



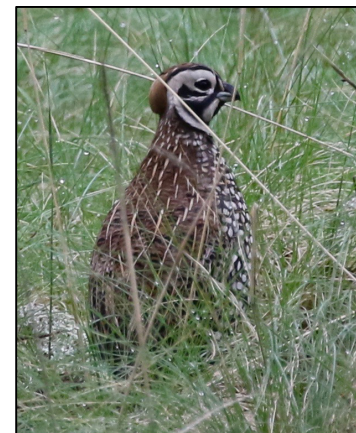
Sunrise Birding LLC
ARIZONA
July 31 – August 8, 2016
TRIP REPORT
Report & Photos by Frank Mantlik

Photos, top to bottom: Montezuma Quail,
Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Juvenile Spotted Owl,
2016 Arizona Tour Group & Leaders





Sunrise Birding LLC
ARIZONA
Trip Report
July 31 - August 8, 2016



Leaders: Wezil Walraven and Frank Mantlik

Report and Photos by Frank Mantlik

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS AND GROUP FAVORITES:

**Mexican Spotted Owl
Whiskered Screech-Owl
Montezuma Quail
Flame-colored Tanager
Black-capped Gnatcatcher
Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher
Yellow-eyed Junco
Red-faced Warbler
Chiricahua Mountains
Lightning shows**

**Buff-collared Nightjar
Lucifer Hummingbird
Apache Northern Goshawk
Violet-crowned Hummingbird
Buff-breasted Flycatcher
Thick-billed Kingbird
Painted Redstart
Five-striped Sparrow
Wisdom's dinner and dancing
Casa de San Pedro**

July 31 (Day 1) - Tucson to Portal

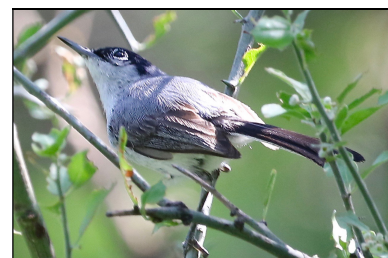
By early afternoon all participants had arrived in Tucson, so we departed for Portal in extreme SE Arizona. En route we stopped just over the New Mexico line to enjoy an aerial encounter of a Golden Eagle and two Swanson's Hawks. Also along the road were our first Greater Roadrunners and Gambel's Quail. After checking into our lodge, there was time to bird before dinner at a friend's (Dave Jasper) nearby yard with feeders. Cactus Wren, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Curve-billed Thrasher, Pyrrhuloxia, Bullock's and Hooded Orioles, and five species of hummingbirds were viewed before a thunderstorm hit. This was a quick introduction to monsoon season in the Arizona deserts and mountains.



Broad-billed Hummingbird

August 1 (Day 2) - Portal, Cave Creek, Chiricahua Mountains

We began the day by birding another Portal private yard and feeders (L. Conrad). The number and variety of birds was impressive, not to mention the view of the scenic Chiricahua Mountains. There was even a morning rainbow. We enjoyed good looks at a covey of Gambel's Quail, two Black-throated Sparrows, a male Western Tanager, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Verdin, Black-headed



Black-capped Gnatcatcher

Grosbeak, Violet-green Swallows, Bronzed Cowbird, Lesser Goldfinch, and several hummingbirds. After breakfast at the lodge, a Greater Roadrunner ran past, carrying lizard prey. Also noted were Acorn Woodpeckers, Inca Doves, and Canyon Towhee.

We departed by vehicle, under showery skies, to explore the Cave Creek area of Coronado National Forest. Our first stop at Stewart Campground yielded great views of Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Hermit Thrush, Brown Creeper, Spotted Towhee, and soaring White-throated Swifts. Further on, a stop at the road to South Fork produced Mexican Jays, Bridled Titmice, Grace's Warbler, and Arizona and Hairy Woodpeckers. During the next stop, Wezil beckoned us out of the vans to quietly observe a Whiskered Screech-Owl roosting in a Sycamore tree cavity. Cameras clicked. Nearby we heard our first Elegant Trogon, but views eluded most. Returning from the upper end of the Cave Creek road, Wezil miraculously noticed something odd close along the road. It proved to be two Montezuma Quail that slowly walked up the slope, allowing all to see them. They were life birds for most!

