

ARIZONA – MAY 2019

PARTICIPANTS – KENNY MUSGROVE; WAYNE GEATER; STEVE ABBOTT

DAY 1: TUESDAY 7TH MAY

This was a travelling day – literally! We caught the 13.40hr United Airlines flight from Heathrow direct to Los Angeles, landing at 16.45hr local time. We passed through immigration, made the short walk from Terminal 7 to Terminal 5, and checked in for our internal flight to Tucson within 30 minutes. This meant we had a 2 hour wait before boarding the 20.00hr flight which took off on time landing in Tucson an hour later. By the time we collected our hire car and made the 5 minute trip to the La Quinta hotel meant we had in all been travelling for over 22 hours.

DAY 2: WEDNESDAY 8TH MAY

Despite the long day previously and the change in time zones we were up for a 6.30 breakfast and then had half an hour birdwatching from the hotel car park. This produced the first lifer of the trip in the form of a **Lucy's Warbler** in the tree next to the car. Other birds seen were **Black-chinned Hummingbird, Verdin, Gila Woodpecker, Hooded Oriole, Western Kingbird, Starling, House Sparrow, Mourning Doves**. We were en-route to our first destination before 07.00 with a drive across Tucson to the Sweetwater Wetlands Preserve. A male **Gambel's Quail** sat confidently on a fence post as we drove into the car park and a **Gila Woodpecker** alighted on a nearby telegraph pole. We gleaned information from a couple of local birders and as we were talking by the pool by the car park a pair of **Mexican Ducks** flew in. **Red-winged Blackbirds** and **Great-tailed Grackles** were numerous in the trees as were **Lesser Goldfinch** and **House Finch**, and the odd **Yellow** and **Wilson's Warblers** and a single **Song Sparrow** were spotted flitting in nearby bushes. A clockwise walk around the preserve tracks produced **American Coot, Common Gallinule, American Widgeon, Mallard, and Gadwall** on the ponds, and **Barn, Northern-rough Winged** and **Tree Swallows** hawking above. The rest of the walk produced **Black-throated Sparrow, Verdin, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Mourning and White-winged Doves; 3 Green Herons; Common Yellowthroat; and Abert's Towhee**. As we completed our circuit and were walking back to the car park, two **Roadrunners** walked across the road and disappeared into the preserve, giving excellent views



Next stop on our agenda for the day was to pay a visit to Woodlands Road where two Lewis' Woodpeckers had been reported in the weeks prior to our visit. Sadly we had no joy with these birds

but **Vermillion Flycatchers, Phainopepla, House Finch and Great-tailed Grackles** were evident around the two ranches at the beginning of the road. **Turkey Vultures and Red-tailed Hawks** were seen patrolling the skies but a pair of **Harris Hawks** in nearby trees was a good sighting. At the end of the road we found a couple of **Gila Woodpeckers** but no sign of our target.

We drove through the Saguaro Cactus zone on the Catalina highway hoping to spot Gilded Flicker but again we only saw **Gila Woodpeckers**. Also seen in this zone were **Olive-sided Flycatcher, Verdin and Black-throated Sparrow** as well as the ubiquitous **Turkey Vultures and Red-tailed Hawk**. We carried on upwards with our first stop being Molino Basin where we found **Canyon Towhee, Summer Tanager, Hooded Oriole, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Lesser Goldfinch and House Finch**. We also heard two **Red-faced warblers** singing but it was only later that evening that we were able to identify them as such. We drove on until we reached the end of the road at Summerhaven, where bird activity around the cabins was good and we picked up **Acorn woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Mexican Jay, Stellar's Jay, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak, American Robin, House Wren, Common Raven, Pine Siskin, Green Tailed Towhee, and Yellow-eyed Junco**. At the café by the Mount Lemmon ski run we only saw **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** on the feeders, but at a viewpoint overlooking the canyon we had a **Peregrine Falcon** sat atop a tree not far from the road. We returned to Summerhaven for a late lunch at one of the Cafes and afterwards as it was now late afternoon, we decided to make our way back down the highway road stopping first at Rose Lake Canyon. On the lake itself the only bird was a single **Mallard** but in the nearby woods on the approach road we had our first **Painted Redstart** of the trip. In the trees and vegetation around the lake we had **Black-chinned Hummingbird, Western Bluebird, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, White-breasted Nuthatch, Spotted Towhee, Red Crossbills and Common Raven**. Our final port of call was the Bear Canyon Area a little further down the road where we had another **Painted Redstart, Summer Tanager, Acorn Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, Mexican Jay, Red Crossbill** and overhead **Northern Rough-winged Swallows and Turkey Vultures**. As dusk set in and the light was starting to fade, a **Northern Pygmy Owl** started calling not far from the car park. At this point we decided to call it a day and retired to a Macdonald's for a late snack and then on to our Hotel.



DAY 3: THURSDAY 9th MAY

After breakfast and a sighting by Wayne of a **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, we set off for the western section of the Saguaro National Park. A pull in overlooking a small canyon was our first stop and produced an hour or so of excellent birdwatching. Our main target had been **Gilded Flicker** and a female was

soon seen when one flew across the road from the hillside and perched on a cactus. Other birds seen here were **Mourning Dove, White-winged Dove, American Kestrel, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, two further Gilded Flickers (males), Pyrruloxia, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Greater Roadrunner and a Curve-billed Thrasher** carrying food to a nest site. An impromptu stop at a pull-in a little further along the road gave us a fantastic view of another **Gilded Flicker**, again perched on a tall cactus.

