

Western Field Ornithologists 32nd Annual Meeting Field Trip Information

For the 32nd Annual Meeting, we will be field tripping through southern Nevada—the Land of Neon and the home to one of the U.S.'s largest Wildlife Refuges. In this seemingly austere desert region, the year-round bird list surpasses the bird lists of many U. S. states. Join WFO and local host Red Rock Audubon during the height of fall migration, and enjoy exciting birding in the mix of the sky islands, foothills, wetlands (Las Vegas does mean the springs)... where the Mojave Desert and the Great Basin converge. Please keep in mind that the region we are visiting is the Mojave Desert and most locations, other than Corn Creek and the Mt. Charleston Loop, will have limited shade or shelter. Water, hats, long sleeves, and sunscreen should be the first things you pack for the day. Snacks, lunches, and field guides, are important, too. Each listing below has a website to be used as a reference for bird lists, history of the field trip sites, and physical description of the area we'll be visiting. All the field trips have a moderate to light level of difficulty. For specific questions about accessibility for those with physical limitations not addressed in the trip descriptions below contact Je Anne Branca, RRAS and WFO field trip coordinator for this meeting at gann2@cox.net.

FULL DAY FIELD TRIPS - FOR THURSDAY, SEPT. 27 AND SUNDAY, SEPT. 30, 2007

1. CORN CREEK AND THE DESERT NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE. What can you say about this little jewel? Practically every eastern vagrant on the Nevada State Bird List (www.gbbo.org) has been seen at Corn Creek! A true oasis, Corn Creek is located about 31 miles northwest of Sam's Town off US 95. From US 95 you will travel a further 3 miles on a gravel road to the Refuge kiosk. There are universally accessible toilet facilities and drinking water available at the Refuge HQ but few places to sit on a bench for a rest. For a complete physical description of Corn Creek and the birds that can be expected, please see the American Birding Association's excellent website for an article dedicated to this unique locale.

<http://www.americanbirding.org/pubs/wingingit/archives/vol17no5p1and4to5.pdf> . Trip is limited to 12 participants and two leaders. Great for beginners and experts alike. Departure of 5:30 AM and return about 3 PM. Wheelchairs will not work at this location, as some of the trails are uneven and all are narrow, but there is little or no altitude change.

MOUNT CHARLESTON LOOP (Combined with Corn Creek). This surprising area, seemingly minutes from the bustle and hustle of The Strip, is located in Nevada's most

spectacular sky mountain range, the Spring Mountains. This field trip will allow you to get a feel for the unique sky island communities of the desert southwest that reach their northern extreme in southern Nevada. Though most of the high elevation breeding birds have departed by this date, the lower elevations and foothills should still be active with resident and migrant birds alike. Northern Goshawk and other forest and high altitude birds are possible. Migrants and vagrants in the foothills are a distinct possibility. Beautiful scenery is guaranteed. Located 50 miles from Sam's Town, the elevation of this trip ranges from 3,500' to 8,000'. Restrooms are only available at the ranger station. There is NO GAS ON THE MOUNTAIN SO MAKE SURE YOUR GAS TANK IS FULL. There are opportunities for birding from your vehicle for those with limited mobility. Sack lunch will be available for a fee, see registration form. Trip is limited to 12 participants and two leaders.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/outdoors/naturewatch/Nevada/wildlife/mt-charlestonloop/index/html> .

2. **Lytle Ranch** is located along the Beaver Dam Wash, a perennial stream running through the Mojave Desert, in the southwestern corner of Utah. Many species of plants and animals typical of the Mojave Desert are at the northeastern extreme of their geographic distribution around Lytle Ranch. Within Utah there are several species of resident and migrant birds that can only be found regularly in the cottonwoods and willow along the Beaver Dam Wash.

Resident species include

Ladder-backed Woodpecker

Verdin

Cactus Wren

Black-tailed Gnatcatcher

Crissal Thrasher

Summer nesting species include:

Common Black-Hawk

White-winged Dove

Costa's Hummingbird

Brown-crested Flycatcher

Lucy's Warbler

Phainopepla

In addition to the riparian habitat along the Beaver Dam Wash, habitat at Lytle consists of pastures, orchards, mesquite thickets, and Joshua tree and creosote desert. Often times the highlight of birding at Lytle is working through the plantings around the old ranch buildings and campground area. The varieties of relatively lush habitats in the harsh Mojave Desert make

Lytle a welcome oasis for birds and birders alike. Birding during migration regularly produces large numbers of western migrants, including flycatchers, vireos, tanagers, warblers, and sparrows. In addition, Lytle Ranch has a well-deserved reputation as a vagrant trap with a long list of rare sightings and many first records for Utah. If we find it impossible to take a group here, your reservation will be switched to either Pahrnagat or Warm Springs. Monitor the website for updates. For further information on this area please see www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/utah/preserves/art5830.html and www.utahbirds.org/counties/washington/LytleRanch.htm . Trip will be limited to 12 people and two leaders. We hope to depart at 5:00 AM and return about 3 PM. Sack lunches will be available for a fee, see registration form.

3. PAHRANAGAT NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, CRYSTAL SPRINGS AND KEY PITTMAN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

This place is simply wonderful. Extensive wetland and woodland complex will definitely surprise and impress you. You can expect eastern vagrants and the more common western migrants are guaranteed. This is one of the best places in Nevada for adding rare raptors to your state list. The Refuge manager, Merry Maxwell, a birder, will assist your leaders in a tour of her portion of the FWS's Desert Complex. **MAKE SURE YOUR GAS TANK IS FULL.** Field trip location is 110 miles from Las Vegas. For a complete bird list for the Refuge and a description of the entire site, go to <http://www.fws.gov/desertcomplex/pahrnagat> . Great birding opportunities abound for birders of every level. Trip is limited to 12 people and two leaders. We will depart at 5:00 AM and return about 3 PM. Sack lunch will be available for a fee, see reg. form.

