

Arizona Monsoon Madness

Species List | August 10-17, 2026

with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by guide Dave Mehlman. Our clients included Cydne, Joan, Maria, Michael, Nancy, Paula, and Ron.

This classic Naturalist Journeys itinerary took the group into, around, up, and over the major mountains of the Sky Islands Region of Southeastern Arizona. Starting with pickups in Tucson, we traveled east, making a stop at the hot, but very productive, Lake Cochise for shorebirds and the action around the Golf Course. We then arrived at our mountain hideaway, Cave Creek Ranch, where we enjoyed great food, superb wildlife, and began to realize what a great group we were! Fed well by Jackie from George Walker House and Ed from Cave Creek Sandwich Company, we birded the full elevational range of the Chiricahua Mountains, from the low deserts to the high pine forests.

We then traveled to the gorgeous Casa de San Pedro, dodging rain storms on the way. The monsoons were generous this year, leading to green grasslands and flowing creeks and rivers, a far cry from the tough drought conditions in previous years. Patrick and Karl hosted us with their usual aplomb and we had fabulous birding around the Casa and in the nearby legendary Canyons like Ramsey, Miller, and Ash (plus unlimited pie!). Though muddy conditions (and a few mosquitoes!) prevented us from fully enjoying the San Pedro River floodplain, a walk at nearby San Pedro House parallel to the river was quite productive. The rains also brought out the spadefoots, which we encountered one evening returning from dinner out, and at least one Ornate Box Turtle which we helped to cross the road.

From there, we looped through the mountains and grasslands, enjoying the sweet song of the Cassin's Sparrow before joining the crowds of birders at the Paton Center for Hummingbirds in Patagonia. In addition to the feeder action there, we spent some time watching the birds bathing in the creek, seeing tanagers, finches, and grosbeaks "splish-splashing" away. From there, a quick stop at Patagonia Lake State Park yielded us coots, ducks, and herons before we pulled into our final destination, the elegantly landscaped Tubac Golf Resort. From here, we had an epic day of birding with the assistance of Vernie Aikins in the canyons of the Santa Rita Mountains. Montosa Canyon was full of singing Varied Buntings (and a nest with young!) and we found the rare Five-striped Sparrow and our only Rufous-crowned Sparrow of the tour. Picking up lunch along the way, we relaxed under the oaks of Madera Canyon for a great picnic lunch with the birds and ended up at the Santa Rita Lodge feeders, where we had our second Berylline Hummingbird of the tour. This truly was an epic tour, with great friendships, company, birds, and food—a tour we will all remember for a long time.

Following is a list of the birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians we were fortunate to observe during the trip.

BIRDS 151 species were recorded. Details are included below.

The eBird link below details 150 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Arizona Monsoon Madness | August 2026 | eBird Trip Report](#)

MAMMALS (9) species were recorded. Details are included below.

Mule Deer *Odocoileus hemionus* — Seen by one person in the group on one day
White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus* — Numerous in the Chiricahuas, Huachucas, and Santa Ritas
Coyote *Canis latrans* — Heard one day and seen dead on the road on another day
Desert Cottontail *Sylvilagus audubonii* — The most widespread mammal of the tour, these were reported on 6 days
Cliff Chipmunk *Tamias dorsalis* — Found on all days in the Chiricahuas
Rock Squirrel *Otospermophilus variegatus* — The most ubiquitous squirrel of the tour, reported on 5 days
Arizona Gray Squirrel *Sciurus arizonensis* — Seen in the Chiricahuas and Huachucas
Mexican (Apache) Fox Squirrel *Sciurus nayaritensis* — Found in the Chiricahuas
Fulvous Pocket Gopher *Megascapheus fulvus* — One of these was out feeding on bird seed at Ash Canyon Bird Sanctuary

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS (8) species were recorded. Details are included below.

Ornate Box Turtle *Terrapene ornata* — One was rescued off the road by Casa de San Pedro
Clark's Spiny Lizard *Sceloporus jarrovi* — Several of these were seen at San Pedro House
Sonoran Spotted Whiptail *Aspidoscelis sonora* — Abundant in several areas, particularly on the trails near San Pedro House
Western Diamondback *Crotalus atrox* — One had been found by some herpers during our night drive from Cave Creek Ranch
Checkered Garter Snake *Thamnophis marcianus* — One seen in the wet path on our morning walk at Casa de San Pedro
Couch's Spadefoot *Scaphiopus couchii* — Several of these were seen on the road at night when we returned from dinner out at Casa de San Pedro
American Bullfrog (I) *Lithobates catesbeiana* — Heard at various wetlands during the tour
Chiricahua Leopard Frog *Lithobates chiricahuensis* — Seen by some in the group in the pond at Cave Creek Ranch

INVERTEBRATES (32) species were recorded. Details are included below. Thanks to Vernie Aikins for the Montosa Canyon list.