We set off east and arrived at Willcox an hour or so later and headed straight for the golf course and lake. Birding around the lake gave us the opportunity to add some water birds to our trip list and the lake area proved to be first class. The highlight was 70 plus **Wilson's Phalaropes** in the far corner in full breeding plumage but other good birds seen on the water were **American Widgeon, Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal, Mexican Duck, Mallard, Shoveler, American Coot, and 6 Lesser Scaup**. Other waders found were good numbers of **American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, White-faced Ibis, Killdeer, and Spotted Sandpiper**. On the smaller ponds near the golf course were two **Black-crowned Night Heron, a Common Gallinule, Common Yellowthroat** and numerous **Red-winged Blackbirds** flitted amongst the reeds. We encountered two birders from Australia on our circuit around the lake and they quickly put us onto two **Scaled Quail** near the Greenkeeper's sheds and after an enquiry to the greenkeepers, we were allowed to enter the course itself. Good numbers of birds were present including **Western Wood Pewee, Vermillion Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, Audubon's Warbler, Great-tailed Grackle, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, and Lark, Chipping, and White-crowned Sparrows**. Overhead we had **Common Ravens, Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks, and Turkey Vultures**.



It was late afternoon when we set off further east heading for Portal, but the sat nav in the car seemed to be having problems recognising our destination, so I took over to guide us there manually. This meant driving 30 miles or so down a dirt road where **Gambel's Quail** were common and both **Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks** were seen perched and flying overhead. When we finally reached Portal we were quite surprised by how small it was, and were greeted by an **American Kestrel** sat on telegraph wires. We drove the six miles or so from the "centre" of Portal to our accommodation for the next three nights at Four Bars Cottages and were greeted by our host Bill Cavalliere, who gave us a quick tour of the property and introduced us to one of its star guests – the

male **Western Screech Owl** that was roosting right outside our cottage front door. Bill offered to take us out for some evening birding, and contacted one of his friends – Dave Jasper for information on owls. We met Dave and his wife in his back yard and spent 15 minutes or so watching his feeders which produced **Curve-billed Thrasher, Acorn Woodpecker, Pyrrhuloxia, House Finch and Cactus Wren**. Having got some information from Dave, we then headed off for Cave Creek Canyon. Our first stop produced an **Elf Owl** calling and several **Mexican Whip-Poor Wills** also calling, one of which Steve managed to get a brief sighting of. Bill then took us to a second site just past the Research Station and soon a **Flammulated Owl** was calling from the top of a nearby tree. Despite trudging through the woods we were only able to hear and not get a sighting of this elusive bird.

DAY 4: FRIDAY 10th MAY

We were up quite early and spent an hour or so birdwatching in Bill's garden. This produced an impressive number of birds: **three species of dove – Mourning, White-winged and Collared, Gila Woodpecker, Black Chinned Hummingbird, Western Kingbird, Western Tanager, a vocal Cactus Wren, Red Cardinal, nesting Curve-billed Thrasher, Pyrrhuloxia, Bullock's Oriole, Brown-headed Cowbird, Blue Grosbeak, White-crowned and Black-throated Sparrow, and numerous House Finch and Pine Siskin**. Warblers were around the small pool at the back of the garden in the form of **Wilson's, Yellow, McGillivray's** and a not expected **Red-faced**, and a flock of **25 Cedar Waxwings** put in a short appearance all alighting in one of the trees before flying off. A good start to the day, and in addition we had the **Western Screech Owls** nesting in the tree in the centre of the garden.

We headed to "downtown" Portal and walked the short distance down the main street to see the nesting **Great Horned Owl** in a tree at the far end. Two almost fledged chicks watched over by their mother was the sight that greeted us. We met two ladies birding the street and they kindly showed us the male **Northern Beardless Tyrannulet** sat near a nest site. A pair of **Brown-crested Flycatchers** flitted from a tree on the opposite side of the road, and a **Gila Woodpecker** called noisily as it flew overhead along with a **Red-tailed Hawk** and a small party of **White-throated Swifts**. We walked on past the owl nest tree until we came to a yard which had a number of feeders and spent the next half hour here in the company of another local birder. Good numbers of birds were seen including lifers for us all in the form of **Bridled Tit and Broad-tailed Hummingbird**. Other birds seen here were **White-winged, Inca, and Mourning Doves; Gambels Quail, Acorn Woodpecker, Black-chinned Hummingbird, White-breasted Nuthatch, Summer and Western Tanagers, Black-Headed Grosbeak, House Finch, and Pine Siskin** and above us a number of **Band-tailed Pigeon** sat high in the trees.



We had been given information regarding a **Whiskered Screech Owl** nest sight in Cave Creek and after several passes, eventually found the correct tree with one of the birds sitting obligingly at the entrance to the nest hole in the bright sunshine. On the other side of the road we were treated to a male **Wild Turkey** in full display mode. We drove down South Fork road hoping to get a sight of one of the Trogons reported to be breeding but it was not to be on this morning. We did get a lifer when an **Arizona Woodpecker** alighted on the base of a tree on the opposite side of the creek, and also saw **Bewick's and House Wren, American Robin, Hermit Thrush and Painted Redstart** all near the bridge. We returned to the Research Station for coffee and then spent half an hour observing the hummingbird feeders. Most of the birds were **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** but there were **also 3 Blue-throated and 3 Rivoli Hummingbirds** amongst them. Other birds seen there were **Northern Flicker, Say's Phoebe, Audubon's Warbler, and overhead Common Raven and Turkey Vulture.**

We headed further up the mountain on the dirt road to Rustler Park and in our initial search found a **Greater Peewee, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Spotted Towhee and several American Robins.** After gleaning some information from a group of English Birders we started the second phase of our search and after great perseverance manage to spot a **Mexican Chickadee.** We also spotted a **Pygmy Nuthatch** excavating a nest hole. Buoyed by this success we set off for Pinery Canyon and en-route met another group, this time American birders who gave us information on a Spotted Owl residing in the area of the campsite. We drove up and down the dirt road for about half an hour looking for the campsite and when we finally found the area also easily located the **Spotted Owl** roosting high up in a pine tree near the dirt road. Other birds seen in the area of the campsite were **Painted Redstart, Spotted Towhee and American Robins.** It was now late afternoon and the weather had deteriorated and it was now quite cold so we decided to set off back down the mountain, where en-route we had a **Wild Turkey in flight, 2 Blue-grey Gnatcatchers and 2 Wilson's Warblers.** We eventually returned to Portal and had a well-deserved meal in the café before driving back to Four Bars Cottage for the night.



