

# Wellness Retreat

May 22-25, 2025



- Art House Café
- Social Club
- Native Garden
- Retro-Luxury Cabin
- Yoga, Meditation and Sound Bath by Humbling Blooms

14349 Highway 16N, Medina, TX 78055  
Info@RiverOaksCourts.com  
830-246-2222

## Nature Walk

- 39 Bird Species
- Tiny, tiny turtles
  - Cool plants
  - A fish colony
  - Lots of fun !

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## Up with the Birds

Our early start earned us the full-on morning chorus welcome. Nice looks at **Lark Sparrows**, **Eastern Phoebe**s and of course those 'just' **White Wings Doves** and **Northern Cardinals**. Heard vireos of every kind and a **Greater Roadrunner** making it low but resonant 'hurt dog' coo. It was hard to leave but an **Ash Throated Flycatcher** watched as we inched our way to the trail.

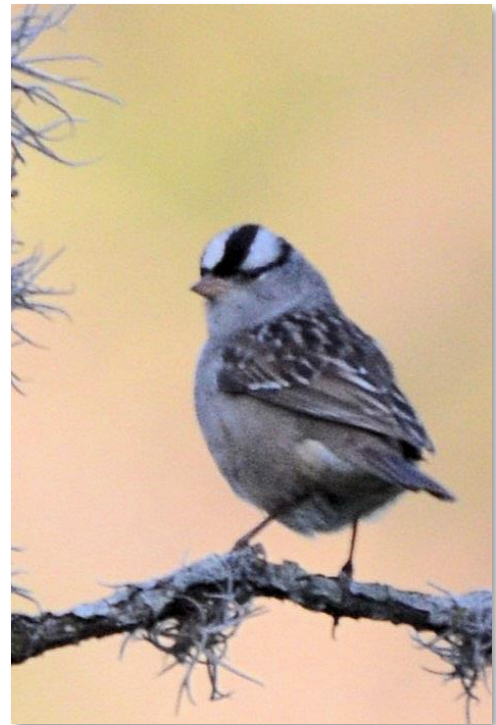
Of course, it was just as busy on the trail. As we checked out the big Texas Madrone tree, our Bird of the Day, Mr. **Yellow Breasted Chat** made his entrance. 3? 4? It was hard to tell how many were along that stretch as we saw them chasing each other from tree to tree. Perhaps we stumbled upon a newly fledged family? Or territorial males? Either way, their mockingbird-like repertoire of hoots and hollers never fails to entertain.



Yellow Breasted Chat, living up to his name in both sight and sound



This common female Northern Cardinal led us to this unexpected 'winter sparrow'



White Crowned Sparrow, see how easy birding is !

## Questions and Answers

Birding, as it is now called, reflects the competitive aspect of tallying up as many birds as possible. But is still about Bird *Watching*, asking questions, finding answers and more questions. We were reminded of this as we *watched* a pair of **Chipping Sparrows** hopping up to knock seeds off the grasses. A **Red-Tail Hawk**, presumably the same who flew over us in the parking lot, was perched near the now abandoned nest. Many theories on why, after almost 30 years, the nest is no longer used. Most likely, the nest is just got too tall; there was no longer any headroom for the hawks to stand! Also, the nest lasted twice the lifespan of the average hawk. Sadly, many banding studies have shown the success rate for fledglings to survive, no less return to the same nest is extremely low. On a lighter note, it was when the interpretive sign was installed, the hawks moved to the Day Use Area for more privacy. The answer may lie somewhere in a combination of those factors. Or maybe the constant quacking from Laura's Rubber Duck above the nest chased them off? ; >



Majestic Red-Tailed Hawk  
sunbathing



Lindheimer's senna : super soft  
leaves and usually a later bloomer



### The most wonderful time of the year

No, for birders it's not just Christmas – Audubon Christmas Bird Counts withstanding – but **SPRING MIGRATION !** Watching the arrival of each species, nest building, hatchlings and then watching the parents trying to keep up with all those fledglings. How those parents have the energy left to fly the family back south at the season is beyond me!

Acadian Flycatchers are some of the last migrants to arrive at Lost Maples. But they wasted no time getting the new family started. We heard many of the explosive 'peet-sah' sounds from male **Acadian Flycatchers** announcing their territories. We checked in on this quieter industrious female building upon a nest I'd seen started a couple of days prior. Not migratory, but our year-round **Common Ravens** have nest in the same 2 spots at Lost Maples every year. The ravens enroute to the pond recently left the nest. Twice, we saw a parent bring them food to an adjacent ledge. While the fledglings were not in view, like all babies, they made quite a racket when lunch arrived.

