

2021 Arizona Trip

After returning from Hawaii, we had a short time to plan for a trip to Southeast Arizona with Mark Pretti, one of our favorite guides. We had not been to Arizona in some time, and it was one of the few places we could go birding without leaving the USA. For reasons that seemed like a good idea at the time, we elected to drive there, planning to visit cousins and friends on the return.

Our plans called for us to arrive in Tucson in time to visit our friends from Austin, the Arredondos, for the afternoon, with more planned on the day after the completion of the tour. This meant that we saw some Arizona specialties before the beginning of the tour. Although not really a specialty of the area, we loved this great close view of a female Cooper's Hawk that had a nest down the street.



Unfortunately, we learned that this bird and the chicks were found dead shortly after we left. Apparently, she had probably found a poisoned rodent and fed it to the chicks.

We were also treated to a pair of Gambel's Quail, who thought the wall around the garden was a perfect place to strut their stuff.



The next morning, we picked up some members of the group at the airport and set off birding, stopping at a local wetland area first. One of the features of Mark's tours that we particularly like is the focus on *all* nature, which on this occasion resulted on a nice look at this [Ornate Tree Lizard](#). Both Linda and I took pictures of this lizard, though at different times.



When the birding was slow, we found other things to focus on, such as the [Variegated Meadowhawk](#), seen around a pond near [Historic Canoa Ranch](#).



Dragonflies are lovely, as I don't need to explain to anyone who has read these Annual Reports, but birding is still the name of the game, and we saw some great ones. We even had a lifer, Rufous-winged Sparrow, a mostly nondescript little bird that we had missed on previous visits to Arizona. It was fairly common on this trip and we saw several of them.

Some of our favorite sightings from the trip are pictured below. Many more are in the online album, [2021 Arizona Trip](#).

We hit most of the birding hotspots on this trip: Madera Canyon, Ramsay Canyon, Paton's Yard, Patagonia Lake, and Mark's back yard.



Peregrine Falcon



Harris' Hawk

These two hawks, Peregrine Falcon on the left, Harris' Hawk on the right, had a minor disagreement over who owned the tree. The Peregrine claimed it first, but gave up when the Harris' showed up.

This was on the way to Mark's back yard.



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Curve-billed Thrasher and Arizona Cotton Rat

This Curve-billed Thrasher waits patiently for the Arizona Cotton Rat to finish drinking from the communal water dish. The rat was a new mammal for us.



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Kentucky Warbler

We visited Sandy Anderson at the [Gray Hawk Nature Center](#) where she showed us a Gila



Gila Monster

Monster and Black-tailed Rattlesnake. The rattlesnake had been raised in captivity, and the Gila Monster had been around for a while. We birded on the property before eating a picnic supper and watching the show. This Kentucky Warbler, seen along the river, was completely new for the property, and very rare for the area.



Elegant Trogon



Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher

Our visit to Ramsay Canyon produced good views of two species Arizona is famous for: Elegant Trogon and Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher. Both these birds were very cooperative, and we took several shots.

After the Arizona part of our trip, we drove back to California, to visit Linda's cousin, Jesse Moorman. Of course, we took advantage of the area to do some more birding, visiting Joshua Tree NP, which has been devastated by a long drought. Much better was a pass through Big Morongo Nature Preserve, a favorite stop. The biggest treat here was an incredible Verdin nest right by the boardwalk thru the marsh. Although the nest was already huge, the birds were still working on it as shown in this picture:



Verdin with nesting material

Then, we drove to Santa Barbara where we visited our old friends, Ann and Bob Arnett, who happened to be vacationing there. After walking around the area shopping, we said goodbye and headed home. A very enjoyable trip.

We have far more photos from the trip than we put in this brief report. You can see all of them in The [2021 Arizona Trip Album](#).