

South Llano River State Park

Nov 2, 2025



Happy Birthday Birds

We had the park to ourselves with -

- Ideal weather
- The state's most inspiring bird blinds full of the usual cast of winter birds
- Not a single raptor or turkey all day
- A record number of armadillos

... All came together for the perfect family birthday celebration!

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Starting out

Just an hour north of Kerrville lies a hidden treasure : South Llano River State Park. With the 4 BEST bird blinds in Texas – or anywhere, there is no better place for beginning birders to develop their birding skills. Yes, using binoculars is a skill. What fun, playing voyeur and watching all the birds splash around in the water and get all fluffy while bathing. Witnessing such joy, there is no denying that birds have emotions just like us. Yes, we were guilty of anthropo-morphizing. Despite some of us occasionally being accused of being a ‘bird brain’, birders are humans who can ONLY think accordingly, so yes, it is ‘natural’ for humans to attribute human emotional and behavioral features to non-human animals and objects.



Ladderback Woodpecker - Male

Wash and Dry



Woodhouse's (formerly Western) Scrub Jay



Fluffy, shiny and clean



House Finches



Fat and fluffy is cute ... on birds



Non-crazy birdwatcher

For a long time, the image of a birdwatcher or naturalist has been stereotyped as an older gentleman, who wears one of those green waistcoats with an abundance of pockets, jumping out of bushes in an artistic fashion and chasing after the latest rarity. And what about the women? Television programs have portrayed birdwatchers as rather 'out there' people with strange habits, especially depicted this way in murder mysteries for some reason.

<https://naturenattering.wordpress.com/2016/03/08/breaking-the-birdwatching-stereotype-anyone-of-any-age>

Focus on the Birds

Birdwatching has 'evolved' into Birding can involve checking seen species off lists, chasing nemesis birds, mobile apps and many of the crazy aspects made fun of in the highly-recommended 2011 movie, *The Big Year*. Obviously, the 'Busy' half of Busy-Birding enjoys all these activities. But we **LOVE** 'beginner trips' that take us back to the true reason we are here : **BIRDZ**. We did not rack up a huge number of species (17), but we found many familiar birds and relished in the subtle details most birders miss. No shame, only joy in 'beginning birdwatching/birding'

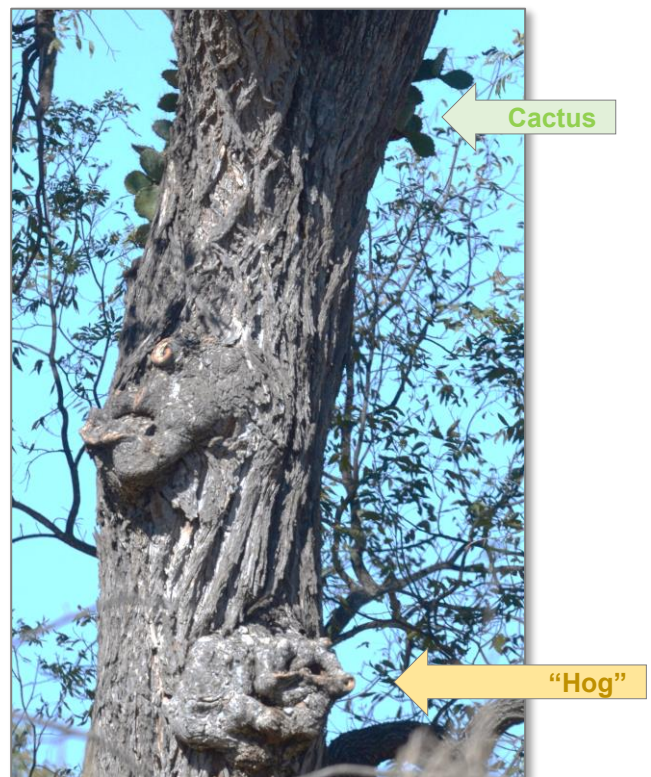
With a quick dismissal, it would have been easy to miss this female **Northern Cardinal** with an extra dab of white above her eye. This is a fairly common color 'abnormality' for cardinals. Asked to describe a bird, we think of the head and front. What about the crown's back side on the **White Crowned Sparrow**. Or this common red spot above the tail on the **House Finch**? Most birders are likely to miss these details. Yes, every walk is a treasure hunt with the rewards is finding the beauty in the new...and familiar ... wonders of nature.



Trip details

The group – including a **Greater Roadrunner** glimpsed by a few - initially met at Lora's blind. After the usual logistics and a quick binocular lesson, we made the short stroll to the Agarita blind. A beautiful **White Crowned Sparrow** (cover photo accompanied by immature with brown crown) posed patiently for all to see. Its crown foreshadowed the Happy Birthday tiara at the lunchtime celebration. The blinds here at South Llano serve as inspiration for anyone wanting to attract birds and beautify their property. Felled and decayed logs are MacGyver'ed into feeder structures with a natural vibe. The sound of dripping and long-flowing water from the natural rock fountains also create an irresistible lure for both birds and birders. Insider hint: these fountains bring in every bird in the park – even non-feeder birds like Golden Cheeked Warblers and Black Capped Vireos - when it's over 100 degrees outside. Not surprisingly, there are fewer birders when it's that hot.

We walked past the Acorn blind to the peaceful Buck Lake where the hogs have gone hog-wild digging up the terrain. We did find this one 'hiding' in the tree gnarl just below a real bunch of hearty cactus also now part of the trunk. Afterwards, we were treated to a birthday celebration with enough food to feed everyone in the park twice-over. True, we WERE nearly the entire day's visitor population despite TPWD Free Day! The 2-month closure of the campground no doubt kept many away. We did have a **Bewick's Wren** and one of the many, many park armadillos with us throughout lunch. A final stop at Lora's blind was the perfect end to a perfect day.



