

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK & THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

APRIL 25 – MAY 4, 2011

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This tour combines two of the richest regions of Texas---the Texas Hill Country and the Trans-Pecos, when the birding is at its peak. The lush and scenic Texas Hill Country offers good chances for the two prized area specialties, the Golden-cheeked Warbler and the Black-capped Vireo. The warbler breeds nowhere else in the world and the vireo has an incredibly restricted range in the United States. In addition the Hill Country serves as a meeting point of both eastern and western species with odd pairings such as Common Poorwill and Chuck-will's-widow, Black and Eastern phoebes, Canyon and Carolina wrens, and Field and Black-throated sparrows. Several South Texas specialties reach their northern limits here, with Green Kingfisher, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Long-billed Thrasher, and Olive Sparrow among the possibilities. Finally we will spend one evening at a nearby bat cave witnessing the dusk flight of millions of Mexican Free-tailed Bats---truly one of the great natural history spectacles anywhere!

Then it is on to West Texas and Big Bend National Park. The avifauna of Big Bend is typical of that of the southwestern United States, with some Mexican species present for added interest. The Colima Warbler is not known to nest anywhere else in the United States and the handsome Lucifer Hummingbird only in an inaccessible portion of southwestern New Mexico. Zone-tailed Hawk, Montezuma Quail, Cave Swallow, Crissal Thrasher, Gray Vireo, Varied Bunting, and Black-chinned Sparrow are among the species that are very local and frequently hard to find in much of the Southwest. Big Bend, the Davis Mountains, and El Paso are excellent places to find these difficult species. Habitats range from floodplain thickets and sparse desert to cool mountain woodland. Each harbors different birds. In fact, more species have been recorded from Big Bend than any other national park. This is rugged country. Temperatures can be hot, and much of our birding is done on foot. The rewards can be great, however, both scenically and biologically.

After three and a half days in Big Bend National Park we will travel north to the Davis Mountains, where grassy plains and rounded peaks provide a gentle contrast to the stark grandeur of Big Bend. Montezuma Quail populations fluctuate cyclically, rising in wet periods and falling in dry ones, but the Davis Mountains are probably the best place in the country to find this boldly patterned but very cryptic species. The birdlife of the Davis Mountains has more affinities with that of the Rockies than it does with that of the Chisos Mountains of Big Bend. Species to expect include Cassin's Kingbird, Western Wood-Pewee, Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Bluebird, Violet-green Swallow, and Western Tanager. Common Black-Hawks have nested along Limpia Creek for a number of years and are a possibility, as is Phainopepla.

April 25, Day 1: Arrival in San Antonio. Participants should make arrangements to arrive in San Antonio today. At the airport, you may proceed to the baggage claim area to use the courtesy phone and request a

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transfer to the Holiday Inn Select, where a room will be reserved in your name. We will meet in the hotel lobby at 5:30 p.m. for a quick, get acquainted session followed by dinner.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Select, San Antonio

April 26, Day 2: Concan & Frio Bat Cave. A short two hour drive will take us from the relative flatness of San Antonio into the heart of the Texas Hill Country. Along the way we may be delayed by a Crested Caracara, a flock of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks or fabulous Scissor-tailed Flycatchers. As we near the tiny town of Concan, the diversity of birdlife will explode. Birds abound here with a very interesting mix of eastern, western, and South Texas species all swirled together in one locale. In fact, the grounds of our lodge are one of the birdiest areas around. Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Black & Eastern phoebes, White-eyed Vireo, Black-crested Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Bewick's and Carolina wrens, Bushtit, Long-billed Thrasher, Yellow-throated Warbler, Field Sparrow, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Olive Sparrow, Painted Bunting, Hooded Oriole, and Lesser Goldfinch are all likely. Even the highly sought Black-capped Vireo nests on the grounds here from time to time. Though decidedly uncommon, we have a chance for the tiny Green Kingfisher here as well. There should be plenty of birds to keep us busy throughout the day. After an early dinner, we will head out to the nearby Frio Bat Cave where over ten million Mexican Free-tailed Bats emerge around dusk. Often raptors are present to cache in on the plentiful buffet. Other species found around the cave include Vermilion Flycatcher, Cave Swallow (over a hundred pairs nest here), Canyon and Rock wrens, Black-throated Sparrow, and if we are lucky, Common Poorwill. The bat exodus is without a doubt one of the great natural history spectacles around!

