

The Economic Impact of South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center

Prepared for South Padre Island Economic
Development Corporation



Prepared by Aaron Economic Consulting, LLC.
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Executive Summary

South Padre Island, Texas, is a well-established premier tourist destination with name recognition. It is also uniquely suited for nature and ecotourism. In fact, one of the island's landmarks is the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center. The center is one of the Lower Rio Grande Valley's nine World Birding Center sites. The center provides unique birding and educational opportunities that highlight the natural environment of South Padre Island and the Laguna Madre Coastal area. South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center is also a very important local and regional economic driver, attracting almost 43,000 visitors annually; not including pass-holders, side entrance and non-paying visitors, and weddings and events. Aaron Economic Consulting (AEC) estimates that in 2016, the 43,000 annual Birding and Nature Center's visitors contributed \$21.4 million to the economy of the island through spending on lodging, food and drinks, entertainment, and souvenirs. The center's 43,000 visitors contributed \$10.4 million in value added to the island's economy and another \$11 million to the economies of surrounding communities in the form of payments for supplies and labor. In Addition to the 220 jobs that are attributable to the center, there are significant contributions to state and local tax revenues. The estimated tax contribution to state and local coffers is \$1.45million (\$553,250 in sales tax, and 578,075 in property tax). AEC also estimated the economic impact of 14,584 visitors that can be documented and verified and are assumed to have visited the region exclusively because of nature tourism. The economic impact of this sub-group is significant. Birding and Nature Center visitors are responsible for \$14 million in total spending, with \$7 million in value added staying in the island and another \$7 million going to surrounding communities (leakages), and more than 140 jobs can be attributed to this sub-group. Furthermore, approximately \$1million in state and local tax revenues are generated (\$353,280 in sales tax and 369,176 in property tax).

Wildlife watching and wildlife related activities are the fourth largest industry in the Rio Grande Valley. South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center is a central piece around which a nature, birding, fish, and wildlife recreation cluster should be developed to take advantage of the benefits of agglomeration. The center has the potential of improving local and regional economic performance and mitigating the impact of seasonality on employment and business turnover within the hospitality industry by attracting birders and wildlife enthusiasts during the off-peak months. By consolidating nature tourism marketing strategy for the Lower Rio Grande Valley's nine World Birding Center sites and targeting international birders from northern Europe, the island can attract a different demographic with greater spending propensity during off-peak months while still catering to the families it usually attracts during peak summer months when kids are out of school.

Introduction

Travel and tourism is one of the world's largest economic sectors. It creates jobs, drives exports, and generates prosperity across the world. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), in 2016 international tourism, generated 9.2 percent of global GDP, 9 percent of total employment, and 4.9 percent of all consumer spending. The United Nations has designated 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. This designation provides a huge opportunity for South Padre Island to further showcase the tremendous economic, social, cultural, environmental, and heritage value that the sector can bring. In the U.S., travel and tourism ranked 9th among major industries in 2013, with \$448 billion or 2.8 percent of GDP and 7th among major employers with more than 5.6 million of the 144 million jobs or 3.9 percent of total employment.

In 2011, the U.S. Census reported that 4.4 million U.S. residents 16 years old and older fed, observed, or photographed wildlife in Texas. Approximately 97 percent (4.2 million) were around-the-home participants and 23 percent (1.0 million) were away-from-home¹ participants.

The importance of nature tourism in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas, is indisputable and South Padre Island, as an established premier leisure tourist destination, is uniquely situated for nature and ecotourism. In fact, a 2004 study by Mathis and Matisoff² stated that the number one and number two bird watching states/provinces in North America are

¹ A detail explanation of around-the-home and away-from-home is included in the appendix

