

Southeast Arizona Sky Island Sampler Species List | April 28 – May 7, 2025 with Naturalist Journeys



Guides Dave Mehlman and Steve Shunk; guests Betty, Bob, Ellen, Fran, Jim, Larry, Mary, Michael, Paul, and Sara.

Summary by Steve Shunk

We found 19 flycatchers, 15 warblers, and 11 different hummingbirds. We explored the Chiricahuas, the Huachucas, and the Santa Ritas. We birded from the Sonoran Desert to the Chiricahua Desert, and—in addition to the mountains—we added wetlands, grasslands, and river bottoms in between. And despite the region's reputation for hot desert weather, it barely got over 80 degrees F.—with several mornings in the 40s!

Besides the big families mentioned above, bird highlights were many. Just a few of our daily or almost daily species included Broad-billed Hummingbird, Curve-billed Thrasher, Lark Sparrow, Green-tailed Towhee, and Black-headed Grosbeak. Spring migration was in full swing, and we saw astonishing numbers of several migrants, including hundreds of Lark Sparrows and thousands of swallows. Wilson's Warblers were practically hopping around at our feet, while Hammond's Flycatchers, Bell's Vireos, and Western Tanagers were all pushing northward through the riparian corridors.

Besides the migration peak, we also enjoyed many of the specialty local breeders. Highlights included: daily Blue-throated Mountain-Gems in the Chiricahuas; Arizona Woodpecker and Yellow-eyed Junco in all three mountain ranges; plus Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Thick-billed Kingbird, and Buff-breasted Flycatcher. Elegant Trogon, Mexican Chickadee, and Rufous-winged Sparrow all had their moments of fame.

Finally, our only nighttime excursion could not have been beat! We found four owl species, including an Elf Owl in the parking lot at Cave Creek Ranch and a Flammulated Owl moth-hunting in the creek bed a few meters below us. Our Spotted Owl from that same afternoon made it a five-owl day.

Our final bird tally stands at 187 species. We birded at five locations where we tallied over 40 bird species, with our biggest list of 59 species at Tubac Golf Resort! Below you will find a link to the master bird report on eBird, followed by a brief summary of other notable flora and fauna we encountered. Enjoy this virtual tour of our sightings, and join us next year for our spring return to Southeastern Arizona!

BIRDS:

Click the link below to access the master eBird trip report. Once you have accessed the report, you will first see the list of the **187** species we encountered, in taxonomic order. Clicking on the name of any species will take you to the eBird reference page for that bird. Clicking the green icons to the right will show you checklists from all the birding spots where each species was encountered, and these listings link to the checklists themselves. Back on the main page, you can access the complete set of 48 checklists from the tour by clicking the blue box at the top.

[Southeast Arizona Sky Island Sampler | April 28-May 7, 2025 | eBird Trip Report](#)

MAMMALS (11):

“Coues’s” White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus couesi*) – fairly common, mostly in the first half of the trip. This subspecies of White-tail occurs from AZ and NM south through the Sierra Madre Occidental to Central Mexico.

Collared Peccary (*Dicotyles tejacu*) – seen twice, with one large ‘squadron’ coming to one of the ponds at Whitewater Draw

Coyote (*Canis latrans*) – One seen by a guest on the first day and then several heard from Cave Creek Ranch

White-nosed Coati (*Nasua narica*) – In Montosa Canyon we watched a large ‘band’ of coatimundis systematically cross the road into the trees, apparently responding to a local who attracts them there by playing his flute and subsequently feeding them.

Desert Cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) – Seen daily in the Chiricahuas

Black-tailed Jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*) – Seen twice crossing the road while we were driving

Cliff Chipmunk (*Tamias dorsalis*) – the common Chiricahua chipmunk

Rock Squirrel (*Otospermophilus variegatus*) – our most common mountain squirrel, seen in all ranges except the Huachucas.

Arizona Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus arizonensis*) – most common in the Santa Ritas

Hispid Cotton Rat (*Sigmodon hispidus*) – seen at the feeders at Casa de San Pedro

Cliff Chipmunk (*Tamias dorsalis*) – the common Chiricahua chipmunk

HERPTILES (6):

Yarrow’s Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus jarrovi*) – record a couple of days Chiricahua lowlands

Desert Spiny Lizard (*Sceloporus magister*) – our most common lizard, especially in lowlands

Zebra-tailed Lizard (*Callisaurus draconoides*) – cool lizard with a busy tail at Desert Meadows

‘Red-eared’ Pond Slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) – invasive species seen at Sweetwater Wetlands

American Bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*) – invasive species heard at Sweetwater Wetlands and Hereford Bridge

Chiricahua Leopard Frog (*Lithobates chiricahuensis*) – seen twice: at the small pond at Cave Creek Ranch, and at Beatty’s Ranch in the Huachucas. The latter, incidentally, was once considered a distinct species, the Ramsey Canyon Leopard Frog (*L. subaquavocalis*), but it has been shown to be conspecific with *L. chiricahuensis*.

BONUS: WILDFLOWERS & MORE

We ran across several wildflowers and other fun flora in the region. The list below—in the order encountered—only covers flora with photo evidence as posted on Steve’s iNaturalist page, with a link below the list.

Wheeler Sotol (*Dasyilirion wheeleri*) – photographed in Cave Creek Canyon

Alligator Juniper (*Juniperus deppeana*) – the dominant juniper in the region

Polypore fungus (*Perenniporia fraxinophila*) – Cave Creek Canyon

Alpine Cancer-Root (*Conopholis alpina* var. *mexicana*) – oak-root parasite found in Cave Creek Canyon

Western Honey Mesquite (*Neltuma odorata*) – common mesquite across the region

Southwestern Prickly Poppy (*Argemone pleiacantha ambigua*) – seen several places on the tour; subspecies endemic to Arizona

Thurber's Desert Honeysuckle (*Anisacanthus thurberi*) – found in the Sonoita Creek Preserve; another southwestern specialty, but not a true honeysuckle

Eastern Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans divaricatum*) – Madera Canyon; isolated subspecies occurring in Arizona and the northern Sierra Madre of Mexico, and not a true ivy

Black-spined Pricklypear (*Opuntia macrocentra*) – Desert Gardens; one of the ‘purple’ prickly pears

Bunny Ears Cactus (*Opuntia microdasys*) – Desert Gardens; introduced in Pima County

Indian Fig Opuntia (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) – Desert Gardens; also introduced

Fishhook Barrel Cactus (*Ferocactus wislizeni*) – Desert Gardens; native, though with a small range

Resin Spurge (*Euphorbia resinifera*) – Desert Gardens; native to Morocco’s Atlas Mountains

Desert Willow (*Chilopsis linearis*) – Canoa Ranch; native but not a true willow

Rose Evening Primrose (*Oenothera rosea*) – Santa Cruz River south of Tubac; southwest native

[Link to Steve’s iNaturalist page](#)