

Field Guides Tour Report

ARIZONA: BIRDING THE BORDER | 2013

May 10, 2013 to May 19, 2013 John Coons

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE.

We started and ended our adventure birding in the Sonoran Desert of southeastern Arizona with some great scenery and, of course, great birds in between. Each of our venues yielded specialties among the more widespread species that we saw on several days. Starting in the desert near Tucson we had excellent views of Gilded Flicker and Rufous-winged Sparrow, two species that are essentially endemic to the Sonoran Desert. A Burrowing Owl the next morning got us headed in the direction of the famous Chiricahua Mountains. At our first stop in the mountains we found Red-faced Warbler, Painted Redstart, and Greater Pewee after we paused to get a look at a group of Western Tanagers. Over the next few days here we had terrific views of a male Elegant Trogon, and Northern Pygmy-Owl, Elf Owl, and Whiskered Screech-Owl during the day. We also saw Mexican Chickadee, Olive Warbler, Black-chinned Sparrow, and a close male Montezuma Quail a bit higher in the mountains. We also encountered a few rarities. A Blue-winged Warbler, very rare in Arizona, that had been found the day before appeared again for us, and a Mexican vagrant, Rufous-backed Robin, was seen by Richard but could not be refound for all. Also, an out-of-place Lewis's Woodpecker made an appearance at the feeders at the George Walker House B&B.

Our next destination was the Huachuca Mountains, where a perched Spotted Owl was cooperative, along with a Zone-tailed Hawk, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, a Buffbreasted Flycatcher building a nest, another male Elegant Trogon, and a slew of hummingbirds including a brilliant White-eared at the Beatty's feeders.

Leaving the higher mountains we then made our way west to Patagonia, Nogales, and California Gulch. Gray Hawk, Thick-billed Kingbird, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, and a Violet-crowned Hummingbird were some of the highlights as Canyon Wrens serenaded us. An early departure for California Gulch allowed us to view wonderful Five-striped Sparrows before it got too hot. A gorgeous male Varied Bunting performed well and a couple of Pacific-slope Flycatchers, a terrific Least Grebe, and a pair of mating Greater Roadrunners also highlighted the day.

Our last day found us making a few stops in the Santa Rita Mountains area, where another Varied Bunting was the highlight until we had fantastic views of a close Blackcapped Gnatcatcher, another rarity from Mexico. A displaying Wild Turkey provided entertainment before we found a Harris's Hawk at Sweetwater Wetlands.

Having Rose Ann Rowlett join us for some birding in the Chiricahuas was definitely a treat, as was birding with and learning about the history of the area from Ted Mouras, our escort into Fort Huachuca. Waking up in the morning to such spectacular scenery



South Fork Road in Cave Creek Canyon in the Chiricahua Mountains, where many of southeast Arizona's specialty birds may be found. (Photo by participant Joan Greenland)

was a highlight difficult to describe. This trip was truly a lot of fun and I hope to see you all again soon.

--John

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

<u>Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)</u> BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK (Dendrocygna autumnalis) – We saw many of these in the wet field at Rio Rico. AMERICAN WIGEON (Anas americana) MALLARD (NORTHERN) (Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos) MALLARD (MEXICAN) (Anas platyrhynchos diazi) – There were several of these on the pond at Willcox.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (Anas discors)

CINNAMON TEAL (Anas cyanoptera) - There was a nicely plumaged male at Sweetwater Wetlands on our first afternoon.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (Anas clypeata)

LESSER SCAUP (Aythya affinis) - Two individuals were on the lake at Willcox.

RUDDY DUCK (Oxyura jamaicensis)

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

GAMBEL'S QUAIL (Callipepla gambelii)

MONTEZUMA QUAIL (Cyrtonyx montezumae) – We had a great experience seeing this real skulker. We saw a male dart behind a grass clump in the Chiricahua Mountains and it eventually walked out and we got it in the scope as it stood motionless in the grass.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

WILD TURKEY (Meleagris gallopavo) - A wonderful bird, we heard a few gobbling as well as those seen.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LEAST GREBE (Tachybaptus dominicus) – Great looks at one at Pena Blanca Lake where a pair has been present for a few years. This is quite a rare bird in Arizona.

EARED GREBE (Podiceps nigricollis)

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT (Phalacrocorax brasilianus) - We saw a handful of these. This species is becoming more common throughout the state.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (Ardea herodias) – We saw a few on nests in cottonwood trees along Sonoita Creek.

