

ABA Donor Trip

Chiricahua Mountains and environs

South East Arizona.

With Jon Dunn and Paul Green. 22–28 July 2002.



Waiting for the Short-tailed Hawk at the Barfoot Lookout Tower

The ABA Southeast Arizona Donor Trip for Century Club members was planned and lead by Jon Dunn, tour leader and ABA Board Member, with logistical support from Paul Green, Executive Director (Chief staff member) from ABA headquarters in Colorado Springs, and Eng-Li Green, ABA Webmaster. The members of our group, totaling 11, came from around the USA and gathered during the afternoon of Monday 22 at the Hampton Inn on Tucson Blvd in Tucson, Arizona. (By the way, we have attached a corrected version of the attendance list so that you can contact your fellow group members.) Following an informal icebreaker, during which we all introduced

ourselves to the group, Jon outlined the activities for the coming week, and Paul talked a little about ABA. We had dinner at Finnegan's Restaurant and retired for an early start the next morning.

Tuesday: Miller Canyon, Spotted Owl, and on to Cave Creek Ranch.

Following a good night's sleep, we had our first birds of the day as we loaded the vehicles. These included a singing Cactus Wren in the palm tree above our heads. We headed west shortly after 7:00AM, south and east through Sierra Vista and on to Miller Canyon in the Huachuca Mountains, where we were treated to the spectacle of hummingbirds at

the Beattys' place. The checklist reveals the full range of species, and these included Violet-crowned, Blue-throated, Magnificent, and a hybrid Berryline. Our first Mexican Jays were around the orchard and apiary of Tom and Edie Beatty. These birds were of the duller Arizona race *Aphelocoma ultramarina arizonae*. We hiked up the steep and rocky Miller Canyon Trail with hopes of catching at least a glimpse of the Flame-colored Tanager that Jon, Paul, and Eng-Li had seen two days before. On the way we had our first good looks at Red-faced Warblers feasting on caterpillars in the maples as we were serenaded by Western Wood-Pewee, Greater Pewee and Dusky-



George, Laura, Maxine and the rest of us, heading up Miller Canyon

this sleepy bird and then, from the same location, saw a pair of Hermit Thrushes of the larger, paler southwest mountain race *Catharus guttatus auduboni*.

Our checklist details the other birds that we saw on the hike. After a further session at the three hummer feeder stations we headed south and east in the vehicles, stopping for gas and more in Douglas, before skirting south and then east of the Chiricahua Mountains. We arrived in Portal in the early evening and had our first sight of Cave Creek Ranch where we were greeted by Terri and Larry Gates, our hosts for the week.

Wednesday: South Fork, Cave Creek, and Elegant Trogons.

capped Flycatcher. We heard and saw both Plumbeous Vireo and the southwestern form of Hutton's Vireo, *Vireo huttoni stephensi*. A wait by the fruiting bush that the Flame-colored Tanager had been feeding on proved "fruitless". Fortune was on Paul's side for, a little upstream, he was able to relocate the Spotted Owl that Tom Beatty had found for us two days before. We had excellent views of

We entered a bit of a routine for the next four days: birding first thing, resting during the heat of the afternoon, and birding in the late afternoon, and sometimes owling in the evening. Our dinners and breakfasts with Terri and Larry were memorable, both for the food and the company. On Wednesday our birding was along South Fork of Cave Creek. Here we observed an interesting



One of our Elegant Trogons by the river crossing on South Fork

interaction between a pair of Elegant Trogons: an adult and a bird of the previous year displayed much chasing and vocalization. The bird shown above is the adult, having no white spot on the face. As we walked on beyond the parking lot, we saw some more warblers, including Black-throated Gray. In the parking lot, some great views of a Painted Redstart.

Thursday: Barfoot Park and Short-tailed Hawk.

On Thursday the group, minus Paul who had returned to Tucson to pick up Ann Stone, ascended the mountains to Onion Saddle, Rustler Park and Barfoot Park. Here, we found a nice assortment of warblers, including Olive (now in its own family) and Grace's. At the appointed time we ventured out into the meadow and were rewarded eventually with views of a light morph Short-tailed Hawk. This individual has been spending its summer here. Although our



Our first dinner at Cave Creek Ranch, on Tuesday evening



Our group walks along South Fork tracking the calls of the Elegant Trogon

views were distant, we did see it in display flight. There are only a handful of records of this species for southeast Arizona, and all are from the high mountains.



