

**Monsoon Magic Birding Tour in Southeast Arizona
with Ken Blankenship / East West Birding Tours
and the Atlanta Audubon Society
6-11 August 2019
Daily Tour Itinerary**

LODGING QUICK-VIEW

Tuesday 6 August – Arrival Date; Holiday Inn Express – Tucson airport

Wednesday 7 August – Holiday Inn Express – Tucson airport

Thursday 8 August & Friday 9 August – Comfort Inn – Sierra Vista

Saturday 10 August – Holiday Inn Express – Tucson airport

Sunday 11 August – Departure Date [no hotel]

DAY “0”

Tuesday 6 August

- Ken will meet your group with our bird-mobile and help get everyone and their things loaded. We will use a large passenger van with 4 benches; the rear-most bench will be used for our luggage and water cooler.
- We will head to our first base of operations for 2 nights, the Holiday Inn Express – Tucson Airport. For anyone arriving early/late, the hotel provides free shuttle service.
- We will have lunch at a local favorite: Tucson Tamale Company
- We *may* have time for a quick birding venture mid-day in the Tucson area, depending on how many members of our group arrive and by what time of day.
- Possible birding spots: Sweetwater Wetlands, Agua Caliente Park
- In the evening, we will most likely do a “relaxed, casual” delivery dinner at the hotel, as everyone will be pretty tired and worn out from travel.

DAY 1: Sonoran Desert to Montane Conifer Forest

Wednesday 7 August

- We’ll meet outside the hotel at 6:15am, and be on the road by 6:30am. This itinerary begins just east of Tucson in beautiful Sonoran desert at the Saguaro National Park East Unit. Here we’ll look for birds of this special habitat, with highlights including: Gilded Flicker, Gambel’s Quail, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Greater Roadrunner, Anna’s Hummingbird, Cassin’s Sparrow, Verdin, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Pyrrhuloxia, Gila Woodpecker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Curve-billed Thrasher, Cactus Wren, Phainopepla, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Canyon Towhee, Black-throated Sparrow, and more.
- Next we’ll stroll around Agua Caliente Park (unless we visit on DAY 0), a few miles to the north. Here we hope to find some birds typical of riparian scrub and open mesquite/palm habitat: Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Vermilion Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Bewick’s Wren, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Anna’s Hummingbird, Lucy’s Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Bell’s Vireo (“Arizona”), Hooded Oriole, Abert’s Towhee, Song Sparrow (*fallax* group), and more.
- For the second half of the day, we will ascend high up into the Santa Catalina Mountains to Rose Canyon Lake and Mt. Lemmon, including a stop in the town of Summerhaven for lunch. Highlights among many targets along the way include: Painted Redstart, Red-faced Warbler, Steller’s Jay, Mexican Jay, Hutton’s Vireo, Violet-green Swallow, Band-tailed Pigeon, White-throated Swift, Rivoli’s Hummingbird, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Arizona Woodpecker, Greater Pewee, Olive Warbler, Pygmy Nuthatch, Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Cordilleran Flycatcher,

Western Wood-Pewee, Virginia's Warbler, Grace's Warbler, Spotted Towhee, Yellow-eyed Junco, Zone-tailed Hawk, Mountain Chickadee, Plumbeous Vireo, Hepatic Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, and more.

- We'll all be tired from a full day of birding, so we'll get back to the hotel around 3-4pm to allow some down time before a group dinner at the famous "Mi Nidito" Mexican restaurant in Tucson.

