



Birds in the Blanco River Basin

In 2007 - 2008, Korn, with the assistance of land owners, sampled for the presence of birds on 11 privately owned ranches along the Blanco River. The sample area ranged from the headwaters in Kendall County, throughout Blanco and Comal counties and to the Southeastern portion of the basin in Hays County¹. Common names of identified birds are presented below (Tables 3 and 4).

Habitat Suitability

Several bird species sharing a habitat, including endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo, were observed to have potential suitable habitat ranges within the Blanco River Basin (figure 20)¹.

Table 3 Birds Identified by Researcher Observation/Sampling in Korn 2008 Study.

Birds Identified in Blanco River Basin - Korn 2008 Study		
Acadian Flycatcher	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Painted Bunting
American Crow	Field Sparrow	Prothonotary Warbler
American Goldfinch	Fox Sparrow	Purple Martin
American Redstart	Golden-cheeked Warbler **	Red-breasted Nuthatch
American Robin	Golden-fronted Woodpecker	Red-eyed Vireo
Barn Swallow	Grasshopper Sparrow	Red-shouldered Hawk
Belted Kingfisher	Great Blue Heron	Red-tailed Hawk
Bewick's Wren	Great Horned Owl	Ring-necked Pheasant
Black-and-White Warbler	Great-tailed Grackle	Rio Grande Turkey
Black Vulture	Green Heron	Rough-winged Swallow
Black-chinned Hummingbird	Green Kingfisher	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Black-crested Titmouse	House Finch	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Black-throated Green Warbler	House Sparrow	Rufous-crowned Sparrow
Blue Grosbeak	House Wren	Savannah Sparrow
Blue Jay	Indigo Bunting	Scarlet Tanager
Blue-gray gnatcatcher	Ladder-backed Woodpecker	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Brown-headed Cowbird	Lark Sparrow	Scrub Jay

¹ Korn, J.M. 2008. Evaluating Avian Communities of the Blanco River Valley Using Occupancy Modeling and Landowner Conducted Surveys. Texas State University. <http://ecommons.txtate.edu/bioltd/6>.



Canyon Wren	Least Flycatcher	Song Sparrow
Carolina Chickadee	Lesser Goldfinch	Spotted Sandpiper
Cedar Waxwing	Lesser Scaup	Spotted Towhee
Chimney Swift	Lincoln's Sparrow	Summer Tanager
Chipping Sparrow	Louisiana Waterthrush	Turkey Vulture
Common Nighthawk	Mourning Dove	Vermillion Flycatcher
Common Raven	Nashville Warbler	Western Kingbird
Cooper's Hawk	Northern Cardinal	White-crowned Sparrow
Crested Caracara	Northern Flicker	White-eyed Vireo
Dark-eyed Junco	Northern Mockingbird	White-throated Sparrow
Dickcissel Orchard Oriole	Northern Pintail	White-winged Dove
Downy Woodpecker	Northern Shoveler	Wood Duck
Eastern Bluebird	Orange-crowned Sparrow	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Eastern Phoebe	Ovenbird	Yellow-rumped Warbler

Table 4 Birds Identified by Land Owner Survey in Korn 2008 Study.

Birds Identified in Landowner & Contractor Surveys - 2008 Korn Study		
American Crow	Common Raven	Northern Mockingbird
American Robin	Dickcissel Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Northern Parula
Ash-throated Flycatcher	Downy Woodpecker	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow	Eastern Phoebe	Painted Bunting
Bewick's Wren	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Purple Martin
Black Vulture	Field Sparrow	Red-eyed Vireo
Black-and-white Warbler	Golden-cheeked Warbler **	Red-shouldered Hawk
Black-bellied Whistling Duck	Golden-fronted Woodpecker	Red-tailed Hawk
Black-chinned Hummingbird	Gray Catbird	Rio Grande Turkey
Black-crested Titmouse	Greater Roadrunner	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Black-throated Green Warbler	Great-tailed Grackle	Rufous-crowned Sparrow
Blue Grosbeak	House Finch	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Blue Jay	House Sparrow	Scott's Oriole
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Inca Dove	Sharp-shinned Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk	Ladder-backed Woodpecker	Spotted Sandpiper
Brown-headed Cowbird	Lark Sparrow	Summer Tanager
Canyon Wren	Lesser Goldfinch	Turkey Vulture
Carolina Chickadee	Mallard	White-crowned Sparrow
Carolina Wren	Mourning Dove	White-eyed Vireo
Chimney Swift	Muscovy Duck	White-winged Dove
Chuck-will's-Widow	Nashville Warbler	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Common Grackle	Northern Bobwhite	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Common Nighthawk	Northern Cardinal	

** Indicates Endangered Species

Table 5 lists all known threatened and endangered birds in the basin.

Figures 20- 22 report potential habitats throughout the basin for the endangered Black-capped Vireo and Golden-cheeked Warbler, the threatened Zone-tailed Hawk (known or thought to reside in portions of each county contained in the basin), and the endangered Interior Least Tern (known to reside in Kendall County).



Table 5 Threatened, Endangered and Rare Birds (TPWD).

