



Field Guides Tour Report

Arizona's Second Spring I 2016

Jul 23, 2016 to Aug 1, 2016

Chris Benesh

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE.



The always splendid and scenic Chiricahua Mountains. (Photo by guide Chris Benesh)

This year's Arizona Second Spring was a wonderful outing with a nice sampling of specialty birds of the region. We started with an afternoon of birding west of Tucson. On our second morning, we were off to Ramsey Canyon to seek out Tufted Flycatchers and other montane species in the Huachucas. That afternoon we watched hummingbirds at Mary Jo's. The following day, we were in Huachuca Canyon, enjoying lots of trogons and other species. That afternoon we visited Miller Canyon in search of Spotted Owls and hummingbirds. Our last morning in Sierra Vista saw us paying a visit to Hunter Canyon for Rufous-capped Warbler before heading east to St. David and Willcox, then we finished the day in Portal.

We had a wonderful couple of days exploring various areas in the Chiricahuas from Stateline Road all of the way up to Rustler Park. Then we headed west again to Rio Rico, stopping in Patagonia along the way. The next day saw us birding Patagonia Lake and Patagonia environs in the morning, and visiting Kino Springs in the afternoon. Our final full day was a trip along the Ruby Road out to lower California Gulch and Warsaw Canyon and another visit to Kino Springs. On our way to the airport on the last day, we spent some time at the Santa Rita lodge feeders hoping the starthroat might pay a visit. Alas, it was a no-show. But we scored a couple of Burrowing Owls before the drop-off.

Thanks to all of you for making the trip so much fun -- lots of great spotting and lots of laughter. I hope to see you all again on future trips. Until then I wish you the best in birding!

--Chris

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)

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) – Some nice looks, mostly in flight, of birds at Kino Springs.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – One at Willcox was notable for late July.

MALLARD (NORTHERN) (*Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos*) – Around Willcox and Kino Springs.

MALLARD (MEXICAN) (*Anas platyrhynchos diazi*) – Quite possibly to be elevated to a full species in the future (and already by some authorities), seen on a few different days.

CINNAMON TEAL (*Anas cyanoptera*)

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – Two on our first visit to Willcox.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

SCALED QUAIL (*Callipepla squamata*) – Mary spotted our first ones. Also known as Cotton tops.

GAMBEL'S QUAIL (*Callipepla gambelii*) – Plentiful and entertaining.

MONTEZUMA QUAIL (*Cyrtonyx montezumae*) – We had some wonderful luck with this species with as many as six seen.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – A big flock in Ramsey Canyon and more in the Chiricahuas.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – We had a lone bird at Patagonia Lake.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – About a dozen of these were at Patagonia Lake.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Two of these at Patagonia Lake.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*)

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – A lone bird at Willcox.

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – One at Sweetwater Wetlands the first afternoon was the only one seen.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Two of these were at Sweetwater Wetlands.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) – Five were at Willcox on our first visit.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – Seen in their typical areas near Nogales.

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*)

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

MISSISSIPPI KITE (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) – After a bit of searching, we ended up seeing three of these in St. David.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*)

GRAY HAWK (*Buteo plagiatus*) – This species has really increased in the state in recent years, being especially more conspicuous in mountain canyons.

SWAINSON'S HAWK (*Buteo swainsoni*)

ZONE-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo albonotatus*) – Our only sighting turned out to be a bird soaring over the rock formations at Texas Canyon.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

SORA (*Porzana carolina*) – Jan spotted our first of these at Willcox. Another was at Kino Springs.

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*)

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*) – Quite a few of these at Willcox where they breed.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

SEMPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – Two were at Willcox blending in with the other shorebirds.

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*)

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

LONG-BILLED CURLEW (*Numenius americanus*)

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER (*Calidris bairdii*)

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*)

WESTERN SANDPIPER (*Calidris mauri*)

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*)

WILSON'S PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus tricolor*)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*)

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Six of these were at Willcox.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – While three of these were also present at Willcox.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [I]

BAND-TAILED PIGEON (*Patagioenas fasciata*) – We did manage to see a couple of these high up in the Chiricahuas.

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

INCA DOVE (*Columbina inca*) – While this species has declined in some parts of Arizona, it was still evident in the Chiricahuas and Patagonia.

COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina*) – Best seen at Kino Springs.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*)

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*)

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

GREATER ROADRUNNER (*Geococcyx californianus*) – One of the real iconic birds of Arizona and the desert southwest. Seen almost daily.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus americanus*) – We had a couple of encounters with this rare species.

Strigidae (Owls)

WESTERN SCREECH-OWL (*Megascops kennicottii*) – Great looks at one right near the lodge in Portal.

WHISKERED SCREECH-OWL (*Megascops trichopsis*) – Thanks to Lori and Mark for getting on to this fabulous roosting bird in Cave Creek Canyon.

GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*) – An eye-popping encounter in Huachuca Canyon.

NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL (*Glaucidium gnoma*) – Great looks a one calling in Miller Canyon on our afternoon visit there.

BURROWING OWL (*Athene cunicularia*) – The last new bird of the trip. We had nice looks at a pair just before heading off to the airport for flights home.

SPOTTED OWL (*Strix occidentalis*) – Just when we had given up all hope of seeing them, mom flew in with food, and the juveniles' begging calls helped us locate them. Whew!

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

LESSER NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles acutipennis*) – Our best looks were on our first evening in Tucson along the Santa Cruz River.

COMMON POORWILL (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*) – Near Portal.

BUFF-COLLARED NIGHTJAR (*Antrostomus ridgwayi*) – One of my favorite moments of the tour was seeing this species so well on our morning visit to California Gulch.

Apodidae (Swifts)

WHITE-THROATED SWIFT (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) – A single bird seen up high in the Chiricahuas.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

MAGNIFICENT HUMMINGBIRD (*Eugenes fulgens*)

BLUE-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Lampornis clemenciae*)

LUCIFER HUMMINGBIRD (*Calothorax lucifer*) – Our wait at Mary Jo's paid off with two birds visiting feeders in the late afternoon.

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus alexandri*) – See on every day of the trip.

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD (*Calypte anna*)

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus platycercus*)

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus rufus*)

ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus sasin*)

CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD (*Selasphorus calliope*) – A few of these were visiting Dave Jasper's feeders in Portal.

BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD (*Cynanthus latirostris*)

VIOLET-CROWNED HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia violiceps*) – Some stunning looks in Patagonia at the Paton's Center.

Trogonidae (Trogons)

ELEGANT TROGON (*Trogon elegans*) – Roughly a dozen birds seen in Huachuca Canyon, another of the iconic birds of southeast Arizona.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

ACORN WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) – A clown among woodpeckers, this species entertained us well, especially while we waited for hummingbirds at the Santa Rita Lodge.

GILA WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes uropygialis*)

LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER (*Picoides scalaris*)

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*)

ARIZONA WOODPECKER (*Picoides arizonae*)

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

GILDED FLICKER (*Colaptes chrysoides*) – Seen on our hot first afternoon west of Tucson.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*)

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*)

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

NORTHERN BEARDLESS-TYRANULET (*Camptostoma imberbe*) – Nice views of a couple of birds at Patagonia Lake.

TUFTED FLYCATCHER (MEXICAN) (*Mitrephanes phaeocercus tenuirostris*) – Wow, this species was a mega! A pair returned this Spring to a high section of Ramsey Canyon, and we were some of the very first to see two recently fledged juveniles!

GREATER PEWEE (*Contopus pertinax*) – Seen by some of us in Miller Canyon.

WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus sordidulus*)

PACIFIC-SLOPE FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax difficilis*)

CORDILLERAN FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax occidentalis*)

BUFF-BREASTED FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax fulvifrons*) – After a lot of searching, we did manage to track one down at the upper end of the road into Huachuca Canyon.