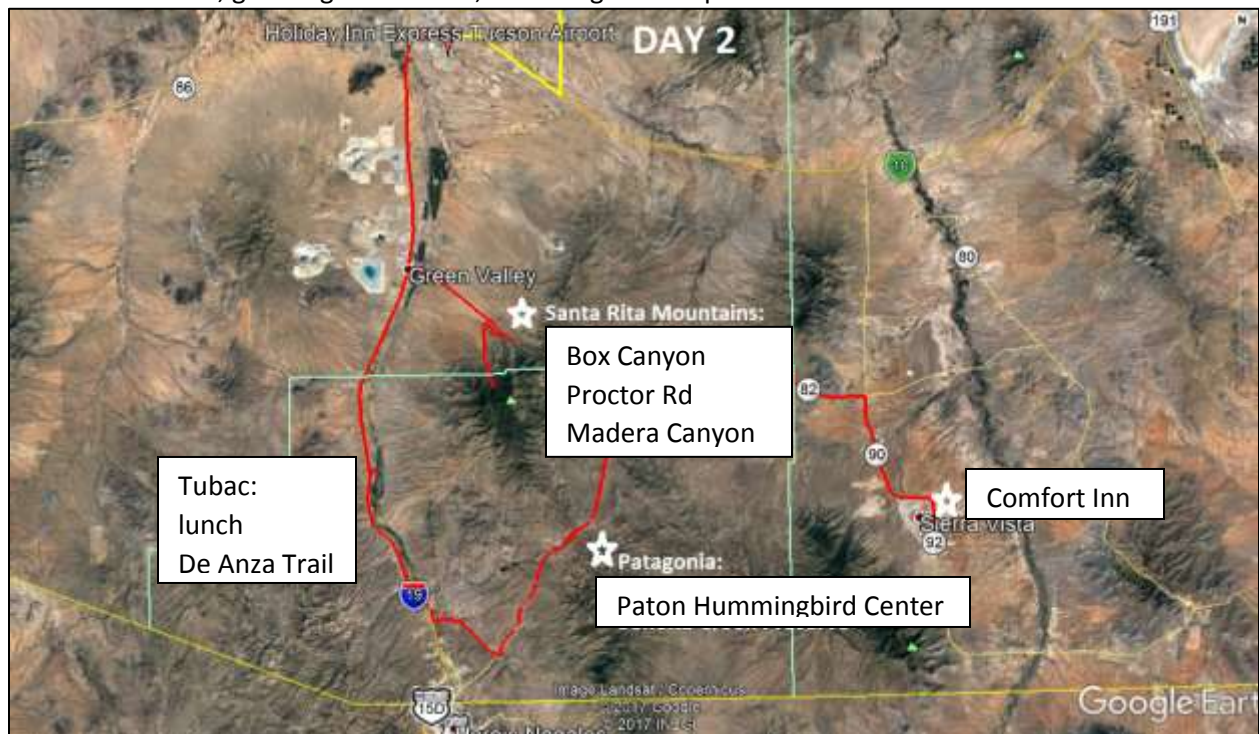


DAY 2: Santa Rita Mountains, De Anza Trail, & Paton Center for Hummingbirds

Thursday 8 August

- We'll need to have the group checked-out, the van packed, and be on the road by 6:30am.
- We'll start off with a bit of a drive – about 45 minutes – but it's well worth it! We'll be heading directly for world class birding at the infamous Box Canyon, Proctor Rd, and Madera Canyon areas in the beautiful Santa Rita Mountains.
- First we'll make a stop in the mesquite grasslands outside the canyons to hear and see some specialty sparrows singing and perhaps even skylarking: Cassin's Sparrow, Botteri's Sparrow, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Black-throated Sparrow, and a few others.
- We'll continue our Santa Ritas adventure by exploring Box Canyon. This rich habitat – a blend of rocky desert and a well-watered riparian corridor – hosts many species of interest, some already mentioned for Mt. Lemmon, but some that would be new: Varied Bunting, Five-striped Sparrow, Scott's Oriole, Cassin's Kingbird, Hooded Oriole, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Bell's Vireo ("Arizona"), Verdin, Blue Grosbeak, and much more.
- Up next, we'll explore the easy, paved trails around Proctor Rd. Our main target here is Black-capped Gnatcatcher, plus many species mentioned above for Box Canyon and the grasslands.
- We'll also visit the amazing feeder station at the [Santa Rita Lodge](#), providing close-up views and great photo ops of birds such as: Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse, Arizona Woodpecker, Acorn Woodpecker, Hepatic Tanager, Wild Turkey ("Gould's"), Lesser Goldfinch, House Finch, Rivoli's Hummingbird, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Black-headed Grosbeak, and more.
- From there, we'll head back to the interstate and then south to have lunch at the Tubac Coffee Shop and Deli (great sammies, ice cream, smoothies, etc.!).