4. RED SPRINGS AND CALICO BASIN. Located about 30 miles west http://www.birdandhike.com/Bird/Red_Rocks/Calico_Basin/Calico_Basin.htm and www.americantrails.org/resources/wildlife/redrockblm.html . Great birding opportunities abound for birders of every level. The elevated boardwalk is universally accessible. Expect western migrants and the possibility of eastern vagrants. Trip is limited to 12 people and two leaders. We will depart at 5:30 AM and return about 3 PM. Sack lunch will be available for a fee, see registration form.

RED ROCK CANYON NATIONAL RECREATION AREA (FEE AREA). (Combined with Red Springs) This extraordinarily beautiful region adjacent to Las Vegas encompasses canyons, ravines, cliff faces, classic desert grasslands, sage prairie lands, and island habitats. Interesting breeders that might still be lingering include Brown-crested Flycatcher, Cassin's Kingbird, and Summer Tanager. Plus, the area should still be hosting migrants. Chukars are frequently spotted some areas. The local population of titmice is

Baeolophus problematic. Help us figure out what they are. Juniper or Oak Titmice? We want your opinion. Reference www.nv.blm.gov/redrockcanyon/Resources/birds.htm for a complete bird list and description of the area. There is a visitor center with universal access restrooms. Elevation to 4,400 feet. We will depart at 5:30 AM and return about 3 PM. Sack lunch will be available for a fee, see registration form. There is limited birding from a vehicle and some areas are more difficult to access than others. Trip is limited to 12 people and two leaders.

SPRING MOUNTAIN STATE PARK (FEE AREA). (Combined with Red Springs)

Located 6 miles from Red Rock. Lots of walking over dirt trails and steps. There is no shade on walk to the pond. Parking lot, picnic area and restrooms have universal access. Elevation is about 3,500 feet. For a description of the site check out http://www.birdandhike.com/Bird/Red_Rocks/Spring_Mt_SP/Spring_Mt_SP.htm . The birding is similar to what we can expect at Corn Creek but site is nearer to Las Vegas: common western migrants, some local breeders hanging on, and always the possibility of an eastern vagrant. Trip is limited to 12 people and two leaders. We will depart at 5:30 AM and return about 3 PM. Sack lunch will be available for a fee, see registration form.

HALF DAY FIELD TRIPS – FRIDAY, SEPT. 28 AND SATURDAY, SEPT. 29

1. HENDERSON VIEWING PONDS. One of the premier birding spots in Nevada with excellent accessibility for limited mobility birders. Anything is possible. Located about 5 miles from Sam's Town, this unique preserve has over 2 miles of trails. You can expect lots of walking, but some stretches are wheelchair accessible. Restrooms and drinking water are available at the site. There is very little shade so wear protective clothing, including hats, and sun screen. Carrying water is highly recommended. You can expect shorebirds and waterfowl galore, plus Verdin, Gambel's Quail, and Abert's Towhee. The list of rarities is high. We will be on the lookout for rare shorebirds, gulls, and terns. The time of year is primo-to-the-max for finding some rare aquatic species. This location has a great viewing deck, as well. For further research and a bird list see http://www.birdandhike.com/Bird/Urban_LV/Henderson/Henderson.htm. We will depart at 5:45 AM and return about 11 AM. Trip limited to 15 participants, 2 - 3 leaders.

2. SPRING MOUNTAIN STATE PARK.

See above reference to Spring Mountain full day trip description. We will depart at 5:30 AM and return about 11 A.M. Trip limited to 15 participants and 2 - 3 leaders.

3. SUNSET PARK

Literally a stone's throw from McCarran Int'l airport, Sunset Park is a great introduction to Southern Nevada birding. Look for Greater Roadrunner, Gambel's Quail, Crissal Thrasher, Verdins, and Abert's Towhee. We will check the hummingbird feeders for rarities and possible vagrants. Walking will be over dirt and grass and there will be some in and out of cars. The parking lot, restrooms and path around lake have universal accessibility. Check out <http://www.sunsetcities.com/sunset-park/index.html> for details not described here. We will depart at 5:30 AM and return about 11 AM.

4. CORN CREEK (DESERT NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE)

See above full day field trip description. We will depart at 5:30 AM and return about 11 A.M. Trip limited to 12 participants and 2 - 3 leaders.

5. TULE SPRINGS (FLOYD LAMB STATE PARK)

Floyd Lamb State Park is located on the broad, flat northwestern edge of the Las Vegas Valley. Although the overall lay of the land is open and flat, the park sits on low rolling hills that are the result of spring deposits (mud) that built up over the millennia. Springs that emerge on park property feed four small lakes and provide water for groves of trees and expansive lawns. Beyond the built up area, the park stretches out into the open desert, encompassing a total of 2,040 acres. Migration is a busy season. The many trees attract migrants, especially eastern migrant warblers, and check the grassy edges for sparrows. The ponds contain domestic and wild waterfowl (including ducks, geese, and grebes); and we'll check the tule marshes for Yellow-headed and Redwing Blackbirds, Marsh Wrens, wading birds. We will depart at 5:30 AM and return about 11A.M. Trip limited to 12 participants and 2 - 3 leaders.