

Garza County

Overview

Garza is situated almost entirely below the Caprock, and is one of the southern counties in the region. Both of these advantages give it a wider possibility of species. However, it is very underbirded, which leaves many rarities unfound. Lake Alan Henry has a lot of potential, but has very limited access without a boat. Camping is available near Lake Alan Henry. Post is 45 min SE of Lubbock, and has a few amenities if you do not plan to stage out of Lubbock. Post is also a central location for many of the hotspots. In general, it is easier to get more ducks in this county than the species mix might suggest. This helps balance the lack of walkable, well-wooded areas in the county.

Route (from Lubbock): This route starts at Lake Alan Henry, heads back to Post and then focuses on the playas/Caprock edge west of Post. Cutting out Lake Alan Henry will shorten the trip considerably. Take Hwy 84 SE from Lubbock to Justiceburg. Turn east on FM2458. Continue on FM3519 until you reach LAKE ALAN HENRY. Bird the area, then return to Hwy 84 and travel NW, stopping to bird the rest area near CR298, which is GREEN TANK (GARZA CO). Continue NW on Hwy 84 until you return to Post. Just before you enter Post, turn west to bird NICHOLS PARK. Cross the street to start birding POST CITY PARK, though the main access is from the east end of 3rd St, on the north side of the playa. Travel north on Ave H to Hwy380, then turn east and continue to the POST AIRPORT PLAYA. After birding the playa, return to Post and turn north on Hwy207 and continue north on Ave F. Turn east on CR226 and bird GARZA CO CR226. Return to Ave F and continue north to bird the BRAZOS RIVER CROSSING. Return to Post via Ave F. Turn west on 15th, south on Ave I and east on 13th St. Bird the wooded fringe at the corner of 13th ST AND AVE H. Drive west back to Hwy 84 and continue south, then turn west on US380. If you need Cave Swallow (not a winter resident), continue west to HWY380 DRAW W OF POST, otherwise travel south on Ave M/FM669. Continue on FM669 until you reach FM669 PLAYA. Return north to CR278, turn west and then south on CR175 and take it to CR290. Bird the playas along CR290. If the water levels are high, you can travel south on CR145 and check for water in CR145 before continuing along CR290. Otherwise, turn north on CR125 and check for water in that playa. If you want to continue birding county roads, travel west on CR280, then north on FM1313, otherwise travel north on CR125 and turn west on FM1313. Turn north on CR105 and bird GARZA CO CR105 (TREES S OF US380). Travel east on US380 to FM399. Turn north and bird FM399 between US380 and US84. Return to Lubbock on US84.

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Locations

LAKE ALAN HENRY

LAKE ALAN HENRY—NORTH CENTRAL PUBLIC BOAT RAMP LAKE ALAN HENRY—SAM WAHL REC AREA TRAILS

CR335

FM2458/FM3519

Lake Alan Henry holds some of the best potential in Garza, but unfortunately the access (and distance from Lubbock) reduces the frequency with which it is birded. The SAM WAHL REC AREA TRAILS and NORTH CENTRAL PUBLIC BOAT RAMP are both fee areas; the cost is cheaper if you are a Lubbock resident. The riparian area below the dam (and dam access itself from land) requires written permission to enter. A boat will enable navigation of the waterways, which may increase the species mix seen. Views of the lake from the Sam Wahl recreation area are somewhat limited. Access Lake Alan Henry from FM2458, which will become FM3519. Hawks, shrikes, woodpeckers, meadowlarks and other icterids may be seen from these roads. Turn east from FM3519 and enter the pay area into the Sam Wahl Recreation area to access both the NORTH CENTRAL PUBLIC BOAT RAMP and the SAM WAHL REC AREA TRAILS. These areas may be good for passerines, including wrens, pyrrhuloxia, and sparrows. Exiting the pay area, and traveling north on CR335 until it bears east (access much down the eastern stretch of CR335 is by permission only) can be good for Greater Roadrunner, sparrows, bluebirds and Lark Bunting.

Access: The fee station is accessed by turning east from FM3519. There are trails available once inside. A boat will also help birding here.

Cost: \$8-\$12/person, depending on Lubbock residency and day of the week. See fee schedule: <https://ci.lubbock.tx.us/departments/lake-alan-henry/about-us/fees-and-annual-permits>

Parking: There is a parking area after the fee station. For birding the roads, roadside parking only.

GREEN TANK (GARZA CO)

This rest stop hosts some reliable water, and has some tall trees, making this a reasonably decent spot to check during migration. The fields nearby may hold sparrows, and icterids while diving ducks, rails, and herons/egrets may be found at the water.

