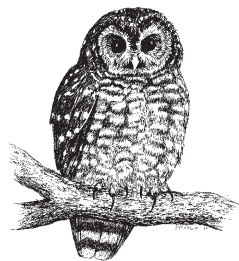


# Birds of Saguaro National Park



Mexican Spotted Owl

## For the Birdwatcher

Whether you are a beginner or a veteran birder, you can find a wondrous variety of birds in Saguaro National Park. From birds that are adapted to the extremes of the desert, to birds that prefer the tall pines of the mountains, over 200 species of birds live in or migrate through the park. Bird watching in unfamiliar territory can be difficult. To take some of the

guesswork out of it, this brochure is provided as a general guide to the birds of Saguaro National Park. Up to date bird lists are available at the visitor centers, as well as staff who can help you plan your birding trip.

## Birds of the Desert



Elf Owl

What birds will you find among the cacti of Saguaro National Park?  
Where can you find them?

The common birds of the desert are greatly varied. From the roadrunner dashing across a trail, to the diminutive verdin gleaning tiny insects from the branch of an acacia, to Harris’ hawks hunting in a family group, birds occupy every niche of the desert scrub habitat.

One of the best ways to find desert birds is by simply getting out there and hiking. Saguaro National Park offers over 75 miles of park trails in desert scrub habitat. Stop frequently to look and listen for birds.

For a less strenuous trip, you might try one of our short, accessible nature trails or a picnic area. Take your bird guide, binoculars and drinking water.

## Birds of the Mountains



Golden Eagle

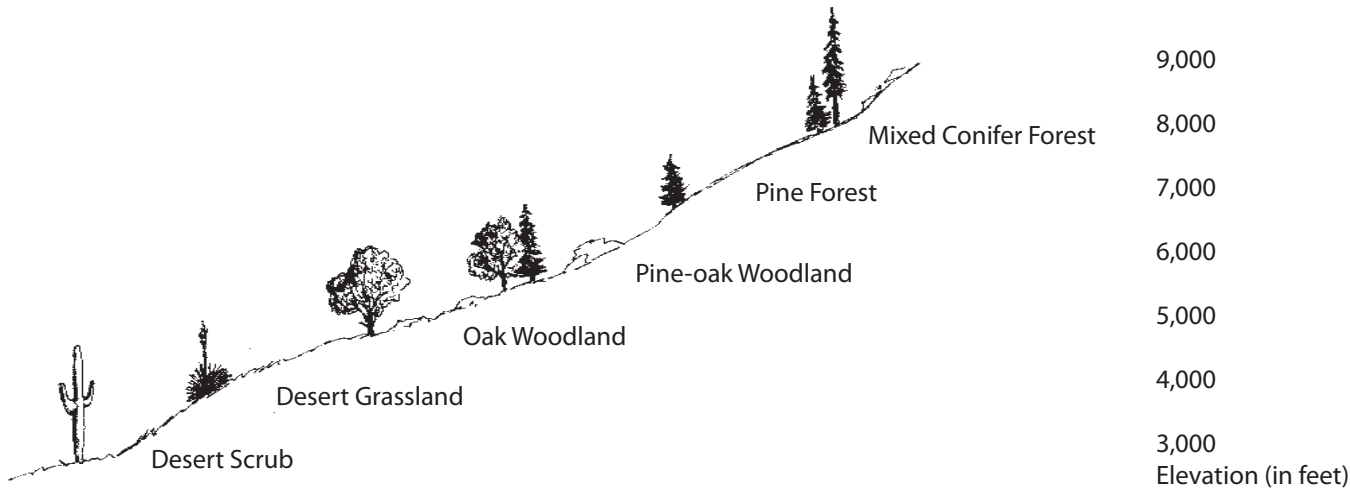
To those who are more adventurous, or simply have more time, a hike into the Saguaro Wilderness Area in the Rincon Mountain District of the park will open new vistas and different habitats.

