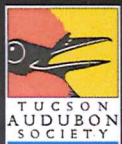
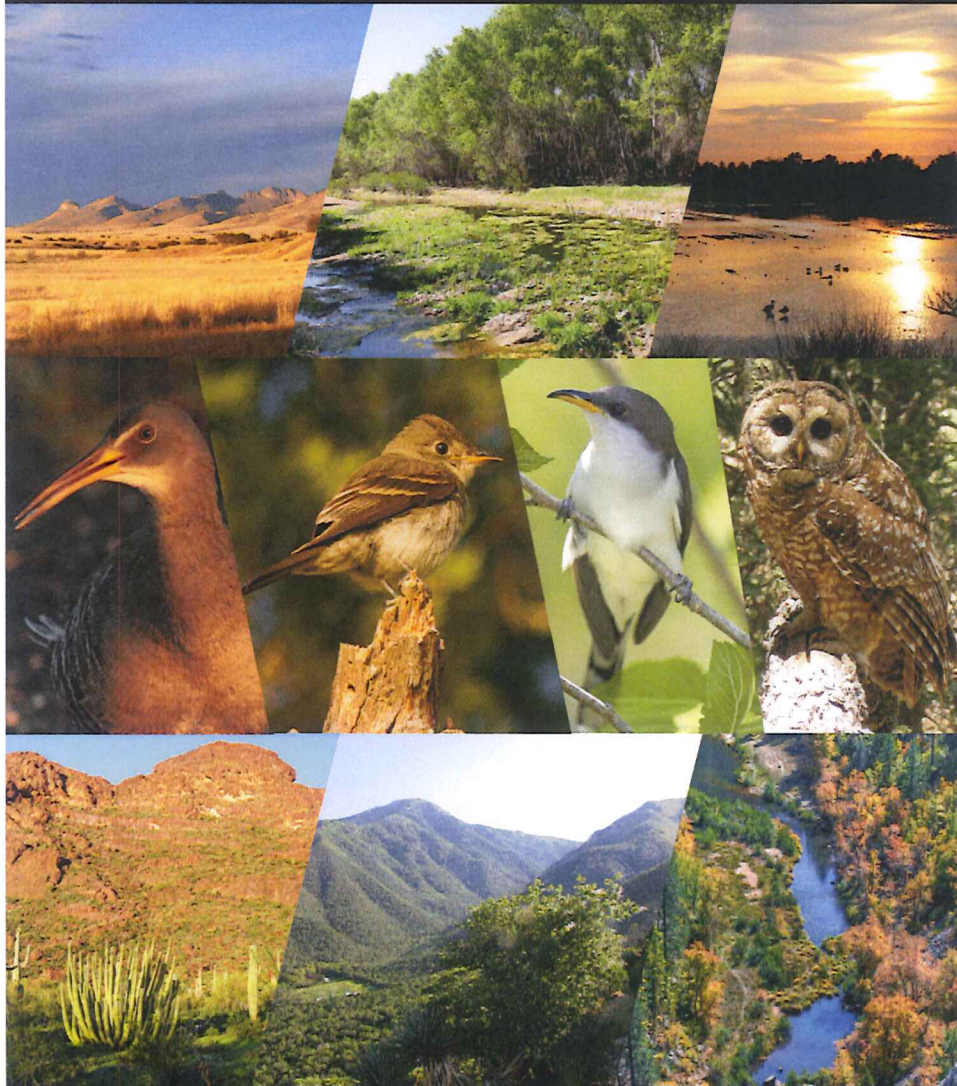


# Arizona's Important Bird Areas



## The Arizona Important Bird Area Program

The purpose of the Important Bird Areas Program is to identify a global network of sites that maintains the long-term viability of wild bird populations while engaging the public to conserve areas of critical habitat.

There is a strong citizen-science component to the Arizona IBA Program. The data used to create new IBAs and monitor existing IBAs come from surveys conducted by trained volunteers. They survey in beautiful locations all over the state! If you are interested in volunteering, visit [www.aziba.org](http://www.aziba.org). The Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program is a worldwide program through BirdLife International that identifies sites that provide important habitats for avian species. Criteria for designation are species abundance, diversity and range restriction. As the United States Partner of BirdLife International, the National Audubon Society administers the IBA Program in the U.S.

The Arizona IBA Program was established in 2001 and is co-administered by Audubon Arizona and the Tucson Audubon Society. Scott Wilbor of the Tucson Audubon Society laid the groundwork for and coordinated the AZ IBA Program solo from 2001 through 2004 and continued with the program until 2011. AZ IBA is currently coordinated by Jennie MacFarland at Tucson Audubon and Tice Supplee at Arizona Audubon.

The Arizona Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program is an exciting, active, field-oriented, community-engaged, science-based and conservation-focused program to benefit Arizona's bird populations of greatest conservation concern, and other native biodiversity, and their most critical habitats and sites.

The AZ IBA Program also works in partnership with the Arizona Game and Fish Department (through the Arizona Bird Conservation Initiative which provides the main support for the AZ IBA program), the Sonoran Joint Venture, the Intermountain West Joint Venture, Arizona State Parks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

There is a strong citizen-science component to the Arizona IBA Program with much of the data used to create new IBAs and monitor existing IBAs coming from surveys conducted by trained volunteer surveyors. The program does utilize other sources of data such as e-Bird, Christmas Bird Counts, Breed Bird Survey Data as well as data collected by agencies such as Arizona Game and Fish, the Forest Service and the National Park Service.

IBAs are classified into three levels: State, Continental and Global. The state designation can only be assigned by a state committee of researchers and managers that determines if a site has significant numbers of a suite of species of conservation concern and restricted ranges. A State IBA can then be elevated to a Continental IBA or Global IBA if a species from a specific list is found in adequate numbers.



San Rafael Grasslands IBA



Golden Eagle by Kenny Wilkins



# Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors IBA



Size: 26.31 square miles, 16843 acres  
Identified: 01/2004 Recognized: 01/2010

**Visiting The Site:** The Agua Fria National Monument is located 40 miles north of Phoenix, AZ. It is easily accessed by traveling on Interstate 17 to the Badger Springs Exit (Exit #256) or the Bloody Basin Road Exit (Exit #259).

**Site Description:** The Agua Fria National Monument, east of I-17 from Black Canyon City to above Cordes Junction, is generally a series of plateaus and mesas deeply cut by the Agua Fria River and its major tributaries. The principal bird attractor is the 26.5 miles of riparian corridor along the Agua Fria and within the tributary canyons. Much of this is mature, native riparian woodland with cottonwoods, willows, sycamores and mesquite.



Agua Fria by Michel LeDyer

**Birds:** The extensive riparian woodland along the Agua Fria River and its tributaries provides both breeding and wintering habitat for a number of bird species and constitutes a recently discovered migration route paralleling the one along the Verde River. This IBA supports one of the higher densities of nesting Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Arizona.

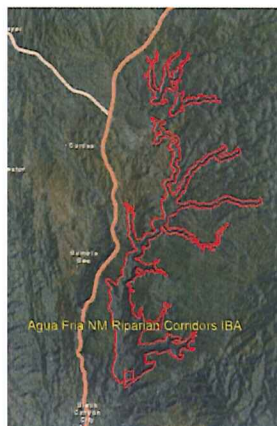
Twenty-eight species with special

conservation status occur in the area, including breeding Common Black-Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Costa's Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Gray Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell's Vireo, Juniper Titmouse, Abert's Towhee, Lucy's Warbler, and Yellow Warbler.

**Conservation Issues:** Grassland and riparian habitat health requires management of grazing, off highway vehicle travel and the fire regime. Fire management through prescription fires has been successfully implemented by the BLM. Loss of grasslands would also impact the small Pronghorn Antelope population, as well as grassland birds including sparrows, meadowlarks and quail. Native fishes, including longfin dace, the Gila mountain sucker, the Gila chub, and the speckled dace, exist in the Agua Fria River and its tributaries. Upstream groundwater extraction is a potential serious threat as development proceeds along the I-17 corridor.



Yellow-billed Cuckoo by Jessi Bryan



# Anderson Mesa IBA

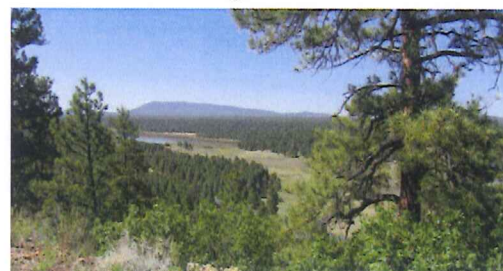


## Global IBA for Pinyon Jay

Size: 261 square miles, 167509 acres  
Identified: 01/2004, Global: 10/2009

**Visiting the Site:** This IBA is 20 miles southeast of Flagstaff, Arizona, east of Lake Mary and north of Mormon Lake, in Coconino County.

**Site Description:** This is a lake complex, including permanent, semi-permanent lakes and wetlands, ephemeral wetlands, grasslands, pinyon-juniper and coniferous forests. Anderson Mesa begins about 9 miles southeast of Flagstaff, continuing as a gently



Anderson Mesa IBA

sloping tableland for approximately 25 miles to the southeast

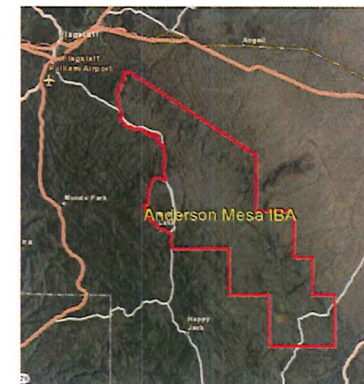
This site has been documented as one of two major waterfowl use areas in Arizona during migration, particularly by dabbling ducks during spring migration. Over 2000 waterfowl were documented using this area during spring migration in the early 1990s. Although severe drought has reduced the numbers of breeding birds, this

site remains a significant migration stop over for waterfowl, water birds, and wading birds during years when sufficient moisture occurs during the winter.

**Birds:** The "Checklist of the Birds of Mormon Lake Arizona & nearby areas (Lakes Mary & Ashurst, Anderson Mesa)" contains 230 species, approximately 45% of the official list for birds noted to occur in Arizona. In addition to providing habitat for migrating and breeding birds, these permanent, semi-permanent lake waters and ephemeral wetlands attract many vagrant bird species as well. The natural wetland system within this IBA

provides excellent habitat for migration, and on-going restoration and protection of this wetland complex will further enhance the value of this area to nesting waterfowl and wetland birds. The restoration work by the Arizona Game/Fish at the Long Lake Complex and at Hay Lake has enhanced the natural retention of snow and rain precipitation over 1200 acres. From a landscape perspective, the Anderson Mesa, contains the only major wetland complex between Lake Roosevelt to the south and Lake Powell to the north.

**Conservation Issues:** Drought is the highest threat. Control of grazing by cattle and elk is essential. Wetlands are being protected from livestock by constructing fences that still allow passage of wildlife. Other threats include, fire, invasive plants, commercial timber harvest projects, disturbance to birds, certain recreation activities, and water transfer through surface water abstraction. Habitat restoration, including the restoration of grasslands is in progress. The ranchers are actively engaged through the Diablo Trust and numerous conservation organizations have assisted in achieving conservation objectives for this site.





# Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch of the NAS IBA



Size: 12 square miles, 7723 acres  
Identified: 01/2004

**Visiting the Site:** Visitors are asked to e-mail [researchranch@audubon.org](mailto:researchranch@audubon.org) or call 520-455-5522 before scheduling a trip. This IBA is located south of the town of Elgin. The miles before the ranch are not paved but are in good condition.

**Site Description:** The Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch of the National Audubon Society is located in broad semi-desert grassland in Southeastern Arizona. It is a 13 square mile sanctuary from which livestock has been excluded since 1968. It encompasses a mix of habitats including semi-desert uplands, oak savannahs, oak woodlands cut by small ephemeral creeks, with riparian habitat. The Research Ranch is in part, privately owned by the National Audubon Society. There is BLM and Forest Service land within the Research Ranch. The BLM lands are a part of the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. The AWRR is primarily a sanctuary and a research site. Visitors are asked to e-mail



[researchranch@audubon.org](mailto:researchranch@audubon.org) before scheduling a trip. **Birds:** Grasslands have been designated priority habitat by the Arizona Partners in Flight (APIF) Conservation Plan and of the six species listed by APIF as Priority species for Desert Grasslands, this IBA contains four species: Botteri's Sparrow-breeding, Baird's Sparrow-wintering, Cassin's Sparrow-breeding, and Grasshopper Sparrow-resident. Other grassland species of special conservation status include Montezuma Quail (resident), Black-chinned Sparrow (wintering), Brewer's Sparrow (wintering), and Sprague's Pipit (fall

migrant)-all of which are Audubon WatchList species for Arizona (10 total for this IBA), and Sage Sparrow (wintering), Eastern Bluebird (resident), Burrowing Owl (resident)-all APIF Priority species, and Northern Harrier (wintering) a USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern (within BCR 16). Other grassland obligate species are abundant on the research ranch, i.e., breeding: Horned Lark and Eastern Meadowlark, and wintering: Vesper Sparrow and Savannah Sparrow. Other non-grassland species of special conservation status include Band-tailed Pigeon (fall migrant), Willow Flycatcher (summer visitor), Lucy's Warbler (breeding), Virginia's Warbler (breeding) (all AZ WatchList), Yellow-billed Cuckoo (summer visitor), Black-throated Gray Warbler (breeding), Cordilleran Flycatcher (breeding), Gray Flycatcher (breeding), and MacGillivray's Warbler (fall migrant) (all APIF Priority species).

**Conservation Issues:** A major threat to this Madrean grassland IBA is the invasion of exotic grass species (Lehman and Boer lovegrasses, Johnson grass and Bermuda), which has resulted in a change in grassland composition and thus habitat quality for native bird populations and other wildlife species. These grasses were brought by human settlers, and have spread by cattle, wind and water.



# Arivaca Cienega and Creek IBA

Size: 7.7 square miles, 4930 acres  
Identified: 07/2002

**Visiting the Site:** From Tucson take Highway 286 south from Three Points to milepost 12. Turn left and drive east 12 miles to Arivaca. From Interstate 19, take the Amado/Arivaca exit west, turn right at the T, then left at the Cow Palace onto Arivaca Road. Then drive 23 miles to Arivaca. Arivaca Cienega Trail is ¼ mile east of Arivaca; Arivaca Creek Trail is 2 miles west of town.

**Site Description:** This IBA is rare desert cienega and connected creek system in southern Arizona. These wet habitats are just a small part of the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, which encompasses 118,000 acres. Arivaca Cienega and Creek IBA is



Yellow-billed Cuckoo by  
Steve Baranoff

located thirty miles west from the main north-south interstate highway in southern Arizona, near the town of Arivaca. The cienega is supported by seven springs. Arivaca Creek in most years is a perennial creek for 2 miles of its 5½-mile length to where it joins the Brawley Wash system. The cienega and creek are part of Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge.

