

# **SUMMER ARIZONA**

**JULY 21 – 28, 2008**

**LEADER: KIM ECKERT**

**COMPILED BY: KIM ECKERT**

**VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS, INC.  
2525 WALLINGWOOD DRIVE, SUITE 1003  
AUSTIN, TX 78746  
[WWW.VENTBIRD.COM](http://WWW.VENTBIRD.COM)**

## SUMMER ARIZONA

JULY 21 - 28, 2008

**Leader: Kim Eckert**

### Tour Summary

It had been a few years since I had led a late-summer tour in Southeast Arizona, seven to be exact, so I wasn't quite sure how this tour would go. Unique birding sites, distracting scenery, monsoons greening up the countryside and tricking birds into song, a dozen hummingbird species swarming about feeders, trogons and all the rest—would they all still be there as I remembered them?

Why I ever had any initial doubts I'll never know. This turned out to be just about the most enjoyable tour I had done all year: it seems you just can't go wrong in late July in Southeast Arizona! There was greenery and water in abundance, thanks to an especially generous monsoon season, and consequently the temperatures were refreshingly moderate. Yet, there was only one afternoon when the rains slowed us down, and no flash-floods precluded any roads we wanted to follow. And just about all the birds and birding places—and *all* the scenery—were still where I had left them seven years ago.

Some might prefer to be here in May, when owls and warblers and others are more vocal and easier to find. But late summer is more like a second spring, when sparrows (especially Cassin's, Botteri's, and Rufous-winged) and other grasslands birds break into song, and when spring's paltry hummingbird species potential doubles into a dozen or more late-summer possibilities. Indeed, this tour used to be aptly named "Arizona Hummingbirds." Where else can you go and "only" list 10 species of hummers, as we did this year (lots of rain = more natural food = less reliance on feeders), and call it a below-average total?

One of the most enjoyable aspects of this trip was the opportunity for exploring new birding sites. Normally, folks going to the Santa Rita Mountains stop at renowned Madera Canyon and leave it at that. But this time around we went to Montosa Canyon just south of Madera, a first for me, where invisible Montezuma Quail were calling from a far hillside, and Cordilleran Flycatcher, Varied Bunting, and Scott's Oriole all appeared close at hand. Another "lifer" birding site, Rio Rico, came later the same morning, where the distinctive trill of a Tropical Kingbird confirmed its ID and Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks loafed on the edge of a wet pasture.

Huachuca Canyon, within the Fort of the same name, also became a new addition to my birding itinerary the next day. In a way, it's just like Madera Canyon of the Santa Ritas, in that birders in Fort Huachuca limit their efforts to Garden Canyon (and adjacent Scheelite and Sawmill canyons). But this summer birders seemed to be having better luck at relatively unknown Huachuca Canyon, and our brief stop here yielded nice looks and listens at Dusky-capped and Sulphur-bellied flycatchers, Painted Redstart, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and others.

Of course, the old, familiar, and reliable sites came through for us as well. On our first full day in Madera Canyon, a vigil at the feeders at Madera Kubo B & B got us off to a “flying” start with our only Arizona Woodpecker, Berylline Hummingbird, and Flame-colored Tanager, not to mention a Magnificent Hummingbird and Hepatic Tanager, along with a nearby juvenile Painted Redstart which, understandably, failed to attract much of our attention.

Fast-forward a few days to the Chiricahua Mountains and its foothills. Even though the road just below the T-intersection (a.k.a. Barfoot Junction) between Rustler and Barfoot parks looks no different than other places at this altitude, it seems consistently attractive to birdlife. This time was certainly no different, with our only Hairy Woodpecker, Mexican Chickadees, Pygmy Nuthatches, Olive Warbler (our second), Grace’s Warbler, our only Red-faced Warbler, and Red Crossbill all essentially together in the same wave!

Then, the next day at a lower elevation along Silver Creek Road, my long-favorite hillside hosted an exceptionally cooperative family of Black-chinned Sparrows, as a migrant Gray Flycatcher happened by, and an assortment of other birds around like Western Scrub-Jay (our only ones), Violet-green Swallows, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Crissal Thrasher, and Rufous-crowned Sparrow all made it difficult to decide which way to look.

Gray and Zone-tailed hawks at Kino Springs, both Western and Whiskered screech-owls posing in the spotlight in Miller Canyon, Violet-crowned Hummingbirds at three different sites, Elegant Trogons perched overhead at Sawmill Canyon, a total of no fewer than 17 flycatcher species, Varied Buntings posing in the sun below Madera Canyon, a Bendire’s Thrasher on Stateline Road...I could go on. Somehow, none of these deserved mention in this tour’s highlights! But that’s how good it is here—when trogons and the like are relegated to a postscript.

