



A [Tropical Birding](#) SET DEPARTURE tour

Southeast Arizona: Hopping the Sky Islands

4-13 August, 2019



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The sky islands of Southeastern Arizona are one of the most legendary birding locations in the United States. Teeming with a host of species found nowhere else in the country, these fabled mountains soar high above the desert floor. Etched with spectacular, lush canyons and crowned in towering pines – the lofty peaks are an open door, providing a glimpse of the exotic avifauna of the neotropics. These alluring heights are themselves surrounded by a vast array of habitats – the iconic rocky desert dotted in saguaros, arid grasslands, oak covered foothills and a few verdant oases wreathed in wetlands.

Southeastern Arizona is a destination that is as exciting on the twentieth visit as it is the first. The diversity of plants, insects, reptiles, and mammals has drawn naturalists from all over the world for decades. The landscape is populated by spectacular resident birds but is also one of the best areas for rare Mexican vagrants in the US. Exciting possibilities exist in the deep reaches of every canyon or may appear in a flash at a backyard feeder. Every visit holds something new and it is a place I always relish returning to.

This year was no exception and at the end of the trip, picking a highlight was deemed impossible. Nearly 200 species of birds were seen in 9 days. We enjoyed great looks 11 species of hummingbird including the exceedingly rare Berylline. It was a good season for other wanderers and vagrants like Rose-throated Becard, Buff-collared Nightjar and Rufous-capped Warbler.

Though it was hot we began our trip with an afternoon excursion around Tucson. Visiting Saguaro National Park on the outskirts of town we had our first introduction to common desert birds like Verdin and Pyrrhuloxia while also encountering some difficult specialties including Gilded Flicker. Watching the sunset behind this quintessential desert landscape set the tone for the rest of the trip.

The following morning we climbed up the sinuous highway leading to Mt. Lemmon. Here in the cool pine forests we were treated to a some exceptional mixed flocks of warblers that included Grace's, Hermit, and Townsend's. The real highlight was seeing double digits of crimson-blushing Red-faced Warblers dancing in the pines providing exceptional looks. We had a few keen family listers on the trip who particularly thrilled to pick up a pair of handsome, orange-hooded Olive Warblers. Not very olive and definitely not a warbler, this sole representative of the family Peucedramidae (Pine runner) is in desperate need of a name change.

A few thousand feet down the mountain and a couple hours down the road we encountered an intense monsoon! These late summer deluges bring a new bout of life to the region and are often called the second spring. While the rain persisted throughout the afternoon, a few of us ventured out in search of birds nearby. While we only had a brief reprieve from the rain we managed to find a very vocal pair of Brown-crested Flycatchers. The flycatchers were quickly outdone by a spectacular Varied Bunting singing from the top of a bush. Clad in raspberry red, tyrian purples, royal blue and every shade in between, this is easily one of the most beautiful birds in North America and one that rarely gives such good looks.

The following morning we headed to the legendary Madera Canyon. However, some recent info led us on a brief detour to nearby Box Canyon where we found a cooperative pair of Five-striped Sparrows. Even better was a family of Lucifer Hummingbirds feeding some recently fledged young. Both groups of birds are rare and local and both were exceedingly cooperative. Returning to Madera we made a brief stop in a roadside grassland for a quick serenade from a melodious duo – Cassin's and Botteri's Sparrows – before heading into the heart of the canyon. Here we had a great introduction to many of the regional specialties at the areas

wonderful network of feeders before strolling down a shady trail. The distant croaking bark of an Elegant Trogon drew us further up the trail and with a little searching we found a male sitting very still on a low branch. In typical trogon fashion it remained motionless, its head panning slowly – somehow inconspicuous despite its coat of crimson and shining emerald. Ever we had all spent enough time in the presence of this spectacular king of the canyons we took our leave.

Driving south to Nogales we settled in and took a break from the midday heat before heading out for one more target. After a long period of searching the towering cottonwoods along the de Anza Trail we located our target sitting on a bare branch. A Rose-throated Becard kept vigil near an old nest site, its brilliant throat catching the light. This rare visitor was a lifer for the whole group and cause for a well-earned rest.

The following morning we set out to spend the day in the remote chasms of Sycamore Canyon and California Gulch. The early hours were spent amongst the cottonwoods, willows and namesake trees of sycamore canyon. In the company of specialist riparian birds like Yellow-breasted Chat and Yellow-billed Cuckoo we searched for potential rarities. A horde of glistening black Phainopeplas gorged themselves on a fruiting tree and a Canyon Wren sang from a ruddy cliff face while we rested in the shade. Near the bottom of the canyon, at a particularly scenic juncture a Rufous-capped Warbler made a brief appearance. Saffron yellow below with boldly striped red cap, this unmistakable visitor from Mexico disappeared almost as quickly as it had come.