- It will be pretty hot and muggy, but if a pair of Rose-throated Becards returns to nest for a third straight year to the nearby De Anza Trail on the Santa Cruz River, we'll make a foray to enjoy these US rarities. Other birds we may encounter include Tropical Kingbird, Thick-billed Kingbird, Vermilion Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, Lucy's Warbler, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and more.
- We will then begin the trek over to Sierra Vista for the second half of our tour. Perhaps "some" folks will choose to take a siesta on the way. ☺
- About halfway along our journey (after +/- 1.25 hours of driving) we will stop at [Tucson Audubon's Paton Center for Hummingbirds](#) in the town of Patagonia. There should be 5-6 species of hummingbirds here, all mentioned previously *except* the star of the show at this special site: Violet-crowned Hummingbird! The feeding stations here should also provide more views of some of the species mentioned for Santa Rita Lodge, plus: Inca Dove, White-winged Dove, Abert's Towhee, Gila Woodpecker, Gambel's Quail, Pyrrhuloxia, Northern Cardinal, etc. A brief stroll down Blue Haven Rd (parallels Sonoita Creek) may produce Gray Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Thick-billed Kingbird, Yellow Warbler, Varied Bunting, and more.
- We'll arrive in Sierra Vista in early evening, hopefully after everyone got another good nap during the second half of the drive. ☺ We'll decide at that time whether to check-in to our next hotel first, go straight to dinner, etc. Get good sleep – we'll start a bit later tomorrow!



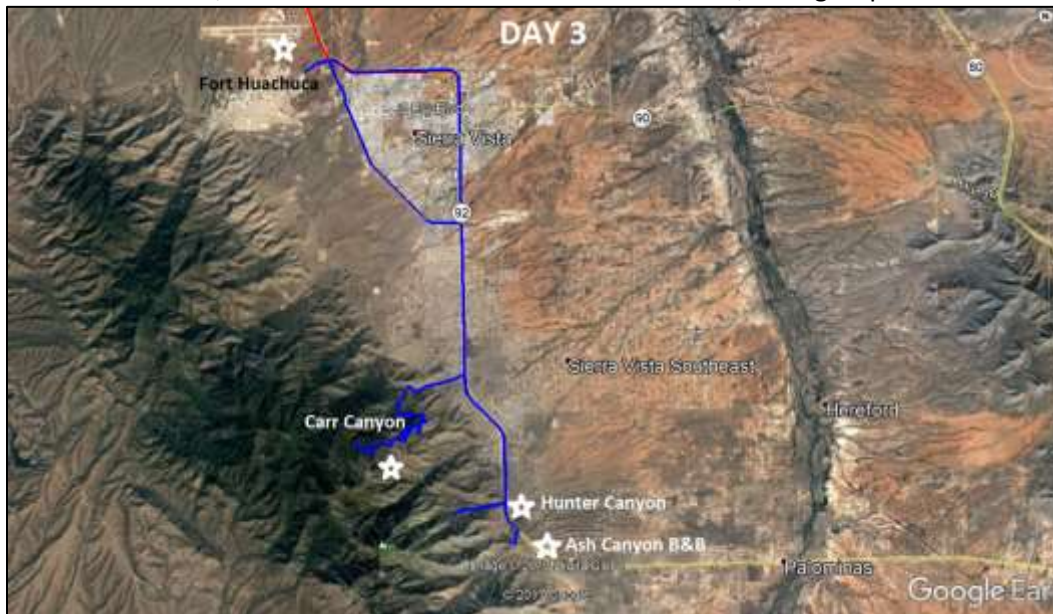
DAY 3: Canyons of the southern Huachuca Mountains

Friday 9 August

- We'll meet outside the hotel at 6:30am, and be on the road by 6:45am. We have the luxury of slightly later morning times because Sierra Vista is right at the doorstep of the Huachucas!
- We'll head straight down to Miller Canyon for a nice morning hike and some great birds! This is a moderately challenging hike, mostly due to a rocky/uneven trail. However, it's only about 1.25 miles or so up to the traditional areas for Rufous-capped Warbler or roosting "Mexican" Spotted

Owls (*both rare, but sometimes reliable here*), and the morning sun will be at our backs on the way up. There are some nice birds over the first 2/3 of the hike, which is through successional habitat that burned in 2011: Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Spotted Towhee, Scott's Oriole, etc. Possible in the higher canyon: Buff-breasted Flycatcher, Band-tailed Pigeon, Red-faced Warbler, "Mountain" Pygmy-Owl, Painted Redstart, Canyon Wren, "Brown-throated" House Wren, Northern Goshawk, "Mexican" Brown Creeper, Rivoli's Hummingbird, Hepatic Tanager, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, and much more. We will also spend some time enjoying the hummingbird feeding station at the Beatty's Guest Ranch.

