



CAMP CHIRICAHUA

July 1-13, 2026



Red-faced Warbler @ Michael O'Brien

Camp Chiricahua, co-sponsored by Black Swamp Bird Observatory (Ohio), offers young naturalists between the ages of 14 and 18 the opportunity to explore the biologically rich ecosystems of Southeast Arizona, centering on the famed Chiricahua Mountains. The primary focus is on the birdlife of the Chiricahuas (pronounced Cheer-ick-ow-wahs) and other important sites in Southeast Arizona, but we will take time to observe all facets of nature and emphasize patient field observation, note taking, and learning bird sounds. The camp is set in a productive learning environment in which participants are educated on ecology, habitats, and ecosystems, and on increasing observation skills. Daily activities are based on thorough exploration of each of the distinct regions we visit. Hikes, field trips, and discussions will complement free time, during which campers will have the luxury of exploring their natural surroundings in small groups.



Cave Creek Ranch © Michael O'Brien

Starting in Tucson, we will first do some desert birding on the east side of town before ascending Mount Lemmon in the Catalina Mountains. Two nights of camping in the forested highlands will acquaint us with the “sky islands” so very characteristic of the borderlands of Southeast Arizona.

Much of our time is spent in the Chiricahuas, an 80-mile-long mountain range rising out of the Chihuahuan Desert to nearly 10,000 feet, and encompassing five distinct life zones. Long famous amongst naturalists for its biological diversity and rich assortment of “Mexican” type birds that inhabit these mountains, the Chiricahuas are also a place of considerable scenic grandeur. Enormous orange-tinted rock formations tower over shaded canyons and the surrounding desert. Perhaps it is the remoteness of the place, or maybe it’s the enchanting spell of summertime monsoons, or even the spirit of Apache warriors long gone, but the Chiricahuas are a true naturalist’s paradise, largely unspoiled and wild. We will have three days to explore this mystical mountain range, from the dry desert grasslands that encircle it to the lofty ponderosa pine forests that crown it. In between are a multitude of habitats that converge in majestic Cave Creek Canyon. While the prolonged drought that continues to affect the Southwest, along with the forest fires of 2011, has resulted in extensive modification to the plant communities here, specialty birds can still be found. It also provides a fascinating opportunity

to observe the resilience of southwestern species, avian and otherwise, in the dynamic, long-term process of post-fire ecological succession.

We will also explore the Huachucas, another of Southeast Arizona's "sky islands." Closest in proximity to the Mexican border, the Huachucas attract a greater number of hummingbirds and Mexican "strays" than the other ranges in Arizona. We will explore at least two of the major canyons in the range, while visits to a variety of hummingbird feeding stations may net us a dozen species of hummers!



We'll finish the trip around Patagonia, where cottonwood-lined Sonoita Creek provides some of the best birding in all of Arizona. Though "listing" is not the goal of the camp, campers should expect to see most of the special birds of Arizona, highlighted by its own bird of paradise, the Elegant Trogon. Other prized sightings are likely to include Gray Hawk, Montezuma Quail, Arizona Woodpecker, Lucifer and Violet-crowned hummingbirds, Thick-billed and Tropical kingbirds, Mexican Chickadee, Red-faced Warbler, and Varied Bunting.

Other wildlife unique to the region deserves our attention as well. Summertime in Arizona is an excellent time to see a host of butterflies, dragonflies, and other insects. Arizona is, additionally, one of

the premier regions of the country for encountering snakes and lizards. We'll take advantage of this biological richness and focus some of our attention on all of these animals.

Camp Chiricahua presents a rare chance for young naturalists to be in the field with their peers and with expert leaders. Together we will all come to learn and appreciate the complex and beautiful ecosystems of the Southwest.

Camp Chiricahua starts and ends in Tucson, Arizona.

July 1, Day 1: Arrival in Tucson; welcome and orientation; afternoon birding

Campers should plan to arrive in Tucson no later than 2:00 p.m. today. After leaving the plane, campers should proceed directly to the baggage claim area where they will be met by camp supervisors holding signs displaying the word VENT in large letters. Please wear your VENT name badge so you will be easier to recognize. Campers will be shuttled with their luggage to the Hampton Inn Tucson Airport where we will spend our first night.

In the mid-afternoon, the staff will assemble all campers in the hotel lobby for a camp orientation and welcome. The staff will introduce itself and outline the exciting events of the coming days. Afterwards, we'll depart the hotel for our first Arizona birding! Where we go this afternoon will depend on how much time we have, but a trip to the surrounding desert will likely yield such characteristic desert birds as Gambel's Quail, Greater Roadrunner, Gila Woodpecker, Cactus Wren, Verdin, and many others.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Tucson Airport

July 2, Day 2: Saguaro National Park; Catalina Mountains

After an early breakfast, we'll visit Saguaro National Park on the east side of Tucson. An eight-mile loop drive through the beautiful Sonoran Desert will provide an excellent introduction to the flora and fauna of the Southwest. Set amid towering saguaro cactus (pronounced sah-war-o), thickly foliaged mesquite and palo verde, barrel cactus and ocotillo, our visit here will be both spectacular for scenery as well as

productive for wildlife. Birds we may expect to see here include Gilded Flicker, Gila Woodpecker, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Verdin, and Rufous-winged Sparrow, and herps may include Zebra-tailed Lizard and Western Whiptail.

