

SOUTHEAST ARIZONA: CUSTOM TRIP REPORT

25 JULY - 1 AUGUST 2019

By Jacob Roalef



We enjoyed nice looks at Five-striped Sparrow, one of the top targets on this trip.



Overview

Southeast Arizona is a land full of beauty with an incredible diversity of avian life, habitats, scenic views, and other wildlife. On this custom-made, 8-day tour we fully experienced this land's diversity, ranging from the extreme heat of the desert and lowlands to the lush conifers on top of the canyons. The trip began and ended in Phoenix to include a few specialty birds, and from there we traveled through the canyons of southeast Arizona.

A total of 168 bird species were seen (plus eight species heard only). In addition 19 species of mammals where sighted as well as various other wildlife and insects. Full bird and mammal species list can be found at the end of this report. Highlights included Five-striped Sparrow, Rivoli's Hummingbird, Rosy-faced Lovebird, Arizona Woodpecker, Montezuma Quail (heard), Lucifer Hummingbird, Zone-tailed Hawk, LeConte's Thrasher, Bendire's Thrasher, Blue-throated Mountaingem, Olive Warbler, Hermit Warbler, Red-faced Warbler, Common Black Hawk, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Whiskered Screech Owl, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, and Elegant Trogon (heard), as well as White-nosed Coati on the mammal front.



Gorgeous sunsets were almost a nightly occurrence over the beautiful desert and canyons of the region.



Detailed Report

Day 1, 25 July 2019. Phoenix Area

The tour began around noon when Kieran and Pattie were picked up from the Phoenix airport rental car center. From there we stopped for a quick bite to eat before continuing to Encanto Park, located in the heart of the big city. It didn't take long before we heard and then saw a small flock of **Rosy-faced Lovebirds**, an established parrot species here and countable for ABA listing. We scanned the rest of the park quickly and were treated to mostly common city birds, but there was a nice **Ring-necked Duck** mixed in. We then continued west out of the hustle of the big city to check on a few areas with water. First was the Glendale Recharge Ponds, which hosted a few shorebirds including **Baird's Sandpiper** and **Western Sandpiper**. Pattie also excellently spotted an adult **Bald Eagle** flying by. Next was the Lower River Road Ponds, where we enjoyed great comparison looks of **Neotropic** and **Double-crested Cormorants** perched next to each other. Our final birding stop of the day was the famous Baseline Road thrasher spot. Unfortunately conditions were extremely hot, which made for tough birding, but we eventually got a flash of **LeConte's Thrasher**, which we labeled as a BVD (Better View Desired). We continued searching with no avail but did enjoy a fly-over **Lesser Nighthawk** in the early evening. Then it was off to dinner and the accommodation in Chandler from here.

Day 2, 26 July 2019. Tucson and Mt. Lemmon

We started the day with some morning birding at Sweetwater Wetlands Park. This small park in Tucson was a pleasant area to hike around in the morning before it got too hot. We enjoyed views of a bright-red **Vermilion Flycatcher** as well as quite a few **Abert's Towhees** hopping around. Things really started to heat up around mid-morning, so we headed up Mt. Lemmon for some altitude birding. We hiked around Rose Canyon Lake, where things were considerably cooler, but we were unlucky with our target bird (more to come later). We did, however, enjoy some point-blank looks at **Yellow-eyed Junco**. We did a little exploring around the campsites until we finally crossed paths with the mixed flock we were hoping for, which contained **Grace's Warbler**, **Pygmy Nuthatch**, **Plumbeous Vireo**, **Cordilleran Flycatcher**, **Greater Pewee**, and others. A **Rufous Hummingbird** was certainly interested in Pattie's hat and almost flew right into the car for further investigation! We continued farther up the mountain for a lunch stop and picked up a few more species at feeders, such as **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** and **Pine Siskin**.

The afternoon was spent driving to Madera Canyon and our next accommodation stop, Santa Rita Lodge. We managed to arrive with just enough daylight to quickly head out to Box Canyon, where we finally scored **Five-striped Sparrow**, our top target species, and a nice **Scott's Oriole**. A great finish to our second day!

