



**Proposal for**  
**2008 Annual Meeting of**  
**The Waterbird Society**  
**5 – 8 November 2008**

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**Local committee:** Clay Green (Chair), Texas State University, Bart Ballard, Texas A&M – Kingsville, Liz Smith, Texas A&M – Corpus Christi, and David Newstead, Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries.

**Venue:** We will be hosting the 2008 annual meeting of the Waterbird Society at the Sheraton Beach Hotel on South Padre Island, Texas. South Padre Island, a 34 mile long stretch of pristine white beach bordered by the Laguna Madre Bay and Gulf of Mexico, is situated at the southerly tip of Texas near the border of Mexico. The area is known for its white sand beaches, numerous watersports, fishing, sailing, and most importantly, birding. South Padre Island and south Texas are world renowned destination for birding; over 500 species have been documented in the lower Rio Grande Valley. Over 100 species of waterbirds occur as resident or wintering birds in South Padre Island alone. Texas has a multitude of avian and wetland scientists, including numerous waterbird scientists that comprise the Texas Colonial Waterbird Society. We expect an excellent turnout and hope to heavily involve our Mexican counterparts through possible plenary speaker, symposia, etc.

**Timing:** The weather is usually quite nice during early November and the threat of hurricanes is diminished. Migration will be winding down by this time but South Padre Island hosts numerous wintering species, many of which be arriving by the time of the meeting.

**Meeting Site:** The Sheraton Beach Hotel has 200 rooms and 45 condominiums, with each room featuring ocean views, refrigerators, and wireless internet. The hotel is situated on the beach and includes 6,000 foot swimming pool, a Jacuzzi, and swim-up bar. The hotel has over 8,500 sq ft of meeting space for a total of 9 rooms. These spaces include a 3,500 sq ft ballroom (up to 300 people) and adjoining rooms for breakout sessions, meetings, etc.

**Travel:** The area is served by two international airports: Brownsville/South Padre Island International Airport, serviced by Continental Airline, is located just 26 miles from the island and Valley International Airport, serviced by Southwest and Continental Airlines,

is located in Harlingen, approximately 40 miles from the island. Ground shuttles are available for from both airports and discounted rates will most likely be available. We are working on negotiated rates for airport shuttles to/from hotel.

**Accommodations:**

For the Sheraton Beach Hotel, we have been offered \$85/night for 5-8 November. There are over 30 hotels on the island with rates varying between \$45/night to \$159/night. There are also several campgrounds and Bed & Breakfasts on the island.

**Scientific program:** The Sheraton Beach Hotel meeting spaces can be divided up into smaller rooms for the possibility of having concurrent paper sessions, symposia and workshops simultaneously. Current plans to also have 2-3 plenary sessions (e.g. Thursday and Friday morning). Tentative plans to have symposia on 1) “Waterbird research in the Laguna Madre of Texas-Laguna Madre de Tamaulipas” to attract speakers working in both the Texas and Mexican side of the Laguna, 2) shorebirds, and 3) climate change. Sponsorships for proceedings of these symposia are still being investigated.

**Social Events:** Breakfast buffet and hot lunch buffet will be offered each day as part of the registration package. This has been successful at past WBS meetings and appears to be an excellent opportunity for social interaction and scientific discussions plus it keeps folks around for the afternoon sessions. Additional social events include:

- Wednesday evening reception – no-cost welcome reception with cash bar, light fare.
- Thursday evening poster social – no-cost social with cash bar, heavy hors d’oeuvres.
- Friday evening – TBA, either a beach cookout or evening tour of G-P Zoo, still looking at several opportunities.
- Saturday evening – Annual Banquet and Awards Ceremony, included in registration.

**Field Trips:** South Padre Island is one of the premier birding spots in the world. Field trips are still to be determined but there are numerous opportunities including great birding destinations like Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, and Sabal Palms Audubon Sanctuary. Pelagic cruises can also be arranged through the World Birding Center and SPI Birding and Nature Center. Late migratory and wintering bird species should be plentiful. Whale sharks and several species of dolphin are commonly seen on the pelagics.

Registration Costs – coming soon!