

THE 2015 RIO GRANDE VALLEY BIRDING FESTIVAL

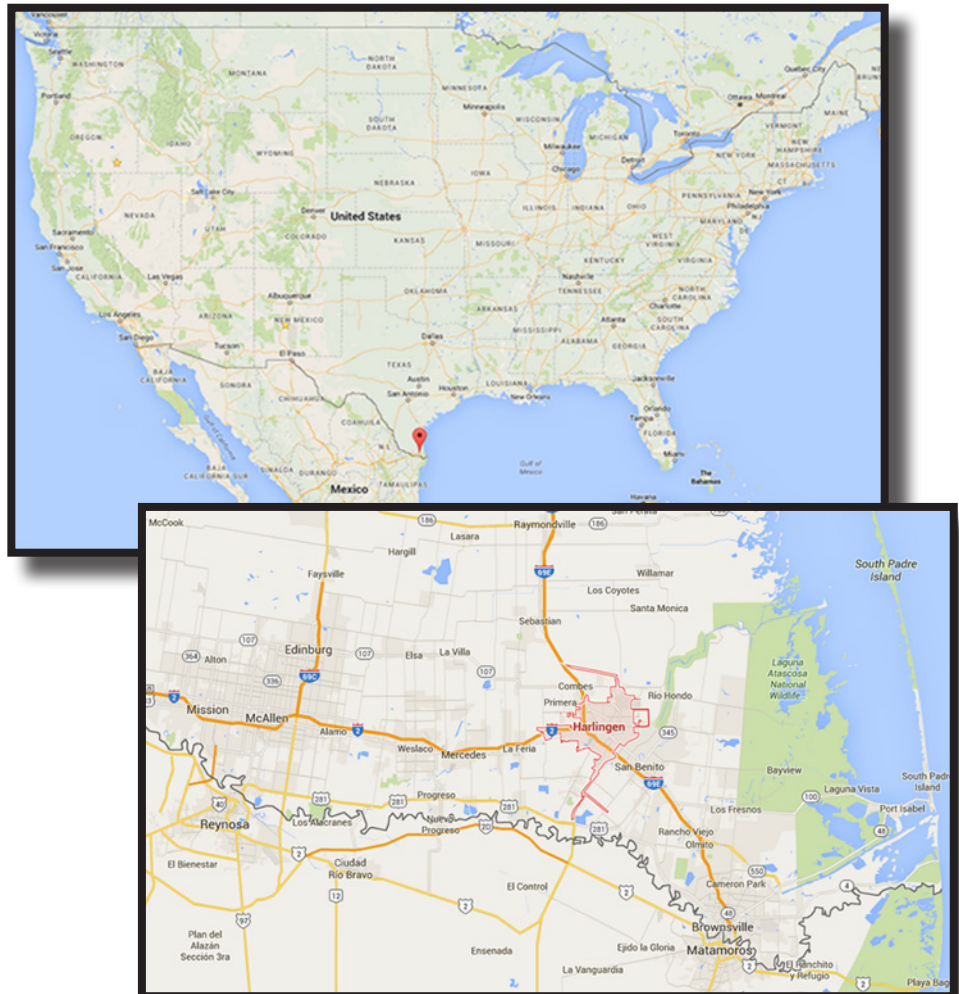
This Flying Pig Adventure was the 22nd annual RGVBF, (Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival), headquartered in Harlingen, Texas. Wendy and our friend Pat, (a frequent fellow traveler and avid birder), were the instigators of this trip. I went along and struck out on my own most days.

There were lots of places to find birds. I just looked at the schedule of birding trips and picked a time when the masses of birders taking guided tours via the RGVBF would not be there. For the most part this worked out well. Most places were within an hours drive of our base and the RGVBF HQ in Harlingen.

There was one field trip specifically for bird photography and one class in creating bird habitat specifically for photographing that I did attend. The field trip to some photography blinds at the Laguna Seca Ranch was very productive for me. The photography habitat class I attended gave me some insights and I learned a bit about what it might take to develop a similar environment locally. If we still lived on our ten acres it would be a project well in progress. Here in the village of Poulsbo, I'll have to be a bit more creative and significantly down scale.

Both the field trip and the class were led by Ruth Hoyt, Laguna Seca Ranch's Point of Contact. At the end of this issue of our Flying Pig Adventures I included some links and other information.

Harlingen is at the very southern tip of Texas along the Rio Grande, and not so deep in the Rio Grande Valley. That there is a Rio Grande Valley is a bit misleading. The added name 'Valley' was intended to be misleading too! The 'Valley' part created entirely by the marketing people who were trying to get farmers to buy land to farm and live on along the Rio Grande. The hope was that the word 'Valley' would conger up minds-eye visions of a fertile green valley with mountains on either side. Surely this would be more enticing than the reality of the mosquito infested swampy Rio Grande delta, (albeit it was very fertile). It is said that by the time the farmers bought into, paid for the land, and then arrived to Rio Grande 'Valley', it would be too late for them to back out. A century later they would do this same sort of thing again in Florida and yet again here in nearby Sequim, WA.



This is one of the bird blinds at the Laguna Seca Ranch. A guide is setting up the perches and feeders on the far side of the pond from the blind the photographers work from. The photographer entering from the back can be seen through the camouflage netting, but won't be very visible once the door is closed.

The photographers enter from the back side of the blind. These kind of blinds are sunk into the ground so that the photographer's eye level is very nearly at the pond and ground level. There are other blinds, such as raptor blinds, which are entirely set above ground and placed a farther distance from the staging perches. The primary reason for having a guide though is to check for snakes and other undesirables that made their way inside the blinds before we entered.



This perspective is from directly behind the blind, after all the undesirables had been evicted and the photographer has begun to set up. We even had padded folding chairs to keep ourselves comfy during this ordeal. Should I have one built for me though, it would also have a flushing toilet, coffee bar, a small fridge and a hammock.





Northern Cardinal (Female)



Northern Cardinal (Male)



Mockingbird



Orange-crowned Warbler



Green Jay



Black-crested Titmouse



Northern Cardinal (Male)



White-crowned Sparrow



Green Jay



Northern Cardinal (Male)



Great-tailed Grackle



Northern Cardinal (Male)



Roseate Spoonbill



Least Bittern



Common Pauraque



Curved-bill Thrasher



White Ibis



Northern Cardinal (Male)



Bobwhite Quail



Green Jay



Kiskadee Takes Dragonfly - Checkmate!

For those interested in more information below are some links:

The annual Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival: <http://www.rgvbf.org/>

Laguna Seca Ranch: <http://www.lagunasecaranch.com/>

Ruth Hoyt (Photographer / Guide / Educator): <http://ruthhoyt.com/>

Some of the places I photographed:

Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, Rio Hondo

Adolph Thoma Jr County Park, Rio Hondo

South Padre Island Birding And Nature Center

South Padre Island Convention Centre (board walk)

Holly Beach Rd Lagoon / Pond, Laguna Vista

Resaca De La Palma State Park, Brownsville

Sabal Palm Sanctuary, Brownsville

Hugh Ramsey Nature Park, Harlingen

Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park, Mission

Quinta Mazatlan, McAllen

Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, Alamo

Estero Llano Grande State Park, Weslaco

Laguna Seca Ranch, Edinburg

That's all from the RGVBF. We are not sure where our next adventure is taking us, so stay tuned.

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