Day 3, 27 July 2019. Birding various sites

We started the day with a relaxing morning by the Santa Rita Lodge feeders, where we enjoyed a few great species like Rivoli's Hummingbird, Arizona Woodpecker, Hepatic Tanager, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and Bullock's Oriole. The rare and elusive White-nosed Coati even made several visits, and with a little luck everyone could enjoy this inquisitive mammal!



We then made our way to Florida and Box Canyon, where we were able to find the rare **Black-capped Gnatcatcher**, an adorable **Lucifer Hummingbird** nest with two babies, and a jaw-dropping **Varied Bunting** foraging low to the ground. We then continued south to the De Anza trail in Tubac, which unfortunately had recently experienced some path-altering weather events. There were still loads of new birds for the trip, though, like **Tropical Kingbird**, **Inca Dove** and **Common Ground Dove**, **Rufous-winged Sparrow**, and **Phainopepla**. Next up was the Patagonia Rest Stop, which treated us to a family of **Thick-billed Kingbirds** perched in the tree right over our car. To finish the day we decided to head to the Ash Canyon B&B, which had recently enjoyed hosting a rare hummingbird as well as an occasionally quail. Unfortunately, the hummer never made an appearance, but we did hear a few great birds in the distance like **Montezuma Quail**, **Elegant Trogon**, and **Grey Hawk**.



The inquisitive White-nosed Coati visits the feeders and drinks the hummingbird sugar water!

Day 4, 28 July 2019. Carr Canyon and San Pedro House

We started this morning very early, back at the Ash Canyon B&B for one last effort on the Plain-capped Starthroat rarity or a visual of Montezuma Quail. After a few hours waiting, however, enough was enough. We spent the better part of the day at Carr Canyon, one of the many spectacular canyons in the Huachuca Mountains. On the drive up we managed to score a quick look at **Woodhouse's Scrub Jay**, a recently split species. The Reef Townsite Campground was particularly slow that morning, but we showed great patience and resilience. Finally we were rewarded with views of **Buff-breasted Flycatcher**, **Spotted Towhee**, and **Hutton's Vireo**. We did a bit of hiking to a nice overlook area, thanks to the tip of another birder, and were treated to spectacular, top-down views of a **Zone-tailed Hawk!** Then we continued our way to the top, but things were slow and quiet. All we managed were a few **Painted Redstarts**.



After lunch we finished the day at the San Pedro House hiking trails, a nice system of trails with a good variety of habitat and a gift shop. The weather was getting rough, but we scored some close views of **Botteri's Sparrow** and **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**. There was also a **Western Screech Owl** that would occasionally poke its head out while roosting in a cavity in a giant cottonwood tree. After about two hours the weather had wiped us out, and we decided to call it a day. We enjoyed a nice dinner near our hotel in Sierra Vista.

Day 5, 29 July, 2019. Las Cienegas and Ramsey Canyon

The morning was spent in the expansive grassland habitat of Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. Right away we were treated to close views of a singing Cassin's Sparrow, and in the distance a Swainson's Hawk was perched in a small tree. The immediate success upon entering this grassland had been a sign, and the hits at Las Cienegas just kept coming with Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, Botteri's Sparrow, over 20 more Cassin's Sparrows, Cassin's Kingbird, American Kestrel, and Lark Sparrow. A stop at the small cattle ponds netted us a few Lucy's Warblers, Black Phoebe, and Brown-crested Flycatcher. Finally we made it to the colony of Black-tailed Prairie Dog, a species extirpated from the state and currently undergoing reintroduction programs. Joining these fun mammals was a whole family of Burrowing Owls.



One of the many singing Cassin's Sparrows

The afternoon was spent at Ramsey Canyon, where we got onto a nice **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher** in the parking lot. We then hiked about half a mile up when Kieran spotted the **Whiskered Screech Owl** about which a nice gentleman had tipped us off. Back at the bottom a lovely **Violet-crowned Hummingbird** was sitting on its nest near a feeder station. We decided



to head back to the hotel to rest a little and get dinner before heading out for a little nighttime birding. After dinner we returned to Carr Canyon, and at the lower canyon picnic area we managed to hear **Common Poorwill** calling from the rocky, lowland scrub.