**Birds:** This IBA is important in Arizona because it supports significant breeding numbers of Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Gray Hawk, Swainson's Hawk (Arivaca Creek), Lucy's Warbler, and Black-bellied Whistling Duck, and small but reliable numbers of nesting Costa's Hummingbird, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Tropical and Thick-billed Kingbirds, Rufous-winged Sparrow, and Varied Bunting, all of which are Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) in Arizona (11 SCC total). Sora and Virginia Rails nest within the cienega as well, rare and uncommon species respectively

in Arizona. Buff-collared Nightjar, another rare species, has been known to nest along Arivaca Creek. Additionally, the IBA supports many conservation species in migration, such as, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Gray Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Lucy's Warbler, Virginia's Warbler, and MacGillivray's Warbler (6 SCC in migration). In winter this IBA becomes a hotspot for Sparrows, both in terms of diversity and density, notable Species of Conservation Concern include: Brewer's, Cassin's, and Grasshopper Sparrows. Lastly,

winter brings an influx of raptors and wading birds, these include, Peregrine Falcon and Great Egret (both SCC) (5 total SCC in winter).

**Conservation Issues:** Water table draw down by nearby water use in the nearby town of Arivaca is a concern. Buenos Aires NWR is working to attain water rights. Cowbird parasitism is likely a significant impact on reproduction performance of many species. Cattle grazing occurs on nearby lands attracting cowbirds to the area. Bullfrog spread into the cienega ponds is a serious concern; this non-native invasive species could alter the food chain structure of the cienega.





# Aubrey Valley and Cliffs IBA



Size: 385 square miles, 246,538 acres

Identified: 10/2011

**Visiting the Site:** Aubrey Valley is approximately 46 km northwest of Seligman, AZ, adjacent to historical Route 66.

**Site Description:** This site is home to Arizona's largest colony of Gunnison's prairie dogs, and for this reason it was also designated as a reintroduction site for black-footed ferrets. The large prairie dog population also provides a regional prey base for resident and migrating raptors, including Golden Eagles and Ferruginous Hawks as well as synoptic species like Burrowing Owls. The extensive north-south cliff line provides abundant raptor nesting and perching opportunities.

**Birds:** Aubrey Valley is extremely important for birds, especially raptors, because it juxtaposes important landscape features along with vital biotic community resources raptors need to survive. Sixteen species of raptor have been found here by surveyors

during transects and point counts. Aubrey Cliffs, the most prominent feature on the landscape, rises approximately 300 m from the valley floor and provides ideal habitat for species such as Golden Eagles (high of 24/survey), a species of high conservation status (SGCN Tier 1b, USFWS BCR 16). Survey data also shows this area to support high numbers of Ferruginous Hawks (high of 23/survey) at certain times of the year, also a

species of high conservation status (IUCN Near Threatened, SGCN Tier 1b and USFWS BCC 16). Although systematic raptor nest searches have not yet been completed, regional biologists have documented at least one Golden Eagle nest territory and one Ferruginous Hawk nest

confirmed as active. The road transect data indicates the area is a significant post-breeding dispersal and migration corridor for these two species. Other raptors are also very abundant in the area, notably Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels. Burrowing Owls are prevalent throughout the valley, and are consistently seen during Black-footed Ferret spot-light surveys. Out of 129 surveys, 377 Burrowing owls were opportunistically observed.

**Conservation Issues:** The largest potential threat to birds in Aubrey Valley is the proposed wind farm that will put electricity-generating wind turbines on the Aubrey Cliffs. The large abundance of raptors in the area would be at risk for collisions with the large rotating turbine blades.



Aubrey Valley by Kenny Wilkins



Golden Eagle by Kenny Wilkins



Golden Eagle and Ferruginous Hawk by Kenny Wilkins



# Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge IBA

*Global IBA for Sandhill Crane & Continental for Yuma Clapper Rail*

Size: 9.4 square miles, 6000 acres

Identified: 01/2004, Global: 10/2010 Continental 10/2011

**Visiting the Site:** To get to Bill Williams River NWR from Lake Havasu City, Arizona follow Arizona Highway 95 south approximately 23 miles. Headquarters are located between mileposts 160 and 161.

**Site Description:** The Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge IBA is a nine-mile corridor and delta and the last extensive naturally flood-regenerated riparian and wetlands habitat on the Lower Colorado River. This riparian zone is an area of year-around available water and riparian vegetation creating cooler, more humid conditions than the surrounding desert where rainfall averages only 3 inches per year and summer temperature

often exceed 120 degrees.

In the winter the warmth allows many plants to keep their leaves, others to bloom in December and January, and the insects to remain active, all of which makes it a vital stopover for migration and wintering of birds on the Colorado River Flyway.

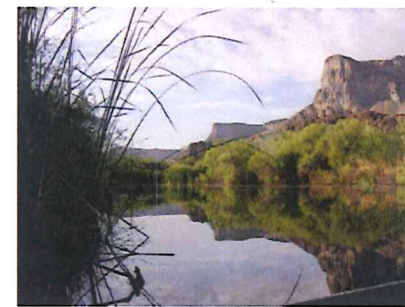
**Birds:** The Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge is the southern most extensive riparian and wetlands habitat on Lower Colorado River in the

United States. This IBA is a stopover for neotropical migrants using the Colorado River flyway as well as being important wintering habitat for many northern species. The refuge provides breeding habitat for 25 species of conservation concern in Arizona. These species nesting in the IBA include the federally listed endangered and threatened species:

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Yuma Clapper Rail. Other species of conservation concern found in this IBA include: Southwestern Yellow-billed Cuckoo, American Bittern, Lucy's Warbler, California Black Rail, Bell's Vireo and Bendire's Thrasher, Clark's Grebe and Yellow Warbler. This IBA is one of the few areas left on the Lower Colorado River with large breeding populations of warblers, particularly Yellow and Lucy's and Yellow-breasted Chats, as well as other riparian obligate species. Overall 343 species have been recorded on the refuge. Virtually the entire complex of species native to the Lower

Colorado River historically are still present on the Bill Williams River NWR.

**Conservation Issues:** Threats may include upstream water diversions, wildfire, invasive exotic species spreading into riparian habitat along river, particularly Tamarix ramosissima, and excessive or inappropriate public recreation.



Bill Williams NWR by USFWS



Yuma Clapper Rail by Len Blumin





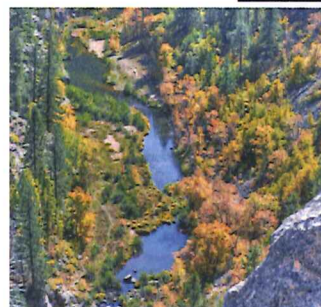
# Blue River Complex IBA



Size: 166.6 square miles, 106,642 acres  
Identified: 01/2004

**Visiting the Site:** This IBA is a long river corridor that parallels Highway 191. A recommended trail in this IBA is the Strayhorse trail. The trail head is located on Highway 191 north of Clifton and south of Hannagan Meadow, on Rose Peak. The Fritz Ranch is accessed about 45 miles further south from FR 475 and 475C

**Site Description:** The Blue River IBA includes approximately 40 miles of the Blue River, ten miles of the Campbell Blue River, 5 miles of KP Creek, and over 20 miles of that portion of the San Francisco River under



Blue River Complex by Kevin Dooley



Mexican Spotted Owl by Lincoln Wildlife Crew

Forest Service jurisdiction in Arizona.

Of the total 400,000-acre Blue River watershed, 99% is managed by the U.S. Forest Service for the public. Fifty-five percent of the watershed is a designated Primitive Area. The remoteness and limited accessibility to this area may be an asset to long-term conservation of its riparian and associated habitats that are at risk from disappearing throughout Arizona and the Southwest.

**Birds:** To date, 216 species have been documented in this IBA with 138 likely breeding. Common Black-Hawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Belted Kingfisher, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Purple Martin, Bell's Vireo, Lucy's Warbler, and Hooded Oriole. Gray Catbird, Bendire's Thrasher and MacGillivray's Warbler are "special status" riparian obligate species found in this IBA during surveys. The presence of

other (non-listed) breeding riparian-obligatory species has been documented including American Dipper, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, and Blue Grosbeak. In addition, the following "special status" species are also known to use the riparian corridor in migration or winter: Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Solitary Sandpiper, and Willow Flycatcher. The presence of other conservation species not associated with riparian habitats indicates the presence of a variety of suitable nesting habitats. For example, the presence of Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, and White-throated Swift represent cliff habitat; Northern Goshawk and Mexican Spotted Owl represent mature ponderosa pine stands, Greater Pewee and Red-faced Warbler represent Pine-Oak habitat; Juniper Titmouse, Gray Vireo, and Black-throated Gray Warbler for pinyon-juniper woodlands, and Black-chinned Sparrow represent chaparral.

**Conservation Issues:** Historically, the greatest stress to the river system has been caused by livestock grazing, which caused significant hydrological changes. The U.S. Forest Service has acted to remove most livestock grazing from the main Blue River over the last decade, allowing for the natural regeneration of the riparian habitat and recovery of natural hydrological processes. Exotic crayfish are present in the streams and pose significant threat to native fish, amphibians, and aquatic invertebrates on which native species depend.



# Boyce Thompson Arboretum and Arnett -Queen Creeks IBA

Size: 4.8 square miles, 3,071 acres  
Identified: 01/2004  
Recognized: 05/2007

**Visiting the Site:** From Phoenix: Take Highway 60 east toward Superior until you reach milepost #223. Drive takes about an hour. From Tucson: Take Oracle Road north, turn left at highway 79 and continue through and past Florence to highway 60, then turn right and continue 12 miles east. Drive takes about 2 hours.

**Site Description:** This IBA includes the north slope of Picketpost Mountain, foothill canyons and ridges, and two intermittent creeks. The 100-acre tract of botanical gardens open to the public is used for education, research, land conservation, and low-impact recreation. This is a noted bird watching area as rarities have been found here



Boyce Thompson by Garry Wilmore

on a fairly regular basis.

**Birds:** Of the at least 275 species recorded in the IBA since the mid 1970s, 62 species of Special Conservation Status in Arizona including: Federally Endangered or Threatened (2 species), AZ Game & Fish State Threatened (15 species), AZ Partners in Flight Priority (APIF) Species (24 species), Audubon WatchList in Arizona (7 species), and U.S.F.W.S. Birds of Conservation Concern (14 species). Populations of some transient species periodically reach relatively high numbers, particularly on

"fall-out" days. On occasion, dozens of some species and scores of others have been noted during spring and fall migration periods, thus qualifying the site also under the criteria "Outstanding Landbird stopover Site." This site meets two other Arizona IBA criteria: 1) Special Conservation Status Species in Arizona, including Purple Martin (APIF), Elf Owl (Audubon-Yellow listed), Gilded Flicker (Audubon-Red listed), Costa's Hummingbird (Audubon-Yellow listed), and Crissal Thrasher (USFWS); plus Gray Flycatcher (APIF), Black-throated Gray Warbler (APIF, USFWS), Brewer's Sparrow (APIF, Audubon-Yellow listed). The Arboretum's low-elevation riparian habitat is exceptional and supports "riparian obligate" species including: Common-Black Hawk, Lucy's Warbler, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Bell's Vireo, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Abert's Towhee, and Yellow Warbler. A noteworthy summer visitor, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo is found here along with migrants including Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (Endangered), and MacGillivray's Warbler.

**Conservation Issues:** Issues of minor concern include: necessity to maintain fencing to restrain cattle entry and to discourage hunting; expansion of mineral extraction activities on nearby Tonto National Forest lands; flooding with its deleterious removal of riparian vegetation; reduction of stream flow from upstream use; potential for wild fire in desert scrub.





# California Gulch IBA



Size: 3.2 square miles, 2,042 acres  
Identified: 07/2002

**Visiting the Site:** If coming from Arivaca, start looking for the turn on your right a little less than 11 miles from where Ruby Road starts in Arivaca. Caution: take the second FR 217 road that you see. The first one leads to Warsaw Canyon, keep going to the second FR 217 turnoff about 1.4 miles further east. This turnoff is prominently marked by a Forest Service "CALIF. GULCH" sign on Ruby Rd. This is a difficult road and this trip should not be



California Gulch



Five Striped Sparrow by  
Marcel Holyoak

attempted in a passenger vehicle. Tucson Audubon does lead field trips

into this area occasionally and detailed directions to the site can be found in their book: Finding Birds in SE Arizona.

**Site Description:** In the remote Pajarito Mountains of southeast Arizona California Gulch IBA is a unique thorn-scrub vegetated canyon. California Gulch IBA is 5 miles west of Sycamore Canyon IBA. It is accessed from Ruby Road by a rugged road south into the drainage. The canyon

is unique with its dense shrub layer on its steep sides, and a perennial spring-fed stream draining into Mexico.

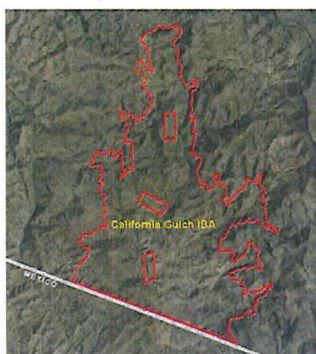
**Birds:** California Gulch has a small but consistent population of Five-striped Sparrows (10 to 15 pairs), a Species of Conservation Status (National PIF Watchlist). This species probably has the smallest regularly occupied breeding range of any bird in the U.S. (excluding island nesters), which is localized to the Pajarito Mountains and Patagonia Mountains (and sometimes the southern Santa Rita Mountains). This IBA has probably the best habitat for Five-striped Sparrow within their U.S. range. Additionally, the canyon supports nesting Gray Hawk, Montezuma Quail, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Tropical Kingbird, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Varied Bunting



Montezuma Quail by J. Oldenettle

and Lucy's Warbler (very abundant), all of which are Species of Conservation Status. The canyon also supports Buff-collared Nightjar (3 pairs, M. Stevenson pers. com.) a rare species in Arizona.

**Conservation Issues:** Cattle grazing in the area is an impact to the riparian vegetation, causes erosion, and degrades stream water quality. Illegal immigrant passage and illegal drug smuggling are serious concerns, affecting both habitat quality and human visitor safety. Past mining activities may be a concern due to soil/water contamination.



# Cave Creek Ecosystem IBA

Size: 4.2 square miles, 2,657 acres  
Identified: 06/2009

**Visiting the Site:** Access to the Tonto National Forest, including the Seven Springs



Jewel of the Creek

Recreation Area and the Cave Creek Trail, is via Seven Springs Road (Forest Road 24) out of Scottsdale. The Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area and the Jewel of the Creek Preserve are located at the north end of Spur Cross Road in Cave Creek. Access to the Seitts and Watt preserves is via an easement at the intersection of Creek Canyon Road and Cloud Road in Cave Creek. The Desert Enclave Preserve is accessible from the west via Cloud Road.

**Site Description:** Cave Creek Ecosystem IBA is located in the Sonoran Desert Eco-region, specifically the Arizona Upland subdivision of

the Sonoran desertscrub biome. The IBA encompasses cottonwood/willow/sycamore and mesquite bosque riparian areas along with associated desert scrub uplands. Flowing or standing water is present in many places and there is considerable elevation change and habitat diversity in this IBA. Much of the land is publicly owned and in a natural undisturbed state which meets the IBA Criterion, Rare, Unique, or Exceptional Representative Habitat/Ecological Community and is an exceptional example of a lowland mesic and xeric southwestern riparian community with adjoining undisturbed high quality upland Sonoran desertscrub vegetation. The perennial water found in reaches of Cave Creek supports a healthy high quality cottonwood/willow and sycamore vegetation and ecological community.

