

Southeast Arizona Fall Sky Island Sampler with Naturalist Journeys



Tour Species List

November 11-18, 2021

Guides Peg Abbott and Hugh Simmons with 9 clients: Dottie, David, Ginni, David, Shubha, Tulja, Richard, Carolyn, and Janell

Trip List Compiled by Peg Abbott

(HO)= Distinctive enough to be counted as heard only

(I)=introduced

Summary: Our fall trips are Sampler Trips where we take time to enjoy sightseeing and fall color as well as birding, at a relaxed pace we also very much enjoy our avian companions. Birds were particularly quiet this November, a phenomenon noted across the region. Still, we enjoyed a good variety of species in spectacular sunny days; high temperatures still crossed into the low 80's one day in Rodeo, though most were mid-70's and perfect. Highlights included the spectacle of Sandhill Cranes at two locations, so memorable - particularly at sunset. Quite a few of the group worked on sparrow identification, and the raptors always drew our attention with great flight shows by Northern Harriers. Finding six species of hummingbirds and the notable show put on by a Greater Roadrunner were significant treats. Seeing the Rufous-backed Robin our first day felt like a real bonus and time to watch behavior, such as Western Bluebirds (seven at a time combing through the berries of a big mistletoe) was fun. It was a most compatible group and we had good fun sampling local cuisine at restaurants and enjoying the catering efforts of Elvia and her husband at the Casa de San Pedro and Carrie Miller at Cave Creek Ranch. Until the next adventure!

BIRDS (105 species recorded):

DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS: Anatidae (11)

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*— We saw about 20 individuals on our Whitewater Draw visit a long way off, but their white plumage marked them nicely. We had two more at Willcox that shone like porcelain and kept their position when the cranes were restless and moving to give us very good views.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*—A common duck at both water locations we visited.

American Wigeon *Mareca americana*—Numerous at Willcox, but not at Whitewater.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*—Two green-headed Mallards and their females were seen in the small pond at Willcox and then Carolyn spotted others as she walked around the berm of the main pond at Willcox.

Mexican Duck *Anas diazi*—See briefly at Whitewater Draw, one pair.

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Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*—Seen in lovely light and at close range at Whitewater Draw, 20+.

Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca*—Scattered individuals seen at both water locations with higher numbers at Willcox where we watch a small group preening on a small sand peninsula, showing off their vibrant speculums.

Canvasback *Aythya valisineria*— Hugh had an eye for this species and put the scope on lone individuals at both water locations.

Redhead *Aythya americana*—We got fine views of a lone individual at Willcox in the scope, spotted by David and Dottie.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*—A lone male was seen at Willcox.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*—Over 50 seen at both Whitewater and Willcox, actively feeding. In both ponds at Willcox.

NEW WORLD QUAIL: Odontophoridae (2)

Scaled Quail *Callipepla squamata*—Very quick views of a line of 6 or so working their way down the block wall of the Chiricahua Desert Museum, Hugh was quick and snapped a nice photo, but alas, quite a few were inside looking at exhibits and missed them.

Gambel's Quail *Callipepla gambelii*—Seen very well at the Jasper feeders on our first visit there. We also saw them at the Chiricahua Desert Museum and heard them a couple of stops on our Rodeo day.

PARTRIDGES, PHEASANTS AND ALLIES: Phasianidae (1)

Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo*—Seen on our day driving up and over the mountain and then later again by the bridge across Cave Creek on the Portal side of the research station.

GREBES: Podicipedidae (2)

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*—Individuals seen at both water locations.

Eared Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*—Six or so were present at Whitewater Draw but this visit we just saw one lone individual at Willcox.

PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae (5)

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* (1)—Seen in urban areas and in good number around the livestock auction facility in Willcox.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (1)—First seen at the Casa de San Pedro, we recorded them on 3 days at multiple locations.

Inca Dove *Columbina inca*—Seen on two days at Cave Creek Ranch where a small group is often calling and visible.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica*—Common, observed most days of the tour.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*—Widespread, we saw them mainly in the open country at low elevations, around Rodeo 30 or more at a time.

