

ARIZONA HUMMINGBIRDS

JULY 22 - 29, 2007

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Leaders: Brennan Mulrooney and Steve Gross
TOUR REPORT
By Brennan Mulrooney

There is a short list of locations in North America that are absolute must-visits for a birder. Southeast Arizona has a prominent spot on that short list. The list of birds found here and nowhere else is well over 20 species, and the diversity in general is fantastic. Put that together with some amazing scenery and an abundance of birder-friendly destinations and it's easy to see why Southeast Arizona is so famous in the birding world. While there are many different sought after species here, ranging from the subtly distinguished flycatchers to the downright gaudy warblers, it's the hummingbirds that are the real stars of the show.

Despite lower than normal numbers and diversity (due presumably to early rains and an amazing agave bloom keeping the birds away from the feeders), we still tallied an impressive 12 species of hummingbirds. Among these were several that are at the top of birders' most-wanted lists. Throughout the trip we saw good numbers of Broad-billed Hummingbirds, and good looks at adult males never failed to elicit gasps of amazement from the group. In Patagonia, at the legendary Paton's feeders, we all had superb looks at the distinctive Violet-crowned Hummingbird with its immaculate white underparts and glowing violet crown. Up in the canyons we encountered both Magnificent Hummingbird and Blue-throated Hummingbird. These two mega hummingbirds of Southeast Arizona both exceed five inches in length! Though we didn't see huge numbers of hummingbirds, as we do most years, we did do quite well with the rare ones, scoring Lucifer, White-eared, and Berylline. All three of these beauties are easily missed in some years and were lifers for almost everybody.

While there was plenty of eye candy provided by all of those hummingbirds, I think that the most memorable moment was provided by a warbler. Not that this should be surprising. After all, Southeast Arizona is home to some pretty fantastic warblers. It was almost the end of the trip and we were getting toward the end of our last day in the Chiricahuas. We had been doing surprisingly well with the warblers, having already had great looks at Olive, Lucy's, Black-throated Gray, Hermit, and Grace's warblers, and the flamboyant Painted Redstart; we just hadn't yet tracked down a Red-faced Warbler. Experience told me that it wasn't going to be easy. At this time of year the warblers are off their territories and moving around quietly in family groups. Well, this family group wasn't quite quiet enough. The incessant high-pitched begging calls of the juvenile led us right to them. Then for at least half an hour we watched as both parents made repeated foraging runs, always returning with their bills brimming full of bugs to shove down their eager offspring's throat. It was a truly amazing experience; the parents were so single-minded in their task that they appeared totally oblivious to our presence and foraged all around us as we sat spellbound.

Of course this just barely scratches the surface of our fantastic time in this legendary place. Other highly sought species that we encountered included: Montezuma Quail; Gray and Zone-tailed hawks; Spotted Owl (in daylight!); Elegant Trogon; Arizona Woodpecker; Gilded Flicker; Greater Pewee; Buff-breasted, Dusky-capped, and Sulphur-bellied flycatchers; Tropical and

Thick-billed kingbirds; Mexican Chickadee; Bridled Titmouse; Black-capped Gnatcatcher; Bendire's and Crissal thrashers; Botteri's Sparrow; Yellow-eyed Junco; Varied Bunting; and Scott's Oriole.

ITINERARY:

July 22: Tour orientation followed by an afternoon excursion to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, then dinner in Tucson

July 23: Morning departure from Tucson; birding our way up from Continental into Madera Canyon; lunch in Green Valley followed by a post lunch break, then afternoon return to Madera Canyon; night in Green Valley

July 24: Morning departure from Green Valley with birding starting at the Rio Rico ponds then on to Kino Springs and the Patagonia Roadside Rest Area before lunch in Patagonia; post lunch visit to the Paton's feeders in Patagonia before driving through the Sonoita Grasslands en route to Sierra Vista; pre-dinner visit to Mary Jo's feeders in Ash Canyon; night in Sierra Vista

July 25: Morning excursion to Fort Huachuca with birding in Garden Canyon, mostly at the upper picnic area; lunch in town followed by a break then afternoon visits to Ramsey Canyon, the Beatty's Guest Ranch in Miller Canyon (picnic dinner there), and then a return trip to Ash Canyon for the 7:20 showing of Lucifer Hummingbird; **10** Hummingbird species this afternoon! Post-dinner owling in lower Carr Canyon; night in Sierra Vista

July 26: Morning birding atop Carr Canyon primarily at the Reef Townsite Campground; lunch in Sierra Vista followed by birding at the Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park and the San Pedro House before the afternoon drive to Portal; owling around town; night in Portal

