

Birding the Sky Islands of South-east Arizona – in the footsteps of Cochise & Geronimo.

29th April – 8th May 2008.

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Introduction

After visiting the lodge at Los Tucanos in Brazil earlier in 2008 and seeing large numbers of hummingbirds at the feeders, the thought of seeing a further 10+ species at feeders at close range in Arizona was very compelling. We decided upon late April/early May (rather than the other option of July) as it would be cooler and there was more chance of some late winter visitors. The potential down side was that there was less chance of any Mexican vagrants – in the event we did pick up a major vagrant for North America.

Flights

We booked a direct flight with British Airways from London Heathrow to Phoenix Sky Harbour. It was possible to fly via several other US hubs into Tucson but we decided upon the direct option with BA.

Car hire

Through Wildwings we booked a 4 x 4 Ford Escape with Alamo at a cost of £269.00. However, as is often the case with US car hire additional charges apply, and we ended up paying an extra £75.60 including taxes to cover both additional drivers.

Accommodation

- 29.04 Holiday Inn Express, Green Valley (booked in advance).
- 30.04 Holiday Inn Express, Green Valley (booked in advance).
- 01.05 Holiday Inn Express, Nogales (booked in advance).
- 02.05 Motel 6, Sierra Vista.
- 03.05 Motel 6, Sierra Vista.
- 04.05 Portal Peak Lodge (booked in advance).
- 05.05 Portal Peak Lodge (booked in advance).
- 06.05 Best Western Hotel, Tucson.
- 07.05 Motel 6, Flagstaff.

Portal Peak Lodge gets very busy during the main birding period so you are advised to book well in advance www.portalpeaklodge.com. Another option, just up the road is Cave Creek Ranch www.cavecreekranch.com.

Site guides/field guides/maps

For pre-planning & throughout the trip we used the ABA/Lane Birdfinding guide, A Birder's Guide to Southeastern Arizona by Richard Taylor (5th edition, 2005), ISBN1-878788-22-1. We used the Rand McNally Arizona state map ISBN 0-528-99720-3 along with the site maps in the Taylor guide all of which proved more than adequate.

The Tucson Audubon Society, Southeast Arizona Rare Bird Alert website www.tucsonaudubon.org/birding/seazrba.htm was also a good source of information for pre-planning and whilst on the ground. Thanks also go to Judy Davis who joined us for dinner in Sierra Vista on the 3rd and provided some great local information.

Daily log

Tuesday 29th April. We arrived at Phoenix Sky Harbour Airport at 17.10. After joining the long queues and eventually clearing customs we collected our pre-booked Ford Escape from Alamo and hit the road to Tucson just as it was getting dark. Reached Green Valley just south of Tucson in about two hours and went straight to bed.
Highlights: **Phoenix**, Neotropic Cormorant (3).

Wednesday 30th April. Birded the scrub around the Holiday Inn at first light then headed to the Santa Rita Lodge feeders in Madera Canyon after a short stop in Continental. During the rest of the morning we visited the feeders at Kubo Cabins and walked the Old Baldy/Vault Mine trails. After lunch back at Continental we drove the Box Canyon road in the afternoon then re-visited the Santa Rita feeders until dark before watching Lesser Nighthawks around the lights at Continental.

Highlights: **Green Valley**, Verdin, Cactus Wren (4), Curve-billed Thrasher (4), Brewer's Sparrow (3) & Pyrrhuloxia. **Continental**, Lesser Nighthawk (3), Gila Woodpecker, Say's Phoebe (2), Cassin's Kingbird & Phainopepla. **Santa Rita Lodge**, Wild Turkey (14), Elf Owl, Vaux's Swift (4), Magnificent Hummingbird (2), Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Acorn Woodpecker (25), Mexican Jay (15), Bridled Titmouse, Violet-green Swallow (10), Painted Redstart (2), Brown-crested Flycatcher, Scott's Oriole (2), Dark-eyed Junco, Western Tanager (2), Black-headed Grosbeak (15) & Lazuli Bunting (5). **Kubo Cabins**, Elegant Trogon, Arizona Woodpecker, Plumbeous Vireo (2), Hutton's Vireo (3), Bridled Titmouse (2), Hooded Oriole (2), Lincoln's Sparrow (2), Flame-coloured Tanager & Hepatic Tanager (3). **Old Baldy/Vault Mine Trails**, Elegant Trogon, Arizona Woodpecker, Dusky-capped Flycatcher (4), Hutton's Vireo (3), American Bushtit, House Wren (2), Painted Redstart (4) & Western Tanager. **Box Canyon Road**, White-throated Swift (3), Cassin's Kingbird (2), Townsend's Warbler (3), Black-throated Sparrow (3) & Canyon Towhee.

