

Arizona

27 July – 11 August 2001

Participants:

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Leaders:

Stuart Healy and Vaughan Ashby

Picture: Spotted Owl

Day 1: We arrived from Gatwick via St Louis 45 minutes behind schedule and with a smooth minibus pickup and a relatively quick motel check-in in Mesa, everyone was able to get a good night's sleep.

Day 2: A very warm but successful first day looking for four target raptors. We spent most of our day on the Gila River and in Aravaipa Canyon where the temperature was well above 100°F. Later in the day, in Tucson, clouds brought relief at the expense of 50+% humidity, high by Arizona standards. Before leaving our Mesa motel, and at a brief roadside stop, we picked up some common species including Red-tailed Hawk, Mourning, White-winged and Inca Doves, Gila Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Common Raven, Verdin, Cactus Wren, Northern Cardinal and Hooded Oriole. On the Gila River in Winkelman we had immediate success with a couple of soaring Mississippi Kites. Other species here included Vermilion Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat and Blue Grosbeak. Next came a long search in a very hot Aravaipa Canyon for Common Black-hawk. We began by checking a now empty nest (active a couple of weeks earlier) where instead we found a soaring Zone-tailed Hawk. We birded our way slowly along the canyon to the wilderness area entrance where we scanned in vain in the heat of the day for soaring birds. This is normally a good place to see them. However, it was almost four hours later back near the nest site that we eventually saw a couple of adults, one flying and one perched. There wasn't much general activity in the canyon and other birds were few and far between. Other species seen included Greater Roadrunner, Common Ground-dove, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Purple Martin, Summer Tanager and Hooded Oriole. In the late afternoon we visited Sweetwater Wetlands. It was disappointing to have to leave at 6:00pm, a new policy is in effect to close the gates early because of partying/vandalism. It took quite a while to find the ever present Harris's Hawks but we ended up seeing an adult and two juveniles. Also present was a very accommodating juvenile Cooper's Hawk with prey, the bird didn't want to fly and we had some excellent views as it ate on the ground. Other species included Green Heron, Cinnamon Teal, Common Moorhen, Abert's Towhee and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

Day 3: What a difference a day makes! A cloudy day from dawn to dusk kept the temperature pleasantly cool for most of it. We birded at San Xavier Mission, Tucson Mountain Park, Snyder Hill sewage ponds and in the Santa Catalinas. The day began well near the mission with several perched up and easy-to-see Burrowing Owls. A couple of hours birding around the mission was slow going but eventually produced 30+ species including a perched up and bill-clapping Greater Roadrunner, two Gilded Flickers, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Blue-gray and Black-tailed Gnatcatchers, 15+ Lark Sparrows, a Rufous-winged Sparrow regularly perching up and singing at a nest site, Abert's Towhee, Black-headed Grosbeak, Pyrrhuloxia, Lazuli Bunting and Hooded Oriole. During a sightseeing stop at Gate's Pass overlook in Tucson Mountain Park we had good views of Rock Wren,

fleeting views of Canyon Wren and close range views of several singing Black-throated Sparrows. Next, we headed over to Snyder Hill sewage ponds where the Elegant Tern was still present. The bird hunted in typical flying and diving fashion as well as picking up food as it walked along the pond edges, allowing very close views. Among the other species present from 25 total were Great White Egret lots of Black-crowned Night-herons, Long-billed Dowitcher, Spotted, Least and Western Sandpipers, Wilson's Phalarope and lots of American Avocets and Black-necked Stilts. In the afternoon we visited Rose Canyon in the Santa Catalinas. Unfortunately, it was cloudy and after 3½ hours we recorded a total of only 12 species including Cooper's Hawk, three Peregrine Falcons, several very elusive Cordilleran Flycatchers, Pygmy Nuthatch, Western Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, Plumbeous Vireo, Yellow-eyed Junco and Pine Siskin. The day ended with success at Windy Vista viewpoint where we had good views of a very elusive Canyon Wren.

