

Trip Report

Arizona's Second Spring I 2024

July 21-30, 2024 with Chris Benesh



One of southern Arizona's most sought-after birds, the Elegant Trogon. Photo by Chris Benesh.

The Arizona's Second Spring Tour is geared to take advantage of the breeding activity that takes place once the summer monsoon rains kick in in July. In 2024 our tour coincided with some active monsoon. We were seldom rained out, but we did get to observe some good monsoon action. We met up at our Tucson hotel on the first afternoon and headed off to the Tucson Mountains in search of a few desert specialties. Our main target was Gilded Flicker, and after a bit of work, we managed to track one down. We also had our first Pyrrhuloxia, Black-tailed Gnatcatchers, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Cactus Wren, and more. We then headed to Sweetwater Wetlands where we had a short stay before an approaching thunderstorm sent us on our way. We did manage a few birds beforehand, most notably Tropical Kingbird.

The next morning, we picked up a few birds right at the hotel before heading in the direction the Santa Catalina Mountains. We spent a couple of hours birding different sections of the road into Rose Canyon Lake. The birding was pretty good. We picked up some specialties like Red-faced Warbler, Grace's Warbler, Western Flycatcher, Greater Pewee, Pygmy Nuthatch, Painted Redstart, etc. We then headed to the Mt. Bigelow Road which was really great. There was a very large, diverse flock that kept us entertained. Short-tailed Hawk put in an appearance and we had a really good Olive Warbler here. We then headed back into Tucson, stopping at a Harris's Hawk nesting area. Then it was time to head east. We made a stop at Lake Cochise in Willcox and picked up a number of waterbirds. There were lots of stilts and avocets, and two Long-billed Curlews, and perhaps up to 100 Baird's Sandpipers. From there we made the long drive to Portal, our lodging for the next three nights.



One of the toughest Arizona specialties is the Montezuma Quail. We had great looks at one in the Chiricahuas. Photo by Chris Benesh.

We started off the next morning birding along the Portal Road and Stateline Road. We had a great study of Bendire's Thrashers on both roads. We also had some nice looks at a few other desert grassland species. We stopped in at Willow Tank. Things were a bit slow there, but there were a couple of perched Golden Eagles to enjoy. When we

arrived back at the lodge there was a territorial Thick-billed Kingbird calling there. We headed up the South Fork of Cave Creek and had a nice mix of specialties. Elegant Trogon topped the list. We had a great male. There was also Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers, Arizona Woodpecker, Hepatic Tanagers, Blue-throated Mountain-gem, and Mexican Jays. That afternoon we stopped off at Bob Rodrigues's feeders. A decent mix of birds, including a Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay. Then we headed over to the feeders at Dave Jasper's home. A really nice mix of birds including a few orioles. That evening, we met up with Dave Jasper to do a bit of nightbirding. We heard a Mexican Whip-poor-will and had a great look at a Whiskered Screech-Owl. Then it was off to bed with a Great Horned Owl as a parting gift.



Among warblers, Red-faced is one of Arizona's finest. This cooperative one was photographed by Bill Thompson.

The following day we headed into the high country. A Montezuma Quail provided a welcome distraction on our way up. After digging the van out of the soft spot I had backed up against, we continued our journey. Greater Pewee, Virginia's Warbler, Band-tailed Pigeon, Yellow-eyed Juncos, Red-faced Warbler, Hermit Warbler, and then Mexican Chickadee! The afternoon began with a visit to the Southwestern Research Station. Here we watched feeders for hummers. Blue-throated Mountain-

gems showed well, and Berylline Hummingbird paid us a visit. While waiting, Keith spotted a Bobcat walking silently in the creek bed behind us. We also had our first Rivoli's Hummingbird here. We then headed back to Dave Jasper's feeders for more action. That evening we went out to an Elf Owl nest site and saw one of them peering out from its nest hole.

The next morning, we had a furtive Crissal Thrasher along the Paradise Road. We then headed to the George Walker House to watch feeders there. The White-eared Hummingbird was a no-show for us. But we had a terrific Arizona Woodpecker there. Then it was time to say goodbye to the Chiricahuas. We stopped for lunch in Bisbee and then headed to St. David to poke around. We saw some nesting Chihuahuan Ravens on the way. We also had our first Gray Hawk there. The afternoon was designated for Ash Canyon, staking out Lucifer Hummingbird. We had our first sighting less than 30 minutes later. Whew! It was really good site to study a variety of Anna's Hummingbirds.