DAY 5: SATURDAY 11th MAY

We needed petrol and were told that the nearest open petrol station was 26 miles away in New Mexico, so early morning trip!) When we returned and crossed back into Arizona we spent an hour or so birding Stateline Road. This gave us another lifer in the shape of **Bendire's Thrasher** (5 birds,

one pair at a nest site), **Gambels and Scaled Quail, Grey Flycatcher, Cassin's Kingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Mockingbird, Cactus Wren and Botteri's Sparrow.**

Next stop was Cave Creek again in our second attempt for Trogon. On arriving at the bridge, we were greeted by the American birding group we met the previous day, and also the two ladies from Portal, amongst many others. What followed was some exciting birdwatching. A **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher** had been spotted in trees just above the bridge and as we were watching it, someone called out a **Plumbeous Vireo** in the same area. We also had **Bridled Titmouse, Townsend's Warbler and Audobon's Warbler** in the same area. An **Elegant Trogon** called from behind us and must have flown upstream directly over the bridge. We spent some time with the group and picked up **White-throated Swift and Violet-green Swallows** hawking around the mountain tops, **Red-tailed Hawk** above the trees, and **Western Wood Peewee, Painted Redstart, and American Robin** around the bridge area. The group moved on and we were left on our own standing on the bridge. The same (or another) **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher** appeared around the bridge area giving excellent views and then the male **Elegant Trogon** started calling again upstream. It flew into view and perched on a branch some 50 metres away and then flew past us alighting in a tree right next to the bridge giving superb views.



We returned to the café in Portal for a late celebratory breakfast and then headed for Bob Rodríguez Yard for another target bird. In fact the first bird we saw when we got there was our target – a **Crissal's Thrasher** feeding on the ground as we were walking to the viewing area. A good list of birds were seen here including, **Gambels Quail, White-winged Doves, Summer Tanager, Pyrrhuloxia, Black-headed Grosbeak, Canyon Towhee, Cactus Wren, Brown-headed Cowbird, Curve-billed Thrasher, Lazuli Bunting, House Finch, Pine Siskin, and White-crowned, Black-throated and Rufous-winged Sparrow.** There were good numbers of hummingbirds and Steve picked out **2 Broad-billed** among the many **Black-chinned.**

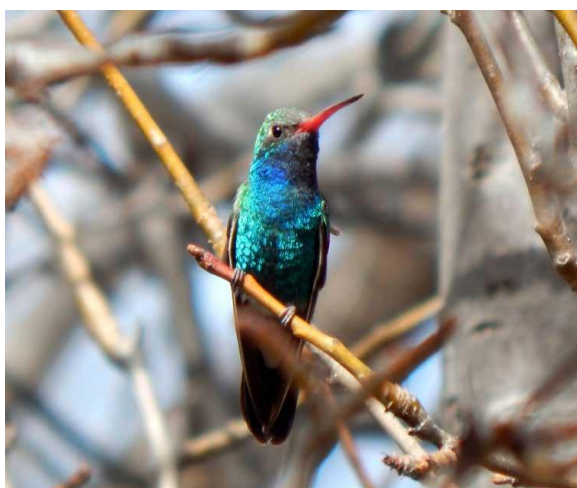
The previous day had seen us miss out on the three warbler species that frequent the higher reaches of the Hirachuacas, so we once again head up the dirt road to Pinery Canyon Campsite. The weather was better today and it was much warmer and we soon had our first success in the form of **two Red-faced Warblers.** Unfortunately the **Spotted Owl** was not in the roost site from the previous day and despite getting a short burst from the female calling, we and another van full of birders who appeared hoping for a sighting were unable to re-locate it. We had noticed that there had been bird

activity in what turned out to be the old campsite itself so we made our way across from the main road. We had another **Red-faced Warbler, Painted Redstart, Audobon's Warbler, Golden-Crowned Kinglet, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, and Hermit Thrush** but the star turned out to be a male **Grace's Warbler** – the second of our targets. We moved on to Barfoot Campground and as we were walking down the entrance road were greeted by two English birders both from Newcastle and one of whom we met on our California trip two years earlier (small world!). We found our third target when not one but four **Olive Warblers** were seen high up in the tree tops, along with more **American Robins, Yellow-eyed Juncos and a Greater Pewee.**

Extremely satisfied with our day we headed back down the mountain road and met our Australian friends once again. We exchanged information and sent them off to Four Bars Cottage for the Western Screech Owls while they provided us with news at the Research Station. Behind the accommodation cabins a bridge over the stream led to path to two small ponds. Here we had a brief view of the **Buff-breasted Flycatcher** that had taken up residence there, along with **Brown-crested Flycatcher, Western Wood Pewee, Painted Redstart, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker and Audubon's Warbler.** It was after 19.00hrs, having stopped to allow a group of Collared Peccary cross the road in front of us, when we reached Portal and unfortunately did not know that the café stopped serving food at seven. Therefore elated but hungry we drove down Portal road to the Four Bars Cottage with only crisps for our evening meal, but we did pick up a few **Lesser Nighthawks** hunting over the road on the way.

DAY 6: SUNDAY 12th MAY

Today was a moving on day and we would be leaving Portal heading west for Sierra Vista. Having obtained some information the previous evening and before breakfast, we first headed up to the small settlement of Paradise some 9 miles or so from Portal. At the churchyard just outside of Paradise we were greeted by a single bird singing from the top of a tree. This turned out to be our target, a **Juniper Titmouse** which gave us great scope views. The only other bird we saw there was a **Hermit Thrush** so we headed for George Walker's Yard.