After lunch we will climb the Mt. Lemmon Highway for two nights of camping in the Santa Catalina Mountains. Our route will take us from rugged saguaro covered hillsides through the oak/juniper transition zone, and eventually up to 7000 feet in the cool conifer- dominated highlands, where we will set up camp at Rose Canyon Lake.

NIGHT: Camping at Rose Canyon Lake, Catalina National Forest



Rose Canyon Lake Campground © Michael O'Brien



Pygmy Nuthatch © Michael O'Brien

July 3, Day 3: The Santa Catalina Mountains

We'll have a full day to explore this beautiful "sky island" range. The birds here are very different from those in the desert around Tucson. Our dawn alarm

clock might include the calls of the Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Pygmy Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Hermit Thrush, Grace's Warbler, and Yellow-eyed Junco. As we explore Rose Canyon and other nearby trails, we'll be watching for other highland species such as Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee, Greater Pewee, Olive and Red-faced warblers, and Red Crossbill. Other wildlife is around as well. We will look for the local Abert's Squirrel (a colony has been established here in the Catalinas) and American Black Bears- sometimes seen in this area. If summer rains have been good, meadows and forest clearings will be decorated with a profusion of wildflowers. Butterflies, in turn, can be outstandingly abundant, with many different kinds possible, including blues, hairstreaks, cloudywings, roadside-skippers, swallowtails, ladies, and sulfurs.

NIGHT: Camping at Rose Canyon Lake, Catalina National Forest

July 4, Day 4: Mt. Lemmon to the Chiricahua Mountains

We'll descend the Catalinas this morning, stopping en route, and head for the Chiricahua Mountains. The journey will take approximately three hours and will see us traversing a broad slice of Southeast Arizona. All along the route is a continual succession of sky island mountain ranges, bearing such names as Santa Catalina, Santa Rita, Rincon, Whetstone, Dragoon, Dos Cabezas, and Pinaleño. Moving east, the cactus-studded deserts of the Tucson area give way to mesquite dominated grasslands. The highway runs through the heart of scenic Texas Canyon, where mountains of igneous rock provide an improbable break in the landscape. Swainson's Hawks and Chihuahuan Raven are birds to watch for along this route.

To break up the drive, we'll make a midday stop at Lake Cochise on the west side of Wilcox. Really a large municipal wastewater treatment pond, the "lake" is the single most famous birding location in the entire Sulphur Springs Valley. The interface of man-made and natural habitats found here provides food and shelter for an impressive diversity of birdlife all year long, and the presence of permanent water represents an important refuge in a region nearly devoid of large bodies of water. An astonishing array of birds has been recorded here through the years, and we hope to encounter a variety of waders and grassland species, as well as any surprises that may turn up. Wayward gulls and terns are frequently found here, and the open water often holds a variety of summering ducks and grebes. The first southbound shorebirds will provide some identification challenges, and such dandies as Wilson's Phalarope and Baird's Sandpiper are likely. American Avocets nest here in some years, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds breed in the reed-lined ponds. Swainson's Hawks, Scaled Quail, Horned Lark, and Chihuahuan Meadowlark are typical sights of the grasslands. In the distance the Chiricahua and Dos Cabezas mountain ranges form a backdrop of considerable panoramic beauty.



Shorebirds at Lake Cochise © Michael O'Brien

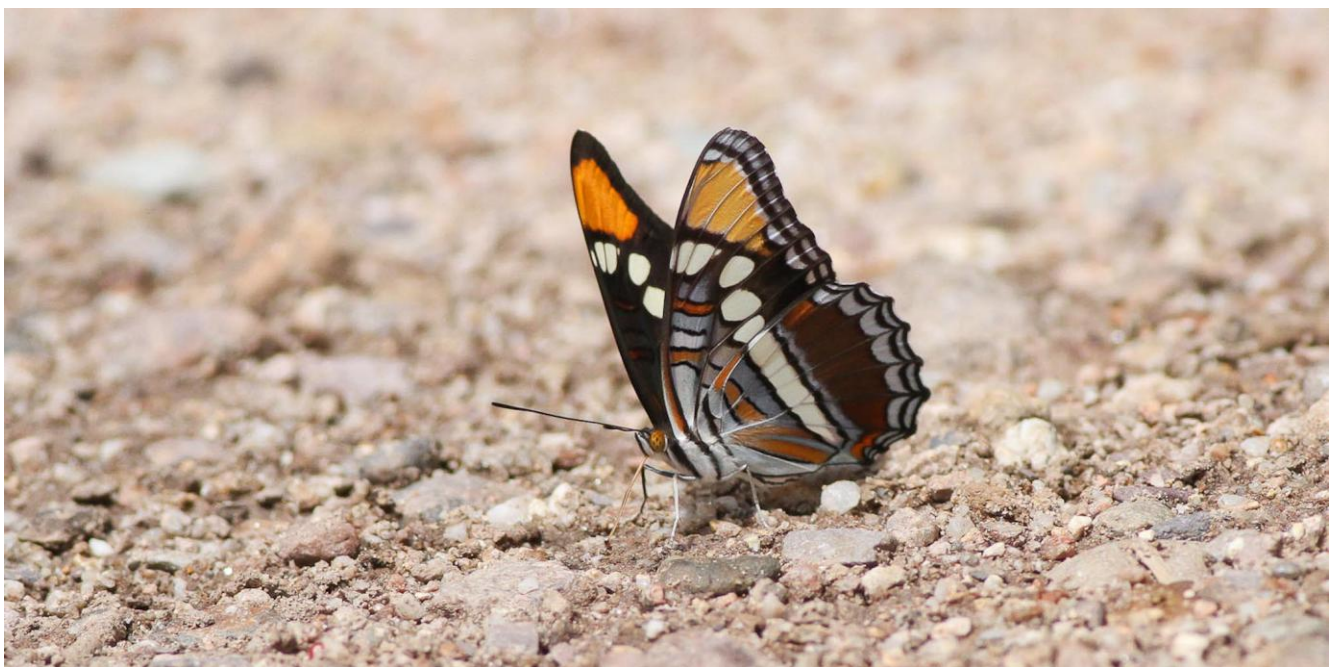
East of Wilcox, the highway skirts the north flank of the Chiricahuas, offering fine views of the peculiar geologic formation known as Cochise’s Head. We’ll arrive in the Portal area, near the mouth of Cave Creek Canyon, late this afternoon. Our first view of the canyon, with its towering, multi-colored cliffs and lush riparian floor, will make a lasting impression. It is these secret enclaves of cool and verdant growth, filled with specialty birds and surrounded by arid grasslands that make birding Southeast Arizona so special.

