



## ARIZONA WINTER SPECIALTIES

Dec 30, 2011 to Jan 4, 2012

Dave Stejskal

This was the first Arizona Winter Specialties tour that Field Guides has offered in several years, and I think we pulled off a good one! Weather was absolutely perfect with clear skies, no wind, lows in the 40's and highs in the 70's. Picture perfect! Weather like that is fairly predictable and that alone is the reason why we get so many visitors to our state during the winter months. The warmer weather is why we get so many birds wintering here as well, and we sure saw our fill on the course of this short trip.

Based primarily in Tucson this year, with a night in Phoenix at the start of the trip, gave us a lot of flexibility to visit the sites that had the greatest potential this season (it seems to change every year, so flexibility of schedule is a 'must' at this season). Staying in one place in Tucson allowed us to unpack and relax a bit while there, keeping re-packing and moving to a minimum.

You've really got to start this trip in Phoenix if you want to have a shot at the scarce and local Le Conte's Thrasher west of the city, and our plan worked to perfection this year. After our arrival at the 'thrasher spot' shortly after sunrise, we had Crissal, Le Conte's, and Bendire's thrashers in the scopes for all to see within about 45 minutes. A run through town on our way south later in the morning yielded looks at Cackling Goose, a beautiful male Eurasian Wigeon, Lewis's Woodpecker, and Rosy-faced Lovebird before we sat down to a picnic lunch in Encanto Park. Besides those goodies in the greater Phoenix area, a run up to the community of Anthem the afternoon before treated us to incomparable looks at a close Rufous-backed Robin at a stakeout in the local park. It was a great way to start this lovely little trip!

South of Phoenix proved to be very productive as well. A stop in the Santa Cruz Flats south of Casa Grande got us scope views of the local Mountain Plover wintering here on a sod farm. Farther south and east, the Sulphur Springs Valley produced 1000's of bugling Sandhill Cranes and a nice variety of wintering waterfowl, raptors, and sparrows. The beautiful grasslands near Patagonia brought views of several White-tailed Kites, loads of elegant Northern Harriers, and more wintering sparrows including the local Baird's (35+ on the barbed wire fences!). After a surprise Northern Pygmy-Owl near town, we relaxed a bit at the Paton's feeders in Patagonia, enjoying the parade of visitors to this lovely yard. Patagonia Lake found us hiking the birding trail east of the campground, with the undeniable highlight being a curious male Black-capped Gnatcatcher with a mixed flock of insectivores.

We worked the north end of the towering Santa Rita Mts. south of Tucson on our final morning. Despite a lot of effort and just trying to wait them out, we never did get a whiff of the pair of Rufous-capped Warblers found there last month. We added a few montane species in the oaks of the canyons after that, including that delightful and confiding Painted Redstart at the feeders. A dash to Pena Blanca Lake west of Nogales got us great views of the many Least Grebes that have recently invaded this small lake from the south, and we added to our already bulging list of wintering sparrows there. That beautiful male hybrid sapsucker added a splash of color to our visit too!

Thanks to all of you for joining me on this short, but very productive, tour to the warm valleys of s. Arizona over New Year's. If you'd been here before during the warmer months, I'm sure you were amazed at how different the birding can be here at this season. If you haven't been here yet in the spring or summer months, well, you'll just have to come back! I had a wonderful time birding with all of you and hope we can do it all again somewhere else soon. Happy New Year!



*Saving the best for last: this dazzling Painted Redstart on our final day in the Sant Rita Mountains was a highlight for many. (Photo by guide Dave Stejskal)*

## KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

## BIRDS

### Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

**SNOW GOOSE** (*Chen caerulescens*) – We found a couple of these w. of Phoenix and one at the sod farm s. of Casa Grande before we found a more sizeable flock at Whitewater. That smaller bird w. of Phoenix on our first morning was very likely a Snow X Ross's goose hybrid.

**CAACKLING GOOSE** (*Branta hutchinsii*) – One of these among the larger Canada Geese w. of Phoenix looked to be either a "Richardson's" Cackling Goose or a "Taverner's" Cackling Goose based on relative size and color.