Here we were greeted by the lady owner and spent half an hour observing the feeders. Our second target was soon heard and then seen – a **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** which made an amazing noise with its wings as it flew onto and off the sugar feeders. Other birds seen there were **Black-chinned, Broad-billed and Rivoli's Hummingbirds, Brown-crested Flycatcher, White-breasted Nuthatch,**

Bridled Titmouse, Mexican Jay, Hepatic and Western Tanagers, Acorn Woodpecker, Black-headed Grosbeak, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Finch, White-winged Dove, Lazuli Bunting, Scott's Oriole and overhead Turkey Vultures. Extremely pleased we headed back to Portal for Breakfast and drove through the first of many downpours we encountered during the day. At the café we were greeted with the sight of a bedraggled Coyote at the back of the building.

We headed back to Four Bars Cottage to collect our bags and say our goodbyes to Bill and as we left we were greeted by a **Bronzed Cowbird** on the tree outside of our room. We had to drive down Stateline Road which gave us a sighting of the **Bendire's Thrasher** at the nest site, **Western Meadowlark**, and a surprise lifer as two male **Lark Buntings** in full summer plumaged flew across one of the fields. We made a quick stop at Willow Tank which was devoid of birds apart from a **Western Kingbird**, but we did get good views of two **Scaled Quail** on the approach road. We drove south stopping at Douglas for a coffee and to fill up with petrol and encountered our Australian friends again doing the same thing before heading for Tucson Airport. Bill had given us a site to visit near Douglas but we had to abort heading there as an almighty storm hit the area. The rest of the journey was uneventful and late afternoon we arrive at Battiste Bed and Birds Guest House, our accommodation for the next three nights. Tony Battiste in a well-known bird photographer in Southern Arizona and the set up in his "yard" was fantastic. We spent an hour in the garden with him over coffee, picking up **Acorn Woodpecker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Greater Roadrunner, Black-chinned and Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Western Tanager, Pyrrhuloxia, Black-headed Grosbeak, Cactus Wren, Mexican Jay, House Finch and White-winged Dove.** Tony gave us some advice as to spend our time in the area and we headed for Ash Canyon B&B to observe the feeders there, in an effort to see another of our targets. The four birdwatchers present kindly vacated their seats on our arrival and we observed many **Mourning and White-winged Doves** feeding below the feeders, **Gila and Acorn Woodpecker, Broad-billed and Lucifer Hummingbirds, Wilson's Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee, Brown-headed Cowbird, Scott's Oriole, House Finch, and a Wild Turkey**, but had to exercise a little patience before the stars arrived. After about 40 minutes or so, a male and female **Montezuma's Quails** crept into the garden and slowly and cautiously came into full view. The birds were very skittish and often disappeared from view but stayed in the garden for the next 30 minutes or so, allowing great photographic opportunities. As the evening was passing we retired to a nearby restaurant for a nice steak and were treated to the breeding **Elf Owls** in Tony's garden when we returned there for the night.



DAY 7: MONDAY 13th MAY

After our breakfast made by Wayne in our room, we sat with Tony again in his garden observing the birds we saw the previous afternoon but in addition, **Cassin's Kingbird, Western Tanager, Anna's Hummingbird, House Wren, Black-throated Grey Warbler and Cassin's Vireo**. We then headed for Ramsey Canyon, where we again met up with the birdwatchers from Newcastle (what a small world it is!) in the reception building and exchanged information. A walk up the canyon produced several **Wild Turkeys, Acorn Woodpecker, Arizona Woodpecker, Western Wood Pewee, a male and female Elegant Trogon, Plumberous Vireo, Warbling Vireo, several Painted Redstarts, Hepatic and Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bewick's Wren, Bridled Titmouse, and Townsend's and Black-throated Grey Warbler**. Information from the centre was that **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher** had arrived and we found a male and female at a nest site up near the small frog ponds area.



After a break for coffee we headed up the twisting dirt road that led to the top of Carr Canyon. We had been given a tip that Virginia's Warbler was present near the car parking space opposite the Campsite just over halfway up. However despite a thorough search of the area in the heat and altitude we had no success. We continued upwards and a stop a little further on produced **3 Buff-breasted Flycatchers, several Blue-grey Gnatcatchers, Spotted Towhee and Bewick's Wren**. We continued onto the top of the canyon where we had **Northern Flicker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Western Wood Pewee, Greater Pewee, and White-throated Swift** overhead. All the way up the canyon **Turkey Vultures** were continuously in view and occasionally a **Red-tailed Hawk** was seen above our heads. We decided to try the Virginia's Warbler site again but nothing in the heat of the afternoon. A quick walk around the campsite produced **two Grace's Warbler and Yellow-eyed Junco**. We returned to base for a short break with the usual suspects in the yard but a **flyover Dusky-capped Flycatcher** caught our attention but we were unable to re-locate it. Tony had given us the information that he had seen **Common Poorwill** in Ash Canyon so as the light was starting to go we drove about a mile or so up into the canyon. Within 20 minutes or so numerous Poorwills began calling from the hillsides, and we were lucky enough to spot three birds in our headlights. An excellent end to the day!

DAY 8: TUESDAY 14th MAY

A quick scan of the garden produced three species of hummingbird this morning – **Black-chinned, Broad-billed and Broad-tailed** but apart from a **Northern Mockingbird** nothing new so after breakfast we headed for Miller Canyon, where we met Tom Beatty who gave us directions regarding

the Spotted Owls that roost higher up in the canyon. On reaching the landmark of the large boulder we conducted a thorough search of the trees but with no success. We did however, have an interesting encounter with a black-tailed rattlesnake which we disturbed while it was sunbathing on the side of the path. Birding was relatively quiet, but we managed to spot a number of species – **Acorn and Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Say's Phoebe, Summer, Hepatic and Western Tanager, House and Cactus Wren, Pygmy Nuthatch, Lesser Goldfinch, several Painted Redstarts, and Hermit and Red-faced Warblers.** We had seen several **Turkey Vultures and Red-tailed Hawks** on our travels up and down the canyon but a different raptor caught our attention when we emerged back into Beatty's orchard and this turned out to be a melanistic **Cooper's Hawk.** We spent half an hour observing the Hummingbird feeders and although there were numerous birds on show, the only new species for the day was **Rivoli's**, amongst the **Broad-billed, Broad-tailed and Black-chinned.**

