

SPRING GRAND ARIZONA

MAY 10-20, 2010

LEADER: BARRY ZIMMER

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Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc.

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Leader: Barry Zimmer

Our 2010 Spring Grand Arizona tour was so successful that it is hard to know where to start in summarizing the highlights. Since owls are my favorite family, I will begin with them. We had nine species for the trip, and none were more exciting than the pair of Spotted Owls in Miller Canyon the last day. They were about 25 feet away and slightly below eye level. We watched them for about 20 minutes as they allopreened and nuzzled each other constantly. It was a sight none of us will soon forget, and, in fact, was voted the favorite bird of the tour! Nearly as amazing was the Northern Pygmy-Owl that sat at the top of a juniper providing full-frame scope views for over 15 minutes. The fact that it was sitting 10 feet from a male Elegant Trogon in the same tree made it all the more unbelievable. Eventually we had to walk away from both birds! Other memorable owl sightings included Whiskered Screech-Owls almost in our laps on two occasions, a pair of Elf Owls posing at the entrance to their nest cavity, and a Barn Owl flying by the group in broad daylight.

Of course, this trip was about so much more than just owls. We enjoyed 11 species of hummingbirds including two very rare Beryllines (one of which we discovered away from feeders in Madera Canyon) and a male White-eared at 10 feet away. Male and female Lucifers put on a show in Ash Canyon, and the Violet-crowneds in Patagonia were as impressive as ever. Gigantic Blue-throateds and Magnificents, brilliant Broad-billeds, and flashy Costa's rounded out the bunch.

Warblers are always a treat on an Arizona tour and this year was no different. Topping the list was the incomparable Red-faced Warbler. We saw several of these stunners, at least a couple of which were at eye level about 15 feet from the group! Views of stunning Painted Redstarts necessitated the ongoing debate of whether they or the Red-faceds were more beautiful. A female Hermit Warbler in with a small group of migrant Townsend's in Madera Canyon was a bonus. We also enjoyed many fine studies of the striking Black-throated Gray Warbler, and had the best views ever on this tour of the uncommon Virginia's Warbler. A male Olive Warbler in Carr Canyon foraged in a ponderosa overhead, with his orange head and black mask gleaming in the sun.

Raptors were also noteworthy. The first morning in Aravaipa Canyon we had a Zone-tailed directly overhead for several minutes, fantastic views of Common Black-Hawk, and a very cooperative pair of Gray Hawks. In Ramsey Canyon, we marveled at a pair of Golden Eagles being dive-bombed by a Peregrine Falcon. Scope views of Harris's Hawks near Tucson, and a quick glimpse of a very rare Short-tailed Hawk in the Chiricahuas were the icing on the cake.

Other highlights included prolonged scope views of a male Flame-colored Tanager in Madera; wonderful studies of Common Poorwill and Whip-poor-will; Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher; Mexican Chickadee; Botteri's, Rufous-winged, Black-chinned, and Five-striped sparrows; Thick-billed and Tropical kingbirds; Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet; and Greater Pewee. Of course, the fantastic views of Elegant Trogon were as wonderful as anything we saw. We watched a pair of Arizona Woodpeckers at a nest (we would see an impressive eight for the trip), and saw a Gilded Flicker very close at the desert museum. Rarities included a male Red Crossbill and a White-rumped Sandpiper.

To top it all off, we had arguably the best weather ever for this trip, with highs in the upper 70s and low 80s for the most part, and gorgeous sunny skies. A wonderfully successful trip on all counts!

ITINERARY:

- May 10 - afternoon visit to Sonoran Desert Museum (24 species)
- May 11 - northwest Tucson, Aravaipa Canyon, Mammoth Sewage Ponds, Sweetwater Wetlands, Madera Canyon, evening owling (71 species; 76 total)
- May 12 - grasslands near Continental, Madera Canyon, Rio Rico area (76 species; 110 total)
- May 13 - California Gulch and Ruby Road, Patagonia / Sonoita Creek area, Paton's yard (71 species; 127 total)
- May 14 - Ruby Road, Patagonia Lake State Park, Sonoita grasslands, Ramsey Canyon (Mile Hi Preserve), Ash Canyon (93 species; 146 total)
- May 15 - Ramsey Canyon Road, Carr Canyon, Miller Canyon, evening owling (71 species; 160 total)
- May 16 - Fort Huachuca including Garden Canyon & Scheelite Canyon, Sulphur Springs Valley (Whitewater Draw), Elfrida; evening owling (63 species; 168 total)
- May 17 - Portal Road & State Line Road, Cave Creek Canyon (including South Fork), Paradise (George Walker House), Herb Martyr Lake Road, evening owling (61 species; 177 total)
- May 18 - Paradise Road, upper elevations of Chiricahua Mts including the "T" junction, Barfoot Park, and Pinery Canyon, South Fork, Jasper's feeders; evening owling (70 species; 188 total)
- May 19 - Miller Canyon, Willcox Sewage Pond (Cochise Lake), Golf Links Road (56 species; 199 total)
- May 20 - departure for home (199 total species)

