



“Monsoon Magic” in Southeast Arizona

Hummingbirds and a Whole Lot More!

August 15-23, 2019



A birding field tour organized by Seven Ponds Nature Center together with Ken Blankenship and East West Birding Tours

Mid-August may seem like a strange time to visit Arizona, but for birders it's the perfect time to find over a hundred birds unique to the southwest, including many species that cannot be found anywhere else in the U.S. Further, the late summer monsoon rains result in the “second spring” – a greening of the desert and a resurgence of bird activity. Much of our tour will be spent at upper elevations, where summer temperatures are moderate, and – in many cases – may be cooler than the hot, humid conditions in the Midwest.



The hummingbird show in late summer in southeast Arizona is unrivaled anywhere else in the United States, with an incredible fourteen species possible. Broad-billed (pictured above), Blue-throated, Rivoli's, Violet-crowned, Black-chinned, Broad-tailed, and Rufous are all expected to be present in late summer. Lucifer, Costa's, Calliope, and Allen's are more challenging, but still very possible. Mexican species such as Plain-capped Starthroat, White-eared, and Berylline occur as post-breeding wanderers or local breeders. Along with the hummingbird possibilities we hope to find such local avian stars as Zone-tailed Hawk, Elegant Trogon, Five-striped Sparrow, Montezuma Quail, Arizona Woodpecker, Thick-billed Kingbird, Mexican Jay, Red-faced Warbler, Abert's Towhee, and Yellow-eyed Junco – just to name a few! The three counties in which we will be spending all of our time – Pima (466), Cochise (466), and Santa Cruz (436) – each have more bird species recorded on eBird than the entire state of Michigan (433). Let's go birding there and experience the Monsoon Magic!

TOUR ITINERARY

Our daily activities will be flexible based on species we've seen to date and recent bird reports, but the following outline provides a preliminary plan of how we will spend our days. Our plans are subject to change based on rare bird sightings, weather conditions, and area closures. Note: the birds listed are not intended to be an exhaustive list – just a sampling of what may be found at each location.

LODGING QUICK-VIEW

Thursday, August 15 – Arrival Date; Comfort Inn Airport – Tucson airport

Friday-Saturday, August 16, 17 – Santa Rita Lodge – Madera Canyon/Santa Rita Mountains

Sunday-Monday, August 18, 19 – Portal Peak Lodge – Portal/Chiricahua Mountains

Tuesday-Wednesday, August 20, 21 – Comfort Inn & Suites – Sierra Vista

Thursday, August 22 – Comfort Inn Airport – Tucson airport

Friday, August 23 – Departure Date [no hotel]

DAY 1 – Thursday, August 15 – Arrival in Tucson; shuttle to hotel; Sonoran Desert

introduction Plan your arrival in Tucson by 1:00 p.m. (earlier is better). After hotel check-in, we'll spend the afternoon at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. This 98 acre area combines zoo, botanical garden,



art gallery, natural history museum, and aquarium into a single facility that includes 1,200 plant types and 230 animal species. It's a great location to learn about desert ecology, and a fantastic place to see characteristic desert birds such as Gambel's Quail, Gila Woodpecker, Verdin, Curve-billed Thrasher, Cactus Wren, Pyrrhuloxia, Hooded Oriole, and Black-throated Sparrow. The hummingbird feeders and plantings will give us a chance to find Anna's, Black-chinned and Costa's hummingbirds. We'll conclude our visit with a walk on a short trail at the adjacent Saguaro National Park, where we will enjoy the large cacti and have additional opportunities to see desert birds. Time permitting, we may also visit nearby Sweetwater Wetlands, a constructed wetland that attracts a huge variety of birds, including waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, and many others.