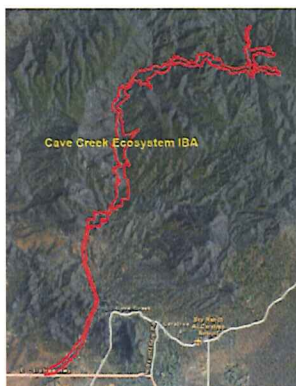
**Birds:** Three Audubon WatchList species are found in very high abundance, they are: Abert's Towhee (Yellow listed), Lucy's Warbler (Yellow listed), and Bell's Vireo (Red listed), the first resident and nesting, the latter two migrants and nesting. Two other Audubon WatchList species are also found within this IBA, Costa's Hummingbird (Yellow



Cave Creek

listed) and Gilded Flicker (Red listed), both nesting and year round residents. At least one pair of Common Black-Hawks (AZ Game and Fish listed Species of Greatest Conservation Need, Tier 1b) are within the Seven Springs area. Elf Owl, an Audubon WatchList species (Yellow listed), breeds within the IBA. The full avian community associated with the riparian community type, is present in this IBA. Furthermore the site represents a high quality example of the Sonoran desertscrub community and supports the full range of bird species associated with this ecological community type.

**Conservation Issues:** The Cave Creek Complex Fire ravaged much of the Cave Creek watershed in 2005. The IBA was largely spared. However, subsequent floods damaged low lying vegetation, washed away soil and exposed considerable cobble that remains today.





# Chiricahua Mountains IBA

## Global IBA for Mexican Spotted Owl

Size: 452.5 square miles, 289,600 acres

Identified: 04/2003 , Global in 10/2009

**Visiting the Site:** From Sierra Vista go east on Hwy 90 then south on Hwy 80 to Bisbee; continue east on Hwy 80 to Douglas; continue northeast on Hwy 80 to Rodeo, NM; and finally go west on Portal Road about 2 miles north of Rodeo. This route is entirely blacktop and is an all-weather route.

**Site Description:** This IBA encompasses the large "sky island" mountain range, the Chiricahua Mountains in southeastern Arizona

almost 40 miles long by 20 miles wide. The IBA extends from 5000 feet elevation, at the ecotone between grassland and oak, to the top of Chiricahua Peak at 9795 feet. Sierra Madrean species reach the northernmost extension of their ranges within this IBA. This IBA is notable for the incredible diversity of bird, mammal, reptile and amphibian species that occur here due to the numerous life zones that overlap in this sky island.

**Birds:** The Chiricahua Range is where the interior Rocky Mountain avifauna meet the northern Sierra Madrean avifauna, as well as a mixing of the Sonoran, Chihuahuan, and Great Basin desert avifauna. Some 375 bird species are known to inhabit the Chiricahua Mountains IBA. Of particular ornithological importance, is the great number of Mexican species whose northern summer breeding range occurs only in the southern "sky

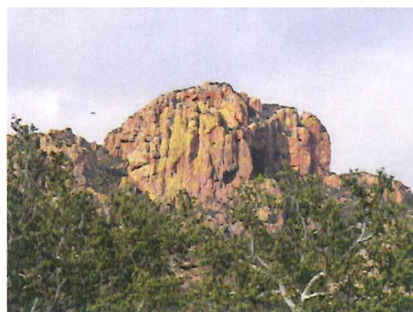
island" mountains of Arizona, these species include: Elegant Trogon, Whiskered Screech-Owl, Violet-crowned Hummingbird, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, and Mexican Chickadee (the latter found only in the Chiricahua and Animas Mountains in the U.S.). The Elegant Trogon population is the second largest group in the United States after the population within the Huachuca Mountains IBA. Fifteen species of hummingbirds have nested in this IBA. This IBA supports 33 Species of Conservation Status, most notably a high percentage of the state population of: Whiskered Screech-Owl, Arizona Woodpecker, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Grace's Warbler, and possibly Crissal Thrasher. Historically, Thick-billed Parrots occupied the Chiricahua Mountains, and the habitat remains little changed. Twenty-six birds were reintroduced in 1986, but the reintroduction attempt failed, apparently to the inexperience of the individuals released and predation by raptors.

**Conservation Issues:** Historically, livestock grazing has caused the greatest stress to the perennial streams of the canyons, and has caused local impacts. The U.S. Forest Service does not permit livestock grazing in Cave Creek Canyon, and around campgrounds in the higher elevations, but grazing does occur in the lower elevations, and the impacts can be significant in terms of erosion and loss vegetation and biotic diversity. Fire risk due to illegal alien traffic is a concern.

Arizona Important Bird Area Program - Page 15



Elegant Trogon by Dominic Sherony



JPC Raleigh



# Cibola National Wildlife Refuge IBA

Size: 22.8 square miles, 14,578 acres

Identified: 06/2008

**Visiting the Site:** From Blythe, go approximately 3 miles west on I-10 to Neighbours Boulevard/78 exit. Go south on Neighbours for 12 milesto the Cibola Bridge. After crossing the bridge, continue south for 3.5 miles to headquarters.

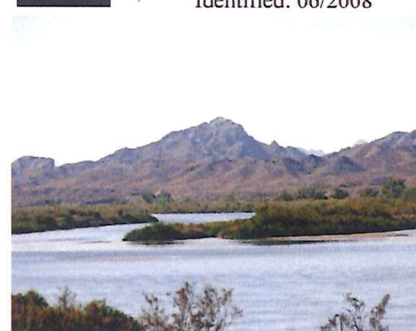
**Site Description:** Cibola NWR is located in the floodplain of the lower Colorado River surrounded by a fringe of desert ridges and washes. The refuge encompasses both the historic Colorado River channel as well as a channelized portion constructed in the late 1960's. Along with these main water bodies, several important backwaters are home to many wildlife species that reside in

this portion of the Sonoran Desert. Because of the river's life sustaining water, wildlife at the refuge survives in an environment that reaches 120 degrees in the summer and receives an average of only 2 inches of rain per year. Cibola Lake is closed in the winter to provide a safe, undisturbed roosting area for wintering waterfowl and other wildlife.

**Birds:** From late October through February, the nearby farm fields are full of Canada, Snow, and Ross' geese. Mid-late September is the best time to see white-fronted geese as they are passing through on migration-- occasionally several will winter on the refuge. The largest portion of the lower Colorado River population of greater Sandhill Cranes winter on the refuge as well as thousands of ducks including mallard, northern pintail, American Widgeon, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Northern Shoveler, Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, and Cinnamon Teal. Clark's, Western, and Pied-billed grebes are also present. Other wintering birds include Bald Eagles and Golden Eagles in the farm fields and occasional Peregrine Falcons. American Kestrels, Northern Harriers, and Prairie Falcons are common. Kestrels are present year-round and nest in the artificial nest boxes.

Hart Mine is an attractive roost to waterfowl, herons, and egrets. Yuma Clapper Rails nest in the marsh as well as in Cibola Lake. Least Bitterns are commonly seen in the marsh and in Cibola Lake. The Island Unit is a restored historic river meander with some farm fields, and moist soil units where waterfowl and shorebirds congregate. Some of the birds seen here include White-faced Ibis, American Avocet, Black Terns, Dowitchers, Killdeer, Black-necked Stilts, sandpipers, Cattle - Snowy - Great Egrets, Great Blue and Black-crowned Night Herons, American Bitterns, Yellowlegs, and Wilson's Snipe.

**Conservation Issues:** Saltcedar encroachment has consumed thousands of acres in upland and riparian areas. Restoration efforts have focused on removal, revegetation, and maintenance of cleared areas. Restored sites contain mixed stands of Fremont cottonwoods, willows, and mesquites.



Snow Geese by Howard Ignatius



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# Gilbert Riparian Preserves



Size: 0.3 square miles, 200 acres  
Identified: 01/2007

**Visiting the Site:** Take US 60 to the Greenfield Road Exit. South on Greenfield and drive south to Guadalupe. The entrance to the parking lot is east of Greenfield on Guadalupe.

**Site Description:** The Gilbert Riparian Preserves IBA contains two areas: the Water Ranch and Neely Ponds, consisting of riparian, upland, and open water habitats.

**Birds:** This IBA is a migration and over-wintering concentration "hot spot" for shorebirds in Arizona. This site consists of two wetland complexes in close proximity



Great Egret by Martin Ely

(Neely and Water Ranch) that are part of the city of Gilbert's water treatment facility, which are managed for wildlife and wildlife viewing (Water Ranch). These wetlands are positioned within a landscape of widespread urban, agriculture, and desert habitat in the mid-section of the state, thus providing an important oasis for shorebirds in migration. The wetland complexes support significant numbers of shorebirds who find ideal foraging habitat in settling basins of each complex. The wetlands have ponds of varying water levels that also provide roosting and foraging habitat for many waterbird and waterfowl species. The upland habitat is native desert scrub, as well as sedge and grasslands in dry basins.

Shorebird diversity is high with 14 species using the wetland basins over the two sites. The species in highest concentrations during migration and "winter" periods are the Long-billed Dowitcher, Least Sandpiper, and Black-necked Stilt. American Avocet joins these species in lower numbers primarily during the spring migration period. Peak numbers of all shorebird species (on a single day) over the two wetland complexes are 1100 shorebirds during spring and fall migration periods, and near 800 shorebirds during winter. Peregrine Falcons are regularly present during the migration period. Burrowing Owl (a USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern) nest in burrows installed for them at the Water Ranch site. American Kestrel and Loggerhead Shrike regularly use this IBA and may nest on site. IBA program surveys (5/04-4/05) recorded 94 species within this IBA

**Conservation and Threats:** The primary purpose of the site is treatment of waste water for the city of Gilbert. Management of the water system will influence water quality and quantity. Threats to birds using the site include anaerobic water conditions that may facilitate botulism outbreaks, predation by feral cats, and disturbance from human activities-including recreational and facility management. Without abatement of threats the site may be a population "sink" for breeding birds.



Gilbert Riparian by Johnida Dockens



# Grand Canyon NP- Lipan and Yaki IBA

Size: 778 square miles, 497,894 acres  
Identified: 07/2002



**Visiting the Site:** To visit the South Rim of the Grand Canyon where Lipan and Yaki Points are located, take I-17 North to Flagstaff, Arizona and then take Highway 89 North to just before Cameron and take State road 64 West to the Park.

**Site Description:** This IBA originally consisted of two points on the south rim of the Grand Canyon, Lipan and Yaki Points. The IBA now includes the entire Grand Canyon National Park. The site steward for the raptor

monitoring is Hawk Watch International. Monitoring dates are August 27 to November 5. Information about the hawk monitoring and how you can help by being a hawk watch volunteer can be found at: <http://www.hawkwatch.org/migration/migration.php>

**Birds:** These cliff promontories function as important air space of a major migratory corridor for raptors. Up to 19 species have been recorded at least once, and 10,000 to 12,000 individuals average per fall migration season. Hawk Watch International initiated standardized counts along the South Rim of the Grand Canyon at Lipan Point in fall 1991, and began a second full-season count at Yaki Point in 1997. Combined

counts at the two sites typically exceed 10,000 migrants of up to 18 species, plus California Condors can often be seen in the local area. The count season extends from late August through early November. Because Grand Canyon National Park attracts millions of visitors each year, these counts represent very important educational opportunities for HWI. The IBA was expanded in 10/2011 to include the entire the National Park because of the many bird species that live in the riparian habitat in the canyon bottom. The lush vegetation and diversity of plant species along the riparian zone create many bird habitats in a relatively small area. Of the 355 bird species recorded in the greater Grand Canyon region, 250 are found in the Colorado River corridor. Bald Eagles use the river corridor as

winter habitat with the trout rich waters of the Colorado River providing a perfect food source for the eagles. Since the construction of Glen Canyon Dam, large numbers of waterfowl have begun using the stretch of river below the dam during the winter, peaking in late December and early January. Nineteen species have been regularly reported between Lees Ferry and Soap Creek, at a density of 136 ducks per mile.

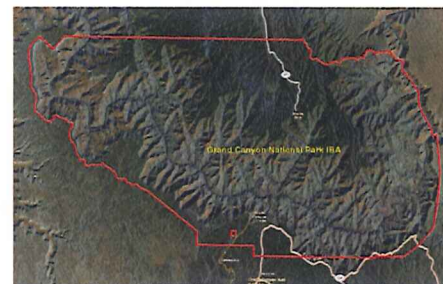
**Conservation Issues:** Low-flying site seeing aircraft is a potential threat, but otherwise this site faces no threats.



Migrating Raptors



California Condor by Michael Quinn





# Havasu National Wildlife Refuge IBA



Size: 61.4 square miles, 39,281 acres  
Identified: 06/2008

**Visiting the Site:** The refuge office is in Needles, California. From Interstate 40, exit on J Street and go southwest (uphill) 0.6 miles. Turn right at the headquarters entrance sign and follow the signs.

The office is in the back. Office hours are 8am-4pm Monday through Friday.

**Site Description:** This NWR and IBA protects 30 river miles and 300 miles of shoreline from Needles, California, to Lake Havasu City, Arizona. One of the last remaining natural



Lake havasu by Mispahn



Western Grebes by M. Watson

stretches of the lower Colorado River flows through the 20-mile-long Topock Gorge within the refuge. The associated 4,000-acre Topock Marsh depends on water from the Colorado River and provides important migratory waterfowl habitat. The passage of the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act in 1990 and the California Desert Protection Act in 1994, together designated 17,606 acres, or 32 percent of the refuge, as wilderness.

**Birds:** The refuge shelters thousands of Canada and snow geese and ducks each winter along with small flocks of

white-faced ibis and American white pelicans. Western and Clark's grebes raise their young in both Topock Marsh and Topock Gorge and herons and egrets nest in rookeries in the marsh. This IBA also supports Clark's and Western Grebes, Anna's Hummingbird, and Abert's Towhee. Nesting Yuma clapper and Virginia rails, common moorhens, least bitterns, and marsh wrens utilize dense cattail habitat along the river. Isolated stands of willow, cottonwood, and taller tamarisk also attract migrating flycatchers, warblers, vireos, tanagers, grosbeaks, and orioles. Water levels of the marsh are manipulated through closing and opening of gates at the South Dike outlet structure. Levels are increased during the early spring to benefit the nesting willow flycatcher and then slowly drawn down over the fall to maximize the availability of submerged aquatic vegetation for water birds. Popular birding locations on the refuge are Pintail Slough, Fivemile Landing, and Catfish Paradise, which can be accessed from County Route 1. Each of these sites has parking and can easily be toured on foot. A viewing tower overlooking the Bermuda Pasture can be accessed by Levee Road.

**Conservation Issues:** The exotic, Salt cedar aggressively takes over disturbed areas along the Colorado River. Native cottonwood and willow trees cannot compete so the staff at Havasu NWR works to control salt cedar and re-establish our native forests, which are much more valuable for wildlife. To protect floating nest birds, jet powered personal watercraft (PWC) such as Sea Doo's, Wave Runners, etc. are not allowed in backwaters off the main Colorado River channel for the 15-mile stretch from the Island/Castle Rock location, north to the Interstate 40 bridge, buoy line.



