

## Sycamore Canyon Trip

April 24, 2014

Leader: Dan Bohlmann

It turned out to be a perfect day before the wind and rain would arrive for the weekend. On the drive from Phoenix we picked up a few hitchhikers along the road such as Ravens, Turkey Vultures, Mourning Doves and a Western Scrub Jay. When we arrived at Camp Verde the fast food restaurant provided us with a Great-tailed Grackle, Rock Doves, Eurasian Collared Dove, English Sparrows and a Kingbird that kept changing from a Cassin's to a Western depending on who was looking at it and the angle of the sun that was hitting it. The group surrounded it and finally decided that it was Casstern, actually Western, maybe? We then drove to Clarkdale and turned off to travel along the Verde River where we picked up some Red-winged Blackbirds and Mallards. The road turns to dirt at this point and gets progressively rougher as you travel the 10 miles to the trailhead and overlook of Sycamore Canyon. The last three miles of scrub brush along the road surprised us when it became a swarm of sparrows leaping out of the brush as we drove by. We stopped and found that every bush was filled with flocks of Lark and Chipping Sparrows along with both types(Cassin's and Western) of Kingbirds. It was that way for several miles. Our 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cars stopped for a longer look on the way out and found Brewers and Vesper Sparrows, American Kestrel, Northern Mockingbird, Say's Phoebe, Gambel's Quail, Loggerhead Shrike, Sharp-shinned Hawk and Zone-tailed Hawk.



We finally reached the overlook of the canyon and were greeted by a Phainopepla fluttering over our car. We dropped down the 200 feet into the canyon and found ourselves in the shade of sycamores, cottonwoods and ash trees along the banks of Sycamore Creek. The whole time that we were down in the canyon there was an almost constant chorus of bird song from many warblers, Summer Tanagers, House Finches and many others. Babs Buck kept a list of the number of birds of each species seen which I will use following some of the birds listed(in parens). The number of times we heard each bird would be off the charts. The Warblers were well represented: Black & White(1), Black-throated Gray(1), Yellow-rumped(3), Wilson's(3), Lucy's(8), and Yellow(11). The Summer Tanagers(7) were singing and chortling almost constantly as we walked the trail deeper into the canyon. Several times we heard the

Canyon Wrens and Rock Wrens calling up on the canyon walls. The entire group got good looks at a Hooded Oriole who posed for us for a long time and others got to see a Bullock's Oriole.

We had a number of Flycatchers show up along the trail in an area of mesquite trees. We had Ash-throated(4), Brown-crested(2) and Dusky(1). There were several places where we saw swallows flying overhead, Violet-green(6) and Northern Rough-winged. A few of the group got to see Townsend's Solitaire(2). A few birds were heard but not seen as far as I know. They were Gila Woodpecker, Bell's Vireo and a "bur-ring" flyby of a Broad-tailed Hummingbird. Other birds seen in the canyon by some of the group were White-crowned Sparrows(7), Black-headed Grosbeak and Black Phoebe. A few other species were seen traveling to and from the canyon were Black-throated Sparrow, Red-tailed Hawk, Western Bluebird, European Starling, and Black-chinned Hummingbird. As a final goodbye a number of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers(4) showed up as we were climbing out of the canyon on the switchbacks, curious as to what all the huffing and puffing was about as we struggled our way out. We ended up with a total of 54 species for the day.

Attendees: Vera Markham, Joe Ford, Susan Fishburn, Babs Buck, Julie Clark, George Wall, Fran Baughman, Tom Ferranti, Peg White, Pam & Mason Rivers and Dan Bohlmann