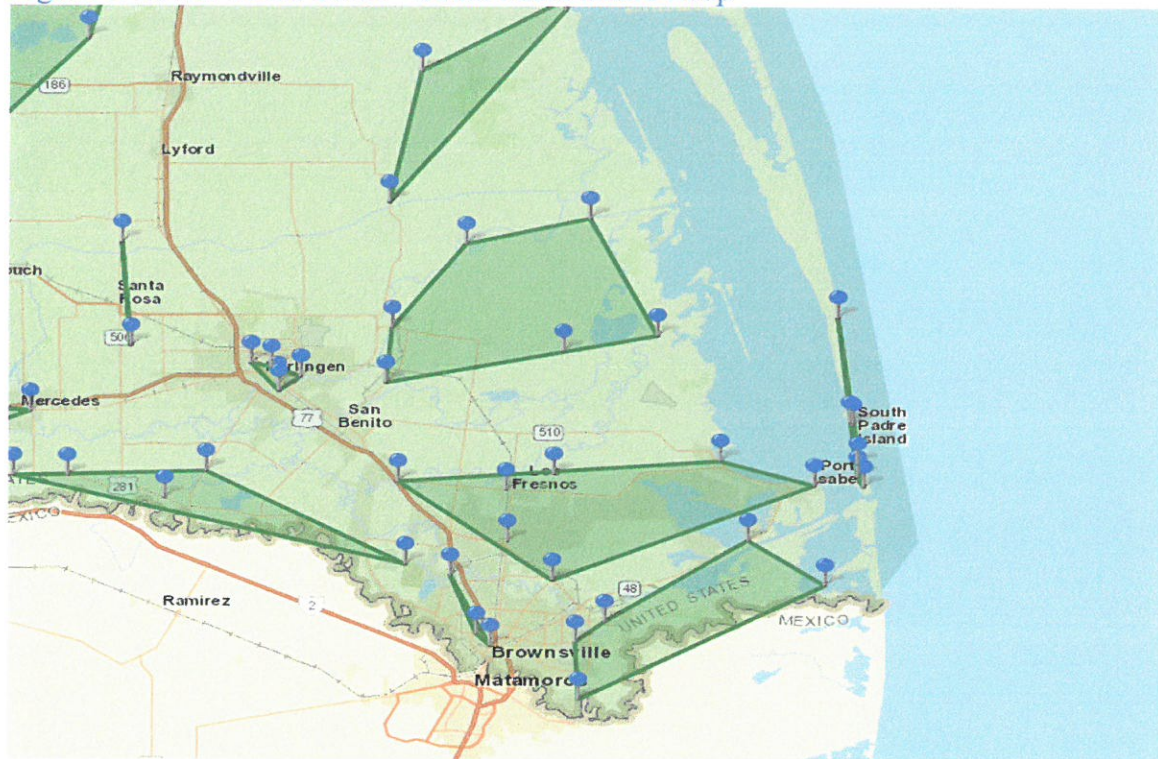
² Mathis, M., & Matisoff, D. (2004). *Valuing nature in Texas: A characterization of ecotourism in the Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley* (Discussion Paper VnT-04-01). Houston, TX: Houston Advanced research Center.

Texas and the Lower Rio Grande Valley respectively. According to Mathis and Matisoff the four counties that make up the Lower Rio Grande Valley – Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy – have more recorded bird species (almost 500 documented species) than all but four states.

The purpose of this report is to estimate the economic impact of the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center on the local economy. South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center is a non-profit organization created by the town of South Padre Island's Economic Development Corporation. It is the Lower Rio Grande Valley's premier destination to observe birds, butterflies and other wildlife.

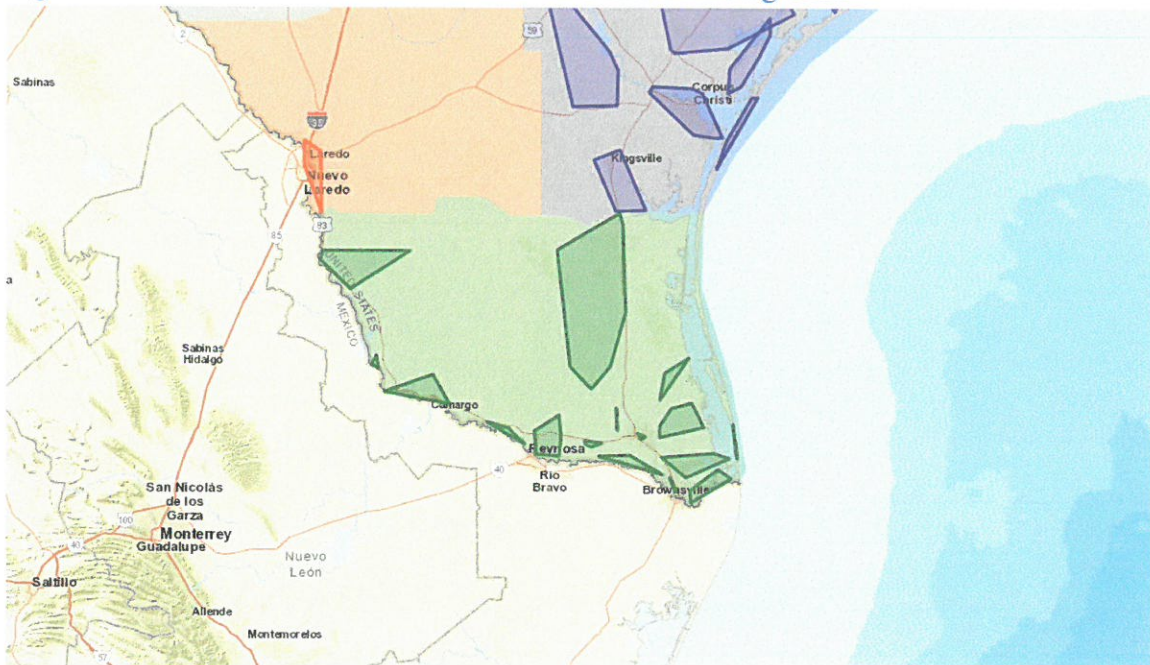
South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center and its environs are a unique destination. Established on a 50-acre tract of rich ecosystem, it contains habitats with dune meadows, salt marshes and intertidal flats along with thickets of native shrubs and trees that are attractive to migrating birds. The center's mission is to raise awareness of environmental conservation by educating the public about birds and other wildlife and plants of South Padre Island and the surrounding Laguna Madre coastal area. The center has over 3,300 feet of boardwalk, an outstanding five-story tower with spectacular views of the Laguna Madre, beaches and dunes of South Padre Island, and the South Padre Island skyline. The center provides unique birding opportunities, interpretive tours, and educational opportunities to learn about birds, the flora and fauna, and the natural environment of South Padre Island and the Laguna Madre coastal area.

