



Field Guides Tour Report

NORTHERN ARIZONA'S CANYONS AND CONDOR II 2014

Jun 6, 2014 to Jun 11, 2014

John Coons

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).

During our time in Northern Arizona we found a wonderful array of birds and fantastic scenery. Our group enjoyed great weather with the cool mornings and warm afternoons for which Flagstaff is famous. The forest fire that ravaged Oak Creek Canyon just before our trip was under control, but the ensuing closures kept us from a few spots but didn't hurt us much bird-wise.

Our first morning in the field found us birding the slopes of the San Francisco Peaks, where we encountered eight species of woodpeckers including Lewis's, Northern Three-toed, and Williamson's Sapsucker. Over our days we birded high deserts, mixed-conifer forests, wetlands and, of course, the Grand Canyon. The highlight had to be the close look we had at the adult California Condor at Marble Canyon at the upper end of Grand Canyon. It was worth the longer drive to see such a fantastic bird in this setting.

We also found a number of quite local western species including Cinnamon Teal, Magnificent Hummingbird, Gray and Dusky flycatchers, Gray Vireo, Bridled Titmouse, Cactus Wren, Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, Phainopepla, Olive Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee, Black-chinned Sparrow, and several wood warblers including Lucy's, Virginia's, MacGillivray's, Grace's, Black-throated Gray, Red-faced, and Painted Redstart. Looking down on a Zone-tailed Hawk nest with a week-old chick at the Grand Canyon and watching a pair of Common Black-Hawks near a nest along Oak Creek were also highlights. Having a pair of Pinyon Jays join us for a drink at dinner on our last day was also a hit.



It's easily one of the greatest spectacles on earth, and the ever-changing light in the Grand Canyon makes it a wonderful place even if there were no birds. (Photo by guide John Coons)

I had a great time seeing these backyard birds with you in some of the prettiest places in the world. I look forward to doing it someplace again in the future.

--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

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – This species has become a year round resident in the Flagstaff area and even bred this year.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – A pair were at Kachina Wetlands where it is not a common visitor.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

CINNAMON TEAL (*Anas cyanoptera*) – We saw a few of these colorful ducks.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – The males had the brilliant blue bills and were doing the neck pumping display.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*)

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – This would have been an unheard of record five years ago, but this species has spread north in Arizona and is now the expected cormorant here.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*)

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*)

CALIFORNIA CONDOR (*Gymnogyps californianus*) – We had great views of this massive bird perched under the Navajo Bridge in Marble Canyon. An adult, this bird was in full colors with a slightly pinker head instead of orange. I checked the website and learned our bird, H-9, was hatched on 3 June 2008. It was well worth the longer drive to see this bird in such a beautiful area.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – These birds have become more common in the Flagstaff area in the last few years. We saw two nests close to Flagstaff.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – We had a scope view of one that Jim spotted along the creek south of Flagstaff. Our first was a brief look at one that flew past at Schultz Tank.

COMMON BLACK-HAWK (*Buteo gallinulus*) – Great looks at both adults at a nest site in a large cottonwood at John and Becky's house along Oak Creek.

ZONE-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo albonotatus*) – We had a wonderful look at a female at a nest with a small chick that we were looking down upon at the Grand Canyon. This is a southwest specialty and this is just about the limit of its range going north.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

VIRGINIA RAIL (*Rallus limicola*) – Nice views of this skulker at the Kachina Wetlands where it came out of the reeds in front of us.

SORA (*Porzana carolina*) [*]

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*)

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*)

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [I]

BAND-TAILED PIGEON (*Patagioenas fasciata*) – We had a perched individual at the edge of the Schultz Burn.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) [I]

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*)

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus americanus*) – We heard one calling and it was seen by a couple of people along Oak Creek near Page Springs. This is a very late migrant to Arizona and they are just arriving now. [*]

Apodidae (Swifts)

WHITE-THROATED SWIFT (*Aeronautes saxatalis*)

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

MAGNIFICENT HUMMINGBIRD (*Eugenes fulgens*) – A male of this large species made a couple of visits to John's feeder in Oak Creek Canyon. This is a very local and rather rare species this far north in Arizona.

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus alexandri*) – A fair number were visiting the feeders at John and Becky's house along Oak Creek.

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD (*Calypte anna*) – Both a male and female were coming to the feeders along Oak Creek.

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus platycircus*) – We had several nice looks at this mountain species.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

LEWIS'S WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes lewis*) – We had great looks at a pair at a nest hole in Flagstaff. This is an often overlooked species on the list of great North American birds. The combination of colors on it are exquisite.

ACORN WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) – We saw a few in Oak Creek Canyon near one of their granary trees.

GILA WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes uropygialis*) – A pair were working in the cottonwoods along lower Oak Creek.

WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*) – On our first morning we had a wonderful view of a male, then a female, on our way to Hart Prairie. Another colorful woodpecker.

RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*) – We only had a fly-by in the Hart Prairie area and could not relocate it.

LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Picoides scalaris*) – This lower elevation desert species showed well along lower Oak Creek near Page Springs.

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – A quite uncommon breeder in the Flagstaff area, we had a close individual near the Williamson's Sapsucker site.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*)

AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (*Picoides dorsalis*) – Jim spotted this quite uncommon species in the Schultz Burn. This species favors recently burned forests for feeding and this now four year old burn is playing out.

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

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*)

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER (*Contopus cooperi*) – We had scope views of a consistently singing individual in Hart Prairie.

WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus sordidulus*) – A rather common voice in the pine forest, we only saw a couple of them.

GRAY FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax wrightii*) – It took some looking but we found a cooperative singing bird in the pinyon-juniper habitat south of Flagstaff.

DUSKY FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax oberholseri*) – We enjoyed good scope views of a handful of birds at Hart Prairie which is the site where this bird was first described to science.

CORDILLERAN FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax occidentalis*) – Formerly known as "Western" Flycatcher this species showed well a few times in the pine and mixed-conifer forests.

BLACK PHOEBE (*Sayornis nigricans*) – We saw one flycatching along one of the ponds at the Page Springs hatchery.

SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*)

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) – Our first ones were along Gray Mountain.

BROWN-CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*) – There were a couple of these large flycatchers at John and Becky's home along Oak Creek.

CASSIN'S KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus vociferans*) – We found one sitting on a nest along the slope of Gray Mountain.

Vireonidae (Vireos)

GRAY VIREO (*Vireo vicinior*) – We had great views of this quite local species near Gray Mountain and again south of Flagstaff.

PLUMBEOUS VIREO (*Vireo plumbeus*)

WARBLING VIREO (*Vireo gilvus*) [*]

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

PINYON JAY (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) – We enjoyed close views of a few birds in my neighborhood in Flagstaff and they even joined us for dinner. Another specialty of Northern Arizona.

STELLER'S JAY (*Cyanocitta stelleri*)

WESTERN SCRUB-JAY (*Aphelocoma californica*) – Our best views were at the Grand Canyon.

CLARK'S NUTCRACKER (*Nucifraga columbiana*) – This species was hard to come by this year but we had one of these mountain birds overhead near Hart Prairie.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*)

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – There were a few along the roadsides that we saw on our drive to Marble Canyon.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*)

PURPLE MARTIN (*Progne subis*) [*]

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – A handful were flying about the Kachina Wetlands. This is a quite local nesting bird in the Flagstaff area.

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – By far the most common swallow we encountered.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*)

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE (*Poecile gambeli*)

BRIDLED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus wollweberi*) – A group of about four showed well in John and Becky's yard along Oak Creek.

JUNIPER TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*) – We watched an adult feeding a recent fledgling at the Grand Canyon.

Remizidae (Penduline-Tits)

VERDIN (*Auriparus flaviceps*) – A desert species, our first was at the interstate rest area on our way to Page Springs.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

BUSHTIT (*Psaltiriparus minimus*)

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta canadensis*)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta carolinensis*)

PYGMY NUTHATCH (*Sitta pygmaea*) – We encountered quite a few of these small nuthatches in the pine forests.

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

BROWN CREEPER (*Certhia americana*)

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

ROCK WREN (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) – This species was quite conspicuous at the Grand Canyon and at Gray Mountain.

CANYON WREN (*Catherpes mexicanus*) – We had a wonderful view of two birds at Marble Canyon.

HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*)

BEWICK'S WREN (*Thryomanes bewickii*)

CACTUS WREN (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*) – At the far northern end of the range we had a couple of individuals and one in the scope south

of Sedona.

Poliptilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliptila caerulea*)

Regulidae (Kinglets)

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*)

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

WESTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia mexicana*) – A good number of these were seen, everyday in fact.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia currucoides*) – A brilliant male in nice light was just off the highway on our first morning near the San Francisco Peaks.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE (*Myadestes townsendi*) – We saw one drop down to the water pool for a drink while we were at the edge of the Schultz Burn.

HERMIT THRUSH (*Catharus guttatus*) – A wonderful songster, we saw a pair near Hart Prairie.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*)

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

CRISSAL THRASHER (*Toxostoma crissale*) – We heard one call a couple of times but couldn't get it in to view. This is a tough bird to see in June. [*]

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*)

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [I]

Ptilonotidae (Silky-flycatchers)

PHAINOPEPLA (*Phainopepla nitens*) – A fair number of these unusual birds were along lower Oak Creek Canyon near Page Springs. They were feeding on mulberries.