CUCKOOS AND ALLIES: Cuculidae (1)

Greater Roadrunner *Geococcyx californianus*—The birding angels smiled on us, after searching hither and yon to no avail, one came to us while we were comfortably perched at the Dave Jasper feeders

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(where it had been reported about a week earlier, but we had little hope...) and put on quite a show. Yeah! We had several scouts in town looking too, so were most pleased to find this one.

HUMMINGBIRDS: Trochilidae (6)

Rivoli's Hummingbird *Eugenes fulgens*—Good views of one individual male at the feeders just below the Ramsey Canyon Nature Reserve and in branches of the large tree that held them.

Anna's Hummingbird *Calypte anna*—The most common hummingbird encountered, first seen at the Paton Center for Hummingbird feeders, we then had them at several locations, often alerted by their sounds.

Broad-tailed Hummingbird *Selasphorus platycercus*—A late-in the season individual was seen well at the Paton Center for Hummingbirds in Patagonia.

Broad-billed Hummingbird *Cyananthus latirostris*—Good views at several of the feeders we stopped at and while up along the nature trail in Cave Creek Canyon.

Violet-crowned Hummingbird *Leucolia violiceps*—This week we saw two individuals at the Paton Center for Hummingbirds, nice!

Blue-throated Mountain Gem *Lampornis clemenciae*—A male watched over his feeding area near the office-entrance to Cave Creek Canyon, putting on a good show. We also saw two of this species perched together and interacting at Ramsey Canyon.

RAILS, COOTS AND ALLIES: Rallidae (1)

American Coot *Fulica americana*—Good views at Whitewater Draw and Willcox, then also seen and heard vocalizing at Willow Tank outside of Rodeo, NM.

CRANES: Gruidae (1)

Sandhill Crane *Antigone canadensis*—This tour was timed for seeing the winter numbers coming in strong. We had thousands in view at both Whitewater and Willcox, just spectacular to see and hear them. Timed with sunset, viewing was just beautiful as well. We also heard them while birding in the San Simon Valley near Rodeo, and Carolyn heard the same ones from the McCord trail.

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: Charadriidae (1)

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*—Quite a number were on the shorelines at Willcox Twin Lakes ponds.

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae (5)

Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americanus*—It was a thrill to be at Willcox at sunset, taking in all the cranes swirling about, when WHOOSH, in came 50 Long-billed Curlew to roost for the night. Wow! The sunset glow caught their wings, very memorable.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*—Hugh picked up two individuals and we got scopes on them for nice comparison to the more numerous Least.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*—Twenty+ seen at Willcox Twin Lake Ponds

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*—A few were seen at Willcox when we first arrived.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*—A lone individual, seen at Whitewater Draw, close to the berm we viewed from.

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HAWKS, KITES AND EAGLES: Accipitridae (3)

Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius*—Seen with fair regularity, a favorite of our photographers found on five days of the journey. One coming close as we watched sunset over the rounded mountains near Sonoita was memorable.

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus*—Seen on two days, one on an early morning walk from the Casa, and the other along the streets of Portal where it perched for good inspection.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*—We saw good numbers along roadways, particularly the grassland areas where they winter. A variety of morphs and color forms.

OWLS: Strigidae (1)

Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus*—We spooked one unexpectedly from a Cottonwood tree roost as we walked a quiet creekbottom at Las Cienagas. We later heard them by Portal.

WOODPECKERS: Picidae (6)

Red-naped Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus nuchalis*—We got good views of this pretty woodpecker as it fed on various deciduous trees and then up the South Fork, on ripe Madrone berries, a pretty site (red on red!).

Acorn Woodpecker *Melanerpes formicivorus*—Very common in woodland areas, including the cottonwood riparian by Cave Creek Ranch and Portal. We watched them fill their granaries and try to ward off Chiricahua Fox Squirrel.

Gila Woodpecker *Melanerpes uropygialis*—Very common our first days along the San Pedro – their laughing call ringing forth on our morning bird walks there.