**CANADA GOOSE** (*Branta canadensis*) – Decidedly scarce south of Phoenix on this tour.

**GADWALL** (*Anas strepera*)

**EURASIAN WIGEON** (*Anas penelope*) – It took us two tries to get this one, but what a beautiful duck! This Old World species (which probably breeds somewhere in N. America) has been a rare, but annual, visitor to the Phoenix area for a couple of decades now.

**AMERICAN WIGEON** (*Anas americana*) – Nice comparisons with the above species in Phoenix.

**MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

**MALLARD (MEXICAN)** (*Anas platyrhynchos diazi*) – We ended up seeing quite a few of these hen-plumaged birds that may actually be more closely allied to the Mottled Duck (another 'hen-plumaged' Mallard-type) of the Southeast U.S. When I was growing up as a young birder in AZ, these were split from Mallard and were called Mexican Duck.

**CINNAMON TEAL** (*Anas cyanoptera*) – We found a pretty good sized flock of these at Whitewater Draw. The looks at the lone male at Patagonia Lake were much closer.

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Anas clypeata*)

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*) – Only in the Sulphur Springs Valley this year.

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN)** (*Anas crecca carolinensis*)

**CANVASBACK** (*Aythya valisineria*) – This one seems to need deeper water to feed in than the others in this genus.

**REDHEAD** (*Aythya americana*) – Similar to the Canvasback, but the head shape is different, the eye is yellow instead of red, and the sides and back aren't as pale.

**RING-NECKED DUCK** (*Aythya collaris*) – Usually one of the most common of the 'diving ducks' in winter in Arizona.

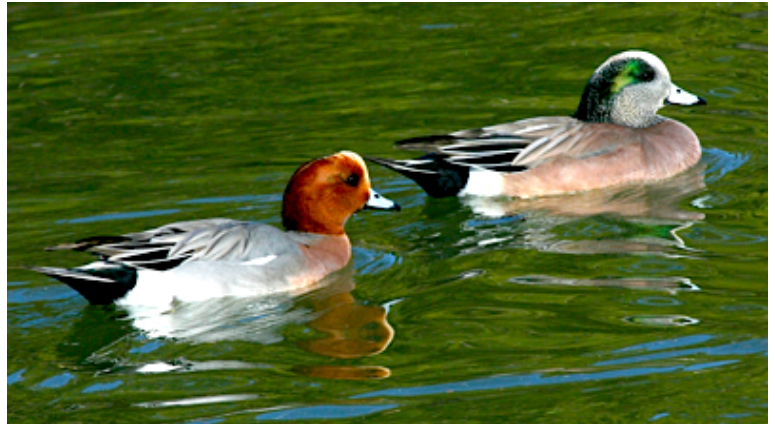
**LESSER SCAUP** (*Aythya affinis*) – Just a few males at Patagonia Lake this year.

**BUFFLEHEAD** (*Bucephala albeola*) – The little golf course pond in Benson was littered with this striking and compact diving duck.

**COMMON MERGANSER** (*Mergus merganser*) – Willcox and Patagonia Lake both held a number of these fish-eating ducks. Called the Goosander in the Old World.

**RUDDY DUCK** (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

### Odontophoridae (New World Quail)



*We had a case of 'double wigeon' at Phoenix where a superb male Eurasian Wigeon joined a group of Americans, giving us a wonderful opportunity to compare them side by side! (Photo by guide Dave Stejskal)*

**GAMBEL'S QUAIL** (*Callipepla gambelii*) – This wasn't a very good year for quail, for some unknown reason. We were lucky to see this one along the fence line at the Benson sewage ponds!

*Podicipedidae (Grebes)*

**LEAST GREBE** (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – Prior to last year, this tiny grebe was a mere 'accidental' in Arizona. Now, they've seemingly taken over at Pena Blanca Lake west of Nogales where they nested last summer.

