

**VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS
PRESENTS:
AUSTIN, TEXAS
BIRDING & NATURE FESTIVAL
APRIL 9 – 13, 2008**

**AUSTIN CITY HIGHLIGHTS PRE-TRIP
APRIL 8-9, 2008**

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For those endowed with a love of nature, the springtime is a special time when the world wakes from its winter slumber in a flamboyant display of renewal. With fresh leaves on the trees, birds on the wing, and roadside wildflowers emerging in a riot of colors, the cycle of life begins anew.

To celebrate the spring season, VENT is planning a birding and nature festival. The site we have chosen for this event is Austin, Texas, one of the nation's most vibrant and exciting cities and the headquarters of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. We have long wanted to share our home territory with birders and other nature enthusiasts. We think there is simply no better time for coming to central Texas than April. Our festival will be based at the Hyatt Regency hotel on beautiful Lady Bird Lake in the heart of Austin. From the hotel you'll be across the lake from the downtown area, and the city's famous lakeside hike and bike trail runs right by the hotel.

We will have three exciting days to explore three distinct regions of central Texas. Our field trips, while emphasizing birds, are also designed as natural history outings encompassing the full range of creatures and plants found in this biologically rich area. Shorebirds and wading birds are easy to find around area lakes and ponds, while a pantheon of migrant hawks, flycatchers, swallows, vireos, and warblers is surging northward. One of our field trips is dedicated especially to finding our two most sought-after birds of the region, the Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo. Butterflies and dragonflies will have emerged en masse and we should encounter an impressive assortment of each. We will see a great variety of wildflowers at the peak of the season, including our state flower, the bluebonnet, the lovely winecup, a deep burgundy-colored mallow, and Indian blanket, a robust multi-hued member of the genus gaillardia. On our final evening together we will board a boat on Lady Bird Lake to watch the amazing spectacle of over one million Mexican free-tailed bats emerge from their improbable roost under the Congress Avenue Bridge.

The Austin, Texas Birding and Nature Festival is also a social event in which participants are treated to social hours, dinners, and evening presentations. There will be numerous opportunities to interact with VENT tour leaders and other festival participants.

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In anticipation of this event, we have assembled an excellent team of leaders, featuring Victor Emanuel, Kenn Kaufman, David Wolf, Kevin Zimmer, Barry Lyon, Brennan Mulrooney, and Michael O'Brien. We are especially excited to announce that Kenn Kaufman will be part of our team as a leader and evening speaker. Long regarded as one of North America's top birders, Kenn has authored or co-authored many books on birding and natural history, and regularly delivers keynote speeches at birding events across the country. His Friday night talk, "Flights Against the Sunset," provides insight into his newest book. Acclaimed wildlife photographer, Greg Lasley, will also join us for an evening. In his presentation, "The Wildlife of Central Texas," Greg will showcase the types of photographs that have earned him a reputation as one of the country's top wildlife photographers.

This festival is guaranteed to be an exciting and successful event. Join us in Austin this April and make new friends, renew old acquaintances, and help us celebrate springtime in central Texas!

Special Notes: As Austin is a dynamic city with a variety of interesting places to visit, we are offering a one-day pre-trip for those participants who want to explore the city's cultural and historical sites. Our itinerary includes visits to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, the LBJ Library, the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, and the state capital.

For those who want to spend more time birding in Texas, this celebration can be combined with our Spring in South Texas tour, March 29-April 9, with Barry Zimmer and Kevin Zimmer and our High Island tour, April 13-17, which will be co-led by Brennan Mulrooney and David Wolf.

Central Texas offers excellent springtime birding and wildflower viewing in a relatively small area. In order to take advantage of the multitude of habitats and birds and other creatures found in the area, we have identified three distinct regions, or zones, to which we will operate daily field trips: Hornsby Bend and Bastrop State Park east of Austin; Fort Hood in the eastern Texas Hill Country north of the city; and Mitchell Lake and Warbler Woods to the south. Over the course of the festival, every participant will have a chance to experience each of these great areas and spend time in the field with all of the tour leaders.

On the first day of the festival, an evening social hour (with cash bar) will begin at 6:00 p.m. and will continue to 7:00 p.m., followed by dinner and a welcome address by Victor Emanuel. On succeeding nights, the evening social hour will begin at 5:30 p.m. and will continue to 6:30 p.m., followed by a daily listing of birds and other wildlife, and the evening's presentation. For the evening programs, participants should anticipate interesting and informative talks from Greg Lasley and Kenn Kaufman. Presentations will be limited to approximately 45 minutes. The event will culminate on April 12 with an evening cruise, with catered dinner, on Lady Bird Lake to view the bats as they emerge from under the Congress Avenue Bridge.

AUSTIN CITY HIGHLIGHTS PRE-TRIP

APRIL 8-9, 2008

To residents of the city and visitors from around the world, Austin offers something for everyone. Home of the Texas state capital, the main branch of the University of Texas, and a thriving live music scene, Austin ranks among the country's most exciting and dynamic major cities. Our Birding and Nature Festival will capitalize on the natural riches found around the city, but additional time is required to appreciate the many things to do here. You may choose to come early and explore Austin on your own, or you may participate in a special one day pre-trip designed to spend time at some of the better known landmarks in the city, including the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, the LBJ Library, the state capital, and the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum.

