

Sierra Vista

A R I Z O N A

BIRDING GUIDE

EXTRAORDINARY SKIES.
UNCOMMON GROUND.

Top
Five
Birding
Locations

Why Birds
Flock to Sierra Vista

HUACHUCA MOUNTAIN CANYONS

Five often-recommended canyons that lead into the Huachuca Mountains offer superior birding. Rare sightings in these canyons, like the Plain-capped Starthroat, the Flame-colored Tanager, and the Slate-throated Redstart, have gained national attention.

Garden Canyon, Fort Huachuca

Hike along trails that wind through some of Arizona's most diverse flora and fauna. Called a bird-watcher's paradise, these canyons attract songbirds and raptors alike.

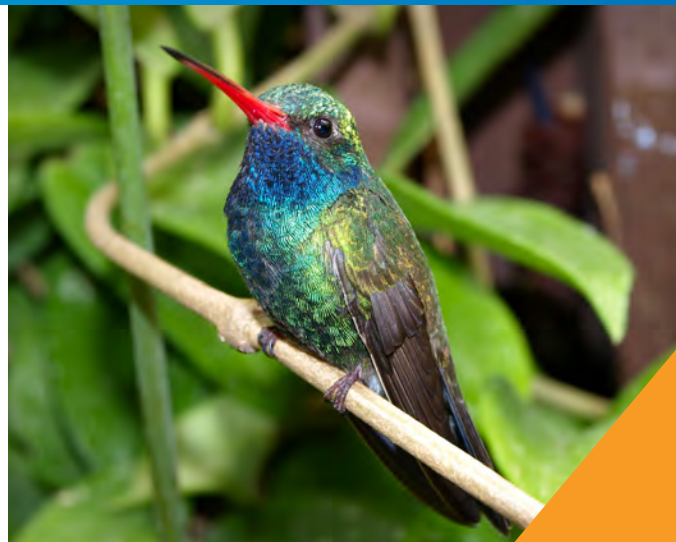
From the Fort Huachuca Van Deman Gate, follow Hatfield Street west and then south to the Smith Avenue intersection. Continue straight on to Lawton Road, which becomes Allison Road and turns east. Turn right on Winrow Avenue, then right on Garden Canyon Road. 800-288-3861 or (520) 533-3000.

Note: Fort Huachuca is an active military installation and specific entrance requirements are enforced. U.S. citizens without a valid Department of Defense credential will be subject to a background check before receiving a photo ID pass, valid for up to 30 days. Allow 30 minutes to complete the entrance requirement. International visitors must arrange for an approved military escort in advance (PIO@SierraVistaAZ.gov). The Fort, including Garden Canyon, maybe be closed without notice.

Brown Canyon Trail

This trail in the Coronado National Forest is excellent for birding and butterflying. The trailhead leads into a cool canyon, and a side route leads to a picturesque box canyon with a seasonal waterfall. The canyon is frequented by Montezuma Quail, Elegant Trogon, Painted Redstart, and many other species, to include the water-loving Black Phoebe.

Hwy 92 East, 6 miles south; right (west) on Ramsey Canyon Road, 0.3 miles to Brown Canyon Ranch Road, right (north); 0.5 miles to the ranch house parking area and trailhead access. 800-288-3861 or (520) 388-8300 (Coronado National Forest).



Miller Canyon

A popular public bird feeding station is at Beatty's Guest Ranch in Miller Canyon, where a U.S. record for hummingbird species sighted in one day was set (14 species). Looking for night hunters? Hit the trails or wait patiently by the water pool.

Hwy 92 East, 9 miles south to Miller Canyon Road; turn right (west) onto Miller Canyon Road. Find Beatty's Miller Canyon Guest Ranch 3 miles on Miller Canyon Road. (520) 378-2728.

Carr Canyon

At 7,200 feet, the cooler temperatures in Carr Canyon make it a terrific place to spot birds, butterflies, and other wildlife.