South Llano River SP (HOTW 093)

17 species, as birders we can't help count

A decent dent in our checklist plus a few ----->
Junction, Texas

Nov 2, 2025 9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

Fog - clear sky; Temperature: 42 - 73°F

Wind: Calm - gentle breeze; Direction: N - SW

Winter Birding - S. Llano River SP	☒ Eastern Phoebe	☒ Hermit Thrush	☒ Common Raven	☒ American Kestrel
☒ Northern Cardinal	☒ White-winged Dove	☒ Bewick's Wren	☒ Carolina Wren	☒ White-crowned Sparrow
☒ Gold Crested Titmouse	☒ Carolina Chickadee	☒ Ladder-backed Woodpecker	☒ Golden-fronted Woodpecker	☒ Spotted Towhee
☒ Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay	☒ Lesser Goldfinch	☒ Turkey Vulture	☒ Black Vulture	☒ Chipping Sparrow
☒ House Finch	☒ Pine Siskin			☒ House Sparrow

Comment: Strangely enough, despite watchful eyes to the sky, the entire day yielded not a single raven, vulture or hawk. This is an all time first in the ENTIRE history of birding!!!

White-winged Dove 10
Greater Roadrunner 1
Golden-fronted Woodpecker 1
Ladder-backed Woodpecker 4
Eastern Phoebe 1
Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay 4
Carolina Chickadee 4
Black-crested Titmouse 15
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1
Bewick's Wren 3
Northern Mockingbird 4
Hermit Thrush 1
House Finch 12
Black-throated Sparrow 3
White-crowned Sparrow 6
Spotted Towhee 5
Northern Cardinal 8



Hermit Thrush



Black Crested Titmouse



Spotted Towhee, a big sparrow

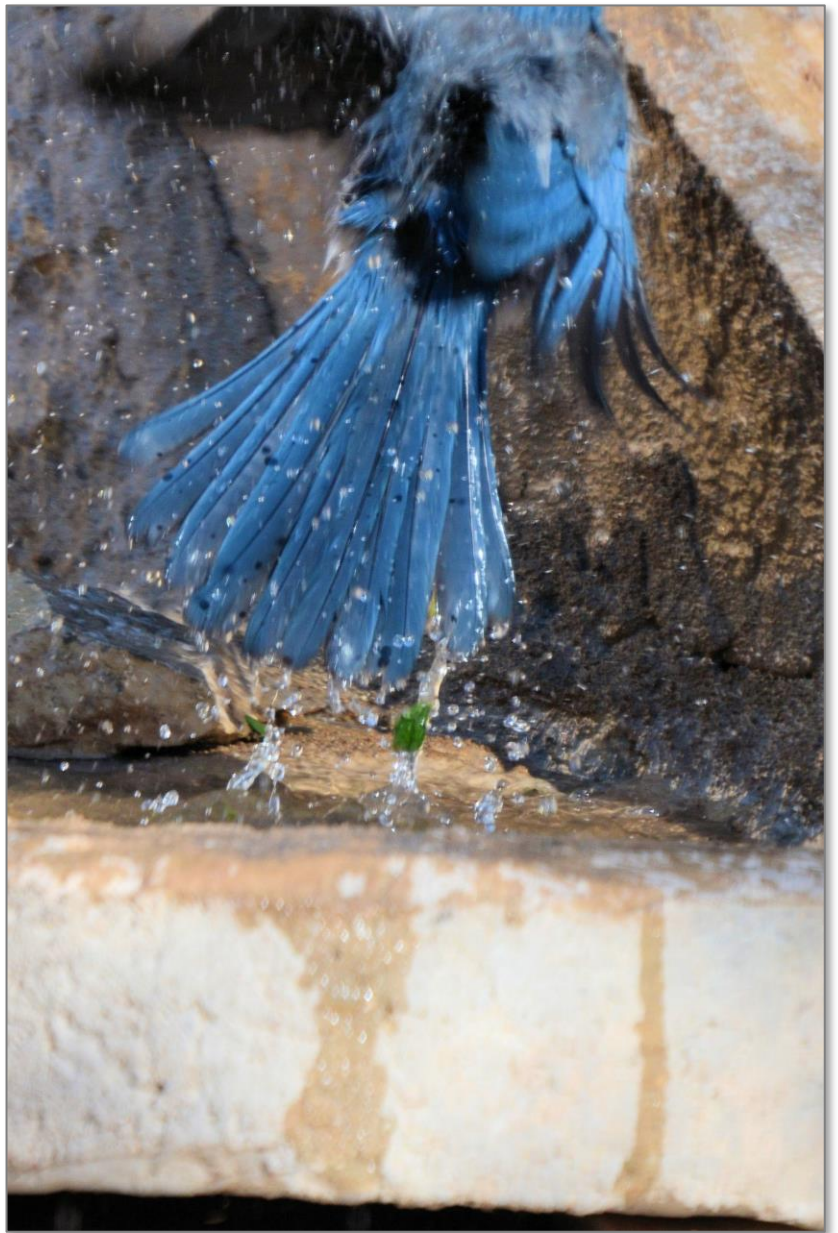


Ladderback Woodpecker - Female

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S283010992>

Thank you
for allowing
Busy-Birding to

Nurture Your Love for Nature



Literally from a Woodhouse's Scrub Jay -

THE END

... 'til the next trip



While digging for a lighter to set thee afire, a brief breeze picked up to remind us of the Burn Ban. In the spirit of Recycle and Reuse, these colorful candles are likely to make an appearance atop the next yummy, homemade birthday cake :>

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