Greater Roadrunner is one of the most iconic desert birds in the southwest. This one was photographed by Kevin Watson.

The next morning we headed into Miller Canyon to try for Flame-colored Tanagers. In the end, the best we could do was hearing them. But there were other nice species to keep us engaged. We then spent some time at the hummingbird feeders where the star performer was a territorial Violet-crowned Hummingbird. In the afternoon we headed out to the Sonoita grasslands for sparrows. We connected with Botteri's and Cassin's, Chihuahuan Meadowlarks, Scaled Quail, and the locally rare Common Nighthawk!

After a brief visit to the San Pedro House area the following morning we headed to Ramsey Canyon for a morning of birding. Here we were treated to nesting Violet-crowned Hummingbird, more Elegant Trogons, and a Buff-breasted Flycatcher, a species that had been eluding us. This was a travel day for us, and on route we made a stop in Patagonia for nesting Mississippi Kite. We also spent some time at the Paton's Center for Hummingbirds. Really good Yellow-breasted Chat here, and more Violet-crowned Hummingbird action. We then headed up Harshaw Creek Road and found the nesting Rose-throated Becard there.

The next day we were headed to Montosa Canyon. A brief stop at the Amado Ponds yielded Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks. In the canyon, we connected with Five-striped Sparrow and Varied Bunting. It was quite a scenic spot to spend some time.



Summer in southern Arizona means hummingbirds. This stunning image of a male Broad-billed Hummingbird was taken by Kevin Watson.

Our last full day of birding found us heading back up to Patagonia and Harshaw Creek to try and connect with Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, which we thankfully did. We saw the becard again in drier conditions, as well as really good Thick-billed Kingbird again. We then paid a visit to Santa Gertrudis Lane and the de Anza Trail. Trail conditions were horrible, and the wise ones turned back to avoid the muddy conditions. The smart move was to head to Green Valley and Desert Meadow Park, where we enjoyed Costa's Hummingbird and a cooperative Greater Roadrunner. We then headed up into Madera Canyon for a last shot of Zone-tailed Hawk which had eluded us the entire tour. We failed in our efforts, but did connect with a Peregrine Falcon for our efforts.

It was a real treat birding with all of you on this trip and for the most part, things ran smoothly and the birds provided. I wish you all good health and many more wonderful birding adventures.

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

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/296512>

-- Chris Benesh

Mammals Seen:

Cave Myotis (*Myotis velifer*) - small bats around Portal while out night birding with Dave Jasper.

Western Red Bat (*Lasiurus frantzii*) - quite a surprise to see one fly in and perch in a tree in Ramsey Canyon.

Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)

Desert Cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*)

Black-tailed Jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*)

Cliff Chipmunk (*Neotamias dorsalis*)

Harris's Antelope Squirrel (*Ammospermophilus harrisi*)

Rock Squirrel (*Otospermophilus variegatus*)

Round-tailed Ground Squirrel (*Xerospermophilus tereticaudus*)

Arizona Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus arizonensis*)

Abert's Squirrel (*Sciurus arizonensis*)

Gray Fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*)

White-nosed Coati (*Nasua narica*)

Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) - this one spotted by Keith at SWRS!
Collared Peccary (*Pecari tajacu*)
White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus couesi*)
Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*)