Birds, such as the red-faced warbler, that are seldom seen on the desert floor, may be found with regularity in the grasslands and the forests of the higher elevations. If camping in a wilderness area appeals to you, ask for information at the visitor center.  
In the canyons of the park, you may find

the canyon wren. More easily heard than seen, it is distinguished by its tumbling cascade of notes.

The grasslands abound with sparrows, their distinctions often challenging the veteran birder.

High on the mountaintop, peregrine falcons nest among the rocks at Helen’s Dome, while the threatened Mexican spotted owl hunts among the ponderosa pines.



Where to Start



Ash-throated Flycatcher

Rincon Mountain District (east)  
1) A moderate 1.8 mile loop hike begins at the Douglas Spring Trailhead. Just east of the sign-in station, turn south on to the Garwood Trail. Watch for activity, particularly on your left, as various sparrows frequent the area. It is also a good place to find the Lucy’s warbler in summer. When you reach the Converse Trail, turn right and proceed to the Wildhorse Trail. Follow the Wildhorse Trail north to Speedway Boulevard. Along the way, watch for birds in the washes. Ash-throated and brown-crested flycatchers, Bell’s vireos, rufous-winged sparrows and Crissal thrashers may be found here seasonally. Trail maps are available at the visitor center.

2) On the north end of the Cactus Forest Drive is the paved, quarter-mile Desert Ecology Trail. One can expect to see several species of birds on this wheelchair accessible trail. Look for rufous-winged sparrow and verdins along the wash. Cooper’s hawks are known to frequent the large mesquite trees along the wash as well.

3) Another area to check is the Javelina Picnic Area at the south end of the Cactus Forest Drive. Sit down at one of the ramadas and watch the birds around you, but please don’t feed them. A quarter-mile hike up the Tanque Verde Ridge Trail from here will take you up to a small canyon where you may find the canyon wren or the black-chinned sparrow.

Tucson Mountain District (west)  
1) The visitor center at the Tucson Mountain District offers a surprising number of

birding opportunities. Visitors often see ash-throated flycatchers and Say’s phoebes hunting insects off the back patio. Cactus wrens and curve-billed thrashers often feed around the building. A short stroll in the cactus garden might reveal a gilded flicker or Gila woodpecker among the saguaros.

2) Another excellent birding area starts at the King Canyon Trailhead. As you begin your hike, watch for pyrrhuloxias and phainopeplas along the wash to your left. Continue on to the intersection of Sendero Esperanza and turn to your left. The grassy arroyo below Mam-a-gah picnic area is an excellent place to look for canyon towhees and black-throated sparrows. To complete this 2.4 mile loop hike, return to the parking lot via the Gould mine trail. For additional birding opportunities, continue up to Wasson Peak via the King Canyon and Hugh Norris Trails. For a 7.5 mile loop, return to the trailhead via the Hugh Norris, Sendero Esperanza and Gould Mine Trails.

3) The Bajada Loop Road is a six-mile, graded, unpaved road that will give you the feeling of being deep in a desert wilderness. Watch for the very social Harris’ hawks along the drive. Secretive rock wrens and verdins may be seen along the hillsides and washes. Look for Gambel’s quail along the road.

A Little Quiz



Roadrunner

1) Which birds are the architects of the saguaro boot?

\_\_\_\_\_

2) Which black bird spreads the seeds of desert mistletoe?

\_\_\_\_\_

3) Which bird builds a football-shaped nest in cholla cactus?

\_\_\_\_\_

4) What tiny, nocturnal hunter lives in saguaro cavities?

\_\_\_\_\_

5) Which cardinal look-alike has a crest and yellow bill?

\_\_\_\_\_

6) Which small yellow-headed bird builds ball-shaped nests?

