

# GRAND NEW MEXICO

**MAY 25 - JUNE 4, 2009**

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*From the high Rocky Mountains near Santa Fe to the deserts in the southwestern portion of the state, New Mexico offers the visiting birder a wide range of habitats and therefore a remarkable number of species. In fact, the state list boasts the fifth highest number of species in the country. Surprisingly however, New Mexico remains largely undiscovered by the birding world.*

*Many highly-prized and much-sought-after species are possible on this tour, including Common Black-Hawk; Dusky Grouse; Flammulated Owl; Lewis' Woodpecker; Three-toed Woodpecker; Williamson's Sapsucker; Vermilion, Gray, and Hammonds flycatchers; Pinyon Jay; Crissal Thrasher; Red-faced and Olive warblers; Painted Redstart; Abert's Towhee; Black-chinned Sparrow; and Pine Grosbeak, to name but a few. A total of over 190 species is likely.*

*The marvelous birding, combined with the generally pleasant weather (most of the tour will be spent in the cool, shady mountains, where we'll escape the desert heat), unparalleled scenery, and ancient Anasazi, Mogollon, and Pueblo ruins make this tour to the "Land of Enchantment" a must for every bird and nature enthusiast.*

**May 25, Day 1: Arrival in El Paso.** Participants should plan to arrive in El Paso, Texas today and transfer to our hotel where a room will be reserved in your name. There is a courtesy shuttle available from the El Paso International Airport (ELP) to the hotel. We will meet at 4:00 p.m. in the lobby for a brief afternoon excursion to the west side of El Paso in search of the localized Mississippi Kite. Time permitting; we will also seek out Burrowing Owl and the localized Cave Swallow. For those arriving later, we will gather again in the hotel lobby at 6:45 p.m. prior to dinner.

NIGHT: Wyndham Airport Hotel, El Paso

**May 26, Day 2: Organ Mountains and Holloman Lakes.** An early start this morning will take us to a desert area at the base of the Franklin Mountains, just north of El Paso. Our main target here will be the localized and secretive Crissal Thrasher which breeds in the brushy arroyos. Other possibilities include Scaled Quail, Cactus Wren, Pyrrhuloxia, and Black-throated Sparrow. After a brief check of this area, we'll depart for Aguirre Springs in the scenic Organ Mountains east of Las Cruces. This is an excellent birding area, with a series of well-maintained trails. We will take a breath-taking one to one-and-a-half-mile (round-trip) hike on one such trail, where the numerous birds are almost overshadowed by the wonderful scenery. Lower juniper covered slopes should produce many birds, including such possibilities as Ladder-backed Woodpecker; Ash-throated Flycatcher; Canyon, Rock, and Bewick's wrens; Black-headed Grosbeak; Canyon Towhee; Rufous-crowned and Black-chinned sparrows; and Scott's Oriole. Although very uncommon, the much sought-after Gray Vireo is a possibility here as well. We will want to keep a careful watch on the skies, as Golden Eagles frequently soar overhead.

After a picnic lunch we'll head to Holloman Lakes to check for late migrating ducks and shorebirds. In any event, we should see numerous pairs of American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, and the locally uncommon and

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threatened Snowy Plover, all of which breed here. Swainson's Hawks and Chihuahuan Ravens should be much in evidence in the nearby grasslands. We will finish the afternoon with a brief visit to the unique and beautiful White Sands National Monument.

NIGHT: Hampton Inn, Las Cruces

**May 27, Day 3: Las Cruces to Silver City.** North of Las Cruces, the habitat along the Rio Grande is less disturbed by agricultural practices, with some tracts of original riparian growth still remaining. Percha Dam State Park is one such spot. Here large cottonwoods and willows line the banks of the lazy river and act as a magnet for many passerines. Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black Phoebe, the elusive Crissal Thrasher, Phainopepla, Lucy's Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, and Lesser Goldfinch are among the breeding birds. Nearby Caballo Reservoir may yield Clark's and Western grebes, or possibly Neotropic Cormorant.

As we head westward through the Black Range, an abrupt change in bird life will be noticeable. The cool pine/fir-filled canyons along our route are home to three of the country's most beautiful warblers—the handsome Olive (very uncommon) and incomparable Red-faced warblers, and the strikingly gorgeous Painted Redstart. A special effort will be made to locate all three of these gems. Other species we might encounter on our way to Silver City include Acorn Woodpecker, Steller's Jay and Western Scrub-Jay, Mountain Chickadee, Western Bluebird, and Western Tanager.

