



STEC NEWSLETTER

SOUTH TEXAS ECOTOURISM CENTER



Explore • Protect • Educate

STEC Newsletter Editor -Edward Meza

OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2023

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FREE EVENT

TRICK OR TREAT?

SOUTH TEXAS ECOTOURISM CENTER

HALLOWEEN Party

FRIDAY OCTOBER 27

6PM-8PM

Creepy Critters Live Animal Show
by Jake Reinbolt

Trick or Treat Nature Trails

Ghost Stories Costume Contest

501 W Tx Hwy 100 Laguna Vista 78578



The South Texas Ecotourism Center is a Cameron County operated nature museum and information center dedicated to the education and preservation of South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley's six ecosystems. The Center offers outdoor exhibits with interpretive panels with QR codes, sculpture of native animals, over 48,000 native plants, a look out pavilion with two telescopes and binoculars to view the wildlife at the Center and at the Bahia Grande Unit of the Laguna Atascosa Wildlife Refuge. The Center has brochures on south Texas and Valley nature centers and parks. The Center is located at 501 State Highway 100 in Laguna Vista, Texas. Open 7 days a week from 8 am to 5 pm. Free Admission. (956) 772-0210.

South Texas Ecotourism Center Adult Classes 2023

The adult classes are \$25 per adult with the exception of the last class in December which is \$35. Classes include dissecting an owl pellet, leaf printing and a perfumery class. The classes will be fun and interesting and you will take home your project. **To register and for more information on the STEC Adult Project Classes call Shannon at (956) 772-**



October 25



November 8 & November 22



December 13th

COME SEE THE WILDLIFE



Event Calendar - October to December 2023



October 19: Speakers Series: Dr. Shari Wilcox – South Texas Ocelots 5:30 to 7:00 pm

October 25: Adult Fall Seminar - Owl Pellet Dissection \$25 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

October 27: STEC Halloween Festival 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

October 28: Participating with the SPI Birding Center Monarch Festival. 9:00 a.m. to 3 p.m.

November 2: Speakers Series: Marilyn Lorenz– Butterflies of the Valley 5:30 to 7:00 pm

November 8: Adult Fall Seminar Leaf Printing \$25 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

November 11 & 12: Participating with an educational booth at the Worlds Birding Festival in Harlingen.

November 16: Speakers Series: Andy Handcock –Environmental Artist and Bird Boxes 5:30 to 7:00 pm

November 22: Adult Fall Seminar Leaf Printing \$25 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

November 26 : Grandparents Day at STEC 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

November 30: Speakers Series: Javi Gonzalez of SPI Birding Center -Christmas Bird County 5:30 to 7:00 pm

December 7: STEC Christmas Event

December 13: Adult Fall Seminar Perfumery Class \$35 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

December 14: Speakers Series: Dr. Erin Easton – Coral Communities of the South Pacific and Gulf of Mexico 5:30 to 7:00 pm

Every Tuesday 11 am to 1 pm: Film and a Picnic. Bring your Lunch and watch a film on a South Texas Nature or Wildlife Center. Free.

Once a month on the third Tuesday from noon to 1pm .Texas Master Naturalist Book Club. Open to the public.

Every Monday and Wednesday 10 am to 11 am. Tuesday and Thursdays. University of Houston &

Tu Salud Si Cuenta Health Classes –

yoga, meditation, walking, and muscle tone. 5 to 15 people. Open and free to the public. Use of different areas in the Center. Indoors and Outdoors when available.

Everyday 9:00 to 11:00 am. Breakfast with the Birds. Bring your breakfast and have a cup of coffee. We will supply the coffee while supplies last. Enjoy your breakfast and coffee while listening and observing the native birds. Free.



Fall Speaker Series 2023

November 2nd to December 14th 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.



November 2nd Marilyn Lorenz– **Butterflies of the Valley**



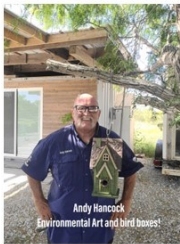
Marilyn has been a Texas Master Naturalist since 2015 and is a regular nature guide leader at the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center and does turtle patrols at Sea Turtle Inc. She has done many presentations in the Valley using her husband Chuck's photos and also writes articles for various local newspapers. She was always an outdoor girl fascinated by the nature to be seen all around and constantly bringing home unexpected guests in the form of baby bunnies, turtles, frogs, slow moving snakes, and the occasional preying mantis egg mass. But flying objects were the most interesting and butterflies and birds were always of high interest.