NIGHT: Cave Creek Ranch, Portal

July 5-7, Days 5-7: Cave Creek Canyon and the Chiricahuas

In a region known for its many legendary birding locations, the Chiricahua Mountains are probably the most famous. The cool shaded canyons, mountain forests, and dramatic geologic formations that define this sky island range have attracted birders, naturalists, and scientists for decades. We will have three full days to explore the Chiricahuas, visiting all the major habitats and searching for as many of the special birds and animals of the region as we can find. The Chiricahuas are a living laboratory of biological diversity, and though birding is of primary interest, we will want to take advantage of all that these mountains have to offer.

Mammal viewing is often wonderful; past camps have been fortunate enough to encounter American Black Bear, Mountain Lion, Bobcat, Mule Deer, Collared Peccary (Javelena), Black-tailed Jackrabbit, Ringtail, and several species of skunk and kangaroo rat. Many campers have an interest in butterflies, and we will take time to identify any that cross our path. Due to its warm and semi-tropical climate, Arizona is superb for butterflies, and hosts a beautiful array of species. We are likely to encounter large, showy types such as Giant, Two-tailed, Pipevine, and Black swallowtails; Red-spotted Admiral; Mourning Cloak; Cloudless Sulphur; Southern Dogface; Arizona Sister; and an impressive diversity of blues and skippers.



Arizona Sister © Michael O'Brien

Field trips to a variety of ecosystems are designed to provide campers exposure to the amazing variety of the Chiricahua Mountains and surrounding desert and grasslands. In addition to time in the field, campers will participate in discussions that cover a variety of topics, including bird observation, journal keeping, botany, climate, and geography. We will have numerous options to consider when planning our birding activities, but campers should expect to visit the majority of the following sites:



Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher © Michael O'Brien

Cave Creek Canyon – One of the most exciting days will be our first visit to the South Fork of Cave Creek. This is a beautiful riparian habitat in the lower elevations of the Chiricahuas, where oaks, sycamores, pines, and cypress provide shade for the lush green undergrowth. The birds here are wonderful; Elegant Trogon must lead the list, but Blue-throated Mountain-Gem, Arizona Woodpecker, Sulphur-bellied and Dusky-capped flycatchers, Hutton's and

Plumbeous vireos, Grace's Warbler, Painted Redstart, and Hepatic Tanager are nearly as special. We'll spend as much time as possible in this very rich area, observing how the habitat becomes much drier as soon as one leaves the shaded canyon and starts up the mountain slope. Here we can expect to find Mexican Jays traveling in noisy flocks and Black-throated Gray Warblers and Bewick's Wrens foraging in the scrubby oaks. The geology of Cave Creek Canyon is not to be underestimated or overlooked either. Stunning cliffs of rhyolite and granite dominate the skyline, and bizarre caves and pockmarks give character to the canyon walls. The rock seems to burn under the morning sun, emanating a luminous mix of orange and yellow hues. Cave Creek Canyon may be home to some of the best birding in North America, but it is the tremendous geologic formations that give the canyon its splendor.

Chihuahuan Desert and Rodeo - The desert and grasslands of the San Simon Valley below Portal hold an entirely different set of birds and plants than are found higher in the mountains. This is wide-open ranch country, dominated by soaptree yucca, honey mesquite, and a wide variety of desert plants and scrub. The birds and other animals that live out here are dry country specialists, adapted to survive in the harsher conditions of the desert environment. We will make a couple of trips into this desert ecosystem, making several strategic stops at different elevations and driving key side roads in search of the birds and reptiles that live out here. Scaled and Gambel's quail, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Chihuahuan Raven, Curve-billed Thrasher, Loggerhead Shrike, Black-throated Sparrow, and Chihuahuan Meadowlark are all birds we are likely to encounter. The old railroad town of Rodeo, New Mexico provides a curious oasis amid the surrounding desert, but it also happens to be a premier site for Bendire's Thrasher. The main highway running north from Rodeo provides beautiful vistas of the expansive deserts and Chiricahua and Peloncillo ranges.

Evening Night Drives and Owling Expeditions –

Nighttime in the Chiricahuas reveals another face to this wondrous place. A whole host of birds, insects, reptiles, and mammals emerge after the sun goes down and the heavens fill with millions of stars. We'll go on a nightbird prowl one night after dinner. The voices of Elf Owl, Western and Whiskered screech-



Western Screech-owl © Michael O'Brien

owls, Common Poorwill, and Mexican Whip-poor-will elevate the ambience of a Chiricahua summer evening, and we have decent chances of seeing some of these nocturnal sprites. On another evening we will load up and head out to the desert for a night drive. Cruising lightly traveled side roads brings opportunities for a variety of other critters, including snakes, toads, kangaroo rats, scorpions, and tarantulas.



