

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours

Grand New Mexico

May 27 – June 5, 2004

Leader: Brad Schram

Itinerary:

May 27 – Arrival in El Paso, get-acquainted dinner

May 28 – Wilderness Park Museum; El Paso Country Club area; Aguirre Springs Recreation area; Holloman Lakes; White Sands National Monument

May 29 – Leasburg; Percha Dam State Park; Caballo Reservoir; the Black Range

May 30 – Pinos Altos; Cherry Creek Canyon; Greyfeathers Lodge/ Lake Roberts; Gila Cliff Dwellings; evening owling

May 31 – Burro Mountains; Redrock; Mangus Springs; evening owling

June 1 – Bill Evans Lake Rd.; Whitewater Canyon (the Catwalk); Glenwood NM State Fish Hatchery; Hwys. 12 and 60 through Plains of San Agustin, the Very Large Array, to Socorro

June 2 – Socorro; Bosque del Apache NWR; drive to Santa Fe; afternoon shopping in the plaza

June 3 – Jacona; Bandelier NM

June 4 – Jacona; Jemez Mtns.; Valles Caldera; Jemez Falls; La Cueva Picnic Area

June 5 – Santa Fe Ski Basin; Rio Grande Nature Center; Sandia Crest

Key:

E = El Paso and surrounding area

L = Las Cruces; Organ Mtns.; Holloman; White Sands

P = Percha SP; Caballo Lake; Leasburg area

S = Black Range; Silver City; Burro Mtns.; Redrock

W = Bill Evans Lake Rd.; Glenwood; Whitewater Canyon

V = Hwy. 180 N. of Glenwood; Plains of San Agustin (VLA); Hwy. 12 & 60 to Socorro

B = Bosque del Apache and Socorro

SF = all areas around Santa Fe

A = Albuquerque, Rio Grande Nature Center, and the Sandia Crest

Bold-faced species include birds of rare, casual, or accidental occurrence

underlined species include birds of very uncommon occurrence or species which occur regularly but in such low densities as to be easily missed

Summary: Overall we had many remarkable bird experiences, fabulous scenery, and usually good weather—but virtually no migrants. The only exceptions from excellent weather throughout occurred on the second day when we endured high winds at Percha State Park and in the Black Range, and during our afternoon in the Jemez mountains when high winds likewise made birding unproductive. All agreed that the Organ Mountains—specifically the Aguirre Springs area—were gorgeous, providing a highlight of the trip. ‘Scope-filling views of Black-chinned and Black-throated sparrows here were truly memorable—as was the less showy but accommodating Canyon Towhee at our feet during lunch. A soaring Zone-tailed Hawk below the crest gave us leisurely views, rewarding our perseverance as we traversed the wind-whipped Black Range. North of Silver City a mixed flock of multiple Red-faced Warblers, Painted Redstarts, Grace’s and Virginia’s warblers, Plumbeous Vireos, Mountain Chickadees, nuthatches, juncos, and a female Magnificent Hummingbird—all at very close range—provided a rare birding experience; it was almost too wonderful to take in at once. Cherry Creek, ringing with Hermit Thrush song, produced Olive and other warblers, Cordilleran Flycatcher, and—at night—Flammulated Owl and Whip-poor-will. A Virginia Rail calling on a fallen branch at minimum binocular focus range at Mangus Springs gave us a thrill; unobstructed close views of Poorwill and Elf and Western Screech owls in the Burro Mountains that evening made the day forever noteworthy. Close Western Tanagers and Western Bluebirds in the Bandelier highlands followed by a responsive Hammond’s Flycatcher in Frijoles Canyon near the ruins punctuated a wonderful day exploring this beautiful national monument. Green-tailed Towhee and Mountain Bluebird were among the highlights near lovely Valles Caldera in the Jemez mountains. The highlands of Santa Fe Ski Basin held curiously few species, but abundant Red Crossbills and a cooperative Pine Grosbeak charmed us all. Trails around the restaurant on Sandia Crest above Albuquerque proved surprisingly birdy; close encounters with Clark’s Nutcrackers here followed by a remarkable sunset viewed from our 10,000-foot perch drew a dramatic close to approximately 1800 miles of travel through varied New Mexico terrane.