GREAT EGRET (Ardea alba) GREEN HERON (Butorides virescens) – There was one along the edge of the wet field at Rio Rico.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills) WHITE-FACED IBIS (Plegadis chihi)

Cathartidae (New World Vultures) BLACK VULTURE (Coragyps atratus) TURKEY VULTURE (Cathartes aura)

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

HARRIS'S HAWK (Parabuteo unicinctus) – A return to the Sweetwater Wetlands on our last afternoon found this beautiful raptor perched in one of the trees.

GRAY HAWK (Buteo plagiatus) - We ended up seeing a few of these small handsome hawks.

SWAINSON'S HAWK (Buteo swainsoni)

ZONE-TAILED HAWK (Buteo albonotatus) – After our first one didn't show well in the sun we had another at Fort Huachuca that gave us good views.

RED-TAILED HAWK (Buteo jamaicensis)

<u>Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)</u> COMMON GALLINULE (Gallinula galeata) AMERICAN COOT (Fulica americana)

<u>Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)</u> **KILLDEER** (Charadrius vociferus)

<u>Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)</u> BLACK-NECKED STILT (Himantopus mexicanus) AMERICAN AVOCET (Recurvirostra americana)

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)
SPOTTED SANDPIPER (Actitis macularius)
WILLET (Tringa semipalmata) – We saw one at Willcox where it is not a common bird.
MARBLED GODWIT (Limosa fedoa) – One was present at the pond at Willcox.
WESTERN SANDPIPER (Calidris mauri)
LEAST SANDPIPER (Calidris minutilla)
BAIRD'S SANDPIPER (Calidris bairdii) – There were about four individuals present at Willcox on the day we visited.
LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (Limnodromus scolopaceus)
WILSON'S PHALAROPE (Phalaropus tricolor) – We saw many of these spinning around in the water at Willcox.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers) RING-BILLED GULL (Larus delawarensis)

<u>Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)</u> ROCK PIGEON (Columba livia) [I]

BAND-TAILED PIGEON (Patagioenas fasciata) EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (Streptopelia decaocto) [I] WHITE-WINGED DOVE (Zenaida asiatica) – Daily. MOURNING DOVE (Zenaida macroura) INCA DOVE (Columbina inca) COMMON GROUND-DOVE (Columbina passerina)

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

GREATER ROADRUNNER (Geococcyx californianus) – We had a great experience with our first one as it crossed the road behind the van, then the pair at the hotel put on a good show and folks even saw them mate. This is one of the iconic birds of the Southwest.

<u>Strigidae (Owls)</u>

FLAMMULATED OWL (Otus flammeolus) – We had one calling just overhead in a very dense juniper and could not see it after chasing one around for a god while. [*]

WESTERN SCREECH-OWL (Megascops kennicottii) - This one took some time but we got a great look in the desert outside of Portal.

WHISKERED SCREECH-OWL (Megascops trichopsis) - We enjoyed a wonderful view of one on a day roost in the Chiricahua Mountains.

GREAT HORNED OWL (Bubo virginianus)

NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL (Glaucidium gnoma) – After we got word of a sighting we hied down the road and Patty spotted this small owl perched quietly in a pine.

ELF OWL (Micrathene whitneyi) – We had a scope view of one in a hole just at dusk in Portal.

BURROWING OWL (Athene cunicularia) – Nice views of a pair along the Santa Cruz River on our first morning in the field.

SPOTTED OWL (Strix occidentalis) - We had nice views of one perched in a pine in Miller Canyon after a relatively short walk up the trail.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

LESSER NIGHTHAWK (Chordeiles acutipennis)

COMMON POORWILL (Phalaenoptilus nuttallii)

MEXICAN WHIP-POOR-WILL (Antrostomus arizonae arizonae) – With Rose Ann's help, we had a wonderful experience with this specialty just after dark as it flew past us and perched a couple of times in the trees.

Apodidae (Swifts)

WHITE-THROATED SWIFT (Aeronautes saxatalis)

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

MAGNIFICENT HUMMINGBIRD (Eugenes fulgens) - Nice views at feeders in the Chiricahua and Huachuca mountains.

BLUE-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (Lampornis clemenciae) – Our best sightings of these were at the feeders at the Research Station.

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD (Archilochus alexandri) - This was the most common hummingbird we encountered.

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD (Calypte anna)

COSTA'S HUMMINGBIRD (Calypte costae) - We saw a female in California Gulch and another in the Montosa Canyon area.

