

Trip Report — Arizona Nightbirds & More I 2026

April 23-27, 2026 with Cory Gregory



The Flammulated Owl is one of the most sought-after owls in North America. We had a wonderful encounter with this species including point-blank looks. Fantastic! Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

There is nowhere in the US better for nightbirds than the Southwest. The desert washes, the oak woodlands, and mountain canyons, all of these were sampled in our short trip to southeastern Arizona. We spent nights in both Tucson and Portal to try to tally as many as we could and, I'm happy to report, we did really well!



We saw a nice collection of birds in the daytime too! One highlight was this beautiful male Coppery-tailed Trogon in the Chiricahuas. Photo by participant Joe Gardner.

Our adventure began right away, on our first afternoon/evening. We departed Tucson and took a trip out to the remote California Gulch region to try for a couple key targets. After our picnic dinner, as the sun began to set, more and more of the daytime sounds faded away, giving rise to the nocturnal ones. Common Poorwills started calling from the hillside and then, yes, the Buff-collared Nightjar started singing too! It took some patience but we were eventually rewarded with an incredible view of this range-restricted specialty. Nearby, Elf Owls were going strong and, on our drive back, we even found a nest hole of this tiny predator. Too cool! Kicking things off with this daytrip made for a great first day!



We saw two species of screech-owls in the same night! This one, the Western Screech-Owl, prefers lower elevation. In fact, we found this one in a desert wash. Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

The following morning we packed up and departed Tucson. On our way to Miller Canyon, we stopped briefly at Box Canyon as well, adding a number of new trip birds. The flash of color from the Hooded Oriole was a nice way to wake up, not to mention seeing a Gray Hawk on a nest! Once in Miller Canyon, we enjoyed birding up the canyon, especially when the call "Zone-tailed Hawk!" rang out. Not only did we see this hawk well, we could see it was carrying nesting material! We enjoyed a variety of other species on the walk including Hutton's Vireo, Bridled Titmouse, Bewick's Wren, Painted Redstart, Townsend's Warbler, and others. Of course, the star of the show was the pair of Flame-colored Tanagers that came in right overhead! That afternoon, after lunch, we made our way over to the picturesque Chiricahuas. As we approached, we added Chihuahuan Raven and even a flock of breeding-plumaged Lark Buntings! That evening, we got settled in and ventured out to see what nightbirds we could find. Right off the bat we had crippling views of a Western Screech-Owl singing, and also a Common

Poorwill that came to check us out! Farther up the canyon, we were successful in seeing a Whiskered Screech-Owl and Mexican Whip-poor-will nicely. What a day!



Our trip started with a rarity! We ventured deep into the wilderness in order to be at the right place at the right time for this Buff-collared Nightjar to show up! Stunning views and a great photo by participant Jonathan Klizas!

Even though this was a nightbirds trip, we definitely birded during the day too! For example, that next morning we birded up the South Fork of Cave Creek. The morning air was full of song from a variety of species like Grace's Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, Summer Tanager, and Painted Redstart. Meanwhile, overhead there were Violet-green Swallows and White-throated Swifts careening around the tall canyon walls. But we were on a hunt for something even more special, something that all birders visiting

Arizona are keen to see, the Coppery-tailed Trogon. It wasn't long until we heard the distinctive barking of a male up the canyon! We finally tracked it down and boy was he a looker! Afterwards, we visited the Southwestern Research Station and enjoyed the many species of hummingbirds including the huge Blue-throated Mountain-gem. We then visited some feeders in town and enjoyed a front-row seat to a wide range of eye-candy. Hooded, Scott's, and Bullock's orioles came in, Black-throated and White-crowned sparrows flitted about on the ground, a Verdin nibbled at some peanut butter, and Pyrrhuloxia and cardinals brightened the scene up. Midday, we descended the slope out of Portal and ventured into New Mexico for some lunch and a visit to the Chiricahua Desert Museum. And then after a siesta, we drove to the George Walker House in nearby Paradise and enjoyed some more point-blank views of a variety of things like Band-tailed Pigeon and Scott's Oriole. That evening, we climbed the Chiricahuas and did a nightbird session at the higher elevations. Of course, we'll all remember this night for the incredible encounter we had with a very close Flammulated Owl! Absolutely amazing to see this species so well.



