

Agua Fria River at Humboldt (Yavapai County) 17 June 2017

By Troy Corman

Our latest expedition took us to the Agua Fria River at Humboldt, Yavapai County on 17 June 2017. The trip was unique in several ways, in that it covered only a single morning, it was all on private land, and it was combined with official callback surveys for Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Willow Flycatcher. The callback surveys were part of a larger effort to monitor populations of the endangered ‘Southwestern’ (*extimus*) subspecies of Willow Flycatcher and the threatened ‘Western’ distinct population segment of Yellow-billed Cuckoo. At an elevation of approximately 4500 ft., this perennial section of drainage is dominated by towering Fremont cottonwoods, with an understory of arroyo willow and other riparian trees. Soon after sunrise, one team conducted surveys for the flycatchers—finding three territories and a single nest with young, while the second team heard a single cuckoo. In Arizona, very few Willow Flycatchers have been documented nesting at this mid-elevation range.



‘Southwestern’ Willow Flycatcher feeding nestlings (photo © Troy Corman).

A few more participants arrived a little later in the morning, and we all joined forces to inventory a one-mile section of the riparian area for all bird species, numbers of each, and any breeding evidence. As a group we identified 47 species, most of which were breeding here. Highlights beyond those previously noted include five species of raptors, with nesting Common Black Hawk and a heard-only Gray Hawk the best finds. Gila and Hairy Woodpeckers both nest here, an odd combination—these two woodpeckers seldom share the same breeding habitat! We detected two singing Indigo Buntings, and late lingering migrants included a Wilson's Warbler and a Western Tanager. The full eBird checklist, with some photos can be viewed at <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S37680851>.



Agua Fria River expedition participants (photo © Felipe Guerrero).

One of the property owners, Garry Rogers, joined us for the expedition and he graciously opened his home to us upon completing our survey later in the morning as the temperatures climbed. I want to thank Garry for his wonderful hospitality and conservation efforts on his property, plus the seven other participants from Flagstaff (Anne Pellegrini), Prescott (Susan Drown, Felipe Guerrero, Carl Tomoff), Wittmann (Chrissy Kondrat-Smith), and the greater Phoenix area (Carol Beardmore, Jennifer Johnston).