

## **MADERA CANYON BIRDS: Summer 2020 – June 1 to August 31**

While much of the rest of the country appears to be slowly recovering from the outbreak of the Coronavirus Covid-19, the number of documented cases in Arizona continues to increase. While birding and nature viewing are generally considered healthy and safe activities, some precautions should be taken during these times. First and foremost is to avoid gathering in close proximity to other humans. Car pooling to birding locations is discouraged, birding fieldtrips (and many other events) have been cancelled, places where people gather to view birds are being closed, and other places are voluntarily limiting the number of people in one place. How should we adjust our behaviors as birders and visitors to Madera Canyon?

**Avoid gatherings.** Should there be crowds at the feeding stations think about coming back later and if you are at the feeding stations limit your time as to give others a chance to safely view the birds. Should you find the crowd of people observing the Elegant Trogon, try to find the bird from a distance or another vantage point. Should you find the trogon yourself; yes, let others know and then move away as to give them a safe opportunity to view this beautiful creature.

**Avoid direct human-to-human contact.** Shaking hands and hugging are out. "High-fives" after finding the Elegant Trogon or the season's first Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher is out.

**Wash your hands.** Should you touch railings, chairs, benches, door handles, anything in the restrooms - wash your hands with soap & water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

A modified form of the Madera Canyon Birds follows. The format of this report has changed such that "specialty" species are discussed rather than generally all birds.

A complete checklist of Madera Canyon birds is available for download on the FOMC web site [www.friendsofmaderacanyon.org](http://www.friendsofmaderacanyon.org) 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>.

### **General Summary:**

Summer-like temperatures arrived in May and it has been very dry in Madera Canyon except for one brief storm. The past spring was overall warmer and dryer than normal. Madera Creek is flowing through limited sections of lower Madera Canyon. Puffy afternoon clouds are giving locals signs of hope that monsoon season will soon be here. Some of the birds that breed during the monsoon season have begun singing.

**Elegant Trogon** – Two pairs of Elegant Trogons are likely nesting lower in the Canyon than normal. One pair is nesting along Madera Creek behind the Santa Rita Lodge (couple of years ago) and the other is likely nesting in the drainage heading towards the Bog Springs Campground from the Madera Picnic Area. Other pairs of Elegant Trogons are nesting along the Carrie Nation Trail, in the drainage between the Old Baldy Trail and the Super Trail, and near Kent & Bog Springs. The best way to observe Elegant Trogons during the early part of this season is to stake out a known nest site from a distance and wait. Or listen for one of the pair to call look in that direction. Later in the season, after the young have fledged, these birds make only soft vocalizations and your best bet is to just stumble upon them in the area of previous nests.

**Hummingbirds** – Madera Canyon is one of the best places to observe hummingbirds north of the border. The best spots in the canyon for observations are the feeding stations at the

Santa Rita Lodge, Madera Kubo, and Chuparosa B&B as well as at any patch of flowering plants. First discovered in late April, a female **Berylline Hummingbird** continues at the Santa Rita Lodge feeders. The most visible and numerous hummingbirds are **Broad-billed** and **Black-chinned**, followed by **Anna's** and **Rivoli's**. As the summer progresses southbound migrants will begin to show, including **Broad-tailed**, **Rufous**, and **Calliope Hummingbirds**. Post-breeding dispersal begins, **Costa's** and **Violet-crowned** move up the Canyon from the surrounding habitats. Hopefully a vagrant or two from Mexico, such as **Berylline** & **White-eared** and perhaps a **Plain-capped Starthroat**, will show up. **Blue-throated Mountain-Gems**, formerly known as Blue-throated Hummingbirds, were once regular in Madera Canyon. Today they are rather rare and because of identification challenges reports of this species should be substantiated with photographs.

**Montezuma Quail** – This species is resident in Madera Canyon though it is infrequently seen. **Montezuma Quail** occur from the lowest part of the canyon, the Proctor Road area, all the way into the pine-oak woodlands above 6000ft elevation. They have a habit of freezing remaining very still when approached, and then if the intruder gets close enough they fly from under foot. Sometimes they freeze out in the open, such as on the road or at the edge of a trail. At these times the observer can get long and very satisfying looks. The best place/time to look for this species is where/when human activity is low though they have shown up at water features at the Lodge, Kubo, and Chuparosa. Perhaps the best method of looking for Montezuma Quail is the not look for them; just happen upon them while enjoying a walk or a hike.

**Raptors** – Eight species of diurnal raptors may be found in Madera Canyon during the summer season. Three of these species grab the attention of visiting birders: **Northern Goshawk**, **Gray**, and **Zone-tailed Hawk**. One (maybe two) pair of resident **Northern Goshawks** breeds in the higher elevations and sparsely traveled portions of Madera Canyon. On rare occasions one may soar down the canyon or high over the surrounding ridges. At least one pair of **Gray Hawks** have been breeding in lower Madera Canyon for the past several years and are frequently heard calling and seen soaring. A few pairs of **Zone-tailed Hawk** nest nearby and can often be seen soaring over the Canyon particularly hunting the slopes between Proctor Road and the Whitehouse Picnic Area. Many non-breeding **Turkey Vultures** roost in the Canyon and large numbers may be seen streaming into and out of the Canyon the evenings and mornings. If you feel like you are approaching the nest of any raptor consider turning around as the disturbance is not good for the birds and is potentially dangerous to the observer.

