Davis Mountains Hummingbird Celebration Field Trips & Photo Workshops

Unless otherwise noted, all Field Trips will Carpool from the Chamber.
What to bring on your Field Trip: Hat, Water, Binoculars and a Snack

Come Early – Enjoy Special Field Trips and Extras!

SOLD OUT! SPECIAL FIELD TRIP #1 – Photographing High Elevation Hummingbirds

DAYS: Monday thru Thursday Noon (8/20-23)
DRIVE: Crow’s Nest Ranch
PARTICIPATION LIMIT: 8
PRICE: $875

DESCRIPTION
Learn advanced hummingbird photography from professional wildlife photographer (& biologist) Larry Ditto. Practice the secrets of the “Pros” in the Davis Mountains and photograph a variety of species coming to feeders. This is a rare opportunity to capture potentially ten species.
TARGET BIRDS: Rivoli’s, Lucifer, Ruby-throated, Black-chinned, Calliope, Broad-tailed and Rufous hummingbirds. Could possibly get Blue-throated, Mexican Violet Ear and Broad-billed Hummingbirds.

SPECIAL FIELD TRIP #2 (Arrive Weds. Afternoon) – Hummingbirds, Sky Islands and Astronomy

DAYS: Wednesday evening, August, 22 ONLY
EXTRAS TO BRING: PORTABLE CHAIR
DRIVE DIFFICULTY: EASY – ADA Accessible
PARTICIPATION LIMIT: 30
TRIP TIME: 5:30 – 9:30 PM
PRICE: $55

DESCRIPTION
Take a trip to see Hummingbirds, Enjoy Spectacular Vistas and Explore the World of Astronomy You are invited to spend the evening as guests of the McDonald Observatory to enjoy some of the smallest and largest wonders in the Universe. View a variety of hummingbird species, enjoy breathtaking vistas, a very fine dinner and learn about astronomy from the experts.

We will carpool twelve miles up to the McDonald Observatory complex on Mount Locke. Starting in town at 5,050 feet we will climb out of Yucca–Sotol Grasslands to the higher elevation of Oak–Pinyon forest at 6,791 feet. At the Hummingbird Park, biologist/ornithologist, Cliff Shackleford, will help identify hummingbird species arriving at the feeders. Leaving the hummingbirds as the sun is sinking on the horizon, we will drive to a spectacular viewing site overlooking the Davis Mountains’ Sky Islands. At this site, we will join McDonald Staff for cool drinks and light appetizers as we view significant geological formations, and the many beautiful vistas. Next is a tour of the astronomer’s world to see the Otto Struve Telescope. Completed in 1938, its dome housed all of the McDonald Observatory. Not only did it contain the 82-inch (2.1-meter) telescope — then the second-largest in the world — it also housed living and sleeping
quarters for the astronomers who used the telescope. We will complete the evening at Astronomers Lodge with a lovely private dinner sponsored by Celestron optics; McDonald scientists will describe the role of the observatory and its work. This is a unique event combining the sciences of ornithology and astronomy.

Our dinner sponsor, Celestron, a company launched in 1955, is famous for the manufacture of telescopes and optics revolutionizing amateur astronomy. Our host sponsor the McDonald Observatory, was built in 1933 and is now a research unit of the University of Texas. It is one of the world’s leading centers for astronomical research, teaching, public education and outreach.

SPECIAL FIELD TRIP #3 (Arrive Weds. Evening) – Exceptional Hummingbirds and Breakfast

**DAY:** THURSDAY Morning ONLY
**TRIP TIME:** 8:00 AM – NOON
**EXTRAS TO BRING:** PORTABLE CHAIR

**DESCRIPTION**
This is the 2018 Celebration’s “Hummingbird Nirvana.” After enjoying an outdoor breakfast at Point of Rocks, a geologic treasure on the Scenic Loop, the group will ascend to a much higher elevation (5,800 feet) into the Pine–Oak Woodlands ecology for viewing the area’s most diverse array of hummingbird species with 10 species possible. Sit in comfort at a private residence and enjoy the sights and sounds of hummingbirds zipping all around you. (Please note: The fee covers breakfast and a donation for habitat conservations and access.)

**TARGET BIRDS:** Rivoli’s, Lucifer, Ruby-throated, Black-chinned, Calliope, Broad-tailed and Rufous hummingbirds; Acorn Woodpecker, Black-headed Grosbeak, Hepatic and Western Tanagers. Anything can show up!

