

Sky Islands and Desert Waters Mini-Expeditions



Sunday, September 25

For all trips, bring sturdy shoes, hat/sunscreen, and at least 1-2 liters of water.

Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area/Bonita Creek

Led by: Camden Bruner

Limit: 10 people – site limits number of vehicles, carpooling would be ideal

Meeting Place: Best Western Plus

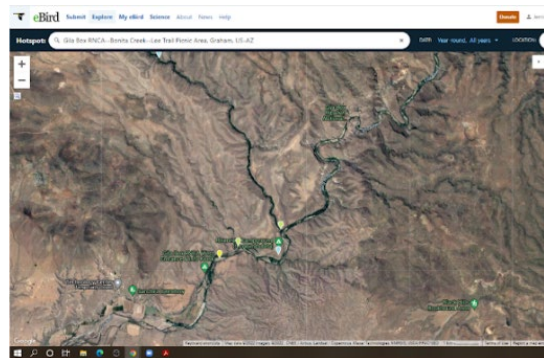
Meeting Time: Sunday, Sept. 25, 6:50 a.m.; carpool if possible. Return to Safford circa noon.

Sign up: Email Camden camden.bruner@usda.gov; cc Jennie jmacfarland@tucsonaudubon.org.

Description: We will be exploring the southern portion of the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area which protects the confluences of the Gila River with the San Francisco River, Bonita Creek, and Eagle Creek. Rivers edge cliffs give the “Gila Box” its name and form a stark boundary between mature riparian habitat

along the perennial waterways and the harsh desert environment above. Our trip in late September will look for migrating passerines, especially warblers, in the riparian habitat. The last of the remaining summer residents should also be present including Common Black Hawk, Bell’s Vireo, tanagers, and Yellow-breasted Chat. We also expect several species of wrens and woodpeckers in addition to upland desert birds. Depending on weather and water levels, the group may walk in the stream along

Bonita Creek – **sandals, water shoes, or footwear you don’t mind getting wet is recommended.** Overall, the trip will be comprised of several stops along a 2WD-accessible road with less than a half mile of walking on relatively flat, even terrain.



eBird Hotspots: Bonita Creek

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2410483>

Willcox Area – Fall Migration and Sparrow Seek

Led by: Homer Hansen

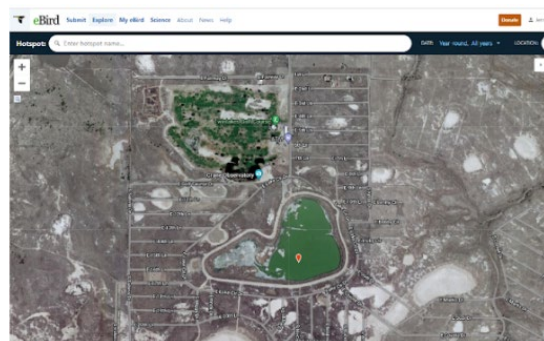
Limit: 12 people

Meeting Place: Best Western Plus, Safford

Meeting Time: Sunday Sept. 25, Leave Safford at 6:30 a.m. to meet at 7:30 a.m. at Lake Cochise [Google map](#)), done by 12 noon.

Sign Up: Email Homer hhansen@willcoxnature.org; cc Jennie jmacfarland@tucsonaudubon.org

Description: We’ll start at Cochise Lakes and look for migrating shorebirds and the first arriving wintering ducks as well as resident Scaled Quail. This site is legendary for oddball species turning up so you never know what you’ll find! Then we’ll explore several sites around Willcox looking for arriving wintering sparrow species and go over how to identify some of the sparrows we encounter.



eBird Hotspot: Cochise Lake & Twin Lakes <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L266875>

Duncan Birding Trail (Greenlee County)

Led by: Caleb Strand

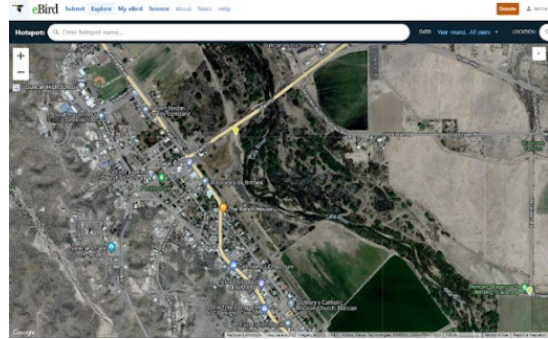
Limit: 12 people

Meeting Place: Duncan Birding Trail – Main Street & Gila River
(32.7226516, -109.1026269) [Google Map](#)

Meeting Time: Sunday, Sept. 25, at 6:00 a.m.

Sign Up: Email Caleb strandcaleb@yahoo.com; cc Jennie jmacfarland@tucsonaudubon.org

Description: The Duncan Birding Trail is located in the small town of Duncan, only 40 minutes east of Safford on U.S. 70 in Greenlee County. Greenlee gets the least coverage by birders of any county in the state; however, this is not due to poor birding! On this trip, we'll be hiking the trails and roads that parallel the riparian along the Gila River and the many adjacent fields with productive weedy habitat. This area has recently had breeding Common Black, Gray, and Zone-tailed Hawks, Mississippi Kites, and an exceptional volume of morning flight (specifically with passerines), which has included regular flyover Dickcissels, a species otherwise hard to find in the state!



eBird Hotspot: Duncan Birding Trail

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3021004>

Pima Area - From the Gila River to Cluff Ranch

Led by: Troy Corman

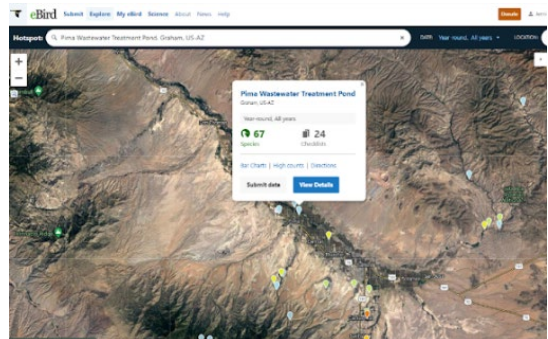
Limit: 12 people

Meeting Place: Best Western Plus in Safford

Meeting Time: Sunday, Sept. 25, at 6:00 a.m. End time approximately noon.

Sign Up: Email Troy aplomado02@gmail.com; cc Jennie jmacfarland@tucsonaudubon.org

Description: We will explore several different habitats beginning with lower river riparian and agricultural lands, plus check the nearby Pima wastewater pond for any migrants. We'll then travel towards the Pinaleño Mountain foothills to the main Cluff Ranch Headquarters area and nearby Ash Creek with its tall cottonwoods, hackberry/mesquite woodlands and marshy pond. This time of year, who knows what exciting birds we will find!! Time-permitting, we'll visit Matthew's Pond west of Pima.



eBird Hotspots: Bryce Road Bridge

Pima WTP

Cluff Ranch Wildlife Area

Matthews (1200 W) Pond

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3633820>

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3633861>

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L351763>

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L11936156>