Thursday 1st May. After an early morning visit to Old Baldy/Vault Mine trail we visited Florida Wash before it got too hot. We then drove towards the Mexican border with stops at Amado Cattle Ranch off the I19 and Cala Basas Park in Santa Cruz on the way to the Paton's Yard in Patagonia. Late in the afternoon on the way to California Gulch we stopped briefly at Kino Springs and Nogales.

Highlights: **Old Baldy/Vault Mine Trails**, Mountain Pygmy Owl. **Florida Wash**, Ash-throated Flycatcher (2), Warbling Vireo, Bewick's Wren, Lucy's Warbler (2) & Townsend's Warbler. **Continental**, Harris's Hawk (2). **Amado Cattle Ranch**, Common Ground Dove (2), Vermillion Flycatcher (5), Cassin's Kingbird (2), Yellow Warbler & Bronzed Cowbird. **Cala Basas Park**, Grey Hawk & Greater Roadrunner. **Patagonia Rest Area**, Black Vulture (3) & Western Tanager. **Paton's Yard**, Cattle Egret (2), Inca Dove (4), Broad-billed Hummingbird (20), Violet-crowned Hummingbird (2), Black-chinned Hummingbird (10), Anna's Hummingbird (3), Acorn Woodpecker (4), Gila Woodpecker (3), American Goldfinch (2), Song Sparrow (2), Green-tailed Towhee, Abert's Towhee (2) & Western Tanager (2). **Kino Springs**, Green Heron, Great Egret, Peregrine, Osprey & Abert's Towhee. **Nogales**, Mexican Duck (2) & Merlin. **Nogales to California Gulch**, Grey Hawk (2) & Zone-tailed Hawk. **Oro Blanco Mine**, Great Horned Owl & Buff-collared Nightjar.

Friday 2nd May. We headed out to California Gulch again for the morning then visited Patagonia Lake State Park, Patagonia Rest Stop, the Paton's & Sonoita Grasslands before arriving in the late afternoon in Sierra Vista.

Highlights: **Nogales**, Cliff Swallow (75). **Pena Blanca Lake to California Gulch**, Greater Roadrunner (4), Costa's Hummingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher (4), Rock Wren (2), Western Bluebird, Lucy's Warbler (2) & Rufous-winged Sparrow (12). **California Gulch**, Grey Hawk, Warbling Vireo (4), Phainopepla (20), Verdin, Bewick's Wren (6), Hooded Oriole (2) & Black-throated Sparrow (10). **Patagonia Lake State Park**, Black-necked Grebe, Neotropic Cormorant (10), Osprey (2), Vaux's Swift, Belted Kingfisher, Vermillion Flycatcher (12), Lucy's Warbler, Common Yellowthroat (2) & Lincoln's Sparrow (2). **Patagonia Rest Area**, Ladder-backed Woodpecker & Thick-billed Kingbird (2). **Paton's Yard**, Violet-crowned Hummingbird (3), Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Gila Woodpecker (6) & Lazuli Bunting (8).

Saturday 3rd May. The whole of the day was spent in the Huachuca Mountains. The morning in Miller Canyon with an extended stay in the restricted area at the Beatty's Ranch watching the hummingbird feeders and the afternoon in Carr Canyon and lounging in the chairs at the Ballator B&B in Ash Canyon again watching the feeders.

Highlights: **Sierra Vista**, White-faced Ibis (25) & Curve-billed Thrasher (4). **Miller Canyon**, Cooper's Hawk, Spotted Owl, White-throated Swift (4), Broad-billed Hummingbird (6), Blue-throated Hummingbird (3), Magnificent Hummingbird (2), Black-chinned Hummingbird (10), Anna's Hummingbird (10), Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Calliope Hummingbird (2), Dusky-capped Flycatcher (2), Bridled Titmouse, Hermit Warbler, Red-faced Warbler (4), Painted Redstart (2) & Hepatic Tanager. **Carr Canyon**, Band-tailed Pigeon (4), Greater Pewee, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Western Scrub-Jay, Hermit Thrush (2), Black-throated Grey Warbler (2), Grace's Warbler (2) & Spotted Towhee (2). **Ash Canyon**, Blue-throated Hummingbird, Magnificent Hummingbird, Lucifer Hummingbird (2), Anna's Hummingbird (10), American Bushtit (2), Cassin's Finch (4), Scott's Oriole (6), Bullock's Oriole (10), Lark Sparrow (20) & Lazuli Bunting (24).

Sunday 4th May. We drove the bottom of the Ramsey Canyon road at first light then headed to Tombstone for a cultural visit to the Boot Hill Cemetery & the OK Corral before heading to San Pedro House. After a short visit to the Ash Canyon feeders we spent several hours driving to White Water Draw Wildlife Refuge before arriving at Portal Peak Lodge at dusk.

