Birding Canyon Country
With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

May 10 – 17, 2018
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Naturalist Journeys, LLC
Renew your spirits in the mountains and beautiful red rock canyons of Utah and Arizona. Discover a beautiful and intriguing terrain, rich in scenic and geologic wonders and great birds! While not on the birding hotspot route, this area we find to be a hidden jewel. Birds of the Rocky Mountains blend with those of the Great Basin to provide wonderful variety. Plants and animals of the region are fascinating as well.

Birding and nature make up the theme of our journey as we enjoy great walks, scenic drives, and time to explore, and photograph. In the evenings, relax in the ambience of rustic lodges in the parks or in charming accommodations in nearby towns.

Grand Canyon, Bryce and Zion are all internationally renowned national parks. There is no close airport to these famed parks, so for this adventure we begin and end in Las Vegas. Air travel rates are often very good, with several specialty airlines to choose from.

**Tour Highlights**

- Search for Western Tanager, Lazuli Bunting, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Greater Roadrunner en route to Zion National Park
- Explore the Narrows of the Virgin River, the Emerald Pools, and the Weeping Wall at Zion National Park
- Immerse yourself in the stunning panorama of rock formations in Bryce Canyon National Park — color and light are a true highlight
- Witness sunrise from the rim of Bryce Canyon
- Spend time at Pipe Springs National Monument that shelters woodpeckers, sapsuckers, and warblers
- Take in the grandeur of Grand Canyon National Park form the North Rim ... the canyon is 10 miles wide!
- Search for nesting California Condor at Navajo Bridge

**Tour Summary**

8-Day / 7-Night Southwest National Park Birding & Nature Tour with Pat Lueders

$2490, from Las Vegas

Airport is McCarran International (LAS)
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Itinerary

**Thurs., May 10  Arrival in Las Vegas / Zion National Park**
Plan to arrive in Las Vegas at McCarran International Airport (LAS) no later than Noon today. If you prefer to arrive the night before, we can pick you up at an airport hotel location, or you can return by shuttle to meet us. There is a La Quinta and a Best Western very close by.

Our plan is to be on the road to Zion National Park by 1:00 PM. Zion is a treasured Southwest national park and an excellent birding site with a range of elevations and a river running through. Zion National Park is a fantastic realm of steep canyon walls, great domes, and towers rising above the Virgin River. From Springdale, the gateway community to the park, we get a great overview of the “temples,” natural domes that inspired the early Mormon pioneers of the region.

On the way in today we stop at a birding hotspot along the Virgin River corridor that offers easy passage for migrants and a breeding home for colorful species like Western Tanager and Lazuli Bunting. This is the lowest elevation and most arid section of Zion National Park and vicinity. At a Mormon pioneer homestead, we often find other Southwest bird species, including Vermilion Flycatcher, Rock Wren, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Greater Roadrunner. We also witness stunning vistas and find a personal sense of history.

Tonight, we settle into our lodgings in the artisan town of Springdale and have dinner at a favorite local restaurant.

*Accommodations in Springdale, UT (D)*

**Fri., May 11  Zion National Park**
While at Zion, we use a convenient and environmentally-friendly shuttle bus system to see the park, with the opportunity to walk short vista point trails. Here we look up to witness the bold power of erosion and the Earth’s movement. Local highlights are the Narrows of the Virgin River, the Emerald Pools, and the Weeping Wall. The deep chasm of Zion Canyon displays a palette of red, orange, deep salmon, pink, yellow, and cream. Across
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these rocks we watch for hunting Peregrine Falcon or a majestic Golden Eagle.

Along the trails you may find Black-throated Gray and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Black-headed Grosbeak, reptiles sunning themselves, a secretive Ring-tailed Cat, or other local wildlife. Along the Virgin River we hope to see American Dipper, Black Phoebe, and both Rock and Canyon Wrens. Time passes quickly!

Tonight we dine together at another great local restaurant in Springdale and review our species list and plans for the next day.