# Huachuca Mountains IBA



Size: 157.9 square miles, 101,028 acres  
Identified: 01/2004



**Visiting the Site:** To reach the most popular birding sites in the Huachucas, you must go through Fort Huachuca. Please note that everyone in the car must have a valid ID and your car must have current registration and insurance. Enter Fort Huachuca from Sierra Vista. Follow south on the main road 9.5 miles to

Garden Canyon as indicated by the signs. Directions to other birding sites in this range can be found in "Finding Birds in SE Arizona."

**Site Description:** Rainfall along the crest of the Huachuca range averages 30 inches per year, and temperatures are 20-25 degrees cooler than the San Pedro valley floor, conditions that make this area a classic "Sky Island."

**Birds:** The Huachuca Mountains support an incredible number of populations of avian "species of conservation concern" (26), some of which are found only in the United States in the border "Sky Island" mountain ranges of southeastern Arizona (Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Whiskered Screech-Owl, and Elegant Trogon). Also found in the Huachuca range are rare neo-tropical species found only in the most southern Sky Island Mountains of Arizona including the Berryline, Blue-throated, Violet-crowned, and White-eared Hummingbirds, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, and Buff-collared Nightjar. Some species of conservation concern in the Sky Island ranges of Arizona are similarly of conservation concern in Mexico (Mexican Spotted Owl and Eared Quetzal-an occasional breeder in the Huachuca Mountains). This range supports the largest number of breeding pairs of Elegant Trogon in the United States (~46 pairs) and likely the largest population of Whiskered Screech-Owl in the United States. A particularly unique feature of this range is the convergence of Rocky Mountain and Sierra Madrean bird populations, for example Virginia's and Black-throated Gray Warblers of the interior Rocky Mountains and Red-faced and Olive Warblers of the Sierra Madres, occurring in different habitats of this same mountain range. Wintering Lewis's Woodpecker and Pinyon Jay and Arizona



Buff-breasted Flycatcher by D. Sherony

Woodpecker and Mexican Jay, are another example of this convergence. Perhaps most surprising, is the co-occurrence of nesting Eastern and the Western Bluebird, and sometimes the Mountain Bluebird (wintering) all within this range, the Eastern Bluebird is a sub-species "Azure Bluebird" from the Sierra Madre.

**Conservation Issues:** Major threat exists from past fire suppression, and a build up of dense fuels, particularly in the pine-oak, ponderosa pine and Douglas fir habitat zones. A localized major threat is heavy grazing by cattle on the western slopes and northern slopes of the range, particularly grazing in riparian habitat within canyons.





# Imperial National Wildlife Refuge IBA



Size: 49.3 square miles, 31,558 acres  
Identified: 06/2008

**Visiting the Site:** From Yuma: Travel north on Highway 95. Near Milepost 47 turn left onto Martinez Lake Road. Follow Martinez Lake Road west for approximately 10 miles. Turn right onto Red Cloud Mine Road and follow signs directing you to the Visitor Center.

**Site Description:** The Imperial NWR lies within the Lower Colorado Subdivision of the Sonoran Desert, a region characterized by a scarcity of precipitation and high summer temperatures. A



Yuma Clapper Rail by Matt Tillett

30-mile reach of the Colorado River bisects the refuge including the last unchannelized section before the river enters Mexico. Over 14,000 acres of the Refuge's desert upland habitats are designated Wilderness.

**Birds:** Spring and Fall offer the greatest variety of birds and the best birding opportunities with 275 species have been observed on the refuge. Also, the refuge is important as a wintering area for Canada geese and many species of ducks. Canada & White-fronted Geese, Tundra Swan (rare, winter), Clark's & Western Grebes (breed), Black and Clapper Rails (breed), Least Bittern (breeds), Sandhill Crane (rare, migration & winter), Bald Eagle (winter), Peregrine & Prairie Falcons (winter), Common Poorwill (breeds), Ladder-backed & Gila Woodpeckers (residents), Willow Flycatcher (migrant), Crissal Thrasher

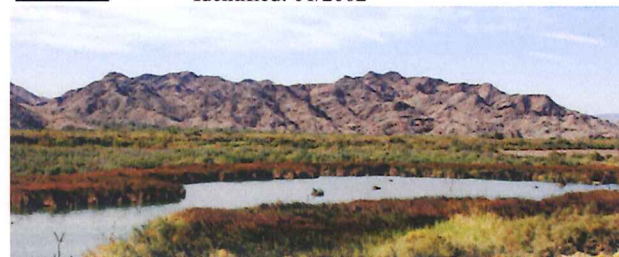
(breeds), Warblers (wintering, migrants), Summer Tanager, Abert's Towhee (breeds), Sage Sparrow. Desert birds include Phainopepla, Verdin, and Lucy's Warbler (early spring). Three Marshbird surveys have been established in 2008 as a part of the Multi-species Conservation Plan. A rapid survey is being conducted at the area which will be planted with cottonwood-willow land cover type, and adjacent habitat. The area which will be planted was bare ground in the summer of 2007 and no birds were present, but the adjacent cottonwood nursery and a thin strip cottonwoods and willows planted on the west side were also surveyed as these areas will serve as sources for bird populations that will colonize the cottonwood-willow site, when planted. In these areas four LCR MSCP listed bird species were detected. These species were the: Summer Tanager, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Gila woodpecker and Yellow Warbler.

**Conservation Issues:** Historic loss of cottonwood and willow and marshlands habitats from the impacts of dikes, diversion canals and dams on natural hydrologic regime. These losses are currently being mitigated through the LCR-MSCP. The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Plan is implementing riparian forest restoration projects.



# Imperial Reservoir IBA

Size: 5.5 square miles, 3,535 acres  
Identified: 01/2002



**Visiting the Site:** This IBA is a system of impoundments, channels, marshes, and backwaters extending from Imperial Dam upstream to Fisher's Landing (below Martinez Lake) along the Colorado River 18 miles northeast of Yuma, Arizona. There is an 18 mile dirt road upon entering the area and it

is not recommended for large trailers.

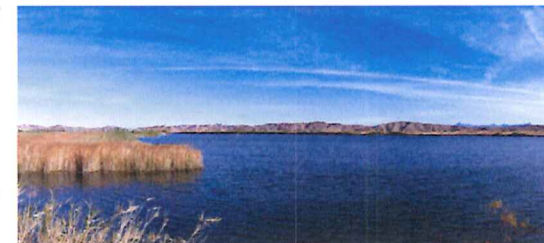


Black Rail

**Site Description:** There are two seasons in this lowest reach of the Lower Colorado River: the high-water period, from spring through Thanksgiving, and the low-water period, from autumn to spring.

**Birds:** Supports substantial populations of Yuma Clapper Rail and California Black Rail. High quality marsh habitat supports other wetland bird populations, such as Virginia Rail, Sora, Least Bittern, and American Bittern. This IBA also supports a large wintering population of American Coots (>2000 individuals). The site is part of a major migratory corridor, providing habitat for migrating neotropical birds, including Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo. The site provides foraging habitat for herons and

egrets as well as wintering habitat for many species of waterfowl and shorebirds. Significant numbers of Snow Geese, Canada Geese, Ruddy Ducks, Gadwalls, American



Imperial Reservoir by Alan Stark

Widgeons, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shovelers, Northern Pintails,

Green-winged Teal, Canvasbacks, Redheads, Ring-necked Ducks and Buffleheads along with Greater Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitchers, Western Sandpipers, Least Sandpipers, Pied-billed Grebes, White-faced Ibises and American White Pelicans winter in this IBA.

**Conservation Issues:** Most riparian habitats have been overgrown by tamarisk and some areas by phragmites an exotic reed from Europe), but no management actions are presently being taken. Dredging would be a threat to marsh habitat if implemented (no pending proposals). Increasing selenium levels along the lower Colorado River poses a threat to avian populations.





## Lower Colorado River Gadsden Riparian Area IBA



Size: 3.7 square miles, 2,398 acres

Identified: 01/2004

**Visiting the Site:** This site is in Yuma County along the Colorado River's Limitrophe Division, approximately 2 miles south of Gadsden, Arizona.

**Site Description:** This IBA is a 3-mile portion of the lower Colorado River within the lowest U.S. division of the river, referred to as the Limitrophe Division. This area provides an example of the lower Colorado River in a relatively natural condition. The upper portion is about 12 miles south of Morelos Dam and the lowest portion is about 1 mile north of the Mexico border. While almost all of the Colorado River is diverted into Mexico's Alamo Canal at



Lower Colorado by Alan Stark



Willow Flycatcher by Syd Phillips

Morelos Dam, some permanent flow of water exists in the Limitrophe Division as a result of leakage through Morelos Dam and irrigation wastewater. As opposed to the rest of the lower Colorado River, the Limitrophe Division is still subject to periodic floods (though small in scale) that result when upstream releases exceed the capacity of the Alamo Canal. These flows tend to favor the establishment of native vegetation over exotic, significant native riparian vegetation has become established as a result.

**Birds:** The lower Colorado River is a major migratory corridor for neotropical birds and also provides significant winter and nesting habitat. This IBA is a key segment of this corridor because it includes some of the best riparian habitat along the entire 40-mile stretch of river between the southern international boundary near San Luis and Laguna Dam. It also includes the only significant marsh in that stretch of river. Bird species recorded here which have conservation status include: Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (suspected to nest and presumed to migrate through to upriver nesting sites), Yuma Clapper Rail (nests), Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo (presumed to nest and migrate), Least Bittern (nests), Great Egret and Snowy Egret (forages here, nests nearby), Osprey (winter), and Belted Kingfisher (winter). Other species of conservation concern that use this IBA include: Abert's Towhee (abundant breeder), Black-throated Gray Warbler (migrant), Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Costa's Hummingbird, Gilded Flicker, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Gray Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Hermit Warbler, Grace's Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, and Brewer's parrow.

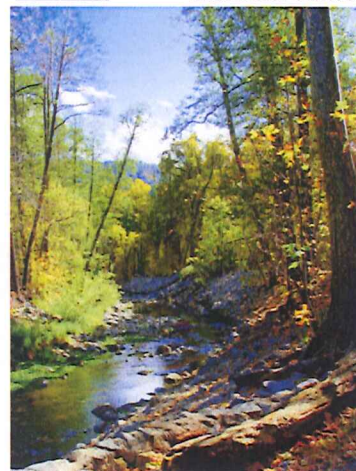
**Conservation Issues:** Dominant threat is from wildfire, which is frequent along the lower Colorado River and favors salt cedar over cottonwood and willow. Another threat is the cessation of periodic high water flows because of drought in the Colorado River watershed.



## Lower Oak Creek IBA

Size: 5.8 square miles, 3,685 acres

Identified: 01/2004 Recognized: 04/2006



Lower Oak Creek by midman

**Visiting the Site:** To reach Red Rock State Park from Phoenix take I-17 north to Arizona 260 west to Arizona 89A to Red Rock Loop Rd. This is a wonderful part of the IBA to go birding with breathtaking scenery.

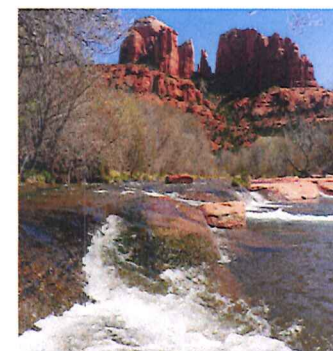
**Site Description:** This IBA is a 10 mile stretch of Lower Oak Creek just a mile or two downstream from where it emerges from the steep canyon walls among the red ramparts of Sedona -the IBA is the river corridor from Red Rock State Park to just south of Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) Page Springs Fish Hatchery. Most of the land in-between the park and the hatchery is U.S. Forest Service, Coconino National Forest, interspersed with mature riparian gallery forests on private properties at Echo Valley (20 acres), Hidden Valley (20 Acres), and Deer Creek (20 Acres).

**Birds:** Lower Oak Creek supports the broad species diversity that accompanies the convergence of the northern plateau with the rising arid desert lands from the south.

This riparian corridor IBA is exceptional for Arizona in two respects, 1) it is a significant migration corridor that supports exceptional landbird diversity and abundance in spring and fall migration, and 2) it is a premier riparian habitat corridor supporting numerous riparian obligate species, many of which are species of conservation concern in Arizona. Audubon WatchList species that breed within the IBA include: Bell's Vireo, Lucy's Warbler and Abert's Towhee. Audubon WatchList migrants passing through Oak Creek IBA include Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Virginia's Warbler. Notable populations of rare species in Arizona also occur, such as Wood Duck, Common Merganser, Common Black-Hawk, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Many cavity nesting species are supported in great abundance because of old growth gallery forest within this IBA, they include: American Kestrel, Common Merganser, Gila Woodpecker, Ladder-backed

Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Bewick's Wren, Bridled Titmouse, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Violet-green Swallow and Lucy's Warbler.

**Conservation Issues:** Most all southwestern waterways are at risk of dewatering, the rapid conversion of pasturelands to ranchettes and residential lots watered by new private wells in the riparian zone amplifies both the loss of water and loss of riparian gallery. The spread of invasive non-native plants is of considerable concern. Russian olive and tamarisk are preventing natural re-colonization of some riparian areas following flooding.



Lower Oak Creek by OutdoorPDK





# Lower San Pedro River IBA

## Global IBA for Bell's Vireo

Size: 51.2 square miles, 32,762 acres  
Identified: 01/2007, Global on 01/2008,  
Recognized: 02/2008

**Visiting the Site:** The vast majority of this IBA is private and currently not open to the public. One place you can legally go birding in prime habitat in a limited capacity is at the "San Manuel Crossing" where River Road crosses the San Pedro River near San Manuel, AZ.

**Site Description:** The San Pedro River serves as a corridor between the Sky Islands of the Madrean Archipelago in northern Sonora and southern

Arizona in its southernmost reaches and Arizona's Central Highlands. The river is not only a major corridor between varied habitat types and ecoregions; it represents a ribbon of water and riparian vegetation in an otherwise arid environment.

The Lower San Pedro River IBA is characterized by well developed cottonwood-willow gallery forest riparian habitat interspersed with old growth mesquite woodlands known as bosques. The largest intact mesquite bosque community in Arizona is located on 14 miles of the San Pedro River beginning south of the community of San Manuel and ending north of the community of Mammoth. Significantly more habitat information on this IBA can be found at [www.aziba.org](http://www.aziba.org)

**Birds:** Species of raptors that nest on the lower San Pedro River include Gray Hawk, Mississippi Kite, Common Black Hawk, and Zone-tailed Hawk. Western Yellow-billed Cuckoos, currently a candidate for Federal listing as a threatened or endangered species, nest in significant numbers on the lower reaches of the San Pedro River. The high importance of the Lower San Pedro River for the recovery of the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher contributed to its designation as an IBA, over 40% of the nesting population in Arizona



Yellow-billed Cuckoo by Jay Bass

is found here. The mesquite bosque at 7B Ranch within this IBA supports excellent breeding populations of Lucy's Warbler and Bell's Vireo. Other species of conservation concern found in this IBA include: Belted Kingfisher, Red-naped Sapsucker, Olive-sided Flycatcher,

Tropical Kingbird, Thick-billed Kingbird, Western Purple Martin.

