

ITINERARY
ARIZONA NIGHTBIRDS & MORE
Maine Audubon Private Tour
May 1-5, 2025



As many as eight owl species are possible on this tour, including the Whiskered Screech-Owl. These owls enter the US only in southeastern Arizona and the bootheel of New Mexico. Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.

We include here information for those interested in the 2025 Field Guides Arizona Nightbirds & More tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by the guide on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

This short tour is dedicated to the pursuit and detailed observation of owls and nightjars in the premier nightbirding destination in North America: Southeast Arizona. Our search will take us from dry, mesquite-lined washes in the desert to riparian woodlands and pine/oak and spruce/fir forests in the Huachuca and Chiricahua mountains as we seek nine or more species of owls and up to four species of nightjars and nighthawks. Sunset of each evening will find us afield as we work on spotlighting such special birds as Whiskered and Western screech-owls, the elusive Flammulated Owl, Elf Owl, Mexican Whip-poor-will (split from Eastern Whip-poor-will in 2010-2011), Common Poorwill, and possibly even the rare

Buff-collared Nighthawk. Some other species are more likely to be seen by the light of day: Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Northern (Mountain) Pygmy-Owl, Burrowing Owl, Spotted Owl, and Lesser Nighthawk.

But our birding won't be restricted to the nighttime! We should see upwards of 150 species on this short trip, including a fine sampling of the many Southeast Arizona specialties. Outings in the Tucson area, the Pajarito Wilderness west of Nogales, the Huachuca Mountains, the Sulphur Springs Valley, and the rich Chiricahua Mountains should garner such species as Gambel's, Scaled, and Montezuma quail, Zone-tailed and Gray hawks, Rivoli's and Broad-billed hummingbirds, Blue-throated Mountain-gem, Elegant Trogon, Arizona Woodpecker, Greater Pewee, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Mexican Chickadee, Crissal and Bendire's thrashers, Olive, Virginia's, Lucy's, Grace's, and Red-faced warblers, Painted Redstart, Rufous-winged, Five-striped, and Botteri's sparrows, and Yellow-eyed Junco along with many others. Now that's some "...& More"!

Since our time is limited on this short tour and the species to find are many and diverse (we'll have but one chance for several of them), participants should be prepared for the possibility of irregular hours of sleep.



*In addition to nightbirds, we'll watch for Arizona specialties such as the lovely Elegant Trogon.
Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.*

We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Moderate amounts of walking (up to 2 miles per hike), some of it on paved roads, but most walking will be on uneven trails that have hazards such as protruding rocks, fallen limbs or tree trunks, poison ivy, and thorny plants. In the Huachuca Mountains, several trails are steep and narrow; our pace will be slow there. Walking sticks and/or folding stools recommended for those who use them. At night, we'll bird mostly along roadsides, but we sometimes need to walk a short distance on a trail over uneven or inclined terrain to reach where a bird is calling (a flashlight or a headlamp is necessary for these occasions).

- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We cover much ground on this tour, and some days will feature long periods of time in the vans and lots of roadside birding with much getting in and out of vans. Also note, the roads in the Chiricahuas are unpaved and bumpy.
- **PACE:** Fairly early mornings (6:00-6:30 a.m. breakfasts), with occasional afternoon breaks during the tour. Regular post-dinner excursions for nightbirds, with return to hotel usually by 10:00 p.m., but later returns a possibility if we have trouble locating a particular species.
- **ELEVATION:** Most birding will take place in the deserts and at moderately high mountain elevations (6000-7000 feet), with parts of a couple days spent at elevations up to about 8500 feet.
- **WEATHER:** Summer weather is warm/hot in southeastern Arizona. Expect temperatures in the low 50s F in the evening in the mountains (low 70s in the deserts), with days ranging from the low 70s to high 90s. Rain showers are a possibility.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Whenever possible, we use modern, indoor restrooms, but on occasion, participants should be prepared to make a comfort stop in nature.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

About the Birding Areas



Tucson—Arizona's second-largest city is situated in the low Sonoran Desert at an elevation between about 2300 and 2650 feet and is bordered by lofty mountains on three sides, some of the peaks rising to well over 9000 feet. We'll have a bit of time on our first afternoon, the morning of Day 2, and our final afternoon together to focus on the low desert surrounding the city, which, as you have undoubtedly heard, can be quite warm (though early to mid-May is typically quite comfortable). We don't plan to spend much time in the heat, though, as our nightbird targets here, if known to be present, are few. Other species we'll search for in the low desert include Gila Woodpecker, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Verdin, Lucy's Warbler, Pyrrhuloxia, and Rufous-winged Sparrow.

