

SUNDAY FIELD TRIPS

Sunday, August 25th

Note: Most Field Trips are full day and return by 5 PM; Half-day Field Trips return at 11 AM

All trips by Van leaving from the Promenade of the Crowne Plaza, Albuquerque

Difficulty levels:

Easy—flat ground some walking.

Moderate—walking needed to get to the birding sites, some elevation changes.

Difficult—fair amount of walking with elevation changes.

List and description of Field Trips for WFO Albuquerque August 2019

Climate Considerations: Although we don't brag about it like some other cities in the mountain west, Albuquerque is a mile above sea level. This means that the most oxygen you will experience on this trip is 83 percent of what you would experience at sea level. In mixed conifer forest at around 8,000 feet (Steller's Jay habitat), the partial pressure of oxygen drops to 75 percent of that at sea level. The air is thin and rather dry, and this will affect your ability to do strenuous exercise, affect your rate of evaporative water loss, and increase your susceptibility to sunburn. Wherever you go, be sure to take (and drink!) plenty of water, wear a hat and use sunscreen.

Respect the weather: Temperatures can be hot during the day, but cool off beautifully at night. One pair of long pants and a light jacket might be welcome additions after sundown in Albuquerque. It can get cold in the mountains during the day, and rain is often a possibility, especially in the afternoons. A light rain jacket can keep you warm on cold mornings and keep the rain off in case you get caught in a thunderstorm. Monsoon season will be upon us and that can cause spectacular afternoon thunderstorms which can cause flash flooding in canyons *even if it is not raining on you*.

Logistics Considerations: New Mexico is a large state. Albuquerque is a bit north and west of the middle. New Mexico has a diverse avifauna, but to get to habitats where we might find a good percentage of these species requires some protracted driving times. We have provided mileages and driving times to our destinations. Please pay attention to them as you register for field trips so that you are not disappointed by the amount of time you spend in a van compared to your time spent birding. Hiking is generally necessary in the mountains to find birds. There are essentially no drive-up Dusky Grouse, Canada Jay, or Three-toed Woodpecker sites in New Mexico in August. Most roads lead to the base of a mountain that must then be climbed.

Having said all this, come the WFO 44th Conference in Albuquerque and enjoy. Not only are the birds beautiful but the people are friendly and the scenery is gorgeous.

1SUN Black Range

Volunteer Leader: TBA

The Black Range is on the eastern edge of New Mexico's expansive Gila Wilderness. We will drive to the starting point of this trip above 8,000 ft in mixed conifer at Emory Pass where we

will look for Red-faced, Virginia's, and Townsend's Warblers, Painted Redstart, Pinyon Jay, Zone-tailed Hawk, and other local breeders and migrants. Red-backed Juncos breed locally and should provide side by side comparison with Gray-headed Juncos. There should be numerous Broad-tailed Hummingbirds and Calliope is a possibility. After birding the pass, we will descend in elevation to search other habitats for Hutton's Vireo, Williamson's Sapsucker, Hepatic Tanager, Olive and Grace's Warblers. Downy Woodpeckers breed locally in the mixed conifers. Stops at some of the lower, more arid conifer forests will produce Acorn Woodpeckers, Pygmy Nuthatch, Plumbeous Vireo, and Black-throated Gray Warbler. Northern Pygmy-Owl is possible along this entire route. This field trip is far from Albuquerque and will be three hours (one way) in a van to Emory Pass. On the way home, we will plan to stretch and have dinner at Socorro Springs Brewery in Socorro. After we have sufficiently refueled, we will hit the road and return to Albuquerque around 7-8 PM.

