

Trip Report — Northern Arizona's Canyons and Condor 2026

May 16-22, 2026 with John Coons



We enjoyed ideal weather at the breathtaking Grand Canyon. This view is from famous Mather Point on the South Rim. Photo by John Coons.

We enjoyed a week of birding in a variety of habitats in Northern Arizona, from the cool mixed-conifer forests of the San Francisco Peaks to the upper Sonoran zone 40 miles to the south. And, oh yeah, with the Grand Canyon in the middle of that. We gathered on our first afternoon for a visit to the Kachina Wetlands on the outskirts of Flagstaff to get an intro to the local habitat and see some water and pine habitat birds, and we endured a strong wind to do so. We saw a handful of duck species, enjoyed nice looks at Virginia Rail, an adult Bald Eagle, Vesper Sparrow, Yellow-headed

Blackbirds, and a few Osprey, with one carrying a rather large goldfish before dinner and settling in to our motel for the first of six nights.



One of our California Condors we found soared right overhead as we stood on Navajo Bridge above the Colorado River and Bill Thompson captured this image at its closest point.

The next morning, we headed to the lower slopes of the San Francisco Peaks, the highest mountains in Arizona, with a cruise through a neighborhood meadow on the way. A pair of Mountain Bluebirds showed well, and a Say's Phoebe enjoyed perching on mailboxes. Getting into the forest, we got our first taste of woodsy birds, with Western Bluebirds, Mountain Chickadees, Western Tanagers, and Plumbeous Vireos, but our highlight was a gorgeous male Williamson's Sapsucker in an aspen grove. We also tracked down a calling Downy Woodpecker, which is an uncommon species in these parts. Further up the road we walked through a large meadow festooned with Bebb's willows and found calling Dusky Flycatchers, Green-tailed Towhees, Black-headed Grosbeaks, a male Red-naped Sapsucker, Western Warbling Vireos, singing Orange-crowned

Warblers, and a just-arrived MacGillivray's Warbler on territory. Heading back into the mixed conifer forest, we located Hermit Thrush, a Plumbeous Vireo on a nest, Brown Creeper, several singing Yellow-rumped Warblers and an exquisite Red-faced Warbler. We abandoned our picnic spot due to the wind gusts and headed to town for lunch, but not before seeing a nice Grace's Warbler. After lunch we visited the other side of the San Francisco Peaks where a wonderful Lewis's Woodpecker showed quite well. After cleaning up at the motel, we saw a few more water birds on a nearby lake before heading to our house for dinner. Here we had close views of Steller's Jays, Black-headed Grosbeak, Spotted Towhee, brilliant male and female Bullock's Orioles, and both Black-chinned and Broad-tailed hummingbirds, which were all visiting the water feature or feeders.



We had great views of this male Olive Warbler in the pine forest south of Flagstaff. This unusual species has bounced around in a few families before settling in its own family: Peucedramidae. Photo by Bill Thompson.

After breakfast the following morning, we headed to the South Rim of Grand Canyon, armed with some hot egg and cheese burritos that Lynn prepared for a driving snack. It turned out to be a beautiful day for visiting this Wonder of the World. The vistas at Grand Canyon are truly breathtaking, no matter if it is your first or fiftieth visit. Believe it or not, most of the public doesn't visit Grand Canyon for birds, but we saw a handful along our walks at Mather Point and in Grand Canyon Village. Pygmy Nuthatch and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers showed well, as did White-throated Swifts zipping by. A group of Juniper Titmice passed through the shrubs below us. All along the way we were hoping for California Condors to appear but the South Rim has not been as reliable as it was several years ago to see this magnificent bird. We had a better locale. Continuing at spots along the Rim, we found Ash-throated Flycatcher, a family of Bushtits, and three different Zone-tailed Hawks, with a pair making repeated passes in the canyon in front of us at Desert View. We stopped by a friend's residence in the park to check his feeders and were not ready for two calling Pinyon Jays that rocketed by right over our heads calling. Leaving the park, we made a handful of stops along Gray Mountain. A pair of beautiful Scott's Orioles showed well for us and we had nice looks at the quite local Gray Vireo. We could hear Pinyon Jays calling way up the slope of the mountain side but had no luck spotting them. More Juniper Titmice showed, as well as singing Bewick's Wrens. We headed to Cameron Trading Post on the Navajo Reservation for dinner before making the hour drive back to Flagstaff.