Figure 1: Lower Texas Coast – South Padre Island Loop



Source: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Figure 2: Lower Texas Coast – Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail



Source: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

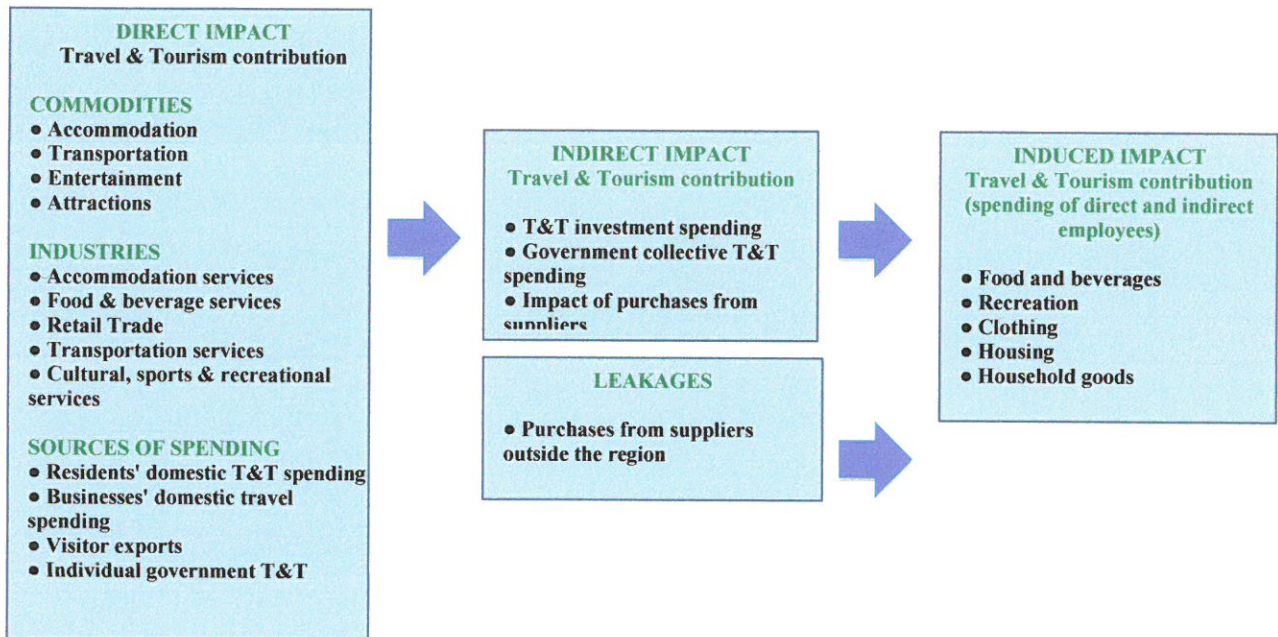
Economic Impact Analysis

One of the primary concerns for policy makers is how to increase the economic benefits of ecotourism. The principal approach, by default, is to attract more visitors. However, increasing the number of visitors beyond the absorptive capacity of these natural resources can stress and degrade the resources that ecotourism relies on. To increase the local economic benefits of ecotourism, it is preferable to increase spending per visitor; or increasing impact multipliers by reducing leakages, strengthening backward linkages, and developing local suppliers.

Attracting higher-spending visitors, developing local events, and developing local handicrafts, can increase the level of spending per visitor. Backward linkages can be strengthened by greater use of local goods and services and by integrating the tourism cluster through financial and technical support to new and existing local suppliers. Economic impact analysis can be used to conduct optimization and costs-benefits analyzes for such programs.

Economic impact analysis is grouped into three categories: direct, indirect, and induced. Direct impacts arise from the initial tourism spending, such as money spent at hotels and restaurants. To provide goods and services (output), restaurants for example, must buy supplies including services (inputs) from other businesses, thereby generating a new round of impact indirectly connected to the visitors, called indirect impacts. In addition, restaurants and suppliers' employees earn wages and salaries by providing the goods and services visitors demand. These employees spend part of their earned income, household expenditures, in their communities to buy various goods and services, thereby generating a third round of impacts called induced impacts. If restaurants purchase part of their supplies from outside the region, then these expenditures leak out and provide no indirect impact to the region.

Figure 3: Economic Impact and Leakages



Direct impact is estimated by summing up all initial tourist expenditures on items such as lodging, restaurant meals and drinks, souvenirs, etc. Indirect and induced impacts are estimated by mapping the linkages connecting the different economic sectors. The information generated is useful in identifying sources and magnitude of leakages, and in determining the likely economic impact if these leakages are reduced or eliminated. This helps policy makers in prioritizing the promotion and development of local producers and suppliers.