### Conservation and Stewardship:

Threats to the area include transition of land use from mining and agriculture to suburban development, Interstate 10 bypass, groundwater withdrawal, OHV damage in riparian zones, fuel

wood cutting, excessive livestock grazing in riparian zones, unnatural fire regime.



# Marble Canyon IBA

## Global IBA for Californian Condor

Size: 159.5 square miles, 102,058 acres  
Identified: 04/2003, Global 01/2008



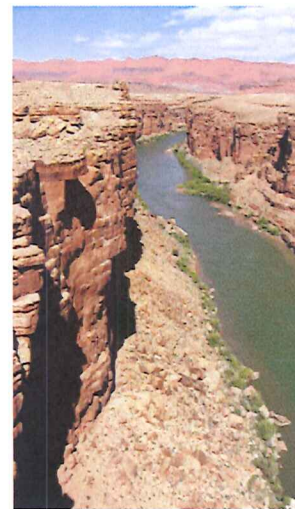
Marble Canyon by arizona traveler

to mark this canyon expanse due to its proximity to the Grand Canyon, but its colorful rock walls are noteworthy in themselves and offer painted vistas that will captivate photographers and sightseers alike.

**Birds:** This IBA supports outstanding numbers of over-wintering waterfowl, up to 6000 birds total. The IBA is 20 miles from the release area for the re-introduced population of California Condors in Arizona, and provides a primary foraging and roosting habitat, along with the Grand Canyon National Park further downstream. The Peregrine Fund is the lead organization for the restoration of California Condors at Grand Canyon. Current information is available at <http://www.peregrinefund.org>. By the close of 2005, there were 59 free-ranging condors in the Arizona/Utah population. Reproduction among wild condors in Arizona reached new highs in 2004 and 2005, with two pairs producing young each year. Condors have fledged a chick in each year from Battleship Cliff in the Grand Canyon. Wild fledged Condors are using this IBA as a travel and foraging corridor between the Vermillion Cliffs release site and the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. Wild Population of California Condors is

currently estimated at 127 individuals and 59 are in Arizona. A Great Blue Heron colony (3-4 pairs) exists within the IBA. The riparian habitat in this IBA provides the best migration corridor in northern Arizona, and supports substantial numbers of passerines, gulls, raptors (especially Osprey), and Belted Kingfisher.

**Conservation Issues:** There is a serious threat from exotic invasive plants, particularly tamarisk and Ravenna grass. Other possible threats to birds include disturbance by waterfowl hunters and anglers above Lee's Ferry and heavy recreational boating occasionally occurring throughout the reach.



Marble Canyon by Mark Freeman



# Mittry Lake State Wildlife Area IBA



Size: 6.2 square miles, 3,984 acres  
Identified: 07/2002

**Visiting the Site:** From Yuma, take Highway 95 north to East Imperial Dam Road, then turn left (west) toward the lake, following WA signs.

**Site Description:** Mittry Lake is a 400-acre oxbow of the Little Colorado River, with a well-developed wetland and marsh habitat adjacent to harsh desert conditions. This IBA is a wildlife management area owned by the BLM and Bureau of Reclamation and is jointly managed by these two agencies along with the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD). The Mittry Lake Wildlife Area includes about 600 acres of water surface and 2400 acres of marsh or upland. A wide variety of vegetative and wildlife species can be found here, with a scenic



Clapper Rail by Len Blumin

backdrop of three mountain ranges. Numerous serpentine waterways connect to main lake body and make exploring by boat a unique experience. Mittry Lake Wildlife Area provides riparian, wetland, and aquatic habitat for many wildlife species. In winter, up to 10,000 waterfowl may be present. This is one of the most accessible settings for wildlife viewing in the Colorado River floodplain.

**Birds:** This area contains some of the largest populations of Yuma Clapper Rails (164 individuals in 2000) and California Black Rails (60 individuals in 2000) in the southwest. Good marsh habitat for other birds such as

Virginia Rail, Sora, Least Bittern, and American Bittern. A large wintering population of American Coots (>5000 individuals) uses the area. This IBA Provides habitat for migrating Southwestern Willow Flycatchers and other neotropical birds. The area provides foraging and nesting habitat for herons and egrets, and supports a population of Burrowing Owls. Wintering birds in this IBA include many duck species, Sora, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant and Northern Harrier. During migration, thousands of swallows are sometimes observed coming to roost for the night in the marsh vegetation. Resident bird species include Black-crowned Night-Heron, Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Osprey, and many others.

**Conservation Issues:** Tamarisk invasion is a major issue regarding the degradation of the riparian habitat. Increasing selenium levels also pose a significant threat to local bird populations. Leakage from the Gila Gravity Main Canal has created marsh habitat, that would be lost if this canal were lined. Fire burning widely in non-native vegetation is a threat.



# Mogollon Rim Snowmelt Draws IBA

Size: 112.7 square miles, 72,162 acres  
Identified: 07/2010



Mogollon rim by Nat Forest

**Visiting the Site:** Take Highway 87 North from Page, AZ. North of Pine, AZ, Forest Road 300 "Rim Road" heads east from the 87 and travels through the IBA. This is a relatively primitive area offering stunning views and many opportunities to pull off and explore the habitat.

**Site Description:** This IBA encompasses drainages located within 8 km of the edge of the Mogollon Rim, an abrupt cliff that represents the southern extension of the Colorado Plateau. This edge of the rim has a narrow band of moist vegetation (especially

maples) associated with greater precipitation formed by the upward deflection of air at the rim face. The habitat of this IBA includes Ponderosa pine, white fir, Douglas fir,

southwestern white pine, quaking aspen, and Gambel oak. Young plants of these canopy trees, plus canyon maple and New Mexico locust dominate the understory woody species.

**Birds:** This IBA is a significant breeding habitat in Arizona for species of conservation concern: Olive-sided Flycatcher, MacGillivray's Warbler, Red-faced Warbler, Virginia's Warbler & Grace's Warbler. A long-term

study (since 1986) of a high elevation riparian ecosystem and bird community in north-central Arizona demonstrates complex effects of climate impacts on this ecosystem. This study has shown this IBA to be significant habitat for many woodpecker species including: Northern Flicker, Red-naped Sapsucker, William's Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Acorn Woodpecker and American

Red-naped Sapsucker  
by D. Sherony

Three-toed Woodpecker. This area is significant for other species such as: MacGillivray's Warbler, Red-faced Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Hermit Thrush, and Green-tailed Towhee, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Mountain Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pygmy Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, House Wren and Western Bluebird. The large numbers of Aspen trees in this IBA is significant as they have been found to be of special importance for cavity nesters including woodpeckers and Western Bluebirds.



**Conservation Issues:** Long-term declines in winter snowfall have been associated with a decline in deciduous trees because it influences over-winter presence of elk that over-browse the habitat in winters with lower snowfall. Large herbivores have been found to impact a variety of systems, and aspen in the western North America seems particularly susceptible.



## Patagonia-Sonoita Creek TNC Preserve IBA

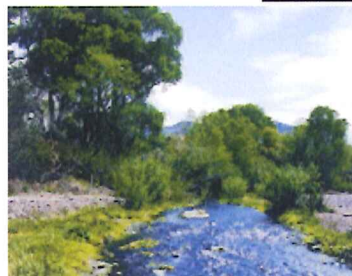


Size: 0.6 square miles, 387 acres

Identified: 07/2010

**Visiting the Site:** Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve is 60 miles southeast of Tucson. Take I-10 east to Highway 83 exit south to Sonoita then turn west onto Highway 82. In Patagonia, turn west on 4th Avenue. Turn south on Pennsylvania, cross the creek, and go about one mile to the entrance.

**Site Description:** This IBA has some of the richest of the remaining riparian (streamside) habitat in the region in a verdant floodplain valley between the Patagonia and Santa Rita Mountains of southeastern Arizona, within the watershed of Sonoita Creek. As one of a few remaining permanent streams, it provides for a wide array of diverse species from endangered fishes to butterflies and birds. The preserve protects a magnificent example of the rare Fremont cottonwood-Goodding willow riparian forest. Some of the trees are among the largest (more than 100 feet tall) and oldest (130 years old) Fremont cottonwood trees in this country. This is one of the few remaining sites in Arizona where this once-common forest type still persists.



Bell's Vireo by Jerry Oldenettel

**Birds:** The Patagonia-Sonoita Creek TNC Preserve is extremely important avian habitat for supporting an exceptionally diverse assemblage of riparian associated bird populations, and densities of nesting individuals of these populations. Over 275 species have been recorded and certain species of conservation concern breed and nest within the Preserve in very dense numbers including: Gray Hawk, Yellow Warbler, Lucy's Warbler, Abert's Towhee and Bell's Vireo. Other species of concern also occur in the preserve, including, Northern

Beardless-Tyrannulet, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Black-bellied Whistling-Duck which commutes to foraging areas locally. This IBA also provides habitat for many riparian obligate species including Great Blue Herons that nest in the cottonwood gallery forest in most years. The primary factor for this diversity is the riparian forest and surface water, and nearness to Sierra Madre Occidental avifauna community stretching up from Mexico. A geologic fault causes the ephemeral Sonoita Creek to rise in this reach of creek, and the well developed floodplain has allowed extensive tree and shrub development, including vines and understory forbs. In recent years more species of the southern Sierra Madre Occidental have found this habitat, and occupied the site for periods, they include the Sinaloa Wren, Rufous-capped Warbler, Plain-capped Starthroat, and Black-capped Gnatcatcher.

**Conservation Issues:** Primary conservation issues are loss/alteration of habitat (development within the watershed, groundwater pumping & climate change.

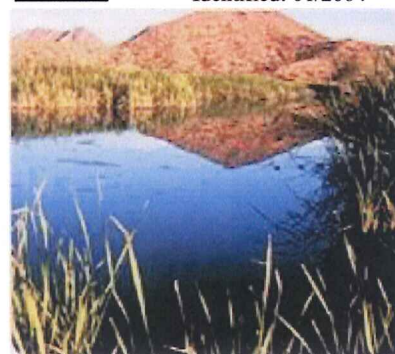


## Quigley State Wildlife Area IBA



Size: 0.96 square miles, 614 acres

Identified: 01/2004



**Visiting the Site:** From Yuma, take I-8 east towards Phoenix. Exit at Avenue 40E or Tacna (exit 42), turn north and cross the railroad tracks. Go north for 1.3 miles then west onto a dirt road for 0.5 miles to the mesa on the southernmost boundary overlooking the ponds.

**Site Description:** This IBA is located along the lower Gila River 40 miles east of Yuma and just north of the town of Tacna and consists of oxbow ponds and associated marshes and riparian areas, irrigated fields planted with wheat for doves in the summer and moist soil waterfowl foods in the winter, and irrigated stands of cottonwoods and willows.

**Birds:** Quigley Wildlife Area provides some of the highest quality marsh and riparian habitat along the lower Gila River. It is the only property below Gillespie Dam that is managed for wildlife. Any birds that use the Gila River as a migration corridor likely pass through Quigley. Bird species recorded here which have conservation status include: Yuma Clapper Rail (presumed to nest), Least Bittern (presumed to nest), Great Egret and Snowy Egret (forages here, nests nearby), Osprey (winter), and Belted Kingfisher (winter), Abert's Towhee (abundant; presumed to nest) and White-throated Swift (fall passage). Other species with conservation status suspected to occur here at least occasionally include Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Costa's Hummingbird, Gilded Flicker, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Gray Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Hermit Warbler, Grace's Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, and Brewer's Sparrow. Other special status species that potentially occur on the QMWA include American bittern, Great Egret, Loggerhead Shrike, Osprey, Snowy Egret, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Western Least



Osprey by Sergey Yeliseev

Bittern, and White-faced Ibis. Currently the portion of the refuge that is existing agricultural land is being farmed for wheat to support White-winged and Mourning Doves. **Conservation Issues:** The dominant continuing threat is competition from salt cedar over native riparian vegetation, but revegetation projects for cottonwoods and willows have been implemented. Water levels in the ponds have declined in recent years as adjacent agriculture has been retired; use of canal water has replaced some of this lost water. Other threats are from wildfire and cowbirds. More conversion of salt cedar to native vegetation would further improve habitat, and reduce fire threat and cowbird parasitism impact.





# Salt and Verde Riparian Ecosystem IBA



Size: 24.3 square miles, 15,523 acres

Identified: 07/2002 Global: 10/2011 Recognized: 11/2010

**Visiting this Site:** Much of this IBA is remote, rugged and only navigable by boat. A good birding destination within the IBA that is accessible is Horseshoe Reservoir where Bald Eagles are frequently seen. To reach this area from Phoenix take to 101 loop to Pima Road and go north to Carefree. From Carefree drive Cave Creek Road northeast until you reach Bartlett Road. Take a right onto Bartlett Road and go 6 miles until you reach the junction with FR 205. Take a left onto FR 205 (which is unpaved). Continue for 11 miles until you reach the reservoir.

**Site Description:** This IBA is comprised of sections of two large rivers, the Salt and the Verde, that come together just east of Phoenix. The Salt River section extends from Saguaro Lake's Stewart Mountain Dam, along the riparian corridor of the Salt River west to the confluence with the Verde River, and the Verde River section is the riparian corridor from Childs, AZ to its confluence with the Salt River. The northern most 15 miles have been designated as a "Wild River", under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This stretch of river is within the large designated U.S. Forest Service Mazatzal Wilderness, the largest forest wilderness in Arizona. The Bartlett and Horseshoe Reservoirs (part of the Verde River), are operated by the Salt River Project, Inc. Maricopa Audubon Society conducts the Salt and Verde River Christmas Bird Count that includes a portion of this IBA.

**Birds:** This IBA contains about approximately 1/3 of all Bald Eagle nest areas in the state of Arizona. The Yellow-billed Cuckoo nests in the IBA, and good numbers of Southwestern Willow Flycatchers (19 individuals detected, 11 territories in 2003). Lucy's Warbler, Abert's Towhee, and Common Black-Hawk are known to occur in the IBA from birder reports, all are species of conservation status. Much more ornithological work needs to be accomplished to fully document the species of conservation status who have breeding, wintering, or in passage

populations in this mostly remote and large federal wilderness. If you do go birding in this IBA, it would be especially helpful if you could enter your observations into eBird.org to help increase our knowledge of the birds that use this habitat.

**Conservation Issues:** Livestock grazing is a key stressor affecting the under-story and mid-story avian habitat along the Verde River. Recreation uses, including boating on the lakes and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), have the potential to disturb nesting birds, particularly Bald Eagles, Common Black-Hawks, cuckoos, and the endangered population of Southwestern Willow Flycatchers.



Bald Eagle by Ron G

# Salt and Lower Gila Riparian Ecosystem IBA



**Global IBA for Neotropical Cormorant & Yuma Clapper Rail**  
**Continental IBA for Abert's Towhee & Long-billed Curlew**

Size: 57.3 square miles, 36,645 acres

Identified: 07/2002, Recognized: 03/2008 Global/Continental: 10/2011

**Visiting the Site:** Arlington Wildlife area is on the west bank of the Gila River approximately 3-1/2 miles south of Arlington and 15 miles southwest of Buckeye in Maricopa County, Arizona.

