

BIRDING THE COACHELLA VALLEY

21-24 September 2017



KEY INFORMATION

PRICE: \$525.00 per person (Single occupancy), or \$775.00 per couple (Double Occupancy).

PRICE INCLUDES:

- Guiding services
- Three nights lodging at the Holiday Inn Express on Highway 111 in Palm Desert
- Breakfast (included with the hotel room)
- Net proceeds from the trip to support WFO's Mike San Miguel Publications Fund

NOT INCLUDED:

- Lunches
- Dinners
- Transportation. Plan is to carpool/car-caravan each day from the hotel

TRIP LIMITED TO 15 PARTICIPANTS

REGISTRATION will be online and information will be sent via WFO News email messages. As per WFO policy, WFO members have the opportunity to register before non-members. WFO's Patrons and Life Members will be able to register first (maximum of eight spots available to them) beginning one week before all WFO members may register.

GENERAL TRIP DESCRIPTION:

September is an exciting time of year to look for birds in and around the deserts of Southern California. At this transitional time of year many birds will be experiencing their first southbound migration or wandering north from Mexico. So you never know what might show up at the Salton Sea or a remote

desert oasis. Even though summer will be officially over, the Coachella Valley and the Salton Sea can still be very hot in late (it is the desert after all). For this reason, we will keep the schedule somewhat flexible depending on the weather and recent bird and reptile sightings.

We will spend one of our days exploring the Salton Sea—home to an incredible diversity of birds. Over 420 species have been recorded so far. Perhaps this will be our longest day as there is so much to see and one day may not be enough. Expect to see plenty of interesting migrating shorebirds, waterfowl, and resident desert species as we make our way around the Sea. A scope is a must. We are bound to see something unusual: will it be a wayward Ruff, Marsh Sandpiper, Bean Goose or Ross's Gull that took a wrong turn somewhere near Siberia? Or a post-breeding Roseate Spoonbill, Blue-footed Booby, or Wood Stork wandering up from Mexico? Or will a late summer tropical storm blow in a Magnificent Frigatebird, Sabine's Gull, or a Cook's Petrel? You will also learn about the changes coming to the Salton Sea ecosystem beginning next year. 2017 might be the last year to experience the Salton Sea as we have known it for the past few decades, another good reason to see it now.

There are many low and high desert oases near Palm Desert and we will spend another day exploring as many as we can based on recent reports and the weather. Expect to visit the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve (a riparian ecosystem where Brown-crested Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, Vermilion Flycatcher, Blue Grosbeak, Summer Tanager, and other southwest specialties spend the summer). Other stops may include the Whitewater Preserve, Mission Creek Preserve, the Coachella Valley Preserve, Desert Center/Lake Tamarisk, Blackrock or other high desert localities.

Most Coachella Valley reptiles bromate (the reptile version of hibernation) after October 15 when the cool weather finally sets in, but in late September we will still have a good chance of encountering a number of them. We will set aside some time between birds to look for Banded Rock Lizard (a local Baja specialty), Desert Iguana, Zebra-tailed Lizard and the endangered Coachella Valley Fringe-toed Lizard—found nowhere else on earth. If it's warm enough at night, we might cruise for snakes on some of the local roads. Sidewinder, Glossy Snake, Shovel-nosed Snake, and Lyre Snake are just some of the possibilities.

The rest of our time will be spent filling in the holes with extra time at the north end of the Salton Sea or checking another oasis for migrants or chasing a reptile. We may even venture up Highway 74 to see a few pinyon-juniper species like Pinyon Jay, Mountain Quail or Oak Titmouse.

Fortunately, there are more places to visit than we will have time to do so! Palm Desert is centrally located and will make an ideal base of operations for our four day/three night adventure. And the Holiday Inn Express is a nice place to relax at the end of the day. Breakfast is included, parking and WIFI are free, and there is a pool, tennis court, gym, and meeting room available. In addition, the hotel is next to Albertson's, Starbucks, Panda Express, Subway, John's Café, Del Taco and the shopping district of El Paseo.

Trip starts: September 21 @ 530 PM from the Holiday Inn Express on Highway 111 in Palm Desert

Trips ends: September 24 @ mid-afternoon

Note: Leaders will bring two scopes and provide radios for car to car communication throughout, plus a large cooler with ice for lunches/or drinks.

Once you sign up for the trip, we will send you an updated schedule including bonus possibilities for early arrival on Thursday.

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