



Field Guides Tour Report

Northern Arizona's Canyons and Condor I 2018

Jun 2, 2018 to Jun 7, 2018

John Coons

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



One of the most sublime spectacles on earth, the Grand Canyon never ceases to impress, whether it is your first or fiftieth visit. We saw our Zone-tailed Hawk soaring above the canyon near here. Photo by guide John Coons.

Our four + days of birding in Northern Arizona covered a lot of habitats and some fantastic scenery. We birded coniferous forests, deep canyons, grasslands, and sycamore lined streams in our search for birds. The wide diversity of habitats nearby allows us to stay in one place for the entire tour, which I wish was possible in other areas of the world. Unfortunately, we were not able to reach the high elevation meadows and forests of the San Francisco Peaks as the Forest Service closed this area in hopes of preventing forest fires during this period of extreme drought we have been experiencing since last September. We missed a handful of species because of this, but still got on well with many of the area specialties. First and foremost was our experience with California Condors at the Vermilion Cliffs. We changed our plans and decided to make a morning trip up north and saw about eight individual condors near the top of the cliff before one sailed right over us. What a thrill to see this huge bird in such a setting.

Other highlights were many and included a Common Black Hawk perched on a wire for several minutes, a Zone-tailed Hawk soaring over the Grand Canyon, a pair of White-throated Swifts mating on the wing and tumbling from the sky, a male Rivoli's Hummingbird, the oddly-colored Lewis's Woodpecker, Gray Vireo singing close to us, a rare Yellow-throated Vireo singing overhead, Pinyon Jays calling and coming in to drink, a number of Clark's Nutcrackers at the Grand Canyon, a brilliantly colored Mountain Bluebird, a very close male Olive Warbler, singing Virginia's Warblers, Red-faced Warbler, and Black-chinned Sparrow, among others. A couple of Coyotes, Elk and Pronghorn were four-legged highlights.

It was great fun birding with all of you and being able to show off the sights and sites of Northern Arizona. I hope our paths cross 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

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl).

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – There were a lot of these around the golf course in Flagstaff and the pond across from our motel.

CINNAMON TEAL (*Spatula cyanoptera*) – We had good views of these quite colorful waterfowl near the Kachina Wetlands and again at Ashurst Lake.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

REDHEAD (*Aythya americana*) – There were five individuals at Ashurst Lake on our final day.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – A rather uncommon duck in June; we saw a male at Ashurst Lake.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – A few were seen at the Kachina Wetlands and more were at Ashurst Lake.

Podicipedidae (Grebes).

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*)

WESTERN GREBE (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) – A single bird was hanging out with two Clark's Grebes at Ashurst Lake.

CLARK'S GREBE (*Aechmophorus clarkii*) – Quite rare in most years in the Flagstaff area; we saw two at Ashurst Lake on our last day in the field.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags).

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – Formerly quite rare in the Flagstaff area, this is now the expected cormorant here. We saw one perched on a stick at Lower Lake Mary.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns).

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*)

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills).

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) – A single individual was spotted at Ashurst Lake.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures).

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*)

CALIFORNIA CONDOR (*Gymnogyps californianus*) – California Condors have been inconsistent at the Grand Canyon this spring, so we altered our plans and went north to Navajo Bridge over the Colorado River, where they are often seen roosting. With no sightings there, we proceeded to the Vermilion Cliffs site, where we spotted 7-10 individuals perched on the rocks and flying about the top of the cliff a good ways off. However, one adult soared right over us for a fantastic view of this primitive looking bird. Yip! Yip! Yip!

Pandionidae (Osprey).

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Our first was at the Kachina Wetlands on our first afternoon, where we watched this bird grab a few orange fish from the pond. We later saw one at a nest near the hotel before we saw five individuals at one time at Ashurst Lake.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites).

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Harlan spotted a soaring adult on our first afternoon at the Kachina Wetlands.

COMMON BLACK HAWK (*Buteogallus anthracinus*) – We had great views of a calling bird that was perched on a wire over Oak Creek. Later we had nice looks at a soaring bird.

ZONE-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo albonotatus*) – Dave spotted this uncommon species sailing over the Grand Canyon.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).

VIRGINIA RAIL (*Rallus limicola*) – We saw a very close individual at the Kachina Wetlands on our first afternoon.

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*)

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings).

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – One was seen flying across the pond at the Kachina Wetlands.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves).

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [I]

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

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*)

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies).

COMMON NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles minor*) – We heard one calling during the day as we birded in upper Oak Creek Canyon. [*]

Apodidae (Swifts).

WHITE-THROATED SWIFT (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) – We had some low fly-bys at the Grand Canyon and even saw a pair mating in flight.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds).

RIVOLI'S HUMMINGBIRD (*Eugenes fulgens*) – A male made an appearance at a feeder in Oak Creek Canyon. This is the furthest north this species is seen regularly in the U.S.

