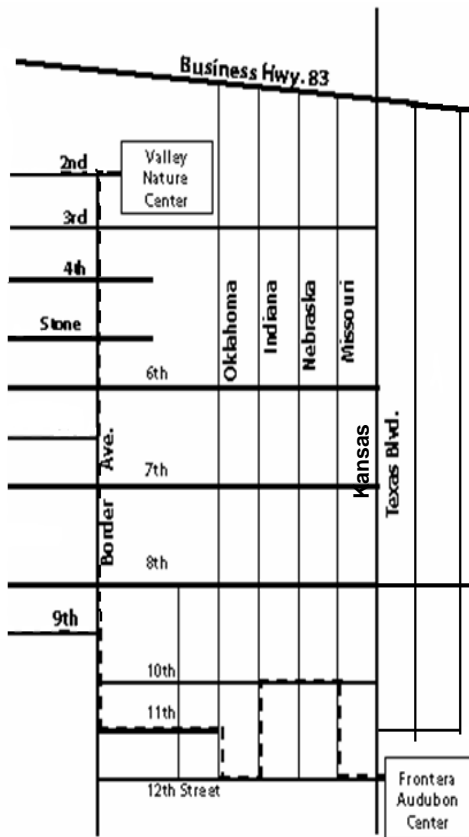


on into the Valley Nature Center parking lot.

If the flock has not appeared, retrace the route and start over again, always listening as you go. You can also park yourself at either end of the route and just wait and listen for a while.

Once the flock is located, you might have to drive over a few block to get closer to it. Once there stay under the cover of overhanging trees. Stay quiet and don't move around. If the parrots are feeding in the trees, don't approach. Use a good pair of binoculars to get the best views! All species of parrots are protected by City Ordinance, and it is illegal to molest them!

Weslaco Parrot Trail Map



**Weslaco Area
Chamber of Commerce**

301 W. Railroad
Weslaco, TX 78596
1-888-968-2102
(956) 968-2102
www.weslaco.com

The Parrots of Weslaco, Texas



**Rendezvous with a Red
Head... Parrot of Course!**



Weslaco's Parrot Flock

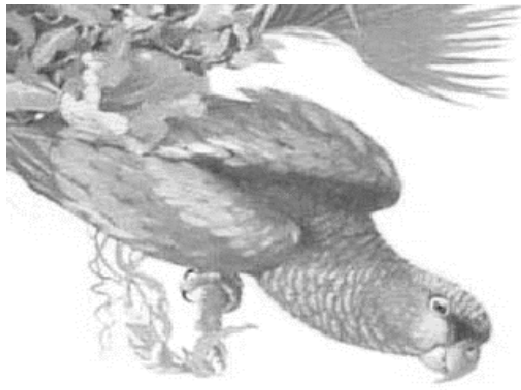
“Here come the redheads” is a familiar cry within the city limits of Weslaco, especially in the older neighborhoods.

What’s coming? Weslaco's parrot flock, that's what!

Wild parrots and parakeets have been living year-round in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in increasing numbers for the past 24 years, and historical records show that parrots and parakeets have been living and visiting the Valley for over 100 years.

Most of Weslaco's parrot flock is made up of **Red-crowned Parrots** (*Amazona viridigenalis*). This species normally inhabits semi-deciduous forest and semi-open country with scattered trees. Undoubtedly, some of the flock are escaped cage birds, but it is likely that at least a core group of them has been streaming in from Mexico during the years. These 12 –13 inch long parrots are bright green overall with a red crown on the head and a red wing patch. The upper and side of the neck is pale bluish. Their cries are loud and raucous, a two-note *cleeeo, cleeeo*, followed by *ahk-akh-akh*.

Close observation with binoculars may reveal a smaller group of **Red-loared Parrots** (*Amazona autumnalis*) mixed in the flock. This slightly larger parrot has yellow on the sides of the face and is also known as the Yellow-cheeked Parrot. The bill is darker than that of the Red-crowned and the body is heavier. They also have a smaller patch of red on the crown.



Their voice is varied, loud, and raucous. *Kyake, kyake, kyake, and yoik, yoik, yoik* are typical calls. These parrots are from the humid lowlands of southern Tamaulipas in Mexico.

From time to time a few **Lilac-crowned Parrots** or **White-fronted Parrots** join the flock. A good pair of binoculars will be most helpful in sorting out these species.

On occasion, one or two **Yellow-headed Parrots** (*Amazona oratrix*) may join the flock as well. These larger parrots have a yellow head and thighs and are unmistakable. Their voice is raucous but with a more human quality, and unlike the Red-crowns, they are frequently silent when flying. These parrots inhabit dry open woods, edges, and savannahs of southern Nuevo Leon and central Tamaulipas.

During spring and summer, a small flock of **Green Parakeets** (*Aratinga holochlora*) can be seen and heard flying over Frontera Audubon, the Valley Nature Center, and City Cemetery. These large parakeets are green overall, with a slender, long, pointed tail. They generally nest in old tree cavities throughout the city.

The flock varies in size from year to year—usually between 45 to 150 individuals. Each evening during the fall, winter, and early spring, about 20 minutes before sundown, they can be heard coming from blocks away, usually from the northwest.

When the parrots land in the tall trees around the Frontera Audubon Center and other areas around town to roost for the night, the noise that they make is incredible—chattering, squawking, muttering, trilling, and screaming, all in a simultaneous cacophony.

The flock leaves their roost site early in the morning as day light breaks. They divide into smaller groups and spread out over the city to feed on green leaves, flower buds, and seeds of taller trees in the neighborhoods. They are very hard to spot during the day if not flying, since they feed silently, and blend in with the foliage in the treetops.

In spring the flock breaks up and pairs form to nest in old tree cavities all over town. The adults stay near their nests, but the younger or single parrots continue to roost as small groups in the traditional roosting spots.

The Best Way to See the Parrots:

Arrive at the intersection of 11th Street and Kansas, or 10th Street and Missouri, about an hour before sunset. Listen carefully to hear the flock approaching. If not heard, drive slowly with windows down, listening, westward along 10th or 12th to Border Ave. If you have not located the flock, turn right on Border and drive slowly northward to Gibson City Park and