July 27: Pre-breakfast birding at and around Dave Jasper's place; after breakfast birding up the Paradise Rd into the highlands of the Chiricahua Mts. with stops at East Turkey Creek Crossing, Onion Saddle, Pinery Canyon, and Rustler Park; we worked our way back down with a productive stop along East Turkey Creek, then down into South Fork Cave Creek stopping at Sunny Flats, the Southwestern Research Station and Vista Point Trail; post-dinner owling in Cave Creek Canyon; night in Portal

July 28: Pre-breakfast birding along the Portal Rd and in and around Rodeo, NM; post breakfast departure from Portal with a brief stop in Wilcox at Lake Cochise, then we were off to Madera Canyon for one more try at Flame-colored Tanager; urban Burrowing Owls on the way to dinner were a nice way to cap off the trip; night in Tucson

July 29: Departures for home

BIRD LIST

Note: Species that are underlined are birds of special note that are either rare, local specialties, or are otherwise generally hard to find. Bird List order is according to the 48th Supplement to the AOU Check-list as published in *The Auk* 124:1109-1115 (2007).

Abbreviations:

MC - Madera Canyon

PRR - Patagonia Roadside Rest

RC - Ramsey Canyon

BGR - Beatty's Guest Ranch, Miller Canyon

AC - Ash Canyon Bed and Breakfast

GC - Garden Canyon

SVEOP - Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park

CM - Chiricahua Mountains

LC - Lake Cochise, Wilcox

SWANS, GEESE, AND DUCKS

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck - a very cooperative pair along Rio Rico Rd

Mallard - we saw "Mexican Mallards" best at SVEOP

Blue-winged Teal - about 20 birds at LC were probably a mix of these and Cinnamon Teal, but they flew before we could get a good look. Adam saw a male that was definitely of this species, but the majority was probably Cinnamon.

Lesser Scaup - a single bird at LC, these are of casual occurrence in summer

Ruddy Duck - about 20 at LC with males in striking breeding colors

PHEASANTS, GROUSE AND TURKEYS

Wild Turkey - seen and heard at AC including one roosting in a sycamore, these are part of a reintroduced population

NEW WORLD QUAIL

Scaled Quail - or Squail for short, best looks below RC

Montezuma Quail - we were very lucky to find a single male along the road below GC

Gambel's Quail - more widespread than the former, seen best at Jasper's feeders

CORMORANTS

Double-crested Cormorant - a single bird at LC

BITTERNS AND HERONS

Great Blue Heron - fairly common and widespread, for a desert...

Great Egret - single at Rio Rico

Snowy Egret - Rio Rico

Green Heron - Rio Rico

Black-crowned Night-Heron - foraging in the open at Rio Rico

IBISES AND SPOONBILLS

White-faced Ibis - a fly-by flock at Rio Rico

NEW WORLD VULTURES

Black Vulture - best at PRR

Turkey Vulture - seen most days

HAWKS, EAGLES AND KITES

Northern Harrier - a single at LC spotted by Jonni was a bit of a surprise at this time of year, possibly an early fall migrant

Cooper's Hawk - several were seen well perched and in flight

Gray Hawk - we found a couple of these handsome southwestern specialties including a whiny juvenile at Kino Springs

Swainson's Hawk - fairly widespread in the open country

Zone-tailed Hawk - never an easy bird, we had at least three

Red-tailed Hawk - we saw a few of the pale bellied "Fuertes" race

Golden Eagle - a soaring adult below GC and two more over Sunny Flats

FALCONS

American Kestrel - a few scattered about

Peregrine Falcon - a juvenile at PRR and an adult at LC

RAILS, COOTS, LIMPKIN, AND CRANES

Sora - another summer surprise, there on no known breeding records for the area, but our bird sure was feisty, even if it never would quite come out into the open.