### Success stories

With very limited ranges and special federal status, **Golden Cheeked Warblers** and **Black Capped Vireos** are the 2 most famous species at Lost Maples. Golden Cheeks were placed on the Endangered Species list in 1990. While their success is indisputable throughout the Texas Hill Country, they remain listed. Black Capped were first listed in 1987 but were de-listed in 2017. Trapping of Brown Headed Cowbirds during breeding season has significantly helped both these species – and other songbirds recover. For more details:<https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/nuisance/cowbirds/trappingProgram.phtml>



Acadian Flycatcher testing out the initial foundation (5/21) and adding to her nest today (5/23).

## Lost Maples Celebs

Given the limited numbers and ranges of the Golden Cheeks and Black Cappeds, birders from all over the world come to Lost Maples to see them! We were lucky to get great looks at both of these local celebrities. Approaching the pond, we heard the characteristic 'ticking' sound of **Golden Cheek Warbler** fledglings. Sure enough, we saw mom trying to feed and herd her newest family members through a small patch of Ashe Juniper and American Sycamore trees. We heard a few Black Cappeds throughout the morning but were lucky to spot mom sitting on a newly constructed but well-hidden nest near the end of our walk.

As celebrated on our Busy-Birding flyers, every Golden Cheek is born in Texas and we are sure proud of these True Texans and their success. The Black Cappeds' population has also increased enough in the last 5 years that finding them no longer requires the "Death March" up atop the ridge.



We were able to get views of her head and tail while keeping a respectable distance





## Non-Birds

While Busy-Birding is obviously focused on birds, it is hard not to be drawn into all of nature's beauty. This is why our motto is "Nurture Your Love for Nature"



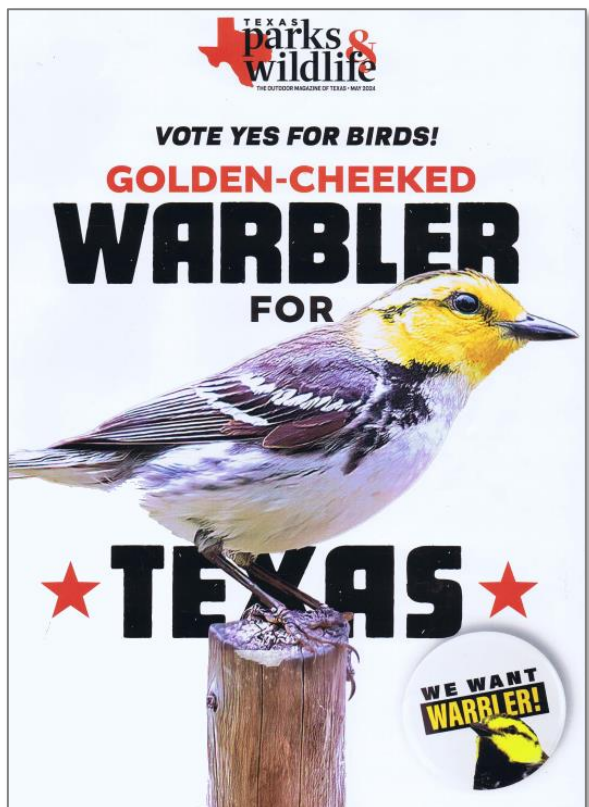
Greater Earless Lizard



Colony of Sunfish redds (nests)



Hackberry Emperor, often seen on big tree on River Oaks Court's patio



A not-so-serious campaign to strip the mockingbird's state bird status. An educational article nonetheless

[https://tpwmagazine.com/archive/2024/may/ed\\_2\\_birds](https://tpwmagazine.com/archive/2024/may/ed_2_birds)



Guadalupe Bass, Texas's state fish

**Lost Maples SNA (HOTW 061), Bandera, Texas, US**  
**39 species**

May 23, 2025 6:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Protocol: Traveling, 2.25 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: Bird Blind to 2nd pond + return.