KEY:

- T = all areas in and around Tucson, also Aravaipa Canyon
- S = Santa Rita Mountains (Madera Canyon), surrounding grasslands
- N = Nogales, Patagonia, Ruby Road
- H = Huachuca Mountains, Sonoita grasslands
- C = Chiricahua Mountains, Sulphur Springs Valley, Willcox
- underlined species represent birds of very uncommon occurrence or species which occur regularly but in such low density as to be easily missed
- bold-faced species** indicate birds of rare, casual, or accidental occurrence

BIRDS:

- Black-bellied Whistling-Duck N---flock of 35 near Rio Rico
- Gadwall N---two late birds at Patagonia Lake
- Mallard T,N,C
- Cinnamon Teal T,C
- Green-winged Teal C---late birds at Willcox
- Ruddy Duck T,N,C---wonderful breeding males with bright blue bills
- Scaled Quail H,C---especially well near Douglas
- Gambel's Quail almost daily
- Wild Turkey H---the Gould's subspecies
- Pied-billed Grebe N

Neotropic Cormorant N
 Double-crested Cormorant N
 Great Blue Heron T,N
 Great Egret N,C---uncommon
 Snowy Egret N
 Cattle Egret N
 Green Heron N---scope views at Rio Rico
 Black-crowned Night-Heron N,C
 White-faced Ibis T,N,C---several nice views of breeding-plumaged birds
 Black Vulture N---only one seen in the parking lot at Zula's
 Turkey Vulture seen daily in numbers
 Cooper's Hawk T,S---less numerous than usual with only three seen
Common Black-Hawk T---great vies right overhead; easily missed
 Harris's Hawk T---local; scope study
 Gray Hawk T,S,N,C---superb views; eight total; rare was one north of Douglas
 Swainson's Hawk T,S,H,C
Short-tailed Hawk C---very rare was a light morph at Barfoot Park spotted by Kirsten; not seen by all
Zone-tailed Hawk T,N---five total with one about thirty feet overhead in Aravaipa!
 Red-tailed Hawk almost daily, including one dark morph near Rodeo
Golden Eagle H---pair over Ramsey spotted by Kirsten
 American Kestrel T,S,N,C
Peregrine Falcon H---one dive-bombing the eagles in Ramsey!
 Common Moorhen T
 American Coot T,N,C
 Killdeer T,N,C
 Black-necked Stilt T,C
 American Avocet C
 Spotted Sandpiper T,N,C
 Western Sandpiper C---late bird at Willcox
White-rumped Sandpiper C---we found one at Willcox the last day accidental in Arizona
 Long-billed Dowitcher C---late
 Wilson's Phalarope C
Franklin's Gull C---rare was one at Willcox
Black Tern C---very uncommon were a dozen or so at Willcox
 Rock Pigeon seen in all urban areas
 Band-tailed Pigeon C---scarcer than usual
 Eurasian Collared-Dove T,S,N,H,C---a recent arriver in this area; now common in places
 White-winged Dove seen daily in numbers
 Mourning Dove seen daily in numbers
 Inca Dove T,N---only seven the whole trip
 Common Ground-Dove N,C---generally uncommon
 Greater Roadrunner N,H,C---great views of several; six total, although it took us several days to see our first
 Barn Owl C---excellent flight views
Flammulated Owl C---after much effort we finally got good views of one; this species is always the most difficult of all the regular owls to see on this trip
 Western Screech-Owl S---heard only

