

Trip Report — Arizona Nightbirds & More I 2025

April 24-28, 2025 with Micah Riegner



Our group enjoying the feeders in Portal. There were lots of hummers and orioles to keep us occupied. Photo by guide Micah Riegner.

This was our first of three AZ Nightbirds tours this year. Despite prolonged drought conditions and some windy nights, we managed to see several owls, including my personal favorite, Flammulated Owl, plus several quintessential Arizona birds like Bendire's Thrasher, Elegant Trogon, Five-striped Sparrow and Red-faced Warbler.

Our first afternoon we drove up to Box Canyon where we saw Five-striped Sparrows, Scott's Orioles and several migrant Townsend's and Hermit Warblers at the flowering Ocotillos. We had a brief sighting of a female

Lucifer Hummingbird, too, and a pair of Rock Wrens singing heartily from their rocky outcrop. From Box Canyon, we descended into Madera Canyon where we set up a dinner picnic in the late afternoon. Painted Redstarts, Mexican Jays and Bridled Titmice were around to keep us entertained while we ate. After wrapping up dinner, we began our search for owls. A Northern Pygmy-Owl was the first to show. As we watched it, some Lesser Nighthawks danced around overhead. We heard Whiskered Screech-owls close, and a couple of Elf Owls, but they didn't show this time around.

The next morning, we set off for Miller Canyon. We were on the dirt road to Miller when our right rear tire blew out. I opened the jack compartment under the passenger seat, and, to my astonishment, there was no jack, so I called Roadside Assistance. After a long, automated message, I finally got through to a human being, and told them what was going on. They sent someone out to help us with the tire but, by the time they arrived we had lost a good chunk of our morning. We went up to the Beatty's and watched the feeders where Rivoli's, Broad-tailed, Broad-billed and Black-chinned Hummingbirds were buzzing around, then we walked a short distance down the trail and saw Hutton's Vireo and MacGillivray's Warbler. We enjoyed a flurry of Empidonax flycatchers that included Hammond's, Dusky, Western and Gray, then we headed to Sierra Vista for lunch. While lunch was underway, I took our tire in to get repaired and bought a jack, just in case we might need it, then we drove out to Willcox to scan Lake Cochise. There were three Bendire's Thrashers along the road posing nicely in the bushes. We could see their relatively short bills to distinguish them from Curve-billed Thrasher. Lake Cochise was full of migrant Wilson's Phalaropes, some close Long-billed Dowitchers and Least Sandpipers, plus there was a flyover of Vaux's Swifts. Arriving in Portal, we had dinner, then set out for more owling. We saw some close Western Screech-owls, and Elf Owls were around too, but they just wouldn't fly into view. Later on, we found some distant Poorwills on a hillside and a Whiskered Screech-owl along the road toward South Fork.

The following morning, we birded South Fork and it was quite birdy. An Elegant Trogon was hanging out near the bridge at the parking area along

with Red-faced Warblers, Arizona Woodpecker, Painted Redstarts, numerous Hammond's Flycatchers, and a Hepatic Tanager. A Black-tailed Rattlesnake crossed the trail in front of us. We made sure to give it some space! We came back to Portal for lunch, then took off in the late afternoon to go up and over Onion Saddle. We saw a flock of Mexican Chickadees at Turkey Creek then crossed Onion Saddle to Pinery Canyon and looked around for the Spotted Owl. It didn't seem to be around. We had our picnic dinner and waited until dark in hopes of seeing one sail in, but nothing showed. The wind had picked up, so it was tough to listen for birds. We worked our way back to Portal listening for nightbirds at various pullouts along the way. We heard a distant Mexican Whip-poor-will, but that was about it.

