

ARIZONA IS A BIRD-WATCHER'S DREAM STATE!

The state has its special Sonoran Desert and “backyard” birds such as Cactus Wren (the state bird), Curve-billed Thrasher, Abert’s (“A’-bear’s”) Towhee, Verdin, Gambel’s Quail, White-Winged Dove, Phainopepla and Gilded Flicker. But the state’s tremendous variety of habitats makes Arizona an important stopover during spring and fall migration for many, many species of birds — from ducks to shore birds, from warblers to raptors.

In the Phoenix area’s West Valley communities, bird-watching is a rewarding pastime at all times of the year. Several easily accessible and celebrated bird-watching sites beckon, ten of which are highlighted here. For excellent in-depth information on these sites and others visit www.birderfrommaricopa.com. For volunteer-guided, bird-watching outings in the West Valley — especially in fall, winter and early spring — to which all are welcome, visit www.sonoranaudubon.com



Curve-billed Thrasher



Burrowing Owl



Estrella Mountain Regional Park



CAUTION: The West Valley’s climate is very, very dry relative to other parts of the country and the sun, which shines all but about sixty days of the year, can be punishing. Therefore, even in cooler winter months on the relatively easy, level trails or walks that are highlighted here, hats and water are always necessary.

*Photos courtesy of Tommy De Bardeleben, Vera Markham,
George Wall, Joe Ford and Marceline Vandewater.*

WEST VALLEY BIRD WATCHING



Black-throated Sparrow



White-winged Dove



**NOW ENJOY THE WEST VALLEY'S EXCELLENT PEOPLE-FRIENDLY
BIRD-WATCHING SPOTS!**



Verdin



Phainopepla



Sage Thrasher



Snow Goose



Gilded Flicker



Gambel's Quail



Cactus Wren



Bald Eagle



- 1** **ARLINGTON WILDLIFE AREA [ARIZONA GAME & FISH], ARLINGTON:** Arlington School Rd. southeast corner at Desert Rose Rd; take the dirt road south; easy, level walking; look for rails, soras and bitterns in the marshy areas; ducks in open water; fields may yield wintering raptors, Sandhill Cranes and sparrows.
- 2** **BASLINE AND MERIDIAN WILDLIFE AREA, AVONDALE:** From Interstate 10, take 115th Ave south 5 miles. After the bridge over the Gila River, turn left toward Phoenix International Raceway (PIR) continuing on this road past the PIR entrance to the B&M parking area; easy walking on old paved roads past lakes, ponds, wetlands, riverbottom sand and scrub; very hot in summer months; Marsh birds — Clapper Rail for example — and waders, ducks, all sorts of migrants, raptors, sparrows, warblers and desert birds in all seasons.
- 3** **ESTRELLA MOUNTAIN REGIONAL PARK [MARICOPA COUNTY]:** From Interstate 10, south on Estrella Parkway to Vineyard; wide variety of desert birds and waterfowl; regular, seasonal guided walks at www.sonoranadubon.org. Park entrance fee.
- 4** **LAKESIDE PAVILION AT SUN CITY GRAND:** West on Route 60, south on Sunrise Blvd. to Remington Drive; easy walking around the Pavilion and ponds; ducks in winter.
- 5** **RECHARGE PONDS [SALT RIVER PROJECT], GLENDALE:** North on 107th Avenue from West Camelback Road; level walking around six ponds and access to the Agua Fria's riverbed; very hot in summer months; known for shorebirds, gulls, raptors, waterfowl and herons.
- 6** **ROBBINS BUTTE WILDLIFE AREA [AZ GAME & FISH], BUCKEYE:** Entry off Route 85 south of the Gila River. Birding farm fields from the car along the dirt entrance road can be fruitful; most desert areas are accessed on foot for easy to moderately difficult hikes; all the desert birds are here and wintering birds that favor farmland.
- 7** **THUNDERBIRD CONSERVATION PARK, GLENDALE:** 59th Ave. north of Route 101 past Arrowhead Lakes; early mornings before other park visitors arrive; most common desert species are found here. The several Arrowhead Lakes across 59th Avenue attract a wide variety of waterfowl in season; bring a scope if using the Thunderbird Viewing Blinds Park site.
- 8** **THE "THRASHER SITE", BUCKEYE:** From Interstate 10, Route 85 south to Baseline Road, west to the intersection with Salome Highway; world-renowned road side location for the elusive Le Conte's Thrasher and other desert southwestern thrashers — Bendire's, Crissal and Sage (in migration) — Black-throated Sparrow and common desert species.
- 9** **TRES RIOS OVERBANK WETLANDS, PHOENIX:** from Interstate 10, 91st Ave south to the City of Phoenix Water Department's Water Treatment Facility. This new, extensive wetland area is not to be missed! From small parking areas along 91st Avenue entry is on foot. Best to get a permit from Tres Rios personnel during business hours. For maps and Smartphone App go to: http://phoenix.gov/webcms/groups/internet/@inter/@dept/@wsd/documents/web_content/trmapparkinfo2013a.pdf. The public is invited to walk the 2.5 mile-long "overbank" wetlands which pass by several ponds hosting marsh birds, shorebirds and ducks. The larger, closed-to-the-public ponds to the north can be scanned for raptors including Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons. To the south, the Gila River bottomlands host songbirds, desert species and many migrants in season.
- 10** **WHITE TANK MOUNTAIN REGIONAL PARK [MARICOPA COUNTY]:** from Interstate 10, north on Cotton Lane to Olive Avenue, drive five miles west; from the 101 Freeway, take Olive Avenue west 14 miles. "Waterfall Canyon Trail" is an easy, one-mile hike including a fully handicapped accessible section; most desert birds including all the wrens — Cactus, Rock and Canyon — can be observed. Park entrance fee.