Day 4: A nice day weather-wise with less humidity than of late, no rain and moderate temperatures. It was also a much better day bird-wise as, unlike yesterday, we found most of what we looked for. Grassland birds were very active along Continental Road in the Santa Rita foothills this morning. Cassin's Sparrow were abundant and singing throughout, we saw about 10 of them. Botteri's Sparrow was mostly silent but we did see a couple carrying food. Other birds included American Kestrel, Loggerhead Shrike, Lark, Rufous-winged Black-throated Sparrows and Eastern Meadowlark. In Florida wash we recorded 20 species including Bell's Vireo, Ash-throated Flycatcher and an early Nashville Warbler. Lucy's Warbler, Rufous-crowned and Botteri's Sparrow and a beautiful male Varied Bunting that perched up in good light for over five minutes were more than supporting cast. In the mountains we birded first along the Vault Mine trail and very soon found a co-operative Arizona Woodpecker that allowed very close approach. Shortly afterwards we enjoyed good views of a male Elegant Trogon perched near the nest site, carrying food and a female also came by and fed the young. Apart from one mixed flock, late morning birding along the trail was a little slow. Nevertheless, we managed to find a few species including White-throated Swift, Western Wood-pewee, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Bridled Titmouse, Hutton's and Plumbeous Vireos, Red-faced Warbler, Painted Redstart and Western and Hepatic Tanagers. Most of the usual feeder birds were present around Santa Rita Lodge including Broad-billed and Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Acorn Woodpecker, Mexican Jay, Black-headed Grosbeak and House Finch. Also here was a small group of Lesser Goldfinches. A very exciting event was to watch a group of Mexican Jays chasing off a Black-tailed Rattlesnake. An early evening visit to Kino Springs produced 40 species including our two main target birds, Gray Hawk (at least one adult and two juveniles) and Tropical Kingbird (very noisy, adults seen feeding young). We also enjoyed long 'scope views of a couple of species not noted for perching in the clear for long periods, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Yellow-breasted Chat. Among the other species present were Green Heron, Common Ground-dove, Vermilion Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Lucy's Warbler and Lazuli Bunting.

Day 5: An early start for California Gulch put us on the Ruby Road an hour before sunrise and paid off with four Common Poorwills, two of them were sitting on the road, seen well by a few and briefly by the others. Although Five-striped Sparrow was easy to find this morning, the initial views were quite poor due to bad light. Eventually, we found at least three, possibly four, singing birds without going into the gulch proper and everyone ended up with some good 'scope looks. Considerably less easy to find was an elusive Northern Beardless-tyrannulet but again, we managed 'scope views in the end. Other species present included a couple of immature Cooper's Hawks, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, a slightly-early Gray Flycatcher, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Canyon Wren, Western and Summer Tanagers, Lazuli, Indigo and numerous singing Varied Buntings, one seen well in good light. In the late afternoon we spent some time tramping around oak woodland in the Pajaritos looking unsuccessfully for Montezuma Quail where we were somewhat surprised to see Gray Hawk in this habitat. We finished up the day at a fairly quiet Peña Blanca Lake where we recorded 25 species including Green Heron, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, an amazingly tame Hutton's Vireo, Summer Tanager, Bronzed Cowbird and the trip's only Black Vulture.

Day 6: Our first stop was Patagonia Lake SP, which produced some typical species including two Neotropic Cormorants, nine Black-bellied Whistling-ducks and a very confiding Least Bittern. Botteri's and Cassin's Sparrows were both singing along the entrance road. Others from a total of 50 species recorded were Great White Egret, Green Heron, Cinnamon Teal, an early Northern Harrier, Spotted Sandpiper, several Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Northern Beardless-tyrannulet, our first Ladder-backed Woodpecker of the trip, Lucy's Warbler and many calling Yellow-breasted Chats. Over at the Roadside rest area, a Coatimundi rivalled the easy-to-see Thick-billed Kingbirds as an attention getter. A singing Varied Bunting was particularly co-operative whereas Bell's Vireo was its usual elusive self. Also present were Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Northern Beardless-tyrannulet, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Canyon Wren and Summer and Western Tanagers. Activity in the Paton's yard was fairly low in the late morning. Only Black-chinned and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds were frequent visitors to the feeders but Violet-crowned Hummingbird did put in a handful of brief visits. A couple of noisy Thick-billed Kingbirds were in the nearby trees and returning to town a family party of Gambel's Quail provided entertainment. After lunch on the green watching Bronzed Cowbird, a brief check of lower Harshaw Canyon produced Greater Roadrunner, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird and Summer Tanager. En-route to Sierra Vista we saw a Coyote, whilst on the poles as we entered the city were our first Swainson's Hawks and Chihuahuan Ravens. After checking into our motel, we made a late afternoon visit to Beatty's in Miller Canyon where, in addition to many hummingbirds, we were able to see a very co-operative Northern (Mountain) Pygmy-owl. Unfortunately, the light was poor and it was impossible to see any detail on the bird. Hummingbird activity was somewhat fast and furious and we recorded Broad-billed, Magnificent, three very belligerent Blue-throated, numerous Black-chinned, at least three Anna's, a female Calliope, an adult male Rufous and several Rufous/Allen's types. Our day ended very well with a very successful evening owling session. We had excellent long looks at a family of Whiskered Screech-owls, posing, preening and nuzzling at close range.