Access: Small area that can be freely walked. Cost: free

Parking: Parking lot after US84 exit

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POST NICHOLS PARK POST CITY PARK

13th ST AND AVE H

HWY 380 DRAW W OF POST US 84 PULLOFF NW OF TOWN

Post is the best birding spot in the county. The best location in Post is POST CITY PARK, which can have nearly all the water birds you need for the county. If the water levels are lower, shorebirds are possible during migration. The reeds can shelter rails, icterids, wrens and sparrows. Swallows frequent the powerlines, while flycatchers and woodpeckers may also be seen here. Access is best from the north (drive to the end of 3rd St and follow it down), but it can also be accessed directly across from NICHOLS PARK. NICHOLS PARK is across the street from POST CITY PARK, and is sometimes worth stopping at. The sports fields may hold urban birds, while the pond may hold a few waterbirds not present at the main city park. You might need to stand on your vehicle to get a good view of the water. Other locations of note in Post include the HWY380 DRAW W OF POST. This is a good spot for Cave Swallow. The US84 PULLOFF NW OF TOWN may hold migrant passerines, and is one of the semi- wooded areas that can be walked. The corner of 13th St and Ave H may also be good for migrating passerines and Mississippi Kites because it hosts a woodlot. Respect private property. Like other cities in the South Plains, driving the side streets and/or walking the alleys can also produce good results.

Access: Post City Park, Nichols Park and US84 pulloff are small and can be freely walked. For in-town locations, bird from roads, sidewalks and alleyways only.

Cost: free

Parking: Roadside in town. Nichols Park has parking further up and wide enough roads to park sooner. Post City Park has a parking lot accessible from the end of E 3rd St (technically S G Pl on Google Maps). The US84 pull-off is a parking area

POST AIRPORT PLAYA

East of Post, just across from the airport, is a turnoff and a nice playa. This playa often holds diving ducks, and the grasslands in the surrounding area are especially good for sparrows like Grasshopper Sparrow and Lark Bunting in the appropriate season. Flycatchers may also be found along the playa.

Access: Bird from the road shoulder/pull-off only. The playa and surrounding land is fenced.

Cost: free

Parking: There is a dirt/gravel pull-off on the south side of Hwy 380, opposite from the airport.

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GARZA CO CR226

NE of Post are two riparian spots that may hold migrating passerines. CR226 is a low traffic road with a playa at the turn. The playa may hold ducks, shorebirds like American Avocet, or egrets like Cattle Egret and sparrows nearby. Importantly, there are trees along the road which may hold woodpeckers, warblers and other migrants.

Access: Road only Cost: free Parking: Roadside

BRAZOS RIVER CROSSING

While the river itself might be disappointing at times, there are a couple of ponds on private property that can be viewed from the road. The ponds and surrounding area may hold ducks, icterids, doves and shorebirds, while the bridge may host Cliff Swallows.

Access: Road only Cost: free Parking: Roadside

PLAYAS SW OF POST FM669 PLAYA

CR290 PLAYAS CR145 PLAYA CR125 PLAYA

Shorebirding in Garza county is easiest atop the Caprock, and there are several playas SW of Post. Some of these playas should give mudflats in most water conditions, with some (CR125 and CR145 playas) only holding water in wetter years, while others along CR290 may have water in relatively drier times. FM669 PLAYA sits just before the Caprock edge, and may host passerines along with shorebirds, while Northern Bobwhite may call in the distance. The scrub on the opposite (east) side of the road may also hold sparrows and other migrants. CR290 is generally worth driving along because it may hold a larger pair of playas between CR155 and CR165, a smaller playa between CR141 and CR145, and then crosses a shallow cut in the Caprock between CR125 and CR135. Check the playas for shorebirds, and walk the scrub along the Caprock edge to look for passerines.

Access: Road only Cost: free Parking: Roadside

GARZA CO CR105 (TREES S OF US380)

The south end of CR105 ends in private property. The playa seen on Google maps is not visible from the public road. The south end of the road can be birdy, though the middle section holds mostly fields. Just south of US380 is a stand of trees and a pond. The trees may hold migrants and rarities like Couch's Kingbird, while the nearby fields may hold sparrows and icterids, including Common Grackle.

Access: Road only Cost: free Parking: Roadside

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FM399

There are a couple points of interest on FM399 between Hwy 84 and US380. Close to Hwy 84 (between FM2282 and CR210) lies a distant playa that may hold shorebirds. A scope will be helpful for this location. Closer to US380 (just south of CR240) lies a prairie dog town, which means the potential for Burrowing Owls in the summer and Ferruginous Hawks/Golden Eagle in the winter.

Access: Road only Cost: free Parking: Roadside