

Southeast Arizona

September 10 - 18, 2011

Custom Tour xxxx Birding Society
9 days/ 8 nights

CHEEPERS!

Birding on a Budget

Maximum 8 participants



Southeast Arizona is one of the best-known birding destinations in the United States. With over 500 recorded species, this area offers opportunities to see more kinds of birds than any other land-locked area of comparable size in the U.S. Of the birds regularly seen in southeast Arizona, 36 are not regular anywhere else in the U.S. and another 40-plus are confined to the zone along the Mexican border. Join us as we visit this amazing birding destination during the "second spring" when there is a resurgence of bird activity as the summer monsoons revitalize the desert vegetation.

Day 1 - Arrival in Tucson, preferably before noon. Hotel shuttle will transport you to our hotel upon arrival. If everyone arrives early enough in the day, we will do some afternoon birding in nearby Sweetwater Wetlands. These wetlands, created by the City of Tucson for water recharge and wildlife habitat in 1997, have proven to be a magnet for birds. Harris's Hawk, Inca Dove, Greater Roadrunner, Cactus Wren, and Abert's Towhee are but a few of the birds we might expect to see in a short visit here.

Overnight in Tucson, Fairfield Inn

Day 2 - We will use the morning hours to do some birding in the deserts surrounding Tucson, where we might encounter a plethora of species in the scrub, including Harris's and Swainson's Hawks, Burrowing Owl, Greater Roadrunner, Gila and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, Gilded Flicker, Say's Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Ash-throated and Brown-crested Flycatchers, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell's Vireo, Common Raven, Cactus Wren, Verdin, and two hummingbird species - Black-chinned and Anna's. Two species of Thrasher are possible today, Crissal, and Curve-billed. As the day heats up, we will bird through the foothills to Mount Lemmon. Canyon Wren, Canyon Towhee, Rufous-winged and Black-throated Sparrows are possible today, as well as Phainopepla and Pyrrhuloxia. On Mount Lemmon, we will search for Grace's, Olive and Red-faced Warblers as well as Mountain Chickadee, Pygmy Nuthatch, and Yellow-eyed Junco. With a great deal of luck, we could spot a Zone-tailed Hawk soaring by.

Overnight in Tucson , Fairfield Inn

Day 3 - We will check out of our Tucson hotel early and head south to the world-renowned Madera Canyon, where all of the Sierra Madrean hummingbirds are possible. In addition to the hummers and some of the more common Arizona species, we will search for Varied Bunting, Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, Dusky-capped and Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers, Bell's and Hutton's Vireos, Black-headed and Blue Grosbeaks, Painted Redstart, Hepatic and Western Tanagers, Arizona and Acorn Woodpeckers, Western Wood-Pewee, Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse, Bushtit, Bewick's and Canyon Wrens, Black-throated Gray and Lucy's Warblers, Scott's Oriole, and Botteri's, Rufous-crowned, and Cassin's Sparrows. Some years there are Flame-colored Tanagers nesting in this canyon, and a Berylline Hummingbird was present throughout the summer of 2010. Chihuahuan Raven is possible in the arid grassland just below Madera Canyon. After a full morning of birding at Madera, we will work our way toward Nogales, making some strategic stops for birding along the way. Montosa Canyon is an excellent spot to find one of the most sought-after birds in Arizona, the Black-capped Gnatcatcher. Further south, Rio Rico is known as the northernmost location to find Tropical Kingbird. Other possible species could include both Cassin's and Western Kingbirds, Gray Hawk, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, Bullock's Oriole and Lesser Goldfinch, to name but a few.