Santa Rita Mountains and Florida Wash—Less than an hour south of Tucson, the lofty Santa Rita Mountains loom above the desert and the nearby retirement community of Green Valley. This is the home of famous Madera Canyon, host to some of the best middle-elevation canyon birding in the state. We'll have most of our first afternoon to bird along the productive roadsides leading to the canyon, and we'll also have a chance to sample the birdlife of Florida Wash below the entrance of the canyon. Nearly all of the Southeast Arizona mountain specialties are found here and it makes a

great introduction to the region's bird life. If we're up for some owling at the time of our visit, or if the rare Buff-collared Nightjar is known to be present, we'll plan a picnic dinner here before we return to our Tucson motel.

Huachuca Mountains—The Huachucas have a long history of great birding in their many canyons, streamsides, and pine forests. In recent years, the most popular birding attractions of these mountains have been the Ramsey Canyon Preserve, the hummingbird feeding stations in Miller and Ash canyons, and Fort Huachuca. Talk to most birders around the country and chances are pretty good that they saw their lifer Spotted Owl either in Miller or Scheelite Canyon in the Huachucas. We'll spend most of the morning in one of these shady canyons at around 6000 feet trying to find these reclusive birds, which often can be seen in the light of day at one of their favorite roosting sites. A decent trail ascends each of these narrow drainages, and we'll hike at a deliberately slow pace, both to enjoy the bird life on the way up and also to avoid getting too winded before looking for the owls. Additional birds to look for are Northern (Mountain) Pygmy-Owl, Arizona Woodpecker, Dusky-capped and Buff-breasted flycatchers, and Yellow-eyed Junco. Your guide will have the most current Spotted Owl news by tour time and will make a final decision on which canyon to visit at that point.

Chiricahua Mountains—Acre for acre, the Chiricahua Mountains region is one of the richest in North America in terms of biodiversity. There are more species of plants, insects, reptiles, mammals, and, of course, birds here than in nearly any other area of comparable size in the US. This is due to a number of factors, the most important of which are the mountains' geographic location (at the southern end of temperate North America and close enough to Mexico to have a strong Neotropical flavor) and their broad elevation range (from about 4000 feet up to nearly 10,000 feet). Among the many species that we will look for in this area, several diurnal specialties should be mentioned: Zone-tailed Hawk, Blue-throated Mountain-gem, Rivoli's Hummingbird, Montezuma Quail, Mexican Chickadee, Olive and Red-faced warblers, and Painted Redstart. We'll have two nights and nearly two full days to search for the nightbirds that these mountains conceal in their deep canyons, lush riparian areas, dry desert flats, and dense pine/oak forests.



The "Mexican" Spotted Owl is one of the birds we'll seek during daylight hours, when we'll hope to be able to quietly observe a snoozing individual such as this one. Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.

Itinerary for Arizona Nightbirds & More

Day 1, Thu, May 1. Arrival in Tucson; to Madera Canyon. Please plan to arrive in Tucson **no later than 2:00 p.m.** today. We will plan to meet in the lobby of the hotel at 2:30 p.m. to start our birding. Unless there is a hot tip on the whereabouts of a viewable Buff-collared Nightjar within striking distance of Tucson by the time our tour starts, our plan will be to spend our first afternoon and evening in nearby Madera Canyon in the Santa Rita Mountains just to the south of Tucson. Madera Canyon hosts a fine variety of nightbirds as well as a number of Southeast Arizona specialty species.

Should the whereabouts of a rare Buff-collared Nightjar be known from elsewhere, such as in the California Gulch area of the Pajarito Wilderness west of Nogales, we'll change our plans for this first outing of the trip accordingly.

If all goes according to plan, we'll hope to have seen several of the following, including Elf and Burrowing owls, Whiskered and Western screech-owls, Lesser Nighthawk, Mexican Whip-poor-will—and, if we're really lucky—Buff-collared Nightjar, before we make it back to our rooms! Good, sturdy hiking boots would be best for today's terrain and don't forget to bring a small flashlight or a headlamp for our post-dinner search for owls and nightjars. We'll likely arrive back at our Tucson hotel tonight between 10:00 and 11:00 p.m. Night in Tucson.

Day 2, Fri, May 2. To the Huachucas and on to the Chiricahua Mountains. After breakfast at our hotel in Tucson, we'll drive southeast to the Huachuca Mountains, where we'll hike up either Miller or Scheelite Canyon in mid-morning. The paths in these canyons are somewhat steep, but the birding is invariably rewarding. Again, sturdy hiking boots would be in order for today's hike. For those who choose not to hike, the birding near the trailhead (either in Miller or Scheelite) can be very rewarding as well. A decision on which canyon to visit will be made by your guide based on recent knowledge of Spotted Owl whereabouts.