Ladder-backed Woodpecker *Dryobates scalaris*—Good views while at Las Cienagas, and on our final days in Portal in the lower elevation areas, also Jasper feeders.

Arizona Woodpecker *Dryobates arizonae*—A beauty, this week our group was charmed and saw them on several days, the first quite close at feeders below Ramsey Canyon Preserve, then at close range at Cave Creek Ranch.

Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*—Seen daily, in a variety of habitats.

FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae (1)

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*—Individuals seen on four days, often perched on a pole or utility wire, watching an open field for prey.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: Tyrannidae (4)

Black Phoebe *Sayornis nigricans*—Great to find them at the pond in Las Cienagas, at Whitewater Draw and then one at Willow Tank in Rodeo. We watched them perched and hunting insects with a sally out from their perch and back, so agile.

Say's Phoebe *Sayornis saya*—Such a friendly one, we found them around buildings, our lodgings, and some abandoned farmsteads. Typically, lone individuals were found on five days.

Vermilion Flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus*—A showstopper always, we had one cooperative male at Whitewater Draw that posed against a vibrant blue sky – another photographers moment of joy!

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Cassin's Kingbird *Tyrannus vociferans*—Richard spotted this species at a distance on our first early morning walk from the Casa de San Pedro and we got a scope on it. A few stay with us and linger into winter, most migrate away.

VIREOS: Vireonidae (1)

Hutton's Vireo *Vireo huttoni*—Seen in the mixed flock at Turkey Creek the day we drove over the Chiricahuas to the national monument.

SHRIKES: Laniidae (1)

Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus*—Seen on four days, a regular wire sitter we would spy as we traveled and explored, particularly in the grasslands. One atop the border wall at Naco was memorable.

CROWS AND JAYS: Corvidae (5)

Steller's Jay *Cyanocitta stelleri*—Seen on our day over to the monument and again at Herb Martyr Campground where we enjoyed a sunny picnic by the creek while at Portal.

Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay *Aphelocoma woodhouseii*—We found this species near Portal with best views and a chance to study them at the Jasper feeders.

Mexican Jay *Aphelocoma wollweberi*—Very common and vocal, in flocks, in Ramsey Canyon of the Huachucas, up by the upper loop trail and on all days from Portal in the pine-oak woodland of the Chiricahuas.

Chihuahuan Raven *Corvus cryptoleucus*—Seen and heard well in the pecan groves and adjacent farm fields on Stateline Road in Portal where they congregate.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*—Seen daily, often pairs or lone individuals.

TITS AND CHICKADEES: Paridae (1)

Bridled Titmouse *Baeolophus wollweberi*—Seen or heard on five days, this cheerful small songbird often seems to be a ringleader for a mixed flock.

PENDULINE TITS: Remizidae (1)

Verdin *Auriparus flaviceps*—Seen well on our walk from Cave Creek Ranch one morning, then again in the lower elevations we explored from Portal.

LONG-TAILED TITS: Aegithalidae (1)

Bushtit *Psaltriparus minumus*—Winter flocks were present at Turkey Creek and higher up the mountain the day we drove from Portal over the mountains to the national monument. Vocal and busy!

KINGLETS: Regulidae (1)

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Corthylio calendula*—Seen daily, one of the more common winter songbirds in the region.

NUTHATCHES: Sittidae (2)

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White-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis*—Seen daily, often heard before being seen, a regular feature of birding, particularly in canyon riparian habitat but also widespread.

Pygmy Nuthatch *Sitta pygmaea*—Seen at one of our stops over the mountain in tall pines adjacent to the road, vocal and feeding.

CREEPERS: Certhiidae (1)

Brown Creeper *Certhia americana*—Seen on three days, all in foothills canyons that we walked, Ramsey, along the Transmountain Road across the Chiricahuas and at South Fork of Cave Creek.

WRENS: Troglodytidae (4)

House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*—Seen on two days, best views on a walk from the Casa de San Pedro on their grounds.