NIGHT: Comfort Inn, Silver City

**May 28, Day 4: Pinos Altos and Mimbres Mountains.** This entire day will be devoted to birding the Mimbres Mountains north of Silver City. The arid juniper slopes and moist pine/fir canyons harbor many birds, including Band-tailed Pigeon; Cordilleran Flycatcher; Mexican and Pinyon jays (uncommon here); Pygmy Nuthatch; Western Bluebird; Virginia's, Black-throated Gray, and Grace's warblers; and Western Tanager. We should also have additional encounters with Red-faced Warbler and Painted Redstart. Although unexpected, as this is the absolute edge of its range, some of our past tours here have located the locally rare Greater Pewee as well.

In addition to an excellent day of birding, we will visit the fascinating Gila Cliff Dwellings, a 13th-century hideout for the hunting and gathering Mogollon Indians. Located high in the cliff faces, these dwellings provided excellent protection from both the elements and intruders.

NIGHT: Comfort Inn, Silver City

**May 29, Day 5: Redrock and the Burro Mountains.** The tiny community of Redrock lies along the Gila River near the border of Arizona. The pristine habitat here is home to several species not generally found elsewhere in the state. Brilliant Vermilion Flycatchers hawk insects near the river's edge, while noisy Gila Woodpeckers rattle from cottonwood snags overhead. Nearby Abert's Towhees and Curve-billed Thrashers frequent dense brush patches. Other breeding species include Gambel's Quail, Greater Roadrunner, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Lucy's Warbler, Northern Cardinal, and Hooded Oriole.

A brief check of the grasslands above Redrock might reveal Scaled Quail, Horned Lark, and Black-throated sparrows. A drive through the Burro Mountains on our return to Silver City will likely produce Bridled Titmouse, Bushtit, Hepatic Tanager, and Spotted Towhee. The very localized Gray Flycatcher is possible here as well.

We will offer at least two nights (quite possibly three) of owling during our stay in Silver City, our prime targets being Elf Owl, Flammulated Owl, Western Screech-Owl, Common Poorwill, and Whip-poor-will.

NIGHT: Comfort Inn, Silver City

**May 30, Day 6: Gila and Cliff; Drive to Socorro.** This morning will be spent scouring the Gila River near the towns of Cliff and Gila in search of a very special bird, the Common Black-Hawk, a few pairs of which usually

nest nearby. This magnificent raptor is perhaps one of the hardest to add to one's North American list and this stretch of the Gila is one of its last U.S. strongholds. We will also check Mangus Springs, a nearby migrant trap which can produce almost anything, and continually scan the skies for the locally uncommon Zone-tailed Hawk.

By mid-morning we will head north towards scenic Whitewater Canyon where the entertaining American Dipper is a real possibility. In the vicinity of Reserve, we will scan the road sides for the unique Lewis' Woodpecker and localized Pinyon Jay. After lunch we will venture through plateau grasslands en route to Socorro where Sage Thrashers and Vesper Sparrows breed sporadically in this area, and Pronghorns are a near certainty.

NIGHT: Super 8, Socorro

**May 31, Day 7: Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge to Los Alamos.** Early morning will find us at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. Here, water levels vary tremendously this time of year with a variety of water birds possible. Least Bittern (scarce), Black-crowned Night-Heron, Virginia Rail, Ring-necked Pheasant, Wild Turkey, Blue Grosbeak, and Yellow-headed Blackbird are among the possibilities. Before heading up to Los Alamos, we will likely visit the historic Santa Fe Plaza for a couple of hours of southwestern shopping at its best!

NIGHT: Hampton Inn, Los Alamos

**June 1-3, Days 8-10: Santa Fe and Jemez Mountains.** We will spend 2½ days in this bird-rich area, where an interesting mix of southwestern and Rocky Mountain species occur. Although our schedule will be flexible, we will certainly explore the riparian habitat along the Rio Grande, the scenic pine-oak canyons of Bandelier National Monument (including more incredible Indian ruins), and the Canadian zone of the Santa Fe Ski Basin and Jemez Mountains.

At Bandelier we will seek out Williamson's Sapsucker, Gray and Hammond's flycatchers, and the nomadic Pinyon Jay, as well as Black-throated Gray and Virginia's warblers. With luck we may encounter the very localized Zone-tailed Hawk soaring over the ancient ruins. Along the Rio Grande, colonies of Lewis' Woodpeckers unique kaleidoscopes of green, pink, red, and silver can be found. The brilliant Lazuli Bunting is also possible.

