



BIRDING TEXAS & BEYOND

ITINERARY, 2027

Southeast Arizona An Immersive Birding Adventure January 14-20, 2027



Sandhill Cranes © Greg Lasley

Part of what makes Arizona an exceptional birding destination is the diverse landscapes found throughout the state. Southeastern Arizona is a crossroads, where the Sierra Madre of Mexico, the Rocky Mountains and the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts collide. Each habitat supports distinct bird communities, with overlapping zones often providing the greatest diversity. Arizona is home to several year-round specialty birds. These include Olive Warbler, Bridled Titmouse, Crissal and Bendire's Thrashers, Mexican Jay, Painted Redstart, Gilded Flicker, Arizona and Gila Woodpeckers, Rufous-winged Sparrow, and Yellow-eyed Junco. Winter in Arizona particularly presents a wealth of birding opportunities, attracting a diverse

array of species to the region. Southeastern Arizona in the winter becomes a hotspot for migrating birds, including waterfowl, raptors, and sparrows. Notable sightings include Sandhill Crane, Ferruginous Hawk, Mountain Plover, and Lark Bunting. Birders may also observe mixed flocks of all three Bluebird species, Townsend's Solitaire, and Phainopepla. During winter, it is also easier to spot Mexican vagrants like Rufous-backed Robin and Ruddy Ground-Dove. Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Rufous-capped Warbler, and Rose-throated Becard have now become low-density, year-round residents and in most winters, a few Elegant Trogons may be found in the lower elevations of canyons. Recent winters have also brought rarer species, such as Northern Jacana, Nutting's Flycatcher, and Streak-backed Oriole to the region.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy beautiful scenery and visit Arizona's top birding hotspots including Ramsey, Madera, and Ash Canyons, Sweetwater Wetlands, Santa Cruz Flats, Sonoita Creek, Patagonia Lake State Park, and more!
- Marvel at the spectacle of tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes at Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area.
- Experience prime time for finding greater concentrations and variety of wintering waterfowl, raptors and sparrows – in addition to Arizona's year-round specialties.
- Enjoy observing vibrant hummingbirds at Paton Center for Hummingbirds – where we hope to see Costa's, Broad-billed, Anna's, and Violet-crowned Hummingbirds.
- Welcome the opportunity to encounter vagrant species from Mexico.



Sandhill Cranes © Greg Lasley

TOUR LEADER: Troy Hibbitts



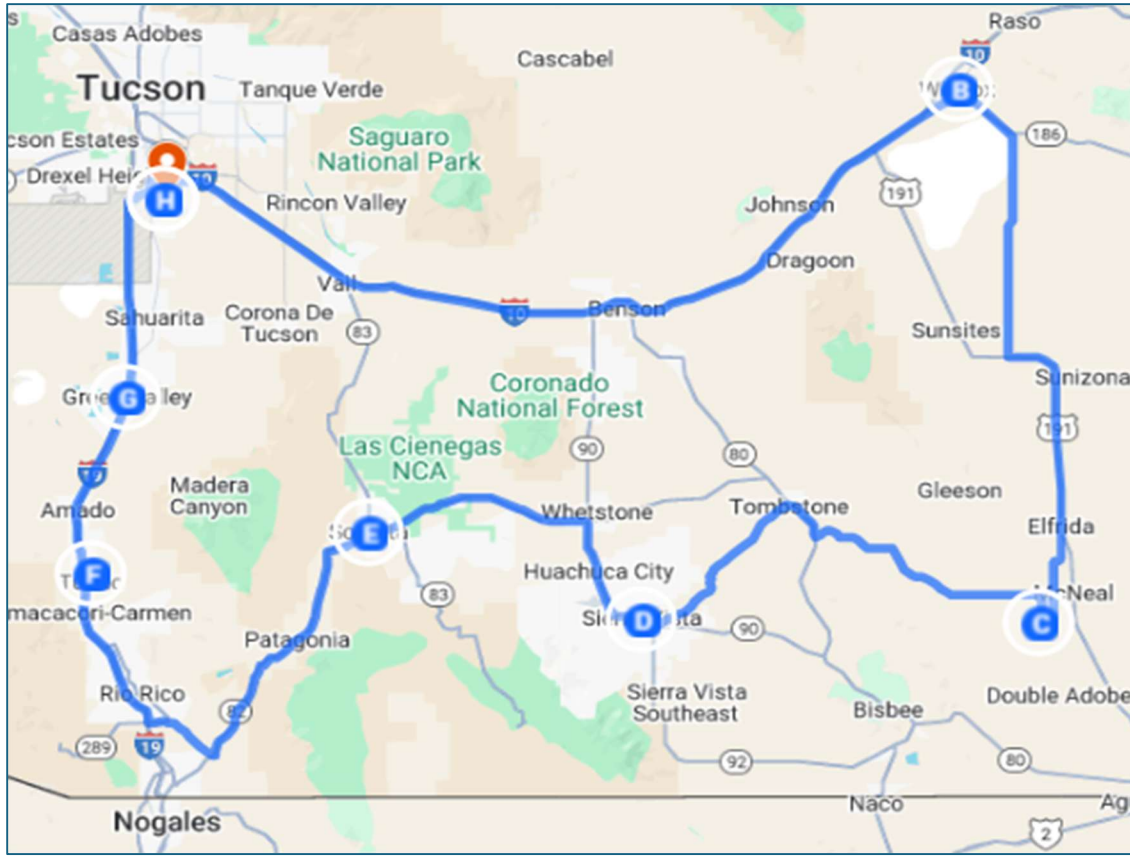
Troy grew up birding on family vacations across the mountain west. After earning his master's degree in evolutionary biology from the University of Texas at Arlington, Troy began a career as a High School Science teacher while filling his weekends and vacation time with birding and general wildlife observation and photography. In addition to birding, he is a leading expert on Reptiles and Amphibians in the southwest, having co-authored three field guides for the state of Texas. He also has somewhat of an eclectic expertise in areas such as dragonflies & damselflies, butterflies, scorpions, and mammals. Troy serves as an eBird reviewer for 5 counties in southwest Texas. He has birded in all of Texas's 254 counties and has many years of birding experience specifically in south and west Texas, as well as in southeastern Arizona.