NIGHT: Neal's Lodge, Concan

April 27, Day 3: Lost Maples, Utopia, & Concan. Our full day in the Hill Country will take us northward to the vicinity of Lost Maples State Natural Area. Here we will seek out the two prized Hill Country specialties, the Black-capped Vireo and the Golden-cheeked Warbler. Neither is easy to find. The vireo can be particularly difficult, but this is the heart of their ranges and we will devote considerable time and effort in trying to locate them. Along the way, we should also encounter a good variety of other species including Western Scrub-Jay, Yellow-throated Vireo, Eastern Bluebird, Summer Tanager, and possibly Scott's Oriole. This should be an excellent and exciting day of birding with potentially great rewards!

After dinner, there will be an option to go on an owling excursion with Eastern Screech-Owl (McCall's race) and Chuck-will's-widow as prime targets.

NIGHT: Neal's Lodge, Concan

April 28, Day 4: Concan to Big Bend National Park. Today will be largely devoted to travel as we head westward toward Big Bend National park. We will make occasional stops for roadside birding, but we have much ground to cover. Just watching the countryside change from the lush Hill Country to the stark but scenic Chihuahua desert will be interesting enough. Depending upon our arrival time in the park, we may do some late afternoon birding or perhaps evening owling.

NIGHT: Chisos Mountains Lodge, Big Bend

April 29, Day 5: The Window Trail & Chisos Basin. Today we will explore the Basin. Canyon Towhees and Cactus Wrens are common right around the lodge. Black-chinned Sparrows frequent the nearby chaparral. Hepatic Tanagers are sometimes found in the oak-juniper habitat right along the roadside. The bulk of our morning will be spent walking the trail down to The Window (a scenic pour-off of Oak Creek). A four and a half mile round trip hike will take us through a variety of habitats where the birding is superb. Our main targets will be Lucifer Hummingbird, the localized Gray Vireo, and the plum-colored Varied Bunting, all of which reside in this canyon. Other possibilities include White-winged Dove; Acorn and Ladder-backed woodpeckers;

Black-crested Titmouse; Verdin; Bewick's, Rock and Canyon wrens; Blue Grosbeak; and Scott's Oriole. Afternoon plans will be flexible depending on what species we are still missing.

An evening owling excursion will be offered to search for the tiny Elf Owl and Western Screech-Owl. A variety of mammals and reptiles are also possible as dusk descends on the desert.

NIGHT: Chisos Mountains Lodge, Big Bend

April 30, Day 6: Boot Springs. This will be our most exciting day—an optional all-day hike into the higher Chisos Mountains to Boot Canyon, the only U.S. home of the Colima Warbler. This is a long hike (nine and a half miles, round trip) with some steep areas, but the trail is excellent and well-maintained, and we keep to a pace to fit our members. The crisp mountain air and the breathtaking vistas alone are worth the effort. Species of the open hillside woodlands include Mexican Jay, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Bushtit, Black-crested Titmouse, Bewick's Wren, Hepatic Tanager (uncommon), and Spotted Towhee. The cool woodlands of Boot Canyon attract the Blue-throated Hummingbird, Cordilleran Flycatcher (scarce), Hutton's Vireo, and the highly-sought Colima Warbler. Often seen overhead are Band-tailed Pigeon, White-throated Swift, and Violet-green Swallow. Some years a pair of Zone-tailed Hawks nests near the pass, and Peregrines are occasionally seen around cliffs. We will offer alternative birding suggestions for those who wish to bird the Chisos in a less vigorous manner.