Montezuma Quail © Michael O'Brien

Paradise Road – The road to Paradise takes off from Portal and follows a long section of Silver Creek. While it is still quite dry here, the environment is very different from that of the desert we've just seen. The creek provides a year-round source of water, and this allows trees like oaks and sycamores to become established.

The drier hillsides are dominated by a high desert plant community, with sotol and agaves decorating rocky hillsides. This area is, in fact, another major transition zone, where a variety of habitats come together. The great mix of trees and plants are paralleled by an interesting mix of birds. Specialties here are Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Juniper Titmouse, Crissal Thrasher, Rufous-crowned and (rarely) Black-chinned sparrows, and Scott's Oriole. Near the old mining town of Paradise, we may be lucky enough to come across the furtive Montezuma Quail.

Barfoot Park and the Chiricahua Highlands – No trip to the Chiricahuas would be complete without a visit to the highlands. Similar to the highlands of Mt. Lemmon, the cool coniferous forest here offers additional opportunities for species like Steller's Jay, Pygmy Nuthatch, and mixed warbler flocks including Olive, Red-faced, Grace's, and perhaps an early migrant Townsend's or Hermit. But our main

target for the day will be the very local Mexican Chickadee and species who's range in the U.S. is limited to the Chiricahua Mountains of Arizona and the Animas and Peloncilla Mountains of New Mexico. We'll also keep a sharp eye out for Short-tailed Hawk, a species that has nested near Barfoot Park sporadically over the years.

NIGHTS: Cave Creek Ranch, Portal

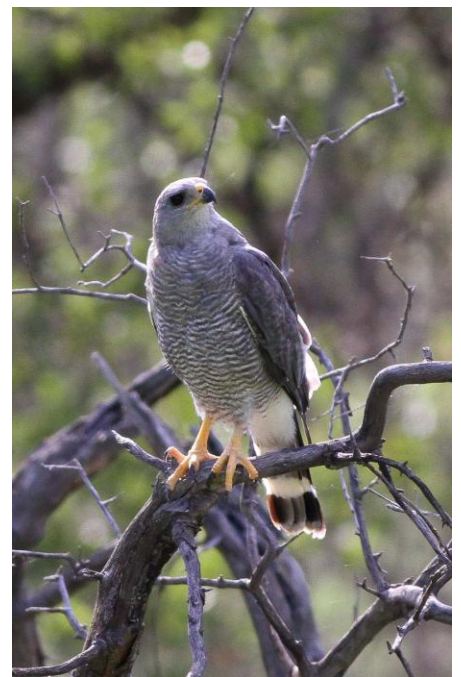
July 8, Day 8: From the Chiricahuas to Sierra Vista

Today will be a day of transition, from the cool canyons of the Chiricahuas to the riparian lowlands of the upper San Pedro River Valley. The drive will take most of the day, broken up by birding stops and lunch. We'll load the vans after breakfast this morning and begin the long descent of the western face of the Chiricahuas. The road takes us down through the heart of Pinery Canyon (reliable for Red-faced Warbler and Hepatic Tanager) and back into the oak-juniper zone of the lower slopes. This is prime country for Montezuma Quail, and we will watch the grassy breaks and swales for these beautiful, but shy ground-dwellers. We'll emerge into the expansive Sulphur Springs Valley, which is actually the bed of an ancient Pleistocene lake, and make our way west toward the highway. We will arrive in Sierra Vista in the middle to late afternoon. After check-in, campers will have the remainder of the day for relaxation and perhaps a swim in the pool.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express, Sierra Vista

July 9, Day 9: San Pedro River and the Huachuca Mountains

We'll devote the early morning hours to exploring the bird-rich cottonwoods of the San Pedro River area. Gray Hawk, Scaled and Gambel's quail, Common Ground-Dove, Vermilion Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Botteri's Sparrow, and Blue Grosbeak are just a few of the species we may encounter here. Following a picnic lunch (perhaps enlivened by a monsoon thunderstorm!), our afternoon birding will be spent in the cool mountain forests of the nearby Huachucas, where



Gray Hawk - Michael O'Brien

we will likely visit Miller Canyon. Miller Canyon is well known for rarities, having hosted such exciting subtropical wanderers as Eared Quetzal, Aztec Thrush, Brown-backed Solitaire, and Tufted Flycatcher. While such dream sightings should not be expected, the possibility of something new and remarkable awaiting discovery at the next turn of the trail adds an undeniable sense of excitement.