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD (Selasphorus platycercus)

BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD (Cynanthus latirostris)

VIOLET-CROWNED HUMMINGBIRD (Amazilia violiceps) - One was visiting the Paton's feeders at Patagonia.

WHITE-EARED HUMMINGBIRD (Hylocharis leucotis) – We had great looks at a stunning male at the Beatty's feeders in the Huachuca Mountains. Another rarity in North America.

<u>Trogonidae (Trogons)</u>

ELEGANT TROGON (Trogon elegans) – We ended up with wonderful views of this southeastern Arizona specialty. We heard one calling near the creek along South Fork and finally crept up on it through the trees spotting it only 30 feet away seemingly unconcerned with us. We had fantastic views.

<u>Picidae (Woodpeckers)</u>

LEWIS'S WOODPECKER (Melanerpes lewis) – An out of place individual came in to the feeders at the George Walker House where it ate some jelly. This is a quite unusual bird here at this time of year.

ACORN WOODPECKER (Melanerpes formicivorus)

GILA WOODPECKER (Melanerpes uropygialis)

LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER (Picoides scalaris)

HAIRY WOODPECKER (Picoides villosus)

ARIZONA WOODPECKER (Picoides arizonae) - We saw an extraordinary number of these specialties this year.

NORTHERN FLICKER (RED-SHAFTED) (Colaptes auratus cafer)

GILDED FLICKER (Colaptes chrysoides) - Nice views of this Sonoran Desert endemic on our first afternoon in the field.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (Falco sparverius)

PEREGRINE FALCON (Falco peregrinus) – We enjoyed pretty good views of one sailing above Cave Creek Canyon where it seemed to have a nest on a ledge.

<u>Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)</u> NORTHERN BEARDLESS-TYRANNULET (Camptostoma imberbe) – Another specialty, we had a silent individual come in near Patagonia.

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GREATER PEWEE (Contopus pertinax) – We saw and heard the distinctive song of this higher elevation flycatcher in the Chiricahua and in the Huachuca mountains.

WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE (Contopus sordidulus)

GRAY FLYCATCHER (Empidonax wrightii) - One seen at the San Pedro House would have been a migrant.

DUSKY FLYCATCHER (Empidonax oberholseri)

PACIFIC-SLOPE FLYCATCHER (Empidonax difficilis) – There were a couple of individuals calling in the California Gulch and Montosa Canyon areas.

CORDILLERAN FLYCATCHER (Empidonax occidentalis)

BUFF-BREASTED FLYCATCHER (Empidonax fulvifrons) – We watched an individual beginning a nest on a small juniper branch while at Sawmill Canyon.

BLACK PHOEBE (Sayornis nigricans)

SAY'S PHOEBE (Sayornis saya)

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (Pyrocephalus rubinus)

DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER (Myiarchus tuberculifer) – While hoping for a trogon to appear on out first morning in the Chiricahuas we saw a pair of these flycatchers carrying material into a nest cavity.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (Myiarchus cinerascens)

BROWN-CRESTED FLYCATCHER (Myiarchus tyrannulus)

SULPHUR-BELLIED FLYCATCHER (Myiodynastes luteiventris) – Great scope views of a calling bird in Garden Canyon where this species had just arrived.

TROPICAL KINGBIRD (Tyrannus melancholicus) - There were four or so birds near the ponds at Rio Rico.

CASSIN'S KINGBIRD (Tyrannus vociferans)

THICK-BILLED KINGBIRD (Tyrannus crassirostris) – Another Southeast Arizona specialty, we had one right above us at the famous Roadside Rest. **WESTERN KINGBIRD** (Tyrannus verticalis)

<u>Laniidae (Shrikes)</u>

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (Lanius ludovicianus)

Vireonidae (Vireos) BELL'S VIREO (Vireo bellii) PLUMBEOUS VIREO (Vireo plumbeus) CASSIN'S VIREO (Vireo cassinii) HUTTON'S VIREO (Vireo huttoni) WARBLING VIREO (Vireo gilvus)

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies) STELLER'S JAY (Cyanocitta stelleri) WESTERN SCRUB-JAY (Aphelocoma californica) MEXICAN JAY (Aphelocoma wollweberi) CHIHUAHUAN RAVEN (Corvus cryptoleucus) COMMON RAVEN (Corvus corax)

<u>Alaudidae (Larks)</u> HORNED LARK (Eremophila alpestris) – A few were around the pond at Willcox.

