



## **S.E. ARIZONA & GRAND CANYON**

**JULY 23-AUGUST 4, 2005**

Trip Report by Adrian Binns

### **Day 1 / July 23 – Scottsdale Community College; Phoenix Desert Botanical Gardens**

Exactly where we were told they would be! The car park at the community college, not just anyone though, it had to be Lot A. Sure enough sitting on a post a Burrowing Owl and 20 feet away behind a thick tree trunk were her 2 well grown juveniles. There was not a sign of a burrow or a mound. Could they really be nesting in the drain pipes? Not too far away is the Desert Botanical Gardens, and with a fast approaching storm, it is after all monsoon season, we decided to go for it and take our chance. The good news was that somehow we missed the rain, the not so good news was that the wind was so strong, it meant birds were rather scare. A Verdin took time out to preen in a Palo Verde and we got all the common doves, including a pair of Inca Doves that sat calling above our heads. Abert's Towhee was piping away, occasionally showing himself and by the time we left he really wanted to be seen and perched nicely. There was a pair of molting Curved-billed Thrashers - without a doubt not the prettiest bird we saw today. That prize went to a brief look at the magenta gorget of a male Costa's Hummingbird that was feeding on Salvia. Several Queen butterflies, Desert Cottontails and a Desert Spiny Lizard were also added, though Michael would also have liked to add the two cats. At dusk fell we had great looks at Lesser Nighthawks that were flying low around the buildings and vegetation, where we could clearly see that the white wing patch was closer to the wing tip than on a Common and that the primaries were rounder, as well as having a completely different flight pattern.

### **Day 2 / July 24 – Baseline Road; Oak Creek Canyon, Garland Indian Garden, Viewpoint; San Francisco Peaks, Del Rio Nature Center, Snow Bowl**

In the open scrub desert we searched for LeConte's Thrasher, coming up trumps when one responded to the tape and was seen in a Mesquite tree. By the time we positioned ourselves for better lighting conditions there was a pair that was quite happy to watch the world go by, half way up the tree. The views and time we had with this pair was amazing. In the denser vegetation a Crissal's Thrasher proceeded to do the same thing as the LeConte, and for once everyone had all the looks they wanted as we compared the two similar species. A Loggerhead Shrike always seemed to be in view and what seemed to be an out of place Black-headed Grosbeak showed well. Returning towards Phoenix the van began to rattle extensively and as luck would have it the rental place (minutes away) just open on this Sunday as we pulled in! Some duck tape and 10 minutes later we were on our way again. The cause was the seal on the windscreen of this brand new van was loose, letting air in. The sticker on the windscreen read, "Ford Quality Satisfaction". Enough said. The day was to be overcast, but still it did not detract from the superb scenic drive through the valley of the red rocks and up or is it down Oak Creek Canyon.

A lunch stop produced a number of Black Phoebes and a Yellow Warbler and the view point had several Black-throated Gray Warbler's, Steller's Jay, Chipping Sparrow, Red-backed Junco, Western Bluebird, Western Tanager and a singing Canyon Wren. It's good to be back in the west!

Just north of Flagstaff on the fringes of the San Francisco Peaks is a small nature center next to the Museum of Native Americans and an hour here is well spent getting wonderful views of Lewis's Woodpecker, Pygmy Nuthatch, Mountain Chickadee, Broad-tailed and Rufous Hummingbirds, the later being very aggressive in guarding 'his' feeder, Bullock's Oriole, Violet-green Swallow, House Wren and Red-shafted Flickers. A Weidemeyer's Admiral was a nice sight as it flew past perched hummingbirds and two Mountain Yarrow Spiny Lizards were seen doing push-ups while a Gray-collared Chipmunk scurried up a rock face and sat on a ledge eating a grass stalk. Not too far away is the ski resort of Snow Bowl on the slopes of Mt. Humphries, and here after a slow start we came up with Brown Creeper, Western Bluebirds, Robin, Chipping Sparrow and several Red Crossbills, though more were heard than seen. Two Olive-sided Flycatchers, one with no vest at all and who eventually showed his white side flanks put on a great show. Our first mixed flock was also seen moving through the spruces and included Red-breasted Nuthatches, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Mountain Chickadees, with a perimeter assembly of Clarke's Nutcracker, Downy and Hairy Woodpecker and Crossbills.

