

Big Bend Birds & Wildflowers

August 25-29, 2017

(note date change)



Naturalist-Led Trip to Big Bend National Park:

Why Big Bend? Toward the end of the rainy season, Big Bend is very pleasant in the mountains as well as the most reliable time to see wildflowers. Summer residents are in the park, and some early fall migrants may be arriving. The average August temperature at mid-elevation at headquarters is 92 degrees Fahrenheit. The lower elevations are 5–10 degrees or more warmer, and the mountains are 5–10 degrees cooler. We will be headed back to the mountains

by noon each day to have lunch and a siesta. The air-conditioned bus will always be close to us if you need to take a break from the heat.

Big Bend NP covers more than 800,000 acres and is part of the Chihuahuan Desert Biosphere Reserve. Habitats range from rivers and floodplains to lo-, mid, and high deserts, grasslands, and mountain forests. More than 1,200 species of plants, 11 species of amphibians, 56 species of reptiles, 40 species of fish, 75 species of mammals, 400 species of birds, and about 3,600 species of insects make the park one of the most biologically diverse “deserts” in the world.



Important:

Bring your passport and small bills to visit Boquillas, Mexico.

Itinerary:

- ▶ **Friday, 8/25**: 6AM Leave the Botanic Gardens parking lot. Breakfast at the Smokestack restaurant in the ghost town of Thurber then on to Marathon, where we will stay at the historic Gage Hotel. We should arrive early enough to enjoy the flowers and birds in their gardens.
- ▶ **Saturday, 8/26**: After breakfast, we will stop at the city park south of town to see who is visiting the springs that morning and then on to Big Bend. We will make several stops along the way at points of interest, including the visitors' center, before we wind our way into the Chisos Mountains to check into the lodge. After checking in and unpacking, we can take a short stroll on the Windows Overlook trail to watch the sunset and have dinner at the lodge restaurant.

► **Sunday, 8/27:** We need an early start, which means a quick breakfast at 7AM so we can get to our destination right after sunrise. Our destination is Rio Grande Village and the floodplain where the freshwater pond and rare (only place in the world) fish live. A black hawk nest site and many other species are also found here. If everyone brought their passports, we will cross the river and go to the village of Boquillas. The round-trip boat ride costs \$5.00 as does a burro ride to/from town (a mile away) or a horse for \$8.00. A local guide will accompany us (required by the Biosphere Reserve) for a gratuity. Numerous crafts are for sale, and two restaurants are available for lunch. A horseback ride to the mouth of the canyon may be available by then. After our foreign adventure, we will return to the mountains for a siesta and some birding around the basin and dinner at the scenic restaurant.

► **Monday, 8/28:** Another early start as we head for the other end of the park, Cottonwood campground, and Santa Elena canyon. After birding and a hike into the canyon, we will visit the trading post of Castolon for lunch, enjoy the small museum, and travel back along the road to stop at several points of interest. In the evening, we will visit the former ghost town of Terlingua for dinner, sightseeing, and shopping.

► **Tuesday, 8/29:** Return home after breakfast. Should arrive early evening.

Bus:

We are taking a small bus that does not have an onboard restroom. However, we will be stopping about every two hours or less to stretch our legs and visit any facilities.

You should bring:

comfortable clothing for birding	hat/cap	sunglasses
hiking/walking shoes	insect repellent	binoculars
sunscreen	toiletries	medicine
notebook & bird ID	light jacket/rain gear	scope (optional)
water bottle	snacks	camera (optional)
small day/fanny pack		

Deadline for Final Payment:

Final payment is due by July 20.

Cost:

- ▶ \$895 per person for Friends of the Nature Center members
- ▶ \$995 per person for non-Friends members (but includes a one-year family membership)

Price includes transportation, lodging, bottled water, and one Nature Center staff accompanying the trip. You are responsible for your food, costs in Boquillas, and any shopping

Refund Policy:

Should you need to cancel your trip by the deadline, you will receive a full refund. After that date, your refund will be reduced by the amount of the nonrefundable costs we incur. If the Friends cancels the trip, you will receive a full refund. It is recommended that you pay for the trip with a credit card that has travel insurance or buy such separately.

Registration:

Go to www.naturecenterfriends.org, click on the events tab, then "Register Here," or send a check payable to the Friends of the Nature Center to FONC, 9601 Fossil Ridge Rd., Ft. Worth, TX 76135.

Any questions, please contact Bill Richerson at wrrich@sbcglobal.net, or call 817-235-6524.