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – That big group at the Rio Rico ponds near Nogales on the last afternoon was an unusually large concentration for that locale.

**EARED GREBE** (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – Just a couple of these near Willcox and at Patagonia Lake.

**WESTERN GREBE** (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) – Two of these smartly patterned grebes were still hanging out at Patagonia Lake. This species is much more likely than the very similar Clark's Grebe at this season in this part of the state.

*Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)*

**NEOTROPIC CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – We never really got a feel for just how common this species has become in the Phoenix area in the last decade or so. This is another bird that used to be rather scarce in the state, but something happened about 15 years ago and the numbers in Phoenix (where it never occurred historically) just exploded.

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Half a dozen or so birds at Patagonia Lake.



*No trip to Arizona is complete without a Cactus Wren; it is the state bird after all! (Photo by guide Dave Stejskal)*

*Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)*

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*)

**GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*) – This species has become much more common in the winter months in s.e. Arizona in the past couple of decades.

*Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)*

**WHITE-FACED IBIS** (*Plegadis chihi*) – Flocks of the size that we saw s.w. of Phoenix on our first morning were unheard of during the winter months until about fifteen years ago.

*Cathartidae (New World Vultures)*

**TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*)

*Pandionidae (Osprey)*

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – There must have been a ready supply of fish in those little ponds s.w. of Phoenix where we saw this one sitting on a pole.

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**WHITE-TAILED KITE** (*Elanus leucurus*) – One of the highlights of our visit to the San Rafael Grasslands was seeing at least five of these elegant raptors perched or in flight. This is one of the most reliable areas for this species in the state currently. Before about 1980, this was merely accidental in Arizona.

**NORTHERN HARRIER** (*Circus cyaneus*) – Lots of these graceful raptors were seen hunting in the grasslands and fields throughout the tour.

**COOPER'S HAWK** (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Just a couple of sightings of this normally common hawk.

**RED-TAILED HAWK** (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – We saw almost every plumage imaginable along the roadsides throughout this short tour.

**FERRUGINOUS HAWK** (*Buteo regalis*) – This beautiful Buteo was strangely scarce or even absent from places where it normally occurs in moderate numbers.

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**CRESTED CARACARA** (*Caracara cheriway*) – A single bird obligingly flew up from the ground and into a tree for a

good look south of Casa Grande. This area has seen an impressive influx of this species in recent years.

**AMERICAN KESTREL** (*Falco sparverius*)

**MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*) – At least six of these were counted on the tour and all appeared to be of the pale 'prairie' race. I would have considered us lucky to have gotten half that number on this tour.

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – A beautiful perched adult was probably striking fear in the hearts of those wintering Mountain Plovers at the sod farm!

**PRAIRIE FALCON** (*Falco mexicanus*) – This falcon was a little skittish along the roadside in the Sulphur Springs Valley, but we all did get a decent look in the scope and saw it well in flight when it showed off those diagnostic dark 'wingpits'.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

**VIRGINIA RAIL** (*Rallus limicola*) – We couldn't have asked for a better look than the one we got at Whitewater Draw!

**SORA** (*Porzana carolina*) [\*]

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*)

Gruidae (Cranes)

**SANDHILL CRANE** (*Grus canadensis*) – The few that we saw in s.w. Phoenix were completely eclipsed by the 1000's that we enjoyed in the Sulphur Springs Valley. What a sight at Whitewater Draw!

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

**KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*)

**MOUNTAIN PLOVER** (*Charadrius montanus*) – The wintering flock here has been reliable for many years, fortunately for us!

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Several out in the flooded alfalfa field with the dozens of White-faced Ibis in s.w. Phoenix that first morning.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – A few of these gave us good looks at Whitewater Draw.

**LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*)

**LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – Several feeding along the roadside at Rio Rico on that last afternoon gave us good comparisons with the similarly-built Wilson's Snipe.

