

Kane County Audubon Southeast Arizona Itinerary, May 2012

“There are few U.S. birding destinations that conjure such tantalizing images in the mind of a birder than that of colorful trogons, warblers and hummingbirds against the breathtaking "Sky Island" backdrop of southeast Arizona. Several nocturnal specialties - including "Mexican" Spotted Owl, Whiskered Screech-Owl and the recently split Mexican Whip-poor-will - also make their home in these mountains. May is a prime time to explore the diverse biomes of the borderlands of Arizona. All of our breeding specialties have arrived and are vocal on territory, while later migrants are still moving through. Owls are more easily detected at this time than any other and hummingbird numbers are high. Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers give their "squeaky-toy" calls from sycamore-lined canyons alongside Elegant Trogons, while amazing breeding warblers including Red-faced, Olive and Virginia's carry out their life cycle in the higher elevations. Such tantalizing species as Mexican Chickadee, Black-capped Gnatcatcher and Rufous-winged Sparrow are birds only readily found north of the Mexican border in southeast Arizona. Add the potential for rare vagrants from the south, and you can see why a May trip to this fantastic birding location is a must!” These are the words from the experts who know; John Yerger and Adventure Birding in Tucson Arizona.

Itinerary

Sunday May 6- Day 1

Sunday we will travel to Tucson arriving by noon. At least three airlines offer flights arriving by that time. After assembling everybody and procuring the necessary supplies we will proceed to a nearby Tucson restaurant for lunch. After lunch we will visit the Arizona-Sonoran (living) Desert Museum which is not only a great place to begin to see wild desert birds but also to view many of the birds (especially hummers) we will be seeing in the wild. Standing in an aviary with hummingbirds flying all about you is an excellent opportunity to study these birds up close and even to get some great pictures. After a few hours at the museum and depending upon the time and temperature we may proceed to Sweetwater Wetland to look for local waterfowl and passerines. Then it's on to Green Valley where we'll have dinner, get sandwiches made for the next day spend our first night.

Monday May 7- Day 2

Getting an early start, we will head for Madera Canyon. On the way we will stop in several locations to look for high desert grassland birds such as Rufous-winged Sparrow, Botteri's Sparrow, Cassin's Sparrow, and the "Lilians" Eastern Meadowlark (a candidate for a split from the Eastern Meadowlark). Then getting into the canyon we'll work our way to the upper parking lot at the trailheads. On the way up we'll be stopping at several places looking for such birds as Acorn Woodpecker, Elegant Trogon and other assorted Western birds. We'll probably lunch at the trail head before proceeding up toward the Mt. Wrightson Wilderness Area. This will

probably be our most exerting hike with an elevation gain of perhaps a thousand feet. In mid-afternoon we'll head back down the canyon getting to Green Valley around five or six o'clock. Dinner will be in Green Valley followed by a good night's sleep.

Tuesday May 8- Day 3

Tuesday morning we'll check out and get an early start to the Nogales/ Patagonia area. Our probable first stop will be Kino Springs where we'll search for Gray Hawk, Tropical Kingbird, Long-billed Thrasher and always keeping our eyes open for Ruddy Ground Dove which have appeared on occasion. After leaving Kino Springs we'll make our way back to Patagonia Lake State Park, a renowned birding destination where we'll look for area specialties which could include Northern-beardless Tyrannulet and where Black-capped Gnatcatchers have nested in the past. The park also has a well deserved reputation for itinerant rarities. After lunch we'll venture over to Paton's Birder Haven where a series of feeders could draw eight to ten species of hummingbirds and several ground feeders. This is one of the best places to see the much sought after Violet-crowned Hummingbird. Then, time permitting, we'll visit the Patagonia Roadside Rest. After we're well worn out we'll head for Sierra Vista, dinner and a chance to meet John Yerger. If we get there early enough we may wander up into one of the canyons to do some late afternoon birding.

Wednesday May 9- Day 4

For the next three days we'll be putting ourselves in the hands of John Yerger, a professional birder and guide extraordinaire with Adventure Birding out of Tucson. Both Jon Duerr and I have birded with John and have had wonderful experiences. John envisions the day as follows: "After breakfast, we will bird Carr Canyon to search for residents including Buff-breasted Flycatcher and Northern ("Mountain") Pygmy-Owl. Other species of interest here include Red-faced, Olive and Virginia's Warblers and Greater Pewees with their memorable "Jose Maria" songs. After lunch in Sierra Vista we will visit Beatty's Guest Ranch and view the amazing hummingbird station that holds the U.S. record for most hummers viewed in one day! Specialties here include White-eared and Blue-throated Hummingbirds. Depending on afternoon temperatures, we may visit Ash Canyon Bed & Breakfast or retire to our hotel to cool off and have dinner. We will spend the night in Sierra Vista."

Thursday May 10-Day 5

For Thursday, John again sets the agenda: "We will bird in Miller or Scheelite Canyon with Spotted Owl as our main target." [PLEASE NOTE: Sheelite Canyon is located on US Government property (Ft. Huachuca) and you will probably be asked for some form of government issued I.D. I assume that an I.D. acceptable to TSA will be sufficient.] "Today we will also visit Ash Canyon Bed & Breakfast for the great feeder station that regularly holds the highly localized Lucifer Hummingbird. In addition to this rare hummer, the great feeder set-up affords incredible views of species including Hooded Orioles and Acorn Woodpeckers. After

lunch we will depart for Portal in the Chiricahua Mountains where we will be based for the next two days”. After dinner we will go owling as well as looking for the recently split Mexican Whip-poor-Will. Then we’ll overnight in Portal.

Friday May 11- Day 6

On Friday John will be guiding us to the Cave Creek area. In his proposal he writes: “We will bird South Fork in the morning, a location that has produced many unusual species over the years and regularly holds such stunners as Elegant Trogon, Hepatic and Western Tanagers and more. We will bird several other parts of Cave Creek Canyon before returning to Portal for lunch. Afterwards, we’ll continue at mid-elevation until early afternoon, at which point we’ll break before dinner to relax and cool off. After dinner, we will bird the Portal–Paradise Road for Black-chinned Sparrows and Common Poorwills as the sun sets. One more night in Portal

Saturday May 12- Day 7

It’s our last day and even though somewhat exhausted we’re going to spend one last half day with John who states: “After breakfast we will drive up in elevation to look for resident warblers, tanagers and flycatchers, but our main target will be the large-bibbed Mexican Chickadee. The range of this species just barely enters the United States, and is found in only two mountain ranges on this side of the border; the Chiricahuas are the most accessible. Short-tailed Hawk has nested nearby in recent years. Driving over Onion Saddle and dropping down into Pinery Canyon, we will bird our way ever lower en route to Willcox where we’ll check the Cochise Lake (aka Willcox Twins Lakes), which is actually a small wastewater effluent pond that always seems to host some unusual bird during migration.” We’ll then bid adieu to John and head for Tucson where we’ll check in at an airport hotel and have a farewell celebratory dinner, toasting to all the lifers seen on the trip.

Sunday May 13- Day 8

Breakfast and then we can each catch our flights home.