Not many people get lucky enough to see a Zone-tailed Hawk carrying nesting material, but that's what we did! This beauty was overhead in Miller Canyon. Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

The following morning, after our picnic breakfast, we packed up the van and climbed up to Pinery Canyon to do some morning birding. The birding was great and we started tallying targets like Red-faced Warbler, Greater Pewee (heard), Steller's Jay, Brown Creeper, Yellow-eyed Junco, Hepatic Tanager, and, finally, Mexican Chickadee! Whew. We descended out of the mountains, enjoyed seeing a Great Horned Owl nest, and made for Patagonia, where we did lunch and visited the Paton Center for Hummingbirds. New species for us included Abert's Towhee, Black Vulture, Lazuli Bunting, and of course the Violet-crowned Hummingbird. A nice surprise was a tiny Calliope Hummingbird as well! We drove down and around to Amado where we added a few more trip birds like some waterfowl, swallows, and herons like Snowy Egret and Black-crowned Night-Heron. We ended the day in Montosa Canyon, a beautiful, steep-walled canyon, serenaded by the songs of Canyon Wrens bouncing down the cliffs. Meanwhile, a flock of Phainopeplas moved through, a migrant

Western Tanager paused briefly, and nearby a collection of Lucy's Warblers bounced through the mesquite.



Not only did we get to hear and see Elf Owls, we even saw one inside its hole! It was a special treat to be able to see behavior like this. Photo by participant Jonathan Klizas.

Although this is a fairly short trip, we amassed a great collection of nightbirds (and more!). We had some stunning views of hard-to-see species, as well as getting to hear them sing. Not surprisingly, Flammulated Owl was voted #1 bird of the trip and I'd have to agree with that view we had! I want

to thank all of you for coming with me to Arizona and for choosing Field Guides. Good birding!



One of the rarest species we encountered on our short trip was a beautiful pair of Flame-colored Tanagers in Miller Canyon. We got superb views, too! Photo by guide Cory Gregory.

Some of the other critters we saw on tour:

Desert Cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) - Fairly common in the dry lowlands.

Black-tailed Jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*) - Seen only once, on our first evening.

Cliff Chipmunk (*Neotamias dorsalis*) - Seen several times in the Chiricahuas.

Harris's Antelope Squirrel (*Ammospermophilus harrissii*) - Visiting feeders in Portal.

Common Rock Squirrel (*Otospermophilus variegatus*) - Fairly common in the Chiricahuas.

Mexican Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus nayaritensis*) - A very range-restricted species, a great one to tally!

Arizona Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus arizonensis*) - Seen once or twice.

White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) - Common in the mountains.

Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) - Seen in the grasslands on our way to Portal.

Chiricahua Leopard Frog (*Lithobates chiricahuensis*) - Very rare and endangered. Seen at Beatty's pond.

