

AVIAN JEWELS OF ARIZONA

**HUMMINGBIRDS, TROGONS,
WARBLERS & MORE**

JULY 21 – 28, 2013

LEADERS:

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A summer trip to Arizona always offers a wide variety of avian treats and this year was no different. The monsoon season was in full force, lowering temperatures, making the landscape lush and green, and bringing a flurry of bird activity. Hummingbirds are one of the main highlights of this trip and we tallied eleven species for the tour. Stunning Broad-billeds, huge Magnificents (living up to their name), and the ubiquitous Black-chinneds were all widespread and seen on a nearly daily basis. Migrant Rufous (brilliant orange and feisty), Broad-tailed (with its unique wing trill), and the tiny Calliope were recorded as well. Less numerous but still expected were Anna's, Costa's (many have departed by this time), Violet-crowned (striking white below with red bill and purple crown), and the biggest of all, the Blue-throated. The prize of our hummingbird list was the Lucifer in Ash Canyon that we studied for several minutes from very close range. This species has declined dramatically since the fires of 2011 and has become very hard to find.

Of course this trip is about so much more than hummingbirds. From the deserts of Tucson to the famed Santa Rita, Huachuca, and Chiricahua mountain ranges to the riparian areas of Patagonia, we totaled nearly 180 species of birds. In the Tucson and Green Valley area, Zone-tailed Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Gilded Flicker, the localized Tropical Kingbird, Lucy's Warbler, Abert's Towhee, and Rufous-winged Sparrow topped the list. Madera Canyon yielded Scaled Quail (uncommon here), Whiskered Screech-Owl, Arizona Woodpecker, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (a species that is much more common at this season than in May), Vermilion Flycatcher, Bridled Titmouse, Painted Redstart, Blue Grosbeak, plum-colored Varied Buntings, and Botteri's Sparrows among others.

Farther south in the vicinity of Nogales and Patagonia, our list continued to grow with the likes of Gray Hawk, Thick-billed Kingbird (one pair had two just fledged babies), a pair of very rare Black-capped Gnatcatchers from close range, Phainopepla, and Yellow-breasted Chat, while nearby grasslands produced Horned Lark, Grasshopper and Cassin's sparrows, and the southwestern race of Eastern Meadowlark (a possible future split).

The Huachuca Mountains just outside of Sierra Vista proved to be our most productive stop. Our morning in Huachuca Canyon produced great views of a family of Elegant Trogons, perhaps the most wanted bird of any trip to Arizona. Incredibly, shortly after we left, another birder further up the canyon discovered a Slate-throated Redstart—an accidental stray from Mexico. This created an immediate change of plans, and the option of a return trip into Fort Huachuca to look for this great vagrant the next morning quickly became a reality. After some patient searching, the folks who went in search of the redstart were rewarded with nice views—a great bonus and a tour first! The remainder of the group ventured up the rocky road into Carr Canyon and had an equally productive

morning. Another Zone-tailed Hawk; more Arizona Woodpeckers; Greater Pewee; Buff-breasted Flycatcher; Virginia's, Grace's, and Black-throated Gray warblers; stunning Indigo Buntings; and Yellow-eyed Juncos were among the highlights. Other noteworthy species around Sierra Vista included a Common Poorwill literally just feet above our heads and a family of Harris's Hawks in a church parking lot that captivated our group.

En route to the Chiricahuas, we were exceptionally lucky to tally both Bendire's and Crissal thrashers in the heat of the afternoon in the Sulphur Springs Valley. As always, the Chiricahuas were an absolute delight with birds everywhere. Mexican Whip-poor-will, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Mexican Chickadee (found nowhere else in the United States), adorable Pygmy Nuthatches, Juniper Titmouse, the ethereal song of Hermit Thrushes, a pair of Olive Warblers, gorgeous Red-faced Warblers, early migrant Hermit Warblers, and a singing Black-chinned Sparrow were arguably our most memorable sightings in this location.

We concluded with a stop in Willcox at Cochise Lake, where we were greeted by over 200 Wilson's Phalaropes, 30+ Baird's Sandpipers, a hundred or more American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Stilt Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitcher, both yellowlegs, Western and Least sandpipers, Cinnamon Teal and more!

In all, our week of birding Arizona yielded 178 species of birds, 18 species of mammals (including two Black Bear sightings), 14 species of reptiles and amphibians, and many beautiful butterflies and dragonflies. We had largely pleasant, mild temperatures throughout due to the monsoon season, yet managed to avoid virtually all of the rain. A great success on every level!

