

## MADERA CANYON BIRDS: SPRING 2019 – MARCH 1 TO MAY 31

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

**Summary:** The past winter was particularly warm & dry late with a blast of moisture and coolness in late February. Madera Creek is flowing well for much of its length in March, hopefully this can be sustained through the season. Springtime in southeast Arizona is usually a dry period and becoming quite warm by May. Birds and other wildlife will be concentrating in areas where they can find food and water.

**Red-tailed Hawks** are found throughout the Santa Cruz River valley and in smaller numbers up towards Madera Canyon. Their numbers drop rapidly throughout early spring as the bulk of the wintering population migrates north, leaving a few nesting pairs to remain through summer. **Cooper's Hawks**, year-round canyon residents, will be setting up territories to nest in the canyon. A few **Northern Goshawks** remain all year in the Canyon at higher elevations, though rarely seen. **Sharp-shinned Hawks** are rare migrants through the Canyon in spring. **Swainson's** and **Zone-tailed Hawks** may be found over the grasslands in spring, but they are uncommon. **Golden Eagles** breed in a nearby canyon and occasionally are seen hunting the grasslands or soaring high over the Canyon. **Northern Harriers** may be seen over the grasslands at the base of the canyon through April. Rarely all four of the local falcons, may be found on the road up to the Canyon. **American Kestrel** is a resident breeder along Madera Canyon Road. **Merlin**, **Peregrine Falcon**, and **Prairie Falcon** are rare visitors.

Three species of quail can be found in or around the canyon. **Gambel's Quail** are common in the desert scrub at lower elevations (more common towards Green Valley). **Scaled Quail** also inhabit the lower elevations, though uncommon; a few utilize the grasslands at the base of the Santa Rita Mountains. Within the Canyon, the only quail to be encountered is the much sought after **Montezuma Quail**. If you know their calls, they can often be heard from the trails traversing the oak-savannah habitat. If seen, it is most often as they flush from under foot. **Wild Turkeys** can be found throughout, from the canyon bottom to the higher elevation oak covered slopes and occasionally out on the grasslands. This re-introduced population is wild and flourishing, particularly near bird feeders.

**Mourning Doves** are present year round around the canyon frequenting feeding stations and are common in spring. **White-winged Doves** have returned and will be in the Canyon through the summer. You might find singles or flocks of **Band-tailed Pigeons** along trails at higher elevations and occasionally at feeders. **Greater Roadrunners** are regular all year around Proctor and down into the desert, listen for the males "cooing" song through the spring. **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** do not arrive in the canyon until June.

Now is a good time to listen for **Great Horned, Western and Whiskered Screech-Owls**, and **Northern Pygmy-Owls**. They are in the canyon but are very hard to find except when they are calling. **Elf Owls** will arrive in late March and several pairs usually nest from Whitehouse Picnic Area up to the Mt. Wrightson parking area. A few **Spotted** and **Flammulated Owls** are in the forests in the upper canyon but are very hard to locate. **Barn Owls** may be encountered at dusk and dawn along less traveled roads in the desert below the Canyon.

By April **Lesser Nighthawks** may be seen between dusk and dawn along Whitehouse and Madera Canyon Roads; easily seen around the lights along the entrance road to La Posada. **Common Poorwill** can be heard in the evenings below Proctor and in the lower portions of the Canyon. **Mexican Whip-poor-wills** can be heard from the Amphitheater parking area and up the Canyon. **Vaux's Swift** is an uncommon migrant over Madera Canyon, while **White-throated Swifts** are often seen high over ridgelines.

The spring hummingbird migration is from March through April. **Broad-billed** and **Black-chinned Hummingbirds** return to breed and are the most numerous. Most of the **Broad-tailed** and all of the **Rufous** and **Calliope Hummingbirds** will move through to more northern mountains. The few **Anna's**, and **Magnificent Hummingbirds** that overwinter become more numerous. Any other species of hummingbirds are uncommon to rare and should be documented and reported.

At least one **Elegant Trogon** overwintered in Madera Canyon mostly seen between Proctor Road and Madera Picnic Area. The main population of trogons should return to the Canyon in late March and early April followed by nesting in May. They can be heard along the stream beds from the Amphitheater Parking Area up canyon on the Carrie Nation & Super Trails and at Bog and Kent Springs.

**Ladder-backed, Arizona, and Acorn Woodpeckers**, and **Northern Flickers** are common. **Hairy Woodpeckers** are uncommon in the forested area high on the mountain. The wintering population of **Red-naped** and any other **Sapsucker** species will be moving north by the end of March. **Gila Woodpeckers** and **Gilded Flickers** are common around Green Valley but not in the canyon.

Eighteen species of flycatchers have been recorded for the canyon and all are here in spring. Some come early and others, like the **Sulphur-bellied** will not arrive until late May. **Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet** may be found around Proctor. **Olive-sided Flycatcher** is usually at higher elevations but passes through quickly in spring. The most common species in spring are **Greater Pewee, Western Wood-Pewee, Hammond's, Dusky, Gray, Cordilleran, Pacific Slope, Dusky-capped, Ash-throated, and Brown-Crested Flycatchers, Black & Say's Phoebe, and Cassin's & Western Kingbirds.**

**Loggerhead Shrike** is uncommon in the grasslands below the Canyon. The resident **Hutton's Vireos** will be joined by migrating **Cassin's Vireo** and nesting **Plumbeous** and **Warbling Vireos**. **Bell's Vireos** are easily heard, not so easily seen, from Proctor down through the brushy grasslands.