American Snout *Libytheana carinenta*—Montosa Canyon
Arizona Checkerspot *Systasea zampa*—Montosa Canyon
Arizona Powdered-Skipper—Montosa Canyon
Arizona Sister *Adelpha eulalia*—Seen flying in several canyons visited
Arizona Skipper *Codatractus arizonensis*—Montosa Canyon
Black Swallowtail *Papilio polyxenes*—Frequently seen flying through the canyons
Bordered Patch *Chlosyne lacinia*—Several in Montosa Canyon
Common Streaky-Skipper *Celotes nesus*—Montosa Canyon
Empress Leilia *Asterocampa leilia*—Seen in the road at Montosa Canyon
Flame Skimmer *Libellula saturata*—Seen near water bodies throughout the tour
Golden-headed Scallopwing *Staphylus ceos*—Montosa Canyon
Marine Blue *Leptotes marina*—Abundant at many sites
Mexican Metalmark *Apodemia mejicanus*—Montosa Canyon
Northern Cloudywing *Cecropterus pylades*—Montosa Canyon
Orange Skipperling *Oarisma aurantiaca*—Montosa Canyon
Orange-tailed Prominent *Cargida pyrrha*—Caterpillar found in Montosa Canyon
Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*—Seen several times during the tour
Pipevine Swallowtail *Battus philenor*—Caterpillar seen in Montosa Canyon
Queen *Danaus gilippus*—Very numerous at almost all sites at lower elevations

Reakirt's Blue *Echinargus isola*—Montosa Canyon
Southern Dogface *Zerene cesonia*—Found at Paton Center and elsewhere
Tailed Orange *Eurema proterpia*—Many at Montosa Canyon
Two-tailed Swallowtail *Papilio multicaudata*—Frequently seen flying through the canyons
Western Giant Swallowtail *Heracles rumiko*—Seen several times during the tour
Giant Agave Bug *Acanthocephala thomasi*—One photographed in Montosa Canyon
Large Milkweed Bug *Oncopeltus fasciatus*—Feeding on milkweeds at Southwestern Research Station
Eastern Boxelder Bug *Boisea trivittata*—Feeding on milkweeds at Southwestern Research Station
Figeater Beetle *Cotinis mutabilis*—One found dead
Arizona Net-winged Beetle *Lycus arizonensis*—Feeding on milkweeds at Southwestern Research Station
Tohono Vinegaroon *Mastigoproctus tohono*—A few of these impressive creatures (technically, whipscorpions) were found during the tour
Desert Blonde Tarantula *Aphonopelma chalcodes*—Presumably this species seen walking in the grass at the Patagonia Lake Birding Trail
Tucson Bronze Tarantula *Aphonopelma vorhiesi*—One found by Dave in his room at Cave Creek Ranch!

LOCATIONS AND NOTES:

Day 1: Monday, Aug. 10; Tucson, Lake Cochise & Twin Lakes Golf Course, Cave Creek Ranch, Portal
Day 2: Tuesday, Aug. 11; Cave Creek Ranch, South Fork Cave Creek Canyon, Southwestern Research Station, Bob Rodrigues yard, Cathedral Rock Road
Day 3: Wednesday, Aug. 12; Cave Creek Ranch, George Walker House, Barfoot Park, Rustler Park, Pinery Canyon, Casa de San Pedro
Day 4: Thursday, Aug. 13; Casa de San Pedro, Ramsey Canyon Preserve, Beatty's Guest Ranch/Miller Canyon, Ash Canyon Bird Sanctuary
Day 5: Friday, Aug. 14; Casa de San Pedro, Ash Canyon Bird Sanctuary, Beatty's Guest Ranch/Miller Canyon, San Pedro House
Day 6: Monday, Aug. 15; Casa de San Pedro, Las Cienegas National Conservation Area South Entrance road, Paton Center for Hummingbirds, Patagonia, Patagonia Lake State Park, Tubac Golf Resort
Day 7: Tuesday, Aug. 16; Tubac Golf Resort, Amado Wastewater Treatment Plant, Montosa Canyon, Madera Canyon, Santa Rita Lodge, Desert Meadows Park (Green Valley)
Day 8: Monday, Aug. 17; Tubac Golf Resort, Santa Gertrudis Lane, de Anza Trail @ Bridge Road