Highlights: **Ramsey Canyon Road**, Scaled Quail (8), White-faced Ibis (17), Cooper's Hawk, Greater Roadrunner (2), Say's Phoebe (2), Verdin & Cactus Wren (4). **San Pedro House**, American Kestrel (2), Gila Woodpecker (4), Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Black-throated Grey Warbler, Common Yellowthroat (6), Wilson's Warbler (10), Yellow-breasted Chat, Scott's Oriole (5), Bullock's Oriole (6), Lincoln's Sparrow, Green-tailed Towhee (2), Canyon Towhee (2) & Abert's Towhee. **Tombstone**, Cactus Wren & Black-throated Sparrow (4). **Ash Canyon B&B**, Broad-billed Hummingbird (4), Magnificent Hummingbird, Lucifer Hummingbird (2), Black-chinned Hummingbird (5) & Anna's Hummingbird (2). **White Water Draw WR**, Scaled Quail (3), Mexican Duck (4), Cinnamon Teal (3), Green-winged Teal (5), Great Egret, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Great Horned Owl, Western Wood Pewee, Grey Flycatcher & Lark Bunting (20). **Douglas to Portal**, Loggerhead Shrike (2). **Stateline Road, Rodeo**, Greater Roadrunner (2), Brewer's Sparrow & Vesper Sparrow. **Portal**, Elf Owl.

Monday 5th May. At first light we birded the Portal area then headed up into the Chiricahua Mountains where we visited Barfoot Park & Rustler Park. An afternoon visit to George Walker House was very enjoyable until we heard about the Northern Tufted Flycatcher at Herb Martyr and the rest of the afternoon was spent missing this Mexican

vagrant. A lousy attempt to find some owls between Portal & Paradise after dark resulted in just a Common Poorwill.

Highlights: **Portal**, Band-tailed Pigeon (8), Blue-throated Hummingbird (2), Magnificent Hummingbird, Acorn woodpecker (3), Hutton's Vireo, Townsend's Solitaire, Cassin's Finch (2), Hooded Oriole, Lincoln's Sparrow, Green-tailed Towhee (2), Summer Tanager, Western Tanager (2), Black-headed Grosbeak (6), Blue Grosbeak & Lazuli Bunting (4). **Portal to Barfoot Junction**, Zone-tailed Hawk. **Barfoot Park**, Red-naped Sapsucker, Greater Pewee, Steller's Jay (10), Pygmy Nuthatch (2), Western Bluebird, Olive Warbler (2), Townsend's Warbler & Grace's Warbler (3). **Rustler Park**, Wild Turkey (4), Peregrine, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Hairy Woodpecker, Steller's Jay (2), Violet-green Swallow (10), Townsend's Warbler, Dark-eyed Junco & Yellow-eyed Junco (3).

George Walker House, Magnificent Hummingbird, Acorn Woodpecker (3), Arizona Woodpecker, Juniper Titmouse, Pine Siskin (75+), Cassin's Finch (6), Scott's Oriole (3) & Western Tanager. **Herb Martyr**, Western Wood Pewee, Hermit Thrush, Painted Redstart (3) & Western Tanager.

Tuesday 6th May. After a pre-breakfast visit to Cave Creek Ranch we finally caught up with the Northern Tufted Flycatcher at Herb Martyr. We then visited the feeders at Crissal Drive in Portal before heading to Barfoot Junction en route to Willcox. The afternoon was spent at Cochise Lake, Willcox before driving to Tucson.

Highlights: **Cave Creek Ranch**, Blue-throated Hummingbird (2), Magnificent Hummingbird, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Acorn Woodpecker (12), Arizona Woodpecker, Juniper Titmouse, Cassin's Finch (2), Golden-crowned Sparrow, Green-tailed Towhee (2) & Rose-breasted Grosbeak. **Portal**, White-throated Swift (2). **Herb Martyr**, Band-tailed Pigeon (10), Northern Tufted Flycatcher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Wood Pewee, Steller's Jay (2), Violet-green Swallow (4), Virginia's Warbler, Black-throated Grey Warbler & Painted Redstart (4). **South Fork**, Plumbeous Vireo (3), Bridled Titmouse (2), Painted Redstart & Rose-breasted Grosbeak. **Crissal Drive, Portal**, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Western Scrub Jay, Cassin's Finch (4), White-crowned Sparrow (13), Canyon Towhee (2) & Lazuli Bunting (9). **Cave Creek Road**, Black Phoebe (3) & Cassin's Kingbird. **Barfoot Junction**, Western Wood Pewee, Mexican Chickadee (2), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (15), Pygmy Nuthatch (2), Brown Creeper, Olive Warbler & Grace's Warbler (2). **Cochise Lake**, Cinnamon Teal (12), Redhead, Black-necked Grebe (3), American Avocet (5), Long-billed Dowitcher, Spotted Sandpiper (10), Western Sandpiper (7), Least Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope (160), Franklin's Gull (2), Say's Phoebe, Loggerhead Shrike & Horned Lark (3).