Departure Time: 5:15 AM

Return Time: 7--8 PM

Cost:\$ TBD

Miles (one way): ~190 miles

Time (one way): ~ 3 hr. Stop for dinner in Socorro on the way home

Hiking Miles (total): Under 2 miles

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate

2SUN Las Vegas NWR

Volunteer Leader: TBA

This full day trip will head to the fringe of the northeast plains of New Mexico. Las Vegas NWR has several small lakes which can host fair numbers of migrant shorebirds and waterfowl along with expanses of quality grassland. A diversity of species will be found on this trip; migrant shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors, and migrant passerines (especially sparrows). Trip targets will be Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Burrowing Owl, Black Tern, Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Scaled Quail, and Black-billed Magpie. The varied habitats at Las Vegas should produce a large number of species on this trip! There are large observation platforms to scope lakes and short trails to look for resident and migratory land birds.

Departure Time: 5:30 AM

Return Time: 3-4 PM

Cost: \$ TBD

Miles (one way): ~ 115 miles

Time (one way): ~ 1.5 hrs

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy

3SUN Pecos Canyon

Volunteer Leader: TBA

The Sangre de Cristo Mountains east of Santa Fe are the southern extent of the Rocky Mountains and the headwaters of the Pecos River. The highlands hold Dusky Grouse, and boreal species such as Canada Jay, American Three-toed Woodpecker, White-crowned Sparrow,

and Pine Grosbeak. Most of these species are not accessible without a considerable hike to spruce-fir forest and treeline, but if the 14 mile road to Elk Mountain from Terrero is maintained well enough, a van can make it up this road to try for these species. The decision to ascend Elk Mountain would have to be made two weeks before the meeting, and rain could cause us to cancel that attempt even the day of the trip. Nonetheless, the lower reaches of the canyon are accessible by paved road and host a lush mixture of riparian thickets, mixed conifer and aspen forests that can hold considerable bird diversity. This will be a drive from the town of Pecos up the canyon of the Pecos River to the Jack's Creek trailhead with stops along the way to look for birds. American Dipper, Red-naped and Williamson's Sapsuckers, Lincoln's and Song Sparrows, Red Crossbill, Clark's Nutcracker, Steller's Jay, Black-billed Magpie, Cassin's Finch, Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes. Terrero Store has hummingbird feeders and will be worthwhile to stop for a look.

Departure Time: 5:30 AM

Return Time: 3–4 PM

Cost: \$ TBD

Miles (one way): ~ 110 miles

Time (one way): ~ 2 hrs 30 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Hiking miles (total) under 5 miles

Elevation gain: under 300 ft per hike

Difficulty level: Easy to Moderate

Drive with various stops for short hikes

4SUN Water Canyon, Magdalena Mountains

Volunteer Leader: TBA

The Magdalenas are the reliable northern extent of the range of three 'Madrean' bird species in New Mexico: Olive Warbler, Red-faced Warbler, and Hutton's Vireo. Mearns' Quail also occur here. The plant communities also become more diverse, with Arizona walnut and Arizona alder making an appearance in the canyon bottoms, and a larger proportion of the junipers are Alligator Junipers in the pinyon-juniper woodlands. Pinyon-Juniper hillsides with extensive ponderosa pines and some Douglas-fir are in the mesic areas of the canyon. A diverse mix of habitats in close proximity makes for excellent birding. Bird species that tend to be found here are Hepatic Tanager, Virginia's, Grace's, and Black-throated Gray Warblers, Zone-tailed Hawk, Northern Pygmy Owl, Acorn Woodpecker, Mountain Chickadee, Juniper Titmouse, Pygmy Nuthatch, White breasted Nuthatch, Bewick's Wren, Hermit Thrush, Steller's and Woodhouse's Scrub Jays, Clark's Nutcracker, and Band-tailed Pigeon. Migrants in this canyon can be spectacular. Hermit Warbler is a possibility.

