

# Trip Report — Arizona Nightbirds & More II 2026

April 30-May 4, 2026 with Micah Riegner



Lesser Nighthawk was our final target for the trip. We saw several actively feeding over the Saguaros in the Tucson Mountains. Photo by tour participant Diane Nastase.

The mountains of Southeast Arizona support an astonishing diversity of owls and nightjars and we saw the vast majority of them in just three days of birding. After gathering in Tucson, we drove the bumpy road out to California Gulch to see one of the scarcest nightbirds in the US. We set up a picnic dinner after finding a confiding Five-striped Sparrow and as dusk approached, so did an ominous storm. Despite the nasty oncoming weather, we managed to find a territorial Buff-collared Nightjar showing its white outer tail feathers as it sat on a Mesquite tree. Then we booked it back to Tucson.

The following morning, we drove to Miller Canyon in the glorious Huachuca mountains. Our main target was the Flame-colored Tanager, which had been reportedly nesting in the sycamore-lined riparian corridor. We ran into a bunch of other birders there, who showed us where nest was, and we could see the top of the female's head as she sat there incubating. The male came by a couple times to check on her. Other birds from the morning included Red-faced and Virginia's Warblers, Hutton's and Plumbeous Vireos, numerous Dusky-capped Flycatchers and a flyover Zone-tailed Hawk.



The rising song of Grace's Warbler brings back childhood memories of birding in Prescott. We saw this individual at Rustler Park in the Chiricahuas. Photo by guide Micah Riegner.

We sat at the feeders for a bit and watched Broad-billed, Broad-tailed, Rufous, Anna's and Rivoli's Hummingbirds coming to drink. Then, after pizza lunch in Sierra Vista, we blasted over to Portal via Douglas, stopping to see Bendire's Thrasher along State Line Road. After checking into our hotel we drove out the Paradise Road and saw a Bobcat crossing right in front of us.

Awesome! Right at dusk we saw Elf Owls at a nest cavity and a pair of Western Screech-Owls in an Alligator Juniper. Some Poorwills called from a distant hillside as the full moon illuminated the valley. The night was young, so we continued towards South Fork, finding a pair of Whiskered Screech-Owls and a close Mexican Whip-poor-will.



Tour participant Diane Nastase photographed this confiding Elf Owl in Portal not far from our lodge. This species can nest in the tiniest of cavities in the Arizona Sycamores.

We continued to bird along Cave Creek the following morning, finding a Thick-billed Kingbird before we even left Portal Peak Lodge. South Fork was relatively quiet, but we saw a few good things, like a Coppery-tailed Trogon inspecting nest cavities, Brown-crested Flycatchers, and Scott's Orioles singing away. We saw several Mexican Fox Squirrels, including one that fell out of a tree, almost landing on someone in the group. In the afternoon, we drove up and over Onion Saddle, stopping for Black-chinned Sparrow in the chaparral along the way. We did another picnic dinner at Pinery Canyon and right at 7:30, our target emerged: Flammulated Owl! The bird flew in right

above us and we were all blown away by its smallness. Further up canyon, we heard a Spotted Owl proclaiming its territory.



Botta's Pocket-Gophers rarely leave the safety of their burrows. We were lucky enough to see this one at the house of Rose Ann Rowlett and Richard Webster. Photo by tour participant Bruce Picukonis.

We packed a lot of birds into our final day of birding. First, we stopped at Rose Ann Rowlett and Richard Webster's house to see Blue-throated Mountain-Gems coming to the feeders. A Botta's Pocket-Gopher was moseying about outside of its burrow, which was cool. As we loaded up, we flushed the flock of Band-tailed Pigeons that were coming down to the feeders in the back. Nearing the Southwest Research Station, we found a Northern Pygmy-Owl in a dead tree, then, up at Rustler Park we found an Olive Warbler, Greater Pewee, Grace's Warbler, and some Steller's Jays. We made our way down the switchbacks towards Willcox, stopping at Pinery

Canyon again to check for the roosting Spotted Owl but couldn't locate it. With another birding group we watched a pair of Buff-breasted Flycatchers that were probably getting ready to nest on the hillside. Once in the semidesert grassland we picked out a distant Crissal Thrasher and an even more distant Chihuahuan Meadowlark. We stopped, too, for the Great Horned Owl nest along the road that Cory told me about. The adult was there with three big fluffy chicks. We had a nice lunch at a Mexican restaurant in Willcox, then we swung by Lake Cochise where a Hudsonian Whimbrel had been reported.



Sunset in the Tucson Mountains after we enjoyed Lesser Nighthawks flying about over the desert. Photo by guide Micah Riegner.