It is in the upper elevations, though, where we will encounter the most additions to our list. Streamside mountain thickets may harbor MacGillivray's Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee, or Lincoln's Sparrow. Spruce-fir forests are home to Clark's Nutcracker, Gray Jay (scarce), Townsend's Solitaire, Pine Grosbeak (uncommon), and Cassin's Finches. Red-naped Sapsuckers frequent aspen groves, while Williamson's forage in the ponderosa. Mountain Bluebirds brighten the intermountain valleys, and Black-billed Magpies wander throughout the lower mountains.

Although not to be expected on any given tour here, the elusive Dusky Grouse and the nomadic Three-toed Woodpecker both occur in this region. Both require considerable patience and luck to locate, as they occur in very low densities. Although easily missed, we will make a special effort to locate these phantoms of the forest.

The tour will conclude in a spectacular manner, with a final dinner atop Sandia Crest (accessible only by the famous Sandia Tram) overlooking the city of Albuquerque and a gorgeous western sunset.

NIGHTS: Hampton Inn, Los Alamos (June 1 and 2)  
Albuquerque Grand Hotel, Albuquerque (June 3)

**June 4, Day 11: Conclusion of Tour.** Participants may make plans to leave from Albuquerque (ABQ) for home at any time today.

**EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS:** Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour will be limited to 7 participants.

**TOUR LEADER:** Barry Zimmer

**Barry Zimmer** has been birding since the age of eight. His main areas of expertise lie in North and Central America, but his travels have taken him throughout much of the world, including such exotic locales as Japan, Russia, Madagascar, Africa, and New Zealand. Barry is a longtime member of the New Mexico Bird Records Committee, and served on the Texas Bird Records Committee for 12 years. He has co-authored three books: *Birds of the Trans-Pecos*, *A Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley*, and *Birds and Birdfinding in the El Paso Area*. Barry has a keen interest in nature photography, having captured over 1,000 species of birds on film. His other interests include sports (a diehard Red Sox fan), cooking, and movies. He received his degree in psychology at the University of Texas in El Paso. Barry resides in El Paso with his wife, Yvonne, and their daughter, Alexandra.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for the tour is **\$3565** per person in double occupancy from El Paso, Texas. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 11, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to El Paso with return from Albuquerque, NM, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$655**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

**FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$300** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Cancellation Penalties and Refunds are based on the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less **\$150** per person is refundable. If cancellation is made between 120 and 90 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 90 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$150.
Between 120 and 90 days before departure	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded.
Fewer than 90 days before departure date	No refund available.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE:** A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We**

**strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends Travel Insured International as our preferred insurance provider.** Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. **Contact Travel Insured International prior to registration for details.** Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

**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.**

**AIR INFORMATION:** 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. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

**BAGGAGE:** We request participants to limit their baggage to one medium-sized suitcase and one carry-on, if possible, as space in the vehicle will be limited.

**CLIMATE and CLOTHING:** The temperate climate of New Mexico's mountains promises warm days (mid 80s to low 90s) and cool nights (often mid 50s or cooler). Desert temperatures will average about ten degrees warmer. It is generally dry with little precipitation, although rain in the northern mountains is a distinct possibility. Our 1997 tour had temperatures in the upper 30s in the mountains overnight. Normally, however, warm and dry would be the expected weather, though one should be prepared for showers, with a rain coat or poncho, especially for day hikes. Dress will be informal throughout. In the south, shorts and t-shirts would be appropriate. In the north, jeans or other long pants and long-sleeved shirts are recommended. Sweaters are appropriate for mountain nights. Hats are recommended for sun protection; and a bathing suit will be useful. Comfortable walking shoes (tennis shoes) are appropriate for most of our walks. The hikes at Aguirre Springs and possibly the Gila Cliff dwellings may be rocky enough for some to want hiking boots.

**EQUIPMENT:** You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). An alarm clock is essential, and a canteen or water bottle will come in very handy. Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. You might appreciate having a small flashlight or headlamp when owling.

**HEALTH:** If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, 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.

As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel). Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html) (click on travel health).

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Regarding altitude, we will bird a variety of altitudes, ranging from 3,500 to 10,300 feet. Considerable time will be spent in the 6,000 to 8,000 foot range.

**INSECT PROTECTION:** Bugs are generally not a problem in New Mexico, but one container of insect repellent is recommended for the occasional mosquito. Our 2008 tour had numerous mosquitoes at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife refuge.

**LAUNDRY:** Self-service laundry facilities are available at the Comfort Inn in Silver City, Super 8 in Socorro and at the Comfort Inn in Santa Fe.

**SUGGESTED READING:** Our website, [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com) offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) or [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) which specializes in ornithology books.

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**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger 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 passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund

will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates on August 5, 2008 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.