Itinerary:

July 21 – afternoon visit to Safelite Auto Glass & Sweetwater Wetlands (37 species)

July 22 –residential Green Valley, Santa Rita Experimental Range, Madera Canyon, Florida Canyon, evening owling (70 species; 96 total)

July 23 – Green Valley, Amado Sewage Pond, Montosa Canyon, Rio Rico ponds, Patagonia Roadside Rest stop, Paton's feeders, Blue Heaven Road, Sonoita Grasslands, Ash Canyon (86 species; 124 total)

July 24 – Huachuca Canyon, Garden Canyon, Scheelite Canyon, Miller Canyon; evening owling (66 species; 132 total)

July 25 –Carr Canyon for half group & return to Huachuca Canyon for the other half, Sulphur Springs Valley (Whitewater Draw), drive to Portal, Southwest Research Station, evening owling (90 species; 152 total)

July 26 –Paradise Road, upper elevations of Chiricahuas including Pinery Canyon and road to Rustler Park; afternoon to Paradise & Cave Creek Ranch; evening owling (68 species; 162 total)

July 27 –Herb Martyr Road, upper elevations of Chiricahuas including Rustler Park, Barfoot Park, and Pinery Canyon, Cochise Lake & Twin Lakes Golf Course in Willcox (96 species; 178 total)

July 28 – departures for home (178 total species)

Key:

T = areas in and around Tucson

S = Santa Rita Mountains, Green Valle, Amado, Montosa Canyon

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

Cinnamon Teal T,C

Northern Shoveler C---unexpected in mid-summer

Ring-necked Duck C---rare in summer

Ruddy Duck T,S---brilliant males

Scaled Quail S,C---seen best below Madera where very infrequent at best

Gambel's Quail T,S,H,C

Montezuma Quail H---one seen by Janet along road below Scheelite Canyon while the group was hiking

Wild Turkey S,C---the Gould's race

Great Blue Heron P

Snowy Egret P

Black-crowned Night-Heron T,C

White-faced Ibis C---group of fifteen south of Willcox

Black Vulture P

Turkey Vulture seen daily

Cooper's Hawk S,H,T

Harris's Hawk H---after missing this species around Tucson & Green Valley, we had wonderful views in south Sierra Vista where I had never sent eh species before; thanks John!; voted the second favorite bird of the tour
 Gray Hawk P---one along I-19, another perched in Rio Rico and fledged young in Patagonia; great views
 Swainson's Hawk S,H,C
Zone-tailed Hawk S,H---one high over Continental and another closer bird in Carr Canyon
 Red-tailed Hawk almost daily
 Common Gallinule T---formerly Common Moorhen
 American Coot T,S,C
 Killdeer T,C
 Black-necked Stilt T,C---flock of 34 at Cochise Lake
 American Avocet C---over 100 seen at Willcox
 Spotted Sandpiper T,C---including one spotted by Brennan in the SWRS parking lot!
 Greater Yellowlegs C---two at Cochise Lake
 Lesser Yellowlegs C--several at Willcox
Long-billed Curlew C---one at Cochise Lake was a nice find!
 Western Sandpiper C---one at Cochise Lake
 Least Sandpiper T, C
Baird's Sandpiper C---an estimated **40** at Cochise Lake; uncommon
Stilt Sandpiper C---four at Cochise Lake; uncommon
 Long-billed Dowitcher C---one adult
 Wilson's Phalarope C---250+
Ring-billed Gull C---rare in summer
 Rock Pigeon urban areas throughout
 Band-tailed Pigeon H,C---scarcer than usual; mostly flight views
 Eurasian Collared-Dove now widespread in this part of the state
 White-winged Dove seen daily in numbers
 Mourning Dove seen daily
 Common Ground-Dove P.C
 Yellow-billed Cuckoo S,P---heard only
 Greater Roadrunner S,H,C---one particularly well in Sierra Vista; oddly only three total
 Western Screech-Owl S---heard only; only 20 or so feet away in dense brush; frustrating!
 Whiskered Screech-Owl S---great views from fifteen feet!
 Great Horned Owl C---roosting birds at Green Valley & Whitewater Draw
Northern Pygmy-Owl C---we spent forty minutes trying to see this uncooperative calling bird in the Chiricahuas
Burrowing Owl T---a nice surprise were six of these charming birds near our motel; this was actually our first bird of the tour!
 Lesser Nighthawk S---scarcer than usual
Common Poorwill H---fantastic views from just feet away; can be very tough in late summer