November 30th Javi Gonzalez - **Christmas Bird Count**



Javier Gonzalez grew up birding in the Rio Grande Valley and is the Naturalist Educator at the South Padre Island Birding Nature Center & Alligator Sanctuary. He enjoys all things nature, but has a special interest in the birds of the Lower Laguna Madre and the Texas Gulf Coast. He has a passion for promoting coastal bird conservation and awareness through birding. He is also the compiler for the annual "Coastal Tip Christmas Bird Count" happening in December each year.

November 16th Andy Hancock - **Environmental Art and Bird Boxes**



Andy Hancock has been an artist using natural and recycled materials for 30 years and worked in 10 countries. His passions locally are the Art of building sandcastles with science, container home design and carving Texas hardwoods using a chainsaw. His larger pieces around the world use standing dead trees that are transformed from loved ones into landmarks. Andy's work can be seen all over South Padre Island where he created the Sea Ranch Dolphins amongst other large scale art that continues to excite tourists as they follow the art trail.

December 14th Dr. Erin Easton—**Coral Communities of the Gulf of Mexico**



Dr. Erin E. Easton is an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). She has a BS in Biology from Indiana University and a MS and PhD in Oceanography from Florida State University. Dr. Easton's Benthic Ecology and Evolution Lab at UTRGV explores the biodiversity and evolution of marine organisms that live in or on the seafloor from the coast to the deep sea. Of particular interest are the deep coral communities of the South Pacific and Gulf of Mexico.



Sign up to Volunteer at the STEC!

We welcome and appreciate volunteers at the STEC. We have volunteer opportunities for welcoming the public, working in the gardens and exhibits, school tours, and during special events. Hours are flexible. We are open 7 days a week from 8 am to 5 pm. Call (956) 772-0210 for more information and to sign up.



Breakfast with the Birds

at

The South Texas Ecotourism Center

Everyday 9am-11am



We have the Coffee and the Birds
you bring your Breakfast

Come Enjoy the Morning at the Center while
listening and observing the native birds



South Texas Ecotourism Center

Film and a Picnic

Every Tuesday 11am-1pm

Bring your lunch and watch
a film about a
South Texas Nature
or Wildlife Center.



BIRD NOTES

Groove-billed Ani.

by: Marilyn Lorenz

Photos by: Chuck Lorenz

Many curious and interesting birds can be found here in the Rio Grand Valley and those are probably the very first words you would use to describe a Groove-billed Ani. (Pronounced ah-nee, as I have been reminded on several occasions.) Groove-billed Anis (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) are not quite as large as the Great-tailed Grackles we have here, but they are also entirely black and with a much heavier bill. The bill is gray and shows distinct horizontal grooves. My first impression of one was that it looked rather like a black parrot.

Anis are semitropical birds and in the U.S. are found mainly along the Gulf Coast and for a distance up the Rio Grand. They have Smooth-billed cousins in Florida. Their habitat is usually overgrown pasture or areas where dense thickets border tall grass or marshes. They mainly eat insects such as grasshoppers, beetles, and spiders. They are known to pick insects off the legs of livestock and will round out the menu with fruits and berries.

They have an unusual nesting protocol of several pairs building a community nest with all the females laying their eggs in the same nest. All of the couples take turns incubating the eggs, with the males taking the night shift. Each female lays 3-4 pale blue eggs which take about 14 days to hatch. The young are fed by all the adults in the group and they begin to fly at 10 days of age and are flying well by 17 days! Adults will often raise two broods in a year.

Descriptions of this bird always seem to include the term disheveled and, truly, they do not have a sharp-dressed look. The wings are often droopy, as if they are just too tired to hold them up and a saggy tail only emphasizes the unkempt effect. Nevertheless, this is their home and if you would like to see them yourself I can recommend our own Laguna Vista Walking Trail. I usually see them in the open field just to the left of the entrance. Other good places are the Laguna Atascosa NWR in Los Fresnos and Hugh Ramsey Park in Harlingen.

