

VIVA LAS VEGAS BIRDING!

Birding Beautiful Southern Nevada

October 20-26, 2023

A birding tour organized by *Seven Ponds Nature Center* and *Bird Las Vegas*

When people think of Las Vegas, images of flashy casinos, nightly shows, bright lights, and showy fountains come to mind. But there is so much more to the area than the Vegas strip. Just a short drive from the city are pine-forested alpine peaks, golden stands of aspen, red rock canyons, Joshua tree forests, deserts and grasslands, wetlands and riparian corridors, and more. Within Las Vegas, large city parks concentrate dozens of birds species. All this great birding is just 20-60 minutes from the heart of downtown. Come explore Las Vegas with us!



TOUR ITINERARY

Our daily schedule 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, or road closures. Note: many birds will be seen at multiple locations, giving you an excellent opportunity for close study of these southwestern birds.

DAY 1 – Friday, October 20 – Arrival in Las Vegas - Plan your arrival in Las Vegas by early afternoon and take the shuttle to our hotel. After a brief meeting in the hotel lobby, we'll head out to dinner.

**DAY 2 – Saturday, October 21 – Introduction to Birding the Valley!
Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve & Clark County Wetlands Park.**

We'll kick off our tour with an introduction to birding in the Las Vegas Valley where we'll look for resident species that live year-round in the lower elevations of the Mojave Desert and the desert southwest. After breakfast we'll head for the Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, where 140 acres of ponds, marsh, and scrub habitat make this location a magnet for birds and birders alike. As



Nevada's top hotspot, over 300 species of birds have been recorded here, and we'll find a nice variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, and songbirds. Just a few of the possibilities include White-faced Ibis, Costa's Hummingbird, Verdin, and Crissal Thrasher. After a break for lunch, we'll head to nearby Clark County Wetlands Park. This park, located along the Las Vegas Wash, includes nearly 3,000 acres of wildlife habitat, and offers birders an opportunity to see a wide range of birds, including Abert's Towhee, Spotted Towhee, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, and Anna's Hummingbird. Today will be a great introduction to Las Vegas area birding.

DAY 3 – Sunday, October 22 – Desert National Wildlife Refuge & Floyd Lamb Park at Tule Springs. No birding trip to Vegas would be complete without a trek north to Cork Creek Field Station, the headquarters of Desert National Wildlife Refuge. Cork Creek is a fabulous place to see migratory woodpeckers such as Red-naped Sapsucker. Here we may find Sagebrush Sparrows along the entrance road, LeConte's Thrashers in the saltbush flats, Phainopeplas perched atop the scrubby vegetation, and Lesser Goldfinches at the feeders. Many other birds are possible at this oasis, which regularly hosts vagrant birds seeking refuge from the surrounding desert. Heading back into town, we'll stop by Floyd Lamb Park at Tule Springs for late fall migrants. The park is a great place to look for birds of prey, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe, and Bewick's Wren are among the numerous birds here. We'll end our day by searching for a colony of adorable Burrowing Owls at the Rainbow Owl Preserve.





DAY 4 – Monday, October 23 – Spring Mountains National Recreation Area/Mt. Charleston area. Northwest of the Las Vegas basin is a large mountain range called the Spring Mountains. The tallest peak, Mt. Charleston, sits at nearly 12,000 feet in elevation. The mountain hosts several different life zones from Joshua tree forest, Pinyon-Juniper woodlands, Ponderosa pine, and aspen groves, all the way up to the Bristlecone Pine forests. Each life zone accommodates different species of birds that aren't often seen in the Valley.

While birding the Spring Mountains, we will look for Chukar, Golden Eagle, Clark's Nutcracker, Steller's Jay, Woodhouse's Scrub Jay, Western Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, Pygmy Nuthatch, Mountain Chickadee, Juniper Titmouse, Bushtit, Spotted Towhee, Cassin's Finch, and Red Crossbill. The mountains can be great places to observe migratory birds of prey, and there is a chance at seeing Northern Goshawks. We may see aspens that have not lost their yellow autumnal leaves and will stop to admire Bristlecone Pines, which are among the longest-lived organisms. If we are fortunate, we will run into Pinyon Jays.