Mexican Whip-poor-will C---totally unexpected this late into the summer; we had nice views near Paradise
 White-throated Swift H,C
 Magnificent Hummingbird S,H,C---always stunning---lives up to it's name!
 Blue-throated Hummingbird C---especially well at the Southwest Research station where ten or so buzzed about at close range
Lucifer Hummingbird H---prolonged, close views of a female in Ash Canyon; has been very tough since the fires
 Black-chinned Hummingbird seen daily
 Anna's Hummingbird T,P,H,C---more numerous than last year
Costa's Hummingbird S---one female in Green valley & another in Montosa Canyon
 Broad-tailed Hummingbird H,C---not as numerous as usual
 Rufous Hummingbird P,H,C---several stunning adult males
Calliope Hummingbird C---female found at the last minute in the Chiricahuas; uncommon
 Broad-billed Hummingbird S,P,H,C---up to 30 in a day; stunning
 Violet-crowned Hummingbird P--- three around Patagonia; a real beauty
Elegant Trogon H---pair in Huachuca Canyon feeding young was a real treat; voted the favorite bird of the tour!
 Acorn Woodpecker S,P,H,C
 Gila Woodpecker T,S,P,H
 Ladder-backed Woodpecker S,PH,,C
 Hairy Woodpecker C
Arizona Woodpecker S,H,C---superb studies in Carr Canyon & the Chiricahuas of this uncommon resident
 Northern Flicker H,C---red-shafted variety
Gilded Flicker S---in Green Valley; localized & uncommon
 American Kestrel S,P,H,C
Peregrine Falcon S---quick fly-by in Green Valley for some
Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet S---close, repeated views; uncommon
 Greater Pewee H,C---nice scope views; uncommon
 Western Wood-Pewee S,H,C
 Cordilleran Flycatcher C---several nice views
Buff-breasted Flycatcher H---about six in Carr Canyon and two more unexpected birds in the Chiricahuas; nice studies of this easy to identify empidonax
 Black Phoebe T,P,C---three total
 Say's Phoebe P,H---only four seen
 Vermilion Flycatcher S,P,C
 Dusky-capped Flycatcher S,P,H,C
 Ash-throated Flycatcher P,C---only five total
 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,C---good scope views; very uncommon & localized; particularly unusual was one at Willcox
 Cassin's Kingbird almost daily

Thick-billed Kingbird P---two pairs (one with fledged young) near Patagonia; very localized
 Western Kingbird common in all lower elevation sites
 Loggerhead Shrike S,H,C
 Bell's Vireo S,P,C
 Plumbeous Vireo S,H,C
 Hutton's Vireo S,H,C
 Warbling Vireo T,H
 Steller's Jay C---subspecies *macrolopha*
 Western Scrub-Jay H,C---subspecies *woodhouseii*, a possible future split; only two total
 Mexican Jay S,H,C
 Chihuahuan Raven C---much scarcer than usual
 Common Raven seen daily
 Horned Lark H
 Tree Swallow C
 Violet-green Swallow H,C---scope views
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow T
 Cliff Swallow S,C---a colony of the southwestern subspecies seen near Montosa
 Barn Swallow seen daily
 Mexican Chickadee C---this Chiricahua endemic was seen well on several occasions with about seven total; another species that has been harder to find since the fires
 Bridled Titmouse S, P, H, C---very cute; seemed scarcer than usual
 Juniper Titmouse C---great, repeated views in Paradise
 Verdin T,S,P
 Red-breasted Nuthatch C---two total
 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---seen well in Montosa
 Canyon Wren S,H---great looks in Montosa
 Bewick's Wren S,P,H,C
 House Wren H,C---the "Brown-throated" variety
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher H,C---uncommon
Black-capped Gnatcatcher S---pair in Montosa at close range for a few minutes; this Mexican species has been very tough in recent years; a real bonus!
 Hermit Thrush H,C---one of the best songs in North America
 American Robin H,C
 Northern Mockingbird almost daily
Bendire's Thrasher C---nice spotting by the two Sarahs; great scope views; tough in late summer
 Curve-billed Thrasher T,S,H,C
Crissal Thrasher C---unusual, prolonged scope study of this desert skulker; usually missed at this season
 European Starling T,S,P,H
 Phainopepla P---25 seen, all in one day

Olive Warbler C---pair near the Barfoot junction that stayed in view for some time; generally very tough in late summer

Orange-crowned Warbler C---a very early migrant near Rustler Park

Lucy's Warbler T---only seen the first afternoon

Virginia's Warbler H,C---nice views of a pair in Carr & another briefly near Paradise

Common Yellowthroat T,P,C

Yellow Warbler T,C

Grace's Warbler H,C---thirteen total

Black-throated Gray Warbler H,C---several nice views; thirteen total

Hermit Warbler C---three total; very uncommon migrant

Red-faced Warbler C---only three seen, but very good views of this beauty; can be hard in late summer

Painted Redstart S,H,C---always stunning

Slate-throated Redstart H---this mega Mexican rarity was discovered the day we arrived in the Huachucas, and half the group chased it successfully the next day; voted the second favorite bird of the tour!