NIGHT: Chisos Mountains Lodge, Big Bend

May 1, Day 7: Rio Grande Village & Cottonwood Campground. Today we will explore the riparian habitats along the Rio Grande. At Rio Grande Village, planted cottonwood groves and thickets of native mesquite and willows combine for excellent bird habitat. Birds are abundant here, including a cornucopia of colorful species such as Vermilion Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Pyrrhuloxia, Blue Grosbeak, Painted Bunting, and Orchard Oriole. Other possibilities include Greater Roadrunner, Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed woodpeckers, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Bell's Vireo, and Verdin. For the past decade or so a pair of Common Black-Hawks has nested at this location, so we will keep a keen eye out for them as well. As this is the heart of spring migration, a wide variety of western migrant landbirds will be possible as well.

In the afternoon we will head to a similar habitat in the southwestern corner of the park called Cottonwood Campground. For the most part species are similar here to Rio Grande Village, but there is a greater likelihood of Gray Hawk (very uncommon to rare), Common Ground-Dove, Tropical Kingbird (a pair of these rarities has nested here for several years), and Hooded Oriole. We will also check out the awesome scenery of Santa Elena Canyon before returning back to the Basin.

NIGHT: Chisos Mountains Lodge, Big Bend

May 2, Day 8: Morning in Big Bend; Afternoon Drive to the Davis Mountains. Our plans this morning will be somewhat flexible depending on what species we are missing. A visit to Blue Creek may be in order (providing more chances for Lucifer Hummingbird or Gray Vireo) or we may revisit one of the areas previously covered. We will likely have an early lunch before heading north toward the Davis Mountains.

After the awesome starkness of the desert, the drive northward is relieved by the high grassland plateau entered near Marathon. Greater rainfall from this point to the Davis Mountains has formed grassy plains, which give way to woodland on the rounded peaks. We will spend the late afternoon and evening searching for the elusive Montezuma Quail, which may be more numerous here than anywhere else in the country.

NIGHT: Hotel Limpia, Fort Davis

May 3, Day 9: Davis Mountains. Today we bird the higher Davis Mountains. Beginning near the State Park, we will work our way westward into the heart of the range. The slopes are covered with an open forest of oak, pinyon, and junipers of several species. Here one may find Band-tailed Pigeon, Western Wood-Pewee, Cassin's

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Kingbird, Western Scrub-Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Scott's Oriole. At the very top of the road, groves of ponderosa pine straggle down from the inaccessible peaks. Gray Flycatcher, Western Bluebird, Violet-green Swallow, Mountain Chickadee, Grace's Warbler, and Hepatic Tanager are among the many possibilities. We will also visit a site where the Common Black-Hawk has nested in the past, hoping to spot one of these rare birds.

After lunch in Van Horn, we will check a number of irrigation impoundments on our way to El Paso. A wide variety of grebes (including Clark's and Western), herons, waterfowl and shorebird possibilities exist at this season. In addition, although the heat of the afternoon is not optimal time, we will have chances for Gambel's Quail, and the always elusive Crissal Thrasher. We will arrive in El Paso in the late afternoon where the tour will conclude with a final checklist session and dinner.

NIGHT: Guesthouse Inn & Suites, El Paso

May 4, Day 10: Departure for Home. Participants may make arrangements to depart El Paso at any time today.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: Barry Zimmer and Bob Sundstrom

Barry Zimmer has been birding since the age of eight. His main areas of expertise lie in North and Central America, but his travels have taken him throughout much of the world, including such exotic locales as Japan, Russia, Madagascar, Africa, and New Zealand. Barry is a longtime member of the New Mexico Bird Records Committee, and served on the Texas Bird Records Committee for 12 years. He has co-authored three books: *Birds of the Trans-Pecos*, *A Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley*, and *Birds and Birdfinding in the El Paso Area*. Barry has a keen interest in nature photography, having captured over 1,000 species of birds on film. His other interests include sports (a diehard Red Sox fan), cooking, and movies. He received his degree in psychology at the University of Texas in El Paso. Barry resides in El Paso with his wife, Yvonne, and their daughter, Alexandra.

