



Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary

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New Mexico: The Rio Grande from the Southern Rockies to the Chihuahuan Desert

January 17-23, 2020



Leaders:

Strickland Wheelock

Kathy Seymour

Tia Pinney

Protecting the Nature of Massachusetts

The Rio Grande shapes the landscape of central New Mexico, with reservoirs, riparian zones, and rich agricultural lands in stark contrast to desert scrub and forested mountain ranges. Our trip begins in Santa Fe in the southernmost reaches of the Rocky Mountains and follows the river south to El Paso in the heart of the Chihuahuan Desert. We will bird renowned sites like Sandia Crest for all three species of Rosy-Finch and Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge for the spectacle of thousands of roosting Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes. Other possibilities include Clark's and Western Grebes, Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Pinyon Jay, Juniper Titmouse, Black-throated and Rufous-crowned Sparrows, Townsend's Solitaire, Acorn Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker, Phainopepla, Crissal Thrasher, and more.

Day 1: Friday, January 17

Our trip begins mid-day as we gather at the Albuquerque airport. We will stop for a quick lunch and then head out birding at the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park located along the Rio Grande. This urban park is primarily wildlife habitat with four constructed ponds. We will look for ducks, Cackling Goose, Sandhill Crane, Greater Roadrunner, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Steller's Jay, White-winged Dove, Black and Say's Phoebes, Mountain Chickadee, Eastern and Western Bluebirds, Spotted Towhee, Great-tailed Grackle, Western Meadowlark, and Lesser Goldfinch.

After the afternoon's introduction to the winter birds of central New Mexico we will drive northeast to the historic city of Santa Fe.

Lodging in Santa Fe

Day 2: Saturday, January 18

Our day starts in the foothills east of Santa Fe as we explore the Santa Fe River and surrounding canyon habitats. Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary, located along the river, is a state recognized Important Bird Area, with piñon-juniper, ponderosa pine and mixed spruce-fir habitats. Adjacent to the Audubon Center is the Santa Fe Canyon Preserve which has a bosque of cottonwood and willow trees and beaver ponds in addition to upland forests. We will be looking for Northern Pygmy-Owl, Steller's and Pinyon Jays, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Black-billed Magpie, Townsend's Solitaire, Winter Wren, Pygmy Nuthatch, Juniper Titmouse, Bushtit, Canyon Towhee, Cassin's Finch, Pine Siskin, Evening Grosbeak. If time permits we will head higher into the mountains to the Santa Fe Ski Area to look for Canada Jay, Red Crossbill, and other high altitude species.

Mid-day we will take a siesta, with a break for lunch and an opportunity to explore the legendary Santa Fe Plaza or rest back at the hotel.

After our city adventures, we will head southwest to Cochiti Lake, a flood control unit along the Rio Grande, within the Pueblo de Cochiti Indian Reservation. The Cochiti Dam

is one of the ten largest earth fill dams in the United States. Here we will look for Western, Clark's, and Eared Grebes, American Coot, Wilson's Snipe, Bald Eagle, Loggerhead Shrike, Black-billed Magpie, Mountain Bluebird, and Townsend's Solitaire.

Lodging in Santa Fe

Day 3: Sunday, January 19

This morning we head back to Albuquerque where we will explore the Rio Grande Valley State Park, a large preservation area along both sides of the Rio Grande. The park habitat is mostly bosque - Spanish for forest - with cottonwood trees, coyote willow, and New Mexico olive that provide habitat for beaver, birds, turtles, and snakes. We will walk along this riparian corridor looking for Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Black and Say's Phoebes, Bushtit, Mountain Chickadee, Western Bluebird, and Lesser Goldfinch

Weather permitting, we will then shift gears and head up into the high elevation habitats of the Sandia Mountains. Sandia is Spanish for watermelon and this small range is thought to be named for the extensive red rock with green coniferous forests along the crest. At Sandia Crest House we will search for Gray-crowned, Black, and Brown-capped Rosy-Finches, Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee, and Cassin's Finch.

In the late afternoon, we will drive to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in time for sunset and our first experience of the grand crane and goose spectacle. The refuge encompasses a nine-mile section of the Rio Grande as well as extensive water impoundments and fields cultivated for winter feeding, attracting tens of thousands of Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes every winter. They stage in the fields in the late afternoon before the masses descend upon their roosting areas at dusk - an unforgettable birding experience.

Lodging in Socorro

Day 4: Monday, January 20

We will be back at Bosque del Apache before dawn for the awesome morning flight of geese and cranes. The sight and sound of thousands of rattling, honking, and bugling birds ascending from their nighttime roosts is awe inspiring. Mixed among the Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes are large numbers of Ross's Geese and many other species of waterfowl. Once the spectacle has abated we will drive the auto loop to experience all that the refuge has to offer. Target birds are Tundra Swan, Gambell's Quail, Long-billed Dowitcher, Neotropic Cormorant, Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Loggerhead Shrike, Greater Roadrunner, Verdin, Curve-billed and Crissal Thrashers, and American Pipit.

