

Southwest Wings Birding and Nature Festival 2011

Local Birding on Your Own

Carr Canyon - 7 miles south on HWY 92 from Fry Blvd/HWY 90, turn west on Carr Canyon Rd – 8.5 miles to the campgrounds in pine forest. Unpaved, switchback road. One of the most reliable localities for Buff-breasted Flycatcher as well as other high-altitude birds such as Red-faced Warbler, Red Crossbill, Yellow-eyed Junco, Olive Warbler, Pygmy Nuthatch and Steller's Jay.

Coronado National Memorial – Turn south from HWY 92 16 miles south of Sierra Vista. All of the common Madrean Woodland birds such as Acom Woodpecker, Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse and Montezuma Quail are found here along with mammals such as White-tailed Deer, White-nosed Coati and Javelina.

Garden Canyon – South end of Fort Huachuca, west end of Sierra Vista. Enter main gate at Fry Blvd. (drivers will need to show proof of insurance, vehicle registration and driver's license), continue on main road 2 miles, then follow the signs directing you to Garden Canyon. The upper picnic area offers great, easy birding: Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Painted Redstart and Elegant Trogon are regular here in season. At the end of the road (which becomes dirt after the Upper Picnic Area, the Sawmill Canyon Trail continues to climb into Pine forest. Garden Canyon is also legendary for butterfly and dragonfly enthusiasts. The fort's other attractions include Native American rock art and a military history museum.

Hummers in Ash Canyon – Take HWY 92 about 12 miles south of Sierra Vista, 0.7 miles past mile marker 332 to Turkey Track Road. Turn right on Turkey Track and follow it about 1/2 mile (curves left, then right) to the fence across the road. You may park in the clearing to the left. The viewing area with chairs is at the west end of Mary Jo Ballator's B&B. Fee.

Leslie Canyon National Wildlife Refuge - Located on the edge of the Swisshelm Mountains 16 miles north of Douglas on Leslie Canyon Road, or 11 miles (unpaved road) east of McNeal on Davis Road. This narrow desert canyon contains Leslie Creek, a stream supporting rare and protected native plants, fish, and frogs. The perennial water amidst Chihuahuan desert thornscrub and grassland attracts a tremendous variety of birds, including Violet-crowned Hummingbirds, Black capped Gnatcatchers, Lucy's Warblers, Rufous-crowned Sparrows, and Varied Buntings. Abide by the regulatory signs because portions of the refuge are closed to public entry to protect the habitat of threatened and endangered species. The roadway continues through the refuge to Rucker Canyon in the nearby Chiricahua Mountains, where camping is available. No fee.

Patagonia – Sonoita Creek Nature Conservancy Preserve – On Pennsylvania Ave north of HWY 82. One hour west of Sierra Vista, this lush riparian area provides habitat for over 200 species of birds. The nearby Roadside Rest Area on Hwy 82 is another spot to visit. Carefully cross the highway and walk along the fence marking private land along Sonoita Creek. Rose-throated Becards have nested in the sycamores here in recent years. Fee.

Paton's of Patagonia – located 1 ¼ miles southeast of the Preserve Visitor Center on Blue Haven Rd, this is definitely the place to see hummingbirds in Patagonia. The Paton yard is open 7 days a week from dawn to dusk. Donation suggested.

Patagonia Lake State Park - located 13 miles southwest of Patagonia - has recently added the Sonoita Creek Natural Area to its attractions. The area boasts shorebirds, flycatchers, and even a trogon or two. You can rent a boat to see the area, take the trail around the lake, or take advantage of a guided pontoon boat trip. Park entrance fee is \$5 per car up to 4 people. Overnight full-hookup camping is available.

Patagonia Butterfly Garden- of the 700 butterfly species you can see in North America, over 200 can be seen in Patagonia. The open butterfly garden is in the Patagonia Town Park. August is an excellent time to visit.

Ramsey Canyon Nature Conservancy Preserve – 6 miles south of Fry Blvd/HWY 90 in Sierra Vista, turn west and drive 4 miles to the end of Ramsey Canyon Rd. This 300 acre property in the middle elevations of the canyon provides excellent birding opportunities. Famous for its hummingbirds (including Magnificent, Blue-throated and White-eared), but offers even more. Look for Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Painted Redstart, Elegant Trogon, Arizona Woodpecker and Spotted Towhee. Fee

Rancho Gulag - Free Guided Walks along the San Pedro River and through variety of habitats. The Area includes a Burrowing Owl relocation site and wildlife enhancement projects. The area is private land open only during these walks.

Walks begin at 8 am until April 1 then go to 7 am until June 1. Walks are suspended during the summer nesting season and begin again the 15th of August at 7am. The walk covers about 3 miles and usually takes about three hours. The terrain is flat and trails are cleared.

10663 Hwy 92 in Palominas. The Hwy 92 entry is on Google Maps title: Palominas Bird Walk Entry.

San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge - Located adjacent to the Republic of Mexico 16 miles (unpaved road) east of Douglas along Geronimo Trail Road (15th Street). A mixture of desert upland and scattered wetlands provide habitats for at least 293 bird species. This is a good place to find Northern Beardless Tyrannulets, Tropical Kingbirds, Bell's Vireos, Yellow-breasted Chats, and Varied Buntings. It is the only place in the United States to see Yaqui chub, Yaqui topminnow, Yaqui catfish, and Yaqui beautiful shiner - all rare and protected native fish. The refuge also protects the San Bernardino Ranch National Historic Site, including the beautifully restored 1884 Slaughter Ranch (\$5 entry fee). The entire refuge is open to walk-in traffic only, during daylight hours every day.

San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area - San Pedro House Visitor Center on Hwy 90, 7 miles west of Hwy 90/Hwy 80 intersection. Additional access points include Hereford Road, Charleston Road and Hwy 92 at Palominas. Holy Trinity Monastery, adjacent to the NCA at the town of St. David, invites birders to walk its 1.3 mile trail around ponds fed by artesian springs.

Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area - Located southwest of McNeal at the end of Coffman Road south from Davis Road. Operated by Arizona Game and Fish Department, this is the largest remaining wetland in the southern Sulphur Springs Valley and provides important wintering habitat for Sandhill Cranes and a variety of waterfowl. During summer, the mix of desert grassland and wetlands are good places to see "Mexican" mallards and a variety of waterbirds, raptors, sparrows, and other migratory birds. During the summer monsoon season, the night-time chorus of amphibians can be very diverse and extremely loud. Undeveloped camping is available. No fee.