

Wintering Birds of Central New Mexico

Rosy-Finches, Raptors, Roadrunners... and more!

February 12-18, 2025

Join us for a winter trip to Central New Mexico where we'll not only enjoy the very special culture and culinary delights, but search from lowlands to highlands in pursuit of resident and wintering birds of the southern Rocky Mountains and northern Chihuahuan Desert. We will take in quintessential winter landscapes along New Mexico's Middle Rio Grande, in the Sandia Mountains at 10,600ft, a 5,000 ft rise from the valley below, and at the famously picturesque Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge.

As we work our way around these spectacular vistas, we'll take in avian spectacles to include dawn fly-out of thousands of white geese (Snow and Ross's) and Sandhill Cranes; swirling flocks of all three species of North American Rosy-Finches (Brown-capped, Black, and Gray-crowned (interior and coastal forms)), and raptors in hot pursuit of prey. We will ogle ancient petroglyphs as we seek Crissal Thrashers and Sagebrush Sparrows at Petroglyph National Monument, trek through the snow in search of American Three-toed Woodpecker at the Sandia Crest, and spend time scouring the cactus garden at Bosque del Apache watching Gambel's Quail, Pyrrhuloxia, Greater Roadrunner, and Verdin. Over the course of the trip we will build an impressive raptor list to hopefully include Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon and many others.

In order to build an impressive trip list, we will visit a stunning variety of habitat types in a small geographic area including Chihuahuan desert grassland and shrubland, Rio Grande cottonwood bosque, pinyon-juniper forest, ponderosa pine forest, spruce-fir forest, and a number of wetland types. Each of these habitats hold their own special treats. Some other bird targets for the trip will include Cactus Wren, Scaled Quail, Juniper Titmouse, Pinyon Jay, Acorn Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker, and Cassin's Finch among many others.

Join local bird guide and biologist, Asher Gorbet, and GCBO's executive director Martin Hagne, and we will have hot air balloons in the sky, green chile on our plates, and birds in our binoculars during this fabulous winter tour that is sure to impress.

Basic Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive by late afternoon, welcome dinner (night in ABQ)

Day 2: ABQ area west (night in ABQ)

Day 3: Bosque del Apache NWR (night in Socorro)

Day 4: BdANWR (fly out)/Water Canyon/Bernardo (night in ABQ)

Day 5: Rosy-finches/Sandias (night in ABQ)

Day 6: ABQ area east/ Estancia Valley (night in ABQ)

Day 7: Depart in AM

Detailed Itinerary:

Day 1: Wednesday 12th - Arrive in Albuquerque by late afternoon.

If flying in, we will pick you up at the Albuquerque International Sunport in our vans. We will check in to hotel, and gather for a welcome group dinner to go over our trip.

Dinner in ABQ

Night in ABQ

Day 2: Thursday 13th - Albuquerque area - Petroglyph National Monument, Rio Grande Nature Center State Park, Tingley Beach

Breakfast at hotel

Today we begin our tour by orienting ourselves to the geography, habitats, cultures, food and, of course, the birds of central New Mexico. Birding will be focused on the west side of the city and a range of habitats that will provide us chances at winter specialties such as Sagebrush Sparrow and Cackling Goose, residents like Crissal Thrasher and Red-shafted Flicker, and arid lands crowd favorites like Greater Roadrunner and Loggerhead Shrike.

Dinner in ABQ

Night in ABQ

Day 3: Friday 14th - Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge

Breakfast at hotel

Today we depart early to make our way to Bosque del Apache, about 1.5 hours south, where once arrived, we will tour the driving loops after spending some time birding the cactus garden first thing in the morning. The cactus garden and headquarters typically yield such species as Verdin, Pyrrhuloxia, and Gambel's Quail, while a loop around the refuge will yield thousands of white geese (Snow and Ross's), Sandhill Cranes, and wintering ducks. Along the way, we'll be accumulating a superb list of raptors who winter and hunt in the refuge and in the surrounding areas.