Bob Sundstrom has led VENT tours since 1989 to destinations including Hawaii, Mexico, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, Iceland, Papua New Guinea, the Southwest Pacific islands, Antarctica, the Bering Sea, and many destinations throughout North America. Bob takes a strong interest in both the natural and cultural settings of his tours. He earned his doctorate at the University of Washington. Bob and his wife Sally live in the rural Scatter Creek Valley south of Olympia, Washington. Bob lived in Seattle for more than two decades, continues to teach birding workshops, and leads a program of short, regional tours that begin in the Seattle area. During two seasons of work in the Pribilof Islands, he helped chronicle the occurrence of North American bird rarities. A skilled birder with a special interest in bird song, Bob has served on the boards of several nature and conservation organizations, as well as the Washington State Bird Records Committee. He is a co-author of *The National Audubon Society Field Guide to the Pacific Northwest*. When not on tour, Bob keeps busy as the lead writer for the daily public radio program *BirdNote*, which is archived at www.birdnote.org.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$2,695** per person in double occupancy from San Antonio, Texas (tour ends in El Paso, Texas). This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 9, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to San Antonio and return from El Paso, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$525**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$300** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$150** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$50** per person. If cancellation is made between 120 and 90 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 90 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. *We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.*

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$150*
Between 120 and 90 days before departure	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
Fewer than 90 days before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$50 per person.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends Travel Insured International as our preferred insurance provider.** Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. **Contact Travel Insured International prior to registration for details.** Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *Please read your itinerary carefully to see whether or not your tour/cruise requires MANDATORY Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the trip.* This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by Travel Insured International. If you do not choose to purchase the insurance through Travel Insured International, you will need to do so through another insurance provider. A good website for information and acquisition of emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

BAGGAGE: To prevent crowding in the vehicles, we ask participants to limit their luggage to one medium sized bag per person, plus one carry-on bag. As a precaution, if you are flying to meet the tour and checking luggage, we urge you to pack a change of clothes, your binoculars, medication, toiletries, and other essentials in your airline carry-on bag.

CLIMATE AND CLOTHING: Lows will be in the upper 50s to upper 60s in Big Bend and highs from the upper 80s to upper 90s (it is even possible to surpass 100 by early May, though not likely). You'll mostly experience temperatures ranging from 85 to 95 degrees in the day, possibly higher at Rio Grande Village. Although we will certainly have hot days in Big Bend, we may still get some cool evenings and some showers; humidity is generally on the low side. Temperatures should be slightly cooler, but humidity higher in the Hill Country. You should bring light raingear and a sweater or light jacket. A hat is strongly recommended for sun protection. Dress will be informal throughout: comfortable field clothes—jeans, shorts, tee shirts, etc. **Comfortable walking shoes (i.e. tennis shoes) and a good pair of hiking boots are essential.**

HEALTH: If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

INSECT PROTECTION: Chiggers can be a problem in much of Texas and are certainly a possibility in the hill country. They are not generally found in Big Bend country. Tucking your pant legs into your socks and spraying around the ankles can help prevent chigger bites. We will likely encounter a few mosquitoes. We recommend that you bring along some insect repellent.

LAUNDRY STOPS: Self service laundry machines are available at Neal's Lodge and in Big Bend.

MISCELLANEOUS: Restaurants able to accommodate vegetarian, vegan, diabetic, low-cholesterol or other special dietary requests are rare in West Texas, away from El Paso. Your leaders may be unable to fulfill these requests at many locations. Please feel free to bring food to supplement what is available on the tour. **A canteen (up to 2 liters of water may be needed for the Boot Springs hike) and a small day pack (or "fanny-pack") are essential for the all-day hike to Boot Springs. You will be carrying your own lunch on this hike.**

We will have two long hikes on this tour. The hike to the Window is a little over four miles roundtrip while the hike to Boot Springs is about nine and half miles round trip. Other birding on this tour is

generally done along roadsides and is not nearly so strenuous. Most mornings we will have breakfast at around 6:00 a.m. Some mornings may be slightly early or slightly later.