We saw the whimbrel, plus Cinnamon Teal, Mexican Duck, White-faced Ibis and Yellow-headed Blackbird, which were all new for the trip. On our way out to the highway, we stopped for a flock of Chihuahuan Ravens that were

lined up on the telephone wires. It's a spot I always find them. We drove back to Tucson and checked into the hotel as dusk approached. Our original plan was to do dinner at a restaurant, but we still needed Lesser Nighthawk, so we did a picnic over in the Tucson Mountains and watched Lesser Nighthawks against a fiery sunset—a nice way to wrap up the tour. The close Common Poorwill that was on the road was an unexpected bonus. I'd like to thank you all for joining me here in Arizona, and I look forward more birding adventures to come!



Western Screech-Owl by tour participant Judy Harackiewicz. We tracked down a pair in a wash near Portal.

## **Mammals**

Desert Cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*)

Black-tailed Jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*) We saw a few out on State Line Road.

Cliff Chipmunk (*Neotamias dorsalis*) The chipmunks at Miller Canyon.

Harris's Antelope Squirrel (*Ammospermophilus harrisi*) These were coming to eat at the Portal feeders.

Common Rock Squirrel (*Otospermophilus variegatus*)

Mexican Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus nayaritensis*) We had multiple encounters with these gorgeous squirrels at South Fork. One fell out of a tree almost landing on someone in the group!

Arizona Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus arizonensis*) Seen at Miller Canyon.

Botta's Pocket Gopher (*Thomomys bottae*) We watched on outside its burrow at Rose Anna and Richard's house.

Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) Certainly the mammal highlight of the trip! We watched one cross the road outside of Portal.

Collared Peccary (*Dicotyles tajacu*) There was a big herd on the road in Portal.

White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) These were regular throughout our time in the mountains.

You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/511517>

You can download a combined PDF of this page and the eBird report at this link: <https://fieldguides.com/triplists/azn26bTRIPLIST.pdf>

-- Micah

# Field Guides Birding Tours -- ARIZONA NIGHTBIRDS II, 2026 (with guide Micah Riegner)



30 Apr – 3 May 2026 (4 days) Link-only



United States

Arizona | New Mexico | Subregions

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
























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4	<b>Blue-winged Teal</b> <i>Spatula discors</i>	  1
10	<b>Cinnamon Teal</b> <i>Spatula cyanoptera</i>	  1
3	<b>Northern Shoveler</b> <i>Spatula clypeata</i>	  1
6	<b>American Wigeon</b> <i>Mareca americana</i>	  1
4	<b>Mexican Duck</b> <i>Anas diazi</i>	  1
3	<b>Redhead</b> <i>Aythya americana</i>	  1
15	<b>Ruddy Duck</b> <i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	  1
1	<b>Scaled Quail</b> <i>Callipepla squamata</i>	  1
8	<b>Gambel's Quail</b> <i>Callipepla gambelii</i>	  5
7	<b>Wild Turkey</b> <i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	  5
4	<b>Rock Pigeon</b> <i>Columba livia</i> *	  1
15	<b>Band-tailed Pigeon</b> <i>Patagioenas fasciata</i>	  1
4	<b>Eurasian Collared-Dove</b> <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> *	  3
20	<b>White-winged Dove</b> <i>Zenaida asiatica</i>	  6
13	<b>Mourning Dove</b> <i>Zenaida macroura</i>	  7
2	<b>Greater Roadrunner</b> <i>Geococcyx californianus</i>	  2
10	<b>Lesser Nighthawk</b> <i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i>	  1
7	<b>Common Poorwill</b> <i>Phalaenoptilus nuttallii</i>	  3
1	<b>Buff-collared Nightjar</b> <i>Antrostomus ridgwayi</i>	  1
6	<b>Mexican Whip-poor-will</b> <i>Antrostomus arizonae</i>	  2
1	<b>White-throated Swift</b> <i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>	  1











12	<b>Rivoli's Hummingbird</b>	<i>Eugenes fulgens</i>	▶  4
1	<b>Blue-throated Mountain-gem</b>	<i>Lampornis clemenciae</i>	▶  1
30	<b>Black-chinned Hummingbird</b>	<i>Archilochus alexandri</i>	▶  4
1	<b>Anna's Hummingbird</b>	<i>Calypte anna</i>	▶  1
1	<b>Calliope Hummingbird</b>	<i>Selasphorus calliope</i>	▶  1
3	<b>Rufous Hummingbird</b>	<i>Selasphorus rufus</i>	▶  2
27	<b>Broad-tailed Hummingbird</b>	<i>Selasphorus platycercus</i>	▶  2
14	<b>Broad-billed Hummingbird</b>	<i>Cynanthus latirostris</i>	▶  4
6	<b>American Coot</b>	<i>Fulica americana</i>	▶  1
3	<b>Black-necked Stilt</b>	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	▶  1
45	<b>American Avocet</b>	<i>Recurvirostra americana</i>	▶  1
2	<b>Killdeer</b>	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	▶  1
1	<b>Hudsonian Whimbrel</b>	<i>Numenius hudsonicus</i>	▶  1
42	<b>Long-billed Dowitcher</b>	<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>	▶  1
50	<b>Wilson's Phalarope</b>	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>	▶  1
3	<b>Spotted Sandpiper</b>	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	▶  1
15	<b>Western Sandpiper</b>	<i>Calidris mauri</i>	▶  1
125	<b>White-faced Ibis</b>	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>	▶  1
1	<b>Black Vulture</b>	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>	▶  1
5	<b>Turkey Vulture</b>	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	▶  2
2	<b>Northern Harrier</b>	<i>Circus hudsonius</i>	▶  2
2	<b>Gray Hawk</b>	<i>Buteo plagiatus</i>	▶  2
2	<b>Zone-tailed Hawk</b>	<i>Buteo albonotatus</i>	▶  1
3	<b>Swainson's Hawk</b>	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	▶  3