The Economic Impact of Ecotourism in Texas

Every 10 years, the U.S. Census conducts a National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. The National Survey defines a birdwatcher (also referred to as a birder) as any individual who has actively and closely observed or attempted to identify birds. People who happen to notice birds while they were outdoors, or on a trip, or at the zoo and watched captive birds are not considered birders. In 2011,

approximately 20 percent of the population in the U.S. 16 years of age and older (47 million people), was identified as birders.

Wildlife Watching Expenditures in Texas

Wildlife watchers in Texas spent \$1.8 billion on wildlife-watching activities in 2011. These expenditures included \$254 million on food and lodging, \$197 million on transportation, and \$28 million on other trip related expenses. This summation included 26 percent of all wildlife watching expenditures by participants. The average trip related expenditures for away-from-home participants were \$463 per person in 2011. In addition, wildlife watching enthusiasts spent approximately \$920 million on equipment including binoculars, cameras, special clothing, etc. Another \$330 million was spent on auxiliary equipment; these are tents, backpacking equipment, and special equipment expenditures such as campers, and trucks, etc. Special and auxiliary equipment expenditures are purchased for wildlife watching recreation but could be used in activities other than wildlife watching. Wildlife watching enthusiasts spent an additional \$426 million on items such as magazines, membership dues and contributions, land leasing and ownership, and plantings.

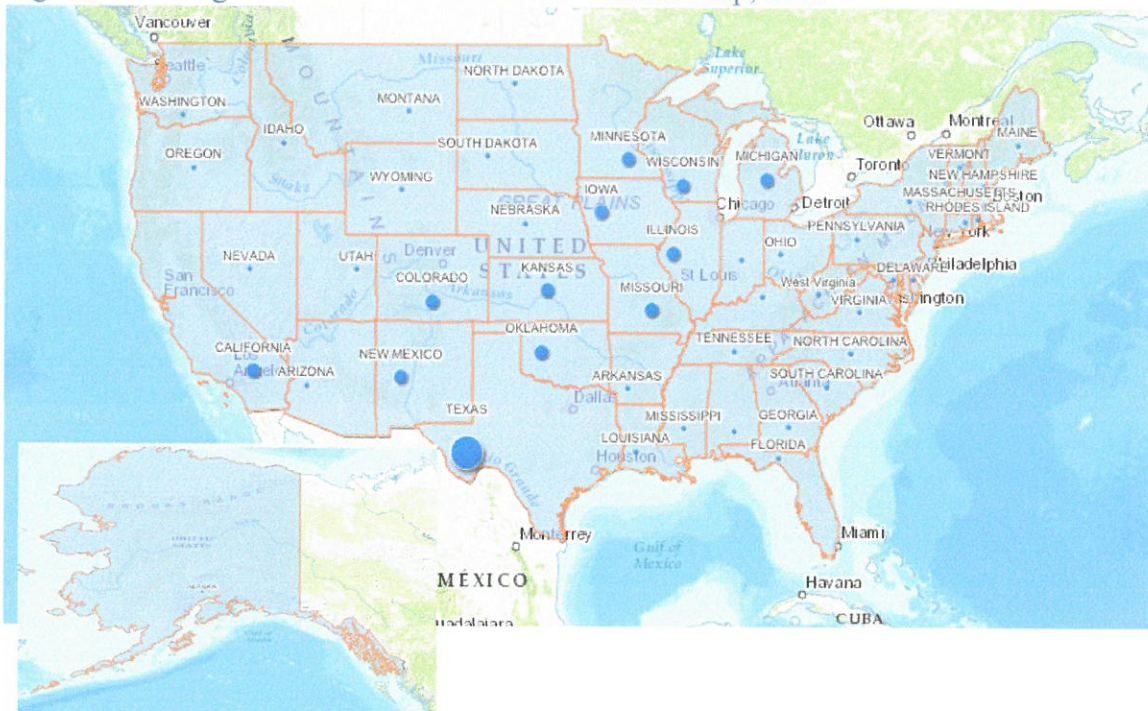
South Padre Island Birding Center and Nature Center

Between January and December 2016 approximately 43,000 people visited South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center. The center collected visitor data from 14,584 visitors. The data collected included names, city of origin, state, and sometimes zip codes and emails. Two thirds of the center's visitors did not provide any information. Visitor data show that visitors came from every state in the U.S. except Hawaii. Visitors also came from Canada, Mexico, England, France, Italy, Germany, Holland, Hungary, South Africa, and Spain. Texas contributed the largest number of visitors followed by Oklahoma, Minnesota, and Illinois. AEC estimated the economic impact for two sets of visitors: 1- visitors to the center whose primary reason to visit South Padre Island is birding, and 2-

all visitors to the birding and nature center regardless of the reason for their visit to the island. AEC assumed that the characteristics of the data collected is a fair representation of all visitors to the center and used the distribution of visitors by origin proportionally to all visitors to conduct the economic impact of all 42,785 visitors.