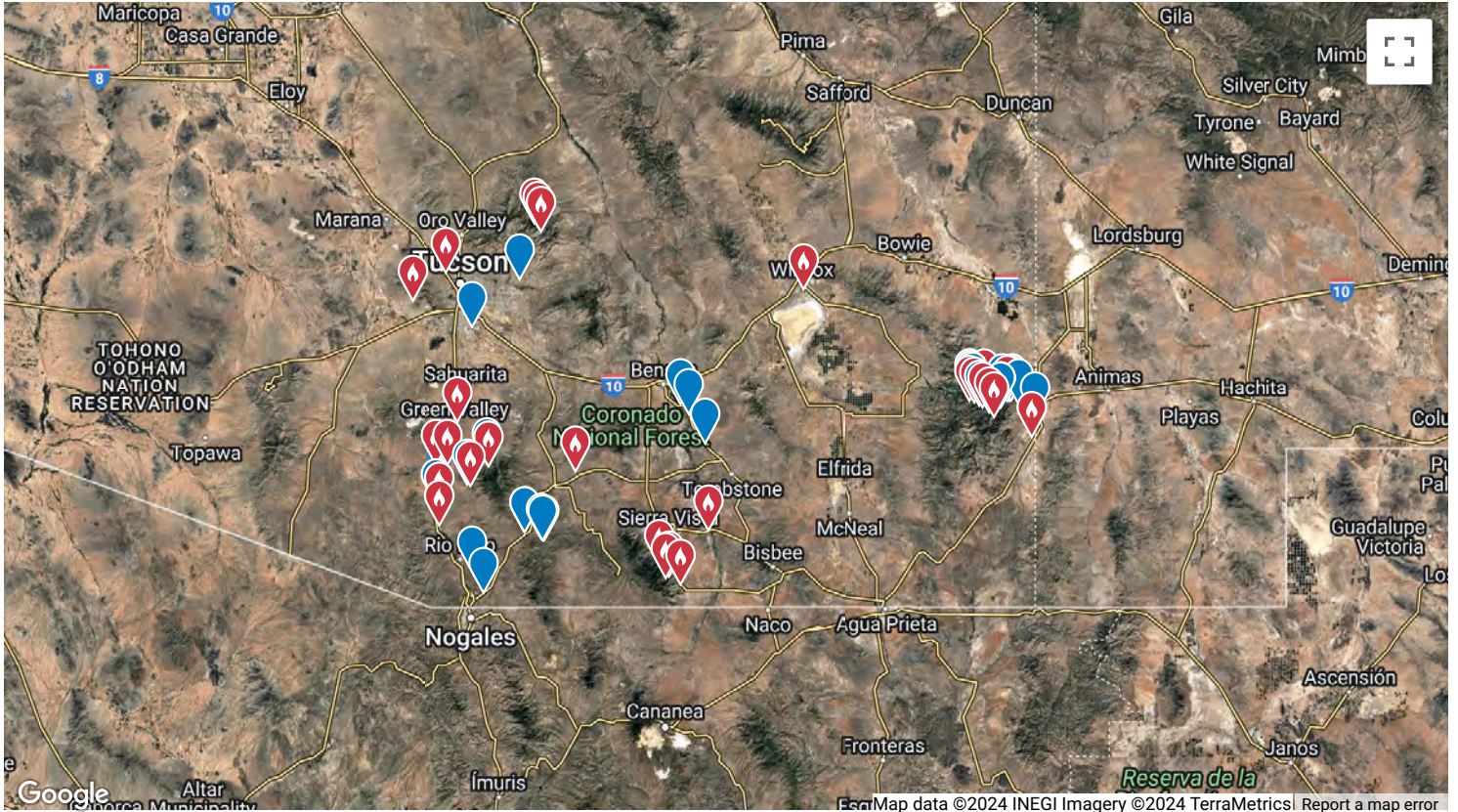
Herps seen:

Madrean Mountain Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis knoblochi*)
Black-tailed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus molossus molossus*)
Chiricahua Leopard Frog (*Lithobates chiricahuensis*)
American Bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*)
Southwestern Fence Lizard (*Sceloporus cowlesi*)
Desert Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus magister*)
Clark's Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus clarkii*)
Chihuahuan Spotted Whiptail (*Aspidoscelis exsanguis*)
Sonoran Spotted Whiptail (*Aspidoscelis sonorae*)
Greater Earless Lizard (*Cophosaurus texanus*)
Sonoran Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus morafkai*)

Field Guides Birding Tours -- ARIZONA'S SECOND SPRING (with guide Chris Benesh)



21 – 29 Jul 2024 (9 days) Link-only



- 📍 **Arizona, United States**
Cochise | Pima | Santa Cruz
- 👤 **Chris Benesh, fgi Triplists**



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

DATA FOR: **Group (all people)** ▾

180

Species Observed

64

Checklists

2

Species with Photos
























1

























Species with Audio

























Species Observed
























[Show all details](#)






