### **Day 3 / July 25 – Grand Canyon; Kendrick Park; Hart's Prairie Road**

How does one begin to describe the scenery at the Grand Canyon? It's simply superb and breathtaking. Something everyone should see once in their lives. We began at Mather Point and worked our way around to Yavapai and then walked from the Kolb Studio to the Rock of Ages and back. Black-throated Grays, this time in fine plumage, Western Tanager, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Scrub-Jay, Canyon and Rock Wren, Bushtit, Juniper Titmouse and Mountain Chickadee were all seen very well. The highlight of the beginning of this morning was undoubtedly watching a Peregrine actively hunting below us. How often does one get a view from above? Eventually we watched it pick up speed and drop out of sight, likely chasing a White-throated Swift. The big bird, literally, now here, is the California Condor. As we walked towards the hotel on the south rim, one was in flight heading east and by the time we got ourselves situated and the Lookout, we had one working the canyon wall in front of us. It was #73, a 3<sup>rd</sup> year juvenile that was joined by an adult. For 15 minutes we watched this monster before the two of them headed out of sight. A walk around the rim failed to produce a Zone-tailed Hawk but we did get great looks at loads of Western Bluebirds, Rock Wrens and an Ash-throated Flycatcher coming in to her nest with a bug in the mouth.

After lunch we headed back south first stopping around Hendrick Park, and the open grassland at the base of the San Francisco Peaks, where several Vesper Sparrows were perched on Mullein stalks with food in their mouths; Western Meadowlarks were less cooperative preferring to sing rather than be seen and 8 Pronghorn stayed relatively motionless in the middle of the grasslands. A Prairie Falcon was spotted flying besides the van and at amazing speed low over the grasses before perching on a low snag. In the Ponderosa Pines along 514, Western Tanagers, Chipping Sparrows, Red-backed Juncos, Flickers, House Wrens, Hairy Woodpeckers and Kestrels were common and 5 Lewis 's Woodpeckers were a pleasant surprise flying throughout a burnt area, giving us excellent views in great light. A final stop along Hart's Prairie Road produced good numbers of Broad-tailed and Rufous Hummingbirds nectaring on *nicotiana* and *penstemon*; 3 White-lined Sphinx Moths on penstemon; a juvenile Townsend Solitaire and an adult and juvenile Green-tailed Towhee.

## **Day 4 / July 26 – Hart’s Prairie Road; Red Rocks Cattle Pens; Saguaro National Forest**

We began where we left off last night, working our way across Hart’s Prairie Road, with stands of Ponderosa Pines some mixed with Aspen and open meadows, all with Mt Humphery’s and dark skies looming above us. An old grove of pines produced two rather uncooperative Plumbeous Vireos that called on and off and were only seen flying away. A Brown Creeper put in a brief appearance. A Clark’s Nutcracker sat up nicely for us at the top of a pine and eventually a Williamson’s Sapsucker was spotted, first a pair and then a male that flew briefly half way up a pine before flying off. After having tried to locate them for almost an hour, we drove on about 200 yards and came across a male sitting on a pine 40 feet from the road! At a small pond surrounded by a good thick stand of Aspens, Pine Siskins were very numerous and two flycatchers proved elusive. A Cordilleran called a few times and a Gray Flycatcher was seen briefly before teasing us with calls. A final stop near the preserve was excellent with a great deal of activity in particular around the edge of a field and along the barbed wire fence. Western Tanagers, Western Wood Pewees, Green-tailed Towhees, Townsend Solitaire, Western and Mountain Bluebirds, House Wren, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, and a Brewer’s Sparrow all obliged. Marianne spotted a Red-naped Sapsucker which eventually tapped. This in turn led to a male and juvenile several hundred yards away joining in, the latter two seen well.