After a McDonald's lunch we decided to go for a change of habitat and headed for the San Pedro River area. Our first sightings around the feeders at the house were **Mourning, White-winged, Inca and Common Ground Doves and Gambel's Quail.** A walk along the riparian forest pathway produced **Turkey Vultures** and a **Chihuahuan Raven** overhead, two sightings of **Grey Hawk** (a good spot by Wayne), **Ladder-backed and Gila Woodpecker, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Cassin's Kingbird, Western Wood-pewee, Vermillion Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, Summer and Western Tanager, Bewick's Wren, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Brown-headed Cowbird, Red-winged Blackbird and Lazuli Bunting.** On the river were several **Mexican Ducks (one with ducklings)** and two **Great Blue Herons** and on one of the ponds were an **American Coot with four chicks** and a dozen **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** hawking above. On returning to the house we were told there was a pair of Western Screech Owls breeding in a large tree behind the building but they remained out of view. It was now late evening so we drove back to Sierra Vista for our evening meal and then retired back to our room at Battiste's home.



DAY 9: WEDNESDAY 15th MAY

A male and female **Scott's Oriole** were the only new birds in the Battiste garden this morning, so after saying our goodbyes to Tony's wife Linda. (Tony had left during the early hours to go to Chicago for a family graduation), we set off on the short journey to Patagonia. Our first bird seen there was new for the trip – a **Black Vulture.** We headed for the famous Paton's yard and immediately on entering found our target – a **Violet Crowned Hummingbird** that posed out in the open in a tree to

the side of the feeders. Other birds seen there were **Ladder-backed** and **Gila Woodpecker**, **Lesser Goldfinch**, **Black-chinned Hummingbird** and **Broad-billed Hummingbird**.

We moved on to Patagonia Lake where over coffee and an ice cream we were able to observe the hills behind the lake where **Turkey Vultures**, **Common Ravens**, and the odd **Black Vulture** were constantly in view. We did spot two distant falcons but were unable to positively identify them. A very confiding male **Vermillion Flycatcher** continually flitted amongst the trees in front of us and numerous **Great-tailed Grackles** flew across the car park. A drive to the water's edge produced **American Coot**, **Great Blue Heron** and ten **Neotropical Cormorants** and perched on a lamp post was our first **Osprey** of the trip. As we were leaving a **Red-tailed Hawk** flew above us. We stopped at the Patagonia Rest Area hoping for Thick-billed Kingbird but the only large flycatchers we saw were **Cassin's Kingbirds**.



Our plan for the afternoon was to drive to Sonoita and then take the dirt road across Box Canyon hoping to find the Five-striped Sparrow stake-out site. However things did not go to plan and we took several wrong roads and ended up driving around and around for half an hour or so. When we did get on the right road we drove straight passed the stake-out site and ended up driving straight to our hotel in Green Valley. The only bird of note was a **Cooper's Hawk** which flew across the road in front of the car as we entered Green Valley. At the hotel we downloaded the co-ordinates for both the sparrow stake out and also those for the Black-capped Gnatcatcher site in Florida Wash, where we headed to first of all. Back we went in the direction from which half an hour earlier we had come and en-route we had a **Greater Roadrunner** running in-front of the car. When we reached our destination **Lesser Goldfinch**, **Phainopepla** and **Bewick's Wren** were spotted in the trees around the car parking area in-front of the fenced off Research area. A short walk up the Florida Wash trail soon produced first the male **Black-capped Gnatcatcher** who was soon joined by the female, and as we returned to the car a **Grey Hawk** flew away from us. With the first target in the bag we set off back down Box Canyon Road heading for the sparrow site, and within minutes of reaching the co-ordinates and parking the car, we had a **male Five-striped Sparrow** in the gully below us. In all we saw at least two possibly three birds along with **Cassin's Kingbird**, **Say's Phoebe**, **Cactus and Rock Wren**, and **Common Raven**. Extremely pleased with ourselves we headed back to Green Valley for our evening meal in the hotel.

DAY 10: THURSDAY 16th MAY

We had a bit of a late breakfast in the hotel and then set off south heading for Tubac, hoping for a sighting of our penultimate target bird in the Carolina area. We parked at the bridge which proved to be a good spot for birds. Here we saw **Vermillion Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, White-winged and Mourning Doves, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Gila Woodpecker, Broad-billed and Black-chinned Hummingbird, Cassin's Kingbird, Say's Phoebe, Black Phoebe, Phainopepla, Common Yellowthroat, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Brown-headed Cowbird Lesser Goldfinch, Song Sparrow** and a very confiding **Greater Roadrunner**, that posed on the bridge for us. Turkey Vultures continually soared overhead and we also had the odd **Chihuahuan Raven**. We joined up with two other groups in an effort to find the trail to the Becard site, but we ended up wandering hopelessly back and forth. However we did have a sighting of a juvenile **Grey Hawk** sat above us in a tree and a couple of sightings of **Bell's Vireo**. We had all but given up and were waking back to the bridge when a chance meeting with a young lady from the Audubon Society set us in the right direction. She was unsure of the correct trail but a phone call to her boss in the office allowed him to give me the directions, and we were soon heading in the right direction. We reached the site (complete with a large orange can lid used as a marker and sat and watched the huge nest hanging from a tree. Within a few minutes we had a sighting of a female **Rose-throated Becard** visiting the nest and over the next half hour, had several sightings of this bird or its mate visiting the nest. As we walked along the trail back to the car we met several other groups heading in the right direction.