5	<b>Red-tailed Hawk</b>	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	▶  3
2	<b>Flammulated Owl</b>	<i>Psiloscoops flammeolus</i>	▶  1
2	<b>Whiskered Screech-Owl</b>	<i>Megascops trichopsis</i>	▶  1
2	<b>Western Screech-Owl</b>	<i>Megascops kennicottii</i>	▶  1
4	<b>Great Horned Owl</b>	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	▶  1
1	<b>Northern Pygmy-Owl</b>	<i>Glaucidium gnoma</i>	▶  1
4	<b>Elf Owl</b>	<i>Micrathene whitneyi</i>	▶  2
1	<b>Spotted Owl</b>	<i>Strix occidentalis</i> Sensitive	▶  1
1	<b>Coppery-tailed Trogon</b>	<i>Trogon ambiguus</i>	▶  1
1	<b>Red-naped Sapsucker</b>	<i>Sphyrapicus nuchalis</i>	▶  1
10	<b>Acorn Woodpecker</b>	<i>Melanerpes formicivorus</i>	▶  5
3	<b>Ladder-backed Woodpecker</b>	<i>Dryobates scalaris</i>	▶  2
1	<b>Hairy Woodpecker</b>	<i>Leuconotopicus villosus</i>	▶  1
5	<b>Arizona Woodpecker</b>	<i>Leuconotopicus arizonae</i>	▶  3
1	<b>Northern Flicker</b>	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	▶  1
2	<b>American Kestrel</b>	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	▶  2
4	<b>Greater Pewee</b>	<i>Contopus pertinax</i>	▶  2
1	<b>Western Wood-Pewee</b>	<i>Contopus sordidulus</i>	▶  1
4	<b>Hammond's Flycatcher</b>	<i>Empidonax hammondii</i>	▶  2
2	<b>Buff-breasted Flycatcher</b>	<i>Empidonax fulvifrons</i>	▶  1
1	<b>Black Phoebe</b>	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>	▶  1
7	<b>Say's Phoebe</b>	<i>Sayornis saya</i>	▶  3
1	<b>Vermilion Flycatcher</b>	<i>Pyrocephalus rubinus</i>	▶  1

8	<b>Dusky-capped Flycatcher</b> <i>Myiarchus tuberculifer</i>	▶ 4
2	<b>Ash-throated Flycatcher</b> <i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>	▶ 2
7	<b>Brown-crested Flycatcher</b> <i>Myiarchus tyrannulus</i>	▶ 5
5	<b>Cassin's Kingbird</b> <i>Tyrannus vociferans</i>	▶ 2
1	<b>Thick-billed Kingbird</b> <i>Tyrannus crassirostris</i>	▶ 1
9	<b>Western Kingbird</b> <i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>	▶ 2
3	<b>Bell's Vireo</b> <i>Vireo bellii</i>	▶ 1
4	<b>Hutton's Vireo</b> <i>Vireo huttoni</i>	▶ 2
8	<b>Plumbeous Vireo</b> <i>Vireo plumbeus</i>	▶ 5
1	<b>Western Warbling Vireo</b> <i>Vireo swainsoni</i>	▶ 1
2	<b>Loggerhead Shrike</b> <i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	▶ 2
2	<b>Steller's Jay</b> <i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>	▶ 1
19	<b>Mexican Jay</b> <i>Aphelocoma wollweberi</i>	▶ 6
15	<b>Chihuahuan Raven</b> <i>Corvus cryptoleucus</i>	▶ 2
6	<b>Common Raven</b> <i>Corvus corax</i>	▶ 4
4	<b>Mexican Chickadee</b> <i>Poecile sclateri</i>	▶ 1
6	<b>Bridled Titmouse</b> <i>Baeolophus wollweberi</i>	▶ 3
1	<b>Verdin</b> <i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>	▶ 1
1	<b>Horned Lark</b> <i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	▶ 1
2	<b>Tree Swallow</b> <i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	▶ 1
5	<b>Violet-green Swallow</b> <i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>	▶ 1
2	<b>Northern Rough-winged Swallow</b> <i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	▶ 1
6	<b>Barn Swallow</b> <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	▶ 2