American Coot - LC

PLOVERS AND SANDPIPERS

Killdeer - a few scattered birds, maybe best at SVEOP

AVOCETS AND STILTS

Black-necked Stilt - just one at LC

American Avocet - several at LC with most showing their lovely breeding colors

SANDPIPERS

Spotted Sandpiper - a couple in LC and a surprise bird in GC

Ruddy Turnstone - a casual fall transient, this one had been hanging around for a while

Western Sandpiper - a few molting adults at LC

Least Sandpiper - less common than the former at LC

Baird's Sandpiper - mostly juvenile birds this year at LC

Stilt Sandpiper - four or five adults in breeding plumage at LC

Long-billed Dowitcher - several adults in breeding plumage at LC

Wilson's Phalarope - mostly adults in all different stages of molt

GULLS AND TERNS

Ring-billed Gull - one bird in ratty first summer plumage at LC, rare in summer

Black Tern - several in breeding plumage adult at LC

PIGEONS AND DOVES

Rock Pigeon

Band-tailed Pigeon - best views were two perched birds in MC

Eurasian Collared-Dove - no longer a noteworthy sighting in AZ

White-winged Dove - seen and heard daily

Mourning Dove - seen daily

Inca Dove - seen only in Patagonia

Common Ground-Dove - just a couple, best in Patagonia and Kino Springs

CUCKOOS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo - singing in flight at Kino Springs

Greater Roadrunner - we saw several of these charismatic birds along the road including one in Continental carrying a mouse

OWLS Owling in summer can be a frustrating endeavor with most young birds out of the nest and family groups on the move.

Western Screech-Owl - a family group unfortunately heard only in Portal

Whiskered Screech-Owl - heard well, but not seen in Cave Creek Canyon

Northern Pygmy-Owl - great views of a responsive bird along East Turkey Creek, CM; the birds in this part of Arizona are *Glaucidium gnoma gnoma* or "Mountain Pygmy-Owl"

Burrowing Owl - our last official bird of the trip in downtown Tucson

Spotted Owl - spectacular views in GC of what we think was a fledgling at its nest cavity and an adult nearby

NIGHTJARS

Common Nighthawk - one heard by a couple of us as it called once at AC

Common Poorwill - we heard several in many locations, but never saw one on the road

SWIFTS

White-throated Swift - best at the base of Carr Canyon

HUMMINGBIRDS: far lower numbers than most years probably due to the enormous number of blooming agaves that we witnessed. Our total of 12 still included all of the regular Southeast Arizona specialties and a couple of rarities.

Broad-billed Hummingbird - these striking birds were fairly common and widespread, the adult males are truly stunning

White-eared Hummingbird - great luck with this rare species, we had fantastic looks at an adult male at the feeders at BGR where it has been annual in recent years

Berylline Hummingbird - we were very fortunate to see a glowing green adult at the feeders in RC, this bird is not present every year. Thanks to David for spotting this one!

Violet-crowned Hummingbird - one of the more scarce breeding hummingbirds in southeast Arizona, we had great looks at the Paton's feeders and some also saw one in Portal

Blue-throated Hummingbird - the largest of the bunch, the huge white cornered black tail is their most distinctive trait, our best looks were probably in Portal

Magnificent Hummingbird - aren't they all magnificent? But then again, adult males of this species are truly breathtaking

Lucifer Hummingbird - another very scarce hummer in Arizona, we had to try twice, but we were finally rewarded with two males coming in to "tank up" at dusk in AC

Black-chinned Hummingbird - perhaps the most common hummer we saw

Anna's Hummingbird - fairly common and widespread at the feeders

Costa's Hummingbird - fairly scarce this far east, we had a female at the Desert Museum

Broad-tailed Hummingbird - their metallic wing trill first drew our attention at BGR, we also saw them at RC and Portal

Rufous Hummingbird - usually these guys are everywhere! we only saw a couple, with most of them at the feeders high above MC

TROGONS

Elegant Trogon - an especially cooperative male in GC eventually gave us fantastic looks

WOODPECKERS

Acorn Woodpecker - these clowns of the oak woodlands were common in the canyons

Gila Woodpecker - fairly common at lower elevations
Ladder-backed Woodpecker - we had our best looks in MC
Arizona Woodpecker - formerly known as Strickland's Woodpecker, great looks in MC
Northern Flicker - the red-shafted form at higher elevations
Gilded Flicker - this sonoran desert specialty gave us a good look near Continental, but what was
with the white wing patches?

