

Arizona in May: Trogons, Owls, and Warblers

Saturday May 22 to Sunday May 30, 2010

Price \$1800

Short tour to Southeastern Arizona from Saturday to Sunday. Tour begins in Tucson. Visits Madera Canyon, Huachuca Mountains, Sonoran Desert, and Chiricahua Mountains. Multiple night stays in Sierra Vista, Portal, and Tucson. Concentrates on breeding birds of the desert Southwest. Excellent for up to nine species of owls and ten species of hummingbirds. Specialty birds such as Elegant Trogon, Common Black-Hawk, Sulfur-bellied Flycatcher, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Red-faced Warbler, Painted Redstart, and Varied Bunting. Relaxing hummingbird watching at feeders. Comfortable accommodations. Staying at Portal Peak Lodge.

Southeastern Arizona is a birdwatchers paradise, and late May is one of the best times of year to visit the desert Southwest. All of the summer residents have arrived, everything is singing (particularly the warblers), and it is the best season to see a wide variety of owls. Our short tour is designed to sample the best birding areas, which will include Aravaipa Canyon, Madera Canyon, the Patagonia-Nogales area, the Huachuca Mountains, and the lovely Chiricahua Mountains. The tour begins in Tucson, then travels to Sierra Vista for a three night stay (an excellent location to base ourselves), and then visits the beautiful Chiricahua Mountains with a two-night stay at Portal and Cave Creek Canyon. The really nice aspect of Southeastern Arizona is the diversity of different habitats and elevations, from the rich lowland Sonoran Desert around Tucson, to the lush sycamore-lined canyons in Madera and Cave Creek Canyons, to the cool boreal pine forests at the tops of the “Sky Islands” in the Santa Rita, Huachuca, and Chiricahua Mountains.

Beginning in Tucson, we’ll venture north to the lovely Arivaipa Canyon, where Common Black-Hawks nest, and the Sonoran desert specialties are at their richest. When the day heats up we’ll climb up to the boreal coolness on Mount Lemmon and search for many of the breeding warblers, such as Grace’s, Olive, Red-faced, and Painted Redstarts. The Nogales/Patagonia area has beautiful *Riparian* habitat that is home to great birds such as Gray and Zone-tailed Hawks, and Topical and Thick-billed Kingbirds. We’ll relax and watch hummingbirds at the famous “Paton’s” feeders where Violet-crowned is regular. Basing ourselves in Sierra Vista for three nights, we’ll have ample time to visit wonderful birding locations in the Huachuca Mountains, such as Garden, Ramsey, and Miller Canyons. Many specialties can be found in these mountains, including the amazing Elegant Trogon, and the very local Buff-breasted Flycatcher. The tour will conclude with a two night stay at Portal Peak Lodge, at the mouth of beautiful Cave Creek Canyon. Everyone will be enthralled by the Chiricahua Mountains, from the lovely sycamore-lined canyons to the high spruce-fir forest at Rustler Park. We’ll have additional chances for Elegant Trogons here, as well as virtually all of the montane specialties. The tour will conclude back in Tucson.

Day by Day Itinerary

Day 1: The tour begins this evening in Tucson, Participants should plan on arriving before 6:00 pm, when an introductory meeting will be held. After the meeting, we will have dinner. **Night near the Tucson Airport.**

Hotel: Holiday Inn Express

Day 2: This morning we'll travel north and east of Tucson to visit the rich Sonoran Desert along the San Pedro River and along Aravaipa Creek. Our main goal is to see Common Black-Hawk, which nests locally along the creek, but numerous other interesting birds can also be found here, including Zone-tailed and Gray Hawks, Mississippi Kite (very local), White-winged Dove, Gambell's Quail, Greater Roadrunner, Gila Woodpecker, gilded Flicker, Ash-throated and Brown-crested Flycatchers, Bell's Vireo, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Verdin, Phainopepla, Lucy's Warbler, Rufous-winged and Black-throated Sparrows, and Hooded Oriole. In the early morning, the desert is alive with song. We'll return to Tucson for lunch and then retreat up Mount Lemmon to escape the heat and bird in the boreal coolness at high elevation. This will be our first opportunity to see many of the Southeast Arizona mountain specialties, such as Olive, Grace's, and Red-faced Warblers. We'll look for Mountain Chickadee, and pine-forest birds such as Hairy Woodpecker, Western Bluebird, and others. After dinner, and at dusk, we'll visit Sabino Canyon and watch Elf Owls exit their holes in the Saguaro Cacti for their evening activities. **Night near the Tucson Airport.**

