

**AZFO Annual Meeting Fall 2016**  
**Mini-expeditions**

**Friday, 21 October 2016**

**West Wetlands and Ag Lands**

**Leader:** Henry Detwiler

**Limit:** 12 participants

**To sign up:** email or call Henry Detwiler at [henrydetwiler@earthlink.net](mailto:henrydetwiler@earthlink.net) or 928-287-7666

0700: Leave Best Western

0715-0845: Yuma West Wetlands

We'll bird along a loop trail that winds through mesquites and palo verdes on the west side of the park, targeting Crissal Thrasher, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, and Western migrants like Gray Flycatcher, Cassin's Vireo, and Hermit Warbler.

At the Hummingbird Garden and ponds we'll look for Costa's and other hummingbirds, more warblers, and flycatchers. Wintering rarities like Golden-crowned and White-throated Sparrows would be nice finds. Among the many Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warblers we'll keep an eye out for Northern Parula and American Redstart, two rare but regular visitors.

Both Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks are common wintering raptors, and are sometimes joined by a Merlin.

0915-1200: Ag fields south of Yuma

We'll drive 12 miles south to an area of mixed desert and huge circular agricultural fields. Alfalfa is the predominant crop, and makes a tasty treat for gophers. These gophers, in turn, are the preferred food for hundreds of Swainson's, Ferruginous, and Red-tailed Hawks every winter season. October is early in the season for Ferruginous Hawks, but we should see a few, and we ought to get plenty of Swainson's Hawks in various plumages. Also common here in the winter are Prairie Falcon, hundreds of Long-billed Curlew, Horned Larks, and American Pipits. We'll sort through several species of sparrows. Every year a small flock of Mountain Plover patrol these fields, but they can be really tough to find. Rarities to this area have included Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, and Crested Caracara.

**Betty's Kitchen, Mittry Lake, and Hidden Shores**

**Leaders:** Lauren Harter and David Vander Pluym

**Limit:** 15 participants

**To sign up:** email Lauren at [lbharter@gmail.com](mailto:lbharter@gmail.com)

Meet at the Best Western at 1 p.m.

On this trip we will be visiting some favorite hotspots north of the city of Yuma. At Laguna Dam and Betty's Kitchen, we will bird a mosaic area containing marsh, riparian scrub, and restored riparian habitat. We will have a good chance to see lingering migrants, particularly sparrows, as well as wintering shorebirds and other marsh birds. Mittry Lake is a large lake, so we'll be

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stopping at several spots to scan the water, listen for marsh birds, and search for riparian land birds in surrounding habitat. We'll keep our eyes out for rare water birds and will also look for Bell's Sparrows. We should see a variety of water birds, especially ducks. Finally, we will check Hidden Shores, an RV park and golf course at Imperial Dam. Here we can check the golf course for any birds there, and scan above Imperial Dam for deep-water diving birds such as loons and ducks. If we have any extra time, we can check out agricultural fields on the way back to Yuma.

Carpooling will be essential, because some pullouts we'll be using are not very big. We will not need to do a lot of walking on this trip and will have at least two restroom stops.

### **San Cristobel to Gila Valley**

**Leader:** Chrissy Kondrat-Smith

**Limit:** 12 participants

**To sign up:** email Chrissy Kondrat-Smith at [azdesertbird@gmail.com](mailto:azdesertbird@gmail.com)

Meet at the Dateland Travel Center (aka, Texaco Station) at 0730.

There are a number of scenic desert valleys that cross paths with the I-8 between Gila Bend and Yuma; Such as Childs, San Cristobel, Mohawk, South Gila, Dome and Lechuguilla Desert Valley. Much of the access in this area is restricted or requires permits, but there are areas on the edges of these valleys open for easy exploration. We will be checking out spots around the San Cristobel, Mohawk, Dome and South Gila Valley. We can hope to expect our most common desert birds in this area, like the Le Conte's Thrasher. Also possible migrants that will be making their way and using these locations for their stopovers during the journey back to their wintering grounds. Check out [Yuma County Hot Spots](#) for more possibilities of what to expect and historical sightings (<http://ebird.org/ebird/hotspots?hs=L3603228&yr=all&m=>). You may also take the option to explore other havens in these areas on Sunday during the I-8 Oases expedition.