Western Screech-owl was only slightly less co-operative in that we had to work a little harder for several shorter views. In addition to the birds seen, other individuals of both species were vocalising nearby.

Day 7: A full morning of birding in Carr Canyon was mostly successful but we had to work hard for almost every species that we found, including the "easy birds". As we started into the canyon, several noisy Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers were perhaps the only exception. A flycatching Violet-crowned Hummingbird was in the same location. Even the normally easy-to-see Greater Pewee (eventually seen well) was reticent and perching low until, of course, we had seen the first one. Buff-breasted Flycatchers were abundant but difficult to see initially. Grace's Warbler was the only singing warbler that we came across and was relatively easy to see. Olive Warbler was completely silent and it took quite a long time before we found a family group at a reliable location (the last one we checked!). Virginia's Warbler was its usual elusive self and, although we heard a few calling individuals over the course of the morning, only a few brief glimpses were managed. As usual in this location, Spotted Towhee was abundant and singing throughout. We recorded over 40 species including close views of Cooper's Hawk, a fly-over Zone-tailed Hawk, Calliope Hummingbird, Violet-green Swallow, Steller's Jay, Western Scrub-jay, Brown Creeper, Eastern Bluebird, Hutton's, Plumbeous and Warbling Vireos, Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler, Painted Redstart, Hepatic and Western Tanagers and Yellow-eyed Junco. After a break we headed to a very humid Scheelite Canyon where the sign-in log indicated that the owls were high up the canyon, certainly not what we needed to hear. In the lower area we became distracted by a small group of foraging birds including two or three Red-faced Warblers. It was a good job that Stuart did not rely on the log entry because he soon found three Spotted Owls including two young and everyone enjoyed some great views without slogging all the way up the canyon. Among the other species present in the canyon were a couple of Band-tailed Pigeons, several White-throated Swifts, a calling Virginia's Warbler that we couldn't track down and Painted Redstart. Driving down to Fort Huachuca, we found a Tarantula crossing the road. We ended the day along Moson Road near Sierra Vista Sewerage Ponds as a thunderstorm threatened. The conditions encouraged Lesser Nighthawks to start working early and we saw lots of them well before sunset.

Day 8: Our early start to French Joe Canyon resulted in only a couple of flying views of Common Poorwill for each van. We arrived at the upper spring at 06.10 and positioned ourselves on the slope above the spring where I've seen one or two Rufous-capped Warblers on all recent visits. However, it was Rich Hoyer who first located the bird at 07.00, well below the spring. We rushed down there but only one member of the group briefly glimpsed the bird before it disappeared. We returned above the spring and after hearing the bird briefly around 08.00 Stuart finally relocated it at 08.30 near the dry waterfall, well above the spring. He got the word out as fast as he could but ironically; it was only a few members of Rich's group that saw the bird and only one of our group. From my canyon bottom location I could see the bird well, singing from a high perch for a minute or so, but I was unable to get people on to it from their location. Very frustrating! Around 09.30 the warbler flew into the big Juniper near the spring and then flew into some dense vegetation and started chipping. We made an attempt to track it down but soon gave up deciding instead to go look for the Plain-capped Starthroat. Unfortunately, the bird was seen at 07.00 and 10.00 but not again that day. Other species seen in the canyon included two or three Cooper's Hawks, two Golden Eagles, a calling but unseen Crissal Thrasher, Painted Redstart, a few singing Black-chinned Sparrows, Summer Tanager, and Bullock's and Scott's Orioles. After a much-needed and entertaining break in Tombstone visiting the OK Corral and Boot Hill Cemetery and having lunch, we ventured out again and managed a couple of successes. A late afternoon visit to Ramsey Canyon resulted in some good looks at the female Berylline Hummingbird, now feeding young. We ended the day by returning to Beatties in Miller Canyon where Stuart was able to whistle in the Northern (Mountain) Pygmy-owl that we had seen two days ago. Fortunately, this time the light was much better and we saw the bird well. We spent an hour enjoying the hummers and, except for Calliope, saw the same species as on Wednesday.