DAY 2 – Friday, August 16 – Patagonia area

We'll be on the road early as we head to the Patagonia area. At Patagonia Lake State Park, Kino Springs, and the (world-famous) Patagonia roadside rest area we hope to find such birds as Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Neotropic Cormorant, Gray Hawk, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Vermilion Flycatcher, Tropical and Thick-billed kingbirds, Lucy's Warbler, and Varied Bunting. Another possibility is Black-capped Gnatcatcher, which is very rare north of Mexico. At the Paton Center for Hummingbirds, we will look for the handsome Violet-crowned Hummingbird as well as other hummingbirds, plus feeder birds like Gila Woodpecker, Abert's Towhee, Inca Dove, and more.

In the afternoon we will head north to Madera Canyon in the Santa Rita Mountains, where the Santa Rita Lodge will be our base for the next two nights. The cabins and casitas here are simpler than modern hotel rooms, but they provide clean and comfortable lodging in a great birding location. Just outside our rooms we will enjoy a variety of birds at the feeders and in the oaks and sycamores nearby. After we check in we'll spend the rest of the afternoon simply enjoying being around the lodge. The hummingbird feeders here typically host several species, including Broad-billed and Rivoli's (formerly Magnificent), and will provide our second hummingbird show of the day! Other species attracted to the various feeders include Acorn Woodpecker, Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Scott's Oriole. Weather conditions permitting we will attempt some owling during our two nights here, as Whiskered Screech-Owls are resident in the oak woodlands around the lodge, and Western Screech-Owls are found in the thickets at the mouth of the canyon.



DAY 3 – Saturday, August 17 – Santa Rita grasslands, Box and Madera Canyons

An early start will give us a full day to explore the area, and we'll start in the Santa Rita grasslands below the mouth of the canyon. This is a great location for Rufous-winged, Cassin's, Botteri's, and Black-throated sparrows. We will also have another chance at such regional specialties as Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet and Black-capped Gnatcatcher, especially at Proctor Road. In Box Canyon, Five-striped Sparrows have nested during monsoon in recent years, and it's also a great place to look

for Varied Bunting, Costa's Hummingbird, Scott's and Hooded Orioles, and other birds of tropical thornscrub. The oak woodlands and sycamore-lined creek near the lodge could yield Sulphur-bellied and Brown-crested flycatchers, Hutton's Vireo, and Black-throated Gray Warbler. Eventually we will explore higher in the canyon where exciting species such as Elegant Trogon, Arizona Woodpecker, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Painted Redstart, and Hepatic Tanager can be found.

DAY 4 – Sunday, August 18 – To Portal and the Chiricahua Mountains Today we will venture east to the spectacular Chiricahua Mountains near the Arizona-New Mexico border. One obvious stop en route will be on the outskirts of Willcox, where a couple of large ponds in the middle of the desert act as magnets for waterbirds migrating overhead. Possibilities here include Cinnamon Teal, White-faced Ibis, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, and Wilson's Phalarope. As we approach the small town of Portal

(our home for the next two nights) we'll drive through desert grasslands that host species such as Swainson's Hawk, Scaled Quail, Bendire's and Crissal thrashers, Say's Phoebe, and Lark Sparrow. In Portal we will find hummingbird feeders at the lodge and a few locations in town, so the show will continue – hopefully with our first look at the impressive Blue-throated Hummingbird.

DAY 5 – Monday, August 19 – The Chiricahua Mountains We'll take advantage of a full day to discover the diverse habitats and various elevations in the Chiricahuas. We may start early in the desert grasslands below Portal and then enjoy a mid-morning walk in the oak woodlands of Cave Creek Canyon. Here we will have another chance to find Elegant Trogon – a definite target species we hope to see on this tour. The pinyon-juniper habitat in the mid-elevations is another habitat worthy of exploration. In this area we may find species scarce at other locations in southeast Arizona such as Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Juniper Titmouse, and Black-chinned Sparrow. Optional night drives while in Portal could yield Barn Owl or Elf Owl (both challenging), Common Poorwill, and some interesting mammals and reptiles.

