

Portal Birding Hot Spots

By Tom's Bird Feeders

- 1) Stateline and Rodeo.** When you turn off of NM Highway 80 onto State Road 533 you will come to a cattle guard. At that guard you will see Stateline Road. This 4 mile long road will have brushy areas with Bendire's Thrashers, Cassin's Sparrows and possibly a White-tailed Kite. Take Highway 80 back to State Road 533. While passing through Rodeo be on the look out for Inca Doves, Gila Woodpeckers, and Great-tailed Grackles.
- 2) Portal Road.** After crossing into Arizona, the dessert scrub continues. This area is good for Black-throated Sparrows, Scaled Quail, Gambel's Quail, Canyon Towhees, Cactus Wrens, Curved-billed Thrachers, Verdins and in the winter look for Ruby-crowned Kinglets.
- 3) The Big Thicket.** Before you get to Portal, on your right will be the turn off for Foothills Road. The desert scrub becomes much thicker and both Silver Creek and Cave Creek run seasonally though the area. About 1/2 mile up this road you will come to **Dave Jasper's House**. His yard is open to the public, but please respect the hours he has posted. His yard is the best place to get the Crissal Thrasher, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher and Western Scrub Jay. In the winter it's possible to get the Golden-crowned Sparrow. Dave has signed many of the plants in his yard, so look for the small metal stakes. The Big Thicket continues up Portal Road. Watch for Pyrrhuloxias, Varied Buntings, Summer Tanagers, Northrn Cardinals, Bell's Vireos, Common Yellowthroats, Yellow-breasted Chats, Cooper's Hawks and Northern Goshawks. In the winter Evening Grosbeaks can sometimes be seen in the hundreds.
- 4) Portal.** Walk along Main Street starting at the Portal Peak Lodge and Store and enjoy the many bird feeders and hummingbird feeders. Please stay on the road and do not enter the yards. Fourteen species of hummingbirds can be seen (Berylline, Violet-crowned, Lucifer, Broad-billed, White-eared, Blue-throated, Magnificent, Plain-capped Starthroat, Black-chinned, Costa's, Anna's, Broad-tailed, Calliope, and Rufous). There has been a Great Horned Owl nesting by the Portal Library for years and the Acorn Woodpecker colony is doing great. You will also start to see large Sycamore trees along Cave Creek so watch for Painted Redstarts and some of the lower canyon species mentioned below.
- 5) Cave Creek Canyon and South Fork.** Continue up the canyon. Just past the Ranger Station (Forest Road 42) is a pullout with a forest information sign. Walk the path up to Sunnyflat Campground. Watch for Elegant Trogons, Sulpher-bellied Flycatchers, Painted Redstarts and at night look for Whiskered-Screech Owls, Spotted Owls, Western Screech Owls and Elf Owls. In the winter you can see Fox Sparrows and Harris' Sparrows. There are 3 campgrounds in the canyon, Idlewilde, Stewart, and Sunnyflat. On Forest Road 42 just past Sunny Flat Campground is the intersection for Forest Road 42E. At the end of 42E is the **South Fork Picnic Area**. Just before the picnic area is a bridge, look off the bridge to your right. It is one of the most reliable places to get the Painted Redstart and Black Phoebe. The hike starting in the picnic area is well worth your time and is probably one of the best places to get the Elegant Trogon.
- 6) North Fork of Cave Creek.** If you continue up Forest Road 42 you will come to the **Southwestern Research Station**. They have hummingbird feeders and seed feeders out and invite the public to stop by. Please respect the parking restrictions. Turning onto Forest Road 42A in front of the Research Station will take you up to the **John Hands Pullout**. You may find Elegant Trogons, Buff-breasted Flycatchers, Mexican Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches. From here on up to **Herb Martyr Pullout** watch for Montezuma Quail, Yellow-eyed Juncos, Painted Redstarts, Northern Pygmy-owls, Arizona Woodpeckers Bridled Titmice, Hutton's Vireos and Virginia's Warblers.
- 7) Portal-Paradise Road.** This road starts out in a dry chaparral area just above Portal. Watch for Black-chinned Sparrows, Greater Roadrunners, Rock Wrens, and Scott's Orioles. About 2-2 1/2 miles up you will notice a change in habitat to oak-juniper. Watch for Juniper Titmice, Phainopeplas, Red-breasted Nuthatches and all of the Thrashers (Sage in the winter). Check out the rock outcroppings for Rufous-crowned Sparrows (ya hear them more than see them.) When you come to the bridge at Paradise turn to your left (Forest Road 42B). Once in Paradise stop at the **George Walker House (B&B)**. Jackie Lewis has opened up her yard to bird watchers. This is a great place to stop. Her hummingbird feeders are always full and the Juniper Titmice, Scrub Jays and Stellars Jays like to visit. Tell Jackie Tom and Nancy say hi. Watch along E. Turkey Creek for Grace's Warblers and Red-faced Warblers. Forest Road 42B will connect with forest Road 42 above the Research Station. Turn Left to get back to Portal or right for a winding, narrow mountain road and great bird watching.
- 8) High Elevation Birding.** Continuing up, uP,UP the road you will reach **Onion Saddle**. Species at this altitude include the Olive Warblers, Red-faced Warblers, Grace's Warblers, Yellow-eyed Juncos, Pygmy Nuthatches, and Flammulated Owls. Turn left at the intersection and continue UP. The next junction will be the **Barfoot Junction**. Hairy Woodpeckers, Greater Pewees, Steller's Jays, Mexican Chickadees, Western Bluebirds and Northern Saw-whet Owls can be spotted in this area. The road to **Barfoot Park** is a great hiking trail, but not so great for driving. When the larkspur is blooming you can see Broad-tailed Hummingbirds. The pine trees are great for Williamson's Sapsuckers. Zone-tailed Hawks have been spotted and Short-tailed Hawks have been reported nesting. If you by-pass Barfoot Park and continue UP the road you will reach **Rustler Park**. All of the high elevation species can be seen here. Spring and fall migration may bring mixed flocks of Townsend's, Hermit, Yellow-rumped, Grace's, Olive and Red-faced Warblers. Look around the Forest Service buildings. This is a favorite spot for the Mexican Chickadee. Check out the steep cleared area above the meadow. There is a spring on the left hand side and the Red-faced Warbler likes this area. This is an old burn area and wildflowers are prolific here. Please treat this area with a GREAT deal of respect. The road to **Long Park** is usually closed, but makes a great hike and another chance for these species.

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