After a leisurely walk out of the canyon we made for the rugged road down California Gulch. Here the distance from the border is measured in feet, not miles and rarities like Black-capped Gnatcatcher are a regular occurrence. The real highlight here is the night birding though. As dusk fell Lesser Nighthawks zipped overhead, Common Poorwills called from the hillsides and nearby a staccato rising song echoed through the gulch. Tracking it to its source we enjoyed great looks at a Buff-collared Nightjar -one of only 3 or 4 pairs known to breed in the US. Before leaving we had a few more nightbirds to track down. A Western Screech-Owl sang at eye level along the roadside while a tiny shadow zipped over our heads. Panning with our lights we found a diminutive Elf Owl staring back, mere feet away. After enjoying the best looks any of us (myself included) had ever had of this species, we cruised out of the canyons and back to Nogales.

The following morning took us on the path to Patagonia. One of the most famous areas for Mexican vagrants in the region – this series of hotspots has hosted everything from Blue-footed Boobies to Bumble Hummingbirds over the years. Sunrise found us at Patagonia Lake State Park where the towering cottonwoods provided great perches for a number of flycatcher species including the diminutive Northern Beardless Tyrannulet. Passing migrants made similar use of this verdant oasis as we located MacGillivray's and Virginia's Warblers fueling up for their continued journey south.

A short ways down the road we pulled into the Patagonia Rest Stop, a small riparian picnic area that has been an incredible magnet for birds. While things were relatively quiet in the late morning heat we did find a hulking Thick-billed Kingbird perched in the sun – this is the most reliable place in the US for this otherwise neotropical tyrannid. Another tropical tyrant at the northern terminus of its range – Tropical Kingbird – brought our total kingbird count to 4 for this single site. With White-throated Swifts wheeling overhead we moved a little farther down the road to the Paton Hummingbird Center run by Tucson Audubon.

A wonderful place to spend a few midday hours we sat in the shade and enjoyed the show at the feeders. Among the hordes of more common hummingbirds we located the stunning Violet-crowned Hummingbird – a

large and immaculately dressed visitor from the south. A pair of scaly Inca Doves crept quietly under the feeders and a dull Bullock's Oriole stopped in for a brief bite of orange before returning to the thicket.

After a relaxed lunch in Patagonia proper we made the short trip down the road to Sierra Vista. In the shadow of the towering Huachuca Mountains, we settled into our hotel before heading out to for a bit of afternoon birding. We spent another relaxed afternoon at a different desert feeding set up. The Ash Canyon B&B felt different this year after the loss of its illustrious owner and care-taker Mary Jo Ballator. However, the decades of work she put into the sanctuary still shone through as we all marveled at the dozens of hummingbirds, flocks of Bushtits and the teeming host of other birds visiting the yard. As always, the highlight was the large number of Lucifer Hummingbirds present – with over a half dozen of these gleaming gems visiting the feeders. As the brilliant tyrian gorgets of the Lucifer caught the last of the suns rays we called it a day and headed into town for dinner at a surprisingly good German restaurant.

The first half of the sixth day of our tour was spent exploring the cool, pine draped heights of Carr Canyon. High in the Huachucas, this mountaintop oasis held a few of our missing local specialties. After sifting through the pines and accompanying Hepatic Tanagers, Plumbeous Vireos and Yellow-eyed Juncos we found our quarry after a few hours. A massive, mohawked Greater Pewee watched from a prominent perch while a tiny, butterscotch Buff-breasted Flycatcher was less conspicuous nearby. On our way down the mountain we heard a few frustratingly distant Montezuma Quail and had close views of the wickedly fast Sonoran Whipsnake before returning to Sierra Vista for lunch at a fabulous little taqueria and a midday break.

Venturing out again in the afternoon we made a quick pass through a nearby water treatment plant that while lacking in waterbirds, held a large flock of Lark Buntings, already returning for the winter. Continuing down the road we dodged a hefty round of monsoon rainstorms before arriving at Whitewater Draw State Wildlife Area. While the rains had arrived for the fall they had failed to refill many of the impoundments here and waterbirds were scarce. What weren't scarce were Lazuli Buntings as a flock of hundreds upon hundreds filled the tall grass outside the dry pools. Seeing fields blooming with dancing convocations of these sky-blue sprites was one of the most spectacular moments of the trip. It isn't only the species seen that matter but the experiences themselves and this relatively common bird proved that beyond all doubt. As the monsoons found us again, we returned to Sierra Vista for the night.

While today was mainly a travel day between Sierra Vista and Portal we took the morning to bird around another famous Huachuca site – Miller Canyon. Starting off with a flyby Northern Goshawk we headed up the path to the main set of feeders where we enjoyed more Rivoli's, Violet-crowned and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds among the more common species. A migrating Calliope Hummingbird made a couple of quick appearances before we set out in search of Montezuma Quail. An enjoyable stroll through the grass covered hillsides of the lower parts of the canyon failed to turn up any quail but a brief appearance of a migrating Olive-sided Flycatcher was a new bird for the trip.

