed description material. A classic 2 volume set but useful primarily as a library reference.

Wildflowers:

- Loughmiller, Campbell and Lynn. *Texas Wildflowers*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984. Field guide with nice photos of many representative wildflowers.
- Irwin and Wills. *Roadside Flowers of Texas*. Austin. University of Texas Press. Good selection of typical wild flowers and attractive line drawings.
- Tveten, John and Gloria. *Wildflowers of Houston and Southeast Texas*. Austin: U. of Texas Press, 1993. The wildflower guide most appropriate to the area of the tour.

SUGGESTED APPS:

- Merlin Bird ID by Cornell Lab*. Cornell University. Highly recommended! This free download from the App store is a remarkable tool to help beginners identify birds, based on a few simple questions. ID text and audio recordings included for each species. The current version (2.1) covers more than 7500 species worldwide, including all of North America. Free "Bird Packs" need to be downloaded for each region.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT: 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.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on August 12, 2024 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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