



SOUTHEAST ARIZONA: SUMMER OF HUMMERS

6–12 August 2012

The “sky islands” of Southeastern Arizona peer down upon the Sonoran Desert floor with an air of majesty and wonder. From the saguaro forests below to the pine forests above, the birding in and around these desert oases is nothing short of awesome.

Join us for our summer vacation in the desert southwest, as we experience some of the best birding on the continent. Our August itinerary places us in Southeast Arizona at the peak of monsoon season, when daily thundershowers fuel new growth in this parched environment, and breeding birds from Mexico’s Sierra Madre drift northward to feast among the “second spring” bloom. The highlight of the season is the abundance of hummingbirds — hundreds of individuals of up to 13 species — that dart between feeding stations and native blossoms throughout the region. But the hummers are only the beginning. After one experience in the Arizona summer, you will understand why we return again and again to the hot desert sun.

Your Host and Lead Guide, Stephen Shunk

TOUR SUMMARY

Our tour starts on Monday afternoon at the Tucson International Airport. We will first head up the Santa Cruz River Valley to the quaint artists’ colony of Tubac, where we will spend our first two nights. Afternoon and evening birding on the desert floor will introduce us to some of the common species we may see during the week, including Gila Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Curve-billed Thrasher, White-winged Dove, Gambel’s Quail, and the spritely little Verdin. We will eat an early dinner and enjoy some evening birding along the Santa Cruz River, which could host Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Tropical Kingbird, and Summer Tanager.

Our first full day, Tuesday, will take us up the famed Madera Canyon where we will enjoy our first taste of Arizona specialty birds. On our way into the canyon, we will bird in Florida Wash and surrounding mesquite grasslands, where we will study Cassin’s, Botteri’s, and Rufous-winged sparrows, with a chance for Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Varied Bunting, and Lucy’s Warbler. A moderately steep hike up the canyon may produce Arizona Woodpecker, Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse, and Painted Redstart, and possibly our first Elegant Trogon. After a picnic lunch, we will spend some time studying the Madera hummingbird stations, where we should see Broad-billed, Magnificent, and Black-chinned hummers, to name only a few. We will return to Tubac for another early dinner, followed by our final evening of birding along the Santa Cruz River.

We will start Wednesday morning at Kino Hot Springs, where we will search for Green Kingfisher, Green Heron, Cassin’s Kingbird, and Gilded Flicker. Some years this spot can produce a Lawrence’s Goldfinch or a rarity such as the Ruddy Ground-Dove. Just up the road we will enter the Patagonia region, visiting the famed Patagonia Roadside Rest Stop, where we are likely to find Thick-billed Kingbird and possibly the very rare Black-capped Gnatcatcher. Patagonia proper hosts a number of important birding spots, including The Nature Conservancy’s Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve and the productive feeding stations at the Paton house. An afternoon of hummer-watching at Paton’s should include Violet-crowned, Broad-tailed, and Magnificent among the many Broad-billed hummers, and we typically get excellent looks at Abert’s Towhee and Bronzed Cowbird at the seed feeders. An evening walk on Sonoita Creek could produce Gray Hawk, Common Ground-Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Bell’s Vireo, and Vermilion Flycatcher.

Thursday morning will take us into the Patagonia Mountains, where we will search for Montezuma Quail and Zone-tailed Hawk, then up onto the San Rafael grasslands to look for Grasshopper Sparrow, “Lillian’s” Eastern Meadowlark, and Horned Lark. We will visit Paton’s again before dinner, followed by some nocturnal birding in the mountains to listen for Elf Owl and Whiskered Screech-Owl.

Friday will be our first day exploring the Huachuca Mountains, starting with a trip into Carr Canyon. This spectacular drive features Red-faced, Virginia’s, Grace’s, and Olive Warblers, plus Buff-breasted, Cordilleran, and Dusky-capped flycatchers. At each birding stop we will scan for Zone-tailed Hawk. After lunch on the mountain, we will visit the hummingbird haven at Ash Canyon. At this productive feeding station, we will watch for White-eared, Berylline, and Lucifer hummers, while being surrounded by many Broad-tailed, Black-chinned, Anna’s, Rufous, and more. The seed feeders at Ash Canyon should allow us close looks at the local songbirds, including Bridled Titmouse, Lesser Goldfinch, and Black-headed Grosbeak, with hordes of White-winged Doves and the occasional swarm of Mexican Jays. We will spend our final two nights in Sierra Vista.

