

SONORAN AUDUBON SOCIETY TRIP REPORT
Seven Springs on April 11, 2015
By Bob McCormick

A beautiful sunny day was the stage for very enjoyable trip to the Seven Springs area north of Carefree, Arizona. Our first stop across from the Bronco trailhead produced many typical desert birds and a singing Scott's Oriole. We then moved across the road to the bathroom where numerous singing Brewer's and White-crowned Sparrows were perched on wires. A Hermit Thrush sat on a fence for photographs. Our first mystery bird, a large sparrow type with a thick, vanilla-colored wing bar, turned out to be a female Lark Bunting.

Our next stop was where the road crosses Seven Springs wash to look for a Black-chinned Sparrow which was unfortunately a no-show. We did get to see a male Rock Wren bring food to the female who had a nest in the rocks.

Several singing Lucy's Warblers and Bell's Vireos were encountered on a walk from the Cave Creek Trailhead to the Cave Creek Group Campsite. A Violet-green Swallow gathered straw in an occupied campsite at the CCC Campground. The campers were thrilled when we showed them where she was taking the straw into a cavity in a large Sycamore. The male swallow, meanwhile, sat on a nearby branch doing nothing. Our second mystery bird was encountered here during lunch. When the Yellow Warblers took a break from singing, we heard a different bird. After much searching, it was found to be a Juniper Titmouse with food in its beak.



The wildflowers were amazing! Every color and type imaginable: penstemons, Indian Paint Brush, Blue Dick, Deep Orange California Poppies, and hundreds of blooming Hedgehog Cactus.

Next stop was the old CCC Campground that is now closed. Here we saw a Western Wood-Pewee, a Plumbeous Vireo, and a soaring Zone-tailed Hawk. Searching the heavy canopy, we found an occupied Cooper's Hawk nest. We then took a short trip down the Cave Creek trail where we watched a Gila Woodpecker make yet another hole in one of the sycamores, and hawks were heard calling from the creek. When we investigated, two Common Black-Hawks emerged from a very shady part of the stream. One flew off while the other perched for photographs. Within a few minutes they were both flying low overhead doing acrobatics while screaming at each other. Around this time an F-16 Fighting Falcon flew low overhead at an



incredible speed. (Editor's note: military jets are authorized to fly as low as 300' above ground level within military training routes throughout southern and central Arizona, and many actions are taken to avoid disturbing listed and sensitive species).

To top the day off, as we were heading out a bright orange Gila Monster slowly crossed the road in front of us right at the entrance to the Sears' Kay ruin.

Birders were Dan Bohlmann, Dave and Ruth Kennedy, and me as the guide.

Miles traveled in 6 hours of birding, maybe three.

44 species, approximately in the order they were observed, and not entered at ebird:

- 1 Scotts Oriole*
- 1 Canyon Towhee
- 8 Gambel's Quail
- 24 White-crowned Sparrow*
- 12 Bewick's Wren
- 3 Northern Mockingbird*
- 6 Cactus Wren *
- 1 Curve-billed Thrasher*
- 32 Brewer's Sparrow#
- 6 Phainopepla
- 3 Anna's Hummingbird*
- 4 Verdin*
- 1 Hermit Thrush
- 1 Lark Bunting
- 2 Rock Wren#+
- 6 Ash-throated Flycatcher
- 5 Common Raven
- 5 Northern Cardinal*
- 2 Common Black-Hawk
- 14 Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)
- 1 Red-tailed Hawk
- 9 Bell's Vireo*
- 8 Lucy's Warbler*
- 1 Black-throated Sparrow*

1 Ladder-backed Woodpecker
2 Turkey Vulture
1 Black-tailed Gnatcatcher
14 Yellow Warbler*
2 Mourning Dove
6 Violet-green Swallow#
2 Orange-crowned Warbler
2 House Finch*
1 Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)
1 Juniper Titmouse*+
1 Black-chinned Hummingbird
2 Black Phoebe
2 Abert's Towhee
26 Lesser Goldfinch
1 Zone-tailed Hawk
1 Costa's Hummingbird
1 Western Wood-Pewee
1 Plumbeous Vireo*
2 Cooper's Hawk#
1 Gila Woodpecker#
3 Dark-eyed Junco

*Singing, #on nest or building, +carrying food