Arriving outside of Portal and the stunning Chiricahua Mountains in the late afternoon we decided to delay our entry to this magical realm for a little longer in favor of exploring the surrounding lowlands. Under a heavy gray shroud we crisscrossed the desert roads of Rodeo, New Mexico in search of a few desert scrub denizens we has not yet encountered. We soon lucked out as we had fantastic looks at a small group of gleaming silver Scaled Quail including a male singing from a fencepost. The dodgy duo of Bendire's and Crissal Thrasher proved less cooperative, remaining noticeably quiet in the windy landscape. Leaving the desert behind for the

comfortable canyon-side cabins of Cave Creek Ranch we checked in while a group of the strange White-nosed Coatimundi raided the feeders. As the sun set, the skies cleared revealing a brilliant Arizona night sky and bright canyon walls echoing with the plaintive calls of Common Poorwill.

The next two full days were used fully to explore the range of elevations and habitats contained in Cave Creek Canyon and the Chiricahua Mountains. Cruising up the road to the old mining town of Paradise we enjoyed a flurry of bird activity around the old cemetery. In the grassy, juniper dotted landscape we turned up a nice group of Juniper Titmice as well as a flock of handsome Lark Sparrows and a number of other species we had already seen well but were enjoyable nonetheless.

As the day progressed we continued to the cool pines of Rustler Park. Near the highest point in the Chiricahuas some large stands of ancient pines escaped a large fire that tore through the area a few years back. In these massive trees we found a large foraging flock that was highlighted by several Mexican Chickadees. Flanked in deep lead-gray, these highly localized birds only reach the US in a few small pockets. Joining the Mexican Chickadees were a delightful mix of Red-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches, Hermit Warblers and Painted Redstarts. An Orange-crowned Warbler was our first for the trip and a Red-faced Warbler was a welcome site after a long absence on the trip list. Heading back down the hill we got word of a Berylline Hummingbird that had been found near the Southwest Research Station. Arriving with only an hour to spare we were helpfully pointed down the right path by a few local birders who had also courteously set up a feeder to keep the hummingbird around. Shortly we were all enjoying views of this rare vagrant to the United States and a truly handsome hummingbird – our 12th of the trip! A fantastic end to the daylight hours. After dinner we took a short night drive. While the owls were quiet we had unbelievable looks at a Ringtail as it walked along the roadside. These elegant, catlike relatives of the raccoon are often shy and usually provide a fleeting glimpse – experiencing the opposite was quite a rare treat.

A morning walk through some grassy hills dotted with oaks led to the explosive discovery of a pair of Montezuma Quail. After erupting mere feet away from our path we quickly ran uphill and managed to get a second look at this secretive gamebird. Satisfying to finally catch up with this exceedingly unpredictable quail! Venturing higher up the road we were treated to prolonged looks at the massive-billed local variety of Red Crossbill as a pair fastidiously gathered grit of the road before returning to dining on the tough-coned pine trees surrounding us.

With few targets left some of us took an afternoon to rest while the rest of us ventured back out into the desert. Out in the cactus dotted shrublands we enjoyed all manner of classic desert species – Cactus Wrens and Pyrrhuloxia, Gambel's and Scaled Quail, Chihuahuan Ravens and finally after much searching – a pair of Bendire's Thrashers! With one more local target in the bag we headed into town for some fantastic enchiladas and one more night of owling. A bright moon kept the small owls quiet but the nightjars were very vocal and we had lovely up-close serenade from a Mexican Whip-poor-will before preparing for our trip back to Tucson.

Departing before sunrise we saved one final birding stop before wrapping up the trip. Stopping at the small Cochise Lake in Wilcox, Arizona we were treated to the vast array of shorebirds this tiny desert oasis attracts. In our short visit we had fantastic, point-blank views of Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Curlew, American Avocet, Baird's Sandpiper, Black-necked Stilt and Long-billed Dowitchers among others. The group favorite though was certainly watching dozens of Wilson's Phalaropes feeding nearby, whirling in tight circles and delicately plucking food siphoned up from below.

At this point it was time to finish the drive to Tucson and depart for home. Once again, the region more than proved why birders come time and again to Southeast Arizona. We enjoyed almost every regional specialty well, saw several highly desirable vagrants and had some great experiences with a wide variety of resident and migrant species. The ever-changing scenery and associated bird communities kept the birding exciting and an exceptionally fun group of people made every day in the field enjoyable. I would like to thank everyone involved for making this visit to Arizona one of my best and I look forward to returning to the Sky Islands again soon.

GALLERY



Red-faced Warbler is a stunning resident of the high elevation pine forests and fairly common on Mt. Lemmon



Once a real rarity Five-striped Sparrow is getting more regular every year.



Botteri's Sparrow isn't flashy but has a spectacular voice.