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*—Heard only, talking to us at sunset when we focused on cranes at Whitewater Draw, and later the same at the small pond with reeds at Willcox.

Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii*—HO - Heard while we walked the trail around Paton Center for Hummingbirds.

Cactus Wren *Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*—Seen well on our days from Portal, they were inquisitive and cooperative for our photographers as well.

STARLINGS AND MYNAS: Sturnidae (1)

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (1)—Seen at La Cienega and in Sonoita, not common.

MOCKINGBIRDS AND THRASHERS: Mimidae (2)

Curve-billed Thrasher *Toxostoma curvirostre*—Seen on six days, good views and common. Some of the best views were at the Chiricahua Desert Museum.

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*—Seen well at the gas station at Naco, in a fruiting tree.

THRUSHES: Turdidae (4)

Western Bluebird *Sialia mexicana*—Beautiful views on the day we crossed over the Chiricahuas, fun to see a flock working over a big clump of mistletoe. We had close views of these, but also saw other flocks feeding in pine-juniper habitat as we explored.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*—One individual seen from a birding stop at Chiricahua National Monument.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*—A hold-out this year, we finally found them our last full day walking up the South Fork of Cave Creek Canyon where they were feeding on ripe Madrone berries.

Rufous-backed Robin *Turdus rufopalliatu*s—One individual seen well at Paton Center for Hummingbirds our first day, great way to begin the tour!

SILKY-FLYCATCHERS: Ptilonotidae (1)

Phainopepla *Phainopepla nitens*—Seen our final full day on the morning bird walk at Cave Creek Ranch, above the ranch house.

OLIVE WARBLER: Peucedramidae (1)

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Olive Warbler *Peucedramus taeniatus*—One individual seen in a mixed flock above Turkey Creek, normally a good spot for Mexican Chickadee which was there the week before but did not make a showing for this group. This bird was a second-year male.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS: Passeridae (1)

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (1)—Seen on five days, near houses and buildings where they find cover in winter in dense shrubbery.

FINCHES: Fringillidae (3)

House Finch *Haemorhous mexicanus*—Common in the region, seen on four of our days.

Pine Siskin *Spinus pinus*—Seen on the day we explored Willow Tank and on up to the Idlewild Campground in Cave Creek.

Lesser Goldfinch *Spinus psaltria*—A few individuals seen at Willow Tank and in tall cottonwood trees at Rodeo where we enjoyed lunch at Migration Taco, our local food truck.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS: Passerellidae (15)

Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerina*—Seen in flocks on the TransMountain drive day, mixed with Dark-eyed Juncos. Widespread from Patagonia to Las Cienagas, Huachucas and Chiricahuas.

Brewer's Sparrow *Spizella breweri*—We got good looks at this small sparrow, which often came up to Peg's pishing to pose for us, scope views.

Black-throated Sparrow *Amphispiza bilineata*—This little beauty charmed us as we walked one morning from Cave Creek Ranch out to the sunlit areas, we also had them in the grasslands out by Rodeo.

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*—Scattered individuals of the Pink-sided race were seen in the oak-pine woodlands, seen on four days.

Yellow-eyed Junco *Junco phaeonotus*—Good views when we encountered a mixed flock at the Turkey Creek junction going up the TransMountain road above Portal.

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*—One of our most frequently encountered sparrows throughout the journey.

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*—One individual was persistent at the feeders at Cave Creek Ranch, good views.

Vesper Sparrow *Pooecetes gramineus*—Widespread, seen on five days and at times in the scope, but nowhere did we have more than a half a dozen at a time, low numbers for a typical November.

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis*—Good numbers at Las Cienagas, also seen on the hawk route in Sulphur Springs Valley.

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*—Seen at both water locations, along the shoreline, best views at Whitewater Draw.

Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolni*—First seen by the small pond at the Paton Center for Hummingbirds, we missed them in Portal, normally an easy find!

Canyon Towhee *Melospiza fusca*—Fairly confiding, we saw pairs at both the Casa and then around Cave Creek Ranch and Portal, very good views at feeders.