2	Black-bellied Whistling-Duck <i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i>	▶ 1
8	Cinnamon Teal <i>Spatula cyanoptera</i>	▶ 1
1	Mexican Duck <i>Anas diazi</i>	▶ 1
4	Ruddy Duck <i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	▶ 1
11	Scaled Quail <i>Callipepla squamata</i>	▶ 2
89	Gambel's Quail <i>Callipepla gambelii</i>	▶ 9
1	Montezuma Quail <i>Cyrtonyx montezumae</i>	▶ 1
16	Wild Turkey <i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	▶ 3
8	Rock Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i> *	▶ 1
2	Band-tailed Pigeon <i>Patagioenas fasciata</i>	▶ 1
8	Eurasian Collared-Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> *	▶ 5
15	Inca Dove <i>Columbina inca</i>	▶ 4
4	Common Ground Dove <i>Columbina passerina</i>	▶ 4
148	White-winged Dove <i>Zenaida asiatica</i>	▶ 20
54	Mourning Dove <i>Zenaida macroura</i>	▶ 12
4	Greater Roadrunner <i>Geococcyx californianus</i>	▶ 3
2	Yellow-billed Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	▶ 2
1	Lesser Nighthawk <i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i>	▶ 1
5	Common Nighthawk <i>Chordeiles minor</i>	▶ 1
1	Mexican Whip-poor-will <i>Antrostomus arizonae</i>	▶ 1

7	White-throated Swift <i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>	▶  2
4	Rivoli's Hummingbird <i>Eugenes fulgens</i>	▶  4
6	Blue-throated Mountain-gem <i>Lampornis clemenciae</i>	▶  4
1	Lucifer Hummingbird <i>Calothorax lucifer</i>	▶  1
31	Black-chinned Hummingbird <i>Archilochus alexandri</i>	▶  11
13	Anna's Hummingbird <i>Calypte anna</i>	▶  3
3	Costa's Hummingbird <i>Calypte costae</i>	▶  1
1	Rufous Hummingbird <i>Selasphorus rufus</i>	▶  1
4	Broad-tailed Hummingbird <i>Selasphorus platycercus</i>	▶  3
66	Broad-billed Hummingbird <i>Cynanthus latirostris</i>	▶  16
7	Violet-crowned Hummingbird <i>Ramosomyia violiceps</i>	▶  4
1	Berylline Hummingbird <i>Saucerottia beryllina</i>	▶  1
1	Common Gallinule <i>Gallinula galeata</i>	▶  1
4	American Coot <i>Fulica americana</i>	▶  2
45	Black-necked Stilt <i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	▶  1
50	American Avocet <i>Recurvirostra americana</i>	▶  1
9	Killdeer <i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	▶  2
1	Semipalmated Plover <i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	▶  1
2	Long-billed Curlew <i>Numenius americanus</i>	▶  1
3	Long-billed Dowitcher <i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>	▶  1
70	Wilson's Phalarope <i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>	▶  1
1	Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularius</i>	▶  1
3	Lesser Yellowlegs <i>Tringa flavipes</i>	▶  1




















2	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	▶  1
2	Stilt Sandpiper	<i>Calidris himantopus</i>	▶  1
100	Baird's Sandpiper	<i>Calidris bairdii</i>	▶  1
16	Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	▶  1
6	Western Sandpiper	<i>Calidris mauri</i>	▶  1
1	Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	▶  1
17	White-faced Ibis	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>	▶  1
1	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	▶  1
5	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	▶  1
6	Black Vulture	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>	▶  3
53	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	▶  12
2	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	▶  1
7	Cooper's Hawk	<i>Astur cooperii</i>	▶  5
1	Mississippi Kite	<i>Ictinia mississippiensis</i>	▶  1
3	Harris's Hawk	<i>Parabuteo unicinctus</i>	▶  1
7	Gray Hawk	<i>Buteo plagiatus</i>	▶  6
1	Zone-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo albonotatus</i>	▶  1
1	Short-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo brachyurus</i>	▶  2  1
7	Swainson's Hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	▶  5
8	Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	▶  6
1	Whiskered Screech-Owl	<i>Megascops trichopsis</i>	▶  1
1	Great Horned Owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>	▶  1
2	Elf Owl	<i>Micrathene whitneyi</i>	▶  1