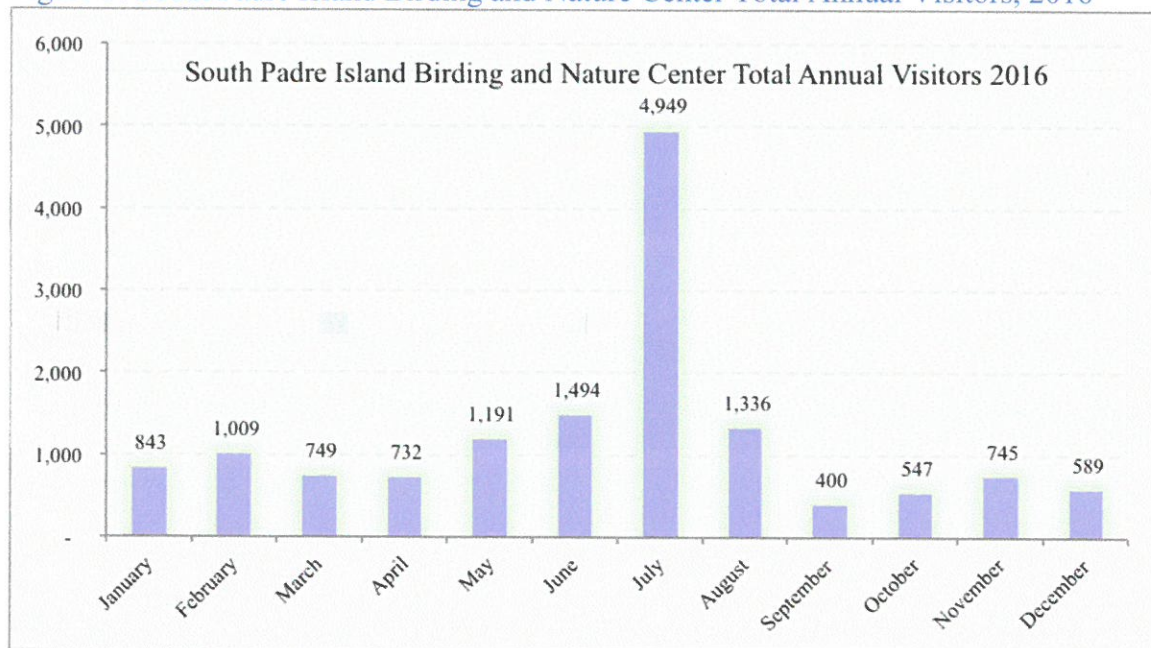
The results of both analyses are summarized in tables below. However, there is a fallacious tendency to associate economic impact with all visitors to the center or with point of sales or where revenues and taxes are collected. In the case of South Padre Island, Texas, visitors come to the island because of special attributes that do not exist in their own communities, features like the beach, the Birding and Nature Center, Sea Turtle. Inc., deep sea and bay fishing, etc. and not for the hotels and restaurants, even though the hotels and restaurants are where revenues and taxes are collected. A quick survey asking visitors the reason for their visit to the island will suffice to show that most of the economic impact at the island can be traced directly to the beach and to the island's other unique features and almost none can be attributed to the hotels, restaurants and retail stores. Hotels, restaurants and retail businesses generally follow traffic; they do not precede it or create it. In other words, a hotel or restaurant will be established if the demand for its services exists and if potential customers are already present.

Figure 4: Birding and Nature Center Annual Visitors Map, 2016



Source: ESRI and AEC

Figure 5: South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center Total Annual Visitors, 2016



Source: SPI-EDC and AEC

Economic Impact of South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center

Visitors to South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center by origin (Figure 6) show that 69.47 percent of visitors originated from Texas. Data collected by the center also show that 85.06 percent of visitors from Texas are not local visitors. Visitors from other U.S. states represent 28.93 percent, while international visitors make up the remaining 1.60 percent. The average length of stay was 4.3 days while the average per person-day spending in 2016 was \$154.35. Visitor per person-day expenditures summarized in Table 8 are consistent with Texas travel report spending estimates.

AEC's economic impact analysis estimates the economic contribution of the birding center's visitors on the economy of the island. The economic impact of the center is not equal to the amount of money collected at the birding center. It is every dollar spent at the island by visitors that have come to the island primarily for birding purposes, and every subsequent dollar spent on supplies to meet the demand of these visitors. In 2016, approximately 3.57 percent of the 1.2 million people who visited the island also visited South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center but only 1.22 percent came because of birding. South Padre Island's birders generated 8.9 percent of the \$156.61 million in gross sales and 3.53 percent of total sales tax revenue.