DAY 6 – Tuesday, August 20 – The Chiricahua Highlands and on to the Huachuca Mountains Road and weather conditions permitting, the plan for today is to head up and over the Chiricahuas en route to Sierra Vista and the Huachuca Mountains. Some of the species we will search for as we ascend to the pine forest of the higher elevations include Band-tailed Pigeon, Greater Pewee, Pygmy Nuthatch, Mexican Chickadee, Yellow-eyed Junco, and Olive, Grace's, and Red-faced warblers.



Later we will make our way to Sierra Vista at the base of the Huachuca Mountains. Several canyons here – Ash, Miller, and Ramsey – are generally considered the best hummingbird-watching locations in southeast Arizona. We will start this afternoon in one of the canyons and visit all before the tour concludes. In recent years, Lucifer, White-eared, and Berylline hummingbirds – all very rare nesting species in the U.S. – have been present with some regularity in one or more of these canyons. Even if all are not present, the chance to repeatedly enjoy the regular species will be a great entertainment. We may also stop at the Fort Huachuca visitor control office to have our passes made.



DAY 7 – Wednesday, August 21 – Canyons of the Huachucas Depending on our success with the desired species to date, there are many options for our time in the Huachucas. In the event we are still searching for Elegant Trogon, Arizona Woodpecker, Montezuma Quail, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, or any of the other higher elevation warblers such as Olive, Grace's, or Red-faced, a good morning option will be a visit to Huachuca and Sawmill Canyons on the grounds of Fort Huachuca. Additionally, if we're feeling adventurous, the hike up narrow Scheelite Canyon – also on the grounds of Fort Huachuca – could yield a Spotted Owl on its day roost. Regardless, in the afternoon we will take a relaxed approach and enjoy one or more of the hummingbird feeding stations we have yet to visit.

DAY 8 – Thursday, August 22 – Carr Canyon; return to Tucson If we have not done so already, a good option for our final morning in the Huachucas would be to drive to the top of the road in Carr Canyon. The views alone are worth the drive and there is the potential for a variety of species, possibly including Northern Pygmy-Owl, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, and Virginia’s Warbler. By mid-afternoon, after a final search for any species we are still looking for or a return visit to a hummingbird location, we will head back towards Tucson to conclude a great week of Arizona birding together.



DAY 9 – Friday, August 23 – Departure from Tucson Plan your departure for any time today; you can shuttle from the hotel to the airport at your convenience.

TOUR LEADERS & GUIDES



Ken Blankenship is a full-time professional birding guide and the owner-operator of East West Birding Tours. Ken has been birding across the southern tier of the United States for almost 20 years, from Arizona to SoCal, from south Texas around the Gulf of Mexico to the Florida Keys, and throughout the Southern Atlantic states. Like many North American birders, for years Ken has been fascinated by the unique birds and habitats of Southeastern Arizona. In 2015, he decided to pursue a dream of living full-time among the “Sky Island” mountains of Cochise, Santa Cruz, and Pima counties. Ken has spent countless hours in the field in all seasons, learning the ebb and flow of our special migrants, breeding birds, and wintering visitors in the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts, high elevation canyons, rolling grasslands, and riparian corridors. Ken’s other greatest area of expertise is the

status and distribution of the birds of the Southeastern United States – particularly Georgia, his native state – where he continues to work for the Department of Natural Resources in early summer performing various types of breeding bird surveys. Ken is a self-admitted “ear-birding addict,” and has obsessively studied bird vocalizations for years, both in the field and recorded media; this includes everything from songs, to chips, to flight calls, to scolds, and every “seet” and “tsip” in between.

Daryl Bernard is a long-time birder and amateur naturalist who loves being outdoors and embraces every opportunity to share nature with others. He enjoys organizing trips and tours, and strives to ensure that every participant has a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Previous birding tours organized by Daryl include trips to Colorado, Texas Lower, California, New Mexico, and Oregon, in addition to many local birding trips in Michigan. Daryl is the Executive Director at Seven Ponds Nature Center in Lapeer County, Michigan.

