

Crosby County

Overview

Crosby county is the second or third best-birded county after Lubbock. Crosby also straddles the caprock edge, which gives it both birds commonly found on the Llano Estacado and birds found below the caprock. Generally the best spots are either reliable playas, mostly found along US 62, or along the caprock edge, usually when a road crosses the White River. White River Lake is the largest body of water in the area and has potential to attract rare waterbirds. The White River Lake CBC is usually held around New Year's and is a good way to bird White River Lake. The route described here is only one possibility; there are many other hotspots to choose from, depending on your target birds and time available. The target mix of species should work well for this county.

Route (from Lubbock): In general, passerine activity decreases before shorebird and waterfowl activity, so this route starts at WHITE RIVER LAKE and works backwards towards Lubbock. For shorter trips, it is possible to run the route in reverse, and/or head out to other hotspots, like CROSBY CO –SILVER FALLS/US82 REST AREA or CROSBY CO—FM2591 CAMP RIO BLANCO/WHITE RIVER CROSSING and/or spend the day birding the White River hotspots. To get to WHITE RIVER LAKE, take Hwy 82 east to Crosbyton. Turn south on FM651 and continue south until you reach FM2794. Turn east and continue until you reach the White River Lake Marina. Pay your entrance fee at the Marina and then continue on FM2794 until you reach CR245. Turn north on CR245 and continue to the northmost parking lot (off Cliff Rd). Park there and proceed down to the river to bird WHITE RIVER LAKE WOODLANDS/FIELDS N. OF LAKE. Return to the marina, taking time to bird the lake as you have opportunity. Bird WHITE RIVER LAKE MARINA AREA on your way back down FM2794. Turn north on FM651 and return to Crosbyton. About a mile north of CR180, stop and bird SOUTH CROSBYTON WETLANDS. Continue north on FM651 and turn east on Elm St and then north on Ave B. Bird CROSBYTON SOUTHEAST PLAYA. Then travel west on Hwy 82 and bird CROSBYTON itself. As you leave Crosbyton, turn south on CR187. Bird CROSBY CO CR187/CR180 and then return to Hwy 82. Travel west on Hwy 82 back to Ralls. Turn south on Ave K and continue to the RALLS WWTP. Return to Hwy 82 and continue west to Hwy 62. Turn north on Hwy 62 and bird RALLS SOUTHWEST PLAYA. Continue on Hwy 62 and turn south on Hwy 207. Take Hwy 207 south to CR174. Turn west and bird RALLS BACKROADS (CR147/CR174). Return to Hwy 62/82 and continue west, birding US62 PLAYAS: Stop at HWY62/FM2576 to bird the playa there. Continue on Hwy 62/82 and turn south on CR125 and west to bird CR166; HWY 62/CR119 PLAYA will be to your south when you hit CR119. Continue west on Hwy 62/82 and bird LORENZO PLAYA if it is wet.

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Locations

US62 PLAYAS

LORENZO PLAYA HWY62/CR119 PLAYA CR166 HWY62/FM2576

All of these locations are easily accessed directly from US62. Lorenzo playa is usually dry and most often holds cattle. When dry, it is exceptionally easy to drive past. It may attract blackbirds, when wet, look for shorebirds during migration and dabbling ducks. About 1 mile east of Lorenzo is another playa just off CR119. During migration, this playa can hold decent shorebirds such as Stilt Sandpiper and Wilson's Phalarope. CR166 is just east of this playa, and may hold raptors and grassland birds. The intersection at FM2576 may hold Brewer's Blackbirds and/or other farm-associated birds.

Access: Road only Cost: free Parking: Roadside

RALLS AREA

RALLS BACKROADS (CR147/CR174) RALLS SOUTHWEST PLAYA RALLS WWTP

Ralls has a few very promising birding spots in the area. Driving the county roads SW of Ralls, especially CR147 and CR174, can be good for shorebirds and grassland passerines, like sparrows. The RALLS SOUTHWEST PLAYA is easily accessible en route to Floyd county because it is off Hwy 62 as soon as Hwy62 splits from Hwy 82. Bird from the shoulder of Hwy 62. When wet, this playa may hold ducks, shorebirds, ibis, etc in due season, while the grasses may hold passerines and the trees raptors. When dry, it is much sparser. The RALLS WWTP is posted no trespassing; please respect this. However, the first couple ponds are visible from the public access road leading up to the ponds and there is a turn around where you can park and look into the ponds. While the best birds may seem to be just out of sight, grebes, herons and migrants may be seen here, and with a good ear, others heard.

