



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

VENT'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION:

GALVESTON-COASTAL EXTENSION

APRIL 24–27, 2026

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American Oystercatcher, Upper Texas Coast, April © Michael O'Brien

As with the famed Upper Texas Coast birding hotspots, Bolivar Peninsula and High Island, Galveston Island is legendary among birders as being among the most exciting places to witness spring migration. For millions of northbound migrant songbirds crossing the Gulf of Mexico, the Galveston area will be their first opportunity to stop, rest, and refuel before continuing north. With clear skies and winds from the south, many of these birds will continue inland without stopping, but rain or northerly winds will force many to put down, resulting in one of the avian “fallouts” that makes the Texas

Coast so famous. Migrating shorebirds also pass through Galveston, and many miles of beach and numerous freshwater ponds provide excellent habitat for them.



Black-throated Green Warbler, Upper Texas Coast, April © Michael O'Brien

On this short extension to VENT's 50th Anniversary Celebration, we'll focus on Galveston Island and its numerous birding hotspots: East End Lagoon Nature Preserve, East Beach, Lafitte's Cove, and Galveston Island State Park, among many other local gems. We will also visit the Eskimo Curlew Memorial Sculpture and pay homage to the site of the last known sighting of this now-extinct species in the United States in 1962—a bird famously seen by Victor Emanuel himself. In our travels, we'll hope to come across an array of warblers, orioles, buntings, and other migratory songbirds, as well as numerous migrant and resident shorebirds such as American Avocet, American Oystercatcher, and Snowy and Piping plovers. In addition to these birds, we'll also watch for Mottled Duck, Clapper Rail, Black Skimmer, Magnificent Frigatebird, Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, and Seaside Sparrow. Enhancing the appeal, Galveston offers fine amenities including some great local restaurants.

April 24, Day 1: Beaumont to Galveston. We will depart Beaumont this morning and make our way to Galveston. The distance is not great—about an hour and forty minutes—but, as is always the case while birding the Texas Coast in spring, weather conditions and tides will dictate our specific plans. We will likely make a few birding stops along the Bolivar Peninsula before we take the ferry across to Galveston and commence exploring the island. Whether the focus is songbirds, shorebirds, or marsh birds, we are sure to have a bird-rich day.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn & Suites, Galveston

April 25, Day 2: Galveston area. We will almost certainly begin our day with a visit to East End Lagoon Nature Preserve, a 684-acre tract of undeveloped coastal prairie, saltmarsh, and lagoon, which is a real magnet for migratory and nesting shorebirds, herons, rails, and others. Adjacent woodlots and patches of brush are among the most consistent places around to see migrant songbirds, and nearby East Beach often hosts large gatherings of gulls and terns, so this relatively small area will likely provide us with a long list of species. Nearby Galveston Island State Park protects more than 2,000 acres of Gulf beach, bay shoreline, dunes, coastal prairie, freshwater ponds, and saltmarsh. This diversity of habitats makes it another highly productive birding area. Among the many wooded patches around Galveston that can harbor migrant songbirds, Lafitte's Cove is one of the most productive and will surely be one of the spots we visit. Depending on birding conditions and timing, other spots we may visit today or the next day include Corp Woods, Offat's Bayou, Moody Gardens, Dos Vacas Muertas, and San Luis Pass, among countless other spots.

NIGHT: Homewood Suites by Hilton, Galveston



Black Terns, Upper Texas Coast, April © Michael O'Brien

April 26, Day 3: Galveston to Houston. We will continue birding Galveston today, almost certainly visiting a mix of new spots as well as a favorite or two from the previous day. By mid-afternoon, we will make our way to our hotel in Houston.

NIGHT: North Houston Marriott, Houston

April 27, Day 4: Departures from Houston. Participants may arrange departing flights from George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) at any time today.

Essential Tour Information

TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 14 tour participants.

TOUR LEADERS: This tour is led by **Michael O'Brien** and **Louis Zemaitis**.



Michael O'Brien is a freelance artist, author, and environmental consultant living in Cape May, New Jersey. He has a passionate interest in bird vocalizations and field identification, and a serious addiction to migration and nocturnal birding. His travels have taken him throughout North and Central America and beyond. At home in Cape May, Michael serves as an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory for whom he conducts numerous workshops, and, for many years, conducted a fall songbird migration count. He is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, and *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*, and is primary author of *Larkwire*, an online and handheld application for learning bird sounds. His illustrations have been widely published in books and field guides, including the *National*

Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America and the new Peterson field guides. Michael also has an intense interest in butterflies, leads several "Birds & Butterflies" tours with his wife, Louise Zemaitis, and is coordinator of the Cape May Butterfly Count.



