



## SOUTHEAST ARIZONA'S SECOND SPRING

**JULY 23-AUGUST 1, 2021 | Tour leader: Nathan Goldberg  
IN COLLABORATION WITH ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY**

[Click here for future Southeast Arizona trips](#)  
[Click here for trip photo gallery](#)

Southeast Arizona and its “Sky Islands” are often considered one of the top birding destinations for United States birders, as the region is host to numerous species that only barely make it across the border into the Lower 48. Throughout this 10 Day tour, we covered a variety of habitats from the Sonoran and Chihuahuan Deserts to the various Sky Island mountain ranges including the Santa Rita, Huachuca, and Chiricahua Mountains. Regional specialties were plentiful, but some focal species we targeted include: **Montezuma Quail, Rivoli’s Hummingbird, Blue-throated Mountain-Gem, Gilded Flicker, Gila Woodpecker, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Sulfur-bellied Flycatcher, Bridled Titmouse, Mexican Chickadee, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Yellow-eyed Junco, Red-faced Warbler, Grace’s Warbler, Painted Redstart**, and many more. The last week in July is famously the start of the monsoon season in Arizona, which we found out the hard way – experiencing some of the most impressive rains Arizona’s seen in years in the first couple days of the tour. These rains led to an incredible “greenification” of the region, with many locals stating they’d not seen the land as green as it was in many years (!). The monsoons often prompt what is known as the *Second Spring* as birds will often nest a second time in the same year if conditions are right, creating a wonderful bounty of avian life ripe for our observation.

### **Top 5 Birds as voted by the group**

- 1. Red-faced Warbler**
- 2. Elegant Trogon**
- 3. (tie) Mexican Whip-Poor-Will & Blue-throated Mountain-Gem**
- 5. (four-way tie) Rivoli’s Hummingbird, Spotted Owl, Berylline Hummingbird, and Whiskered Screech-Owl**

**Day 1, July 23: Sonoran Desert region, night Tucson**

With attendees arriving throughout the afternoon, we all gathered at 4:30 PM in the lobby of the hotel for introductions and a discussion of the upcoming 10 days. As it was many participants' first time in the Southwest, we made sure to be succinct so we could get out for a brief evening introduction to the region and its birds – and headed to Honey Bee Canyon Park on the north side of Tucson. There had been an incredibly powerful monsoon the prior evening with lots of storm damage, leading to many downed Saguaro cacti and Ocotillos that we noted along the way.

Arriving at Honey Bee Canyon, we were quickly greeted by a vocal nesting pair of **Brown-crested Flycatchers** as well as some curious **Cactus Wrens**. The birding was good even from the parking lot, and we soon connected with our main target here – a pair of **Gilded Flickers** – a specialty we wouldn't run into later on the trip. Down the trail we found more denizens of the desert including **Black-throated** and **Rufous-winged Sparrows**, **Black-tailed Gnatcatchers**, **White-winged Doves**, and towards dusk, had a nice showing of some **Lesser Nighthawks**. It soon got dark though, so we retreated to the van and had a nice dinner at Nico's (a local Mexican restaurant) before heading to bed.

**Day 2, July 24: Santa Rita Mountains, Santa Cruz River Valley, night Patagonia**

This morning we had a reasonably early wakeup in Tucson and headed to the Santa Rita mountains outside of Green Valley, AZ. Here, our destination was the famous Madera Canyon – home to the Santa Rita Lodge which hosts a wonderful feeder setup for both hummingbirds and passerines alike. Though we were in the Southwest (causing us to expect a dry heat and lots of sun), it was apparent the monsoons were here in force...

Our first destination in the canyon was up the Carrie Nation Mine Trail to look for a pair of nesting Elegant Trogons. While we couldn't find a trace of them, we were greeted on our way up by a pair of **Arizona Woodpeckers** as well as a vocal **Sulfur-bellied Flycatcher**. Waiting for the trogons to show, the skies opened up and dumped quite a bit of rain on us, so we decided to seek shelter back at the van spending only a brief bit of time with a family of **Mexican Jays** on the way down.

Retreating to the lodge, we took shelter under the canopy outside the visitors center and were instantly greeted by the vagrant **Berylline Hummingbird** that'd been hit-or-miss here for a few weeks. It was amazingly cooperative in the rain – perching at eye-level in a bush offering incredible views while it preened – showing its green head and rufous wings and tail. The feeders here are always jam packed with action, and once we tore our eyes away from the Berylline we soaked in point-blank views of numerous **Rivoli's**, **Broad-billed**, and **Black-chinned Hummingbirds**.

Sensing a break in the rain, we left Santa Rita Lodge and headed over to nearby Box Canyon where we had great views of both **Scott's** and **Hooded Orioles**, a singing male **Varied Bunting**, and our two major targets, a **Five-striped Sparrow** and a female **Lucifer Hummingbird**. Five-striped Sparrows historically have only been found in a tough area to access known as California Gulch, near the Mexico border – so we were quite fortunate that there was a bird on territory in a

much more convenient location (and offering incredible views to boot)! The Lucifer Hummingbird was also extra special as it was feeding at a wild agave plant reliably, and offered great views through the scope for all.

After enjoying the sparrow and hummingbird, we headed back to Santa Rita Lodge, with a quick stop along the way for a cooperative **Botteri's Sparrow**. Back at the feeders, the rain was lessening, and we soaked in more views of the various hummingbirds, including the cooperative **Berylline Hummingbird** once again. Activity at the feeders picked up and we had great views of **Acorn Woodpeckers**, **Bewick's Wren**, **Black-headed Grosbeaks**, and a **Bronzed Cowbird**.