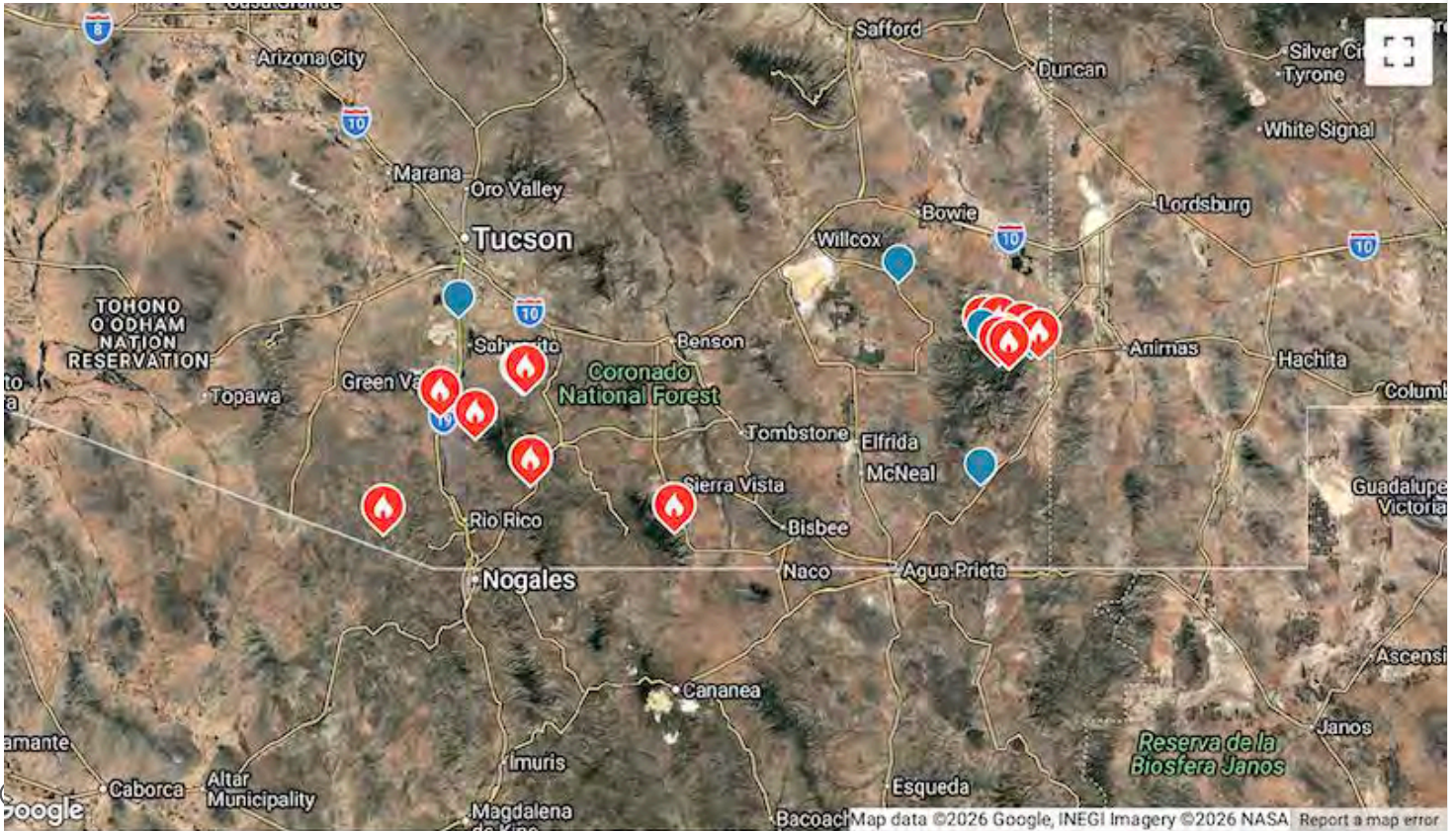
You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/508365>

-- Cory Gregory (Curlew)

Field Guides Birding Tours -- ARIZONA NIGHTBIRDS I, 2026 (with Cory Gregory)



23 – 26 Apr 2026 (4 days) Link-only



Arizona, United States
Cochise | Pima | Santa Cruz

Cory Gregory



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



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 6
LIFERS  

Species Observed

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- 14 **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* ▶  1
- 2 **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* ▶  1
- 5 **Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* ▶  1
- 8 **Gambel's Quail** *Callipepla gambelii* ▶  3
- 7 **Wild Turkey** *Meleagris gallopavo* ▶  3
- 2 **Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia* * ▶  1
- 1 **Band-tailed Pigeon** *Patagioenas fasciata* ▶  1
- 2 **Eurasian Collared-Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* * ▶  1
- 4 **Inca Dove** *Columbina inca* ▶  2
- 32 **White-winged Dove** *Zenaida asiatica* ▶  8
- 6 **Mourning Dove** *Zenaida macroura* ▶  4
- 1 **Greater Roadrunner** *Geococcyx californianus* ▶  1
- 12 **Common Poorwill** *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii* ▶  2
- 1 **Buff-collared Nightjar** *Antrostomus ridgwayi*  ▶  1  1
- 8 **Mexican Whip-poor-will** *Antrostomus arizonae* ▶  3
- 12 **White-throated Swift** *Aeronautes saxatalis* ▶  2
- 1 **Rivoli's Hummingbird** *Eugenes fulgens* ▶  1
- 4 **Blue-throated Mountain-gem** *Lampornis clemenciae* ▶  2
- 20 **Black-chinned Hummingbird** *Archilochus alexandri* ▶  4
- 2 **Anna's Hummingbird** *Calypte anna* ▶  1