**Site Description:** The IBA is the Salt River from 83rd Avenue, connecting with the Gila River at 115th Avenue and extending west and south along the Gila River to Gillespie Dam. The Gila River has perennial flow that is from treated effluent from the City of Phoenix and other communities (Tres Rios Wetlands at 83rd Ave.), excess agriculture

water, and from natural ground water. Arlington, B&M, Powers Butte and Robbins Butte, Arizona Game and Fish Wildlife Areas, are managed for bird and wildlife values. The Tres Rios Nature Festival is held in March to celebrate the birds and other wildlife and their habitats. This IBA is Global for Yuma Clapper Rail and Continental for Neotropical Cormorant.

**Birds:** The area has rich productivity of plant growth due to perennial supply of nutrient

laden waters. The fish community here is considered to be one of the most abundant in Arizona, and consequently, the community of fish-eating birds is phenomenal. Egrets and herons are exceptionally abundant, with annual Audubon Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) enumerating several hundred of these species (Great Egret, Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Snowy Egret, and Double-crested Cormorant). Ospreys are regular winter residents, common in migration, and have attempted to nest in recent years. Least Bittern is relatively common and Neotropical Cormorant occur regularly in mixed groups with Double-crested Cormorant. Yuma Clapper Rails reach their upstream limit of distribution within the reach, and are widely distributed within preferred habitats within the area. Abert's Towhee is particularly abundant, with the U.S. highest counts for the CBC occurring in this IBA. Many raptors winter along the river corridor in this area, especially the Northern Harrier and Cooper's Hawk, along with Osprey, Red-tailed Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Prairie and Peregrine Falcon. White-tailed Kite has nested on the Robbins Butte Wildlife Area and Swainson's and Ferruginous Hawk



Rio Salado by Derric Bostrom



migrate through in the fall and spring in large numbers (500 Average).

**Conservation Issues:** Invasion of salt cedar dominate much of the riparian corridor. Loss of water supply due to pumping and reduced sewage flow because of diversion to other treatment facilities, water conservation, and gray water recapture by local communities is considered a long-term serious threat.



# San Pedro River National Conservation Area IBA



Size: 89 square miles, 56,983 acres  
Identified: 07/2002

**Visiting the Site:** The most popular birding spot in this IBA is the San Pedro House. From Tucson, take Interstate 10 east 40 miles to State Highway 90. Follow the highway south through Huachuca City to Fry Boulevard in Sierra Vista, AZ. Follow this street for six miles east until you reach the San Pedro House.

**Site Description:** The San Pedro River National Riparian Conservation Area is a protected area encompassing some 50 miles of the San Pedro River and adjoining habitats, it is the best example of desert riparian ecosystem in the United States. The area is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The area is accessed by 6 paved road entry points and is a popular birding destination.

**Birds:** This IBA is one of the four major north-south migratory bird corridors of the southwestern United States, along with the Rio Grande, Santa Cruz, and the Colorado River. Bird densities during migration average 40 birds per hectare, and can reach 75 to 100 birds per hectare. Greatest abundance in migration is Yellow



Blue Grosbeak by Blake Matheson

Warblers and Wilson's Warbler, but also using the corridor are Osprey, Common Black-Hawk, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Gray Flycatcher, and MacGillivray's Warbler. This IBA supports the largest breeding population of Gray Hawks in the U.S., 35 pairs (40% of the population), and one of the largest Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo population in the U.S., 41 pairs documented. The IBA supports migrating Southwestern Willow Flycatchers, which nest further downstream in great abundance between San Manuel and Winkelman. Two warbler species nest in tremendous number in this IBA, Lucy's Warbler within the mesquite bosque habitat, and Yellow Warbler within cottonwood/willow habitat.

Green Kingfisher nest in the river banks with as many as 7 pairs in a given year. Botteri's and Cassin's Sparrows nest in the adjacent bunchgrass habitat in exceptionally high numbers. Other nesting species of conservation status (SCS) include, Abert's Towhee (very abundant), Elf Owl, Gilded Flicker, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Tropical Kingbird, Crissal Thrasher, and Varied Bunting. Belted Kingfisher and Red-naped Sapsucker can be found regularly over-wintering along the river. Historically, both the Aplomado Falcon and Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl nested in the river valley.

**Conservation Issues:** Urban, suburban, and ranchette development in the upper San Pedro Valley, and their resulting water use, causing the downward trend of the regional aquifer is the major threat to the future conservation of a flowing San Pedro River and high water table supportive of riparian vegetation critical to birds and other wildlife. Over draft of the aquifer from ever expanding and new subdivisions may ultimately dry the river at certain seasons and locations, unless strict growth and conservation measures are implemented.



# San Rafael Grasslands IBA



Size: 85 square miles, 54,478 acres  
Identified: 10/2011



San Rafael Grasslands by cobalt123

**Visiting the Site:** From Tucson take the I-10 east to the AZ-83 south and go about 25 miles. Then make a right onto AZ-82, then left onto Taylor Ave, then left onto Harshaw Road and 6 miles later a slight right onto Harshaw Creek Rd and then a right onto San Rafael Valley Rd. This road takes you through most of the IBA's prime birding areas.

**Site Description:** The habitat of this IBA is primarily short grass prairie and is one of the finest stands of native grassland in the state. This area encompasses one of the last remaining un-fragmented remnants of a

grassland ecosystem in the US between southern California and west Texas. This beautiful valley is the headwaters of the Santa Cruz River, which flows into Mexico then turns north back into the United States and eventually joins the Gila River. Much of the private ranching land in the valley is protected by conservation easements to ensure that the sustainable

grazing practices that have preserved this valley continue

**Birds:** This area is of vital importance for grassland species of birds. This area is a winter home to several species of conservation including Chestnut-collared Longspur, Cassin's sparrow, Arizona Grasshopper Sparrow (breeding), Brewer's Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Sprague's Pipit, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, Swainson's Hawk, Montezuma Quail, McCown's



Loggerhead Shrike by Mark Sharon



Chestnut-collared Longspurs by M. Sharon

Longspur, Botteri's Sparrow and Prairie Falcon. The number of Chestnut-collared Longspurs documented by IBA survey teams meets the criteria that qualify this area as a Global IBA. The valley contains the famous Bog Hole Wildlife Area noted for its abundance and diversity of waterfowl such as Canvasbacks, Cinnamon Teal, and Mexican Mallards. This area also provides habitat for other birds such as Marsh Wren, Lincoln's Sparrow, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe as well as several swallow species. It should also be noted that there was a reported sighting of an Aplomado Falcon in the San Rafael Valley on November 24, 2005

**Conservation Issues:** The most relevant current threat to this valley is mining. As the headwaters of the Santa Cruz River, this area is particularly vulnerable to the water depletion and fouling associated with mining. Preliminary plans are underway for an open pit copper mine and in 2007 Freeport/Phelps Dodge staked mining claims in the San Rafael Valley.





# Santa Rita Mountains IBA



Size: 217 square miles, 138,768 acres  
Identified: 04/2003 Recognized: 05/2011

**Visiting this Site:** The most accessible birding destination in this IBA is Madera Canyon. From Tucson, take I-19 south to exit 63, Continental Road and go east and make a right on Whitehouse Canyon Rd. Go several miles through the Santa Rita Experimental Range, which has some good birding opportunities, especially during monsoon season for sparrows. Stay on the paved road into Madera Canyon. Be sure to check the feeders at the B&Bs.

**Site Description:** Encompassing the entire mountain range, including the world famous birding hot spot of Madera Canyon, the Santa Rita Mountains Important Bird Area (IBA) is one of the Sierra Madre Occidental "Sky Islands." The distinct forest, oak savannah, grassland, and riparian habitats found here provide essential habitat for significant populations of a number of bird species of conservation concern. This mountain range provides essential habitat for the Sierra Madre Occidental "sky island" bird community in Arizona. This



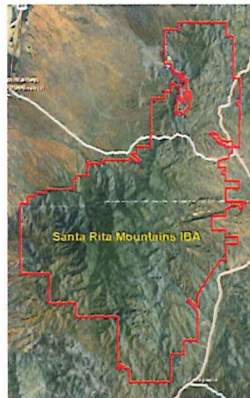
Magnificent Hummingbird by Carol Foll

IBA occupies distinct forest, oak savannah, grassland and riparian habitats. It is this transitioning elevational gradient of many different vegetation communities that makes this IBA so important to so many different bird species.

**Birds:** The Santa Rita Mountains IBA contains a number Species of Conservation Status of Sierra Madre bird community that extends far south into central Mexico. The species include: Northern Goshawk, Gray Hawk, Mexican Spotted Owl, Whiskered Screech-owl, Montezuma Quail, Elegant Trogon (within 7 canyons), Arizona Woodpecker,

Violet-crowned Hummingbird, Lucifer Hummingbird, Costa's Hummingbird, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, and Varied Bunting. Other species of concern that occur within the IBA include: Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Band-tailed Pigeon, Elf Owl, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Greater Peewee, Gray Flycatcher, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Bridled Titmouse, Virginia's Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Lucy's Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Grace's Warbler, Red-faced Warbler, Cassin's Sparrow, and Botteri's Sparrow. Buff-collared Nightjar, a rare species in Arizona, is also present. Winter brings Red-naped Sapsucker to the IBA. The Tucson Audubon IBA team is documenting the surprisingly rich bird life found in the lesser known canyons.

**Conservation Issues:** Illegal immigrant traffic can be significant through the range, which leads to trampling of vegetation, and accompanying trash. Campfires have potential for starting forest fires if they are not properly put out, but due to the remoteness of this area there is little Border Patrol impact. Birder overuse of lower Madera Canyon trail may be disturbing nesting birds in this confined stream reach. Please note that playing bird calls is prohibited in Madera Canyon.



# Sonoita Creek SNA/ Patagonia Lake IBA

Size: 5.5 square miles, 3,497 acres  
Identified: 01/2007, Recognized: 04/2007



Patagonia Lake by Alan Stark

**Visiting this Site:** Patagonia Lake State Park, which falls within this IBA, is notable as a hot spot of bird diversity and for the rare birds that are often found there. From Tucson take the I-10 east to the AZ-83 south (exit 281) and turn right onto AZ-82W. After 19 miles turn right where indicated toward Patagonia Lake.

**Site Description:** Sonoita Creek is bordered by lush broadleaf riparian vegetation (cottonwood, willow, ash, sycamore) with an upland terrace of mesquite bosque. The uplands of Sonoita Creek SNA are covered with high desert vegetation of mesquite, acacia, ocotillo, barrel

cactus, and other smaller cactus and yucca. Coal Mine Springs within the uplands of Sonoita Creek SNA is an oasis of perennial water, ringed by mesic-riparian vegetation including cottonwood and Arizona ash, net-leaf hackberry, and wetland vegetation. Patagonia Lake and its wetland and riparian margins, comprised of cattails, bulrush, and willow, are also included within the IBA..

**Birds:** This IBA has been identified because of its importance to riparian obligate avian species in southern Arizona. Most noteworthy are the regionally significant breeding populations of species of conservation concern (special status species), including: Gray Hawk (8 pairs), Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo (11-12 pairs), Bell's Vireo, Lucy's Warbler, Abert's Towhee, and Broad-billed Hummingbird. Yellow-breasted Chat nest in great abundance. Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet and Varied Bunting (both special status species), are also present with smaller breeding populations. Two very rare nesting raptor species in southern Arizona, the Common Black-Hawk (1 pair) and the Zone-tailed Hawk (1 pair) have regularly nested in the IBA. Golden Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, Zone-tailed Hawks, and Northern Harriers (winter months) forage over the uplands of the IBA. This riparian oasis is also a migration hot-spot for foraging riparian dependent species, notably, Summer Tanager, Yellow Warbler, and Lucy's Warbler. A few rare species in Arizona, at the northern limits of their range distribution, also periodically occur along Sonoita Creek, including: Green Kingfisher (nesting), Black-capped Gnatcatcher (nesting), Elegant Trogon (over-wintering), and Rufous-backed Robin (over-wintering).

Patagonia Lake supports a significant wintering Waterbird concentration, which notably includes cormorants (Double-crested and Neotropical), grebes (Pied-billed and Eared), rails



Black-capped Gnatcatcher by D. Sherony

(Virginia's and Sora). Around its margins Patagonia Lake contains rare and therefore important marsh habitat in southern Arizona, which in turn supports rare wintering species such as the Marsh Wren and Swamp Sparrow.

**Conservation Issues:** The primary conservation issue for SCSNA is exotic species. These include non-native fish, crayfish, bullfrogs and livestock





# Sonoran Desert Borderlands IBA



Size: 1,851 square miles, 1,184,668 acres  
Identified: 07/2010

**Visiting this Site:** To reach Organ Pipe NM: follow Arizona Highway 85 through Ajo and Why. The Monument entrance is four miles from Why. The Kris Eggle Visitor Center is 22 miles (35.4 km) south of Why. To reach Cabeza Prieta NWR: the visitor center is in Ajo where you must get a permit to enter the refuge and can be found by Take Highway 86 (Ajo Way) west across the Tohono O'odham reservation to Why, follow Highway 85 north to Ajo. Please be advised that this IBA is very remote with few to no facilities and can be dangerous at times.

**Site Description:** This IBA includes the entire Cabeza Prieta NWR and Organ Pipe National Monument. There is a standing request for permission from the DOD to include the Barry Goldwater Air Force Range in the IBA. This is the largest IBA in Arizona and one of the most remote. Cabeza Prieta is the third largest National Wildlife Refuge in the



Le Conte's Thrasher by Bill Bouton

lower 48 states and contains Arizona's largest Wilderness area. **Birds:** Cabeza Prieta Refuge bird records indicate 212 species recorded over its history. Seven Audubon Watchlist species were found here during these IBA surveys. These species are: Gilded Flicker (Red listed), Bendire's Thrasher (Red listed), Brewer's Sparrow (Yellow listed, Costa's Hummingbird (Yellow listed), Sage Sparrow (Yellow listed), Le Conte's Thrasher (Yellow listed) & Abert's Towhee (Yellow listed). Loggerhead Shrike, a USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern, was also found in abundance along with Sage Thrasher and Le

Conte's Thrasher. Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is an excellent example of an Arizona Upland ecosystem within the Sonoran desertscrub biome. Three Audubon WatchList species were found in abundance, Gilded Flicker (Red listed), Costa's Hummingbird (Yellow listed), and Elf Owl (Yellow listed). Plus two other bird species of concern were observed here: Loggerhead Shrike, and Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl for which Audubon IBA surveys found one nest territory in 2009, and two nest territories in 2010.

**Conservation Issues:** As the Refuge shares a 56-mile international border with Sonora, Mexico, it is not surprising that two of the most important threats to the ecology of Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge are the impacts of illegal border crossers and the actions of Border Patrol officers attempting to apprehend them. The rules of the refuge prohibit any vehicle traffic off of designated public use roads as the tracks made by vehicles could remain for hundreds of years in this fragile desert ecosystem. Despite this prohibition, many tracks, some of them deeply rutted, were observed by IBA surveyors miles from any road presumably from both illegal border crosser traffic and Border Patrol vehicles attempting to intercept such traffic.



# Sycamore Canyon/Pajarito Mountains IBA

Size: 3.5 square miles, 2,213 acres  
Identified: 04/2003



Sycamore Canyon by Kendall Kroesen

**Visiting the Site:** From Tucson, go south on I-19 about 58 miles to Ruby Rd (exit 12). Go west on Ruby Rd about 10 miles to a T-intersection. Turn left (south) towards to campground, the road becomes FR 39. After 9.5 miles of winding road, a sign marks the turn to Sycamore Canyon on the left. After 150 yards there is a parking area under some Arizona Walnut trees.