SPECIAL FIELD TRIP #4 – Hummingbird Gardens in the Mountains

**DAY:** FRIDAY AND SATURDAY
**TRIP TIME:** 8:30 AM to NOON
**DRIVE:** TRAVEL TO MOUNTAIN RANCHES IN TWO GROUPS

**DESCRIPTION**
Enjoy a one-of-a-kind hummingbird experience. Feast your eyes on a variety of hummingbird species in a variety of beautiful high mountain settings. We will visit three very lovely and different gardens at private ranch residences high in the Davis Mountains. Traveling to the Glover, Davis/Holmes, and Caldwell Ranches you will experience: 1) A charming ranch garden with loads of hummingbirds, 2) A stunning off-the-grid modern home featuring native plants, birds and a spectacular view of the Davis Mountains, and 3) A grand garden designed for wildlife and the owner’s love of sustainable living and conservation. The tour (roundtrip) is approximately 60 miles and the two groups should be back in Fort Davis in time for lunch.

**TARGET BIRDS:** Black-chinned, Calliope, Broad-tailed, Rufous, and perhaps Rivoli’s, Lucifer and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, plus other Neotropical migrants and resident birds.

SPECIAL BREAKFAST MEAL #5 – Breakfast at Star Date Café (& Banding Demonstrations)

**DAY:** FRIDAY and SATURDAY
**TIME:** SERVING BEGINS 7:00 AM (ENDS AT 8:30 AM)
**DRIVE:** STAR DATE CAFE IS 20-25 MINUTES FROM TOWN & ON THE WAY TO BANDING STATIONS, SEE MAP.
DESCRIPTION
If you would like to enjoy breakfast on your way to bird banding at the McDonald Observatory or The Nature Conservancy, the Star Date Café at the McDonald Observatory Visitors Center will open from 7 to 8:30 a.m. to serve a (reserved) hot breakfast. You reserve and pay with registration, indicating the day you will attend banding. Breakfast menu and prices will be listed for selection on registration forms.

Hummingbird Celebration Field Trips

HUMMINGBIRD BANDING at the TNC Davis Mountains Preserve
(Optional Breakfast, see above for details)

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<td>HIKING DIFFICULTY:</td>
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<td>DRIVE DIFFICULTY:</td>
<td>EASY – ADA Accessible</td>
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<td>DAILY PARTICIPATION LIMIT:</td>
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<td>TRIP TIME:</td>
<td>7:30 AM</td>
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<td>WHAT TO BRING:</td>
<td>PORTABLE CHAIR</td>
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DESCRIPTION
Join Kelly Bryan for the morning and learn fascinating information about hummingbirds in migration from perhaps the most knowledgeable hummingbird biologist in North America. Kelly Bryan has banded 20,000 hummingbirds and confirmed eighteen hummingbird species in the Trans-Pecos. See the tiny birds up-close!

TARGET BIRDS: Rivoli’s, Lucifer, Ruby-throated, Black-chinned, Anna’s, Calliope, Broad-tailed, Rufous and Allen’s Hummingbirds Anything could turn up!

HUMMINGBIRD BANDING at the McDonald Observatory
(Optional Breakfast, see above for details)

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<td>DAILY PARTICIPATION LIMIT:</td>
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<td>TRIP TIME:</td>
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<td>WHAT TO BRING:</td>
<td>PORTABLE CHAIR</td>
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DESCRIPTION
Join master bander, Charles Floyd for a wonderful morning of hummingbirds at the McDonald Observatory near Mt. Locke, one of the Celebration’s highest elevations. Charles Floyd is President of West Texas Avian Research, Inc. He has banded over 20,000 Black-chinned Hummingbirds and recaptured the oldest known banded Black-chinned Hummingbird on record at 11 years of age. The banding process will allow you to see birds up close while you learn of the natural wonder of hummingbirds in migration.

TARGET BIRDS: Rivoli’s, Lucifer, Ruby-throated, Black-chinned, Anna’s, Calliope, Broad-tailed, Rufous and Allen’s Hummingbirds Anything could turn up!

Hummingbird Feeding Frenzy – Cerro Colibri

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<th>DAYS:</th>
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<tr>
<td>HIKING DIFFICULTY:</td>
<td>SHORT UPHILL WALK AND ADA ACCESSIBLE</td>
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<td>DRIVE DIFFICULTY:</td>
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<td>DAILY PARTICIPATION LIMIT:</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>TRIP TIME:</td>
<td>3:30 – 5:30 PM (THU) 4:00 – 6:00 PM (FRI) 8:00 – 11:00 AM (SAT)</td>
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WHAT TO BRING: PORTABLE CHAIR

DESCRIPTION
Visit a local lovely residence and beautiful garden. Watch hummingbirds buzzing around feeders from the porch where leaders will help with bird identification. Five species of hummingbirds are usual during migration.