Accommodations in Springdale, UT (B,L,D)

Sat., May 12  Kolob Reservoir / Panguitch / Bryce Canyon National Park
This morning, we pack up and head out to explore a more remote section of Zion National Park, venturing higher in elevation to lush Ponderosa Pine forests near a small reservoir. The scenery is just stunning and with luck we find higher elevation birds such as Western Bluebird, Steller’s Jay, Pygmy Nuthatch, Grace’s Warbler, raptors and possibly California Condor, which roost near Kolob Reservoir and Lava Point.

We take a back road over the mountain to connect to a scenic highway dotted with several bird-rich water areas as we continue on to Bryce Canyon National Park. Panguitch Lake can be bountiful for sightings of grebes and ducks. In year’s past we’ve sighted Common Loon, Eared, Western, and Clark’s Grebes, Cinnamon Teal, Osprey, and Forester’s Tern. In reed patches we look for brilliant male Yellow-headed Blackbird. Willows lining the lakeshore make great resting spots for warblers and sparrows moving through the region. Black-billed Magpie are now common among the sagebrush hills.
Our lodgings at Bryce are in the park, so we can settle in, and time dinner early so that we can watch sunset over a panorama of rock features that have no equal. Bryce provides fanciful rock formations in every color of the rainbow and is completely different in character from either Grand Canyon or Zion. It is higher in elevation and allows us to explore a variety of forests with a mixture of birds and mammals. We look for Utah Prairie Dogs in the Bryce Canyon entrance area and Mule Deer and Elk can both be found here, too. The visitor’s center provides a wonderful orientation to the park, with excellent displays and an extensive collection of natural history books on the region. The historic dining room at our lodge is a lovely place for our dinner.

Accommodations at Bryce Canyon National Park (B,L,D)

Sun., May 13  Bryce Canyon National Park

Bryce Canyon, established in 1905 by Theodore Roosevelt, is often the favorite of the parks among our travelers; it is small, intimate, and presents a real playground of light. Perhaps more than the other parks, it appeals to the imagination with its intricate pinnacles and hoodoo rocks that appear to take on human form. The multi-hued rocks of the large amphitheaters (actually eroded plateau edges) that comprise Bryce seem to glow in the early morning light. Thousands of colorful spires rise and join together in a panorama like no other.

Opt to start the day with a short walk to see the beauty of sunrise from the canyon rim. After breakfast, enjoy a great hike that makes a loop down through Bryce’s fanciful features. Experience the myriad, wonderful creations in siltstone, sandstone, limestone, and dolomite. We return in time for lunch, and then take a scenic drive along the rim for varied views of this wonderland of rock. Townsend’s Solitaire sing from atop Bristlecone Pine, and Clark’s Nutcracker often call in flight overhead, busy caching their winter supply of seeds. We may find a group of migrant Townsend’s and Yellow-rumped Warblers mingling with resident Mountain Chickadee. In brushy areas look for Bushtit, Mountain Bluebird, and Juniper Titmouse. We often see both Mountain and Western Bluebirds, and if the Pinyon Pines have a good cone crop, we may find flocks of Pinyon Jay. Dinner tonight is at your leisure, in either the park’s historic dining room, or a casual pizza-pub nearby.

Accommodations at Bryce Canyon National Park (B,L)
Mon., May 14   Bryce To Kanab / Pipe Springs National Monument
This morning we depart Bryce Canyon National Park to the west, passing through colorful Red Canyon and along the Sevier River. Mountain Bluebird are often seen on the western buck and rail fences, while White-throated Swift chatter overhead.

On today’s drive we pass from 8,000 feet at Bryce, down in elevation to 4,000 feet through Hatch, Long Valley, and Orderville, small and historic Mormon communities. Orderville, created in 1874, was a socialistic experiment by Brigham Young for all to share resources and work. Riparian vegetation occurs along much of our route, a bonus for finding Bullocks Oriole, Lesser Goldfinch, Green-tailed Towhee, Black-chinned Hummingbird, and a mix of tanagers, swallows, and warblers.