We saw a few White-throated Swifts rocketing around the rim of Grand Canyon but Bill Thompson froze this individual as it passed overhead.

On Tuesday morning, we headed south to much lower elevations. Making a pit stop at a rest area, we found our first Lucy's Warbler, Purple Martins, and a couple of Black-necked Stilts at the sewage pond. We continued to the house of long-time friends that is on a wonderful stretch of riparian habitat along Oak Creek. We walked the trail alongside the flowing stream and found a bunch of new birds. A couple of male Vermilion Flycatchers showed well, as did a calling Brown-crested Flycatcher, a few Abert's Towhees, Summer Tanager, Black Phoebe, Ladder-backed and Gila woodpeckers, several Northern Yellow Warblers and we had great views of Yellow-breasted Chat. Meanwhile, we also had a great study of a pair of Common Black Hawks that were hanging around their nest. We spotted a Bald Eagle flying along the creek. After another pit stop at a fish hatchery and seeing a LOT of rainbow trout and our first Verdins, we watched hummingbird feeders, where a good number of Anna's and Black-chinneds were visiting. We saw a few more ducks as well as a Forster's Tern at the nearby Sedona

Wetlands, where we also had great views of a singing Bell's Vireo. We headed to lunch in Sedona, nestled amongst the beautiful Red Rock Country of canyons, mesas, and rock formations. Afterwards, we drove up Oak Creek Canyon and did a couple of walks where we encountered Bridled Titmice, more Black-headed Grosbeaks, Bullock's Orioles, and Western Tanagers, a beautiful Painted Redstart, and a Great Blue Heron rookery. Near the top of Oak Creek Canyon a singing male Olive Warbler showed very well, and it took some work but we finally got great views of a singing Virginia's Warbler. We got back to the motel with a bit of a break before visiting a local Mexican restaurant for dinner.



MacGillivray's Warblers are one of the later birds to arrive on territory in Northern Arizona and we found one of the early ones amongst the willows on the slopes of the San Francisco Peaks. Photo by Bill Thompson.

Wednesday morning found us heading north out of Flagstaff, with a stop at a friend's house where we only heard a distant Pinyon Jay in the forest. Going on, we passed through some interesting geological landscapes on the Navajo

Reservation before arriving at Navajo Bridge near the Vermilion Cliffs. From the bridge, 400+ feet above the Colorado River, we soon had views of three different California Condors. We watched these birds stretching their wings on the rock ledges and on the girders of the two bridges for a spell, and got to see these magnificent birds flying over and under the bridge. One of these birds flew 30 feet over our heads. Our friend Briana, one of the condor researchers, arrived with her telemetry equipment and filled us in on the current status and progress of the Condor program. We learned there are seven active nests this year in the northern Arizona and southern Utah area. Each of the condors we saw had a numbered wing tag and a search of the Peregrine Fund's website revealed the following history of our birds:

#88 Male, hatched at the Oregon Zoo in March 2023

#59 Male, hatched at San Diego Wild Animal Park in March 2024

#6C Female, hatched in the wild in May 2022, and this bird's father was hatched in the wild in April 2007

From the bridge we could see some ducks well below us on the river, including a quite late Common Goldeneye perched on a rock, but another highlight was spotting four Desert Bighorn Sheep on a sandy beach next to the river; one of them was a small lamb hanging out with mom. This was a quite lucky sighting. We headed back through Cameron for lunch at the Trading Post, where we saw Cedar Waxwings then did what almost every birding trip must do... visit a sewage treatment facility. The small pond at Cameron had a few Cinnamon and Green-winged Teal and White-faced Ibis. Before getting back to Flagstaff we stopped in a forest fire burn scar from 2022 but could not find any recent sign of American Three-toed Woodpeckers.



One of the more sharply marked of all the sparrows is this Black-throated Sparrow, which is found in drier desert-like habitat. Photo by Bill Thompson.

On our final full day of birding, we decided to head south again, where we had the best chance at adding new species. We walked a dirt side road through junipers and mesquites and had close views of a singing Black-throated Sparrow, more Gray Vireos, and a locally uncommon Rufous-crowned Sparrow. We headed to Montezuma Well National Monument where we visited the interesting spring-fed sinkhole. Here we saw a pair of Cooper's Hawks, a Blue Grosbeak, Rock Wren and a close Canyon Wren, more Lucy's Warblers, and oddly, a lingering Canada Goose(!?). Climbing back up the Mogollon Rim which forms the southern edge of the vast Colorado plateau, we found Gray Flycatcher and our best Black-throated Gray Warbler on our way to a picnic lunch at Stoneman Lake. This lake can be dry in May, but there was a fair amount of water with a handful of ducks including a few new species like Northern Pintail and American Wigeon, along with a female Hepatic Tanager that made a brief appearance. Heading back to Flagstaff we passed the larger area lakes including Mormon Lake,

Arizona's largest natural body of water, but we didn't find anything new and many of the waterfowl were extremely distant. We did scope a herd of 140+ Elk.