Peucedramidae (Olive Warbler)

OLIVE WARBLER (*Peucedramus taeniatus*) – It took some looking but we had nice looks at a one year old male with a yellow head and pale gray cheek near Mormon Lake. Taxonomically, this bird is now the sole member of its family.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis celata*) – We had nice looks at this local breeder in Hart Prairie.

LUCY'S WARBLER (*Oreothlypis luciae*) – We saw a few in the lower elevations south of Sedona.

VIRGINIA'S WARBLER (*Oreothlypis virginiae*) – We had good views of a singing individual at Hart Prairie.

MACGILLIVRAY'S WARBLER (*Geothlypis tolmiei*) – A very local breeder in Northern Arizona we had nice looks at this skulker in Hart Prairie where we heard a few more singing.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Our only sightings were at Kachina Wetlands.

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*)

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S) (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*)

GRACE'S WARBLER (*Setophaga graciae*) – After seeing our first at the Grand Canyon we enjoyed a few more in Oak Creek Canyon and the Mormon Lake area.

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (*Setophaga nigrescens*) – We had a wonderfully close view of a singing bird at the Grand Canyon.

RED-FACED WARBLER (*Cardellina rubrifrons*) – Another dazzler, this wonderful warbler showed well on a few occasions in the Flagstaff and Oak Creek Canyon areas. Usually thought of as a southeastern Arizona specialty, this bird has become more prevalent in Northern Arizona.

PAINTED REDSTART (*Myioborus pictus*) – This riparian specialty gave us a good show at John and Becky's cabin.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT (*Icteria virens*) – A boisterous species we had a few along lower Oak Creek.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE (*Pipilo chlorurus*) – After working hard to see the first one, we saw a handful in the Hart Prairie area. This is another local breeding specialty.

ABERT'S TOWHEE (*Melospiza aberti*) – Good views on an exposed log of this southwest specialty at John and Becky's house.

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*)

BLACK-CHINNED SPARROW (*Spizella atrogularis*) – After some okay views of one along Gray Mountain we cleaned this species up with nice looks south of Flagstaff.

VESPER SPARROW (*Poocetes gramineus*) – Our first showed well at Kachina Wetlands on our first afternoon.

LARK SPARROW (*Chondestes grammacus*) – One of the prettiest sparrows we saw one at Kachina Wetlands on the first afternoon.

BLACK-THROATED SPARROW (*Amphispiza bilineata*) – This handsome sparrow was seen a few times in the high desert.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*)

DARK-EYED JUNCO (RED-BACKED) (*Junco hyemalis dorsalis*)

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

HEPATIC TANAGER (*Piranga flava*) – Dave and I finally connected with a singing bird on our final morning after dropping Doris at the airport.

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*) – Another riparian bird in Northern Arizona, we saw a couple along Oak Creek.

WESTERN TANAGER (*Piranga ludoviciana*) – We had daily sightings of this colorful species.

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*) – A singing male at John and Becky's cabin was a bit of a surprise.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*)

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) – Quite numerous at Kachina Wetlands and there were a couple at the pond across from the hotel.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*)

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*)

HOODED ORIOLE (*Icterus cucullatus*) – There were a couple along Oak Creek.

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE (*Icterus bullockii*) – One showed well in a pine in my neighborhood in Flagstaff.

SCOTT'S ORIOLE (*Icterus parisorum*) – Our only sighting ended up being at Gray Mountain.

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*)

PINE SISKIN (*Spinus pinus*) – A few were coming to drink at Schultz Tank.

LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*) – Quite numerous at the feeders at John and Becky's and a few other places.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) **[I]**

MAMMALS

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)

BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT (*Lepus californicus*) – One was seen by some in the Schultz Burn at the base of the San Francisco Peaks.

CLIFF CHIPMUNK (*Tamias dorsalis*) – This is the small chipmunk we saw at the Grand Canyon.

ROCK SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus variegatus*) – Several were begging for food at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon.

GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus lateralis*) – We saw a couple of these on our way into Hart Prairie.

GUNNISON PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) – Besides those at the hotel we saw a few behind the convenience store on our way to the San Francisco Peaks and heard them barking.

ABERT'S SQUIRREL (*Sciurus aberti*) – A very handsome squirrel, we encountered a few around Flagstaff. This is also known as Tassel-eared Squirrel.

ELK (*Cervus canadensis*) – There were a good number in the Mormon Lake basin.

MULE DEER (*Odocoileus hemionus*)

PRONGHORN (*Antilocapra americana*) – It was a surprise to see this open country species in the burned forest of the Schultz Burn.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 131 bird taxa and 10 mammal taxa