**Owls and Nightjars** – Seven species of owls and three species of nightjars can be found and around Madera Canyon and presumably nest. Encounters with any nocturnal bird are exciting, for both the birder and the birds. As nocturnal birds are typically sensitive to disturbances please be cautious during your observations. Please do not play audio recordings to attract owls or nightjars as they are busy defending territories from natural intruders and feeding young. **Whiskered Screech-Owls**, **Elf Owls**, and **Northern Pygmy-Owls** can be found through the road-accessible portions of the Canyon. **Great-horned** and **Western Screech-Owls** are typically found at the base of the Canyon. A few **Spotted** and **Flammulated Owls** are in the forests in the upper canyon but are very hard to locate. **Lesser Nighthawks** may be seen between dusk and dawn along Madera Canyon Road. **Common Poorwill** can be heard in the evenings around Proctor Road and lower portions of the Canyon. **Mexican Whip-poor-wills** can be heard from the Amphitheater parking area and up the Canyon.

**Woodpeckers** – There are several species of woodpeckers that reside in Madera Canyon. The two that attract the most attention are the **Acorn** and **Arizona Woodpeckers**. The **Acorn Woodpecker** attracts attention because of its abundance and behaviors. These can be found at any of the feeding stations in the canyon and along most of the trails, they are quite obvious and rather flamboyant. The **Arizona Woodpecker**, on the other hand, is rather shy. Normally seen singly or as a pair, this species can be found throughout the canyon wherever there are oaks. The best place to observe this species is at the feeding stations as it sneaks to get some suet before being chased away by the **Acorn Woodpeckers**.

**Flycatchers** - Many species of flycatchers have been recorded for the Canyon and may remain through the summer to breed. **Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers** can be found nesting along all of the drainages (wherever there's Sycamores) in Madera Canyon. **Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet** may be found around Proctor and the Whitehouse Picnic Area. While **Western Wood-Pewees** can be found nearly everywhere in the canyon, its large cousin the **Greater Pewee** is found at higher elevations where the pines begin to mix with the oak. **Cordilleran Flycatchers** are found mostly in shaded areas along creeks from the Amphitheater area and higher in the Canyon. **Dusky-capped & Brown-Crested Flycatchers** have bred in cavities throughout the canyon. Southbound migrating **Pacific Slope Flycatchers** begin arriving in August.

**Black-capped Gnatcatchers** are resident breeders in the lowest portion of Madera Canyon and along the flanks of the Santa Rita Mountains. In the Canyon they are found along the Proctor Loop Trail and down Madera Creek to the west. They often build nests in close proximity to the trail and maybe viewed without encroaching. Both **Blue-gray & Black-tailed Gnatcatchers** are nearby so careful observations are necessary to determine which species you are looking at.

More than thirty species of warblers have occurred in the Canyon and a handful is around the summer. **Lucy's Warblers** have bred in the mesquite bosques from the Whitehouse Picnic Area down to the Proctor Road area. **Grace's, Red-faced, Virginia's** (uncommon) and **Olive Warblers** breed in the oak and pine forest at higher elevations of the Canyon. **Black-throated Gray Warblers** and **Painted Redstarts** can be found virtually anywhere in the Canyon from the Proctor Road Area to Josephine Saddle. Late in the summer, southbound migrants such as **Hermit** and **Townsend's Warblers** begin showing up.

The following is a quick list of interesting though not as highly sought after species for Madera Canyon: **Mexican Jays** may be found in flocks throughout the Canyon. **Bridled Titmice** can be found throughout the canyon in family groups and small flocks mostly above the Whitehouse Picnic Area. **Verdins** are noisy permanent residents found in the mesquite grassland around Proctor. **Crissal Thrashers** can sometimes be found in the mesquites along Proctor Road. **Hepatic Tanagers** pairs can be found throughout the Canyon. **Varied Bunting** can be found in the mesquite grasslands below Madera Canyon up to Proctor and the feeding stations. **Botteri's** and **Cassin's Sparrow** have returned to the grasslands below the Canyon and may be heard from the Proctor Road parking area. **Yellow-eyed Juncos** are mostly found breeding at higher elevations, a few pair can be found along Madera Creek from the Santa Rita Lodge to the Chuparosa.

Late July through August is the time to look for **Aztec Thrushes**. Though casual at best, past occurrences of this species seems to coincide with the ripening of choke cherries. Most of the records of this species are from the Carrie Nation Trail at about 6000ft elevation.

### **Note to eBirders:**

If you are entering eBird data for Madera Canyon there are a number of eBird hotspots in Madera Canyon. There are basically hotspots for each of the parking & picnic areas, feeding stations, and a number of the trails. Please use these hotspots whenever possible and try not to 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.

**To learn what unusual species are being seen in the canyon and Arizona in general link to: [www.birdingonthe.net/maillinglists/AZNM.html](http://www.birdingonthe.net/maillinglists/AZNM.html)**

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

**Calling the Tucson Audubon Rare Bird Alert 520-629-0510 x 3**

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