

RGV Birding Festival - Post-Festival Trip Northern Mexico Medley

from the Mountains to the Desert

with René Valdés, Roy Rodriguez, and Mary Gustafson

5 DAYS (13 Meals)

\$915 PER PERSON

*Join us on a fascinating excursion to northcentral Mexico, visiting the states of **Coahuila** and **Nuevo Leon**. Our destination will be the Monterrey and Saltillo area, visiting renowned birding spots in the comfort (and convenience) of a modern motor coach. A maximum of 30 participants will be on a birding adventure to Cumbres National Park and surrounding environs, and to see as many birds as we can! Departure is Monday, 13 November, returning on Friday, 17 November. A valid passport is required (passport may not expire before May 13, 2018).*

This is an active trip with a lot of walking and standing. We'll be in a large group at times (maximum 30 participants with three guides) and if conditions allow, we'll break into smaller groups. Participants should be able to walk steadily for some distance. Trip hazards and uneven ground can be expected at all sites. It is okay to bring your camera, keeping in mind this is not a photography trip.

The price of your trip includes transportation, 4 nights lodging (2 in Saltillo and 2 in Santiago), birding daily, 4 breakfasts, 5 lunches, and 4 dinners. All tourism and border fees are included. Alcoholic beverages can be purchased at your own expense. Bottled water and an afternoon snack will be supplied daily on the motor coach.

Monday - Day 1 - This trip starts with a 7 AM departure from Harlingen. We will go through customs and immigration and turn in our paperwork for visas before continuing onward into Mexico. We'll take a stretch break on the way to **Monterrey**, the third largest city in Mexico, before continuing on to beautiful **Chipinque Park** (approximately 3 hours from the border). We'll enjoy a picnic lunch in the mountain forest at Chipinque. The park is scenic and birdy, and while we won't be there at the best time of day there will still be birds to look at, and we'll spend a few hours enjoying Acorn and Golden-olive (Bronze-winged) Woodpecker, Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse, Rufous-capped and Crescent-chested Warbler, and maybe

even Gray-collared Becard. We'll continue on to **Saltillo**, and spend the night at the **Hotel Rancho El Morillo**. **Meals: PL, D.**

Tuesday - Day 2 - We'll be birding the **Chihuahuan Desert grasslands** and **brush southeast of Saltillo**, looking for the many wintering grassland birds with a special target, the endemic **Worthen's Sparrow**. With a world population estimate under 1000 birds (an out of date estimate was 100 pairs total) we will keep our eyes peeled! Many other sparrows are possible, including Savannah, Vesper, Lark, Black-throated, Grasshopper, Chipping, and more! We'll also hope to see the Burrowing Owl, Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Scaled Quail, Sprague's Pipit, and many other desert species. We'll have a picnic lunch with us so we can maximize birding time. We'll go into **Saltillo** in the afternoon for a visit to the **Museo de las Aves de México**, focused on the birds and ecosystems of Mexico. **Night, Hotel Rancho El Morillo. Meals: B, PL, D.**

Wednesday - Day 3 - We'll have an early departure from **Saltillo** and the flat plains and sky islands of the **Chihuahuan Desert**, and drive east to an area of high elevation pine forest. We will make a pilgrimage to the "**Highrise**", a nesting cliff for the **Maroon-fronted Parrot**, an endemic with a population of about 3000 individuals. Although most birds will have finished nesting and moved elsewhere, we will hope for a few birds to be lingering near the colony. We'll **bird the pine forest** looking for Band-tailed Pigeon, White-eared Hummingbird, Pine Flycatcher, Gray Silky-Flycatcher, Mexican Chickadee, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Brown-backed Solitaire, Olive Warbler, Slate-throated Redstart, Russet Nightingale-Thrush and Yellow-eyed Junco. We'll look for the **Hooded Yellowthroat**, a yellowthroat of dry brushy areas that is very secretive in winter. After driving through the spectacular **San Isidro Canyon** we will stop at **Parque El Manzano** for more chances at pine forest species. If time allows, we'll visit **La Boca Dam** in the late afternoon for some water birds for a change. **Night, Hotel Las Palomas in Santiago. Meals: B, L, D.**

Thursday - Day 4 - Today we'll head out early to **Parque Natural La Estanzuela** southeast of **Monterrey**. La Estanzuela is close to the city but extensive enough to have intact forest and healthy bird populations. This is an excellent place for the Crimson-collared Grosbeak, and we'll try to find this shy and reclusive bird. We'll

spend some time birding the entrance road before entering the park proper. This area has a mix of high and lower elevation species, with Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and Red-billed Pigeon from lowlands, and Flame-colored Tanager and Blue-capped Motmot from the highlands. After lunch we'll go back into **Cumbres National Park** to visit **Cola de Caballo (Horsetail Falls)**, a scenic waterfall and more of a tourist attraction than a birding site, but we won't stop birding. We'll explore looking for birds like Broad-billed Hummingbird, Elegant Trogon, Blue-capped Motmot, Greater Pewee, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Rose-throated Becard, Brown Jay, Spot-breasted Wren, Rufous-capped Warbler, Rufous-capped Brush-Finch, Flame-colored Tanager, and more. **Night, Hotel Las Palomas in Santiago. Meals: B, L, D.**

Friday - Day 5 - We'll load everything back onto the bus and depart **Santiago**. Our last birding destination is **La Juventud Dam**, a large presa (reservoir) on the way back to the border. In addition to the expected herons, egrets, shorebirds and waterfowl, we'll be looking for wild Muscovy Duck, Mallard (Mexican Duck), Brown Jay, Kingfishers, and any other species we may have missed. Many of the birds are similar to those in South Texas, and we'll enjoy old friends like Green Jay, Altamira Oriole, White-tailed Hawk, Verdin, and Green and Ringed Kingfisher. We'll return to the border and cross back into the United States, returning about 5 PM to Harlingen. **Meals: B, L.**

About our Border Logistics

*We will depart Harlingen on a motor coach for the short ride to the border. At the border, we will disembark and take all our luggage and belongings with us for a short taxi ride to Mexican customs and immigration where we will apply for a visa. In Mexico we will board a different motor coach and continue on to Monterrey. **Go With Jo staff** will be present throughout to help us through the border crossing and paperwork. We will reverse the process on our return to the border.*

PRICE PER PERSON	DEPARTURE DATE
Single - \$1,290	November 13, 2017
Double - \$ 915	
Triple - \$ 890	
Quad - \$ 890	

VALID PASSPORT REQUIRED!!

Currently there is **NO CHARGE** for the Mexican Visa on land tours of **7 days or less!**

Departs from **Harlingen** at 7:00a.m.