By mid afternoon we had left the north and were nearing Tucson, stopping first at the Red Rocks Cattle Pens, where there was a multitude of Brown-headed Cowbirds, splattering of Red-winged Blackbirds and an assortment of the usual doves, including many Eurasian Collared Doves. We came to look for Ruddy Ground Dove. We thought we had a good candidate under a mesquite in the shade with an all dark bill, but the throated eventually showed spots. In flight we all saw the white edges of the tail feathers. It was our first Common Ground Dove. Another one caught our attention, but this in the end turned out to be the same. Over two hours of persistence paid off when one was spotted flying besides the road from one of the pens to the Palo Verde tree by the tank. It was very ruddy overall with no white in the tail - no doubt a male. Unfortunately that was about all we saw other it fly away from the tree. Round-tailed Ground Squirrel and a Desert Iguana were also seen here. From here it was onto the Saguaro National Forest to look for Gilded Flicker. A Pyrrhuloxia was heard, so we walked closer to find it and Mike called that he had the bird (flicker), perched 50 feet in front of him. It flew away, and we relocated it in a dead Saguaro. It flew away again and was relocated a second time. We all got to see the brown head and light barring on the back along with the yellow underside of the wings.

## **Day 5 / July 27 – Golden Gate Road; Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum; Santa Rita Lodge; Kubo House; Hummingbird Hill; Madera Canyon Road**

Taking Golden Gate Road to the Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum we continued our luck with several nice sightings of Gilded Flickers to go along with Gila’s, Cactus Wrens and Curved-billed Thrashers. Harris’ Antelope Squirrel and Black-tailed Jackrabbits were also seen. Can there be a better museum than the Desert Museum? One would be hard pushed to match the quality and setting that allows the museum to blend in perfectly with the natural landscape. Hooded Orioles and Cactus Wrens kept as enthralled; a male Phainopepla was seen as were Black-headed Grosbeaks, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher’s Pyrruloxia, Cardinal and Brown-crested and Ash-throated Flycatcher. We also got to study a young male Costa’s Hummingbird, though Wayne did see a male.

We spent the afternoon in Madera Canyon first at the feeders at Santa Rita Lodge where Broad-billed, Black-chinned and a Magnificent Hummingbird put in appearances. Black-headed Grosbeaks, House Finch and Lesser

Goldfinch also visited the feeders while Mexican Jay and Bridled Titmouse stayed on the perimeter of the feeding station. At the Kubo House we put in several hours of neck-craning keeping an eye out for a Flame-colored Tanager amongst the Oaks and Sycamores. There was plenty of activity with noisy Lesser Goldfinch, Black-headed Grosbeak and White-breasted Nuthatches being the most abundant species. A family of Hooded Orioles was kept busy feeding young while Canyon Wren, Painted Redstart, Plumbeous Vireo and Brown-headed Flycatcher rounded out some of the more common species. A Red-breasted Grosbeak was a good find for this part of the world and a pair of squeaky Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher's were seen very well. 3 Wild Turkeys also added to the variety of species. Nancy called out an orange Tanager, which turned out to be a Flame-colored that everyone was able to see some aspect of the bird. It was seen with a pair of Hepatic Tanagers. While waiting along the road, we struck up a conversation with someone heading up the hill in his car, who kindly offered to let us pay his feeders a visit, which just happen to have a White-eared Hummingbird. What a place is was? Set on the hill with a view across the valley, we sat on his upper deck verandah and watched all kinds of hummingbird activity at his 5 feeders. Rufous, Black-chinned and Broad-billed were the main three, but there was also a Blue-throated, Magnificent and the aforementioned White-eared – a young male. While all this was going on the sycamore across the road had Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher and an Elegant Trogon land in it.