Hotel: Holiday Inn Express

Day 3: Today we will make a circuit from Tucson to Madera Canyon, to the Patagonia/Nogales area, and finally on to Sierra Vista. Beginning in Madera Canyon, we'll have the opportunity for a number of canyon birds. We hope that the long-returning Flame-colored Tanager returns for another year, but other birds we will likely see include Broad-billed and Magnificent Hummingbirds, Arizona and Acorn Woodpeckers, our first chance for Sulfur-bellied Flycatcher, Plumbeous and Hutton's Vireos, Canyon Wren, Bridled Titmouse, Painted Redstart, Hepatic Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Scott's Oriole. If a "Mexican" rarity is being seen locally (such as Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Rufous-capped Warbler, or one of the rare hummingbirds), we will look for them this morning. The afternoon will be spent birding around Patagonia. We'll look for a number of fun birds found in the lush Cottonwood/Sycamore Riparian habitat along Sonoita Creek, including Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Gray Hawk, Violet-crowned Hummingbird, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, both Thick-billed and Tropical Kingbirds, Brown-crested and Vermilion Flycatchers, Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, Bell's Vireo, Canyon and Rock Wrens, Lucy's Warbler, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, and Varied Bunting. We'll continue on to Sierra Vista for a three night stay. **Night in Sierra Vista.**

Hotel: Hampton Inn

Days 4-5: We'll have two full days to bird the Huachuca Mountains and Sierra Vista area. Sierra Vista makes a wonderful base to visit a number of interesting and exciting birding locations. We'll visit Fort Huachuca and bird Garden and Sawmill Canyons. Also, there are several canyons along the east side of the Huachucas, including Ramsey, Carr, Miller, and Ash, and we'll likely visit most if not all of them depending on what is being seen where. Late May is the perfect time for breeding activity in the canyons, and we'll have an excellent chance for specialties such as Spotted, Northern Pygmy, Whiskered Screech, and Western Screech-Owls, Magnificent and Blue-throated Hummingbirds, Elegant Trogon, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Greater Pewee, Sulfur-bellied Flycatcher, Plumbeous Vireo, all the fancy southeastern Arizona warblers, Hepatic Tanager, Yellow-eyed Junco, and Spotted Towhee. In recent years both White-eared and Lucifer Hummingbirds have been regular, and Berylline Hummingbird is also a possibility (although not annual). In the more desert lowlands at the base of the mountains, we'll look for birds such as Scaled Quail, Botteri's Sparrow, and Pyrrhuloxia. We'll have some flexibility in our schedule to venture back to the Patagonia area in case we are still missing something important. **Nights in Sierra Vista.**

Hotel: Hampton Inn

Days 6-7: We'll have this morning to bird in any of the canyons in search of any species we might be missing, or alternatively we can visit the San Pedro River and bird the lush riparian habitat. Afterwards, we'll depart the Sierra Vista area to begin our drive to Portal in the Chiricahua Mountains, our base for the next two days. Starting in the Sulfur Springs Valley, we'll visit the Whitewater Draw area in search for both Crissal and Bendire's Thrashers. The valley is alive with Swainson's Hawks, and we hope to see a few late migrants, or water birds at Whitewater Draw. We'll then continue our drive to Portal via Douglass and the east side of the Chiricahuas. We'll have the better part of two full days to bird beautiful Cave Creek Canyon, as well as other wonderful areas in the Chiricahua Mountains, such as Rustler and Barfoot Parks, and a variety of private residences with feeders. The birding in the Chiricahuas is very rewarding. Some of the new birds we can expect include Western Scrub-Jay, Juniper Titmouse, Mexican Chickadee, and Black-chinned Sparrow. We'll have additional chances for many of the Arizona specialties, in particular Elegant Trogon, Sulfur-bellied Flycatcher, Painted Redstart, and Red-faced Warbler. Nightbirding will also be a priority, and we'll look in particular for Flammulated Owl and Whip-poor-will, as well as Elf, Western Screech, Whiskered Screech, and Great-horned Owls. We stay at comfortable Portal Peak Lodge run and operated by the Webster family. **Nights at Portal Peak Lodge.**

Hotel: Portal Peak Lodge

Day 8: We will have the entire morning to bird in lovely Cave Creek Canyon, to look for any specialties we may be missing, or possibly take a stroll up South Fork in search of more trogons. It will be difficult pulling ourselves away from this incredible place! After lunch we'll work our way back to Tucson, stopping at Willcox Playa to check a couple of ponds that are usually productive for waterbirds. Nesting American Avocets are usually present, as are numerous Horned Larks and Eastern Meadowlarks (Lillian's). We'll arrive

back at our Tucson hotel in the late afternoon, in time to clean up and have a nice farewell dinner. **Night near the Tucson airport.**

Hotel: Holiday Inn Express

Day 9: The trip ends this morning in Tucson. There are no birding activities planned.

