

The Valley Nature Center

The Valley Nature Center's mission centers around habitat conservation through environmental education. Approximately 6,000 students visit VNC each year and an additional 9,000 students are reached through in-school programs. The main focus is to connect children with nature to create a bond that brings about long-term conservation.



Buff-bellied Hummingbird



LOCATION: The Valley Nature Center is in Weslaco, Texas, south central Hidalgo County. This portion of the county is located in the delta region of the Rio Grande River.

SIZE: 2.4 ha (6 acres)

HABITAT: The habitat at The Valley Nature Center is mostly regenerating Tamaulipan Thorn Scrub Forest with small pockets of Sabal Palm and riparian areas including Sugar Hackberry, Texas Ebony, and Tepeguaje. There are three small ponds with open areas containing nectar producing plants. Many native plants were transplanted to VNC from sites which were slated for development and a stroll through the center allows one to examine plant species native to diverse areas such as Sabal Palm Grove, Arroyo Colorado Brush, the Barretal, Coastal Lomas, and the Chihuahuan Thorn Forest.

BIRDS: One hundred and seventy-three species of birds have been documented at VNC. In addition to many of the Valley specialities like Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Plain Chachalaca, Green Jay, Clay-colored Robin, Long-billed Thrasher, White-tipped Dove, and Altamira Oriole, VNC provides habitat during migration for many species of neotropical/nearctic migrants including 60 species of wood warblers, tanagers, flycatchers, and vireos.



CONSERVATION: The Valley Nature Center is on land owned by the city of Weslaco so the site itself is fairly secure. The Lower Rio Grande Valley is undergoing tremendous growth and native habitat is being destroyed at an alarming rate, however. To help save as much native plant material as possible, VNC performs plant rescues in areas that are slated for development. The rescued plants are potted and either offered for sale through VNC's native plant nursery or they are donated.

Site Partner:

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