DAY 5 – Tuesday, October 24 – Las Vegas Wash, Lake Mead, Hoover Dam - After birding at higher elevation the day before, we will be back in the valley looking for familiar desert species. We will bird along the lower Las Vegas Wash, and we will be on the lookout for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds such as Cinnamon Teal, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, Spotted Sandpiper, and peeps. This site can have similar species to that of the Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, and we will continue to look for migratory species. If we have

not had great looks at Say's and Black Phoebe, we should be here. If the weather is still warm, we'll look for some herps, including Spiny Softshell Turtles, Spiny and Side-blotched lizards, and Tiger Whiptails. At Lake Mead we could see both Western and Clark's grebes along with assorted waterfowl. After birding the wetlands, we will head to Boulder City and Hoover Dam. We do not expect to see many bird species at Hoover Dam, but this can be a good place to run into Canyon Wrens. We will stop at a park in Boulder City to observe a wild but accommodating herd of Desert Bighorn Sheep.



DAY 6 – Wednesday, October 25 – Wee Thump Wilderness/Searchlight area & Sunset Park. On the last day of our adventure together, we will head to the town of Searchlight and the Wee Thump Wilderness. This area is home to one of the densest forests of the iconic Joshua Tree. Here we will look for species that aren't easily seen closer to Las Vegas. Our big targets for the day are Gilded Flicker and Curve-billed Thrasher. Amongst the Joshua tree forests we will look for Loggerhead Shrike, Bewick's Wren, Rock Wren, Sage Thrasher, Black-throated Sparrow, and Brewer's Sparrow. After birding in the Searchlight area, we'll head back into Las Vegas to bird in the



afternoon. We will check out an urban park near the hotel and take in the last viewings of birds common to Las Vegas such as Verdins and Great-tailed Grackles. If there is time and the desire to do so, we will aim to track down any species that have eluded us during the week. Afterwards we will have our farewell dinner and recount all the great birds and wonderful experiences we've had in Las Vegas.



DAY 7 – Thursday, October 26 – Departure from Las Vegas. Plan your departure for any time today. Enjoy breakfast at the hotel and take the shuttle to the airport to catch your flight home. Hotel check-out is 12:00.



TOUR LEADERS

Alex Harper arrived in Las Vegas in 2015 to conduct avian field work and has been finding rarities in the desert ever since. Alex first began guiding when he was a teenager as a volunteer trip leader for the Audubon chapter in Miami and took birders around the city for specialties in high school. His college education is in Environmental Science, and he has done subsequent avian field work in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, California, and the Florida Keys, along with Nevada. Alex heads up to Alaska every summer to guide, returning to Vegas for the fall, winter, and spring. Alex is a registered Emergency Medical Technician and Wilderness First Responder. He began serving on the Nevada Bird Records Committee in 2019.



Justin Striet loves and lives Mohave Desert birding, and with 14 years' experience working as a professional avian ecologist, he knows southern Nevada birds. Justin has conducted bird surveys in Arizona, California, Iowa, Nevada, Montana, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming. He has been a member of the Nevada Bird Records Committee since 2015, which has only increased his knowledge of the distribution and timing of some of Nevada's more rare species. Justin regularly leads tours for the Red Rock Audubon Society, and as a member of the *Bird Las Vegas* team, he is excited to share his knowledge of birds and passion for teaching with our group.

Daryl Bernard is a long-time birder and amateur naturalist who loves being outdoors and embraces every opportunity to share nature with others. Daryl enjoys organizing trips and tours and strives to ensure that every participant has a thoroughly enjoyable experience. He has organized and led more than a dozen birding field tours throughout North America, many local birding trips in Michigan, and seasonal bird walks for Seven Ponds. Daryl is the Executive Director at Seven Ponds Nature Center in southeast Michigan, and regularly presents birding programs at Audubon clubs, libraries, and birding festivals.