Access: Road only Cost: free Parking: Roadside

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CROSBYTON AREA CROSBYTON

CROSBY CO CR187/CR180 CROSBYTON SOUTHEAST PLAYA SOUTH CROSBYTON WETLANDS

Aside from locations on the Caprock edge and below the Caprock, Crosbyton may hold the best diversity of species and locations. As the major urban area for Crosby, slowly driving the streets and walking the alleys may produce city birds that are hard to find elsewhere in the county, including Chimney Swift, Blue Jay and any missing doves. Northwest of the town may hold water in wet years, but the most reliable water is in the southeast of Crosbyton, at CROSBYTON SOUTHEAST PLAYA and SOUTH CROSBYTON WETLANDS. Birding the former is best done by walking Birch St and Ave B. The tall trees along Birch St may hold migrating passerines, Great Horned Owl, and woodpeckers, while the field/mudflat/playa (depending on water levels) can attract a range of waterfowl, shorebirds (including American Golden-Plover), herons, swallows and sparrows. Further south, the latter may hold ducks and migrating warblers. To the southwest of Crosbyton, the county roads, especially CR187 and CR180, can hold a good diversity of species. Water along both county roads may hold shorebirds and waterfowl, while the nearby grassland is good for icterids, raptors and sparrows.

Access: Road only Cost: free Parking: Roadside

CONE PLAYA

This playa is very hit or miss, depending on whether it is wet or not. In medium to low water in the county, expect this playa to be dry. Consequently, it is most often a stop (if it looks promising) while en route to destinations in Floyd County. When wet, the playa may hold shorebirds and/or dabbling ducks.

Access: Road only Cost: free Parking: Roadside

CROSBY CO –SILVER FALLS/US82 REST AREA

The Silver Falls rest area is about an hour away from Lubbock and sits on the edge of the Caprock. Consequently it holds a strong diversity of species. This is a good spot to look for migrant passerines, and may be reliable for Canyon Wren. Woodpeckers, Eastern Phoebe and Black-crested Titmouse are likely year-round, with swallows, Painted Bunting, and flycatchers resident during the summer.

*Access: This is a small park that can be freely walked. Cost: free
Parking: Parking lot for the rest area.*

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CROSBY CO—FM2591 CAMP RIO BLANCO/WHITE RIVER CROSSING

The camp itself is a Girl Scout Camp, and may not be publicly accessible, but the river crossing can be birded from the road. This location is similar to Silver Falls, but not as well birded. Red-headed Woodpecker may nest here, while Yellow-breasted Chat is also possible.

Access: Road only Cost: free Parking: Roadside

WHITE RIVER LAKE

WHITE RIVER LAKE MARINA AREA

WHITE RIVER LAKE WOODLANDS/FIELDS N. OF LAKE

White River Lake is probably the single best birding spot in Crosby county. Most birding entries are from the winter due to the CBC, or the summer for breeding bird surveys, though the location is also worth birding at other times of the year. There is an entry fee (\$5), which can be paid at the Marina. The Marina area gives some views of the lake, as do other locations around the lake, while the woodlands/fields north of the lake provide access to riparian areas. To access the woodlands, continue north on CR245 until you reach the northmost parking lot, and then continue on foot north along the lake. The lake itself will hold deepwater birds, and is the best place in the county to look for diving ducks, scoters, grebes, loons and gulls. As with other water in the South Plains, water levels fluctuate wildly, so it is worth checking the levels prior to going. Shorebirds may be found in migration, and the woods along the lake may hold passerines. The area north of the lake may hold woodpeckers, breeding Yellow-breasted Chat, titmice, owls, sparrows, and other passerines.

Access: The lake can be scoped from the marina. To get to the woodlands, continue on foot north along the lake from the northernmost parking lot.

Cost: \$5

Parking: Parking is available at the marina and at various parking lots around the lake. Park in the northernmost parking lot on CR245 for the woodlands.