## **Itinerary**

July 21 - All arrived in time for the 2:00 p.m. option to Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, with birding en route along Kinney Road.

July 22 - All morning in Madera Canyon, especially at Proctor Road and Madera Kubo, and along White House Canyon Road en route (most of afternoon rained-out).

July 23 - Morning at Montosa Canyon, Rio Rico, Kino Springs, and Patagonia Roadside Rest; afternoon at Paton's feeders, and drive to Sierra Vista.

July 24 - Morning at Garden, Sawmill, and Huachuca canyons in Fort Huachuca; afternoon at Miller Canyon and Beatty's feeders; evening at Ash Canyon B & B feeders (briefly) and return to Miller Canyon for owling.

July 25 - All morning at Carr Canyon; afternoon return to Ash Canyon B & B and drive to Portal via some brief birding along Stateline Road.

July 26 - Pre-breakfast option along Stateline Road; rest of day at Cave Creek Canyon, Barfoot Junction area, Rustler Park, Barfoot Park (briefly), Paradise and vicinity, and Dave Jasper's feeders; evening owling/poor-willing option.

July 27 - Pre-breakfast quail search to Cave Creek Canyon and along Silver Creek Road (briefly); return to Silver Creek Road, and return drive to Tucson via Foothills Drive and Willcox; late afternoon option to Kinney Road, Columbus Park, and Sweetwater Wetlands.

July 28 - Departure for home.

## **Bird List**

Key:

- Underlined species = Arizona specialties (i.e., those mostly absent, rare, or very local elsewhere in the U.S.)
- **Boldfaced** species = special highlights (i.e., unexpected rarities or highly-sought specialties)
- spaces indicate divisions between family groups

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck - Rio Rico  
American Wigeon - Amado sewage ponds  
Mallard  
Cinnamon Teal - Sweetwater Wetlands  
Redhead - Willcox  
Ruddy Duck

Scaled Quail - several along Stateline Road  
Gambel's Quail  
Montezuma Quail - heard-only, alas, at Montosa Canyon and near Southwest Research Station

Eared Grebe - Willcox

Great Blue Heron  
Great Egret  
Green Heron - Sweetwater Wetlands  
Black-crowned Night-Heron - Willcox

Black Vulture - Kino Springs  
Turkey Vulture

Northern Harrier - Stateline Road  
Cooper's Hawk  
Gray Hawk - nice view of an adult at Kino Springs  
Swainson's Hawk  
Zone-tailed Hawk - ditto!  
Red-tailed Hawk

American Kestrel  
Peregrine Falcon - adult in flight over Carr Canyon

Common Moorhen - Sweetwater Wetlands  
American Coot

Semipalmated Plover - Rio Rico  
Killdeer

Spotted Sandpiper - this and the next 5 shorebirds all at Willcox  
Western Sandpiper  
Least Sandpiper  
Baird's Sandpiper  
Long-billed Dowitcher  
Wilson's Phalarope

Rock Pigeon  
Band-tailed Pigeon - Carr and Cave Creek canyons  
Eurasian Collared-Dove - downtown Willcox  
White-winged Dove  
Mourning Dove  
Inca Dove - Paton's feeders  
Common Ground-Dove - a few fly-bys

Yellow-billed Cuckoo - Montosa Canyon, Kino Springs, and Patagonia Roadside Rest  
Greater Roadrunner

Western Screech-Owl - close in Miller Canyon (but a dim view thanks to my defective spotlight)  
**Whiskered Screech-Owl** - excellent, close look in Miller Canyon  
Great Horned Owl - also in Miller Canyon  
Northern Pygmy-Owl (the *gnoma* subspecies) - heard well in Garden Canyon

Common Poorwill - a few heard-only along Silver Creek Road

White-throated Swift - Carr Canyon

Broad-billed Hummingbird

**White-eared Hummingbird** - great views of a male at Beatty's feeders

**Berylline Hummingbird** - at Madera Kubo's feeders

Violet-crowned Hummingbird - at no fewer than 3 sites: Paton's, Portal Peak Lodge, and Dave Jasper's!

