

New Mexico Three-day Post Conference Tour

Leaders: Dave Krueper and Jon Dunn

Sunday through Tuesday, August 25th to 27th

25 August (Sunday)

After check-out and pick up of pre-ordered Grab and Go breakfasts, we will assemble at 5:00 am in the New Mexico Ballroom to organize seating and luggage into the vans for our first day of the tour. It will be a long 4 to 5-hour drive to Carlsbad, with some stops for birding as we go. There will be the opportunity to enjoy the scenic shortgrass prairies of eastern New Mexico along the way. Late morning visiting Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge near Roswell should be pleasant. We hope to view large numbers of south-bound migrant waterfowl and shorebirds as well as lingering summer breeders and residents such as Scaled Quail, Northern Bobwhite, Greater Roadrunner, Snowy Plover, and possibly a late interior Least Tern. This is the prime season for wandering colonial waterbirds such as Roseate Spoonbill, Little Blue Heron, Tricolored Heron, and Reddish Egret; all very rare in the interior Southwest. Warning, the mosquitoes will probably be out in force so be prepared with repellent and patience. After our visit to Bitter Lake, we will have a late lunch in Roswell.

Back on the road, this field trip continues south to Carlsbad where, we may be able to get down to Carlsbad Caverns National Park to view the bat exodus and possibly Cave Swallows and Black-chinned Sparrows which breed there (leader discretion). The caverns proper do not provide a great deal of habitat for migrants, but our goal is to scour the hillsides for what residents may be around. Maybe there will be Cactus Wren and the *celsum* subspecies of Curve-billed Thrasher. Then, it is a short drive back to Carlsbad, where we will check in to our hotel and have a group dinner in town. Night in Carlsbad.

26 August (Monday)

After breakfast and checkout, we are off to Rattlesnake Springs and Washington Ranch to the south of Carlsbad for riparian and Chihuahuan Desert birding in one of the most productive desert vagrant traps in New Mexico. One could spend all day here exploring the cottonwood and willow gallery forest in search of early migrants; Gray Hawks, Vermilion Flycatcher, late Lucy's Warbler, Bell's Vireo and Painted and Varied Buntings, plus many more. This patch has hosted one of the two New Mexico records of Piratic Flycatcher in the past, and so who knows what we might find. After a quick lunch in Carlsbad, we are off again toward Cloudcroft in the Sacramento Mountains to the north and east. There will be several stops along the way, but we will also want to spend time in the higher elevations of the Sacramento Mountains searching for Evening Grosbeak, Warbling Vireo and possibly Red-faced Warbler. Toward sunset, we will descend from the high elevations down to Alamogordo ("fat cottonwood" in Spanish) with views of White Sands National Monument toward the west. After checking in to the hotel, we will then have dinner nearby. Night in Alamogordo.

27 August (Tuesday)

After breakfast, it is off to saline ponds to the west of Holloman to look for migrant shorebirds and any remaining Interior Snowy Plovers (breeders at this location). Skirting the White Sands Missile Range to the west, we'll drive southwest toward Las Cruces and then north to Percha Dam State Park for other riparian specialists and migrants; Great Kiskadee, Common Black Hawk, Prairie Warbler and Carolina Wren have been found here in the recent past. If we have time, we might target Elephant

Butte Lake (Sabine's Gull is nearly annual here in the fall) or Bosque del Apache NWR on the return to Albuquerque (leader discretion depending on recent sightings). That evening, we will have a farewell dinner and checklist session to close out the trip. Some folks may be able to fly out in the evening if flights are available.

Return Time: 5-6 PM

Room for 16 participants in two vans

Cost: \$350

Restroom facilities: yes

Difficulty level: Easy but with great variety of elevation and with potentially warm temperatures.

(Could be in the 90's at lower elevations.)

WFO Field Trip includes vans, gas, insurance for vans and field trip leaders. Field trip participants are responsible for food, hotel accommodation, and preferred snacks. Water will be available to refill participants' water bottles. After signing up for this field trip, participants will receive an email with phone numbers for hotel rooms along the way and at the airport if you are staying the last night in Albuquerque.