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus alexandri*)

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD (*Calypte anna*) – We saw a female in Oak Creek Canyon and a male at John and Becky's house.

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus platycercus*) – We saw several and heard even more as they zipped overhead.

Picidae (Woodpeckers).

LEWIS'S WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes lewis*) – On our first morning, we had nice looks at one of the two that were present at a partially dead oak tree outside of Flagstaff.

ACORN WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) – We saw a few in Oak Creek Canyon.

GILA WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes uropygialis*) – A few were along Oak Creek south of Sedona.

LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Picoides scalaris*) – This small woodpecker finally showed well along Oak Creek.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*)

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

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – After Harlan spotted one on the way to the Grand Canyon, we saw another perched in a snag near Mormon Lake.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus sordidulus*)

GRAY FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax wrightii*) – Nancy spotted a silent individual that came in to investigate us in the pinyon-juniper habitat.

CORDILLERAN FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax occidentalis*) – This pine forest breeder showed well near Oak Creek Canyon.

BLACK PHOEBE (*Sayornis nigricans*)

SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*) – We saw one going to a nest at the Kachina Wetlands.

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) – A pair were across the horse pasture along lower Oak Creek.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) – We had a nice look near the South Rim of Grand Canyon.

BROWN-CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*) – There was a very active and vocal pair at John and Becky's house along Oak Creek.

CASSIN'S KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus vociferans*) – We saw a few, with the first one outside of Flagstaff during our Pinyon Jay search.

WESTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus verticalis*) – Our best views were those at Cameron.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

GRAY VIREO (*Vireo vicinior*) – Near Gray Mountain we had good luck with this local specialty as it sang from pinyon pines and junipers.

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO (*Vireo flavifrons*) – A real rarity anywhere in Arizona; we finally had nice looks at a singing individual in Oak Creek Canyon where it has been the last three springs.

PLUMBEOUS VIREO (*Vireo plumbeus*) – This is a fairly common local breeder. Originally this was part of the Solitary Vireo complex that was split into three species.

WARBLING VIREO (*Vireo gilvus*) – We finally got nice looks at a singing bird in the pine-oak woodland in upper Oak Creek Canyon.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

PINYON JAY (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) – This one took some work before we finally got to a new spot for me outside of Grand Canyon. There were at least ten individuals in the area making noise and coming in to drink. This is another local specialty.

STELLER'S JAY (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) – We saw these daily.

WOODHOUSE'S SCRUB-JAY (*Aphelocoma woodhouseii*) – Our best looks were along the South Rim at Grand Canyon.

CLARK'S NUTCRACKER (*Nucifraga columbiana*) – I thought we were going to miss this high elevation species, since we could not get to the San Francisco Peaks due to the fire closures, but this was an exceptional year for them along the South Rim of Grand Canyon and we had quite good looks a few times.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*)

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – We had nice looks in the grasslands north of Flagstaff. Even seeing the horns on one of them.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – A few were flying around the Kachina Wetlands where we saw them perched.

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Several were at Ashurst Lake flying with a lot of Violet-green Swallows.

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – Many.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – These were about the motel in Flagstaff each day.

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – Hank saw a few flying over the pond across from our motel in the morning.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE (*Poecile gambeli*)

BRIDLED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus wollweberi*) – A single bird showed well for us in John and Becky's yard south of Sedona.

JUNIPER TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*) – Scarce this year. Harlan saw one at the South Rim of Grand Canyon.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

BUSHTIT (*Psaltriparus minimus*) – We had nice looks on the way to Cornville.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta carolinensis*)

PYGMY NUTHATCH (*Sitta pygmaea*) – This tiny nuthatch showed well and came in to drink during our dinner on the deck.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*)

BEWICK'S WREN (*Thryomanes bewickii*)

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – We had a couple of quick views near Gray Mountain.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

WESTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia mexicana*) – We saw this species each day, including some stunningly blue males.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia currucoides*) – A sky-blue male with a couple of females showed well right along the road in Kendrick Park on the way to Grand Canyon.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*)

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) – We saw a couple and heard a few more.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [I]

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – We heard one calling at the courtyard of the motel in Cameron. [*]

Ptilionotidae (Silky-flycatchers)

PHAINOPEPLA (*Phainopepla nitens*) – Several of these fruit-eaters were chowing down on mulberries along the Oak Creek south of Sedona.

Peucedramidae (Olive Warbler)

OLIVE WARBLER (*Peucedramus taeniatus*) – A bird that is now in its own family. We had a great close view of a stunning male in upper Oak Creek Canyon.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

LUCY'S WARBLER (*Oreothlypis luciae*) – A singing individual finally showed for us at John and Becky's house.