Yellow-breasted Chat P---after some effort

Spotted Towhee H,C

Rufous-crowned Sparrow S,H,C

Canyon Towhee S,H,C

Abert's Towhee T,P

Rufous-winged Sparrow S---nice views

Botteri's Sparrow S,H---great studies

Cassin's Sparrow H,C---distant scope views in Sonoita Grasslands

Chipping Sparrow C

Black-chinned Sparrow C---great scope study after some work; localized

Lark Sparrow S,P---somewhat oddly, only four total

Black-throated Sparrow S,H,C---the most handsome sparrow?

Grasshopper Sparrow H---nice views of a generally skulky bird

Song Sparrow T,C---southwestern subspecies *saltonis*

Yellow-eyed Junco H,C---increasing due to the fires?

Hepatic Tanager H,C

Summer Tanager S,P,H

Western Tanager S,H,C---only seven seen

Northern Cardinal S,P,H,C---the brighter red, longer crested race *superbus*

Pyrrhuloxia S,H---great views

Black-headed Grosbeak every day but the first

Blue Grosbeak everyday but the first; 31 total

Indigo Bunting C---two singing males in Carr Canyon; very uncommon

Varied Bunting S,P---stunning, plum-colored beauties; five total; much easier at this season than in May

Red-winged Blackbird T,P

Eastern Meadowlark H,C---southwestern subspecies *lilianae*

Great-tailed Grackle all but two days

Bronzed Cowbird S,P---only three total

Brown-headed Cowbird S,P,H,C

Hooded Oriole S,P,C
Bullock's Oriole S,H,C---great looks at male below Garden Canyon for half the group
Scott's Oriole S,H,C---good views of female in Green Valley; otherwise heard only
House Finch seen daily
Red Crossbill H, C---nomadic & unexpected; flock of 15 or so near Rustler Park
Lesser Goldfinch seen daily in exceptional numbers; increased in numbers since fires
House Sparrow seen daily

Total species – **178**

Mammals:

Harris's Antelope Squirrel
Arizona Gray Squirrel
Apache (Mexican) Fox Squirrel
Cliff Chipmunk
Round-tailed Ground Squirrel
Rock Squirrel
Botta's Pocket Gopher---spotted by Brennan at the SWRS; a crowd pleaser
kangaroo rat species---either Merriam's or Ord's; great views of eight on critter cruise
Desert Cottontail
Antelope Jackrabbit---by half of the group below Madera
Black-tailed Jackrabbit---by some in Sulphur Springs Valley
small bat species
medium-sized bat species
Gray Fox
American Black Bear---two seen in the Chiricahuas; the first thanks to Sarah
Raccoon---by Susan at Sweetwater
Collared Peccary (Javelina)
White-tailed Deer---including a doe with a just born fawn in the middle of the road!

Total species – 18

Reptiles & Amphibians:

Desert Spiny Lizard
Mountain Spiny Lizard
Striped Plateau Lizard---not seen by all; regional specialty
Desert Grassland Whiptail
Tiger Whiptail
Lesser Earless Lizard
Regal Horned Lizard---leader only
Long-nosed Snake---in hand inspection on night drive
Desert Kingsnake---two seen, one below Madera and the other below Portal
Black-tailed Rattlesnake---hiding by the donation box at the SWRS
Bullfrog---heard only

Western Spadefoot Toad---the peanut butter toad!
Sonoran Desert Toad---put a saddle on this one!
Bullfrog---heard only

Total species – 14 (two shy of tour record for herps)

Butterflies:

Pipevine Swallowtail
Two-tailed Swallowtail---largest butterfly in North America!
Sulphur species
Blue species
Variegated Fritillary
Tiny Checkerspot
Bordered Patch
Mourning Cloak
Monarch
Queen
Gulf Fritillary
Arizona Sister---one of my favorites!
Golden-banded Skipper
Northern Cloudywing
Golden-headed Scallopwing
Fiery Skipper
Skipper species---in hand; ID pending Brennan's review of video

Total species – 15

Dragonflies:

Common Green Darner
Blue-eyed Darner
Red Saddlebags
Flame Skimmer
Mexican Amberwing
Blue Dasher

Total species - 6

Significant others:

Tarantula---huge one below Madera
Tarantula Hawk (Wasp)
Velvet Ant
Gibber californicus (a pleasing fungus beetle)---a real hit with the group!
Darkling Beetle

“Lugenberger’s Hairy-backed Fly”---scope views
Earth fissures...(yikes)
Toad sniffing