Drive and various stops for short hikes

Departure Time: 5:30 AM

Return Time: 4 PM

Cost: \$ TBD

Miles (one way): ~ 100 miles

Time (one way): ~ 2 hrs

Restroom facilities: Yes
Hiking miles (total) under 5 miles
Elevation gain: under 300 ft per hike
Difficulty level: Easy to Moderate

5SUN Pajarito Ski Area (Los Alamos)

Volunteer Leader: TBA

After a drive, this trip will begin at the Pajarito Ski Area parking lot. We will hike the numerous trails in the area and cover lots of ground climbing in elevation to nearly 10,000 ft. During the hike, we will search for typical montane species of mixed conifer such as Red Crossbill, Cassin's Finch, Evening Grosbeak, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Hammond's and Cordilleran Flycatchers, Clark's Nutcracker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Williamson's Sapsucker. A majority of the time, we will stay in mixed conifer forest but will venture into vast aspen stands and open meadows. All during the hike, we will look for Northern Goshawk and Dusky Grouse.

Departure Time: 5:45 AM
Return Time: 3–4 PM
Cost: \$ TBD
Miles (one way): about 100 miles
Time (one way): about 1 hr 45 minutes
Restrooms: No
Difficulty level: Moderate to Difficult due to elevation

6SUN Jemez Mountains (Valles Caldera)

Volunteer Leader: TBA

There are six super volcanoes on dry land in the world and three of them are in the United States. Yellowstone is one and Long Valley in the Mammoth Mountain area in California is another. New Mexico is lucky enough to have one as well. The 13 mile wide Valles Caldera, is a dramatic, grassy bowl set in the Jemez Mountains near Los Alamos. Although the last eruption was a long time ago, hot springs and fumaroles are still in the region. The Valles Caldera is now one of the country's newest National Preserves (part of the National Park system). We will investigate the coniferous forests adjacent to the Caldera, but more importantly, we will inspect the grasslands within the crater itself. Our target species include one of the highest elevation breeding subspecies of Eastern Meadowlark, Northern Goshawk, American Dipper, Clark's Nutcracker, Red-breasted, White-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches, Mountain Bluebird and other high elevation species. After our time exploring the Caldera, we will return along the same route to search for American Three-toed Woodpecker and a rare possibility of a Dusky Grouse. If we have enough time (depending on earlier sightings, we may opt for a drive along the road into Bandelier National Monument for Grace's Warbler and other ponderosa pine specialties, or for a quick stop in Los Alamos for migrants at a known migrant trap.

Departure Time: 5:45 AM
Return Time: 3–4 PM
Cost: \$ TBD
Miles (one way): ~130 miles
Time (one way): ~3 hours with stops

Restroom facilities: Yes (gas stations and USFS facilities)

Difficulty level: Moderate due to elevation

7SUN Sandia Mountains

Volunteer Leaders: Wezil Walraven, Tom Stephenson

This trip departs at 5:45AM from the hotel for a 1 hour van ride to the Sulphur Canyon Picnic Area (Elevation 6800). This picnic area has a maintained trail at a slight incline which we will walk up slowly. The habitat in this part of the Sandias is Wavy Leaf Oak, ponderosa pine and then Quaking Aspen up higher. We should get views of Western Tanagers. Black headed Grosbeak, Band tailed Pigeons, Northern Pygmy-Owl and a few species of warblers including the possibility of a Townsend's in migration. We should also get a look at Red breasted Nuthatch, Hermit Thrush and Steller's Jay. After we spend about 2 hours here, we will drive over to the Doc Long Picnic Area of the Sandia Mountains (elevation 7360) which is a short 10 minute drive up the mountain. The trail at Doc Long Picnic Area is dirt and gravel and fairly easy to walk with a slight incline. We will slowly walk up this trail in search of Juniper Titmouse, Mountain Chickadee, MacGillivray's and Virginia's Warblers, Bewick's Wren, House Wren, Plumbeous Vireo, Black headed Grosbeak, Broad tailed and Black chinned Hummingbirds, Western Tanager, Chipping Sparrow and again, possibly Northern Pygmy-Owl and more. We will find a shaded picnic table for a lunch stop before we head way up the mountain to Sandia Crest. Along the road to the crest Rocky Mountain Mule Deer are often seen alongside the road. The trails are maintained and have some rocky outcroppings. We will meander along the trail looking for Clark's Nutcracker, Hairy Woodpecker, Pygmy Nuthatch, Red Crossbills, Gray headed Junco and more. We will stop at the overlook in search of soaring hawks and raptors, along with a view of Albuquerque. A Peregrine Falcon has been spotted here in the past. We will depart by 3:00PM to arrive in Albuquerque by 4:00PM.

