

# MADERA CANYON BIRDS

September 1 to November 30, 2018

A complete checklist of Madera Canyon birds is available for download on the Friends web site (link below) and in print at the Visitor Information Station as you enter the canyon and in some brochure boxes attached to trail map panels in the canyon. To learn what unusual species are being seen in the canyon and southeast Arizona generally, go to the local birding hotline on the web at: <http://birding.aba.org/maillist/AZ>.

## General Summary:

The middle of September marks the traditional end to the Monsoon Season for southeast Arizona however this season the Monsoon Season ended early September. Though the vegetation in the Canyon appears lush in early September, there are signs that it this lushness is drying out and Madera Creek for the most part has no surface flow. Hopefully the birds and wildlife will find the few available pools of water and these pools will persist until the winter rains late in the year. Again, it will be interesting to see how the birds adapt to these conditions.

## Read the following for more bird possibilities:

**Quail/Turkey:** Three species of resident quail can be found in and near Madera Canyon. Only the **Montezuma Quail** can be found in the canyon proper and rarely out on to the grasslands. Though common in Madera Canyon they are seldom seen. Look for them crossing the road or any trail and listen for the distinctive calls and song in quiet areas of the canyon. **Gambel's & Scaled Quail** occur on the grasslands and in desert scrub habitats at the base of and below Madera Canyon. **Gould's Wild Turkey** can be found nearly anywhere in Madera Canyon, particularly at feeding stations.

**Diurnal Raptors:** The large roost of **Turkey Vultures** in the mid-canyon begins to fade out through September and should be gone by October. Resident raptors in the Canyon include **Cooper's & Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle** (uncommon), and **Northern Goshawk** (rare in upper Canyon) and can be found through the fall. **Zone-tailed & Gray Hawks**, which breed in the Canyon, should be migrating away by mid-October. **Swainson's Hawks** are mostly migrants through the grasslands in this area and should be gone by early October. Northern Harriers and American Kestrels return open grasslands to hunt in early fall and remain through winter. Other falcon species are rare and not expected.

**Doves/Cuckoos:** Though most migrate away, a few **White-winged & Mourning Doves** linger at the feeding stations through the fall. An occasional **Inca Dove** may spend some time at these feeding stations also. Individuals and small flocks of **Band-tailed Pigeons** wander widely in search of food (mostly acorns) throughout the Canyon, uncommon in early fall, becoming rare by winter. **Greater Roadrunners** are common around Proctor Rd and down Whitehouse Canyon Rd towards Green Valley. The few **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** that summered around Proctor Rd will likely leave by mid-September.

**Nocturnal Birds:** Seven species of owls occur in the Madera Canyon, they are difficult to find during the day but can be heard after dusk. **Great Horned Owls** are most often encountered in the lower portion of the Canyon. **Western Screech-Owls** are common in the desert washes and along Proctor Rd among the primitive camping area. **Whiskered Screech-Owls** are fairly common in the Canyon from the Whitehouse Picnic Area upwards. **Elf Owls** migrate out of the Canyon by mid-September and are typically silent this time of year. **Northern Pygmy-Owls** occur throughout the Canyon from the Madera Picnic Area up and can sometimes be heard

calling during the daytime. **Lesser Nighthawks** may be seen at dusk & dawn along Whitehouse Canyon Rd and around streetlights in Green Valley through October. **Common Poorwills** cease calling from the base of the mountains and most leave as fall progresses. Similarly **Mexican Whip-poor-wills** of the upper portions of the Canyon have departed. **White-throated Swifts** may be seen flying high near rocky cliffs.

**Hummingbirds:** This group fared well in the late summer around the feeders and good numbers should continue through mid-October. The bulk of the southbound migrants pass through before mid-fall, many of the local breeders also leave about the same time, a few pass through late in the fall, and fewer still may winter in the Canyon. Hummingbirds normally concentrate near feeding stations at the Chuparosa B&B, Madera Kubo, Santa Rita Lodge, and the Bog Spring Campground Host (if occupied). The few **Rufous**, **Broad-tailed**, and **Calliope Hummingbirds** passing through are mostly females & juveniles and will depart by October. The two most common nesting species, **Broad-billed** and **Black-chinned** are gone by September & October respectively. **Anna's** have arrived, the peak of their migration is in October and some will remain to winter with a few **Magnificent Hummingbirds**. Hopefully one of the other rare species such as **Berylline**, **Violet-crowned**, or **Lucifer Hummingbirds** may show up before season end.