Whiskered Screech-Owl S,C---excellent views from about fifteen feet!
 Great Horned Owl C---nice daytime studies from fifty feet
Northern Pygmy-Owl C---walk away views from about thirty feet in the same tree as a male trogon;
 tied for third favorite bird of the tour; easily missed
 Elf Owl S,C---great study at nest hole
Burrowing Owl T---uncommon & localized
Spotted Owl H---after two strenuous hikes (missed entirely on the Scheelite walk), we were
 rewarded with unbeatable views of a pair allo-preening on their day roost from about twenty
 five feet; runaway winner of the favorite bird of the tour
 Lesser Nighthawk S
 Common Poorwill H---after some effort we had very good views
 Whip-poor-will C--- the Mexican subspecies *arizonae*, already split by some authors
 White-throated Swift T,S,N,C
 Broad-billed Hummingbird T,S,N,H
White-eared Hummingbird H---fantastic male in Miller Canyon; rare at this season
Berylline Hummingbird S,H---incredibly we found a male out "in the wild" at Madera canyon, and
 then days later saw a female that had appeared in Miller canyon; this rare summer visitor is not
 generally seen on this tour
 Violet-crowned Hummingbird P---three seen
 Blue-throated Hummingbird S,H,C
 Magnificent Hummingbird S,H,C---lives up to its name
Lucifer Hummingbird H--- male & female in Ash Canyon (where the species has become somewhat
 regular in recent years) were a treat
 Black-chinned Hummingbird almost daily
 Anna's Hummingbird S,N,H
Costa's Hummingbird T,N---two at the desert museum and one along Ruby Road
 Broad-tailed Hummingbird S,H,C
 Elegant Trogon C---first a pair at South Fork followed by fantastic, prolonged (walk away) scope
 views of a male higher up; tied for third favorite bird of the tour
 Acorn Woodpecker S,N,H,C
 Gila Woodpecker T,S,N,H---our first bird of the tour!
 Ladder-backed Woodpecker T,N,C---scarcer than usual
 Hairy Woodpecker C---heard only
Arizona Woodpecker S,H,C---several nice views of this uncommon species including a pair at the
 nest; often hard to find
 Northern Flicker C---red-shafted variety; seemed scarcer than usual
 Gilded Flicker T---cooperative bird at the museum
 Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet N---close studies of three
 Olive-sided Flycatcher T,,S,C---late migrants
 Greater Pewee H---four seen
 Western Wood-Pewee S,N,H,C
Hammond's Flycatcher S---late migrants
 Cordilleran Flycatcher S,H,C
 Buff-breasted Flycatcher S,H---one out-of-range bird in Madera and about ten in the Huachucas; a
 cute easy-to-identify empid
 Black Phoebe T,C---much scarcer than usual with only two seen
 Say's Phoebe N,H,C---also much scarcer than usual with only five seen
 Vermilion Flycatcher T,S,N,C---always spectacular

Dusky-capped Flycatcher S,N,H,C
 Ash-throated Flycatcher T,S,N,H,C
 Brown-crested Flycatcher T,S,N,C---our first spotted by Rich
Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher C---only one seen; always a very late arriver
Tropical Kingbird T---pair at Sweetwater where unusual
 Cassin's Kingbird almost daily
 Thick-billed Kingbird N---great, prolonged study of one in Patagonia
 Western Kingbird T,N,H,C
 Loggerhead Shrike H,C---declining?
 Bell's Vireo T,S,N,C
 Plumbeous Vireo S,N,H,C
 Hutton's Vireo S,H,C
 Warbling Vireo S,N,C
 Steller's Jay H,C---subspecies *macrolopha*
 Western Scrub-Jay H,C---subspecies *woodhouseii*; a likely future split
 Mexican Jay S,N,H,C---subspecies *arizonae*
 Chihuahuan Raven H,C
 Common Raven daily
 Horned Lark H,C
 Violet-green Swallow H,C
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow T,N,C
 Bank Swallow C
 Cliff Swallow H---oddly, two at lunch were our only ones
 Barn Swallow almost daily
 Mexican Chickadee C---good views in Pinery
 Bridled Titmouse S,N,H,C---many great views of this cute species
Juniper Titmouse C---after an hour long wait
 Verdin T,S,N
 Bushtit N,H,C
 Red-breasted Nuthatch C
 White-breasted Nuthatch S,N,H,C
 Pygmy Nuthatch C---the cutest bird in North America?
 Brown Creeper H,C
 Cactus Wren almost daily
 Rock Wren N
 Canyon Wren N,H---great scope views
 Bewick's Wren N,H,C---especially well at California Gulch
 House Wren S,C
 Black-tailed Gnatcatcher C
 Western Bluebird C---uncommon
 Swainson's Thrush T---migrant
 Hermit Thrush C
 American Robin H---scarcer than normal
 Northern Mockingbird N,H,C---not seen until Day 5
Bendire's Thrasher C---always tough but we had great views in the Sulphur Springs Valley
 Curve-billed Thrasher almost daily
Crissal Thrasher C---pair near Portal; generally skulky and elusive
 European Starling T,S,N