\_\_\_\_\_

Answers: 1) Gila woodpeckers and gilded flickers 2) phainopepla 3) cactus wren 4) elf owl 5) pyrrhuloxia 6) verdin

The Rincon Mountain District (RMD) of Saguaro National Park is ecologically diverse—a quality that is reflected in this bird list of over 200 species. The Rincon Mountains are part of the Madrean Archipelago of “Sky Islands,” where the Rocky Mountains of the U.S. meet Mexico’s Sierra Madre Occidental. The ranges of many subtropical plant and animal species (e.g., sulphur-bellied flycatcher, elegant trogon) reach their northernmost extent here. The RMD also lies at the interface of the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts and includes biological elements from both. Biodiversity in this district is further enhanced by an elevational gradient of almost 6,000 feet, from the desert (2,700') to evergreen forests (8,666') atop Mica Mountain.

Six successive biomes occur here, grouped into four habitats (**H**) for the purposes of this bird list. Sonoran desert (D) is characterized by saguaros and other cacti and perennial shrubs. Woodland/chaparral (WC) includes grasslands, brushlands, and oak and juniper woodlands. Forests (F) include pine and mixed conifer. Associated with water, riparian vegetation (Ri) such as cottonwood and willow, is found in the drainages of each of all these habitats, creating further complexity and diversity.

In this list, season (S) includes year-round residents (Y); summer breeders (S; usually neotropical migrants here between April and August); winter visitors (W) here from November through February; and migrants (M) passing through in spring or fall.

Habitat and season both affect abundance (A). In the right habitat and season, abundant (A) birds are likely to be seen daily and in large numbers. Common (C) birds are likely to be seen daily in fewer numbers. Uncommon birds (U) are seen less frequently but regularly, and rare (R) birds, though usually present, are difficult to find. Occasional (O) birds are transient—found regionally, but not usually present in the park. Accidental (X) birds are far out of their normal range (and may never be seen here again).

Key		
Abundance (A)	Habitat (H)	Season (S)
A–Abundant	Ri–Riparian	Y–Year-round
C–Common	D–Desert	S–Summer
U–Uncommon	WC–Woodland/Chaparral	W–Winter
R–Rare	F–Forest	M–Migratory
O–Occasional		
X–Accidental		

✓	Common name	A	H	S
DUCKS AND GEESE				
	mallard	O	Ri,D	Y
TURKEYS AND QUAIL				
	scaled quail	R	D,WC	Y
	Gambel's quail	A	Ri,D,WC	Y
	Montezuma quail	U	WC	Y
	wild turkey	U	Ri,WC,F	Y
BITTERNS, HERONS AND EGRETS				
	great blue heron	R	Ri,D	Y
VULTURES				
	black vulture	O	D,WC	M
	turkey vulture	C	Ri,D,WC,F	S
RAPTORS				
	osprey	O	D	M
	northern harrier	R	D	W
	sharp-shinned hawk	R	Ri,D,WC,F	M
	Cooper's hawk	U	Ri,D,WC,F	Y
	northern goshawk	R	WC,F	Y
	common black-hawk	O	Ri,D	M
	Harris's hawk	R	D	Y
	gray hawk	R	Ri	S
	Swainson's hawk	R	D,WC	M
	zone-tailed hawk	U	Ri,D,WC,F	S
	red-tailed hawk	C	Ri,D,WC,F	Y
	ferruginous hawk	O	D	W
	golden eagle	R	D,WC,F	Y
CRANES				
	sandhill crane	O	D	M
PLOVERS				
	killdeer	O	Ri	Y
SANDPIPERS				
	spotted sandpiper	O	Ri	M
PIGEONS AND DOVES				
	rock pigeon	R	D	Y
	band-tailed pigeon	U	WC,F	S
	Eurasian collared-dove	R	Ri,D	Y
	Inca dove	R	Ri,D	Y
	common ground-dove	R	Ri,D	S
	white-winged dove	A	Ri,D	S
	mourning dove	A	Ri,D,WC	Y
CUCKOOS AND ROADRUNNERS				
	yellow-billed cuckoo	R	Ri	S
	greater roadrunner	U	D,WC	Y
OWLS				
	barn owl	O	Ri,D	Y
	flammulated owl	U	WC,F	S
	western screech-owl	U	Ri,D,WC	Y