**Elegant Trogons** are most reliably found along the Carrie Nation Mine Trail in the summer. For the most part family units will have broken up and mostly silent individuals may be encountered foraging for caterpillars and berries in throughout the Canyon. An individual or two may linger through late fall and into winter; if present they may be encountered anywhere along Madera Creek above Proctor Rd. **Ladder-backed** (lower Canyon), **Arizona** (mid-to-upper), and **Acorn** (throughout) **Woodpeckers** are common residents. **Northern Flickers** and **Hairy Woodpeckers** (uncommon) are resident in the pine forests of higher elevations in the Canyon with the flicker population moving downhill and supplemented with northern birds through the fall. **Red-naped** and **Williamson's Sapsuckers** begin arriving in September for a stay through winter. Hopefully a **Yellow-bellied**, **Red-breasted**, or some **hybrid Sapsucker** will also make an appearance.

**Flycatchers:** Of the numerous species of flycatchers recorded in the Canyon, the most sought after **Sulphur-bellied** is one of the earliest to leave (by mid-September). A few of the resident species may be found around Proctor; **Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet**, and **Say's Phoebes**. Most of the breeding and migrant species are gone by October; **Olive-sided** (rare), **Cordilleran**, **Pacific-slope**, **Dusky-capped**, **Ash-throated**, and **Brown-Crested** (usually leave in August) **Flycatchers**, **Western Wood- & Greater Pewees**, and **Western & Cassin's Kingbirds**. A few **Hammond's**, **Dusky**, & **Gray Flycatchers** may linger through late fall and into the winter in the lower portion of the Canyon.

**Loggerhead Shrikes** may be encountered in the grasslands below Proctor Rd. All the nesting vireo species remain in the Canyon through October including **Plumbeous**, **Hutton's** (resident), **Warbling**, & **Bell's** and the migrant **Cassin's**. **Mexican Jays** are a standard feature of Madera Canyon. The adults can be distinguished from the juveniles as the young birds have a pinkish bill that darkens with age. **Steller's Jays** typically stay in at the higher elevations and are not common here. The **Common Ravens** are the most commonly encountered raven in and around the Canyon. Rarely a flock of wandering **Chihuahuan Ravens** may be found in the mesquite grasslands but not in the Canyon. **Western Scrub-Jays** are rare. The few **Violet-green Swallows** that nested at higher elevations have moved away. **Northern Rough-winged** and **Barn Swallows** are sometimes encountered on the grasslands near water tanks. Other swallow species are rare.

**White-breasted Nuthatches, Bridled Titmouse, and Bushtits** are common in the juniper-oak woodlands. **Red-breasted** and **Pygmy Nuthatches** are irregular visitors, though there have been recent reports in the pines at higher elevations. **Verdins** are permanent residents; found in mesquites near Proctor.

Five species of wrens are resident in or near the Canyon. **Cactus Wrens** inhabits the scrubby desert at and below Proctor. **House, Bewick's, and Canyon Wrens** can be found throughout the Canyon. **Rock Wrens** are rarely encountered because their favored habitat is where few birders venture. Though rare, a **Winter** or **Pacific Wren** may inhabit damp brushy areas in the Canyon through fall and winter. **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** return in September, becoming one of the most common birds seen and an identification challenge for those seeking **Hutton's Vireos**. **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers**, though fairly common on the oak-savannah hillsides during the summer, their numbers diminish through fall to be absent by winter. **Black-tailed Gnatcatchers** are residents of the mesquite grasslands below Proctor. **Black-capped Gnatcatchers** were regular this summer along the Proctor Road Trail and hopefully continuing through fall.

The local population of **Eastern Bluebird**, though rare begins to form flocks and wander throughout the Canyon. Flocks of **Western Bluebirds** may be found wandering through the grasslands and lower Canyon by mid-October. **Townsend's Solitaires** are uncommon fall transients in the Canyon. The resident population of **Hermit Thrushes** is supplemented by northern breeders, which stay for the winter. **Swainson's Thrush** is an uncommon fall migrant in the Canyon. Migrant **American Robins** arrive in mid-October supplementing the local breeding population, forming flocks searching the Canyon for berries. **Northern Mockingbirds** and **Curve-billed Thrashers** can usually be found along Whitehouse Canyon Rd. **Crisal Thrashers** can sometimes be seen or heard along Proctor Road and at Florida Wash. **Phainopepla** are common in the mesquite grassland all year feeding on mistletoe berries. An occasional flock of **Cedar Waxwings** might be found passing through the Canyon in search of berries.