**WILSON'S SNIPE** (*Gallinago delicata*) – A recent split from the Old World Common Snipe.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**RING-BILLED GULL** (*Larus delawarensis*) – A single immature bird with the ducks at Willcox.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) [I]

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) [I]

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*)

**INCA DOVE** (*Columbina inca*) – That single bird that we saw at Pena Blanca Lake on the last afternoon had lost his companion Ruddy Ground-Doves.

Psittacidae (Parrots)

**ROSY-FACED LOVEBIRD** (*Agapornis roseicollis*) – These introduced African parrots are common and expanding in parts of the greater Phoenix area and will likely be added to the 'official' list of N. American birds sanctioned by the ABA (American Birding Association). Nice looks at Encanto Park! [I]

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**GREATER ROADRUNNER** (*Geococcyx californianus*) – We had a couple of really fine views of this charismatic species on the tour. Try to show someone this bird, and you never seem to find it - the 'zen' approach is much better!



*No, this photo is not out of place! Rosy-faced Lovebirds are now established in the Phoenix area, and are likely soon to be added to ABA's official list of North American birds. (Photo by guide Dave Stejskal)*

Strigidae (Owls)

**NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL (MOUNTAIN)** (*Glaucidium gnoma gnoma*) – I really wasn't expecting this little guy at all during our travels on this trip, so it was a very welcome surprise to hear one answer me near Patagonia!

**BURROWING OWL** (*Athene cunicularia*) – This is a species that has declined precipitously in Arizona and elsewhere in N. America, so we were lucky to see those two individuals at all!

**SHORT-EARED OWL** (*Asio flammeus*) – There had been recent reports of this species wintering this year in the San Rafael Grasslands, but I really didn't expect it to be out and about at 9:00 a.m.!

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

**ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD** (*Calypte anna*) – Great looks of this and the next species (both males) at the Paton's feeders in Patagonia.

**BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD** (*Cynanthus latirostris*)

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

**LEWIS'S WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes lewis*) – This very distinctive woodpecker is a scarce winter visitor to the Arizona lowlands from the mountains of the West.

**ACORN WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) – A relative of the Lewis's, both species spend a lot of time cacheing acorns in their favorite dead trees.

**GILA WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes uropygialis*) – This is the 'default' woodpecker in both Phoenix and Tucson.

**RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER** (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*) – A nice adult male at lunch for all in Patagonia, then we all enjoyed a beautiful hybrid male sapsucker at Pena Blanca Lake on the last afternoon (likely a Red-breasted X Red-naped sapsucker).

**LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER** (*Picoides scalaris*) – Sounds just like a Downy Woodpecker, and similarly sized.

**ARIZONA WOODPECKER** (*Picoides arizonae*) – His soft tapping gave him away and provided us with super views on our last day. Formerly lumped with the Strickland's Woodpecker (now a c. Mexico endemic).

**NORTHERN FLICKER (RED-SHAFTED)** (*Colaptes auratus cafer*) – We never did see this one well until late in the tour. All of our flickers were the western "Red-shafted" Flicker.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

**HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax hammondi*) – It was nice to hear this one calling just after we had seen and heard our first Dusky Flycatcher just up the road. These two are notoriously difficult to tell apart visually and, unfortunately, we weren't able to study them in much detail on this tour this year.

**GRAY FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax wrightii*) – For those who ended up seeing this flycatcher, its habit of pumping the tail downward while perched, instead of flipping it up like the other similar species of *Empidonax*, was see well. Calls are very similar to the Dusky Flycatcher that we heard before lunch.

**DUSKY FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax oberholseri*) – Of the three 'Empids' that we saw that day, I was most surprised to find this one where we did - it's the scarcest of the three during the winter months.

**BLACK PHOEBE** (*Sayornis nigricans*) – Our Western replacement of the familiar Eastern Phoebe.

**SAY'S PHOEBE** (*Sayornis saya*) – Quite common in much of the open country that we visited.

**VERMILION FLYCATCHER** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) – That beautiful male that we saw while we looked for the Ruddy Ground-Doves was one of the more memorable birds of the trip. Gorgeous!

**ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) – Briefly overhead at Patagonia Lake on the final afternoon.



*Red-breasted Sapsucker would have been a good find on the trip, as they are rare in Arizona; we had to settle for finding half of one! This handsome male appears to be a hybrid with Red-naped Sapsucker.  
(Photo by guide Dave Stejskal)*

Laniidae (Shrikes)

**LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE** (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – This species has declined terribly in the East, but it seems to be doing just fine in the West.

Vireonidae (Vireos)

**PLUMBEOUS VIREO** (*Vireo plumbeus*) – A good bonus find while we were watching the Black-capped Gnatcatcher at Patagonia Lake. This was once part of the old Solitary Vireo, which has since been split into three species. This one is the only member of those three related birds that breeds in Arizona.

**HUTTON'S VIREO** (*Vireo huttoni*) – Very similar to the common Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

**MEXICAN JAY** (*Aphelocoma wollweberi*) – Formerly known as the Gray-breasted Jay. These birds were unusually quiet this trip.

**CHIHUAHUAN RAVEN** (*Corvus cryptoleucus*) – Not the best of looks out in the Sulphur Springs Valley.

**COMMON RAVEN** (*Corvus corax*)

Alaudidae (Larks)

**HORNED LARK** (*Eremophila alpestris*) – We had some good looks at this attractive species in the Phoenix area and at Willcox.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

**TREE SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – A single adult lingered at the Benson sewage ponds. A real rarity at this season in the southeast corner of the state.

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

**BRIDLED TITMOUSE** (*Baeolophus wollweberi*) – One of the most charming of all the birds in southeast Arizona.

Remizidae (Penduline-Tits)

**VERDIN** (*Auriparus flaviceps*) – Surprisingly poor looks on this trip.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

**WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta carolinensis*) – Typically the only nuthatch species in the middle elevation riparian and oaks in the region.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

**CACTUS WREN** (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*) – We really got an eyeful of this one as it sat on a post right next to the van after we left Whitewater Draw. Arizona's state bird.

**ROCK WREN** (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) – The birds that we saw s. of Casa Grande on Day 2 and the one that joined us for lunch at Whitewater Draw were wintering there from farther north.

**CANYON WREN** (*Catherpes mexicanus*) – Briefly for some folks at Pena Blanca Lake on our final afternoon.

**BEWICK'S WREN** (*Thryomanes bewickii*) – This common wren was inadvertently omitted from our trip checklist.

**HOUSE WREN** (*Troglodytes aedon*)

**MARSH WREN** (*Cistothorus palustris*) – We all enjoyed some fabulous looks of birds foraging in the open at Pena Blanca Lake.

Poliophtidae (Gnatcatchers)

**BLACK-TAILED GNATCATCHER** (*Poliophtila melanura*) – Good views of a male while we searched for Le Conte's Thrasher on our first morning w. of Phoenix.

**BLACK-CAPPED GNATCATCHER** (*Poliophtila nigriceps*) – We found the right flock at Patagonia Lake and ended up with super views of this scarce invader from W. Mexico. Patagonia Lake has been one of the most reliable sites for this one for the last decade.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus calendula*)



*On most tours here, we're happy enough to find a single cooperative Baird's Sparrow, so the 30+ that sat out on nearby barbed wire fences was simply amazing! (Photo by guide Dave Stejskal)*

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

**WESTERN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia mexicana*) – Right next to our parked van as we got ready to hike up Florida Canyon s. of Tucson. This is an invasion species that isn't found in the lowlands of s.e. Arizona every year.

**MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia currucoides*) – Like the above species, this one isn't found every winter in s.e. Arizona. After being teased a little by a flock in Benson, we ended up with stellar views of a couple of adult males at Patagonia Lake.