After lunch in Tubac we headed for Pena Blanca Lake a few miles to the west. Birds were sparse here but we had **Green Heron, American Coot, Barn Swallow, Western Scrub Jay** and the ubiquitous **Turkey Vultures** soaring overhead. We then headed to Rio Rico for refreshment and to fill up with fuel before heading out into the hills for our second target of the day. This involved driving some 30 miles down a dirt road to California Gulch and en-route as well as meeting several border patrol vehicles, we had yet another **Greater Roadrunner** running down the road in front of the car. We also saw **Ash-throated and Vermillion Flycatcher** en-route.. Having programmed the co-ordinates into Wayne's phone we arrived at the confluence of California Gulch and Warsaw Gulch at around 19.00 hrs in bright sunlight. As we waited squadrons of **Turkey Vultures** continually soared overhead probably heading to roost. As the light began to fade and a full moon shone brightly in the sky several **Buff-collared Nightjars** began to sing but unfortunately none began to show in flight. We tracked one down sitting on a branch in a bush in the gulch itself and managed to get brief views

before it flew off. **Poorwills** had also begun calling from the hillside but like the nightjars none showed themselves in flight. However we were very satisfied and made the long journey back to our hotel in Green Valley and enjoyed a late evening meal in the restaurant.



DAY 11: FRIDAY 17th MAY

Today was a long travelling day as we had decided as part of this trip we would do our touristy bit and visit the Grand Canyon. So we made the extremely long journey from south of Tucson near the Mexican Border to the south rim of the Grand Canyon, calling in at Flagstaff en-route. To break the journey we decided to call in to Paige Springs Fish Hatchery as a pair of Lewis' woodpeckers had been reported on Ebird. We had no joy with our target and even tried the "Bubbling" Ponds area a mile or so up the road, but again with no success. We did have an **Osprey** at the hatchery perched on a tree behind one of the breeding ponds and other birds seen were **Mallard, Killdeer, Great Blue Heron, Acorn Woodpecker, Western Tanager, American Robin, Brown-headed Cowbird, Yellow and Lucy's Warbler and overhead Common Raven and Turkey Vultures**. I had hoped we may get a sighting of Common Black Hawk here but again no joy. We had lunch at a nearby bar and then drove on to Flagstaff to check into our hotel. With the formalities completed we then drove the 70 miles or so (through a blizzard!) to the Grand Canyon spending 90 minutes or so with the hundreds of other tourists enjoying the natural wonder, before driving back to Flagstaff for an overnight stay.



DAY 12: SATURDAY 18th MAY

We had hoped that Lewis' Woodpecker would be easy to find in the Flagstaff area, but despite an intensive search lasting several hours we again had no joy. Other birds seen on this "pilgrimage" were **Turkey Vulture, American Crow, White-winged and Mourning Doves, Acorn Woodpecker, Common Raven, Brewer's Blackbird, Bullock's Oriole and House Finch**. Somewhat deflated we set off on the long journey back to the Phoenix area and on arriving there made our way to the Gilbert Water Ranch Preserve in the south-east of the city. This gave us a chance to catch up with a few water birds that to date we had not managed see. Birds seen around the numerous ponds were **Canada Goose, Mallard, American Wigeon, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, Green Heron, Neotropical Cormorant, American Coot, Killdeer, Black-necked Stilt, Greater Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, American Avocet, Mourning and Collard Dove, House Finch, European Starling, Gila Woodpecker, Curve-billed Thrasher, Abert's Towhee, Verdin, Song Sparrow, and House Sparrow**. We had hoped to see Rosy-faced Lovebirds which are reported in the area but again we had no joy. Despite covering several hundred miles already we were not finished for the day and as evening fell, we made our way from east to west heading for our hotel in Gila Bend, where we got the bad news that our planned boat trip on the 20th May from San Diego had been cancelled due to predicted bad weather. Certainly not the best of days!



DAY 13: SUNDAY 19th MAY

After breakfast and checking out of our hotel we had planned to set off west for California. Before leaving the Gila Bend area we paid a quick visit to the nearby Sewage Ponds where several good birds were seen – **Cinnamon Teal, Spotted Sandpiper, Killdeer, Snowy Egret, White-faced Ibis, Northern-rough winged Swallow, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Red-tailed Hawk** and of course the ever present **Turkey Vultures**.

We set off on our third long drive in as many days and planned a stop-over in Yuma to break up the journey. We arrived around lunch-time and our first port of call was the West Wetland Park where we spent an hour or so birding. Apart from the now expected **Turkey Vultures** a walk around the trails produced **Green Heron, Neotropical Cormorant, American Coot, Gambel's Quail, Mourning, White-winged, and Collared Dove, Black-chinned Humming Bird, Gila Woodpecker, Western Wood Pewee, Northern Mockingbird, Abert's Towhee, Verdin, Yellow and Townsend's Warbler**. We also had an unidentified *Empidonax* species and a **Chinese Goose** on the pond but I suppose the latter

was not countable. During my research for the planning of this trip I had read that Mitty Lake was a good area with the possibility of Black Rail so we headed there next, although the journey was not as straightforward as it seemed and involved us driving around numerous dirt roads for an hour or so before we got there. What greeted us on the first section of the lake was something of a surprise as we saw a late staying **Lesser Scaup** and several **Clark's Grebes**. Continuing around the lake produced quite a few more **Clark's Grebe** and **Great-tailed Grackles** were prominent everywhere, but the most productive area was a small pond at the bottom end from where we came in. Here we had several **Ruddy Duck**, **Mallard**, **Great Blue Heron**, **Snowy Egret**, our only **Pied-billed Grebe** of the trip and a heard only **Ridgeway's Rail**. The afternoon was passing and we headed back to Yuma (which we did in half the time it took in coming out) and on hitting the main highway set off westwards for San Diego. This was somewhat an unusual journey which involved crossing a time zone, passing through desert and over mountains and boulder strewn hills before dropping down to the coast. One new bird we saw en-route was a small flock of **Cattle Egret** that we saw in a field just after crossing the state border line into California. The light was beginning to fade as we hit San Diego, where we checked into the Comfort Inn, and were given an upgrade on the room before heading out for a nice steak at a steakhouse just around the corner.