Back in Flagstaff we toasted our birds at our final dinner together. It was great fun birding with all of you and sharing some wonderful sightings and experiences in our Northern Arizona "backyard." We got to many areas that most visiting birders never get to see. I hope to see all of you again in the future.



Grace's Warbler is one of the birds that is near the northern limit of its range in the ponderosa pine forests around Flagstaff. Photo by Bill Thompson.

Mammals encountered during our trip included:

Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)

Desert Cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*)

Cliff Chipmunk (*Neotamias dorsalis*)

Gray-collared Chipmunk (*Neotamias cinereicollis*)

Common Rock Squirrel (*Otospermophilus variegatus*)
Common Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel (*Callospermophilus lateralis*)
Gunnison Prairie Dog (*Cynomys gunnisoni*)
Arizona Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus arizonensis*)
Abert's Squirrel (*Sciurus aberti*)
Wapiti (*Cervus canadensis*)
Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*)
Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*)
Bighorn Sheep (*Ovis canadensis*)

You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this
link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/526486>

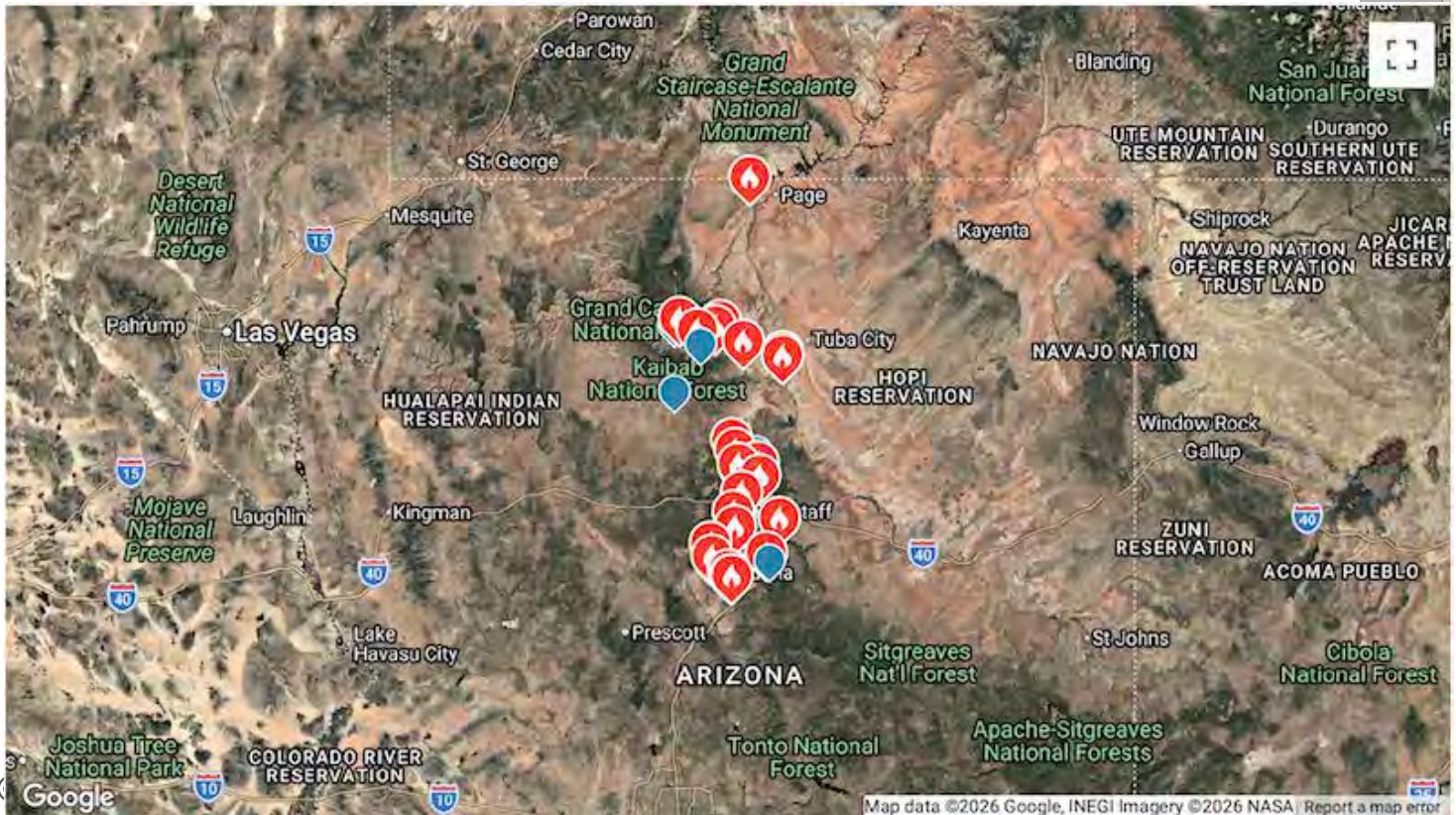
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-- John Coons

