

# **WEST TEXAS CIBOLO CREEK LODGE**

**SEPTEMBER 9-15, 2010**

**LEADER: BARRY ZIMMER**

**COMPILED BY: BARRY ZIMMER**

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*Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc.*

## **West Texas: Cibolo Creek Lodge**

**September 9-15, 2010**

**Leader: Barry Zimmer**

*Our West Texas: Cibolo Creek Lodge tour continued its impressive run with loads of western migrants, southwestern specialty species, and several rarities. This is the fourth year we have run this trip, and this year's list smashed the previous record by 12 species!*

*We began in El Paso where the Fort Bliss Sewage Ponds yielded a good number of migrants including the likes of Cassin's Vireo; Purple Martin (very rare here); Nashville, Townsend's, Yellow, Wilson's, and MacGillivray's warblers; Summer Tanager; and Blue and Black-headed grosbeaks among others. We also had nice views of Gambel's Quail, Baird's Sandpiper, and American Avocet at this location. My yard produced a good showing of hummingbirds with three species, including a stunning adult Rufous. Reservoirs and agricultural lands east of El Paso produced a different group of birds with Clark's and Western grebes, Harris's Hawk (literally 20 feet out the window of the van with a ground squirrel in its talons!), a striking juvenile Sabine's Gull (casual in this area), Laughing Gull (rare here), several Burrowing Owls (some very close), Greater Roadrunner, and Cave Swallows topping the list.*

*Then it was on to luxurious Cibolo Creek Lodge where we spent the next four nights. We spent two full days birding the ranch property with many highlights to show for it. Common Black-Hawk (my first ever at this location); Zone-tailed Hawk (prolonged scope views of an immature, plus an adult over La Cienega); Scaled Quail; Western Screech-Owl (from about 20 feet); Common Poorwill; Golden-fronted Woodpecker; Olive-sided Flycatcher; Vermilion Flycatcher (20 or more per day!); Plumbeous and Bell's vireos; Canyon and Rock wrens; Crissal Thrasher; Virginia's Warbler; more Townsend's Warblers; Northern Waterthrush; Yellow-breasted Chat; dozens of Western Tanagers and Blue Grosbeaks; Varied and Painted buntings; Cassin's, Rufous-crowned, Lark, Brewer's, Clay-colored, and Black-throated sparrows; and Hooded, Scott's, and Orchard orioles were among the more noteworthy.*

*Another day was spent in and around the Davis Mountains to the north. Near the town of Marfa, we stumbled onto a gorgeous adult White-tailed Kite. This species is very rare in the region, and we had lengthy scope views. Another Zone-tailed Hawk was seen near Davis Mountains State Park, and later in the day an adult Golden Eagle was seen being chased by a pair of Red-tailed Hawks. Highlights of the oak/ juniper zone here included Calliope Hummingbird, Acorn Woodpecker, Dusky Flycatcher, Plumbeous Vireo, Black-crested Titmouse, Bushtit, Western Bluebird, Western Scrub-Jay (the soon to be split Woodhouse's subspecies), Green-tailed Towhee, and Hepatic Tanager (a couple of stunning males). Perhaps the most exciting moment of the tour came with the discovery of a male Montezuma Quail that sat frozen in the grass for several minutes, providing another tour first!*

*Heading back toward El Paso on our last day we added 17 new species to our list including Snow Goose (very early), Wood Duck, Eared Grebe, White-faced Ibis, Osprey, Pectoral Sandpiper, 10 Stilt Sandpipers, Franklin's Gull, and over 100 Wilson's Phalaropes.*

*In all we tallied 174 species of birds, 10 species of mammals, a dozen reptiles and amphibians, 29 species of butterflies (at their peak at this season), and a dozen dragonflies. We also enjoyed the comfort and luxury of Cibolo Creek Lodge with its wonderful starry nights and peaceful days, not to mention superb food!*

**Itinerary:**

September 9 - McKelligon Canyon, my yard, Mountain Park (23 species)

September 10 - Fort Bliss Sewage Ponds, Border Highway, Hwy 20 from Tornillo to McNary with stops at Tornillo Reservoir, Fort Hancock Sewage Ponds & McNary Reservoir, drive to Cibolo with roadside birding (92 species; 102 total)

September 11 -all day on west side of Cibolo Creek Ranch including Carrizal Springs, Cibolo Springs, North Springs, and the waterfall area; evening owling (61 species; 120 total)

September 12 - all day in and around the Davis Mountains including Limpia Creek, Davis Mountains State Park, the McDonald Observatory, and the Laurence Wood Picnic area (79 species; 141 total)

September 13 - all day on east side of Cibolo Creek Ranch including La Cienega and La Morita (73 species; 157 total)

September 14 - drive back to El Paso with roadside birding and stops at McNary Reservoir, Fort Hancock Sewage Ponds, Fort Hancock Reservoir, Tornillo Reservoir, Cattleman's pond, Ascarate Lake, Keystone Heritage Park, Fort Bliss Sewage Ponds (99 species; 174 total)

September 15 - departures for home (174 total species)

**Key:**

E = all areas in and around El Paso and down river to McNary

C = Cibolo Creek Ranch

D = Davis Mountains and surrounding grasslands, Marfa

**bold-faced species** indicate birds of rare, casual, or accidental occurrence

underlined species indicate birds of very uncommon occurrence or species which occur regularly but in such low densities as to be easily missed

**Birds:**

**Snow Goose** E---very unexpected was a lone bird at Cattleman's, at least a month early for this species

Wood Duck E

American Wigeon E---a few at Ascarate

Mallard E---of the "Mexican Duck" subspecies (*diazi*)

Blue-winged Teal C

Cinnamon Teal C---on the lodge pond with Blue-wings

Northern Shoveler E,C

Northern Pintail E

Green-winged Teal E

Ring-necked Duck E---early was a male at Keystone

Ruddy Duck E

Scaled Quail E,C---some great views  
 Gambel's Quail E---great views near my house and at Fort Bliss  
**Montezuma Quail** D---a fairly cooperative male provided a tour first  
 Pied-billed Grebe E---babies at Ascarate  
 Eared Grebe E---two at McNary  
 Western Grebe E---numerous at McNary  
 Clark's Grebe E---side-by-side with preceding species  
American White Pelican E---lone bird at Tornillo  
 Neotropic Cormorant E---especially well at Keystone  
 Double-crested Cormorant E  
 Great Blue Heron E,C  
 Great Egret E  
 Snowy Egret E  
 Green Heron E  
 Black-crowned Night-Heron E---distantly  
 White-faced Ibis E, Van Horn  
 Turkey Vulture seen daily in numbers  
 Osprey D---three migrants in grasslands near Valentine & Van Horn  
**White-tailed Kite** D---stunning adult at Marfa; very rare here; voted the favorite bird of the tour!  
 Northern Harrier C,D---early migrants  
 Sharp-shinned Hawk E  
 Cooper's Hawk E  
Common Black-Hawk C---quite unexpected was an adult bird just south of the lodge along the creek  
 bed  
 Harris's Hawk E---especially nice was one along the Border Hwy with a ground squirrel in it's  
 talons; voted the third favorite bird of the tour  
 Swainson's Hawk E,D---up to 14 in one day  
Zone-tailed Hawk C,D---great scope views of immature bird at Ojo Carrizal, another at La Cienega,  
 and an adult female flying overhead at Limpia Creek  
 Red-tailed Hawk seen daily, mostly of the *fuertes* race  
Golden Eagle D---being chased by Red-taileds along the scenic loop  
 American Kestrel E,D,C  
Peregrine Falcon E---nice adult at McNary  
 Common Moorhen E  
 American Coot E  
Semipalmated Plover E---singles at McNary and Keystone; uncommon  
 Killdeer E  
 Black-necked Stilt E  
 American Avocet E  
 Spotted Sandpiper E  
 Solitary Sandpiper E,C  
 Greater Yellowlegs E  
 Western Sandpiper E  
 Least Sandpiper E  
Baird's Sandpiper E---nice views at McNary & Fort Bliss; generally uncommon  
Pectoral Sandpiper E---very uncommon; one at McNary  
 Long-billed Dowitcher E  
 Wilson's Phalarope E---over a hundred at Cattleman's

**Sabine's Gull** E---stunning juvenile bird at Tornillo seen very well; the second year in a row for this rare arctic species  
Franklin's Gull E---first summer bird at Fort Hancock; uncommon  
**Laughing Gull** E---juvenile at Fort Hancock was another real rarity  
 Black Tern E  
 Forster's Tern E  
 Rock Pigeon urban areas throughout  
 Eurasian Collared-Dove E,C,D---now present in most towns along our route and even one at the lodge itself  
 White-winged Dove E,D,C  
 Mourning Dove seen daily in numbers  
 Inca Dove E---my yard & Marfa  
 Greater Roadrunner E,C---a total of 9 seen with repeated excellent views  
Western Screech-Owl C-----great views on owling excursion; difficult at this season; voted second favorite bird of the tour  
 Great Horned Owl C,D---great daytime study north of Marfa  
 Burrowing Owl E---nice studies of several at burrows; sixteen total  
 Lesser Nighthawk C---seen by Joe and me one night at the lodge pond  
Common Poorwill C---unexpected this late  
 White-throated Swift E,C---heard by me in McKelligon and seen by Sue at the lodge  
 Black-chinned Hummingbird E,C,D---thirty or more in my yard including nice scope view of adult male  
Calliope Hummingbird D---missed in my yard, but a female was seen briefly in the Davis Mts.  
 Broad-tailed Hummingbird E---female in my yard  
 Rufous Hummingbird E---eight at my feeders, including a stunning adult male  
 Belted Kingfisher C  
 Acorn Woodpecker D  
 Golden-fronted Woodpecker C---at the westernmost limit of their range  
 Ladder-backed Woodpecker E,C,D---seen daily  
 Olive-sided Flycatcher C---two seen  
 Western Wood-Pewee E,C,D---a total of 31 seen  
 Willow Flycatcher E---one at Fort Bliss the last afternoon  
Least Flycatcher C---one each in Davis Mts and Cibolo  
 Dusky Flycatcher D---one in Davis Mts. State Park  
 Black Phoebe E,D,C---always one or two around the lodge  
 Say's Phoebe E,D,C  
 Vermilion Flycatcher C---always around lake at lodge; 39 total seen!  
Ash-throated Flycatcher C---a couple late birds on the east side of the ranch  
 Cassin's Kingbird D,C---up to 25 a day as migrants went through; an estimated 69 total  
 Western Kingbird E,D,C---mostly around El Paso but a few elsewhere  
 Loggerhead Shrike E,C,D---seen daily in small numbers  
 Bell's Vireo C---some still singing; nice views of several; an impressive 18 seen!  
 Plumbeous Vireo C,D---two  
Cassin's Vireo E---two  
 Warbling Vireo E,C---four total  
 Western Scrub-Jay D---the soon-to-be split subspecies *woodhouseii*  
 Chihuahuan Raven E,D---nice views of the white neck near Van Horn  
 Common Raven C,D  
**Purple Martin** E---very rare was a female seen by Joe & I at Fort Bliss

Tree Swallow C,E  
 Bank Swallow E---a couple in with Barns at Fort Bliss  
 Cliff Swallow E,C,D  
 Cave Swallow E,D---good views of several groups  
 Barn Swallow seen daily  
 Black-crested Titmouse D  
 Verdin E,C  
 Bushtit D---nice views near the observatory, including some "black-eared" birds  
Red-breasted Nuthatch E---two at Fort Bliss the first morning spotted by Joe; irregular  
 White-breasted Nuthatch D  
 Cactus Wren E,D,C  
 Rock Wren E,C---the first bird of the tour!  
 Canyon Wren E,C,D---one inside the fort at La Cienega!  
 Bewick's Wren C,D  
 House Wren D---seen only by me but heard by others  
 Black-tailed Gnatcatcher C---only one  
 Western Bluebird D---about twelve with a couple nice males  
 American Robin E---a few at Fort Bliss; generally uncommon in this region  
 Northern Mockingbird seen daily  
 Curve-billed Thrasher E,C  
Crissal Thrasher C,E---one on the east side of the ranch  
 European Starling E,D---a few only  
 Orange-crowned Warbler C,E---three total  
Nashville Warbler E---very uncommon here  
 Virginia's Warbler C---one spotted by Judy right on the lodge grounds  
 Yellow Warbler E,C,D---eight total  
 Yellow-rumped Warbler E,C,D---"Audubon's" type; about 13 seen  
 Townsend's Warbler E,C,D---a total of seven seen  
**Black-and-white Warbler** C---female spotted by Joe at La Morita provided a tour first!  
Northern Waterthrush E,C---three seen; scope views; very uncommon  
 MacGillivray's Warbler E---three  
 Common Yellowthroat E  
 Wilson's Warbler seen daily with 36 total  
Yellow-breasted Chat C---one at Ojo Carrizal  
 Green-tailed Towhee D---one found by Joe along Limpia Creek  
 Canyon Towhee C,D---including one eating a cookie!  
 Cassin's Sparrow C,D---several nice views; twenty or more in a day!  
 Rufous-crowned Sparrow E,C,D---best in McKelligon Canyon  
Grasshopper Sparrow D---four in grasslands north of Marfa were a surprise; two were streaky  
 immature birds  
 Chipping Sparrow E,C,D---very common with over 200 on some days  
 Clay-colored Sparrow E,C---about sixteen total  
 Brewer's Sparrow C---oddly only one  
 Vesper Sparrow C---two seen  
 Lark Sparrow C,D---repeated good views  
 Black-throated Sparrow E,C,D---a truly stunning sparrow  
 Lark Bunting E,C,D---much more numerous than usual with an estimated 745 seen!  
 Savannah Sparrow C,E---two total  
 Lincoln's Sparrow E,C---one each at Fort Bliss & Cibolo

Hepatic Tanager D---four total including two striking males  
 Summer Tanager E,C,D---almost daily with a few striking males  
 Western Tanager E,C,D---a very impressive 37 individuals with 2 or 3 males seen  
 Northern Cardinal C,D  
 Pyrrhuloxia E,C,D---great views  
 Black-headed Grosbeak E,D  
 Blue Grosbeak E,C,D---75 seen including about four adult males  
Varied Bunting C---several females or young birds; uncommon this late  
 Painted Bunting C---about ten female plumaged birds;a lone adult male was seen only by me  
Dickcissel C---scope view on east side of ranch; very uncommon fall migrant  
 Red-winged Blackbird E---our last new bird!  
 Eastern Meadowlark D,C---the lilianae subspecies, a possible future split  
 Yellow-headed Blackbird E,D  
 Brewer's Blackbird C,E---early arrivals  
 Great-tailed Grackle E,D  
 Bronzed Cowbird C---young begging from Orchard Oriole  
 Brown-headed Cowbird C---one female by the windmill was our only one  
 Orchard Oriole C---a few around the lodge  
 Hooded Oriole E---female with two young at the lodge; uncommon  
 Bullock's Oriole C,D  
 Scott's Oriole C,D---five total  
 House Finch small numbers daily  
American Goldfinch C---an early bird at La Morita  
 Lesser Goldfinch C,D  
 House Sparrow E,C,D

total species - **174** (crushing the all-time tour record)

**Introduced birds:**

Canada Goose  
 Chukar

**Mammals:** total species -10

Pronghorn---many superb studies  
 White-tailed Deer---one by the lodge  
 Mule Deer---several around the lodge including some nice bucks  
 Desert Cottontail---a couple only  
 Black-tailed Jackrabbit---about three of these impressive rabbits seen  
 Rock Squirrel---five or more scattered around  
 small bat species---probably Mexican Free-tailed  
 medium bat species---a dead one at La cienega was a Pallid Bat  
 Striped Skunk---daytime study at Fort Bliss  
 Collared Peccary (Javelina)---22 total including some tiny youngsters

**Introduced mammals:** total species - 3

Camel  
 Scimitar-horned Oryx  
 Black Buck

**Reptiles & Amphibians:** total species - 13

Rio Grande Leopard Frog  
Red-spotted Toad---found by Judy  
Checkered Whiptail  
Chihuahuan Spotted Whiptail  
Little Striped Whiptail---especially striking with it's bright blue tail & throat  
Desert Grassland Whiptail  
Texas Earless Lizard---with their curled up black-and-white tails!  
Chihuahuan Collared Lizard---uncommon here  
Texas Spiny Lizard  
Big Bend Tree Lizard---only by me  
Black-tailed Rattlesnake---closer than we would have liked...yikes!  
snake species---seen on night drive briefly, possibly a glossy snake  
Spiny Soft-shelled Turtle

**Butterflies:** total species - 29

Sleepy Orange  
Mexican Yellow  
Dainty Sulphur  
Cloudless Sulphur  
Southern Dogface  
Cabbage White  
Checkered White  
Pipevine Swallowtail  
Black Swallowtail  
Two-tailed Swallowtail---wonderful study up close  
Giant Swallowtail  
Western Pygmy Blue  
Gray Hairstreak  
Elada Crescent  
crescent species---photographed by Judy  
Painted Lady  
Common Buckeye---found by Joe  
California Sister---one of my favorites  
Variegated Fritillary  
American Snout  
**Common Mestra**---one at La Morita; rare here  
Hackberry Butterfly  
Empress Leilia  
Queen  
Monarch  
leafwing species  
Orange Skipperling  
**White-striped Longtail**---found by Judy; rare here  
duskywing species

**Odenates:** total species - 12

Familiar Bluet

Desert Firetail---seen only by me

Variiegated Meadowhawk

Flame Skimmer

Roseate Skimmer---seen only by me

Twelve-spotted Skimmer

Black Saddlebags

Wandering Glider

Common Green Darner

Blue-eyed Darner

Blue Dasher

whitetail species

**Significant others:**

Horse Lubber Grasshopper---lots of these strange grasshoppers

Pallid-winged Grasshopper

grasshopper species---all black with bright red wings

walking stick species

Praying Mantis

Leaf-footed Bug

scarab beetle species in genus Chrysina---bright metallic lime green

unusual beetle species with large bulbous back

great scope views of jupiter, it's moons, and the starry skies

Marfa Prada