

WORLD BIRDING CENTER HEADQUARTERS FACTS
October 2004

- The World Birding Center Headquarters at Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park is the flagship site of a network of nine unique birding destinations set along a 120-mile historic river road in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of south Texas.
- After seven years of planning and work, the headquarters hosted a grand opening on October 2004. The project cost \$7.3 million in federal, state and local funds.
- The WBC headquarters in Mission is the first of three WBC sites managed by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to open. The department will also build and operate the World Birding Center at Estero Llano Grande State Park near Weslaco and the World Birding Center at Resaca de la Palma State Park near Brownsville.
- Six other WBC sites are being built and/or operated by local communities in Edinburg, Harlingen, Hidalgo, McAllen, Roma, and South Padre Island.
- The WBC headquarters now covers 764 acres, including the original 587.7-acre state park, plus 176.2 acres donated by Bentsen Palm Development.
- HQ facilities include approximately 12,800 sq. ft. of new interior space, including an exhibit hall featuring bi-lingual bird and habitat exhibits with Spanish translations by Museo de las Aves de Mexico. There is also meeting space, a gift shop and café bar.
- However, the headquarters is designed to get people outdoors and facilitate direct contact with nature and wildlife. A new 30-foot hawk tower provides a commanding vantage at the edge of a restored wetland/lake. “Water stations” with trickling or misting water and native plant landscaping provide settings to attract and view birds.
- Extensive habitat restoration will transform former agricultural fields into native trees, brush and wetland habitats. “Wildscape” gardens will showcase ways people can use native plants to provide bird and wildlife habitat.
- Habitat restoration is vital because the Lower Rio Grande Valley has high biodiversity and is an internationally-known birding destination, yet agriculture, residential and business development have altered or replaced all but 3-to-5 percent of the region’s original native habitat. The WBC and other Valley nature tourism ventures emphasize the connections between habitat, wildlife, tourism and jobs.
- Educational and interpretive programs will engage visitors in the story of the site and how they can contribute to conservation by becoming good stewards. Programs will be available for all ages and all skill levels of birding and outdoor experiences.
- The WBC is more than just birding; it also includes opportunities for general nature appreciation, photography, hiking/biking, wildlife observation and outdoor recreation.
- Details are online (www.worldbirdingcenter.org).