Maximum size of group: The maximum group size for our Arizona tour is nine.

Tour Leader for your Arizona Tour: Gary Rosenberg

Gary Rosenberg lives in Tucson, where he has designed and led about 100 birding tours to Arizona and the desert Southwest during the past 25 years. He has been birding since early childhood, studied Ornithology for a Master's degree at Louisiana State University, and is the author or co-author of numerous scientific and popular articles on bird identification and behavior. Gary is also a passionate photographer, and has had numerous bird photos published in magazines and books. He is currently the secretary of the Arizona Bird Committee, which evaluates rare bird reports within Arizona. His current areas of expertise, apart from Arizona, include most areas in North America, in particular Florida and Alaska, as well as Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador and Peru.

Pace of the tour: The pace of this tour is Easy to Moderate. Most of the birding will be done along roads, or on reasonably level trails. On one or two days we plan on slightly more difficult mountain trails, that are well-maintained, but hilly at times. The best birding in Arizona during May is the early mornings, so one should expect relatively early breakfasts (5:30). We will try and schedule mid-day siestas during the hottest part of the day. On at least a few nights, there will be after-dinner owling excursions that may last until 9:00 – 10:00.

Tour Price: \$1800. The cost of the tour includes all accommodations, food, within-tour transportation, baggage handling (when needed), entrance fees, water during the day's tour activities, and guide services, as indicated by the itinerary. In general the hotels and lodges we use on the tours are nice and comfortable, and often the best-available in the more remote areas we visit. In the cities we stay in above average (but not necessarily the most expensive) hotels. Meals are typically taken in local restaurants near the hotels and lodges.

The following items are not included in the tour price: travel to and from the location the tour begins and ends, laundry, alcoholic beverages, phone calls, and other items of a personal nature.

Deposit policy: At the time of booking a tour, a \$300 deposit is required to secure a space on the tour. This deposit is refundable or transferable up until 120 days prior to the departure date of the tour. The deposit must be received within 14 days of booking, or the reserved space will be released. Up to the 120 day prior to departure date, a deposit may

be transferred to another Avian Journeys tour without penalty. Between 119 and 90 days prior to tour departure, cancellation of a reservation will result in forfeit of 50% of the \$300 deposit. Cancellation of a reservation within 90 days of the tour departure date will result in forfeit of the deposit.

Tour Registration: To register for this Arizona tour, please first contact Avian Journeys by email or phone to check on availability. Once we have confirmed that there is space on the tour, please fill out the registration form, which is available on the “Register for a tour” page, and mail it to Avian Journeys. It is very important that you read all the information in this document, and then make sure you sign and date the waiver at the end of the registration form. A \$300 deposit is necessary to secure a space on the trip. Full payment for the tour will be invoiced 100 days prior to the departure date, and must be received within 90 days of departure.

Cancellation policy: Cancellation by a tour participant greater than or equal to 90 days prior to the departure date will result in full refund of payments to Avian Journeys (minus 50% of the deposit if the cancellation occurs between 119 and 90 days prior to the tour departure). Cancellation by a tour participant within 90 days of a tour will result in a refund of amounts we are able to recover from our hotels and ground agents. Fixed cost amounts can not be refunded. In general, the amount we can potentially refund may be as low as 50% or 25% of the cost of the tour.

Trip insurance. At the time of payment for the tour, we highly recommend purchasing travel insurance. The following companies offer trip insurance, and/or emergency medical insurance: <http://www.travelinsured.com>, <http://www.accessamerica.com>, www.aaa.com. One never knows when personal illness, or an illness in the family is going to strike. Given that a cancellation by a participant within 90 days of departure might result in a loss of most, if not all of the cost of a tour, trip insurance is a good idea. Furthermore, insurance is recommended in case of an illness on a tour, and in a worse case scenario, the need for an emergency medical evacuation, which can be prohibitively expensive. Purchasing insurance is a personal choice, and Avian Journeys does not recommend one company over another.

Travel to Arizona: The tour begins and ends in Tucson, Arizona. If you are flying in to Tucson, you should plan on arriving before 6:00 pm, the time of our introductory meeting on Day 1. Tucson is served by most of the major air carriers, and have direct connections from Dallas, Houston, Denver, Atlanta, and other cities, depending on the carrier. We can advise you on your travel plans to Tucson, but we suggest using one of the online travel booking sites, such as Orbitz or Travelocity. It is also easy to book flights online through all of the airline web sites.