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet - unfortunately heard only in MC
Greater Pewee - good looks in Carr Canyon and CM
Western Wood-Pewee - fairly common in the canyons
Cordilleran Flycatcher - first in MC then great views in CM
Buff-breasted Flycatcher - this scarce breeder is limited to a few high altitude forests in
Southeast Arizona, we only got glimpses of a shy bird in Carr Canyon
Black Phoebe - two at Rio Rico and one in Rodeo
Say's Phoebe - a few scattered about
Vermilion Flycatcher - just a few of these fancy little flycatchers
Dusky-capped Flycatcher - fairly common in the canyons, more yellow and less rufous
than the following
Ash-throated Flycatcher - more a bird of open habitats
Brown-crested Flycatcher - fairly common in riparian habitats
Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher - these strikingly patterned birds were uncommon in canyon riparian
areas, seen best in Garden Canyon
Tropical Kingbird - a very localized breeder in Arizona, our only one was at Rio Rico
Cassin's Kingbird - fairly common and very vocal
Thick-billed Kingbird - a pair at PRR, another very localized breeder in the U.S.
Western Kingbird - quite common, with migrants out in the open desert

SHRIKES

Loggerhead Shrike - several scattered sightings

VIREOS

Bell's Vireo - very vocal, but not easy to see, "chibbity-chibbity-chee?"
Plumbeous Vireo - we had several good looks in the canyons
Hutton's Vireo - good looks at this drab little vireo, like a kinglet on steroids...
Warbling Vireo - probably only seen by a few, not common this year

CROWS AND JAYS

Steller's Jay - we heard a few in CM before the rain chased us off the mountain
Western Scrub-Jay - good views along the Paradise and Portal Roads
Mexican Jay - "wink! wink!" these vociferous jays were common in the canyons
Chihuahuan Raven - we checked the length of the nasal bristles and also saw why they used to
call it White-necked Raven
Common Raven - seemed to be more common than the former

LARKS

Horned Lark - good views for my van south of Portal

SWALLOWS

Purple Martin - we had several this year, those breeding in the Sonoran Desert use cavities in
Saguaros

Violet-green Swallow - good looks at this western specialty, best on the wires at GC and CM
Northern Rough-winged Swallow - SVEOP and LC
Bank Swallow - a few in the swallow flock at SVEOP
Cliff Swallows - common breeders under the bridges in the area
Barn Swallow - seen most days

CHICKADEES AND TITMICE

Mexican Chickadee - we found them right away in CM and had several great looks throughout the day

Bridled Titmouse - a strong candidate for cutest bird in North America, we saw several in the lower canyons

Juniper Titmouse - not seen by everybody, we had a squirrely bird on the Paradise Rd; formerly part of Plain Titmouse, an unusually apt bird name

VERDIN

Verdin - we saw several of these cute little guys in the drier areas

BUSHTIT

Bushtit - we found a few flocks of these charismatic little fluff balls

NUTHATCHES

Red-breasted Nuthatch - seen by most in one of the flocks in CM

White-breasted Nuthatch - fairly common in most of the canyons

Pygmy Nuthatch - a flock at Rustler Park stayed way high up in the pines

CREEPERS

Brown Creeper - great looks at several of the "Mexican" race including one in Ramsey Canyon that didn't move for almost 5 minutes!

WRENS

Cactus Wren - common and conspicuous

Rock Wren - seen by most at PRR

Canyon Wren - seen by most in MC

Bewick's Wren - seen or heard most days

House Wren - great looks in CM at an individual of the Brown-throated group that just reaches SE Arizona from the south

GNATCATCHERS

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - one at PRR

Black-tailed Gnatcatcher - seen well at the Desert Museum

Black-capped Gnatcatcher - a very rare bird in the U.S. and not present every year, most of us were very fortunate to get great looks at a male in MC

THRUSHES

Eastern Bluebird - a heavily worn female in Carr Canyon was a real head scratcher for a while

Hermit Thrush - great looks at a pair at a nest in Carr Canyon

American Robin - just a few at higher elevations

MOCKINGBIRDS AND THRASHERS

Northern Mockingbird - fairly common at lower elevations

Bendire's Thrasher - a cooperative bird in Rodeo showed well for us

Curve-billed Thrasher - common in the lower elevations

Crissal Thrasher - we struggled for distant views at Jasper's then had one running in the road in Rodeo with the Bendire's!

STARLINGS

European Starling

PHAINOPEPLA

Phainopepla - seen every day

OLIVE WARBLER

Olive Warbler - not olive and not a warbler - discuss. We were very lucky to find two in Carr Canyon, these birds can be really tough at this time of year.