BLACK PHOEBE (*Sayornis nigricans*)
SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*) – Al spotted our first!
VERMILION FLYCATCHER (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) – Also a treat to see this colorful species.
DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*)
ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus cinerascens*)
BROWN-CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*)
SULPHUR-BELLIED FLYCATCHER (*Myiodynastes luteiventris*) – Our best views were in the Huachucas. Quite a noisy and striking species.
TROPICAL KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus melancholicus*)
CASSIN'S KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus vociferans*)
THICK-BILLED KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus crassirostris*) – We had a family group nesting right in Portal (where rare) and another near Patagonia.
WESTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus verticalis*)

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*)

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

BELL'S VIREO (*Vireo bellii*)

HUTTON'S VIREO (*Vireo huttoni*)

PLUMBEOUS VIREO (*Vireo plumbeus*)

WARBLING VIREO (*Vireo gilvus*) – We had three singles on the tour, the first of which was spotted by Jan.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

STELLER'S JAY (*Cyanocitta stelleri*)

WOODHOUSE'S SCRUB-JAY (*Aphelocoma woodhouseii*) – This split became official since the tour. The Western Scrub-Jays seen in the Chiricahuas.

MEXICAN JAY (*Aphelocoma wollweberi*)

CHIHUAHUAN RAVEN (*Corvus cryptoleucus*)

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*)

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*)

PURPLE MARTIN (*Progne subis*) – Well seen on our first afternoon in the Tucson Mountains. This subspecies nests in saguaros.

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – There were a small number of these migrating over the desert along Stateline Road.

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW (*Tachycineta thalassina*)

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*)

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*)

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

MEXICAN CHICKADEE (*Poecile sclateri*) – Some nice views in the higher zones of the Chiricahuas. This species barely makes it into the US.

BRIDLED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus wollweberi*)

JUNIPER TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*)

Remizidae (Penduline-Tits)

VERDIN (*Auriparus flaviceps*)

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

BUSHTIT (INTERIOR) (*Psaltriparus minimus plumbeus*)

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta canadensis*)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta carolinensis*)

PYGMY NUTHATCH (*Sitta pygmaea*)

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

BROWN CREEPER (*Certhia americana*)

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

ROCK WREN (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) – We had this species nesting at Beatty's in Miller Canyon.

CANYON WREN (*Catherpes mexicanus*) – A great songster.

HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*)

BEWICK'S WREN (*Thryomanes bewickii*)

CACTUS WREN (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*)

Poliptilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliptila caerulea*)

BLACK-TAILED GNATCATCHER (*Poliptila melanura*)

BLACK-CAPPED GNATCATCHER (*Poliptila nigriceps*) – We did track down three of these at Patagonia Lake. This species, while still considered rare, has dramatically increased in population in southern Arizona.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia sialis*) – Mary spotted this species for us west of Nogales. Birds in Arizona are paler than those found in the eastern United States.

WESTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia mexicana*)

HERMIT THRUSH (*Catharus guttatus*)

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*)

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (*Toxostoma curvirostre*)

BENDIRE'S THRASHER (*Toxostoma bendirei*) – Some terrific looks at this species along Stateline Road, including recently fledged young.

CRISSAL THRASHER (*Toxostoma crissale*) – We had pretty good luck with this species, randomly spotting a couple perched up while we were looking for other species. This can be a tough bird in summer.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*)

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [H]

Ptilionotidae (Silky-flycatchers)

PHAINOPEPLA (*Phainopepla nitens*)

Peucedramidae (Olive Warbler)

OLIVE WARBLER (*Peucedramus taeniatus*) – Whew, it took a lot of searching, but we eventually found an eleventh hour one near Barfoot Junction.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

LUCY'S WARBLER (*Oreothlypis luciae*)

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*)

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*)

GRACE'S WARBLER (*Setophaga graciae*)

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER (*Setophaga nigrescens*)

HERMIT WARBLER (*Setophaga occidentalis*) – We were fortunate to see a couple of these.

RUFOUS-CAPPED WARBLER (RUFIFRONS GROUP) (*Basileuterus rufifrons caudatus*) – Our hike up Hunter Canyon eventually proved productive for this species. Like the Black-capped Gnatcatcher, this species appears to be increasing in Arizona, though still considered quite rare.

RED-FACED WARBLER (*Cardellina rubrifrons*) – Seen in Ramsey and again in Miller Canyon.

PAINTED REDSTART (*Myioborus pictus*)

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT (*Icteria virens*) – This species will likely end up placed in its own family.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

RUFOUS-WINGED SPARROW (*Peucaea carpalis*) – Most were seen near Patagonia and Nogales though we had our first west of Tucson on our first afternoon.

