

## **Stop 19 – A Bird Migration Hub**

Did you know that South Texas is considered a world-class birding destination? This designation doesn't come easily. Hundreds of migrating birds travel back and forth through Texas every year. Over 630 different species of birds have been OFFICIALLY counted in Texas, more than any other state. It's also no surprise that the mission area is a favorite stopping off corridor for those traveling birds. More than 220 species have been identified on mission property. Among the most common residents are the Northern cardinals, Carolina wrens, and Northern mockingbird. Keep a sharp eye out in the sky for the soaring Red-shouldered hawk over this riparian woodland.

Riparian ecosystems are areas along a riverbank or stream. These spots are especially important in dry climates like South Texas. Virtually all wildlife visit or inhabit these riparian areas to survive.

Birds like other animals, congregate on the grounds of the missions for the very same reasons the original Spanish settlers came to the area. The spring fed waters of the San Antonio River sustain life. In fact, for centuries parts of what became known as El Camino Real, or The King's Highway, followed the migration routes of animals and native peoples. The historic Camino Real, today a modern highway, connects Mexico, to Texas, Louisiana, and New Mexico.