Next we hit the Southwestern Research Station, where we ate a picnic lunch and birded the grounds. Highlights were a family of Blue-throated Hummingbirds (including close views of a fledgling), Black Phoebe, our first Yellow-eyed Juncos, and a nice variety of butterflies, wasps, and other insects in the small meadow. We then walked up the South Fork trail, which was fairly quiet, but we viewed Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Coue's White-tailed Deer, a lizard, and a beautiful Ring-necked Snake Wezil caught to show us. We then enjoyed the 360-degree mountain scene at Sunny Flats campground. Returning to Portal, we birded at DJ's feeders, where species seen included Cassin's Kingbird, Pyrrhuloxia, Curve-billed Thrasher, and Calliope, Rufous, Black-chinned, Blue-throated, and Broad-billed Hummingbirds.

We dined on barbecue outdoors, due to a power outage at the lodge and for 60 miles around. Then we went to try for night birds at Sunny Flats and up toward Rustler Park, but got skunked, literally. We did see Hognose and Striped Skunks.

August 2 (Day 3) - Portal, Rustler Park, State Line Road/Desert, Willow Tank

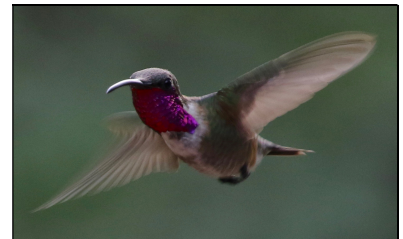
Pre-breakfast birding resulted in extended views of



Five-striped Sparrow



Lark Sparrow



Lucifer Hummingbird



Western Wood Pewee

singing Cassin's and Botteri's Sparrows, Plumbeous Vireo, and Canyon Wren, but failed to find a local Thick-billed Kingbird or Elegant Trogon. After breakfast we drove back up the slope, stopping when Nancy spotted a pair of fairly cooperative Montezuma Quail in the tall grasses. Another stop produced a flock of Bushtits. The rain didn't deter us as we next birded at the high elevation Rustler Park. We bagged Band-tailed Pigeon, Steller's Jay, Mexican Chickadee, Olive Warbler, and Red-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches high in the tall conifers. A sack lunch at a sheltered picnic site also afforded close views of House Wren, Lesser Goldfinch, and Yellow-eyed Juncos. A Coue's White-tailed Deer grazed near us. Heading back down the mountain, we crossed several bridges over the rain-swollen Cave Creek.



Rufous Hummingbird

After a brief stop in Portal for Bell's Vireo and Blue Grosbeak, we birded the scrubby desert along State Line Road. Among the species seen were Greater Roadrunner (perched), Scaled Quail, Eurasian collared-Dove, Red-tailed Hawk, and American Kestrel. One very productive stop yielded several Swanson's Hawks hunting along the ground, Loggerhead Shrikes, Say's Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatchers, Cassin's and Western Kingbirds, Eastern Meadowlarks (the pale Southwestern *Liliana* race), and large flocks of migrating Lark Buntings. Another productive stop was a water pond at Willow Tank; here we saw Great Blue Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, Sora, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Common Raven, Blue Grosbeak, and Lazuli and Painted Buntings.



Pyrrhuloxia

After dinner, we again went owling - in town and at Sunny Flats. Though unsuccessful, one van saw a handsome Gray Fox.

August 3 (Day 4) - Portal to Wilcox to Sierra Vista/Hereford

Pre-breakfast birding this clear morning on the road to Paradise found us Ash-throated Flycatcher, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay (a new split from Western Scrub-Jay), Rock Wren, Virginia's Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, and we heard Crissal Thrasher and Scott's Oriole. We also saw a Coyote and a group of Collared Peccaries (Javelina) along the road. After breakfast we departed Portal for good and continued toward Paradise. We soon hit our target with good views of Juniper Titmouse, as well as Bewick's Wren, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and a flock of Lark Sparrows. Slightly further, one van enjoyed a close Arizona Woodpecker.



Canyon Towhee

Next stop was Pinery Canyon, where we tried to locate the rare Slate-throated Redstart, but the birds had finished nesting and had departed, unfortunately. After a delicious barbecue lunch in Wilcox, we visited the nearby wetlands of Lake Cochise and Twin Lakes Golf Course. We racked up many new trip species, including Cinnamon Teal, Ruddy Duck, Great Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, American Coot, many shorebirds (including Long-billed Curlew, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Willet, Wilson's Phalarope, and Baird's, Stilt, Least, Western, and Spotted Sandpipers), a variety of Swallows, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. A Lilian's Eastern Meadowlark and a family of Scaled Quail were photographable.