Schedule Your School and Organizations Tours Now

We recommend that you start scheduling your classes or organizations for touring the South Texas Ecotourism Center at least two weeks prior to your touring date. Please call (956) 772-0210 to reserve your date. Tours are free and last up to one and a half hours depending on the size of the group. If you would like to have your lunch at the Center, we have a multipurpose room that can accommodate 70 people to eat comfortably. Please let us know at the time of your scheduling if you need to use the multipurpose room. We will divide the students up depending on the size of the group and one group will view the short film, the others tour the educational lab and the rest divided throughout the Center's exhibits.



Look out boardwalk.



Multipurpose Room.



Outdoor Classroom

RENTAL OPPORTUNITIES AT STEC



- MEETING ROOM
- OVERLOOK RAMP
- OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
- BIRD BLINDS
- AMPHITHEATER

CALL (956) 772-0210 FOR INFORMATION



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Grandparents Day Sunday November 26th 10 am –3 pm

Come join us on the Thanksgiving Holiday Weekend at the STEC. We will be presenting Grandparents Day with Photo Ops, STEC Family Activity Folder, Nature Craft and Refreshments on Sunday November 26 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Fun for the entire family. Free.



Grandparents Day at the South Texas Ecotourism Center Sunday November 26th 10am-3pm

Grandparent & Grandchild Photo Op

STEC Family Activity Folder

Nature Craft





Thursday, December 7, 2023

6 to 9 p.m. FREE

Food, Music, Vendors, Crafts

For More Information call (956) 772-0210

501 W. State Highway 100, Laguna Vista, Texas 78578

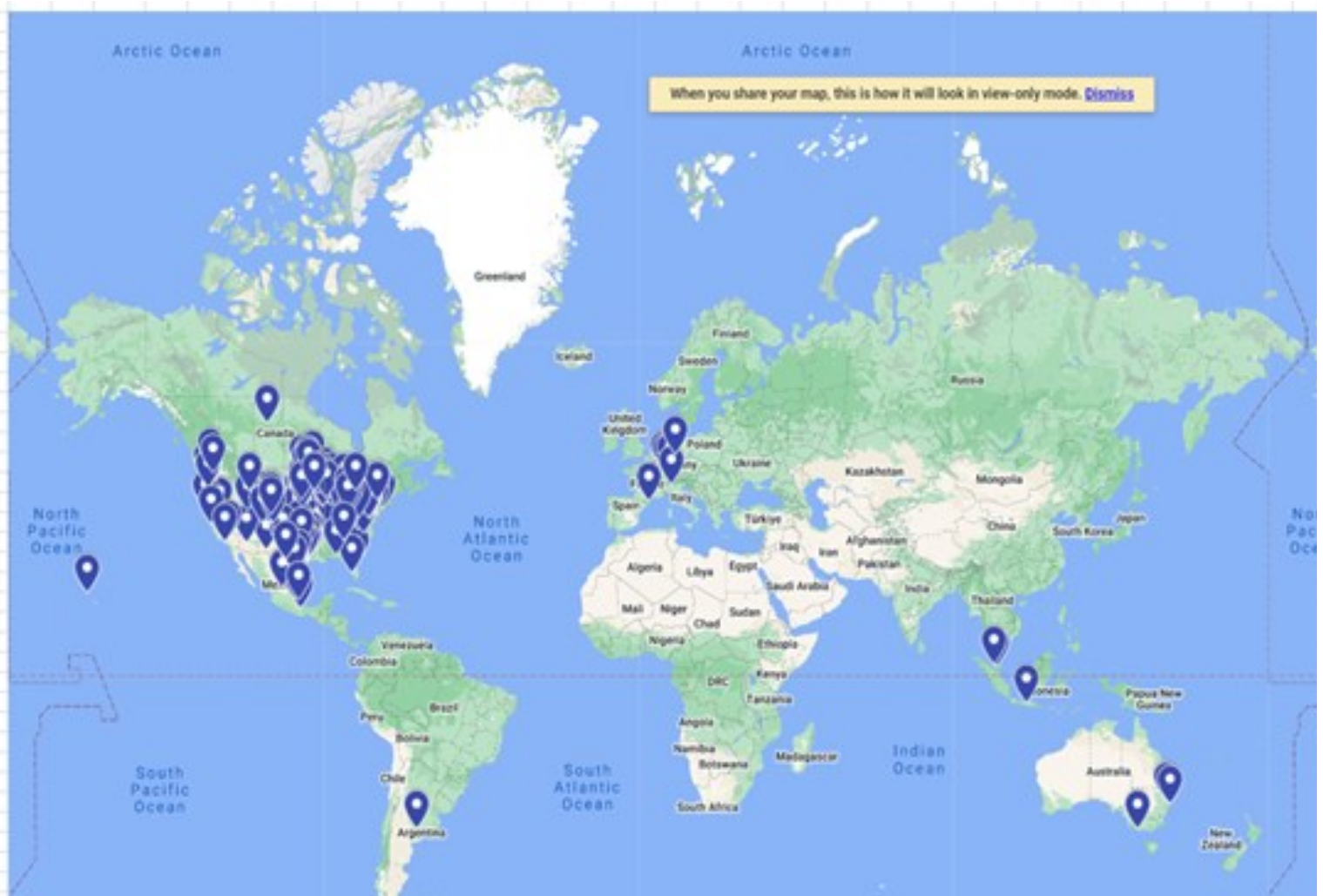
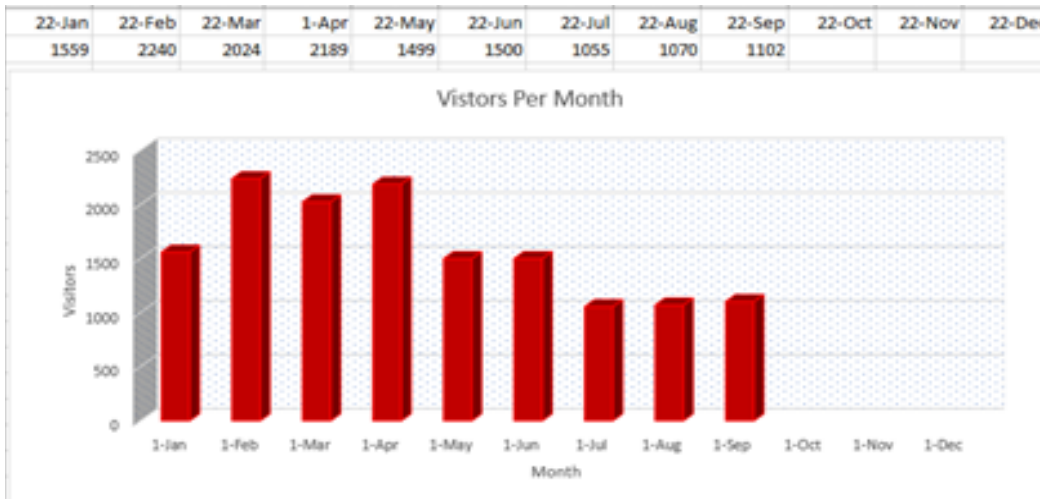
We will be having the 2nd Annual "Christmas at the STEC" on Thursday, December 7th from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Please call (956)772-0210 if you would like to be a vendor selling food and arts and crafts ,etc. No charge for vending but you would need to bring your own table, chairs, lights and canopy.



STEC Visitors Come from All Over the World

Our Center receives visitors from all over the world including Germany, Italy, France, Slavia, Australia, South Korea, Paraguay (South America), Mexico, Canada, and from all 50 states in the United States.

October through June are STEC busiest times for visitors.



STEC Gift Shop

While visiting the STEC, stop by our gift shop. We have t-shirts, caps, cups, glasses, post-cards, art work, and books.



STEC Staff:

Edward P. Meza, Director

Pablo Medrano, Office Specialist/ Educator

Mary Shannon McGinley– White, Ecotourism Specialist/Educator

Jose Angel Martinez, Maintenance Worker/Educator



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South Texas Ecotourism Center



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STEC_LvTX

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www.stec-lv.org