Midday will we have lunch and then head to the Water Canyon Wildlife Area in the Magdalena Mountains. This isolated range of unusual rock formations has a wide variety of habitats including scrubland, piñon-juniper woodland, ponderosa pine forest, spruce-

fir forest, grassland, and riparian areas. The diversity of habitats supports a variety of wildlife including mountain lions, black bears, pronghorns, mule deer, coyotes, and red and grey foxes. In Water Canyon we will focus on montane and grassland species including Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Williamson's and Red-naped Sapsuckers, Acorn Woodpecker, Chihuahuan Raven, Pygmy Nuthatch, Juniper Titmouse, Bushtit, Rock Wren, Chestnut-collared Longspur, and Pine Siskin.

Lodging in Socorro

Day 5: Tuesday, January 21

Today we head south towards Truth or Consequences. We will forego the highway to bird the Farm to Market roads through the narrow cultivated corridor along the river searching for Ferruginous Hawk, Chihuahuan Raven, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Loggerhead Shrike, raptors, sparrows, and more.

Just north of Truth or Consequences is Elephant Butte Lake, another dammed section of the Rio Grande and the largest reservoir in New Mexico. Here we will scan for Western and Clark's Grebes, Neotropic Cormorant, ducks and other waterfowl.

As we continue south to Las Cruces we will stop at the sycamore lined Las Animas Creek looking for Gambell's Quail, Western Screech-Owl, Acorn and Lewis's Woodpeckers, Red-naped Sapsucker, Bridled Titmouse, Curve-billed and Crissal Thrashers, Pyrrhuloxia, and more. We will be traveling through some of the best remaining examples of Rio Grande riparian bosque. We will visit Caballo Reservoir, an excellent location for grebes, cormorants, ducks, and California Gull as well as a variety of songbirds. At Percha Dam we will walk through cottonwood bosque and mesquite scrub searching for Gambell's Quail, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Greater Roadrunner, Black Phoebe, Verdin, Crissal Thrasher, Phainopepla, sparrows, and possibly all three bluebird species.

Time permitting we will stop for a Yellow-headed Blackbird roost.

Lodging in Las Cruces

Day 6: Wednesday, January 22

Today starts with driving up into the Organ Mountains, named for the rocky spires that stick up above the canyons and rocky ridges. The habitats range from low elevation Chihuahuan desert and grassland, to oak juniper woodlands and finally ponderosa pine at the highest elevations. The habitat at Aguirre Springs is juniper, oak, and mountain mahogany with a spectacular backdrop of the Organ Pipe Needles to the west and White Sands and the Chihuahuan Desert to the east. We will look for Scaled Quail in the grasses, Acorn Woodpecker in the trees, and Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, and Prairie Falcon along the cliffs. On the western side of the Organ Mountains, Dripping Springs is an area of desert scrub, piñon-juniper and oak woodlands where we will look for desert songbirds including Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Juniper Titmouse, Rock,

Canyon, Bewick's, and Cactus Wrens, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Curve-billed and Crissal Thrashers, Phainopepla, Black-chinned, Rufous-crowned, Brewer's, and Black-throated Sparrows, Canyon, Green-tailed and Spotted Towhees, and Pyrrhuloxia.

Our afternoon stop will be Rio Bosque Wetlands Park which is an EL Paso city park managed by the University of Texas at El Paso as an environmental research site. The university is engaged in rehabilitating the Rio Grande wetland habitats that were once common along this section of the river. Along with desert riparian species we will be looking for Harris's Hawk and Burrowing Owl.

If we were unable to visit a Yellow-headed Blackbird roost yesterday, we will visit one in the late afternoon.

Lodging El Paso

Day 7: Thursday, January 23

This morning we will bird the El Paso area looking for any target birds we may have missed during the week. By late morning we will head to the El Paso airport, taking home great memories of this unique and beautiful area, the birds we've seen and, of course, the geese and crane extravaganza.

Please note:

This is a natural history field trip – we will rise early every morning and be active all day. Participants should be able to be to walk at least 1 mile and be on your feet for 1-2 hours.

While we attempt to be true to our itinerary, all scheduled events are subject to change depending on the weather and other considerations.

Fees:

Member \$1590; Non-member \$1910

Single Room Supplement: \$400

Deposit: \$250 due with registration;

Final payment is due November 17, 2019.

Fee covers all ground transportation, lodging, and entrance fees. Participants are responsible for personal supplies, snacks, and meals.

Cancellation Policy:

Cancellations must be made in writing or by email, and are effective upon receipt. Cancellations received up to 6 months prior to departure will be refunded in full. For cancellations less than 6 months prior to departure, the deposit is not refundable. Final payment is due 60 days prior to departure; no refunds are available for cancellations less than 60 days prior to departure. However, if we are able to fill your spot, a partial refund may be possible.