DAY 14: MONDAY 20th MAY

Our original plan had been to take a chartered boat trip from San Diego down into Mexican waters, but as stated earlier this had been cancelled due to the high winds, so after breakfast we headed south towards the Mexican Border to Tijuana Slough. The first bird we saw here was a new bird for the trip – **Yellow Crowned Night Heron**, which was sat in the edge of the reeds near the entrance. Other birds seen on the marshes here were **Snowy Egret**, **Ridgeway's Rail**, **Western Gull**, **Forster's Tern**, **Long-billed Curlew**, **Neotropical Cormorant**, and **Caspian Tern**. As we walked back towards the entrance a squadron of **Brown Pelicans** flew over the houses near the beach, and these were followed by an **Osprey**. In the bushes near the entrance we had **Black-chinned** and **Anna's Hummingbird**, **Cooper's Hawk**, **Bell's Vireo**, **Bushtit** and **Common Yellowthroat**, and two more **Yellow-crowned Night Herons** flew overhead and landed on a nearby roof.

We drove to the Tijuana River Valley Park and followed the trail that led to the beach. A **Northern Harrier** hunted over the marsh and an **American Kestrel** hovered overhead. Two **Killdeer** ran along the sandy edges of the marsh and **Song Sparrows** flitted in and out of the sage. Just before the beach several **Horned Lark** were seen. Steve had walked ahead to the beach and when myself and

Wayne arrived he told us he had a **Brown Booby** flying north, in his scope. We all managed to get good views and in the next half hour we picked out another four birds all flying north with one being really close to the shore line. Although the sea was quite rough we managed to pick out a group of around **20 Surf Scoter** on the sea and also a smaller group of **4 Black Scoter** which was a good spot from Steve. Other birds seen from the beach were **Brown Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Western Gull, Snowy Plover, Caspian, Royal, Forster's and Least Tern**. All in all, an excellent period of birdwatching! We walked back to the car and met two local birdwatchers en-route who gave us some local information and while we were chatting we picked up **California Thrasher, Yellow-breasted Chat, Orange-crowned Warbler, and 2 Northern Harriers** now hunted over the marsh. As we drove back to the nearby town for lunch **2 Red-tailed Hawks** were sat on telegraph posts.



After lunch at the local Denny's we drove back to San Diego and headed for Loma Point. As it was late afternoon we didn't have a great deal of time here but a quick sea watch produced **Brown Pelicans, two more Brown Boobies, Western Gull, Forster's Tern and a Peregrine Falcon**. We headed back towards the city and called in at Island Harbour where there were very few birds except for **Brown Pelican, Western Gull** and a surprising individual **Western Grebe**. Our final port of call was Formosa Slough where on entering from the housing estate picked up **Rufous and Anna's Hummingbird, Common Yellowthroat, Song Sparrow and Lesser Goldfinch** in the bushes. We drove round to the open end of the slough by the main road enabling us to get a better view of the birds feeding in the shallows. Here we had **several Black-crowned Night Heron, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Egret, Mallard, Gadwall, Willet, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Forster's Tern and a flyover Cooper's Hawk**. The biggest surprise was, as the evening drew in, over **70 Red-crowned Parrots** flying into the neighbourhood going to roost. We returned to the hotel for our final evening meal of the trip.

DAY 15: TUESDAY 21st MAY

The two locals we had met yesterday had told us of Black-throated Magpie-Jays colonising the area, and could be seen at the Butterfly and Bird Park. What we did not realise was that the park in Tijuana Valley was only half a mile or so from where we had met. So after breakfast we head south again toward the border. We found the park but did not have any success in finding the Jays. Birds seen here were **Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, the only White-tailed Kite of the trip, Anna's Hummingbird, Vaux Swift, Bell's Vireo, California Thrasher, Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue Grosbeak, Olive-sided Flycatcher and a Willow Flycatcher of the SW taxon**.

We headed back to San Diego for some last minute shopping and then headed north for Los Angeles where despite having a little difficulty in finding the hire car return place, checked in for our overnight flight which landed at Heathrow around noon the following day.

CONCLUSION:

This is the third time we have undertaken a birdwatching trip to the United States in the last four years, the other two being to Texas (2015) and California (2017), and like the other two it went very well from both a birdwatching and logistical point of view. Arizona was a little different being a landlocked state but it gave us the opportunity to see certain species that have a restricted range in the USA. From a birding point of view we did very well, seeing the majority of expected targets and only missing out on a handful of birds. In all we ended up with seeing 190 plus species in Arizona and an additional 30 species in the San Diego area of California. Everyone we met was very friendly and readily offered us help, assistance and happy to give us very useful information. In retrospect, despite it being a jaw-dropping sight, I wonder if the extremely long trip from almost the Mexican border to the north of Arizona to pay a visit to the Grand Canyon (we only stayed 90 minutes) was worth it. We did spend the best part of two days travelling over 700 miles to fit this in. I feel that perhaps these two days could have been better spent perhaps exploring the area around and to the north of Phoenix. However I am sure my two colleagues would disagree with me. Despite seeing many wonderful birds my personal highlight was seeing Brown Booby close to the shore at the southernmost point of California; Steve's was the Elegant Trogon as it was the one Trogon he missed on a visit to Costa Rica; and Wayne's was the attractive Red-faced Warbler. All in all, a good time was had by all! I would like to acknowledge my two colleagues – Steve for his outstanding birding ability and knowledge, and Wayne for his super photography and the ability to pull out a big spot, and to Bill Cavaliere (Four Bars Cottages) and Tony and Julie Battiste (Battiste Bed, Breakfast, and Birds) for their welcome, hospitality, and invaluable knowledge and information.