We ran back up to the Carrie Nation Mine Trail but sadly still had no luck with the Elegant Trogons, however we were pleasantly surprised to find a male **Painted Redstart** on the way back to the van as well as some **Wild Turkeys** on a neighboring hillside. Back at the van, we also had nice views of a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** before heading out of Madera Canyon further south towards Tubac.



*Berylline Hummingbird*



*Five-striped Sparrow*

The region south of Madera Canyon and Green Valley encompasses the Santa Cruz River valley, and there is a large riparian corridor of cottonwoods that follows it. The river itself flows north from Nogales nearly parallel to I-19 as it heads to Tucson and regions further north, but this stretch of the river has wonderful birding spots made accessible by the famous De Anza Trail. We visited a short stretch of this trail near Rio Rico, and found some riparian species including a young **Gray Hawk** on a nest, **Lucy's Warbler**, **Summer Tanager**, **Tropical** and **Cassin's Kingbirds**, **Vermilion Flycatcher**, and numerous **Bridled Titmice**. From Rio Rico, we headed through the border town of Nogales and ended the evening at the Stage Stop Inn in Patagonia – serenaded throughout the night by the abundant **Barn Swallows** nesting outside our rooms.

### **Day 3, July 25: Mount Lemmon, night Patagonia**

We started this morning earlier than usual, as we headed up to Mount Lemmon for the day to target some higher elevation specialties. Mount Lemmon is the highest point in the Santa Catalina Mountains, which are on the northeast side of Tucson. Normally, the vistas from up top offer great views of the surrounding region both north and south, but today that was not the case unfortunately. As with yesterday, we were inundated with rain both throughout the drive to the mountains as well as upon arrival.

Our primary site for the morning was Incinerator Ridge Road and trail, but plans had to be flexible. As soon as we exited the van, we were encompassed by a thick bank of fog which rapidly morphed into a steady, soaking rain – putting a damper on our birding. After about an

hour of hiking up and down the road, we decided to retreat close by to the nearby town of Summerhaven and sought shelter at the local restaurant known as Sawmill Run. Here we warmed up with a nice wood fire, had breakfast and some coffee, and watched the radar closely hoping for a break in the weather.

Around 11 AM the rain lightened up and we motivated – heading back to Incinerator Ridge. This time we were more successful in our endeavors and found a nice mixed flock of passerines which included **Pygmy Nuthatches**, **Plumbeous** and **Hutton's Vireos**, **Mountain Chickadees**, **Hepatic Tanager**, and our main target, two **Red-faced Warblers**. While birding along the trail we were also treated to a cooperative **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** as well as a quick visit by three Type 2 (Ponderosa Pine) **Red Crossbills** – confirmed by recordings.



*Red-faced Warbler*

After a quick stop back at Sawmill Run for lunch, we began our slow descent off of the mountain. Stopping along the way to look for Olive Warbler at a few spots, we sadly came up empty-handed. However, we spent some time at Rose Canyon and Lake where we got nice views of the ever-present **Yellow-eyed Junco**, and ran into a nice pocket of passerines including **Virginia's**, **Black-throated Gray**, **Red-faced**, and **Yellow Warblers** as well as a few **Plumbeous Vireos**. On the way out from the lake, we stopped for a pair of young **Cooper's Hawks** that were quite vocal, and ran into a distant male **Grace's Warbler** as well as a small flock of **Bushtits** before heading down towards Tucson and Patagonia.

Ending the evening in Patagonia, we had nice views of a few **Great-tailed Grackles** around the hotel as well as heard one of the local **Gila Woodpeckers** calling. After a nice dinner at the Wagon Wheel Saloon, we called it a night – ready to bird the numerous hotspots around Patagonia in the morning.

#### **Day 4, July 26: Patagonia area, La Cienegas National Conservation Area, Huachuca Mountains, night Sierra Vista**

This morning we were lucky to only have to drive a short distance from the hotel to reach our first birding location for the day: the famous Patagonia Roadside Rest Stop. This is **the** spot where the infamous “Patagonia Picnic Table Effect” was coined (a term to describe when an original report of a rare bird brings birders to a locale and they subsequently find additional new rare birds there), so we were eager to see what we could find.

A short walk into the riparian corridor next to the road revealed **Brown-crested Flycatchers**, **Bell’s Vireos**, a few **Phainopeplas**, both **Western** and **Summer Tanagers**, and the main targets – a family of **Rose-throated Becards** – with some recently fledged young. The becards were extremely vocal but often sat high in the canopy, making viewing conditions somewhat challenging. After enough time though, the male sat on the recently vacated nest offering everyone a wonderful view.

Back out near the van, we birded the rest stop itself and found a **Ladder-backed Woodpecker**, a vocal **Rufous-crowned Sparrow**, a pair of singing **Canyon Wrens**, and had nice views of another multi-colored male **Varied Bunting**. From here we headed to Patagonia Lake State Park where we added some water birds to the trip list. **Ruddy Duck**, **Pied-billed Grebe**, **American Coot**, **Neotropic Cormorant**, and **Spotted Sandpiper** all were new for us, and we were treated to a nice assortment of raptors including a **Zone-tailed Hawk**, adult **Gray Hawk**, and **Black** and **Turkey Vultures**. A short walk along a birding trail at the east end of the lake provided us with more satisfying views of **Lucy’s Warblers**.