5	Elegant Trogon <i>Trogon elegans</i>	▶  3
35	Acorn Woodpecker <i>Melanerpes formicivorus</i>	▶  12
29	Gila Woodpecker <i>Melanerpes uropygialis</i>	▶  10
6	Ladder-backed Woodpecker <i>Dryobates scalaris</i>	▶  6
2	Hairy Woodpecker <i>Dryobates villosus</i>	▶  2
7	Arizona Woodpecker <i>Dryobates arizonae</i>	▶  5
5	Northern Flicker <i>Colaptes auratus</i>	▶  5
1	Gilded Flicker <i>Colaptes chrysoides</i>	▶  1
8	American Kestrel <i>Falco sparverius</i>	▶  2
1	Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	▶  1
2	Rose-throated Becard <i>Pachyramphus aglaiae</i>	▶  1  2
4	Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet <i>Camptostoma imberbe</i>	▶  4
8	Greater Pewee <i>Contopus pertinax</i>	▶  7
35	Western Wood-Pewee <i>Contopus sordidulus</i>	▶  13
11	Western Flycatcher <i>Empidonax difficilis</i>	▶  6
1	Buff-breasted Flycatcher <i>Empidonax fulvifrons</i>	▶  1
1	Black Phoebe <i>Sayornis nigricans</i>	▶  1
1	Say's Phoebe <i>Sayornis saya</i>	▶  1
12	Vermilion Flycatcher <i>Pyrocephalus rubinus</i>	▶  5
15	Dusky-capped Flycatcher <i>Myiarchus tuberculifer</i>	▶  7
4	Ash-throated Flycatcher <i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>	▶  3
20	Brown-crested Flycatcher <i>Myiarchus tyrannulus</i>	▶  11
13	Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher <i>Myiodynastes luteiventris</i>	▶  3

4	Tropical Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i>	▶  3
17	Cassin's Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus vociferans</i>	▶  7
13	Thick-billed Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus crassirostris</i>	▶  8
19	Western Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>	▶  5
5	Bell's Vireo	<i>Vireo bellii</i>	▶  5
8	Hutton's Vireo	<i>Vireo huttoni</i>	▶  5
15	Plumbeous Vireo	<i>Vireo plumbeus</i>	▶  8
3	Warbling Vireo	<i>Vireo gilvus</i>	▶  2
3	Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	▶  3
5	Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>	▶  3
3	Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay	<i>Aphelocoma woodhouseii</i>	▶  2
30	Mexican Jay	<i>Aphelocoma wollweberi</i>	▶  9
3	Chihuahuan Raven	<i>Corvus cryptoleucus</i>	▶  2
6	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	▶  4
1	Mountain Chickadee	<i>Poecile gambeli</i>	▶  1
4	Mexican Chickadee	<i>Poecile sclateri</i>	▶  2
36	Bridled Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus wollweberi</i>	▶  10
19	Verdin	<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>	▶  9
5	Horned Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	▶  1
70	Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	▶  2
12	Violet-green Swallow	<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>	▶  1
3	Purple Martin	<i>Progne subis</i>	▶  1
9	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	▶  5





82	Cliff Swallow <i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>	▶  4
7	Bushtit <i>Psaltriparus minimus</i>	▶  2
23	White-breasted Nuthatch <i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	▶  10
11	Pygmy Nuthatch <i>Sitta pygmaea</i>	▶  4
3	Red-breasted Nuthatch <i>Sitta canadensis</i>	▶  2
5	Brown Creeper <i>Certhia americana</i>	▶  5
2	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher <i>Polioptila caerulea</i>	▶  2
4	Black-tailed Gnatcatcher <i>Polioptila melanura</i>	▶  2
4	Rock Wren <i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>	▶  2
3	Canyon Wren <i>Catherpes mexicanus</i>	▶  3
8	Northern House Wren <i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	▶  5
11	Bewick's Wren <i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>	▶  8
13	Cactus Wren <i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>	▶  6
19	Curve-billed Thrasher <i>Toxostoma curvirostre</i>	▶  11
6	Bendire's Thrasher <i>Toxostoma bendirei</i>	▶  2
1	Crissal Thrasher <i>Toxostoma crissale</i>	▶  1
5	Northern Mockingbird <i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	▶  3
2	Eastern Bluebird <i>Sialia sialis</i>	▶  1
4	Western Bluebird <i>Sialia mexicana</i>	▶  2
1	Hermit Thrush <i>Catharus guttatus</i>	▶  1
9	American Robin <i>Turdus migratorius</i>	▶  4
16	Phainopepla <i>Phainopepla nitens</i>	▶  7
2	Olive Warbler <i>Peucedramus taeniatus</i>	▶  2