Thirty-four species of wood warblers plus the **Olive Warbler** have been documented in the Canyon. Many are accidentals so don't expect to see them all! Migrants that move through the Canyon, most depart by late fall, include **Orange-crowned, Nashville, Virginia's, Lucy's, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Gray, Townsend's, Hermit, Grace's, Wilson's, and MacGillivray's Warblers** along with **Northern Waterthrush (rare)** and **Yellow-breasted Chat (rare)**. **Red-faced Warbler** will depart by the end of September. The few warblers that remain in low numbers to winter include **Painted Redstart, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Gray, Townsend's, and Olive Warblers**.

A few **Hepatic, Western, and Summer Tanagers** will remain in the Canyon in fall but will then depart south. A few **Northern Cardinals** may be found at Proctor and in the mesquite grasslands below. **Pyrrhuloxias** can sometimes be found at the Florida Wash crossing on the way up to the Canyon. **Black-headed Grosbeak** is abundant throughout the Canyon in the fall and rarely a migrant **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** stops by as well. **Blue Grosbeak** and **Varied Bunting** wrap up their late breeding season in the mesquite-grasslands and move south by mid-October. They may be joined by a rare **Indigo** or even rarer **Painted Bunting**. **Green-tailed Towhees** arrive in September while **Canyon Towhees** are resident around Proctor. **Spotted Towhees** perform an altitudinal migration through the fall, from the higher mountains to the lower Canyon. Sparrows can be numerous in the grasslands during fall. Some breeding species remain but arrive from the north to winter here. Those to find in fall include **Botteri's, Cassin's, Rufous-winged, Rufous-crowned, Chipping, Brewer's, Black-chinned (rare), Vesper, Lark, Black-throated, Savannah, Lincoln's, and White-crowned Sparrows** from Proctor to the

Santa Cruz River. **Dark-eyed Juncos** will return in late fall and **Yellow-eyed Juncos** will come down the mountain to feeders.

**Eastern (Lilian's) Meadowlark** is common in the grasslands. A few **Western Meadowlarks** may wander to the grasslands in late fall to winter. Most **Hooded** and migrant **Bullock's Orioles** leave the area by mid-fall, leaving a single **Scott's Oriole** or two to overwinter in the Canyon. Most **Brown-headed & Bronzed Cowbirds** leave the Canyon by the end of September. **Lesser Goldfinches, House Finches, and Pine Siskins** dominate the feeders in the Canyon through the fall. An early **Cassin's** (rare) or **Purple** (very rare) **Finch** may show up at the feeders. **Lawrence's Goldfinch** might be found in the grasslands but they are very rare and irregular. **Red Crossbills** may be present but they are irregular (not every year) at higher elevations.

Madera Canyon checklist: <http://www.friendsofmaderacanyon.org/PDF/birdlist.pdf>.

See an unusual bird or one not on this or the bird checklist – Send email to:  
[info@friendsofmaderacanyon.org](mailto:info@friendsofmaderacanyon.org).

To learn about hummingbirds in southeastern Arizona & the monitoring program, sign on to: [www.HumMonNet.org](http://www.HumMonNet.org) and <http://humbander.net>.

To learn what unusual species are being seen in the canyon and Arizona in general, link to: <http://birding.aba.org/maillist/AZ>

Laurens Halsey

For the **Friends of Madera Canyon**

### **Note to eBirders:**

If you are entering eBird data for Madera Canyon there are a number of eBird hotspots in Madera Canyon. There are hotspots for each of the parking & picnic areas, feeding stations, and a number of the trails. Please use these hotspots when ever possible and do not merge a hike or drive through the canyon into one checklist. Also beware that the Pima – Santa Cruz County line cuts east-west through Madera Canyon. County boundaries are important for eBird data collection & reporting. The county line crosses Madera Canyon Road at the Madera Picnic Area, about at the midpoint of the big parking area on your left as you head up canyon. If you can see the Santa Rita Lodge, you are in Santa Cruz County so please use the “Madera Canyon—Santa Rita Lodge” hotspot. Otherwise use the “Madera Canyon—Madera Picnic Area” hotspot. If birding at the Bog Springs Campground, which is bisected by the county line, use the “Madera Canyon—Bog Springs campground” unless the birds you are noting are on the north side of the campground, then create a personal spot that is in Pima County.