

Wintering Birds of Central New Mexico

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

January 21-27, 2026

Join us for a winter trip to Central New Mexico where we'll not only enjoy the very special culture and culinary delights (eating at the local spots!), but search the lowlands to the 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 grassland and wetlands of Bosque del Apache NWR and the Ladd S. Gordon Wildlife Management Area.

As we work our way around these spectacular vistas, we'll take in avian spectacles to include 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 (including sub species of 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 for Gambel's Quail, Pyrrhuloxia, Greater Roadrunner, and Verdin in their habitats. 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 find as many species as possible, 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.

This does mean a bit of travel to get it all covered, but longest ride is about 1.5 hrs, and days like at BdA NWR, we will ride in the vans quite a bit on the tour loop and stop at spots to bird. Most walks will be easy to moderate, but some snow/ice will be encountered in the mountains. We will also be at very high altitudes some days so be aware of that!

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 chili on our plates, and birds in our binoculars during this fabulous winter tour that is sure to impress.

Basic Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive by Noon, lunch, maybe a few birds, welcome dinner (night in ABQ)
Day 2: ABQ area west (night in ABQ)
Day 3: Bosque del Apache NWR (night in ABQ)
Day 4: Water Canyon / Ladd S. Gordon Wildlife Management Area (night in ABQ)
Day 5: Rosy-finches / Sandia Crest and Mountain (night in ABQ)
Day 6: ABQ area east (night in ABQ)
Day 7: Depart in AM

Detailed Itinerary:

Day 1: Wednesday 21th - Arrive in Albuquerque by 12:00 Noon.

If flying in, we will pick you up at the Albuquerque International Sunport in our vans. (There is a hotel shuttle as well if need be.)

We will grab lunch, and if time we will see some birds, check in to hotel, and then gather for a welcome group dinner to go over our trip.

Dinner in ABQ

Night in ABQ – **We will stay in the same hotel the whole time!**

Day 2: Thursday 22nd - Albuquerque area West - Petroglyph National Monument, Rio Grande Nature Center State Park, Alameda Open Spaces

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 23rd - 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. Once arrived we will be spending some time birding the cactus gardens at the visitor center first thing in the morning. The cactus garden and headquarters typically yield such species as Verdin, Pyrrhuloxia, and Gambel's Quail, and more. We will then tour all the driving loops and wetlands around the refuge, which could yield thousands of white geese (Snow and Ross's), Sandhill Cranes, and wintering ducks. Today's lunch is a picnic in the refuge! Along the way, we'll be accumulating a superb list of raptors who winter and hunt in the refuge and in the surrounding areas. Then back to Albuquerque.

Dinner in ABQ

Night in ABQ

Day 4: Saturday 24th - Water Canyon in Magdalena Mountains, Ladd S. Gordon Wildlife Management Area,

Breakfast at hotel

We will depart early in morning to make our way to the Magdalena mountains and Water Canyon area, about 1.5 hrs away, 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. On the way there we will hope to see Pronghorn Antelopes, Mountain Bluebirds and more. After lunch in Socorro, NM we will head to the nearby 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, and hope for other wintering raptors as well. We will then make our way back to Albuquerque

Dinner in ABQ

Night in ABQ

Day 5: Sunday 25th - 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 26th - Albuquerque area East and cleanup

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, Western Bluebirds and maybe even Pinyon Jay!

Dinner in ABQ

Night in ABQ

Day 7: Tuesday 27th - Depart for home

Breakfast at the hotel on your own, followed by Hotel shuttle to the ABQ airport.

Trip Logistics and Info:

Trip Fee:

Double - \$1,985.00

Single - \$2,285.00

Max Participants: 12

Travel: two 12 passenger vans

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

Included in Fee:

- 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 & 1 picnic lunch)
- 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 Associate Editor 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.