TOUR SIZE: This tour is limited to 8 participants

DIFFICULTY LEVEL & PACE OF THE TOUR: Moderate (2-3 miles of daily walking). Field time each day is typically between 7-10 hours (weather permitting) and some moderate drive from location to location (up to 1.5 hrs. between stops). Most of the birding is done on trails, boardwalks, and along the road as we drive to various birding destinations. Walking on uneven, soggy terrain, or in the rain is highly possible. Days start with breakfast at the hotel and departure for the field between 6:30 to 7:00 am. We bird throughout the morning, take a break for lunch and resume birding until around 5:00 pm followed by dinner at a local restaurant.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION: The tour price is \$3,185 per person in double occupancy. The single supplement for this tour is \$630. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single room accommodations, or if you prefer to share a room but have no roommate and we cannot arrange one for you. The package includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 7, ground transportation during the tour, entrance fees to parks/preserves, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, and guided services provided by the tour leader(s). It does not include travel expenses including but not limited to airfare to and from the tour destination, travel insurance, extended stays (before and/or after the tour), alcoholic beverages, gratuities, and items/expenses of personal nature.

TOUR ROUTE



-  A - **Start**: Tucson International Airport (TUS)
Tucson Area: Sam Lena Park, Sweetwater Wetlands, Saguaro National Park, Santa Cruz Flats (Overnight: Nights 1 & 2 – Home2 Suites by Hilton, Tucson Airport)
- B – Willcox: Lake Cochise and Twin Lakes Golf Course
- C – Elfrida/Whitewater Draw
- D – Sierra Vista Area : Sierra Vista EOP, Huachuca Mountains (various canyons), San Pedro River (Overnight: Nights 3 & 4 – Casa de San Pedro, Hereford)
- E – Patagonia and Sonoita Area: Paton Center for Hummingbirds, Sonoita Creek, Patagonia Lake State Park, Atascosa Highlands
- F – Tubac (Overnight: Nights 5 & 6 – Tubac Golf Resort & Spa)
- G– Green Valley Area: Santa Rita Mountains (various canyons), Canoa Ranch Conservation Park, Amado WTP
-  H- **End**: Tucson International Airport (TUS)

ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrive at Tucson International Airport (TUS) before 2 pm. Participants will transfer to the hotel where a room will be reserved in their name. The hotel offers complimentary shuttle service from the airport. We will meet at the hotel lobby by 5 p.m. for a tour orientation and welcome dinner. Overnight stay: Home2 Suites Tucson Airport, Tucson.