Hirundinidae (Swallows) NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (Stelgidopteryx serripennis) VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW (Tachycineta thalassina) BANK SWALLOW (Riparia riparia) – One made a pass at Sweetwater Wetlands but I'm not sure if anyone got on it. BARN SWALLOW (Hirundo rustica)

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

MEXICAN CHICKADEE (Poecile sclateri) – We had nice views of this mega-specialty in the Chiricahua Mountains where it was moving about with a mixed flock.

BRIDLED TITMOUSE (Baeolophus wollweberi)

JUNIPER TITMOUSE (Baeolophus ridgwayi) – Good views at the George Walker House where this is one of the reliable spots to find this locally uncommon species.

<u>Remizidae (Penduline-Tits)</u> VERDIN (Auriparus flaviceps)

<u>Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)</u> **BUSHTIT** (Psaltriparus minimus)

Sittidae (Nuthatches) RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (Sitta canadensis) [*] WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (Sitta carolinensis) PYGMY NUTHATCH (Sitta pygmaea)

<u>Certhiidae (Treecreepers)</u> BROWN CREEPER (Certhia americana)

<u>Troglodytidae (Wrens)</u>

ROCK WREN (Salpinctes obsoletus)
CANYON WREN (Catherpes mexicanus) – We had nice scope views of a singing individual.
HOUSE WREN (Troglodytes aedon)
BEWICK'S WREN (Thryomanes bewickii)
CACTUS WREN (Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus) – Amazingly, we had to go looking for this common desert species on our last afternoon.

Polioptilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (Polioptila caerulea)

BLACK-TAILED GNATCATCHER (Polioptila melanura)

BLACK-CAPPED GNATCATCHER (Polioptila nigriceps) – We enjoyed great views of a close individual at the southern end of the Santa Rita Mountains. A real surprise to find this very difficult bird and see it so well.

<u>Regulidae (Kinglets)</u>

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (Regulus calendula)

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

HERMIT THRUSH (Catharus guttatus) - We heard more than we saw. It certainly has a great evening voice in the forest.

RUFOUS-BACKED ROBIN (Turdus rufopalliatus) – Richard and I saw this Mexican rarity along South Fork during our afternoon siesta. It had been around for a few days but had proved very elusive which was evident when we returned to try and find it for all.

AMERICAN ROBIN (Turdus migratorius)

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (Mimus polyglottos)

BENDIRE'S THRASHER (Toxostoma bendirei) – Great views of one that ended up coming in quite close to us and perching in a yucca right next to the road.

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (Toxostoma curvirostre)

CRISSAL THRASHER (Toxostoma crissale)

<u>Sturnidae (Starlings)</u> EUROPEAN STARLING (Sturnus vulgaris) [I]

<u>Bombycillidae (Waxwings)</u> CEDAR WAXWING (Bombycilla cedrorum)

<u>Ptilogonatidae (Silky-flycatchers)</u> **PHAINOPEPLA** (Phainopepla nitens)

<u>Peucedramidae (Olive Warbler)</u> OLIVE WARBLER (Peucedramus taeniatus) – Now the sole member of its family, we had one with a mixed-flock in the Chiricahuas.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (Parkesia noveboracensis) – There was one calling at the Blue-winged Warbler spot but we were more interested in some other things at the time and we ended up never seeing it. This is a rare but regular migrant through southeastern Arizona. [*]

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER (Vermivora cyanoptera) – A very rare vagrant from the eastern US, we were informed by Rose Ann that she had just seen it overhead in a tree along South Fork of Cave Creek Canyon. We jumped out of the van and relocated it a few minutes later.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (Oreothlypis celata)

LUCY'S WARBLER (Oreothlypis luciae)

VIRGINIA'S WARBLER (Oreothlypis virginiae) – One moved through with the Blue-winged Warbler flock during our first morning in the Chiricahuas.

MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER (Geothlypis tolmiei)

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (Geothlypis trichas)

YELLOW WARBLER (Setophaga petechia)

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (Setophaga coronata)

GRACE'S WARBLER (Setophaga graciae) - There were a handful that showed well for us.

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (Setophaga nigrescens)

TOWNSEND'S WARBLER (Setophaga townsendi) - We saw about 4-5 individuals here and there with mixed flocks.