Joshua trees in the Wee Thump Wilderness

Clark County, Nevada

(photo by Daryl Bernard)

All other photos courtesy of WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

ACCOMMODATIONS

Lodging for this tour will be in a single location, conveniently located in Las Vegas, Nevada. This will provide us with easy access to most of our birding destinations and will give us the luxury of settling in to one location, not needing to pack and unpack several times throughout the tour. Restaurant options abound near our lodging.

FEE and REGISTRATION INFORMATION

- Tour Fee: \$2,100 per person in double occupancy from Las Vegas, Nevada
- Single Supplement: \$450 (subject to availability)
- Deposit: \$300 (due upon online registration)
- Final Payment Due: September 1, 2023
- Group size is limited to **8-10 individuals** and early registration is encouraged

WHAT THE TOUR FEE INCLUDES:

- Full guide service – Alex Harper and Justin Streit of *Bird Las Vegas* will share guide duties, with at least one of them birding with us every step of the way
- Hotel accommodations for six nights
- All meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 7
- Van transportation in a single 12 or 15-passenger van
- All park entrance fees and highway tolls
- Pre-trip information and a thorough trip report 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 and from Las Vegas
- Transportation between our hotel and Harry Reid International Airport
- Alcoholic beverages
- Laundry
- Other items of a personal nature
- Gratuity for local birding guide services (optional)

ONLINE REGISTRATION WILL OPEN FOR SPNC MEMBERS ON TUESDAY, MAY 9, 2023, 9:00 AM

ONLINE REGISTRATION WILL OPEN FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC ON TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2023, 9:00 AM

Registration for this tour will take place online at www.sevenponds.org with a \$300 deposit due at the time of registration. At the Seven Ponds home page, go to Programs then Seven Ponds Field Tours and select the Nevada Birding Field Tour registration button. Upon successfully completing your online registration, you should receive an email confirmation almost immediately. Participants will be mailed a registration form to return. If the tour is full, you can join the waitlist. For more information, contact Daryl Bernard at (810) 796-3200 or (989) 513-5195 (cell) or via e-mail at dbernard@sevenponds.org.

LAS VEGAS AREA OCTOBER TARGET BIRDS - birds we rarely (or never) see in Michigan

Snow Goose	Loggerhead Shrike
Ross's Goose	Pinyon Jay
Greater White-fronted Goose	Steller's Jay
Cinnamon Teal	Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay
Gambel's Quail	Clark's Nutcracker
Chukar	Mountain Chickadee
Eared Grebe	Juniper Titmouse
Western Grebe	Verdin
Clark's Grebe	Violet-green Swallow
Band-tailed Pigeon	Bushtit
Eurasian Collared-Dove	Pygmy Nuthatch
Inca Dove	Black-tailed Gnatcatcher
White-winged Dove	Rock Wren
Greater Roadrunner	Canyon Wren
Common Poorwill	Pacific Wren
White-throated Swift	Bewick's Wren
Anna's Hummingbird	Cactus Wren
Costa's Hummingbird	LeConte's Thrasher
American Avocet	Crissal Thrasher
Mountain Plover	Sage Thrasher
Western Sandpiper	Northern Mockingbird
Red-necked Phalarope	Western Bluebird
Franklin's Gull	Mountain Bluebird
California Gull	Townsend's Solitaire
Neotropic Cormorant	Varied Thrush
American White Pelican	Phainopepla
Snowy Egret	Cassin's Finch
White-faced Ibis	Lesser Goldfinch
Golden Eagle	Lawrence's Goldfinch
Burrowing Owl	Brewer's Sparrow
Red-naped Sapsucker	Black-throated Sparrow
Red-breasted Sapsucker	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Lewis's Woodpecker	Abert's Towhee
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	Green-tailed Towhee
Gilded Flicker	Spotted Towhee
Prairie Falcon	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Hammond's Flycatcher	Western Meadowlark
Gray Flycatcher	Bullock's Oriole
Black Phoebe	Great-tailed Grackle
Say's Phoebe	MacGillivray's Warbler
Vermilion Flycatcher	Summer Tanager
Cassin's Vireo	Western Tanager
Plumbeous Vireo	Blue Grosbeak