The rich cascading song of Canyon Wrens is one of the quintessential western bird songs – this individual serenaded us while taking a rest in the shade of Sycamore Canyon.



Seeing any owl at close range is a special experience – this Western Screech-owl was no exception.



The intense purple of Lucifer Hummingbirds gorget almost glows in low light.



Acorn Woodpeckers are gregarious, noisy and comical. Breeding cooperatively, a few were still nesting even in early August.



The large and spectacular Rivoli's Hummingbird was one of over a dozen hummingbird species seen on this tour.



The cotton-topped Scaled Quail is often just a silver flash in the desert so an extended look is always a nice surprise.



The squeaky “rubber ducky” call is the best way to locate Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers.

BIRD LIST

The taxonomy of the bird list follows eBird/Clements (available here: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/clementschecklist/download/>)

(H) indicates a species that was HEARD only.

(G) indicates a species recorded by the GUIDE ONLY.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	<i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i> – single bird seen near Nogales (8/6)
Cinnamon Teal	<i>Spatula cyanoptera</i> – small numbers at Patagonia Lake (8/8), Whitewater Draw (8/9) and Wilcox (8/13)
Mexican Duck	<i>Anas diazi</i> – present at all open water sites visited
Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i> – a pair seen with a flock of teal at Patagonia Lake (8/8)
Scaled Quail	<i>Callipepla squamata</i> – several confiding pairs in the low desert near Rodeo, NM including a male singing from a fence post (8/10, 8/12)
Gambel's Quail	<i>Callipepla gambelii</i> – large coveys present throughout low, open country sites.
Montezuma Quail	<i>Cyrtonyx montezumae</i> – a pair flushed nearly underfoot and later seen scurrying up a draw near Cave Creek (8/12). One of the most explosive moments on the trip!
Wild Turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i> – small family group seen on the road through the Chiricahuas (8/13)
Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i> – present at Pena Blanca (8/7) and Patagonia (8/8) Lakes
Neotropic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax brasilianus</i> – good numbers at Patagonia Lake (8/8)
Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax auratus</i> – several at Patagonia Lake (8/8)
Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i> – present at all open water/ wetland sites
Green Heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i> – a juvenile bird was spotted in the shoreline vegetation at Pena Blanca Lake (8/7)
Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> – two birds at Patagonia Lake (8/8)
Black Vulture	<i>Coragyps atratus</i> – seen circling with Turkey Vultures while resting along the trail down Sycamore Canyon.
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i> - widespread and abundant
Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i> – a surprise to see this species flying high over Rodeo, NM (8/12). Potentially an early migrant.
Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i> – single individual perched on a lightpost near Tucson (8/4)

Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i> – recently fledged juvenile seen flying through the lower section of Miller Canyon (8/10). Impressive even at a distance.
Gray Hawk	<i>Buteo plagiatus</i> – This dapper hawk of the tropics was pleasantly common at all riparian sites visited, particularly near Nogales (8/6-8)
Swainson's Hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i> – common in open grassland sites near Whitewater Draw (8/9) and outside Rodeo, NM (8/10-12)
Zone-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo albonotatus</i> – great looks at this often cryptic species circling low over Mt. Lemmon (8/5)
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i> – widespread and abundant
Common Gallinule	<i>Gallinula galeata</i> - one at Pena Blanca Lake (8/7)
American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i> – common at Pena Blanca (8/7) and Patagonia Lake (8/8)
Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i> – common at Wilcox (8/13)
American Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra americana</i> – dozens of these elegant shorebirds seen at close range at Wilcox (8/13)
Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i> – a few joined in the shorebird spectacle at the small Cochise Lake in Wilcox (8/13)
Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferous</i> – Wilcox (8/13)
Long-billed Curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i> – common at Wilcox (8/13)
Marbled Godwit	<i>Limosa fedoa</i> – a few at Wilcox (8/13)
Baird's Sandpiper	<i>Calidris bairdii</i> – several boldly patterned juvenile birds feeding at close range. Wilcox (8/13)
Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i> – Wilcox (8/13)
Western Sandpiper	<i>Calidris mauri</i> – two at Wilcox (8/13)
Long-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i> – a small flock seen distantly at Wilcox (8/13)
Wilson's Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i> – dozens entertained us as they fed in dizzying circles on the glassy waters at Wilcox (8/13)
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i> – Wilcox (8/13)
Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i> – single individual in good comparison with Lesser Yellowlegs, Wilcox
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i> – a pair at Wilcox (8/13)
Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i> – abundant and widespread in urban areas
Eurasian Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> – common near human habitation
Inca Dove	<i>Columbina inca</i> – several of these delicate “living pinecones” at the Patton’s feeders in Patagonia (8/8)
Common Ground-Dove	<i>Columbina passerina</i> – a single bird flushed along the De Anza Trail (8/6)
White-winged Dove	<i>Zenaida asiatica</i> – abundant and widespread apart from mountainous settings
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i> – abundant and widespread
Greater Roadrunner	<i>Geococcyx californianus</i> – uncommon and widespread in low desert and open foothills. One of the quintessential animals of the American Southwest, we enjoyed extended views on the majority of days