Lucifer Hummingbird © Michael O'Brien

The summer months are a fabulous time for hummingbirds in southern Arizona, and no place is more reliably productive than the Huachucas. Vigils at feeding stations may yield up to a dozen species. Beside the quality, we can expect quantity. Dozens of

hummers are typically zipping around the feeders at all times; feeding, chasing and fighting. Black-chinned, Broad-billed, and Anna's are most common, but Rivoli's, Broad-tailed, and Blue-throated Mountain-Gem periodically put in appearances. The first southbound migrants will certainly be around, and we can look forward to the coppery-colored Rufous Hummingbird earnestly defending favored feeders. Costa's is less common but certainly possible, while the very first Calliopes may even be around. For even greater viewing enjoyment, Miller is now the premier place for seeing the highly localized White-eared Hummingbird, several of which summer in the canyon every year. Nearby Ash Canyon is best for the elusive Lucifer Hummingbird.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express, Sierra Vista

July 10, Day 10: Huachuca Mountains and Sonoita Grasslands

We'll spend another full morning in the Huachuca Mountains, perhaps visiting Carr or Hunter canyons, or maybe spending more time at hummingbird feeders in Ash or Ramsey canyons. Our itinerary will depend largely on what specialties of the Huachucas we are still seeking. In the afternoon, we'll head west toward Patagonia, making a stop in the Sonoita Grasslands at Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. One of the best grasslands in southeastern Arizona, this beautiful area is home to Chihuahuan

Meadowlark, Grasshopper, Lark, and Botteri's sparrows, and (rarely) White-tailed Kite. In addition, we'll keep a sharp eye out for Pronghorn, which are frequently seen in this area.

NIGHT: Stage Stop Inn, Patagonia

July 11, Day 11: Patagonia and Sonoita Creek

We will spend a full and exciting day searching the riparian and desert thornscrub habitats of the Patagonia-Sonoita area. The list of birds possible from this locale underscores the uniquely subtropical flavor of the Sonoita Creek drainage: Neotropic Cormorant, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Black Vulture, Gray and Zone-tailed hawks, Violet-crowned Hummingbird (an exceptionally classy and elegant bird; always a trip favorite among the campers), Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Thick-billed Kingbird, and Varied Bunting are representative. We will try for as many of these species as possible, all the while hoping for a glimpse of a true rarity. In recent years, Rose-throated Becard, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, and Rufous-capped Warbler have regularly turned up in this special area. While seeing these Mexican species is not to be expected, their distinct possibility will charge our visit with that anticipation which makes birding in southeast Arizona such a pleasure.

NIGHT: Stage Stop Inn, Patagonia

July 12, Day 12: Santa Rita Mountains; Return to Tucson

We will depart *early* today to explore our final mountain range, the Santa Ritas. Our itinerary will be somewhat flexible, but our first stop will likely be Box Canyon, a remote and rugged landscape with rocky slopes covered in ocotillo. This beautiful canyon has received more attention from birders



Texas Horned Lizard @ Michael O'Brien

in recent years due to the presence of a few pairs of Five-striped Sparrows. Though seeing these special birds is by no means guaranteed, Box Canyon is always an interesting and birdy place to visit. Varied

Buntings and Bell's Vireos are numerous here, and other possibilities include Costa's and Lucifer hummingbirds, Rock Wren, Crissal Thrasher, Lucy's Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Scott's Oriole, and sometimes Black-chinned Sparrow.

Our afternoon will likely be spent in the deservedly famous Madera Canyon. Hummingbird feeders here often host a rarity or two – White-eared and Berylline are regular, and trails through mountain canyons are home to the likes of Elegant Trogon, Arizona Woodpecker, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Mexican Jay, and Hepatic Tanager. In the late afternoon we'll return to our hotel in Tucson. After a well-deserved dip in the pool, we will meet for a final group dinner.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn Tucson Airport

July 13, Day 13: Depart for Home

Campers will be escorted to the airport in time for flights home. All campers should plan to depart Tucson no later than 12:00 PM today.

Essential Tour Information

CAMP SIZE: Camp Chiricahua is designed for boys and girls ages 14 through 18 who have an interest in birds and natural history. The camp will be limited to 10 participants.

LEADERS: This tour is led by **Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis**



Michael O'Brien is a freelance artist, author, and environmental consultant living in Cape May, New Jersey. He has a passionate interest in bird vocalizations and field identification, and a serious addiction to migration and nocturnal birding. His travels have taken him throughout North and Central America and beyond. At home in Cape May, Michael serves as an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory for whom he conducts numerous workshops, and, for many years, conducted a fall songbird migration count. He is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, and *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*, and is primary author of *Larkwire*, an online and handheld application for learning bird sounds. His

illustrations have been widely published in books and field guides, including the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and the new Peterson field guides. Michael also has an intense interest in butterflies, leads several “Birds & Butterflies” tours with his wife, Louise Zemaitis, and is coordinator of the Cape May Butterfly Count.



Louise Zemaitis is an artist and naturalist living in Cape May, New Jersey where she is a popular field trip leader teaching birding workshops as an Associate Naturalist with New Jersey Audubon’s Cape May Bird Observatory. She also enjoys leading birding groups and lecturing at birding festivals and is known for her enthusiasm for all natural history subjects. Louise and her husband, Michael O’Brien, have been guiding young birders at birding events

and conferences for many years. In addition to leading, Louise is field coordinator of the Monarch Monitoring Project in Cape May, served as compiler of the Cape May Christmas Bird Count for over 20 years, and owns Swallowtail Studio at West End Garage in Cape May. An honors graduate of Temple University’s Tyler School of Art, she enjoys working as a freelance artist and her illustrations have been widely published. Her proudest accomplishment has been the raising of her two sons, Bradley, a biologist and artist, and Alec, a philosopher and musician.