Leaving the lake we headed into Patagonia and to the famous Paton’s Center for Hummingbirds. We were shocked upon arrival to find no hummingbird feeders up at all (and all the regular feeders already down due to a bear in the area), but still were able to find some nice species including a cooperative **Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet**, numerous **Phainopepla**, an **Abert’s Towhee**, **Yellow-breasted Chat**, and many **Lesser Goldfinch**.

From the Paton’s Center we stopped for lunch at the Wild Horse restaurant in the Stage Coach Inn, and then began our drive to Sierra Vista and the Huachuca Mountains where we planned to spend the next two nights. Along the way, we stopped at La Cienegas National Conservation Area where we found a few Mexican Pronghorn along the road (reintroduced to this region from Texas) as well as our main target, the skulky **Cassin’s Sparrow**. Given it was the heat of the day, we retreated back to the vans after decent views of the sparrow and refueled with some ice cold water and snacks before continuing our drive.

Arriving in the early afternoon to Sierra Vista, we first headed to the hotel then journeyed back out for a few hours of birding. A pair of White-eared Hummingbirds had been very infrequently coming to the feeders at the well-known Beatty's Guest Ranch (at the base of Miller Canyon), so we decided to spend a few hours there marveling at the numerous hummingbirds and hoping to catch a glimpse of the special Mexican visitors. Sitting on the stadium benches next to the feeders offered great views (in shade!) of **Rivoli's**, **Black-chinned**, **Broad-tailed**, **Broad-billed**, **Anna's**, **Rufous** (only one, an immature bird), and the gorgeous and uncommon **Violet-crowned Hummingbird**. While the White-eared's didn't make an appearance, the nonstop show at the feeders was a great way to spend the heat of the afternoon.



*Rivoli's Hummingbird*

Before heading for dinner, we left Beatty's feeders for an evening vigil at a nearby private yard that had been frequented for the last 8 (!) months by multiple male and female **Montezuma Quail**. An incredibly skulky game bird of the region, to have this species reliably coming to a feeder/yard was quite a lucky break. Unfortunately, with the recent rains, they'd become less reliable and harder to see in the tall grasses – and this evening we sadly only heard a male call a few times. Our treat here this evening was a pair of Desert Blonde Tarantulas which walked around within 5 feet of us offering great views. Dusk soon arrived and we thanked the homeowner, mentioning we'd be back to try again the following evening, then headed to dinner at a wonderful Italian restaurant before getting some much needed sleep.

**Day 5, July 27: Huachuca Mountains, night Sierra Vista**

The Huachuca Mountains are another major focal spot for special birds in this region, so we headed out early to Miller Canyon for a morning hike to see what we could find. Miller Canyon is one of a few well-known canyons that cut into the Huachuca Mountains – another “Sky Island” we visited on this trip. The term “Sky Island” comes from the concept that this range and others are fully surrounded by low-lying desert habitat and that the mountains rise up creating “islands” of higher elevation ecosystems that form niche habitat pockets in the region. It is in these zones and on these “islands” that we hoped to find our target birds.

Heading into the canyon, we stopped along the way for views of both a very cooperative **Rufous-crowned Sparrow** as well as a **Canyon Towhee** (one of many we’d see in the coming days). Parking at Beatty’s, we began the hike up canyon in the prime morning hours and quickly ran into pocket after pocket of birds. Some **Arizona Woodpeckers** greeted us on the way in, along with a vocal **Sulfur-bellied Flycatcher** and numerous **Western Wood-Pewees**. A little ways up the trail, we encountered one of our main targets, a calling **Greater Pewee** which provided great views for all after a bit of work. Near the pewee, we ran into a group of passerines which included **Bridled Titmice**, **Plumbeous Vireos**, the interior subspecies of **White-breasted Nuthatch**, the Mexican subspecies of **Brown Creeper**, as well as numerous warblers including **Painted Redstarts**, **Virginia’s**, **Black-throated Gray**, and **Red-faced Warbler**.

**Spotted Towhees** called throughout our mile and a half hike up to a landmark known as split-rock (it’s a giant rock... split in half), where we set our packs down and rested a bit. This area has a larger density of Ponderosa Pines, and was where we located another big target of ours – two **Buff-breasted Flycatchers** – a small Empidonax flycatcher that only reaches the United States in SE Arizona and SW New Mexico. After a good rest and some snacks, we headed back down the canyon, pleased with our morning hike and success with our targets.

Before heading to lunch, we sat at Beatty’s feeders for about a bit to see if the White-eared Hummingbirds would come in for a drink. Sadly, they did not show – nor could we find them up the canyon (though we tried hard throughout the morning). The ever-present show of hummingbirds here still was incredible, and eventually we tore ourselves away for lunch at La Casita, a wonderful Mexican restaurant in town. With food now in our systems, we headed to the hotel for a brief afternoon rest before heading out for an afternoon/evening of birding.

