

WINTER SOUTHERN ARIZONA

JANUARY 15–21, 2018



Western Screech-Owl © Barry Zimmer

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By Barry Zimmer



Red-naped Sapsucker, Madera Canyon, Arizona, January 16, 2018 © Barry Zimmer

Once again, our Winter Southern Arizona tour was a huge success. We scoured a variety of habitats from the oak-juniper woodlands of Madera Canyon to the riparian habitat along the Santa Cruz River, to the Sonoran desert around Green Valley, and to the agricultural fields and desert scrub of the Sulphur Springs Valley in search of southwestern residents, winter specialties, and Mexican rarities. On all counts our trip was wildly successful.

We began our journey around Green Valley, where we tallied such gems as Harris's Hawk, Costa's Hummingbird, Gila Woodpecker, Verdin, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Phainopepla, Canyon Towhee, the highly localized Rufous-winged Sparrow, Black-throated Sparrow, and Pyrrhuloxia among others. Heading up into world-famous Madera Canyon, we were met by a host of new birds. Feeders around the Santa Rita

Lodge hosted a rare overwintering Rivoli's Hummingbird, the highly sought Arizona Woodpecker, Acorn Woodpecker, two incredibly close Red-naped Sapsuckers, Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse, an absolutely stunning Painted Redstart, and a fierce-looking Yellow-eyed Junco among others. Further up canyon, we located a mixed species flock that contained Hutton's Vireo, Brown Creeper, and a snazzy male Townsend's Warbler, while the Procter Road area at the mouth of the canyon yielded White-throated Swift, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Hammond's Flycatcher, Western Bluebird, and Canyon Wren. All those goodies were packed into Day One of our tour!



Arizona Woodpecker, Madera Canyon, Arizona, January 16, 2018 ©Barry Zimmer

The following day we visited the agricultural fields and desert scrub of the Santa Cruz Flats to the northwest of Tucson. Two Bendire's Thrashers, a Sage Thrasher, and a small group of Sagebrush Sparrows got the day off to a bang. A perched Ferruginous Hawk a short distance away allowed incredibly close scope views. By mid-morning we had arrived at a set of sod farms, where we were greeted by a flock of 46 Mountain Plovers. This threatened and declining species is often devilishly hard to find (a real needle in a haystack situation), and we were very fortunate to have them present when we pulled up. A couple of close Burrowing Owls, a bobbing Rock Wren, and a perched Prairie Falcon added to our ever-growing list. We had been so successful in such short order that we now had enough time to try to track down a vagrant Lewis's Woodpecker that had been found in a nearby pecan grove. Within minutes we had located this beauty and soaked-in awesome scope views. A close, fly-by Crested Caracara, two Long-billed Curlews, an entertaining pair of Greater Roadrunners, a fluorescent male

Vermilion Flycatcher, and an estimated 6,000 Yellow-headed Blackbirds were among the noteworthy additional finds before lunch. We had permission to visit some local feeders after lunch and were treated to a nice hummingbird show that included at least four flashy Broad-billed Hummingbirds. We finished the day at Sweetwater Wetlands where we found Cinnamon Teal, Orange-crowned Warbler, and a pair of Abert's Towhees in the late afternoon.



Lewis's Woodpecker, Santa Cruz Flats, Arizona, January 17, 2018 © Barry Zimmer

Our third day was devoted to the Nogales/Patagonia region. A short detour early on produced our only Gilded Flicker of the trip (our eighth species of woodpecker!). We had great success at Patagonia Lake State Park. A cooperative pair of Black-capped Gnatcatchers (a rarity from Mexico that has recently established a tiny resident population) was the highlight of the day, but we also tallied Eared Grebe, a rare pair of Greater Scaup, Common Merganser, Neotropic Cormorant, Gray Flycatcher, and more Western Bluebirds. A visit to the Paton Hummingbird Center yielded the spectacular Violet-crowned Hummingbird (our fifth species of hummingbird for the trip—a very good mid-winter tally) and two rare Cassin's Finches. We devoted the afternoon to searching for two Mexican rarities, Rufous-backed Robin and Sinaloa Wren. We had great success with the robin, locating three birds feeding on hackberries. We were unable to find the wren in the remaining time we had, but did get a Plumbeous Vireo as a consolation prize. We ended the day with a wonderfully successful owling excursion that netted superb views of both Western and Whiskered screech-owls.