Jennie Duberstein began working with young birders in 1997, when she was hired to direct her first field ornithology camp in Colorado. She has remained deeply involved with the young birder community ever since, directing field courses, summer camps, and conferences and helping connect young birders with opportunities and each other. For her “day job”, Jennie coordinates the Sonoran Joint Venture, an international partnership for bird and habitat conservation in the southwestern United States and

northwestern Mexico. She is a wildlife biologist and conservation social scientist who has spent her professional career working to build partnerships for bird and habitat conservation. In addition to her work with young birders, Jennie has directed environmental education programs, developed community-based conservation projects in the U.S.-Mexico border region, developed and taught courses and workshops on bird identification, ecotourism, and bird monitoring, and has studied species including Double-crested Cormorant and wading birds in Sonora and Yellow-billed Cuckoos in Arizona.

She received her B.S. in Wildlife Biology from Virginia Tech and her M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Arizona's School of Natural Resources and the Environment.

TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION

TOUR FEE: The fee for Camp Chiricahua is **\$3,690** per camper. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 12, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and leadership services provided by the camp staff.

The fee does not include airfare from your home to Tuscon and return, airport departure taxes, airline baggage fees or special assistance charges, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. **Also not included is the camping equipment (tent, sleeping bag and pad, and eating utensils) which must be brought by each camper.**

Partial camp scholarships MAY be available through the American Birding Association (ABA) and Victor Emanuel Nature Tours and awarded to campers who couldn't otherwise attend. Please contact the ABA and VENT for more information.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. We accept MasterCard and Visa.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days (March 3, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

FUEL SURCHARGES: Our prices are based on fuel prices at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit (including initial and second deposit)
- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:** No refund will be provided.

- **Optional add-ons:** Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable. Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of booking. By selecting and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

This cancellation policy applies to all participants and all tours (Pre-Tours and Extensions are considered self-contained tours separate from the main tour). Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

CANCELLATION BY VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant with a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A “**Force Majeure**” event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

CAMP POLICIES: Summer youth camps operated by Victor Emanuel Nature Tours are designed to expose camp participants to the treasures of the natural world. The settings for VENT youth camps are selected for their biological richness and natural beauty. The staff of the camps designs programs that camp attendees will find exciting and educational. It is our expectation that campers will have the kinds of experiences that create memories that last for a lifetime. The success of our camps depends on the leadership and organization of the staff, but the level of enjoyment that an individual camper achieves will depend on his ability to demonstrate a willingness to cooperate and share. **In 40 years of offering youth nature camps, a camp participant has never been sent home.**

In order to maintain a perfect record, campers must adhere to the following rules:

- There will be no usage of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco products permitted. We take a zero tolerance approach.
- Any disputes that arise between campers will be mediated by staff members. Fighting will not be tolerated.
- Cooperation is essential. Every day brings a host of responsibilities to the staff members, from preparing meals to cleaning camp sites, vehicles, ice chests, and cooking supplies. Campers will be required periodically to help with these endeavors. Non-cooperation is not an option.
- Damage or destruction of the property of others is strictly prohibited and is considered grounds for dismissal.

Finally, Campers will NOT be permitted to attend a VENT Camp unless they, along with their parents or legal guardians read, sign and return the following documents. These documents will be included in materials the Camper will receive after registering:

1) To the Camper: This document, signed by the camp participant, certifies that the camper has read and understands the rules and regulations of the camp.

2) Release and Assumption of Risk: This document, signed by a parent or legal guardian, acknowledges that participation in birding camp activities involves some degree of risk of injury from, but not limited to, the hazards of traveling, hiking in various types of terrain, accident, illness, and the forces of nature. A parent or guardian's signature holds VENT harmless from any and all liability. VENT is also granted permission to seek medical assistance for an ill or injured camper.

3) Tetanus Shot Certification Document: This document, signed by a parent or legal guardian, acknowledges that the prospective birding camp participant is up to date with tetanus vaccination. Campers must provide proof of vaccination.

4) Acknowledgement of Receipt of Camp Packing List: This document, signed by a parent or legal guardian, acknowledges receipt of a packing list provided by Victor Emanuel Nature Tours.

5) Emergency/Medical Evacuation Insurance: This document signed by a parent or legal guardian, acknowledges purchase of insurance that covers emergency evacuation and medical coverage.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: The parents, or legal guardian, of all camp participants are **required** to purchase emergency/medical evacuation insurance for his/her son or daughter for this program and will be asked to sign and return to the VENT office a waiver stating that this has been done. Such insurance should be available from any insurance company which provides trip cancellation coverage. Please refer to the **Trip Cancellation & Medical Evacuation Insurance** section of this itinerary for more information.

SUGGESTED OPTIONS: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with **Redpoint Travel Protection** as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its comprehensive Ripcord plan, which includes a medical evacuation benefit. With this in mind, it is important to note that medical evacuation is not offered by Redpoint as a stand-alone policy or benefit. For travelers not interested in comprehensive travel insurance, VENT recommends **Medjet and its MedjetAssist® plan**. Medjet is not an insurance company, and Medjet Assist is not an insurance product; rather, Medjet is a membership-based air-medical transport company specializing in moving hospitalized travelers from an admitting hospital to a medical facility of choice. Medjet does not provide medical evacuation service from the point of injury or illness; yet, the MedjetAssist plan offers robust enough travel protection to satisfy the medical evacuation insurance requirement in place for many VENT tours.