Day 6, 30 July 2019. Portal and the Chiricahua Mountains

We were up and out of the hotel early to begin our journey toward Portal and the majestic Chiricahua Mountains. We started by driving along Stateline Road, where we eventually caught up with **Bendire's Thrasher**. We watched it fly from the left side of the car in Arizona across the street to the right side of the car and land in New Mexico. A double-state tick! Along the road we also encountered a few more nice species like **Greater Roadrunner**, **Black-throated Sparrow**, and **Pyrrhuloxia**. Next we visited a few feeder stations in the Portal area. These feeders were bustling with wildlife, including over 50 **Gambel's Quails**, **Canyon Towhee**, **Blue-throated Mountaingem**, and **Harris's Antelope Squirrel**, and we even heard **Crissal Thrasher**.

From here we began our journey up the mountain, where we enjoyed lunch at a campground with a few Yellow-eyed Juncos. After lunch we birded along the road between Onion Saddle and Barefoot junction, which is loaded with conifers. Right away a few Red Crossbills were getting a drink from a small puddle in the road. After a few hours of searching, we came across a few mixed flocks that were absolutely loaded with different species, including Hairy Woodpecker, Olive Warbler, Brown Creeper, Bridled Titmouse, Grace's Warbler, Blackthroated Grey Warbler, Painted Redstart, Pygmy Nuthatch, House Wren, and Bushtit. Our last stop of the day was the feeder station at the George Walker House in Paradise. Unfortunately our time here was cut short due to an incoming thunderstorm. We decided to head back down the canyon before any potential flooding occurred.



The adorable Harris's Antelope Squirrel waiting for its turn at some bird seed.



Day 7, 31 July 2019. Phoenix – Willcox and Mt. Lemmon

We spent the early hours of the morning at Lake Cochise just outside of Willcox. An oasis of water in an otherwise dry desert, this lake was teeming with waterbirds. Hundreds of shorebirds like American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, and Wilson's Phalarope were covering the water's edge. Larger waders and ducks such as Great Blue Heron, White-faced Ibis, and Cinnamon Teal were foraging in the slightly deeper sections, while Barn and Tree Swallows were zooming around catching insects. We continued on our journey back to Phoenix and made a quick stop in a small town called Saint David. A pair of Mississippi Kites were nesting in the neighborhood, and it didn't take long before we were treated to great looks of this amazing raptor.

We decided to give Mt. Lemmon one more try, and this time it sure didn't disappoint! Back at Rose Canyon Lake we waited for only about 15 minutes before a raptor started calling. The **Common Black Hawk** was soaring around and then perched up in a tree for us for over 10 minutes while we watched in the scope. A true highlight bird of the trip! We then continued up the mountain, where we encountered an amazing mixed flock with multiple **Red-faced Warblers**, **Hermit Warbler**, **Townsend's Warbler**, and **Mountain Chickadee**. We couldn't help but celebrate a little during a late lunch before making the few hours' drive back to Phoenix for the final night of the trip.



The stunning Mississippi Kite

Day 8, 1 August, 2019. Thrasher and Departure

On the final morning of the trip we decided to head back to Baseline Road in hopes of better views of LeConte's Thrasher. This morning proved to be much more active, and we quickly found LeConte's Thrasher as well as multiple Bendire's Thrashers, Ash-throated



Flycatcher, and a pair of **Black-tailed Gnatcatchers**. A great morning to finish a great tour! We then transferred to the airport and said our goodbyes and until next time.



The colors on this **Broad-billed Hummingbird** really shimmer in the light.



We were treated to great views of the strange-looking Yellow-eyed Junco.



Bird List - Following IOC (9.1)

Birds 'heard only' are marked with (H) after the common name, all other species were seen.

The following notation after the common names is used to show conservation status following BirdLife International: CR = Critically Endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, NT = Near-threatened.