The afternoon weather was overall pleasant, but the ever-present dry heat was quite intense so we opted to not venture too far from the van. We headed to the San Pedro House which sits adjacent to the riparian corridor along the San Pedro River. Here, we found feeders full of activity – with **Blue Grosbeaks** making up the bulk of birds present – alongside **White-winged and Mourning Doves**, **Curve-billed Thrasher**, **Lesser Goldfinch**, and some **Brown-headed Cowbirds**. **Yellow-breasted Chats** also called from the nearby trees, and we had a distant pair of **American Kestrel** in the neighboring field. From here we headed south to the Casa de San Pedro B&B to have a look at their feeders, but not before stopping for some desert specialties including **Chihuahuan Ravens**, **Pyrrhuloxia**, and a few **Swainson’s Hawks**.



On the way into the Casa de San Pedro B&B we had our first **Loggerhead Shrike** of the trip, and once we pulled in we could see the feeders were quite active. Here we got great views of **Gambel's Quail**, **Common Ground Dove**, **Gila Woodpecker**, plus more. The B&B owners also mentioned their resident **Great Horned Owls** were roosting in a tree near the pool, and a quick check revealed both an adult and immature bird sitting in the shaded portion offering great views.



*Great-horned Owl*

With evening encroaching, we thanked the hosts for their help and headed back towards the mountains for another Montezuma Quail vigil. Unfortunately though, this evening was even less successful than last – with absolutely no response or sign of the elusive quail. We decided to try once more for them in the morning on our way out of Sierra Vista, and soon after headed up to the nearby Ash Canyon Bird Sanctuary. The feeders here have been hosting both a male and female **Lucifer Hummingbird** for some time now, but they are most reliable at the feeders close to dusk. Arriving at 6:45 PM was perfect, and after some nice views of **Black-chinned**, **Anna's**, and **Broad-billed Hummingbirds** as well as a **Gray Hawk**, we were all treated to a few feeding sessions from the male **Lucifer Hummingbird** \*right before\* a huge monsoon hit. Escaping just before the rain started, we wrapped up a late evening with a very comical and enjoyable dinner at Applebee's. You got it!

**Day 6, July 28: Huachuca Mountains, Chihuahuan Desert, Chiricahua Mountains, night Portal**

This morning we awoke fairly early and headed back for one final attempt for **Montezuma Quail**, and after nearly an hour and a half, we located both a male and female wading through the tall grass at the edge of the homeowners property. While views were a bit brief, everyone got to see the birds and some participants even snapped a few quick photos. Our third try was a resounding success, and there were smiles all around. We also lucked into our only **Ash-throated Flycatchers** of the trip while here.

Heading out from Sierra Vista, we made a stop at the infamous **Lavender Pit** outside the old copper-mining town of Bisbee. The pit is quite a sight to behold, and is an old open-pit mine that was created back in 1917 and last mined in 1974 when copper production eventually slowed in Bisbee. We also had nice scope-views of a singing **Rock Wren** here, before heading into town for breakfast and some exploration. Following our stop in Bisbee, we headed further SE into the town of Douglas, along the US/Mexico border for another brief stop where we added some birds to our Mexico life-lists.

Leaving Douglas, we headed north through the Chihuahuan Desert – a different desert ecosystem than the neighboring Sonoran Desert which Tucson is in – and arrived in Portal which was our new base for exploring the region over the next three days.

After checking into the rooms at Portal Peak Lodge, we headed over to Cave Creek Ranch and watched the feeders in the yard for a special bird of the region to arrive. It did not take long, and soon we all had eyes on a male **Blue-throated Mountain-Gem**, a hummingbird that only reaches the United States in SE Arizona and far SW New Mexico. The feeders were busy with other birds as well, and we quickly found an **Inca Dove** calling away as well as **Acorn** and **Arizona Woodpeckers**, **Bridled Titmice**, **Hooded Orioles**, a **White-breasted Nuthatch**, and plenty of **Black-headed Grosbeaks**.

Knowing we'd be back to spend more time at the feeders throughout our time in Portal, we motivated and drove over to Cave Creek Canyon where we hoped to track down arguably the top target bird of the trip. We fortunately didn't have to wait long, and soon were watching both a male and female **Elegant Trogon** bring food in for their young at an active nest. This species is essentially the mascot for SE Arizona birding, so we were extremely thankful there was such an accessible and active nest during our visit to the region. Cave Creek Canyon is home to a variety of other species as well, including **White-throated Swifts** (heard calling overhead), **Dusky-capped Flycatcher**, **Sulfur-bellied Flycatcher**, and **Spotted Towhees**.

After spending some quality time with the Trogons, we headed back to the hotel for a brief rest, followed by dinner at Portal Peak Lodge. Following dinner, we headed back into the field for a very enjoyable evening of nightbirding that included nice views of both **Mexican Whip-Poor-Will** and **Whiskered Screech-Owl**.



*Blue-throated Mountain-Gem*



*Whiskered Screech-Owl*

**Day 7, July 29: Chiricahua Mountains, night Portal**

Waking up in Portal for the first time is an experience often coupled with energy and anticipation, so we got an early start today with many targets planned. Our first stop was only about 3 minutes from the hotel, where we caught up with the recently nested **Thick-billed Kingbirds** just down the road. They put on a nice show for us, and offered great views. From here, we headed a short ways out of town into the desert – which is cool in the early morning – and looked (unsuccessfully) for Crissal Thrasher. Though the thrasher was a no-show, we did spend some time at some feeders and had great views of numerous **Gambel's Quail** and **Black-throated Sparrows**, as well as **Canyon** and **Abert's Towhees**, **Phainopepla**, **Pyrrhuloxia**, and a loudly singing **Yellow-breasted Chat**.