Dinner in Socorro

Night in Socorro

Day 4: Saturday 15th - Bosque del Apache NWR, Water Canyon, Bernardo Wildlife Management Area

Breakfast at hotel

We will start the morning observing the magnificent "fly out" event of thousands of cranes and geese at BdA. After bidding adieu to the refuge, we will head up to the nearby Magealena mountains where a variety of wintering montane birds can be found. Of particular interest here are woodpeckers, especially sapsuckers (Red-naped and Williamson's) and Acorn Woodpecker. After lunch, we'll make our way back to Albuquerque with a stop at the Ladd S. Gordon Wildlife Management Area to ogle more cranes and geese and search for wintering rufous-morph red-tailed Hawk and Harlan's Hawk both of which are known to winter in this area of the state.

Dinner in ABQ

Night in ABQ

Day 5: Sunday 16th - Sandia Crest and Sandia Mountains

Breakfast at hotel

Today we will venture up to high elevation in search of all three species of Rosy-Finches (Brown-capped, Black, and Gray-crowned), American Three-toed Woodpecker, and other montane treats. We'll start the day at the Sandia Crest (elevation 10,600 feet) and bird our way down the mountain targeting winter finches (Cassin's Finch, Red Crossbill, and Evening Grosbeak are all possibilities) and central NM montane specialties like Juniper Titmouse, Pinyon Jay, and Western and Mountain Bluebirds.

Dinner in ABQ

Night in ABQ

Day 6: Monday 17th - Albuquerque area cleanup/ Estancia Valley

Breakfast at hotel

Today we will bird in the Albuquerque area targeting any species of the region we have not yet seen. We'll visit one of the most picturesque canyons in the area, Embudito, part of the Sandia Mountain Wilderness and visit the Sandia Mountain Ranger Station where we can take in the wonder of the Tijeras Pueblo Archeological Site as we watch for Juniper Titmouse, Canyon Towhee, Townsend's Solitaire, Woodhouse's Scrub Jay, and four or more subspecies of Dark-eyed Juncos. Finally, to round out the trip, we'll spend time in the afternoon cruising roads in the Estancia Valley looking for any raptors we may have missed so far including more chances at Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks and Golden Eagle.

Dinner in ABQ

Night in ABQ

Day 7: Tuesday 18th - Depart for home

Breakfast at the hotel, followed by shuttling you to the ABQ airport in our vans.

Trip Logistics and Info:**Trip Fee:**

Double - \$1,975.00

Single - \$2,250.00

Max Participants: 12

Travel: two 12 passenger vans

Arriving and Departing Airport: Albuquerque International Sunport, NM (ABQ)

Included in Fee:

- Local bird guides
- Hotel room
- Hotel breakfast
- Vans & fuel during trip
- Drivers for vans
- Entry fees & parking fees to parks
- Water in vans
- Some snacks in vans

Does Not Include:

- Flights to and from destination
- Meals (other than hotel breakfast)
- Tips for guide, meals
- Drinks & snacks (other than listed above)
- Alcoholic drinks
- Personal items

Our New Mexico Guides:

Asher Gorbet (They/Them)

Asher is a wildlife biologist and ornithologist based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Their work primarily focuses on songbirds: in particular, utilizing bird banding as a research tool to study songbird ecology. Over the years, Asher has worked with and studied a vast array of species including Black-throated Gray Warbler, Yellow-eyed Junco, Varied Bunting, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Acadian Flycatcher, Burrowing Owl, and many others. Asher is a North American Banding Council (NABC) certified bird banding trainer and a Director-at-Large for NABC; serves as a technical reviewer for American Birding Association magazines; volunteers with Rio Grande Bird Research; and serves on the board of Bird Alliance Central New Mexico. In their free time, Asher is a rabid traveler, dedicated cat parent, and an enthusiastic beekeeper. You're equally likely to find Asher in the woods hugging a tree or at home hugging their cats.



Martin Hagne, Executive Director of GCBO (He/Him)

Martin Hagne was born and raised on the Swedish west coast, where his grandfather instilled a love for nature at an early age. He moved to the United States, and the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, in 1979 and turned his focus towards wildlife viewing and conservation concerns. Martin serves as the Executive Director of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory in Lake Jackson, TX. Previously he served as the Executive Director of the Valley Nature Center in Weslaco, Texas, a non-profit environmental education facility, for 13 years. He has also worked as a Field Biologist doing baseline studies for many years, including avian (bird), reptile and amphibian, mammal, threatened and endangered species, and habitat studies. Martin has served on several national, state, regional and local environmental appointments, committees, and boards. He also leads birding field trips both in the U.S. and foreign locations. Birding, nature viewing, native plants, conservation issues and environmental education are great passions for Martin.