Louise Zemaitis is an artist and naturalist living in Cape May, New Jersey where she is a popular field trip leader teaching birding workshops as an Associate Naturalist with New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory. She also enjoys leading birding groups and lecturing at birding festivals and is known for her enthusiasm for all natural history subjects. Louise and her husband, Michael O'Brien, have been guiding young birders at birding events and conferences for many years. In addition to leading, Louise worked as field coordinator of the Monarch Monitoring Project in Cape May and served as compiler of the Cape May Christmas Bird Count for many years. An honors graduate of Temple University's Tyler School of Art (owner of Swallowtail Studio), she enjoys working as a freelance artist, and her illustrations have been widely published. Her proudest

accomplishment has been the raising of her two sons: Bradley, a conservation educator and artist, and Alec, a library scientist and musician.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: **\$1,795** per person based on double occupancy. This includes all meals from lunch on Day 1 through dinner on Day 3, 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 alcoholic beverages, laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the “TIPPING” subsection below.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: If you request single accommodations, a single supplement of **\$360** will be added to your tour fee.

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. If you choose not to register online, you may pay your deposit by credit card, check, money order, or bank transfer. If not paying online, or by card, your tour space will be held for 10 days pending receipt of your deposit.

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 25, 2025) 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 very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

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: 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	Your deposit(s) minus \$250*
179 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposits, but any payments on the balance 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.

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 luggage to one medium-size bag 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 \(TSA\)](https://www.transportation.gov/tsa) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: For this short trip to the Upper Texas Coast, light field clothing is the norm. April is a time of generally mild to warm days. In the event of late cold front, which is entirely possible in April, conditions can change dramatically in a short amount of time. A cold front can bring overcast conditions accompanied by wind, rain, and falling temperatures. So, while bringing light clothing is a safe bet, you should come prepared for a variety of conditions. Please note that mosquitos may be present in all areas. The following items are recommended:

- **Pants:** Several pairs of pants are recommended. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular.
- **Shirts:** Several long-sleeved shirts in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for warm weather.
- **Hat:** A hat for protection from the sun is essential. A broad-brimmed hat, such as those made by Tilley, provide the best protection, but you should bring a baseball-style cap at the very least.
- **Outerwear:** Mild to cool weather is expected on this trip, but a fleece and warm jacket or coat is strongly recommended in the event of a cold front.
- **Other cold weather gear:** In the event of a cold front, you will be very glad you brought a few items of clothing suitable for cold weather. We recommend bringing a fleece and/or light water-repellent jacket.
- **Swimsuit:** You may wish to bring along swimwear as the hotels do have a swimming pool.

FOOTWEAR: A lightweight hiking boot or trail shoe is recommended for birding excursions. Athletic shoes are acceptable but will not keep your feet dry and can become soiled from muddy conditions. For other situations, like when around our hotel, you may prefer sandals and/or athletic shoes.

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

- **Backpack:** Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Field guides**
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Insect repellent**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Collapsible walking stick** – highly recommended for those who have trouble walking
- **Tissue packs**

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: Spring on the Upper Texas Coast is generally one of the more pleasant and enjoyable times of the year to be in the region. Most days are sunny and warm, and humidity is low. Temperatures on the Texas coast in April range from the middle 60s to the upper 80s. It is possible to experience a strong weather front, bringing overcast skies, wind, and rain out of the north with temperatures dropping into the upper 40s.

CONDITIONS: This will be an easy tour with light physical demands. Our travels will be limited mostly to Galveston Island and the route to the island from Beaumont. Our excursions will consist of walks on roads, paths, and beaches. Accommodations and meals are of high quality. Bottled water and other cold drinks and snacks will be always provided by your tour leaders.

INTERNET ACCESS: Wi-Fi is available at both hotels.

TIME: In April, Texas operates on Central Daylight Time (CDT).

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is not available at either of the hotels we'll use.

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: Mosquitoes and chiggers are present in the Upper Coast/Piney Woods region and can be a problem if there has been a lot of rain. It is always recommended that participants

carry insect repellent and take appropriate steps to prevent insect bites, such as tucking pant legs into socks while out of the vans.

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: Any of the following field guides are excellent choices for this event.

Kaufman, Kenn. *Kaufman Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. New York: Mariner Books, 2005.
National Geographic Society. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Eighth edition. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2025.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Second edition. New York: Knopf, 2014.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern North America*. Second edition. New York: Knopf, 2016.

Mammals:

Kaufman, Kenn and Rick Bowers. *Kaufman Field Guide to the Mammals of North America*. Mariner Books, 2007.

Reptiles & Amphibians:

Conant, Roger and Joseph T. Collins. *Reptiles and Amphibians Eastern/Central North America*. Peterson Field Guides. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998.

Butterflies:

Kaufman, Kenn and Jim P. Brock. *Kaufman Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

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 wildflowers 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 covered in this event.

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." Two pack options for this event are **US: Texas and Oklahoma** and **US and Canada: Continental**.

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.

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 20, 2025 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.

View the complete [Terms and Conditions](#) on our website.

9/10/25 - BL

9/16/25 - PS/DE