18	House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i> *	▶ 6
113	House Finch <i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>	▶ 19
3	Red Crossbill <i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	▶ 2
3	Pine Siskin <i>Spinus pinus</i>	▶ 1
93	Lesser Goldfinch <i>Spinus psaltria</i>	▶ 20
3	Rufous-winged Sparrow <i>Peucaea carpalis</i>	▶ 2
1	Botteri's Sparrow <i>Peucaea botterii</i>	▶ 1
8	Cassin's Sparrow <i>Peucaea cassinii</i>	▶ 3
1	Black-chinned Sparrow <i>Spizella atrogularis</i>	▶ 1
1	Five-striped Sparrow <i>Amphispizopsis quinquestrata</i>	▶ 1
42	Black-throated Sparrow <i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>	▶ 6
2	Lark Sparrow <i>Chondestes grammacus</i>	▶ 2
27	Yellow-eyed Junco <i>Junco phaeonotus</i>	▶ 5
6	Song Sparrow <i>Melospiza melodia</i>	▶ 3
12	Canyon Towhee <i>Melospiza fusca</i>	▶ 5
8	Abert's Towhee <i>Melospiza aberti</i>	▶ 5
2	Rufous-crowned Sparrow <i>Aimophila ruficeps</i>	▶ 2
23	Spotted Towhee <i>Pipilo maculatus</i>	▶ 11
16	Yellow-breasted Chat <i>Icteria virens</i>	▶ 6
6	Chihuahuan Meadowlark <i>Sturnella lilianae</i>	▶ 2
11	Hooded Oriole <i>Icterus cucullatus</i>	▶ 8
8	Bullock's Oriole <i>Icterus bullockii</i>	▶ 4
2	Scott's Oriole <i>Icterus parisorum</i>	▶ 2

5	Red-winged Blackbird <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	▶  2
4	Bronzed Cowbird <i>Molothrus aeneus</i>	▶  3
28	Brown-headed Cowbird <i>Molothrus ater</i>	▶  7
6	Great-tailed Grackle <i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>	▶  3
5	Lucy's Warbler <i>Leiothlypis luciae</i>	▶  2
1	Virginia's Warbler <i>Leiothlypis virginiae</i>	▶  1
2	Common Yellowthroat <i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	▶  2
6	Yellow Warbler <i>Setophaga petechia</i>	▶  5
8	Grace's Warbler <i>Setophaga graciae</i>	▶  3
3	Black-throated Gray Warbler <i>Setophaga nigrescens</i>	▶  3
1	Hermit Warbler <i>Setophaga occidentalis</i>	▶  1
4	Red-faced Warbler <i>Cardellina rubrifrons</i>	▶  4
13	Painted Redstart <i>Myioborus pictus</i>	▶  4
15	Hepatic Tanager <i>Piranga flava</i>	▶  9
9	Summer Tanager <i>Piranga rubra</i>	▶  9
4	Western Tanager <i>Piranga ludoviciana</i>	▶  3
1	Flame-colored Tanager <i>Piranga bidentata</i>	▶  1  1
24	Northern Cardinal <i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	▶  11
15	Pyrrhuloxia <i>Cardinalis sinuatus</i>	▶  5
14	Black-headed Grosbeak <i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i>	▶  9
13	Blue Grosbeak <i>Passerina caerulea</i>	▶  9
2	Varied Bunting <i>Passerina versicolor</i>	▶  2

ADDITIONAL TAXA

35	Mallard/Mexican Duck <i>Anas platyrhynchos/diazi</i>	▶  1
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- 1 dabbling duck sp. *Anatidae sp. (dabbling duck sp.)* ▶  1
 - 1 hummingbird sp. *Trochilidae sp.* ▶  1
 - 1 raven sp. *Corvus sp. (raven sp.)* ▶  1
 - 1 new world oriole sp. *Icterus sp.* ▶  1
-