The highlight of our afternoon is seeing a historic oasis that is also good for birding, Pipe Springs National Monument. Here, large trees attract migrants and provide shelter for resident woodpeckers, sapsuckers, and warblers.

Accommodations at Canyons Lodge, Kanab (B,L,D)

Tues., May 15   North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park
We are here for the opening of the North Rim of Grand Canyon guest facilities, and we hope for no late snowstorms! The park’s maintenance crew have been busy plowing the road, and along the margins, green vegetation is breaking through. Birds we may find at our stops include Williamson’s Sapsucker, Townsend’s Solitaire, Juniper Titmouse, Western Bluebird, Mountain Chickadee, and an elusive flock of Pinyon Jay. Finding big groups of Wild Turkey is almost a certainty, along with some impressive Mule Deer and possibly Golden Eagle.
The canyon is GRAND, a realm of rock, and the main attraction here is the play of light and rock and sky. Throughout the day, the colors of the canyon change. The canyon is approximately 10 miles wide, and over a mile deep. Vivid panoramas reveal a impressive geologic history. Weathering and erosion have created fantastic buttes and mesas within the canyon, while water and wind have sculpted the canyon walls. We take in as many of the vista points as possible before returning to Kanab for the evening.

The drive back affords one of the grandest views in the Southwest: we look off to layer after layer of colored rocks, the sequence that comprises the region’s Grand Staircase. Dinner is in Kanab upon return.

**Accommodations at Canyon Lodge, Kanab (B,L,D)**

**Wed. May 16  Kanab / California Condor at Navajo Bridge / Local Birding**

We planned an extra day here to bird the local hotspots and to give us a backup day if weather keeps us from reaching the North Rim the previous day. Kanab is well situated to finding California Condor, which have taken to nesting at Navajo Bridge in recent years. These are birds of the fascinating restoration effort based from the Vermilion Cliffs, a dramatic landscape feature visible for miles around.

This is a good day to look for species we may have missed, including Black-throated Sparrow, Woodhouse’s Scrub-Jay, Prairie Falcon, and Broad-tailed Hummingbird.

**Accommodations at Canyon Lodge, Kanab (B,L,D)**

**Thurs., May 17  Departures from Las Vegas**

Today we pack up after an early breakfast for the return to Las Vegas, arriving in time for flights out after 1:00 PM. This is a little more than a three-hour drive, and we take a few breaks, always looking for one more bird! (B)
Plan Ahead!
Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Please note, starting in January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Cost of the Journey
Cost of the journey is $2490 DBL / $2990 SGL per person, based on double occupancy, from Las Vegas, Nevada. Cost includes seven nights’ accommodations; all meals as stated in the itinerary; group airport transfers; ground transportation; professional guide services; park, preserve, and other activity fees; and miscellaneous program expenses. Tour price does not include: roundtrip airfare to and from Las Vegas, Nevada, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, porterage, telephone charges, or alcoholic beverages.

Travel Information
Please plan to arrive at McCarran International Airport by 12:00 PM on May 10. Please book departure flights from 1:00 PM onward on May 17.

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Photo Credits
Hiking Bryce Canyon, Naturalist Journeys Stock (NJS); Coyote, Peg Abbott (PA); Grand Canyon Scenic, NJS; California Condor, Narca Moore-Craig; Greater Roadrunner, PA; Western Tanager, Greg Smith (GS); Bighorn Sheep, NJS; Western Bluebird, GS; Bighorn Trio, NJS; Hiking Zion, NJS; Hiking Bryce, NJS; Zion Vista, GS; Lazuli Bunting, Sandy Sorkin; Vermilion Flycatcher, Woody Wheeler; Squirrel, NJS; Zion Scenic, NJS; Golden Eagle, GS; American Dipper, NJS; Western Grebes, PA; Mule Deer, PA; Hiking Bryce Canyon, NJS; Pinyon Jay, NJS; Clark’s Nutcracker, NJS; Red Canyon, NJS; Bullock’s Oriole, PA; Grand Canyon, GS; California Condor, GS; Vermilion Cliffs, NJS; Rainbow Bridge, NJS; Scenic, NJS.