✓	Common name	A	H	S
	whiskered screech-owl	U	WC,F	S
	great horned owl	U	Ri,D,WC,F	Y
	northern pygmy-owl	R	WC,F	Y
	cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl	O	Ri,D	Y
	elf owl	C	Ri,D,WC	S
	burrowing owl	O	D	M
	Mexican spotted owl	R	WC,F	Y
	long-eared owl	R	Ri,D,WC,F	M
	northern saw-whet owl	U	WC,F	S
NIGHTHAWKS AND NIGHTJARS				
	lesser nighthawk	C	D	S
	common nighthawk	O	D	M
	common poorwill	C	D,WC	S
	Mexican whip-poor-will	U	WC,F	S
SWIFTS				
	Vaux's swift	R	Ri,D	M
	white-throated swift	U	D,WC,F	Y
HUMMINGBIRDS				
	magnificent hummingbird	R	WC,F	S
	black-chinned hummingbird	C	Ri,D,WC	S
	Anna's hummingbird	C	Ri,D,WC	Y
	Costa's hummingbird	U	Ri,D,WC	Y
	broad-tailed hummingbird	C	Ri,D,WC,F	S
	rufous hummingbird	R	Ri,D,WC,F	M
	broad-billed hummingbird	U	Ri,D	S
TROGONS AND QUETZALS				
	elegant trogon	O	WC	S
KINGFISHERS				
	belted kingfisher	O	Ri	M
WOODPECKERS				
	acorn woodpecker	C	Ri,WC	Y
	Gila woodpecker	A	Ri,D,WC	Y
	Williamson's sapsucker	R	WC,F	W
	red-naped sapsucker	U	Ri,WC,F	W
	ladder-backed woodpecker	C	Ri,D,WC	Y
	hairy woodpecker	C	WC,F	Y
	Arizona woodpecker	U	Ri,WC	Y
	northern flicker (red-shafted)	U	Ri,D,WC,F	Y
	gilded flicker	C	Ri,D	Y
FALCONS				
	crested caracara	O	D	M
	American kestrel	U	Ri,D,WC	Y
	merlin	R	D,WC	M
	peregrine falcon	R	D,WC,F	Y
	prairie falcon	R	D,WC	Y
TYRANT FLYCATCHERS				
	northern beardless-tyrannulet	R	Ri	S

✓	Common name	A	H	S
	olive-sided flycatcher	R	Ri,D,WC,F	M
	greater pewee	C	WC,F	S
	western wood-pewee	C	Ri,D,WC	S
	willow flycatcher	O	Ri	M
	Hammond's flycatcher	U	Ri,D,WC,F	M
	gray flycatcher	U	Ri,D,WC	W
	dusky flycatcher	R	Ri,D,WC,F	M
	Pacific-slope flycatcher	U	Ri,D,WC	M
	cordilleran flycatcher	C	Ri,WC,F	S
	buff-breasted flycatcher	O	WC,F	S
	black phoebe	U	Ri	Y
	Say's phoebe	U	D,WC	Y
	vermillion flycatcher	U	Ri,D	S
	dusky-capped flycatcher	U	Ri,WC	S
	ash-throated flycatcher	A	Ri,D,WC	S
	brown-crested flycatcher	C	Ri,D	S
	sulphur-bellied flycatcher	O	WC	S
	tropical kingbird	O	Ri	S
	Cassin's kingbird	U	Ri	S
	western kingbird	U	Ri,D,WC	S
SHRIKES				
	loggerhead shrike	R	D,WC	Y
VIREOS				
	Bell's vireo	C	Ri,D	S
	gray vireo	R	D,WC	S
	plumbeous vireo	C	Ri,D,WC,F	S
	Cassin's vireo	R	Ri,D,WC,F	M
	Hutton's vireo	U	Ri,WC	S
	warbling vireo	U	Ri,D,WC	S
	yellow-green vireo	X	Ri	S
JAYS AND ALLIES				
	pinyon jay	O	WC,F	W
	Steller's jay	C	WC,F	Y
	western scrub-jay	U	WC	Y
	Mexican jay	C	WC,F	Y
	Clark's nutcracker	O	WC,F	W
	common raven	C	Ri,D,WC,F	Y
LARKS				
	horned lark	O	D	M
SWALLOWS				
	purple martin	C	Ri,D	S
	tree swallow	O	Ri,D	M
	violet-green swallow	U	Ri,D,WC,F	S
	northern rough-winged swallow	R	Ri,D	M
	cliff swallow	R	Ri,D	M
	barn swallow	R	Ri,D	M