As the crisp cool morning shifted into more intense heat, we headed up and into the Chiricahua Mountains in search of higher elevation specialties. The road up the mountain is quite windy, but the vistas are hard to beat as you can see for 25-50 miles in some places. Once we arrived in the higher elevation Ponderosa Pine forest, we started listening for mixed flocks. We didn't even get to the Rustler Park Campground before hitting a dense flock of passerines calling loudly just off the road, so we hopped out of the van and soon were taking in views of **Mexican Chickadees**, **Grace's** and **Olive Warblers**, **Plumbeous Vireos**, **Pygmy Nuthatches**, **Cordilleran Flycatcher**, and even a **Greater Pewee**. We also found a **Hermit Warbler** in this flock, an early migrant that was an unexpected surprise.

Heading over to the nearby Barfoot Park Campground, we found another dense mixed flock which contained more **Pygmy Nuthatches**, **Hermit Warblers**, an **Olive Warbler**, **Brown Creepers**, and some extremely cooperative **Greater Pewees**. The birds danced above our heads in the Ponderosa Pines, foraging happily in the cooler weather found at these higher elevations.

We continued birding the region and stopped at a special location for a young, recently fledged (**Mexican**) **Spotted Owl**. This species is never a given on this tour, but we do make a serious effort for it in areas they are known to be. We lucked out as the young owl was easy to spot, and as if that wasn't good enough, we learned there was also a roosting **Mexican Whip-Poor-Will** in the area too. The whip-poor-will sat calmly and offered a great study of this hard-to-find species during daylight hours – a rare treat that many locals haven't even had as these birds can disappear during the day in this rugged terrain.

Thrilled with our success, we retreated down the mountain and had a great lunch at the Sky Island Grocery – a lovely locale 10 minutes outside of Portal just over the New Mexico line. With full bellies after lunch, some decided to take a siesta while others explored the Cave Creek Ranch feeders for the afternoon before we all reconvened for dinner and an early bedtime.



*Fledgling Mexican Spotted Owl*



*Mexican Whip-Poor-Will*

**Day 8, July 30: Chihuahua Desert, Chiricahua Mountains, night Portal**

This morning we met at 6 AM, and headed back into the desert again for a morning of birding before the heat set in. On the way out of Portal, we ran into a **Loggerhead Shrike** followed by a cooperative albeit distant singing **Scaled Quail**. At the Scaled Quail spot, we also spotted a Tarantula meandering down the middle of the road – which proved to be a Chiricahuan Gray Tarantula (a different species than the ones seen in Sierra Vista).

Heading further into the desert, we birded down Stateline Road (which separates Arizona and New Mexico, as well as the Pacific and Mountain Time Zones). The drive netted us nice views of **Chihuahuan Ravens**, **Western** and **Cassin's Kingbirds**, a **Northern Mockingbird**, **Lark Sparrows**, and a **Swainson's Hawk**. Eventually, we turned down Gin Road in New Mexico and lucked into both **Crissal** and **Bendire's Thrashers**, as well as a singing **Cassin's Sparrow** and a distant **Golden Eagle** (a great spot by Scott). We also had a quick flyby **Lazuli Bunting** here, the only one of the trip.

After Gin Road, we headed over to the Willow Tank on the Arizona side of the line for a quick quarter-mile loop before the heat set in, and had **Red-winged Blackbirds**, **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, **Lucy's Warblers**, and another **Bendire's Thrasher**.

Pleased with our success in the desert, we headed back into the mountains for cooler air and another opportunity to spend some time with the Cave Creek Canyon **Elegant Trogons**. While the views were more brief this time, the male came in quickly upon our arrival – offering killer views as it brought a bug to its young.

From here, we headed west out of Portal through the foothills and into the ghost town of Paradise. While there are indeed a few residents here, there really is no longer a “town” so much as a few buildings here and there. Paradise is home to the George Walker House, a hundred year old house that is nestled into juniper-woodland and host to a wonderful feeder setup.

Settling in on the porch next to the feeders, we watched closely for about an hour until our target finally arrived: a **Juniper Titmouse**. These birds are quite habitat-specific, and this was our only opportunity to see one on the trip. The feeders were quite active, and we spent our spare time waiting for the titmouse to show watching a group of **Mexican Jays**, a father-son pair of **Black-headed Grosbeaks**, **Lesser Goldfinches**, a **Blue-throated Mountain-Gem**, and the oddest highlight – a large group of bats that flew around their roost box in broad daylight!

After the busy morning, we headed back towards Portal and had a late lunch at Sky Island Grill and Grocery again (can you tell we were fans?). Here we witnessed an incredibly intense rainstorm move into the valley and towards the mountains – it came and went in about 10 minutes, and the rain appeared to be isolated to a single cloud. Monsoon season is quite the wild ride! We also paid a visit at the Chiricahua Desert Museum before heading back into Portal for the afternoon – spotting our only **Greater Roadrunner** of the trip along the drive into town!

Following the wonderful meal, we figured we'd rest up a bit and enjoy our last day in town with a more relaxed schedule. We spent quality time at the Cave Creek Ranch feeders and soaked in killer views of the resident **Blue-throated Mountain-Gem** as well as a nice family group of **Gambel's Quail**. An adult male **Rufous Hummingbird** paid a visit to the hummingbird feeders, as did an adult male **Verdin** – both nice surprises.