April 8, Day 1: Arrival in Austin, Texas. Pre-trip participants should plan to arrive in Austin by late afternoon. The Hyatt Regency hotel is located approximately 15 minutes from the airport but does not provide transportation services. Upon arrival, please proceed outside the baggage claim area, where you will readily find taxis for hire. Cab fares vary but typically range from \$20-\$25. Airport Super Shuttle service to the hotel is also available and costs approximately \$12.00. Guests can pick up the shuttle at the airport without reservations (note that a transfer without stops to the hotel cannot be guaranteed). Dinner will be on your own. You may choose to eat at the hotel or walk to any number of nearby restaurants.

NIGHT: Hyatt Regency Hotel, Austin

April 9, Day 2; Austin City Highlights Tour. We will depart the hotel by 8:00 a.m. and return by 5:30 pm. The following schedule reflects the approximate plans for the day, followed by descriptions of the important sites visited.

8:30 a.m. – Depart hotel
9:00-11:00 a.m. – Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. – LBJ Library
1:00-2:00p.m. – Lunch
2:15-4:00-Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum
4:15-5:00-Texas State Capital Tour

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center – Nationally recognized as a premier native plant conservation organization, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is named for the former First Lady who was an ardent supporter of “protecting North America’s native plants and natural landscapes.” As the website states, “First as the National Wildflower Research Center and later as the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, this special place exists to introduce people to the beauty and diversity of wildflowers and other native plants. Every day, the Wildflower Center brings life to Mrs. Johnson's vision in its public gardens, its woodlands and sweeping meadows as well as in internationally influential research. In 2006, the Center became an Organized Research Unit of the University of Texas at Austin.”

We'll have two hours to explore the well kept gardens and flower beds. Native plants are the theme here and April is the peak time to see many species of wildflowers in bloom. A system of paths will take us through the center and signed interpretation allows for easy identification of most everything we see. A well-stocked gift

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shop is also worth a visit. Please visit the official website, <http://www.wildflower.org>, to learn more about the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) Library and Museum – The LBJ Library and Museum officially commemorates the life and political career of Lyndon Baines Johnson, our 36th president. We will have approximately an hour and a half to tour the museum, viewing its interpretive displays and photographs.

“Six decades of American history frame the life of Lyndon Johnson: boyhood in Central Texas, teacher, courtship of a young lady from East Texas, Congressman, Senator, Vice President, and President. Exhibits feature the turbulent Sixties: War on Poverty, Civil Rights, Vietnam, and the Great Society...It is one of eleven presidential libraries administered by the National Archives and Records Administration. The library houses forty million pages of historical documents which include the papers from the entire public career of Lyndon Baines Johnson and also from those of close associates.”

More information about the LBJ Library and Museum may be found at <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/>.

Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum – The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum brings to life the “Story of Texas.” With three floors of modern, interactive exhibits, special programs, and a short visit to the Texas Spirit Theatre, you’ll learn about the Lone Star State in a fun and educational environment. Visit the official web site, <http://www.thestoryoftexas.com/>, to learn more.

Texas State Capital – The state capital of Texas stands as a remarkable architectural achievement and is widely considered one of the most beautiful of our nation’s capital buildings. Built of red granite, the building is one of the tallest in the city and faces south, offering commanding views of downtown Austin and the Colorado River beyond. The University of Texas sits only a few blocks to the north. We’ll finish the day with an hour-long tour of the building, visiting the capital rotunda and both houses of congress. In the late 1990s, \$106 million was spent restoring the capital, inside and out, along with its park-like grounds, to its former glory.

AUSTIN, TEXAS BIRDING & NATURE FESTIVAL APRIL 9 – 13, 2008

April 9, Day 1: Arrival in Austin, Texas. Festival participants should plan to arrive in Austin by late afternoon. The Hyatt Regency hotel is located approximately 15 minutes from the airport but does not provide transportation services. Upon arrival, please proceed outside the baggage claim area, where you will readily find taxis for hire. Cab fares vary but typically range from \$20-\$25. Airport Super Shuttle service to the hotel is also available and costs approximately \$12.00. Guests can pick up the shuttle at the airport without reservations (note that a transfer without stops to the hotel cannot be guaranteed). An evening social hour with cash bar will begin at 6:00 p.m. Dinner will be served at 7:00 p.m., followed by a welcome address by Victor Emanuel.

NIGHT: Hyatt Regency, Austin

April 10-12, Days 2-4: Field Trips and Evening Presentations. Austin was chosen as the site to host the Birding and Nature Festival as it offers great weather and great birding at one of the most dynamic times of the year. The city is centrally located, relative to our field trip destinations.