After dinner several of us when out for a night ride. Our first find was a Striped Skunk at the gift shop then a quarter mile down the road a Mountain Lion – my first! I could not have been more excited, finally I saw one. It was likely a young female about 6 feet in length and looking well feed. She could not have been more than 20 yards from us, caught in the spot light beam, staring at us before walking away. Western Spotted Skunk, Merriam's Kangaroo Rat and a couple of Tarantula rounded out an excellent drive.

### **Day 6 / July 28 - Kubo House; Tumacacori Mission, De Anza Trail; California Gulch**

It was an early morning start to see if we could get better views of the Flame-colored Tanager, but it never showed. Other than the Rose-breasted Grosbeak we had all the same species as yesterday afternoon as well as a Wilson's Warbler. We did meet a rather anal ordinance officer on the road who was not happy to see that my scope and I were standing on the road! There had been a Streaked-backed Oriole reported about 40 minutes south of where we were, so we went to investigate. Western Kingbird, Barn Swallow, Mockingbird, Blue Grosbeak, Gila and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Bell's Vireo, Chat's galore, 3 Summer Tanagers, Vermillion Flycatcher, Lesser Goldfinch, a plethora of Phainopepla's but not a single oriole. We ran into 3 other couples some of whom had been there since dawn, and no one had any luck.

After lunch we headed to California Gulch, a wonderfully scenic spot near the Mexican border. A stop on along Ruby Road produced singing Cassin's most of which stayed out of sight, good looks at Black-throated Sparrow and Black Vultures. It was a very pleasant afternoon, and though it may have been 90 degrees it certainly was not as hot as it could have been. The gulch was hopping with Varied Buntings, Cassin's Kingbirds, Canyon and Cactus Wrens, Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, Ladder-backed Woodpecker and the reason we were there. . . . Five-striped Sparrow. They put on a wonderful show perched on Ocotillo and singing their hearts out. There must have been at least 7 of them on territory as we encountered them at regular intervals between the streams. We had a pleasant dinner at Oro Blanca Mine under half a sky with lighting in the distance which was going away from us and half a starry sky. Once dusk turned to dark a Western Screech Owl began to call. It was only for a short time - then we heard a Common Poorwill call twice. This was followed by silence for about half an hour before the screech owl started up again only to be joined by a second one. For whatever reason the Buff-collared Nightjar decided to take a night off.

**Day 7 / July 29 – Madera Canyon, Old Baldy Trail; Madera Canyon Road; Rio Rico; Kino Springs; Patagonia Rest Stop; Paton’s House**

A pre breakfast walk up the canyon was to look for the trogons, but it seemed that everyone that was looking had the same results – no sighting and an occasional call. However there was plenty of other activity with Dusky-capped Flycatchers dueting; Black-throated Gray Warblers in the tree tops; Arizona and Acorn Woodpeckers; plenty of Western Wood Pewees; Painted Redstarts and Plumbeous Vireos. A Zone-tailed Hawk was spotted flying over the canopy and later seen in clear view circling. Our return to the car park lead to yet another unpleasant encounter with the same officer as yesterday, and it became very obvious that he was on a mission, and that was to get me. During breakfast the feeders produced a few new birds including a male Costa’s Hummingbird and Bronzed Cowbirds. The Mesquite grasslands along Madera Canyon Road produced several cooperative Botteri’s Sparrows; a rather unusual sighting of a Cassin’s Sparrow that was quite happy walking about; and a rather uncooperative Rufous-winged and Rufous-crowned Sparrows. We got out the canyon just in time as a storm approached from the east which by the time we reached Green Valley was in full force – the monsoon was here in full force.

The afternoon was spent heading south first stopping at Rio Rico for Great Blue Heron, Vermillion Flycatchers and about 9 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks. Kino Springs was excellent, beginning with a number of Blue Grosbeaks, Lesser Goldfinch, Varied and Lazuli Buntings feeding in the grasses along the edge of the first pond. Black-bellied Whistling Ducks were in the pond and young Grey Hawks could be heard calling, their nest not to far away in a Cottonwood tree with one bird on the nest and the other just off it. We even got stunning looks at two Rufous-winged Sparrows, one of which perched singing for the longest of times. The activity around the second didn’t let up either, with Rough-winged Swallows flying around and Coot on the water. In the reeds a Song Sparrow and Common Yellowthroat was seen and the Tropical Kingbirds put on a great show included one on a nest.