After another lovely dinner at Portal Peak Lodge, we spent the evening looking for nightbirds. Though we couldn't conjure up a Common Poorwill unfortunately, a family group of **Elf Owls** treated us to a lovely chorus in the foothills. Though we tried hard, we couldn't find them in the flashlight, leaving us with an auditory but sadly non-visual experience. Ready for bed after the long day, we headed back into town – stopping for a baby Black-tailed Rattlesnake in the road – and then to sleep.

### **Day 9, July 31: Chiricahua Mountains, Willcox Lake, Benson Sewage Treatment Plant, night Tucson**

Sadly, today marked our final morning together and the last full day of birding on the trip. With heavy hearts we had to head out of Portal and into the much *much* larger metropolis of Tucson. Before departing though, we drove into Cave Creek Canyon and spent one final hour with the nesting **Elegant Trogons**, both of which paid a visit to the nest – bringing in some very large insects for their young. It felt apropos to spend a bit more time with these incredible birds before leaving the Chiricahuas, and we were honored to have such quality observations of them – something that's never guaranteed.



*Male Elegant Trogon*

Heading out of Portal, we stopped for breakfast in Rodeo, NM before heading north to the I-10 and then west to the town of Willcox where we exited the highway to bird Lake Cochise and the Twin Lakes Golf Course ponds, more fondly known simply as “Willcox” to the local birders.

These ponds are oases in a very dry region, and in turn, bring in numerous waterbirds of all sorts during migration. Upon arrival, we quickly set up the scope and watched **Cinnamon Teal** and **Northern Shovelers**, **Mexican** and **Ruddy Ducks**, as well as numerous species of shorebirds including **American Avocet**, **Black-necked Stilt**, **Wilson’s Phalarope**, **Long-billed Dowitcher**, **Least**, **Western**, **Baird’s**, and **Spotted Sandpipers**, and **Black Terns**. A smaller pond near the golf course held a trifecta of waders, specifically a **Black-crowned Night-Heron**, **Great Egret**, and **Snowy Egret** all together. These aforementioned species were all new for the trip, and added quite a variety of species to the trip list.

After Willcox, we made a quick lunch stop at Adolfo’s Taco Shop before continuing west along I-10, exiting at the small town of Benson. Here, we continued the theme of waterbirds at the Benson Sewage Treatment Plant, adding **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon**, **Mallard**, and **Ring-necked Duck** to our list. The ponds also held an impressive number of both pure **Mexican Ducks** as well as Mexican Duck x Mallard hybrids, offering a nice side-by-side comparison. The ponds also held a **Pied-billed Grebe**, numerous **Killdeer** and **Spotted Sandpipers**, and a pair of **White-faced Ibis**. Scanning the wires around the ponds also revealed a **Vermilion Flycatcher**, as well as a male **Bronzed Cowbird** amongst the **Great-tailed Grackles**.

Sadly, our time birding was coming to a close. We completed the final leg of the drive into Tucson and checked into the hotel before grabbing a wonderful dinner at Saguaro Corners, right next to the eastern section of Saguaro National Park. Following dinner we said our goodbyes as some had very early flights – concluding the final day of Red Hill Birding’s Southeast Arizona tour.

### Day 10, August 1: Departure from Tucson









**BIRD LIST.** 168 species (including 1 heard only and 1 leader only). Taxonomy follows the Clements/eBird Checklist, 2021 update. Former (or alternate) English names are in parentheses. (heard) = heard only; (leader) = tour leader only. The global IUCN red list status is listed for threatened and near-threatened species: CR=Critically Endangered, EN=Endangered, VU=Vulnerable, NT=Near-threatened.

<b>Cinnamon Teal</b>	<i>Spatula cyanoptera</i>
<b>Northern Shoveler</b>	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>
<b>Gadwall</b>	<i>Mareca strepera</i>
<b>American Wigeon</b>	<i>Mareca americana</i>
<b>Mallard</b>	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
<b>Mexican Duck</b>	<i>Anas diazi</i>
<b>Ring-necked Duck</b>	<i>Aythya collaris</i>
<b>Ruddy Duck</b>	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>
<b>Scaled Quail</b>	<i>Callipepla squamata</i>
<b>Gambel's Quail</b>	<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>
<b>Montezuma Quail</b>	<i>Cyrtonyx montezumae</i>
<b>Wild Turkey</b>	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>
<b>Pied-billed Grebe</b>	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>
<b>Eurasian Collared-Dove</b>	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
<b>Inca Dove</b>	<i>Columbina inca</i>
<b>Common Ground Dove</b>	<i>Columbina passerina</i>
<b>White-winged Dove</b>	<i>Zenaida asiatica</i>
<b>Mourning Dove</b>	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>
<b>Greater Roadrunner</b>	<i>Geococcyx californianus</i>
<b>Lesser Nighthawk</b>	<i>Chordeiles acutipennis</i>
<b>Mexican Whip-poor-will</b>	<i>Antrostomus arizonae</i>
<b>White-throated Swift</b>	<i>Aeronautes saxatalis</i>
<b>Rivoli's Hummingbird</b>	<i>Eugenes fulgens</i>
<b>Blue-throated Mountain-gem</b>	<i>Lampornis clemenciae</i>
<b>Lucifer Hummingbird</b>	<i>Calothorax lucifer</i>
<b>Black-chinned Hummingbird</b>	<i>Archilochus alexandri</i>
<b>Anna's Hummingbird</b>	<i>Calypte anna</i>
<b>Rufous Hummingbird (NT)</b>	<i>Selasphorus rufus</i>
<b>Broad-tailed Hummingbird</b>	<i>Selasphorus platycercus</i>
<b>Broad-billed Hummingbird</b>	<i>Cynanthus latirostris</i>
<b>Violet-crowned Hummingbird</b>	<i>Leucolia violiceps</i>
<b>Berylline Hummingbird</b>	<i>Saucerottia beryllina</i>
<b>Sora (leader)</b>	<i>Porzana carolina</i>
<b>American Coot</b>	<i>Fulica americana</i>
<b>Black-necked Stilt</b>	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>
<b>American Avocet</b>	<i>Recurvirostra americana</i>
<b>Killdeer</b>	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>
<b>Sanderling</b>	<i>Calidris alba</i>