BOTTERI'S SPARROW (*Peucaea botterii*)

CASSIN'S SPARROW (*Peucaea cassinii*)

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*)

BLACK-THROATED SPARROW (*Amphispiza bilineata*)

FIVE-STRIPED SPARROW (*Amphispiza quinquestriata*) – Our visit to the California Gulch/Warsaw Canyon confluence yielded at least four of these.

LARK SPARROW (*Chondestes grammacus*)

LARK BUNTING (*Calamospiza melanocorys*)

YELLOW-EYED JUNCO (*Junco phaeonotus*)

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*)

CANYON TOWHEE (*Melospiza fusca*)

ABERT'S TOWHEE (*Melospiza aberti*)

RUFOUS-CROWNED SPARROW (*Aimophila ruficeps*)

SPOTTED TOWHEE (*Pipilo maculatus*)

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

HEPATIC TANAGER (*Piranga flava*) – Quite a few good views, but one bathing in a pool in Ramsey Canyon was particularly memorable.

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*)

WESTERN TANAGER (*Piranga ludoviciana*)

FLAME-COLORED TANAGER (*Piranga bidentata*) – A singing male seen on our hike up Ramsey Canyon was a real treat. This species is still quite rare in the United States.

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)

PYRRHULOXIA (*Cardinalis sinuatus*) – Great looks at this and the preceding species at Bob Rodrigues' feeders just outside Portal.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)

BLUE GROSBEAK (*Passerina caerulea*)

LAZULI BUNTING (*Passerina amoena*)

VARIED BUNTING (*Passerina versicolor*) – Nice to see this species in the Chiricahuas and again west of Nogales.

PAINTED BUNTING (*Passerina ciris*) – We saw a handsome male and a greenish female at Kino Springs.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)
EASTERN MEADOWLARK (LILIAN'S) (*Sturnella magna lilianae*)
GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*)
BRONZED COWBIRD (*Molothrus aeneus*)
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*)
HOODED ORIOLE (*Icterus cucullatus*) – Our best looks were at Bob's feeders near Portal. What colorful birds!
BULLOCK'S ORIOLE (*Icterus bullockii*)
SCOTT'S ORIOLE (*Icterus parisorum*) – We did see one really nice looking male.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*)
LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*)

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

MAMMALS

BRAZILIAN FREE-TAILED BAT (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) – A great show witnessing many thousands emerging from the Ina Road bridge in Tucson at dusk.
EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)
DESERT COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus audubonii*)
BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT (*Lepus californicus*)
ANTELOPE JACKRABBIT (*Lepus alleni*) – We did see two of these briefly near Warsaw Canyon.
CLIFF CHIPMUNK (*Tamias dorsalis*)
HARRIS'S ANTELOPE SQUIRREL (*Ammospermophilus harrisi*)
ROCK SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus variegatus*)
ROUND-TAILED GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus tereticaudus*)
MEXICAN FOX SQUIRREL (*Sciurus nayaritensis*) – Like the chickadee, this squirrel is really range restricted in the US, being found only in the Chiricahuas.
ARIZONA GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus arizonensis*) – Another fairly range restricted species.
ARIZONA COTTON RAT (*Sigmodon arizonae*)
COYOTE (*Canis latrans*) – Seen on our first two days.
STRIPED SKUNK (*Mephitis mephitis*)
COLLARED PECCARY (*Tayassu tajacu*) – We did encounter a group of six in the Chiricahuas.
MULE DEER (*Odocoileus hemionus*) – Two of these were on the lower slopes of the Huachucas.
WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

A few of the interesting critters seen along the way:

Desert Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus magister*)

Yarrow's Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus jarrovi*) - This was the colorful species seen in the higher mountain canyons.

Clark's Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus clarkii*)

Sonoran Spotted Whiptail (*Aspidoscelis sonorae*) - This is one of the parthenogenic species (all are females) thought to be the result of an ancient hybridization event.

Banded Rock Rattlesnake (*Crotalus lepidus*) - This handsome specimen was seen on the hike up to the Spotted Owls.

Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus atrox*) - sounding like a sprinkler firing off in the weeds as we explored Kino Springs.

Totals for the tour: 190 bird taxa and 17 mammal taxa