Common Name	Habitat Description	Location within Basin
Black-capped Vireo	oak-juniper woodlands with distinctive patchy, two-layered aspect; shrub and tree layer with open, grassy spaces; requires foliage reaching to ground level for nesting cover; return to same territory, or one nearby, year after year; deciduous and broad-leaved shrubs and trees provide insects for feeding; species composition less important than presence of adequate broad-leaved shrubs, foliage to ground level, and required structure; nesting season March-late summer	Blanco, Comal, Hays, Kendall
Golden-cheeked Warbler	juniper-oak woodlands; dependent on Ashe juniper (also known as cedar) for long fine bark strips, only available from mature trees, used in nest construction; nests are placed in various trees other than Ashe juniper; only a few mature junipers or nearby cedar brakes can provide the necessary nest material; forage for insects in broad-leaved trees and shrubs; nesting late March-early summer	Blanco, Comal, Hays, Kendall
Interior Least Tern	subspecies is listed only when inland (more than 50 miles from a coastline); nests along sand and gravel bars within braided streams, rivers; also know to nest on man-made structures (inland beaches, wastewater treatment plants, gravel mines, etc); eats small fish and crustaceans, when breeding forages within a few hundred feet of colony	Kendall
Mountain Plover	breeding: nests on high plains or shortgrass prairie, on ground in shallow depression; nonbreeding: shortgrass plains and bare, dirt (plowed) fields; primarily insectivorous	Blanco, Comal, Hays, Kendall
Western Burrowing Owl	open grasslands, especially prairie, plains, and savanna, sometimes in open areas such as vacant lots near human habitation or airports; nests and roosts in abandoned burrows	Blanco, Comal, Hays, Kendall
Zone-tailed Hawk	arid open country, including open deciduous or pine-oak woodland, mesa or mountain county, often near watercourses, and wooded canyons and tree-lined rivers along middle-slopes of desert mountains; nests in various habitats and sites, ranging from small trees in lower desert, giant cottonwoods in riparian areas, to mature conifers in high mountain regions	Blanco, Comal, Hays, Kendall



Much of the basin is considered suitable habitat for both the endangered Warbler and Vireo. Both require juniper-oak woodlands and are dependent on both mature Ashe juniper and deciduous & broad-leaved shrubs & trees for nesting and feeding (figure 20)²

The green areas in the map below show land cover containing the birds' preferred woodland, tree and shrub combination. Map portions shaded in brown contain too much open space or urbanized area. There are several large tracts throughout the basin that appear to be suitable habitat, containing or bordering with few unsuitable areas.

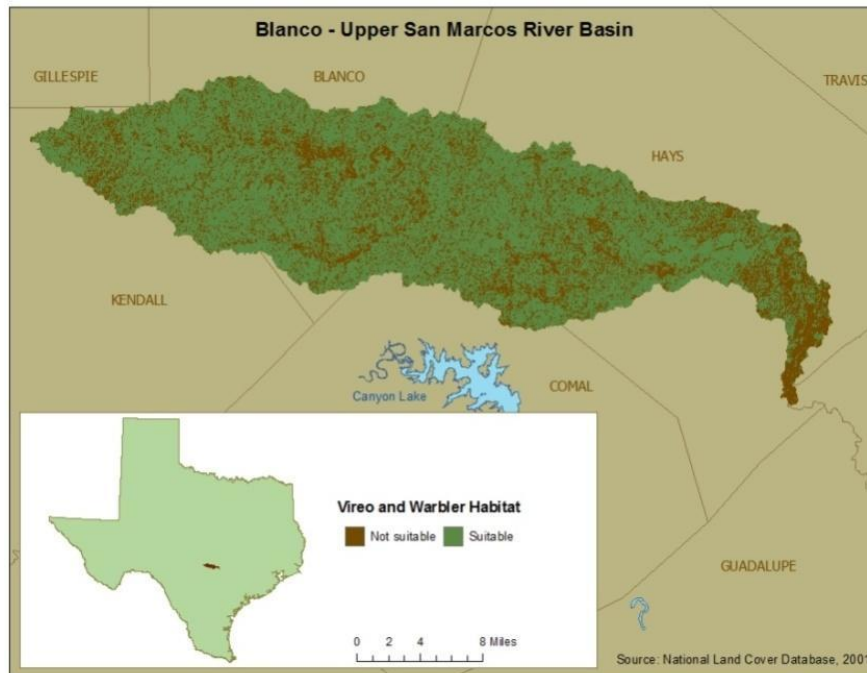


Figure 20 Blanco River Basin Potential Suitable Warbler and Vireo Habitat

The Zone-Tailed Hawk's habitat is limited to wooded canyon lands with access to wooded creeks and streams³. The westernmost portion of the basin appears to contain the most suitable habitat, although the hawk's hunting range may span across the basin and into other areas (figure 21).

Increasing habitat and hunting range fragmentation are areas of concern in managing this species.

² Texas Parks and Wildlife. No Date. Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species of Texas.

<http://gis.tpwd.state.tx.us/TpwEndangeredSpecies/DesktopDefault.aspx> (Accessed December 02, 2010).

³ BirdLife International. 2006. *Buteo albonotatus*. 2006 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2006. www.iucnredlist.org (Accessed September 22, 2010).



Figure 21 Blanco River Basin Potential Suitable Zone- Tailed Hawk Habitat

Terns typically breed in the northern portion of Texas along the Oklahoma border and winter along the Texas Coast. However, in recent years, the Least Interior Tern has been identified in Central Texas and in the Kendall County portion of the Blanco River basin along small creeks and streams, typically with rocky and sandy terrain. Changes in water levels and land cover utilized for nesting habitats increase the tern's breeding susceptibility⁴.

The least-developed western portion of the basin contains the greatest percentage of suitable tern habitat. This is due to the area's topography and minimized disturbance related to development (figure 22).

⁴ Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD). No Date. Interior Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum athalassos*). <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/species/thlizard/> (Accessed December 02, 2010).



Figure 22 Blanco River Basin potential Suitable Interior Least Tern Habitat