Yellow-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i> – common by voice and seen well on several occasions, the threatened Southwestern population is present in riparian woodlands like those found at Madera Canyon (8/6), Sycamore Canyon (8/7) and Patagonia Lake (8/8)
Western Screech-Owl	<i>Megascops kennicottii</i> – exceptional views of a calling individual in California Gulch (8/7) during a very successful round of night birding.
Whiskered Screech-Owl	<i>Megascops trichopsis</i> – heard several nights and seen briefly at Cave Creek (8/11-12)
Elf Owl	<i>Micrathene whitneyi</i> – stunning, point blank looks at this miniscule owl mere meters from the Western Screech-Owl we saw at California Gulch (8/7)
Lesser Nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i> – several seen cruising languidly over the streets of Tucson (8/4) and at dusk at the bottom of California Gulch (8/7)
Common Poorwill	<i>Phalaenoptilus nuttallii</i> – Heard well in California Gulch (8/7) and seen on the road through Cave Creek (8/12)
Mexican Whip-poor-will	<i>Antrostomus arizonae</i> – Several heard and one seen along the South Fork of Cave Creek (8/12)
Buff-collared Nightjar	<i>Antrostomus ridgwayi</i> – Great to connect with this incredibly rare and local breeding for a second consecutive year. After listening to the dry, emphatic crescendo of its song for several minutes we had extended looks at a perched bird in California Gulch (8/7)
White-throated Swift	<i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i> – small groups seen foraging near the cliffs at the Patagonia Rest Area and up Carr Canyon (8/8-9)
Rivoli's Hummingbird	<i>Eugenes fulgens</i> – these big bruisers were present in low numbers in appropriate habitat throughout the tour and were especially common at Miller Canyon (8/10) and Cave Creek (8/11-12)
Blue-throated Mountain gem	<i>Lampornis clemenciae</i> – Finally given a proper title, there were good numbers of these gems whirring and glistening around the feeders at Cave Creek Ranch (8/10-12)
Lucifer Hummingbird	<i>Calothorax lucifer</i> – A banner year for this scarce hummingbird we encountered a pair feeding several recently fledged young in Box Canyon (8/6) and at least 6 birds visiting the feeders of their traditional stronghold – Ash Canyon B&B (8/8)
Black-chinned Hummingbird	<i>Archilochus alexandri</i> – abundant throughout lowland habitats
Anna's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte anna</i> – a little late/scarce this year, moderate numbers were present at most Hummingbird feeding stations.
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus platycercus</i> – hanging around at higher elevation, several were seen at Mt. Lemmon (8/5), Carr Canyon (8/9) and Rustler Park (8/12)
Rufous Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus rufus</i> – several of these handsome passage migrants were seen among the hordes of hummers at Mt. Lemmon (8/5) and Miller Canyon (8/10)
Calliope Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus calliope</i> – single migrating individuals seen at the flowering agave in Box

	Canyon (8/6) and the feeders at Miller Canyon (8/10)
Broad-billed Hummingbird	<i>Cynanthus latirostris</i> – abundant in lowland habitats
Berylline Hummingbird	<i>Amazilia beryllina</i> – this less-than-annual Central American gem was a fantastic surprise, being discovered in Cave Creek during our stay (8/11). Local birder Dave Jasper set up a feeder along the trail, allowing for great looks throughout the day.
Violet-crowned Hummingbird	<i>Amazilia violiceps</i> – single individuals of this handsome, snowy-bellied hummer were seen at Patton's Hummingbird Center (8/7) and Miller Canyon (8/10)
Elegant Trogon	<i>Trogon elegans</i> – Perhaps the most wanted bird in Southeast Arizona, a vocal male put on a spectacular show, perching calmly and at length in typical trogon fashion. Madera Canyon (8/6)
Acorn Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes formicivorus</i> – noisy, abundant and obvious in mountain and canyon environments.
Gila Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes uropygialis</i> – several seen in desert and riparian areas near Tucson (8/4), Tubac de Anza (8/5) and Patagonia (8/7)
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides scalaris</i> – present at Tubac de Anza (8/5) and Patagonia Lake (8/7)
Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides villosus</i> – uncommon at high elevations at Mt. Lemmon (8/4) and Rustler Park (8/11)
Arizona Woodpecker	<i>Picoides arizonae</i> – this Southeast Arizona specialty was found at the feeder in Madera Canyon (8/6) and Cave Creek (8/11)
Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i> – present at high elevations at Mt. Lemmon (8/5) and Carr Canyon (8/9)
Gilded Flicker	<i>Colaptes chrysoides</i> – a pair of this low desert specialty were found visiting cactus in Saguaro National Park (8/4)
American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i> – scattered individuals in open environments with abundant perches
Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet	<i>Camptostoma imberbe</i> – this inconspicuous pygmy flycatcher was seen at Patagonia Lake (8/8)
Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i> – a migrant individual made a brief stop low in Miller Canyon (8/10)
Greater Pewee	<i>Contopus pertinax</i> – this bulky flycatcher was making use of an obvious perch in Carr Canyon (8/9)
Western Wood-Pewee	<i>Contopus sordidulus</i> – common at Carr Canyon (8/9) and Rustler Park (8/11)
Willow Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii</i> – a single individual seen in the dense willow thickets at Whitewater Draw (8/9)
Dusky Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax oberholseri</i> – single bird seen in Cave Creek Canyon (8/11)
Cordilleran Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax occidentalis</i> – a few birds, presumably late lingering breeders at Mt. Lemmon (8/5) and Carr Canyon (8/9)
Buff-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax fulvifrons</i> – often inconspicuous this time of year, a single bird performed well at Carr Canyon (8/9)
Black Phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i> – common near water
Say's Phoebe	<i>Sayornis saya</i> – a few in open grasslands near Whitewater Draw (8/9) and Animas, NM (8/11)

