

Oak Creek Canyon Report

April 23, 2019

Leader: Dan Bohlmann

The weather was supposed to be cloudy with a good chance of rain but it turned out to be a pretty nice day. The first spot we stopped was at the Huckaby Trailhead parking lot to pick up typical chaparral birds. Things were surprisingly quiet at first as we wandered in a big circle around the area. Up in the sky we spotted a Raven, then a Turkey Vulture and a Harris Hawk. Finally we began hearing and then seeing a Scrub Jay, Ash-throated Flycatcher, House Finch, Lesser Goldfinch, Cactus Wren, Bewick's Wren and Gambel's Quail. We then began to see those species that were remaining silent, White-winged Dove, Eurasian-collared Dove, Great-tailed Grackle, Mockingbird, House Sparrow, and Blue Gray Gnatcatcher. So we had a total of 16 species in the area that was totally quiet at first.

The second spot we went was Indian Gardens and we ended up on a bridge that crossed Oak Creek just north of the Gardens. That's where we really hit the jackpot. Every tree was filled with Warblers, mainly male and female Yellow and Yellow-rumped Warblers and one Lucy's. In the creek was a beautiful pair of Common Mergansers, Robins bobbing around on the sides of the creek, Black Phoebes flitting from rocks to trees and a Hooded Oriole that came for a drink and posed nicely. A Summer Tanager dive bombed over our heads as he came in for a landing in an Ash tree. Overhead swirled a number of Northern-roughwinged Swallows. A Woodpecker was heard rattatating above us in a Cottonwood. It turned out to be a Downy. We crossed Oak Creek to the other side and found a Hummingbird on a nest which was identified as Black-chinned. And a little bird was scurrying around the ground which turned out to be a House Wren. So we had another 11 species here.

We then went to the Encinita Picnic Area which we found almost empty. I've never seen it anything but overflowing full, especially at lunch time. It must have been due to the lousy weather forecast. While we were eating our picnic lunch we were serenaded by a Spotted Towhee and a Bewicks Wren. We saw a few other birds that we had seen already so we decided to move on to our last spot.

The final place is really beautiful and special for hikers, swimmers, picnickers, history fans and birders. It is at one of the original 1880 homesteaders ranch at Red Rock Crossing on Oak Creek. Some of the old buildings are still there along with an old waterwheel mill. The big downside is that it costs \$11 a car to enjoy it and it's not covered by the Sedona or National Parks Senior Pass. We took in the shaded walkways along the creek and saw a lot of birds that we had seen already. We did see some new ones such as a Song Sparrow, a Bridled Titmouse and a Female Wilson's Warbler. The bird of the day showed up a few feet away from us which I originally thought was a black plastic bag hung in a tree but it took off flying and turned out to be a Common Black Hawk. So we had a total of 32 species but probably over a hundred birds and we didn't get rained on until we had almost made it back to the cars at the last spot.

Attendees were: Jim Consolloy, Jean Eddins, Cindy Rucker, Paul Doucette, Vera Markham, Carol Samson and Dan Bohlmann