TARGET BIRDS: Lucifer, Ruby-throated, Black-chinned, Calliope, Broad-tailed and Rufous Hummingbirds; Scaled Quail, Curve-billed Thrasher, Black-throated Sparrow, Scott’s Oriole, Summer Tanager, Black-headed and Blue Grosbeak are usually there and more.

Field Trip Digiscoping Hummingbirds - McDonald Observatory

DAYS: THURSDAY and SUNDAY
HIKING DIFFICULTY: EASY
DRIVE DIFFICULTY: EASY

DAILY PARTICIPATION LIMIT: 16
TRIP TIME: 3:00 – 6:00 PM (THU)
8:00 – NOON (SUN)

DRIVE
While owning a nice 600mm Nikon or Canon lens will help you get wonderful photographs of hummingbirds, not everybody can afford them! If you have a good spotting scope, choosing the correct DSLR, Mirrorless camera or Smartphone can make it possible to get amazing photos and videos. Clay will show you how the systems work and give tips on field shooting. You will practice photographing hummingbirds at feeders. If you do not have a spotting scope, we will have some available – just bring your camera with full batteries and empty memory cards!

Field Trip to Sproul Ranch NEW for 2018

DAYS: FRIDAY, SATURDAY and SUNDAY
HIKING DIFFICULTY: EASY
DRIVE DIFFICULTY: EASY

DAILY PARTICIPATION LIMIT: 16
TIME: 7:45 AM - NOON

DESCRIPTION
Kerith and Roy Hurley own and operate the H.E. Sproul Ranch and Harvard Hotel in the heart of the Davis Mountains of West Texas. The Ranch was established in 1886 by R.S. Sproul, Kerith's great–great grandfather and was recognized by the state of Texas in 1986 as the first ranch in Jeff Davis County to have been family-owned and operated for 100 years. Today, more than 120 years later, Kerith continues to operate this historic property as a working cattle and hunting ranch. This tour is a true 4×4 experience. You will travel to the top of Cook Mountain overlooking the ranch headquarters and view magnificent mountain scenery in every direction. You will also have a chance to see abundant native wildlife, including mule deer, white-tailed deer, javelina and many species of birds.

TARGET BIRDS: Common Black Hawk (rare), Zone-tailed Hawk, Acorn Woodpecker, Hutton’s Vireo, Violet-green Swallow, Western Bluebird, Western Tanager and Black-headed Grosbeak. Numerous other breeding species and migrants (flycatchers, warblers, etc.) should also be seen.

Field Trip to Elephant Mountain Wildlife Management Area NEW for 2018

DAYS: FRIDAY, SATURDAY and SUNDAY
HIKING DIFFICULTY: EASY
DRIVE DIFFICULTY: EASY

DAILY PARTICIPATION LIMIT: 16
TRIP TIME: 6:30 AM – 1 PM
DESCRIPTION
Elephant Mountain WMA consists of 23,147 acres within the Trans-Pecos Ecological Region of West Texas. The most prominent feature of the area is Elephant Mountain (6,225 elevation) which extends from the northern to the southern property boundaries. The large flat-topped mountain of igneous origin rises nearly 2,000 feet above the surrounding tableland. The top of the mountain covers over 2,200 acres and is not open to the public to prevent disturbing the desert bighorn herd. Vegetation on Elephant Mountain WMA lies within a transition zone between the arid Chihuahuan Desert scrub to the south and high desert grasslands to the north.

TARGET BIRDS: Eastern and Western Neotropical migrants in the riparian zone and grassland birds.

Field Trip to Alamito Creek Preserve - Dixon Water Foundation NEW for 2018

DAYS: FRIDAY, SATURDAY and SUNDAY
HIKING DIFFICULTY: EASY
DRIVE DIFFICULTY: EASY

DESCRIPTION
The Alamito Creek Preserve is in a riparian zone that is a major north/south bird migration corridor located in southern Presidio County. Whereas many other creeks in far West Texas have lost their bank-side tree canopy, this beautiful stretch of Alamito (Spanish for “little cottonwood”) is still lined by a thriving cottonwood community.

TARGET BIRDS: Both eastern and western Neotropical migrants

Field Trip to Tule Canyon

DAYS: FRIDAY and SATURDAY
HIKING DIFFICULTY: EASY
DRIVE DIFFICULTY: HIGH-CLEARANCE VEHICLE REQUIRED
EXTRAS TO BRING: PORTABLE CHAIR

DESCRIPTION
Travel to a local private ranch in your high-clearance vehicles and ride three miles on ranch roads into Tule Canyon where a hummingbird feeding station has been set-up. A short bird walk for canyon species will round out the trip.