Clear sky, Temperature: 68 - 88°F

Wind: Light breeze - moderate breeze, Direction: N - SW

Cloud Cover: 0%, Humidity: 45 - 78%



Lots of close-up views of Black Crested Titmouse (Titmice?) parents and their wing-flapping, noisy, begging but adorable Not-yet black-crested fledglings

Inca Dove 2  
White-tipped Dove 1  
White-winged Dove 15  
Yellow-billed Cuckoo 1  
Black-chinned Hummingbird 1  
Black Vulture 1  
Turkey Vulture 8  
Red-shouldered Hawk 1  
Red-tailed Hawk 1  
Ladder-backed Woodpecker 1  
Eastern Wood-Pewee 2  
Acadian Flycatcher 4  
*Adding to nest started/recorded 2 days ago*  
Eastern Phoebe 6  
Ash-throated Flycatcher 2  
Black-capped Vireo 2  
*Mom on nest; Dad nearby*  
White-eyed Vireo 7  
Hutton's Vireo 1  
Yellow-throated Vireo 3  
Red-eyed Vireo 2  
Common Raven 4  
*Fledgling on ledge nearby nest;  
One parents seen bringing food*  
Black-crested Titmouse 8  
*Lots of fledglings being fed by lots of parents*  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 4  
Canyon Wren 2  
Carolina Wren 2  
Bewick's Wren 2  
Olive Sparrow 3  
Chipping Sparrow 4  
Lark Sparrow 1  
White-crowned Sparrow 1  
*Surprised to see this time 'winter bird'*  
Yellow-breasted Chat 6  
Red-winged Blackbird 1  
*Not surprisingly, 1st heard then seen by pond*  
Louisiana Waterthrush 1  
Black-and-white Warbler 3  
Tropical Parula 1  
Continuing bird  
Yellow-throated Warbler 2  
Golden-cheeked Warbler 6  
*Feeding fledglings; others not seen but  
heard cucaracha song multiple times*  
Summer Tanager 4  
Northern Cardinal 8  
Blue Grosbeak 2





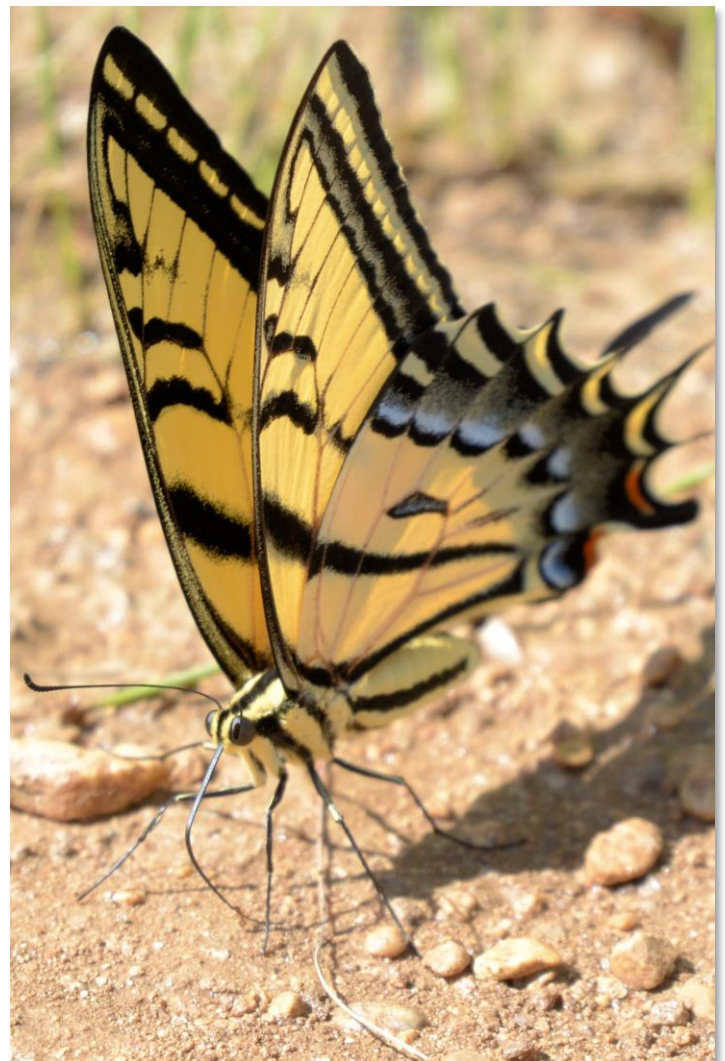
One of 5?6? So tiny Red-Eared Sliders



Female Black Chinned Hummer

Thank you  
for letting us  
Nurture  
Your Love  
for Nature

See you again soon in **MEDINA, TEXAS**  
Medina River Oaks Courts,  
Humbling Blooms and  
Busy-Birding.  
Sincerest Regards,  
Laura @ **Busy-Birding.com**



Double-Tailed Tiger Swallowtail