Saturday’s Huachuca Mountain hotspots will include Garden Canyon at Fort Huachuca and the Nature Conservancy’s (TNC) Ramsey Canyon Preserve. The morning drive into Garden Canyon will take us through open grasslands, with another great chance to study Botteri’s and Cassin’s sparrows. The oaks in the canyon bottom usually host a noisy flock of Acorn Woodpeckers, which are often accompanied by an equally noisy group of Mexican Jays. Elegant Trogon and Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher are resident here. Ramsey Canyon gives us another great chance for hummingbirds, with possible Blue-throated, Magnificent, and Violet-crowned coming to the feeders with many Broad-tailed and Anna’s hummers.

Our return to Tucson will take us back across the Santa Rita Mountains through Box Canyon and Empire Gulch. Highlights of the mountain drive might include Costa’s Hummingbird, Scott’s Oriole, Phainopepla, or Zone-tailed Hawk. We will return to the airport by noon, in time for 2 p.m. or later flights.

TOUR ITINERARY

We will typically choose our daily birding destinations based on our success at finding certain species and local bird sightings, but we will roughly follow the itinerary below.

Monday, August 6 – Tucson to Santa Cruz River Valley

Meet at Tucson airport by 4 p.m. Birding native habitats and productive developed areas between Tucson and Green Valley. Night in Green Valley.

Tuesday, August 7 – Madera Canyon & Tubac

Morning birding in Madera Canyon; afternoon in Box Canyon. Night in Sierra Vista.

Wednesday, August 8 – Patagonia

Morning at Carr Canyon; afternoon in Miller and Ash canyons. Night in Sierra Vista.

Thursday, August 9 – Patagonia

Birding in Garden and Ramsey canyons. Night in Patagonia.

Friday, August 10 – Huachuca Mountains

Birding in and around Patagonia. Night in Patagonia.

Saturday, August 11 – Huachuca Mountains

Birding at Kino Springs and Tubac. Lunch at Tubac and return to Tucson by noon.

Sunday, August 12 – Sierra Vista to Tucson

Birding at Kino Springs and Tubac. Lunch at Tubac and return to Tucson by noon.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

Extensive birding experience is not required for this southwestern adventure. Birders with more advanced skills will be able to identify more of the anticipated species, whereas less experienced birders will delight in higher numbers of “life birds.” This tour may even be fine for some beginners, but they should be prepared for the abundance of bird species in this productive region. Your guides are patient, professional educators, with many years of combined birding experience. As usual, not everyone will see every bird species, but we will work diligently to help each participant learn bird songs and visual identification, as well as general natural and cultural history of the region.

This tour is for moderately active people in good health. Our guides are certified first-aid providers, but we will often be several hours from any medical facilities. Every day will involve some walking, and we may hike up to two or three miles per day. Most individual walks will be short and at a “birdwatcher’s pace,” but some routes may lead up steep hills or over rough terrain. In these cases, one of the guides will be available to hang back with those who prefer a less vigorous approach. Throughout the tour, we will bird mostly on foot, with very little of our birding to be conducted from the vehicle. The group will travel in a large van or sport-utility vehicle, with comfortable seating for a maximum of seven birders.

CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT

Very hot temperatures and moderate humidity predominate during the Southeast Arizona monsoon season, but the spectacular thunderstorms can occasionally bring the temperature down below 80 degrees. We will typically experience delightfully balmy mornings and daily thunderstorms, separated by extended periods of hot sun with cooler (and sometimes cold!) weather at higher elevations. You should be prepared to be outside, away from the vehicle or other shelter, for a few hours at a time. Lightweight and light-colored clothing will help moderate the effects of the summer sun, but you should avoid white garments that may betray your presence to the birds. Your personal gear for each day should fit into a large daypack, but please do not compromise your ability to be comfortable in a wide variety of conditions. Sturdy footwear will help you negotiate any rough terrain we may encounter.