TARGET BIRDS: Broad-billed, Ruby-throated, Black-chinned, Calliope, Broad-tailed and Rufous Hummingbirds; Bushtit, Hepatic Tanager and Black-chinned Sparrow.

Field Trip to TNC Sky Island Preserve

DAYS: FRIDAY, SATURDAY and SUNDAY
HIKING DIFFICULTY: EASY TO MODERATE
DRIVE DIFFICULTY: 4 WD OR HIGH-CLEARANCE VEHICLE REQUIRED
EXTRAS TO BRING: STURDY HIKING SHOES

DESCRIPTION
A Sky Island Adventure! This trip will focus on the pine and pinyon-juniper woodlands along Madera Creek on The Nature Conservancy’s Davis Mountains Preserve. We will drive up Madera Canyon Road to Wolf Den Canyon or Road Canyon, where we will bird some of the lower elevation pine stands. We may also swing by 48 Tank to check for water birds. There will be short, easy hikes along the road and trails, all of which are relatively flat.

TARGET BIRDS: ‘Mexican’ Mallard, Montezuma Quail, Common Black Hawk (rare), Zone-tailed Hawk, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Acorn Woodpecker, Gray Flycatcher, Hutton’s Vireo, Plumbeous Vireo, Violet-green Swallow, Western Bluebird, Grace’s Warbler, Hepatic Tanager, Western Tanager and Black-headed Grosbeak.
Numerous other breeding species and migrants (flycatchers, warblers, etc.) should also be seen. Be prepared for several miles of hiking.

**Field Trip to Christmas Mountain Oasis**

**DAYS:** FRIDAY, SATURDAY and SUNDAY  
**HIKING DIFFICULTY:** EASY – Will work for ADA  
**DRIVE DIFFICULTY:** HIGH-CLEARANCE VEHICLE REQUIRED

**DAILY PARTICIPATION LIMIT:** 16  
**TRIP TIME:** 6:00 AM – 1:00 PM

**DESCRIPTION**
Lucifer Madness Field Trip *(Drivers, please get the map.)* This is your chance to get great views of the fantastic Lucifer Hummingbird in its wild breeding environment in the Christmas Mountains. This trip is not for the “Faint of Heart.” We will drive 75+ miles south through Alpine on Hwy. 118 to a turn-off, then 30-minutes on very rough desert roads. If rain is predicted, come prepared - the roads are muddy. This location is a guaranteed spot for Lucifer Hummingbirds!  
**TARGET BIRDS:** Lucifer, Ruby-throated, Black-chinned, Anna’s, Calliope, Broad-tailed, Rufous Hummingbirds plus Varied Bunting, Willow Flycatcher, Scott’s Oriole, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher and maybe an Elf Owl.

**Field Trip to Miller Ranch**

**DAYS:** FRIDAY and SATURDAY  
**HIKING DIFFICULTY:** EASY TO MODERATE  
**DRIVE DIFFICULTY:** EASY

**DAILY PARTICIPATION LIMIT:** 16  
**TRIP TIME:** 6:30 AM – 1 PM

**DESCRIPTION**
Carpool from the Chamber for a 1-hr 10-minute drive to the historic C.E. Miller Ranch and Camp Holland – 52 miles. *(Drivers, please get the map.)* We drive paved roads from the Chamber to Valentine, then unpaved roads *(If raining, road is muddy and may be slippery.)* to the ranch Hqqs where restrooms are available. We will arrive there early morning to see Gambel’s and Scaled Quail feeding. Then we will transfer to high-clearance ranch vehicles for a drive into the canyon for birding, a moderate hike and a tour of Camp Holland built by the U.S. Army in 1918 in response to Mexican bandit raids. The adventure really begins as we traverse the rugged canyon terrain of the Sierra Vieja Mountains in search of our  
**TARGET BIRDS:** Ruby-throated, Black-chinned, and Rufous Hummingbirds; Gambel’s and Scaled Quail; Golden Eagle, Phainopepla, Peregrine Falcon, Verdin, Canyon Wren and many more species.