Day 9: Today we birded in Sulphur Springs Valley and the Chiricahuas and had an enjoyable and productive day. Birding along Coffman Road and at Whitewater Draw was very good, although most of the recent "good" birds at Whitewater Draw seemed to have moved on. First we worked on thrashers and managed to locate both target species. We had excellent looks at a perched and preening Bendire's Thrasher but only short and distant looks at a flying and briefly perched Crissal Thrasher. An early group of Lark Buntings was a pleasant surprise. Among the 50 species recorded here were Great White and Snowy Egrets, Swainson's Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Long-billed Curlew, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Wilson's Phalarope, Laughing Gull, Bank and Tree Swallows, Black Phoebe and Lazuli Bunting. On our way to the mountains we stopped at an owl roost site that normally has a couple each of Great Horned and Barn Owls. Today we were specifically looking for Great Horned so, of course, Murphy's law dictated that we saw only Barn Owls, six of them in fact. Our time in the Chiricahuas was very eventful. After a lunch break at Pinery Canyon campground, the heavens opened just as we had started walking again and heavy hail forced us to take shelter. When the rain subsided, a flat battery on one of the vans was waiting for us back at the campground. Fortunately, someone there had jumper cables and we were able to recover. We spent some time looking for Mexican Chickadee, finding three separate groups before everyone managed to see them well. Probably because we didn't need them we located two Northern (Mountain) Pygmy-owls, one of which just wouldn't leave us alone. The bird perched quite low at close range and posed for photographs. We then spent even more time looking unsuccessfully for Virginia's Warbler (a couple of people saw one). Other species at high elevation including Cordilleran Flycatcher, Olive and Red-faced Warblers, Painted Redstart and Yellow-eyed Junco. We ended the day in Portal with a very disappointing visit to Utterback's yard. At a time of day when the feeders should have been buzzing with hummingbirds, only a few were present with Blue-throated Hummingbird being the highlight. There were lots of Acorn Woodpeckers and Lesser Goldfinches and a calling and briefly perched Crissal Thrasher. Driving back to Willcox, Janet found an amazing millipede and a Greater Roadrunner diced with death!

Day 10: Our last morning in south-east Arizona as we headed to the White Mountains and saw a radical change in weather. It was very warm in Safford during a breakfast stop but an afternoon monsoon at Luna Lake really dropped the temperature and even caused us to use the heater, a far cry from last week in Aravaipa Canyon! We started the day with a visit to Willcox ponds where the birding was very enjoyable. Shorebird habitat is much reduced as the smaller, temporal ponds continue to dry up. The most interesting birds were a couple of very-early Greater Scaup, a good bird in August. We recorded 30 species in 2½ hours including Eared Grebe, Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Harrier, Swainson's Hawk, good numbers of Gambel's and Scaled Quail, Long-billed Dowitcher, Lesser Yellowlegs, a large flock of Wilson's Phalaropes, calling Eurasian Collared-dove that we didn't bother to track down, Bank Swallow and singing Cassin's Sparrow. A stop at the stateline on Highway 78 in the Burro Mountains produced our first Hairy Woodpecker and Black-throated Grey Warbler of the trip. The warbler made us work very hard in the heat of the day before we managed a good view. The timing of our arrival at Luna lake could hardly have been worse and we were able to bird for only a few minutes before a very cold and heavy rain began, forcing us to wait for almost an hour. Before the rain we managed three new trip birds in quick succession; Osprey, Bald Eagle and a very out of place Sandhill Crane for the second successive year. A small herd of Elk were in a nearby field and chipmunks kept us entertained. When birding resumed we added a few more trip birds including Ring-necked Duck, Redhead, Mountain Bluebird and Brewer's Blackbird. Weather conditions improved considerably during our visit to Nutrioso Creek where the birding was excellent including migrating Brewer's Sparrows and a male Lazuli Bunting feeding young. However, Red-naped and Williamson's Sapsuckers in the same tree, some great views of five or six Lewis's Woodpeckers and telescope views of Virginia's Warblers were well received. Also present were Rufous Hummingbird, Western Kingbird, Mountain Chickadee, Western Bluebird, a superbly confiding Green-tailed Towhee, Black-headed and Blue Grosbeaks, Western Tanager and Bullock's Oriole. As darkness approached, we ended the day with an unsuccessful search for Pinyon Jay but it didn't seem to matter too much.