About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan

Ripcord is a completely integrated travel insurance program with single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims. Critical benefits include comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: [Ripcord Travel Insurance](#); or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help > Preparation and Insurance > Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, second deposit, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip costs in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a [Coronavirus FAQ page](#) on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company’s primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United

States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: [Medjet.com/VentBird](https://www.Medjet.com/VentBird) or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

AIR TRAVEL: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: As space in the vans is limited, campers should pack as carefully and efficiently as possible. Please avoid bringing any unnecessary items that may take up more room. We require that campers pack their clothing and equipment in a pliable, middle to large size duffel bag, and perhaps a smaller bag for camping gear. Campers may wish to bring a carry-on or other small travel bag for toiletries, personal items, or valuables. **PLEASE DO NOT BRING HARD-SIDED SUITCASES OR FRAME BACKPACKS.**

Campers who bring excess or oversized luggage may be required to ship some of their luggage home at the beginning of camp.

The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your airline to find out specific weight restrictions. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security we recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the most updated information: <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTHING: Since summer is a warm and dry time of the year in Arizona, campers will want to pack clothes associated with hot weather. Campers should pack several t-shirts, but making sure to avoid white and other bright colors. A long-sleeved t-shirt will come in handy for evenings and the early morning hours. Shorts will be fine, even preferred most days, but you should also pack a pair or two of long pants. Jeans are acceptable, but are not as comfortable as cotton or other lightweight materials. Packing a light rain jacket is essential in the likely event of rain. Mornings on Mt. Lemmon can be quite chilly so campers are advised to bring an item of clothing for cooler weather, such as a fleece, flannel shirt, or light jacket. A hat for protection from the sun is essential. A wide-brimmed hat is best, but campers should bring a baseball cap at the very least. Laundry services will be available in Sierra Vista but campers should bring enough changes of clothes to last at least a week if not the whole camp.

For footwear, campers should bring a good fitting, broken-in pair of hiking boots or trail shoes. There may be one or two hikes of moderate length and campers will have a much better time if they do not have to cope with sore feet or blisters. A pair of lightweight walking shoes will provide more comfort for most other situations.

EQUIPMENT: Campers should pack a binocular in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, two water bottles, notepads, extra clothing, cameras etc.). Your camp supervisors will have spotting scopes, but if you have one and wish to bring it, feel free to do so. Two one-quart water bottles are essential for lengthier hikes. Bicycle type bottles are not a good choice, as they tend to leak. Other items to bring include a camera, towel and washcloth, flashlight, and or headlamp. Sunscreen is required for a trip to Arizona in the summer, as the sun's rays are intense and

can easily burn exposed skin. A travel alarm clock is also recommended. Other items to consider are personal toiletries and medications. Campers should bring a notebook and pens. Some optional items are your favorite snack foods and extra batteries. **Please refer to the packing list, which will be included in materials the Camper will receive after registering for a more complete listing of items to bring to camp.**

Notes:

- As it is our intent to be immersed in the natural world, we prefer that you do not bring portable music devices, electronic games, etc. to camp.
- Many campers may wish to bring a camera, and it is perfectly fine to do so. However, excessive camera gear is not appropriate for this camp, and bulky, hard-framed camera cases are not permitted. The camp experience is about being in nature and observing wildlife. An aggressive pursuit of photographs can get in the way of this and is not appropriate. Participants whose primary objective is photography should not sign up for this camp.

DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS

CLIMATE: Southeast Arizona is a large and diverse region, so campers should expect to experience a variety of conditions. Temperatures during the camp could range from 45 to 105 degrees! The Sonoran Desert around Tucson sees daytime temperatures in excess of 100 degrees on a daily basis at this time of year. Our activities will be limited to the morning hours, and we will be off the desert during the hottest time of day. In the mountains, daytime temperatures will be warm to very warm, with temperature readings in the upper 80s and maybe even reaching 90 degrees. Most of our time will be spent in and around Cave Creek, where temperatures will range from 60 degrees at night to 85 degrees in the daytime. Mornings at Mt. Lemmon can be chilly, often with temperatures in the 40s or 50s. The altitude will be moderate to high, about 5,000-9,000 feet.

A fascinating weather feature of the Southwest is the summer “monsoon” season. Usually beginning in early to mid-July, a pattern develops in which moisture-laden air, streaming north from Mexico, runs into extremely hot air, produced by intense heating of the earth. Since hot air rises, great updrafts of superheated air condense the moisture, creating magnificent cumulo-nimbus clouds. Cumulo-nimbus clouds bear a trademark anvil appearance in which the flat, gray bottoms (where the rain is), rapidly spread out into massive, white multi-headed formations, some of which tower up 10,000 feet.

Afternoon and evening thunderstorms are a daily occurrence in the monsoon pattern. These storms are highly concentrated and typically produce a large amount of heavy rainfall in a short period of time, accompanied by booming thunder claps and dramatic lighting shows.

The arrival of the summer rains in Arizona (if it's a normal to good year) provides welcome relief from the searing heat of early summer. These daily storms have the ability to magically transform parched deserts and mountain forests into vibrant, thriving landscapes. Campers should be prepared for rain and humidity.

CONDITIONS: A typical day will see us out bright and early to take advantage of the cooler morning hours. We will stay busy and active up to lunch, and then take a lengthy break during the heat of the day. During periods of down time, campers will be free to relax, play games, catch up on notes and lists, or explore the immediate area in small groups. We will venture out again in the mid-to-late afternoon, when the heat of the day begins to abate and bird and animal activity is picking up again. The days are long in the summer, and darkness does not fully descend until after 9:00 p.m. There will be post-dinner activities some days including short hikes/walks, evening night drives, and night-birding excursions. All vehicle travel will be in 15-passenger touring vans.

Meal times will usually fall within these timeframes:

Breakfast: 6:00 – 7:00 a.m.

