



# NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY  
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## STUDENTS FROM PORT LAVACA TRAVIS MIDDLE SCHOOL AND CALHOUN HIGH SCHOOL TO PARTICIPATE IN BIRD COUNT AT WHITMIRE DIVISION

*Science and Spanish Club, sponsored by GBRA, the Gulf of Mexico Foundation, and the  
USFWS Aransas National Wildlife Refuge has been practicing bird identification*

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**Seguin, Texas** - On Friday, December 8, the Travis Middle School and Calhoun High School Science and Spanish Club will take a field trip to the 3,440-acre Myrtle Foester-Whitmire Division, a land management unit of the USFWS Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which hosts 18 percent of the waterfowl wintering on the Texas Gulf Coast. Sponsored by the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) and the Gulf of Mexico Foundation, the Science and Spanish Club includes approximately 25 students in grades six through eleven and their teachers, Sherrie Krause and Maggie Hernandez. Using field guides provided by the sponsors, the class has been practicing bird identification in preparation for the event. The event is intended to emulate the Christmas Bird Count that takes place annually at the Aransas National Refuge.

"The Christmas Bird Count has grown in popularity since it was originally founded by the National Audubon Society in 1900," said Cinde Thomas-Jimenez, GBRA Education Coordinator. "We thought this would be a great way to expose students to the importance of the wetland environment that is so crucial to migrating birds. It's another reason to protect and conserve our water resources. Being able to actually see the environment and the beautiful birds that depend on it puts emphasis on the message that water is important to all living things."

GBRA has a particular interest in the Whitmire Division. In November 2004, a Memorandum of Understanding was completed among the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust, GBRA and the USFWS Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. In March 2005, a water supply contract between GBRA and the Refuge for the delivery of fresh water to the Whitmire Division was signed. In addition, grant monies totaling approximately \$90,000 from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and the Formosa Plastics Environmental Endowment Fund provide funding for additional water control structures and improvements to be made to the existing GBRA canal system within the Whitmire Division.

"A total of 1,140 acres of vital wetlands have been enhanced as a result of this cooperative effort, providing adequate water levels and food resources for waterfowl and other migratory birds on the project area's managed impoundments and second-crop rice fields," said Thomas-Jimenez.

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The Science and Spanish Club students will depart from Travis Middle School, 705 N. Nueces Street, at 8:00 a.m. on Friday, December 8, spending about two hours at the Whitmire Division, starting the bird count at about 9 a.m., stopping for lunch and then more bird watching at the USFWS Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

“The Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Complex was established in 1937 and currently encompasses 115,000 acres,” said Tonya Stinson, USFWS Aransas National Refuge Complex Environmental Education Specialist. “The Myrtle Foester Whitmire Division is approximately 3,440 acres, and is part of our coastal waterfowl refuge which is a winter foraging ground for thousands of migratory birds. There are lots of birds at the Whitmire Division that most of us rarely get to see, such as the two flamingos that appeared last year after hurricane season. The Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Complex is the winter foraging site for the only naturally migrating and breeding population of the Whooping Cranes. Other endangered or threatened birds found include the Southern Bald Eagle, the Brown Pelican, and the Piping Plover. We think the students will really enjoy this hands-on environmental education experience while learning about the importance of the local watershed.”

GBRA provides stewardship for the water resources in its ten-county statutory district, which begins near the headwaters of the Guadalupe and Blanco Rivers, ends at San Antonio Bay, and includes Kendall, Comal, Hays, Caldwell, Guadalupe, Gonzales, DeWitt, Victoria, Calhoun and Refugio counties.