Common Name	Scientific Name	
Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl (Anatidae)		
Canada Goose	Branta canadensis	
Blue-winged Teal	Spatula discors	
Cinnamon Teal	Spatula cyanoptera	
Northern Shoveler	Spatula clypeata	
Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos	
Mexican Duck	Anas diazi	
Ring-necked Duck	Aythya collaris	
New World Quail (Odonto	phoridae)	
Gambel's Quail	Callipepla gambelii	
Montezuma Quail (H)	Cyrtonyx montezumae	
Pheasants, Grouse, and All Wild Turkey	ies (Phasianidae) Meleagris gallopavo	
Pigeons and Doves (Colum	bidae)	
Rock Pigeon	Columba livia	
Eurasian Collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto	
Inca Dove	Columbina inca	
Common Ground Dove	Columbina passerina	
White-winged Dove	Zenaida asiatica	
Mourning Dove	Zenaida macroura	
Cuckoos (Cuculidae)		
Greater Roadrunner	Geococcyx californianus	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Coccyzus americanus	
Nightjars and Allies (Capri	imulgidae)	
Lesser Nighthawk	Chordeiles acutipennis	
Common Poorwill (H)	Phalaenoptilus nuttallii	







Common Name	Scientific Name
Falcons and Caracaras (Falc	conidae)
American Kestrel	Falco sparverius
Old World Parrots (Psittacu	lidae)
Rosy-faced Lovebird	Agapornis roseicollis
Tyrant Flycatchers (Tyranni	idae)
Greater Pewee	Contopus pertinax
Western Wood Pewee	Contopus sordidulus
Cordilleran Flycatcher	Empidonax occidentalis
Buff-breasted Flycatcher	Empidonax fulvifrons
Black Phoebe	Sayornis nigricans
Say's Phoebe	Sayornis saya
Vermilion Flycatcher	Pyrocephalus rubinus
Dusky-capped Flycatcher	Myiarchus tuberculifer
Ash-throated Flycatcher	Myiarchus cinerascens
Brown-crested Flycatcher	Myiarchus tyrannulus
Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher	Myiodynastes luteiventris
Tropical Kingbird	Tyrannus melancholicus
Cassin's Kingbird	Tyrannus vociferans
Thick-billed Kingbird	Tyrannus crassirostris
Western Kingbird	Tyrannus verticalis
Shrikes (Laniidae)	
Loggerhead Shrike - NT	Lanius ludovicianus
Vireos (Vireonidae)	
Bell's Vireo (H)	Vireo bellii
Hutton's Vireo	Vireo huttoni
Plumbeous Vireo	Vireo plumbeus
Warbling Vireo	Vireo gilvus
Crows, Jays, and Magpies (C	Corvidae)
Steller's Jay	Cyanocitta stelleri
Woodhouse's Scrub Jay	Aphelocoma woodhouseii
Mexican Jay	Aphelocoma wollweberi
Chihuahuan Raven	Corvus cryptoleucus
Common Raven	Corvus corax





Common Name	Scientific Name
Western Bluebird	Sialia mexicana
Hermit Thrush	Catharus guttatus
American Robin	Turdus migratorius
Mockingbirds and Thrasher	rs (Mimidae)
Curve-billed Thrasher	Toxostoma curvirostre
Bendire's Thrasher - VU	Toxostoma bendirei
LeConte's Thrasher	Toxostoma lecontei
Crissal Thrasher (H)	Toxostoma crissale
Northern Mockingbird	Mimus polyglottos
Starlings (Sturnidae)	
European Starling	Sturnus vulgaris
Silky-flycatchers (Ptiliogona	
Phainopepla	Phainopepla nitens
Olive Warbler (Peucedrami	dae)
Olive Warbler	Peucedramus taeniatus
Onve warbier	1 enceuramus inemuius
Finches, Euphonias, and All	ies (Fringillidae)
House Finch	Haemorhous mexicanus
Red Crossbill	Loxia curvirostra
Pine Siskin	Spinus pinus
Lesser Goldfinch	Spinus psaltria
New World Sparrows (Passe	erellidae)
Rufous-winged Sparrow	Peucaea carpalis
Botteri's Sparrow	Peucaea botterii
Cassin's Sparrow	Peucaea cassinii
Grasshopper Sparrow	Ammodramus savannarum
Chipping Sparrow	Spizella passerina
Black-throated Sparrow	Amphispiza bilineata
Five-striped Sparrow	Amphispiza quinquestriata
Lark Sparrow	Chondestes grammacus
Lark Bunting	Calamospiza melanocorys
Yellow-eyed Junco	Junco phaeonotus
Song Sparrow	Melospiza melodia
Canyon Towhee	Melozone fusca



