

## Seeking birding data to understand range shifts of Crested Caracaras

The Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) is a unique and iconic bird which primarily occurs in southern Texas, southern Arizona, and south-central Florida where it lives in open habitats. Historically, Crested Caracaras likely occupied a larger range than they do today – following European settlement, the range of Crested Caracaras contracted, likely driven by habitat loss and fragmentation. More recently, anecdotal evidence suggests that they are expanding their range, and sightings of them in urban areas are becoming more common. Our study aims to determine if and why the range of the Crested Caracara is changing both within the United States, and beyond. To facilitate this research, we are using publicly available point occurrence data (i.e., geographically referenced observations) from a wide range of datasets (e.g., eBird, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, Breeding Bird Survey) and data from a variety of other sources. A challenge of evaluating distributional changes of birds over time is that data tend to be sparser the farther you go back in time. Further, observations may be biased towards known birding areas, or areas that are easily accessible to birders/researchers.

In order to minimize some of these potential challenges, we are seeking additional sighting records (observations) for Crested Caracaras from members of the public. Specifically, we are eager to collect sighting records that aren't available via eBird, or that haven't been collected as part of a Breeding Bird Survey (i.e., data that we've unlikely obtained from other sources). We are interested in sightings regardless of when they were made, or where they were made (even sightings made outside of the known Crested Caracara range are important!). Preferably, sighting records should include the date of the observation (year at a minimum) and geographic location (coordinates are preferable, but written descriptions are also valuable). If you have sighting records of Crested Caracaras and would like to contribute to this exciting study, please contact Dr. Jennifer Smith ([jennifer.smith@utsa.edu](mailto:jennifer.smith@utsa.edu)). Any data would be much appreciated and we look forward to hearing from you!