We recommend that you bring your own binoculars and favorite field guide. If you have contemplated purchasing new binoculars, we encourage you to do yourself this favor (feel free to call us for recommendations); you will be glad you have them for this trip. We always carry extra binoculars for individual use, should you wish to test some of the quality optics on the market. You may also bring a spotting scope, although we usually have two spotting scopes available for the group. We carry an extensive birding library for reference and learning.

ACCOMMODATIONS

We will spend each night in comfortable motels along our route. If you are traveling with a birding partner or are willing to room with another solo birder, we should be able to get you into a double room. However, this may not be possible in all cases. Those sharing rooms will pay the *double-occupancy* tour fee. If you request it, or if we are not able to match you with a roommate due to the gender mix of the participants, you will be responsible for the *single-occupancy* rate.

MEALS & REFRESHMENTS

Your tour fee also includes all meals, snacks, and beverages from dinner on Tuesday, August 9, through lunch on Sunday, August 14. We will eat most meals at restaurants that appeal to a wide variety of food preferences, but it may be difficult to accommodate the most restrictive diets. If you maintain such a diet, remember that appropriate foods may not be available at restaurants or in nearby stores. To prepare for these contingencies you may wish to bring some foods that will satisfy your restrictions.

On most days, we will begin birding very early in the morning to beat the mid-day heat. This may be followed by our largest meal of the day and possibly an afternoon siesta. Our evening meal may take the form of a light picnic or a deli stop, followed by a refreshing evening of birding and storm-watching.

One of our goals is to keep you pleasantly fueled and hydrated to help you get the most of the birding day. We will insist that you drink plenty of water throughout the day to prevent fatigue and dehydration in this arid climate. Your registration materials ask for your dietary restrictions and preferences. While we cannot honor every food and drink request, the more detailed your response, the better we can serve you on the road.

TOUR FEE & TRAVEL

Your trip fee includes transportation from the Tucson airport. We request that you arrive before 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 9. If you will travel to the region by automobile or will arrive on an earlier day, we will arrange your rendezvous individually. We also request that you schedule your departure from Tucson no earlier than 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 15. We will schedule our day to arrive at the airport by noon so that you have ample time to make your afternoon flights. If you have any challenges meeting these schedules, please contact us.

In addition to ground transportation, your tour fee includes all food and beverages, six nights lodging; permit and license fees; service-related gratuities; and the instruction and leadership of your guides. The fee does not include guides' gratuities, which are not expected but always appreciated based on your satisfaction with our service.

We require a *nonrefundable* \$95 deposit to hold your place on any tour. We will request the balance 60 days before the tour. If you register less than 60 days before the tour, your tour fee is due in full. We accept checks, money orders, or credit cards (VISA or Mastercard only).

2011 TOUR FEES:	<i>Single/Double</i>	\$2,205/\$1,940
DEPOSIT:		<u>\$95</u>
BALANCES AFTER DEPOSIT:	<i>Single/Double</i>	\$2,110/\$1,845

NOTE: Our tour fees are structured to allow the best possible client-to-guide ratio for an optimal birding experience, with a maximum of 7 participants on this tour.

REFUND POLICY: Your deposit is non-refundable. If you cancel your reservation more than 60 days prior to the tour, you will be refunded any payments above your deposit. If you cancel between 60 and 30 days prior to the tour, you will receive a 50% refund of fees paid over the deposit. If you cancel less than 30 days prior, you forfeit your entire tour fee, unless you can fill your space with another birder. If you cancel at any time, your deposit is transferrable to any Paradise Birding tour at any time in the future. We recommend that you purchase travel insurance.

For more information on any aspect of the tour, please contact us directly by telephone or e-mail. To pre-register for the tour, please complete the registration forms printable from our web site at <http://www.paradisebirding.com/2011regforms.pdf> and return them with your non-refundable \$95 deposit.

We look forward to seeing you in Arizona this summer!

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