

WESTERN COLORADO: BIRDS AND HABITATS

AN INTRODUCTORY BIRDING TOUR WITH LOUISE ZEMAITIS

JUNE 19 – 24, 2011

©2010

Western Colorado offers an outstanding diversity of habitats, each with its own special array of birds and other wildlife. With some of the most breathtaking scenery in the country as a backdrop, there could hardly be a better place to study the ties between habitat and bird distribution. June is peak breeding season, and the mountains, canyons, and valleys will be full of birdsong and nesting activity. This short introductory tour offers an excellent opportunity for viewing Colorado's birds and other wildlife in their busiest time of year, and will focus on the relationships between birds and the habitats they use.

Based in Montrose, we'll sample arid canyons along Escalante Creek, deep gorges at Black Canyon of the Gunnison, montane forest of the Uncompahgre Plateau, and mountain meadows of Grand Mesa. We should encounter numerous bird species characteristic of this region such as Chukar, Dusky Grouse, Black Swift, Lewis's Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker, Gray Flycatcher, Gray Vireo, Pinyon Jay, American Dipper, "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrow, and Pine Grosbeak. Along the way, mammals will also be conspicuous and we may see Yellow-bellied Marmot, White-tailed Prairie Dog, Abert's Squirrel, Elk, and Bighorn Sheep.

June 19, Day 1: Arrival in Grand Junction. Tour participants should plan to arrive in Grand Junction no later than 5:00 p.m. Upon arrival, please take the hotel's courtesy shuttle to the hotel. The tour begins at 6:00 p.m. in the lobby of the hotel where we will have a short introductory meeting followed by dinner.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites, Grand Junction

June 20, Day 2: Escalante Canyon and Escalante State Wildlife Area. We'll begin our tour with a visit to Escalante Canyon, an arid rocky canyon with riparian woodlands along Escalante Creek. This interesting area holds a wide variety of birds including Chukar, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Say's Phoebe, Gray Flycatcher, Gray Vireo, Pinyon Jay, Rock Wren, and Lark and Black-throated sparrows. After a picnic lunch, we'll move on to Escalante State Wildlife Area outside Delta. This riparian woodland along the Gunnison River is home to Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Lewis's Woodpecker, Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, and both Indigo and Lazuli Buntings.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express, Montrose

Western Colorado: Birds & Habitats, Page 2

June 21, Day 3: Black Canyon. Today we'll visit Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. This fascinating canyon with its narrow opening, sheer walls of crystalline rock, and great depths of over 2000 feet, is a thrill to see. The canyon should be full of White-throated Swifts playing on the updrafts and we'll also keep our eyes open for Dusky Grouse, Dusky Flycatcher, Canyon Wren, and Green-tailed and Spotted towhees. If time permits, we may also investigate some riparian and agricultural areas along the Uncompahgre River near Montrose.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express, Montrose

June 22, Day 4: Uncompahgre Plateau and Ouray. We'll spend much of today exploring the Uncompahgre Plateau and its varied forest of oak, pinyon-juniper, and ponderosa pine. Here we may find William's Sapsucker, Western Bluebird, Pygmy Nuthatch, and Virginia's, Grace's, and Black-throated Gray warblers. In the afternoon, we'll visit the little tourist town of Ouray, best known in the birding world as home to a colony of Black Swifts that nest at Box Canyon Falls. We'll take a short hike to see this spectacular, almost subterranean waterfall and get close-up views of swifts on the nest. We'll also watch the stream below for resident American Dippers.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express, Montrose

June 23, Day 5: Fruitgrower's Reservoir and Grand Mesa National Forest. We'll begin this morning with a visit to Fruitgrower's Reservoir, a small reservoir in an arid valley, where we may find breeding Western and Clark's grebes and Willets. But most of our day will be spent enjoying the beautiful, lush, high-elevation spruce-fir forest and meadows of Grand Mesa (the world's largest flat-topped mountain). Some of the birds we may see include Band-tailed Pigeon, Gray Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Fox Sparrow, Pine Grosbeak and Red Crossbill.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites, Grand Junction

June 24, Day 6: Departures from Grand Junction. Participants may arrange their departures any time today.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: Louise Zemaitis & Michael O'Brien

Louise Zemaitis is an artist and naturalist living in Cape May, New Jersey where she is a popular field trip leader teaching birding workshops as an Associate Naturalist with New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory. She also enjoys leading birding groups and lecturing at birding festivals and is known for her enthusiasm for all natural history subjects. Louise and her husband, Michael O'Brien, have been guiding young birders at birding events and conferences for many years. In addition to leading, Louise is coordinator of the Monarch Monitoring Project in Cape May, compiler of the Cape May Christmas Bird Count, and member of the Cape May Artists' Cooperative. An honors graduate of Temple University's Tyler School of Art, she enjoys working as a freelance artist and her illustrations have been widely published. Her proudest accomplishment has been the raising of her two sons, Bradley, a biologist and artist, and Alec, a philosopher and musician.