#### **0730-0750: Dateland Travel Center (aka, Texaco Station)**

As you travel west to Yuma on I-8 take exit 67. We will meet on the south side of the parking lot. Along this piece of San Cristobel Valley, we can do a quick scan along the edges of the palm groves for warblers, sparrows, flycatchers, Barn Owls and possibly even a Ruddy Ground-dove before continuing on our journey. It's also a good stop to pick up any last minute snacks or beverages for the day. Don't forget the bag of Dates!

#### **0815-0915 Tacna Migrant Trap and Quigley Wildlife Area**

The Tacna Migrant Trap is located on Desert Valencia Ranch on the edge of Mohawk Valley. We have the opportunity to pick up possibly swifts, swallows, and local desert birds. In June the Quigley WA succumbed a fire. We will check out the status of this area and surrounding edges, as it was known to be quite the location for migrants, Great-horned Owls, warblers and flycatchers.

#### **0935-1000: Coyote Wash Golf Course Pond**

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On the edge of Lechugilla Desert lies a master-planned community with a golf course oasis. The ponds located on the west side of the golf course attract birds such as Spotted Sandpiper, Black-bellied Plover, Eared Grebe, and a handful of wintering water fowl. In August of 2013 a Least Terns found their way to this spot.

### **1010-1100: Effie May and Gila River Ponds**

A short trek from Coyote Wash we will visit two neighboring hotspots that can be found in the South Gila Valley. At the Effie May Riparian Area, we will look for birds such as Winter Wrens, migrant warblers, Vesper Sparrows, sapsuckers, and whatever else makes their way into our binoculars. We will make a quick stop at the Gila River Ponds to see what other migrants or wintering birds we can find.

### **1110-1130: Gila Valley's Gila River, 22 E Crossing**

As we continue into Gila Valley, we will stop at this interesting little spot in hopes for Sora, Virginia Rail, egrets, sparrows and possible flycatchers.

### **1155-1220: Fortuna Ponds**

At Fortuna Ponds we will check out the outflow ditch and tall cottonwoods that stand on the north side of the lake harbor. The ponds are a safe haven for wintering ducks. We will most likely see Green Herons, egrets, thrushes, migrant flycatchers and warblers.

### **1245-1330 North Gila Valley**

If time allows we will visit a location where one of the largest desert rivers, the Gila River, meets the Colorado River. This location is just north of E. Levee Rd in the North Gila Valley. It is not known what we may see, but worth exploring!

## **Cibola National Wildlife Refuge**

**Leaders:** Walt Anderson and Felipe Guerrero

**Limit:** 12 participants

**To sign up:** email Felipe Guerrero at [fplguerrero@gmail.com](mailto:fplguerrero@gmail.com)

Meet at the Best Western at 6 am to carpool for the 90-minute drive to the refuge.

Cibola offers a fine variety of ecosystems to check out for birds. Burrowing Owls and falcons are commonly seen on the auto tour loop, and a restoration forest of riparian trees and shrubs is an excellent place to look for migrating passerines. There are two blinds that give views of a waterfowl loafing pond, and there is a roadside pond that waterfowl may be using because duck hunting season starts that day! A private pond nearby often hosts a variety of ducks, including Wood Ducks, as well as a Vermilion Flycatcher. We will drive along the Colorado River, which sometimes hosts deep-water ducks. There are ponds and marshes, upland scrub, and backwaters to examine. Raptors are fairly common, and there is always potential for surprises. We will have several options for restrooms, and the refuge has a nice display area with mounted birds and abundant information. We will start back around noon or so, depending on the wishes of the group.