Lunch: 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Dinner: 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Campers will “tent-camp” in a developed campground on Mt. Lemmon. Potable water and outhouses are available, but there are no shower facilities. Accommodations at the other locations will be two to three persons per room.

Campers should expect to participate in several lengthy, lightly strenuous hikes. No activities will be scheduled, however, for which not all campers will be able to participate.

In addition to bird observation, campers can expect to participate in discussions about birding, biology, and ecology. Campers should bring a notebook for note taking and journal entries.

Campers will be encouraged to call home on a regular basis and keep their families informed of their activities. A cell phone is recommended. However, the use of cell phones should be limited to personal down time away from the group. Use of cell phones (other than for photography, audio recording, or other in-field related apps) during any group activity, either in the field or during checklist sessions, is prohibited.

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH: We want your time at Camp Chiricahua to be as rewarding and memorable as possible. To ensure this comes to pass, we offer the following information and suggestions for health-related issues:

- Staff members are certified to perform standard first aid and CPR and carry an assortment of first aid supplies.
- Those campers on prescribed medication should remember to pack it **in their carry-on luggage**.
- **VENT requires that all campers be up to date with his/her tetanus shot. Campers will not be permitted to attend a VENT Camp unless the accompanying tetanus shot certification document has been returned to the VENT office, signed and dated by a parent or legal guardian.**
- Due to the high temperatures of summer, campers will always be provided with plenty of cool drinks in the forms of bottled water and juice.
- On the portion of the camp where camping is required, staff members will do all the cooking. Campers should expect healthy meals that are low in fat, salt, and sugar, but high in protein, starch and vitamins. Plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables will be available.
- Throughout the trip, campers are allowed to buy items of their choosing (with their own money) at rest stops.

**** Campers with special dietary needs should notify our office upon registration.**

VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. is the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). Canadian citizens should check the website of the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) (click on Border and Travel Health).

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

COVID-19: We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying "Up to Date" with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance for avoiding COVID-19.

SUN EXPOSURE: The sun's ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), even in winter and early spring. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION

A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend [Amazon](#) which has a wide selection; [Buteo Books](#) and [NHBS](#) which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and [Abe Books](#) for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

The bookstores of the [Los Angeles Audubon Society](#) and [Tucson Audubon Society](#) also carry a fine inventory of books on birding and natural history. The bookstores can be accessed through their respected websites.

Bird Identification:

Kaufman, Kenn. *Kaufman Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000.

National Geographic Society. *Field Guide to North American Birds*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 7th edition, 2017.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. New York, NY: Alfred Knopf Publishing Company, 2nd edition, 2014.

Sibley, David Allen. *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2nd edition, 2016. This is a slimmed down version of *The Sibley Guide to Birds*.

Bird References:

Baichich, Paul J. and J. O. Harrison. *A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2nd edition, 2005. This is a superb and usually overlooked reference to the breeding biology of North American birds. Offers far more information that is available in standard field guides.

Ehrlich, Paul R., et. al. *The Birder's Handbook: A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988. (An excellent reference guide full of essays and information about North American birds.)

Mammals:

Kays, Roland W. and Wilson, Don E. *Mammals of North America*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2nd edition, 2009.

Bowers, Nora, Rick Bowers, and Kenn Kaufman. *Kaufman Focus Guides: Mammals of North America*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007.

Reid, Fiona. *Peterson Field Guide to the Mammals of North America*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 4th edition, 2006.

Butterflies:

Brock, Jim P. and Kenn Kaufman. Kaufman Focus Guides: Butterflies of North America. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2nd edition, 2006. This guide is, overall, the best North American butterfly identification resource available.

Reptiles:

Brennan, Thomas C., and Andrew T. Holycross. A Field Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles in Arizona. Arizona Game and Fish Department, Phoenix, 2009. An excellent book – very useful!

Stebbins, Robert C. Peterson Field Guides: Western Reptiles and Amphibians. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 3rd edition, 2003.

Trees:

Petrides, George A. and Olivia. Peterson Field Guides: Western Trees. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, second edition 1998.

Geology:

Chronic, Halka. ***Roadside Geology of Arizona***. Missoula, MT: Mountain Press, 1986.

History:

Trimble, Marshall. ***Roadside History of Arizona***. Missoula, MT: Mountain Press publishing, 1996.

Suggested Aps:

Merlin Bird ID by Cornell Lab. Cornell University. Highly recommended! This free download from the App store is a remarkable machine-learning ID tool to help birders of any skill level identify birds through sound ID, photo ID, or based on a few simple questions. ID text and audio recordings included for more than 10,000 species worldwide. Free “Bird Packs” need to be downloaded for each region.

Larkwire. A complete, game-based learning system for mastering bird sounds and visual identification, available by subscription from the App store. The “Southwest Songs & Calls” course would be an excellent way to study for Camp Chiricahua.

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY APPS & ONLINE RESOURCES:

eBird: Among the largest and most successful citizen science projects in existence, eBird is an essential tool in promoting bird study and conservation. Among a range of benefits, eBird allows users to keep a variety of lists in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, lists are automatically updated. Additionally, trip leaders can share daily lists, so one only need accept a shared list and it will upload to your files! **Highly recommended.**

MERLIN BIRD ID: Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate bird watchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions regarding his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The Photo ID feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app, followed by the appropriate regional "pack."

TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, "**VENT**") act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on September 25, 2025 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "**Airline**") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

View the complete [Terms and Conditions](#) on our website.

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