Field Guides Birding Tours—Northern Arizona's Canyons and Condor, 2026 (with John Coons)



16 – 21 May 2026 (6 days) Link-only



📍 Arizona, United States

Coconino | Yavapai

👤 John Coons

🔄 140

Species Observed

📄 35

Checklists

Species Observed

[Show all details](#)

212	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	▶ 5
14	Cinnamon Teal	<i>Spatula cyanoptera</i>	▶ 2
1	American Wigeon	<i>Mareca americana</i>	▶ 1
78	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	▶ 6

1	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	▶  1
24	Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	▶  1
15	Redhead	<i>Aythya americana</i>	▶  2
2	Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	▶  1
1	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	▶  1
55	Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	▶  4
8	Eurasian Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> *	▶  2
9	Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	▶  5
10	White-throated Swift	<i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>	▶  3
13	Black-chinned Hummingbird	<i>Archilochus alexandri</i>	▶  4
6	Anna's Hummingbird	<i>Calypte anna</i>	▶  1
16	Broad-tailed Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus platycercus</i>	▶  6
5	Virginia Rail	<i>Rallus limicola</i>	▶  2
2	Sora	<i>Porzana carolina</i>	▶  1
325	American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>	▶  3
9	Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	▶  2
3	Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	▶  2
11	Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	▶  5
1	Forster's Tern	<i>Sterna forsteri</i>	▶  1
9	Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	▶  3
3	Eared Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	▶  1
1	Neotropic Cormorant	<i>Nannopterum brasilianum</i>	▶  1
23	White-faced Ibis	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>	▶  2

28	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	▶  6
3	California Condor	<i>Gymnogyps californianus</i>	▶  1
31	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	▶  12
5	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	▶  3
4	Cooper's Hawk	<i>Astur cooperii</i>	▶  3
2	Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	▶  2
2	Common Black Hawk	<i>Buteogallus anthracinus</i>	▶  1
3	Zone-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo albonotatus</i>	▶  3
3	Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	▶  3
1	Williamson's Sapsucker	<i>Sphyrapicus thyroideus</i>	▶  1
1	Red-naped Sapsucker	<i>Sphyrapicus nuchalis</i>	▶  1
1	Lewis's Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>	▶  1
2	Acorn Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes formicivorus</i>	▶  1
4	Gila Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes uropygialis</i>	▶  3
4	Downy Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates pubescens</i>	▶  2
2	Ladder-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates scalaris</i>	▶  1
6	Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Leuconotopicus villosus</i>	▶  5
3	Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	▶  3
1	American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	▶  1
1	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	▶  1
12	Western Wood-Pewee	<i>Contopus sordidulus</i>	▶  10
2	Gray Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax wrightii</i>	▶  1
4	Dusky Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax oberholseri</i>	▶  1