**HERMIT THRUSH** (*Catharus guttatus*) – Along the path at Pena Blanca Lake on our final afternoon.

**RUFOUS-BACKED ROBIN** (*Turdus rufopalliatu*s) – I'm glad we took advantage of such an easy 'stakeout' north of Phoenix that first afternoon! It was a pretty weird setting, with all of the people and the miniature train and all, but our looks were fantastic! A 'rare-but-regular' winter vagrant from W. Mexico

**AMERICAN ROBIN** (*Turdus migratorius*) – Bob and Joanne saw our only birds back in the parking lot at Florida Canyon.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*)

**BENDIRE'S THRASHER** (*Toxostoma bendirei*) – This was a nice bonus in the area while we searched the very sparse desert scrub for Le Conte's Thrasher.

**CURVE-BILLED THRASHER** (*Toxostoma curvirostre*) – There are a lot of thrashers in Arizona, but none is more tolerant of a wide variety habitats than this one - okay, maybe N. Mockingbird if you really want to count that one as a thrasher!

**CRISSAL THRASHER** (*Toxostoma crissale*) – We normally have to really work at digging this one out at other seasons of the year. But now? All you have to do is park your vehicle in the right habitat, get out, and there it is singing its head off from the top of a mesquite!

**LE CONTE'S THRASHER** (*Toxostoma lecontei*) – This was really the whole reason why we drove way out west of Phoenix that first morning, just to see this scarce, skulking, and local species in its rather bleak surroundings. It's one of the best spots anywhere for this sought-after thrasher.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [I]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

**AMERICAN PIPIT** (*Anthus rubescens*) – Loads of these in the agriculture of the Phoenix and Friendly Corners areas. It used to be called Water Pipit, but was split from the Old World forms.

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)

**CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR** (*Calcarius ornatus*) – Wow, these were nearly a no-show on this tour out in the San Rafael Grasslands, where we typically see dozens in the winter months.

**MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR** (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) – Another near-miss on this tour, and hardly countable given the looks that we had at Friendly Corners.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

**ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER** (*Oreothlypis celata*) – We never got into any good riparian at low elevations in the Phoenix or Tucson areas, where it can be really common in the winter. Just a couple of sightings here and there (best at Florida Canyon).

**COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*)

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S)** (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) – Watch for these birds (the old Audubon's Warbler) to be re-split from the eastern/northern birds (the old Myrtle Warbler).

**BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER** (*Setophaga nigrescens*) [\*]

**PAINTED REDSTART** (*Myioborus pictus*) – One of the highlights of the tour for some folks was seeing this stunning and



*There's nothing like a vagrant from Mexico to spice up an Arizona tour. We scored early when we nabbed this super Rufous-backed Robin at a stakeout near Phoenix. (Photo by guide Dave Stejskal)*

confiding species at the feeders on our last day.

*Emberizidae (Buntings, Sparrows and Allies)*

**GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE** (*Pipilo chlorurus*) – Nicely responsive in the desert near Green Valley.

**SPOTTED TOWHEE** (*Pipilo maculatus*) – Maybe best near Patagonia.

**RUFOUS-CROWNED SPARROW** (*Aimophila ruficeps*) – A brief look for some on the pygmy-owl road near Patagonia.

**CANYON TOWHEE** (*Melospiza fusca*) – No great looks at this one anywhere, except maybe on our final day. Split many years ago from the similar, but disjunct, California Towhee (it all used to be called Brown Towhee).

**ABERT'S TOWHEE** (*Melospiza aberti*) – This was one of the nice birds that we saw while we were searching for the elusive Ruddy Ground-Doves near Friendly Corners. A regular at the Paton's yard, too.

**RUFOUS-WINGED SPARROW** (*Peucaea carpalis*) – A pair of these s.c. Arizona specialty sparrows came out nicely for a look in the desert near Green Valley on the last day.

**CHIPPING SPARROW** (*Spizella passerina*)

**BREWER'S SPARROW** (*Spizella breweri*) – The Sulphur Springs Valley held good numbers of these rather drab sparrows.

**VESPER SPARROW** (*Poocetes gramineus*) – Nice studies of this one on the fences in the grasslands near Patagonia.

**LARK SPARROW** (*Chondestes grammacus*) – The best was perhaps in the Paton's yard. A real stunner of a sparrow if you see it well.