Your tour leader will have a spotting scope. If you want to bring your own, please feel free to do so. If you are bringing a camera, we suggest that you try to bring sufficient film or digital storage media, as it will not always be readily available during the tour. Sunscreen is essential, as is an alarm clock (no wake up calls at Big Bend or Davis Mountains). Don't forget a flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries and lip balm.

SUGGESTED READING: Our website, www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com which specializes in ornithology books. Also go to www.bigbendbookstore.org, the online bookstore for The Big Bend Natural History Association.

Indispensable in the field will be your favorite North American field guides, plus guides to other topics that particularly interest you (mammals, reptiles and amphibians, trees, cacti, geology, etc.). A guide to the birds of Mexico will be carried by your leader in the unlikely, but always possible, event that a stray Mexican species of bird is encountered. **To use during the tour, we recommend a good U.S. field guide, such as the *National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of North America*.**

Birds:

- Dunn, Jon and Alderfer, Jonathan. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Fifth Edition. National Geographic. Washington D.C.
- Lockwood, Mark W. and Brad McKinney, James Paton, and Barry Zimmer. *A Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley*. Lane/ABA Birdfinding Guide. American Birding Association, 1999.
- Lockwood, Mark. *Birds of the Texas Hill Country*. University of Texas Press. Austin. 2001
- Peterson, Jim and Barry Zimmer. *Birds of the Trans-Pecos*. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1998.
- Peterson, Roger Tory and James Fisher. *Wild America*. Boston: Riverside Press, 1975. See chapters 16 and 17 for the adventures of two great naturalists as they bird their way through Texas.
- Wauer, Roland H. *Birds of Big Bend National Park and Vicinity*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973. An invaluable aid to understanding the ecology, distribution and abundance of the bird life of the area. The bibliography of this book provides a list of journal articles pertinent to this area for those desiring further study. Out of print, but still available.
- Wauer, Roland H. and Carl Fleming. *A Naturalist's Big Bend*. College Station. Texas A&M Press, 2002.

Wildflowers & Plants:

- Kirkpatrick, Zoe Merriman. *Wildflowers of the Western Plains, A Field Guide*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Irwin, Howard S. and Mary Motz Wills. *Roadside Flowers of Texas*. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1985. Good selection of typical wildflowers, with attractive line drawings.
- Loughmiller, Campbell and Lynn. *Texas Wildflowers*. Austin: The University of Texas Press. 1986.
- Warnock, Barton H. *Wildflowers of the Big Bend Country, Texas*. Alpine, Texas: Sul Ross State University, 1970. Guide to plant ecology and identification within this region. Out of print, may be difficult to find.
- West, Steve. *Northern Chihuahuan Desert Wildflowers*. Falcon Guide. Helena, Montana. 2000.

Miscellaneous:

- Bowers, Nora & Rick and Kaufman, Kenn. *Mammals of North America*. Houghton Mifflin: Hillstar Editions. 2004.
- Brock, Jim and Kaufman, Kenn. *Butterflies of North America*. Houghton-Mifflin. Hillstar editions. 2003.
- Garrett, Judith & Barker, David. *A Field Guide to Reptiles & Amphibians of Texas*. Texas Monthly Press. 1987.
- Tennant, Alan. *A Field Guide to Texas Snakes*. Texas Monthly Press 1985.

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Tyler, Ronnie C. *The Big Bend: A History of the Last Texas Frontier*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984. An excellent historical account of the region, available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Try www.abebooks.com.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motor-coach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on August 18, 2010, and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.