Abert's Towhee *Melospiza aberti*—Good views while at Casa de San Pedro on our second morning early walk to the river.

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Green-tailed Towhee *Pipilo maculatus*—Heard along the streambed we walked at Las Cienagas with brief views in flight, heard again at the Bob Rodrigues feeders in Portal.

Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus*—Best seen at Chiricahua National Monument, around the upper picnic tables by Massai Point.

NEW WORLD BLACKBIRDS: Icteridae (4)

Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*—Fabulous fanciful flights at sunset at Whitewater Draw where they flew in big number, thousands as they came into roost. Sight and sound were just amazing.

Western Meadowlark *Sturnella neglecta*—Groups seen in the valley below Portal, and along the hawk route in Sulphur Springs Valley.

Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna*—We identified this species first at Las Cienagas, waiting for them to fly to show off their tails, then getting them in the scope to look at cheeks and other field marks. Thankfully they often vocalize!

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*—Seen at both water locations we visited in good number.

NEW WORLD WARBLERS: Parulidae (2)

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Setophaga coronata*—Widespread, seen daily – its cheerful chip always welcomed. Most individuals seen were not bright, many young birds in the mix.

Painted Redstart *Myioborus pictus*—We tried two times to spot this lovely bird, which is wintering by the Stewart Bridge this year in Portal. The first crew to look were lucky and had it right above them in trees, vocalizing as it probably settled down for the night. We tried to invite it in the next day for more to see but it must have been down creek feeding, our calls were to no avail.

CARDINAL-GROSBEAKS: Cardinalidae (3)

Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*—Common, widespread, seen on five of our 7 days.

Pyrrhuloxia *Cardinalis sinuatus*—Less common than Cardinals, we did note them on 5 days, but in fewer locations and numbers. We did have great views at several feeders along our route.

Lazuli Bunting *Passerina amoena*—Wonderful views at the Paton Center for Hummingbirds where at least three are lingering into late fall.

Mammals (13 species)

Mule Deer *Odocoileus hemionus*—Seen in the Sonoita Area, then again in open country driving to Portal.

White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus*—The small subspecies of our region was seen well in the mountain oak woodlands we visited. A regular group hung out by the feeders at Cave Creek Ranch, but we saw them along roads and trails as well.

Collared Peccary *Pecari tajacu*—A herd was very comfortable at Cave Creek Ranch and on the grounds of the lodge, we saw them there daily.

Coyote *Canis latrans*—Quick views for those coming over from the Fairmont to Casa our first morning.

White-nosed Coati *Nasua narica*—An old individual starts its day with some peanut butter spread over an alligator juniper at Cave Creek Ranch, so great to see one so close!

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Raccoon *Procyon lotor*—A family trio was spotted as we turned into Cave Creek Ranch after dark one night while staying there.

Desert Cottontail *Sylvilagus audubonii*—Seen on several days, multiple locations.

Black-tailed Jackrabbit *Lepus californicus*—Seen alongside the road going into the Casa de San Pedro as we drove out one morning for our outings

Harris's Antelope Squirrel *Ammospermophilus harrisi*—Seen very well at feeders in the Portal area

Rock Squirrel *Otospermophilus variegatus*—Seen at Cave Creek Ranch

Arizona Gray Squirrel *Sciurus arizonensis*—Seen at Patagonia and in the Huachucas at Ramsey Canyon

Chiricahua Fox Squirrel *Sciurus nayaritensis chiricahuae*—This endemic subspecies of Mexican Fox Squirrel to the Chiricahua Mountains put on a good show for us the day we walked up the South Fork of Cave Creek Canyon.

Cliff Chipmunk *Tamias dorsalis*—Seen at Cave Creek Ranch

Reptiles (2 species)

Yarrow's Spiny Lizard *Sceloporus jarrovi*—

Chiricahua Leopard Frog *Lithobates chiricahuensis*—Seen at Las Cienagas, and later at Ramsey Canyon.