Many of central Texas' resident birds are readily found on territory, and are joined by a variety of northbound migrants. Austin lies within the Central Flyway, which means that each spring millions of raptors, shorebirds, and songbirds fly through the region en route to their more northerly breeding sites. In addition to locating such resident birds as Red-bellied and Golden-fronted woodpeckers, and Black-crested Titmouse, we should enjoy a nice mix of raptors, with Swainson's and Broad-winged Hawks and Mississippi Kites possible and up to 20 species of shorebirds probable, with good chances for American Golden-Plover; Upland, Stilt, Baird's and Pectoral sandpipers; Wilson's Phalarope and up to a dozen species of warblers.

April also heralds the arrival of many of our summertime resident birds, freshly back from their wintering grounds in the Neotropics. Our daily field trips are expected to produce the season's first Ruby-throated Hummingbirds; Chimney Swifts; Western and Eastern kingbirds; and White-eyed Vireos. We'll also hope to encounter some of our country's most elegant birds, including Crested Caracara, Pileated Woodpecker, and Scissor-tailed and Vermilion flycatchers, whose appearances are always causes for excitement.

Beyond birds, Texas may well be the greatest state in the nation for viewing wildflowers. If winter rains have been ample, we stand the chance of witnessing spectacular wildflower blooms, with roadsides and fields covered with bluebonnets, pink primrose, horsemint, Indian blanket, Mexican hat, prairie verbena, winecup, and many others. Butterflies are often present in big numbers and big diversity. We stand a good chance of identifying at least thirty species, with a suite of swallowtails, sulphurs, oranges, crescents, hairstreaks, anglewings, and skippers almost assured.

All field trips will return by their scheduled times, affording participants at least an hour of personal time before the evening activities commence.

Field Trip Note: Field trip participants will visit a different zone each day. Each field trip will carry a maximum capacity of 16 participants and two leaders divided among two 15-passenger touring vans. All field trip departures are spaced over 15-minute intervals. Most participants should not expect to visit all the zones in numerical order.

NIGHTS: Hyatt Regency, Austin

**Zone 1: Fort Hood
(Northeastern Hill Country north of Austin)**

Departs 6:30 a.m.; returns by 4:30 p.m.

On this field trip participants will visit an outstanding natural area on an active military base. Located halfway between Austin and Waco, Fort Hood was built in 1942 and named for Confederate General John Bell Hood. It is one of the largest military installations in the country and is home to the 1st Cavalry Division, 4th Infantry Division, and 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment among others. The portion of the base we'll visit holds some of the largest breeding populations of Golden-cheeked Warblers and Black-capped Vireos anywhere. Texas Nature Conservancy works with the military to census and conduct research on the warbler and vireo. A representative from Texas Nature Conservancy will accompany our groups onto the reservation.

We'll leave the hotel early this morning to make the hour and thirty minute drive north from Austin. We'll want to arrive at Fort Hood while it's still early to take advantage of the preponderance of birdsong we're likely to hear. The primary reason for our visit is seeing the Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo. These two species are among the most localized of North America's breeding birds. The warbler nests only in the Texas Hill Country, and the vireo's range is nearly as restricted, with only small populations occurring in north Texas and Oklahoma. Both species migrate early in the season and will be on territory by the time our festival begins. The Nature Conservancy of Texas has been working with and managing the habitat of these two special birds for approximately 15 years. Among its activities include controlled burns to maintain ample amounts of suitable habitat, cowbird control, and censuses.

Besides showing us the birds, the TNC guide will provide interpretation of both species that includes discussion of habitat requirements, threats to survival, and the role TNC plays in warbler and vireo research.

Our time at Fort Hood will also provide participants a look at a sizeable corner of the famed Texas Hill Country. This eco-region, better known to some as the Edward's Plateau, is unique to central Texas. Deeply eroded limestone hills interlaced with tree-lined river corridors create a multitude of microhabitats within the overall ecosystem, in addition to some truly outstanding scenery. While the warbler and vireo are our primary quarry, we'll also watch for Western Scrub-Jay, White-eyed Vireo, Canyon Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Canyon Towhee and Lark Sparrow among many others.

**Zone 2: Mitchell Lake and Warbler Woods
(Lakes, brush country, and migrant bird trap south of Austin)**

Departs 6:45 a.m.; returns by 4:30 p.m.

Lying an hour and a half south of Austin, just south of downtown San Antonio, Mitchell Lake is a wonderful 1200-acre natural area consisting of lakes and ponds of varying sizes, flooded wetlands, and extensive upland habitat. This site is one of the very best in all of central Texas for viewing a fabulous assortment of pelicans, cormorants, waders, shorebirds, raptors, and brush country landbirds. Mitchell Lake is the home of the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, which partners with the San Antonio Water System to manage the property for all types of nature enthusiasts. The facility plays an important role in connecting the local community to the natural world and annually provides science education for thousands of local K-12 schoolchildren.

We'll arrive shortly after the gates open and spend a few minutes exploring the attractive gardens around the Audubon Center. Xeriscaped with native plants, the colorful gardens are a haven for butterflies, and we'll likely

encounter such common species as dun and clouded skippers, bordered patch, black swallowtail, and sleepy orange.