A storm was headed straight for us and our next stop was the Patagonia Rest Stop. Arriving just as the rain was diminishing; we quickly picked up Thick-billed Kingbirds, Phainopeplas, and a Yellow Warbler. Crossing the road, Cassin’s Kingbirds and Brown-crested Flycatchers were busy calling and the later was seen on numerous occasions. After a short walk to the north the nest was easily spotted and within 5 minutes a young female exited the nest to be followed by a male. The male spend most of the half hour that we were there picking up nesting material and adding it to the top of the nest, just by loosely wrapping it around. A one point the young female flew towards us and called several times. A Western Wood Pewee (it never called) with a considerable amount of yellow on the lower mandible was on a nest in the same tree as the Becard.

At Paton’s House the yard was full of feeder birds....Gambels Quail, the doves, the blackbirds, a Blue Grosbeak, Phainopeplas, a Chat calling non stop, a Grey Hawk once in a while, and then there are the hummingbird feeders. Broad-bills made up the majority, though there never really were that many birds in all today. A few Black-chinned and a Violet-crown were the other regulars. We also picked up a young Anna’s.

**Day 8 / July 30 – Fort Huachuca, garden Canyon, Schelite Canyon, Sawmill Canyon; Ash Canyon B&B**

We awoke to a steady rain that began over night and continued till late morning. This is somewhat a bit of an oddity for this time of year, as it is monsoon season, which basically means daily half hour afternoon storms. It was only a light drizzle by the time we reached the fort. My good friend Bill joined us for the remained of the trip. In the grasslands our first bird was a Peregrine followed by grassland specialists such as Cassin’s Kingbird,

Lark Sparrow, and Curve-billed Thrashers along with a few wet Red-tailed Hawks and Violet-green Swallows on the wires. From the second picnic area up, we had a constant escort of Western Wood Pewees. Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers seemed pretty numerous and we would occasionally hear Canyon and Bewick's Wrens. A juvenile Cooper's Hawk also put in an appearance and later when we descended Garden Canyon we found her drinking from a large puddle in the road. Stopping along the dirt road we hit a nice mixed flock with Bushtit, Bridled Titmouse, Plumbeous Vireo several Hutton's Vireos while Bewick's Wren, Spotted Towhee and Arizona Woodpecker could be seen nearby.

We reached Sawmill Canyon by 9:15 and the weather had taken a turn for the worse. We tried to wait it out but after 40 minutes we decided to head down the hill and see if things were better at Schelite Canyon. A short stop at the pictograph site produced a pair of Band-tailed Pigeons and two early migrant Olive-sided Flycatchers were seen. Luckily for us the rain had stopped by the time we got there and it looked as though it was clearing. The decision was made to go for the Spotted Owl. Once we reached the 5/8<sup>th</sup> of a mile point we began in earnest to look for the owl stopping frequently and scanning every tree while we listened to very vocal Canyon Wrens. An hour and twenty minutes after we began Bill spotted a pair of owls above Mike's head in the open at the far end of the canyon. By now the rain was over and the owls were drying out, preening and attempting to cough up pellets. We paused for lunch on the way back down and picked up Rufous-crowned Sparrow just before reaching the trail head. Meanwhile Carol and Wayne (the two that had already seen the owls) and who had stayed behind had a Common Black Hawk and a Greater Pewee, Robin's nemesis.

A return to Sawmill Canyon, this time under blue skies, produced several cooperative Buff-breasted Flycatchers and two Yellow-eyed Juncos. We spent the last hour and half of the day at Ash Canyon B&B watching the hummingbird activity at Mary Jo's 7 feeders positioned on her mesquite tree. Of course there were all ages of Broad-bills, some Black-chinned a Broad-tailed, a number of Allen's as well as a male Calliope and 2 female and 1 male Luficers.

