

## **THURSDAY FIELD TRIP DESCRIPTIONS**

**Thursday, August 22**

**Note: All Field Trips are full day and return by 5 pm**

**Two Half-Day Field Trips return by arrangement**

**All trips by Van leaving from the New Mexico Ballroom at 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 sun screen.

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 American 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 to Albuquerque and enjoy. Not only are the birds beautiful but the people are friendly and the scenery gorgeous.

### **1THU Bitter Lake NWR**

Volunteer Leader: TBA

This long full day trip will focus on finding migrant shorebirds and waders at one of the best places in the state to do so. Bitter Lake NWR is located on the southeastern plains of New Mexico along the Pecos River outside of Roswell. There will be lots of driving time on this trip but the rewards are

worth it! Targets will include: Snowy Plover, Least Tern, Upland Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, migrant shorebirds, waders, and waterfowl. Land bird targets will include Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Black-throated Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, and Scaled Quail. There will be long stops at various units across the refuge to scope mudflats and marshes. Recent fall vagrants here have included waders such as Tricolored Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Reddish Egret, and Roseate Spoonbill. We will be able to stop at a vagrant trap (Mesa Rest Area) on the way down to Bitter Lake NWR to stretch our legs and look for migrant land birds. A scope will be essential for this trip.

Departure Time: 5:15 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$50

Miles (one way): ~ 202 miles

Time (one way): ~ 3hr 10 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy

### **2THU 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: 5:15 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$ 50

Miles (one way): ~ 115 miles

Time (one way): ~ 1hr 30 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy

### **3THU Pecos Canyon (and possible Elk Mountain highlands)**

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 tree line, 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 and 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. Some of the birds we hope to find are American Dipper, Red-naped and Williamson's Sapsucker, Lincoln's Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Red Crossbill, Clark's

Nutcracker, Steller's Jay, Black-billed Magpie, Cassin's Finch, Hermit and Swainson's Thrush. Terrero Store has hummingbird feeders and it will be worthwhile to stop for a look. This field trip is a drive with various stops for short hikes.

Departure Time: 5:15 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$ 50

Miles (one way): ~ 110 miles

Time (one way): ~ 2 hrs 30 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Hiking miles (total): less than 5 miles

Elevation gain: less than 300 ft per hike

Difficulty level: Easy to Moderate

#### **4THU 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. Montezuma 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: 4:00 PM

Cost: \$ 50

Miles (one way): ~ 100 miles

Time (one way): ~ 2 hrs

Restroom facilities: Yes

Hiking miles (total): less than 5 miles

Elevation gain: less than 300 ft per hike

Difficulty level: Easy to Moderate

#### **5THU 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: 5:30 AM

Return Time: 4:00 PM  
Cost: \$ 50  
Miles (one way): ~100 miles  
Time (one way): ~1 hr 45 minutes  
Restrooms: No  
Difficulty level: Moderate to Difficult due to elevation

### **6THU Jemez Mountains**

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 (Lillian's Meadowlark). We will look for 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: 5:30 AM  
Return Time: 5:00 PM  
Cost: \$ 50  
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

### **7THU Sandia Mountains**

Volunteer Leader: TBA

This trip departs at 5:45 AM 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 ft) 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 and House Wrens, 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.

Departure Time: 5:45 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$ 50

Miles (one way): ~35miles

Time (one way): ~50 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Moderate due to elevation

### **8THU Sevilleta NWR**

Volunteer Leader: TBA

At 229,673 acres – more than 358 square miles – Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge is the eighth 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 subspecies of Eastern Meadowlark (Lillian's Meadowlark). Short hikes are a likely possibility to try and find birds away from the roads.

Departure Time: 5:45 AM

Return Time: 4:00 PM

Cost: \$ 50

Miles (one way): ~55miles

Time (one way): ~55 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes, at the Visitor's Center

Difficulty level: Moderate

### **9THU 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 prior to Spanish contact, Quarai was, in its prime, 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: 5:45 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$ 50

Miles (one way): ~75 miles

Time (one way): ~1 hr 30 minutes

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

Difficulty level: Easy to Moderate

### **10THU 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: 5:45 AM

Return Time: 4:30 PM

Cost: \$ 50

Miles (one way): ~95 miles

Time (one way): ~1 hr 30 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy

### **11THU New Mexico Museum of Natural History Behind-the-Scenes Tour of Geoscience Collection and Fossil Preparation Lab**

Volunteer Leader: TBA

New Mexico is rich in fossils. Visit the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and take a tour behind the scenes to learn about how paleontologists find fossils and bring them back to the museum. See how rock is carefully removed, revealing the fossils within. Learn about the fossil animals of New Mexico and how our specimens are used for research. Learn about some of the ways paleontologists form hypotheses about what happened in ancient times. Linger afterwards to visit the public displays. Your admission is included in the cost of the field trip.

Departure Time: 8:00 AM

Return Time: 11 AM—12 PM

Cost: \$ 40

Miles (one way): 1.9 miles

Time (one way): 5 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy

Museum rules for visit: Rules for behind the scenes tour:

- 1 No food or drink. Adults may bring water bottles with lids.
2. Space will be provided to store backpacks during the tour
3. Wear close-toed and close-heeled shoes
4. Do not touch specimens unless invited by a museum staff member

**12THU Albuquerque BioPark Zoo—Behind the Scenes**

Volunteer Leader: TBA

Located next to the Rio Grande in Albuquerque, the 64-acre Zoo has been offering guests close encounters with exotic and native animals since 1927. Join Zoo bird staff on a behind-the-scenes tour of the bird facilities. The Albuquerque BioPark Zoo houses a variety of bird species from Asia, Africa, South America and now has a newly-opened penguin exhibit. It is also one of the captive rearing locations for Socorro Dove. Tour duration: 1 - 1.5 hours. After the tour, wander the public displays at the zoo until noon or by arrangement. Your admission is included in the price of the field trip.

Departure Time: 8:45 AM

Return Time: 12 PM

Cost: \$ 40

Miles (one way): ~ 4 miles

Time (one way): ~ 13 minutes

Restroom facilities: Yes

Difficulty level: Easy