<b>Baird's Sandpiper</b>	<i>Calidris bairdii</i>
<b>Least Sandpiper</b>	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>
<b>Western Sandpiper</b>	<i>Calidris mauri</i>
<b>Long-billed Dowitcher</b>	<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>
<b>Wilson's Phalarope</b>	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>
<b>Spotted Sandpiper</b>	<i>Actitis macularius</i>
<b>Black Tern</b>	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
<b>Neotropic Cormorant</b>	<i>Nannopterum brasilianum</i>
<b>Great Blue Heron</b>	<i>Ardea herodias</i>
<b>Great Egret</b>	<i>Ardea alba</i>
<b>Snowy Egret</b>	<i>Egretta thula</i>
<b>Black-crowned Night-Heron</b>	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
<b>White-faced Ibis</b>	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>
<b>Black Vulture</b>	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>
<b>Turkey Vulture</b>	<i>Cathartes aura</i>
<b>Golden Eagle</b>	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
<b>Cooper's Hawk</b>	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>
<b>Gray Hawk</b>	<i>Buteo plagiatus</i>
<b>Swainson's Hawk</b>	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>
<b>Zone-tailed Hawk</b>	<i>Buteo albonotatus</i>
<b>Red-tailed Hawk</b>	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>
<b>Whiskered Screech-Owl</b>	<i>Megascops trichopsis</i>
<b>Great Horned Owl</b>	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>
<b>Elf Owl (heard)</b>	<i>Micrathene whitneyi</i>
<b>Spotted Owl (NT)</b>	<i>Strix occidentalis</i>
<b>Elegant Trogon</b>	<i>Trogon elegans</i>
<b>Acorn Woodpecker</b>	<i>Melanerpes formicivorus</i>
<b>Gila Woodpecker</b>	<i>Melanerpes uropygialis</i>
<b>Ladder-backed Woodpecker</b>	<i>Dryobates scalaris</i>
<b>Hairy Woodpecker</b>	<i>Dryobates villosus</i>
<b>Arizona (Strickland's) Woodpecker</b>	<i>Dryobates arizonae</i>
<b>Northern Flicker - Red-shafted</b>	<i>Colaptes auratus [cafer Group]</i>
<b>Gilded Flicker</b>	<i>Colaptes chrysoides</i>
<b>American Kestrel</b>	<i>Falco sparverius</i>
<b>Rose-throated Becard</b>	<i>Pachyramphus aglaiae</i>
<b>Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet</b>	<i>Camptostoma imberbe</i>
<b>Greater Pewee</b>	<i>Contopus pertinax</i>
<b>Western Wood-Pewee</b>	<i>Contopus sordidulus</i>
<b>Cordilleran Flycatcher</b>	<i>Empidonax occidentalis</i>
<b>Buff-breasted Flycatcher</b>	<i>Empidonax fulvifrons</i>
<b>Black Phoebe</b>	<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>
<b>Vermilion Flycatcher</b>	<i>Pyrocephalus rubinus</i>
<b>Dusky-capped Flycatcher</b>	<i>Myiarchus tuberculifer</i>

Ash-throated Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus cinerascens</i>
Brown-crested Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus tyrannulus</i>
Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher	<i>Myiodynastes luteiventris</i>
Tropical Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i>
Cassin's Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus vociferans</i>
Thick-billed Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus crassirostris</i>
Western Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>
Bell's Vireo	<i>Vireo bellii</i>
Hutton's Vireo	<i>Vireo huttoni</i>
Plumbeous Vireo	<i>Vireo plumbeus</i>
Warbling Vireo	<i>Vireo gilvus</i>
Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>
Steller's Jay	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>
Mexican Jay	<i>Aphelocoma wollweberi</i>
Chihuahuan Raven	<i>Corvus cryptoleucus</i>
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Mountain Chickadee	<i>Poecile gambeli</i>
Mexican Chickadee	<i>Poecile sclateri</i>
Bridled Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus wollweberi</i>
Juniper Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus ridgwayi</i>
Verdin	<i>Auriparus flaviceps</i>
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>
Purple Martin - hesperia	<i>Progne subis hesperia</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>
Bushtit	<i>Psaltriparus minimus</i>
White-breasted Nuthatch - Interior West	<i>Sitta carolinensis [lagunae Group]</i>
Pygmy Nuthatch	<i>Sitta pygmaea</i>
Brown Creeper - albescens/alticola	<i>Certhia americana albescens/alticola</i>
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila melanura</i>
Rock Wren	<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>
Canyon Wren	<i>Catherpes mexicanus</i>
House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>
Bewick's Wren	<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>
Cactus Wren	<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>
Curve-billed Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma curvirostre</i>
Bendire's Thrasher (VU)	<i>Toxostoma bendirei</i>
Crissal Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma crissale</i>
Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>
Phainopepla	<i>Phainopepla nitens</i>
Olive Warbler (Ocotero)	<i>Peucedramus taeniatus</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>