### **Day 9 / July 31 – Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park; Rte 90; Sulphur Springs Valley – Noble Road; Whitewater Draw; San Pedro River Inn; Fort Huachuca – Sawmill Canyon; Beatty's B&B**

For a location, Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park, that is not environmentally friendly this is a totally misnamed place. Old name...Sewage Ponds. An evenings worth of rain and thunder was slowly ending as we began our day with a soaked Peregrine and numerous Yellow-headed Blackbirds trying to dry themselves out. Common Yellowthroats were singing away in the rushes and groups of swallows including Cliff's would lift off from there perch in the reeds and fly over the well vegetated pond. I presume there is water in there as we could not really see any.

A stop along Rte 90 was to view a juvenile Swainson's Hawk sitting on an agave stalk and watch skylarking Cassin's Sparrows at close quarters. In the Sulphur Springs Valley the first bird we came across was our target, the Bendire's Thrasher and it gave us a great opportunity to compare it to the more common and similar looking Curved-billed Thrasher. We even got to see a second, and in the process got bitten by Harvester Ants, as we watched a Cassin's Kingbird chase, land on and harass an adult Swainson's Hawk over our heads. A small covey of Scaled Quail crossed the road and a group of about a dozen early wintering Lark Buntings were seen flying across a field.

On the way to Whitewater Draw we watched an Ash-throated Flycatcher, Blue Grosbeak and Loggerhead Shrike besides the road and had Black-tailed Jackrabbit, Mule Deer and a young Spotted Ground Squirrel.

Whitewater Draw was quite birdy despite only the pond having water. Mexican Mallards and a Great Blue Heron were the largest birds in the water, while a Long-billed Dowitcher, Silt Sandpiper and Spotted Sandpiper were feeding along the edge of the rushes and Killdeer could be seen and heard flying around the pond. Black Phoebe, Vermillion Flycatcher, Lazuli Bunting and Common Yellowthroat were in the rushes and an assortment of swallows including Tree and Cliff flew over the pond. Scaled Quail, Loggerhead Shrike and Eastern Meadowlark were in the surrounding fields.

Approaching the San Pedro River Inn Roadrunners seemed to be all over the place while Black-throated and Cassin's Sparrows greeted us. Several noisy Cassin's Kingbirds called from the Cottonwoods as did a Lucy's Warbler while we searched for a Barn Owl. Ladder-backed Woodpecker was also in the same tree. Say's Phoebe, Canyon Towhee and Vermillion Flycatcher were seen well on the grounds.

Midday we return to the fort and Sawmill Canyon, first stopping for a Common Black Hawk Mike spotted from the back of the van deep in the woods. We were here to locate a Greater Pewee, but as with yesterday's effort we fell short. However, we did get to watch Mexican Jays mob a Great Horned Owl for a good half hour as well as a pair of Zone-tailed Hawks tumble from the sky. Nancy found a Western Wood Pewee's nest tucked in on a Sycamore tree and Robin found an empty Hepatic Tanager nest. As we split up to look for the pewee, Bill was further up the canyon and came across a flock of warblers that had a number of Graces and Olive and Black-throated Gray. Elegant Trogon was also seen in flight and heard calling as were several Buff-breasted Flycatchers.

The remainder of the afternoon was spent at Tom Beatty's feeders, watching dozens of hummers. In all there were three White-eared, more Anna's than we had seen all trip to date as well as 2 Magnificent and a Blue-throated. Time was also spent analyzing the hybrid Berryline's Magnificent that has been on his property for some 4 or 5 years.