**BLACK-THROATED SPARROW** (*Amphispiza bilineata*) – Another stunner, we saw this one pretty well in the desert near Whitewater Draw.

**SAGE SPARROW** (*Amphispiza belli*) – After our work was done with the thrashers w. of Phoenix, we were able to track down a few of these handsome wintering sparrow in the Atriplex scrub.

**LARK BUNTING** (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) – This was a very good winter for this species in s. Arizona and we saw a few big flocks that easily numbered in the 100's along some of the roadsides.

**SAVANNAH SPARROW** (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – Very common in all of the agriculture and grasslands throughout the tour.

**BAIRD'S SPARROW** (*Ammodramus bairdii*) – WOWW!!! This wintering species was seen as easily as I've ever seen it in the past, but the numbers were astounding! We couldn't have asked for better views.

**SONG SPARROW** (*Melospiza melodia*)

**LINCOLN'S SPARROW** (*Melospiza lincolni*) – The best looks were at the lake on the last afternoon.

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (MOUNTAIN)** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys oriantha*) – Some of us had a nice pink-billed, dark-lored adult bird on the ground near our van at Whitewater Draw. This is the race that breeds in the Rocky Mountains and is generally a very scarce winterer in the state.

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S)** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – The common pale-lored wintering race in the state that breeds in the far north.

**DARK-EYED JUNCO** (*Junco hyemalis*) – Just glimpsed for some.

*Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)*

**HEPATIC TANAGER** (*Piranga flava*) – This was a very welcome surprise find at Patagonia Lake while we were enjoying the Black-capped Gnatcatcher.

**NORTHERN CARDINAL** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – Longer-tailed and longer-crested here than the birds most are familiar with in the East.

**PYRRHULOXIA** (*Cardinalis sinuatus*) – Nicely at the feeders and at the lake on the final afternoon.

**LAZULI BUNTING** (*Passerina amoena*) – A beautiful male was attempting to make it through the winter at the Paton's feeders in Patagonia.

*Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)*

**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Strange how scarce this one was on this tour.

**EASTERN MEADOWLARK (LILIAN'S)** (*Sturnella magna lilianae*) – We had excellent views in the grasslands at this distinctive race that some taxonomists feel should be split from Eastern (it would be called Lilian's Meadowlark).

**WESTERN MEADOWLARK** (*Sturnella neglecta*) – Good studies from the van up in the Phoenix area.

**YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) – That little cattle pen w. of Phoenix near Palo Verde held our only Yellow-heads this year.

**BREWER'S BLACKBIRD** (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) – This is the western counterpart of the Rusty Blackbird (which we unfortunately missed up at Anthem on our first afternoon).

**GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – Just about everywhere in the cities. It's hard to believe that this one was unknown in Arizona prior to the late 30's.

*Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)*

**HOUSE FINCH** (*Carpodacus mexicanus*)

**LESSER GOLDFINCH** (*Spinus psaltria*) – Covering the feeders at the Paton's in Patagonia.

*Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)*

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) **[I]**

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## **MAMMALS**

**DESERT COTTONTAIL** (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) – The only cottontail in the sparse lowland deserts of s. Arizona.

**ARIZONA GRAY SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus arizonensis*) – These were scrambling in the trees overhead at the Paton's.

**BOTTAE'S POCKET GOPHER** (*Thomomys bottae*) – A nice surprise when we saw it emerge partially from a burrow under the feeders at the Paton's. Very widespread in s. Arizona.

**COLLARED PECCARY** (*Tayassu tajacu*) – It was really wonderful seeing a family group of these just off the road as we were leaving Patagonia Lake. That little one was as small as I've ever seen one in Arizona!

**WHITE-TAILED DEER** (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – A few of these small deer crossed the road in front of our van as we headed for the lake on the last afternoon. This form is called the Coues's White-tailed Deer.

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## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

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**Totals for the tour: 150 bird taxa and 5 mammal taxa**