Our final day of birding we made our way up and over Onion Saddle. We saw a good number of warblers, including a very close Grace's Warbler at eye level. We stopped again at Pinery and scoured the area for the Spotted Owl. Other birders were there, too, but no owl, unfortunately. We saw a Buff-breasted Flycatcher, a nice reward. It was singing from some low shrubs. We had lunch in Willcox, then continued toward Tucson. We stopped to check a bridge for a Barn Owl I had seen before the tour, but it didn't seem to be around. We got checked into our hotel, had an early dinner, then drove up to Mount Lemmon for a final night of owling. It took some time and effort, but eventually we saw a Flammulated Owl zip into view at the top of a Ponderosa, a nice final bird of the tour! A Bobcat that crossed the road in front of us was our final mammal. I'd like to thank Caroline in our office for setting everything up for us and I'd like to thank you all for joining me on this short but sweet Arizona tour. Looking forward to birding with you again soon!



This Northern Pygmy-Owl at Madera Canyon was the first owl of the tour. Photo by guide Micah Riegner.

Mammals

Desert Cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*)

Cliff Chipmunk (*Neotamias dorsalis*) These were especially common around Portal.

Harris's Antelope Squirrel (*Ammospermophilus harrisi*) We saw one on the road to Box Canyon and then several at the feeders in Portal.

Common Rock Squirrel (*Otospermophilus variegatus*) Seen at various sites throughout the tour.

Mexican Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus nayaritensis*) I was calling this Chiricahua Fox Squirrel. We saw several during our time around Portal.

Arizona Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus arizonensis*) One was at the picnic area at Madera Canyon.

Northern Gray Fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) We saw one cross the road at

the SW Research Station above Portal one night.

Coyote (*Canis latrans*)

Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) Seen along the road above Portal.

Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) Wow! Seeing one cross the road while we headed back into Tucson was a great way to end the tour.

Collared Peccary (*Dicotyles tajacu*) One was hanging out in the parking lot at our hotel in Portal.

White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) Certainly the most abundant mammal of the tour. We saw them most outings.

Herps

Black-tailed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus molossus*) We saw one cross the trail at South Fork. I made a short video of it.

Ornate Tree Lizard (*Urosaurus ornata*)

Arizona Striped Whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris*)

Zebra-tailed Lizard (*Callisaurus draconoides*) Seen at the bridge in Tucson.

You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link:

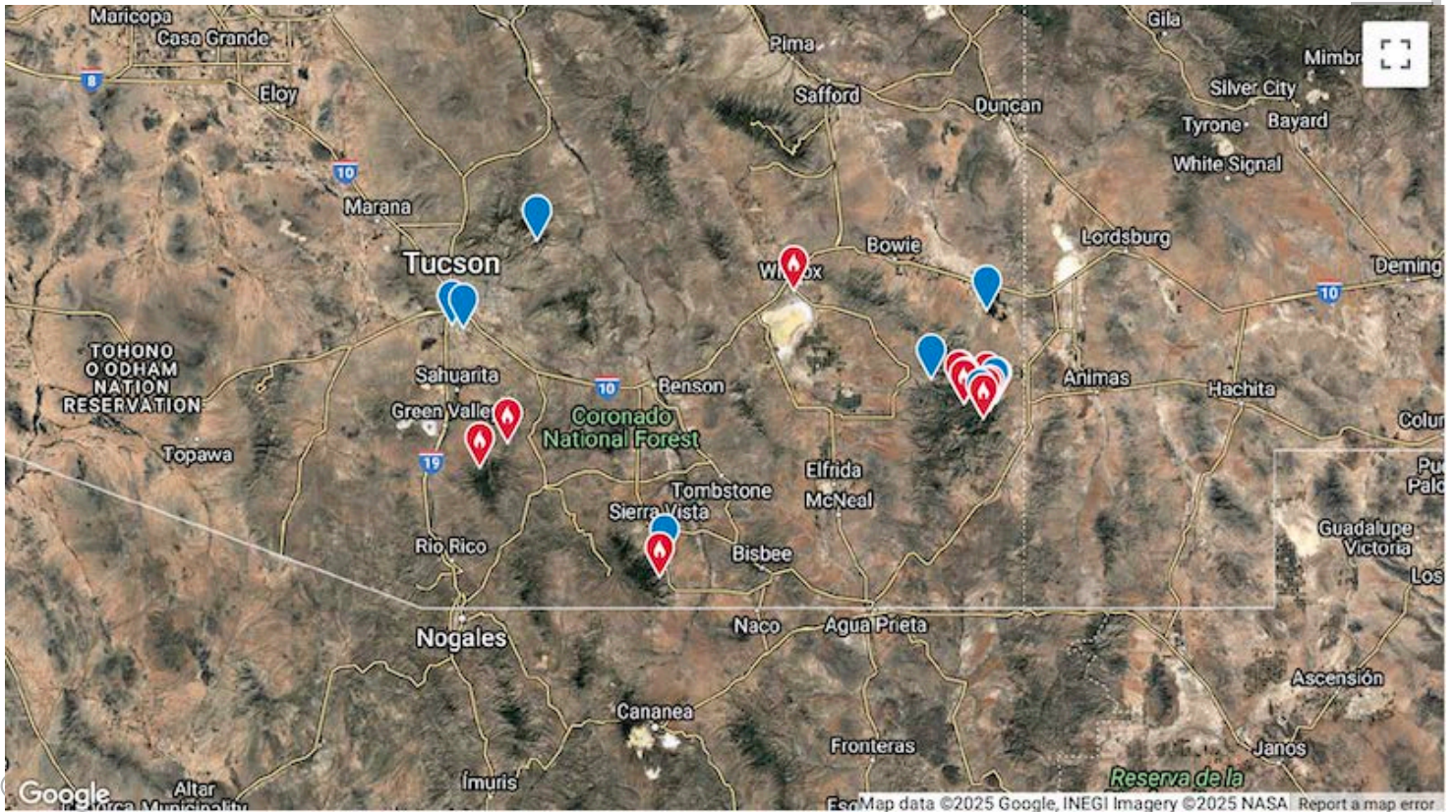
<https://ebird.org/tripreport/360230>

Micah

Field Guides Birding Tours--ARIZONA NIGHTBIRDS & MORE I (with Micah Riegner)



24 – 27 Apr 2025 (4 days) Link-only



📍 Arizona, United States

Cochise | Pima

👤 Micah Riegner



For a narrative summary of this tour, including a Field Guides photo gallery and additional media for this trip...

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Species Observed

[Show all details](#)

5	Cinnamon Teal	▶  1
10	Northern Shoveler	▶  1
2	American Wigeon	▶  1
10	Ruddy Duck	▶  1
2	Gambel's Quail	▶  2
12	Wild Turkey	▶  2
1	Rock Pigeon *	▶  1
3	Inca Dove	▶  1
1	White-winged Dove	▶  1
1	Mourning Dove	▶  1
1	Greater Roadrunner	▶  1
3	Lesser Nighthawk	▶  1
2	Common Poorwill	▶  1
2	Mexican Whip-poor-will	▶  1
2	Vaux's Swift	▶  1
30	White-throated Swift	▶  1
5	Rivoli's Hummingbird	▶  2
4	Blue-throated Mountain-gem	▶  4
1	Lucifer Hummingbird	▶  1
3	Black-chinned Hummingbird	▶  2
1	Anna's Hummingbird	▶  1

1	Costa's Hummingbird	▶  1
3	Broad-tailed Hummingbird	▶  1
5	Broad-billed Hummingbird	▶  2
6	American Coot	▶  1
6	Black-necked Stilt	▶  1
9	American Avocet	▶  1
3	Killdeer	▶  1
4	Long-billed Dowitcher	▶  1
35	Wilson's Phalarope	▶  1
2	Least Sandpiper	▶  1
12	White-faced Ibis	▶  1
38	Turkey Vulture	▶  3
1	Northern Harrier	▶  1
1	Gray Hawk	▶  1
1	Zone-tailed Hawk	▶  1
2	Swainson's Hawk	▶  1
4	Red-tailed Hawk	▶  4
1	Flammulated Owl	▶  1
5	Whiskered Screech-Owl	▶  3
2	Western Screech-Owl	▶  1
1	Great Horned Owl	▶  1
1	Northern Pygmy-Owl	▶  1
5	Elf Owl	▶  2
1	Elegant Trogon	▶  1