After a refueling and provisions stop in Sierra Vista, we arrived at the lovely Casa de San Pedro, our lodge for three nights. After a fabulous authentic Mexican dinner served in-house, we reviewed the day's list, followed by some local owling. We heard and saw Great Horned and Barn Owls.

August 4 (Day 5) - Hereford, Coronado NF, Miller and Huachuca Canyons

A walk on the inn property at dawn and briefly viewing the feeders yielded a Great Horned Owl family, Gila Woodpecker, Abert's Towhee, Yellow-breasted Chat, Gambel's Quail, White-winged Dove, several hummingbirds, and many Lesser Goldfinches. Then a drive up to Montezuma Pass afforded spectacular views of the surrounding mountains and the San Pedro River valley below; Mexico was nearby and we could see the border wall. Birds seen here included White-throated Swift, Rock Wren, Turkey Vulture, and nesting Canyon Towhee. We returned to the Casa for a scrumptious breakfast prepared by the owners.

The next destination was Miller Canyon, and Wezil spotted a juvenile "Apache" Northern Goshawk perched on a hilltop tree. Then, entering through Beatty's Orchard, we hiked up Miller Canyon...in the rain, which was moderately heavy at times. We saw Canyon Wrens and "puddling" swarms of butterflies along the way. But the real prize was eventually locating a pair of fledgling (Mexican) Spotted Owls. They were so curious, they actually flew and hopped closer to us! All of us took photos and some took video. It was truly a fantastic experience. Descending the canyon, we dried out while enjoying the many hummingbirds at Beatty's feeders:



Mountain Spiny Lizard



Botteri's Sparrow



Violet-crowned Hummingbird



Western Scrub Jay

Magnificent, Black-chinned, Broad-tailed, Rufous, Broad-billed, and Violet-crowned. Also present were Acorn Woodpeckers and Black-headed Grosbeak. Beatty's friendly puppies provided loving entertainment. Upon leaving, we viewed two juvenile Gray Hawks near their nest.

Lunch was followed by a visit to Fort Huachuca (sign-in required) and Huachuca Canyon. We searched a while for the rare Sinaloa Wren, even though it hadn't been reported for several weeks. Next we walked up Huachuca Canyon, where we heard a close Elegant Trogon calling. But it eluded our views. We did see Painted Redstart, Western Wood-Pewee and Mexican Jays. Back in Hereford, we dined at an Italian restaurant, where Cliff Swallows were nesting.

August 5 (Day 6) - Hereford, Ramsey and Carr Canyons

Following an early, tasty breakfast of buckwheat-oat pancakes and sausage, we departed for Ramsey Canyon. Today most of us would hike up to the upper canyon in search of common and a few rare species of the area. We took our time as we climbed in elevation. Along the way we saw Hepatic Tanager, Hutton's Vireo, Black-throated Gray and Hermit Warblers, Western Wood-Pewee, Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers. Other wildlife seen included White-nosed Coati, Rock Squirrel, large green scarab beetles, and Arizona Sister butterflies. Upon reaching an overlook, Frank encountered an old friend from Honduras, who was here to photograph reptiles. James showed us a Yarrow's (Mountain) Spiny Lizard, sporting a brilliant blue throat. We were now entering the area of our first rarity. With some persistence, most got to see and hear the male Flame-colored Tanager. This is a very rare species in the U.S.; its normal range is Mexico through Central America. Frank, Nancy and Maha continued further up the canyon in search of the also rare Tufted Flycatcher. They were unsuccessful, but managed to see a female Flame-colored Tanager. Other species seen included Red-faced Warblers and Cordilleran Flycatcher. Dan and Carolyn discovered a Black-tailed Rattlesnake along the trail, much to the delight of James and his friend. Back at the visitor center, we rested a bit, and purchased items at the gift shop.