Vermilion Flycatcher	<i>Pyrocephalus rubinus</i> – this crimson sprite of a flycatcher was delightfully common near water throughout the trip
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus tuberculifer</i> – uncommon in canyons and riparian areas throughout
Ash-throated Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i> – a few seen in dry scrubby areas near California Gulch (8/7) and Rodeo, NM (8/12)
Brown-crested Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus tyrannulus</i> – a noisy pair made a brief showing during an afternoon shower at Tubac de Anza (8/5)
Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher	<i>Myiodynastes luteiventris</i> – several family groups of this boldly patterned and local flycatcher were located by their “rubber ducky” calls in Madera (8/6) and Cave Creek Canyons (8/12)
Tropical Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i> – good looks at this abundant tropical species at the northern terminus of its range from the Patagonia Rest Area (8/8)
Cassin's Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus vociferans</i> – common in a variety of low-elevation habitats
Thick-billed Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus crassirostris</i> – two of these hulking kingbirds were seen at the traditional spot, Patagonia Rest Area (8/8)
Western Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i> – less common than Cassin's but still widely seen at low elevations
Rose-throated Becard	<i>Pachyramphus aglaiae</i> – a long search led to a resounding success, locating a plum-bibbed male near a known nest at Tubac de Anza (8/6). A lifer for the whole group!
Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i> – uncommon and widespread in open grassy and shrubby areas
Bell's Vireo	<i>Vireo bellii</i> – a few present at most riparian areas. Particularly common at lower elevations at Mt. Lemmon (8/5) and California Gulch (8/7)
Hutton's Vireo	<i>Vireo huttoni</i> – a few in mixed flocks at Mt. Lemmon (8/5) and Carr Canyon (8/9)
Plumbeous Vireo	<i>Vireo plumbeus</i> – one in a large mixed flock at Mt. Lemmon (8/5)
Warbling Vireo	<i>Vireo gilvus</i> – surprisingly only one seen, Carr Canyon (8/9)
Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i> – a few at Rustler Park (8/11)
Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay	<i>Aphelocoma woodhouseii</i> – a small group at Carr Canyon (8/9) and on the road to Rustler (8/11)
Mexican Jay	<i>Aphelocoma wollweberi</i> – common and conspicuous in mountains and canyons, sizeable groups were regularly, especially near feeders and campsites
Chihuahuan Raven	<i>Corvus cryptoleucus</i> – while many ravens were left unidentified, we encountered Chihuahuan Ravens in appropriate desert grassland habitat, particularly near Whitewater Draw (8/9) and Animas, NM (8/12)
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i> – abundant and widespread in nearly all habitats.
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i> – a few seen around Pena Blanca Lake (8/7)
Purple Martin	<i>Progne subis</i> – several seen in Saguaro National Park (8/4). The local population nests in cavities made by woodpeckers in the saguaro cactus.
Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i> – a large flock of swallows at Whitewater Draw (8/9) was mostly this species

Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i> – a few present in the swallow flock at Whitewater Draw (8/9)
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i> – the most common and widespread swallow – seen most days
Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i> – a small nesting colony present on the hotel in Nogales (8/7) and several seen at Whitewater Draw (8/9)
Mountain Chickadee	<i>Poecile gambeli</i> – fairly common on Mt.Lemmon (8/5)
Mexican Chickadee	<i>Poecile sclateri</i> – two individuals of this scarce and local species were seen at Rustler Park (8/11)
Bridled Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus wollweberi</i> – fairly-common in oaks and near canyons, particularly Madera (8/6), Ash (8/8) and Cave Creek (8/10-12)
Juniper Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus ridgwayi</i> – the road to Paradise was paved with Juniper Titmice, or at least lined with them (8/11)
Verdin	<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i> – common in low-desert scrub, it was nice to encounter the sole North American representative of this family throughout the trip.
Bushtit	<i>Psaltiriparus minimus</i> – a sizable flock of these insect-like little birds swarmed through the yard at Ash Canyon B&B (8/8)
Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i> – one seen at Rustler Park (8/11)
White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i> – a few at most canyon and mountain sites
Pygmy Nuthatch	<i>Sitta pygmaea</i> – small groups of these tiny and energetic nuthatches were seen and (definitely) heard at Mt.Lemmon (8/5) and Rustler Park (8/11)
Brown Creeper	<i>Certhia americana</i> – uncommon and inconspicuous, one or two were encountered at Mt.Lemmon (8/5), Madera Canyon (8/6) and Cave Creek (8/11-12)
Rock Wren	<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i> – a single bird was seen well on a dusty hillside in California Gulch (8/7)
Canyon Wren	<i>Catherpes mexicanus</i> – the unmistakable, descending whistles of Canyon Wrens were a wonderful addition to the soundscapes of Madera Canyon (8/6) and Cave Creek (8/11). A particularly vocal and cooperative bird was present in Sycamore Canyon (8/7)
House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i> – a few birds at Carr Canyon (8/9) and Cave Creek (8/11-12)
Bewick's Wren	<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i> – widespread and vocal throughout the tour
Cactus Wren	<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i> – the classic bird song in every western and the state bird of Arizona, Cactus Wrens were present at most low-desert sites visited.
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila caerulea</i> – uncommon at several sites throughout the tour
Black-capped Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila nigriceps</i> – a pair of this rare but increasing Mexican visitor were seen in California Gulch (8/7)
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila melanura</i> – uncommon at low desert sites, they were abundant in Saguaro NP (8/4)

Golden-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus satrapa</i> – heard at Rustler Park (8/11)
Western Bluebird	<i>Sialia mexicana</i> – small family group present at Rustler Park (8/11)
Hermit Thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus</i> – a few at Carr Canyon (8/9) and Rustler Park (8/11)
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i> - common at high elevation sites
Curve-billed Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma curvirostre</i> – seen almost daily at low-elevation sites
Bendire's Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma bendirei</i> – a single bird encountered singing from a fence line, outside Portal, AZ (8/12)
Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i> – uncommon and widespread at lower elevation sites
European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> – almost absent on this trip, a flock was seen near Wilcox, AZ (8/13)
Phainopepla	<i>Phainopepla nitens</i> – these dapper desert wanderers were common this trip near fruiting plants (particularly mistletoe) at low elevation
Olive Warbler	<i>Peucedramus taeniatus</i> – in desperate need of a name change, we encountered a pair of Flame-headed Peucedramus foraging along the road at Mt.Lemmon (8/5). For the family listers in the group, this was the big score of the trip!
Orange-crowned Warbler	<i>Oreothlypis celata</i> – one bird in a mixed flock at Rustler Park (8/11) constituted the only sighting of the trip
Lucy's Warbler	<i>Oreothlypis luciae</i> – a few individuals of this demure warbler were at Patagonia Lake SP (8/8)
Virginia's Warbler	<i>Oreothlypis virginiae</i> – a productive mixed flock on Mt.Lemmon (8/5) had one Virginia's among the large numbers of other migrants
MacGillivray's Warbler	<i>Geothlypis tolmiei</i> – a single skulky migrant was seen by a few at Patagonia Lake SP (8/8)
Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i> – a few at Whitewater Draw (8/9)
Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i> – fairly common at Patagonia Lake SP (8/8) and Whitewater Draw (8/9)
Grace's Warbler	<i>Setophaga graciae</i> – single individuals seen at Mt.Lemmon (8/5) and Cave Creek (8/12)
Black-throated Gray Warbler	<i>Setophaga nigrescens</i> – a few with the large number of migrants at Mt.Lemmon (8/5)
Townsend's Warbler	<i>Setophaga townsendi</i> – at least 6 seen at Mt.Lemmon (8/5) between two large mixed flocks
Hermit Warbler	<i>Setophaga occidentalis</i> - two of these sunny warblers were seen at Mt.Lemmon (8/5)
Rufous-capped Warbler	<i>Basileuterus culicivorus</i> – an individual of this unusual Mexican visitor was spotted in the lower sections of Sycamore Canyon (8/7)
Red-faced Warbler	<i>Cardellina rubrifrons</i> – unusually abundant at Mt.Lemmon (8/5), double digits of this spectacular southwestern warbler gave jaw dropping looks for all!
Painted Redstart	<i>Myioborus pictus</i> – another strikingly bold warbler of the southwest, these animated and flashy birds put in appearances at Mt.Lemmon (8/5), Sycamore Canyon (8/7) and Cave Creek (8/11-12). A crowd favorite!