## **Day 10 / August 1- Patagonia Lake State Park; Amado Montosa Road; Carr Canyon**

Several birds were still needed to be cleaned up, so today we began by looking for the Black-capped Gnatcatcher at Patagonia Lake State Park. Following another night of steady rain, the lake was well above normal and the grassy area or buffer zone between the cattails and mesquite was under water, but the washes were relatively dry and easy enough to walk through. On the water Great Blue Herons, American Coots, Pied-billed Grebes, a Ruddy Duck and an American White Pelican were seen along with several Black-bellied Whistling Ducks flying over. We spend over 2 hours working the mesquite trees back and forth up and down coming across many Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Yellow-breasted Chats, Bell's Vireos, Verdins, Song Sparrows, Vermillion Flycatchers and Summer Tanagers and a few Ash-throated Flycatchers and Black-throated Sparrows. At one stage we heard a few calls from a Black-capped Gnatcatcher and while walking towards the sounds it flew towards several of us, giving us the briefest of sightings, and then it vanished. That was it! We did witness a Yellow Warbler feeding a Brown-headed Cowbird and a Bell's Vireo being just as hospitable.

Plan B to get the gnatcatcher involved driving another hour, but we had to give it a go! At Amado Montosa Canyon Wrens were very vocal and a pair of Black-capped Gnatcatchers came into low bare branches in a tree very close to us, for some excellent looks at the male or female. We also had an additional bird which responded just as well, perching at the top of a tree, but this one had a short narrow tail, no doubt due to molt. Black-tailed Gnatcatcher were also heard here. With one bird down, Greater Pewee was next.

At the top of Carr Canyon the campground had Yellow-eyed Juncos, American Robins and Hepatic Tanagers, but the one sighting of a Greater Pewee faded away when it could not be relocated. Continuing on towards Comfort Springs, a Greater Pewee was seen flying between two dead snags about road level on a down slope. Stopping we soon came across two of them, chasing each other. Was it a pair or just a fussy juvenile? We got exceptional views from the road as well as in the pine stand, where one began its two note call which it was still doing 20 minutes later when we left. Grace's Warbler, Painted Redstart and White-breasted Nuthatch were also seen here. On our way down we picked up several Rufous-crowned Warblers and Cooper's Hawk at the base of the canyon.

Just as a storm began to approach us with thunder and lightning we reached our Whiskered Screech Owl spot, only to find that a couple had a stereo blaring which made listening to owls next to impossible. Plan B, once again, took us to the next canyon where as luck would have it we were pointed in the right direction and soon had one calling. 15 minutes later it was located 15 feet up a pine and everyone was delighted. We got the owl and somehow beat the rain. Today turned out to be quality day rather than one of quantity.

### **Day 11 / August 2 – Willow Tank; Gin Road; Cave Creek Ranch; South Fork / Maple Trail**

Heading west we made stops at the Bisbee open copper mine pit and the Gladsten Hotel in Bisbee to see the beautifully decorated entrance room and staircase. In the Chihuahuan Desert we came across several pairs of Chihuahuan Ravens sitting at their nest on telegraph poles as well as a very cooperative adult and two juvenile Swainson's Hawks. At Willow Tank the disappointment of not seeing water continues yet again, but in spite of that we did see a first year female Lucy's Warbler and a mixed group of Lark Sparrows and Lark Buntings along with numerous Mockingbirds and Western Tanagers. In the distance we could hear Cassin's Sparrows calling. Not far away we were rewarded with two Barn Owls, one of which put on a nice show.

It was only a short ride into the Chirachua's and Cave Creek Ranch, where we watched the feeders for the next three hours while having lunch. While Blue-throated Hummingbirds were no doubt the star attraction we did get to see a fine male White-eared. An interesting sight was seeing a Blue-throated land on the gravel path, spread its wings and sun itself. Rufous' were pretty regular along with a male and female Calliope. Lesser Goldfinch were all over the place and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Bridled Titmouse, Black-headed Grosbeak would be in occasional appearance. A Virginia's Warbler was also seen moving about behind the water fountain.