✓	Common name	A	H	S
CHICKADEES AND TITMICE				
	mountain chickadee	C	WC,F	Y
	bridled titmouse	C	Ri,WC,F	Y
	juniper titmouse	R	WC	Y
VERDINS AND BUSHTITS				
	verdin	C	Ri,D	Y
	bushtit	U	Ri,WC	Y
NUTHATCHES AND CREEPERS				
	red-breasted nuthatch	U	WC,F	Y
	white-breasted nuthatch	C	Ri,WC,F	Y
	pygmy nuthatch	C	WC,F	Y
	brown creeper	U	WC,F	Y
WRENS				
	rock wren	C	D,WC	Y
	canyon wren	U	D,WC	Y
	house wren	C	Ri,D,WC,F	S
	marsh wren	O	Ri	M
	Bewick's wren	C	Ri,D,WC	Y
	cactus wren	A	D	Y
KINGLETS AND GNATCATCHERS				
	blue-gray gnatcatcher	U	Ri,D,WC	S
	black-tailed gnatcatcher	C	D	Y
	ruby-crowned kinglet	C	Ri,D,WC,F	W
THRUSHES AND ALLIES				
	eastern bluebird	O	F	S
	western bluebird	U	Ri,D,WC,F	Y
	mountain bluebird	O	D,WC,F	W
	Townsend's solitaire	O	Ri,WC,F	W
	hermit thrush	C	Ri,WC,F	S
	American robin	C	Ri,WC,F	S
THRASHERS AND ALLIES				
	curve-billed thrasher	C	D,WC	Y
	Bendire's thrasher	O	D	Y
	crissal thrasher	R	Ri,D,WC	Y
	sage thrasher	O	D,WC	W
	northern mockingbird	C	Ri,D,WC	Y
STARLINGS				
	European starling	R	Ri,D	Y
WAXWINGS				
	cedar waxwing	R	Ri,D,WC,F	W
SILKY FLYCATCHERS				
	phainopepla	C	Ri,D,WC	Y
WARBLERS				
	olive warbler	U	WC,F	S
	orange-crowned warbler	U	Ri,D,WC,F	M
	Lucy's warbler	A	Ri,D	S
	Nashville warbler	U	Ri,D,WC,F	M
	Virginia's warbler	U	Ri,D,WC	S