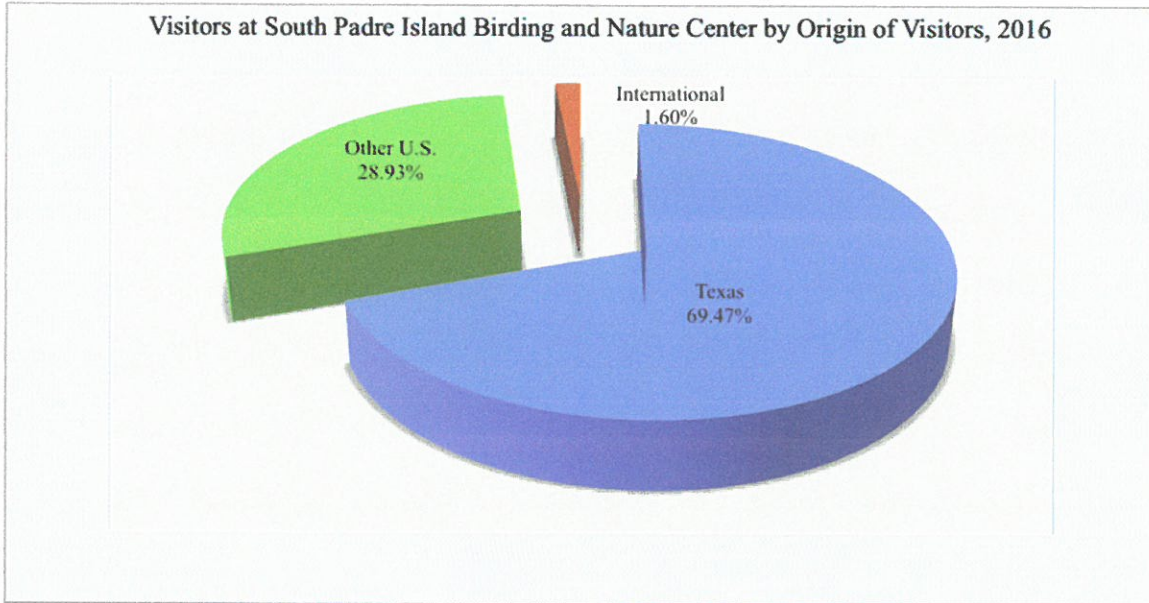
Table 8: Visitor Spending

	Person Day	Total Stay Expense
Birding and Nature Center Access Fee	\$6.00	\$6.00
Food and Drinks	\$28.34	\$123.85
Auto Expenses	\$22.89	\$100.03
Lodging	\$58.53	\$255.78
Nature Tourism Merchandise	\$12.87	\$12.87
Other Retail	\$13.42	\$58.65
Other Entertainment	\$7.39	\$32.29
Miscellaneous	\$4.79	\$20.93

The total contribution of the center's 14,584 visitors to the local gross product was \$13.94 million. The total impact is the value of all the visitor expenditures while they were at the island, plus any expenditure by businesses, including hotels and restaurants, on supplies to provide the visitors with the goods and services they demand while at the

island, plus the expenditure by employees of these businesses, including suppliers because of income earned serving the center's visitors.

Figure 6: Visitors at South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center by Origin, 2016



Source: SPI-EDC and AEC

The total output impact includes \$10.06 million in direct impact, \$2.37 million indirect impact and \$1.50 million in induced impact. Total value-added is the share of the output contribution that stays in South Padre Island and does not leak out of the local economy. Total value-added was \$6.82 million, direct value-added impact was \$5.14 million, indirect value-added impact was \$853,472, and induced value-added impact was \$836,213. More than half the spending (51.04 percent) at the island leaked out to surrounding communities. The center contributes a total of 142 jobs to South Padre Island's economy and \$3.96 million in labor income.

Table 9: Birding and Nature Center Impact Summary

Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Total Value-Added	Output
Direct Effect	117	\$2,999,529	\$5,135,203	\$10,064,419
Indirect Effect	13	\$518,044	\$853,472	\$2,372,305
Induced Effect	12	\$437,732	\$836,213	\$1,502,858
Total Effect	142	\$3,955,304	\$6,824,888	\$13,939,582

Table 10 shows the top ten impacted economic sectors in South Padre Island. As expected, hotels and motels are the biggest beneficiaries from the birding center followed by food and drinking places with 57 jobs and 30 jobs respectively. General merchandise stores get 14 jobs, and other retail stores get 9 jobs. The average annual salary for the hotel and motel jobs is \$26,840 and \$19,480 for food and drinking places.

Table 10: Birding and Nature Center Top Ten Employment Impact

Description	Total Employment	Total Labor Income	Total Value-Added	Total Output
Hotels and motels	57	1,529,901	2,771,124	5,007,938
Food and drinking places	30	584,397	875,425	2,027,132
Retail Stores - General merchandise	14	373,717	556,597	898,675
Retail Stores - Miscellaneous	9	157,635	227,713	315,860
Automotive equipment rental and leasing*	7	285,715	591,295	1,465,361
Other amusement and recreation industries	3	88,823	155,901	488,557
Retail Stores - Sporting goods, hobby, book and music	1	30,427	50,103	81,294
Museums, historical sites, zoos, and parks	1	44,233	51,319	88,951
Offices of physicians, dentists, and other health practitioners	1	65,555	76,409	122,972
Wholesale trade businesses	1	44,803	77,400	106,801

Table 11 shows the 2016 state and local tax impact attributable to the birding and nature center. Visitors to the center contributed \$353,280 in total sales tax, approximately \$85,333 to the town coffers and \$267,947 to the state coffers. Another \$369,176 was added in the form of property tax and personal property tax revenue. The total tax revenue contribution to both the state and local economies that was attributable to the birding and nature center is \$927,435.