Moving beyond the center, we'll soon find ourselves in mixed woodland where botanical representatives of the Hill Country eco-region come into contact with those of the South Texas brush country. Mesquite and juniper grow side-by-side in the drier uplands and support an impressive mix of birds, many of which we are not likely to encounter elsewhere. Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Long-billed Thrasher, and Verdin are not uncommon and we'll listen for the sweet song of Painted Buntings, the first of which may be starting to appear on territory. Continuing further into the property, we'll concentrate on shorebirds, which often populate the various ponds and impoundments of Mitchell Lake by the thousands. Spring is the best time to see shorebirds as they are all adorned in bright breeding plumage. Handsome American Avocets and Wilson's Phalaropes, among our most beautiful of shorebirds, will be high on our list, but our exploration of the property should reveal at least a dozen other species.

Mitchell Lake also provides plenty of habitat for other birds associated with lakes and wetlands. American White Pelicans form large graceful flocks as they soar over the refuge and Neotropical Cormorants can be picked out from the more common Double-crested. As many as nine species of herons and egrets are possible and even White-faced Ibis turns up here regularly.

Though most of the waterfowl have departed, an assortment of lingering duck species can be expected. Most likely are Blue-winged and Green-winged teal; Northern Shoveler; Northern Pintail; and Redhead.

Around mid-day we'll say goodbye to lovely Mitchell Lake and begin the return trip to Austin, setting our sights on Warbler Woods. Warbler Woods is a private property, owned by Susan and Don Schaezler, and managed as a bird and wildlife refuge and preserve. Covering 126 acres of varied habitat, Warbler Woods sits at a premium location where several major eco-regions converge. The result is that plant diversity is high, with over 200 species recorded on the property. Naturally, butterfly and bird diversity is also high, allowing for an exciting visit at any time of year.

Through their generosity, Susan and Don have opened their property to the birding community and birders are welcome almost any time. We have secured access for our groups and look forward to a couple of hours of birding at this site. Warbler Woods has proven exceptional as a migrant trap, and development of the surrounding countryside has only served to increase the value of the refuge as an important oasis of food and shelter for migrant songbirds.

The quality of birding at Warbler Woods can vary dramatically from one day to the next, as it can any place during the migration period, but we'll undoubtedly enjoy some special sightings. Among the MANY possibilities are Great-crested Flycatcher; Eastern Wood-Pewee; Black-and-white, Nashville, Yellow-throated, Yellow, and Wilson's warblers; and Indigo and Painted buntings. We'll take time to work the trails nearest the main house and also set up a vigil for monitoring activity around the feeders and water drips.

Zone 3: Bastrop State Park and Hornsby Bend
(Mixed woodlands and water impoundments east of Austin)

Departs 7:00 a.m.; returns by 3:30 p.m.

This field trip provides participants a superb mix of waterbirds and landbirds by visiting two dramatically different habitats just east of Austin.

Located 45 minutes outside of Austin, 6,000-acre Bastrop State Park sits as the western-most extension of the "piney woods." The typical habitat of east Texas, the woodland here is part of the so-called "Lost Woods," a name bestowed on the area for its distance from similar habitat farther east. The forest here is quite scenic and supports large stands of loblolly pine, interspersed with post oak and other hardwoods. Though Pileated

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Woodpeckers and Nothorn Parulas are common birds of the drier uplands, we'll want to focus on the western side of the park in the vicinity of Alum Creek, where diversity reaches its peak.

We'll depart the hotel and head straight for the park, with our first stop being the road that parallels Alum Creek. This section of Bastrop supports the largest bottomland forest in the area. Pecan, pine, hackberry, and oaks form the climax tree community, while bald cypress is found immediately along the creek. Underneath the canopy lives a world of smaller trees, woody plants, shrubs, vines, grasses, and wildflowers.

We'll need at least two hours to adequately cover a fairly small area. We'll be on foot most of the time which is far more conducive to better birding and wildlife viewing. Among many birds to look for, seeing warblers is always high on everybody's list and this area should give us chances to find several species that do not typically range much further west. Northern Parula and Pine Warbler are abundant and we should hear their trilled songs cascading down from the treetops. Black-and-white Warbler and the fabulous Hooded Warbler breed in the park in smaller numbers and we hope to find them as well. Even some of the more difficult to find warblers breed here in some years, including Louisiana Waterthrush, and the ultra-furtive Swainson's Warbler.

Our exploration of the park is likely to garner a whole range of species new for the trip. Carolina Chickadees and Carolina Wrens are common forest residents, while Cooper's, Red-tailed, and Red-tailed Hawks engage in aerial courtship displays. Barred Owls are often heard by day broadcasting their powerful calls and the startling calls of Pileated Woodpeckers resonate through the forest. Yellow-throated and Red-eyed Vireos; Nashville and Yellow-rumped warblers; Downy and Red-bellied woodpeckers; and Summer Tanagers round out a suite of species that live in or pass through Bastrop each spring.