Rufous-winged Sparrow	<i>Peucaea carpalis</i> – this range-restricted resident was fairly common at lowland sites including Saguaro NP (8/4), Tubac de Anza (8/5-6) and California Gulch (8/7)
Botteri's Sparrow	<i>Peucaea botterii</i> – a few very vocal birds were present along the road between Madera and Box Canyons (8/6)
Cassin's Sparrow	<i>Peucaea cassinii</i> – more common and vocal than Botteri's in the same brushy grassland (8/6)
Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerine</i> – a flock of roughly 20 birds was seen near the Paradise Cemetery (8/11)
Black-throated Sparrow	<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i> – perhaps the most handsome of the desert sparrows, fairly common in arid habitats.
Five-striped Sparrow	<i>Amphispiza quinquestrata</i> – a vocal pair was seen in Box Canyon (8/6), always nice to encounter this rare and local species.
Lark Sparrow	<i>Chondestes grammacus</i> – small numbers in Box Canyon (8/6) and lower sections of Miller Canyon (8/10)
Lark Bunting	<i>Calamospiza melanocorys</i> – a small flock was present at the Sierra Vista Waste Water Treatment Plant (8/9)
Yellow-eyed Junco	<i>Junco phaeonotus</i> – common in upper canyon and montane areas, particularly Mt. Lemmon (8/5) and Carr Canyon (8/9)
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i> – a few individual seen at Patton's Hummingbird Center (8/8)
Canyon Towhee	<i>Melozone fusca</i> – fairly common in scrubby mid-elevation and around feeders
Abert's Towhee	<i>Melozone aberti</i> – a few at most low elevation sites, especially Saguaro NP (8/4) and Wilcox (8/13)
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	<i>Aimophila ruficeps</i> – small numbers on grassy, rocky hillsides – especially lower end of Carr Canyon (8/9)
Spotted Towhee	<i>Pipilo maculatus</i> – common in upper elevations, very abundant in recently burned areas of Carr Canyon (8/9)
Yellow-breasted Chat	<i>Icteria virens</i> – a few heard in quality riparian areas – seen well near the entrance of Sycamore Canyon (8/7) and at Patagonia Lake SP (8/8).
Hepatic Tanager	<i>Piranga flava</i> – a few in high-elevation pine-oak woodland – a bird visiting the feeders at Patton's (8/8) was a surprise.
Summer Tanager	<i>Piranga rubra</i> – seen well in the cottonwoods at Box Canyon (8/6) and Tubac de Anza (8/7)
Western Tanager	<i>Piranga ludoviciana</i> – uncommon migrant
Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i> – long-crested and particularly bright, this distinctive southwestern subspecies was fairly common at lower elevations.
Pyrrhuloxia	<i>Cardinalis sinuatus</i> – a true desert denizen, the gorgeous Pyrrhuloxia (Latin for firefinch) was always a treat despite numerous encounters.
Black-headed Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i> – common in a variety of habitats, seen daily
Blue Grosbeak	<i>Passerina caerulea</i> – another widespread species, seen daily in brushy lowland habitats.
Lazuli Bunting	<i>Passerina amoena</i> – a flock of several hundred of these sky-blue gems was an absolutely mind-blowing encounter at Whitewater Draw (8/9)
Varied Bunting	<i>Passerina versicolor</i> – an indescribable mix of deep reds, rich purples, velvety blues – we enjoyed scope views in good light of this often skulky species at Tubac de Anza (8/6) and California Gulch (8/7)

Yellow-headed Blackbird	<i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i> – a large, noisy flock at Whitewater Draw (8/9) was our only sighting of the tour
Eastern Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella magna</i> – the isolated “Lillian’s” Eastern Meadowlark was present in good numbers in the grasslands of Animas, NM (8/12)
Hooded Oriole	<i>Icterus cucullatus</i> – a pair was seen well low on the road to Mt.Lemmon (8/5) and in Box Canyon (8/6)
Bullock's Oriole	<i>Icterus bullockii</i> – a female briefly visited the feeders at Patton’s on (8/8)
Scott's Oriole	<i>Icterus parisorum</i> – a bird drinking nectar from a blooming agave in Box Canyon (8/6) proved to be our only encounter with this uncommon species.
Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i> – flocks present in the wetlands at Patagonia Lake SP (8/8), Whitewater Draw (8/9), and Wilcox (8/13)
Bronzed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus aeneus</i> – a few birds put in an appearance on the road near Patagonia (8/8)
Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i> – a small flock was present at a cattle pond outside Nogales (8/6)
Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i> – common in town around Green Valley (8/6), Nogales (8/7) and Sierra Vista (8/9)
House Finch	<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i> – abundant and widespread
Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i> – a pair gathering grit from the road near Rustler Park (8/11) provided uncharacteristically good views.
Pine Siskin	<i>Spinus pinus</i> – a few birds at a feeder on Mt.Lemmon (8/5) were the only individuals noted
Lesser Goldfinch	<i>Spinus psaltria</i> – common and widespread
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i> – common and widespread