- Our next stop will actually depend on specific rarities, and we will fine-tune our itinerary accordingly. At any rate, our mid-day stop will include picnic lunch and a medium-to-easy hike.
 - For example, if a Tufted Flycatcher once again takes up residence in upper Carr Canyon, we would grab sandwiches and drive up there for a picnic lunch and search for that bird as well as many species mentioned earlier for Mt. Lemmon and Madera Canyon.
 - Or, if a White-eared Hummingbird, Berylline Hummingbird, or Plain-capped Starthroat were to show up at the Ramsey Canyon Inn, we would head there.
- In the afternoon, we'll spend an hour or so relaxing with Mary Jo Ballator at the Ash Canyon Bird Sanctuary. She will have tons of hummers, including many species mentioned previously and her special star of the show: Lucifer Humminbird. She has many types of seed and suet feeders, too, so we should be in for a nice show.
- After that, we'll head back to the hotel for down time, then group dinner.



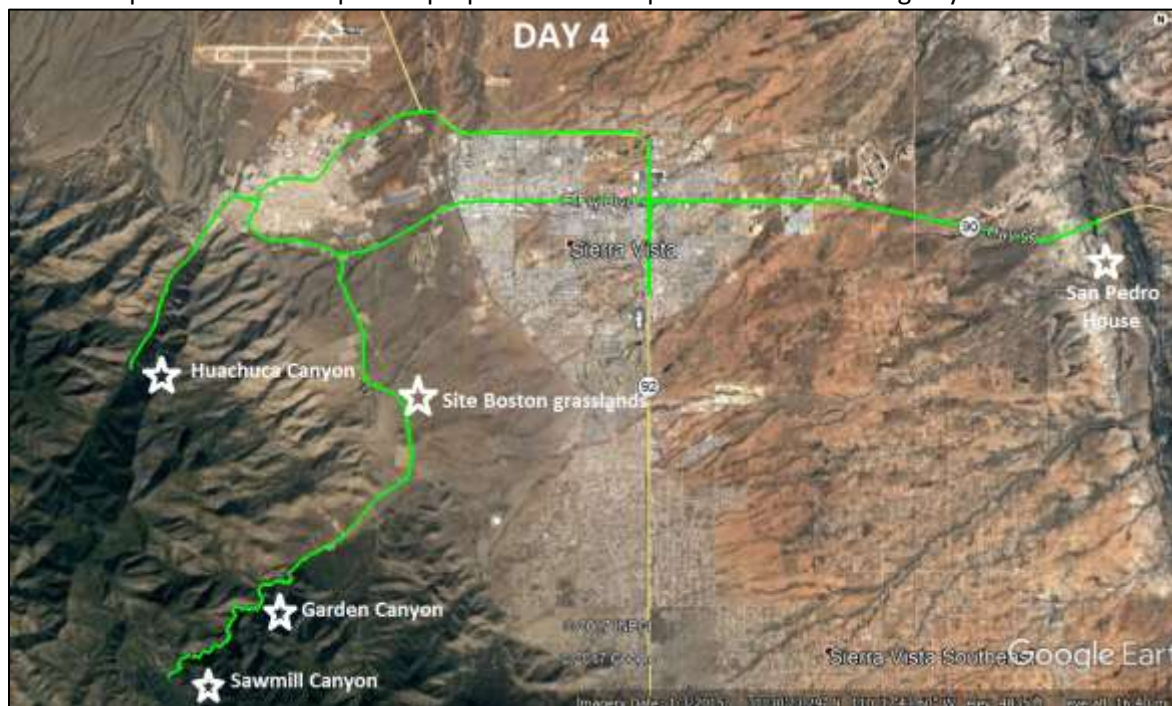
DAY 4: Fort Huachuca: Canyons and Grasslands