Phainopepla T,S,N
 Olive Warbler H,C---beautiful male in Carr Canyon
Orange-crowned Warbler N---one in California Gulch was quite late
 Virginia's Warbler H---the best views ever of this often difficult to find species
 Lucy's Warbler T,S,N
 Yellow Warbler T,N,H
 Yellow-rumped Warbler T,S,H,C---Audubon's types
 Black-throated Gray Warbler S,H,C--- many great views
 Townsend's Warbler S,N,H---migrants
Hermit Warbler S---female in Madera; very uncommon
 Grace's Warbler H,C---several nice studies
 Common Yellowthroat T,N
 Wilson's Warbler T,S,N
 Red-faced Warbler H,C---this stunning species was voted the second favorite bird of the tour
 Painted Redstart S,H,C---always spectacular
 Yellow-breasted Chat N---great views at Paton's
Green-tailed Towhee N---two late migrants
 Spotted Towhee H,C
 Canyon Towhee S,N,H,C
 Abert's Towhee T,N
 Rufous-winged Sparrow T---very good views of this localized species
Botteri's Sparrow S---nice scope study; not necessarily to be expected on a spring trip; subspecies
 arizonae
 Rufous-crowned Sparrow N---subspecies *eremoeca*
Five-striped Sparrow N---unsurpassed views in California Gulch; extremely localized
 Chipping Sparrow N,C
Black-chinned Sparrow C---one near Paradise; often hard to find
 Lark Sparrow N,H,C
 Black-throated Sparrow S,N,C---the handsomest sparrow?
Lark Bunting N,C---late individuals on Ruby Road and the Sulphur Springs Valley; generally gone
 by this time
Grasshopper Sparrow H---good views of a couple near Sonoita; uncommon breeder; subspecies
 ammolegus
 Song Sparrow T,N---subspecies *saltonis*
 White-crowned Sparrow N,C---a few remnant migrants of both the black-lored (*oriantha*) variety
 and the white-lored *leucophrys*
 Yellow-eyed Junco H,C---more numerous than usual with many great studies
 Hepatic Tanager S,N,H,C
 Summer Tanager T,N
 Western Tanager almost daily
Flame-colored Tanager S---wonderful male in Madera provided great views; casual in this country
 Northern Cardinal almost daily; the longer crested, brighter red, Arizona subspecies *superbus*
 Pyrrhuloxia T,S,C---exceptionally well at the desert museum
 Black-headed Grosbeak almost daily
 Blue Grosbeak S,N,C---just arriving
 Lazuli Bunting C---a pair at Paradise
Indigo Bunting C---female along the Paradise Road; unexpected
 Red-winged Blackbird T,N

Eastern Meadowlark H,C---the southwestern race liliana, a possible future split
 Great-tailed Grackle everywhere but the Chiricahuas
 Bronzed Cowbird T,S---scarcer than usual with only three seen
 Brown-headed Cowbird almost daily
 Hooded Oriole T,S,N,C
 Bullock's Oriole S,N,H,C
 Scott's Oriole S,N,H,C---great views, our first thanks to Kirsten
Cassin's Finch N---a female in Patagonia was quite unexpected this late
 House Finch seen daily
Red Crossbill C---first time in several years for this trip
 Pine Siskin S,N,H,C---late migrants; unusually numerous
 Lesser Goldfinch almost daily; unusually numerous
 House Sparrow seen daily

total species - 199

MAMMALS: total species - 17+

Rock Squirrel
 Apache (Mexican) Fox Squirrel---much more numerous than usual
 Arizona Gray Squirrel
 Round-tailed Ground Squirrel
 Harris's Antelope Squirrel
 Cliff Chipmunk
 Desert Cottontail
 Eastern Cottontail
 Black-tailed Jackrabbit
 Javelina (Collared Peccary)---including tiny little babies in Portal
 Coyote---spotted by Nancy near Apache
Mountain Lion---unfortunately this incredible mammal was seen only by me on an owling trip as I
 went to bring the van up to the group; this was a first for me in the U.S.
 White-tailed Deer
 Mule Deer
 Pronghorn
 bat species---at least two different sizes, including a quite large one in Madera

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS: total species - 14

Tiger (Checkered) Whiptail
 Sonoran Spotted Whiptail
 Desert Grassland whiptail
 Clark's Spiny Lizard
 Desert Spiny Lizard
 Yarrow's (Mountain) Spiny Lizard
 Zebra-tailed Lizard
 Lesser Earless Lizard
 Ornate Tree Lizard
Selvin's Bunch Grass Lizard---uncommon

Sonoran Spiny-tailed Iguana---escaped population at desert museum
Coachwhip---beautiful salmon pink snakes
Red-eared Slider
Bullfrog---scope views

BUTTERFLIES: total species - 22

Two-tailed Swallowtail
Pipevine Swallowtail
Black Swallowtail
Sleepy Orange
Clouded Sulphur
Dainty Sulphur
Mexican Yellow
Checkered White
Empress Leilia
California (Arizona?) Sister---possibly just split
Red-spotted Purple
Queen
Variegated Fritillary
lady species
Western Pygmy Blue
Marine Blue
Texan Crescent
Mylitta Crescent
Elada Checkerspot
duskywing species---(Mournful or Funereal)
Common Checkered Skipper
Silver-spotted Skipper

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS:

Tarantula Hawk (Wasp)
Roseate Skimmer
Flame Skimmer
hot apple pie in Nogales
tales of the Bun Boy Motel
the Velvet Elvis
Little Caesar (twice)
"delicious" saladitos
Tundra