Table 11: Birding and Nature Center State and Local Tax Impact

Description	Employee Compensation	Proprietor Income	Tax on Production and Imports	Households	Corporations
Dividends					\$22,912
Social Ins Tax- Employee Contribution	\$3,170				
Social Ins Tax- Employer Contribution	\$13,638				
Tax on Production and Imports: Sales Tax			\$353,280		
Tax on Production and Imports: Property Tax			\$366,924		
Tax on Production and Imports: Motor Vehicle Lic			\$6,404		
Tax on Production and Imports: Severance Tax			\$64,295		
Tax on Production and Imports: Other Taxes			\$45,263		
Tax on Production and Imports: S/L Non-Taxes			\$28,583		
Corporate Profits Tax					
Personal Tax: Income Tax					
Personal Tax: Non-Taxes (Fines- Fees				\$16,714	
Personal Tax: Motor Vehicle License				\$3,087	
Personal Tax: Property Taxes				\$2,252	
Personal Tax: Other Tax (Fish/Hunt)				\$914	
Total State and Local Tax	\$16,808		\$864,748	\$22,967	\$22,912

In addition to state and local taxes, \$743,623 in federal taxes is attributable to the birding center. The largest share of this tax is employee and employer contribution to social insurance tax with \$360,217, personal income taxes was \$164,176, corporate profits tax was \$92,116. Tax on production and imports was \$76,797, and proprietor income tax was \$50,317.

Table 12: Birding and Nature Center Federal Tax Impact

Description	Employee Compensation	Proprietor Income	Tax on Production and Imports	Households	Corporations
Social Ins Tax- Employee Contribution	\$179,096	\$50,317			
Social Ins Tax- Employer Contribution	\$181,120				
Tax on Production and Imports: Excise Taxes			\$34,370		
Tax on Production and Imports: Custom Duty			\$16,006		
Tax on Production and Imports: Fed Non Taxes			\$26,421		
Corporate Profits Tax					\$92,116
Personal Tax: Income Tax				\$164,176	
Total Federal Tax	\$360,217	\$50,317	\$76,797	\$164,176	\$92,116

The following tables present the economic impact of all 42,785 visitors to South Padre Island's Birding and Nature Center. These estimates assume all the visitors to the center visited the region for birding purposes exclusively.

Table 13: Birding and Nature Center Impact Summary

Impact Type	Employment	Labor Income	Total Value-Added	Output
Direct Effect	178	4,613,283	7,770,899	15,409,697
Indirect Effect	20	806,849	1,348,473	3,639,340
Induced Effect	19	672,553	1,284,346	2,308,698
Total Effect	217	6,092,686	10,403,718	21,357,735

The estimated total output impact was 21.36 million, \$15.41 million in direct impact, \$3.64 million indirect impact and \$2.31 million in induced impact. Total value-added was \$10.40 million, \$7.77 million in direct value-added impact, \$1.35 million in indirect value-added impact, and \$1.28 million in induced value-added impact. The island captured 41.71 percent of the value generated while 51.29 percent leaked out to other communities, as many of the island suppliers are not located within the city limits. The center contributed a total of 217 jobs to South Padre Island's economy and \$6.09 million in labor income.

Table 14 shows the top ten employment impacted sectors in South Padre Island. Hotels and motels, and food and drinking places are the top two types of businesses most impacted with 67 jobs, and 44 jobs respectively, followed by general merchandise retail with 34 jobs and miscellaneous retail with 15 jobs. The average annual salary for the hotel and motel jobs is \$26,802; \$19,457 for food and drinking places; and \$24,678 for retail jobs.

Table 14: Birding and Nature Center Top Ten Employment Impact

Description	Total Employment	Total Labor Income	Total Value-Added	Total Output
Hotels and motels, including casino hotels	67	1,795,780	3,252,713	5,878,259
Food services and drinking places	44	856,119	1,282,464	2,969,669
Retail Stores - General merchandise	34	931,016	1,386,610	2,238,807
Retail Stores - Miscellaneous	15	278,204	401,881	557,448
Automotive equipment rental and leasing	12	502,760	1,040,475	2,578,532
Other amusement and recreation industries	9	235,433	413,231	1,294,968
Retail Stores - Sporting goods, hobby, book and music	2	57,237	94,249	152,924
Museums, historical sites, zoos, and parks	2	99,211	115,104	199,508
Wholesale trade businesses	1	72,237	124,793	172,198
Offices of physicians, dentists, and other health practitioners	1	100,793	117,482	189,073

Visitor state and local tax contribution in 2016 was \$553,250 in total sales tax, with approximately \$134,121 going to the town coffers and \$419,129 to the state coffers. Another \$578,075 was added in the form of property tax and personal property tax revenue. The total tax revenue contribution to both the state and local economies that was attributable to the Birding and Nature Center is \$1.45 million.