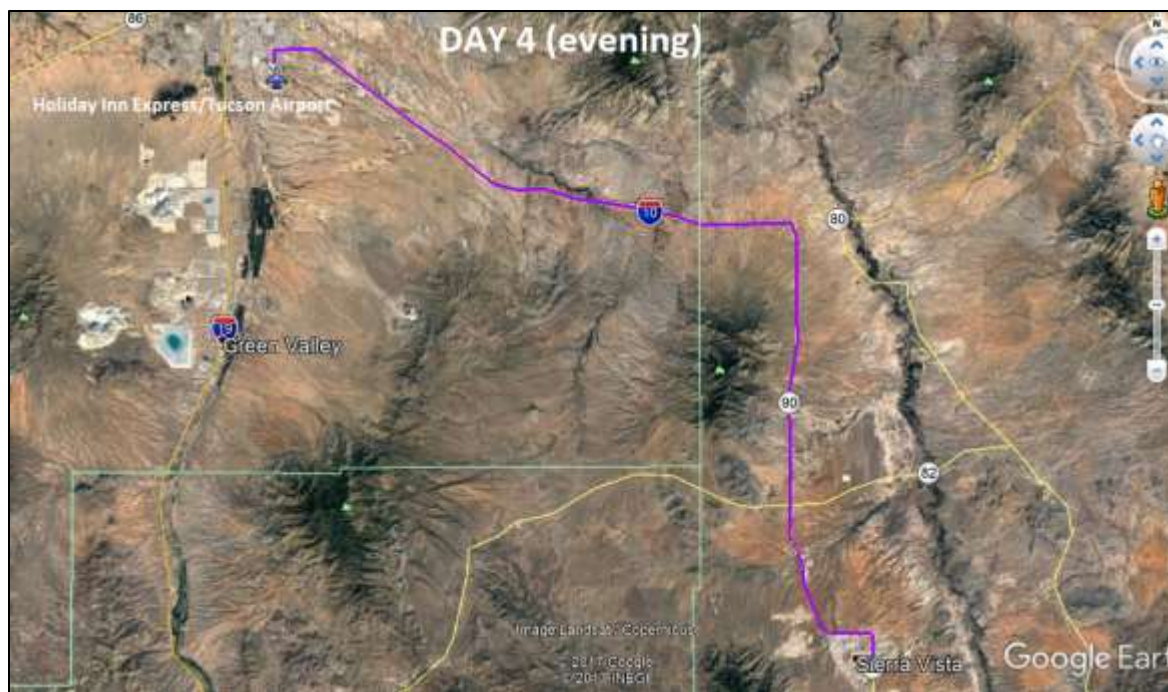
Saturday 10 August

- We'll head out earlier today, at 6:30am, and go to the Van Deman Gate of Fort Huachuca. Everyone will go inside and fill out a short form, then present their ID to get a Fort Huachuca pass made up. The whole process will take 30-45 minutes as long as there isn't a wait. While we wait for everyone to have their passes made, we'll see what birds we can scrounge up in the mesquite scrub near the visitor control building.
- On this last full day of birding, we'll enjoy more spectacular Huachuca Mountain birding with a side of history! The history of Fort Huachuca dates all the way back to the Indian Wars of the late 19th century, although today it is an active Army base specializing in military intelligence methods and training.
- The canyons we will explore may include Huachuca Canyon, Garden Canyon, and Sawmill Canyon. Overall, the birds here will have a very similar feel to Madera Canyon, but with much less traffic (human and vehicle!). Another nice feature of all of these canyons is that the hiking is

very mellow, with little (and very gradual) elevation gain. The density of nesting Elegant Trogons in Huachuca Canyon was striking in summer 2018, a rare Sinaloa Wren took up residence in Huachuca Canyon in July 2018... there was a Flame-colored Tanager in Garden Canyon for several weeks in May-June 2017, so who knows what we'll find!

- We will also make a stop in the Site Boston grassland area. Here we have a chance for Scaled Quail, Blue Grosbeak, Botteri's Sparrow, Cassin's Sparrow, Say's Phoebe, Phainopepla, "Lilian's" Eastern Meadowlark, Loggerhead Shrike, Ash-throated Flycatcher, etc.
- If time, weather, temperature, and other conditions are favorable, we may make a short visit to one more riparian hotspot: San Pedro House on the San Pedro River; this would offer another solid chance at species such as: Gray Hawk, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Zone-tailed Hawk, Blue Grosbeak, Gila Woodpecker, Botteri's Sparrow, Cassin's Sparrow, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe, Abert's Towhee, Song Sparrow (*fallax* group), Summer Tanager, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Cassin's Kingbird, Inca Dove, Common Ground-Dove, Pyrrhuloxia, Gambel's Quail, and so on.
- At the end of our birding day, we'll hit the road to head back to Tucson and the Holiday Inn Express near the airport to prepare for our departures the following day.





DAY 5: Departure and/or Morning Walk at the Sonoran Desert Museum

Sunday 11 August

- If your departure is early in the day, the hotel will have its shuttle operating early enough to get you to the terminal for check-in.
- If we have folks who are not departing until later in the day, or are staying behind for additional days on their own, we will be offering a *fairly quick* morning excursion to the impressive [Sonoran Desert Museum](#) on the west side of Tucson. Along with enclosures featuring many animals typical of this unique ecoregion, there is an extensive interior museum with interpretive exhibits, an aviary, and incredible plantings of native cacti and other desert plants.
- We would leave with plenty of time to get back to the hotel to retrieve luggage and get you to the airport for your departing flight(s).