Day 2: Tucson area – Sweetwater Wetlands and Santa Cruz Flats. We'll spend today birding the low country around Tucson looking for Gilded Flicker, Greater Roadrunner and Costa's Hummingbird and at the Sweetwater Wetlands Park for waterfowl and impressive numbers of Yellow-headed Blackbirds. The Sweetwater Wetlands are a series of constructed wetlands with



Sagebrush Sparrow © Greg Lasley

ponds, cattail marshes, and mudflats surrounded by desert. Species found here include Mexican Duck, Common Gallinule, Vermilion Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Verdin, and Abert's Towhee. We'll also travel northwest on I-10 toward Phoenix birding along the way to the Santa Cruz Flats to look for some specialty birds that are hard to find elsewhere like Crested Caracara, Prairie Falcon, Sagebrush Sparrow, Mountain Plover, and potentially up to five species of Thrasher – Curve-billed, Crissal, Bendire's, LeConte's, and Sage. In recent years,



Crissal Thrasher © Troy Hibbitts

Streak-backed Orioles have been sighted here, as well as Ruddy Ground Dove. The Tucson Audubon Society has counted more than 300 species of birds in this location. The Santa Cruz Flats is a well-known and heavily birded area in south-central Arizona. Hundreds of birders check out this expansive agricultural location primarily during the winter months. Other species of interest found here include Burrowing Owl and Greater Roadrunner, to name a few.

Overnight: Home2 Suites Tucson Airport, Tucson.



Ferruginous Hawk © Greg Lasley

Day 3: Sulfur Springs Valley and Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area. Today we travel east toward Sulfur Springs Valley. The valley stretches from north of Willcox south to the Mexican border. The Sulphur Springs Valley Loop provides a 35-mile driving tour. The focal point of the loop is the Willcox Playa – when the playa has sufficient water, it provides habitat for thousands of migratory birds. The agricultural fields, ponds, and desert scrub also offer excellent birding opportunities, especially in the winter months. The entire Valley is a major wintering ground for raptors including Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk and Golden Eagle. Specialty birds in this location include Bendire’s Thrasher, Pyrrhuloxia, Scaled Quail, Curve-billed Thrasher, and Greater Roadrunner. Within this expansive valley is a wildlife area called Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area, where tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes gather in this large wetland complex. Snow and Ross’s Geese and other variety of waterfowl can

gather in large numbers here as well as Wilson’s Snipe, Horned Lark, Black Phoebe, and Vermilion Flycatcher. The surrounding Chihuahuan Desert scrub can be good for Lark Buntings and Sagebrush Sparrows. Overnight: Casa de San Pedro B&B, Hereford.

Day 4: Huachuca Mountains and San Pedro River.

The Huachuca Mountains are the third highest of the Sky Island mountain ranges in southeastern Arizona. Today we visit the Nature Conservancy Preserve at Ramsey Canyon, one of the first well-known birding sites in Southeast Arizona. Ramsey Creek descends through oak woodlands, its banks lined with sycamores, maples, cacti, yucca, and agaves. Here we may



Painted Redstart © Greg Lasley

find Wild Turkey, wintering warblers such as Townsend’s and Painted Redstart, Red-naped Sapsucker, and Hutton’s Vireo. We continue to the Ash Canyon Bird Sanctuary to look for hummingbirds such as Anna’s and Broad-billed, as well as other specialties of the pine-oak woodlands, which include the Arizona Woodpecker and Woodhouse’s Scrub Jay. Montezuma Quail frequent the area and may come into seed or water while we visit, offering

spectacular views. We then drive a short distance to San Pedro House, a visitor center with walking trails. Located along East Highway 90, San Pedro House was identified as being significant for world bird conservation by the American Bird Conservancy. The riparian forest, one of the rarest forest types in the world, provides essential habitat for a variety of wildlife, including over 350 species of birds. Here we search for birds along the cottonwood riparian areas, adjacent mesquite woodlands, and grasslands including Northern Harrier, Loggerhead Shrike, Crissal Thrasher, Lark Bunting, Lark Sparrow, and Abert's Towhee. Overnight: Casa de San Pedro, Hereford.

Day 5: Patagonia and Sonoita.

We'll start the day early in the grasslands north of Sonoita searching for the elusive Baird's Sparrow in with the flocks of Savannah, Vesper and Grasshopper Sparrows. Several other open country birds can be found here like Chestnut-collared Longspur, White-tailed Kite, Say's Phoebe, Loggerhead Shrike and Chihuahuan Meadowlark.