2	Costa's Hummingbird <i>Calypte costae</i>	▶  1
1	Calliope Hummingbird <i>Selasphorus calliope</i>	▶  1
4	Broad-tailed Hummingbird <i>Selasphorus platycercus</i>	▶  3
26	Broad-billed Hummingbird <i>Cynanthus latirostris</i>	▶  7
1	Violet-crowned Hummingbird <i>Ramosomyia violiceps</i>	▶  1
1	Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularius</i>	▶  1
1	Neotropic Cormorant <i>Nannopterum brasilianum</i>	▶  1
2	Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	▶  1
1	Snowy Egret <i>Egretta thula</i>	▶  1
4	Black Vulture <i>Coragyps atratus</i>	▶  1
27	Turkey Vulture <i>Cathartes aura</i>	▶  9
1	Cooper's Hawk <i>Astur cooperii</i>	▶  1
2	Gray Hawk <i>Buteo plagiatus</i>	▶  2
3	Zone-tailed Hawk <i>Buteo albonotatus</i>	▶   1  2
1	Swainson's Hawk <i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	▶  1
1	Red-tailed Hawk <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	▶  1
1	Flammulated Owl <i>Psilosops flammeolus</i>	▶   2  1
3	Whiskered Screech-Owl <i>Megascops trichopsis</i>	▶  1
1	Western Screech-Owl <i>Megascops kennicottii</i>	▶   1  1
2	Great Horned Owl <i>Bubo virginianus</i>	▶  1
3	Elf Owl <i>Micrathene whitneyi</i>	▶  1
1	Coppery-tailed Trogon <i>Trogon ambiguus</i>	▶  1
18	Acorn Woodpecker <i>Melanerpes formicivorus</i>	▶  5
5	Gila Woodpecker <i>Melanerpes uropygialis</i>	▶  2



- 6 **Ladder-backed Woodpecker** *Dryobates scalaris* ▶  4
- 1 **Hairy Woodpecker** *Leuconotopicus villosus* ▶  1
- 2 **Arizona Woodpecker** *Leuconotopicus arizonae* ▶  2
- 4 **Northern Flicker** *Colaptes auratus* ▶  2
- 1 **Crested Caracara** *Caracara plancus* ▶  1
- 1 **Greater Pewee** *Contopus pertinax* ▶  1
- 4 **Hammond's Flycatcher** *Empidonax hammondii* ▶  2
- 2 **Black Phoebe** *Sayornis nigricans* ▶  1
- 1 **Say's Phoebe** *Sayornis saya* ▶  1
- 1 **Vermilion Flycatcher** *Pyrocephalus rubinus* ▶  1
- 4 **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** *Myiarchus tuberculifer* ▶  3
- 8 **Ash-throated Flycatcher** *Myiarchus cinerascens* ▶  4
- 4 **Brown-crested Flycatcher** *Myiarchus tyrannulus* ▶  2
- 12 **Cassin's Kingbird** *Tyrannus vociferans* ▶  3
- 2 **Western Kingbird** *Tyrannus verticalis* ▶  1
- 7 **Bell's Vireo** *Vireo bellii* ▶  4
- 6 **Hutton's Vireo** *Vireo huttoni* ▶  2
- 2 **Plumbeous Vireo** *Vireo plumbeus* ▶  2
- 1 **Loggerhead Shrike** *Lanius ludovicianus* ▶  1
- 2 **Steller's Jay** *Cyanocitta stelleri* ▶  1
- 1 **Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay** *Aphelocoma woodhouseii* ▶  1
- 16 **Mexican Jay** *Aphelocoma wollweberi* ▶  2
- 2 **Chihuahuan Raven** *Corvus cryptoleucus* ▶  1