✓	Common name	A	H	S
	MacGillivray's warbler	R	Ri,D	M
	common yellowthroat	R	Ri	M
	northern parula	X	Ri	M
	yellow warbler	R	Ri	M
	yellow-rumped warbler	U	Ri,D,WC,F	Y
	Grace's warbler	C	WC,F	S
	black-throated gray warbler	C	Ri,D,WC	S
	Townsend's warbler	U	Ri,D,WC,F	M
	hermit warbler	U	D,WC,F	M
	Wilson's warbler	U	Ri,D,WC,F	M
	red-faced warbler	C	WC,F	S
	painted redstart	C	Ri,WC,F	S
	yellow-breasted chat	R	Ri	S
SPARROWS AND ALLIES				
	green-tailed towhee	U	Ri,D,WC	M
	spotted towhee	C	D,WC,F	Y
	rufous-crowned sparrow	U	D,WC	Y
	canyon towhee	C	D,WC	Y
	Abert's towhee	U	Ri,D	Y
	rufous-winged sparrow	C	D	Y
	Cassin's sparrow	O	D,WC	M
	chipping sparrow	C	Ri,D,WC	W
	Brewer's sparrow	A	Ri,D,WC	W
	black-chinned sparrow	U	D,WC	Y
	vesper sparrow	R	D	W
	lark sparrow	U	Ri,D,WC	W
	black-throated sparrow	C	D,WC	Y
	lark bunting	R	D	W
	sagebrush sparrow	O	D	W
	savannah sparrow	O	Ri,D	M
	fox sparrow	X	Ri,D,WC	W
	song sparrow	R	Ri	M
	Lincoln's sparrow	U	Ri,D	W
	white-throated sparrow	O	Ri,D	W
	white-crowned sparrow	A	Ri,D,WC	W
	golden-crowned sparrow	X	Ri,D,WC	W
	dark-eyed junco	C	Ri,D,WC,F	W
	yellow-eyed junco	C	WC,F	Y
CARDINALS, GROSBEAKS AND BUNTINGS				
	hepatic tanager	U	WC,F	S
	summer tanager	U	Ri	S
	western tanager	C	Ri,D,WC,F	S
	northern cardinal	C	Ri,D,WC	Y
	pyrrhuloxia	C	Ri,D	Y
	rose-breasted grosbeak	X	Ri,WC	M
	black-headed grosbeak	C	Ri,D,WC,F	S
	blue grosbeak	U	Ri,D,WC	S
	lazuli bunting	U	Ri,D,WC	M

✓	Common name	A	H	S
	indigo bunting	R	Ri,D	S
	varied bunting	U	Ri,D	S
BLACKBIRDS AND ALLIES				
	red-winged blackbird	R	Ri,D	W
	eastern meadowlark	O	D	W
	western meadowlark	R	D	W
	yellow-headed blackbird	O	Ri,D	W
	Brewer's blackbird	U	Ri,D	W
	great-tailed grackle	R	Ri,D	Y
	bronzed cowbird	C	Ri,D,WC	S
	brown-headed cowbird	C	Ri,D,WC	S
	hooded oriole	U	Ri,D,WC	S
	Bullock's oriole	U	Ri,D,WC	S
	Scott's oriole	U	D,WC	S
CARDUELINE FINCHES				
	house finch	A	Ri,D,WC	Y
	Cassin's finch	O	WC,F	W
	red crossbill	R	WC,F	Y
	pine siskin	U	Ri,D,WC,F	Y
	lesser goldfinch	C	Ri,D,WC	Y
	Lawrence's goldfinch	O	Ri,D	W
	evening grosbeak	O	WC,F	W
OLD WORLD SPARROWS				
	house sparrow	R	D	Y

Cover photos: zone-tailed hawk (top; NPS/D. Jackson), cactus wren (middle; NPS/N. Perkins), and acorn woodpecker (bottom; NPS/D. Jackson).

The information in this list is based on many years of bird observations and surveys throughout the Rincon Mountain District of Saguaro National Park. However, with changing land use and climate, bird lists are inherently works in progress. Use this list as a guide, and report your own observations (to the RMD Visitor Center or on eBird) to help us revise future versions. The list is arranged by family, with common names following the American Ornithologists' Union's Check-list of North American Birds, 7th edition, and its supplements to 2013.

This checklist was produced by Saguaro National Park and the Sonoran Desert Network.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Sonoran Desert Network

# Bird Checklist

## for Saguaro National Park

### Rincon Mountain District