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**Sunday, 23 October 2016**

**Salton Sea**

**Limit:** 12 participants

**To sign up:** see paper sign-up sheet at Saturday's meeting (October 22<sup>nd</sup>)

Join AZFO for a day of birding at the Salton Sea. The Salton Sea is known for its plethora of Gulls, Terns and Shorebirds. We will scour the Red Hill Marina and Sony Bono National Wildlife refuge for Yellow-footed, Glaucous-winged and Western Gull as well as for the many other regularly occurring species.

We will leave Yuma at 5:30am and return around 3pm.

**Imperial NWR and Martinez Lake**

**Limit:** 15 participants

**To sign up:** see paper sign-up sheet at Saturday's meeting (October 22<sup>nd</sup>)

Meet at host hotel at 0630 and carpool to the refuge. Trip will likely continue until about 1 pm with lunch in the field, so please plan accordingly.

Imperial National Wildlife Refuge attracts a diversity of migrant and resident birds to various habitats, including riparian, upland desert, marshes and endangered fish ponds. With fall migration in full swing, we anticipate a good number of species, and possibly some surprises. We'll explore several of these areas that are normally closed to the public including marsh units where we'll hopefully spy (or hear) some secretive marsh birds such as Ridgway's and Virginia rail, least bittern, sora, and black rail. The large expanse of open water at adjacent Martinez Lake should provide good views of a variety of grebes and ducks, and possibly gulls and terns.

**Yuma East Wetlands**

**Limit:** 40 Participants

**To sign up:** see paper sign-up sheet at Saturday's meeting (October 22<sup>nd</sup>)

Meet at Best Western at 7 a.m.

Yuma East Wetlands is a large, collaborative habitat restoration area just a few minutes from the Best Western. The Bureau of Reclamation, Arizona Game and Fish Department, City of Yuma, and Quechuan Indian Tribe have all worked together to create a visitor-friendly network of habitats ranging from open water and marsh, to brushy upland and lush cottonwood forest. We can expect to see ducks, rails (hear them anyway), shorebirds, and a variety of land birds. This is a hotspot for migrants and for rarities, so chances are good we will see something interesting!

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This will be a good trip for anyone needing to head home at a specific time. Since we will be close to the hotel and the parking lot is plenty spacious, carpooling won't be necessary. However, be prepared to do a lot of walking – our day will be spent entirely on foot. Restrooms will be available at the parking lot.

#### **I-8 Oases**

**Limit:** 12 participants

**To sign up:** see paper sign-up sheet at Saturday's meeting (October 22<sup>nd</sup>)

0700: Leave Best Western

Group Size: No more than four vehicles (in the feedlots)

#### 0730-0745: **Effie May**

We'll check out a small riparian area with cottonwoods and lots of brush. We'll look for Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Red-naped Sapsucker, irregular Lawrence's Goldfinch, Western flycatchers and warblers, and rarities like Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Winter Wren.

#### 0800-0900: **Solar & Power Ponds and/or Dome Valley Feedlot**

Depending on water levels we may visit one or both of these sites. If conditions are good, we can be treated to a wide variety of waders, shorebirds, terns, gulls, and waterfowl. Past denizens have included four species of geese, Neotropic Cormorant, Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, Black-bellied and Snowy Plovers, Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers, all the mergansers, and Surf Scoter. The feedlot is also a fine place to survey icterids, including hundreds of Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

#### 0930-0945: **Coyote Wash Pond**

This golf course pond regularly has White-fronted Goose, Hooded Merganser, and a number of other waterfowl during the winter season. Caspian and Forster's Terns are possible, as well as Neotropic Cormorant and a variety of waders.

If the Solar Ponds and the Dome Valley Feedlot are dry, we'll explore the Tacna saltbush flats instead, looking for Le Conte's and Sage Thrashers, Bell's and Sagebrush Sparrows, and bluebirds.

1000-1010: Tacna Chevron (gas, restroom, & snacks)

#### 1035-1100: **Dateland Palm Grove**

We'll survey this oasis palm grove from the edges, looking for Barn Owl, flycatchers, warblers, and sparrows. Past goodies here have included Ruddy Ground-Dove, Lewis's Woodpecker, Tropical & Cassin's Kingbirds, and Common Grackle.