1	Red-naped Sapsucker	▶  1
12	Acorn Woodpecker	▶  3
1	Gila Woodpecker	▶  1
1	Ladder-backed Woodpecker	▶  1
2	Hairy Woodpecker	▶  2
1	Arizona Woodpecker	▶  1
2	Northern Flicker	▶  2
1	American Kestrel	▶  1
1	Peregrine Falcon	▶  1
2	Western Wood-Pewee	▶  2
11	Hammond's Flycatcher	▶  3
1	Gray Flycatcher	▶  1
1	Dusky Flycatcher	▶  1
3	Western Flycatcher	▶  3
1	Buff-breasted Flycatcher	▶  1
2	Black Phoebe	▶  2
1	Say's Phoebe	▶  1
1	Dusky-capped Flycatcher	▶  1
2	Ash-throated Flycatcher	▶  1
1	Cassin's Kingbird	▶  1
3	Western Kingbird	▶  1
1	Bell's Vireo	▶  1
1	Hutton's Vireo	▶  1

1	Plumbeous Vireo	▶  1
1	Loggerhead Shrike	▶  1
2	Steller's Jay	▶  1
25	Mexican Jay	▶  4
2	Common Raven	▶  2
3	Mexican Chickadee	▶  1
9	Bridled Titmouse	▶  5
1	Verdin	▶  1
23	Violet-green Swallow	▶  2
6	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	▶  1
20	Barn Swallow	▶  1
2	Cliff Swallow	▶  1
9	Bushtit	▶  4
35	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	▶  6
8	White-breasted Nuthatch	▶  6
5	Pygmy Nuthatch	▶  1
2	Brown Creeper	▶  1
1	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	▶  1
2	Rock Wren	▶  1
1	Northern House Wren	▶  1
1	Cactus Wren	▶  1
2	Curve-billed Thrasher	▶  2
3	Bendire's Thrasher	▶  1

1	Northern Mockingbird	▶  1
2	Western Bluebird	▶  1
1	Hermit Thrush	▶  1
2	American Robin	▶  2
1	House Sparrow *	▶  1
6	House Finch	▶  4
11	Lesser Goldfinch	▶  4
18	Chipping Sparrow	▶  3
7	Brewer's Sparrow	▶  2
2	Five-striped Sparrow	▶  1
2	Black-throated Sparrow	▶  2
13	Lark Sparrow	▶  3
2	Yellow-eyed Junco	▶  1
1	White-crowned Sparrow	▶  1
2	Vesper Sparrow	▶  2
3	Canyon Towhee	▶  2
2	Rufous-crowned Sparrow	▶  1
10	Green-tailed Towhee	▶  3
3	Spotted Towhee	▶  3
1	Bullock's Oriole	▶  1
6	Scott's Oriole	▶  4
1	Red-winged Blackbird	▶  1
1	Brown-headed Cowbird	▶  1

1	Brewer's Blackbird	▶  1
2	Great-tailed Grackle	▶  2
3	Orange-crowned Warbler	▶  3
1	Lucy's Warbler	▶  1
1	MacGillivray's Warbler	▶  1
11	Yellow-rumped Warbler	▶  4
6	Grace's Warbler	▶  3
3	Black-throated Gray Warbler	▶  3
6	Townsend's Warbler	▶  4
3	Hermit Warbler	▶  3
7	Wilson's Warbler	▶  5
4	Red-faced Warbler	▶  2
7	Painted Redstart	▶  4
1	Hepatic Tanager	▶  1
2	Northern Cardinal	▶  2
1	Pyrrhuloxia	▶  1
16	Black-headed Grosbeak	▶  3
2	Lazuli Bunting	▶  1