**Mexican Jays** may be found in flocks throughout the Canyon. **Steller's Jays** are uncommon in the fir forest higher on the mountains though several wintered and

may linger near the upper picnic area. The **Common Ravens** are the more common of the two ravens in the Canyon with some flocks of **Chihuahuan Ravens** in the mesquite grasslands and pecan groves along the Santa Cruz River. **Western Scrub-Jays** are rare along Proctor Road down from the Canyon.

**White-breasted Nuthatches, Bridled Titmice, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets** are common in the juniper-oak woodlands. The numbers of kinglets diminish as they migrate to breeding grounds to north. This is the time of year that we get to see their bright red crowns as the male quarrel. There may be a few **Red-breasted** and **Pygmy Nuthatches** high in the canyon near Josephine Saddle. Flocks of **Bushtits** are common in the juniper-oak habitats. **Brown Creepers** may be anywhere in above 5,000 feet. **Verdins** are permanent residents, found in the mesquite grassland around Proctor.

Five species of wrens may be found along the roads to and in the Canyon any time of year: **Cactus** at lower elevations, and **House, Bewick's, Canyon,** and rarely **Rock** in the Canyon. Eastern **Winter** and **Pacific Wrens** are rare. **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** migrate through the mesquite-grasslands near Proctor and breed in the juniper-oak habitats along the Four Springs Trail. **Black-tailed Gnatcatchers** might be found in the mesquite grassland (below Proctor) while the rare **Black-capped Gnatcatchers** continues to be reported from the Proctor Road area trail.

**American Robins** are common migrants in the Canyon. Bluebirds of any type are usually uncommon in the Canyon. **Eastern Bluebirds** are or were rare residents in the juniper-oak habitats and may breed near the Bog Springs Campground. **Townsend's Solitaire** is a rare find in the Canyon with no reports over the winter. **Hermit Thrushes** are common all year; their beautiful songs can be heard in the upper reaches of the Canyon in the spring. **Swainson's Thrush** is an uncommon spring migrant.

**Northern Mockingbirds** and **Curve-billed Thrashers** can be found along Whitehouse Canyon Rd. Resident **Crissal Thrashers** can sometimes be found in the mesquites along Proctor Rd. **Phainopeplas** are common in the mesquite grassland all year where they feed on mistletoe berries. Flocks of migrating **Cedar Waxwings** may be found in the Canyon.

Migrating wood warblers will increase in number through May and some will remain to nest. Migrants include **Orange-crowned, Nashville, Townsend's, Hermit, Wilson's, Black-and-white** (rare), **MacGillivray's** (uncommon), and **Northern Waterthrush** (rare), while breeding species include **Virginia's** (uncommon), **Lucy's, Yellow** (rare), **Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Gray, Grace's, Red-faced,** and **Olive Warbler** along with **Painted Redstart. Yellow-breasted Chat** is rare in the canyon. Thirty-four species of warblers have been documented in Madera Canyon. The following warbler species are very rare in Madera Canyon (and Arizona), don't count on seeing them: **Crescent-chested, Northern Parula, Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian, Yellow-throated, Prairie, Cerulean, Hooded, Fan-tailed,** and **Slate-throated Redstart.** But if you do, document and report them.

A few **Hepatic Tanagers** overwintered in the canyon and will be joined by **Western, Summer,** and more **Hepatic Tanagers** in April. A few **Northern Cardinals** and **Pyrrhuloxias** can be found in the mesquite grasslands on the way up to the canyon. **Black-headed Grosbeak** is an abundant migrant throughout the canyon and remains through the summer to breed. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** is a rare spring visitor, most often seen around one of the feeding stations. Beginning in May **Blue Grosbeak** and **Varied Bunting** can be found in the mesquite grasslands below Madera Canyon up to Proctor and at the feeding stations. **Lazuli Buntings** compete for feeder space as they migrate through to more northern breeding areas. The few wintering **Green-tailed Towhees** will soon depart while **Canyon Towhees** will become more evident around Proctor. **Spotted Towhees** move from the lower Canyon up to the pine-fir and scrub oak habitats high in the Canyon. This has been a moderate year for wintering sparrows (**Chipping, Brewer's, Black-chinned** (rare), **Vesper, Lark, Lincoln's, Fox** (rare), **Savannah,** and **White-crowned Sparrows, & Lark Bunting**), their numbers will be declining as spring progresses and they migrate northward. **Botteri's** and **Cassin's Sparrow** will be returning to the grasslands below the canyon but will be mostly silent & difficult to find until June. **Rufous-crowned, & Black-throated Sparrows** are resident in the grasslands and lower portions of the canyon. Usually restricted to the grasslands, several **Rufous-winged Sparrows** spent the winter at the Santa Rita Lodge and Madera Kubo feeders. Wonder how long they will remain? **Dark-eyed Juncos** and **Yellow-eyed Juncos** are still at feeders from Santa Rita Lodge to the Chuparosa Inn. The **Dark-eyed** will migrate north by the end of April and the **Yellow-eyed** will go up higher in the canyon to nest.

**Eastern** (Lilian's) **Meadowlark** is common in the grasslands. Sometimes **Western Meadowlarks** may be heard in the grasslands but most leave for their breeding grounds to the north. **Scott's Orioles** will be common in the canyon by May and **Hooded** and **Bullock's Orioles**, while more common in Green Valley, are also found in the canyon.

**Lesser Goldfinches, House Finches,** and **Pine Siskins** dominate the feeders in the canyon in early spring but the Siskins will soon depart for the north.

If you see an unusual bird - or one not on this or the canyon check list – please let us know by sending an email to: [info@friendsofmaderacanyon.org](mailto:info@friendsofmaderacanyon.org).

**Laurens Halsey - For the Friends of Madera Canyon**