#### 1115-1215: **Aztec Feedlot**

If we need to consolidate vehicles, we'll carpool just before arriving at the feedlot to minimize dust and disturbance. Again, the water level will determine how good the birding is. If we're in luck, we may find a number of late shorebirds, waders, gulls, and waterfowl. This is one of the better spots in Yuma County for a variety of sparrows. It might also harbor the odd longspur.

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The combination of fields and water in the middle of the Sonoran Desert makes for a great potential for interesting birds. Past visitors have included Ruddy Turnstone, Greater Scaup, and Crested Caracara.

### **Queen Canyon to Signal Peak**

**Limit:** 12 participants

**To sign up:** see paper sign-up sheet at Saturday's meeting (October 22<sup>nd</sup>)

0545 - meet in the Best Western parking lot near the office; Leave 0600; arrive 0730 at the trail head for Kofa Queen Canyon Rd.

This trip will require a 4WD vehicle for the last 3 miles into the canyon to the trail head. If you do not have 4WD, please specify so we can try to provide you with a ride up. If you have a 4WD vehicle, and willing to carpool people up, please include how many people you can take to the trailhead. We can plan to leave a few cars at the US-95 and Palm Canyon Rd cross streets for carpooling purposes.

Located in the KOFA mountain range (aka, King of Arizona Mountains), Signal Peak is the highest peak in Yuma County. There is a 2000 foot climb over 1.5 miles of the trail to the peak (elevation 4,877 feet (1487M)). Trail distance is a total of 4.1 miles. The trail can be strenuous on the last mile of the hike. We will begin our hike where Queen Canyon Road meets Ten Ewe Canyon. From there we will begin our hike through the Indian Canyon up to Signal Peak, exploring along the way. Expected finds include BGGN, COHU, SPTO, CANW, ROWR, and a possible LCTH on the drive in. Other possibilities include GRVI, Peregrine Falcon and migrant warblers. Don't forget to check out the Spiral Labyrinth as you drive in (located before the road "y's" at Palm Canyon Rd and Queen Kofa Rd. In the canyon, keep your eyes open for a look at Arizona's only native palm tree, the California fan palm, thought to have arrived under the "bird poop" theory. Wear a hat and sturdy hiking shoes, sunscreen and bring plenty of water and snacks.

<http://www.toddshikingguide.com/Hikes/Arizona/Misc/Misc20.htm>

<http://hikearizona.com/decoder.php?ZTN=1436>

**In case of bad weather, unforeseen circumstances, or extra time for the Queen Canyon to Signal Peak expedition, the backup will be:**

### **Palm Canyon (backup to Queen Canyon/Signal Peak)**

**Limit:** 12 participants

**To sign up:** see paper sign-up sheet at Saturday's meeting (October 22<sup>nd</sup>)

0600 meet in the Best Western parking lot near the office; Leave 0615.

0730 arrive at the trail head at the end of Palm Canyon Road. Easy access for cars to the trail head.

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Located in the KOFA mountain range (aka, King of Arizona Mountains), expected finds include BGGN, COHU, SPTO, CANW, ROWR, and a possible LCTH on the drive in. Other possibilities include GRVI, Peregrine Falcon and migrant warblers. Don't forget to check out the Spiral Labyrinth as you drive in (located before the road "y's" at Palm Canyon Rd and Queen Kofa Rd. In the canyon you can expect to see the only native palm trees to Arizona, the California Palm. Thought to arrive there under the "bird poop" theory.

A 1.5-mile moderate hike. On average this hike takes 1 hours total to hike. With exploring expect and additional 1-1.5 hours. Wear a hat and sturdy hiking shoes, sunscreen and bring plenty of water and snacks.

[https://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/PalmCanyonFactSheet2014\\_508.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/PalmCanyonFactSheet2014_508.pdf)