Day 11: A beautiful morning gave way to afternoon clouds and rain that affected us somewhat. Nevertheless, we had a productive and enjoyable day despite some soggy conditions. On the way to Green's Peak we saw a small herd of Pronghorn whilst the weather on the peak co-operated very well early this morning, but the clear blue sky and windless conditions didn't help our cause very much. Blue Grouse was very hard to find and it took almost two hours before we found a pair. A beautiful male stepped up on to a log and gave us a wonderful display with the female close by. We certainly earned it because walking around for long periods on a 45-degree slope at over 10,000 feet takes some doing! Other birds recorded during the search included Hairy Woodpecker, a band of seven very raucous Clark's Nutcrackers, Pine Siskin and flyover Red Crossbills. After breakfast at the Country Cafe in Greer (slow but excellent), we birded in Butler Canyon along the East Fork of the Little Colorado where we managed only an hour before the rain began. We didn't find our target Dusky Flycatcher as we recorded 15 species including Osprey, several calling Virginia Rails with two seen, Red-naped and Williamson's Sapsuckers in the same tree for the second day in a row, more Clark's Nutcrackers, Pygmy Nuthatch and Western Tanager. We moved on to West Fork figuring that looking for American Dipper would be a good way to deal with the rain. This turned out to be a good move because, although we got pretty wet, we did find one juvenile and everyone had good looks. After the rain stopped we spent some time looking for Three-toed Woodpecker but without success. Among the species here were Band-tailed Pigeon, Williamson's Sapsucker, Belted Kingfisher, Golden-crowned Kinglet and MacGillivray's, three Virginia's and seven Red-faced Warblers. A brief return visit to Butler Canyon was successful and produced a co-operative Dusky Flycatcher after 30 minutes of searching. We decided not to risk missing Pinyon Jays further north and headed back to Nutrioso, we missed them there last night because the birds had already gone to roost. On the way we stopped at Nelson Reservoir where a Peregrine Falcon surveyed the scene from a dead tree high on the east ridge. Birds on the water and in the marsh included Black-crowned Night-heron, Gadwall, Northern Pintail, Cinnamon Teal, Sora and Virginia Rails and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Our return to Nutrioso turned out to be successful; we immediately located a small flock of Pinyon Jays only to lose them as we piled out of the vans. Then came 30 minutes of cruising around before we relocated them as they started to settle in to roost. The birds flew in calling softly and it would have been very easy to miss them again for the sake of a few seconds difference in driving down the road. A few Common Nighthawks took to the sky as we 'scoped the jays. A good end to the day.

Day 12: Today we moved on to the sightseeing portion of the trip after a soggy morning of birding in the White Mountains. We encountered rain at most locations but managed to find a number of target birds and add another 13 species to the trip list. We had planned to start at South Fork but continued instead to Sunrise where the weather looked better. Viewing conditions in the drizzle at the lake were quite bad and made distant birds difficult to identify, so I'm sure we left a few behind. However, we did manage to find our target Vesper and Savannah Sparrows as well as our first Canada Geese and Horned Larks of the trip, plus Osprey, Bald Eagle and Mountain Bluebird. At the campground we got well and truly soaked as we worked hard to eke out a few species. We were pleased to find that Cassin's Finches were still visiting the site host's feeders whilst also present were Calliope, Broad-tailed and Rufous Hummingbirds. After much time trying and walking the trails, our persistence finally paid off as we found a few completely silent Gray Jays with a bonus of two Olive-sided Flycatchers. Other species recorded included Red-naped Sapsucker, a noisy family of Hairy Woodpeckers, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Red Crossbill. A group of Steller's Jays were harassing what was probably a Great Horned Owl but we got there just a little too late to see it. A stop at Sheep Crossing soon produced our target Lincoln's Sparrow as well as Townsend's Solitaire which saved us some valuable time that we were rapidly running out of. Among the other species here were a trip first Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Virginia's and MacGillivray's Warblers and Green-tailed Towhee. A brief stop at Crescent Lake produced six Common Mergansers and a very co-operative Sora Rail, a heard only species up to today. Also present at the lake were Osprey and Redhead and nearby, a Northern Harrier. Before heading north