Birds:

Pied-billed Grebe S, B, A

Eared Grebe L a pair at Holloman Lakes

Western Grebe P, B

Clark’s Grebe P, B the common grebe at Caballo Reservoir, a minority at B d A

American White Pelican B a few only

Double-crested Cormorant P a fly-by at Percha was, surprisingly, the only one

Neotropic Cormorant B a few at B d A

Least Bittern B heard only, close by in reeds but refusing to come into view

Great Blue Heron L, P, W, B

Snowy Egret L, B

Black-crowned Night Heron P a fly-over at Percha the only one

Green Heron A a single bird at Rio Grande Nature Center the only one seen

Turkey Vulture seen throughout, all but the last day

Snow Goose B a single bird, late, at B d A
 Canada Goose B common at B d A
 Wood Duck A a few at Rio Grande Nature Center, including 3 chicks
 Gadwall L, B
 American Wigeon B a lone lingering female at B d A
 Mallard wherever standing water occurs
 “Mexican Duck” E this Mallard subspecies in El Paso Country Club area
 Cinnamon Teal V, B
 Northern Shoveler B
 Redhead B one of the two commonest duck species (with Gadwall) at B d A
Common Merganser S a fly-by at Redrock the only one seen
 Ruddy Duck S, B Lake Roberts and B d A
Mississippi Kite E an adult perched at close range near its nest tree
Common Black Hawk W a trip highlight; perched and overhead at the fish hatch.
 Swainson’s Hawk L, S 5 between Deming and Silver City the most seen
Zone-tailed Hawk S fabulous looks at a bird overhead in the Black Range
 Red-tailed Hawk L, S, W, B, SF
Bald Eagle S a second year bird at Lake Roberts was a major surprise
 American Kestrel L, P, S, V, B
Peregrine Falcon B, SF an imm. at B d A and an adult at Valles Caldera
 Green Pheasant B introduced, originally from Japan
 Scaled Quail E, SF up-close at WPM, El Paso; calling each morning by motel, SF
 Gambel’s Quail commonly, in desert environments
 Virginia Rail S calling, almost touchable—fabulous encounter!
 American Coot S, B, SF, A
 Killdeer E, L, B
 Black-necked Stilt L a few at Holloman with avocets
 American Avocet L
 Spotted Sandpiper B the only sandpiper of the tour
 Rock Pigeon in all cities and towns
 Band-tailed Pigeon S, SF at altitude
 White-winged Dove very common at low altitude, virtually ubiquitous
 Mourning Dove ubiquitous at all but highest altitude
Eurasian Collared Dove B common in town at Socorro; *none here two years ago*
 Greater Roadrunner S, B parking lot bird at B d A the only close look
Flammulated Owl S heard at close range, but invisible at Cherry Creek
 Western Screech Owl S right overhead in Burro Mountains, great look!
 Great Horned Owl P a daytime bird at Percha
 Elf Owl S in pines in Burro Mountains—fine study in beam
 Burrowing Owl B a family at Socorro, voted favorite bird(s) of the trip!
 Lesser Nighthawk L, B daytime looks
 Common Poorwill S a cooperative, vocal bird—flying and perched in Burro Mtns.
 Whip-poor-will S a vociferous bird perched in the beam, Cherry Creek
 White-throated Swift S, W, SF good looks, multiple locations
Magnificent Hummingbird S a female amidst a mixed flock, Cherry Creek
 Black-chinned Hummingbird daily, all altitudes and virtually all locations
 Broad-tailed Hummingbird S, SF feeder looks at Greyfeathers, fly-bys at altitude
Anna’s Hummingbird E a remarkable perched male at WPM, El Paso
 Belted Kingfisher W four birds at the fish hatchery were the only ones seen