1	Western Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax difficilis</i>	▶  1
1	Black Phoebe	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>	▶  1
2	Say's Phoebe	<i>Sayornis saya</i>	▶  1
1	Vermilion Flycatcher	<i>Pyrocephalus rubinus</i>	▶  1
5	Ash-throated Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>	▶  4
2	Brown-crested Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus tyrannulus</i>	▶  2
2	Cassin's Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus vociferans</i>	▶  2
6	Western Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>	▶  3
4	Bell's Vireo	<i>Vireo bellii</i>	▶  2
8	Gray Vireo	<i>Vireo vicinior</i>	▶  3
6	Plumbeous Vireo	<i>Vireo plumbeus</i>	▶  3
7	Western Warbling Vireo	<i>Vireo swainsoni</i>	▶  2
5	Pinyon Jay	<i>Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus</i>	▶  3
9	Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>	▶  6
2	Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay	<i>Aphelocoma woodhouseii</i>	▶  2
2	American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	▶  1
55	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	▶  19
5	Mountain Chickadee	<i>Poecile gambeli</i>	▶  4
5	Bridled Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus wollweberi</i>	▶  1
9	Juniper Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus ridgwayi</i>	▶  3
3	Verdin	<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>	▶  2
1	Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	▶  1
3	Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	▶  2

112	Violet-green Swallow	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>	▶  10
2	Purple Martin	<i>Progne subis</i>	▶  1
16	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	▶  5
28	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	▶  7
6	Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>	▶  4
20	Bushtit	<i>Psaltirparus minimus</i>	▶  2
5	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Corthylio calendula</i>	▶  1
11	White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	▶  7
3	Pygmy Nuthatch	<i>Sitta pygmaea</i>	▶  2
2	Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>	▶  1
1	Brown Creeper	<i>Certhia americana</i>	▶  1
10	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	<i>Poliopitila caerulea</i>	▶  4
3	Rock Wren	<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>	▶  3
2	Canyon Wren	<i>Catherpes mexicanus</i>	▶  2
5	Northern House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	▶  3
13	Bewick's Wren	<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>	▶  8
2	European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> *	▶  1
1	Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	▶  1
12	Western Bluebird	<i>Sialia mexicana</i>	▶  5
4	Mountain Bluebird	<i>Sialia currucoides</i>	▶  2
1	Hermit Thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>	▶  1
8	American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	▶  2
6	Cedar Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	▶  1

63	Phainopepla	<i>Phainopepla nitens</i>	▶  6
1	Olive Warbler	<i>Peucedramus taeniatus</i>	▶  1
55	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i> *	▶  7
34	House Finch	<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>	▶  8
6	Pine Siskin	<i>Spinus pinus</i>	▶  2
13	Lesser Goldfinch	<i>Spinus psaltria</i>	▶  4
8	Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>	▶  5
2	Black-throated Sparrow	<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>	▶  1
15	Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	▶  6
2	White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	▶  1
6	Vesper Sparrow	<i>Pooecetes gramineus</i>	▶  3
13	Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	▶  2
7	Abert's Towhee	<i>Melospiza aberti</i>	▶  2
1	Rufous-crowned Sparrow	<i>Aimophila ruficeps</i>	▶  1
10	Green-tailed Towhee	<i>Pipilo chlorurus</i>	▶  2
13	Spotted Towhee	<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>	▶  9
7	Yellow-breasted Chat	<i>Icteria virens</i>	▶  5
14	Yellow-headed Blackbird	<i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i>	▶  2
1	Western Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	▶  1
9	Bullock's Oriole	<i>Icterus bullockii</i>	▶  5
2	Scott's Oriole	<i>Icterus parisorum</i>	▶  1
55	Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	▶  6
28	Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>	▶  6

20	Brewer's Blackbird	<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>	▶  4
18	Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	▶  4
3	Orange-crowned Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis celata</i>	▶  1
16	Lucy's Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis luciae</i>	▶  6
1	Virginia's Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis virginiae</i>	▶  1
3	MacGillivray's Warbler	<i>Geothlypis tolmiei</i>	▶  1
4	Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	▶  3
17	Northern Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga aestiva</i>	▶  8
8	Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Setophaga coronata</i>	▶  2
9	Grace's Warbler	<i>Setophaga graciae</i>	▶  5
1	Black-throated Gray Warbler	<i>Setophaga nigrescens</i>	▶  1
1	Wilson's Warbler	<i>Cardellina pusilla</i>	▶  1
2	Red-faced Warbler	<i>Cardellina rubrifrons</i>	▶  1
1	Painted Redstart	<i>Myioborus pictus</i>	▶  1
1	Hepatic Tanager	<i>Piranga flava</i>	▶  1
6	Summer Tanager	<i>Piranga rubra</i>	▶  2
11	Western Tanager	<i>Piranga ludoviciana</i>	▶  6
3	Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	▶  2
14	Black-headed Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i>	▶  10
1	Blue Grosbeak	<i>Passerina caerulea</i>	▶  1
2	Lazuli Bunting	<i>Passerina amoena</i>	▶  1