From Bastrop, we'll proceed to Hornsby Bend for several hours of what should be very excellent birding. To Austin area birders and butterfly and dragonfly enthusiasts, Hornsby Bend provides an extraordinary destination on the edge of a major metropolitan area. Situated only 15 minutes from downtown Austin, Hornsby is the THE favored destination for many. Getting here is simple and every visit provides rewarding experiences in nature.

Hornsby Bend serves many purposes, but first and foremost it is the wastewater treatment facility for the city of Austin. Unlike the majority of wastewater treatment facilities around the country, Hornsby is also a research site for urban ecology, biosolids, ecological restoration, and a demonstration site for green building. Its importance to naturalists and the overall community cannot be overestimated. School children of all ages are regularly brought to Hornsby for science education and the facility's Center for Environmental Research is operated partly for University of Texas interns.

The draw of Hornsby Bend lies in the diversity of habitats found here. Water-filled impoundments and open-mudflats are the feature attraction, but a hackberry forest, pecan grove, and open grassy pastures provide plenty of options. We'll spend most of our time viewing the birds on the ponds and mudflats. Cinnamon, Green-winged, and Blue-winged teal are all likely, as are an exciting blend of shorebirds. Pectoral, Baird's, Western, Least, and Semipalmated sandpipers should be present and we'll take time to scope the flats for Stilt and Solitary sandpipers. American Golden-Plover, Buff-breasted, and Upland Sandpipers are less likely but clearly possible.

If our visit coincides with a good day for migration, we'll check the pecan grove for roving flocks of warblers and vireos. The pasturelands are worth scoping for Black Vultures, Crested Caracaras, and Cave Swallows.

We'll return to the hotel by 3:30 this afternoon. There will be an optional opportunity to drop by the nearby VENT office and meet our staff. Those participating in this option will be brought back to the hotel by 4:30 p.m.

April 12: Event Finale on Lady Bird Lake. As this evening represents the festival's last, we have arranged a very special grand finale to your time in Austin—a riverboat cruise with catered dinner on Lady Bird Lake! We'll reconvene in the lobby at 6:00 p.m. and make the short walk to the adjacent waterfront.

Lady Bird Lake, formerly Town Lake, is probably the most readily identifiable landmark in the city. Long, narrow, and highly scenic, the lake contributes greatly to the appeal of Austin. It is the centerpiece of the city's famous hike and bike trail, and its location in the heart of Austin ensures a unique vibrancy to the downtown area. Though Lady Bird Lake is an established gathering place for Austinites, people are not the lake's most famous inhabitants. That distinction belongs to the 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats that live under the Congress Avenue Bridge. Each evening from March through October, an amazing ritual plays out as throngs of people gather on the bridge to witness the bats emerge en masse for their nightly feeding forays. As the bats stream out over the lake by the tens of thousands, they form tight formations resembling spiraling columns of smoke. The sight before you constitutes the greatest urban wildlife spectacle in the country. You simply must see it to believe it.

Our riverboat cruise is essentially a tour of the downtown lakefront that culminates with a bat viewing at the Congress Avenue Bridge. In addition to experiencing pleasant visual scenery, you will receive historical interpretation from our guide. Our arrival at the bridge is timed for the emergence of the bats, and our being right on the lake affords us close proximity to the action! With the lights of downtown as a backdrop and a delicious dinner on the lake, we think you'll agree that this is a wonderful way to end an exciting short trip.

April 13, Day 5: Departure for Home. Participants may depart Austin at any time today for flights home. The fare for a cab ride from the hotel to the airport runs approximately \$20.00-\$25.00. Super Shuttle service to the airport is available for approximately \$12.00. Guests must have concierge arrange pickup from hotel to airport. Super Shuttle phone - 512-258-3826

FESTIVAL SIZE: Both the Pre-Trip as well as the Festival will be limited to 48 participants, with no more than 9 participants per leader.

TOUR LEADERS: Victor Emanuel, Kenn Kaufman, David Wolf, Kevin Zimmer, Barry Lyon, Brennan Mulrooney, and Michael O'Brien. **If registration for the festival is lower than expected, not all of the tour leaders listed will be in attendance.** Victor Emanuel and Barry Lyon will be our primary leaders for the Pre-Trip, with additional leaders being added as necessary.

Victor Emanuel started birding in Texas 59 years ago at the age of eight. His travels have taken him to all the continents, with his areas of concentration being Texas, Arizona, Mexico, Panama, and Peru. He is the founder and compiler for 40 years of the record-breaking Freeport Christmas Bird Count, and served a term as president of the Texas Ornithological Society. Birds and natural history have been a major focus throughout his life. He derives great pleasure from seeing and hearing birds, and sharing with others these avian sights and sounds, both the common ones and the more unusual ones. He initiated the first birding camps for young people, and considers that one of his greatest achievements. Victor holds a B.A. in zoology and botany from the University of Texas and an M.A. in government from Harvard. In 1993, he was the recipient of the Roger Tory Peterson Excellence in Birding Award, given by the Houston Audubon Society in recognition of a lifetime of dedication to careful observation, education, and addition to the body of avian knowledge. In 2004, he received the Roger Tory Peterson Award from the American Birding Association, and the Arthur A. Allen Award from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Victor is a member of the board of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, and the American Bird Conservancy.