WARBLERS

Lucy's Warbler - seen best at Kino Springs

Yellow Warbler - at PRR and Rio Rico

Black-throated Gray Warbler - several in the canyons, including one feeding a cowbird chick

Hermit Warbler - a female in Carr Canyon

Grace's Warbler - good looks at a couple in Carr Canyon

Common Yellowthroat - a few perched up at Kino Springs

Red-faced Warbler - probably the winner for tour favorite, this was one of our last target birds and very high on everybody's most wanted lists; we finally tracked down a family group in CM that allowed us to watch for about 30 minutes from close range as both adults fed a begging fledgling

Painted Redstart - fairly common in the canyons we saw adults and immatures

Yellow-breasted Chat - great looks at Rio Rico

TANAGERS

Hepatic Tanager - best looks in GC

Summer Tanager - heard and saw several in lower elev. riparian zones

Western Tanager - we saw several of these handsome birds

Flame-colored Tanager - what a bummer, this bird stymied us three times; we heard it sing a few times but it never sat still long enough for us to get more than a fleeting glimpse as it moved high through the dense sycamores of MC

SPARROWS AND ALLIES

Spotted Towhee - heard more than seen, but they were fairly common in the canyons

Canyon Towhee - more common below the canyons, sharper looking than...

Abert's Towhee - more localized than the former, best at the Paton's

Rufous-winged Sparrow - a very cooperative birds our first morning below MC

Cassin's Sparrow - these guys were tough this year, we had a distant singing bird below GC, then had great up-close looks at LC

Botteri's Sparrow - way more common than Cassin's this year, best below MC

Rufous-crowned Sparrow - great looks in MC

Chipping Sparrow - a family group at the Research Station

Lark Sparrow - who said sparrows are drab? we had great looks at several locations

Black-throated Sparrow - even better looking than the former? perhaps

Song Sparrow - seen well at Kino Springs

Yellow-eyed Junco - fairly common in the higher elevations of CM and Carr Canyon

CARDINALS AND ALLIES

Northern Cardinal - fairly common and widespread, formerly the "Long-crested Cardinal"

Pyrrhuloxia - not as common as the former but we had several good looks

Black-headed Grosbeak - seen daily

Blue Grosbeak - seen or heard daily
Lazuli Bunting - males and females foraging together at Kino Springs
Varied Bunting - great looks at a pair in MC, also seen at PRR

BLACKBIRDS AND ALLIES

Red-winged Blackbird - scattered birds where we found water
Eastern Meadowlark - the distinctive southwestern form, "Lilian's Meadowlark" we saw a few in various grasslands
Yellow-headed Blackbird - several in the marsh at SVEOP
Great-tailed Grackle - these big brutes are common, especially around towns
Bronzed Cowbird - good looks at Rio Rico
Brown-headed Cowbird - all too common and widespread
Hooded Oriole - many great looks at males and females
Bullock's Oriole - not as common as Hooded, we mostly saw them in flight
Scott's Oriole - seen best along Stateline Road south of Portal

FINCHES

House Finch - common at seed feeders
Pine Siskin - a bit of a surprise at the feeders in Portal
Lesser Goldfinch - common at feeders

OLD WORLD SPARROWS

House Sparrow

MAMMALS

Desert Cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*)
Black-tailed Jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*)
Rock Squirrel (*Spermophilus variegates*)
Arizona Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus arizonensis*)
Cliff Chipmunk (*Tamias dorsalis*)
Harris's Antelope Squirrel (*Ammospermophilus harrisi*)
Coues' White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus couesi*)
Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*)

HERPS

Common Chuckwalla (*Sauromalus ater*) - probably an escapee from the museum
Greater Earless Lizard (*Cophosaurus texanus*) - with the curled black and white tail
Desert Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus magister*) - the lizard with a collar
Southwestern Fence Lizard (*Sceloporus cowlesi*)
Chihuahuan Spotted Whiptail (*Cnemidophorus exsanguis*)
Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus atrox*)
Black-tailed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus molossus*)

BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

Pipevine Swallowtail (*Battus philenor*)
Two-tailed Swallowtail (*Papilio multicaudata*)
Checkered White (*Pontia protodice*)
Orange Sulphur (*Colias eurytheme*)

Southern Dogface (*Zerene cesonia*)
Sleepy Orange (*Eurema nicippe*)
Spring Azure (*Celastrina ladon*)
Zela Metalmark (*Emesis zela*)
Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*)
Variegated Fritillary (*Euptoieta claudia*)
Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*)
Red-spotted Purple (*Limenitis arthemis*)
California Sister (*Adelpha bredowii*)
Red Satyr (*Megisto rubricata*)
Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)
Queen (*Danaus gilippus*)
Dull Firetip (*Pyrrhopyge araxes*)
Two-spotted Forester (*Alypiodes bimaculata*) - this was the abundant black and white moth

OTHER CRITTERS

Velvet Ant (family Mutillidae) - AKA Cow Killer

Tarantula Hawk (*Pepsis sp.*) - big black wasp with orange wings and long legs