Departure Time: 5:45 AM

Return Time: 4:00 PM

Cost: \$ TBD

Miles (one way): ~35miles

Time (one way): ~50 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate due to elevation

8SUN Sevilleta NWR

Volunteer Leader: TBA

At 229,673 acres – more than 358 square miles – Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge is the 8 th largest refuge in the 48 contiguous states. Located at the junction of 4 biomes (shortgrass prairie, Chihuahuan desert, Colorado Plateau shrub-steppe and pinyon juniper woodland) and bisected by the Rio Grande, it is one of the most diverse places in the state. Most of the refuge is not accessible to the general public so this trip will provide a rare opportunity to experience this incredible landscape. The grasslands, desert and woodlands will provide a diversity of bird possibilities. Gray Vireos, a southwestern endemic often difficult to find in much of their range, are common on the refuge in the juniper savannah and linger well into October. Several pairs of Golden Eagles breed on the refuge and several other raptor species are possible. Fall migration will be starting to ramp up and if the planets align just right, there could be large numbers of

shrikes and wrens passing through the landscape. Several sparrow species are possible, and another southwestern endemic, Lillian's Meadowlark. Short hikes are a likely possibility to try and find birds away from the roads.

Departure Time: 6:00 AM

Return Time: 4--5 PM

Cost: \$ TBD

Miles (one way): ~55 miles

Time (one way): ~55 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes, at the Visitor's Center

Difficulty level: Moderate due to elevation

9SUN Quarai Ruins and Manzano Mountains

Volunteer Leader: TBA

This will be a combination birding and cultural exploration of the Estancia Valley on the east side of the Manzano Mountains, southeast of Albuquerque. Our first stop will be at the Manzano Ponds to catch early morning migrant activity around the wetland. After a brief time there, we then continue south on to the Quarai unit, one of three historical sites within the Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument. The Quarai unit is the smallest of the three units at approximately 90 acres. Pueblo artifacts at the site suggest that in its prime and prior to Spanish contact, Quarai was a very large pueblo. This fact is mainly due to the presence of a year round water source flowing from springs along Zapato Creek. This thriving city is what Don Juan de Oñate found when he arrived at Quarai in 1598. Like the other Missions of Salinas Pueblo, a combination of disease, drought, famine, and Apache raids led to the abandonment of Quarai in 1678. We will spend time viewing and photographing the beautiful ruins, as well as birding the riparian area adjacent to the ruins. The associated pinyon-juniper habitat should hold migrants plus resident Juniper Titmouse, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, several wren species, and Canyon Towhee. We will then go north and west into the Manzano Mountains for montane birding through the burn matrix of the Trigo Fire.

Departure Time: 6:00 AM

Return Time: 4--5 PM

Cost: \$ TBD

Miles (one way): ~75 miles

Time (one way): ~1.5hr

Restroom facilities: Yes (Quarai) afternoon will seek facilities nearby

Difficulty level: Easy to Moderate

10SUN Bosque del Apache NWR

Volunteer Leader: TBA

Translated as "Apache Forest," this is one of the premier wildlife viewing destinations in the western US. While particularly known for its huge numbers of Sandhill Cranes, white geese and waterfowl during the winter months, migration can be highly rewarding as well. The refuge was established in 1939 to provide a critical stopover for migrating waterfowl, and consists of 57,331 acres of riparian habitat, farmland and Chihuahuan desert-scrub, and is critical during

migration as birds follow the Rio Grande corridor to and from breeding and wintering grounds. The refuge proper has recorded over 365 species of birds, including two North American firsts; Sungrebe and Rufous-necked Wood-Rail. We will spend our time touring the refuge roads (both north and south loops), as well as at the feeders at the refuge headquarters. We hope to find some lingering breeders such as Bell's Vireo, Vermilion Flycatcher, Bullock's Oriole, Lucy's Warbler, and Blue Grosbeak as well as other Southwest specialties such as Verdin, Black-throated Sparrow, Canyon Towhee and Pyrrhuloxia.