Kenn Kaufman is an author, artist, teacher, traveler, and naturalist who has focused on birds since the age of six. Two of his books, *A Field Guide to Advanced Birding* and *Lives of North American Birds*, are now considered standard references for birders. *Kingbird Highway* has been hailed as "one of the best books ever written about birding." In 2000, Houghton Mifflin Company launched Kenn's new field guide series, *Kaufman Focus Guides*, with a brand new guide to all North American birds. The series now includes volumes on North American butterflies (2003), mammals (2004), and insects (2007). He has led nature tours on six continents, and has been responsible for developing VENT's program of educational birding workshops.

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David Wolf is a senior member of the VENT staff and one of our most experienced tour leaders. After birding the U.S. and Mexico for over a decade, an interest in the wildlife of Africa led him to Kenya in 1975 where he spent over a year studying the birds and other wildlife of the African continent. Soon after his return to Texas he began leading Rockport Wildlife Weekends for VENT, at that time a new company, and he hasn't looked back since. In addition to Africa, David has extensive birding and tour-leading experience in North America and the Neotropics. He unites great birding skills with a wide-ranging interest in all aspects of natural history. David and his wife, Mimi, live in Nacogdoches, Texas, with assorted horses, cats, and dogs.

Kevin Zimmer has authored three books and numerous papers dealing with field identification and bird-finding in North America. His book, *Birding in the American West: A Handbook*, deals with finding and identifying birds in the western United States. Living in Alaska contributed to his affection for the Far North, where he has anchored VENT's tour program since 1986. For the past 17 years he has concentrated his attention on the Neotropics, particularly on Brazil, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. He has directed VENT's Brazil program since 1991. Kevin has a PhD in biology (research emphasis in Avian Evolutionary Ecology) from New Mexico State University, and is currently a research associate of Cornell's Library of Natural Sounds and the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. He has authored numerous technical papers on the taxonomy, distribution, and behavior of Neotropical birds, particularly those of the Amazon basin. He recently completed (with co-author Mort Isler) the major chapter on the *Thamnophilidae* (antbirds) for the prestigious *Handbook of Birds of the World* series. He and Andrew Whittaker are currently at work on a comprehensive field guide to the birds of Brazil, to be published by Princeton University Press. Kevin lives in Atascadero, California with his wife Susan. Their daughter Marina is in graduate school at Dominican University in San Rafael, California.

Barry Lyon's passion for the outdoors and birding has its roots in his childhood where he grew up in southern California. Through his early and teenage years his developing interests were nurtured by summertime camping trips to southern Arizona and road trips throughout the American West. He attended three VENT/ABA youth birding camps, which would ultimately pave the way for his future involvement with VENT. While in college, Barry studied history and political science, with an emphasis on environment and development politics. He holds a B.A. from the University of Arizona at Tucson from which he graduated in 1994. He joined the VENT team in 1995 and hasn't looked back. Barry has guided tours throughout the United States and Canada, as well as to Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and the Caribbean. In the summer of 2004 he relocated to Austin and joined the staff in an administrative position. Barry will continue to lead a limited number of tours, but his increased responsibilities include new tour development and assisting in marketing and advertising efforts.

Brennan Mulrooney was born and raised in San Diego, California. Growing up, his heart and mind were captured by the ocean. He split his summer days between helping out behind the scenes at southern California's leading aquarium and working on sport fishing vessels off the coast. As a wildlife and fisheries biology major at UC Davis, he developed his fascination with birds and love of birding while taking a required ornithology course. Since graduating from UC Davis, Brennan has traveled throughout the United States working on widespread ornithological field studies. His work has taken him from the mountains of northern California to the Salton Sea in southern California, and from Cape May, New Jersey to Key Largo, Florida. Currently Brennan and his wife Brynne live in Key Largo where they are conducting research on nesting Roseate Spoonbills in Florida Bay for Audubon's Tavernier Science Center. Participants often comment that Brennan's sharp eyes, sharper wit, and easygoing attitude make it a pleasure to bird with him.

Michael O'Brien is a freelance environmental consultant, artist, and author living in West Cape May, New Jersey. He is an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory for whom he conducts numerous workshops and a fall songbird migration count. He is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, and *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*. Michael has served on the Maryland/DC and New Jersey Records Committees, as an editorial consultant for *Birding*, and as a regional editor for *North American Birds*. His illustrations have been widely published including in *National Geographic's Field Guide to the Birds of North America*.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the Austin, Texas Birding and Nature Festival tour is **\$1,995** per person in double occupancy (standard room) or **\$2,150** (city and river view room) from Austin, Texas. **Please note: You will automatically be assigned a standard room. To request a city and river view room, please contact the VENT office.** The tour fee includes all meals from Dinner on Day 1 to Breakfast on Day 5, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, entrance fees, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Austin and return, transfers between the airport and hotel, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$525** (standard room) or **\$675** (city and river view room). 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.

