

Sonoran Audubon Society Field Trip
Estrella Mountain Regional Park on December 13th, 2014
By Joe Ford

At 8:15 AM we started our 2 hour birding hike of 1.5 miles through the park area beginning at the visitor center, walking to the east boundary, then returning along the northern boundary to the visitor center. Our usual route was abandoned due to the several hunters that were along the Gila River and east into the mitigated lakes, which made safety a concern. Therefore waterfowl and shorebirds are at a minimum in this report. Skies were cloudy with banks of stratocumulus and cumulus moving through the area that had received up to ½ inch of rainfall during the early morning hours. Temperature was at 60 degrees at the start of the hike and only 66 degrees at conclusion with an increasing west wind and cooler temperatures moving in.

The five participants were: Wendell and Janet Thrush from western New York, Marcyes Schmaus from Sheridan, Wyoming, and guides Paul Doucette and Joe Ford from the Sonoran Audubon Society

Highlights: Some 95 House Finches were counted, the greater numbers in two large flocks; some 200 White-faced Ibis were observed in flight over the Gila flood plain; and of course the male Vermilion Flycatcher was a treat. A Say's Phoebe was observed in hovering mode about 4 ft. off the ground for over 2 minutes, most likely seeking food.



Our group observed the following 30 species: Gambel's Quail, Neotropic Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, White-faced Ibis, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Gila Woodpecker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Say's Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Verdin, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Northern Mockingbird, Curve-billed Thrasher, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Lark Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Great-tailed Grackle, and House Finch.

For more details and counts visit eBird <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S20908825>