



TOGETHER FOR NATURE

Arizona in Winter Tentative Itinerary

February 14-18, 2024

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Want to get away??? Picture perfect days in the upper 60s and 70s and lots of sun, anybody? That's what you can expect from a winter AZ trip, even though it does get chilly at night. There are a considerable number of winter specialties, some of which can't be predicted ahead of time, like Rufous-backed Robin and Green Kingfisher. We will have to be flexible to maximize our chances for these kinds of birds, but also for the more regularly wintering birds like Green-tailed Towhee.

Wednesday, 2/14: Flight to Phoenix, Gilbert Water Ranch

After getting in, we will spend the afternoon at the Gilbert Water Ranch. There are bound to be lots of wintering birds present and we will start picking up our first lifers. There often is a rarity around. Overnight at the Best Western Plus in Chandler.

Thursday, 2/15: Santa Cruz Flats, Pena Blanca Lake or De Anza Trail

A prime area for wintering birds is called the Santa Cruz flats, an agricultural area between Phoenix and Tucson. Targets are Crested Caracara, Mountain Plover, Chestnut-collared Longspur and Lark Bunting. We won't turn down Ferruginous Hawk or Burrowing Owl should we happen to run into one - and we probably will. We will also carefully check the Red Rock feedlot. After that, we will either head over to Pena Blanca Lake or work one of the access points of the De Anza trail; there are several opportunities. Overnight at the Best Western in Nogales.

Friday, 2/16: Patagonia area, San Rafael Valley

Patagonia is always worth a visit, winter or summer. The Paton's feeders should have a lingering Violet-crowned Hummingbird. Early morning we will spend in the San Rafael or Sonoita Grasslands, where a small number of Baird's Sparrows winter. We will need luck to see one. Other targets include longspurs, Short-eared Owl, Grasshopper Sparrow, Chihuahuan Meadowlark and, on the way in, the Mexican subspecies of Eastern Bluebird. In the afternoon, we will visit Patagonia Lake State Park which is always delightful as there are a variety of habitats. Overnight at the Best Western in Green Valley.

Saturday, 2/17: Madera Canyon, Santa Cruz River Valley

We will get an early start with an attempt to find Rufous-capped Warbler at Florida Canyon. After spending a little more time in lower Madera Canyon including the Santa Rita lodge, we will try a variety of areas in the Santa Cruz River Valley, including Amado, Rio Rico, Tubac and Tumacacori. The upper areas of Madera Canyon are typically relatively inactive in winter. We will head back all the way to Phoenix in the late afternoon. Overnight at the Super 8 in Goodyear near Phoenix.

Sunday, 2/18: The Thrasher Experience. Flight from Phoenix back to Portland

Early morning we will visit an area west of Phoenix called the Thrasher Spot. Not only is there a chance for 5 species of thrashers including LeConte's, Crissal and Bendire's, but we may also get to compare Sagebrush and Bell's Sparrows side by side if we are lucky. Before flying back to Portland, we will visit one more site en route.