



BIRDING ITINERARY

GALVESTON'S FAR WEST END

Galveston Island has the best year-round birding! We encourage you to explore and enjoy discovering all that the island has to offer. This itinerary is designed to be enjoyed during any season of the year.

Need help with identification? Guided tours are available; visit www.birdingforfun.com or contact Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council (GINTC) at 409.789.8125.

Not sure where to start? Try this **self-guided birding tour** of some of the Far West End's hotspots – spend a few hours, or a full day, the choice is up to you!

1

Galveston Island State Park **MAP** 14901 FM 3005, Galveston (UTC 070)

The State Park protects over 2,000 acres of undeveloped coastal habitat, including beaches, prairies and wetlands. It is an important migration stopover for shorebirds and waterfowl in spring and fall, and many raptors and sparrows are common in winter. During spring, watch for Painted and Indigo Bunting, Orchard Oriole, Blue Grosbeak, and other migrants in the scrub and salt cedars. Groove-billed Ani is also possible. Check the wetlands year-round for herons, egrets, rails, and other waders. Magnificent Frigatebird can often be seen soaring overhead during summer. White-tailed Kite and Crested Caracara are present year-round, and Northern Harrier is common in winter. Birding by kayak is also available. *Note: there is an entry fee; park and trail maps are available at headquarters.*



Magnificent Frigatebird (photo by Kristine Rivers)



Tricolored Heron (photo by Kristine Rivers)

Jamaica Beach **MAP**

Continue west on FM 3005, watching the fields and ponds along the way. In winter, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, and Black-bellied Plover are common. When you reach Jamaica Beach, turn right on Bob Smith Drive.

2

The estuaries on the left side of the road are ever-changing depending on weather and tidal influences, providing habitat that ranges from mud flats to deep coastal wetlands, bringing in a variety of shorebirds year-round. Scan carefully for Black-necked Stilt, Willet, Killdeer, Least and Western Sandpiper, Reddish Egret, Tricolored Heron and other waders. *(continued on other side)*

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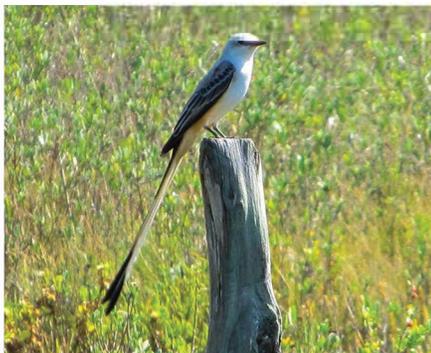
2

Jamaica Beach *continued* MAP

In winter, Osprey often perch low over the marsh. On the right, The Lorenz Family Jamaica Beach Bird and Fish Estuary provides nearly 10 acres of protected habitat that often attracts surface-feeding ducks in the winter. Turn around before the curve near the end of the road, and check the bay in winter for Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, and Red-breasted Mergansers. During summer, swallows and Purple Martins are plentiful. Return to FM 3005 and turn right. *Ready for lunch? If so, try Nate's West End Seafood and Steaks less than a mile ahead on the left before continuing. If not, continue to the next step.*



Barn Swallow (photo by Kristine Rivers)



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (photo by Kristine Rivers)

Dos Vacas Muertas Bird Sanctuary MAP Seabird Drive, Galveston (UTC 070A)

Just over 4½ miles from Jamaica Beach, watch carefully on the right for a small sign for the Dos Vacas Muertas Bird Sanctuary (just before Sea Isle.) Turn right on Seabird Drive and park near the sanctuary gate on the right. This 6-acre sanctuary can be productive during spring migration, with an oak motte and wetlands that provide a stopover for Painted and Indigo Bunting, Summer and Scarlet Tanager, and Orchard Oriole. Scissor-tailed Flycatcher nests in this area. Check the mudflats for shorebirds year-round.

3

Return to FM 3005 and turn right, continuing west. Long-billed Curlew and Marbled Godwit may be seen along the roadside during winter and early spring. Check the power lines year-round for Loggerhead Shrike and Crested Caracara; American Kestrel and Osprey are common in the winter.

4

San Luis Pass (UTC 071) MAP

Exit left just before the toll bridge to access the flats and beach. *Note: access "roads" often impassable; high-clearance and/or 4-wheel drive vehicles recommended.*

When accessible, this is one of the best spots in the country for viewing water birds year-round. The large sand flats are usually quite productive for Piping and Snowy Plover, Black Skimmer, and a variety of terns and gulls, at times hosting thousands of feeding shorebirds. Black Tern is common during fall migration. Check the shoreline for American Avocet, Sanderling, Willet, Ruddy Turnstone, Great Blue and Tricolored Heron, and Reddish Egret. The deep, fast-moving waters in the pass attract both species of pelican, cormorants, Red-breasted Merganser, and Common Loon in the winter. In summer, watch for Horned Lark and Wilson's Plover near the dunes, and for Magnificent Frigatebird soaring overhead and perched on pilings.



American Avocets (photo by Kristine Rivers)