Flights:

DO NOT book your flight until we have given you the flight information for the trip leaders. Please schedule your flight to arrive no later than 30 minutes after the leaders, and for your return flight not to depart earlier than that of the trip leaders. Please provide us with your flight details.

Trip Insurance:

If you cancel for any reason, the cancellation policy will apply. If you wish to purchase trip cancellation insurance, you can search for policies at www.insuremytrip.com.

Registration Form – New Mexico, January 2020

To register please call the registrar or fill out this form and mail it with a deposit.

Program Registration

Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary

208 South Great Road

Lincoln, MA 01773

781-259-2220

drumlinfarmeducation@massaudubon.org

For more information about the trip please contact:

Kathy Seymour

781-259-2207

kseymour@massaudubon.org

Name(s) _____ Member no. _____

Address _____

Telephone Cell _____

Daytime _____

Evening _____

E-mail address _____

Would you like to receive our quarterly Birders Connection email? Yes ___ No ___

I would like to join Mass Audubon: Family \$65 _____ Individual \$48 _____

Single Room Requested: Yes ___ No ___ Please note single supplement fee.

Deposit Enclosed: _____

Visa/Mastercard/Discover/American Express: _____

Exp. date ___/___

Payment by check is greatly appreciated, and enables us to use more of our funds for programming. Please make your check payable to Mass Audubon. Thank you!

New Mexico, January 2020 – Checklist Highlights

Snow Goose	Green Heron	Black-tailed Gnatcatcher
Ross's Goose	Black-crowned Night-Heron	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Greater White-fronted Goose	White-tailed Kite	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Cackling Goose	Golden Eagle	Eastern Bluebird
Tundra Swan	Northern Harrier	Western Bluebird
Wood Duck	Bald Eagle	Mountain Bluebird
Blue-winged Teal	Harris's Hawk	Townsend's Solitaire
Cinnamon Teal	Rough-legged Hawk	Hermit Thrush
Northern Shoveler	Ferruginous Hawk	Curve-billed Thrasher
Gadwall	Western Screech-Owl	Crissal Thrasher
American Wigeon	Great Horned Owl	Sage Thrasher
Mexican Duck	Northern Pygmy-Owl	American Pipit
Northern Pintail	Burrowing Owl	Cedar Waxwing
Green-winged Teal	Belted Kingfisher	Phainopepla
Canvasback	Williamson's Sapsucker	Evening Grosbeak
Redhead	Red-naped Sapsucker	Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch
Ring-necked Duck	Lewis's Woodpecker	Black Rosy-Finch
Greater Scaup	Acorn Woodpecker	Brown-capped Rosy-Finch
Lesser Scaup	Ladder-backed Woodpecker	Cassin's Finch
Long-tailed Duck	Hairy Woodpecker	Red Crossbill
Bufflehead	Northern Flicker	Pine Siskin
Common Goldeneye	American Kestrel	Lesser Goldfinch
Hooded Merganser	Merlin	Chestnut-collared Longspur
Common Merganser	Peregrine Falcon	Black-chinned Sparrow
Red-breasted Merganser	Prairie Falcon	Brewer's Sparrow
Ruddy Duck	Black Phoebe	Black-throated Sparrow
Scaled Quail	Say's Phoebe	Lark Bunting
Gambel's Quail	Loggerhead Shrike	Dark-eyed Junco
Ring-necked Pheasant	Canada Jay	White-crowned Sparrow
Pied-billed Grebe	Pinyon Jay	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Eared Grebe	Steller's Jay	Harris's Sparrow
Western Grebe	Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay	White-throated Sparrow
Clark's Grebe	Black-billed Magpie	Sagebrush Sparrow
Eurasian Collared-Dove	Clark's Nutcracker	Vesper Sparrow
Inca Dove	Chihuahuan Raven	Lincoln's Sparrow
White-winged Dove	Common Raven	Swamp Sparrow
Greater Roadrunner	Horned Lark	Canyon Towhee
American Coot	Mountain Chickadee	Rufous-crowned Sparrow
Sandhill Crane	Juniper Titmouse	Green-tailed Towhee
Black-necked Stilt	Verdin	Spotted Towhee
Long-billed Dowitcher	Bushtit	Eastern Towhee
Wilson's Snipe	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Spotted Sandpiper	Pygmy Nuthatch	Western Meadowlark
Greater Yellowlegs	Brown Creeper	Eastern Meadowlark
California Gull	Rock Wren	Rusty Blackbird
Neotropic Cormorant	Canyon Wren	Brewer's Blackbird
American White Pelican	Pacific Wren	Great-tailed Grackle
Great Blue Heron	Marsh Wren	Orange-crowned Warbler
Great Egret	Bewick's Wren	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Snowy Egret	Cactus Wren	Pyrrhuloxia