Western Screech-Owl, Madera Canyon, Arizona, January 18, 2018 © Barry Zimmer

Day Four found us in the Sulphur Springs Valley south of Willcox. A host of highlights were found, including the likes of Greater White-fronted Goose, a very rare male Eurasian Wigeon, an estimated 15,000 Sandhill Cranes, three more Ferruginous Hawks, another Prairie Falcon, a Barn Owl that magically perched in the open on a telephone pole (voted the favorite bird of the tour), Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Crissal Thrasher, another Sage Thrasher, Lark Bunting, Brewer's Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, and a swirling flock of Chestnut-collared Longspurs.

On our final day, we ventured north to Phoenix in search of the recently established and countable Rosy-faced Lovebirds. An early start was necessary, but we were rewarded with excellent studies of 19 lovebirds shortly after dawn. We finished with a visit to the Buckeye area, where we tallied our sixth species of thrasher, the highly sought LeConte's.



Sandhill Cranes, Whitewater Draw, Arizona, January 19, 2018 © Barry Zimmer

In all, we totaled 160 species of birds with loads of raptors and wintering sparrows, many resident southwestern specialties, and a couple of Mexican rarities. Additionally, we enjoyed some of the best weather ever for this trip with high temperatures in the 70s every day except the last! This tour is truly a great winter escape!

ITINERARY

January 15 - arrival in Tucson

January 16 – residential Green Valley, Continental, Madera Canyon (Santa Rita Lodge, Madera Kubo, Whitehouse Picnic area, Proctor Road), Florida Canyon (59 species)

January 17 – Arizona City, Santa Cruz Flats, Rich's house, Sweetwater Wetlands (80 species; 113 total)

January 18 –Sahuarita Road, Amado Sewage Pond, Patagonia Lake State Park, Paton's Center for Hummingbirds, Santa Gertrudis Lane & De Anza trail, evening owling (81 species; 133 total)

January 19 – Texas Canyon Rest Area, Willcox, Cochise Lake & Twin Lakes Golf Course, Kansas Settlement, Whitewater Draw (both in Sulphur Springs Valley) (77 species; 156 total)

January 20 – Phoenix, Encanto Park, Buckeye (Baseline Road), Redrock Cattle Pens (49 species; 149 total)

January 21 - departures for home or on to Winter California (149 species total)

KEY

M = Madera Canyon, Green Valley, Amado, Sahuarita
T = Tucson, Sweetwater, Santa Cruz Flats, Hoyer house
N= Nogales, Patagonia areas, Santa Gertrudis Lane, De Anza Trail
S = Sulphur Springs Valley, Kansas Settlement, Willcox
P = Phoenix, Buckeye

bold-faced species indicate birds of rare, casual, or accidental occurrence
underlined species indicate birds of very uncommon occurrence or species which occur regularly but in such low densities as to be easily missed

BIRDS

Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) S---flock of 29 at Cochise Lake was exceptional

Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) S---two at Cochise Lake and an impressive 91 at Whitewater Draw, including one blue morph

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) P---an introduced population

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) T,N,S---scarcer than usual

American Wigeon (*Anas americana*) M,T,N,S,P

Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) S---male in with large American Wigeon flock at Twin Lakes Golf Course; very rare; spotted by Brennan

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) M,T,N,S---several of the "Mexican Duck" subspecies diazi

Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*) T---two males at Sweetwater; uncommon in mid-January

Northern Shoveler M,T,N,S

Northern Pintail S

Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*) T,N,S

Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*) M,T,N,S,P---wonderful studies at Encanto Park

Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*) N---male and female at Patagonia Lake; rare here
 Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*) M,N
 Bufflehead (*Bucephala clangula*) T,M---pair at Amado Sewage Pond
 Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*) N---20 or more at Patagonia Lake; uncommon
 Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) M,T,N,S
 Gambel's Quail (*Callipepla gambelii*) M,T,S---many great views
 Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) M---the Gould's subspecies
 Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*) T,N,S
 Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) N---three at Patagonia Lake
 Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) daily in urban areas
 Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) M,T,N,S,P---seen daily in numbers
Inca Dove (*Columbina inca*) N,P,T---increasingly scarce in this area; five at Santa Gertrudis, ten at the Phoenix Starbuck's and six at the Redrock Cattle Pens
 White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) M,N,S---uncommon in winter; only eight or so total
 Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) seen daily
 Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*) M,T,N,S---eleven total; many excellent studies; tied for third favorite bird of the tour!
 White-throated Swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) M---fifteen or so feeding over Madera Canyon; uncommon in winter
Rivoli's Hummingbird (*Eugenes fulgens*) M---one immature male & one female at Santa Rita Lodge and an adult male at the Madera Kubo; nice bonus bird for winter!; recently split off from Magnificent Hummingbird
 Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) M,T,N,P---many great views; stunning males
Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*) M---four in Green Valley; hard to find at this season
Broad-billed Hummingbird (*Cynanthus latirostris*) T,N----four in Rich's yard (including stunning adult males), plus one, surprisingly, at Patagonia Lake; generally rare in winter



Broad-billed Hummingbird, Tucson, Arizona, January 17, 2018 © Barry Zimmer

Violet-crowned Hummingbird (*Amazilia violiceps*) one gorgeous bird at Paton's feeders spotted by Burr; rare in winter

Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*) T---heard only

Sora (*Porzana carolina*) T---heard only

American Coot (*Fulica americana*) M,T,N,S,P

Sandhill Crane (*Antigone canadensis*) S---over **15,000** seen around Kansas Settlement, Sulphur Springs Valley and Whitewater Draw; wonderful display of thousands right overhead sailing around & rattling

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) T,S,P

Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*) T---flock of **46** present when we arrived at the turf farm; prolonged views; seen on less than half our tours here and often takes considerable time searching to locate any

Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*) T---two on a field at Santa Cruz Flats; very uncommon

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) S---four at Whitewater Draw; quite rare here

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*) S---one at Whitewater Draw; rare in winter; possibly a tour first

Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*) T,S

Long-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) S---a dozen at Whitewater Draw

Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*) S---four at Cochise Lake & Twin Lakes; uncommon

Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*) S---one at Whitewater Draw

Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) T,N,P---one at each area; side-by-side views with Double-crested

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) N,P
American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) T---quite unexpected was a flock of 18 flying over Valencia Road in Tucson; another tour first!
 Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) T,N
Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) N,P---very uncommon in winter
Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) T,P---great views at Sweetwater; very uncommon in winter
 Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) M---immature at Amado
 Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) T---25 total
 Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) N,P---three total; very uncommon in winter
 Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) M,T,S,P---a high count of 15 in one day; good numbers of males this year
 Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) T---one by some at Sweetwater
 Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) T,N,S,P---five total
 Harris's Hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) M,S---one family group in Green Valley and another near Willcox; eight total; localized
 Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) seen daily with a high count of **122** in one day
 Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*) T,S,P---superb views; five birds total
Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) S---incredible views of one that flushed from an abandoned building and then, quite unexpectedly, perched on a telephone pole; voted the favorite bird of the tour!
 Western Screech-Owl (*Megascops kennicottii*) M---fantastic scope study from about fifteen feet away on owling trip; tied for third favorite bird of the tour!; can be tough in mid-winter
Whiskered Screech-Owl (*Megascops trichopsis*) M---good views of this species as well; not seen in several years on this trip, as they are hard to get in mid-winter
 Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) S---one roosting in a pine near Elfrida
Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) T---exceptional views of two on the Santa Cruz Flats
Lewis's Woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*) T---one wintering in a pecan grove in the Santa Cruz Flats was a real bonus!
 Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) M,P---common in Madera; two at Encanto Park were unexpected
 Gila Woodpecker (*Melanerpes uropygialis*) M,T,N,P
Red-naped Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*) M,N---wonderful studies of three in Madera fighting over a pyracantha bush; another two in Patagonia; arguably our best luck ever with this species
 Ladder-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides scalaris*) M,T,N
Arizona Woodpecker (*Picoides arizonae*) M---male at Santa Rita Lodge feeders and female at the Amphitheater; easily missed
 Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) M,T,N,S---Red-shafted form; ten total
Gilded Flicker (*Colaptes chrysoides*) M---one in Sahuarita after much searching elsewhere; declining, localized & easily missed
Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) T---one seen well on Santa Cruz Flats; very uncommon but increasing in this area