After settling into our rooms we headed out to South Fork and worked the dry creek bed to no avail as we search for one of the 17 reported Elegant Trogons! We had better luck along the very scenic Maple Trail, where we crossed the stream bed 5 times and walked about a good mile before Robin found the first of what would be 4 Elegant Trogons. It was perched three quarters of the way up a maple tree where we could get good scope views of the sub adult male. We watched for 20 minutes as it was joined by at least two others, all of which were busy moving about feeding.

Exiting the Portal Store after dinner we had a flyby Great Horned Owl and Lesser Nighthawk. We then drove the road looking for Whip-poor-wills and Poorwills. We did catch glimpse of a Poorwill as it took off from a ditch and did hear one calling, but that was it. We had better luck with the other critters including a baby Western Diamondback Rattlesnake, Tarantulas and 3 Striped Skunks.



## **Day 12 / August 3 – Road to Paradise; Barfoot and Rustler Junction; Rustler Park; George Walker House; Cave Creek Ranch**

A pre breakfast drive along the road to Paradise produced many Black-throated Sparrows along with several Juniper Titmouse, Canyon Towhees, Western Scrub Jays, Calliope Hummingbirds, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Western Tanager and 3 Bullocks Orioles. Our target here was Black-chinned Sparrow and we did locate 2 juveniles which provided good looks. Field Crescent, Harris Antelope Ground Squirrel and Black-tailed Jackrabbit were also seen.

After breakfast we headed to Rustler Park, passing many Mexican Jays before making our first stop just beyond Onion Saddle when we heard Mexican Chickadees. This was to be the first of two big mixed flocks that we would come across that included Red-faced, Hermit, Olive, Townsend and many Grace's Warblers, Yellow-eyed Juncos, Pygmy Nuthatch, Brown Creepers. A young family group of Cooper's Hawks along with Red-tailed Hawks, Greater Pewee, a family of House Wrens, Hairy Woodpecker and a Virginia's Warbler were also sighted. At Rustler Park we added a very confiding Hermit Thrush that was actively searching for insects. By mid day the skies had darkened considerably and thunder was nearby and by the time we finished our picnic lunch it began to rain. Descending back down the mountain we stopped in at the George Walker house where the feeders held Calliope and Rufous hummers.

## **Day 13 / August 4 – Carr Canyon / Comfort Springs Trail; Rodgers Sewage Treatment Plant; Sweetwater Wetlands**

Our plans changed when we received word that 3 Aztec Thrushes were seen in Carr Canyon yesterday morning. It meant an early start and we were up to the task, arriving to meet Bill at the base of Carr Canyon by 6:30. A number of vehicles were already assembled at the top and it was not long before we meet the first group half way down the trail to Comfort Springs. It just happened to be Jon Dunn's group that original found the male and two females. Spreading out all along the trail for some ½ mile we thoroughly covered the stunning mixed deciduous-pine forest in which it was seen. Band-tailed Pigeon's, Acorn Woodpeckers, Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, a plethora of Spotted Towhees, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Red-faced Warbler, Painted Redstart...the list goes on, Brown Creeper, Red-tailed Hawk, Short-tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Stellar's Jay, Mexican Jay, Greater Pewee but no sign of Aztec Thrush! By late morning we were rewarded with a beautiful 3 foot Black-tailed Rattlesnake that Carol and Wayne almost stepped on as they made their way back up the path.

Heading north we stooped at Rodgers Treatment plant where we had spotted a juvenile Harris' Hawk. It was very cooperative sitting and occasionally calling from midway up a pine tree. Our final stop on this warm day was at Sweetwater there were a number of Coots, Moorhens, Mexican Mallards, Ruddy Ducks, the males still with their blazing blue bills and Cinnamon Teal. Common Yellowthroats, Song Sparrows and Yellow Warblers were around the rushes while Abert's Towhees were often spotted walking across the paths. A small pool of water in the open areas held several Killdeer as well as 2 Least Sandpipers while along the edge of the larger water impoundments a Spotted sandpiper was walking amongst 3 roosting Black-necked Stilts.