The fee for the Austin City Highlands Pre-trip is **\$395** per person in double occupancy (standard room) or **\$450** (city or river view room) from Austin, Texas. **Please note: You will automatically be assigned a standard room. To request a city and river view room, please contact the VENT office.** This includes breakfast and lunch on April 20, 1007, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, entrance fees, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Austin and return, transfers between the airport and hotel, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$150** (standard room) or **\$175** (city and river view room). 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.

Please Note: A limited number of city and river view rooms are available and will be sold on a first come first served basis. Please be sure to contact the VENT office to request an upgrade to a city and river view room when you register for these departures.

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.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for the Austin City Highlights Pre-trip is **\$200** per person. The deposit for the Austin, Texas Birding and Nature Festival 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 90 days prior to the departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 90 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less **\$125** per person is refundable. If cancellation is made between 90 and 70 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 70 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself.***

If you cancel:

90 days or more before departure date
Between 90 and 70 days before departure

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$125.
No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded.

Fewer than 70 days before departure date

No refund available.

TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE: Application forms 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 to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. 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. Contact the VENT office prior to registration for details.**

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AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of VENT. Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to assist you in making air arrangements. Airline tickets carry restrictions due to the airfare used. You may find that your ticket cannot be reissued or exchanged for another air carrier or routing. Cancellation penalties and change fees may be assessed for any changes to the ticket. These charges are solely your responsibility. First and business class travel may be available on some flights. **All requests for travel assistance (air tickets, additional hotels, etc.) must be received no later than 60 days prior to departure date. Within 60 days, arrangements must be made on your own.** Please Note: VENT charges a \$35 per person booking fee for all domestic air tickets.

PROGRAM & CONDITIONS:

Hotel: All festival activities and lodging will be based out of a single location, the Hyatt Regency Hotel. It is a full service hotel about 15 minutes from the airport in downtown Austin on the shores of beautiful Lady Bird Lake. Among the many services offered by the hotel are:

- Business Center®
- High speed internet in guest rooms
- Fitness center
- Concierge
- Gift shop
- Laundry and dry cleaning
- Room service 18 hours per day
- Safe deposit boxes at front desk
- Soda, ice machines

Schedule: The Austin, Texas Birding and Nature Festival is structured to include day-long field trips to three distinct regions around Austin, followed by optional evening social hours, dinners, and keynote presentations. The following schedule is representative of the entire program. Please note that daily field trip departure and return times will vary according to destination, but will fall within a general time frame.

Breakfast: Breakfast will be in the field upon arrival at each destination.

Field Trip Departure Time: Field trips will depart the hotel at 15 minute intervals beginning at 6:30 a.m.

Lunch: The hotel will provide box lunches each day of the festival.

Field Trip Return Time: The zone 1 and zone 2 field trips will return to the hotel by 4:30 p.m. and the zone 1 field trip will return by 3:30 pm.

Evening Social: On day 1, an evening social hour will begin at 6:00 p.m. and will last until 7:00 p.m.; on days 2 and 3 the social hour will begin at 5:30 p.m. and last until 6:30 p.m. A cash bar will be available during this time.

Dinner: Dinner will begin at 7:00 p.m. on day 1 and at 6:30 p.m. on days 2 and 3.

Birdlist and other wildlife sightings: We feel that the excitement and camaraderie generated on the daily field trips becomes infectious, and that great finds, prized sightings, and memorable encounters should be shared among all the field trip leaders and participants. Each night, as dessert is served, we will compile a list of birds and other wildlife seen on all the field trips.

Presentations: A keynote presentation will be held each night following dinner and will begin approximately 15 minutes after dessert is served. Each address will be about 45 minutes in duration.

Field Trip Information: April is a great time to be in central Texas. Great weather and a diversity of habitats allows for a wonderful mix of resident and migrating bird species. Within the Austin region, we have identified three major zones of importance to which field trips will be scheduled: Fort Hood north of Austin; Mitchell Lake and Warbler Woods south of Austin; and Bastrop State Park and Hornsby Bend east of Austin. Every participant will have the opportunity to experience each region and spend time in the field with every leader. Travel will be aboard 15-passenger vans for all field trips and the leader to participant ratio will not exceed 8:1. Every participant will have a window seat. Two vans will depart each day for each region.

Upon registration for the festival, you will be arbitrarily assigned to a field trip group unless we are aware of any friends, family members, or travel companion with whom you wish to travel. Please provide our office staff with the names of any people with whom you wish to be grouped.

Bottled water and other cold drinks will be available at all times. Participants will pick up boxed lunches after breakfast for each field trip day before boarding the vehicles.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: Springtime in central Texas is the most beautiful time of year. April in particular is delightful. The heat of summer has not yet begun to build and the days are mild. Festival participants are likely to experience warm, but not hot weather under mostly sunny to partly cloudy skies. Mornings are cool, with temperatures ranging from the middle 60s to low 70s and warming to the upper 70s or mid 80s during the warmest part of the day. Chances for precipitation are low to moderate; nevertheless, spring can be a time of unstable weather fronts, typified by widespread showers and thunderstorms. Though most of these storms are localized, heavy rainfall is possible.