Departure Time: 6:00 AM

Return Time: 4–5 PM

Cost: \$ TBD

Miles (one way): ~95 miles

Time (one way): ~1 hr 30 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy

11SUN Bird Banding at Rio Grande Nature Center –HALF DAY--CARPOOL Volunteer Leaders: Steve and Nancy Cox

The Rio Grande Bird Research crew lead by Steve and Nancy Cox will open their long term banding operation to field trip participants on this half day trip. Late August should see an influx in local breeding species and migrants through the Rio Grande Bosque corridor. Participants will get close looks at the birds as they are being banded and will be able to birdwatch with the crew on net rounds. The banding crew will provide tutorials on how the birds being banded are aged and sexed.

Departure Time: 6:00 AM (Steve will leave entrance gate open from 5:45-6AM. Participants should park in parking lot. Do not be late!)

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$ TBD

Miles (one way): 4 miles

Time (one way): 15 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes, at the visitor's center

Difficulty level: Easy

12SUN Rio Grande Nature Center—HALF DAY--CARPOOL Volunteer Leader: TBA

The Rio Grande is the fifth longest river in North America, and the 20th longest in the world. Rising as a clear, snow-fed mountain stream more than 12,000 feet (3,700 metres) above sea level in the Rocky Mountains of southern Colorado, the Rio Grande descends across steppes and deserts, watering rich agricultural regions as it flows on its way to the Gulf of Mexico. The total length of the river is about 1,900 miles (3,060 km). Even though it is dammed and channelized for much of its length, extensive stands of native cottonwood and willow riparian habitat exist, providing critical year-round habitat for breeders, migrants and resident bird species. The Rio Grande Nature Center provides a wonderful example of the representative bird

species found in the riparian habitats from Sandoval County south to Socorro County. There are several trails within the Center, and several large ponds which will allow us to seek out Southwestern specialties such as Blue Grosbeak, Bell's Vireo, Gambel's Quail, and even a possible Common Black Hawk. The RGNC also shelters resident Black-capped Chickadee (and potential for Mountain-Black-capped Hybrids), Black-chinned Hummingbird, Wood Duck, several species of swallows, Yellow-breasted Chat, and possibly early fall migrants.

Departure Time: 6:00 AM

Return Time: 11:00 AM

Cost: \$ TBD

Miles (one way): ~ 5 Miles

Time (one way): ~ 15 minutes

Walking distance to hike Rio on Bosque Trail

Elevation Gain: Flat

Restroom facilities: Yes, at Visitor's Center

Difficulty level: Easy

New Mexico Three-day Post Conference Tour

Leaders: Jon Dunn and Dave Kreuper

Sunday through Tuesday, August 25 to 27th

25 August (Sunday)

Participants need to assemble at 5:00 am in the hotel parking lot to organize seating and luggage into the vans for our first day of the tour. It will be a long 4+-hour drive to Carlsbad, with a few 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 mosquito patrol should 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 (if we have the time), 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, back to Carlsbad, where we will check in to our hotel and have a group dinner in town. A block of rooms is reserved at the hotel and participants will need to make their own reservations. 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 NM 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 ("big 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. Again, a block of rooms at the hotel are reserved and participants need to make their own reservations.

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 Plover (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 then 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. Participants will need to make their own hotel accommodations if staying the night in Albuquerque, and then departing in the morning.

Return Time: 4-5 PM

Cost: To be determined

Restroom facilities: yes

Difficulty level: Easy but with great variety of elevation