Lewis's Woodpecker SF a perched bird on a known nest tree in Santa Fe
 Acorn Woodpecker L, S a group favorite, multiple good looks
 Gila Woodpecker S a few at Redrock
 Red-naped Sapsucker S fine close looks, a male along Gila River near dwellings
 Ladder-backed Woodpecker E, L, S fine 'scope looks
 Downy Woodpecker SF one in Jemez mountains
 Hairy Woodpecker L, S, SF
 Northern Flicker W, SF
 Olive-sided Flycatcher L fine 'scope studies in Organ Mountains
 Western Wood-Pewee L, S, W, B, SF
 Hammond's Flycatcher SF at Bandelier only
 Dusky Flycatcher SF at Jemez Falls only, high and difficult
 Gray Flycatcher S, SF Burro mtns. and Bandelier
 Cordilleran Flycatcher S Cherry Creek Canyon
 Black Phoebe L, S, SF, A
 Say's Phoebe L, S, SF
 Vermillion Flycatcher P, S at Percha SP and Redrock
 Brown-crested Flycatcher S at Redrock
 Cassin's Kingbird S, SF
 Western Kingbird virtually ubiquitous in dry areas
 Loggerhead Shrike S, V west of Burro mountains and on Plains of Augustine
 Bell's Vireo S, B seen well at Redrock
 Plumbeous Vireo S, W, SF common singer in the pines
 Warbling Vireo P, S, SF, A ubiquitous in aspen groves in mountains
 Steller's Jay S, SF, A in pines at altitude throughout, but relatively few
 Western Scrub Jay S, V, SF
 Mexican Jay S, SF in pinyon-juniper woodlands
 Pinyon Jay V in pines just south of Plains of Augustine, a few only
 Clark's Nutcracker SF, A only one in SF Ski Basin, and three up close on Sandia Cr.
 Black-billed Magpie SF a few around Jacona north of SF
 American Crow V, SF damp agricultural areas and SF, not common
 Chihuahuan Raven E, L, S, B dry lowlands
 Common Raven L, S, SF, A predominantly highlands
 Horned Lark S, V
 Purple Martin S a few high over Lake Roberts
 Tree Swallow B a few late migrants at B d A
 Violet-green Swallow S, W, SF, A common in pines at altitude
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow W, B a few
 Cliff Swallow L, P, S, B, SF
 Cave Swallow E a colony over canals near nests under bridge, El Paso CC area
 Barn Swallow E, L, S, B, A
 Mountain Chickadee S, SF, A
 Bridled Titmouse S, W seen well multiple times
 Juniper Titmouse S, SF a variety of good looks
 Verdin S amazingly, heard only near Redrock—overlooked during other searches
 Bushtit L, S, W, SF
 Red-breasted Nuthatch SF, A in pines at altitude
 White-breasted Nuthatch L, S, SF
 Pygmy Nuthatch S, SF, A in Ponderosas at altitude, a group favorite