Words of advice in Paradise

In the evening, after another excellent dinner in Cave Creek Ranch, we set out to see if we could find any owls on the premises, and had great views of Western Screech Owl down by the creek.

Friday: Paradise Road, State Line Road, Rodeo and the Animas Valley, Cassin's and Botteri's Sparrows.

Following breakfast at Cave Creek Ranch, we headed a little west and then north on the Paradise

Road, where we saw Ash-throated and Brown-crested Flycatchers. Some good ear-work by Jon found us the Black-chinned Sparrow too. We moved ahead to the rather idyllic Paradise Cemetery, home to a Say's Phoebe, and then back down to the State Line Road. Searching for Bendire's Thrasher, that we were never to see we became very familiar with the streets of Rodeo. Though Bendire's Thrasher eluded us, we had good views of Phainopepla. We had to work a little harder to catch a glimpse of Lucy's Warbler, but the Pyrrhuloxia in the same bush was much easier to see. We all had

great views of the flying horse in the gallery, called Horse Feathers, before driving south toward the Animas Valley and Gray Ranch, and a different set of grassland habitats in search of Cassin's Sparrow and Botteri's Sparrow. We were not disappointed, and were treated to a great display of virtuosity by the Cassin's Sparrow, and we had good views of both species. In the distance too we caught sight of a Lesser Nighthawk identified, as Jon taught us, by the indistinct wingbar of the juvenile.

A pleasant routine for us all was the daily checklist. Sometimes we did this around dinner at Cave Creek, sometimes by the feeders, and on one occasion in Paul and Eng-Li's cabin. Our sessions around the feeders at the Cave Creek Ranch brought us good views of various other species. Notable among these were Arizona Woodpecker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Band-tailed Pigeon, and Violet-crowned, Calliope and Blue-throated Hummingbirds.

Saturday: Rodeo, Walker House and Stewart Campground: Juniper Titmouse.

This morning we started early and birded around Rodeo before returning to the Portal Peak Lodge for our breakfast. Today's highlight was undoubtedly our visit to the



Being serenaded by Cassin's Sparrow in the Animas Valley

Walker House, where we spent some restful hours studying the hummingbirds. Jon focussed on showing us the differences between juvenile and females of the commoner species, including Broad-tailed, Rufous, Calliope and Black-chinned. We also got to see the Juniper Titmouse that had been reported. Some of us were diverted by the tarantula that was prowling the grounds, and a menagerie of various invertebrates and snakes that had been gathered by a film crew in the neighboring house.

On Saturday we had dinner at the Portal Peak Lodge and moved on to the Stewart Campground, where we found the Whiskered Screech Owl.

Sunday: Barfoot, Wilcox and back to Tucson.

On Sunday morning we bade farewell to our hosts, Terri and Larry Gates and the Cave Creek Ranch, and headed back toward Rustler Park. We took the trail up to the Barfoot Lookout Tower at around 8900 feet, and spent around two and half hours looking for the Short-tailed Hawk that some had missed on Thursday. The hawk did not show until after we had left (the British birder we passed on our way down did see it). Our hike of three-quarters of a mile did turn up several Hermit



Warblers (early fall migrants) and another Red-faced Warbler, and many Yellow-eyed Juncos. As we searched, some of us saw a small speck turn into a Zone-tailed Hawk and then soar right past us, while the White-throated Swifts swept quickly around us.

Our group then drove on to Wilcox to take advantage of the lakes by the golf course. Here we were treated to some great views of shorebirds, with Jon giving some valuable lessons on identification. Western and Baird's Sandpipers were very cooperative, as were the Wilson's Phalarope. Other notable birds at the water included some magnificent Eared Grebe, Semipalmated Plover, Stilt Sandpiper and Black Tern. White-faced Ibis, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and Long-billed Dowitchers completed the scene. From here we worked north to

Tucson and back to our hotel. We completed our week with dinner at the Old Pueblo Grill and a final checklist.

We have enclosed a checklist that serves as a record of the complete list of the species seen by the group.

We have posted this account, and extra photographs, on the ABA website. To take a look, please go to www.americanbirding.org/cc/cctrseaz.htm

Jon and Paul thank you all for joining. We greatly enjoyed spending time birding with you. We look forward to seeing you again at an American Birding Association event, and thank you for your past and future support of our organization.