**Field Trip to Post Park and Gage Gardens**

**DAYS:** FRIDAY, SATURDAY and SUNDAY  
**HIKING DIFFICULTY:** EASY  
**DRIVE DIFFICULTY:** EASY

**DAILY PARTICIPATION LIMIT:** 16  
**TRIP TIME:** 7:30 AM – 1 PM  
**SPECIAL NOTES:** RESTROOMS AVAILABLE  
**LUNCH AVAILABLE IN MARATHON**

**DESCRIPTION**
Post Park and Birds Galore! Carpool to one of the regions’ best county parks and add birds to your southwestern lists. This is sure to be a great birding morning in search of desert and riparian birds near Marathon. We will focus on three areas in Brewster County that often produce some wonderful birds. The first is Gage Gardens which provides a great stopover for migrants and a breeding location for residents. The second location is Post Park.  
The road to the park traverses scrubland and open habitat with a few livestock watering stations that attract birds. Once we arrive at the park, we’ll bird in the shade of giant trees along the banks of historic Peña Colorado Springs. Take easy birding walks in the park, or sit and watch from a shady picnic table. This is a
great migrant trap so just about anything is possible! Our final stop is the Marathon Prairie Dog Town which is a fabulous area for grassland and open-habitat birds.

**TARGET BIRDS:** Scaled Quail, Greater Roadrunner, Swainson’s Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Horned Lark; Clay-colored, Brewers, and Cassin’s Sparrows; Say’s and Black Phoebes; Vermilion Flycatcher, Bronzed Cowbird and migrants.

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**Field Trip to Sandia Wetlands – Wild Rose Pass & Mountain Geology**

**DAYS:** FRIDAY, SATURDAY and SUNDAY  
**HIKING DIFFICULTY:** EASY  
**DRIVE DIFFICULTY:** EASY  
**DAILY PARTICIPATION LIMIT:** 16  
**TRIP TIME:** 7:00 AM - NOON

**DESCRIPTION**

This is an easy 1+ hour drive to Balmorhea and the Sandia Wetlands. The drive is about 45 miles (one way) and traverses some of the most beautiful and impressive geology in Texas. We will arrive early morning for shorebirds, sparrows and waterfowl at a private re-constructed desert wetland (or cienega) open to the public and made possible by landowners Don and Ellen Weinacht. An historic and very large desert wetland would have occupied the area surrounding the San Solomon Springs site where Balmorhea State Park and Balmorhea Lake were built. The Sandia Wetlands help replicate habitat that is no longer available for shorebirds and wetland species. Helping with the restoration project are The Nature Conservancy, Tierra Grande Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists with grants from Ed Rachal Foundation and Duck’s Unlimited; also SRSU Borderlands Institute.  

**TARGET BIRDS:** A variety of shorebirds and waterfowl including Wilson’s Phalarope, Cinnamon Teal and White-faced Ibis.

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**Field Trip to Davis Mountains State Park**

**DAYS:** FRIDAY, SATURDAY and SUNDAY  
**HIKING DIFFICULTY:** EASY – Will work for ADA  
**DRIVE DIFFICULTY:** EASY  
**DAILY PARTICIPATION LIMIT:** 16  
**TRIP TIME:** 4:00 – 6:00 PM (SAT)  
**FRI-SUN:** 8:00 – NOON

**DESCRIPTION**

This is an easy 6 mile drive to Davis Mountains State Park, a great place to see birds. (Bring $3 cash and deliver to trip leader.) Check out the neat photo blinds and feeding stations at the Park for hummingbirds and other birds. Enjoy the easy walk between the two blinds. Davis Mountains State Park is well known as a birding “Hot Spot.” The normal entrance fee of $5 per visit has been reduced to $3 throughout the Celebration event.  

**TARGET BIRDS:** Ruby-throated, Black-chinned and Rufous Hummingbirds; Montezuma Quail, Wild Turkey, Zone-tailed Hawk, Acorn Woodpecker and migrants.

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**Field Trip to Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute**

**DAYS:** FRIDAY, SATURDAY and SUNDAY  
**HIKING DIFFICULTY:** EASY  
**DRIVE DIFFICULTY:** EASY  
**DAILY PARTICIPATION LIMIT:** 16  
**TRIP TIME:** 8:15 – NOON (FRI-SUN)

**DESCRIPTION**

This is an easy 4 mile drive from Fort Davis east on Hwy 118 to the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center, a great place to learn about the area’s unique Geology and exciting desert–grassland birds. Your tour will include a stroll through the botanical garden, a visit to the new bird feeding station, and an interpreted geology hike (all the while birding of course)!
TARGET BIRDS: Montezuma and Scaled Quail, Swainson’s Hawk, hummingbirds, Vermilion Flycatcher, Cassin’s and Western Kingbirds, Western Wood-Pewee, Woodhouse’s Scrub-Jay, Bushtit, Cactus Wren, Phainopepla, Pyrrhuloxia, and Black-headed Grosbeak.