Wednesday 7th May. At first light we searched the Saguaro forest near the Tucson Desert Museum then headed up into the Santa Catalina Mountains for most of the day visiting Molino Basin, Bear Canyon & Incinerator Ridge Road. On the long drive up to Flagstaff we broke the journey at Picacho Reservoir.

Highlights: **Tucson Desert Museum**, Gilded Flicker, Ash-throated Flycatcher (4), Verdin (3), Cactus Wren (6), Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (3) & Orange-crowned Warbler.

Molino Basin, Roadrunner, Coopers Hawk, Warbling Vireo & Phainopepla (3). **Mount Lemmon (Bear Canyon/Incinerator Ridge Road)**, Zone-tailed Hawk, White-throated Swift (5), Broad-billed Hummingbird (2), Magnificent Hummingbird (3), Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Hairy Woodpecker, Greater Pewee, Hutton's Vireo, Steller's Jay (3), Mountain Chickadee, Violet-green Swallow (5), American Bushtit (2), Western Bluebird, Red-faced Warbler (2), Painted Redstart (2), Yellow-eyed Junco (8) & Spotted Towhee.

Picacho Reservoir, Gambel's Quail (30+), Gadwall (2), Cinnamon Teal, Redhead, Pied-billed Grebe (3), White-faced Ibis (70), Black-crowned Night Heron (12), Great Blue Heron, Great White Heron (5), Snowy Egret (2), Common Moorhen (2), Black-necked Stilt (5), Long-billed Dowitcher (45), Spotted Sandpiper (2), Least Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Common Ground Dove, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Rough-winged Swallow (60), Horned Lark (4) & Red-winged Blackbird (100).

Thursday 8th May. After a later start than normal, we drove from Flagstaff to the south rim of the Grand Canyon up until lunchtime before heading back to Phoenix for our 19.25 overnight flight back to Heathrow.

Highlights: **Flagstaff**, American Crow (7) & Violet-green Swallow (6). **Flagstaff to Route 64**, Mountain Chickadee, Pygmy Nuthatch & Western Bluebird (3). **Mather Point, Grand Canyon**, California Condor, White-throated Swift (6), Western Scrub Jay (3), Violet-green Swallow (10) & Black-throated Grey Warbler (4).

MCP, October 2008

Arizona, 2008 – Itinerary

Tuesday 29th April

Departed Heathrow from Terminal 4 at 14.35 on BA 289 to Phoenix. Arrived at 17.10 & collected our pre-booked Ford Escape from Alamo. Drive to Tucson & stayed overnight at the Holiday Inn Express, Green Valley just south of Tucson (booked in advance).

Wednesday 30th April

Birding all day in Madera Canyon including an afternoon visit to Box Canyon. Overnight at the Holiday Inn Express, Green Valley (booked in advance).

Thursday 1st May

Birding in Madera Canyon area up until lunch then drove south to the Patagonia area. Evening visit to California Gulch. Overnight at Holiday Inn Express, Nogales (booked in advance).

Friday 2nd May

Morning spent birding in California Gulch then back to Patagonia area before driving to Sierra Vista. Overnight in Motel 6, Sierra Vista.

Saturday 3rd May

Birding all day in the Huachuca Mountains including Miller Canyon, Carr Canyon & Ash Canyon. Overnight in Motel 6, Sierra Vista.

Sunday 4th May

Early morning at Ramsey Canyon before a short cultural visit to Tombstone. Visits to San Pedro House & White Water Draw before driving to the Chiricahua Mountains. Overnight at Portal Peak Lodge (booked in advance)

Monday 5th May

Birding in the Chiricahua Mountains/Portal Lodge area including Barfoot Park, Rustler Park & George Walker House then late afternoon at Herb Martyr. Overnight at Portal Peak Lodge (booked in advance)

Tuesday 6th May

Pre-breakfast visit to Cave Creek Ranch before another visit to Herb Martyr. Drive over the Chiricahua Mountains at Barfoot Junction to Willcox. Overnight at Best Western in Tucson.

Wednesday 7th May

Early morning at Tucson Desert Museum then onto the Santa Catalina Mountains mainly around Mount Lemmon. Drove north to Flagstaff via Picacho Reservoir. Overnight at Motel 6 in Flagstaff.

Thursday 8th May

Morning at Mather Point on south rim of Grand Canyon then drove south to Phoenix. Departed Phoenix on BA 288 at 19.25, arriving back at Heathrow at 13.10 on Friday 9th May.