Baggage suggestions: We suggest limiting your baggage as much as possible, and trying to bring one piece of luggage, and one carry-on (such as a small backpack). While we will have plenty of room in the van, traveling as light as possible makes everyone’s life more simpler. Airlines are also starting to charge for additional luggage, so limiting yourself to one piece can be cost effective. Please note that the luggage should not weigh

a ton. You should be prepared to be able to lift and/or carry your own luggage at hotels. Most hotels have luggage carts, and the leader will try and help you, but please don't expect the leader to be able to lift and carry over-heavy bags.

Climate in Arizona: The weather in Southeast Arizona in May can vary. Some years it is already reaching about 100 degrees in the lowland desert areas around Tucson, while other years it may be significantly cooler. This is typically the peak of the dry season, so any precipitation would be a welcome surprise, but not very likely. When we are up in the mountains, the temperatures are *much* cooler (60's to 80's), and nights are quite pleasant. Much of this tour is spent at elevations above 5000 feet, with only one or two days birding in the desert lowlands.

What to Bring

Clothing – Over the years we have discovered that “everyone” has their own tastes regarding clothes. We will suggest that you consider quick-drying pants and shirts, particularly if you plan on doing your own laundry. Many of the higher quality field cloths available from companies such as “Ex Oficio” or “REI” also offer protection from UV rays, which is important in Arizona. We also recommend cloths with “neutral” colors, such as browns, tans, and greens that blend with the natural environment, which is less threatening to forest and desert birds. Bright reds and pinks should please be avoided, although they do attract hummingbirds! Shots are generally fine for an Arizona tour, but we do occasional walk off the roads, and those wearing shorts need to be extra careful with cactus spines.

Footwear – Comfortable footwear is perhaps the most important item to consider, as we are on our feet most of the day, every day! We suggest lightweight hiking boots. Sneakers, and occasionally sandals (such as Tevas or Keens) are also fine most of the time, but again those not wearing hiking boots need to be extra careful with cactus spines when venturing off of roads or trails.

The following items are important:

- Binoculars
- Camera (optional)
- Hat (ESSENTIAL!)
- Lightweight Jacket
- Small Flashlight w/ replacement batteries
- Small LED Headlamp (useful when owling)
- Alarm Clock
- Insect Repellant
- Sunscreen
- Water Bottle
- Small backpack
- Ear Plugs (optional)

General health issues: Arizona poses little health risks. The most important health issue is the sun and dehydration. Wearing a hat, putting on sunscreen, and drinking lots of water will insure a safer experience. Biting insects are typically not a problem, although *chiggers* are sometimes a problem in areas around Patagonia. Applying insect repellent should help in this situation. Poisonous snakes are present in Arizona, especially rattlesnakes of several species. They are rarely seen, but participants should be aware that they exist – we have never heard of a bird tour participant ever being bitten by a rattlesnake! Cactus spines are more of a problem, and participants should watch where they walk when leaving trails or roads.

Photography: Our leaders are typically very interested in photography, in particular “digiscoping”, and within the context of the tour, photography is encouraged. Certain sensible guidelines will be adhered to, such as not approaching a bird for photos until all in the group has had a satisfying look, and we will avoid unnecessary disturbance of a bird, particularly if it is nesting. At the end of the tour the leader will share his or her photo highlights, making them available on CD, or downloadable from a social network web site.

Field Guides. All books listed below are available from **Amazon.com**.

Kaufman, Kenn. 2000. *Birds of North America*. Houghton Mifflin, New York.

National Geographic Society. 2002. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Fourth Edition. National Geographic Society, Washington, DC.

Sibley, David Allen. 2000. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Sibley, David Allen. 2003. *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Additional Reading and References: If you are interested in other critters other than birds, you may consider some of the following.

Brock, Jim, P. and Kenn Kaufman. 2003. *Butterflies of North America*. Houghton Mifflin, New York.

Glassberg, Jeffrey. 2001. *Butterflies Through Binoculars: The West*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Howell, Steve N.G. and Sophie Webb. 1995. . *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*. Oxford University Press.

Jones, Lawrence, and Rob Lovich. 2009. *Lizards of the American Southwest: A Photographic Guide*. Available at amazon.com.

Kays, Roland W., and Don E. Wilson. 2002. *Mammals of North America*. Princeton University Press.

Monson, Gale and Allan R. Phillips. 1981. *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Arizona*. University of Arizona Press.

Paulson, Dennis. *Dragonflies and Damselflies of the West*. Princeton University Press.

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