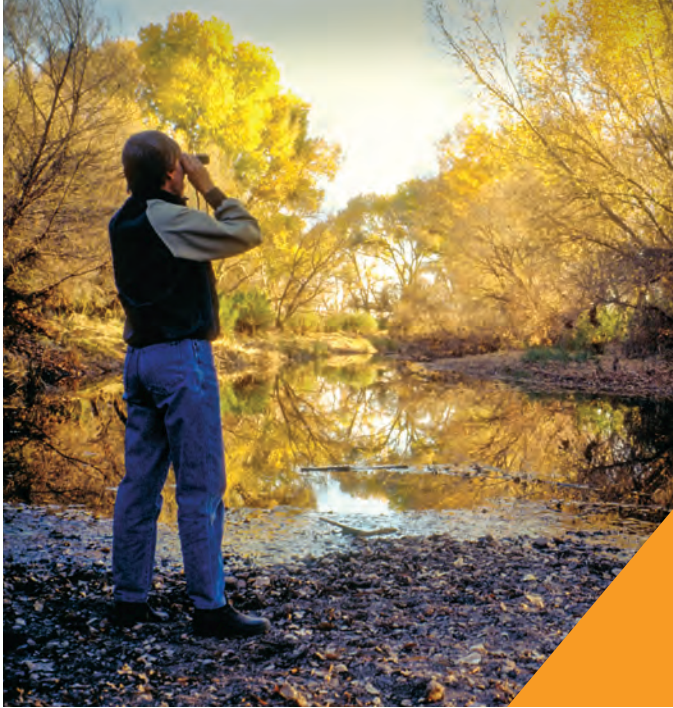
Hwy 92 East, 7 miles south to Carr Canyon Road; turn right (west) onto Carr Canyon Road.

Nature Conservancy's Ramsey Canyon Preserve

You won't want to miss this world-renowned attraction, a 280-acre National Natural Landmark bestowed to The Nature Conservancy in 1975. The canyon's unique interplay of geology, biology, topography, and climate make it a haven for over 170 varieties of birds, including 14 species of hummingbirds. The preserve is open Thursday through Monday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. March through October, and 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. November through February; closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's. Sorry, no pets or smoking on the Preserve.

Hwy 92 East, 6 miles south; right (west) onto Ramsey Canyon Road, 3 miles to the Preserve. 800-288-3861 or (520) 378-2785.

SAN PEDRO RIPARIAN NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA



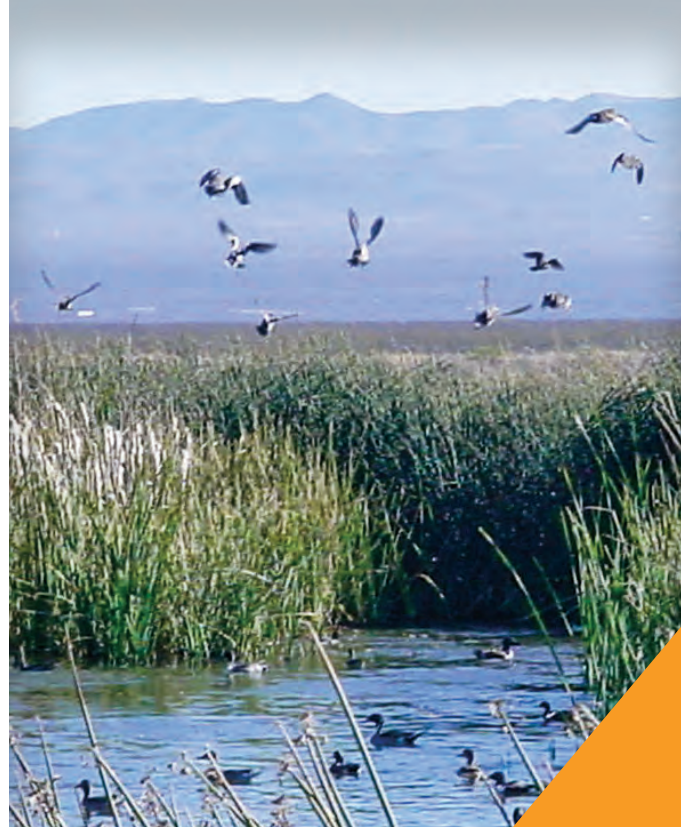
Established in 1988, the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) is the first of only two national riparian conservation areas in the United States. Managed by the Bureau of Land Management, this 58,000-acre area is teeming with wildlife.