VIRGINIA'S WARBLER (*Oreothlypis virginiae*) – This species is mostly a Great Basin species, so it is away from many of the birding meccas. It was wonderful to see it so well in the forest outside of Flagstaff.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*)

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*) – These were seen and heard along the sycamores and cottonwoods of Oak Creek.

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

GRACE'S WARBLER (*Setophaga graciae*) – A pine forest specialty. We had nice looks in upper Oak Creek Canyon.

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (*Setophaga nigrescens*) – Our first ones were at the South Rim.

RED-FACED WARBLER (*Cardellina rubrifrons*) – We had great looks at a beautiful singing individual right along the road in the upper slopes of Oak Creek Canyon. This is one you can't stop looking at.

PAINTED REDSTART (*Myioborus pictus*) – We had a scope view of a singing bird near the Cave Springs CG in Oak Creek Canyon.

Passerellidae (New World Buntings and Sparrows)

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*)

BLACK-CHINNED SPARROW (*Spizella atrogularis*) – We had great views of another local bird at the bottom of the Mogollon Rim as we dropped off the Colorado Plateau. This bird was singing its great bouncing-ball song.

BLACK-THROATED SPARROW (*Amphispiza bilineata*)

LARK SPARROW (*Chondestes grammacus*) – This is one of the more colorful and better marked sparrows.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (RED-BACKED) (*Junco hyemalis dorsalis*) – This subspecies is the local breeding form and is quite common around Flagstaff.

VESPER SPARROW (*Poocetes gramineus*) – We had nice looks at one on a fence wire in Kendrick Park.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*)

ABERT'S TOWHEE (*Melospiza aberti*) – A pair calling across the creek gave us the slip, but we found a closer one that showed well.

RUFIOUS-CROWNED SPARROW (*Aimophila ruficeps*) – A quite local bird in the area. We had great looks at a singing individual south of Flagstaff.

SPOTTED TOWHEE (*Pipilo maculatus*) – We saw a few, with our best view at Grandview Point at Grand Canyon.

Icteriidae (Yellow-breasted Chat)

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT (*Icteria virens*) – A recent split has placed this well-known species in its own family. We heard a few along lower Oak Creek and had one land right above us in a tree.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*) – Both at male and female were spotted near the Page Springs Fish Hatchery.

WESTERN TANAGER (*Piranga ludoviciana*) – We saw a couple, with a nice male in upper Oak Creek Canyon.

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) [*]

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*) – Harriet spotted a couple at the water tank where we saw the Pinyon Jays.

BLUE GROSBEAK (*Passerina caerulea*) – A male near John and Becky's house disappeared before we could get on it.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) – We saw several at the Kachina Wetlands on our first afternoon, then some folks saw a pair along the edge of the pond across from our motel.

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*)

HOODED ORIOLE (*Icterus cucullatus*) – A male was spotted at John and Becky's house along Oak Creek.

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE (*Icterus bullockii*) – Our best views were of the male that joined us at dinner, where it wanted a drink.

SCOTT'S ORIOLE (*Icterus parisorum*) – An adult male and a female-plumaged individual showed for us near Gray Mountain after we left Grand Canyon.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*)

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) – These are fairly common breeders around Flagstaff that head to southern Arizona in the winter.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*)

Fringillidae (*Finches, Euphonias, and Allies*).

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*)

RED CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*) – Two individuals giving the Type 2 subspecific call came in near the waterhole where we saw the Pinyon Jays.

PINE SISKIN (*Spinus pinus*) [*****]

LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*)

Passeridae (*Old World Sparrows*).

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

MAMMALS

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – We saw a couple along the roadsides in the mountains.

DESERT COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) – This was the smaller rabbit that was in the lower deserts.

BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT (*Lepus californicus*) – Harriet saw one of these long-eared guys on the way to Grand Canyon.

CLIFF CHIPMUNK (*Tamias dorsalis*)

GRAY-COLLARED CHIPMUNK (*Tamias cinereicollis*)

WHITE-TAILED ANTELOPE SQUIRREL (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*) – This was the small squirrel that ran across the road soon after we had left the Grand Canyon.

ROCK SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus variegatus*) – There were many plump individuals at the overlooks at Grand Canyon.

GUNNISON PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) – A few were seen around burrows on a couple of different days.

ARIZONA GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus arizonensis*) – We saw one at John and Becky's house along Oak Creek. This is a very range restricted species in the U.S. and is really only found in riparian habitats.

COYOTE (*Canis latrans*) – We saw two Coyotes, one along the highway on our way to Navajo Bridge and another on our Grand Canyon day.

ELK (*Cervus canadensis*) – We saw a few females in the forest on our drive to Grand Canyon.

MULE DEER (*Odocoileus hemionus*)

PRONGHORN (*Antilocapra americana*) – We saw two or four in the grasslands north of Flagstaff in the afternoon we returned from seeing the Condors.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 120 bird taxa and 13 mammal taxa