Overnight in Nogales, Holiday Inn Express



Bridled Titmouse

Day 4 - We will leave early for California Gulch, famous as the only accessible spot for Five-striped Sparrow. We will be visiting this very special site at the time of year when these rare sparrows are vocalizing from exposed perches above the subtropical thornscrub high on the steep slopes of the area. En route we will pass through an area where Montezuma Quail are often seen; other birds that occur here regularly are Gray, Zone-tailed and Red-tailed Hawks, White-throated Swift, Broad-billed, Costa's, and Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, and Lazuli and Varied Buntings, among many others. We will head east around midday, stopping in the Patagonia area to pick up all the specialties this site is known for, including Thick-billed Kingbird and Violet-crowned Hummingbird. Continuing on to the Huachucas, where we will spend the next few days visiting the canyons made famous by their avian inhabitants, we will try to reach Ash Canyon by dusk to catch good views of the Lucifer Hummingbirds at feeders as they take their last meal of the day before going into torpor for the night.

Overnight in Sierra Vista, Fairfield Inn

Day 5 - Today we will visit two more canyons in the Huachucas, but first we will bird the San Pedro River valley, a lush ribbon of green amid the parched Chihuahuan Desert landscape. The area around San Pedro House offers opportunities for Swainson's Hawk, American Kestrel, Gambel's Quail, Common Ground-Dove, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Gila Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Vermilion Flycatcher, Say's Phoebe, Cassin's and Western Kingbirds, Cactus Wren, Lucy's Warbler, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Canyon and Abert's Towhees, Eastern Meadowlark, and Bullock's Oriole. We are likely to hear the characteristic songs of Botteri's and Cassin's Sparrows around the parking lot.



Cactus Wren



Steller's Jay

From San Pedro, we will drive to Upper Carr Canyon Road, the only vehicular access to the Ponderosa Pine of the high Huachuca Mountains. As we begin our drive, the birds we might see are typical of the Madrean pine-oak woodlands: Cooper's Hawk, Montezuma Quail, Northern "Mountain" Pygmy-Owl, Western and Whiskered Screech-Owls, Virginia's and Black-throated Gray Warblers, Painted Redstart, Canyon and Spotted Towhees, and Rufous-crowned Sparrow. As we ascend 1,750 feet to the summit, the bird life changes dramatically. Here, some of the birds we'll be on the lookout for are Band-tailed Pigeon, Greater Pewee, Graces' and Olive Warblers, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Western Scrub-Jay and Steller's Jay. This is the most reliable place for us to see Buff-breasted Flycatcher, a true Arizona specialty bird.

Ramsey Canyon, home of the Nature Conservancy's 300-acre Ramsey Canyon Nature Preserve, is the most popular natural history site in the Huachuca Mountains. Up to 12 species of hummingbirds have been seen at the feeders behind the visitors' center in a single day, although it is more reasonable for us to expect 6-10 species during our visit. Regulars such as Broad-billed, Blue-throated, Magnificent, Black-chinned, Anna's, and Broad-tailed are easily found; however, there's always the chance of seeing something more unusual like Calliope, Rufous, White-eared, Berylline, Violet-crowned, or Lucifer. On the trails, we might encounter Wild Turkey, Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse, Bewick's Wren, Plumbeous Vireo, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Hepatic Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Yellow-eyed Junco or Scott's Oriole, among many others. Painted Redstart is common and, if we are extremely lucky, the Whiskered Screech Owl that is resident in Ramsey Canyon might choose a visible roosting spot during our visit. Ramsey is one of the best places to search for Elegant Trogon, another Arizona specialty, and is also a good spot for Golden Eagle.

Overnight in Sierra Vista, Fairfield Inn

Day 6 - We will visit Miller Canyon early this morning, where we will have the opportunity to see White-eared Hummingbirds among the throngs of hummers at the feeders at Beatty's Bed and Breakfast, where 15 species of hummingbirds have been seen, as many as 14 in a single day. A short hike here could afford us views of resident Spotted Owls, and if we're incredibly lucky, we could find a rarity like Eared Quetzal or Aztec Thrush, two extremely rare birds that have occurred here in the past. We will travel across the Chiricahua Mountains during the hottest part of the afternoon. We will enjoy stunning scenery as we cross the homeland of the Chiricahua Apaches, with panoramic views and unique geology the norm in this remarkable area. We will arrive in Portal, situated at the entrance to Cave Creek, in time for dinner.