Blue-throated Hummingbird - especially handsome at Southwest Research Station

Magnificent Hummingbird - Madera Kubo and Beatty's feeders

Black-chinned Hummingbird

Anna's Hummingbird - Beatty's and Ash Canyon B & B

Broad-tailed Hummingbird - Beatty's and Rustler Park

Rufous Hummingbird - including a full adult male at Portal Peak Lodge

**Elegant Trogon** - 2 males perched overhead at Sawmill Canyon, plus another heard-only at Huachuca Canyon

Acorn Woodpecker

Gila Woodpecker

Ladder-backed Woodpecker

Hairy Woodpecker - near Barfoot Junction

Arizona Woodpecker - Madera Kubo's feeders

Northern Flicker

Gilded Flicker - finally along Kinney Road on the last day

Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet - finally at Patagonia Roadside Rest

Greater Pewee - relatively easy and vocal at Carr Canyon

Western Wood-Pewee

Gray Flycatcher - unexpected migrant along Silver Creek Road

Cordilleran Flycatcher - Montosa, Garden, and Cave Creek canyons

Buff-breasted Flycatcher - first seen at Sawmill Canyon, with better looks at Carr Canyon

Black Phoebe

Say's Phoebe - Southwest Research Station

Vermilion Flycatcher - Rio Rico and Garden Canyon

Dusky-capped Flycatcher - best views at Huachuca Canyon

Ash-throated Flycatcher

Brown-crested Flycatcher

Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher - relatively easy at Garden and Huachuca canyons

Tropical Kingbird - Rio Rico and Sweetwater Wetlands

Cassin's Kingbird

Thick-billed Kingbird - by a nest at Patagonia Roadside Rest

Western Kingbird

Loggerhead Shrike

Bell's Vireo

Plumbeous Vireo

Hutton's Vireo - Garden and Carr canyons

Warbling Vireo - briefly at Silver Creek Road

Steller's Jay

Western Scrub-Jay - also along Silver Creek Road

Mexican Jay

Chihuahuan Raven

Common Raven

Purple Martin - saguaro-nesters near the Desert Museum

Violet-green Swallow - mostly along Silver Creek Road

Northern Rough-winged Swallow  
Cliff Swallow  
Barn Swallow

Mexican Chickadee - Cave Creek Canyon, Barfoot Junction, and Rustler Park  
Bridled Titmouse  
Juniper Titmouse - George Walker House feeders

Verdin

Bushtit

White-breasted Nuthatch  
Pygmy Nuthatch - especially near Barfoot Junction

Brown Creeper

Cactus Wren  
Rock Wren - Carr Canyon  
Canyon Wren  
Bewick's Wren

Ruby-crowned Kinglet - Rustler Park

Black-tailed Gnatcatcher - best look on Silver Creek Road

American Robin

Northern Mockingbird  
**Bendire's Thrasher** - unexpectedly close and cooperative on Stateline Road  
Curve-billed Thrasher  
Crissal Thrasher - best along Stateline and Silver Creek roads

European Starling

Phainopepla

Olive Warbler - Carr Canyon and near Barfoot Junction

Virginia's Warbler - Carr Canyon  
Lucy's Warbler - briefly at Kino Springs  
Yellow Warbler - heard-only at Sweetwater Wetlands  
Black-throated Gray Warbler  
Grace's Warbler - Sawmill & Carr canyons and near Barfoot Junction  
Common Yellowthroat  
**Red-faced Warbler** - near Barfoot Junction (where else?!)

Painted Redstart

Yellow-breasted Chat - heard-only

Hepatic Tanager

Summer Tanager

Western Tanager

**Flame-colored Tanager** - brief visit to Madera Kubo's feeders and constantly singing overhead

Spotted Towhee

Canyon Towhee

Abert's Towhee - Desert Museum and Sweetwater Wetlands

Rufous-winged Sparrow - unusually common and vocal, especially below Madera Canyon

Cassin's Sparrow - especially vocal this year

Botteri's Sparrow - best looks in the cul-de-sac below Madera Canyon

Rufous-crowned Sparrow - Silver Creek Road

**Black-chinned Sparrow** - surprisingly close singing male on Silver Creek Road

Lark Sparrow - Stateline Road

Black-throated Sparrow

Song Sparrow

Yellow-eyed Junco - Carr and Cave Creek canyons

Northern Cardinal

Pyrrhuloxia - Kinney Road and Dave Jasper's

Black-headed Grosbeak

Blue Grosbeak

Varied Bunting - Proctor Road and Montosa Canyon

Red-winged Blackbird

Eastern Meadowlark

Great-tailed Grackle

Bronzed Cowbird - Kino Springs

Brown-headed Cowbird

Hooded Oriole

Bullock's Oriole

Scott's Oriole - best looks in Montosa Canyon

House Finch

Red Crossbill - Barfoot Junction and vicinity

Lesser Goldfinch

House Sparrow