CLOTHING: As the Birding and Nature Festival is a fairly short event, participants will not need to pack a lot of clothing. Warm weather should be the rule, but if a late cold front passes through during the festival, you will need a warm fleece or light jacket. We recommend bringing one or two pairs of long pants and a pair or two of shorts. Many participants will feel more comfortable in shorts if the days become particularly warm. Denim is acceptable, but most people prefer lighter weight cotton pants or other thin material. Be sure to bring several t-shirts (short and long-sleeved) if you desire. Many people also prefer long-sleeved designer shirts made of lightweight material with mesh seams for increased ventilation and numerous pockets for books, pens, notebooks, etc.

For evening presentations, field clothing is acceptable, but some participants might feel more comfortable in "smart-casual" attire. For men this includes slacks/khakis and open-collared shirts. For women this includes casual dresses or skirt/slacks ensembles. The degree of dress is also in accordance with your personal preference. Physical activity at this event will not be particularly demanding, but when considering proper footwear, we recommend a light hiking boot or sturdy trail shoe. A hat for protection from the sun is essential.

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LAUNDRY SERVICE: The Hyatt Regency hotel provides same day laundry/valet service, Monday-Sunday, for a charge.

BAGGAGE: Because the festival is a short event, and based out of a single hotel, space is not an issue and participants should feel free to bring as much baggage as is desired.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. You will certainly want to bring a quality pair of binoculars and possibly a camera with you to the festival. Your tour leaders will have spotting scopes available for group use, but you may bring your own if you prefer. Other typical travel items include:

- Personal medications (packed only in your carry-on bag)
- Travel alarm clock
- Sunscreen and lip balm (essential)
- Field guides
- Notebook and pen
- Insect repellent (do not pack in your carry-on bag; your tour leaders will have some available for group use as well)
- Sunglasses
- Backpack or daypack (for carrying extra clothing, field guides, personal items, etc.)

DOCUMENTS: Please remember to bring some form of government issued identification, displaying your photograph. Driver's licenses and passports are typically preferred.

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 festival 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 a standard travel precaution, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots.

Insects: In general, biting insects are not a problem in central Texas in April. Mosquitoes are usually not numerous in any of the areas we will visit and chiggers, while a nuisance, are more frequently encountered later in the year, usually during the summer months. Still, we recommend the use of CUTTER'S lotion (or a similar lotion) and a pump-style container of OFF or a similar repellent. CUTTER'S also makes a repellent stick which comes in a small cylindrical container and is available at a number of outdoor-type stores.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides, etc.) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders, evening presenters, 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.

SUGGESTED READING: Our website, at 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 the store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com, which specializes in ornithology books.

The bookstores of the Tucson Audubon Society, www.tucsonaudubon.org/, and Los Angeles Audubon Society, <http://www.losangelesaudubon.org/store/products.php?c=2>, also carry a fine inventory of books on birding and natural history.

Bird Identification: All of these guides are excellent resources for identification of North American Birds and all are perfectly suitable for a few days of birding in central Texas. We especially recommend the Kaufman field guide and Sibley's guide to birds of Eastern North America. Both are especially compact and portable.

Kaufman, Kenn. *Kaufman Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000.

National Geographic Society. *Field Guide to North American Birds*. 5th ed. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2006.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. New York, NY: Alfred Knopf Publishing Company, 2000.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Eastern Birds*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000. This is a slimmed down regional version of *The Sibley Guide to Birds*.

Bird References:

Clark, William S. and Wheeler, Brian K. *A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors*. Reprinted by Princeton University Press in 2003.

Clark, William S. and Wheeler, Brian K. *Raptors of Eastern North America: The Wheeler Guides*. Princeton University Press, 2003

Kaufman, Kenn. *Kingbird Highway*. New York, NY: Houghton, Mifflin, Co., 2006.

Kaufman, Kenn. *Lives of North American Birds*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996. An excellent and underrated resource to the natural history of North American birds.

Mammals:

Bowers, Rick and Nora, and Kenn Kaufman. *Kaufman Focus Guides: Mammals of North America*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.

Trees and Wildflowers: There are a number of good books available on the trees and wildflowers of central Texas. These two are among the best ones.

Enquist, Marshall. *Wildflowers of the Texas Hill Country*. Lone Star Botanical, 1989.

Wrede, Jan. *Trees, Shrubs, and Vines of the Texas Hill Country*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2005.

Butterflies: Though there are now a number of excellent national and regional field guides to the butterflies of North America, this one is still the best.

Kaufman, Kenn and Brock, Jim P. *Kaufman Focus Guides: The Butterflies of North America*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Dragonflies:

Dunkel, Sidney W. *Dragonflies Through Binoculars: A Field Guide to Dragonflies of North America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000.

History: Both of these books are among the better of a topic widely written about.

Campbell, Randolph B. *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004

Fehrenback, T. R. *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans*. Da Capo Press, 2000.

RESPONSIBILITY CLAUSE: 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, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by

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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. Where 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 October 15, 2007 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.