Nancy Kautz has been a naturalist at Seven Ponds Nature Center for over a decade. She is a passionate birder, but equally interested in all aspects of natural history. A consummate interpreter, Nancy takes every opportunity to help others enjoy the natural world around them. In preparation for this trip she will not only be studying the birds and bird songs of southeast Arizona, but the plants and other animal life as well. Nancy has been a leader on many Seven Ponds natural history field tours, and recently helped lead tour to the Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley and Michigan’s eastern Upper Peninsula.

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

We will travel in two large vans. Since we will be packing up a few times throughout the tour, we ask that you travel as lightly as is practical. This will help maximize space in the vans.

FEE and REGISTRATION INFORMATION

- Tour Fee: \$2200 per person in double occupancy from Tucson, Arizona
- Single Supplement: \$525 (subject to availability)
- Deposit: \$300 – due upon receipt of registration materials
- Final Payment: \$1900 – due July 1, 2019
- Group size limited to **12 individuals**; early registration is encouraged (tour may fill quickly)

WHAT THE TOUR FEE INCLUDES:

- professional guide service throughout – Ken will be with us for all of our birding
- lodging for eight nights
- all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 9
- ground transportation in two large vans
- shuttle from the airport on Day 1 and to the airport on Day 9
- all park entrance fees, parking fees, tolls, etc.
- pre-trip info and a post-trip mailing with a list of all species observed by the group
- eBird checklist sharing (for those using eBird)

WHAT THE TOUR FEE DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- your airfare to/from Tucson, Arizona
- snacks, additional drinks, and alcoholic beverages
- laundry services
- other items of a personal nature
- gratuity for local birding guide services (optional)

TELEPHONE/ON-SITE REGISTRATION WILL OPEN AS FOLLOWS:

SEVEN PONDS MEMBERS – TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2019 at 9:00 a.m.

GENERAL PUBLIC – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. (if space remains)

Registered participants will be mailed a registration form to return with their tour deposit.

To register for this tour, please call SEVEN PONDS NATURE CENTER at 810-796-3200 on or after the dates listed above. Please be aware that space is limited, these tours often fill quickly, and registration is on a *first-call/visit, first-registered* basis.

For more information, contact Daryl Bernard at 810-796-3200 or 989-513-5195 (cell) or via e-mail at dbernard@sevenponds.org

PHOTO CREDITS

ALAN SCHMIERER: Elegant Trogon (p1), Lucifer Hummingbird (p1)

GORDON KARRE: Broad-billed Hummingbird (p1), Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet (p2), Rivoli's Hummingbird (p3), Painted Redstart (p3), Yellow-eyed Junco (p4), Arizona Woodpecker (p4), Buff-breasted Flycatcher (p5), Mexican Jay (p8), Olive Warbler (p8), Varied Bunting (p8)

Seven Ponds Nature Center
together with Ken Blankenship and EAST WEST BIRDING TOURS
“Monsoon Magic” in Southeast Arizona
Target Species (Highlights)

HUMMINGBIRDS

Rivoli's Hummingbird (*formerly Magnificent*)
Plain-capped Starthroat*‡ (*peak presence, semi-annual; some years none are found*)
Blue-throated Hummingbird† (*mostly in Chiricahua Mtns; possible on Mt. Lemmon*)
Lucifer Hummingbird† (*peak presence*)
Black-chinned Hummingbird
Anna's Hummingbird
Costa's Hummingbird†
Broad-tailed Hummingbird
Rufous Hummingbird (*peak passage*)
Calliope Hummingbird (*peak passage, but tricky; if at a feeding station, word spreads*)
Broad-billed Hummingbird*
Berylline Hummingbird*† (*near peak presence, but much more rare in past 5-6 years*)
Violet-crowned Hummingbird*† (*being found in the field in new places, may be expanding*)
White-eared Hummingbird† (*near peak presence, but more rare in past 5-6 years*)