we checked Becker Lake where our target Western Meadowlark was easy to find. Very few species were actually on the water but around it we saw Peregrine Falcon, five Lewis's Woodpeckers and a couple of Brewer's Sparrows. Disappointingly, we lost a considerable amount of time due to the rain over the last couple of days and we left the White Mountains minus Three-toed Woodpecker as we ran out of time. A journey through the Petrified Forest NP was in superb light but with few birds, just Golden Eagle (perched), Rock Wren, Horned Lark and Brewer's Sparrow but by the time we reached the Painted Desert it had clouded over. At the visitor centre we saw three Common Nighthawks, Willow and Dusky Flycatchers and two Warbling Vireos.

Day 13: A relatively late start for a morning of sightseeing at the Grand Canyon. It was cold and threatening rain as we left Flagstaff but, fortunately, the weather at the canyon was much better which was good news for those taking a sightseeing flight. We had only one target bird here, Juniper Titmouse, which we saw along the rim trail with minimal effort. Among the other species on the trail were Hairy Woodpecker, White-throated Swift, Gray and Ash-throated Flycatchers, Pygmy Nuthatch, Western Bluebird, Rock Wren, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, Plumbeous Vireo, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Lark Sparrow and Red Crossbill. Most of the group then enjoyed a superb scenic flight over the Grand Canyon in beautiful weather. In the late afternoon we birded along Eldon Mountain Lookout Trail near Flagstaff looking unsuccessfully for Three-toed Woodpecker. Even though we failed on the woodpecker, the birding was interesting and we added Downy Woodpecker and Hermit Warbler to our trip list. Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warblers, Pygmy Nuthatches and Pine Siskins were very common here. Also present were a male Williamson's Sapsucker, Clark's Nutcracker and Olive Warbler.

Day 14: Today our targets were Gray Vireo and Black-chinned Sparrow, both "big grebes", White-faced Ibis and any other water species that we could find. We drove much of the way south from Flagstaff in swirling mist and rain and it was still very cool and a little damp when we reached Slate Creek Divide at 07.45. It was quite an adventure driving up from the old highway to the corral as both vans struggled to maintain traction and steering control on the deceptively slick surface. Thankfully, we made it without any significant problems, just some frayed nerves. The delightfully cool conditions were apparently not to the liking of the birds because the area was extremely quiet. Nevertheless, with a little bit of effort we managed to see a fairly co-operative Gray Vireo and a couple of very reticent Black-chinned Sparrows without burning too much daylight. Among the other species present were Gambel's Quail, Cassin's Kingbird, Western Scrub-jay, Phainopepla, Bewick's Wren, Canyon and Spotted Towhees, Lark, Black-throated and Rufous-crowned Sparrows and Hepatic Tanager. By the time we reached Roosevelt Lake the sun was breaking through and the humidity started to make its presence felt. At Bermuda Flats we immediately saw both Western and Clark's Grebes in numbers and then spent several hours birding our way south along the lake with stops at Windy Hill and Grapevine. A distant flock of gulls caught our attention and although most were obviously Ring-billed Gulls, a larger and darker mantled gull intrigued us enough to walk a mile or so, zig-zagging around the shore line. Our persistence paid off with a California Gull (probably a third year bird), a very uncommon Arizona bird. Other species new for the trip here were American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant and White-faced Ibis although, disappointingly, we found no terns or shorebirds. We recorded a total of 40 species including Great White Egret, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-heron, two soaring Cooper's Hawks, Vermilion and Ash-throated Flycatchers, a calling and briefly perched Crissal Thrasher, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, a small group of Lazuli Buntings and Hooded and Bullock's Orioles. After a break, we ended the day and the tour with a leisurely visit to Gilbert Wildlife Area, which, surprisingly and thankfully, had some water! The last couple of hours before dark yielded 30 species including a new-for-the-trip five Greater Yellowlegs. Other species included Peregrine Falcon on a power line tower, Great White Egret, a small group of Black-necked Stilts, 19 Long-billed Dowitchers, five Lesser Yellowlegs, three Spotted Sandpipers, a shy Sora Rail, two Greater Roadrunners, Abert's Towhee, Lazuli Bunting and Bullock's Oriole. At the end of the day we had recorded a tour record of 247 species.

Day 15: Return flight from Phoenix via St. Louis to London Gatwick.

Day 16: Arrival back in the UK at the end of the tour.