Along the nearly 40 miles of riverbank, you'll find habitat not normally associated with desert living, from lush undergrowth to leafy canopies. The Riparian Area is highly popular with bird watchers, as nearly half of the known breeding bird species in the U.S. have been spotted there. Visitors can hike solo or choose from regularly scheduled bird, interpretive, and river walks led by docents from the Friends of the San Pedro River.

Start your exploration from the San Pedro House, where docents will provide you with information on trails, habitat, petroglyphs, and ghost towns. 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily. Hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, dogs, and licensed hunters are welcome.

Hwy 90 East, 8 miles; turn right (south) to the San Pedro House. 800-288-3861 or (520) 508-4445 (San Pedro House).

SIERRA VISTA ENVIRONMENTAL OPERATIONS PARK



The Environmental Operations Park, also known as the Sierra Vista Wastewater Wetlands, is a 50-acre wetlands planted with aquatic plants, including cattails and grasses that attract migrating and nesting birds. Over 2,000 acre-feet of water are treated through this natural system and returned to the aquifer each year to help protect the area's unique environment. Check it out from the 1,800 square-foot wildlife viewing platform, 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Guided bird walks are conducted on Sundays (April through September at 7:00 a.m.; October through March at 8:00 a.m.), courtesy of Friends of the San Pedro River, Huachuca Audubon Society and Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory (SABO).

Hwy 90 East, 3 miles; left (north) onto N. Kino Road (between mileposts 324 and 325). 800-288-3861 or (520) 458-5775; for Sunday morning tours: (520) 459-2555 or (520) 432-1388.

WHITEWATER DRAW



This 1,500-acre wildlife habitat is famous for the large population of Sandhill Cranes during the winter season of October through February, although many waterfowl, shorebirds, and passing flocks are present in spring and fall. The shoreline is closed from mid-October through February, but the rest of the Wildlife Area is open.

Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area lies in the Chiricahua desert grassland habitat of the Sulphur Springs Valley. Spotting scopes are located on the viewing platforms for use by visitors.

Hwy 90 East, 15 miles; turn right (southeast) onto Hwy 80 East, 10.2 miles to the Bisbee traffic circle; continue on Hwy 80 East, 4.3 miles; left (east) onto Double Adobe Road, 8.1 miles; left (north) onto North Central Hwy, 6.2 miles; left (west) onto W. Bagby Road; right (north) onto N. Coffman Road. 800-288-3861 or (520) 642-3763.

WILLCOX PLAYA WILDLIFE AREA



Lake deposits and landslide masses contributed to the formation of this 595-acre wildlife area, along with sedimentary deposits of gravel, sand, silt, and dune sand. This ancient lakebed attracts hundreds of species of birds all year, making this destination a rich experience for birds and birders alike. Chiricahua Leopard Frog, Mexican hog-nosed snake, javelina, mule deer, and other wildlife thrive in this otherwise desert environment, taking refuge in the riparian habitat. Between October and February, more than 20,000 Sandhill Cranes make the Willcox Playa Wildlife Area a stop during their winter migration, encompassing an annual birding festival in January. The festival, Wings Over Willcox, features field trips, seminars, and plenty of birds.

From the Hwy 90/I-10 intersection, take I-10 East; exit 331 (Hwy 191 South), 8 miles; left at the Apache Wildlife Area sign just before milepost 58. 800-288-3861 or 800-200-2272.

WHY THEY FLOCK TO SIERRA VISTA

Tucked amid the sky islands of the Coronado National Forest, Sierra Vista and nearby canyons are migratory corridors and critical nesting habitat for myriad species of birds, from hummingbirds to waterfowl, raptors to songbirds.

The sky islands create five distinct life zones — and a magnet for birds from Mexico’s Sierra Madre Mountains, the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts, and beyond. The protected riparian areas, forested mountainsides, and vast basins are spectacular all year long.

If you’re seeking hummingbirds, Sierra Vista plays host to 15 of the 26 species that have been reported north of Mexico. Known as the “hummingbird capital of the United States,” Sierra Vista hosts these tiny acrobats from spring through fall, although a few species are year-round residents.

Photography

Edward Bottomley | Ty Holland
City of Sierra Vista | Thinkstock

City of Sierra Vista Sierra Vista Visitor Center

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