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) seen daily with a high count of 15 in one day
Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) N---one male at Cochise Lake, possibly the Prairie race *richardsonii*; very uncommon
Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) T,S,P---singles at each locale; Scope views of perched bird; uncommon
Rosy-faced Lovebird (*Agapornis roseicollis*) P---a very early morning start on our last day, paid off with nineteen birds in Encanto Park shortly after dawn; exceptional views
Hammond's Flycatcher (*Empidonax hammondi*) M,N---three total
Gray Flycatcher (*Empidonax wrightii*) N---nice views at Patagonia Lake
Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*) M,T,N,S,P---only four seen
Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) T,N,S,P
Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephala rubinus*) T,S,P---eight total; particularly superb views of one male at Santa Cruz Flats; voted the second favorite bird of the trip!
Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) T,S,P---nineteen total
Hutton's Vireo (*Vireo huttoni*) M---uncommon in winter; great views at the Amphitheater
Plumbeous Vireo (*Vireo plumbeus*) N---one at Sweetwater seen very well; rare in winter
Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma woodhouseii*) S---one seen well at the Texas Canyon Rest Area; recently split from the Western Scrub-Jay complex; very uncommon on this tour
Mexican Jay (*Aphelocoma wollweberi*) M---quite a few in Madera Canyon
Chihuahuan Raven (*Corvus cryptoleucus*) S---several in Willcox/ Kansas Settlement areas
Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) daily
Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) T,S
Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*) P---one at Encanto Park was unexpected in mid-January
Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) S---also a surprise in mid-January at Whitewater Draw
Bridled Titmouse (*Baeolophus wollweberi*) M,N---many great looks at this cute species in Madera
Verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*) seen daily with many great views
Bushtit (*Psaltiriparus minimus*) T---by Tom only; quite unexpected in lower elevations
Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*) T---also somewhat out of place in the Santa Cruz Flats; irregular & irruptive
White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) M,N---subspecies *nelsoni*, a possible future split
Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*) M---one at the Amphitheater in Madera; uncommon
Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) T---one in the Santa Cruz Flats seemed unexpected
Canyon Wren (*Catherpes mexicanus*) M---one only in the Proctor Road area
House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) M,N---four total; uncommon in winter
Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*) T,N,P---mostly heard, glimpsed by some

Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) M,N
 Cactus Wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*) M,S
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*) N
 Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila melanura*) M,T,N,P---more numerous than usual
Black-capped Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila nigriceps*) N---one pair at Patagonia Lake seen very well after some searching; rare resident; great views; tied for third favorite bird of the tour!



Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Patagonia Lake, Arizona, January 18, 2018 © Barry Zimmer

Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*) M,T,N,S
Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) N---a nice find by Brennan at Santa Gertrudis Lane; uncommon
Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*) M,N,S---more numerous than usual; uncommon & irregular
 Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) M,N---four total

Rufous-backed Robin (*Turdus rufopalliatu*s) N---three seen at Santa Gerturdis Lane; rare visitor from Mexico



Rufous-backed Robin, De Anza Trail, Arizona, January 18, 2018 © Brennan Mulrooney

Curve-billed Thrasher (*Toxostoma curvirostre*) M,T,S,P---the western *palmeri* subspecies