Table 15: Birding and Nature Center State and Local Tax Impact

Description	Employee Compensation	Proprietor Income	Tax on Production and Imports	Households	Corporations
Dividends					\$33,709
Social Ins Tax- Employee Contribution	\$4,964				
Social Ins Tax- Employer Contribution	\$21,359				
Tax on Production and Imports: Sales Tax			\$553,250		
Tax on Production and Imports: Property Tax			\$574,617		
Tax on Production and Imports: Motor Vehicle Lic			\$10,029		
Tax on Production and Imports: Severance Tax			\$100,688		
Tax on Production and Imports: Other Taxes			\$70,883		
Tax on Production and Imports: S/L Non-Taxes			\$44,762		
Corporate Profits Tax					
Personal Tax: Income Tax					
Personal Tax: Non-Taxes (Fines- Fees				\$25,666	
Personal Tax: Motor Vehicle License				\$4,741	
Personal Tax: Property Taxes				\$3,458	
Personal Tax: Other Tax (Fish/Hunt)				\$1,404	
Total State and Local Tax	\$26,323		\$1,354,228	\$35,269	\$33,709

Federal taxes attributable to the birding center were estimated at \$1.14 million in 2016. The largest share of this tax is employee and employer contribution to social insurance tax with \$564,136, personal income taxes was \$252,107, corporate profits tax was \$135,521. Tax on production and imports was \$120,267, and proprietor income tax was \$69,617.

Table 16: Birding and Nature Center Federal Tax Impact

Description	Employee Compensation	Proprietor Income	Tax on Production and Imports	Households	Corporations
Social Ins Tax- Employee Contribution	\$280,483	\$69,617			
Social Ins Tax- Employer Contribution	\$283,653				
Tax on Production and Imports: Excise Taxes			\$53,824		
Tax on Production and Imports: Custom Duty			\$25,066		
Tax on Production and Imports: Fed Non Taxes			\$41,377		
Corporate Profits Tax					\$135,521
Personal Tax: Income Tax				\$252,107	
Total Federal Tax	\$564,136	\$69,617	\$120,267	\$252,107	\$135,521

Conclusion

One of the most important features of South Padre Island is its uniqueness in being both a premier tourist destination with its weather, beach, fishing, and other water related activities, but also an important ecological and nature tourism destination. The International Eco-tourism Society defines eco-tourism as “*responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people*”³.

Very few tourism destinations can claim to also be eco-tourism destinations.

South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center is a key asset, not only for the city of South Padre Island but also, for the region hospitality and tourism industry. It is a critical component and a major economic linchpin for the region along with the other components of South Padre Island’s hospitality and tourism industry.

A simple way to understand the economic importance of South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center, and the island in general on the region’s economy is through economic base analysis. The economic base technique is based on the assumption that the local economy can be organized along two very general sectors: 1) a non-local sector usually referred to as basic sector, and 2) a local sector or non-basic sector. The basic sector is composed of local businesses that are entirely dependent upon external demand. For example, the Birding and Nature Center provides services to non-local visitors, so their business is largely dependent and “exporting” their services and subsequently injecting “external dollars” into the economy. The non-basic sector is made up of local businesses that largely depend on local demand. For example, a local retailer sells its goods to local households and businesses for local consumption using “local dollars” in the process.

Why is this business classification important? Economic base theory states that expanding and strengthening the local economy is done through the development of the basic sector and the injection of “new dollars” into the economy instead of circulating the same amount of “local dollars”.

³ <http://www.ecotourism.org>

The basic sector is recognized as the engine of economic growth for local economies. Economic base theory states that the local economy is strongest when it develops economic sectors that draw and inject external dollars into the economy and are not reliant on local demand. The Birding and Nature Center is part of the basic sector of the economy of the island and a source of external dollars.

Visitors come to the island because of unique features they do not have in their own communities. However, few people appreciate the economic value of the island's real attractions because most of the economic benefits that are attributable to these unique features, like the Birding and Nature Center, are captured at their point of sale by commercial tourism operators, and not by the Birding and Nature Center.

South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center's contributions to the local and surrounding economies are substantial. AEC estimated the economic impact of the 43,000 visitors to the center to exceed \$21 million of "external dollars". Approximately \$10.5 million is injected into the island's economy and another \$11 million injected into the economies of surrounding communities. The 43,000 visitors to the center are also responsible for 220 jobs and \$1.45million in state and local taxes, including \$553,250 in sales tax, and 578,075 in property tax.

South Padre Island has principally been a resort destination for families during peak months and a popular spring break destination for college students. Ecotourism's continued expansion provides the Birding and Nature Center and other nature tourism assets in South Padre Island and the Lower Rio Grande Valley an extraordinary opportunity to attract affluent visitors from all over the world and to generate greater economic activity, increased income and employment, and undeniable economic incentives for biodiversity conservation.

One potential market to explore is Scandinavia because Norwegian Airlines will soon establish air routes connecting major cities in Scandinavia to Austin, Texas, eliminating the need for multiple connecting flights between northern Europe and the Lower Rio Grande Valley. This new air service connecting Scandinavia to Austin, Texas, makes the island a relatively easily accessed destination and Scandinavia a very interesting market for South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center to explore (along with the other the

Lower Rio Grande Valley World Birding Center sites). Scandinavian and other north European countries are affluent countries with very well established bird watching cultures and a number of bird and wildlife watching clubs and associations. In addition, South Padre Island's off-peak season could be an ideal period to market the island's nature tourism and all of its other attributes to this market segment as many north Europeans have sought warmer tourism destination.