Common Name	Scientific Name
Abert's Towhee	Melozone aberti
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	Aimophila ruficeps
Spotted Towhee	Pipilo maculatus
Yellow-breasted Chat (Icterii	dae)
Yellow-breasted Chat	Icteria virens
Troupials and Allies (Icterida	e)
Eastern Meadowlark - NT	Sturnella magna
Hooded Oriole	Icterus cucullatus
Bullock's Oriole	Icterus bullockii
Scott's Oriole	Icterus parisorum
Red-winged Blackbird	Agelaius phoeniceus
Bronzed Cowbird	Molothrus aeneus
Brown-headed Cowbird	Molothrus ater
Great-tailed Grackle	Quiscalus mexicanus
New World Warblers (Parulio	dae)
Lucy's Warbler	Oreothlypis luciae
Virginia's Warbler	Oreothlypis virginiae
Common Yellowthroat	Geothlypis trichas
Yellow Warbler	Setophaga petechia
Grace's Warbler	Setophaga graciae
Black-throated Grey Warbler	Setophaga nigrescens
Townsend's Warbler	Setophaga townsendi
Hermit Warbler	Setophaga occidentalis
Red-faced Warbler	Cardellina rubrifrons
Painted Redstart	Myioborus pictus
Cardinals and Allies (Cardina	alidae)
Hepatic Tanager	Piranga flava
Summer Tanager	Piranga rubra
Western Tanager	Piranga ludoviciana
Northern Cardinal	Cardinalis cardinalis
Pyrrhuloxia	Cardinalis sinuatus
Black-headed Grosbeak	Pheucticus melanocephalus
Blue Grosbeak	Passerina caerulea
Varied Bunting	Passerina versicolor



Common Name	Scientific Name
Old World Sparrows (Passeridae)	
House Sparrow	Passer domesticus

Total Seen	168
Total Heard	7
Total Recorded	174

Mammal List

Common Name	Scientific Name
Squirrels and Allies (Sciuridae	e)
Harris's Antelope Squirrel	Ammospermophilus harrisii
Black-tailed Prairie Dog	Cynomys ludovicianus
Rock Squirrel	Otospermophilus variegatus
Arizona Gray Squirrel	Sciurus arizonensis
Round-tailed Ground Squirrel	Xerospermophilus tereticaudus
Gray-collared Chipmunk	Neotamias dorsalis
Gophers (Geomyidae)	
Botta's Pocket Gopher	Thomomys bottae
Rabbits and Hares (Leporidae	9)
Antelope Jackrabbit	Lepus alleni
Black-tailed Jackrabbit	Lepus californicus
Desert Cottontail	Sylvilagus audubonii
Shrews (Soricidae)	
Crawford's Gray Shrew	Notiosorex crawfordi
New World Leaf-nosed Bats (I	Phyllostomidae)
Mexican Long-tongued Bat	Choeronycteris mexicana
Free-tailed Bats (Molossidae)	
Brazilian Free-tailed Bat	Tadarida brasiliensis
Dogs (Canidae)	
Coyote	Canis latrans



Common Name	Scientific Name
New World Tree Climbe	rs (Procyonidae)
White-nosed Coati	Nasua narica
Northern Raccoon	Procyon lotor
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Deer (Cervidae)	
Mule Deer	Odocoileus hemionus
White-tailed Deer	Odocoileus virginianus
Pronghorn (Antilocaprid	lae)
Pronghorn	Antilocapra americana
Total seen	19