Bendire's Thrasher (*Toxostoma bendirei*) T---two seen; localized

Le Conte's Thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*) P---good views of a very skulky pair near Buckeye; third time for this tour; only possible if a visit to Phoenix occurs the last day

Crissal Thrasher (*Toxostoma crissale*) S---scope views of pair near Willcox

Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) N,S---one south of Arizona City seen well, but even better views of another in the Sulphur Springs Valley; very uncommon

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottus*) M---only around Green Valley & Madera

European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) M,T,N,S,P

Phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*) M,N,

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) M,T,N,S,P

American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*) T,S---much scarcer than usual

House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) M,T,N,S,P

Cassin's Finch (*Haemorhous cassinii*) N---a male and female at the Paton's feeders in Patagonia was a first in many years for this species on the tour

Pine Siskin (*Spinus pinus*) M,N

Lesser Goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*) M,T,N

Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*) S---up to 80 or so at Cochise Lake coming in for a drink; good studies of birds in flight
 Orange-crowned Warbler (*Oreothlypis celata*) T,N,P---eight total
 Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*) N
 Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Setophaga coronata*) T,N,P---Audubon's subspecies
Townsend's Warbler (*Setophaga townsendi*) M---stunning male in Madera; rare in winter
Painted Redstart (*Myioborus pictus*) M---one spectacular bird in Madera near the Santa Rita Lodge feeders; not seen every year
 Rufous-crowned Sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps*) M---two at the Santa Rita Lodge feeders; can be hard to find
 Canyon Towhee (*Melazone fusca*) M,S---Continental & Texas Canyon
 Abert's Towhee (*Melazone aberti*) T,N,P---five total
 Rufous-winged Sparrow (*Peucaea carpalis*) M,N---great looks at this very localized species in Green Valley; noteworthy were two birds in Madera Canyon itself
 Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) M,N
 Brewer's Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*) S---a down year for this species, but we had about 35 near Willcox
 Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*) S
Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*) S---uncommon in winter; two seen
 Black-throated Sparrow (*Amphospiza bilineata*) M,T,S---the most handsome sparrow?
Sagebrush Sparrow (*Artemisiospiza nevadensis*) T---scope studies in the Santa Cruz Flats
 Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) S---a down year for this species as well, but we had some great looks; about 40-50 total
 Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) T,S
 Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) T,N,S---southwestern resident race *saltonis*, plus some northern migrants
 Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolnii*) M,T,N,S---twelve total
 White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) M,T,N,S,P---seemed less numerous than usual
 Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) M---Pink-sided, Oregon and Gray-headed varieties
Yellow-eyed Junco (*Junco phaeonotus*) M---uncommon; three seen this year; exceptional views
 Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) M,T,N---the brighter, longer-crested race (*superbus*) of Arizona
 Pyrrhuloxia (*Cardinalis sinuatus*) M,T,N,S---ten total; many superb views
 Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) T,N,S,P
 Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*)
 Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) T,S,P
 Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) T,P---an estimated 6000 at Redrock!
 Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) T,S,P
 Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) T,N,S,P
 Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) T,P

Total species – 160

MAMMALS

Arizona Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus arizonensis*)
Round-tailed Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus tereticaudus*)
Desert Cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*)
Coyote (*Canis latrans*)---spotted by Patricia near Buckeye
Collared Peccary (*Pecari tajacu*)---also known as Javelina; a good find on this trip
White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

Total species - 6

BUTTERFLIES

Sleepy Orange
Blue species thought to be a Spring Azure
Gulf Fritillary
Red Admiral
Texan Crescent
Funereal Duskywing

Total species – 6

THREE FAVORITE BIRDS

1. Barn Owl
2. Vermilion Flycatcher
3. Tie between Greater Roadrunner, Western Screech-Owl & Black-capped Gnatcatcher

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Tarantula Hawk
Hot apple pie with cinnamon sauce a la mode at Zula's
Interesting (not to mention delicious) dining at Café Poca Cosa
Incredible star gazing on our owling trip



Barn Owl, Kansas Settlement, Arizona, January 19, 2018 © Barry Zimmer