Overnight in Portal, Portal Peak Lodge

Day 7 - Today we will explore Portal and Cave Creek Canyon. Portal is reported to be the best place in Arizona to see Calliope Hummingbird from late July through September. We will visit some hummingbird feeders in town in hopes of finding a Calliope or perhaps a Violet-crowned Hummingbird among the more common species. Some specialty birds we can expect to find among the typical high desert species include Cassin's Sparrow, Scaled Quail, and Crissal Thrasher, but as we increase altitude, we will encounter a different set of birds. Although we will certainly watch for species like Montezuma Quail, Band-tailed Pigeon, White-throated Swift, Blue-throated and Magnificent Hummingbirds, and other birds typical of the pine-oak woodlands, the target species for this area is Elegant Trogon. After dinner, we will search for some of the owls that nest in the area, including Flammulated, Elf and Spotted Owls, Whiskered Screech-Owl, and Northern Pygmy-Owl.

Overnight in Portal, Portal Peak Lodge



Spotted Owl

The Spotted Owl may be the most publicized of all endangered species in North America. Because of its dependence on large tracts of old-growth coniferous forests, management for this owl has caused tremendous turmoil in the forest harvesting industry, and has spawned an incredible amount of research. They prefer an uneven and multilayered canopy. They prefer shaded mountain slopes and canyons over flat plateau areas.



White-eared Hummingbird

Day 8 - After one last birding outing in Cave Creek, where we will try to pick up any species we might have missed, we will bird our way across the higher elevations of the Chiricahuas, where Mexican Chickadees are common. As we make our way back to Tucson, we'll make several stops to look for the Chickadees as well as other high-elevation birds, including Hairy Woodpecker, Western Tanager, Western Bluebird, Chipping Sparrow, Steller's Jay, Violet-green Swallow, Brown Creeper, and Pygmy Nuthatch. Warblers that might be found include Olive, Grace's, Orange-crowned, Red-faced, Townsend's, Hermit, and Audubon's. Northern Goshawk and Band-tailed Pigeon are also possible, as is Northern Pygmy-Owl. As we approach the town of Willcox, we will be on the lookout for Chichuahuan Raven, Prairie Falcon, Golden Eagle, Burrowing Owl, and Scaled Quail. We will make some strategic stops at some ponds and lakes near Willcox where we will scan the water for ducks and other waterfowl and check out the muddy banks for shorebirds. Some possible species include Snowy Plover (rare), Western and Baird's Sandpipers, Wilson's Phalarope, Eared Grebe, White-faced Ibis, American Avocet, Long-billed Curlew, as well as several species of duck. Many rarities have been reported in this area, so we will stay alert for anything out of the ordinary. We will continue our journey back to Tucson where we will enjoy a farewell dinner before we check in at a hotel.

Overnight in Tucson, Fairfield Inn

Day 9 - This morning each participant will take the hotel's shuttle to the airport at the appropriate time for his/her flight home.

The price INCLUDES:

- Lodging
- Breakfast, Days 2 - 9
- All transportation during tour
- Entrance fees to Ramsey Canyon, Beatty's feeders, Mt. Lemmon, Madera Canyon, Ash Canyon feeders
- Transfers to and from the airport via hotel shuttle
- Expert local birding guide and all guide's expenses
- Tour leaders from *Cheepers! Birding on a Budget*
- Customized checklist
- Final checklist summarizing group sightings at the conclusion of the trip
- **Photo disk containing hundreds of photos of your trip!**

The price does NOT include:

- Airfare to Tucson, AZ
- Meals other than breakfasts
- Tips
- Items of a personal nature, such as extra drinks, snacks, alcoholic beverages, laundry, souvenirs, etc.

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget LLC reserves the right to make changes in the itinerary if the need should arise due to unforeseeable circumstances such as weather, landslides, and other natural phenomena, as well as suggestions by local guides in order to take advantage of an unusual birding opportunity. Lodging is subject to change based on availability.



Costa's Hummingbird