We'll prepare a picnic lunch before heading east to the Chiricahuas, where we'll spend the next two nights. After an early dinner, we'll begin our search for the fine variety of nightbirds resident in the Chiricahuas. We plan to spend our daylight hours on the few roads and trails of the area to search for the numerous Arizona specialties that inhabit these beautiful mountains. Night in the Chiricahuas.

Day 3, Sat, May 3. Owling the Chiricahua Mountains. We'll have this morning to get just a little more sleep, both to catch up for the past couple of nights and to prepare for owling this evening when we'll concentrate on locating any species we may have missed thus far. We'll plan to bird one of the many rich habitats of this range this morning after breakfast, taking a midday break back at our rooms after lunch. We'll be back out in the field in the afternoon, searching the Cave Creek Canyon area, or the desert flats below Portal, for the many special birds found here before we head back out into the field after an early dinner to track down any remaining nightbirds. Night in the Chiricahuas.



*Another Arizona specialty we'll seek is the stunning Painted Redstart.
Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.*

Day 4, Sun, May 4. The Chiricahuas; to Tucson. After a final morning high in the upper reaches of the Chiricahuas, we will drive back to Tucson via the wetland habitats of Willcox, planning to arrive with time to clean up before our delicious farewell dinner at a nearby restaurant. Should we still be needing a nightbird or two, we may decide to take a picnic dinner afield to track down our quarry close to Tucson on this final night of the tour. The tour ends this evening after dinner and any additional nightbirding that we plan after eating. Night in Tucson.

Day 5, Mon, May 5. Departure. If you are flying out this morning, you should take the courtesy van to the airport in plenty of time for your flight.

About Your Guide

Cory Gregory, a lifelong addict of all things birds, started learning birds on flashcards at the age of three. Ever since he can remember he knew he wanted to pursue his passion and work with birds. Cory earned a B.S. in zoology in Michigan, where he also worked for Whitefish Point Bird Observatory for several seasons. He then furthered his education at Iowa State University, where he earned a M.S. studying Long-billed Curlews in Nebraska. To this day, the prairie states mean a lot to him.

As an avian ecologist, Cory has worked with a wide range of birds including Steller's Eiders in Alaska, Laysan Albatrosses in Hawaii, Red Knots in Georgia, and Upland Sandpipers in Kansas. In 2014 and 2015, Cory served as a local guide on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs of Alaska and hasn't stopped guiding since.

Parallel to being a full-time guide, Cory still identifies as a lifelong biologist and will occasionally work field jobs when he can. As recently as 2022, he worked as an avian ecologist in northern Michigan where he captured, handled, and banded Northern Saw-whet Owls.

Cory has been based out of Hannibal, Missouri, for some time and now serves on the Missouri Birds Record Committee. When not on tour, he and his partner, Ashley, pursue their interests in birding, traveling and, recently, moths.

In North America, his stomping grounds, Cory has co-lead Field Guides groups to locales coast-to-coast including Arizona, Alaska, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, Maine, and Newfoundland. Farther afield, Cory has also guided in Costa Rica, Mexico, Jamaica, Colombia, Peru, France, and Australia. He has a busy and wide-ranging schedule coming up thanks to adding Oregon and Michigan to his portfolio of tours. Folks have had a great time traveling with Cory, and we think you will, too!

"Cory was wonderful. He surely knows his birds, and his calm presence and dry sense of humor made the trip a lot of fun - and very productive as well. I would absolutely take another tour with him." S.S, Arizona Nightbirds

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for Cory's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

Financial Information

FEE: \$2175 from Tucson

DEPOSIT: \$225 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: November 2, 2024

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$325

LIMIT: 7

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Caroline Lewis. Caroline will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Please plan to arrive in Tucson no later than 2:00 p.m. on Day 1, May 1. You may depart from Tucson at any time on the last day of the tour (May 5). Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights

not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility. Our hotel in Tucson will gladly store a bag for you in their storage room if you would like to leave a bag until our return to Tucson on Day 4. We would encourage you to take a smaller bag with you in the van for our two nights away from Tucson.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$2175 for one person in double occupancy from Tucson. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 4, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through dinner on Day 4, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Tucson, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$325. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact us at fieldguides.com/contact-us/. Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$225** per person, or see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by November 2, 2024. We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.**

Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and full payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the full tour fee is non-refundable, which would include the full deposit if the final payment has not yet been paid. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of that insurance is not refundable, so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, you

acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive information from us regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii. We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right 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. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

5/24 CJG

Updated 10/24 peg; 1/25peg