

**Arizona Field Ornithologists – Virtual Meeting**  
**Sunday, November 7th, 2021 - Half-day expeditions**

*Registration:* please register for trips by emailing the trip leaders. Registration for each trip will be closed once the group limit is reached.

**Altar Valley - Black Hills**

*Trip difficulty:* Moderate; Walking Distance: ~2 miles; Trip Duration: return by noonish; Elevation Gain: none; Ground Condition: old road and few trails, some walking through desert scrub. No established restrooms on site.

An under-birded area relatively close to Tucson, this valley has a mix of Sonoran and Chihuahuan vegetation which is attractive to a variety of bird species, including Crested Caracara's and other raptors, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls, Gilded Flickers, and several species of sparrows. We'll explore the area around the Black Hills, very obvious on Google Earth due to their lava origin, walking through some lush washes. Wear good walking shoes, bring a small pack with water and snacks.

*Meeting Time & Location:* 6:30 a.m. meeting time at the McDonald's at the SW corner of Mission Rd and Ajo Way (just west of the freeway exit)

Limited to 11 participants plus guide.

*Leader:* Tim Helentjaris, [tnhelentjaris@msn.com](mailto:tnhelentjaris@msn.com)

**Dutchman/First Water Trail, Maricopa and Pinal County:**

*Difficulty level:* maybe about a 2 or 3 out of 5, with a 5 being very difficult.

This area is located on the north side of the Superstition Mountains, and is a well known hiking area, but also has potential of attracting migrants in Spring and Fall. Typical desert birds, but also includes many species found in a bit higher elevations such as Northern Cardinal, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, 3 or species of towhee, sparrows, and many other species. In summer, Bell's Vireo, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and many other species nest here. It is not birded too often and the trail starts out in Maricopa County and crosses over into Pinal County before returning. There is a dry stream bed, that often has water and although it is located in the desert, it has some fairly dense vegetation.

*Meeting Time & Location:* Group will be meeting at the Dutchman Trailhead at 6:30 am, and directions will be emailed to all participants. The trail is about a 4 mile round trip hike on a good trail that has some rocks and boulders to navigate but some very nice scenery.

Limited to 6 participants plus leader, due to limited parking and narrow trail. The trailhead access will require driving 2½ miles on a gravel/dirt road. Rough in spots, but a sedan can navigate the road with slow driving. When we return, we can consider visiting Prospector Park in Apache Junction, which is a great location for Bendire's Thrasher.

*Leader:* Gordon Karre, [karhop1@msn.com](mailto:karhop1@msn.com)

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**Winslow area playas, tanks and grasslands**

We'll be making a large loop from Flagstaff that will take us to playas near Leupp and Winslow where many rarities have been reported over the past couple of months. There are stock tanks scattered throughout the area that we'll check out as well. The high desert grasslands will also provide birding opportunities. Much of the route is on paved roads but we'll be using dirt roads as well. Higher clearance vehicles are suggested and all-wheel drive or four-wheel drive vehicles will be essential if the roads are muddy. Be sure to bring snacks, plenty of water, sturdy walking shoes, and dress in layers that can be removed as the day warms up.

*Meeting Time & Location:* We'll be meeting at 6:30 in the parking lot directly south of the McDonalds that is located adjacent to Safeway on the eastside of Flagstaff at 4930 Highway 89. We will return to Flagstaff at approximately noon.

The trip is limited to 12 participants.

*Leaders:* Anne Pellegrini and Joe Crouse, [joseph.crouse@nau.edu](mailto:joseph.crouse@nau.edu)

**Hassayampa Plain eBird Gap Area**

The Hassayampa Plain is the dry floodplain of the Hassayampa River that drains the area south of the Vulture Mountains, north of the Belmont Mountains, and west of the White Tank Mountains. Habitat includes lowland and upland Sonoran Desert, with braided washes across the plain. It harbors high densities of Bendire's Thrashers, a small remnant population of LeConte's Thrashers, and other species of conservation concern including Costa's Hummingbird, Elf and Burrowing Owls, and Gilded Flicker. This area is slated to have a segment of the proposed Interstate-11 pass through here, which would further fragment the habitat and wildlife populations. The Hassayampa Plain is lacking in eBird data and is part of an area being considered for Important Bird Area nomination, which is also why this was one of the first AZFO eBird Gaps project areas chosen. For this mini-expedition, we will focus on some of the vegetated desert washes and water tanks off of Vulture Mine Rd. and Aguila Rd. to look for resident and migrant bird species. These two roads are paved with wide dirt/gravel shoulders, and we will be hiking mostly on flat or gently sloping terrain, although the sandy wash bottoms may involve somewhat more strenuous walking. Be sure to bring your own snacks and water, sturdy footwear, a hat and/or sunscreen, and dress in layers (it will likely start off chilly, but warm up quickly if the weather cooperates). The nearest restrooms are at the Vulture Peak Trailhead (pit toilet) or in Wickenburg.

*Meeting Time & Location:* 6:30am at the southwest corner of the Safeway Grocery parking lot in Wickenburg (1999 W Wickenburg Way, Wickenburg, AZ 85390). Alternatively, if you are planning to come north from Tonopah/I-10 via N. 355<sup>th</sup> Ave., we can make prearrangements to meet off Vulture Mine or Aguila Rds. Carpooling can be arranged via email ahead of time among registered participants if interested. Several gas and food options are available in Wickenburg. We will end by late morning/noon.

This trip will be limited to 10 participants plus the two leaders. We can split into two groups if we have enough participants.

*Leaders:* Chrissy Kondrat ([azdesertbird@gmail.com](mailto:azdesertbird@gmail.com)) and Eric Hough