WILSON'S WARBLER (Cardellina pusilla)

RED-FACED WARBLER (Cardellina rubrifrons) - Great looks of this fabulous bird in the Chiricahuas.

PAINTED REDSTART (Myioborus pictus) - This certainly is another beauty of the area.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT (Icteria virens) - It was surprising to see this normally hard-to-see bird come to the feeder at the Paton's.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE (Pipilo chlorurus) – A few wintering birds were still around. **SPOTTED TOWHEE** (Pipilo maculatus)

RUFOUS-CROWNED SPARROW (Aimophila ruficeps) CANYON TOWHEE (Melozone fusca) ABERT'S TOWHEE (Melozone aberti) RUFOUS-WINGED SPARROW (Peucaea carpalis) - Another specialty of the Sonoran Desert we enjoyed wonderful scope views on our first afternoon. BOTTERI'S SPARROW (Peucaea botterii) CHIPPING SPARROW (Spizella passerina) **BREWER'S SPARROW** (Spizella breweri) BLACK-CHINNED SPARROW (Spizella atrogularis) - Great views in the scope of this local bird. LARK SPARROW (Chondestes grammacus) FIVE-STRIPED SPARROW (Amphispiza quinquestriata) – Great looks at another mega-specialty at California Gulch. It was worth the long drive into this remote area. BLACK-THROATED SPARROW (Amphispiza bilineata) SONG SPARROW (Melospiza melodia) LINCOLN'S SPARROW (Melospiza lincolnii) - One came to the feeders / water feature at the Rodriguez feeders. WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (MOUNTAIN) (Zonotrichia leucophrys oriantha) YELLOW-EYED JUNCO (Junco phaeonotus) Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies) **HEPATIC TANAGER** (Piranga flava) SUMMER TANAGER (Piranga rubra) WESTERN TANAGER (Piranga ludoviciana) - A real looker, we saw these on most days. NORTHERN CARDINAL (Cardinalis cardinalis) PYRRHULOXIA (Cardinalis sinuatus) - Both this species and the Northern Cardinal showed well at the feeders just outside of Portal. ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (Pheucticus ludovicianus) – This was a surprise. A brilliant male showed up at the feeders at the George Walker House at Paradise and was also a surprise to the owner, Jackie. BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK (Pheucticus melanocephalus) **BLUE GROSBEAK** (Passerina caerulea) **LAZULI BUNTING** (Passerina amoena) [*] VARIED BUNTING (Passerina versicolor) – Another great sighting in California Gulch, these were just arriving in Arizona for the summer. Icteridae (Troupials and Allies) **RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (Agelaius phoeniceus) EASTERN MEADOWLARK (LILIAN'S) (Sturnella magna lilianae) GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (Quiscalus mexicanus) **BRONZED COWBIRD** (Molothrus aeneus) BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (Molothrus ater) HOODED ORIOLE (Icterus cucullatus) BULLOCK'S ORIOLE (Icterus bullockii) SCOTT'S ORIOLE (Icterus parisorum) - There were about six individuals coming to the feeders at the George Walker House. Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies) HOUSE FINCH (Haemorhous mexicanus) **PINE SISKIN** (Spinus pinus) – A lot of these were seen this year, quite unusual. LESSER GOLDFINCH (Spinus psaltria)

<u>Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)</u> HOUSE SPARROW (Passer domesticus) [I]

MAMMALS

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (Sylvilagus floridanus) [E] DESERT COTTONTAIL (Sylvilagus audubonii) BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT (Lepus californicus) ROCK SQUIRREL (Spermophilus variegatus) ROUND-TAILED GROUND SQUIRREL (Spermophilus tereticaudus) NAYARIT FOX SQUIRREL (Sciurus nayaritensis) – This specialty of the Chiricahua Mountains seemed to be at a low point in the cycle of its population. ARIZONA GRAY SQUIRREL (Sciurus arizonensis) WHITE-THROATED WOOD-RAT (Neotoma albigula) – This is likely the woodrat (packrat) that we saw near the feeders. GRAY FOX (Urocyon cinereoargenteus) COYOTE (Canis latrans) WHITE-NOSED COATI (Nasua narica) STRIPED SKUNK (Mephitis mephitis) **COLLARED PECCARY** (Tayassu tajacu) – Several came to the Rodriguez feeders where they bullied their way around for a while. **WHITE-TAILED DEER** (Odocoileus virginianus) – These were nearly daily sightings throughout the trip.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 199 bird taxa and 14 mammal taxa