OTHER SPECIES

Scaled Quail
Montezuma Quail (*hard to target/random*)
Golden Eagle
Short-tailed Hawk (*mostly in Chiricahua Mtns*)
Northern Goshawk†
Harris's Hawk†
Gray Hawk
Zone-tailed Hawk
Band-tailed Pigeon
Inca Dove
Greater Roadrunner
Western Screech-Owl
Whiskered Screech-Owl*
Northern Pygmy-Owl (“Mountain”)*
Elf Owl (*past peak, less vocal/active, but still detectable thru +/- early August*)
“Mexican” Spotted Owl† (*...if a roosting area is found and becomes reliable*)
Lesser Nighthawk
Common Poorwill
White-throated Swift

Elegant Trogon*
Acorn Woodpecker
Gila Woodpecker
Ladder-backed Woodpecker
Arizona Woodpecker*
Gilded Flicker (*only occurs in Sonoran Desert habitat in AZ, NV, CA, and NW Mexico*)
Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet
Tufted Flycatcher‡ (*present from spring through late summer, 2015-2018*)
Greater Pewee
Western Wood-Pewee
Hammond's Flycatcher (*esp. mid-August—*)
Gray Flycatcher (*early, but possible*)
Dusky Flycatcher (*esp. late August—*)
Pacific-slope Flycatcher
Cordilleran Flycatcher
Buff-breasted Flycatcher*
Black Phoebe
Say's Phoebe
Vermilion Flycatcher
Dusky-capped Flycatcher
Ash-throated Flycatcher
Brown-crested Flycatcher
Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher*
Tropical Kingbird (*peak presence*)
Cassin's Kingbird
Thick-billed Kingbird* (*tricky from late July—*)
Western Kingbird
Rose-throated Becard‡ (*may become more reliable for 2-3 years+, as multiple pairs fledged 2 broods spring-summer 2018*)
Bell's Vireo (“Arizona”)
Plumbeous Vireo
Cassin's Vireo (*esp. mid-August—*)
Hutton's Vireo
Warbling Vireo (*esp. mid-August—*)
Steller's Jay
Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay
Mexican Jay (“Arizona”)*
Chihuahuan Raven
Common Raven
Violet-green Swallow
Mexican Chickadee* (*Chiricahua Mtns only*)

Bridled Titmouse*
Verdin
Bushtit
Pygmy Nuthatch
Rock Wren
Canyon Wren
Bewick's Wren
Cactus Wren
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher
Black-capped Gnatcatcher*
Western Bluebird
Curve-billed Thrasher
Crissal Thrasher
Phainopepla
Olive Warbler*
Orange-crowned Warbler (esp. mid-August—)
Lucy's Warbler
Nashville Warbler (esp. mid-August—)
Virginia's Warbler
MacGillivray's Warbler (esp. mid-August—)
Yellow-rumped Warbler ("Audubon's")
Grace's Warbler
Black-throated Gray Warbler
Townsend's Warbler (esp. mid-August—)
Hermit Warbler (esp. early August—)
Rufous-capped Warbler* †
Wilson's Warbler (esp. early August—)

Red-faced Warbler* (esp. July-early August)
Painted Redstart
Rufous-winged Sparrow*
Botteri's Sparrow (peak detection)
Cassin's Sparrow (peak detection)
Grasshopper Sparrow
Black-chinned Sparrow
Black-throated Sparrow
Five-striped Sparrow* ‡ (peak detection)
Lark Sparrow
Yellow-eyed Junco*
Canyon Towhee
Abert's Towhee
Rufous-crowned Sparrow
Spotted Towhee
Hepatic Tanager
Summer Tanager
Western Tanager
Pyrrhuloxia
Black-headed Grosbeak
Lazuli Bunting
Varied Bunting (peak detection)
Hooded Oriole
Bullock's Oriole
Scott's Oriole
Lesser Goldfinch

* Specialties of Southeast Arizona and parts of Southwest New Mexico

† Permanent resident or annual in late summer/early fall, but particularly local and/or difficult to find

‡ Highly sought-after rarities, generally annual or semi-annual, and generally "stake-out" birds. If present, all attempts will be made to work these birds/locations into our itinerary!