Michael O'Brien is a freelance artist, author, and environmental consultant living in Cape May, New Jersey. He has traveled extensively throughout North and Central America and has a passionate interest in migration, bird vocalizations, and field identification. At home in Cape May, Michael serves as an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory for whom he conducts numerous workshops and, for many years, conducted a fall songbird migration count. He is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, and *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*. His illustrations have been widely published in books and field guides, including the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and the new Peterson field guides. Michael also has an intense interest in butterflies and leads several "Birds & Butterflies" tours with his wife, Louise Zemaitis.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$1295** per person in double occupancy from Grand Junction. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 5, lodging as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Grand Junction and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$275**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$300** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$150** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$50** per person. If cancellation is made between 120 and 90 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 90 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. *We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.*

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$150*
Between 120 and 90 days before departure	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
Fewer than 90 days before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$50 per person.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends Travel Insured International as our preferred insurance provider.** Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. **Contact Travel Insured International prior to registration for details.** Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

Western Colorado: Birds & Habitats, Page 4

IMPORTANT NOTE: *Please read your itinerary carefully to see whether or not your tour/cruise requires MANDATORY Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the trip.*

This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by Travel Insured International. If you do not choose to purchase the insurance through Travel Insured International, you will need to do so through another insurance provider. A good website for information and acquisition of emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements to Fort Lauderdale from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

BAGGAGE: As space in the vehicles is limited, please restrict your baggage to one-medium sized piece of luggage and a carry-on bag.

LAUNDRY: Coin operated laundry machines are available at our hotels.

CLIMATE: Due to significant changes in elevation on this tour, we may encounter a wide range of temperatures. At higher elevations, mornings are usually chilly (often in the low 40s) with mid-day temperatures in the 50s or 60s. At lower elevations or level terrain, pleasant mornings in the 50s or 60s may give way to afternoon highs in the 80s (exceptionally the 90s). Although prolonged periods of rain are unlikely, brief afternoon thunderstorms are always a possibility.

CLOTHING: We suggest moderate weight field clothing including a warm jacket, light gloves, and lightweight rain gear. We also strongly suggest bringing layers such as a medium-weight sweater or fleece. You should bring a comfortable pair of walking shoes or hiking boots and a second pair of light shoes. Dress will be casual throughout.

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good condition, along with a belt pack or day-pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, extra digital storage media, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag (check for current airline security carry-on restrictions; see www.tsa.gov/travelers for more information). Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. Other items should include an alarm clock, as well as a good flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries.

HEALTH: Bring plenty of sunscreen, preferably at least SPF 15. This is important, as the sun is particularly intense at the highest elevations where we will be spending considerable time. Although our activities at the higher elevations will be extremely limited, those who suffer from high blood pressure, chronic bronchitis, a known heart condition, or any other cardiovascular disorder should consult their physician before registering for this tour. If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B. In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

SUGGESTED READING: Our website at www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store which carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from the store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com.

Bowers, Bowers, and Kaufman. *Mammals of North America*. Kaufman Focus Guides. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.

Brock, Jim P, and Kenn Kaufman. *Butterflies of North America*. Kaufman Focus Guides. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

Craighead, Craighead, and Davis. *A Field Guide to Rocky Mountain Wildflowers from Northern Arizona and New Mexico to British Columbia*. Peterson Field Guide Series. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963.

Robertson, Leigh. *Southern Rocky Mountain Wildflowers*. A Falcon Guide. Connecticut: The Globe Pequot Press, 1999.

Ehrlich, Paul R. Et al. *The Birder's Handbook: A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988.

Kaufman, Kenn. *Lives of North American Birds*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996.

Kaufman, Kenn. *Birds of North America*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000. Illustrated with digitally-enhanced photographs.

National Geographic. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Fifth Edition. Washington D.C.: The National Geographic Society, 2006.

Petrides, George A. and Olivia. *Western Trees*. Peterson Field Guide Series. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

Stebbins, Robert C. *Western Reptiles and Amphibians*. Third Edition. Peterson Field Guide Series. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

Zimmer, Kevin J. *Birding in the American West: A Handbook*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2000.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to give them a tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. and/or their Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. They can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour.

Western Colorado: Birds & Habitats, Page 6

When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on September 27, 2010 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation may provide transportation within the United States.