**Site Description:** Sycamore Canyon is owned and managed by the Coronado National Forest, United States Forest Service. It is located near the ghost town of Ruby, at the lower edge of Madrean evergreen oak woodlands while Sycamore Creek flows down to the Mexico

border where it enters Sonoran desert-dominated habitat. The canyon is relatively shallow and narrow with intermittent drainage, and is very convoluted with scattered permanent pools. Vegetation is primarily high-elevation riparian, including Fremont cottonwood, willow, and velvet mesquite, with scattered Arizona sycamore.

**Birds:** This very small canyon has a very high concentration of nesting IBA priority bird species. According to the Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas (ABBA), 95 species of birds were either confirmed nesting or designated as probable or possible nesting species in or adjacent to Sycamore Canyon. This is one of the highest breeding bird diversity concentrations in Arizona. Arizona BBA surveys also discovered this unique area was found to have the lowest elevation breeding populations of many avian species in Arizona, these include: Spotted Owl, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Whip-poor-will, Acorn Woodpecker, Arizona Woodpecker, Elegant Trogon, Sulphur-Bellied Flycatcher, Rose-throated Becard, Eastern Bluebird, Painted Redstart, Hepatic Tanager, and Black-Headed Grosbeak. During ABBA surveys in 1993 and 1994, 3-4 pairs of Rose-throated Becards were found nesting in Sycamore Canyon. This is one of the highest concentrations ever found for this species in Arizona and in the United States. Through the years, this rugged canyon has attracted many resident and visiting birders in hopes of viewing the rare



Rose-throated Becard by J. Oldenettel

Mexican species that have occasionally been reported. These include such birds as the Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Rufous-capped Warbler, Fan-tailed Warbler, and Yellow Grosbeak.

**Conservation Issues:** Illegal immigrant traffic can be very high at times in the canyon, which leads to trampling of vegetation. Accompanying litter and discarded materials contribute to trash build up in the canyon. Campfires have potential for burning sections of the canyon if they are not properly put out, but due to the remoteness of this area there is little patrol. Overgrazing, especially in the riparian area is one of the biggest issues.





# Tanque Verde Wash and Sabino Canyon IBA

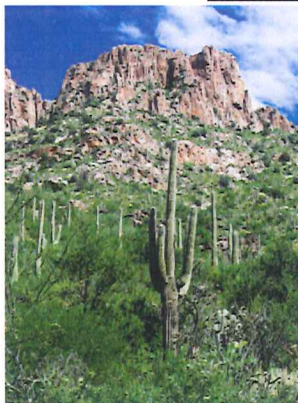


Size: 7.5 square miles, 4,770 acres

Identified: Expanded: 10/2011

**Visiting this Site:** Sabino Canyon: in Tucson, go east on Tanque Verde Road to Sabino Canyon Road and go north 4.5 miles to the entrance on the east just past Sunrise. Tanque Verde Wash: there are several good access points along Tanque Verde Road such as Woodland Ave or where Tanque Verde Loop Rd crosses the wash. Stay in the sandy wash, the banks are private land.

**Site Description:** This IBA originally included Sabino Canyon and Bear Creek but now also contains the adjoining Tanque Verde Wash. As a result, information about this IBA tends to be divided along these boundaries. Upper Sabino Canyon (Coronado National Forest) is a narrow riparian area in a deep canyon at the southern base of the Santa Catalina Mountains. Its stream is perennial and lined with willow, cottonwood, ash, and sycamore.



Sabino Canyon by Roger Smith

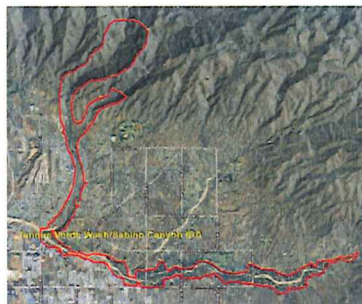


Desert Purple Martin by SearchNetMedia

At one point a small silted in pond contains a wide area of thick vegetation. Tanque Verde Wash is part of Tucson's system of storm water runoff drainages that while having been "improved" with bank stabilization in some places, remains relatively natural. The native vegetation is especially intact on the eastern end of the wash. This area provides a wonderful habitat resource for native riparian birds and a migratory oasis for migratory birds along with other wildlife and also acts as a corridor for wildlife to move through Tucson.

**Birds:** Seven species of hummingbirds have been observed in migration (Broad-billed, Black-chinned, Anna's, Costa's, Calliope, Broad-tailed, and Rufous). Intact lowland riparian habitat tends to have very high breeding bird densities. Riparian corridors and oasis riparian habitat in southern Arizona are extremely important for birds migrating through the area. Certain species of conservation concern nest within the Tanque Verde Wash/Sabino Canyon in very dense numbers including: Bell's Vireo, Abert's Towhee, Lucy's Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Gila Woodpecker and Broad-billed Hummingbird. Other breeding birds found here, but in lower densities include Gray Hawk, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Desert Purple Martin, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Tropical Kingbird, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Belted Kingfisher and Elf Owl. There are also some migratory and wintering species of conservation concern that were found in Tanque Verde Wash including Black-throated Gray Warbler, Brewer's Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swainson's Thrush and Lark Bunting.

**Conservation Issues:** Private and public wells remove groundwater that may be necessary for health of the riparian habitat. Introductions of invasive non-native plants are facilitated by the proximity of homes.



# Tuzigoot IBA

Size: 3.5 square miles, 2,267 acres

Identified: 07/2002



Dead Horse Ranch State Park by Jason Shultz

**Visiting this Site:** Tuzigoot National Monument is 52 miles south of Flagstaff, Arizona via U.S. Alternate Highway 89A, or 90 miles north of Phoenix. Travel Interstate Highway 17, take Exit 287 and travel west on Highway 260 to Cottonwood. You will continue through Cottonwood on Hwy 89A and go toward Clarkdale. At the first traffic light after turning on to 89A, signs will direct you to turn left to stay on 89A. Go straight through this intersection. This will put you on HISTORIC 89A and take you through "Old Town Cottonwood". There will be a sign telling you

where to turn to get to Tuzigoot. You take Tuzigoot Road and follow it to the end. Car GPS units have trouble with this, follow the above directions instead.

**Site Description:** Riparian gallery forest of Fremont cottonwood, Goodding willow, and mesquite borders the Verde River and the east side of Tavasci marsh. Mesquite bosque borders the south and north side of Tavasci marsh, and around Peck's Lake, with the greatest tree height on the north side of Tavasci marsh, and well developed around Peck's Lake. Chaparral habitat is present on the uplands. The remaining habitats consist of grassland and cliff/rock. The marsh is managed for habitat/wildlife conservation.

**Birds:** This ecosystem provides high quality wetland, lake, and riparian habitat for migrating, breeding, and over-wintering birds. The marsh habitat stands out for its uniqueness in Arizona, and its populations of Least Bittern and Virginia's Rail, Belted Kingfisher, Great Blue Heron (in winter), with rare Yuma Clapper Rail detections. The riparian area including the mesquite bosque stand out for the conservation status birds using the habitat both during the breeding and migration passage periods. The over-wintering waterfowl numbers can exceed 1000 birds at Peck's Lake, species in notable numbers include Canada Goose, Gadwall, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, and Ring-necked Duck. Bald Eagles and Osprey are known to winter along the Verde River, both also use the IBA during the migration periods. Yellow-billed Cuckoo have been found to nest within the IBA. The mesquite bosque supports an abundant Lucy's Warbler population, a conservation status species. Species using



Virginia Rail by Mike Baird



the area in migration include: Southwestern Willow, Gray, and Cordilleran Flycatchers, and Virginia's and MacGillivray's Warblers, all of which are species of conservation status. In winter the surrounding sedge and grassland habitat support hundreds of over-wintering sparrows, notably the Brewer's Sparrow in huge numbers. **Conservation Issues:** Water quality of Peck's Lake is not meeting Arizona Department of Water Quality standards, past mining activities is believed to be the cause. In an attempt to meet water quality standards the Verde River water is diverted into Peck's Lake.



# Upper Little Colorado River Watershed IBA



Size: 95.9 square miles, 61,360 acres  
Identified: 04/2003 Recognized: 07/2008

**Visiting this Site:** There are two public access points. The Lakeview Trail access is two miles west of the traffic light in Springerville on U.S. Highway 60; turn south into the main Becker Lake area, designated with signage. The River Walk Trail access is one mile west of the traffic light on Highway 60; turn south into the parking area just before crossing the bridge over the Little Colorado River.

**Site Description:** This IBA encompasses approximately 27 miles of the Little Colorado River (LCR) from its headwaters on Mount Baldy flowing northeast to the 355-acre Wenima Wildlife Area and includes the tributaries of Hall Creek, Benny Creek, Rosy Creek,



Gray Catbird by Gerhard Hofmann

Butler Canyon, the East Fork of the LCR, the West Fork of the LCR, and the South Fork of the LCR. The IBA is  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile wide along the drainages, but encompasses some adjoining uplands where known Mexican Spotted Owl and Northern Goshawk territories exist. Several lakes/reservoirs are included in the watershed and are within the IBA: Lee Valley Reservoir, White Mountain Reservoir, River Reservoir, Tunnel Reservoir, Bunch Reservoir, and Becker Lake. The Lakeview Trail is a one

mile loop following the western edge of Becker Lake to an observation platform overlooking the southern marshy end of the lake. Here waterfowl and shorebirds can easily be seen.

**Birds:** This riparian corridor contains a significant amount of intact, diverse, high elevation habitat. It supports a diversity of breeding species, many of which nest only in the high elevations in Arizona. The area is important nesting habitat for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and includes most of the high elevation nest sites documented in the state. The upper watershed includes seven Mexican Spotted Owl territories and three Northern Goshawk territories, and one Peregrine Falcon eyrie. The lower stretch of the river holds the majority of known Gray Catbird breeding sites in the state, and at least one Yellow-billed Cuckoo territory. The riparian corridor also supports a diversity of migrant passerines that includes large numbers of MacGillivray's Warbler. Wintering Bald Eagles are present on the lakes in substantial numbers. In the Wenima Wildlife Area within the IBA, numerous waterfowl, birds, and raptors can be seen, including Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Belted Kingfisher, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, and a variety of migrating warblers and songbirds. Check the bluff edges for raptors. Both Mountain and Western Bluebirds are found in the junipers in winter.

**Conservation Issues:** Drought and water diversion is of moderate concern in this system.



Little Colorado by Matt Grant



# Upper Santa Cruz River IBA

Size: 3.4 square miles, 2,184 acres  
Identified: 01/2007 Recognized: 04/2011

**Visiting this Site:** A great place to bird in this IBA is on the Anza Trail in Tubac. From Tucson take the I-19 south to the Tubac Exit (Exit 34), make a left under the freeway then another left (north) at the frontage road. Drive 0.4 mile north to Plaza Road and follow the signs to the Tubac Presidio State Park, just before the park entrance there is a sign reading "Anza Trailhead", go right and park by the fence.

**Site Description:** The Upper Santa Cruz River IBA is presently the 9.5 linear km riparian corridor from Tumacacori National Historical Park downstream (northward) through the Tucson Audubon held conservation easement at Esperanza Ranch. This reach of river has the highest groundwater levels and perennial river flow, primarily treated wastewater, but with some groundwater seep augmentation.



Santa Cruz River by John Hoffman

**Birds:** The IBA's identified importance to regional bird populations is most evident in the

substantial numbers and density of riparian obligate avian species present in this habitat. Of the most notable species of conservation concern supported in this IBA is a concentration of nesting Gray Hawks, part of the broader population of the Upper Santa Cruz River watershed, which includes nesting birds along the Rio Santa Cruz in Mexico. Also, of conservation importance is a concentration of nesting Yellow-billed Cuckoo, most notably occurring within the Tumacacori area. At present the only other known regional sub-population of cuckoos in the watershed occurs further south along Sonoita Creek, in Sycamore Canyon (outside the watershed), and again in Mexico along the Rio Santa Cruz. Other species of conservation concern supported in this IBA are notably dense populations of: Lucy's Warbler, Bell's Vireo, and

Abert's Towhee. Three rarer species of concern found in the IBA, but little elsewhere along the Santa Cruz River corridor in the U.S. are the Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Varied Bunting, and Rufous-winged Sparrow.

This corridor also provides key habitat for neotropical migrant species, such as the nesting Summer Tanager, Yellow Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat, all of which are abundant in the IBA. Other nesting neotropical migrant species that are rare nesting species in southern Arizona include, the Lazuli and Indigo Buntings, and the Tropical Kingbird.

**Conservation Issues:** Residential encroachment into the floodplain and riparian (mesquite bosque habitat) is a top conservation issue, especially at Tubac, south of Tubac on to Carmen, and north of Tubac up to Chaves Siding Road. The next most significant and most long lasting threat is groundwater pumping causing lowering groundwater levels, reduced flow, and coupled with periodic drought, together these factors are suspected of causing tree stress and die-off.



Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet  
by James Prudente





# Upper Verde River State Wildlife Area IBA



Size: 2.8 square miles, 1,809 acres  
Identified: 06/2008

**Visiting this Site:** From Hwy. 89 in Paulden, take Chino Ranch Road East (USFS 635) approximately 1 mile. Make sharp right, cross railroad tracks and make sharp left. Take very first right and go south approximately 3 miles to enter the main parcel of the property.

**Site Description:** This IBA is located approximately eight miles north of Chino Valley in Yavapai County, Arizona. The primary management emphasis for the Upper Verde River property is to manage riparian habitat and maintain native fish diversity. Secondary management emphases are environmental education and compatible wildlife oriented recreation. This IBA's riparian vegetation is characterized as mixed broadleaf deciduous, dominated by Arizona ash, boxelder,



Upper Verde River SWA by Yandahi



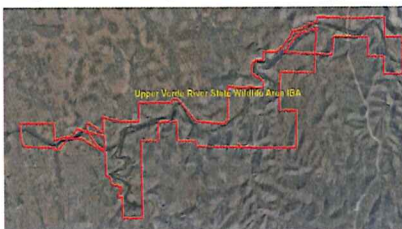
Pinyon Jay by Ted Parowan

Arizona walnut and netleaf hackberry. Goodding's willow, red willow and Fremont cottonwood are also present

**Birds:** South of the Colorado River, the Verde River represents the most significant perennial waterway in the northern 1/3 of the state. Aside from supporting rare or priority riparian breeding species, it serves as an important stopover and/or wintering grounds for a host

of migratory birds. The Upper Verde River Wildlife Area IBA contains the headwaters of the Verde River. It provides breeding habitat for species of conservation concern (special status species) in Arizona, including the: Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yellow Warbler, and Lucy's Warbler, all of which occur in significant numbers within the IBA. Other species of conservation concern occur in low numbers, they include: Bald Eagle (winter), Ferruginous Hawk (winter), Golden Eagle (possible one breeding pair), Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (migration/breeding), Peregrine Falcon (migration), Red-naped Sapsucker (migration and winter), Crissal Thrasher (resident), Sage Thrasher (winter-rarely), Black-throated Gray Warbler (breeding), Lucy's Warbler and MacGillivray's Warbler (migration). The Upper Verde Wildlife Area also contains Pinyon-Juniper vegetation, providing foraging habitat for Pinyon Jays and Juniper Titmice, both special status species that have been recorded in fall and winter periods within the IBA. White-throated Swifts have been recorded foraging over Granite Creek in spring and Cinnamon Teal may nest along the Stillman Lake area of the Wildlife Area. Lastly, this IBA is particularly important as a wintering area for many Arizona breeding species of higher elevations.