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TRIP LIST

ARIZONA	CALIFORNIA (San Diego Area)
Canada Goose	Mallard
Gadwall	Gadwall
American Wigeon	Surf Scoter
Mallard	Black Scoter
Mexican Duck	Brown Pelican
Blue-winged Teal	Brown Booby
Cinnamon Teal	Double-crested Cormorant
Northern Shoveler	Snowy Egret
Lesser Scaup	Little Blue Heron
Ruddy Duck	Cattle Egret
Wild Turkey	Black-crowned Night Heron
Scaled Quail	Yellow-crowned Night Heron
Gambel's Quail	Turkey Vulture
Montezuma Quail	Northern Harrier
Pied-billed Grebe	Osprey
Eared Grebe	White-tailed Kite
Clark's Grebe	Cooper's Hawk
Neotropic Cormorant	Red-shouldered Hawk
Great Blue Heron	Red-tailed Hawk
Great Egret	Ridgeway's Rail
Snowy Egret	Snowy Plover
Green Heron	Killdeer
Black-crowned Night Heron	Greater Yellowlegs
White-faced Ibis	Willet
Black Vulture	Long-billed Curlew
Turkey Vulture	Western Gull
Osprey	Least Tern
Cooper's Hawk	Forster's Tern
Grey Hawk	Caspian Tern
Harris's Hawk	Royal Tern
Swainson's Hawk	Vaux's Swift
Red-tailed Hawk	Anna's Hummingbird
American Kestrel	Black-chinned Hummingbird
Peregrine Falcon	Rufous Hummingbird
Ridgway's Rail	American Kestrel
Common Gallinule	Red-crowned Parrot
American Coot	Willow Flycatcher (South-Western taxa)
Killdeer	Olive-sided Flycatcher
Black-necked Stilt	Bell's Vireo (least taxa)
American Avocet	Horned Lark
Greater Yellowlegs	Bushtit
Spotted Sandpiper	California Thrasher
Wilson's Phalarope	Common Yellowthroat

Rock Pigeon	Orange-crowned Warbler
Band-tailed Pigeon	Yellow-breasted Chat
Eurasian Collared Dove	Savannah Sparrow
White-winged Dove	Song Sparrow
Mourning Dove	Blue Grosbeak
Inca Dove	Great Tailed Grackle
Common Ground Dove	Lesser Goldfinch
Greater Roadrunner	House Finch
Flammulated Owl	House Sparrow
Western Screech Owl	
Whiskered Screech Owl	
Great Horned Owl	
Northern Pygmy Owl	
Elf Owl	
Mexican Spotted Owl	
Lesser Nighthawk	
Common Poorwill	
Buff-collared Nightjar	
Mexican Whip-poor-will	
White-throated Swift	
Broad-billed Hummingbird	
Violet-crowned Hummingbird	
Blue-throated Hummingbird	
Rivoli's Hummingbird	
Lucifer Hummingbird	
Black-chinned Hummingbird	
Anna's Hummingbird	
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	
Elegant Trogon	
Acorn Woodpecker	
Gila Woodpecker	
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	
Hairy Woodpecker	
Arizona Woodpecker	
Northern Red-shafted Flicker	
Gilded Flicker	
Northern Beardless Tyrannulet	
Olive-sided Flycatcher	
Greater Pewee	
Western Wood-Pewee	
Gray Flycatcher	
Cordilleran Flycatcher	
Buff-breasted Flycatcher	
Black Phoebe	
Say's Phoebe	
Vermilion Flycatcher	

<p> Dusky-capped Flycatcher Ash-throated Flycatcher Brown-crested Flycatcher Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher Cassin's Kingbird Western Kingbird Rose-throated Becard Loggerhead Shrike Bell's Verio Plumbeous Verio Cassin's Verio Warbling Verio Steller's Jay Western Scrub Jay Mexican Jay American Crow Chihuahuan Raven Common Raven Tree Swallow Violet-green Swallow Northern Rough-winged Swallow Cliff Swallow Barn Swallow Mexican Chickadee Bridled Titmouse Juniper Titmouse Verdin Bushtit White-breasted Nuthatch Pygmy Nuthatch Brown Creeper Cactus Wren Rock Wren Canyon Wren Bewick's Wren House Wren Golden-crowned Kinglet Blue-gray Gnatcatcher Black-tailed Gnatcatcher Black-capped Gnatcatcher Western Bluebird Hermit Thrush American Robin Northern Mockingbird Bendire's Thrasher Curve-billed Thrasher </p>	
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Crissal Thrasher	
European Starling	
Cedar Waxwing	
Phainopepla	
Olive Warbler	
Lucy's Warbler	
Yellow Warbler	
Audubon's Warbler	
Black-throated Gray Warbler	
Townsend's Warbler	
Hermit Warbler	
Grace's Warbler	
MacGillivray's Warbler	
Common Yellowthroat	
Wilson's Warbler	
Red-faced Warbler	
Painted Redstart	
Yellow-breasted Chat	
Hepatic Tanager	
Summer Tanager	
Western Tanager	
Green-tailed Towhee	
Spotted Towhee	
Canyon Towhee	
Abert's Towhee	
Rufous-winged Sparrow	
Botteri's Sparrow	
Five-striped Sparrow	
Chipping Sparrow	
Lark Sparrow	
Black-throated Sparrow	
Lark Bunting	
Song Sparrow	
White-crowned Sparrow	
Yellow-eyed Junco	
Northern Cardinal	
Pyrrhuloxia	
Black-headed Grosbeak	
Blue Grosbeak	
Lazuli Bunting	
Red-winged Blackbird	
Eastern Meadowlark	
Yellow-headed Blackbird	
Brewer's Blackbird	
Great-tailed Grackle	
Bronzed Cowbird	

Brown-headed Cowbird	
Hooded Oriole	
Bullock's Oriole	
Scott's Oriole	
House Finch	
Red Crossbill	
Pine Siskin	
Lesser Goldfinch	
House Sparrow	