4	Common Raven <i>Corvus corax</i>	▶ 2
2	Mexican Chickadee <i>Poecile sclateri</i>	▶ 1
6	Bridled Titmouse <i>Baeolophus wollweberi</i>	▶ 3
3	Verdin <i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>	▶ 1
1	Horned Lark <i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	▶ 1
4	Violet-green Swallow <i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>	▶ 1
10	Northern Rough-winged Swallow <i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	▶ 1
10	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	▶ 1
4	Cliff Swallow <i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>	▶ 1
5	Bushtit <i>Psaltriparus minimus</i>	▶ 3
3	Ruby-crowned Kinglet <i>Corthylio calendula</i>	▶ 1
6	White-breasted Nuthatch <i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	▶ 5
1	Brown Creeper <i>Certhia americana</i>	▶ 1
1	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher <i>Polioptila caerulea</i>	▶ 1
1	Black-tailed Gnatcatcher <i>Polioptila melanura</i>	▶ 1
2	Canyon Wren <i>Catherpes mexicanus</i>	▶ 1
3	Northern House Wren <i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	▶ 2
3	Bewick's Wren <i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>	▶ 1
1	Cactus Wren <i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>	▶ 1
5	Curve-billed Thrasher <i>Toxostoma curvirostre</i>	▶ 2
2	Northern Mockingbird <i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	▶ 2
2	American Robin <i>Turdus migratorius</i>	▶ 1
7	Phainopepla <i>Phainopepla nitens</i>	▶ 2

1	Olive Warbler <i>Peucedramus taeniatus</i>	▶  1
2	House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i> *	▶  1
30	House Finch <i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>	▶  10
8	Pine Siskin <i>Spinus pinus</i>	▶  3
22	Lesser Goldfinch <i>Spinus psaltria</i>	▶  7
3	Chipping Sparrow <i>Spizella passerina</i>	▶  1
4	Black-throated Sparrow <i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>	▶  3
20	Lark Bunting <i>Calamospiza melanocorys</i>	▶  1
2	Yellow-eyed Junco <i>Junco phaeonotus</i>	▶  1
14	White-crowned Sparrow <i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	▶  5
2	Song Sparrow <i>Melospiza melodia</i>	▶  1
4	Lincoln's Sparrow <i>Melospiza lincolni</i>	▶  2
4	Canyon Towhee <i>Melozone fusca</i>	▶  3
1	Abert's Towhee <i>Melozone aberti</i>	▶  1
2	Spotted Towhee <i>Pipilo maculatus</i>	▶  2
1	Yellow-breasted Chat <i>Icteria virens</i>	▶  1
3	Hooded Oriole <i>Icterus cucullatus</i>	▶  2
1	Bullock's Oriole <i>Icterus bullockii</i>	▶  1
10	Scott's Oriole <i>Icterus parisorum</i>	▶  1  6
1	Red-winged Blackbird <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	▶  1
9	Brown-headed Cowbird <i>Molothrus ater</i>	▶  4
7	Great-tailed Grackle <i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	▶  1
4	Lucy's Warbler <i>Leiothlypis luciae</i>	▶  1

- 5 **Northern Yellow Warbler** *Setophaga aestiva* ▶  2
- 2 **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Setophaga coronata* ▶  2
- 6 **Grace's Warbler** *Setophaga graciae* ▶  2
- 4 **Black-throated Gray Warbler** *Setophaga nigrescens* ▶  2
- 1 **Townsend's Warbler** *Setophaga townsendi* ▶  1
- 1 **Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla* ▶  1
- 1 **Red-faced Warbler** *Cardellina rubrifrons* ▶  1
- 5 **Painted Redstart** *Myioborus pictus* ▶  3
- 2 **Hepatic Tanager** *Piranga flava* ▶  2
- 3 **Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra* ▶  3
- 3 **Western Tanager** *Piranga ludoviciana* ▶  3
- 2 **Flame-colored Tanager** *Piranga bidentata* ▶  3  1
- 6 **Northern Cardinal** *Cardinalis cardinalis* ▶  3
- 3 **Pyrrhuloxia** *Cardinalis sinuatus* ▶  1
- 9 **Black-headed Grosbeak** *Pheucticus melanocephalus* ▶  4
- 8 **Lazuli Bunting** *Passerina amoena* ▶  1

ADDITIONAL TAXA

- 1 **Gray/Dusky Flycatcher** *Empidonax wrightii/oberholseri* ▶  1
- 1 **Empidonax sp.** *Empidonax sp.* ▶  1