Cactus Wren E close at WPM El Paso
 Rock Wren S, SF very well seen two or three times
 Canyon Wren S, W heard more often than seen, but 'scope looks wonderful
 Bewick's Wren E, S, A
 House Wren S, SF, A
 American Dipper W, SF walk-away 'scope-filling view at the catwalk!
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet S, SF, A
 Western Bluebird SF common in pines above Santa Fe
 Mountain Bluebird SF gorgeous looks at Valles Caldera—a group favorite
 Townsend's Solitaire SF by Brad only, unfortunately, just below the ski basin
 Hermit Thrush S, SF, A ethereal song of the forest
 American Robin E, L, S, W, SF, A
 Northern Mockingbird E, L, S, W, V, B, SF
 Sage Thrasher V a couple seen well on Plains of San Augustine
 Curve-billed Thrasher W road to Bill Evans Lake and Glenwood fish hatch.
 Crissal Thrasher E a responsive bird at El Paso WPM
 European Starling E, L, S, W, V, SF no shortage of Sky Rats near habitation
 Phainopepla L, S common in dry country south of SF
 Olive Warbler S smashing look at a male, good look at a female
 Orange-crowned Warbler W heard only in Whitewater Canyon area
 Virginia's Warbler S close birds in flock above Cherry Creek Canyon
 Lucy's Warbler L, P, S
 Yellow Warbler S, W, SF
 Yellow-rumped Warbler SF, A
 Black-throated Gray Warbler S Cherry Creek Canyon
 Grace's Warbler S, SF multiple excellent looks!
 MacGillivray's Warbler SF a responsive male at La Cueva Campground
 Common Yellowthroat S, B heard only, not concentrated upon
 Red-faced Warbler S multiple fabulous looks at one of the great warblers extant
 Painted Redstart S like the red-faced above
 Yellow-breasted Chat S, W, B great looks at a gorgeous bird
 Hepatic Tanager L, S, W various fine close looks at this southwest specialty
 Summer Tanager P, S, B wonderful looks
 Western Tanager L, S, W, SF, A in pines, close-up
 Green-tailed Towhee SF, A near Valles Caldera
 Spotted Towhee W, SF, A
 Canyon Towhee L, S, W
 Rufous-crowned Sparrow W a close pair in the 'scope
 Chipping Sparrow SF, A
 Black-chinned Sparrow L excellent close 'scope study—subtly beautiful sparrow
 Lark Sparrow W, SF
 Black-throated Sparrow L, S another group favorite—beautiful
 Dark-eyed Junco S, SF, A in pines at altitude
 Northern Cardinal S a pair at Mangus Springs were only ones seen
 Pyrrhuloxia E a teed up male at El Paso WPM posed for close 'scope study
 Black-headed Grosbeak L, S, W, B, SF, A
 Blue Grosbeak L, S, B, SF fine looks
 Lazuli Bunting W, SF great looks at a male at Jacona
 Red-winged Blackbird L, S, B

Eastern Meadowlark V, SF Valle Grande and Valles Caldera
Western Meadowlark B, A
Brewer's Blackbird A
Great-tailed Grackle E, L, B, A
Bronzed Cowbird L a bird on a wire near Mesilla
Brown-headed Cowbird E, L, S, W, B, SF
Hooded Oriole S, W excellent 'scope looks at a real stunner
Bullock's Oriole P, S, B
Scott's Oriole L, S another group favorite—and a great song
Pine Grosbeak SF one only, a female, at the ski basin—fine 'scope looks
Red Crossbill SF, A excellent looks in the ski basin
House Finch E, L, P, S, W, V, SF, A
Pine Siskin SF
Lesser Goldfinch S, SF
House Sparrow all towns

Total:

174 Species

Mammals:

Rock Squirrel
Abert's Tassel-eared Squirrel
Least Chipmunk
Cliff Chipmunk
Desert Cottontail
Eastern Cottontail
Black-tailed Jackrabbit
Coyote
Mule Deer
Elk

Reptiles and Amphibians:

Desert Grassland Whiptail
Chihuahuan Spotted Whiptail
Little-striped Whiptail
Eastern Fence Lizard
Brush Lizard
Clark's Spiny Lizard Whitewater Canyon
Greater Earless Lizard beautiful creature at Aguirre Springs!
Texas Horned Lizard one on hwy. south of Redrock
Gopher Snake
Rock Rattlesnake by trail at Gila Cliff Dwellings—named “icy”, apparently
Red-eared Slider
Mud Turtle
Bullfrog

Butterflies:

Western Tiger Swallowtail

Double-tailed Swallowtail

Pipevine Swallowtail

Orange Sulphur

Clouded Sulphur

Queen

Mourning Cloak

Painted Lady

Common Buckeye

Red-spotted Purple

California Sister