After sandwiches, we drove up the winding, narrow, rough road to Carr Canyon. The elevation reached 7400 feet. We birded the campground and Comfort Spring trails,



Whiskered Screech-Owl



Yellow-eyed Junco



Buff-breasted Flycatcher

missing Buff-breasted Flycatcher, but finding two Zone-tailed Hawks, Eastern Bluebirds, and Grace's Warbler. Back down the mountain, we visited Ash Canyon B&B feeders. It felt good to just sit and watch birds. The main highlight was a pair of Lucifer Hummingbirds, but also Anna's Hummingbird, Willow Flycatcher (heard), several White-winged Doves, and later a flock of ten Lesser Nighthawks overhead. Dinner at a local restaurant was just reward for a tiring yet productive day. Outside the sunset was spectacular, and more nighthawks wheeled overhead.

August 6 (Day 7) - Hereford to Patagonia to Amado

After an early breakfast, we bade farewell to our Casa hosts, and headed to nearby Hunter Canyon. Hiking up produced some new species: Black-chinned Sparrow, a pair of Buff-breasted Flycatchers, and Rufous-capped Warbler. The latter was our rarest find; we all heard it, but unfortunately only a few got to see it. We also had good views of Band-tailed Pigeon, Painted Redstart, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Rufous-crowned Sparrow, among others. Back in town at a traffic light, we saw a Peregrine Falcon perched on a utility pole. A brief stop at the Sierra Vista EOP (wastewater treatment ponds) produced a few Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Chihuahuan Raven.



Gray Hawk



White-nosed Coati

Onward to Patagonia, where a stop at the famous Paton's Hummingbird Center produced another Violet-crowned Hummingbird and a female Lazuli Bunting. Nearby, another stop along a dirt road found us a Rufous-winged Sparrow, Varied Bunting, and 2 Yellow-breasted Chats. Another sudden thunderstorm resulted in lightning cracking over our heads. Soon we stopped at the famous Patagonia Roadside Rest Area, where we succeeded in seeing the very localized Thick-billed Kingbirds, as well as another Varied Bunting, two Black Vultures, Blue Grosbeak, and Summer and Western Tanagers. We arrived at our inn in Amado, settled in, did the day's list, then had a great meal, with live music and dancing, at Wisdom's Cafe...a real western joint. Afterwards, Wezil located a pair of Western Screech-Owls for all to enjoy.

August 7 (Day 8) - Amado, Madera Canyon, California Gulch

Breakfast was followed by birding the various hotspots of Madera Canyon in the Santa Rita Mountains. First up was a walk on the Proctor Road loop trail. This proved quite productive, with good views of Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet (2), (Apache) Northern Goshawk, a pair of Phainopeplas, a juvenile Painted Redstart, and the real prize: two Black-capped Gnatcatchers. The latter can only be found in the U.S. in this limited region of Arizona.

Feeling like we were on a roll, we next birded the extensive bird-feeding station at Santa Rita Lodge, hoping to see the rare Plain-capped Starthroat. Three hours of watching went unrewarded, except we had fine views of the more common species: Wild Turkey

(Gould's race), Arizona Woodpecker, Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse, Hepatic Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lesser Goldfinch, and 5 species of hummingbirds, including about 20 Broad-billed. A short hike up the Wrightson Trail was unproductive in the heat of the day.

Next we grabbed a late lunch and headed south to California Gulch. Here we hiked down to see two singing male Five-striped Sparrows. This very localized rare breeding species was a life bird for most. We also saw Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and Hooded Orioles. We drove a bit further on to a site where Buff-collared Nightjar occurs. Arriving shortly before dark, we had a lively picnic supper. We gazed at the unusual mammals clouds overhead. As the sun set, we heard, and some saw, a Nightjar fly by. We also heard two different Elf Owls calling, and numerous bats hawked insects overhead. Yet another lightning storm provided drama in the night sky. We returned to our inn, all a bit tired.

August 8 (Day 9) - Amado to Tucson

After breakfast, we settled up, loaded the vans, and birded the grounds a short while. All got to see two Lucy's Warblers, before we thanked our hosts and departed. A brief stop at Amado Water Treatment Plant (WTP) yielded a Neotropic Cormorant, Ruddy Duck, American Coot, and Great-tailed Grackles. In due time, we had returned to Tucson Airport for flights home.

It was a pleasure meeting each of you, and sharing Arizona's natural riches with you.

Sincerely,
Frank Mantlik
Sunrise Birding LLC

