

AZFO Annual Meeting Field Expeditions

Friday Afternoon, 21 October

Hassayampa River Preserve Birding Blitz (Off Trail) – Leaders: Christina Kondrat-Smith & Troy Corman

This wonderful riparian preserve is managed by The Nature Conservancy and has several loop trails to explore the best example of cottonwood and willow gallery woodlands along the entire drainage. Although many birders have visited this location in the past, this will be your opportunity to hike off trail to sections of the preserve few have a chance to explore. We will separate into 2-3 teams surveying different areas and keeping track of all species and numbers encountered.

We will begin surveys at the preserve at 3:00 PM and meet back in the preserve parking lot at approximately 5:30 PM. Carpooling will be arranged from the AZ Game and Fish Dept. office front parking lot with a departure of 2:15 PM. To accommodate various hiking abilities, there will be one team that will remain on the trail system, primarily east of the river channel including Palm Lake. For those planning on going off trail, long pants are required and recommend hiking footwear that can get wet, but some routes will be fairly dry. Expect uneven terrain, climbing through a few fences, plus over or under fallen trees.

Directions: The entrance to the Hassayampa River Preserve is near mile marker 114 on the west side of Hwy. 60 south of Wickenburg. It is about 6 mi. north of the Hwy. 60 & Hwy. 74 (Carefree Hwy.) intersection and approximately 35 mi. west of the AZ Game and Fish Dept. office.

Sunday Morning, 23 October

Agua Fria National Monument – Leader: Mike Nicosia

The Agua Fria National Monument is located on a high mesa semi-desert grassland, cut by the Agua Fria River and its major tributaries. The extensive riparian woodland along the river and its tributaries provides both breeding and wintering habitat for a large variety of bird species and constitutes a recently discovered migration route. These riparian corridors are also designated as an Important Bird Area. Elevations at the monument range from 2150 to 4600 ft.

We will meet at the entrance of the Agua Fria National Monument on Bloody Basin Road at 7 am. We will bird the riparian corridor along the river, roughly three miles roundtrip. The hike will be rocky and possibly wet in some places. Boots or old sneakers are recommended.

Directions: From Cordes Junction: Follow I-17 south to exit #259/Bloody Basin Road. After exiting I-17 turn left at the stop sign and follow Bloody Basin Road for 0.20 miles to kiosk on right.

From 5000 W. Carefree Highway: Follow I-17 north for 37 miles to exit #259/Bloody Basin Road. Turn right at stop sign and drive 0.15 miles to kiosk.

Morgan City Wash Area – Leader: Troy Corman

This riparian oasis is surrounded by Sonoran Desert and has a tendency to concentrate migrants, including many casual and rare species. The lower section of Morgan City Wash is spring fed with permanent running water for over a mile when it empties into the otherwise dry Agua Fria River bed. During the past 5-6 years, over 215 bird species have been observed here including 27 warbler species and 8 vireo species. Other outstanding rarities have included Broad-winged Hawk, Ruddy Ground-Dove, Rufous-backed Robin, Varied Thrush and Orchard and Baltimore Orioles...the possibilities are practically endless.

Troy will guide you through this lush wonderland and show you some of his favorite locations. This will be approximately a 3 to 3.5 miles hike and will range from established trails along the wash to no trails where ducking and climbing over fallen trees, plus hiking over sections of loose rocks is to be expected. We will be out all morning so please bring snacks, plenty of water, sturdy hiking shoes and long pants.

Directions: Since this location is only a 10 min. drive down the Carefree Hwy. from the AZ Game and Fish Office, we will meet there and carpool from the front parking lot at 0700.

Verde River: Ft. McDowell Tribal Lands – Leaders: Marceline VandeWater & Janet Witzeman

These tribal lands along the lower Verde River are normally only birded during the Salt-Verde Rivers CBC because permits are necessary. The many different habitats on these lands have produced some outstanding birds during this December count including such things as Brant, Greater Pewee, and Black-throated Blue and Prairie Warbler. Therefore, just imagine what could be passing through this area during October! Here is your chance to explore the wonderful riparian woodland stands and other habitats along the Verde River just upstream and downstream of the Beeline Hwy. (Hwy. 87).

We will meet at 0700 in the south parking lot of the Denny's in Fountain Hills which is located in the southeast corner of Shea Blvd. and Saguaro Blvd. We will carpool from there. Depending on the number of participants, we may break-up into two different teams to cover more area and have a greater chance to uncover surprises. This is a morning Expedition.

Directions: The address for the Denny's is 17053 E Shea Blvd., Fountain Hills, AZ 85268. It can be reached coming from Scottsdale by following Shea Blvd. east into Fountain Hills, or from the south (on Beeline Hwy) by turning west on Shea Blvd for about 0.7 mile.