

Bird Watching in Big Bend

Not all birds can live in the same environment. This is the reason why bird enthusiasts travel all over the country and around the world to continue this hobby. One place that is not too far and has a lot to offer is in Big Bend National Park.

Big Bend National Park is located in the Southwest corner of Texas. It is halfway between El Paso and Laredo while the Rio Grande swings southward to form a huge bend which marks the southern boundary of this national reserve. All in all, it is 1200 square miles of Chihuahuan Desert and mountain grandeur.

This makes it an excellent habitat for more than 450 species of birds, 75 species of mammals and 70 species of amphibians and reptiles. When the weather gets cold, most birds use this as a migratory flyway so you will get to see some birds that are only here once or twice a year.

Some of the birds you can encounter at the Big Bend National Park include the Band-tailed Pigeon, Black-chinned Sparrow, Colima Warbler, Crissal Thrasher, Elf Owl, Flammulated Owl, Green Kingfisher, Lucifer Hummingbird, Mexican Jay and the Pyrrhuloxia.

This is also the only place in the US that you will see the Mexican long Nosed Bat that is listed as an endangered species.

Given the parks size, there are a lot of excellent bird watching spots to check out. You can go to the Rio Grande Village, the Cottonwood campgrounds, the Chisos Basin and the Hot Springs to see the colorful golden fronted woodpecker or the Colima warbler.

Another ideal spot is the Ojito Adentro that is found on wayside stop #4. While you are walking, you can hear the Bell's Vireo singing especially during early March and September. In the Spring, you will encounter the Blue Grossbeak, Canyon Bewick, Summer Tanager, Vermillion Flycatcher and the Zone tailed hawk.

Some bird species that drop by for a visit during certain months of the year include the acorn woodpeckers, ash-throated flycatchers, black-chinned and broad-tailed hummingbirds, cactus and canyon wrens, greater roadrunners, lesser nighthawks, loggerhead shrikes, northern flickers, scaled quail, Scott's orioles, spotted sandpipers, tufted titmice, bushtits, western wood-pewees, white-throated swifts, white-winged doves and Wilson's warblers.

The mammals you could see at the Big Bend National Park include the desert

cottontails, black-tailed jackrabbits, rock squirrels, Texas antelope squirrels, Merriam's kangaroo rats, coyotes, gray foxes, raccoons, striped skunks, mule deer, and white-tailed deer.

You should be careful when you go bird watching at the National Park. There are also a few poisonous snakes like the diamondback, the Mojave, the black tailed rattlesnake and the trans-pecos copperhead. There have also been reported sightings of Mountain Lions and Black Bears. Since the Park was opened to the public, there have only been 4 attacks on humans.

The Big Bend National Park is open all year round. More than 300,000 visitors come here annually so pack along your gear and head out for some bird watching at the Big Bend. You can camp here for a few days and even get some snapshots which you can add to your collection back home.

So you don't get lost, you can get a Ranger to guide you around, join a nature seminar and a host of other activities that are offered at the park.