6	<b>Bushtit</b> <i>Psaltriparus minimus</i>	▶  2
6	<b>White-breasted Nuthatch</b> <i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	▶  5
2	<b>Pygmy Nuthatch</b> <i>Sitta pygmaea</i>	▶  1
3	<b>Brown Creeper</b> <i>Certhia americana</i>	▶  3
1	<b>Blue-gray Gnatcatcher</b> <i>Poliophtila caerulea</i>	▶  1
3	<b>Northern House Wren</b> <i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	▶  3
4	<b>Bewick's Wren</b> <i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>	▶  2
2	<b>Cactus Wren</b> <i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>	▶  2
11	<b>Curve-billed Thrasher</b> <i>Toxostoma curvirostre</i>	▶  4
1	<b>Bendire's Thrasher</b> <i>Toxostoma bendirei</i>	▶  1
1	<b>Crissal Thrasher</b> <i>Toxostoma crissale</i>	▶  1
4	<b>Northern Mockingbird</b> <i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	▶  3
2	<b>Western Bluebird</b> <i>Sialia mexicana</i>	▶  2
1	<b>Swainson's Thrush</b> <i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	▶  1
2	<b>Hermit Thrush</b> <i>Catharus guttatus</i>	▶  1
10	<b>American Robin</b> <i>Turdus migratorius</i>	▶  5
1	<b>Phainopepla</b> <i>Phainopepla nitens</i>	▶  1
1	<b>Olive Warbler</b> <i>Peucedramus taeniatus</i>	▶  1
7	<b>House Sparrow</b> <i>Passer domesticus</i> *	▶  2
4	<b>House Finch</b> <i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>	▶  2
7	<b>Pine Siskin</b> <i>Spinus pinus</i>	▶  2
3	<b>Lesser Goldfinch</b> <i>Spinus psaltria</i>	▶  1
1	<b>Black-chinned Sparrow</b> <i>Spizella atrogularis</i>	▶  1

- 1 **Five-striped Sparrow** *Amphispizopsis quinquestriata* ▶  1
- 10 **Black-throated Sparrow** *Amphispiza bilineata* ▶  7
- 1 **Lark Sparrow** *Chondestes grammacus* ▶  1
- 7 **Yellow-eyed Junco** *Junco phaeonotus* ▶  2
- 15 **White-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia leucophrys* ▶  1
- 1 **Lincoln's Sparrow** *Melospiza lincolnii* ▶  1
- 4 **Canyon Towhee** *Melospiza fusca* ▶  3
- 1 **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** *Aimophila ruficeps* ▶  1
- 11 **Spotted Towhee** *Pipilo maculatus* ▶  5
- 1 **Yellow-headed Blackbird** *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* ▶  1
- 1 **Chihuahuan Meadowlark** *Sturnella lilianae* ▶  1
- 1 **Hooded Oriole** *Icterus cucullatus* ▶  1
- 4 **Bullock's Oriole** *Icterus bullockii* ▶  2
- 11 **Scott's Oriole** *Icterus parisorum* ▶  3
- 3 **Red-winged Blackbird** *Agelaius phoeniceus* ▶  2
- 1 **Bronzed Cowbird** *Molothrus aeneus* ▶  1
- 10 **Brown-headed Cowbird** *Molothrus ater* ▶  2
- 40 **Great-tailed Grackle** *Quiscalus mexicanus* ▶  1
- 5 **Lucy's Warbler** *Leiothlypis luciae* ▶  2
- 1 **Virginia's Warbler** *Leiothlypis virginiae* ▶  1
- 3 **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Setophaga coronata* ▶  2
- 7 **Grace's Warbler** *Setophaga graciae* ▶  4
- 2 **Black-throated Gray Warbler** *Setophaga nigrescens* ▶  2

- 1 **Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla* ▶  1
  - 5 **Red-faced Warbler** *Cardellina rubrifrons* ▶  2
  - 5 **Painted Redstart** *Myioborus pictus* ▶  4
  - 3 **Hepatic Tanager** *Piranga flava* ▶  3
  - 2 **Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra* ▶  2
  - 1 **Western Tanager** *Piranga ludoviciana* ▶  1
  - 2 **Flame-colored Tanager** *Piranga bidentata* ▶  1
  - 4 **Northern Cardinal** *Cardinalis cardinalis* ▶  3
  - 1 **Pyrrhuloxia** *Cardinalis sinuatus* ▶  1
  - 8 **Black-headed Grosbeak** *Pheucticus melanocephalus* ▶  4
-