**Conservation Issues:** The primary issue is unauthorized grazing. Under AZGFD ownership the habitat has improved dramatically, but grazing continues to impact via loss of seasonal vegetation cover and bank erosion. The Wildlife Area is currently being fenced using funds from an ADEQ grant to prevent further trespass livestock grazing.



# Watson and Willow Lakes Ecosystem IBA

Size: 2.3 square miles, 1,501 acres  
Identified: 07/2002 Recognized: 04/2011



Watson Lake by rwarrin

**Visiting this Site:** Willow Lake: From the Courthouse Plaza in downtown Prescott AZ, drive north on Montezuma Street which will curve west and become Whipple Street. Then turn north in Willow Creek Road for about 4 mile to Willow Park. Watson Lake: An easy 4 mile drive from downtown Prescott AZ. Drive east from Courthouse Plaza on Gurley Street for about 1.2 miles. Turn north Highway 89 and proceed about 3.5 miles. Enter the traffic circle, take the first right into the park.

**Site Description:** This Important Bird Area (IBA) is located within the city limits of Prescott, AZ and occurs in two sections, Watson Lake and Willow Lake. The IBA also includes the immediate surrounding uplands and 2 miles of Granite Creek flowing into Watson Lake.

**Birds:** These lakes are particularly important to large numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds during the fall migration. In wet years waterfowl numbers can exceed 5000 birds at one time. Notably abundant are Northern Pintails and Northern Shovler. Shorebird numbers in the fall can exceed 300 birds on a given day, including Black-necked Stilts and American Avocets. White-faced Ibis and Forrester's Tern also regularly occur in the fall, and Marbled Godwits occur in spring migration. There are no other comparable lake systems within a distance of 200-300 miles east and west, and 60 to 150 miles north and south, thus indicating the importance of the lakes ecosystem as stop-over feeding and resting site for these migrants. Ruddy and Ring-necked Ducks and Common Merganser over-winter in large numbers. Wintering Bald Eagles and resident Peregrine Falcons find available prey among the waterfowl flocks. Wood Duck (approximately 50 pairs) are notable breeders within the ecosystem. There are Great Blue Heron and Double-crested Cormorant rookeries as well. The riparian area is small, and supports breeding Yellow Warbler in abundance, breeding Lucy's Warblers, and nesting Green Heron.



Northern Pintail by David Schenfeld

**Conservation Issues:** The City of Prescott has implemented regulations regarding recreational use of the two lakes, most notably a "no wake" regulation on Watson Lake with limited horsepower motors. Kayaking is the only boating allowed on Willow Lake. Kayakers do disturb the waterfowl in the winter, but this is intermittent, and the birds seem to stay in spite of these disturbances. Periodic consultation with City staffers and council by Prescott Creeks and Prescott Audubon has increased the City's awareness of the value of the IBA as an ecotourism value. The first annual Get Out... Get Into It festival in 2011 included a dedication of this Important Bird Area.





# Whitewater Draw State Wildlife Area IBA

Global IBA for Sandhill Crane



Size: 2.4 square miles, 1,509 acres

Identified: 06/2008 Global: 10/2011

**Visit this Site:** From U.S. Hwy. 191 at McNeal, drive west on Davis Road for 3 miles to Coffman Road. Turn south on Coffman Road and follow the signs for 2 miles; turn west into parking area and trailhead.

**Site Description:** The Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area IBA lies within the Chihuahuan desert grassland habitat type. Past land uses of the property included farming and

ranching with about 30% of the property being irrigated farmland. Much of this is being returned to native grasslands through rest and active reseeding projects. The next largest



Whitewater Draw by Lady Cliff

portion of the Wildlife Area is comprised of native grasslands, most of which is being rehabilitated as well. Over 600 acres of the area is intermittently flooded wetland with two small patches of riparian habitat. The surrounding agricultural community of the valley enhances feeding opportunities for such species as sandhill cranes

**Birds:** This Arizona Game and Fish Wildlife Area is of state and regional significance as the primary wintering area for Sandhill Cranes in Arizona, and includes both the Lesser (most numerous) and Greater subspecies. Whitewater Draw is in the southern Sulphur Springs Valley and cranes are coming from both the Rocky Mountain population and Mid-Continental population. The area also supports wintering Snow Geese (80-200) and a few Ross's Geese (occasional to 40). Counts of Sandhill Cranes in early January have steadily climbed from 4,000 in 1991 to over

22,000 in 2008 at Whitewater Draw, with another 13,000 present 36 miles north in the Willcox Playa area, and another 600 present in the far north of Sulphur Springs Valley at Bonita, AZ, and 400 present in the Safford Valley near Duncan. The Greater subspecies breeds in the northern states of the continental U.S., and the Lesser subspecies, breeds from Alaska and eastern Siberia. Two other species of conservation status occur in the winter and migration periods at Whitewater Draw, but no quantitative surveys for these species have occurred, they include: Mountain Plover (winter), rare, 0 to 40 individuals occasionally and Long-billed Curlew (spring & fall migration).

**Conservation Issues:** The most serious conservation issue is climate change induced increased drought and the loss (or diminishment) of a seasonal winter flooded wetland. This is a global issue, and of particular high threat to the intermountain west region of North America. There have also been issues recently with less water than in the past being pumped into the area to create loafing sites for Sandhill Cranes.



Long-billed Curlew by Mike Baird



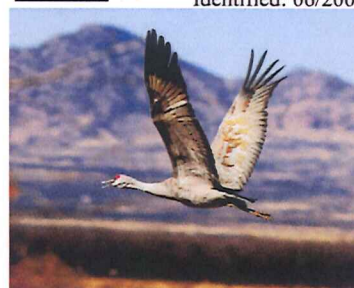
# Willcox Playa /Cochise Lakes IBA

Global IBA for Sandhill Crane



Size: 74 square miles, 47,343 acres

Identified: 06/2009 Global: 10/2011

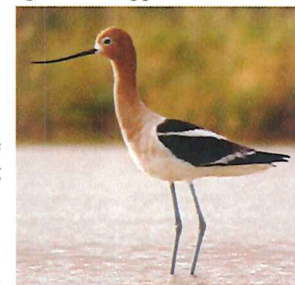


Sandhill Crane by Glenn Seplak

**Visiting this Site:** Much of this IBA is not open to the public, but birders can and should visit Cochise Lake which can be excellent for shorebirds. From Tucson, take I-10 east to Willcox and get off exit 340 and follow the signs to AZ 186. Cross the railroad tracks and continue 0.5 mile to the sign on the right for Twin Lakes Golf Course at Rex Allen Jr. Drive. Take this road 1.1 miles to the cattleguard at the entry to the lake. You can drive around the lake.

**Site Description:** The heart of this IBA is the massive Willcox Playa, a broad alkaline lakebed fringed with semi-desert grassland (primarily saltgrass and sacaton) and mesquite. The playa is seasonally flooded to a shallow depth. Outlying this playa are the satellite lakes/wetlands of Cochise Lakes (or aka Lake Cochise), alkali flats, and Willcox Playa Wildlife Area containing Crane Lake. The Playa itself is a former bombing range, and owned by the Department of Defense and administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It is not managed in anyway, and is posted no trespassing. On the upper east side of the playa is the Arizona Game and Fish Department managed Willcox Playa Wildlife Area, consisting of 555 acres.

**Birds:** Willcox Playa and Crane Lake, within the northern portion of the Sulphur Springs Valley of Southeast Arizona, supports the second largest over-wintering concentration of Sandhill Cranes in Arizona, typically 4,000 to 9,000 birds (White Water Draw is the area with the largest number of over-wintering cranes, 10,000 to 22,000 and increasing). The wetter period of the mid 1980s brought large increases in crane numbers, and since then numbers have been steadily increasing at both White Water Draw and the Willcox Playa/Crane Lake within the Valley. Both in spring and late summer the shorebirds can stop-over in very substantial numbers at both the playa and along Cochise Lakes. These in-migration shorebird species using the playa and Cochise Lakes, include: Wilson's Phalarope (April, May, July, Aug., Sept.), Willet (April), Least Sandpiper (April, Aug., Sept.), Western Sandpiper (April, Aug., Sept.), Long-billed Dowitcher (May, Sept.), Black-necked Stilt (July, Aug., Sept.), and American Avocet (July, Aug., Sept.). Small numbers of some shorebirds occasionally breed within the IBA, including American Avocet and rarely Snowy Plover. Ducks over-winter on the lakes in large flocks, primarily composed of American Wigeon,



American Avocet by S Fitzgerald



Northern Shoveler, and Green-winged Teal. In spring, March and April and again in fall, September and October, large numbers of waterfowl pass through and use Cochise Lakes, including: Ruddy Duck, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, and Cinnamon Teal.

**Conservation Issues:** The primary threat to the Willcox Playa/Lake Cochise is urban/suburban development surrounding the playa and the resulting concurrent increase in groundwater pumpage leading to declining groundwater levels. This would impact the taller riparian vegetation, potentially leading to die-offs of native riparian trees.



# eBirding Arizona's IBAs



## eBird



You can help conserve Arizona's native birds every time you visit one of Arizona's Important Bird Areas. The valuable online data portal eBird now includes the boundaries of all of Arizona's Important Bird Areas and by keeping track of the species and numbers of birds you encounter within these areas and entering them into eBird, you are contributing to a massive data set that can be used to manage and protect these special places.

To become a valuable asset to the Important Bird Area Program:

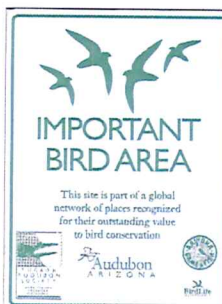
- Setup a free account with eBird at [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org).
- While birding an IBA, keep track of the species of birds you observe. Bring a checklist and keep track of the number of each species you encounter. Also record your exact location, time, and distance traveled.
- Submit your checklist to eBird. By listing ArizonaIBA as one of your observers, your data will be sent directly to the AZ Important Bird Area office. Birders will be recognized and credited for sharing their data with the Important Bird Area program.

### What Can You Do?

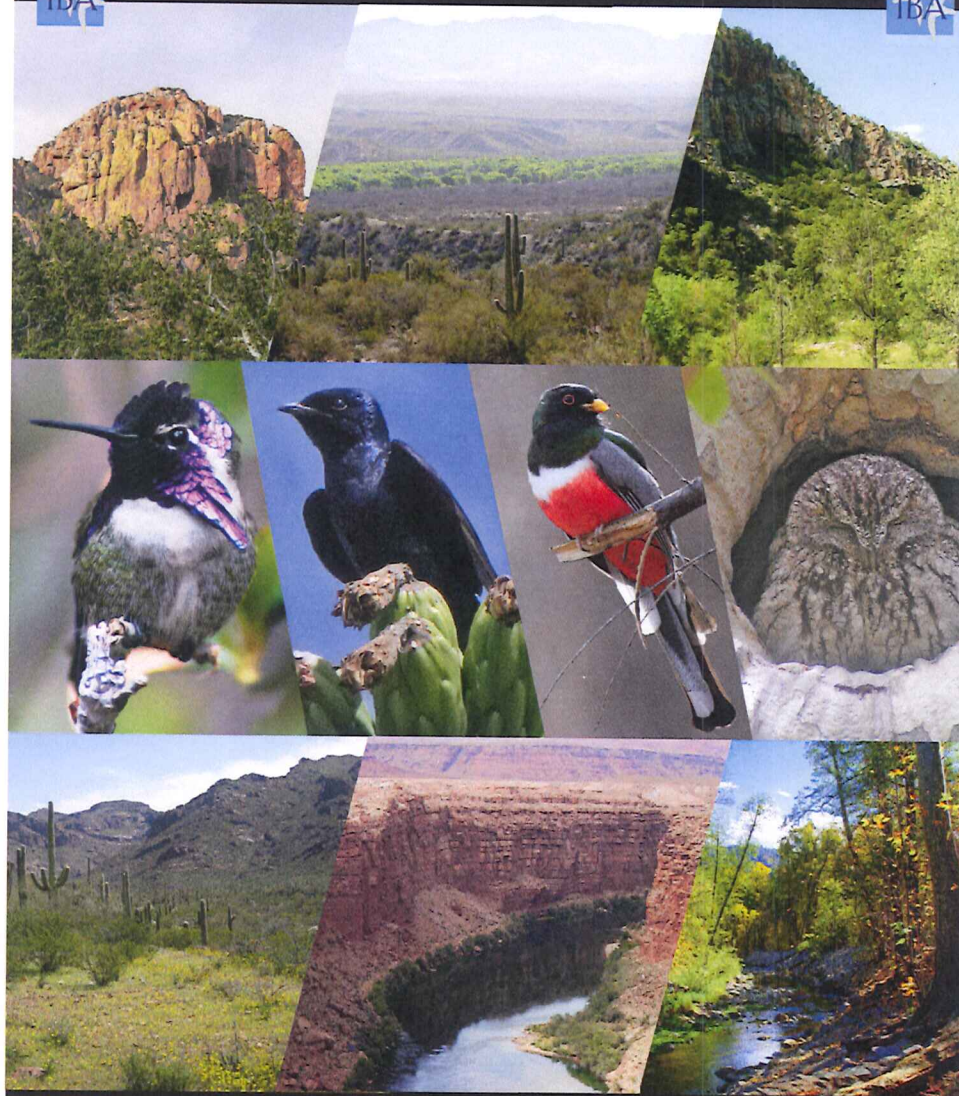
- Visit one of Arizona's Important Bird Areas and go birding, on your own or with friends!
- Promote awareness of these special areas to your friends, family, and community.
- Create an eBird account and start sharing your data with the Important Bird Area program.
- Volunteer as in Important Bird Area survey team member.

To find out what bird species and Important Bird Areas are of priority at this time, be sure and check out [www.aziba.org](http://www.aziba.org)

## eBird



The purpose of the Important Bird Areas Program is to identify a global network of sites that maintains the long-term viability of wild bird populations while engaging the public to conserve areas of critical habitat.



Front Cover (top to bottom, left to right) Appleton-Whittle Audubon Research Ranch, Lower San Pedro River, Gilbert Riparian Preserve, Yuma Clapper Rail, Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Spotted Owl, Organ Pipe N.M. Huachuca Mountains, Blue River, Buck Cover (top to bottom, left to right) Chiricahua Mountains, Lower San Pedro River, Sycamore Canyon, Costa's Hummingbird, Desert Purple Martin, Elegant Trogan, Whiskered Screech-Owl, Cabeza Prieta NWR, Marble Canyon, Lower Oak Creek

The Arizona Important Bird Area Program is largely supported by the generous support of Arizona Game and Fish through the Arizona Bird Conservation Initiative. Thank You!

