

Mount Holyoke College Class of 1964

After the Middle Ages comes the Renaissance!

Birding and Photographic Journey to Texas: Search for Endangered Whooping Cranes

Whooping Cranes in Texas



November 2011, **Priscilla Morse Huston** and **Nancy Chambers Goff** were discussing the endangered whooping cranes that winter on the Texas coast south of Priscilla's home in Houston and they hatched a plan for a birding and photographing trip. **Edie Prentice Mendez, Sarah Allen Mowitt** and **Lenore Wadzinski Yousef** joined in. Priscilla planned the trip, was our tourguide/driver for Houston, and especially Rice University, and she and her husband Sam hosted us in their gracious home.



Sarah, Edie, Priscilla, Nancy and Lenore in Houston

Our first morning in Houston, we joined Priscilla at the Rice Women's Faculty Book Club to discuss Sandy Tolan's "The Lemon Tree." Priscilla then drove us down the coast to the Inn at Fulton Harbor, where we spent 3 nights within short walking distance to the birding boat and nearby restaurants and watering holes.



Harbor at Fulton Bay



Lenore, Sarah, Priscilla, Edie and Nancy

In spite of predictions for rain and thunderstorms, we had marvelous weather the entire trip. In the morning we boarded the birding boat "Skimmer" at Fulton Harbor for a trip to the nearby marshes and shell islands to get our first views of the cranes - and dolphins, and much more numerous herons, hawks, pelicans, cormorants, ... Fascinating! These dramatic cranes are the tallest North American birds; they mate for life and migrate from their nesting spots in northern Canada as couples with one or two juveniles to this region of the Gulf of Mexico coast. We drove back up the Coast to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge [free with a National Parks' Golden Age Passport!], stopping as we saw a few crane families along the road. At the Refuge we saw more cranes, many other birds, deer and alligators - the latter a bit too close for comfort!



Whooping Crane



Pelicans



Pelicans



Whooping Crane family with twins



Assorted birds

We returned a second day for short hikes, birdwatching, and, of course, photography.



Hawk



Alligator



Nancy



Priscilla



Sarah and Lenore



Edie

On our final day, we enjoyed the Rockport Clay Expo pottery fair and the Coastal Bend Woodcarving show and competition, both with artists from throughout Texas. We returned to Houston for a marvelous concert by the Rice University Shepherd School Chamber Orchestra. Ever the consummate host, Priscilla drove us all to the airport for farewells and trips home. Thank you, Priscilla!



Submitted by: Edie Mendez (edithmen@sonic.net)
Added: 5/9/12