House Finch	<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>
Red Crossbill - Ponderosa Pine or type 2	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i> (type 2)
Pine Siskin	<i>Spinus pinus</i>
Lesser Goldfinch	<i>Spinus psaltria</i>
Rufous-winged Sparrow	<i>Peucaea carpalis</i>
Botteri's Sparrow	<i>Peucaea botterii</i>
Cassin's Sparrow	<i>Peucaea cassinii</i>
Five-striped Sparrow	<i>Amphispizopsis quinquestriata</i>
Black-throated Sparrow	<i>Amphispiza bilineata</i>
Lark Sparrow	<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>
Yellow-eyed Junco	<i>Junco phaeonotus</i>
Song Sparrow - fallax Group	<i>Melospiza melodia</i> [fallax Group]
Canyon Towhee	<i>Melozone fusca</i>
Abert's Towhee	<i>Melozone aberti</i>
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	<i>Aimophila ruficeps</i>
Spotted Towhee	<i>Pipilo maculatus</i>
Yellow-breasted Chat	<i>Icteria virens</i>
Eastern Meadowlark – Chihuahuan (NT)	<i>Sturnella magna</i> [liliana Group]
Hooded Oriole	<i>Icterus cucullatus</i>
Scott's Oriole	<i>Icterus parisorum</i>
Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>
Bronzed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus aeneus</i>
Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>
Great-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i>
Lucy's Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis luciae</i>
Virginia's Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis virginiae</i>
Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>
Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>
Yellow-rumped Warbler - Audubon's	<i>Setophaga coronata auduboni</i>
Grace's Warbler	<i>Setophaga graciae</i>
Black-throated Gray Warbler	<i>Setophaga nigrescens</i>
Hermit Warbler	<i>Setophaga occidentalis</i>
Red-faced Warbler	<i>Cardellina rubrifrons</i>
Painted Redstart	<i>Myioborus pictus</i>
Hepatic Tanager	<i>Piranga flava</i>
Summer Tanager	<i>Piranga rubra</i>
Western Tanager	<i>Piranga ludoviciana</i>
Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>
Pyrrhuloxia	<i>Cardinalis sinuatus</i>
Black-headed Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus melanocephalus</i>
Blue Grosbeak	<i>Passerina caerulea</i>
Lazuli Bunting	<i>Passerina amoena</i>
Varied Bunting	<i>Passerina versicolor</i>

**MAMMAL LIST.** 19 species. As there is no standardized list of English mammal names, the names used here are ones in common usage (alternate names are in parentheses). (heard) = heard only; (leader) = tour leader only.

**Desert Cottontail**

**Black-tailed Jackrabbit**

**Arizona Gray Squirrel**

**Abert's Squirrel**

**Cliff Chipmunk**

**Rock Squirrel**

**Northern Raccoon**

**White-nosed Coati (Coatimundi)**

**Striped Skunk**

**Coyote**

**Gray Fox**

After discussions with a local in Portal, our Fox sighting on State Line Road was almost guaranteed to be a Gray Fox rather than a Kit Fox.

**Coue's White-tailed Deer**

**Mule Deer**

**Pronghorn - Mexican**

**Collared Peccary (Javelina)**

**Deer Mouse sp.**

**Cotton Rat sp.**

**Bat sp. 1** – Under the bridge in Rio Rico

**Bat sp. 2** – At the George Walker House

*Sylvilagus audubonii*

*Lepus californicus*

*Sciurus arizonensis*

*Sciurus aberti*

*Tamias dorsalis*

*Spermophilus variegatus*

*Procyon lotor*

*Nasua narica*

*Mephitis mephitis*

*Canis latrans*

*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*

*Odocoileus virginianus couesi*

*Odocoileus hemionus*

*Antilocapra americana mexicana*

*Pecari tajacu*

*Peromyscus sp.*

*Sigmodon sp.*

**REPTILE/AMPHIBIAN LIST.** 9 species.

**American Bullfrog**

**Couche's Spadefoot (Toad)**

**Striped Plateau Lizard**

**Yarrow's Spiny Lizard**

**Desert Grassland Whiptail**

**Giant Spotted Whiptail**

**Ornate Box Turtle**

**Sonoran Whipsnake**

**Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake**

**Banded Rock Rattlesnake**

*Lithobates catesbeianus*

*Scaphiopus couchii*

*Sceloporus virgatus*

*Sceloporus jarrovi*

*Aspidoscelis uniparens*

*Aspidoscelis stictogrammus*

*Terrapene ornata*

*Masticophis bilineatus*

*Crotalus atrox*

*Crotalus lepidus klauberi*

**INSECT HIGHLIGHTS.** 5 Species.

**Desert Blonde Tarantula**  
**Chiricahuan Gray Tarantula**  
**Tohono Vinegaroon**  
**Oil Beetle**  
**Black Witch (Moth)**

*Aphonopelma chalcodes*  
*Aphonopelma gabeli*  
*Mastigoproctus tohono*  
*Meloe sp.*  
*Ascalapha odorata*



*Desert Blonde Tarantula*



*Tohono Vinegaroon*





*Collared Peccary (Javelina)*



*Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake*