

AVIAN JEWELS OF ARIZONA

**HUMMINGBIRDS, TROGONS,
WARBLERS & MORE**

JULY 22 – 29, 2012

LEADERS:

BARRY ZIMMER & BRENNAN MULROONEY

COMPILED BY: BARRY ZIMMER

**VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS, INC.
2525 WALLINGWOOD DRIVE, SUITE 1003
AUSTIN, TX 78746
WWW.VENTBIRD.COM**

AVIAN JEWELS of ARIZONA

HUMMINGBIRDS, TROGONS, WARBLERS & MORE

JULY 22 - 29, 2012

The list of amazing highlights from our recent Avian Jewels of Arizona tour is a long one. Topping the list perhaps was the Plain-capped Starthroat—a super-rarity in this country—in Montosa Canyon that gave us nice scope views from close range. This was only the third time I have seen this species in the United States, and the first in nearly 15 years. The starthroat was one of 11 species of hummingbirds we would record for the trip, including such gems as Violet-crowned, Broad-billed, Blue-throated, and Magnificent.

A male Montezuma Quail that strolled into the road in the Chiricahua Mountains was equally as exciting. This species is seen on less than half of our tours here and often the views are fleeting. This particular bird stayed in the road for a minute or so and then remained in good view as it slowly crossed a dry creek bed. It was voted the favorite bird of the tour by the group!

Owls provided myriad highlights on this trip with six species seen. Vying for top honors were the incredible views of a roosting Spotted Owl in Scheelite Canyon and the last-minute find of a Northern Pygmy-Owl in the Chiricahuas. In each case we had prolonged studies of difficult to find species. We also enjoyed a late Elf Owl, several great views of Whiskered Screech-Owl, Western Screech-Owl, and a roosting Great Horned Owl.

My personal favorite moment of the trip was a Mexican Whip-poor-will that fluttered just over our heads in the spotlight like some giant moth for about 10 seconds. This species is not typically recorded on late summer tours here.

Colorful birds were plentiful on our trip. From the plum-colored Varied Buntings (a species we rarely see on spring tours) to the incredible Elegant Trogons (we had a pair feeding young at a nest!), to sprightly Painted Redstarts, to vivid Vermilion Flycatchers, Summer Tanagers, and Pyrrhuloxias, to flaming-orange Bullock's Orioles, and to brilliant Yellow-breasted Chats, we spanned the palette of the color spectrum.

We also did extremely well with regional specialties. We had great luck with Botteri's and Rufous-winged sparrows, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (another difficult bird on spring tours), and Gilded Flicker in the Madera Canyon and Green Valley area. Patagonia yielded superb views of Gray Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Thick-billed Kingbird, and Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet. Arizona Woodpecker, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, and

Greater Pewee showed well in the Huachuca Mountains, while Mexican Chickadee, Crissal and Bendire's thrashers, Juniper Titmouse, Red-faced Warbler, and Yellow-eyed Junco were all tallied in the Chiricahuas.

In all we had a record-setting 189 species of birds, 17 species of mammals, 16 species of reptiles and amphibians (including a rarely seen twin-spot rattlesnake), and 29 species of butterflies. Our weather was generally excellent, as we avoided the rains almost entirely and enjoyed delightfully cool weather for much of the trip, with only two hot afternoons.

Itinerary:

July 22 – afternoon visit to Sweetwater Wetlands (34 species)

July 23 –residential Green Valley, Santa Rita Experimental Range, Madera Canyon, Florida Canyon, evening owling (63 species; 85 total)

July 24 –Amado Sewage Pond, Montosa Canyon, Rio Rico ponds, entrance road to Patagonia Lake State Park, Patagonia, Blue Heaven Road, Sonoita Grasslands (89 species; 120 total)

July 25 – Huachuca Canyon, Garden Canyon, Scheelite Canyon, Miller Canyon (67 species; 134 total)

July 26 –Carr Canyon, Sulphur Springs Valley (Whitewater Draw), drive to Portal, evening owling (34 species; 141 total)

July 27 – Portal Road & Rodeo, upper elevations of Chiricahuas including Pinery Canyon and road to Rustler Park; afternoon to Paradise; evening owling (85 species; 169 total)

July 28 – Portal Road & Paradise Road, upper elevations of Chiricahuas including Rustler Park, Barfoot Park, and Pinery Canyon, Cochise Lake in Willcox (110 species; 891 total)

July 29 – departures for home (189 total species)

Key:

T = areas in and around Tucson

S = Santa Rita Mountains, Green Valle, Amado

P = Nogales & Patagonia

H = Huachuca Mountains, Sierra Vista, Sonoita Grasslands

C = Sulphur Springs Valley, Chiricahua Mountains, Willcox
Underlined species indicate birds of very uncommon occurrence or species of such low density as to be easily missed

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

Birds:

Mallard T,P,C
Blue-winged Teal C
Cinnamon Teal T,C
Northern Shoveler S---unexpected in mid-summer
Redhead S---unexpected was a male at Amado
Ruddy Duck S
Scaled Quail H,C---our first thanks to Mary
Gambel's Quail S,H,C
Montezuma Quail C---a male in the middle of the road near the Southwest research Station was a real bonus; voted the favorite bird of the tour!
Wild Turkey S---the Gould's race
Pied-billed Grebe C---heard only at Whitewater
Great Blue Heron P,C
Great Egret P---uncommon
Green Heron P
Black-crowned Night-Heron T,C
Black Vulture P
Turkey Vulture seen daily
White-tailed Kite C---one spotted by Margaret near Double Adobe; generally rare anywhere in southeast Arizona
Cooper's Hawk T,S,H
Harris's Hawk T,S---pair at Sweetwater and a single in Green Valley; localized
Gray Hawk P---one in Rio Rico and another in Patagonia
Swainson's Hawk H,C
Zone-tailed Hawk P---one near Patagonia Lake put on an amazing show right overhead for a couple of minutes
Red-tailed Hawk almost daily
American Kestrel almost daily
Peregrine Falcon H---nice adult south of Sierra Vista
Sora C---two at Whitewater Draw; somewhat unexpected at this season
Common Gallinule T---formerly Common Moorhen
American Coot T,S
Killdeer T,C
Black-necked Stilt T,C
American Avocet C---over 50 seen at Willcox
Spotted Sandpiper C
Willet C---a very uncommon to rare migrant
Lesser Yellowlegs C---several at Willcox

Western Sandpiper C---a few at Cochise Lake
Least Sandpiper C
Baird's Sandpiper C---an estimated **130** at Cochise Lake; uncommon
Pectoral Sandpiper C---quite rare for July was one at Cochise Lake
Stilt Sandpiper C---about a dozen at Cochise Lake; uncommon
Long-billed Dowitcher C
Wilson's Phalarope C---400+
Black Tern C---two at Cochise Lake; uncommon
Rock Pigeon urban areas throughout
Band-tailed Pigeon S,H,C---much more numerous than usual with up to a hundred in one day!
Eurasian Collared-Dove now widespread in this part of the state
White-winged Dove seen daily in numbers
Mourning Dove seen daily
Inca Dove T,C---one at Sweetwater and three briefly in Willcox; not seen by all; declining
Common Ground-Dove P,H
Yellow-billed Cuckoo S,P---scope views
Greater Roadrunner P,C---one particularly well near Patagonia Lake; oddly only three total
Western Screech-Owl S---nice views in the Santa Ritas
Whiskered Screech-Owl S,C---great views in both locations
Great Horned Owl C---roosting bird at Whitewater Draw
Northern Pygmy-Owl C---just before the rainstorm hit we had prolonged scope views of this species on our way out of the Chiricahuas; generally quiet by this season; good spotting by Scott; this subspecies has already been split by Clements as the Mountain Pygmy-Owl
Elf Owl C---lucky to get good rear on views in the Chiricahuas; most often missed this late in the summer
Spotted Owl H---fantastic study at daytime roost after arduous climb; voted the third favorite bird of the tour
Lesser Nighthawk T,S---scarcer than usual
Common Nighthawk H---daytime views in the Sonoita Grasslands
Mexican Whip-poor-will C---totally unexpected this late into the summer; we had incredible studies of bird fluttering right over our heads for about ten seconds; tied for second favorite bird of the tour!
White-throated Swift H---distantly
Broad-billed Hummingbird S,P,H,C---up to 35 in a day; stunning
Violet-crowned Hummingbird S,P---one in Madera Canyon where rare and another four or so around Patagonia; a real beauty
Blue-throated Hummingbird H,C---especially well in Miller Canyon
Magnificent Hummingbird S,H,C---always stunning
Plain-capped Starthroat S---we had scope views of this very rare stray from Mexico in Montosa Canyon after only a half hour's wait; tied for the second favorite bird of the tour; only my third time ever in the United States!
Black-chinned Hummingbird seen daily

Anna's Hummingbird H---only a few seen
Costa's Hummingbird S---one female in Montosa Canyon
 Broad-tailed Hummingbird H,C---not as numerous as usual
 Rufous Hummingbird H,C---not as numerous as usual
Elegant Trogon H---pair in Huachuca Canyon still feeding young at nest was a real treat
 Acorn Woodpecker S,P,H,C
 Gila Woodpecker T,S,P
 Ladder-backed Woodpecker T,S,P,C
 Hairy Woodpecker C
Arizona Woodpecker H,C---superb studies in Carr Canyon of this uncommon resident; first spotted by Dave
 Northern Flicker H,C---red-shafted variety
Gilded Flicker S---in Green Valley; localized & uncommon
Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet P---right overhead; uncommon
 Greater Pewee H---nice scope views; uncommon
 Western Wood-Pewee S,H,C
 Cordilleran Flycatcher C---several nice views
Buff-breasted Flycatcher H---about ten in Carr Canyon; nice studies of this easy to identify empidonax
 Black Phoebe T,C
 Say's Phoebe S,P,H,C
 Vermilion Flycatcher P,H
 Dusky-capped Flycatcher S,P,H,C
 Ash-throated Flycatcher P,H,C
 Brown-crested Flycatcher T,S,P,H,C
 Sulphur-bellied flycatcher S,H,C---nice studies in Madera and Huachuca Canyons in particular; much easier at this time of year than in May
Tropical Kingbird T,P---good scope views; very uncommon & localized
 Cassin's Kingbird almost daily
Thick-billed Kingbird P---pair near Patagonia; very localized
 Western Kingbird common in all lower elevation sites; seen daily
 Loggerhead Shrike S,H,C
 Bell's Vireo S,P,C---less numerous than usual
 Plumbeous Vireo S,H,C
 Hutton's Vireo S,H,C
 Warbling Vireo H,C
 Steller's Jay H,C---subspecies *macrolopha*
 Western Scrub-Jay S,H,C---subspecies *woodhouseii*, a possible future split
 Mexican Jay S,H,C
 Chihuahuan Raven C
 Common Raven seen daily
 Horned Lark H
 Tree Swallow C
 Violet-green Swallow H,C
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow P

Bank Swallow C---one at Willcox
 Cliff Swallow S,C
 Barn Swallow seen daily
 Mexican Chickadee C---this Chiricahua endemic was seen well on several occasions
 with about nine total
 Bridled Titmouse S, P, H, C---very cute
 Juniper Titmouse C---seen best in Paradise
 Verdin T,S,P,H
 Bushtit H,C
 Red-breasted Nuthatch C
 White-breasted Nuthatch S,P,H,C
 Pygmy Nuthatch C---the cutest bird in North America
 Brown Creeper H,C
 Cactus Wren S,H,C
 Rock Wren S---heard only
 Canyon Wren S,H---great looks in Montosa
 Bewick's Wren S,P,H
 House Wren H,C---the "Brown-throated" variety
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher H---uncommon
 Golden-crowned Kinglet C---heard only by Leslie
 Eastern Bluebird H---uncommon; subspecies *fulva*
 Western Bluebird C---uncommon & localized
 Hermit Thrush C
 American Robin H,C
 Northern Mockingbird almost daily
Bendire's Thrasher C---nice spotting by Mary; tough in late summer
 Curve-billed Thrasher seen daily
Crissal Thrasher C---unusual, prolonged scope study of this desert skulker
 European Starling T,P
 Phainopepla P,H,C
 Olive Warbler C---one female type seen by a few near Rustler Park; hard in late
 summer
 Lucy's Warbler T,P,C
 Virginia's Warbler H---two total
 Common Yellowthroat T,C
 Yellow Warbler T,P
 Yellow-rumped Warbler C---two total
 Grace's Warbler H,C---eleven total
 Black-throated Gray Warbler S,H,C---several nice views; ten total
Hermit Warbler H,C---three total; very uncommon migrant
 Red-faced Warbler C---only two seen and not seen by entire group; can be hard in late
 summer
 Painted Redstart S,H,C---always stunning
 Yellow-breasted Chat P
 Spotted Towhee H,C
 Rufous-crowned Sparrow S,C

Canyon Towhee S,H,C
 Abert's Towhee T
 Rufous-winged Sparrow S---superb views
 Botteri's Sparrow S,H---great studies
 Cassin's Sparrow H,C---great studies after some effort
 Chipping Sparrow C
Black-chinned Sparrow C---elusive and shy this year, but seen by all and some had scope views
 Lark Sparrow almost daily
 Black-throated Sparrow S,H,C---the most handsome sparrow?
Grasshopper Sparrow H---incredible views of a generally skulky bird
 Song Sparrow T,P,C---southwestern subspecies *saltonis*
 Yellow-eyed Junco H,C
 Hepatic Tanager H,C---our first thanks to Susan
 Summer Tanager S,P
 Western Tanager S,H,C---only seven seen
 Northern Cardinal S,P,H,C---the brighter red, longer crested race *superbus*
 Pyrrhuloxia S,H,C---great views
 Black-headed Grosbeak every day but the first
 Blue Grosbeak everyday but the first; 31 total
 Lazuli Bunting P,C---not seen by all
Indigo Bunting C---singing male on the Paradise Road; very uncommon
 Varied Bunting S ---stunning, plum-colored beauties; seven total
 Red-winged Blackbird T,C
 Eastern Meadowlark H,C---southwestern subspecies *lilianae*
Yellow-headed Blackbird T---early migrant male at Sweetwater
 Great-tailed Grackle all but one day
 Bronzed Cowbird S,P,C---only five total
 Brown-headed Cowbird T,S,P,H,C
 Hooded Oriole T,S,P
 Bullock's Oriole C---great looks at male below Portal
 Scott's Oriole S,C---glimpsed by some in Montosa and heard only near Paradise; unusually scarce
 House Finch seen daily
Red Crossbill C---nomadic & unexpected; two near Rustler Park
Pine Siskin C---somewhat out of season
 Lesser Goldfinch seen daily in exceptional numbers with up to a hundred in one day
 House Sparrow seen daily

Total species – **189** (believed to be the all-time tour record!)

Mammals:

Desert Cottontail
 Black-tailed Jackrabbit

Round-tailed Ground Squirrel
Harris's Antelope Squirrel
Cliff Chipmunk
Apache (Mexican) Fox Squirrel---a lifer for Brennan
Arizona Gray Squirrel
Rock Squirrel
kangaroo rat species---either Merriam's or Ord's
small bat species
large bat species
Raccoon---by some at Sweetwater
Coyote---by one van near Portal
Badger---by a few on night drive below Madera; rarely seen
Pronghorn
White-tailed Deer
Collared Peccary (Javelina)

Total species – 17

Reptiles & Amphibians:

Desert Spiny Lizard
Mountain Spiny Lizard
Striped Plateau Lizard---not seen by all; regional specialty
Slevin's Bunch Grass Lizard---in-hand inspection; regional specialty
Ornate Tree Lizard
Desert Grassland Whiptail
Chihuahuan Spotted Whiptail
Lesser Earless Lizard---in-hand inspection
Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake---one on State Line road
Black-tailed Rattlesnake---one in Huachuca Canyon and another in Carr; very "docile"
Twin-spot Rattlesnake---one at Barfoot Junction in the Chiricahuas; a real regional specialty
Gopher Snake---leader only
Turtle species
Sonoran Desert Toad---put a saddle on this one!
Red-spotted Toad
Bullfrog---heard only

Total species – 16 (a tour record for herps?)

Butterflies:

Pipevine Swallowtail
Two-tailed Swallowtail---largest butterfly in North America!
Black Swallowtail
Cloudless Sulphur

Clouded Sulphur
Sleepy Orange
Checkered White
Western Pygmy Blue---smallest butterfly in North America!
Blue species
Variegated Fritillary
Tiny Checkerspot
Texan Crescent
Bordered Patch
Question Mark or Satyr Comma
Mourning Cloak
Lady species
Red-spotted Purple
Arizona Sister---one of my favorites!
Empress Leilia
Queen
Red Satyr
Golden-banded Skipper
Dull Firetip---by some
Northern Cloudywing
Duskywing species (Mournful or Funereal)
Golden-headed Scallopwing
Fiery Skipper
Taxiles Skipper
Roadside skipper species---quite possibly Bronze Roadside Skipper

Total species – 29

Dragonflies:

Common Green Darner
Blue-eyed Darner
Black Saddlebags
Red Saddlebags
Wandering Glider
Flame Skimmer
Mexican Amberwing
Widow Skimmer

Total species - 8

Significant others:

Tarantula
Tarantula Hawk (Wasp)

Prometheus Moth---huge specimen outside our motel in Sierra Vista
Gibber californicus (a pleasing fungus beetle)---a real hit with the group!
Darkling Beetle
Ladybug species
Dung Beetle---in action!
Chrysina beyeri---bright green scarab beetle in Madera
Chrysina lecontei---another bright green scarab
Long-horned beetle species
Desert Centipede
Impressive monsoon storms!
Margaret's lucky button
Spontaneous bursts of John Denver's "Take Me Home" in public
Earth fissures...(yikes)
JR and his hounds