

Nature Tourism Highlights

- The most popular birding and butterfly destination in the United States
- 507 recorded bird species; 39 of those species seen nowhere else in the country
- 50 percent of all recorded bird species in the United States are recorded in the McAllen area
- 11 different habitats converge in the area, attracting different species
- McAllen is the funnel for the major migratory flyway in the Western Hemisphere
- 300 butterfly species of the 500 known to be in the United States
- Dragonfly watching growing in popularity
- Home to the ocelot and **jaguarundi**, endangered big cats (**spelling**)
- Number one in the nation for reptile species; 149 recorded
- Second in the nation for mammals; 159 recorded
- 340 endemic species _ plants and animals found nowhere else in the world
- 125,000 visitors travel to the area yearly for bird watching; projected to **reach 200,000 by 2006**
- Nature tourism has economic impact of \$125 million yearly; projected to **reach \$200,000 by 2006**
- Each rare bird species is responsible for \$100,000 in local spending
- Nature tourism is responsible for 2,500 local jobs
- Home to many **expert birders, field guides and nature artists**
- Area a model for communities in the United States
- Host of the world's richest wildlife photography contest (**Valley Land Fund Photo Contest, held ever 2 years**)
- Home of **World Birding Center locations now open in Mission and Edinburg**
- Part of the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail
- Home to the Great Texas Birding Classic team competition
- Home to three national wildlife refuges, including the top two **in the US** for recorded bird species
- Many partnerships with Mexico for wildlife watching
- Native planting **and habitat preservation have** become widespread

Places of Interest in the McAllen area

- International Museum of Art & Science
- Museum of South Texas History
- **Edinburg Scenic Wetlands**
- **World Birding Center Headquarters**
- **North American Butterfly Association Butterfly Park**
- Valley Nature Center
- Frontera Audubon **Thicket**

Area Information

- Geographical, financial, social and cultural center of the Rio Grande Valley
- **Southernmost region of the continental United States, situated as far south as Ft. Lauderdale, Florida**
- Located eight miles from Mexico border
- **Population of 115,000; three million people within a 60-mile radius, including Mexico**
- **Among the 4 fastest growing areas in the country every year for last 10 years**