Costa's Hummingbird © Greg Lasley

We'll then head over to Patagonia Lake State Park, one of Arizona's top birding hotspots. The hackberry and mesquite groves can be full of wintering passerines like flycatchers, vireos, and even an Elegant Trogon in recent winters. There is often a good selection of ducks on the lake, and Green Kingfishers can be found along the swampy edges on rare occasion. Notable species found in this location include Golden Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Gilded Flicker, Cooper's Hawk, and Bald Eagle. This state park promises unforgettable wildlife encounters, breathtaking scenery, and an incredible opportunity to observe a variety of birds. We continue to explore Sonoita Creek and along the Santa Cruz River. Owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy, Sonoita Creek Preserve provides habitat for over 200 species of birds. We'll spend the rest of the day birding the Paton Center for Hummingbirds. The center's many feeders and water features are always full of birds including Anna's, Costa's and possibly Violet-crowned Hummingbirds, Lazuli Bunting, Green-tailed Towhee and Gambel's Quail. Often a Western Screech-Owl is roosting nearby, and recent winters have hosted Ruddy Ground-Dove and Rufous-backed Robin. Overnight: Casa de San Pedro B&B, Hereford.



Elegant Trogon © Troy Hibbitts

Day 6: Green Valley, Santa Rita Mountains, and Tubac. Today we will spend the day exploring the beautiful Santa Rita Mountains. We first travel south toward Green Valley to Canoa Ranch Conservation Park. The ponds at the park are magnets for wintering waterfowl, here we can also expect to see Costa's Hummingbird, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and Gambel's Quail. The centerpiece to the Santa Rita Mountains is Madera

Canyon, at a higher elevation than Tucson, the canyon forms a deep, wooded ravine that attracts birds to the sky islands. Here we will get our first taste of the birds that make birding Southeastern Arizona famous like Mexican Jay, Acorn Woodpecker, Arizona Woodpecker, Bridled Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Painted Redstart, Rock and Canyon Wrens. The feeders at the Santa Rita Lodge will give us an excellent serving of the diversity of juncos with three different forms of Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon, Gray-headed and Pink-sided) comingling with the Yellow-eyed Junco. In recent winters at least one Elegant Trogon has been seen roaming up and down the canyon. We continue birding in Tubac, Anza Trail along the banks of the Santa Cruz River through a lush cottonwood-willow riparian forest and mesquite bosque. The river is a corridor for migrant birds, here we may find Rufous-backed Robin, Rose-throated Becard, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Curve-billed Thrasher, and Lawrence's Goldfinch, to name a few. We also explore the nearby Montosa Canyon, the less birded region of the Santa Rita Mountains - common sightings in this location include Canyon Wren, Abert's Towhee, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Vesper Sparrow, Hutton's Vireo, and Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet. Overnight: Tubac Golf Resort & Spa, Tubac.



Gambel's Quail © Greg Lasley

Day 7: Tour Conclusion & Departures. Our Arizona birding tour concludes today. If time allows, we will stop at a few locations along the way back to the airport. Airport drop-off by no later than 12 pm. Participants may arrange departing flights from Tucson International Airport (TUS) after 2pm.

Target Species

While we cannot guarantee sightings of the birds listed below, we believe that encountering these species is likely during this tour.

Elegant Trogon	Green Kingfisher
Mexican Duck	Red-naped Sapsucker
Montezuma Quail	Arizona Woodpecker
Cinnamon Teal	Gilded Flicker
Ruddy Ground-Dove	Crested Caracara
Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay	Prairie Falcon
Townsend's Warbler	Rose-throated Becard
Costa's Hummingbird	Mexican Jay
Baird's Sparrow	Bridled Titmouse
Sandhill Crane	Black-capped Gnatcatcher
Mountain Plover	Bendire's Thrasher
Ferruginous Hawk	Crissal Thrasher
Greater Roadrunner	Rufous-backed Robin
Western Screech-Owl	Phainopepla
Olive Warbler	Sagebrush Sparrow
Painted Redstart	Yellow-eyed Junco
Gambel's Quail	Chihuahuan Meadowlark
White-tailed Kite	And many more!

REGISTRATION & PAYMENTS: To register for this tour you will need to complete an online reservation form. The non-refundable deposit for this tour is \$300 per person. All payments, including initial deposits and final balances, may be made by credit card through PayPal, check, money order, or bank/wire transfer. Deposits are due 14 days from the date you submit your reservation form. The remaining balance is due as soon as the tour confirms or 60 days prior to the tour start date, whichever comes first. We will invoice you accordingly.

Please read our Terms and Conditions for more information before booking any of our tours or services. Our Terms and Conditions include important information about how we operate our tours, including cancellation policy, travel insurance, health and fitness requirements, and more.